



# FROM THE EDITOR



By Mark A. Taylor

## Growing Christians and a Growing Church

**S**ometimes the best church growth advice centers in a simple idea. Consider, for example, 365 Days of Purpose, a program to encourage Bible reading, Scripture memorization, and prayer at Southern Acres Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky ([www.southernacres.org](http://www.southernacres.org)). Bruce Carpenter, adult education minister there for 15 years, believes this “back-to-basics” emphasis is as responsible as anything for nudging Southern Acres off of an attendance plateau that lasted for a couple of years.

The program is a follow-up to 40 Days of Purpose, a nationwide emphasis offered by Rick Warren from Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California ([saddleback.com](http://saddleback.com)). Southern Acres participated in 40 Days of Purpose last year, preceding it with 100 Days of Preparation, a campaign developed by Southern Acres to involve all the congregation’s leaders in Bible memory and quiet times with God.

The response was so positive that Southern Acres decided to make it a yearlong emphasis in 2003. Church members are encouraged to make seven commitments:

- Hear a sermon every week, either in person or on tape.
- Attend a small group or Bible fellowship (Sunday school class) every week.
- Memorize a short Bible verse each week.

- Have a daily quiet time to read a devotion, consider a Bible passage, and pray.

- Use the church’s prayer list (updated regularly on the Web) as the basis for this quiet time, at least one day per week.

- Park at a distance from the main campus for Sunday services, leaving the close spots for visitors.

- Bring at least three guests to church during 2003.

The church, averaging above 1,000 in worship attendance, has enlisted 525 to participate in the program (this number includes those who have committed to fewer than all seven items). Three times this year, senior minister Wally Rendel will preach and adult Bible fellowship classes will teach on a theme related to the program.

Carpenter sends a monthly reminder and list of Bible memory verses to everyone who has signed up. He believes this all-church emphasis on connecting with God has transformed attitudes and helped the church grow. “We’re seeking His face,” he said. “We’re praying together for the same things at the same time.”

Like most successful church growth strategies, 365 Days of Purpose is simple, it is biblical, and it has flourished because of hard work behind the scenes. A version of this program could work at a congregation of any size.

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