

True North Cohorts 2010 proved to be an exceptional time of equipping and resourcing for pastors and leaders. District leaders traveled with Dr. Bob Rhoden to the Northern, Central and Southern region of the state on February 1st, 2nd, and 4th, bringing the 1st of 6 training modules, intent on equipping both pastors and leaders to “close the gap” in New Jersey.

It's clear that our district leadership team is motivated and mobilized to help the church at New Jersey to fulfill our mission and are personally invested in us. Each one in attendance received a free training DVD on leadership. The Host churches graciously provided lunch for all in attendance.

One of many factors that contributed to the success of this initiative was the involvement of all those in attendance. It's clear that the NJDC leadership not only recognizes the value of providing training to help develop the potential of every leader, but they also recognize the value of the wisdom that we have access to, through one another. This was evident by the incorporation of round-table discussions in both morning and afternoon sessions. The Word says, **“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend” Proverbs 27:17 NLT.** Well, we experienced this together as pastors and leaders from around the state shared personal experiences and wisdom from the Lord at those round-table discussions, and then afterward, all of this wisdom was brought forward in a corporate setting. The church at New Jersey is truly blessed!

The first of 6 sessions, focused on Leadership, Vision and Mission. We were exceedingly blessed to have with us Dr. Robert Rhoden, General Council's Executive Presbyter. He was so refreshing! Dr. Rhoden is full of wisdom and care for the churches. It was a privilege to sit under his ministry. We learned a lot and laughed a lot, too!

During our morning sessions Dr. Rhoden shared on **creating a culture of leadership in our churches where we make people's greatest potential our goal.** He shared on a number of great leadership values, including how Spirit-led leaders establish a nurturing culture, where people love and serve. Leaders who are doing everything aren't accomplishing anything - we simply cannot do it alone. We are to empower others; focus on their worth and potential and release them into effective ministry. He also placed great emphasis on the importance of leaders continuing to develop a heart for God: **Personal prayer time, study and taking time to just sit in His Presence and think things through.** That's some break-through thinking! Doing ministry cannot substitute for a personal relationship with God. It must begin with the leader's personal relationship with the Lord.

In the afternoon the sessions were focused on Leading with vision. Topics included Mission, Core Values, Vision and Goals. Emphasis on things like identifying hindrances to vision, were profoundly helpful. Some hindrances noted were how churches, after many years, can begin to operate out of memory and not the creative conceivings of the Wonderful Holy Spirit. **How many of us are asking ourselves and the Holy Spirit, “Why are we doing what we're doing?” and “Is what we are doing fulfilling our mission?”** Even some of our daily tasks, which may be things that need to be done, can become what Dr. Rhoden referred to as “ministry monsters”. There was great wisdom shared on how to identify those ministry monsters, avoid or manage as needed and focus on fulfilling the mission of the church.

Each session was closed with a time of prayer. The Presence of the Lord moved into the meetings in a powerful and unique way in each of the locations we visited. Our pastors and leaders were anointed with oil and prayed for and God just sealed this time together like only He can.

Pastors are encouraged to welcome all of their staff and leadership teams to join them for the times of training. The cost for the sessions was set low intentionally to make the sessions accessible. The value of this caliber of training combined with the time of fellowship we share together is priceless. **The pastors that bring their teams along have a great advantage; they leave the sessions with their team already having the same paradigm!** A bold move in implementing the focus in the interim of these most strategic meetings. Hope to see you and your ministry team in April!

Angie Dorman