Transitioning the Local Church from a Rural to Suburban Context

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Date
8-2009

Department
Seminary

Degree
Doctor of Ministry (DMin)

Chair
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Primary Subject Area
Religion, Clergy; Religion, General; Religion, Philosophy of

Keywords
Church, Rural, Suburban, Transition

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/254

Abstract
A review of current literature demonstrates that very little material is available to assist pastors and church leaders in transitioning their churches from a rural to suburban context. This project will serve as a tool to assist pastors in leading their churches to transition from a rural to suburban context. Based on demographic studies, an historical analysis, the development of a plan to move the church forward, analyzing potential disruptions, and seeing the end result of the rural to suburban transition, the goal of the project will be fulfilled.

The suburbs are a bit embarrassing, it seems, yet statistically most of us live and minister in a suburban context. More than 53 percent of the U.S. population lives in the suburbs, and it’s the fastest-growing population migration in the West. I know lots of people are moving back into the city, with their ironic moustaches and alarmingly tight trousers, but re-inhabiting urban spaces is a complex and costly exercise that doesn’t appeal to people just trying to get to the suburbs for some peace and quiet. Suburban Life.

For a long time I resented having to minister in a suburban context. I was longing for something a little more missionally credible, a little more street. Suburban Love. But God opened my eyes. Urbanization. The process of transition from a rural to a more urban society. Statistically, urbanization reflects an increasing proportion of the population living in settlements defined as urban, primarily through net rural to urban migration. The level of urbanization is the percentage of the total population living in towns and cities while the rate of urbanization is the rate at which it grows (UNFPA, 2007). Although cities played a significant role throughout human history, it is not until the industrial revolution that a network of large cities started to emerge in the most economically