

ASSOCIATION OF RESORT AND LEISURE MINISTERS

FUTURE WORK

Bill Black

The Association of Resort and Leisure Ministers is poised to embrace an unidentified future through its deep roots and creative people.

(Historical Context)

Resort missions began as a creative outburst of people determined to follow God's leadership in risking themselves and their ministries. These early leaders ensured that the work of resort missions did not settle into traditional church programming. They also ensured that the purpose was missions and not recreational ministry for those already in church. This early work was done by individuals who found themselves in resort settings and by denominational leaders with vision.

The radical ideas of ministry done differently in resort and leisure settings led to the start of many specific expressions. The early settings for such work were beach and mountain resorts along with major special events. Close relationships between local churches and the resort ministries provided a base for the resort ministries to develop performance based ministries that got peoples' attention, earned the right to be heard, and that presented the Gospel.

The performance emphasis grew into programming that shared the Gospel in skier worship services, children day camps in campgrounds, and outreach to lifeguards on beaches. These different programs were cutting edge that pushed the envelope of missions understanding. Resort ministers kept the creative flow in establishing language and professional standards for new ministries.

In the 1990's the next level of creativity for resort missions came through a shift into vision based responses for ministry. The themes of "where is God going" and "how do we respond to opportunity" became guides. Again, ARLM and its members pushed the envelope for the church as we shifted from program into vision.

Relationships and deep community presence have been the work expression of resort missions for this decade. Resort life has never provided stability for guests or for residents and the work of resort missions has become even more holy as we seek to provide God's stability for life. It is in this area of entering into and providing community through personal relationships (even with short term visitors)

that the keys for the next year's are found. Revealing the holy action of God in peoples' lives and speaking meaning into their holy moments is to be our work.

Resort missions has always been about the future and about leading the church into new concepts of missions. The new work, the creative burst, the cutting edge before us is found in our relationships and our ability to interpret how God is present for leisure lifestyle people.

And Now For ARLM's Role

Identify settings

We are to be searching out those resort locations and those special events that are in need of a missions presence. This idea includes national and international settings.

Call out new people

Who are the future resort and leisure ministers? How do we enable them to hear their call? Can we help shape their understanding of call? How do we help them prepare for their future through experiences, mentoring, and education?

Method for starting

New ministries with new people in new settings are worthy of new methods. We are to be about the dreaming of these methods and the testing and developing of them. Remember our deep roots of cutting edge missions!

Means for maintaining

The systems for maintaining ministries are rapidly and radically changing. Denominational structures no longer exist. We are situated and suited for exploring many different responses and finding the vehicles that enable this mission to be accomplished.

Develop language and skills yet unspoken and unnamed

The early work of resort missions created the language and professional standards necessary for comprehension (or at least moderate understanding) by the church. Radically different futures with creative new mission expressions are worthy of new language and skill sets. An example of language and accompanying skill set that has become prevalent in our relational ministry efforts is "speaking meaning

into holy moments”. How do we describe what we do? How do we identify “holy moments”? The movements of relationships with people are non-linear and are not easily identified. This is our task.

Provide for connection

Resort missions works in the movement of the Church. It flows from the Church and through the world and into peoples’ lives. Movements cannot be controlled and can only at times be directed. We have always been comfortable on the edge and in the flow. We are to be inviting the Church to join us. We are to be going on into the future.

The obvious question is how, then, do we do this? How does the Association of Resort and Leisure Ministers accomplish this? I (Bill Black) do not know. And if I did, I would not tell you. I do know that this is a holy journey and will be lots of fun. I look forward to our going together into it.