

# McClatchy: Call people to follow Jesus, not pander to lowest values

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SAN ANTONIO—Ministers contribute to the decline of churches when they appeal to people’s lowest values of selfish consumerism rather than challenging them to follow Jesus, Rick McClatchy told a regional [New Baptist Covenant II](#) assembly.

“As churches, we focus on the A-B-Cs—attendance, buildings and cash. We create programs and service to attract and entertain the spiritual consumer and hope they will put some money into the offering plate to pay for all these services we are providing them,” McClatchy, Texas field coordinator for the [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship](#) , told a group at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio.

McClatchy pronounced himself “a failure” for much of his ministry because he focused time and energy on trying to make consumers of religion happy. “What I had to do was to face an ugly truth about my ministry. I wasn’t producing disciples who went out into the world to change it for the better. Instead, I was reinforcing people’s selfish concerns,” he said.

Rosalynn Carter speaking at Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga., the anchor site for New Baptist Covenant II. The meeting is linked by satellite and Internet to dozens of viewing locations around the country, including sites in San Antonio and Oklahoma City.

"I enticed and manipulated people into making so-called decisions for Jesus rather than truthfully challenging people to calculate the cost of following Jesus in a lifestyle of sacrificial service to God and others. ...

"In my well-intentioned effort to attract a crowd, I had given them a secular Jesus that could reinforce their self-indulgence, materialism and indifference to the poor and marginalized," he added, paraphrasing a statement by author Mike Slaughter.

The turning point in ministry came, he related, when he realized Jesus' original intent for the church was to create a body of people who would continue his work of compassion and transformation.

"Jesus had compassion upon people who were suffering—the poor, the hungry, the sick, the outcasts. But Jesus' vision, while including compassionate ministries, also included transformational ministries," McClatchy said.

"Jesus wanted to challenge the structures and powers that kept people in spiritual and physical bondage, be that political powers, military powers or religious powers. He was not content to simply tell the victims of injustice that things would be better in the afterlife. He wanted people to have life abundantly now.

"The true greatness of any local church is measured by how many of its members are out compassionately serving in the world to change it for the better—not by the A-B-Cs of attendance, buildings and cash."

Sociologists report the group in the United States with the highest religious profile is older African-American women in the South. The reason, McClatchy asserted, is that when they were young, courageous church leaders in the Civil Rights movements challenged them to make sacrifices and take risks by peacefully protesting. In contrast, most white churches focused on trying to entice young people to attend by offering to entertain

them.

“Think about this now. The church that asked their children to get locked up in jail kept them, and the church that asked their children to come to a lock-in lost them,” he said. “The truth is simple. Appeal to a generation’s highest aspirations—a nonsegregated society in this case—and you win them. Appeal to a generation’s lowest aspirations—having fun—and you lose them.”

The church experiences power when it asks people to go into the world and compassionately work to make society look more like God intended it to be, he insisted.

Missional churches capture that sense of being sent into the world to carry on the work of Jesus, he added.

Missional churches focus wholly on Jesus, engage the whole church in mission, practice a whole gospel that addresses the spiritual and physical transformation of the individual and society and reach out to the whole world in ministry, giving special attention to the suffering and hurting people, he explained.

“This type of church will not become a reality by a vote in a business meeting. This type of church will not become a reality by ordering a how-to-missional-church kit from your denomination,” McClatchy said.

“This type of church becomes a reality when you develop a missional lifestyle—a lifestyle like Jesus, where you go out where people are suffering and lost, people disconnected from God. You go to your neighbors, peers, children and grandchildren, and you help them, eat with them, sometimes stay in their homes, have conversations with them and tell them stories about God. Then invite them to follow Jesus, leaving all safety behind, and to change the world.”