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ENERGIZING SMALLER CHURCHES NETWORK EXTENDS MINISTRY; NEW BOOK, FALL CONFERENCE SERIES ENCOURAGE LEADERS

“Releasing the Power of the Smaller Church”

CINCINNATI, July 20, 2007— Several thousand of the leaders of the nation’s smaller churches have already found a source for vitality and encouragement through the work of the Energizing Smaller Churches Network (ESCN).

With the release this month of a new book, **Releasing the Power of the Smaller Church** (Standard Publishing, July 07) and a fall round of conferences with the same title, the ESCN is providing new opportunities for building up and reaching out to these leaders who represent the majority of congregations in the United States.

According to a study by the Barna Group, the majority of church-going Americans worship with fewer than 100 others, and fewer than 12% attend a church of 1,000 or more.

A national organization formed in 2004, the Cincinnati-based ESCN seeks to provide training and resources for churches of 200 members or less. In addition to its conferences the organization provides resources, networking and support through consultation and its website, www.escnetwork.org. The ESCN is sponsored by Standard Publishing, which is also based in Cincinnati.

ESCN’s newest resource, **Releasing the Power of the Smaller Church**, addresses felt needs of smaller churches with practical, “how-to” helps for ministry. Topics addressed include conducting building programs, working with local news media, and staying fresh in preaching and teaching. Each chapter has been written by a minister of a smaller congregation.

The 2007 book follows an earlier volume, **Unleashing the Potential of the Smaller Church**, which discussed other areas of ministry, such as youth, families, missions, and community outreach, all in the context of the smaller church.

The ESCN will also present a series of two-day workshops called “Releasing the Power of the Smaller Church” in six cities in fall 2007, continuing the series that started earlier in the year.

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The conference will include plenary sessions that affirm the value of the smaller church and equip smaller church leaders and volunteers for effective ministry. In addition, specialized workshop sessions will offer step-by-step instructions, specific tools, and helpful resources for smaller church ministry.

ESCN's fall conference schedule includes:

- Friday-Saturday, August 17-18, at Cincinnati Christian University, Ohio;
- Friday-Saturday, September 7-8, at Lincoln Christian College, Lincoln, Illinois;
- Friday-Saturday, September 14-15, at Crossroads College, Rochester, Minnesota;
- Friday-Saturday, October 12-13, Johnson Bible College, Knoxville, Tennessee;
- Friday-Saturday, October 26-27, at Roanoke Bible College, Elizabeth City, North Carolina

Registration information and more details are available at www.escnetwork.org.

“Over the past months, those of us leading the ESCN have discovered there is a huge need for leaders of smaller churches to be recognized, supported and applauded for the work they do,” said Shawn McMullen, director of the Energizing Smaller Churches Network, and editor of **Releasing the Power of the Smaller Church** as well as **Unleashing the Potential of the Smaller Church** (Standard Publishing, 2006). “These leaders deserve to have encouragement and resources for improving their ministries that are appropriate to the size of their communities and congregations, as well as to have their enormous contributions to the lives of so many people recognized.”

“We’re committed to serving the church,” said Steve Couture, vice president of sales and marketing at Standard Publishing. “It is exciting to us to see the interest so many ministers and volunteer leaders in smaller churches have in participating in a network that addresses their needs and concerns,” he continued. “We’re just happy to support their work and provide resources and events that serve the smaller church.”

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Since 1866, Standard Publishing has been providing true-to-the-Bible resources that inspire, educate, and motivate Christians to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Based in Cincinnati, Ohio, Standard creates a wide array of Christian products and resources for churches and families. For more information, visit www.standardpub.com.

*Note to news professionals:
for additional statistics on smaller churches, take a look at the ESCN Fact Sheet
that accompanies this news release.*