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level of the conversation,” said Jones.

The decision leaves the future structure of emergent leadership unclear. “We know how to run traditional organizations,” said Brian McLaren, a board member and one of the group’s most prominent pastors. “We don’t



Tony Jones will no longer coordinate Emergent Village.

know how to run networks. [But we know] there’s a place for leadership in networks.”

McLaren says there have been ongoing questions about the label itself. “For many people, the name *emergent* has allowed them to remain in the evangelical world,” he said. For others outside the conversation, he admitted, the name has become an epithet for theological heresy or cultural trendiness.

Even some within the network are beginning to avoid emergent vocabulary. Prominent blogger Andrew Jones (known online as “Tall Skinny Kiwi”) has dropped the emergent label from his conversations. “The word no longer communicates what I want it to,” he said, “so even though I will still be

in support of emerging church ventures . . . I will no longer be using the word for myself and the ministries that we support.”

Additionally, several thinkers once associated with emergent, including pastor Dan Kimball and professor Scot McKnight, have formed a new network provisionally called Origins, dedicated to “friends, pioneers, innovators, and catalysts who want to dream and work for the gospel together rather than alone.”

Nevertheless, the Emergent Village board remains optimistic about the future. McLaren pointed to groups such as Presbymergent and Anglimergent as examples of conversations that are taking place outside of Emergent Village.

Such groups encourage John Franke, professor of theology at Biblical Seminary and Emergent Village member. “We never thought we were the conversation,” he said. “We’re just a particular node of the wider conversation.”

Now that he has stepped down, Jones is hopeful that critics and proponents alike will be less likely to apply the views of a few prominent speakers and writers to everyone who identifies as emergent. “The best-case scenario,” he said, “is that stakeholders will step into leadership roles and feel a great deal of ownership in the network.”

Emergent leaders recognize the dangers of decentralization. Networking, a central emergent value, may become difficult in the absence of an obvious contact person. And some have concern that ambitious leaders might try to co-opt the network.

But Jones hopes decentralizing American emergent networks will give participants

worldwide, who lack access to book publishing and other resources enjoyed by their American counterparts, more freedom to express themselves. “Any time you can dethrone an overeducated, loud, brash, white man,” he said, “people just feel more openness for their own voice to be heard.”

• *Brandon O’Brien*

[HIGHER EDUCATION]

Northwestern Tempest

St. Paul college seeks reconciliation amid ongoing identity conflict.

Northwestern College held a day of prayer and fasting to seek reconciliation after a two-year debate over theological identity and management practices went public last fall.

In October, a group of former trustees took their case online, claiming that the suburban St. Paul school is “badly divided” and drifting from its conservative evangelical identity under the presidency of Alan Cureton, who came during the school’s centennial in 2002.

The school, where evangelist Billy Graham served as president from 1948 to 1952, says it has established “academic, fiscal, and program strength” under Cureton’s leadership while “holding firm to its Christ-centered biblical foundation.”

The former trustees say that since June 2007, one-third of the board has resigned or been removed for allegedly refusing to give Cureton their “complete and unfettered support” during the college’s Envision Excellence capital campaign. On October 27, the trustees launched the Friends of Northwestern College and Radio website in order to engage the debate publicly.

“It grieves us that it has come to this point,” said Galen Call, former trustee and current senior pastor of Venture Christian Church in Los Gatos, California. “We don’t see this website as being the source of the problem. We see it as taking the covers off a problem that has existed for some time.”

News quickly spread when the website was noted in Justin Taylor’s popular blog, *Between Two Worlds*. A Facebook group started by concerned alumni soon followed, quickly mushrooming to over 1,000 members.

The administration defended its theological steadfastness in a November chapel service, then launched its own website—NWC Responds—to keep the debate from

COURTESY OF TONY JONES

Go Figure compiled by Ted Olsen

5%

Increase in the U.S. suicide rate since 1999.

16%

Increase in the U.S. suicide rate among those ages 40–64.

68%

Americans who attend religious services at least once a week who say that the U.S. has a moral obligation to be involved in world affairs.

54%

Americans who attend religious services less than weekly who agree.

231,000

Amish population in the U.S.

84%

Growth in the Amish population between 1992 and 2008.

becoming as heated as recent ones at Baylor University, Cedarville College, and Westminster Theological Seminary. The administration says the trustees were removed not for theological differences or loyalty issues but for their “persistent disregard for board governance and bylaws.”

Concerned alumnus Dallas Jenkins ('97) researched the dispute on campus and says the college's critics have too much credibility to be ignored. “There is smoke coming out of the windows at the Northwestern College house, plain and simple,” he said. “That leads us to believe that there's a fire inside.”

Dissent began to culminate after a June 2007 board meeting that dealt with the modern application of the college's doctrine. In August 2007, Bible department chairman Doug Huffman and other faculty members presented concerns to the board that the administration was exhibiting post-modern views of truth and an authoritarian management style. Huffman was later demoted in spring 2008.

An April faculty survey revealed that 44 of 57 respondents felt “an atmosphere of fear and distrust exists at Northwestern College.” In May, the student newspaper reported that half of faculty respondents felt relations between faculty and the administration were mediocre or poor.

On June 9, Call and three fellow and former trustees, citing a crisis of disunity between faculty and the administration, appealed to Cureton to resign. On June 16, the board dismissed the dissenting trustees for having “drafted an ultimatum that directly opposed the majority action of the board.”

Brook Berry, vice president for marketing and enrollment, said the heart of the

controversy was related to mishandled personnel decisions, not theology. “[Grievance] procedures were not utilized, which has resulted in these personnel issues spilling over into the public arena,” he said.

Cureton has apologized for the handling of Huffman's demotion and is pursuing reconciliation through an investigative faculty committee. A newly formed faculty panel called the Jethro Commission has recommended ways that the trustees can communicate better with faculty and include them in decisions.

“The ongoing fight against theological drift is a very healthy part of almost every conservative Christian institution—[as] well it should be,” said Berry. “Frankly, we wish more colleges were as concerned about the theological drift as Northwestern.”

The concern may last for some time. “I appreciate that the administration seems to be taking steps towards reconciliation, but I hope they understand that this goes deeper than a few incidents that need closure,” said Jenkins. “There's still a long way to go towards clarity for the Northwestern College family.”

• *Jeremy Weber*

[FINANCE]

Microfinance, Now More Micro

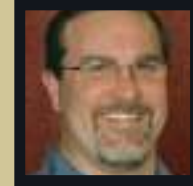
Hit by the credit crunch, lenders anticipate fewer loans to the poor.

When Mama Atiya's husband died in 2006, her in-laws claimed the family property,

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John Newland

The senior pastor at Fall Creek Baptist Church in Indianapolis received the “cease-and-desist” letter from the NFL that led to many churches canceling Super Bowl outreach events in 2007. The NFL has announced it will allow church viewings.



How did you feel when the NFL reversed its call?

We were gratified because common sense prevailed. The

NFL flagged us because our website asked members to donate money for food for the event. They were not prohibiting us from sharing our faith; they were prohibiting us from showing their product in the way we wanted to show it. So we met in homes in smaller groups.

We learned two things. One, God clarified for our country an event that churches all across the country were doing and what the purpose of it was. And two, our church was challenged to be more aware of copyright law.

What are you doing this year?

Our Super Sunday outreach event will have a lot of free food, giveaways, and games, and will have a gospel presentation and personal testimony at halftime. We have scrutinized the NFL's policy change and will make sure we are in full compliance. For example, the NFL has taken away the restriction on the size of the screen, but it has to be in your normal place of worship.

What makes the Super Bowl a better outreach event than, say, the season premiere of *Los?*

It crosses so many lines of community and brings us together in a way that has mass appeal. We try to take advantage of things that draw people's attention across socioeconomic, political, and cultural lines—the things that divide us in this country.

Any advice for other churches hosting Super Bowl outreaches?

First, define your purpose. Second, find out what's legal and what's not legal. Free is the key. And be careful with your use of the words *Super Bowl*. Understand that if you are using somebody else's product, you have to follow their rules. Churches cannot cut corners. We must be above reproach.

BRIEFS

• Fort Worth, Texas, became the **fourth diocese to secede** from the Episcopal

Church when delegates voted November 15 to align with the conservative Argentina-based Anglican Province of the Southern Cone. It followed the dioceses of San Joaquin in Fresno, California; Pittsburgh; and Quincy, Illinois.

• Wycliffe Bible Translators in November received **an anonymous \$50 million gift** to speed up Scripture translation for the last people groups without the Bible in their native tongue. The gift was the largest in Wycliffe's 75-year history.

• Prominent megachurch **Without Walls International Church** faced foreclosure

of its Tampa property in November when the Evangelical Christian Credit

Union demanded immediate repayment of a \$12 million mortgage. The church had defaulted on a \$1 million loan due in August, according to the *St. Petersburg Times*. The August divorce of pastors Randy and Paula White prompted half of the 22,000-member congregation to leave the church.

• Augsburg Fortress, the publishing arm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, announced in October it will close nine U.S. bookstores, lay off more than 50 of almost 300 employees, and **decline to publish new books** in its consumer-oriented line. The publisher will focus on church resources, academic texts, and web-based products.