

LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OVERCOMING GROWTH STRANGULATION AND SMALL CHURCH NEGATIVE
STEREOTYPES THROUGH INTENTIONAL BIBLICAL STEPS

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

Donald Scott Campbell

Lynchburg, Virginia

March 19, 2014

Copyright © 2014 by Donald Scott Campbell

All Rights Reserved

LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

GRADE

MENTOR

READER

ABSTRACT

OVERCOMING GROWTH STRANGULATION AND SMALL CHURCH NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES THROUGH INTENTIONAL BIBLICAL STEPS.

Donald Scott Campbell

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013

Mentor: Dr. Charles N. Davidson, Dr. Dean Hinson, Dr. Scott Hawkins

The purpose of this paper is to provide encouragement to small churches so they may nurture spiritual growth while working to overcome space restrictions that prohibit sustained numerical growth. Through intentional biblical steps, small church negative stereotypes can also be diagnosed and eliminated, thus bringing forth growth. By addressing spiritual problems and space restrictions, congregations can be rejuvenated and community perceptions can be improved by making God's people and facility meet His standard of excellence. The research tools include surveying twenty-five pastors to ascertain strengths and weaknesses of their church growth strategies and twenty-five large church attenders to identify small church perceptions and provide correction to any misperceptions that may hinder growth. The goal of this project focuses on small churches becoming spiritually healthy with vision and unity that scripturally reveals God's power to attract people into His Kingdom, while building His church to the size and effectiveness He desires.

Abstract length: 150 words

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	iv
Table of Contents	v
Tables & Figures.....	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Statement of Scope and Limitations.....	2
Biblical/Theological Basis.....	2
Statement of Methodology	3
Summary of Literature Review	7
CHAPTER 1 WHY DO MOST SMALL CHURCHES REMAIN SMALL?	12
The Need for Biblical Leadership.....	14
The Power of Focus: Developing Vision, Purpose and Goal.....	16
The Problem of Spiritual Growth Strangulation: The Bible vs. Tradition	20
The Decision to Become a Cruise Ship or Battleship Church	24
CHAPTER 2 THE OBSTACLE OF SMALL CHURCH NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES.....	27
The Feeling of Defeat: Buying into Small Church Negative Stereotypes	27
A Survey of Small Church Perceptions from Large Church Attenders.....	30
CHAPTER 3 BIBLICAL STEPS TO OVERCOME NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES.....	44
Step 1—Diagnosing Spiritual Diseases of the Church.....	44
Ethnikititis.....	46
Ghost Town Syndrome	47
Cultural Blindness	48
Koinonitis: The Country Club Church.....	49
The Church of Laodicea Love Syndrome.....	50
Pew Paralysis.....	51
Hyper-Cooperativism	53
Step 2—Growing People on the Inside by Serving on the Outside	53
Center Events on Community.....	56
Outreach Picnics	57
Food Pantry Ministry	57

Fundraising Events to Finance Ministry and New Space Needs	59
Homeless Shelter Ministry	60
Nursing Home Ministry.....	61
Detention Home Ministry.....	61
Jail Ministry	62
Step 3—Maintain a Visual Presence of Doing on the Web	63
The Result: People Want to be Where God is Working	64
CHAPTER 4 RECOGNIZING THE OBSTACLE OF GROWTH	
STRANGULATION	65
Diagnosing the Physical Limitations Prohibiting Church Growth	67
Sanctuary Seating	69
Parking.....	70
Educational Space.....	71
Restroom Facilities.....	75
Building Layout and Flow.....	76
CHAPTER 5 BIBLICAL STEPS TO OVERCOME GROWTH	
STRANGULATION	79
Step 1—Develop a Congregation that Prays and Worships Through Giving.....	79
Step 2—Demographic Research of Community Needs	82
Step 3—Develop a Growth Strategy	85
Church Growth Strategies of Surveyed Pastors	87
Step 4—Building Program: Presenting a Vision of Growth.....	98
Step 5—Reveal God's Power Through Unity.....	103
Step 6—Building God's Servants Through Building God's House.....	108
Step 7—Maintaining a Standard of Excellence Fit For The King Of Kings.....	111
APPENDIX A RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.....	114
Survey #1.....	115
Survey #2.....	119
Permission Request Letter for Survey #1	122
Consent Form	123
Church Member Recruitment Letter.....	127
Consent Form	128
BIBLIOGRAPHY	131
VITA	135

IRB APPROVAL/WAIVER PAGE	136
---------------------------------------	------------

Tables & Figures

Table 1.	Negative and Positive Perceptions of Small Churches	42
Table 2.	Shoreline Community Church Space Survey	68
Table 3.	Pastoral Responses Regarding Church Growth Factors	89
Figure 1.	Site Plan for Shoreline Community Church	67
Figure 2.	Shoreline Community Church Building Plans, Phase 1: "Operation Breathing Room"	73
Figure 3.	Shoreline Community Church Building Plans, Phase 2: Future Auditorium	74
Figure 4.	Population Comparison of Shoreline Community and Shoreline Church	83

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Numerical church growth strangulation, particularly in smaller churches that have a weekly attendance between thirty-five and one-hundred people, is a major problem for today's smaller churches. Lack of growth due to space limitations and sometimes stunted spiritual growth is due to leadership that does not present clear purpose, vision, and goals to build the Kingdom of God through the local church will also be examined. This project aims to identify the causes of stunted and even dying churches, as well as provide solutions that will enable even the smallest congregations to thrive.

This project will also diagnose physical limitations, which prohibit church growth and will provide steps to overcome some of the most common physical obstacles that promote growth strangulation. Also, surveys of pastors to ascertain church growth strategies, strengths, and weaknesses will be used to make a plan to open up available physical space giving "breathing room" to ministry efforts that will result in greater attender retention and spiritual growth.

The project will also take into consideration the compounded problem of negative small church stereotypes that also hinder numerical and spiritual growth. Diagnosing various spiritual diseases, which promote negative stereotypes in churches and a presentation of the biblical cures, will also be examined.

Additionally, surveys of "large church" congregants will be used to identify and address small church perceptions that may or may not be accurate but hinder church growth. Each negative perception will be dealt with through intentional biblical steps that will eliminate the

negative stereotype and shows that a spiritually healthy church reveals God's power and builds an attractiveness, which draws people into the church.

Statement of Scope and Limitations

This paper will be written from the perspective of churches in the northeastern United States. Because of the unique socioeconomics, cultural backgrounds, and religious landscapes found throughout the United States, it is acknowledged that perceptions and stereotypes presented in this project may be different and even opposite in some parts of the country.

Biblical/Theological Basis

This project is not about building a huge congregation just for the sake of looking successful in the eyes of man. There are different kinds of growth, some of which have nothing to do with numbers. The theoretical basis for this project is to show that God is the One who builds His church and He is more concerned about the spiritual health of His people rather than numerical growth.

However, many small churches fall into the trap of believing the negative stereotypes and feel defeated because they cannot keep up the pace and programming found in the larger churches, so they often give up and become a country club or a cruise ship rather than a battleship in the Lord's army.

This project is to encourage all churches, but especially the small church, that they can do "big church" ministry and even be viewed as the "biggest small church in town" if they are truly growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, submitting to His will for their lives, both individually and corporately.

A church can be alive and growing spiritually even when the attendance numbers remain the same for long periods of time. The opposite is also true. A church can be adding to its

membership in huge numbers every month, yet be in the midst of a spiritual famine. The church is called by God to be evangelists, to plant the seed of the Gospel. God calls pastors and teachers to water the seeds, and still others to use their spiritual gifts in order to grow their local church. But it is only God who gives the increase and each person will receive their own reward according to their labor (1 Cor. 3:7-8).

If the church is to grow, each person must be trained to exercise their spiritual gifts within the church and to be mindful of keeping the planting and watering duties in balance. If they become out of balance, the church will not grow as God intended.

A living and growing church is found in Acts 2:42-47. The believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." They were serving one another and reaching out to those in their community who needed to know the Lord. Because of their obedient efforts the Lord "added to their number daily those who were being saved." When these elements are present, the church will experience spiritual growth, whether or not there is numerical increase.

This project intends to encourage all churches but especially small churches to recognize that God wants them to be the best version of who He created them to be individually as His children and corporately as the Body and Bride of Christ. By applying the biblically based steps included in this paper and seeking the Lord's purpose, vision and goal for His people and church, spiritual and numerical growth will occur at the size and rate that the Lord alone will determine.

Statement of Methodology

The first part of this project, chapters one through three, deal with the importance of promoting spiritual growth of people in the church. The second part, chapters four through five,

outlines how to diagnose and overcome negative small church stereotypes and the church building's physical limitations that may be prohibiting numerical growth of congregants.

Chapter one attempts to answer the question, "Why do most small churches remain small?" While God is the One who ultimately determines the size of local church bodies, many would experience their congregations "Praising God and having favor with all the people" and witnessing how "... the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" as found in Acts 2:47, if they were truly under and obedient to biblical leadership. A look at what biblical leadership is and is not will be examined in this chapter.

Chapter one will also address how to formulate vision, purpose, and goal statements that will keep the congregation and leadership focused on the direction God has for the local church, as well as being used as filters that determine whether ministries are biblical and promoting Kingdom growth. This section will also discuss the necessity of church leadership to feed the flock a healthy spiritual diet that will eliminate wrong perceptions or doctrines and identify unhealthy traditions that prohibit change and growth. The chapter closes with a section to encourage pastors and leaders not to feel defeated by lack of success or other prospering ministries that may seem to outshine them, causing them to buy into small church negative stereotypes.

Chapter two, "The Obstacle of Small Church Negative Stereotypes," will examine the results of a survey given to area large church members concerning their small church views and perceptions that may or may not be true, but discourage and hinder the small church from growing.

Chapter three, "Biblical Steps to Overcome Negative Stereotypes," Step 1 begins by diagnosing eight of the most common spiritual diseases that promote small and large church

negative stereotypes and the biblical steps to take for curing each disease and overcoming the stereotypes that may produce harmful public perceptions. The spiritual diseases discussed include: Ethnikitis, Ghost Town Syndrome, Cultural Blindness, The Church of Laodicea Love, Pew Paralysis, and Hyper-Cooperativism.

The chapter closes with ideas on how to keep spiritual diseases at bay through centering events around serving and meeting community needs such as neighborhood outreach picnics, food pantry ministry, and fundraising events to help finance ministry and space needs.

Biblical step two involves "People Building" outside the confines of the church building will also keep hearts focused on God's will and keep spiritual diseases at a minimum by learning to serve at a local homeless shelter, or begin a nursing home ministry, or a detention home and jail visitation ministry. The chapter closes with step three: "Maintain a Visual Presence of Doing." When the church is maintaining a visual presence of "doing" in the neighborhood it will result in people growing as Christian servants and allowing God to attract outsiders from the neighborhood to the church to be part of what God is doing.

Chapter four is entitled, "Recognizing the Obstacle of Growth Strangulation" and illuminates the need for diagnosing the physical limitations prohibiting church growth such as improper sanctuary seating, parking, educational space, restroom facilities, and how to check for proper building layout and flow.

Chapter five presents seven biblical steps to overcome growth strangulation by showing God's love and concern for people through the functionality of His church building to meet not only spiritual needs but physical space requirements to do ministry effectively.

The chapter begins by showing the importance of developing a congregation that prays and worships through giving of their time, talent and treasure. Step two involves conducting a

demographic research project to help target the proper audience and what needs the church can meet within the immediate community. Step three illustrates the importance of developing a growth strategy custom made for the uniqueness of each church. A survey of church growth strategies from pastors of large churches will demonstrate what works for them and may be inspirational for the formulation of a small church growth strategy.

When a growth strategy is formulated, change needs to occur. Step four encourages leaders to present a vision of growth to gain the support of the congregation. Whether the growth strategy is for growing leaders, expanding ministry, moving ministry, expanding physical space or the construction of a full building, a vision of growth must be clearly communicated.

When a vision of growth is clearly communicated, the people will be on board to serve the leadership in attaining the goals. Step five is designed to reveal God's power through unity. Church unity will be at an all-time high and God's power will be revealed encouraging the church that their goals can be attained.

Step six involves building God's people through building His house. Whether it is a physical building project or a revamping of ministries, spiritual health and maturity will be enhanced through the process if people are engaged to be a part of the process. Step seven continues the engagement of people in the process of change and growth by helping them see the importance of individual ownership of ministries and the church property as a whole. The outcome should be a congregation that desires to maintain a standard of excellence in the church that is fit to bring glory to the King of Kings.

Summary of Literature Review

The summary of literature review will include seven sources from books, five articles or journals, and three thesis works.

The Emotionally Healthy Church—A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives, written by Peter Scazzero, illuminates the vital relationship between emotional maturity and spiritual integrity in order to raise strong biblically disciplined Christians, which in turn will build an emotionally healthy church. The book assists the thesis research because it seeks to answer why many supposedly "spiritually mature" Christians remain emotionally stunted. This volume is especially directed to pastors and church leaders. The tools and insights from this volume will enable them to bring about both spiritual and emotional health to themselves, their ministries and leadership, which will grow their congregations as a result.

James D. Berkley, edited *Leadership Handbook of Management & Administration*, which is a comprehensive reference guide written to be a helpful resource for pastors and church ministry leaders. This volume will help substantiate points in my thesis made in chapter two concerning biblical leadership. The book contains thirty-eight chapters and uses articles authored by one-hundred pastors and ministry professionals. The stated purpose and intended audience of this book is found on page sixteen, which reads, "...over five hundred pages of counsel directed toward those of us who do the work of pastoral ministry. Combining insights from biblical theology, scholarly pursuits, and years of practical experience, the writers have one purpose: to help pastors and other Christian workers more effectively serve our Lord Jesus Christ through leading His people into abiding faith and fulfilling ministry."

Stephen Anderson's book, *Preparing to Build* is a volume full of tips and practical advice that is an important resource guide for anyone about to begin the planning process for building a

church. The book is divided into thirteen chapters that frame the entire church building process into an easy to understand outline of what needs to be done before, during, and after the construction of God's house. His intended audience is any lay person or church leader with a desire to gain wisdom and the ability to ask the right questions in order to properly plan church buildings that really meet the needs of the congregation, that are not necessarily their wants. This volume will help verify my thesis in chapter two of the importance of developing purpose, vision, and goal.

The Church Administration and Finance Manual, written by Otto F. Crumroy Jr., Stan Kukawka, and Frank M. Witman, serves as a resource and reference book for pastors and church leaders who face real-world administrative and financial challenges in the church today. The book will help my thesis in diagnosing physical limitations that cause growth strangulation and how to navigate a congregation through a stewardship program. Chapter two deals with church planning principles including financial and budgeting procedures and even property acquisition and construction procedures. Chapter four details leadership in the church, including the different styles and characteristics of leadership, conflict resolution, and also presents several models of how to lead a church through a stewardship program.

Cracking Your Churches Culture Code, by Samuel R. Chand, helps by providing new incite into the church by helping leaders to understand the importance of understanding the culture of the church before making strategy and vision statements that are mismatched to the church at large and will provide confusion rather than growth.

Growing Plans, by Lyle E. Schaller, discusses five different strategies for church growth and provides approaches for small, medium, and large church scenarios. Schaller believes that no church exists in complete isolation from all other churches. The book will assist my thesis in

chapters six and seven because it uses actual case history research data to back up claims and strategies for church growth. On pages thirteen and fourteen the author states that, "A basic assumption on which this book rests has three facets: (a) it is good for individual Christians to be part of a worshipping congregation; the hermit Christian is a contradiction in terms, (b) it is good for congregations to receive new members into their fellowship; they enrich the life and ministry of that congregation, and (c) denominations tend to be healthier, to place a greater emphasis on mission and ministry, to be open to new ideas, to be more responsive to change, and to be less oriented toward institutional survival goals when they are experiencing numerical growth. New members bring a breath of fresh air to congregations and to denominational gatherings."

11 Innovations in the Local Church, written by Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, presents a profile of eleven churches that dare to be different in their presentation of the Gospel message. The first part of the book illustrates the need for churches to be intentional and innovative in sharing the Gospel and making disciples. If our current methods are not working, the profiles presented are designed to inspire change in methodology through success stories of each different church type. Each church profile contains the pros and cons within the type, which allows the reader to customize an innovation to fit into an already established ministry. The book will help my thesis in chapters four and seven through the church models of city reaching churches, community transformation churches and attritional churches.

In a 2007 Seattle Post Intelligencer article entitled, "Christians Serving Others Overcome Stereotypes," columnist Anthony B. Robinson speaks to Christians who are dispelling public stereotypes such as, "all Christians are people who don't drink or dance and who believe all gay people are going to hell." This article will assist my thesis because it shows that serving others in the name of Christ will put those perceptions to rest.

An article by George W. Cornell of The Associated Press found in the *Orange County Register* entitled "Churches Defy Stereotypes About Social Ministries" will help my thesis in the small church negative stereotype section. The article reports on a study that dispels the commonly held view that liberal church congregations are more committed to social-service ministries than their conservative counterparts.

The 1999 *Lincoln Journal Star* article by author Bob Reeves entitled, "Small But Mighty Churches Can Offer Community Without Being The Size Of One," will help my thesis because it compares and contrasts the small and large church family, gives pros and cons to each and gives information that changes negative small church stereotypes.

An article by Shauna Stephenson, published in the *Wyoming Tribune*, "Is There A Clergy Shortage?" includes useful statistics concerning the clergy and the unwillingness of many seminary students to follow the call to smaller churches who need educated pastors to help them grow properly. The trend seems to be for educated pastors to find mega-church employment.

A *St. Petersburg Times* article entitled "Throw Out The Stereotypes" will enhance my thesis because it contains a study that shows the willingness of congregations to serve in outreach capacities but church leadership underestimates member support for social ministries.

A 2010 Liberty University thesis by Chang Kyu Kim entitled, *Biblical Strategy and Shift to Spiritual Driven Church Growth*, will help my thesis because it contains information on how churches can convert from orienting church growth around human efforts and programs to spiritual driven church growth, like the early church found in the book of Acts.

Arthur T. Roxby III, from Asbury Theological Seminary, wrote a thesis project entitled, *Can They Live Again? An Analysis of Small Churches Within The Church of The Nazarene Who Transitioned to Vitality From The Death Spiral*. This paper will help my project because it

examines small churches that had formerly been stalled or declining yet accomplished transition to renewed vitality.

Measuring Quality Church Growth, Fred Hayes Smith's dissertation from Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Missions will be helpful to my project because it contains a spiritual growth measuring tool that is both simple to use and accurate in its measurements. The resulting instrument is the Spiritual Life Survey, which uses sixty statements to accurately determine the quality of spiritual growth in a church congregation and may aid in making my surveys.

CHAPTER 1

WHY DO MOST SMALL CHURCHES REMAIN SMALL?

It is of utmost importance for church leaders to realize for themselves and then teach to their flocks that the church is a living organism that belongs to God and is loved dearly by Him. 1 Corinthians 3:11 NKJV¹ states, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." Building God's church with any other motivation other than the goal of knowing, growing, or serving Jesus daily will result in a foundation that will not support the Kingdom of God and will have a misdirected mission, which will ultimately fail to mature into a healthy part of the Body of Christ.

Matthew 16:18 records the words of Jesus spoken to Peter that reiterate His ownership and sovereign control of the church: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Despite all of our human efforts, God is the only One who can truly build His Church. When discouraging people or circumstances arise that look as if they will hinder His church, we are to remember that God is ultimately going to have His way and even the gates of Hell will not prevent God's plans to grow and build His church the way He sees fit.

The culture of the world at large tends to view bigger things as better. Whether it is a home, or a business, or even the amount of "likes" received on a Facebook account, more is viewed as better and more is to be desired. Jesus refers to the church many times in scripture as "the body of Christ" and states that all parts—big or small—are important to the health of the body as a whole. The apostle Paul speaks of the multitude of spiritual gifts available to all believers. Each gift has a role in the body of Christ. Some gifts seem more desirable to others.

¹ The New King James Version of the Holy Bible will be used consistently throughout this paper.

Some are big and bold; like the miraculous sign gifts that the apostles were privileged to have and use to edify the Body of Christ. But the scriptures tell us that from the greatest to the least, the gifts are all important as they work together for the common goal of a spiritually healthy church. 1 Corinthians 12:27-30 states, "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"

In other words, not all churches are supposed to be mega-churches unless that is their God given role in the Body of Christ. While shopping at large enterprises and the perks offered from bigger entities, such as retailers and other businesses, attract some people, this is not always the case for God's business, the Church. In fact, some churches find great benefit in remaining small. For example, Rev. Mobby Larson pastors the seventy-five-member Second United Church of Christ in the Jewett City section of Griswold. He states at a church conference that:

Most small churches do not want to grow into bigger ones. "We want to celebrate who we are," Larson said. It was a theme that ran throughout the general discussions and workshops — that small churches do not have to accept the prevailing American attitude that bigger is better or that small churches are no longer viable in a complex society. More than half the Protestant churches in North America average fewer than 100 people in attendance, statistics provided by the organizers showed. One in three churches count 35 or fewer people at worship.²

Some churches are small because that is God's designated role in the Body of Christ. They serve a purpose that is just as important as the numerically larger parts of the Body. They have found their role and do not need size to validate their ministry or spiritual health.

² Gerald Renner, "Small Churches Glory in their Size Meeting Shows Numbers Don't Count." Hartford Courant(Hartford, CT), January 29, 1995.

In Acts 2:47; Luke informs the reader that the first century church was found "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." It's God's business to determine the size of His churches, and He honors and blesses those who are faithful and careful to promote sound doctrine. When sound doctrine is taught and lived out through the believers of the local church, God blesses those efforts to His glory.

Whether large or small, truly only God can build His church to be the most profitable possible for the Body as a whole. However, churches will never know if they are part of the body that is to stay small as part of God's plan or to become large to fulfill His will unless sound doctrine is ever present. His church will not be built by our efforts but through His power as His people are obedient to His call in their lives.

On the other hand, some churches remain small out of lack of sound biblical teaching and leadership and never reach the size and health that God designed them to have in the Body of Christ.

The Need for Biblical Leadership

The book, *Leadership Challenge*, by Kouzes and Posner, offers a very helpful and concise definition of leadership—"The art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations."³ The author makes an important distinction in those who lead people to do and those who can mobilize people to want to do. "People in positions of authority can get other people to do something because of the power they wield, but leaders mobilize others to want to

³ James M. Kouzes, and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th Edition, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 30.

act because of the credibility they have. There are monumental differences between enlisting support and giving orders, between gaining commitment and commanding obedience."⁴

People need to be led in a biblical manner and are willing to follow and participate when leaders are truly committed to the vision they present. Dr. Bill Hybels has a lecture entitled "Vision To Die For," which uses Scriptures and historical events to illustrate ways that effective leaders demonstrate their vision and their commitment to their vision, which enables them to persuade others to follow them. He uses the differences of being an owner versus a hireling. David Yonke quotes Dr. Hybels in his article, "Ownership and Involvement Called Keys to Church Vision." He says, "People who have ownership in their plans will pay whatever price is necessary—even laying down their lives if it comes to that. Hirelings, on the other hand, consider it to be 'just a job,' and when trouble arises are quick to flee. He cited Jesus's words in John 10:12, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away."⁵

God has enlisted the church to provide biblical leadership so people want to learn and serve the Savior and become enabled to serve by putting the Word of God into practice in daily life. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Word of God enables and equips believers to grow spiritually which will naturally, overtime, produce numerical growth. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

⁴ James M. Kouzes, and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th Edition, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 31.

⁵ David Yonke, "Ownership and Involvement Called Keys to Church Vision." *The Blade*, Aug 11, 2007, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/380634898?accountid=12085>.

For churches to grow into fulfilling God's will for, they need to align all programs, events, and activities according to His Word. All things done for God should be based on His truth alone. His written word should be the filter through which all activities, classes, and projects should be processed. If they go against His word or do not represent the building of His people or Kingdom, Christians should not be interested in pursuing them and wasting God's time and resources.

Additionally, Paul states in Titus 1:3 that God, "Has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior." God has chosen and commanded the mode of preaching to get His word activated in His people who, after applying the Word to their hearts, will have a desire to live a life and conduct His church in a way that is pleasing to God. To be a biblical leader is to keep the reason for being part of the church in front of the congregation consistently.

In order to do this, a biblical leader must identify the strength, weaknesses, spiritual gifting, and God's specific call for himself and the church in order to fulfill personal needs and the needs of the congregation and the community God has placed a particular pastor and congregation. The biblical leader will focus the people and the church on their purpose for following Christ and building His Kingdom.

The Power of Focus: Developing Vision, Purpose and Goal

It is becoming rare to find a healthy vital and visionary congregation in America today. Visionary leadership of those educated and gifted to lead is also becoming a rare commodity in the church today. "Church researchers such as George Bama and Lyle E. Schaller argue that a vast majority of American churches are either stagnant or declining. Furthermore, few church leaders are either gifted or trained to be effective visionary leaders. The combination of declining

churches and leaders without a vision of a preferred future creates severe disadvantages for church growth and church health."⁶ Barna also states that, "According to research, people are leaving the local church not because they want less of God, but because they want more of God."⁷

"A pastor should be one who maintains a vital walk with Christ and who relies on the power of the Holy Spirit not only for power in ministry but also for his personal growth and conformity to the image of Jesus Christ his shepherd."⁸ 2 Timothy 2:15 states the need for all Christians to be able to, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." How much more should a pastor of God's people study to be prepared in presenting the Word of truth? It is essential for a biblical leader to go above and beyond the norm in his study of the Word of God.

Pastor Kenneth H. Carter Jr. speaks of how grateful he was to be able to spend three years in post-graduate studies. After a lifetime of ministry he is able to reflect back in time and share his wisdom with other ministry leaders. He states, "I am just as convinced that a basic theological degree is not enough. It is a beginning, perhaps, but it is not sufficient for a lifetime of service."⁹ He concludes that there is a respect and a sense of increased legitimacy given to the leader's ministry from the congregation when the leader makes it a priority to invest the Word of

⁶ David Michael Cady, "The Impact of Vision on Congregational Health in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church," (D.Min. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2005), 5.

⁷ Jen Waters, "Statistics of Spirituality; Pollster Urges Church to Use Data as Tool for Action," *Washington Times* (Washington, DC), October 25, 2005.

⁸ Timothy Z. Witmer, "Seminary: A Place to Prepare Pastors?" *Westminster Theological Journal*, 69, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 229-246, accessed January 14, 2014, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

⁹ Kenneth H. Carter Jr., "My Continuing Education as a Pastor," *Clergy Journal* 85, no. 3 (2009): 18. Accessed January 14, 2014. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

God into his life. He states, "I have discovered along the way that laity want their clergy to grow spiritually and intellectually."¹⁰

The biblical leader who is "complete" and "thoroughly equipped for every good work according to 2 Timothy 3:17 is in the position of casting a vision for the church to pursue in order to build the Kingdom of God. However, if a congregation has lost or forgotten the core values of Christianity, then a leader providing a vision will only serve as a means of doing good things for the sake of doing good things. A biblical leader must revisit the core values of the faith and biblically substantiate who God is, who is Jesus, the Holy Spirit, what the Bible says about mankind, salvation and the church. "Part of the role of the visionary leader, then, is to work with others to catch God's vision and continually lift up the core values to the community of faith. In essence, once the vision is caught, it must be continually re-caught by both the leader and the community."¹¹

Pastor Rick Warren also notes that church vision, purpose, and goal must be restated and reinforced on a regular basis for it to be relevant in the lives of the congregation. "This is because people get distracted with other things. Restate your purposes on a regular basis. Teach them over and over. Utilize as many different media as you can to keep them before your people. By continually fanning the fires of your purposes you can overcome the tendency of your church to become complacent or discouraged."¹²

¹⁰ Kenneth H. Carter Jr., "My Continuing Education as a Pastor," *Clergy Journal* 85, no. 3 (2009): 19. Accessed January 14, 2014. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

¹¹ David Michael Cady, "The Impact of Vision on Congregational Health in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church," Asbury Theological Seminary, 2005.

¹² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1995, 118.

Christ instituted the purpose of the church through the doctrine of the New Testament and the Great Commission. The church is not supposed to collectively come up with fancy catch phrases and cute slogans unless they are able to effectively communicate what the church is to be and do according to Jesus.

Two scriptures summarize what vision, purpose, and goal statements should communicate. First, the Great Commandment found in Matthew 22:37-40 states, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Second, the Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:19-20 and says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."

These statements from the Lord should be used to inspire vision, purpose, and goal statements for the church. If the statements that are formulated address the commands of these scriptures, then they will act as filters to run all church activities, events, and programs through in order to determine whether they accomplish a biblical purpose of the church or not. If the event, activity, or program fulfills one of these statements they should be pursued. If they do not fulfill the purpose of the church, they should not be implemented.

If churches remain small after implementing biblical leadership and focus on the purpose of the church according to Scripture, then they have assumed their God given role in the Body of Christ. More than likely, they are small in number but mighty in strength according to the Lord's will and design for them. The spiritually healthy small church is an effective and powerful tool in the hands of God. Those who do not grow out of laziness or satisfaction with the status quo may

not hear the words of the Lord, "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"¹³

The Problem of Spiritual Growth Strangulation: The Bible vs. Tradition

The times are changing and so are people's attitudes concerning church. Spiritual growth strangulation happens when people refuse to try new methods to reach people for Jesus Christ. They tend to choke out anything that is new and stick to the methods of the past because "that is how we have always done things." When Christians lose focus of why they go to church and the call of Christ in their lives, traditions become a bit like idols, which never allow change to occur. When Christian congregations stop growing spiritually, the numerical growth of the church dwindles at an alarming rate. In the last fifty years the world has changed drastically. Unfortunately, many churches did not, and are still attempting to reach new generations with the methods of the past.

Today, many churches, both rural and city, are closing their doors for good. Traditionally the church, especially the small church, was the main meeting place for a community to gather. The social life of the community used to revolve around the church. In particular, rural communities depended upon the church as a place where neighbors were brought together through suppers, services, concerts and support for one another. "We have entered a different era. Young families often do not see the need for organized religion. Hockey and soccer fill Sunday morning, and sadly, I believe in ten years there will no longer be any little rural

¹³ Matthew 25:2.

churches."¹⁴

The changing attitudes towards church have drastically altered the traditional way of life especially in small town America. "A new breed of rural resident is taking over. Their allegiance to the small struggling church does not have the fervent loyalty of those earlier settlers. Large, well-equipped community halls often right next door to a struggling rural church, are now the social hub for the farming community. No longer is the little church needed as a gathering place for community activity."¹⁵ Many city churches have experienced empty pews that result in church closings. "More and more weddings are being performed outside of church. Scenic retreats, golf clubs, grand hotels have all become the place for the wedding ceremony. Even funerals are being held outside the church, and many, many young people do not have their children baptized."¹⁶

All hope is not lost for the small church. Sometimes God ends a work because it has run its course and accomplished His purpose. The world is changing and the church needs to change with it without compromising its core values and message. Forty years ago, the Southern Baptist Convention began to focus on a larger church paradigm, which closed many small churches or merged them into mid-size congregations. "The smaller churches were closed and merged, and big churches with seminary-trained pastors became the trend. What they have found is that bigger is not necessarily better, according to a new study in the latest issue of the Review of Religious Research. Increasing the size of congregations has produced a flood of midsize

¹⁴ Cook, Mary, "Empty Pews Resulting in Closure of More and More Small, Rural Churches." *Smiths Falls EMC* (Smith Falls, ON, Canada), Nov 29, 2012, 46, seach.proquest.com/docview/1220930389?accountid=12085.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

congregations, whose members give less in time and money than members of smaller congregations.¹⁷

The Southern Baptist Convention is beginning to move away from the so-called traditional large church models, back to the first century biblical example of "house churches" that originally prospered and strengthened the denomination just a generation ago. "It's really only been in the last generation that we've created these large churches and our smaller churches became mid-sized churches", said Rev. David Palmer, associate director of the convention's New Church Extension Division. "We made a fatal connection. We sold the idea to be a real church you had to have a full-time preacher."¹⁸ Additionally, they have found that there is strength in small numbers, small groups, which brings higher accountability with one another and higher religious standards to live within.¹⁹

Change in the church is necessary in order to counter the change in culture and attitudes in the world today. However, it doesn't appear that change will come from traditional sources of the past. New churches are being planted throughout North America and the world that are collectively referred to as "21st Century Churches."

"Within the 21st Century Church, there will be a strong awareness that our relationships and beliefs don't mark us as model individuals with no problems in life. An important attribute of these churches will be authenticity, where people can be open and vulnerable, recognizing that all others in that church, including the leadership, have the same or similar life problems. For the

¹⁷ Associated Press, "Southern Baptists Going Back to Roots Small Churches Better, Study Says," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), May 13, 1994, 10. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/283765697?accountid=12085>.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹⁹ Ibid.

21st Century Church, life change is vital for its survival and growth.²⁰

The clergy-laity distinctions will vanish in favor of everyone being on equal footing as participants in the church. The staff will be both paid and unpaid specialists in meeting needs of the congregation and community. There will also be a "Breaking down of the distinction between secular and sacred, where beliefs, ethics and behaviors will be consistent from Sunday through all remaining days of the week.

This will be a major break from traditional churches, which accept that displays of conviction and belief are inappropriate in the public and work sectors."²¹ The traditional churchgoer of the past who dropped in once a week for a spiritual pick-me-up is being replaced by a new generation seeking spiritual authenticity in the lives of Christians. A characteristic of the 21st Century Church model is that individuals are more concerned with relationships that meet genuine needs of those inside as well as outside of the church. "There will be a strong awareness that our relationships and beliefs don't mark us as model individuals with no problems in life. An important attribute of these churches will be authenticity, where people can be open and vulnerable, recognizing that all others in that church, including the leadership, have the same or similar life problems."²² This new generation of Christians looks to genuine transformation life change as the essence of the future growth and survival of the church.

In 2000, George Barna reported that:

70 percent of Americans experienced and expressed their faith through their local church, 5 percent through alternative-based faith communities, 5 percent through their families, and 20 percent through media, arts and culture. By 2035, Mr. Barna

²⁰ Russell Grant, "New 21st Century Church is Changing the Face of Faith," *The Record*, Nov 05, 2001, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/266964322?accountid=12085>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

predicts that 30 percent to 35 percent will experience and express their faith through the local church, with equal amounts looking to alternative faith-based communities and media, arts and culture. 5 percent will still experience faith through their families, he says, 'the church is radically changing; people aren't as interested in buildings and programs. They are interested in things that constitute value in their lives.'²³

With a vast menu of spiritual options available today, people are looking for spiritual answers that are practical to everyday life but genuinely model biblical Christianity and Jesus Christ. Barna adds, "Because many people want to get closer to God, they are reconstructing their personal faith experiences...there's a growing and fairly intense desire to have more of God."²⁴

The Decision to Become a Cruise Ship or Battleship Church

Some churches remain small in spite of having biblical leadership and vision, purpose and goals that help focus the church on the Great Commission. Some churches remain small even though their pastor is well educated and consistently nourished in the Word. These categories are required, but if a church does not understand who they are in the Body of Christ corporately and individually, and is not identifying and effectively reaching the target audience of their community, they run the risk of becoming a cruise ship rather than a battleship for the Lord.

A church that has become a cruise ship has failed at the challenge of being biblically faithful in contextually presenting the gospel message. The cruise ship passengers expect to be pampered, fed and served. The cruise ship church will go too far in trying to take the gospel into

²³ Jen Waters, "Statistics of Spirituality; Pollster Urges Church to Use Data as Tool for Action," *Washington Times* (Washington, DC), October 25, 2005, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/409831131?accountid=12085>.

²⁴ Ibid.

the world by compromising the light of the Word by mixing it with the darkness of the world.

"They will adopt too many of the values of the world around them, and will compromise and dilute the gospel. This is technically called syncretism; when values of the world are mixed with true faith."²⁵

On the other end of the spectrum, some churches do not go far enough into the world and specific culture around them. They tend to have the appearance of righteousness about them but the world around them deems them irrelevant. These churches become slave ships that are burdened with rules and regulations that hinder the true freedom Christ died for His church to experience. "They cause the world to confuse the true faith with rules (robes, beards, political party, length of hair, etc.). This is technically called obscurantism; when rules and traditions obscure the true faith and confuse the world."²⁶

The battleship church is a biblically faithful balance between the cruise ship and slave ship. It is known as a contextual biblical church. It provides an appropriate expression of the gospel in the context of the particular culture or people group that God has positioned the church to reach. "We would expect a Korean church to look different from an African church, and both of those would look different from an Anglo church in Alabama. They can all be biblically faithful in their context while dressing differently, singing different kinds of music, and even listening to the Word preached in a different manner. They are contextual biblical churches."²⁷

"The church will never win wars with a cruise ship mentality! Churches should be battleships,

²⁵ Elmer L. Towns and Ed Stetzer, *Perimeters of Light: Biblical Boundaries for the Emerging Church*, Chicago: Moody Press, 2004, 34.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

where everyone is on call, where everyone has a responsibility, and where everyone is trying to make a difference. To win the spiritual battles a church faces, everyone must be involved."²⁸

The church needs to reexamine its boundaries if it expects to grow and be relevant and blessed by the Lord. The principles of Scripture should never change, but the methods should be ever changing to meet the needs of others. Dr. Elmer Towns often uses this anonymous quote in distinguishing method from principal. "Methods are many, principles are few. Methods may change, but principles never do."²⁹

Churches should make the effort to weed out past traditions and boundaries that are not biblical or were wrongly instituted because of the culture. Fences and barriers that may have been erected out of fear or ignorance need to come down. The church that wants to grow into what God desires them to be will see the need to reposition boundaries and become an effective battleship for the Lord.

²⁸ Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 2005, 88.

²⁹ Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, *11 Innovations in the Local Church*, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007, 15.

CHAPTER 2

THE OBSTACLE OF SMALL CHURCH NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

The Feeling of Defeat: Buying into Small Church Negative Stereotypes

Pastoring any church, big or small, is a great challenge and can bring about many difficult situations that can oftentimes adversely affect family, marriages, physical, mental and spiritual health. However, people often carry a unique set of preconceived notions about small churches and these misconceptions often keep visitors away. Small churches have to recognize and overcome the obstacles of small church negative stereotypes, whether they derive from ignorance or personal experiences. Small churches face a greater challenge for survival today, but Christian leaders need to remember Luke 18:27, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Tending to God's business as a pastor is more than a full-time job when done correctly. Yet, small churches find it extremely difficult to financially afford a full-time pastor. The people tend to become as their leader leads. If their leader is part time in the work of the church, the followers will often serve and support accordingly. "In a 2003 report by *Pulpit and Pew: The Duke Center for Excellence in Ministry*, a study found that many small churches just can't afford to pay a full-time pastor, and finding part-time clergy is even more challenging. Additionally, many pastors aren't interested in small, rural churches because they are seen as unwilling to make any changes."¹

¹ Shauna Stephenson, "Is there a Clergy Shortage? Yes, and no. Nationally, there's a Surplus, but there also is a High Vacancy Rate. And Small Towns Struggle to Attract New Clergy because of Mega-Churches' Appeal," *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle* (Cheyenne, WI), Mar 11, 2007.

Rev. Jon Shepherd of the Golden Prairie Baptist Church in Wyoming, presented pastoral challenges in general and how a shortage of qualified pastors for small churches is increasing in a sermon about relationship between a congregation and a pastor. The research for his message states that, "Four out of five seminary graduates quit within the first five years. The average tenure of a pastor is 3.6 years. Half of pastors will be divorced by the end of their ministry. 80 percent of pastors feel discouraged and unqualified. 80 percent of pastor's wives say the most disturbing event in the family history was when their husband entered the ministry...the trend toward mega-churches has left many of the smaller churches without any form of spiritual leadership."²

God will send a qualified and called leader to the congregation who fervently prays and have a vision and desire of moving forward in growth. Once the hurdle of finding a qualified leader who will invest the necessary ministry time to maintain growth is cleared, churches are left with the problem of attracting people to commit to supporting the church. Some very small churches can get easily frustrated because some sort of programming is needed in order to attract people—however, without enough people programming simply cannot occur.

God can do a lot with a little. One of the positive stereotypes of a small church is community. Once a loving community is established, it is time to keep the people busy in activities for the Lord. Dan Inman, pastor of Lincoln's Plains Baptist Church has nearly 85 members. Nearly every member is involved in some activity from door-to-door evangelism, to leading Sunday school or Bible studies. Pastor Inman states, "People get more of a feeling of

² Shauna Stephenson, "Is there a Clergy Shortage? Yes, and no. Nationally, there's a Surplus, but there also is a High Vacancy Rate. And Small Towns Struggle to Attract New Clergy because of Mega-Churches' Appeal," *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle* (Cheyenne, WI), Mar 11, 2007.

contributing and being part of the work than they might in a big church. We believe we can grow and still have the same family atmosphere and attitude if we become a big church."³

Church growth expert Carl F. George, author of *How to Break Growth Barriers*, says:

Many larger churches counteract the impersonality of bigness by creating lots of small groups in which people can get to know each other. Studies show that people in big churches tend to identify more with their small group of friends than with the congregation as a whole. George also points out that although big churches get most of the publicity, half of the approximately 400,000 churches in the United States have 75 or fewer members."⁴

Sometimes small churches can feel discouraged because of what they feel others perceive small churches to be about. Small churches in some cases do have inadequate resources and leadership, which makes them feel defeated and unable to grow. They are often perceived as being an exclusive community that does not welcome outsiders. Traditionalism can take over a congregation and keep them focused on a more successful time in their history at the expense of trying new methods to reach souls. Because of their small physical stature in the community, they often have poor self-esteem collectively, which prohibits growth. Sometimes, it is the area mega-church with all it has to offer that intimidates smaller churches from even trying to grow.

The ecclesiastical culture at large amplifies this theology of smallness and inadequacy, telling the small church that success is defined by size and range of services. Much literature pertaining to small churches promotes growth as the only path to success or faithfulness to God's calling...Healthy churches desire growth, and unwillingness to pay the price for growth offers the only reason for a church not to grow."⁵

Overcoming and moving beyond negative small church stereotypes will motivate the church that

³ Bob Reeves, "Small but Mighty Churches can Offer Community without being the Size of One," *Lincoln Journal Star*, Jan 30, 1999, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/247845221?accountid=12085>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Roxby, Arthur T., III, "Can they Live again? An Analysis of Small Churches within the Church of the Nazarene Who Transitioned to Vitality from the Death Spiral," (D.Minn. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2010), 70.

wants to grow to make the necessary adjustments. But first the small church must see how others perceive them.

A Survey of Small Church Perceptions from Large Church Attenders

I prepared a survey entitled "A Survey of Large Church Member Perceptions of Small Churches" and received responses from thirty-two members from churches with an attendance of 1,000 or more. Congregants who responded to the survey came from churches who average 4,000 members represent the average of who responded with 1,000 as the smallest and 5,000 the largest. The survey's goal was to pose simple questions, mostly in a true or false manner to ascertain people's perceptions of small churches. The hope is to gain information and perceptions that may be beneficial for small churches to be aware of and realign where necessary to help improve public perception and increase growth. The information from the surveys will help in constructing intentional biblical steps to correct any misconceptions the results seem to point out.

Of those surveyed, 44 percent were male and 56 percent female. The ages of the respondents were 44 percent between 18-39, 50 percent between 40-59, and only 6 percent 65 years and older. When asked to supply their church affiliation most of them responded either Non-denominational or Independent Christian Church. There were several who stated they were Southern Baptist, Church of Christ, and Restoration Christian.

When asked whether their churches were in a rural or urban location, only 16 percent responded rural and 84 percent claimed to be urban churches. The age of the churches themselves ranged from 20 years old up to 50 years old with 91 percent responding that their church has experienced growth in membership during the last five years.

The first true/false question I asked was, "Small churches are simply miniature versions of large churches." 91 percent answered false proving they have an understanding that small

churches function in a uniquely different manner in their part of the Body of Christ than a midsize or larger church. "This stereotype is naïve and dangerous. What works in a large church may not work in a small church. The structure is different (single cell vs. stretched cell or multiple cell). Decisions are handled differently in a small church (made by congregations vs. made by committees or by staff and leaders). Growth patterns, obstacles, and strategies vary according to size."⁶

The next true/false question posed a positive stereotype associated with most small churches, "Small churches are friendly." 69 percent answered true and 31 percent answered false. While many large and small churches are friendly, it is only because they purpose to be friendly. Some small churches can fall into the trap of exclusivity because they have known each other for years and believe they are friendly to everyone. They may be friendly to each other, but the visitor is often made to feel like an intruding, unwelcome visitor. Friendly churches of any size must choose to be friendly and have strategies in place to make sure guests feel welcome from start to finish at every service.

The third true or false question is, "Small churches are afraid of numerical growth." While 32 percent answered true, 68 percent answered false. According to, this usually happens if any of the following conditions exist:

- A particular individual or family has dominated the church for decades and fears losing control.
- Most members believe the church will lose its perceived closeness and friendliness if it grows.

⁶ Tom Claibourne, "Small Churches: Responding to Some Stereotypes," *The Christian Standard*, June 1, 2012, A <http://christianstandard.com/2012/06/small-churches-responding-to-some-stereotypes>.

- People incorrectly assume a church must compromise biblical truth to grow numerically.
- Members hate the thought of people who are "not like us" attending.
- Older members fear being lost in the shuffle as new people, programs, and priorities emerge.
- Change is viewed as a dangerous threat.

It is exciting, however, to watch when small churches decide to take Jesus' Great Commission seriously, deal with the above barriers in a wise, prayerful way, and strive for a healthy balance between evangelism, discipling, and shepherding as they begin to grow.⁷

Next, the survey asked the true or false question: "Small churches cannot offer creative programming." Only 6 percent said this was true, but 94 percent said this was false. As a small church pastor, I agree that small churches do not have to equate creativity with a large budget. Having less money available for programming is an incentive to get very creative in order to make ministry programs available at all.

I currently pastor a small church. In order to grow and be relevant in the community, small churches like ours have to seek what niche ministry will meet the needs in the community. In particular, we look for a ministry help that is not being met by any of the other area churches.

Our church surveyed our neighborhood and asked what service the church could provide for people. Most people responded that they were unemployed and had children to take care of. We decided to open a small food pantry that operated once a week. We present a brief Gospel message and then provide whatever food our congregation has provided that week. This ministry has proved to be a great success. Our little church of one-hundred members has been able to get

⁷ Tom Claibourne, "Small Churches: Responding to Some Stereotypes," *The Christian Standard*, June 1, 2012, A <http://christianstandard.com/2012/06/small-churches-responding-to-some-stereotypes>.

creative and meet the needs of over 450 families this year alone without taking any funds out of the church budget. Small church leaders can get creative by seeking the needs of both their church families and the families of their immediate neighborhood and can be like the men of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12:32 who were able to have an "understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." George Barna warns the church to understand the times we live in and minister accordingly when he notes, "It will be increasingly difficult to convince the un-churched that our faith is pertinent to the 21st century if the tools of our trade are from the last century."⁸

The next survey question addresses the stereotype that says, "Small churches cannot grow once they have declined or stagnated." While a declined or stagnated church may not be attractive for someone looking to take on a work for God, it is not impossible. In fact, this stereotype was discounted as false by 100 percent of those surveyed. Leaders must understand that God does indeed bring ministries and church congregations to a close in some cases. But more often than not, discouragement sets into the leadership and many ministries suffer a premature death.

Leaders need to understand that God has a "Remnant Principle" by which he always leaves a group of faithful followers in works that have a future in God's plan. Throughout the Bible God reveals he has a remnant that He is waiting to activate to service. Noah's family of eight was used to repopulate the earth after the flood of Genesis 6:9-8:22. In the Old Testament God encouraged Elijah who wanted to die because he felt alone and defeated. Yet, God revealed to him that he was not alone because He had "...Reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal..."⁹ God also used twelve disciples to be the foundation of His

⁸ George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle*, Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990, 29.

⁹ 1 Kings 19:18.

church in the New Testament. During the time of tribulation recorded in Revelation 7, God had a remnant of 144,000 who preached the Gospel to the lost during the most trying times in the history of man.

I was discouraged when my wife and I left a mega-church ministry to rescue a small church. It was our calling, but great despair set in when our first Sunday morning Bible class only had five in attendance including my wife and me. But the several families that were still hanging on at the church were the seeds God used to bring us out of defeat and into victory. We are now experiencing a steady attendance between eighty and one hundred people weekly. God will bless a faithful remnant to be part of His new work and future growth when they strive to be faithful and effective for His Kingdom.

The next stereotype to tackle is, "Small churches cannot have a big impact." Again, 94 percent of the large church membership said this is false. Most small churches are very active in their communities and are making a big impact for the Kingdom of God. In a study directed by Carl S. Dudley and Thomas Van Eck for the Center for Church and Community Ministries in Chicago, "Found no support for the thesis that large rather than small churches are more likely to support community ministries. Our data show that our smallest churches were nearly as likely as the largest to be in favor of church involvement in the local community and were much more supportive of the view that the church should work for justice."¹⁰

The study also revealed that no significant differences exist in attitudes in ministries that desire to make a community impact due to their socioeconomic levels. "Churches of lower socioeconomic status place uniquely strong emphasis on personal responsibility for situations of

¹⁰ Cornell, George W., "Study Churches Defy Stereotypes about Social Ministries," *Orange County Register* (Santa Ana, CA), Jan 23, 1993, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/272609738?accountid=12085>.

poverty. Churches with higher socioeconomic status do not place as much blame on the individual for being in poverty, but they also resist blaming the system."¹¹

So, small churches with little resources can, and do have a big impact and often emphasize a biblical stand on taking personal responsibility. The objective is to show people how to live a life that is pleasing to God. Part of taking personal responsibility is teaching others the meaning of Galatians 6:8, "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." The strength of teaching personal responsibility is found in many large churches but is most often found in smaller congregations.

Small churches even have a big impact felt beyond their local community. Because most small churches cannot hire a leader for every ministry position, they train their young people from an early age to help assist in children's programming, the nursery ministry and the music ministry. When they become adults, they are often part of the church leadership in their home church or take the experience with them to other churches when they settle into a new community to raise their family.

All churches, regardless of size should consider providing an apprenticeship environment for their on-site personnel to have the opportunity to be trained in ministry. "The leadership community sets the table for reproduction. A congregation becomes a mature discipling church when it reaches the 'Come and be with Me' stage on a corporate level. On a small, unintentional scale, every church has some of this, but the discipling church knowingly and corporately

¹¹ Cornell, George W., "Study Churches Defy Stereotypes about Social Ministries," *Orange County Register* (Santa Ana, CA), Jan 23, 1993, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/272609738?accountid=12085>.

develops this priority."¹² In essence, the small church provides unpaid internship experiences that travel throughout the corporate body of the church throughout the world. All of this evidence debunks the stereotype that small churches cannot have a big impact.

Another small church negative stereotype that is negated is that "Small churches are less faithful and successful than large churches." 97 percent of those surveyed responded that this was false. Defining the terms "faithful" and "successful" by Jesus's definition is essential for a proper biblical understanding of success that matters.

In the Parable of the Talents found in Matthew 25, Jesus equally praised two men who doubled their talents even though they had been given a different number of talents to multiply. One was given two and the other was given five, but both were equally commended on their faithfulness and success of doubling what they had been entrusted to keep. It was not the number of talents that made success occur, it was the servant's faithfulness in multiplying them.

Tom Claibourne asks a series of questions that, in light of the Parable of the Talents, helps put success and faithfulness according to Jesus into perspective.

At what attendance level does a ministry become significant? One hundred fifty? One thousand? Is the faithful preacher who pours his life into a small group of inner-city people less productive than the man preaching to 400 in the suburbs? Is the courageous missionary struggling deep inside the Muslim world with a handful of converts less productive than the man leading 2,000 in a more receptive field?

Was Jesus more productive when he fed 5,000, or when he talked to Nicodemus, or when he discipled the Twelve? When Philip baptized throngs in Samaria (Acts 8), was he more productive than when he converted the lone Ethiopian on the desert road?

We serve the Lord of the universe who calls all kinds of people to all kinds of ministries in all kinds of settings so that all people can have the opportunity to respond to the gospel message of Christ. Jesus is the Master we are seeking to please.

¹² Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1990, 197-198.

Small and large are relative terms. Let's build faithful churches that take Jesus' commission seriously, whatever our size and location.¹³

No matter the number of people who are ministered to or whether they make a decision or not to follow the Lord or join the church, 100 percent will always be impacted with the power and authority of God's Word when it is presented in love.¹⁴

The next item on the survey posed the question "Are small churches more inclusive or exclusive?" The response was almost split: 48 percent said that small churches were more inclusive and 52 percent saw small churches as exclusive entities. Pastor Rick Warren recommends growing the church from the outside in, rather than the inside out. By concentrating on meeting people in the community through visits, surveys, and community events, the committed core of the church can be exposed to the community at large. The church can make relationships with people who don't normally attend the church.

This "outside in" growth approach will help the church from becoming stale and growing inward. Churches who have already taken on an exclusive atmosphere will become too comfortable with the status quo and eventually become afraid of engaging outsiders to come to church. Rick Warren observes, "The problem with most small churches is that they are all core and nothing else. The same fifty people come to everything the church does. They've all been Christians for so long they have few, if any, unbelieving friends to witness to."¹⁵ He goes on to say that getting out and talking to people is important, but just as important is to recognize the culture of the people you are trying to reach. "One of the major barriers to church growth is

¹³ Tom Claibourne, "Small Churches: Responding to Some Stereotypes," *The Christian Standard*, June 1, 2012, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://christianstandard.com/2012/06/small-churches-responding-to-some-stereotypes>.

¹⁴ Ephesians 4:15-16.

¹⁵ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1995, 139.

'people blindness'; being unaware of social and cultural differences between people...the best way to find out the culture, mind-set, and lifestyle of people is to talk to them personally."¹⁶

According to the survey, the church needs to work on building a reputation of being all inclusive and putting in the needed labor to get to know and love our neighbors.

Psalm 133:1 states, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The community of relationships in God's church is to be fostered by leadership providing a connectedness between membership and community. The survey asked whether it was true or false that "Small churches cannot provide a connectedness to membership and community." The survey, with 94 percent responding false, obviously knows a connectedness to membership and community is indeed possible.

However, many small churches fall into the trap of making membership an end in itself. Membership becomes a status and a privilege yet requires no true personal investment. Many people wrongly take pride in announcing how many church memberships they currently hold. Oftentimes, a disconnect between membership and experiencing authentic Christian community within a church is because the leadership take, "The route of defining others as problems to be solved, the way one might repair an automobile or the route of lumping persons together in terms of economic ability or institutional effectiveness, the way one might run a bank. Somewhere between there is community; a place where each person is taken seriously, learns to trust others, depend on others, rejoice with others."¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., 165-166.

¹⁷ Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, 180.

It is imperative that Christians understand that no such thing as a "Lone Ranger"¹⁸ Christian exists. There is no way for a Christian to fulfill the "one another" commands of the Lord, such as love one another, pray for one another, and bear one another's burdens if they isolate themselves from the church body. "Christians are a community of people who are visibly together at worship but who remain in relationship through the week in witness and service."¹⁹ Hebrews 10:25 admonishes Christians to be wary of, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

The next true/false survey question was "Small churches are too political." 38 percent answered true and 63 percent answered false, showing a more divided answer to this question than others. Churches that overemphasize politics can be both small and large. The problem is a loss of focus on the power and authority of the Gospel. These churches can be far left liberal Democrats or far right conservative Republicans and both overemphasize political involvement at the expense of sharing the Gospel.

Alvin Reid, author of *Radically Unchurched* sums up this topic by stating, "It is not my intent to criticize those who are involved in politics, for we have a biblical responsibility to be civic minded. Rather, my plea is to maintain a focus on the Gospel, giving priority to the power of the Gospel over political persuasion. Spreading the Gospel and being political doesn't have to be either/or; it is both/and. One needs, however, to maintain the proper priority."²⁰

¹⁸ Lyle E. Schaller, *Growing Plans*, Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983, 13.

¹⁹ Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, 179.

²⁰ Alvin L. Reid, *Radically Unchurched*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002, 39.

A similarly divided response came when people were asked to answer true or false that "Small churches are intolerant to change," with 34 percent answering true and 66 percent saying false. It is true that both small and large churches can become resistant to change. But as the survey reveals, a small church has to react to change much more quickly when in a state of decline as opposed to a larger church. Author Aubrey Malphurs has developed a ministry analysis for churches to ask the basic questions that will realign a church to change and grow. A church analysis will prompt people to see what the church "could be" if change were implemented. Malphurs says a church analysis²¹ will produce an "iceberg effect" that will warn of the dangers ahead if change does not occur. He figures the percentage of decline in a church before it has to close its doors. He has found this reality check produces change in the most resistant of people to get out of the way of the coming iceberg. "While larger churches have longer, small churches may have only a year or two before it is over. This gets people's attention. It touches them emotionally and may be key to getting the reluctant ones on board with the process."²²

The stereotype that "small churches are more hypocritical than large churches" was the final true/false question on the survey. The larger church members responded with an 87 percent false answer to this question. Of course a perfect church is a myth, but if it did exist we had better stay away before we ruin it. We are living in a fallen world full of fallen people and must realize that all congregations whether small or large are going to have their fair share of hypocrites. Dr. Elmer Town's definition of a hypocrite is "one who claims to live by the standards of Scripture, yet fails to live by that standard either by his ignorance or deceptive

²¹ Aubrey Malphurs's Church Ministry Analysis may be downloaded from www.malphursgroup.com.

²² Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005, 74.

practices."²³ All churches must strive to live what they preach in order to bring honor to the Lord and draw people to Him. Malachi 2:10 states, "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?" Fighting within the body of Christ is very damaging to our witness to a lost and dying world. We profane the covenant of the fathers by living a hypocritical lifestyle that adds to negative stereotypes of the church, especially small churches

The final question of the survey asks, "What two words come to mind when you think of small churches?" Respondents made a total of twelve negative and nineteen positive remarks, tallied below in Table 1. The negative remarks should be noted, along with a plan to remove any of these perceptions and a system to keep these perceptions from becoming a reality in the church.

²³ Elmer, L. Towns, *America's Fastest Growing Churches*, Nashville, TN: Impact Books, 1972, 114.

Table 1: Negative and Positive Perceptions of Small Churches	
<u>Small Church Negative Perceptions</u>	<u>Small Church Positive Perceptions</u>
1. Envy and familial.	1. Family oriented.
2. Inclusive and hypocritical.	2. Community, intergenerational.
3. Stagnant and shrinking.	3. Tight-knit, traditional.
4. Lacking content.	4. Tight-knit, community.
5. Not contemporary.	5. Potential, community.
6. Urban.	6. Friendly, family.
7. Not relevant.	7. Small church (nothing more).
8. Unwilling to change.	8. Intimate, history.
9. Quaint and safe.	9. Social minded.
10. Scared, reserved.	10. Comfortable, belonging.
11. Old and smelly.	11. Think next.
12. Challenged, threatened.	12. Good friends.
	13. Close, family.
	14. Warm, giving.
	15. Closeness, serving.
	16. Close, relationships.
	17. Family, faithfulness.
	18. Community, family.
	19. Family, friendship.

Source: Data taken from survey administered gauging large church attenders' perceptions of small churches.

Overall, the survey contains encouraging information about the larger church members' perception concerning small churches. It is easy for a small church pastor to get discouraged and feel isolated. I have had the opportunity to be an associate pastor of a mega-church and now pastor of a small church. The small church experience can sometimes make you feel defeated and that all the other churches are doing better than yours. It is encouraging to know that more often than not, the larger churches have a positive perception of the smaller church. In fact, the positive perceptions of a small church are what they are trying to experience or maintain through small group ministries.

As far as the negative perceptions listed above, they contain no real surprises. Sound biblical leadership, teaching, and focus to live out the scriptures in a relevant and loving manner to the community at large can go a long way in turning around these negative perceptions. Tom Claibourne did a similar survey years ago by asking people to list the first two words they thought of when they heard the words, "small church." He had an interesting observation, "One pattern that emerged was a bit surprising to me. The most harshly negative replies came almost exclusively from preachers who have had long associations with small churches. About 25 percent of those I surveyed were from churches of more than 1,000 in attendance, and they offered mostly positive observations. Very intriguing!"²⁴ As a small church pastor, it is encouraging to know when we are feeling like nobody respects the work of the small church, we actually have many admirers in the larger churches who have a clearer and more accurate picture of your Kingdom work.

²⁴ Tom Claibourne, "Small Churches: Responding to Some Stereotypes." *The Christian Standard*, June 1, 2012, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://christianstandard.com/2012/06/small-churches-responding-to-some-stereotypes>.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL STEPS TO OVERCOME NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

In order to overcome any negative small church stereotypes that may be present, every church must take time for self-examination so they can determine what, if any, spiritual diseases are present within the congregation. One of the most important goals of a church is for it to be healthy. "A healthy church is a congregation that increasingly reflects God's character as His character has been revealed in His Word."¹

Step 1—Diagnosing Spiritual Diseases of the Church

An examination to determine what kind of culture is in the church is essential in diagnosing the spiritual diseases that may be present in the congregation. Culture, not vision or strategy, is the most powerful factor in any organization. "The fact is, culture eats strategy for lunch. You can have a good strategy in place, but if you don't have the culture and the enabling systems in place, the negative culture of the organization will defeat the strategy."² With most spiritual diseases people oftentimes become secondary to programming and other works, which poses a danger for becoming judgmental. Matthew 7:1–7:2 states, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." Those who tend to engage in moral judgments usurp God's place of judgment. This type of judgmental person is rightfully stereotyped. By not being loving and forgiving, his judgmental nature bears witness that he is an arrogant, unrepentant person who has made himself ineligible for God's forgiveness. "Vision and strategy usually focus on products,

¹ Mark Dever, *What is a Healthy Church?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007, 40.

² Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011, 2-3.

services, and outcomes, but culture is about the people; the most valuable asset in the organization."⁴

Samuel R. Chand, author of "Cracking Your Church's Culture Code" suggests a group of questions to be asked in order to see some snapshots of a church's culture emerge. The questions that best apply to small churches are:

- Who are the heroes? What makes them heroes? Who determines who the heroes are?
- When someone inquires, "Tell me about your church or nonprofit," what stories are told?
- Who has the ear of the top leaders? How did these people win a hearing with the leaders?
- What are the meaningful rituals? What message do they convey to those in the organization and those outside it?
- Who is rewarded and for what accomplishments?
- How are decisions made, deferred, or delayed?
- Who are the non-positional power brokers (the people who have authority based on the respect they've earned but don't have authoritative titles)?
- Where are the control problems and power struggles most evident?
- How is "turf" defined and protected?⁶

Once these cultural questions are answered, there could be some common spiritual diseases revealed that can now be addressed and cured. Something to note when examining this list is the place rituals have in our services. Luke 11:37-11:41 recounts the story of the Pharisee criticizing Jesus for not washing outwardly before dining, but Jesus pointed out that the Pharisee's "inward part is full of greed and wickedness." The Lord wants His people to never forget to love people

⁴ Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011, 4.

⁶ Ibid., 5-6.

in His name. Remember not to get so hung up on religious rites, as the Pharisees were prone to do, at the expense of giving gifts of love of what God has blessed you to have to those in need. Preaching the truth in love rather than a "turn or burn" stereotype that offends and keeps people away from God's house.

Ethnikitis

One such spiritual disease is known as "Ethnikitis," defined by Elmer Towns in his book *154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing* as: "the inbred allegiance of the church to one ethnic group and its lack of adaptation or openness to other groups. This disease occurs when communities change their ethnic character and churches fail to adapt to those changes."⁷

The remedy is to begin a transition to reflect the neighborhood, institute Bible classes or cells for new groups, or consider hiring staff members who represent the new groups moving into the neighborhood. Beginning a second-language preaching service with the consideration of becoming a multi-congregational church can also help bridge this ethnic gap. Dr. Towns warns, "The church that suffers ethnikitis is first, sinning against God, second, disobeying the Great Commission, and third, allowing a cancer to fester within its body."⁹ The sin of ethnikitis goes against John 7:24: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." God's people need to remember to use "righteous judgment" when dealing with others, especially those who do not know the Lord. This discipline will go a long way in dispelling the usual "holier than thou" views Christians get blamed for having from the world. The sacrifice of Jesus

⁷ Elmer L. Towns, *154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing*, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988, 16.

⁹ Ibid.

was made for all people. Romans 6:10 states, "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."

Ghost Town Syndrome

The Ghost Town syndrome speaks more of the community than it does the church. It occurs when a small town is running out of people. Members who leave the church due to death or moving are not replaced with new members. Young people are leaving to go to school and flowing out of the community due to lack of jobs. A large percentage of this church is over the age of fifty and funeral services begin to outweigh weddings.

Sometimes God finishes a work in a church and community. When this appears to be the case, a part-time or lay pastor can maintain the church and allow it to die with dignity or the church could merge with another church. However, church mergers usually do not work and cause even more problems. In a September 18, 2007 article entitled, "New Life for Old Church Buildings," author David Briggs relates the current experience seen in some suburban area churches. He states:

Massive population shifts to the suburbs are leaving behind financially struggling churches with dwindling membership in the cities and inner-ring suburbs. For example, over the next year and a half the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland will consider whether to close or merge more than 45 of its 231 parishes. Church leaders from all denominations find themselves balancing the desire to have the buildings used for continued ministry with more practical considerations, such as receiving a high sale price.¹⁰

The cure can be found in attending to people who are going through transitional periods in their lives. Major seasons of change would include: Death of a loved one, divorce, marriage, birth of a child, loss of job, relocating to a new neighborhood. All of these major life changes are when people are most receptive to coming to church.

¹⁰ David Briggs, "New Life For Old Church Buildings." *Christian Century* 124, no. 19: 14-318. 2007, accessed June 5, 2013, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

This is because when people move they go through a transition in their lives which St. Augustine referred to as "the seasons of the soul." This means people are ripe for evangelism, like fruit for the harvest. During times when people move, they go through culture shock or disequilibrium. The uncertainty created by culture shock creates a void in a person's life. This emptiness drives him to find satisfaction, and since the greatest satisfaction is Christ, the person is a candidate for salvation.¹¹

Meeting people's needs through hospital visitation, funerals, and weddings can help, but do not set unrealistic growth goals, rather concentrate on maintenance ministry and investigate starting new works in areas that have growth.

Cultural Blindness

Cultural blindness, also known as people blindness, happens when the church is oblivious or unwilling to recognize the cultural differences that exist in their community. The attitude of this church is that everyone, regardless of their heritage or background, should conform to the same set of cultural rules. This church cannot see the spiritual, social, and community needs that surround them. "The key to an effective, growing ministry may be summarized in the expression 'find a hurt and heal it.' Hence, a church must have a 'vision' of needs, then develop a program to meet the needs of people and the community."¹²

The church also needs to break down cultural differences within the body of Christ. Different denominations can and should realize the power of coming together in the name of Christ to further the Kingdom of God. Bruce O'Donoghue, chairman of the non-profit organization Vision Orlando. Vision Orlando seeks to bring the churches of Orlando together in evangelistic events. Vision Orlando believes a community benefits from its churches working

¹¹ Elmer L. Towns, 154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988, 17.

¹² Ibid.

together, overcoming cultural and denominational differences. Bruce states, "To make the church really effective to what we're really called to do, we've got to get beyond the denominations."¹³

The cure is found by collectively brainstorming what culture makes up the community and determining what needs are currently not being met by other churches in the area. Once the culture and needs are realized, take a look at other similar churches and how they minister to their community. Then, conduct brainstorming sessions to determine ministry programs that would fulfill the goal of meeting the needs of the church family and community at large. Discuss ways to celebrate cultural differences and provide ministry options that are meaningful to all people groups involved in an effort to remove cultural barriers that keep people from hearing the Gospel message. Oscar Thompson, author of "Concentric Circles of Concern—Seven Stages for Making Disciples," notes, "If we could get our churches to see that we are to love without discrimination and that we are to give the Holy Spirit liberally to love everybody in sight through us, then we would have revival on our hands."¹⁴

Koinonitis: The Country Club Church

The next disease that churches can suffer from happens when relationships between members within the church become more important than outreach activities outside the church. This is known as "koinonitis"—a word derived from the Greek stem *koin*, the root for the word *Koinonia*, translated "fellowship" in English Bibles. When a church begins to ignore the Great Commission command of Jesus, it will begin to grow inwardly and become stagnate and not relevant to growing the Kingdom of God.

¹³ Adelle M. Banks, "Group Sees More Church Cooperation as Key to Fulfilling Its Vision," *Orlando Sentinel* (Orlando, FL), Mar 06, 1993. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/278220344?accountid=12085>.

¹⁴ Oscar W. Thompson, *Concentric Circles of Concern- Seven Stages for Making Disciples*.

Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999, 78.

Author of *The Incestuous Workplace*, William White observes, "The sickest cultures are those that close their doors to new ideas. "Closed organizations thrive on rigid, unchallengeable, organizational belief systems and progressive isolation from the outside world. The absence of fresh thinking robs the organization of creativity and the stimulation of new ideas, and soon, people turn inward, creating institutional stagnation."¹⁵

The remedy includes forming small groups that will help assimilate visitors and new members into the church, which will also help cultivate a welcoming spirit within the church. Introducing outgoing evangelistic community projects and ministries will also counter balance the inward focus of the church. Pastors can provide a spiritual gifts inventory for the congregation to find out what their spiritual gifting is and how they can apply it to outreach ministry. Pastors can also set the tone for outreach in the pulpit through messages that inspire and command obedience to "...Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."¹⁶

The Church of Laodicea Love Syndrome

The Church of Laodicea Love Syndrome is also known as "Old Church Syndrome" and "St. John's Syndrome," referring to John the Revelator's writing what the Lord said concerning the Laodicean church having "left their first love" in Revelation 2:4. "This condition occurs during a transition from the first generation who began the church with a pioneering spirit to the second generation which tends to be content to settle down. First generation members are usually pioneers who want to expand the church, but second-generation church members are usually

¹⁵ Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011, 126.

¹⁶ Luke 14:23.

settlers who want to settle down on the land."¹⁷ This church can easily fall into the trap of being judgmental to sinners in a very hateful manner.

On the positive side, many Christians are aware of the public perceptions that a church without its first love can invoke. In a 2007 *Seattle Post Intelligencer* article entitled, "Christians Serving Others Overcome Stereotypes," columnist Anthony B. Robinson speaks to Christians who are dispelling public stereotypes such as, "all Christians are people who don't drink or dance and who believe all gay people are going to hell."¹⁸

The cure is found in church-wide spiritual renewal, revival, and obedience to the Holy Spirit's leading. Leaders of the church will find great inspiration if they are purposely exposed to other spirit-filled churches. Robert Lewis states, "The ultimate culture shifter is the Holy Spirit."¹⁹ He further illustrates by saying, "The question is not how much of the Holy Spirit is available, but which container our faith opens for Him. If I've got just a thimble's worth of faith, He'll fill it. But if I open my entire heart faith, He'll fill that too. My job is to hang close to Jesus and open myself wide."²⁰

Pew Paralysis

Pew Paralysis, also known as "Arrested Spiritual Development" occurs when internal spiritual growth ceases, in turn terminating any external growth. It takes root when there is "sin

¹⁷ Elmer L. Towns, 154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988, 17.

¹⁸ Anthony B. Robinson, "Christians Serving Others Overcome Stereotypes," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Dec 15, 2007, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/385443314?accountid=12085>.

¹⁹ Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift—Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 2005, 69.

²⁰ Ibid., 70

in the camp," lack of prayer, no vision, and lack of sound Bible teaching and preaching.

Symptoms include members only wanting to enjoy the fruits of their years of sacrificing their time, talent, and treasure. Another symptom is seen when pastors are doing all the ministry work and lay people act as helpers for the pastor to attain his goals and vision.

In a 1999 *Lincoln Journal Star* by author Bob Reeves entitled, "Small but Mighty Churches can Offer Community Without Being the Size of One," Bob reports on one facet of the frustration that the disease of Pew Paralysis brings into a church that seemingly won't grow.

A church that never attracts new members eventually will die. Roca United Methodist Church, with only 22 members, tries to bring in new people, but because the church is so small, strangers may feel out of place, said the Rev. Mike Flury, who serves as part-time pastor of the church in Lancaster County's oldest small town. The congregation is mostly older, made up of families who have lived in Roca for generations he said. "In some way, everyone in the church is related by blood or marriage to everyone else." The members "want to attract people, but we're in a Catch-22 situation," he said. "In order to attract new faces, you need programs. But you have to have people to have programs."²¹

Dr. Towns lists the remedies in concise fashion for Pew Paralysis:

- Conduct a stewardship campaign to teach church members biblical stewardship of time, talents, and treasure.
- Pastors should address known cases of unconfessed sin among members personally and (if necessary) publicly.
- Organize the church to pray for the resolution of church problems and needs of the community.
- Conduct a Friend Day campaign to motivate church members to reach out beyond themselves to the lost in their sphere of influence.
- Institute new times/meetings for prayer and intercession. If the traditional prayer meeting has lost its vitality, perhaps a series of early morning prayer meetings before members go to their employment will revitalize the church.²²

²¹ Bob Reeves, "Small but Mighty Churches can Offer Community without being the Size of One," *Lincoln Journal Star*, Jan 30, 1999. 1, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/247845221?accountid=12085>.

²² Elmer L. Towns, 154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988, 22.

Hyper-Cooperativism

Sometimes churches think they can solve their growth problems by joining in an evangelistic effort with other churches, an idea known as "Hyper-Cooperativism." The problem with partnering with other entities and churches is that it causes mixed messages in the congregation, no focus on the true task of the church—evangelism—and it causes denominational and or ecumenical energy-drain on the leadership and congregation. Taking this route for church growth brings an unnatural disconnection between making decisions for Christ and a commitment to a local church.

The remedy is to get back to basics and make local church evangelism the central focus. The church needs to make it a priority to make disciples rather than getting decisions or professions of faith. Jesus Christ commands this be done as the purpose of the church's existence in Matthew 28:18-20. Pastor Rick Warren proclaims that it is essential that each church have a clear-cut identity. He states, "Absolutely nothing will revitalize a church faster than rediscovering its purpose."²³

Step 2—Growing People on the Inside by Serving on the Outside

Now that the tools have been presented to realign the church with the Lord's original purpose, it is time to go out into the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus and to train people to represent the Lord and evangelize at the same time. These are some ministry ideas that help put "feet to faith" in congregations and at the same time help Christians to better know Jesus, grow in Jesus, and serve Jesus Daily.

²³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1995, 82.

When God led my wife and me to start our church in 2007, it was actually a church rescue. The few who made up the faithful remnant were keeping the doors open, but it was just a short matter of time before they would close for good. The church had a forty-year history in the community that we had to discover. I assembled a few people to canvas the neighborhood in an effort to meet the people, introduce myself as the new pastor, and to find out what kind of reputation the church had in the community.

The responses were interesting. The former pastor seemed to have a great reputation as a person but the church had a history of splits, internal conflict, and an exclusive inward nature. My wife and I were able to piece together the struggles the church had through interviewing some of the remnant and through church meeting documents that we found. After many months of investigation it was clear to my wife and I that the church we were rescuing had not been functioning as a New Testament church for many years.

We had to start from scratch and form a church council to make a new church constitution, by-laws, and a church policy manual for the congregation to approve. It is crucial that the congregation have input and involvement in creating these documents, as they form the mission of the church. People who are allowed to have ownership and input in decisions will make visions more attainable. Rev. Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willcreek Church in Chicago, believes that ownership and involvement are keys to fulfilling vision. He believes, "Consulting church members, giving them a chance to offer input, ideas, and opinions, is a much more effective strategy because the people not only offer constructive comments, but they gain a sense of 'ownership' in the project."²⁴

²⁴ David Yonke, "Ownership and Involvement Called Keys to Church Vision," *The Blade*, Aug 11, 2007, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/380634898?accountid=12085>.

Once the foundational work was officially voted into the church, we proposed a new church name. The new name was needed to signify to the community that a fresh work was occurring and to eradicate the bad reputation of the past. We decided to incorporate the goal of "Knowing Jesus, Growing in Jesus, and Serving Jesus Daily" to act as a filter for all the activities that we planned to do. If our plans did not incorporate a "know, grow or serve" element, we were not going to pursue it.

Within a few months we were experiencing a steady weekly attendance of around sixty people. I led the church back to the Bible basics. I began teaching a Bible study on Sunday morning in the book of Acts in order to teach the congregation how the original church was supposed to look and how it was to function.

I taught in the Gospel of John on Wednesday evenings to make sure everyone understood who Jesus Christ is and what true salvation entailed. The Sunday worship time now had a contemporary praise team, which presented both a balance of traditional hymns and contemporary music that was well received by everyone. The preaching was relevant and exegetical for the most part with a balance of topical messages and always included practical applications for the congregation. The motto I instituted was that we provided, "relevant teaching in a renegade world."

Because the church building was in disrepair, I organized many Saturday workdays that not only accomplished the needed work but brought the church family together as a team with a common goal of representing the Lord and leading people to His house which was now fit for The King of Kings and for people's salvation.

In the midst of all this activity, I made sure to take advantage of the momentum of this "honeymoon" period to impact the community for Christ. John 12:32 states, "And I, if I am lifted

up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." Jesus Christ, being literally lifted up on the cross of Calvary as the Father's only acceptable sacrifice on behalf of the sins of all mankind, will also build His church numerically and spiritually when He is lifted up by the sacrifice of our lips in worship and works that are acceptable to the Father when presented in spirit and truth of the worshipper. This scripture emphasizes the power of true worship that God uses to build the believer and His church.

Psalm 40:3 proclaims, "He has put a new song in my mouth; Praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord." A new and transformed life with desires to please the Father of Heaven by building His church spiritually and numerically will also act as a witness used of Him to draw others to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Center Events on Community

We began to lift the Lord in the community by maintaining a visual presence of activity at the church. The workdays drew favorable comments from the neighbors, who in some cases forgot there was a church underneath all the overgrown bushes and trees that were now neatly trimmed or removed. People inside and outside of the church were experiencing the excitement of change and God's hand moving in a bold manner.

The Apostle Paul in Romans 12:2 states, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." By allowing the Holy Spirit to sanctify the life of the believer through Bible study, service projects and evangelism efforts, God will prove to the world and the believer that He is about undeniable change in this life and the life to come.

Outreach Picnics

To bring a visual invitation to the community we began to hold annual community picnics in the front yard of the church every summer. The church provides all the food for free. We have a small prayer tent area where people can ask for prayer. The prayer tent is also where we ask the community to fill out a questionnaire that asks if they attend church anywhere, or what needs our church could help them with. We also ask them what they feel is the greatest need in our community. When they complete a survey, we enter them in a drawing that gives them a chance to win a gift card for gasoline or groceries. The church members donate the gift cards. We invite everyone to church and use the information we have gleaned from the surveys to inspire relevant programming for our community.

Churches can gain great momentum when groups of people begin to serve. Service takes the focus off of us and places it on the welfare of others. "Service exercises the muscles of a church. It makes a church breathe deeply the breath of the Spirit. It builds an unassailable witness to the community."²⁵

The community picnics allow us to introduce ourselves as people who care about people in our neighborhood. The picnics have helped to put a positive face on our church and put the negatives of the past to rest.

Food Pantry Ministry

One of the most notable responses from our community picnic surveys was the fact that many people were unemployed, single parents and or depressed. While we gave grocery and gas cards as an act of love during our annual picnics, we saw the greater need

²⁵ Mel Lawrenz. *Whole Church—Leading from Fragmentation to Engagement*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009, 131.

and decided to start a food pantry ministry about two years into our church rescue. We only gave out food that our members or friends of the church donated to us. We purposely avoided going to government food resources so we could freely present the Gospel without any hindrance. The first year we advertised with a large banner in the front of the church. We gave food away once a week and required each person receiving food to hear a brief Gospel presentation.

Many church leaders are afraid to step out in faith and provide or support a social service that includes the Gospel message. However, a study by Carl S. Dudley and Thomas Van Eck of the Center for Church and Community Ministries in Chicago showed that, "Pastors frequently underestimate member support for social ministries. The lack of knowledge of member's attitudes may be a barrier to developing social ministries, the study says. The study, financed by the Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis, Ind., also reports that many conservative churches feel as strong about social justice as liberal churches."²⁶

The faithfulness of our church family to provide food is amazing. We experience anywhere between five to twenty-five families per week receiving assistance. We are "a hand up" not "a hand out" so we limit people to coming for food to six times per year. Not only are we meeting a legitimate need and sharing the love of the Lord, but involvement with the program is also growing servants who give and serve the Lord as they continue to spiritually grow in grace. In essence, the church can experience Proverbs 22:9, "He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor."

²⁶ "Throw Out Stereotypes, Say Church Researchers," *St. Petersburg Times* (St. Petersburg, FL), Aug 22, 1992. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/262897213?accountid=12085>.

Author Mel Lawrenz acknowledges the power of works of service in building up the Body of Christ. "As leaders we have the privilege of gradually introducing more and more people to the pleasure and the cost of service. It doesn't matter if it is service within the believing community or outside. In many ways the real growth happens when the work is outside. But gradually you see strength. At first there may be fatigue or pain. The muscle of a church grows gradually. But once muscle is there, it has a way of looking for the next opportunity to stretch."²⁷ Our small church has built enough spiritual muscle to be able to feed over 450 families per year.

Fundraising Events to Finance Ministry and New Space Needs

Another way we found to stay visible in the community and to make awareness of our intentions and needs to make ministry occur is to have several fundraising events each year. We have had yard sales of items donated by our congregation with the funds earmarked for a specific ministry or church need. We get to interact with our neighbors, invite them to church, and let them know for which programs we are trying to raise funds so they will know which ones may benefit them.

Spaghetti dinners and pancake breakfasts have also allowed us to meet the community and have them experience the love of Christ through our people. If someone comes who cannot afford to make a donation for the meal, we give it to them as a gift from the Lord. Oftentimes, the people who received a free meal come back with a food or monetary gift to the church at a later date. Some people even start coming to church services a result of our people's attitude of love toward others.

²⁷ Mel Lawrenz, *Whole Church—Leading from Fragmentation to Engagement*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009, 131.

We have had car shows, tent revivals, and music festivals. Anything that will show that something exciting is happening at the church and will draw attention to what we are trying to do in our community: reach people for Christ. All of our events are free, but we ask donations for the food and refreshments we provide. We have the opportunity to share what the proceeds are going towards, such as our recent new addition of restrooms and educational space for our children's ministries. We also have prayer areas available and a gospel presentation during our events. It is a great "icebreaker" to get someone who normally would not set foot in a church to come on the property and experience the love of God through His servants.

Homeless Shelter Ministry

The Scripture has much to say about the poor. Deuteronomy 15:11 states: "For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'" If your town has a homeless shelter that is receptive to the Gospel ministry of the church, it would be an excellent training opportunity for the membership. Homeless shelters offer many volunteer opportunities for people to communicate the Gospel through the Word and works. Our church participates at our city's mission by doing a church service once a month for over two hundred men and around fifty women.

Taking the church outside of the confines of the church building and property is positive for growth on many levels. It gives the church the opportunity for others to know more about the church. It gives training opportunities for members to learn how to communicate the Gospel message before a large group through the main sermon or testimonies. It gives musicians and singers an opportunity to share their gifts and hone their skills in leading worship. It gives anyone an opportunity to observe others who are suffering homelessness and to see God's hand

moving boldly in the lives of those at the shelter. It gives God an opportunity to speak to your heart and to spur you on as to how you can encourage others through Christ.

Nursing Home Ministry

A local nursing home is another way to take the church on the road and be a blessing to others who are confined and cannot get out to attend church. The Bible says in Leviticus 19:32: "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord." Our church has a small group of volunteers who go to two nursing homes once a month to put on a church service and encourage those in the home. Again, this is a training exercise for those interested in ministering to others and it is a time for members to be used by God to lift up His name in Word and worship. The people at the home are always blessed with the presence of the church, and the ministry volunteers are so blessed by those in the home that relationships begin to blossom. The volunteers show growth in their heart and service for the Lord as a result of this ministry of love and compassion.

Detention Home Ministry

A detention home ministry that focuses its attention on incarcerated youth is another avenue to take to get the church outside the church building and represent the Kingdom of God. The Bible gives a clear directive in Psalm 82:3 to "Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy." Our church goes once a month on a Sunday morning before our worship service and meets with those in detention. They present the Gospel through the Word and through their own personal testimonies. There is often a time where the kids can ask questions and have their concerns prayed for by our church members.

Jail Ministry

Visiting a local jail or prison is another way for the church to be a blessing and be blessed. There are often para-church ministries that are already involved in presenting the Gospel to inmates. Almost all of these ministries depend on local church volunteers to assist in spreading the Good News. We have been able to go to our local jail several times a year to present church services, small group Bible studies, and one on one visitation with inmates. We have also been part of delivering the Gospel along with Christmas gifts with others churches to hundreds of inmates in just a few hours on a Saturday morning.

All of these outreach ministries show the heart and love of Christ to others. God blesses those who go out in His name to go to greater heights in their relationship with Him and with those around us. In Matthew 25:36 the Lord says that doing these works to others is like doing them to Him personally. "I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."

Each of these unique groups will attract and burden different people within the congregation to step out in faith and to serve as a result of their own life experiences which they can share. The church may not grow with those ministered to in these ministries, but God honors His church through the spiritual growth of His people, and often brings numerical growth through the reputation the church gains as a result of engaging the community with Christ. 1 Peter 5:6-7 sums up this thought. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Step 3—Maintain a Visual Presence of Doing on the Web

If there is someone or a group of people in the church who has the ability to start and maintain a church website, then look into the possibility of a church website ministry. Today, websites are extremely affordable and take little time to maintain once they are up and running.

The Internet continues to grow and people are using it as a primary source of information now more than ever. I recently had several visitors come to our worship service and asked how they found out about our church. They said they had recently moved to our city and located our church by visiting our website. I am hearing this more often from our visitors, and they remark they like seeing an active, vibrant church online and want to experience that church in person. Timothy Fish, author of *Church Website Design*, says "It is my belief that most churches can better minister to their communities and membership with a website than what they can without one."²⁸

Content should include a church schedule of events, a doctrinal statement, a short article about what people can expect when they come to church (how to dress, type of music, length of service). Contact information and clear directions to the church also help make an effective church website that attracts visitors. A church calendar along with pictures and video segments of outreach events and other ministry activities will show how active, alive, and inviting the church is to those who are seeking a church home. Online sermon audio or videos are also helpful resources for people to "preview" the church before they visit.

A church website will by no means ever replace the traditional personalized touch of one on one ministry that God desires His people to give to others. However, "The church website is a ministry. A good church website will touch people's lives and can minister to people that the

²⁸ Timothy Fish, *Church Website Design—A Step By Step Approach*. Lexington: Timothy Fish, 2007, xi.

church would never be able to contact by any other means...There is the potential of touching more lives through the church website than through any other ministry."²⁹ A church website is just one more avenue to do the "greater works" that Jesus talked about in John 14:12.

The Result: People Want to be Where God is Working

When people see the church is actively pursuing a relationship with God and are truly putting feet to their faith by ministering the love of Christ to one another in the church and to others outside the church on a consistent basis, they will be attracted to come and see what God is doing at the church. When true blessings are received, the word gets out and people's curiosity will bring them to church. Jesus attracted crowds because he met people's needs; He loved them, and taught them in interesting and practical ways that they could apply to their lives right now.

Pastor Rick Warren notes, "It is a myth that large churches are always cold and impersonal, and that small churches are automatically warm and loving. Size has nothing to do with love or friendliness. The reason some churches remain small is because they aren't loving. Love draws people in like a powerful magnet. A lack of love drives people away."³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., 4.

³⁰ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1995, 210.

CHAPTER 4

RECOGNIZING THE OBSTACLE OF GROWTH STRANGULATION

The church that my wife and God called us to rescue, Shoreline Community Church, was established February 4th, 2007. During the past five years we have gone from a few families to just over one hundred members.

The church building, built in 1966, has a sanctuary consisting of 2,800 square feet that seats 150 people at capacity but comfortably seats closer to just about a hundred. Our attendance had plateaued within the first two years due to growth strangulation of the facility but we now have a weekly attendance that ranges consistently between eighty and one hundred people. We have recognized from the beginning that the facility was not designed to promote growth or comfort and began planning a 1,500 square foot educational addition, a remodeling of the restroom facilities, and adding a much needed entrance vestibule.

In addition to the lack of proper entrance and vestibule space, our pressure points included inadequate educational space and no available facility for infants. The restroom space was embarrassingly small and not handicapped accessible, and many guests never paid a return visit because of these poor facilities.

Unfortunately, these space issues severely limited our growth as a church. It severely hindered our nursery, children's and youth programming, and played a role in why we had trouble attracting quality ministry leadership and members that are required to grow any church. The congregation could not find solutions to relieve our pressure points other than remodeling and making new space.

The biggest strength our facility had to offer at that time was the just over three acres of land it sits on and we had that land at our disposal to build upon. Additionally, a recent gift from

a friend of the church gave us another one and a quarter acres next door that contained a house and large storage barn. Together, these parcels of land proved that God had blessed us with the necessary room to expand and had given a heart to the people to build for growth.

Our church members began making big changes to the appearance of our new property, and these efforts gained the attention of our neighborhood. We removed over eighty-three trees and completed a massive cleanup of the property. Many people in the neighborhood have commented that they never realized there was a house or garage on the property because of the overgrowth of trees. We hoped the activity of cleaning up the new house, along with the new addition we planned to build, would attract more people to check out God's work at our church.

I share this story to encourage church leaders to try everything and anything to make the most of their existing space as possible before establishing a building program for the church. Even though our church space was inadequate for very large activities, we utilized our limited facilities very well. We viewed every room as a multipurpose space: Our worship space hosted worship services, fellowship hall, dinners, vacation Bible school, seminars, concerts, weddings, funerals and even a local voting precinct at one point. We learned to do a lot with a little.

We did everything imaginable to find alternative space for education. During our first year we were able to build a thirty-by-forty foot steel storage garage that not only acted as much needed church storage but served double duty during the summer months as a youth classroom. We used a fenced play area with picnic tables during the warm months for our children's and youth education and their many activities.

Unfortunately, we were not able to sustain attendance or growth with seasonal space. We looked into renting neighborhood school space and neighboring apartments but they were not cost effective for the limited time we needed their use. We even considered moving our church

to a new location but our neighborhood is a very fertile mission ground in need of spiritual light and hope and we did not want to abandon it.

The good news remained that we had land to build upon along with the gift of the neighboring home and its large storage garage sitting on over an acre of land. The blessing of this new acquisition made staying in our current facility very attractive and a more cost effective avenue for future sustainable growth. The church property without the new home and land acquisition is shown in Figure 1 along with the proposed future additions.



Figure 1. Site Plan for Shoreline Community Church

Diagnosing the Physical Limitations Prohibiting Church Growth

It is wise to take stock of the available and usable space that the church facility has in order to determine if it is adequate or needs to be remodeled or built new. Our church did a church space survey before making any decisions about building new or remodeling the existing

structures. Table 1 gives the space statistics that we had, which made the decision to begin a building program a "have to" if we were serious about our future growth.

Table 2: Shoreline Community Church Space Survey				
<u>Auditorium</u>	30'x80'	2,400 sq. ft. includes small fellowship space and walkway.	Multipurpose praise and worship auditorium and fellowship hall.	Adequate for 100 people. Not adequate for church growth.
<u>Office/Classroom 1</u>	14"x12'	168 sq. ft.	Youth 13-17 yrs. old	Not adequate. 16 youth at 10 sq. ft. per person.
<u>Office/Classroom 2</u>	12'x12'	148 sq. ft.	Children 0-12	Not adequate. 7 children at 20 sq. ft. per person.
<u>Men's Restroom</u>	11'x4'	49 sq. ft.	Restroom	Not adequate. Not handicap accessible.
<u>Women's Restroom</u>	11'x4.5'	49.5 sq. ft.	Restroom	Not adequate. Not handicap accessible.
<u>Vestibule</u> <i>Pastor's current office is the additional 9'x18' shown in picture as future vestibule space.</i>	6'x22'	132 sq. ft.	Entrance	Not adequate. Needs to be at least 50% of auditorium space =1,200 sq. ft.
<u>Kitchen</u>	11.8'x14.2'	167.56 sq. ft.	Warming Kitchen	Adequate
<u>Secretary Office</u> <i>Shown in picture as future corridor into new educational area.</i>	12'x8.5'	102 sq. ft.	Secretary office/ Counting room	Adequate but very cramped.
<p><i>The current church space has no separate fellowship hall, inside storage, or separate copier room.</i></p> <p><i>The recently acquired home next to the church will give us a total of 2,900 sq. ft. of additional space for a future Pastor's Office of 162 sq. ft. A Secretary Office of 143 sq. ft. and plenty of storage space. The house will alleviate space issues that would have been present even after the new educational space, is built.</i></p>				

Sanctuary Seating

Our sanctuary can support up to one 150 people but is most comfortable around 100–120 attendees at one time. "Worship attendance should be 65 to 80 percent of room capacity to encourage optimal growth."¹ In order to calculate if your sanctuary's capacity is in a comfortable range conducive to growth you can first count all of your chairs. If you have pews, divide them with the assumption that each person will need roughly thirty to thirty-six inches per person. "Next, compare this capacity to your average attendance over the previous year. Simply divide your average attendance by your room capacity and you will get a percentage somewhere between 1 and 100 percent. If you are between 40 and 80 percent, you are in the 'comfortable' range (with 60 to 80 percent ideal)."²

Our plan was to meet the immediate need of adding proper education space especially for the children's ministry. By adding a children's church ministry that would inhabit newly built space, we could increase our children's attendance by thirty-five to forty-five per week plus the added numbers of their parents and extended family without building a new sanctuary right away.

"Sanctuary seating requirements typically range from 10 to 15 square feet per person, depending on layout, seating type, seating pattern, and total size of the sanctuary...Using chairs instead of pews will generally allow the seating of more people in the same space, perhaps as much as 20 percent more."⁴ The use of chairs, especially for small churches who are

¹ Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know—101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013, 205.

² Ibid., 207.

⁴ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 109.

experiencing space limitations, allow for reconfiguration of the worship space to accommodate multi-purpose uses such as weddings, funerals, fellowship dinners, and special events.

In her book, *Planning and Building Church Facilities*, Gwenn E. McCormick gives the following guidelines for congregational seating:

- Row spacing: thirty-six inches or more recommended, thirty-four inches minimum (forty-eight inches minimum if last row against a wall).
- Pew lengths and seating: Average space per person, twenty inches width. thirteen or fourteen persons maximum on each row. Row length, twenty-one feet, six inches to twenty-three feet, four inches.
- Aisle widths (check local codes): Center or main aisle, four feet minimum; five or more feet recommended. Side aisles, two feet, six inches minimum; Some codes, three feet, eight inches.⁷

Parking

Proper and adequate parking is essential in determining how much the church will be able to grow numerically. A church can estimate about one acre per hundred people on the property at one time. This statistic can be reduced where street parking is available or in areas where many people use public transportation in order to get to church.

To get an accurate idea of your church's parking requirements in a future building program, have someone go into the parking lot and count cars over a several week period in conjunction with taking a good attendance of everyone on campus, including men, women, children, and babies. Divide the total average attendance by the average number of cars. The result will probably be somewhere around 2 to 2.5 people per car. Divide this

⁷ Gwenn E. McCormick, *Planning and Building Church Facilities*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992, 235.

number into the capacity of the new facility and this will tell how many parking spaces the church will eventually need in order to fill the building to capacity.⁸

If parking is not adequate or is poorly situated in relationship to the entrances, it will be a discouragement for those who are elderly, handicapped, or simply inconvenient for those who may have minor mobility issues to attend church consistently or at all. "A church will grow only to the size of its parking capacity."⁹

For many small churches, parking is a major problem due to lack of land or finances. Some ideas that are doable for small churches include the organization of a valet parking ministry. Valet parking will help the elderly and visitors get front door access without additional walking where parking spaces are at a premium. This ministry may have to attain permission to use parking at neighboring businesses or properties, but may help church growth in the long run when parking spaces are limited, especially when it rains.

If offsite parking is available, a shuttle service may also be an alternative to lack of parking space. Another idea may be to organize interested members into a carpooling system. Once attendance begins to fill the church to an uncomfortable capacity, an additional worship service could be considered to ultimately double church attendance utilizing a small church space.

Educational Space

Our people wanted to build the entire package of educational space and a new 300 seat auditorium at first because it was what we wanted. We thought doing it all at once was the way

⁸ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 109.

⁹ Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know—101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013, 214.

to go. As we got closer to a building commitment among the church members, we all began to count the cost. The Lord advises that we count the costs before we embarrass ourselves in Luke 14:28-30: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it; lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'" We quickly learned that the cost was very high, especially for our size congregation. We wanted the entire package but realized in order for us to stop plateauing and eventually find ourselves in decline we had better learn how to separate our needs from our wants.

"To determine need, the church must look at the big picture, the entire scope of ministry, and do so through the refining lens of its vision."¹⁰ What we really needed was adequate educational space for our youth, a room for a nursery, a larger area for fellowship and classes, remodeled restrooms and a new entryway that relieves bottlenecks on Sunday morning and would serve as both a coat-room and welcome center. Small churches typically find this an area of weakness where creativity is needed to maximize space. Gary McIntosh recommends, "The capacity of the lobby should be 60-70 percent of the worship center capacity."¹²

¹⁰ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 51.

¹² Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know—101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013, 208.

I thought it best that we divide the entire building project into two phases. Phase one, our need, which I named "Operation Breathing Room." And phase two, "Operation Sanctuary." By placing our need first we are able to stop plateauing and begin to grow our children's ministry in addition to opening up the necessary breathing room in the rest of the facility. Financially this made sense and was easier for our small church to attain bank financing and financial commitments from our membership. We were building what we needed and what we could afford until we grew to the next level, which in theory would bring us to the point of being able to build phase two through those who were yet to come as a result of Operation Breathing Room.

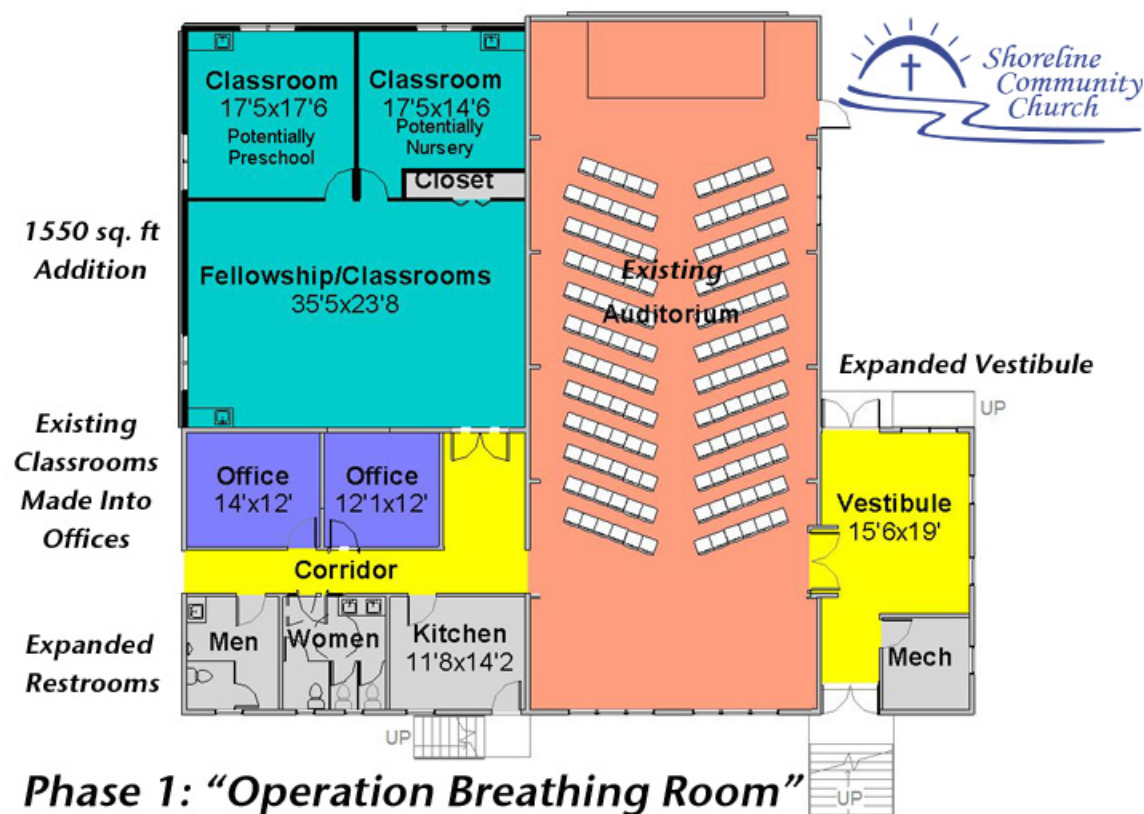


Figure 2. Shoreline Community Church Building Plans, Phase 1: "Operation Breathing Room"

Once phase one is completed, we hope to grow and begin planning and fundraising for phase two to begin within five to ten years. Phase two is the addition of a 300-seat auditorium

that will attach to our new educational addition. It will include a full kitchen, extra restrooms, a baptismal, a small fellowship area, offices, and a large vestibule area. Our existing auditorium can eventually be sectioned into several large classroom areas that may be utilized for a future daycare ministry throughout the week or remain as is for smaller Bible studies, classes, events or a fellowship hall. It is good to have a future vision plan in place for the congregation to look forward and work towards a future of growth.

Phase 2: Future Auditorium

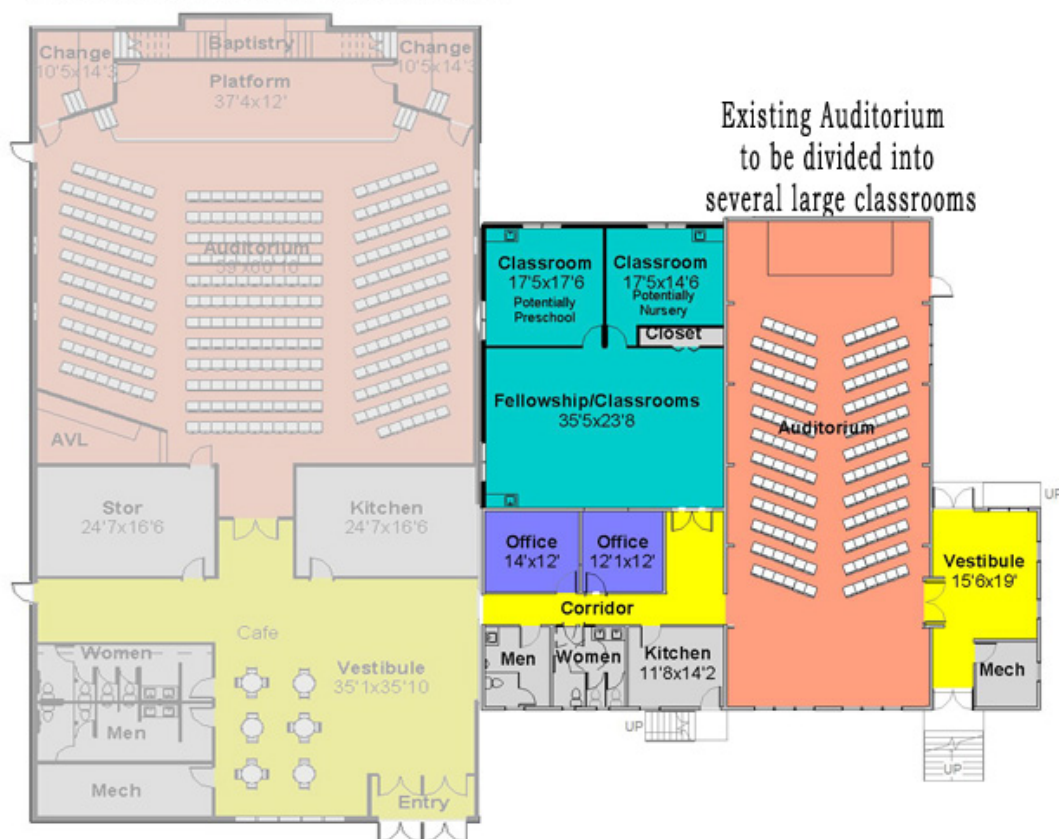


Figure 3. Shoreline Community Church Building Plans, Phase 2: Future Auditorium

When planning for future growth, proper room size must be considered. The size of the room is dependent on the age-group using the space. Children require more space than adults.

Stephen Anderson recommends, "Classrooms range in size from 12 square feet per person (for adults) to 35 square feet per person (nursery and toddlers)."¹³

The goal for our church is not to become a mega-church, but a church that is able to meet the needs of the community-at-large and to train Christian leaders, teachers, and preachers to reproduce disciples and other churches as the Lord has commanded in space that will best accommodate and encourage growth.

Restroom Facilities

Our restroom facilities were extremely uncomfortable and small. Whoever originally designed the existing facility was able to pack the men's and women's restrooms and a utility closet complete with mop basin all in less than a 10-foot by 10-foot space! The restrooms could in no way accommodate wheelchairs or anyone with handicap needs.

Unfortunately, this weakness severely limited our growth as a church. Some people came right out and commented that they could not come back to our church because of the poor restroom provisions. It certainly hindered our nursery needs, children's and youth programming, and caused trouble when trying to attract the ministry leadership and help that we required.

The importance of proper, attractive and clean restroom space at church cannot be overemphasized. "In fact, Lyle Schaller goes so far as to suggest that the women's restroom is the most important room in your church!"¹⁴ Author Gary McIntosh believes that all churches need to

¹³ Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know—101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013, 110.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 217.

institute what he calls, "The Restroom Capacity Rule" which states: "A church needs enough restrooms so that every attendee can be accommodated within fifteen minutes."¹⁵

Not only should the church restrooms be adequate, clean and attractive, they should also be handicap accessible. Every effort should be made to update restrooms if church growth is to be attained. Many older churches built before current code regulations may not be compliant concerning the American Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Though older churches may not be required by law to update, the lack of handicapped facilities does not speak well about the church and its thoughtfulness of others.

Building Layout and Flow

Much thought, prayer, and study is necessary in building God's house. Many with good intentions, want to rush into building the wants of the church rather than the true ministry needs that will benefit future growth. Our church building committee met with our architect sporadically over a span of four years. Every meeting changed the layout and flow of our project dramatically. After each meeting we gradually came to a design that would not only have a physical flow to the construction that made sense, but also would contribute a flow to meet current ministry needs that would ultimately bring numerical and spiritual growth to our church.

Samuel Chand suggests that churches take the "facility test" which asks, "Do facilities, including their layout, design, and décor, reflect the vision?"¹⁶ Such preparation is essential and a biblical step in the church building process. The Old Testament is clear and precise that extensive planning and studies should be conducted before attempting to build. The biblical

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Samuel R. Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011, 139.

accounts of the preparations to build the Tabernacle in Exodus chapters 35–39 and the Temple in 1 Kings chapters 5–6 and 2 Chronicles chapters 3–4 supports the need for adequate planning that will meet the vision of the church.

If it were a small project, the studies would be limited while a larger, more complex endeavor, would require more comprehensive studies. However, whether large or small, mission driven planning should be done. Building committees need time to dream, develop goals and determine directions. "The studies are not data driven. Their purpose is to uncover information that will help focus and clarify mission. Sometimes information is gathered and then not used effectively because the committee does not understand the connection between the data and planning. The committee must focus on the relationship between adequate data and the church's mission."¹⁷

The mission statement of the church expresses the core of the church's purpose and must be used in conjunction with a growth-mission strategy. The facilities should then be designed to support the agreed upon strategy for church growth and ministry efforts. "Developing a growth-ministry strategy enables the church to focus on the means by which growth is achieved. Then the church makes decisions about facility development on the basis of that strategy. The strategy is not just a beautifully articulated statement; it becomes the marching orders for the church. It is the criteria the church applies to the priority of space provisions."¹⁸

The design must help grow the ministry the church has decided to become the vision. During our initial building meetings, the committee was more concerned about how things looked and the wants over needs. As time passed and several meeting later, our growth-ministry

¹⁷ Gwenn E. McCormick, *Planning and Building Church Facilities*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992, 30.

¹⁸ Ibid., 32.

strategy came into focus. We decided to build the breathing room, educational space for children's ministry and proper restrooms in order to get us the growth needed to build an overall larger facility in the future.

Simply put, any church building, addition or remodeling should be driven by vision, mission, financial ability, and needs. Author Stephen Anderson succinctly defines these terms.

- Vision: What is God's vision for your church? What is the church going to be when it grows up?
- Mission: What is the church trying to accomplish for the community and congregation?
- Financial Ability: What can the church afford to build and how will it be paid for?
- Needs: What does the church need to build in order to become the vision and accomplish the mission?¹⁹

Finally, when designing church facilities, an overall balance in size and capacity needs to be attained for future church growth to be achieved. "When a church's overall spaces; parking, seating, childcare, education, fellowship, lobby, and so on, are in balance, they complement each other and encourage growth. But facilities that are out of balance can be the reason for otherwise inexplicable lack of growth."²⁰

¹⁹ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 59.

²⁰ Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know—101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013, 356.

CHAPTER 5

BIBLICAL STEPS TO OVERCOME GROWTH STRANGULATION

Step 1—Develop a Congregation that Prays and Worships Through Giving

Part of the problem of churches experiencing growth strangulation, plateauing in attendance and then tapering off into decline is the poor equipping of the saints. Consistent scriptural teaching on the topics of prayer and worship are essential components in every believer's walk with God and each other. These items are part of the successful growth of the early church that helped them break out of the confines of Jerusalem and into Samaria and finally into the uttermost parts of the world as the Lord commanded. The church today is in need of the steadfastness of the early church exemplified in Acts 2:42 where, "...They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers." "If the early model of church growth in the Bible is appropriate for this demand, then the early model is the most complete expression of spiritually driven strategies and methods. Furthermore, as the early principles of church growth are unveiled, spiritually driven biblical strategies and methods could be discovered and applied."¹

Whether it is spiritual growth strangulation or physical growth strangulation due to space restriction of a building, prayer is essential to expansion needs, in addition numerical and personal spiritual growth of the believer and church body as a whole. The example found in Acts 2:42 reveals the power of God in accomplishing the "one another" commands the Lord has given His people.

¹ Kim, Chang Kyu, "Biblical Strategy and Shift to Spiritual Driven Church Growth," (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, 2010).

Fred Hayes Smith observes that a biblically based lifestyle for the Christian and the church provides an unchanging standard that promotes lifestyle change that is pleasing and will be blessed by God.

A life-style based on the Biblical standard will change only as it strives to mold itself to meet Biblical requirements. In that process, certain areas of the standard will at one time or another receive the major emphasis to the detriment of the others. For-example, Christian A may well select "worship" as the first area of change in his life. On the other hand, Christian B will make "giving" the area of primary importance in his life. Eventually, for growth to be healthy, both must move on to the other areas and mold their life-style and worldview to that of the standard.²

To achieve this type of lifestyle change that God will bless, Christians must first submit to learning and living steadfast under the teaching of His rightly divided word of truth.

Fellowship is a natural outcome of being with God and in His word. As a result, relationships with other believers are formed which bring about knowledge of their needs, hopes, and desires. Prayer is the avenue God would have us to use to exercise faith in Him for personal needs and the needs of others.

Concerning prayer, worship, and giving, George Barna states, "We must seek to have every believer regularly involved in a time of meaningful worship. We must encourage every believer to pray, and redefine 'prayer ministry' to be a major underpinning of every individual and congregation. We need to turn around our churches, so that more money is given for outreach (domestic and international), and the focus of church ministry is not solely on the congregation, but on the community as well."³

Equipping the congregation to exercise their faith is also essential to move the church from a mode of stagnation or even decline into one of growth. There will be opposition to

² Smith, Fred Hayes. "Measuring Quality Church Growth (Spiritual, Survey, Scientific)." D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1985.

³ George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle*, Ventura, CA; Regal, 1990.

change. Some of the greatest spiritual and physical growth spurts in God's people and church occur during the fiery trial of life. By exercising faith, God will build His people through the darkest of time and will expose the light of learning and growth when the trial is through. Only God can do the building and growing of His church and His people.

In Matthew 18:19–20 Jesus states, "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

It is of utmost importance that Jesus remain in the midst of all decisions, including building or expansion of His house. An agreement of His people concerning anything not only invites the Lord into the process but also continually reminds us of our inability to do anything without His power and involvement.

In order for the church to move forward and overcome the barriers that are causing growth strangulation in the church there must first be an eradication of sin in the camp. If God's people have not been taught or equipped to financially support the work of God then a period of self-examination and repentance is in order.

1 Chronicles 16:29 states, "Give to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!" When Christians acknowledge and repent of their sins, God will reveal a holy life in His people and allow them to see the beauty of His holiness. When hearts are true toward God, His will for our life and the health of His church will ultimately be revealed. The desire to give back to God a consistent monetary offering will occur when giving God all the glory in all areas of life becomes a priority

and a spiritual habit. God has chosen the vehicle of His people to build His church. This can only occur when hearts are equipped and rightly motivated to give glory due His name.

Step 2—Demographic Research of Community Needs

Every church needs to recognize who they are "in Christ" and to strategize whom their target audience needs to be to effectively meet the most needs and the most souls for Christ. The most logical place to look for an audience to target for ministry is in the church's immediate neighborhood. Getting to know the people and their needs should be a priority for a church to grow God's way. Church leaders should be concerned with making its members disciples of Christ who are actively involved in outreach efforts and evangelism in the community.

"The single greatest problem with small churches is perception. Low attendance, small budgets, and limited staff are not, in and of themselves, problematic. What is problematic are the insecurities and defensiveness that result when we fail to live up to expectations of success established by a handful of churches."⁴ Church leaders need to see the world as Jesus views it, and to value the church as Jesus does. The key is training church members to put aside unreasonable expectations about church growth and to trust God for the harvest.

Trusting God for the harvest begins with planting Gospel seeds in the immediate church community. Getting to know the people and their needs will enable the church to be a physical and spiritual resource that demonstrates Jesus's example to all. Our church conducted a demographic study of our community before we presented our building plans to the church at large for their approval. Our leadership wanted to retool our ministry and methods and further justify the new space we were proposing to build by showing the congregation the target

⁴ Brandon J. O'Brien, *The Strategically Small Church*, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2010, 36.

audience of our community and their legitimate needs that we could meet in the name of Christ. By visiting homes and surveying the people the results have refocused our ministry for growth and who God intends us to be in His plan.

Our research has shown us that while the houses in the neighborhood are older, new families with children are moving into our neighborhood with a large number of single-parent families. The chart below illustrates that our church membership is slightly older than our neighborhood but generally reflects the ages of the people in our neighborhood. The chart shows that 56 percent of our community is between the ages of 0-34 which is the target audience we are trying to reach for future growth.

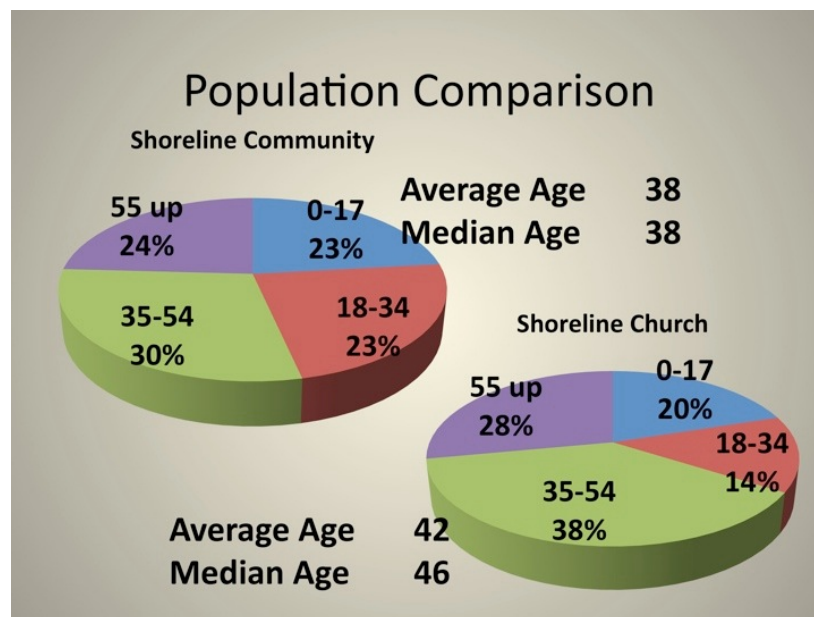


Figure 4. Population Comparison of Shoreline Community and Shoreline Church

A population comparison of Shoreline's community and Shoreline's church family indicates a close match in almost all age categories. In other words, our church family resembles the families in our community. Our greatest obstacle to physical growth is lack of children's space.

The greatest benefit of expanding our church is being able to attract 18-34 year olds, especially those with children, which is currently our weakest demographic due to our current building limitations. In fact, our research has shown within a two-mile radius we can find: 727 working women with children ages zero to five, 1,400 working women with children ages six to seventeen, and 380 working women with children in both of these age groups. We need a facility that can meet the needs of those families and reach them for Christ!

One negative aspect about Shorline is that part of our community is transitory with a large series of apartments housing many low-income people who tend to move a lot. The positive in this transitory population is that many times we receive an influx of refugees from all over the world. Many different people groups have come and gone. The positive side to these varied people groups is that they have allowed us to share the Gospel message along with missionaries through English Language classes. This ministry has grown our volunteers spiritually and has shown our congregation and community that our church is a resource of love and is willing to help those with needs. Reaching out to other people groups has been a challenge but has also been very rewarding. "Churches in America must ask themselves whether they can continue to call themselves churches if they are open only to people just like their current members; ethnically, socially, economically, or physically."⁵ This concept reminds us of Colossians 3:11 that in the Kingdom of God, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."

God is concerned with both spiritual and physical growth for His church. Churches that desire to be healthy must be intentional about the spiritual health of its members and instill in them a desire to be more adept at passionately following Jesus Christ daily. God wants His

⁵ Alvin L. Reid, *Radically Unchurched*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002, 27.

people to love one another and meet the needs of others in the example and name of His Son. In the Old Testament, God oftentimes encourages righteousness in His people through the abundance of blessing He provides in the form of growth and prosperity. Psalm 92:12–13 states, "The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

Step 3—Develop a Growth Strategy

A demographic study of church membership and the surrounding community will go a long way in helping leadership determine a future growth strategy. A plan for growth must be determined, constructed and adhered to for short-term, intermediate, and future goals to be fully realized. Jesus had a plan to fulfill the scriptures and become the sacrifice for sin for all of mankind. He was determined, focused and resolute to go to Jerusalem no matter what situations would occur and carry out His plan. Isaiah 50:7 shows the Lord's resolve: "For the Lord GOD will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed." A deeply committed plan is a fundamental management principle that the Lord illustrated for us in His earthly ministry. "Without a plan, you have nowhere to go, nothing toward which to direct your energies. Without a plan, you can only react to circumstances. A plan puts you in charge of your energies and activities. You become proactive, not reactive."⁷

No one particular prescription for churches to follow exists when strategizing for growth as many different ways will work. What works for one church will not necessarily work for all congregations. In other words, you won't find a "one size fits all" plan for spiritual and numerical

⁷ Bob Briner, *The Management Methods of Jesus*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996, 2.

growth. However, many church growth principles that have been published that can be tweaked to individual church growth strategies. For example, author Thom Rainer, in *The Book of Church Growth*, lists "Thirteen Principles of Church Growth"⁹ that should be nurtured to health in church congregations.

1. Prayer
2. Leadership
3. Laity and ministry
4. Church planting
5. Evangelism
6. Worship
7. Finding the people
8. Receptivity
9. Planning and goal setting
10. Physical facilities
11. Assimilation and reclamation
12. Small groups
13. Signs and wonders; evident spiritual power

Pastor Rick Warren sets out his list for a church growth program:¹

1. Worship: Love the Lord with all you heart: church grows stronger.
2. Ministry: Love your neighbor as yourself: church grows broader.
3. Evangelism: Go and make disciples: church grows larger.
4. Fellowship: Baptizing them: church grows warmer.
5. Discipleship; Teaching them to obey: church grows deeper.

Pastor Warren also recommends that church leaders evaluate their church by asking, "What is our business?" and then, "How's business?"² He advocates leading the church through four critical phases. "First, you must define your purposes. Next, you must communicate these

⁹ Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993, 171-316.

¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1995, 49.

² Ibid., 93.

purposes to everyone in your church on a regular basis. Third, you must organize your church around your purposes. Finally, you must apply your purposes to every part of your church."³

George Barna lists "Ten Critical, Achievable Goals"⁴ the church can strive for and incorporate into an individualized church growth strategy.

1. Win people to Christ.
2. Raise Bible knowledge.
3. Equip the Christian body.
4. Establish Christian community.
5. Renew Christian behavior.
6. Enhance the image of the local church.
7. Champion Christian morals.
8. Live by a Christian philosophy of life.
9. Restore people's self-esteem.
10. Focus on reaching the world for Christ.

For many churches, small and large, developing a church growth strategy is a major culture shift for a church to go through and there is no set timeline that is the same for every church. Every church has its own God-driven rate of growth, depending on its age, maturity, denominational ties, and many other factors. "Don't make the mistake of thinking that a culture shift is occurring just because everyone is agreeing with the vision. The true test is when you can see the change implemented in people's lives."⁵

Church Growth Strategies of Surveyed Pastors

In an effort to ascertain the ever-changing trends in church growth in our fast paced society, I conducted a survey of twenty-seven large church pastors. The survey, entitled, "A

³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1995, 94.

⁴ George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle*, Ventura, NC: Regal, 1990, 226-230.

⁵ Robert Lewis, and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift—Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005, 67.

Survey of Church Growth Strategies of Local Pastors" was taken in order to glean wisdom for smaller churches that desire to grow by examining the current methods of large churches.

Twenty-five male pastors and two female pastors were surveyed. Eighteen were between the ages of forty and fifty-nine, seven were eighteen to thirty-nine years old, and two were sixty-five years or older. The denominations were varied and included a mixture of eight non-denominational, four Southern Baptist, two Independent Baptist, three Church of God. The survey also included pastors from Vineyard, LCBC, Wesleyan, New Life A of G and the Foursquare denomination.

Of the churches surveyed, 81 percent were located in urban areas and 19 percent indicated their location as rural. The approximate attendance of the surveyed churches included churches as small as 230-450 with seven churches at 5,000. The rest of the churches were over 1,000 with the exceptions of a church with 6,500 in attendance, one with 8,000 and a multi-site church spanning six campus totaling 15,000 in weekly attendance.

When the pastors were asked, "Has your church been growing in membership during the last five years?" 96 percent answered yes, growth has been experienced. Table 3 illustrates the responses these pastors gave to what they believe are the major causes of their church growth.

Table 3. Pastoral Responses Regarding Church Growth Factors

What do you believe are the three major causes of your church growth? (Select Three)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	•Sunday School Program		1	4%
2	•Small groups/Cell groups		7	26%
3	•Youth programming		5	19%
4	•Children's programming		4	15%
5	•Worship service		24	89%
6	•Ladies fellowship program		0	0%
7	•Men's fellowship program		0	0%
8	•Prayer meetings		0	0%
9	•Pastoral visitation		0	0%
10	•Personal evangelization by membership		11	41%
11	•Unity of leadership		9	33%
12	•Following the direction of the Holy Spirit		5	19%
13	•Clearly communicated vision statement		9	33%
14	•Bible studies		3	11%
15	•Outreach events		2	7%
16	•Ministry teams working outside of the church (jail, detention home, nursing home etc.)		0	0%
17	Other		2	7%

The top reason given for church growth is the worship service. When people experience God's presence and have a personal meeting with Him, they are forever impacted and changed. When congregations are exposed to John 4:24 in a relevant and practical manner they will be taught that, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth... There are a hundred reasons why we should make every effort to impart truth in our worship. One of them is to promote unity. Give people a truth-filled worship experience, and they will walk away more unified. Provide them with a pattern of weekly truth-filled worship, and the weight of the truth will be a centripetal force pulling people toward the center of that truth."⁶ and there will be a desire to encounter God on a consistent basis. "Worship is an encounter with God, and meeting God brings changes in a person's life. We should offer to that person a time and a place both to acknowledge that change in the context of the Body of Christ, and to give a place to that person to seek out further counsel or prayer."⁷

Alvin Reid, author of *Radically Unchurched*, offers a wonderful definition of worship. "Worship, in the simplest of definitions, means to meet God and leave changed. It is seeing Jesus and magnifying him in His resurrection; it is acknowledging the greatness of God in the face of our struggles, and as such it is the cure for a multitude of human woes. Worship means we reflect on our life from God's perspective, focusing upon God, not upon ourselves."⁸

⁶ Mel Lawrenz, *Whole Church—Leading from Fragmentation to Engagement*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009, 110.

⁷ Alvin L Reid, *Radically Unchurched*, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002, 147.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

However, we must remember and train the congregation to understand that no matter how wonderful the worship experience may be on Sunday morning, if it does not lead to a daily lifestyle that is pleasing to God, then true worship has not occurred.

The second most popular response was 41 percent of pastors believe church growth has occurred due to personal evangelism by membership. Again, it is a personal touch from God Himself that draws people to investigate His church. Through evangelism God uses His people to touch the souls of others. "Evangelism is speaking words. It's sharing news. It's being faithful to God by presenting the good news...that Christ, by His death and resurrection, has secured a way for a holy God and sinful people to be reconciled. God will produce true conversions when we present this good news (John 1:13; Acts 18:9–10). In short, evangelism is presenting the good news freely and trusting God to convert people (Acts 16:14)."⁹ The only true growth that a church will experience comes from God using His people to introduce the Savior.

Unity of leadership and a clearly communicated vision statement are tied for third place at 33 percent for reasons pastors believe their church is experiencing growth. Unity of leadership starts at the top with the senior pastor's example. "Senior pastors serve associates by being committed to their ministry success. If we follow Jesus's model of servant leadership, the 'greater' will serve the 'lesser.' The pyramid is inverted when senior pastors die to self by encouraging the full potential of the associate."¹⁰ The members of the church will take notice of the senior pastor's investment in his team. This process will not only bring unity to the leadership team, but will translate into unity within the congregation.

⁹ Mark Dever, *What is a Healthy Church?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007, 91.

¹⁰ J. D. Berkley, ed., *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994, 188.

The consistent presentation of a clearly communicated vision falls primarily to the senior pastor. "The effective communication of vision to a congregation relies on the credibility of a pastor's vision: Do the people believe in it? Can they believe in it? Any ministry vision must have credibility if people are going to commit themselves to it."¹¹ The best way to communicate vision is to use various methods such as preaching and teaching, PowerPoint presentations that can be recited by the congregation on a monthly basis, or even a skit or drama presentation of the vision. "Perhaps the greatest way to communicate and maintain the vision is through the lives of the ministry's leaders. The only limit to the effective communication of the vision is the creative and innovative abilities of the leadership."¹²

The fourth major cause the surveyed pastors attributed to their church growth is their use of a small group ministry. When a small groups ministry appropriately fits into the overall style of the church, they can prove to be a great promotional tool, making the church well known in the community. Dr. Neal McBride, author of *How to Build a Small Groups Ministry*, relates a story to help illustrate the potential growth power of small groups. "For example, one church I'm familiar with in Oregon is known as a 'helping' church. Their 'main path' small groups ministry concentrates on assisting group members to deal with spiritual and personal struggles. As a result, besides serving church members, many non-Christians are attracted to the church through their groups ministry."¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 189.

¹² J. D. Berkley, ed., *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994, 191.

¹³ Neal F. McBride, *How to Build a Small Groups Ministry*, Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1995, 51.

The activities of small group ministries can contribute to church growth through three objectives:¹⁴

1. Develop the spiritual maturity and personal worship of each group member. This occurs through Bible study discussion, and application of scripture, through encouraging each other to pray for one another and learn from the experiences of one another, and providing opportunities to worship, praise and singing. The small group will also provided members an opportunity to deal responsibly with spiritual struggles and concerns on a regular basis.
2. Promote fellowship among group members. By providing opportunities for group members to exercise the "one another" commands found in scripture will result in cooperation, commitment and concern between members.
3. Stimulate ministry within and outside the church. Group members should have the opportunity to discover and understand their individual spiritual gifts, be equipped to share their faith with non-Christians and to exercise their gifts through good works inside the church and out in the community.

Three items were listed that were close in their percentage responses. Tied for fifth place at 19 percent each, pastors listed "Youth Programming" and "Following the direction of the Holy Spirit" major causes of their church growth. "Children's Programming" closely follows in sixth place with a 15 percent response.

Most church youth groups provide a great opportunity for teens to "hang out" together in a wholesome, safe and supervised environment. Dennis Rainey observes that our twenty-first century culture needs more teaching emphasis on the appropriate roles of men and women made

¹⁴ Ibid., 195.

available for teens. "Hopefully teens have seen husbands and wives, dads and moms model biblical roles in their homes. If not, then the church must fill in the gap for those teens who have not had such modeling. Because the issues surrounding such biblical roles may seem irrelevant to young people, church leaders will need to be creative as they seek to impact youth in this area."¹⁵

Following the direction of the Holy Spirit is most important. Oftentimes church leaders fall into the role of "Holy Spirit Jr." and implement their will rather than God's will and leading in ministry. David Ferguson, author of the *Great Commandment Principle*, claims that many Christians live out their ministry by wrongly interpreting Romans 8:31. "But we get into trouble when we erroneously interpret that verse ['If God is for us, who can be against us?'] to mean, 'As long as I have God, I don't need anyone else.' While our hopes and expectations should be directed in faith toward God and Him alone, we must allow our sovereign God to provide as He wills. And He often involves others as His ambassadors. When we misunderstand human need, claiming that we need only God, we unwittingly foster unhealthy and unbiblical self-reliance."¹⁶

Children's Programming concludes the close-knit trio of reasons pastors listed for church growth. Children's programming should not be viewed strictly as "baby-sitting" but rather as an opportunity to train youth and adults to minister to children on a spiritual level. Children should be exposed to the Word of God through reading. "Bible stories in age-appropriate books should be read regularly to young children. All such activities will plant spiritual seeds and will provide necessary stimulation for developing brains. Encourage parents to teach their children at an early

¹⁵ Dennis Rainey, *Ministering to Twenty-First Century Families*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001, 162.

¹⁶ David Ferguson, *The Great Commandment Principle*, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1998, 132.

age to learn how to take responsibility for their behavior, admit when they are wrong, ask forgiveness, and forgive by saying 'I forgive you'."¹⁷

Bible Studies ranked number seven for church growth. Teaching the Bible the way Jesus taught is essential. He presented the Word of God in an interesting, relevant manner that always contained a practical application that people could readily apply to the everyday lives. Pastor Rick Warren has a few quotes that inspire this kind of teaching. He states, "We do not have to make the Bible relevant; it already is! But just as Jesus did, we have to show the Bible's relevance by applying its message personally to people's lives"¹⁸...What people need today are fewer 'ought to' sermons and more 'how to' sermons"¹⁹...The deepest kind of teaching is that which makes a difference in people's day-to-day lives."²⁰

Another tie is found in the eighth position. "Outreach Events" and the "Other" category which listed two responses: Preaching the Bible and Weekday Classes. At 7 percent of the responses, both of these categories are not largely responsible for attracting people to church membership, but do strengthen and spiritually mature members in fulfilling the heart of the Lord in service toward others.

Likewise, the remaining five categories on the survey: Ladies Fellowship, Men's Fellowship, Prayer Meetings, Pastoral Visitation, Ministry teams working outside of the church: jail, detention home, nursing home, all received a zero response as a component for major church growth. While these ministries are valid, much needed, and fulfill scripture; they should be

¹⁷ Dennis Rainey, *Ministering to Twenty-First Century Families*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001, 132.

¹⁸ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1995, 224.

¹⁹ Ibid., 229.

²⁰ Ibid.

viewed as opportunities to disciple committed members and not relied upon solely to grow the church.

Next on the survey, the pastors were asked, "From the above list, or from your own experience, what do you believe are the three major weaknesses that may be hindering church growth?" The top answer with nine responses was "lack of vision." Coming in second place was lack of personal evangelism, and third place is a tie between "stuck in tradition" and lack of relevancy." Other repeated responses include: "a lack of unity," "the economy," and "old age" of the congregation.

One pastor responded that his church was in transition. He has taken over a church that had been stagnant and in a rut for ten years. He states, "Assimilation has been a crucial weakness for this church. It is being turned around through a dynamic "guest services" team as well as much teaching on every member investing and inviting friends to community events we do through the year and every Sunday. We have seen a remarkable improvement in just six months."

When asked, "Does your church have a vision, purpose, or goal statement?" All pastors replied that they did with 88 percent responding that they communicated their vision statement often. Another 93 percent stated that they help their members discover and develop spiritual gifts; 96 percent have strong biblical preaching that includes relevant life application; 93 percent claim their leadership teams work with unity; and 81 percent provide job descriptions for their workers.

When asked, "What do you believe is the most effective program of biblical teaching that will provide both spiritual and numerical growth for your church?" fifteen out of twenty-three responses believe "strong biblical teaching that is relevant and practical" brings about both

spiritual and numerical growth in the church. Six pastors tied the strong biblical preaching and teaching with either small groups, whose discussions were sermon based or weekend services.

Pastors were asked, "In what areas do you observe your church member's greatest spiritual growth?" The top four answers were: service activities, church services, evangelism and small groups. Service activities had the most responses at eleven; the rest had three responses apiece.

When asked if their church facility provided adequate educational space 59 percent replied yes, 41 percent said no. Of those who answered, 53 percent denied having a plan to provide more educational space. Most have plans to build multi-purpose educational space that will also act as a fellowship area when needed. Two respondents are planning to become multi-site churches and are either fundraising or leasing new facilities to accomplish this goal.

Of the pastors surveyed, 96 percent of these large and growing churches make good first impressions a priority. It is also important to note that 89 percent have adequate and handicap accessible restrooms in place and 81 percent of those surveyed reported having adequate parking space available. However, 77 percent of the pastors feel that sometime during their ministry growth that space restrictions or inadequate facilities have been a part of hindering their church growth.

When asked if they believed that an unchurched person is more likely to be drawn to visit a large church or a small church first, 78 percent responded large church first. The overwhelming response was the large church provides anonymity for visitors to be able to blend in without any pressure to participate or be singled out and publicly embarrassed. The survey remarks also noted that large churches provide a place where people can have a cover to observe without

participating or being drawn in. One pastor commented by saying, "A small church will look at you like fresh meat most of the time and make you feel completely awkward."

The final question asked pastors if there is any other information they would like to share concerning church growth strategies. Here are several parting words from our surveyed pastors. "You don't need to compromise your context (Bible preaching) to grow evangelistically. Follow what you feel is right for your church and community." "Context is crucial. Know your community." "Vision leaks. Having a vision tied to a clear strategy that is communicated and executed is critical." "We invest a disproportionate percentage of our budget in reaching people far from God in order to keep it a high priority in our church."

Step 4—Building Program: Presenting a Vision of Growth

Once the growth inhibitors have been identified and an individualized growth strategy is chosen, it is time to build a team that can assemble the necessary data that needs to be clearly communicated to the church at large. Communication is crucial in order to achieve the goals that will promote church growth. Tom Phillips, president of International Students, Inc., states, "An effective team is well organized and well informed. Without cohesiveness that comes from complete trust and clear communication, the buckshot will be headed in the same direction toward the target, but in the spaces in between, the adversary can work and cause division and disharmony."¹

The goal of communicating the growth strategy to the church is to get them to buy into the plan with their commitment and to bring unity within the membership to provide the

¹ George, Barna, *Leaders on Leadership*, Ventura, CA: Regal, 1997, 226.

momentum to get the job done. "Creating positive change in an organization requires communication. Interaction fuels action. That is the power of the Law of Communication."²

Whether the growth strategy involves an investment in new staff, ministries, a building addition, or an entire building project, it will take proper communication to instill trust in leadership and inspire the investment of time and finances from individual members who believe in the vision of change that the church leadership casts.

In the case of my church, as discussed earlier, we had a growth strangulation problem due to lack of physical space. Once we formulated a growth strategy through a demographic survey of community needs and the ministry needs of the church, a building committee was formed to work alongside an architect to execute a master building expansion plan to provide the opportunity for church growth. When selecting an architect, Gwenn McCormick offers excellent questions for the committee to ponder during the interview process. "During the interview listen for the architect's sensitivity to the church's needs and desires. How does he deal with unrealistic expectations by the committee? Does he reveal a healthy regard for work done by previous committees? Does the architect listen and understand the committee? Does he give evidence of being a good communicator? Are suggestions and alternative approaches offered? Does he seem familiar with local codes and building issues?"³

The master plan was to be implemented in two phases over the next ten years. Phase one has been five years in the planning stages and was completed in January of 2012. Phase one is the addition of educational space and restroom space because they are our immediate needs that

² John C. Maxwell, *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001, 197.

³ Gwenn E. McCormick, *Planning and Building Church Facilities*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992, 243.

are hindering growth. Phase two would include a new worship center, entry space, kitchen and office space, and additional parking that would occur only if the necessary growth to support and justify this project happens as a result of the implementation of phase one.

Communicating the need for more space had been part of the vision cast before the church each year since its inception in 2007. A land survey had been completed and meetings with the architect and our building committee occurred over a period two years before the plan was acceptable to all involved. The proper time had to be invested to make sure that a proper design was created to meet our immediate needs and to be sure it was financially feasible for the project to move forward. We also needed the additional time to bring about a unified consensus within the church membership. Remember what Ecclesiastes 10:10 says, "If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success."

Taking the time for proper planning will also bring unity to the church and a design to the project that maximizes useable space to meet immediate affordable needs rather than expensive wants. "Failure to properly research and objectively understand the needs of the church and its financial ability can cause the church to build facilities that are too small, too large, or otherwise inadequate. Failure to take adequate preparation in hiring the architect or builder can yoke the church to a poor performer or an improper relational fit. Failure to ask the right questions during the planning process will cost the church time, effort, and money...or worse."⁴

Otto F. Crumroy, author of "Church Administration and Finance Manual" gives important statistics that can help any church project avoid disaster when it is dependent on church member's financial support.

⁴ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 16.

For most any building or major improvement project, a church usually will need to have one-third of the total cost in cash, one-third in pledges, and one-third in borrowed money. As a broad general guide to planning, in most programs 20 percent of the people will give 80 percent of the money. This will certainly be true of a church's first capital program.

Some additional general planning guidelines: about 66 percent of the congregation will commit to a capital program. Thus, 34 percent of the congregation gives nothing. Of the 66 percent who give:

- 3 percent give the first 25 percent
- 10 percent give the second 25 percent
- 20 percent give the third 25 percent
- 67 percent give the fourth 25 percent⁵

Once the building committee was satisfied with the master plan, it was time to present the church membership with our research findings. The church had not been kept in the dark during the planning process. Every move forward was briefly communicated to them throughout the entire time. The building committee decided to present the plan, along with the architect, for the church's approval and to answer any questions or concerns⁶ members may have by having an evening pot-luck dinner before the presentation. All members were invited along with any outside friends and supporters of the church. "Almost every building proposal put forth in the church will have its naysayers. However, if the majority of solid, sold-out, fruit producing saints in your church are prayerfully behind the building program, go for it. Let those in opposition decide on whether to join you, get out of the way, or find a new church to hinder."

After the dinner, presentation, and a time to answer questions and concerns, a capital campaign was presented and a faith response on a ballot was taken. As pastor, I had already been training the members to give to our building program on a consistent basis. We would have many different fundraising activities throughout the year for this purpose. The response in their participation and the funds donated indicated that the membership was on board to move forward

⁵ Otto F. Crumroy, Stan Kukawka, and Frank M. Witman, *Church Administration and Finance Manual: Resources for Leading the Local Church*, Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998, 74.

⁶ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 150.

with phase one of our expansion for growth. We still needed the official vote of the church and wanted to know how much money they were willing to give on a monthly basis above their normal giving to cover the anticipated mortgage payment. We already raised \$50,000 over a couple of years but needed a loan of \$100,000 to complete the project. Our architect's cost calculations were in line with current financial conditions. He is estimating about one hundred dollars per square foot of space being built.

Because this is an addition and not a full church building project, we decided that a conventional loan would be the best way to proceed. Our financial leaders followed the criteria used by lending institutions to establish a safe amount for our church loan. We have an annual income of around One hundred and thirty thousand dollars. The loan will be one hundred and two thousand dollars. Our loan will not exceed the four times the annual income for the past five years the text recommends. Our debt will be twenty thousand dollars under our annual income. Our payments on the debt will be less than the recommended thirty percent of the past years income. Our payment will be around ten percent of our yearly income.

We had to communicate what a capital campaign was about before asking for their vote and financial commitment. We had to make sure the membership's desire was to better serve our congregation and our community with the addition of educational and restroom space. "A capital campaign is less about money than it is about understanding a need exists, equipping the saints with the knowledge of how God provides for needs to be met, and then calling people to make the appropriate faith response. If the members understand and embrace these precepts, the money will take care of itself."⁷ We also wanted to emphasize that the goal of this expansion was to be a

⁷ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 141.

a tool for ministry.⁸ "Buildings are tools for ministry. Tools aren't always pretty, but they do need to be effective. Too often churches build edifices that are as much or more a monument to the architect, pastor, or building committee than a tool for ministry. God does not care how pretty your church building is, He is interested in what you do with it."

To encourage small church pastors, out of our one hundred members, there are about forty who truly give financially as God commands. God can and will do a lot with a little. The membership unanimously⁹ voted to accept the proposed building project. (Do not expect 100% support. Our results were not typical. "Generally speaking, if less than 75-85 percent of the congregation is in agreement on an issue. It's probably a good time to back up and build unity before proceeding.")The membership committed to give financially above and beyond their normal giving by providing pledges of \$1,200 per month into the building fund. With our building fund grown to \$50,000 were able to secure financing for \$100,000 with a monthly payment of around \$800 a month to successfully accomplish building phase one of our master plan.

Rarely have there been so many people of like mind working together on any project! We entered into an exciting time for our church; a time of change and a time of growth. We sought God's direction and provision to bring this vision into reality. We asked Him to move people's hearts to sacrificially sow into this ministry of expansion in order to change lives for Christ's sake.

Step 5—Reveal God's Power Through Unity

It is vitally important for God's church to understand and the unbelieving community to experience God's power through unity. In John 17:20-23 Jesus makes it clear that He wants all

⁸ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 147.

⁹ Ibid., 152.

believers in Christ to be one with Him. It is this kind of unity God will use to draw the unbelieving world into believing that He sent the Savior, God the Son, to bring them into unity and peace with God the Father. Paul states the importance of unity in the local church and the fact that it will bring true peace to the congregation when exercised in Ephesians 4:3.

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Aubrey Malphurs, author of "Advanced Strategic Planning" comments that, "Unity is another function of a well-constructed, shared statement of intent or mission. A clear direction communicates a unifying theme to all members and draws them together as a team or community...at the same time it encourages those with a different intent or another ministry agenda to look elsewhere."¹⁰ On the other hand, Peter Scazzero, author of "The Emotionally Healthy Church" warns, "When a ministry dream or opportunity does not work out, it is crucial that we pay attention to our inner life beneath the surface and feel the disappointment before God."¹¹

When people are unified in the devotion to God, their commitment to living a life that is pleasing to God becomes a priority and become the ones who are "sold out" for God. George Barna believes in igniting people's passion for God.

Once they have made a serious commitment, the peripherals don't matter as much. They'll endure worship services that may not meet their exact specifications because their focus is on God, not themselves. They'll attend activities at times that are not optimally convenient because the most important reality is to experience God's presence. They will sacrifice more of their hard-earned money for the purposes of ministry because they recognize that they are stewards, not owners. They will gladly share their faith in Christ with nonbelievers because they understand their responsibility to other people and to

¹⁰ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005, 122.

¹¹ Peter Scazzero, & W. Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 2003, 168.

God, and because they simply cannot contain their own excitement about the privilege of relating to God.¹²

The year before the church expansion occurred, I led our church through a sermon series on the importance and power of prayer. At the end of the series I challenged the congregation join my wife and me on a thirty day fast. After a thorough teaching of biblical fasting, we presented many options on how to fast so everyone would be able to participate regardless of age or health conditions. Dallas Willard, author of "The Spirit of the Disciplines" notes that, "Fasting confirms our utter dependence on God by finding a source of sustenance beyond food. Through it, we learn by experience that God's word to us is a life substance, that it is not food ('bread') alone that gives life, but also the words that proceed from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4)."¹³ I was very surprised at the large and positive response. Fasting not only brought everyone closer to God but to each other. Unity was at an all time high and our focus was to build the space necessary to reach souls for Christ.

Our church begins teaching about the power of unity in our New Member Class¹⁴, through sermons, and through service projects and outreach ministries. During the years of preparation to expand the facilities, the membership was being trained in their service to the Lord and saving towards the building project. It is Aubrey Malphurs' conviction, "... that every church should have a new members class where it orients its new people to its values, mission, vision, and strategy as well as other matters such as doctrine. The idea is to get as many people as possible on the same page at the very beginning of their church experience to achieve maximum ministry effectiveness."

¹² George Barna, *Growing True Disciples—New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*, Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2001, 3.

¹³ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, 166.

¹⁴ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005, 130.

Promotion of our expansion project was vital to maintain interest, focus and momentum of the membership. Charles Tidwell, author of "Church Administration –Effective Leadership for Ministry" defines and expresses the importance of promotion. "Promote means to exalt in station, rank, or honor; to elevate; to advance. It means to contribute to the growth or prosperity of; to further; as, to promote learning."¹⁵ Keeping positive momentum is also crucial to keeping unity alive. John Maxwell has what he calls "The Law of the Big Mo." He relates the story of a church relocation/building project that was only supposed to take three years, but difficulty in obtaining the proper zoning permits caused the project to drag on for eleven years. He claims the greatest challenge of his life as a leader was trying to sustain momentum for the last five years of his pastorate at this particular church. While most churches would have given up, he did everything possible to keep momentum sustained. He states, "I continually kept the vision for the relocation in front of the people. We made it a habit to focus on what we could do rather than on what we couldn't, and we often celebrated our victories, no matter how small. Meanwhile, we made progress in areas where we could...the momentum we built was so strong that even the eleven-year obstacle couldn't stop us."¹⁶

All of the promotion projects we have done have produced good results and have spiritually grown our people. They provided opportunities for us to showcase the Lord and what He was doing at our small church. We always included facets of our goal of "Knowing Jesus, Growing in Jesus, and Serving Jesus Daily" in all that we did.

¹⁵ Charles A. Tidwell, *Church Administration—Effective Leadership for Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1985, 206.

¹⁶ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998, 174.

The projects included fundraisers such as a monthly pancake breakfast, being food vendors at a local car show that is produced by members within our congregation over the last several years. Our church also sponsors a Fall Harvest Music Festival, which has allowed us for the past several years to sell food and other items to raise building funds while providing free Christian music for all who attend.

In order to keep everyone aware of our progress during this time, we placed a fundraising thermometer in the auditorium that allowed everyone to monitor our progress and keep awareness and need at a high level. The thermometer provided a much-needed visual for all to see, as we got closer to our financial goal week by week. Visuals are powerful communicators. The thermometer brought focus, anticipation, and excitement to our building program.

Another ongoing project that brings awareness and focus to our cause is called "Change for Change." We distributed plastic containers with a picture of what our church would look like after the building project is completed. We asked people to collect their change in these containers and when they are filled, to empty them into a large container inside the church where all can view the amount as it grows. As a result, we have averaged between two to three hundred dollars a month using this project. During the first three months the giving averaged between five to seven hundred dollars. We also set a financial goal each year for a special offering during the Easter season specifically for our building project.

It is because of everyone being on the same page through a consistently communicated vision that everyone understands and shares the vision which has made it possible to pull our forces together in unity as a church and move mountains for the Lord.

Step 6—Building God's Servants Through Building God's House

Building God's house is truly an overwhelming and humbling task to undertake. It is easy to get caught up in the details and problems that come with every building project. For leadership and membership to remain focused on what they are building and for whom they are building, scripture reminders should be kept before the congregation.

Building God's house is something that God proclaims cannot truly house Him. He is bigger than all that He has created. While He gives His people the privilege of building a physical house in His name to worship, it is the building of His people's hearts to view God with an awesome reverential fear that is of primary concern to Him. The House of God is just a vehicle for spiritual growth to occur. Isaiah 66:1-2 states, "Thus says the Lord: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,' says the Lord. 'But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.'"

It is good to keep before the congregation that the true church is not made of brick and mortar, it is not the physical building itself, but is made of all believing souls resting on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Cornerstone, Jesus, is what the entire physical church building and spiritual building made up of His people need to lean upon for stability as the foundation of life that cannot be shaken. Both physical and spiritual buildings will be blessed to grow together as seen in Ephesians 2:19-22. "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in

whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

It is also good to bolster the faith of the church due to all the carefully detailed preparations that leadership has presented and remind the congregation that God is a God of order as evidenced in 1 Corinthians 14:33, "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." He will honor the project because there was a process of counting the costs, research, and an orderly presentation of the facts to the church body before committing. Proverbs 24:27 states, "Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house." Putting first things first before committing will allow God to clearly speak to all hearts concerning his will to build.

There has to be an element of faith to building God's house. Don't let all the overwhelming obstacles and costs become reasons not to build. If God is truly calling His people to build His house, it must be understood by all that He will provide every need to accomplish the task at hand. Nehemiah 2:20 gives the directive that, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build..."

To provide our church congregation with a visual element to increase their faith and prayers before building, we marked out the addition we were going to build with stakes and string and let it stand for three months until the day of groundbreaking. Every room, door, and entrance was marked to actual size so everyone could see and walk through the new addition. This illustration brought the reality of the project into focus and continued the exciting momentum that strengthened our faith that this project was going to happen soon.

After a Sunday morning groundbreaking ceremony the construction work began. Because the project was an addition with some remodeling of the existing church facility, we did not feel

it was necessary to hire a general contractor. In the end, I wish we had hired a contractor to handle all of the details. I adamantly recommend hiring a general contractor with any project larger than ours. When hiring a contractor it is wise not to hire one who is a member of the church. You have trouble firing him if things don't go well and it can cause him to leave the church along with others close to him. Stephen Anderson pleads with church leaders on this topic. "If you are thinking of letting a contractor who is a member of your church build your new facilities, you should proceed with great caution, as often this does not end well. If you are considering this, you should really try to talk yourself out of it. If that fails, get someone else to try to talk you out of it."¹⁷ Having the contractor who is a member on the building committee is a much more valuable resource than to have him be in charge of the actual construction.

Our church is blessed to have many able bodied, experienced construction personnel. We were able to do much of the work through the volunteers within our own congregation. It was a bonding experience that enhanced our relationships with each other working for a common goal. The experience brought our church family closer together because of all the foundational planning we accomplished beforehand.

It is good for churches to work together. It is worth looking to other churches for volunteer assistance. By putting out the word to other local churches, more volunteer help may be available. Churches looking to do mission projects may also be available to help. Our Southern Baptist Association provided us with a wonderful resource to put our building addition under roof over a weekend. The Ohio Buckeye Baptist Builders sent twenty volunteers to help us quickly frame and roof our addition. It was wonderful seeing everyone working together in the

¹⁷ Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*, Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007, 145.

name of Christ. The building group was so gracious. We let them stay overnight and fed them. The only thing they required was that we send some of our members to assist them in another church building project the following year. We were able to send our men on a mission trip to help a church in the Columbus, Ohio area build their addition, which was yet another growth spiritual growth spike for our congregation.

Six months later we were finished enough to open our new educational space for use. It was early December and our first event held in the new space was a Happy Birthday Jesus Party for our children's class. Since then, we have seen great growth in our children's ministry. We finally are able to inspire teacher volunteers to take on the responsibility of operating our children's ministry. Parents and grandparents are now bringing their kids to our children's ministries. We are now training teachers and ministry leaders to take ownership of growing their church due to the new educational space. Growth is happening spiritually and numerically in both the adult leaders and children. This is a very exciting time for our church as we are transitioning into what we hope God will bless as a major growth cycle.

Step 7—Maintaining a Standard of Excellence Fit For The King Of Kings

It is so important to show the world that Christians are serving the King of Kings and maintain a standard of excellence in all things including the upkeep of His house. Our inspiration is found in Colossians 3:23, "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men." We have been blessed with a group of talented volunteers who have been able to share their abilities in keeping the church clean and maintained from the beginning. We have four to six workdays each year that are well attended and productive. We always provide a meal for our volunteers because it is the least we can do for labor that would otherwise be extremely costly.

Our active core members have been trained to respect God's house and fully embrace what the psalmist communicated in Psalm 84:10, "For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

We have been careful to insure God's property with policies that are customized to our particular ministry needs. Our church insurance is brokered through a Christian company that specifically deals with churches and their unique coverage needs. Our agent is a trusted Christian whom our church has had opportunity to work with in several past ministry situations.

Part of my vision for the future growth of our church is to communicate the need for expanding our weekly volunteer base of maintenance workers as our facilities begin to grow. We have recently been able to hire part-time maintenance workers to tend to the larger facilities out of our group of core volunteers. People are more apt to return to a church that is well maintained.

Growth will not happen without vision, purpose and goals that are clearly and consistently communicated to the congregation. Growth will be hindered without the proper space; it will simply plateau and fall off. I believe our church is on the right path and that God would have us to invest into our facilities and grow our people while reaching out to our community the best we can in full dependence on Him.

We have already experienced the fruit of all the foundational work that has been included in this paper. By taking the time to grow the people of the church to a mature level spiritually, God will bless us physically with the church facility to meet the needs of our community at large in His perfect timing.

The size of the church is whatever God desires it to be. The church will be profitable to the Kingdom of God when it is obedient to His Word. This paper is designed to be an

encouragement to small church leaders to be the best version of the man or woman of God that He intended you to be; that He died for you to be. When this kind of biblical focus and vision occurs, God will get the glory through His people, the church, as they shine as a witness to His transformational power in the dark lives struggling in this world. The scriptures sum it up best in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

I am using two surveys as research instruments. Both will be administered through Qualtrics.com. The first survey is entitled, "A Survey of Church Growth Strategies of Local Pastors" and is directed to twenty-five local church pastors to ascertain the strengths, weaknesses, and effectiveness of their church growth strategies. This information will help in presenting growth strategies that work and those that are not profitable to growth.

The second survey is entitled, "A Survey of Large Church Member Perceptions of Small Churches" and is directed to twenty-five church members of large churches (attendance of 300 or more) in order to ascertain perceptions of small churches that may hinder their growth. The information will help in constructing intentional biblical steps to correct any misconceptions of small churches.

Survey #1

A Survey of Church Growth Strategies of Local Pastors

I acknowledge consent to participate in this survey and acknowledge that no compensation was received for participation.

- Yes
- No

Please indicate your gender:

- Male
- Female

Please indicate your age bracket:

- 18-39
- 40-59
- 60+

Please indicate your church affiliation:

Is your church located in a rural or urban location?

- Rural
- Urban

What is the approximate size of your church (attendance)?

What is the age of your church?

Has your church been growing in membership during the last five years?

- Yes
- No

What do you believe are the three major causes of your church growth? (Select Three)

- Sunday School program

- Small groups/Cell groups
- Youth programming
- Children's programming
- Worship service
- Ladies fellowship program
- Men's fellowship program
- Prayer meetings
- Pastoral visitation
- Personal evangelization by membership
- Unity of Leadership
- Following the direction of the Holy Spirit
- Clearly communicated vision statement
- Bible studies
- Outreach events
- Ministry teams working outside of the church (jail, detention home, nursing home ect.)
- Other_____

From the above list, or from your own experience, what do you believe are the three major weaknesses that may be hindering church growth?

_____, _____,

Does your church have a vision, purpose, or goal statement?

- Yes
- No

Is your church vision, purpose, or statement communicated often?

- Yes
- No

Do you help members to discover and develop spiritual gifts?

- Yes
- No

Do you have strong biblical preaching that includes life application?

- Yes
- No

Does your leadership team work with unity?

- Yes
- No

Do you provide job descriptions for all workers?

- Yes
- No

What do you believe is the most effective program of biblical teaching that will provide both spiritual and numerical growth for your church?

In what areas do you observe your church member's greatest spiritual growth?

Does your church facility provide adequate educational space?

- Yes
- No

If you answered no to the last question, do you have a plan to provide more education space?

- Yes
- No

If so, how?

Are good first impressions of your church facility a priority for you?

- Yes
- No

Are your restroom facilities adequate and handicap accessible?

- Yes
- No

Do you have adequate parking available?

- Yes
- No

Do you feel that any space restrictions or inadequate facilities have ever been part of hindering your church growth?

- Yes
- No

Do you believe that an unchurched person is more likely to be drawn to a visit a large church or a small church first?

- Large
- Small

Why?

-
- Is there any other information you would like to share concerning church growth strategies?
-

Survey #2

A Survey of Large Church Member Perceptions of Small Churches

I acknowledge consent to participate in this survey and acknowledge that no compensation was received for participation.

- Yes
- No

Please indicate your gender:

- Male
- Female

Please indicate your age bracket:

- 18-39
- 40-59
- 60+

Please indicate your church affiliation:

Is your church located in a rural or urban location?

- Rural
- Urban

What is the approximate size of your church (attendance)?

What is the age of your church?

Has your church been growing in membership during the last five years?

- Yes
- No

Small churches are simply miniature versions of large churches.

- True

- False

Small churches are friendly.

- True
- False

Small churches are afraid of numerical growth.

- True
- False

Small churches cannot offer creative programming.

- True
- False

Small churches cannot grow again once they have declined or stagnated.

- True
- False

Small churches cannot have a big impact.

- True
- False

Small churches are less faithful and successful than large churches.

- True
- False

Are Small churches usually more inclusive or exclusive?

- Inclusive
- Exclusive

Small churches cannot provide a connectedness to membership and community.

- True
- False

Small churches are too political.

- True

- False

Small churches are intolerant to change.

- True
- False

Small churches are more hypocritical than large churches.

- True
- False

What two words come to mind when you think of small churches?

Are there any other positive or negative small church perceptions you would like to share?

Permission Request Letter for Survey #1

December 4, 2013

Dear Pastor:

As a graduate student in the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief survey entitled, "A Survey of Church Growth Strategies of Local Pastors."

It should take approximately ten to fifteen minutes for you to complete the survey. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be required.

You will access the survey by clicking on the link provided at the bottom of this letter.

Please read the informed consent form before completing the survey.

Please click on the link below or copy into your web browser to participate in the survey.

https://qtrial.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e2QTGModjwAysy9

Sincerely,

Rev. Scott Campbell
Shoreline Community Church
790 Carnegie Ave.
Akron, Ohio 44314

Consent Form

Overcoming Growth Strangulation and Small Church Negative Stereotypes Through Intentional Biblical Steps

Donald Scott Campbell

Liberty University

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

You are invited to be in a research study of how small churches can overcome space restrictions that prohibit sustained numerical growth and how small church negative stereotypes can be diagnosed and eliminated in order to bring forth both numerical and spiritual growth. You were selected as a possible participant because your affiliation with a large church (over 300) ministry. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Donald Scott Campbell from Liberty University/Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to address spiritual problems, the effectiveness of church growth strategies and space restrictions, so congregations can be rejuvenated and community perceptions can be improved by making God's people and facility meet His standard of excellence. The goal of this project is to focus small churches to become spiritually healthy with vision and unity that scripturally reveals God's power to attract people into His Kingdom while building his church to the size and effectiveness He desires.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

Participants will be asked to go to www.qualtrics.com and click on the link provided to complete the survey. The data will be used to ascertain perceptions of small churches that may hinder their growth. The information will help in constructing intentional biblical steps to correct any misconceptions of small churches and will help in distinguishing which church growth strategies work and those that are not profitable to growth.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

No study is without risk. However, the risks are no more than you would encounter in everyday life. The benefits to participation is knowing that you have aided a study that will provide encouragement to small churches to nurture spiritual growth while working to overcome space restrictions that prohibit sustained numerical growth, and to identify and overcome small church negative stereotypes that prohibit growth.

Compensation:

Participation is completely on a volunteer basis and no compensation will be provided.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Completed surveys will not contain any personal information and will be stored as a password protected Word

Document for a period of three years and then will be erased. There will be no anticipated use of the data in the future.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Donald Scott Campbell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at dscampbell2@liberty.edu or his advisor Dr. Victor Dean Hinson at vdhinson@liberty.edu or call (434) 592-4046.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

IRB Code Numbers: [Risk]

IRB Expiration Date: [Risk]

Date: December 16, 2013

Dear Pastor:

As a graduate student in the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The title of my research project is "Overcoming Growth Strangulation and Small Church Negative Stereotypes Through Intentional Biblical Steps." The purpose of my research is to provide encouragement to small churches to nurture spiritual growth while working to overcome space restrictions and negative small church perceptions that prohibit sustained numerical growth.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your church to invite them to participate in my research study by taking a survey entitled, "A Survey of Large Church Member Perceptions of Small Churches."

The data will be used to ascertain perceptions of small churches that may hinder their growth. The information will help in constructing intentional biblical steps to correct any misconceptions of small churches and will help in distinguishing which church growth strategies work and those that are not profitable to growth. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to dscampbell2@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Rev. Scott Campbell
Shoreline Community Church
790 Carnegie Ave.
Akron, Ohio 44314

Church Member Recruitment Letter

Date: December 17, 2013

Dear Church Member:

As a graduate student in the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief survey entitled, "A Survey of Large Church Member Perceptions of Small Churches."

It should take approximately ten to fifteen minutes for you to complete the survey. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be required.

You will access the survey by clicking on the link provided at the bottom of this letter.

Please click on the link below to participate in the survey.

Please read the informed consent form before completing the survey.

https://qtrial.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6ulwYPz7YNfE5kF

Sincerely,

Rev. Scott Campbell
Shoreline Community Church
790 Carnegie Ave.
Akron, Ohio 44314

Consent Form

Overcoming Growth Strangulation and Small Church Negative Stereotypes Through Intentional

Biblical Steps

Donald Scott Campbell

Liberty University

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

You are invited to be in a research study of how small churches can overcome space restrictions that prohibit sustained numerical growth and how small church negative stereotypes can be diagnosed and eliminated in order to bring forth both numerical and spiritual growth. You were selected as a possible participant because your affiliation with a large church (over 300) ministry. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Donald Scott Campbell from Liberty University/Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to address spiritual problems, the effectiveness of church growth strategies and space restrictions, so congregations can be rejuvenated and community perceptions can be improved by making God's people and facility meet His standard of excellence. The goal of this project is to focus small churches to become spiritually healthy with vision and unity that scripturally reveals God's power to attract people into His Kingdom while building his church to the size and effectiveness He desires.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to please complete the survey.

The data will be used to ascertain perceptions of small churches that may hinder their growth.

The information will help in constructing intentional biblical steps to correct any misconceptions of small churches and will help in distinguishing which church growth strategies work and those that are not profitable to growth. The survey should take ten to fifteen minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

No study is without risk. However, the risks are no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to participation; however, your participation does benefit society by providing encouragement to small churches to nurture spiritual growth while working to overcome space restrictions that prohibit sustained numerical growth, and to identify and overcome small church negative stereotypes that prohibit growth.

Compensation:

Participation is completely on a volunteer basis and no compensation will be provided.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Completed surveys will not contain any personal information and will be stored as a password protected Word Document for a period of three years and then will be erased. There will be no anticipated use of the data in the future.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Donald Scott Campbell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at dscampbell2@liberty.edu or his advisor Dr. Victor Dean Hinson at vdhinson@liberty.edu or call (434) 592-4046.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Stephen. *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*. Clayton, NC: Stephen Anderson, 2007.
- Associated Press. "Southern Baptists Going Back to Roots Small Churches Better, Study Says." *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), May 13, 1994.
- Adelle M. Banks, "Group Sees More Church Cooperation as Key to Fulfilling Its Vision," *Orlando Sentinel* (Orlando, FL), Mar 06, 1993.
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/278220344?accountid=12085>.
- Barna, George. *Growing True Disciples –New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2001.
- . *Leaders on Leadership*. Ventura, CA; Regal, 1997.
- . *The Frog in the Kettle*. Ventura, CA; Regal, 1990.
- Berkley, J. D. ed. *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994.
- Briggs, David. "New life for old church buildings." *The Christian Century* 124, no. 19 (2007): 14-318. Accessed June 5, 2013. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.
- Briner, Bob. *The Management Methods of Jesus*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996.
- Cady, David Michael. "The Impact of Vision on Congregational Health in the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church." (D.Min. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2005).
- Carter Jr., Kenneth H. "My Continuing Education As A Pastor." *Clergy Journal* 85, no. 3 (2009): 18-19. *A Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.
- Chand, Samuel R. *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011.
- Claibourne, Tom. 2012. "Small Churches: Responding to Some Stereotypes." *The Christian Standard*. June 1, 2012, accessed January 16, 2014,
<http://christianstandard.com/2012/06/small-churches-responding-to-some-stereotypes>.
- Cook, Mary. "Empty Pews Resulting in Closure of More and More Small, Rural Churches." *Smiths Falls EMC* (Smith Falls, ON, Canada), Nov 29, 2012.
<http://seach.proquest.com/docview/1220930389?accountid=12085>.

- Cornell, George W. "Study Churches Defy Stereotypes about Social Ministries." *Orange County Register* (Santa Ana, CA), Jan 23, 1993.
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/272609738?accountID=12085>.
- Crumroy, Otto F. & Stan Kukawka, and Frank M. Witman. *Church Administration and Finance Manual: Resources for Leading the Local Church*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998.
- Dever, Mark. *What is a Healthy Church?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007.
- Ferguson, David. *The Great Commandment Principle*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1998.
- Fish, Timothy. *Church Website Design—A Step By Step Approach*. Lexington, KY: Timothy Fish, 2007.
- Grant, Russell. "New 21st Century Church is Changing the Face of Faith." *The Record*, Nov 05, 2001. 0, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/266964322?accountid=12085>.
- Hull, Bill. *The Disciple Making Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1990.
- Kim, Chang Kyu. "Biblical Strategy and Shift to Spiritual Driven Church Growth." (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, 2010).
- Kouzes, James M. and Posner, Barry Z. *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995.
- Lawrenz, Mel. *Whole Church –Leading from Fragmentation to Engagement*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Lewis, Robert and Cordeiro, Wayne. *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005.
- Maxwell, John C. *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork*. Nashvillem, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001.
- . *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- McBride, Neal F. *How to Build a Small Groups Ministry*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1995.
- McCormick, Gwenn E. *Planning and Building Church Facilities*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992.
- McIntosh, Gary L. and Arn, Charles. *What Every Pastor Should Know – 101 Indispensable Rules or Thumb for Leading Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013.

- O'Brien, Brandon J. *The Strategically Small Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2010.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Rainer, Thom. *The Book of Church Growth*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993.
- Rainey, Dennis. *Ministering to Twenty-First Century Families*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001.
- Reid, Alvin L. *Radically Unchurched*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002.
- Reeves, Bob. "Small but Mighty Churches can Offer Community without being the Size of One." *Lincoln Journal Star* (Lincoln, NE), Jan 30, 1999.
- Renner, Gerald. "Small Churches Glory in their Size Meeting Shows Numbers Don't Count." *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, CT), Jan 29, 1995.
- Robinson Columnist, Anthony, B. "Christians Serving Others Overcome Stereotypes." *Seattle Post—Intelligencer* (Seattle, WA), Dec 15, 2007.
- Roxby, Arthur T., III. "Can They Live Again? An Analysis of Small Churches with the Church of the Nazarene Who Transitioned to Vitality from the Death Spiral." (D.Min. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2010).
- Scazzero, P. & Bird, W. *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 2003.
- Schaller, Lyle E. *Growing Plans*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983.
- Smith, Fred Hayes. "Measuring Quality Church Growth (Spiritual, Survey, Scientific)." (D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1985).
- Stephenson, Shauna. "Is there a Clergy Shortage?; Yes, and no. Nationally, there's a Surplus, but there also is a High Vacancy Rate. and Small Towns Struggle to Attract New Clergy because of Mega-Churches' Appeal." *Wyoming Tribune—Eagle* (Cheyenne, WY), Mar 11, 2007.
- Thompson, W. Oscar. *Concentric Circles of Concern—Seven Stages for Making Disciples*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999.
- "Throw Out Stereotypes, Say Church Researchers." *St. Petersburg Times* (St. Petersburg, FL), Aug 22, 1992.
- Tidwell, Charles A. *Church Administration—Effective Leadership for Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1985.

- Towns, Elmer, L. *154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School and Keep Your Church Growing*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988.
- . *America's Fastest Growing Churches*. Nashville, TN: Impact Books, 1972.
- Towns, Elmer, L., and Stetzer, Ed. *Perimeters of Light*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2004.
- Towns, Elmer, L., Stetzer, Ed., and Warren, Bird. *11 Innovations in the Local Church*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1995.
- Waters, J. "Statistics of Spirituality; pollster urges church to use data as tool for action." *Washington Times* (Washington, DC). October 25, 2005.
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/409831131?accountid=12085>.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.
- Witmer, Timothy Z. "Seminary: A Place To Prepare Pastors?." *Westminster Theological Journal* 69, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 229-246, accessed January 14, 2014 *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.
- Yonke, David. "Ownership and Involvement Called Keys to Church Vision." *The Blade*, Aug 11, 2007. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/380634898?accountid=12085>.

VITA

Donald Scott Campbell

PERSONAL

Born: July 2, 1963

Married: Cynthia A. Long, May 4, 1991.

Children: (Stepson) Brandon Bernard, born November 16, 1977.

(Stepson) Dustin Campbell, born November 5, 1984.

Andrew Campbell, born February 29, 1992.

EDUCATIONAL

A.A., Liberty University, 2000.

B.S., Liberty University, 2004.

MAR. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006.

M.Div., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010.

MINISTERIAL

License: March 20, 2000, Akron Baptist Temple, Akron, Ohio.

PROFESSIONAL

Chaplain, Haven of Rest Ministries, 1996-2001.

Associate Pastor, Akron Baptist Temple, 2001-2007.

Senior Pastor, Shoreline Community Church, 2007-present.

IRB APPROVAL/WAIVER PAGE

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 7, 2014

Donald Scott Campbell

IRB Exemption 1709.121713: Overcoming Growth Strangulation and Small Church Negative Stereotypes through Intentional Biblical Steps

Dear Donald,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
 - (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
 - (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,



Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

1971 UNIVERSITY BLVD. LYNCHBURG, VA. 24515 IRB@LIBERTY.EDU FAX (434) 522-0506 WWW.LIBERTY.EDU