

Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 26

Moving toward God's Vision in Large Churches

Why are we gifting you this volume? Because the mission statement of our primary publication—*The Parish Paper: New Ideas for Active Congregations*—is to help the largest possible number of congregations achieve maximum effectiveness in their various ministries. *The Parish Paper* is a monthly newsletter whose subscribers receive copyright permission to distribute to their constituents—more than two million readers in 28 denominations. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com for subscription information.

Purpose of this Volume: Provides in-depth answers to questions that readers of *The Parish Paper* ask regarding principles and procedures by which congregations with more than 350 in average-worship-attendance can achieve their full potential for health and effectiveness. Clergy, staff, and lay leadership in large churches face vastly different challenges than do leaders in small and midsize churches (fewer than 350 in average worship attendance).

© Copyright 2009 by Herb Miller (Fourth Edition). You have permission to download this volume free at www.TheParishPaper.com and/or to distribute copies to people in your congregation.

Volume 26 – Contents

- I. What Is God's Vision for Large Churches? – Page 2
- II. Why Are Large Churches Becoming More Popular? – Page 4
- III. Large Churches Are Different! – Page 5
- IV. In What Ways Are *Effective* Large Churches Different? – Page 9
 - A. Priorities
 - B. Pastors
 - C. Personnel
 - D. Programming
 - E. Participation
 - F. Procedures
 - G. Property
- V. What Challenges Do Large Churches Face as They Grow? – Page 12
 - A. 350-400 in Average Worship Attendance
 - B. 450-550 in Average Worship Attendance
 - C. 700-750 in Average Worship Attendance
 - D. 900-1,000 in Average Worship Attendance
 - E. 1,800-2,000 in Average Worship Attendance
- VI. What Type of Leadership Produces Large Church Effectiveness? – Page 17
- VII. What “Nuts & Bolts” Methods Can Strengthen Large Churches? – Page 31
- VIII. Coaching Large Congregations toward Positive Change – Page 39
- IX. Celebrate Large Churches! – Page 49

I. What is God's Vision for Large Churches

Leadership in churches of *every size* begins with God's vision. A church is God's business, not ours. We are *stewards* of this business, *not owners*. What does the owner ask us to accomplish?

A. According to the biblical record the church is the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27). Therefore, the church's business is as follows:

1. Congregations focus on the goal of extending Christ's ministry into their present generation and local communities by being, doing, and saying what Christ was, did, and said.
2. The purpose of churches is to make more and better disciples for Jesus Christ.

B. What core-values produced Christ's behavior, thinking and words? His foundation value was the kingdom of God—a term Jesus used more than 100 times in the four Gospels. Inviting people to enter the kingdom of God and let the kingdom of God enter them drove Christ's behavior, thinking, and teaching.

Jesus summarized what that term—kingdom of God—looks like in human behavior with his two Great Commandments (Luke 10:27) and his Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Because healthy congregations and effective leaders operate from Christ's core-values, they have three equally important priorities:

1. A spiritual focus that transforms the quality of people's lives by more fully developing their relationship with God (Luke 10:27)
2. An action focus that helps hurting people in the congregation and community and across the world (Luke 10:27, 29-37)
3. An influence focus that encourages more people to make an initial connection with God (Matthew 28:19-20)

C. Christ's core-values are not multiple-choice. Unless a congregation and its leaders operate from *all three* of Christ's core-values, the writing of vision and mission statements and the emphasis on goals, priorities, passion, focus, methods, social science insights, marketing techniques, and business management procedures is like improving food service on *The Titanic*.

The core-values that leaders hold in their minds and hearts create their *basic motivations*—which determine their *behaviors* (how they spend their not-unlimited supply of time and energy). Defective core-values produce disoriented thinking and dysfunctional behavior; thus, vision and mission statements say one thing, but leaders spend their time doing quite another.

Congregations that drop one or more of Christ's three core-values from their agendas are planning a crash-and-burn future—regardless of what the vision and mission statements proclaim. God does not bless with fruitfulness leaders whose behaviors do not match the mission and ministry of their Master.

Christian history reveals a tendency toward selective amnesia regarding Christ's three core-values. Pietists (present-day charismatics and fundamentalists) sometimes solidly affirm the *spiritual focus*, forgetting the other two. Activists (theological liberals and social-action enthusiasts) sometimes lock in on the *helping hurting people focus*, forgetting the other two core-values. Entrepreneurs (evangelicals) sometimes glue themselves to the *influence focus* (converting people), forgetting the other two values.

D. Effective large church leadership builds from a balanced emphasis on Christ’s three core-values. Churches do not move closer to God’s vision under their own energy. They go where their leaders take them. Leadership effectiveness is the most important element in determining a congregation’s health and effectiveness in mission and ministry. Effective leadership in a large church is far different, however, from leadership in a business or a corporation. Effective leadership in a large church is also far different than in a small or midsize church.

E. That balanced emphasis on Christ’s three core-values provides a solid foundation for developing vision statements, mission statements, attitudes, and behaviors. Examples:

- One large church—Lakeridge United Methodist, Lubbock, Texas—states its vision as “Helping people experience a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ and grow in that relationship.” The congregation moves toward that vision with a four-word mission statement: accepting, transforming, equipping, and sending.
- Another large congregation—Zionsville Presbyterian Church, Zionsville, Indiana—uses the following values statement:

Ten Special Affirmations of Our Church

WE BELIEVE:

1. Personal spiritual growth is our first priority: the changing of human lives comes about only as individuals turn to Jesus Christ.
2. There should always be passion for spiritual essentials, yet always freedom to differ on peripheral issues.
3. God has called us to be a people-oriented church, not a program-oriented church.
4. Everyone who walks through our door truly matters, and everyone who joins our fellowship can truly contribute.
5. The people of our church are called to be ministers, or “active players,” while our pastors are called to be coaches.
6. There should be no pressure to have a certain kind of spiritual experience: it matters not *how* we came to trust Christ, but only *that* we trust *him* today.
7. Honest questions deserve honest answers: no question about God is too simple, too challenging, or so inappropriate that it cannot be asked.
8. God has called our church to grow, and will provide all the challenges that come with growth.
9. People striving to follow Jesus Christ will have the best experience when they are accountable to others as part of a small group that shares fellowship, study, and prayer.
10. The focus of our church is meeting the unique needs of those we are seeking to reach, not perpetuating the successful programs of our past.

F. Avoid developing written vision statements, mission statements, attitude goals, and expected behaviors without reference to Christ’s three core-values. Beginning with an emphasis on the end-products often leads to the kind of selective amnesia described above—overemphasizing membership growth, spiritual growth, or service to the community—that results in unhealthy, ineffective congregation.

Without a balanced foundation of Christ’s three core-values, leaders of large congregations find themselves mired in what author John Updike stated as “the good mistakenly aspired to.” The biggest temptation of large church leaders, as is also true of smaller churches, is not spending time doing evil things but spending time doing something good—but a good exclusively centered on *one* of Christ’s core-values rather than all three.

II. Why Are Large Churches Becoming More Popular?

Americans increasingly attend churches whose average attendance exceeds 350. The following statistics reveal that while small churches are the most numerous, one-half of American worshipers attend a large church:

Fifty percent of America's approximately 350,000 churches are "small," meaning they average fewer than 100 in worship. But only eleven percent of American worshipers attend these small churches! During recent decades the total number of small churches *stayed about the same*.

Forty percent of America's 350,000 churches are "midsize," meaning they average between 100 and 350 in worship. Thirty-nine percent of American worshipers attend these midsize churches. During recent decades *the total number of midsize churches steadily declined*.

Ten percent of America's 350,000 churches are "large," meaning they average more than 350 in worship. But fifty percent of American worshipers attend these large churches. (Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox,], p. 22) The number of large Protestant churches *steadily increased*, quadrupling since 1950.

Approximately two-thirds of all adults who choose a new church home in a typical month pick a large church. At least 1,210 Protestant churches in the U.S. today average weekly attendance of over 2,000, nearly double the number of megachurches that existed five years ago. (*Megachurches Today 2005*, Leadership Network and Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religious Research)

A. Why are large churches becoming more popular? Church historian Richard Niebuhr noted that any major change in society leads to emergence of new Protestant denominations. In the post-1950s ecumenical-climate, major societal change led to new types of congregations *within* each denomination:

In 1930, one-teacher schools comprised 149,282 of the 238,306 U.S. public elementary schools. In what kind of churches do people who grow up in one-room schools feel comfortable? Small churches!

Most young adults with birthdates between 1946 and 1985 grew up in large school systems. In what kind of churches do people who grew up in large school systems feel comfortable? Large churches!

The strong convictions of today's young parents regarding the value of quality education for their children, coupled with the expectation of finding quality programming in large institutions, also increases the popularity of large churches.

B. Why does America continue to have about the same number of small churches (125 or fewer in attendance)? Many pre-1946-birthdate church attendees, acclimated in small schools and churches during childhood, prefer small churches. But approximately 20 percent of Americans of all ages feel emotionally uncomfortable in groups larger than 100. For these people, small churches are a welcome haven, insuring their continued presence in a unique specialty role.

C. Why are midsize churches (125 to 300 in attendance) diminishing in numbers? When approximately 70 percent of young-adult families shop for a church, they feel they should pick one that provides (a) excellence in programming such as high quality worship, preaching, and music; (b) more options in programming that include numerous worship-time choices; and (c) the possibility of better education and youth group experiences for their children. This thinking pattern is so pervasive across denominational lines some researchers accurately refer to midsize churches as "the dangerous size."

III. Large Churches Are Different!

In addition to being bigger, large churches exhibit numerous characteristics that set them apart from midsize and small churches. The seven listed below are among the most powerful. Since midsize churches tend to be a mixture of those seven distinctive characteristics, we see the nature of large churches more clearly by contrasting them with small churches:

A. The *priorities* are different in a large church.

1. The priorities in small churches that average fewer than 125 in worship attendance focus on face-to-face relationships. Small churches resemble large families, most of whose members do everything as one group, thereby experiencing a powerful sense of belonging. In the small church, the individual's *relationships* with the other members matters more than the *performance quality* of what happens in the congregation's programming.
2. By contrast, many people who attend large churches are seeking quality programming for themselves and their children: quality music, quality preaching, and quality everything. At the people-relationship level, many large church attendees are looking for anonymity more than they are for the intimacy of a small family group. Thus, the overall priorities in large churches of more than 350 in average worship attendance tend to focus more on *performance quality* than on *people relationships*. Example:
 - a. The scene is a small-church worship service. During the offertory, a twelve-year-old boy plays a viola solo. The boy is not all that good with the viola. However, in the third pew on the right side of the sanctuary sit his grandparents, long-term, active members of this congregation. His parents, an assortment of family friends, and a few other relatives are scattered throughout the sanctuary. For this congregation, the quality of the viola solo is irrelevant. The boy and their relationship with him are the goals.
 - b. A large congregation of 350-1,000 in average worship attendance could not permit that viola solo, so it would never happen. Why not? In large churches, the quality of what happens in the worship service must be consistently exceptional. Leaders know that only a few of the worshippers would know the boy and his family; therefore, most worshipers would feel negative rather than positive about the performance. Leaders also know that many among the numerous first-time and repeat worship visitors would feel turned off by the viola solo.

B. The *pastor behavior* is different in a large church.

1. Small-church attendees expect close personal relationships with the pastor and his or her family.
2. The majority of large-church attendees expect to know their pastor primarily through large gatherings such as worship, funerals, weddings, fellowship dinners, and through what he or she writes in the newsletter.
3. A summary of what members of the three church sizes typically expect from their pastors looks like this:
 - a. Small churches focus on *People* (as individuals) and expect *Chaplain-behavior* from their pastors.
 - (1) Thus, when people in small churches begin "murmuring" about their pastor's inadequacies, what is the most negative comment

- they can make? (Murmuring is a King James Translation word for the Old Testament account about Moses: “They murmured against Moses” [Exodus 15:24].)
- (2) When a small church’s members murmur, “I’m not sure our pastor really cares about people,” they are stating a horrific accusation.
 - (3) Small-church members understand themselves to be in the caring-for-people business (retail, one-at-a-time, not just wholesale, in groups).
 - (4) Therefore, the most important role their pastor plays is “Chaplain.” If the members view their Chaplain-CEO as lacking compassion for people, they feel their church has the wrong kind of leader.
- b. Midsize churches focus on *Programs* (for groups of individuals who feel connected to it through some group, activity, or ministry) and expect “*Y-Director*” behavior from their pastors.
- (1) When the “murmuring” begins in a midsize church, the complaints more often mention something that is going wrong in one of the programs, groups, or ministries.
 - (2) Example: “When Pastor Smith was here, we had twenty-five high-school kids in the youth group. I understand that only about three attend now. We have a big problem!”
 - (3) The midsize-church pastor must shepherd several groups and ministries, not just shepherd the individuals in those groups.
 - (4) What happens when pastors who have developed skill as chaplains relocate to midsize congregations where attendees measure clergy effectiveness by how well he or she keeps several group- and program-plates spinning in the air at the same time? Considerable transition stress may result during the first eighteen months (for both the pastor and the congregation).
- c. Large churches focus on *Performance* (high quality plus good attendance is expected and measured at all *Events*) and expect *Corporation President-behavior* from their pastors.
- (1) When the “murmuring” begins in a large church, the complaints often mention defective quality or attendance in one or more of the congregation’s events.
 - (2) Fifty-two of these events per year happen on Sunday morning. Other events happen at special seasons and special times such as funerals and weddings.
 - (3) People in large churches tend to count things when they judge clergy performance.
 - They look around the sanctuary and decide whether it is “as full as it used to be.”
 - They look at the financial report to see if the income and outgo match.
 - Or, as one lay leader said to another, “We have always had about 700 people at the Annual Thanksgiving Dinner, but I don’t think we had more than 200 this year. Sunday morning attendance seems down, too. We need to do something about this!”

- (4) What happens when pastors who have developed skill as Y-directors in midsize congregations where attendees measure clergy effectiveness by how well he or she keeps several group- and program-plates spinning in the air at the same time relocate to a large church? Considerable transition stress may result during the first eighteen months (for both the pastor and the congregation).

C. The *personnel numbers and functions are different in a large church.*

1. Small churches rely heavily on laypersons for getting things done.
2. Large churches, by contrast, rely far more on paid professional staff that gives direction to lay leaders and members for accomplishing ministries.

D. The *programming is different in a large church.*

1. Small-church attendees expect minimal programming, often consisting of worship, Sunday school, choir, youth activities, and a women's organization. Thus, most of the members view small-church pastors who exhibit enthusiastic support of those five programs and genuine concern for the church members and people in this community as highly effective, even though the church stays the same size for many years.
2. Large-church attendees, by contrast, expect a cafeteria of programming that meets the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of persons at every age and stage of development.

E. The *participation is different in a large church.*

1. Small-church attendees expect everyone to participate in every gathering. Every absent member is a matter of concern, because small churches are in the *individual* caring business. If an active member is unexpectedly absent from a small-church gathering, several people wonder whether she is out of town, ill, or angry. During the next couple of days, several people check with her to find out.
2. Large-church attendees, on the other hand, expect to pick and choose the church activities in which they participate. Members who do not attend everything are not viewed as disloyal or alienated.

F. The *procedures are different in a large church.*

1. The small church is a participatory democracy in which consensus of the members determines procedures.
 - a. Small-church attendees expect their high involvement levels to give them ownership and control of decision-making procedures.
 - b. Thus, the governing-board meetings in small churches often have the emotional feel of town-hall gatherings in small New England villages.
 - (1) In small churches, people not present at the meeting sometimes exert strong influence. Example: When someone asks at a governing board meeting, "What will George Murphy think of this decision?" the group may decide to get George's opinion before they vote on this matter. Why?
 - (2) They know that a majority vote does not always mean that the board's wishes can happen. In some instances, one respected, strongly-opinionated individual not present at the meeting can successfully veto the action of twenty-five board members.

- c. Small-membership churches give their pastors little or no authority for congregational decision-making.
 - (1) On the day the pastor arrives, he or she finds no leadership role vacancies. Those roles are already filled by influential laypersons.
 - (2) Most of the members highly respect the new pastor. However, they view him or her as a “chaplain-outsider” who will not be here long. “So we need to decide things to suite ourselves.”
 - (3) Small-church leaders expect the pastor to preach, teach, visit the sick, bury the dead, and marry the willing, but they do not expect the pastor to exert leadership, especially in making changes.
 - (4) Someone made only a slight overstatement by asserting that small-church leaders tend to define change as “changing pastors,” not as expecting pastors to change church procedures.
- d. Because small churches act like families, their members can fight intensively and remain together, whereas large congregations may split when they cannot agree on similar issues.
- e. Lay leaders in small-membership churches dislike written communication, which is one of the reasons they have a love-hate relationship with their denomination.
 - (1) Regional and national denominational structures, by necessity, communicate on paper. How do families communicate at the dinner table? Do they circulate memos? No! They talk with one another.
 - (2) Little wonder that small churches get irritated with “all this paperwork” from their districts, regions, synods, and presbyteries.
- 2. The large church is a representative democracy that determines its procedures through elected representatives, appointed representatives, and paid staff.
 - a. Leaders and members in a large church give the senior pastor more authority his or her first day in the parish than small-church laypersons give the pastor after five years of faithful service.
 - b. Lay leaders in larger churches know that the oral grapevine does not go everywhere, and that oral grapevine frequently distributes inaccurate information to the people and groups within its reach.
 - c. Thus, large churches use bales of paper and barrels of ink to communicate with and among members, committees, governing boards, and ministries.

G. The *property* is different in a large church.

- 1. Small-church attendees expect people to treat the church building as they do their own home, with carefully followed traditions for room use, turning off the lights, and tidiness.
 - a. Attendees view many objects as sacred, with special history and meaning (like the precious personal items in our homes).
 - b. Moving or changing certain of those “sacred” objects can be highly offensive, to some members feeling like an insult to their congregation’s heritage and “the people who built this church.”
- 2. Large-church attendees expect people to treat the church building like a public institution through which much traffic flows for many different reasons. Their attendees do not expect everyone to take meticulously good care of the building, and they expect high maintenance costs.

IV. In What Ways Are *Effective* Large Churches Different?

The following lists illustrate the contrast between large churches (many of which are declining in health, vitality, and membership) and *effective* large churches that are moving in the opposite direction.

The lists provide an opportunity for analysis: put a check mark by items that you feel should receive greater emphasis in our congregation.

Even better: *ask governing board members and staff members, without discussing these lists among themselves, to check those items they feel need greater emphasis.* Then, tabulate the results and discuss them at (a) a governing board meeting and (b) a staff retreat.

Consider (a) appointing a visioning team “to consider how our church can strengthen the items that receive numerous check marks,” or (b) asking staff to propose fine-tuning ideas.

A. Priorities:

1. Strong emphasis on quality and attention to detail in every aspect of congregational life.
2. Strong emphasis on transforming the quality of individual lives through the spiritual power of Jesus Christ.
3. Strong emphasis on helping hurting people both inside and beyond our church, rather than a focus on “taking care of our church building and traditions.”
4. Strong emphasis on meeting the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of people born after 1955.
5. Strong emphasis on reaching out to people who have no active church relationship.
6. A focus on attracting new members from great distances, rather than from a close geographical proximity to the building.
7. An intentional focus on communicating warmth and hospitality to “church shoppers.”
8. A focus on (a) finding and fine-tuning ideas from effective large churches and (b) creating ideas that help other churches, rather than the habit of drawing all new ideas from denominational sources.
9. Freedom of thought on most doctrinal matters, while at the same time being strongly orthodox in theology at three points:
 - a. Christ-centered
 - b. Bible-centered
 - c. Love-centered
10. A focus on effective communication through newsletters (usually weekly) and the various media tools, such as e-mail, which fits their community residents’ mind-set.

B. Pastoring:

1. The senior pastor and staff exhibit genuine caring and concern for people.
2. The senior pastor and staff recognize that pastoring the various groups, classes, choirs, and organizations is as important as caring for individuals.

C. Personnel:

1. A senior pastor who is a visionary leader and whose ministry skill mix contains that rare balance of people orientation (consideration behavior) and task orientation (structure behavior).
2. Highly competent and productive program and administrative staff.
3. A senior pastor who sees as one of his/her principle tasks the goal of making productive the specific strengths and knowledge of each staff member.

4. A staff that exhibits high creativity, while working within the bounds of a common vision reinforced with frequent staff communication.
5. An emphasis on moving beyond “staff assistants to the senior pastor” to staff that assumes primary responsibility for programs and events.
6. An emphasis on moving beyond staff with identical talents and viewpoints to staff with diverse gifts but collegial relationships.
7. An emphasis on moving beyond staff that operates independently to staff working interdependently and having fun together.
8. An emphasis on moving beyond an insistence on top-down control of details to an insistence on initiative and creativity, within the boundaries of the overall congregational vision and high levels of communication.
9. An emphasis on moving beyond lay-managed ministries to staff-managed ministries.
10. An emphasis on moving beyond risk-avoidance to faith ventures that are expected to fail occasionally.
11. An emphasis on moving beyond staff doing all of the work to staff leading laypersons in doing the work through ministry teams.
12. An emphasis on moving beyond senior-minister-centered care to staff- and group-centered pastoral care.

D. Programming:

1. Positive, upbeat worship services that are meaningful to people in every age range.
2. Consistently-memorable, biblically-based sermons.
3. Several worship options each weekend.
4. A high-quality music ministry that includes several music groups, and utilizes the broad range of music necessary to meet the spiritual needs of people in every age group.
5. Numerous attractive options in weekday programming—for every age group, including adults.
6. A strong teaching ministry that includes numerous biblical learning opportunities for adults.
7. Two-to-four high-quality large-group events each year.
8. A focus on children that includes weekday programs such as preschool, daycare, Parents’ Day Out, and Christian elementary school.
9. Strong emphasis on world missions, benevolences, and community outreach—often 20-to-35 percent of the congregation’s total annual giving, rather than the 8-to-15 percent in smaller churches.
10. Effective stewardship education that attracts \$1,400 to \$2,700 per year, per-average-worship-attendee, compared to the \$700 to \$1,200 per year, per-worship-attendee given in smaller churches.
11. Specialized ministries for several groups, rather than generalized ministry to one group.
12. An emphasis on moving beyond “we have always done it that way” habits to excellence in everything.
13. An emphasis on moving beyond a focus on offices and positions to a focus on people working together in ministry teams.
14. An emphasis on moving beyond one program for each age range to multiple choices for each age group.
15. An emphasis on moving beyond a casual focus on prayer to a highly intentional focus on prayer.

E. Participation:

1. A staff that understands the difference in participation preferences in persons born before and after 1945.
2. A high respect for anonymity and “observer status” by worship attendees who wish to play that role.
3. A wide range of opportunity for connectedness and a sense of belonging through classes and groups.
4. An expectation that attendees get involved in one or more of the various ministry teams long before they become official members of the congregation.
5. Recognition that our church cannot meet every person’s spiritual need.

F. Procedures:

1. A senior pastor who understands how to structure the organizational and decision-making processes in ways that fit the unique nature of a large-membership church.
2. An organizational structure that requires a small percentage of laypersons’ time to maintain, so that larger amounts of laypersons’ time can focus on ministries directed toward transforming lives and helping hurting people.
3. A focus on producing the emotional “feel” of a family, within a highly complex structure similar to a corporation.
4. An emphasis on moving beyond organizational simplicity to organizational complexity.
5. An emphasis on moving beyond a one-congregation self-identity to a “multiple congregations within a congregation” self-identity.
6. An emphasis on moving beyond a low emphasis on small-group development to intentional small-group development.
7. An emphasis on moving beyond unorganized visitor follow-up to intentional, well-organized visitor follow-up.
8. An emphasis on moving beyond the 1950s’ recordkeeping systems to a sophisticated computer system that tracks members, participation, and statistics.
9. An emphasis on moving beyond advertising by word-of-mouth only, to multiple forms of advertising.
10. An emphasis on moving beyond traditional long-range planning processes to continuous evaluation and change processes.

Property:

1. High quality facilities.
2. An attractive nursery.
3. Sufficient off-street parking.
4. A focus on providing attractive, contemporary, functional facilities—without succumbing to the ever-present temptation of becoming preoccupied with caring for the building instead of caring for the people.
5. An emphasis on moving beyond once-a-week use of the worship area and rooms to multiple uses for multiple worship services and activities.

V. What Challenges Do Large Churches Face as They Grow?

As you study the following, give special attention to the section that describes your church's size category plus the section that describes churches in the next-largest category.

A. The large church crosses five major transition points as it grows beyond 350 in worship attendance. Transition is most obvious at the following size levels:

- 350-400 average worship attendance
- 450-550 average worship attendance
- 700-750 average worship attendance
- 900-1,000 average worship attendance
- 1,800-2,000 average worship attendance

B. Each of those five transition points presents a special set of leadership challenges. Put a check mark by the transition points you think your church is dealing with right now!

Even better: ask governing board members and staff members, without discussing these lists among themselves, to check the items they feel need greater emphasis. Then, tabulate the results and discuss them at (a) a governing board meeting and (b) a staff retreat.

350-400 average worship attendance:

- a. The church needs more fellowship groups, ministry teams, and adult classes but few leaders see the need for them.
- b. The church needs more program staff and a full-time associate pastor, but several lay leaders fail to see this need.
- c. The church needs more secretarial staff, but many lay leaders wonder why we can't get by with what we've had in the past.

450-550 average worship attendance:

- a. Loss of vision and direction as the "busyness" of the system (funerals, weddings, etc.) begins to focus the staff on running the institution, instead of seeing it as a means for accomplishing Christ's ministries.
- b. The increasing layers of bureaucratic structure that must approve every new idea begin to stifle creativity and focus staff/lay leaders on maintaining the status quo.
- c. The natural self-satisfaction at having attained such a substantial size begins to permeate the thinking/behavior processes of many lay and staff leaders with the often-repeated cliché, "Our church is about the right size."
- d. Because assimilation processes that worked well at a smaller size begin to work poorly at this size, recruiting laypersons for various ministries becomes more difficult; thus, focusing the attention of staff more on housekeeping matters than on membership-growth opportunities.
- e. Because communication systems that worked well at a smaller size are becoming less effective, much staff and lay leadership time begins to focus on correcting miscommunication and resolving conflicts that result from poor communication.
- f. The volume of pastoral care stemming from funerals, hospitalizations, and personal crisis matters begins to consume staff time to such an extent that little energy is left for reaching out to new people.
- g. If the property acreage and/or building space are inadequate, parking and space limitations begin to dampen the interest in membership growth.

- h. Continuing to operate with older staff-leadership procedures that fit a smaller size church often restrict a growth orientation—by keeping the staff focused on interpersonal and organizational relationship problems.
- i. The church often has fewer group entry points for new attendees than it needs—less than seven regularly meeting adult groups per 100 worship attendees—without recognizing this deficiency.
- j. The church often tends to expect too much from laypersons and fails to make a transition to the employment and training of sufficient staff to recruit and lead the laypersons.
- k. The governing board often withholds permission to add additional staff and refuses to give the present staff permission to make the changes necessary to accomplish membership growth.
- l. The governing board tends to act one size smaller than this church is, trying to micromanage the work of committees and staff, rather than acting as an affirming body that supports the leadership of staff and committees.
- m. The senior pastor often emotionally resists moving away from the “hub and spoke” pastoral relationship system with members and committees to a new role of “hub and spoke” pastoral relationship system *with the staff*—which must now begin to replace the senior pastor in most of the individual member and committee relationships.

700-750 average worship attendance:

- a. A large number of members begin to feel “lost in the crowd,” losing the sense of personal love and support from the staff and one another that they enjoyed when the church was smaller.
- b. Lyle Schaller says that at this size the senior pastor must delegate to other staff members the primary leadership in all or part of six responsibilities:
 - Community ministries
 - Administration
 - Oversight of program and group life
 - Pastoral care
 - Recruiting and caring for a huge network of laypersons
 - The enlistment and assimilation of new members
- c. At this size, leaders must use every possible technical asset to compensate for the depersonalization inherent in large groups—such as computer printouts that remind the staff of birthdays and the first anniversary of the death of a spouse, etc.
- d. A strong emphasis on developing a large number of small groups of various kinds becomes essential for creating the sense of belonging and caring that was achieved in other ways when the church was smaller.

900-1,000 average worship attendance:

- a. The changes needed to move past this membership size are massive rather than incremental—thus, the staff and governing board often feel like forming a “back to Egypt committee” so they can move back into their personal comfort zones.
- b. At least three-fourths of the members must find their primary institutional identity within a class, study group, circle, choir, mission team, cell, mutual support group, or some ministry team—rather than with the congregation as a whole.

- c. Many of the members must accept and affirm the fact that a staff person other than the senior pastor will fill the role of “my pastor,” which is a difficult transition for many members.
- d. The organizational structure must shift beyond the “wheel and spokes” structure, in which all staff members report to and are directly accountable to the senior pastor. This size church must shift to a departmental structure, in which most of the staff members report to and are directly accountable to a short list of key staff members, who in turn report to and are accountable to the senior pastor. (Why? Organizational experts, using the term “span of control,” remind us that a supervisor can NEVER effectively manage more than seven people—and five or fewer works better. Any organizational structure, including churches, whose leaders break that rule also break the effectiveness of its ministries, its staff, its lay leaders, and its ministry teams.)
- e. The senior pastor leads primarily through a small lay executive group, the personnel committee, the budget committee, a short list of key staff members, and as a public figure in most of the worship services—articulating the vision for tomorrow in various ways that keep the church’s purpose pointed in a unified direction.
- f. Effective staff members become much more crucial. Lay leaders begin to select staff more on the basis of competence, creativity, character, energy, initiative, productivity, and performance—rather than on the basis of academic credentials or denominational seniority.
- g. Staff members must be selected for new roles, moving in directions such as the following:
 - From a Christian education director to someone who expands the group life through the ministry of teaching
 - From a youth minister to someone who creates and oversees a package of ministries that include families with teenagers
 - From a choir director to a director of music who understands the spiritual-growth facilitating power of music and its essential role in large-group events
 - From a children’s worker to someone who builds a network of ministries with families that include children
 - From a parish visitor to someone who enlists and trains teams of laypersons and staff to do pastoral care
 - From a minister of evangelism to someone who recruits and trains evangelism teams
- h. Leaders begin to accomplish most of the church’s ministries through teams and groups of laypersons recruited through the leadership of a lay ministries coordinator, who now becomes one of the most crucial staff members.
- i. Much of the ministry management role of standing committees led by laypersons transitions toward specialized staff members who become a management team under the visionary leadership of a senior pastor—who must now try to avoid micromanaging *their leadership roles* in the same way that he or she avoided micromanaging the leadership roles of the lay committees when the church was smaller.
- j. Unless the polity of the congregation’s denomination requires it, most congregations of this size transition to fewer standing committees and more ministry teams. Many congregations of this size end up with four standing committees: Christian education, Property, Finance, and Personnel.

- k. Lyle Schaller says that a few churches of more than 1,000 attendees use advisory committees to help the staff stay in touch with the members, but most churches of this size do not need the standing committees found in smaller churches for the following reasons:
 - They focus primarily on meeting the needs of people who will join next year, not people who have already joined.
 - They focus primarily on meeting religious needs, not on trying to keep the long-term members happy. (Long-term members in these churches out-migrate to other churches at a fairly high percentage rate, but the large newcomer list more than compensates for their exits.)
 - Churches of this size are oriented toward the people who are *participating* rather than toward the concept of “members.” People who do not wish to participate either sit in the bleachers and watch or go elsewhere.
- l. Opportunity for participation in a ministry team motivates far large numbers of God’s people to engage in mission and ministry than is the case with committees alone. That expanded lay participation, in turn, increases the spiritual growth of and the opportunities for fellowship among a larger number of parishioners.
- m. As the governing board moves to a role of setting broad policy, approving budget, auditing financial reports, and monitoring progress toward goals, the phrase “staff-led and lay-governed” begins to feel emotionally comfortable to the lay leaders, staff, and members—a transition that can, for a brief time during this shift, cause uneasiness and conflict among a short list of size-transition-challenged resisters.

1,800-2,000 average worship attendance:

- a. These megachurches provide associate staff in almost every category of ministry, such as evangelism, assimilation, prayer, media, youth, and children.
- b. John N. Vaughan’s research, reported in *Megachurches & America’s Cities* (Grand Rapids: Baker books), indicates that these churches have twenty strengths:
 - Multiple ministries
 - High-visibility location
 - Specialized staff
 - Name recognition of the church
 - Senior pastor is a proven leader-preacher-teacher
 - Many neighborhoods represented
 - Social and community stability
 - Openness to innovative ideas
 - Reduced staff exposure to internal conflict
 - Expanded opportunity for service
 - Excellence of music
 - Media saturation of the immediate metropolitan area
 - Media saturation into other cities, states, and countries
 - Organizational and group homogeneity due to large numbers of members in every age range

- Kingdom-focused vision rather than dominance by the local culture
 - Strong financial resources
 - Potential for influencing change in cities
 - Major spiritual influence against the forces of urban darkness
 - Strong center of support for Christian values
 - Umbrella for weak churches ready to disband
- c. The pastor of a large independent church told Lyle Schaller that the following factors allow these congregations to be effective:
- (1) We trust the congregation's lay leaders (the denomination does not protect us from being fired and having to relocate).
 - (2) We do not have to contend with negative newspaper stories.
 - (3) We reward the competence of our pastors and congregations with affirmation.
 - (4) We trust people rather than institutions.
 - (5) We organize around teams rather than individuals.
 - (6) We encourage the development of large churches (rather than punishing them by increased financial demands through financial assessments).
- d. Lyle Schaller says that if the goal is to move beyond 1,800 in average worship attendance, the senior pastor must concentrate on three concerns:
- (1) Energizing and expanding worship with the help of other staff
 - (2) Creating, articulating, and helping leaders to live out the vision of what God calls this church to do tomorrow.
 - (3) Identifying and handling minor problems before they grow into major problems—through the skilled use of a warm heart, a listening ear, an open mind, and a keen eye for detail.

C. A change in congregational size requires a change in the organizational structure.

Peter Drucker, guru of American Business Management for the last six decades, says that every time an organization changes size by as much as 45 percent, it probably needs a new structure. This is one of the least recognized—and most destructive when not recognized—challenges that large congregations face when they grow larger.

D. Significant change in the size of an organization is always more complex than anticipated. Inevitably, a size change requires three kinds of management:

1. Stress management
2. Change management
3. Change in the management of the system itself

E. What are some of the transition stresses in your congregation at present? Ask the staff, after they read the lists above, to take turns answering that question. Tabulate the responses. Discuss the items that get the most “hits” at future staff meetings.

VI. What Type of Leadership Produces Large Church Effectiveness?

Every pastor, in every size church, leads. The two big questions: “In what direction?” and “In what manner?”

A. Effective large-church leaders accomplish three *goals*:

1. Establish appropriate direction for a group
2. Gain commitment from group members to move in that direction
3. Motivate group members to achieve that direction’s objectives

Ineffective leaders leave out one or two of these three functions. Or, they try to accomplish one or more of those three functions in a manner that does not fit their congregation or group.

B. Effective large-church leaders accomplish those three goals with seven *activities*. Each of the seven is important:

1. See the vision of what God wants this church to become.
2. Communicate the vision to the congregation and the staff.
3. Select staff that can achieve the vision.
4. Organize the staff in ways that can achieve the vision.
5. Inspire the staff for achieving the vision.
6. Nurture the staff in ways that empower them to achieve the vision.
7. Inspire the congregation to participate in achieving the vision.

C. Effective large-church leaders with five *strategic components*. Those five parts mesh together like gear-wheels, connected to the drive-shaft of leadership vision concerning what God wants this church to become. If one of the five gear-wheels is missing or defective, the others are impaired. Place a check mark by the ones you think need greater emphasis in our congregation.

1. Purpose

- a. Effective leaders understand the difference between leadership and management.
 - (1) Leaders tell people what direction to go.
 - (2) Managers tell people how to get there.
 - (3) Effective churches have both kinds of leaders.
- b. Effective leaders help the church become purpose driven.
 - (1) Program-driven churches entangle leaders in finding a new program for next year.
 - (2) Ray Bakke Says, “Programs are what we do when we don’t know what we should do.”
 - (3) That may be a slight exaggeration, but *purpose*-driven churches evaluate their programs and program-selections in the light of the congregation’s central purpose.
- c. Effective leaders help churches focus on people instead of traditions, money, and buildings.
 - (1) Fred Smith says that effective large churches attempt to “distribute” ministry in the community, rather than merely trying to get people to come to church.
 - (2) Ironically, large churches are often more effective at creating intimacy than small churches—because they are honeycombed with small “retail departments” called sharing groups, discipleship

- groups, classes, ministry teams, etc., that are organized around a subject such as caring for small children or growing older.
- d. Effective leaders help the church to use windshield-planning procedures.
 - (1) Rearview-mirror-planning habits entangle the leaders in trying to accomplish goals set in the past.
 - (2) Windshield-planning looks beyond the church's present location to state the direction God is calling it to go.
 - e. Effective leaders set a long-range vision.
 - (1) After you formulate a vision, it takes five to seven years for people to follow you into that vision.
 - (2) Long pastorates are only an advantage if you continue to have a vision.
 - f. Effective leaders understand that vision produces the money to accomplish the vision.
 - (1) If you do God's work in God's way, you will have sufficient money to do it.
 - (2) A church's money problems are seldom a lack of money as much as a lack of vision to accurately do God's work in God's way.
 - g. Effective leaders are meaning makers.
 - (1) The meaning people expect to find through churches:
 - A feeling of spiritual focus
 - A feeling of hope
 - A feeling of being loved
 - A feeling of participating in meaningful ministries that help others
 - (2) Effective pastors learn how to deliver those four meanings in ways that match what most of their people see as important in their size congregation.
 - h. Effective leaders stay in touch with the parishioners they are leading.
 - (1) Just as every leader has needs, priorities, agendas, convictions, dreams, and visions, the people he or she leads have them also.
 - (2) Stay in touch, annually, by using a survey instrument that gives all worship attendees equal opportunity for input without signing their names, writing a letter, e-mailing you, or attending a meeting.
 - (3) Go to www.TheParishPaper.com and download free of charge an instrument that accomplishes this goal, titled "*How to Accomplish Effective Congregational Planning.*"
 - i. Effective leaders state purposes and priorities that unite people.
 - (1) Lyle Schaller says that unity is less difficult to achieve in churches that stress theological uniformity.
 - (2) In contrast, churches that put a greater emphasis on *fellowship and belonging as a way to achieve unity* tend to experience more fragmentation due to diversity; hence, their leaders must be more intentional about the creation of diverse groups in the church.
 - (3) In both kinds of congregations, however, a common purpose helps people to travel in the same direction.

- j. Effective leaders understand that conflict is a normal byproduct of setting purpose and direction.
- (1) Unity is not the *absence of tension* in an organization, as much as it is the *presence of cooperation* in ministry.
 - (2) Conflict in effective organizations is balanced with goal orientation, involvement, and a spirit of cooperating in accomplishing ministry.
 - (3) Some conflict comes from the 8 percent of Americans who exhibit a high level of negative moods.
 - People who live *near* big cities feel more positive than those who live *in* big cities or *far away* from them.
 - Eight percent of Americans age twenty-five and older exhibit a high level of negative moods, as measured by the frequency with which they feel depressed, lonely, restless, bored, and upset.
 - Negative moods are about 25 percent more prevalent in central-city counties of metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan counties not adjacent to a metro than they are in suburban metro counties and non-metro counties adjacent to metros. (*American Demographics*, December 1997)

2. Personnel

- a. Effective leaders understand that the larger the church, the more it needs a “Level 5” leader as senior pastor, who exhibits the following qualities:
- (1) A paradoxical combination of (a) professional will and resolve to do whatever must be done to produce the best long-term results and (b) great personal humility that shuns public adulation and is never boastful
 - (2) An effective leader who acts with quiet, calm determination based on *inspired standards* (rather than merely exhibiting an inspiring personal charisma to his/her followers) to catalyze commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision
 - (3) A competent manager who organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives, channeling his or her ambition into the company, not the self
 - (4) A contributing team member who (a) works effectively with other team members in group settings toward the achievement of the church’s objectives, and (b) will settle for nothing less than excellence
 - (5) A highly capable individual who (a) makes productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills, and good work habits, but (b) looks out the window, not in the mirror, to apportion responsibility for poor results; never blaming other people, external factors, or bad luck; but apportioning credit for the church’s success to other people, external factors, and good luck. (Paraphrased from descriptions by Jim Collins, “Level 5 Leadership,” *Harvard Business Review*, January 2001, pages 67-73.)

- b. Effective leaders understand that effective staff is a major key to the effectiveness of large churches.
 - (1) The most important resource in a church is laypersons who volunteer their time, talents, and leadership.
 - (2) Staff is the key to recruiting and organizing the laypersons' time and leadership in a large church.
 - Paradoxically, it is easier to tap lay energies in small churches than in large churches.
 - Large churches lack the natural peer pressure inherent in a small family-size group.
 - In large churches, several of the laypersons feel that there are probably many other people better qualified than they.
 - Then, too, some people attend large churches looking for anonymity and "bleacher status" rather than player participation.
 - (3) Without effective staff, lay-leadership time and energy is not harnessed.
- c. Effective leaders train the staff to become facilitators of ministry rather than providers of ministry.
 - (1) The central task of staff is to produce performers, rather than to be a performer.
 - In smaller congregations of less than 350 average worship attendance, being a performer met the emotional needs of many staff members.
 - Shifting roles to that of "producing performers" is complex for many staff members who have served in smaller, static congregations.
 - (2) Changing this focus is as complex for the staff members as the challenge a senior pastor faces in shifting roles when moving from a midsize to a large congregation.
- d. Effective leaders understand the staffing changes they need to make in order to cross transitional points in church size.
 - (1) When average worship attendance is 100-170, the church needs a generalist pastor and lay volunteers.
 - (2) When average worship attendance is 350-1,000, the church needs a generalist pastor with specialist staff members who work with clusters of lay volunteers in standing committees.
 - (3) When average attendance is 1,000-3,000, the church needs a generalist pastor, two specialist pastors (a business administrator and a program director), and several generalist pastors (who involve large numbers of lay volunteers in specific ministries).
- e. Effective leaders understand that large churches, like corporations in the business world, are only as effective as their smaller units.
 - (1) Staff abilities are the primary determiner of effectiveness in these smaller units.
 - (2) Up through the middle of the 1900s, many healthy, large churches functioned with only one staff member—a pastor who was a generalist. Unfortunately, some of the lay leaders still remember those "good old days," but did not notice the changes in parishioner

- expectations and several other societal changes that made that model obsolete.
- f. Effective leaders develop skill in selecting staff.
- (1) Peter Drucker says, “The purpose of organization is to make weakness irrelevant.”
 - (2) With the proper organizational structure, the weaknesses of the senior pastor become irrelevant, as do the weaknesses of the staff.
 - (3) Smaller congregations should usually hire staff from outside the church—because the people on the inside seldom understand what the senior pastor is trying to accomplish.
 - (4) The larger the church, the more possible it is to obtain staff from inside the congregation.
 - (5) See skill-evaluation, reference-checking, and hiring guides in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness*. At www.TheParishPaper.com download free of charge.
- g. Effective leaders understand the role of manager.
- (1) Few people who have the star quality often found in senior pastors who are excellent speakers, have the coaching qualities necessary to be a good manager.
 - (2) Therefore, senior pastors need one or more management-skilled staff that put wheels on the vision and move it to reality.
- h. Effective pastors understand that it takes strong *pastoral* skill to grow a church to 350 in worship attendance and strong *leadership* skills to grow a church beyond 350 in attendance.
- (1) Senior pastors in large churches must continue to love people and be close to many of them; yet, avoid falling into the trap of thinking that the pastor’s relationship with the people in a large congregation can be the same as it was in a smaller church.
 - (2) Initially, clergypersons find it extremely difficult to transition from problem solver/pastor to leader/director/CEO.
- i. Effective leaders understand the nature of their leadership role.
- (1) The leader must have vision, visibility (out and about), and versatility (always with a new word, new idea, new method, new suggestion).
 - (2) Charles Kinder says that the leader must see the vision, state the mission, and set the tone.
 - (3) D. A. Nadler says that the leader must envision, energize, and enable.
 - (4) Leith Anderson says that leaders in large churches must focus on leadership, communication, administration, and interpersonal relationships.
 - (5) Max Dupree says that the role of a leader is as follows;
 - State the vision (the more complex the organization and the more talented the people, the more you need to be working on the issue of the future).
 - Build trust.
 - Share the values.
 - Be visible.

- Define reality (leaders cannot cast accurate vision without an accurate definition of reality).
 - Make promises.
 - Select, nurture, and evaluate key people.
 - Energize (enable, support, celebrate).
 - Achieve a working level of unity.
 - Measure, adjust, and review.
 - Train people (technically, in relationships, about the context in which they work).
 - Keep adjusting the communicating/coordinating structure so that it stays consistent with the objectives and the size of the system.
 - Make the organization into a community.
 - Say thank you.
- j. Effective leaders understand that leadership is not a person but a series of functions that a group of people fulfill.
- k. Effective leaders understand that decision making is not an event; it is a process that unfolds over weeks, months, or sometimes even years—a process rife with discussion and debate, and a process that requires support at all levels of the organization when execution-time arrives.
- (1) Leaders who make bad decisions persevere in the fantasy that decisions are events that they alone control.
 - (2) Leaders who make good decisions see all of them as processes, and they explicitly design and manage them as such.
- l. Effective leaders learn how to shift from the role of directing to the role of coaching, support, and delegation.
- (1) Ken Blanchard says this happens through the acronym HELP:
 - **H**—Humor—expect “zoo behavior.”
 - **E**—EGO—recognize the Edging God Out tendency in oneself and others.
 - **L**—Listen—every problem you have can be solved by listening.
 - **P**—Purpose.
 - (2) One way leaders can attain more active involvement from staff and members is by understanding the four different psychological orientations that people bring to their group relationships.
 - (1) If you fail to make assignments that fit staff types, you cannot succeed.
 - (2) If you make staff assignments that fit staff types, you cannot fail.
 - (3) The next page provides a self-analysis tool that senior pastors and staff find useful.

Four People Types*

Every congregation and staff team needs all four of the following types of people. The percentage in front of each person-type is the percentage of that type of person in the American population.

As you read the characteristics of each of the four types, try to identify your own personal pattern from among the four.

At a meeting of staff, ask each person to identify his or her type.

17 percent are Initiators:

- They are good at organizing new programs and solving problems.
- They are restless, innovative.
- They are better at organizing a program than they are at maintaining it.
- They want to think of and see creative things accomplished.

17 percent are Expressors:

- They are good at showing concern and caring.
- They enjoy being with people.
- They like meetings.
- They want to be liked and accepted.

33 percent are Analysts:

- They are good at handling complex details and getting things done exactly right.
- They enjoy giving advice.
- They are better at maintaining a program than they are at inventing/organizing it.
- They want to avoid rapid and/or unexpected changes.

33 percent are Dependables:

- They are good at carrying out plans and programs.
- They are reliable and dependable.
- They like the satisfaction of getting things done.
- They want to enjoy friendly relationships while carrying out plans developed by leaders.

Initiators like to tell you where to go.

Expressors like to talk about going there.

Analysts like to tell you how to get there.

Dependables like to get the work done.

Each of the four types comes in a positive or negative personality format. Thus, we have positive and negative *initiators*, positive and negative *expressors*, etc.

*Adapted from *L-E-A-D Personality Inventory* by Walter A. Lacey and John J. Fanning (Lynchburg, Virginia: Church Growth Institute, 1986), inventory booklet and an album with five audiotapes, \$39.95. Order from Church Growth Institute (<http://store.churchgrowth.org/epages/ChurchGrowth.sf>).

- (4) Much of the failure to motivate staff comes from failing to fit their personal pattern with the job you ask them to do in the church.
 - (5) We must also face the fact that leaders in large churches that grow in membership are likely to be *Initiators*.
 - (6) *Expressors* tend to lead churches where the quality of caring and fellowship is high but membership growth is flat.
 - (7) Senior pastors in large churches that move them to grow in membership need at least one *initiator* in a key staff position.
- m. Effective leaders learn that spending time counseling with and coaching the staff is one of their most important ministries.
- (1) Jesus gave an outstanding amount of time to leadership training.
 - Forty-nine percent of the verses in the Gospel of Mark show Jesus relating to his close followers (teaching, correcting, traveling, eating, and praying with them).
 - One-third of those verses show Jesus relating more closely to his three most intimate followers—Peter, James, and John.
 - (2) This pattern must be replicated between the senior pastor and staff in a large church.
- n. Effective leaders learn how to delegate.
- (1) Delegation is one of the hardest management skills to learn. Nobody is born with it, and all of our childhood training tends to equip us for doing things ourselves rather than delegating them to others. Most people do not, therefore, learn how to delegate unless they are forced into it.
 - (2) I once said to a friend who owns a trucking company with more than 100 employees, “I have trouble delegating things.” He smiled and replied, “You will learn. You just haven’t experienced enough pain yet!” Later on, I found he was right. When you experience enough pain from having too many responsibilities and not enough time to accomplish what you know God calls you to do, you learn how to delegate the things you were once convinced you just had to do yourself.
 - (3) The matters you delegate do not get done quite as well as you would have done them, but they get done. And involving other people in your work doubles, triples, or quadruples your productivity. This far more than compensates for the slight reduction in quality that comes from not having done everything yourself.
 - (4) Several psychological hang-ups mitigate against learning how to delegate:
 - Fear of giving away some of our power and authority
 - Fear of losing the security blanket that detail work provides
 - Fear of changing a work pattern that has served us well in the past
 - The perfectionist “I can do it better myself” syndrome
 - Failure to recognize that people who have more responsibility and authority feel better about their jobs

- Fear that we will appear to be dumping our work on other people
 - Fear that it may take longer to train someone than to keep doing the job yourself
 - The feeling that there is only one right way to do a job
- (5) Key principles in learning how to delegate:
- Getting the job done is more important than who does the job.
 - We do people a real favor by allowing them the same joy of achievement that we like to experience ourselves.
 - Employees like rather than dislike people who delegate.
 - Other people can do a job well if we give them sufficient authority, training, and experience.
 - Delegating work only to the ablest members of the team produces an overall detrimental effect. The strong get stronger and the weak get weaker. Also, you overwork and burn out the ablest members of the team. In effect, you penalize your best people for doing a good job.
 - Working out a mutually agreed-upon deadline date significantly increases the chances of getting something done quickly and with enthusiasm.
 - Step back and allow people to do things while still remaining available for support and assistance if they need it.
- (6) Six levels of delegation:
- Look into it and report to me on what you find.
 - Look into it and give me a list of options, with your recommendation of which option we should take.
 - Look into it and tell me what you think should be done about it.
 - Look into it and do it, unless I tell you not to.
 - Take action and tell me what you did.
 - Take action, and I don't need to know about it.
- (7) Staff leadership by the senior pastor in a large church involves a complex mixture of staying in touch without over-controlling, staying connected with programming plans without micromanaging, caring about staff members without smothering them, recognizing that leading office staff is different from leading clergy and program staff (because office staff accomplish a higher percentage of their ministries through direct delegation of specific tasks), leading the staff in group decision-making without relinquishing all decision-making authority, coaching staff members toward excellence without stifling creativity, and reprimanding without abusively damaging long-term relationships.
- (8) Detailed suggestions for how to conduct staff meetings; how to conduct quarterly coaching conferences with associate pastors and program staff; how to provide evaluation and feedback for clergy, program staff, and office staff; and how to maintain a healthy staff environment are found in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness* and

Volume 22, How to Strengthen Clergy/Staff Leadership & Relationship Skills. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download these resources free of charge.

- o. Effective leaders are concerned about everything but avoid taking responsibility for the details of everything.
 - (1) The higher up an organization you move, the more you work with people rather than with details.
 - (2) The pastor of a large church, for example, must be concerned about all the people in the church but refuse to take responsibility for all the details in the church.
 - Trying to take responsibility for all the details means you are trying to play God.
 - It also means you are breaking one of the Ten Commandments; you are stealing what does not belong to you.
- p. Effective leaders create a motivational climate.
 - (1) A motivation climate includes many of the following elements:
 - Responsibility
 - Trust
 - Listening
 - Teams
 - Solving problems as a team
 - Praise
 - Recognition for ideas
 - Knowing why you're important to the organization
 - Flexible controls
 - Direction (clear key-result areas, measurements, goals)
 - Knowledge (skills, training, information, goals)
 - Support (approval, coaching, feedback, encouragement)
 - Resources readily available
 - Upward and downward communication
 - (2) Removing one or more of those elements reduces the motivational climate in such a way as to make the senior pastor's vision difficult to accomplish, no matter how skilled the senior pastor is or how many hours he/she works.
- q. Effective leaders make frequent use of staff teams.
 - (1) The total staff feels like a team; they have individual goals but function as a team because they share a common purpose, coalesced around the congregation's vision and mission statements, passionately and frequently articulated by the senior pastor.
 - (2) For specific kinds of problem-solving, a motivated subsection of the entire staff team consisting of three staff members is five or six times as productive as three motivated individuals working alone.
 - (3) Good coaches make frequent use of small-group team meetings to discuss "What are we going to do about X?"
- r. Effective leaders develop a cohesive staff structure that couples independent planning and action with bonded relationships among members of the staff team.
 - (1) Many senior pastors in large churches have neither seen nor experienced an effective large-church leadership model.

- (2) The pastor of one large church with more than 2,500 in average worship attendance outlined the following components of an effective staff model, to which the congregation shifted when it abandoned the “hub and spokes” model in which everyone reported to the senior pastor:
- (a) The church has two divisions, called education and ministries, with a division head for each.
 - (b) The church divides all its groups by age or function: age groups such as children, junior high, etc., or function groups such as worship, evangelism, etc.
 - (c) Each division head meets with the division at least monthly, sometimes more often.
 - (d) The church has twelve pastors, each of which has a level of paraprofessionals who report to him/her.
 - (e) Each of the twelve pastors prepares a written report on Friday and distributes it to all other staff members. Each report includes a listing of all telephone calls and appointments, which protects against development of inappropriate relationships.
 - (f) The senior pastor meets with the twelve pastors every Monday for two hours and the following occurs:
 - The group reviews each pastor’s written report.
 - Anyone who is going to do anything in the life of the church (ushers, etc.) has his or her name “cleared.”
 - The Sunday worship experience is debriefed.
 - (g) The staff coffees together every morning at 10:00 a.m. and every afternoon.
 - (h) The staff gets together for pizza every Sunday evening after everything is finished.
 - (i) The twelve pastors hold four retreats each year.
 - (j) The senior pastor says the organizational structure is less important than holding staff together in relationships with the divisions and the church’s direction and mission.
 - (k) The senior pastor puts much effort into relationships and times when the staff is together.

3. Programming

- a. Effective leaders understand the kinds of programming needed to meet the spiritual needs of contemporary adults.
 - (1) George Gallup says that Americans want a wide variety of services, both spiritual and practical, from their churches and synagogues. Among these, the following are especially important:
 - A sense of community that helps them to overcome loneliness
 - Support and help for families, to help cope with the many challenges of modern life
 - Spiritual help in finding meaning for their lives
 - Help in deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ

- Information about the Bible and its meaning
 - Practical help in putting their faith into practice
 - Help in learning how to serve other people better
- (2) Studies indicate that adults are especially desirous that their churches provide effective ministries in four areas:
- Children and youth
 - Personal support in times of stress
 - Positive relationships with other people
 - Inspiration and guidance
- b. Effective leaders understand the need to change programming by addition, not by subtraction.
- (1) Avoid discontinuing an older group or ministry.
 - (2) Instead, add a group or ministry while leaving present ones intact; if they die, let them, but do not murder them.
- c. Effective leaders understand that worship effectiveness is the keystone to strengthening all other programming in the church, because it tends to determine the volume of people the church serves.
- (1) The music is usually the change most needed in order to strengthen the worship service.
 - (2) The music is often the change most resisted in the worship service.
 - This resistance sometimes comes from older members.
 - This resistance sometimes comes from a vocal 12 percent of the young-adult household members.
 - This resistance sometimes comes from professional musicians.

4. Process

- c. Effective leaders understand the four essential items they must manage in the church's governance system.
- (1) Vision—which they manage through board leadership and multifaceted communication
 - (2) Staff—which they manage through job descriptions, job objectives, and communication
 - (3) Time—which they manage through calendaring and planning
 - (4) Lay volunteers—which they manage through staff leadership and coordination
- b. Effective leaders understand where they get their authority.
- (1) Leadership authority in a large church comes from the following:
 - Vision
 - Board-member selection and leadership
 - Staff selection and leadership
 - Budget-building and monitoring
 - (2) In midsize and small churches of fewer than 350 in worship attendance, the governing board does the planning through committees.
 - (3) In large churches of more than 350-1,000 in worship, the governing board does the planning through staff working with laypersons in committees.

- (4) As the large church moves toward and beyond 1,000 in average worship attendance, the senior pastor leads the staff in preparing the plan.
 - The budget grows out of that plan prepared by staff
 - The governing board approves the plan.
- (5) The board will let the senior pastor shape the budget after he or she has demonstrated the ability to raise the money for it (two or three years of successful stewardship campaigns and a balanced budget at the end of each year accomplishes this trust-building).
- c. Effective leaders learn that the appointment of special committees to deal with specific challenges is the key to continuing change in large churches.
 - (1) Labeled “The Joel Committee” by John Ed Mathison, this type of special committee addresses a specific problem (such as shortage of parking). The governing board selects committee members that have specific talents and expertise in this challenge. After completing its work, the specialized committee dissolves.
 - (2) For each new MAJOR challenge, the governing board appoints a new Joel Committee. The name is from Joel 2:28—“I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.”
 - (3) This procedure is vastly superior to the older type of long-range planning committee that is generalist in nature rather than specific to each task.
- d. Effective leaders remember that the old guard (persons who are older than the senior pastor and were members of the church before he or she arrived) may *never* see the senior pastor as the person who is “in charge.”
 - (1) These persons may disagree with the senior pastor, but their need for being loved and respected by the chief leader of the church is greater than the senior pastor usually imagines, even though they do not always treat the senior pastor respectfully.
 - (2) People who act upset over change do not necessarily dislike the senior pastor personally.
- e. Effective leaders allow a certain amount of “challenge” to their leadership.
 - (1) They understand that giving opportunity for negatives to come out in meetings is not always negative.
 - (2) Allowing this process of “challenge” to happen openly can keep the air continually cleared and strengthen the support of other leaders for the senior pastor’s central vision.
- f. Effective leaders understand how to facilitate friendliness in large groups.
 - (1) In churches with more than 125 in worship, people cannot be expected to know everyone’s name.
 - (2) The friendliness found in larger groups comes from feeling close to some of the people and feeling at least welcome among the others.
 - (3) Many large churches therefore make frequent use of name tags.
- g. Effective leaders find that time management skills are essential ministry tools.
 - (1) Among the most valuable of these are the following:
 - Protect time for study, sermon preparation, and crisis pastoral calling, or you will never have sufficient time to accomplish these crucial roles.

- Set appointment times realistically but tightly, and build in a termination point for each one.
 - Learn the art of sending short, hand-written notes to members on significant personal or pastoral matters.
 - Learn how to use a dictating unit, not just for letters but for specific assignments such as filing, telephone calls, plane reservations, and other detail tasks.
 - Learn the art of brief pastoral calls in hospitals, nursing homes, crisis situations, and home visits.
 - Learn how to make “courtesy appearances” at meetings.
 - Build in a termination time for meetings.
 - Structure time for the nurture of personal spiritual life, lest your perspective on everything you do become distorted.
- (2) Stress and frustration increases if one or more of these time-management skills is not mastered.
- (3) The following *Church Effectiveness Nuggets Volumes* provide numerous time-management insights: *Volume 10, How to Improve Your Time-Management Skills*; *Volume 16, Clergy and Clergy-Spouse Stress-Management Skills*. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com and download these resources free of charge.

5. Property

- a. Effective leaders understand that property lids can strangle every other positive element in congregational life.
- b. Effective leaders show patience and determination in removing one or more of the six classic property lids that block congregational effectiveness.
- (1) Inadequate nursery
 - (2) Inadequate sanctuary seating
 - (3) Inadequate parking
 - (4) Inadequate classroom space
 - (5) Inadequate fellowship hall space
 - (6) Inadequate contemporary décor of the building.

VII. What “Nuts & Bolts” Methods Can Strengthen a Large Church?

Leadership in large churches primarily involves (a) articulating and communicating mission, vision, and values; (b) aligning structure, staff, and systems with the mission; (c) putting in place appropriate mechanisms to accomplish the mission; (d) identifying and developing leaders, and (e) leading change and transition.

But leaders are also expected to provide some how-to-do-it ideas for accomplishing their vision. Generally speaking, effective large churches learn more from other effective large churches than from any other source. Large-church pastors and staff report that their best source of new ideas is attending the annual workshops/seminars sponsored by large congregations across the United States. Information regarding some of those workshops is available from the following sources:

- www.willowcreek.com
- www.purposedriven.com
- www.ginghamsburg.org
- www.joyonline.org
- www.leadnet.org
- www.ccbt.org
- www.fellowshipassociates.com
- www.southeastchristian.org
- www.pastorwayne.org
- www.frontline.to/emerge

To learn about periodic Dish Network satellite broadcasts to subscribing congregations—featuring a variety of church leadership topics—go to the www.cnonline.net Web site.

Large churches establish multiple campuses for reasons such as the following:

- As a church-planting strategy, with the new location eventually becoming a separate congregation
- As a way to target a younger-adult age group or a different psychographic group that reaches a new constituency not possible at the mother church’s location
- To reach a larger number of people of the same economic and cultural composition
- To reach the same racial group but from a different economic or cultural section of society
- To reach a different racial group
- To reach a different language or ethnicity group
- To deal with a land-locked and parking-starved location where building construction to remove the growth-lid is impossible
- To establish a new congregation with a different worship style and music
- As a special-purpose branch to serve people in institutional settings such as a nursing home or prison
- To assist a declining-membership, dying congregation and eventually absorb it

Examples of multiple-location congregations that provide resources:

Eastern Star Church, Indianapolis, www.easternstarchurch.org

St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, Indianapolis, www.the-garden.org

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, www.spiritgarage.org

Upper Arlington Lutheran Church, Columbus, Ohio, www.ualc.org

Resources for navigating church-size transitions: Few continuing-education events are designed to precisely address the needs of clergy when they move from a midsize church to a large church, or pastors who move into an executive-pastor position, or clergy who become associate pastors in charge of program staff and various ministries. For a description of one of the best of these (which is also quite expensive), a one-week course titled “Management of Managers,” contact the University of Michigan Business School, Executive Education Center, Ann Arbor (www.bus.umich.edu).

Other options for leaders in large congregations, available through the American Management Association (www.amanet.org/catalog) and scheduled each year in various parts of the United States, include seminars such as “Management Skills for New Supervisors (Seminar #2248),” “Making the Transition from Staff Member to Supervisor (Seminar #2243),” “Leadership Skills for Supervisors (Seminar #2517),” and “Confronting the Tough Staff: Advanced Management Skills for Supervisors (Seminar #2140).”

Under each of the twelve strategic objectives listed below are examples of helpful methods. Not listed in order of importance, *all twelve* are important to large-church effectiveness. Nor are these exhaustive lists of methods; rather, they are examples.

Involve appropriate staff and/or committees in studying the ideas and associated resources for their ministry areas.

A. A spiritual-growth focus that emphasizes prayer, Bible study, stewardship, fellowship, and service to others. These five are among the most powerful ways people experience spiritual growth. A congregation that unconsciously loses its spiritual focus abandons the basic reason why churches are in business.

Prayer is a powerful but often under-utilized resource among people who lead change in congregations. Few endeavors increase insights and spiritual maturity in adults more than prayer. Increase the percentage of members who pray daily by using, both within the staff team and throughout the entire congregation, the prayer card titled *The Secret to Abundant Living: Learning How to Ask*. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com and download a free copy of this prayer card, in electronic form for easy reproduction, along with permission to photocopy or reprint it and instructions for how to use it with the entire congregation. This tool motivates a sizable percentage of members to engage in daily conversation with God.

New Consecration Sunday, 2007 Revised Edition, Stewardship Program with Guest Leader Guide and CD-ROM by Herb Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007)—ISBN 798-0-687-64437-7—available through www.cokesbury.com or at Cokesbury Bookstores or by phoning 800/672-1789 or 615/749-6113.

Thousands of congregations in 25 denominations have reported (a) 15 percent to 30 percent increases in total congregational giving the first year and (b) 10 percent to 15 percent increases in total giving during each of seven or more subsequent years of use. One congregation obtained the following results: first year, 14.4% increase in giving; second year, 10.3% increase; third year, 13.4% increase; fourth year, 13.6%; and fifth year, 19.6% increase.

In one congregation, financial giving increased 25 percent the first year, 18 percent the second year, and 30 percent the third year. The congregation’s financial secretary said, “Three reasons produced these annual increases. Firstly, virtually no households lower their giving during the annual campaign. Secondly, between 66 percent and 88 percent of the households make some degree of annual increase. Thirdly, four-to-six new households decided to tithe each year we used *Consecration Sunday*. These households, some of which grew from giving 4 percent of their income to giving 10 percent of their income, were a major part of our enormous annual increases.”

The *2007 Revised Edition* provides (a) a user-friendly CD that contains an audio overview, a downloadable PowerPoint presentation, and several printed letters for congregational use; (b)

greater clarity in how-to instructions; and (c) information regarding a free on-line service for guest leaders who wish to e-mail questions to Herb Miller. The program unfolds during four weeks of multifaceted communication and a concluding worship service.

Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download this resource free of charge: *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 5, How to Increase Financial Stewardship.*

B. Worship that emphasizes joyful participation and multiple-generation music. Leaders in many large congregations do not recognize that a major cause of their attendance decline is the exclusive use of worship style and hymns that spiritually fed young adults during the 1940s and 1950s but do not spiritually connect with the majority of young-adult families in the 2000s era. When young-adult worship visitors (age eighteen to forty-four) feel that a congregation's worship services are boring, irrelevant, emotionally flat, and do not communicate in ways that connect with their spiritual needs, they judge those worship services as an irrelevant waste of time and decide to shop elsewhere for a church home.

At least two worship services are essential, preferably with different styles of music and content. A strong music program includes multiple children, youth, and adult choirs and groups. Generally speaking, strive to provide two musical groups for each 100 people in total average worship attendance.

Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download this resource free of charge: *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 4, How to Increase Worship Attendance.*

C. Warmth and caring that emphasizes concern for individuals through the various church groups and adult Sunday school classes. The large church attempts to retain a small church feeling, without being small. This happens through fellowship facilitation processes that are more complex than those found in small churches. The fellowship content and connections must meet the needs of adults in every age-range, but especially people age twenty-five through forty-four.

This happens primarily through getting people engaged in one or more groups and in one or more ministry teams. Bonding into a group and a ministry happens with the largest possible percentage of newcomers when (a) a staff member assumes the role of "Newcomer Assimilation Coordinator" and interviews each person who regularly attends worship for two consecutive months and (b) the congregation has an organizational structure that accomplishes this goal (one that includes numerous "entry level positions" provided by the numerous "ministry teams"). The Newcomer Assimilation Coordinator provides leaders in the various ministry teams with appropriate information gained in newcomer interviews.

Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download free of charge the following volumes of *Church Effectiveness Nuggets*:

Volume 6, How to Shrink Your Church's Inactive Member List

Volume 7, How to Build Assimilation Bridges for New Members/Attendees

Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine

D. A pastor who cares about people and develops the organizational skill to help people care about one another. Study the methods outlined in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 9, How to Develop a Congregational "Care Team."* Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download this resource free of charge.

E. A future-focus that is positive and hopeful. One way to accomplish this is to build and maintain effective annual planning procedures. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com and download free of charge a copy of *How to Accomplish Effective Congregational Planning* and permission to reproduce the survey instrument it provides for local use.

Whatever annual planning processes the church uses, it benefits from a frequently repeated vision and mission statement. An American Management Association survey says that less than 50 percent of business executives think their department managers have a solid grip on the company's goals (*Wall Street Journal*, 7-18-96, page 1). That statistic is probably much lower in congregations. The larger the church, the more it needs a vision and mission statement and a senior pastor who keeps passionately repeating them.

In large churches, the attitudes of and the team spirit among staff members is crucially important. See the staff feedback and communication procedures in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness* plus the study/discussion procedures for staff in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 22, How to Strengthen Clergy/Staff Leadership & Relationship Skills*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download these resources free of charge.

F. A strong Sunday church school that emphasizes numerous options for adult classes. To increase children and youth Sunday school attendance, increase the number of adult classes and the percentage of worshippers who attend them. Adults who attend a Sunday school class are more regular in worship attendance and their children more regularly attend Sunday school. Obtain and study *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 11, How to Increase Adult Sunday School Attendance*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com and download free of charge.

Raising expectations of adult members regarding teaching is crucial to strengthening elementary classes. Not to be confused with an older, very different model called team teaching, the Teacher Team concept simultaneously provides sufficient Sunday school teachers and assimilates new adult church attendees in a positive way. Study the section on "Teacher Teams" in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 12, How to Increase Children and Youth Sunday School Attendance*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com and download free of charge.

The "Workshop Rotation Model" delivers quality Christian education in elementary Sunday school classes—with fewer teachers and less preparation time than traditional Sunday school models. Download information about this system from www.rotation.org and see the explanation in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 13, How to Increase Children and Youth Sunday School Attendance* mentioned above.

Strong youth ministries are usually built on the foundation of strong junior high and senior high Sunday school classes, not vice-versa. Children consistently become one year older each year. Therefore, if the high school youth group is micro, build strong elementary Sunday school attendance; then build strong junior-high Sunday school and youth ministry. Two years later, add a strong high-school class and youth ministry. Study the principles and suggestions in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 2, How to Grow Strong Youth Groups*. Download this resource free of charge at the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site.

G. Effective recruitment methods that encourage members to invite and welcome new attendees. Develop systematic procedures for encouraging members to increase the volume of invitations they extend to unchurched people to visit the worship services.

Select procedures appropriate to your congregation and community from the extensive list of outreach options in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 8, How to Attract First-Time Worship Visitors*. See, also, *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 1, How to Transform Worship Visitors into Regular Attendees*. Download at the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site free of charge.

H. A determination to start several new groups or ministries each year that can serve as entry points for new attendees. If most of your church's adult classes or groups began several years ago, they attract and assimilate few new attendees and members, especially those from young-adult households. Thus, each time a church adds a core ministry such as a new adult Sunday school class or a children's choir, the likelihood of membership growth increases.

In small churches, the biggest single resistance to starting new groups is lay peoples' fear of not knowing everyone in the church. People in midsize churches have recovered from that fear; they do not expect to know everyone. In churches above 350 in average worship attendance, the resistance to starting new groups increases again; this time, because the staff mistakenly tends to think that "we have enough groups." Churches need about six or seven regularly meeting adult groups (including adult classes) per 100 people in average worship attendance. That is a bunch of groups! Many large churches fall short of that measurement; thus, limiting their vitality and growth.

Setting a goal of three-to-five new classes, groups, or programs each year, while fully recognizing that 60 percent of them will not last more than a year or two, helps to overcome that natural resistance to expanding the congregational entry points.

I. High levels of communication through Sunday morning worship bulletin inserts, newsletters, weekly staff meetings, and quarterly meetings of committee chairpersons and staff as a strategic-planning team. When average worship attendance moves beyond 350, communication complexity increases exponentially. Leaders of effective large churches understand the necessity of saying something five times in five different ways to attain maximum communication impact.

Some large churches develop a CARE Caller ministry such as the one Rick Warren describes. "CARE stands for 'Contact, Assist, Relate, and Encourage.'" Team members telephone in the evening and ask three questions: (a) "How are you doing?" (b) "Do you have any prayer requests?" (c) "Is there anything you'd like for us to report to Pastor Rick or a staff member?" Each CARE caller takes notes on a form. Then, they update the person on any coming events or church news.

Study the several methods that work with large churches in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine*.

J. Staff and lay leaders who learn how to work with the two very opposite viewpoints of church members born before and after 1946. The depression years of the 1930s are well known for having produced a generation of people which, throughout their lives, espoused financially conservative values.

Less often recognized is the manner in which the life circumstances through which every generation passes during their late teens, 20s, and 30s shape the personal value systems by which they relate to and give time and energy to organizations such as civic clubs, corporations, and congregations.

Two radically-contrasting value systems were forged by the national experiences of the generation that fought (or whose parents fought) World War II and the generation that fought (or whose parents fought) in Vietnam. Examples:

People born before 1946 have a high commitment to and confidence in institutions. A chain of command in which they have no personal say is quite acceptable. Much of this attitude was shaped by the successful winning of World War II, one of the greatest institutional triumphs in history. These people are easily motivated by "duty," by "ought to," and by "should." Regardless of obvious flaws, they tend to maintain loyalty to their corporations, clubs, and congregations.

People born after 1946 have low confidence in institutions. They insist on having a say in major decisions of any group in which they participate. A chain of command works only when they have involvement and input into the process. Much of their opinion was shaped by the Vietnam War, one of the worst cases of institutional mishandling in history. They do not respond to “guilt” motivation. They are motivated by things that make sense to them, not by what older church leaders say “we ought to do.” If an institution is not willing to meet their needs, they move to another job or to another congregation.

Those contrasting generational values influence adult thinking and behavior, not just in church participation but in every kind of community, civic, job, and corporate setting. Examples:

- People born prior to 1946 rally to the cry, “United we stand!” People born after 1946 are more likely to say, “Individually, I’ll decide!”
- When faced with an overwhelming obstacle, people born prior to 1946 are likely to feel and say, “Whatever it takes, we’ll get it done!” People born after 1946 are more likely to feel and say, “Whatever makes sense.”
- People born prior to 1946 are likely to say, “Meaning in life comes from commitment to great causes.” People born after 1946 are more likely to say, “Meaning in life comes from personal choices.”

Much of the pain and conflict in congregations is purely a lack of perception regarding how to work with people from those birth-date zones.

For the causes behind and procedures for dealing with a wide variety of “bent personalities” and congregational conflicts, see *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 3, How to Prevent and Resolve Congregational Conflict*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download this resource free. In some congregations, the staff-parish relations committee schedules, in coordination with the governing board, a study of that *Nuggets Volume* and/or uses it as part of a January orientation of new officers, committee chairpersons, and governing board members.

At every opportunity, say, “Differences of opinion are acceptable in our congregation: the only unacceptable behavior here is unwillingness to discuss the underlying reasons for the differences of opinion.”

K. Organizational procedures that fit a large congregation. The leadership-governance-participation system in every church involves five distinct functions:

1. A policy-setting group
2. A communicating-coordinating-calendaring-visioning group
3. Ministry-management groups
4. Ministry-action teams
5. Spiritual-gifts identification and use among members

In small churches, those five functions blur together in much the same way that they blur together in a large family. When a church exceeds 150 in worship attendance, and especially when it exceeds 350, those five functions must become far more formalized—so that the functioning and relationships of the staff, committee chairpersons, and members flow smoothly and effectively toward the destination of healthy, effective mission/ministry delivery.

Churches between 350 and 900 in average worship attendance need an effective standing-committee system that provides lay leadership positions for the approximately 15 percent of laypersons who have the gifts and inclination toward such roles (Ministry-management groups, cited as #3 in the list above).

These churches need a means of helping the other 85 percent of laypersons find and use their talents, enthusiasms, and spiritual gifts in service roles that give them a sense of meaning and satisfaction. That can only happen by developing numerous ministry teams that are organized, led, and managed by staff and/or the standing committees, but these team members do not serve on the standing committees or attend committee meetings. For detailed, how-to-do-it suggestions

regarding how to accomplish that objective, obtain and study the following volumes of *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine; Volume 24, Identifying and Mobilizing Parishioners' Spiritual Gifts; and Volume 25, Preparing an Annual Congregational Plan Book*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download these resources free of charge.

L. A determination to remove the ministry-inhibiting lids in the church building and property. Facilities either lift or put lids on the quality of ministries and relationships. Study the five most frequently seen ministry-inhibiting lids and some ideas for lifting them:

1. Insufficient or over-sufficient sanctuary seating
 - Most people experience a room that is 80-to-85 percent full on an average Sunday as “uncomfortably full.”
 - If the sanctuary feels uncomfortably empty (which usually happens when the pews are less than 50 percent filled), removing a few of the back pews and/or a few of the front pews and placing them in storage improves the atmosphere.
2. Insufficient parking
 - At least one close-by parking space is needed for each two worshipers.
 - Fewer parking spaces than that keep a restraining lid on attendance (this lid is invisible until the first month after you remove it).
 - The long-term solution to insufficient parking is either to buy more adjacent lots or to relocate the church building to a site that has sufficient parking.
 - The short-term solution to inadequate parking is to ask two dozen of the most active leaders—who are physically able to do so and are willing to make the sacrifice—to park at a distance, so that newcomers do not drive away when they see that there is no place to park.
3. Insufficient classroom space
 - Build more classrooms.
 - Ask one or more adult classes to meet in the living room of a home near the church.
4. Insufficient fellowship hall space
 - Build a larger fellowship hall.
 - Make arrangements with a nearby high school or other institution to use their facilities for church meal functions involving the entire congregation.
5. Insufficient contemporary decor of the building
 - Some architects say, “Most rooms that have not been updated for twenty years feel ‘old’ to most of the people who visit them for the first time.”
 - Research indicates that newcomers become so accustomed to the inadequate ambiance of a room or facility after six visits that they no longer see it as drab, outdated, or museum-like. Why? The positive relationships with people in the facility gradually replace negative feelings about room ambiance.
 - What if newcomers are so put off by the “old” feeling of the facility that they do not return? The positive ambiance of friendly church members never gets a chance to replace the negative ambiance of the facility.

Large churches in which many leaders have been members for several decades are especially prone to not seeing one or more of the five ministry-inhibiting lids. The following ideas can help to address facility lids:

☉ The most important places to begin improvements in older buildings are (a) the church nursery, (b) the hallways on the way to the nursery and elementary classrooms; some of these hallways are narrow and dark; with thirty-watt bulbs every thirty feet, they have the ambiance of the catacombs with none of the spiritual significance, (c) the rest rooms, especially the women’s

restroom, and (d) the narthex, or main entryway; some of these spaces have all the appeal of a cluttered freight office. To address the need to improve the narthex, employ an interior decorator for a few hours (she or he must never have been in this building before) and ask for suggestions on how to improve the ambiance. These improvements are seldom expensive but make a big difference in first impressions among newcomers.

☉ Healthy, effective congregations ask three questions about any facility improvement project they are considering: (a) Is this facility improvement something God wants us to do, something that will produce real ministry benefits in the lives of people? (b) Is the timing right; are we ready to do it now? (c) How would we pay for it? Ineffective church leaders scramble the sequence of those questions, asking the third question while disregarding the other two questions. The order in which leaders ask those three questions is crucial. Effective, healthy churches never have enough money, because they use all of their money in ministry efforts! God gives churches the money to do what he calls them to do in ministry.

☉ Appoint a “facilities improvement study task force” and ask this group to obtain more information about the improvements needed in your present facilities. Over a period of about two months, the facilities improvement study task force should gather ideas from all classes and groups of every age to begin surfacing important issues the church leaders should discuss concerning facilities. Visit each adult Sunday school class, hold a meeting of all elementary and youth class teachers, talk with each committee in the church, meet with the staff, and communicate with all ministry groups that presently use any part of your facilities. Following the completion of those conversations, during the next couple of months go back to all of these groups and ask individuals to prioritize a list of the most-needed improvement possibilities.

☉ Congregations always find it easier to raise money for several small projects all at one time than to raise the same amount of money over a period of years in several different efforts. Raising money one project at a time means (a) some people are for it; some against it and (b) it seems like “we talk about money all the time.” By contrast, “putting all your begs in one ‘asket’” means that everyone sees at least one of their pet projects on the list and therefore has a good reason to give generously.

☉ Keep facility improvement costs separate from your operating budget. Contrary to what many people fear, a capital-fund campaign for facilities improvement rarely has a negative impact on regular budget giving. The opposite is more often true. In most cases, the positive experience of giving to an effectively designed and implemented capital campaign significantly increases regular giving to the operating budget during subsequent years.

Generally speaking, mainline congregations should never combine their annual operating budget campaign with a capital campaign for facilities improvement. Combining the two appeals tempts some mainline-church members to split their present level of giving between capital and budget, rather than making an over-and-above gift to the facilities improvement project.

Separating the two endeavors creates more effective opportunities for congregational inspiration and education. Scripture provides a basis for that practical advice. In the Bible we see two types of gifts—(a) gifts that build the temple, which come as additional offerings on unique occasions and (b) regular and ongoing gifts that run the temple by supporting the priests, religious celebrations, and benevolences.

VIII. Coaching Large Congregations toward Positive Change

Every organism experiences constant change, few of which are neutral. Most changes are either positive or negative. For example, as the youth grows into an adult, most physical and mental changes are positive. Later in life, most changes become negative: the body begins a quiet but certain reduction in efficiency, moving inexorably toward old age and the cemetery.

Congregational change is also a constant that is seldom neutral. A church either moves toward maximum health and effectiveness in mission and ministries or moves downhill, with shrinking enthusiasm, volunteer efforts, and financial resources. But the constant change that happens in human beings and congregations differs in one BIG way. A church can experience several years of decline in health and effectiveness, then reverse its direction.

Recurring cycles of health and effectiveness are not, however, *a certainty!* Some large churches, especially those in central-city locations, decline and disappear. But renewal of congregational vitality is always a possibility—if positive change-coaching happens.

Some principles of congregational change-coaching are universal. They work for churches of every size. Other principles of congregational change-coaching are size specific. What works in large and mega churches does not apply in small and midsize churches.

A. Effective change-coaches in congregations of every size exert spiritual, not just organizational and psychological, leadership. Pastors in spiritually transformed and transforming churches of every size emphasize the following spiritual behaviors:

1. Preach, talk, and teach a “God is alive” theology. A consultant interviewing a layperson in a healthy, growing congregation asked what their pastor did best.

The man replied, “Communicates a live God to people.”

Effective spiritual leaders provide more than psychological help, more than good ideas, more than emotional experiences, more than a social group. They encourage people to make a spiritual connection with God. They do not confuse the bread of life with the crumbs of religion.

When people think God is alive, they think God is present rather than historical. That conviction translates into what theologians call a “high Christology.” God is incarnated in present-day culture to transform the quality of individual lives. For people in churches that teach a high Christology, the Bethlehem stable is a continuous event. God is still among us. He still walks the Emmaus Roads of daily life, communicating with people who are willing to talk with him.

2. Preach, talk, and teach the value of personal prayer. A pastor facing life-threatening heart surgery visited the office of a clergy friend. In case anything went wrong, he wanted his friend to preach his funeral. After they chatted a few minutes, his friend said, “Let’s go down to the prayer room.” The two entered a small room that contained an altar and kneeling rail. His friend prayed for his safe passage through and recovery from the surgery, revealing in his prayer that he had listened carefully to every aspect of his friend’s emotional stress.

Later, after surgery, the pastor told his daughter how much his friend’s prayer had meant to him. She said, “No wonder that church has more than 1,000 people in worship each Sunday. My pastor would have listened empathetically and given me a pep talk about how capable my surgeon is. Even if our church had a prayer room, I doubt he would use it.”

Everyone has a spirit of some kind, and that spirit can change with circumstances. People can have a peaceful spirit, a negative spirit, an angry spirit, a fearful spirit, or some other kind of spirit. Spiritually skilled pastors know that the best way to help people shift to a new spirit is by helping them connect with the spirit of Christ. Prayer is the primary way that happens, which is why scripture urges us 103 times to “ask.”

3. *Preach, talk, and teach the life-transforming power of Bible study.* College courses such as “The Bible as Literature” have educational value.

- However, transmitting facts is not a church’s primary purpose; changing lives is the goal.
- Thus, we have a biblical book titled *The Acts of the Apostles*, not The Thoughts of the Apostles or The Ideas of the Apostles.

H. Richard Niebuhr warned against “biblicism,” reminding us that such an approach makes scripture the object of its study, instead of God. (*Reflections*, Summer-Fall 1995)

- “Biblioatry” can block God’s truth by putting it into unusable, deadening forms.
- Yet “rationalolatry” can be as dangerous for some congregations as fundamentalism is for others.

Rational thinking, when divorced from a spiritual focus, becomes an invisible form of “salvation by intellectual good works.”

- The Christian faith is not merely right behavior (as some moralists would tell us).
- The Christian faith is not merely right thinking (a viewpoint that many conservatives and liberals share, which explains why they argue so vehemently).
- Nor is Christian faith merely right feeling, as some congregations seem to emphasize in their worship format and content.

Christian faith is a gift God gives to people who form and maintain a right relationship with him. That is the primary objective of Bible study in transformed and transforming churches. Their Bible study concentrates on helping people to form and maintain a personal relationship with God.

The people in an African coastal village were physically stronger, more mentally alert, and more culturally advanced than their relatives in the country’s interior. A physician discovered why: the seacoast families got adequate protein from their diet of fish.

We are what we eat—in more ways than one! Pastors who facilitate positive change feed people spiritual food.

4. *Remember that a few people—despite the positive results evident from making changes—will continue to resist the changes that produced those results.* Rational thinking, warm sincerity, and personal caring do not grant leaders immunity from the lunatic fringe.

Continuing to care about these people requires a spiritual attitude, not an emotional or psychological method.

- Love them anyway.
- Repeatedly express appreciation to them.
- Pray for them by name, daily.
- Disregard their attempts toward negative influence.

Ask God to give you the same feelings toward such people that Jesus possessed when he looked down from the cross and said of the soldiers who killed him, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:24)

5. *Refuse to INTERNALIZE the criticism of that 5 percent of people in every congregation who are perpetually critical.* In her book, *The Comfort Trap*, Judith Sills quotes a Buddhist parable: an enemy shoots an arrow at your heart. It falls short and lies at your feet. Now you have two choices. You can finish the job, or you can turn and walk away.

Every pastor makes that choice regarding the dissident 5 percent.

- Healthy, effective pastors see the arrow laying there at their feet.
- They continue to care about the persons who shoot arrows, but they turn and walk away.

Effective pastors do not allow a short list of antagonists to paralyze a congregation's forward momentum.

- They hear the dogs barking and respect their right to bark.
- But effective pastors know that most of the barking is rooted in internal fears rather than in reality.

Such pastors claim the freedom of mind that stands clear of and remains detached from destructive and/or irrational perceptions and habits.

B. Effective change-coaches in congregations of every size must learn their church's unique culture, ethos, and core values. The more they learn, the more they may wish to change the congregation's personality. But they cannot effectively influence change in a personality that they do not yet understand.

1. What is this congregation's culture? Like the often-used term "corporate culture" in the business world, congregational culture is the *total environment*—the ocean in which this fish swims. Corporate culture is different in each congregation, and takes considerable time to figure out.

A congregation's culture includes components such as the following:

- Written and unwritten rules regarding how the organizational structure functions (how we do things around here)
- Customs, traditions, and rituals to which leaders and parishioners religiously adhere
- Furniture, pictures, and rooms in the building that hold great symbolic meaning
- Often repeated "creation stories," describing the church's early days, founding principles, and the primary constituent base
- The deep meaning and continuing influence of events or personalities during high or low points in congregational history (photos that would appear in the congregation's family album if such a book existed)
- Often repeated metaphors regarding which ministries are important and how to do them
- The congregation's self-identity in this community (how parishioners see it and how they think community residents see it)
- Type of spirituality, such as conservative, evangelical, fundamentalist, charismatic
- The core values desired, taught, and preached (which sometimes differ from the *actual* core values lived out in congregational behavior)
- Mental models deeply embedded in the lay leaders' cherished ideologies and organizational structures
- Basic philosophies and priorities—often unwritten and sometimes unbiblical—that repeatedly judge some ministries important and other ministries irrelevant (example: "Our church is about the right size," a totally opposite idea from Christ's Great Commission, in which he directs his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples.)
- Emotional climate (warm, accepting, and loving—or cold, judgmental, and introverted)
- The dominant psychological mood—such as depressed, happy, fearful, cautious, or critical
- Significant congregational skills and parishioner skills
- Behavioral standards to which lay leaders hold one another and parishioners accountable
- Which members the congregation holds in high esteem, listening carefully to their opinions, and which members the congregation disregards

- The activities and ministries lay leaders feel are worthy of spending time to accomplish and the ones they feel comfortable neglecting
- The activities and ministries lay leaders feel the pastor must make a high priority and the ones they feel comfortable with the pastor neglecting
- Which group(s) the pastor must take care not to alienate, such as the women's organization, a particular adult Sunday school class, or the property committee
- How the congregation thinks about money and financial giving, such as the type of annual stewardship programs that are acceptable and unacceptable
- Vision of what our church should attempt in future years

The multiple components of a congregation's culture (total environment)—many of which are invisible to the just-arrived pastor—determine (a) how and why parishioners do what they do and (b) what type of new ideas they typically embrace or reject.

2. *What is this congregation's unstated but deeply ingrained ethos?* Congregational ethos is its attitudinal, spiritual, and emotional *atmosphere*. Often invisible at first glance by a visitor, this powerful influence is the congregation's fundamental *character* or *spirit*.

Ethos includes (a) the congregation's emotional climate (warm, accepting, and loving—or cold, judgmental, and introverted) and (b) the dominant psychological mood (depressed, happy, fearful, cautious, or critical).

Ethos is the spontaneous, recurring, underlying sentiment that drives and refuels a church's beliefs, attitudes, customs, and practices. (Erwin Raphael McManus, *The Unstoppable Force* [Orange: California: Yates & Yates] p. 97) Examples:

- *Healthy*, effective congregations consistently (a) *live by faith in God's guidance*, (b) *are known by their love*, and (c) *speak words of hope*. (1 Corinthians 13:13) A congregational culture of faith, hope, and love is capable of transforming individuals and the communities in which individuals live. (*The Unstoppable Force*, pp. 162-163)
- *Unhealthy*, ineffective congregations are weak in either (a) their faith in God's guidance, (b) their love toward people inside and outside the church, or (c) their hope in the future, or weak in all three. God cannot bless an organization that does not embody all three of these apostolic qualities.

Whatever the congregation's innate ethos, the pattern tends to persist across generations of a church's lay leaders and members, decade after decade. Without an understanding of this ethos, a pastor cannot fully understand how the congregation's internal soil influences whether the seeds of change grow, struggle, or fail to germinate.

3. *What are this congregation's deeply ingrained, but often unstated, core values?* A congregation's core values are the mission and ministry crops that grow in this *environment* (congregational culture) in this *atmosphere* (congregational ethos). Wrapped in the treasured folds of congregational history and experience, core values and vision are not instantly obvious. Like treasures hidden beneath the surface of an archeological dig, a church's core values and vision emerge as a pastor interacts with individuals, groups, and the governing board.

Many congregations become frustrated when they set important goals and make plans, then fail to arrive at the destination they so carefully selected. Those failures often happen because congregations *always act on their core values*, not on the goals they set! Congregations always *act according to their core values*, not according to their plans. Unfortunately, a congregation's core values are always partially invisible to its leaders, submerged in "the way we have always done things here."

Jesus taught his first disciples three core values through The Great Commandment and The Great Commission (Acts 2:41-42, Luke 10:25-37, Matthew 28:19-20). Christ's three core values

summarize as follows: (a) Help people grow spiritually in their relationship with God. (b) Love our neighbors in church, community, and world. (c) Offer Christ to people outside our walls.

The emphasis on or neglect of one or two of Christ's three core values determines a church's destiny.

† *Unhealthy*, ineffective congregations give most of their emphasis and energy to *one* of Christ's three core values. Their clergy and lay leadership tend to consciously or unconsciously believe the myth that Christ's *other two* core values happen automatically, as a byproduct of focusing on the *one* core value about which they feel the most passionate. In other words, when clergy and lay leadership make Christ's three core values a multiple-choice question, they produce *unhealthy*, ineffective congregations.

† *Healthy*, effective congregations give all three of Christ's core values equal emphasis and energy.

Gradually, a pastor finds out (a) what the church is doing and not doing, (b) what the church's oral tradition says is important to do, (c) what the people in this community expect effective churches to do and not do, (d) what role this particular congregation has played in the history of this community, (e) what this congregation's REAL core values are (compared to its desired or stated core values). One pastor stresses the necessity of listening VERY HARD for what she calls the congregation's "password" (the values that are critical to these parishioners' hearts).

An Iowa town's name is Story City. But every town or city has a "story" and *every church* has a "story." The congregational values and vision are embedded in that story. Effective pastors know that learning and becoming part of that story is essential to exerting positive influence in this congregation and community. Change proposals built on a congregation's foundational story, using its heart passwords, stand an excellent chance of acceptance, action, and positive results. Other types of change proposals, regardless of how rational, practical, appropriate, or frequently used by other congregations, may achieve active or passive resistance by fine, dedicated lay leaders.

4. How can the pastor influence the fine-tuning of deeply ingrained congregational core values so that they fit this moment in history and unify the leaders and congregation? The vision and energy for new directions MUST evolve from within the congregation's staff and lay leaders, not from the new pastor's determination to (a) use a particular program from his or her previous congregation, or (b) take charge and fix things here, or (c) imitate the ministry of a famous megachurch.

"Organizational excellence tends not to be a function of imitation. It tends to be a function of origination." (Robert E. Quinn, *Building the Bridge As You Walk On It* [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004] p. 5) The pastor, staff, and laypersons develop the vision and energy for change jointly; otherwise, the staff and laypersons will now "own" the vision. Thus, when the pastor begins to communicate and administrate the fine-tuned vision, some of the sailors mutiny—either by (a) jumping overboard, or (b) by inciting the other sailors to riot, or (c) by attempting to throw the pastor overboard, or (d) by all of the above. The effective pastor generates new vision *with* the staff and lay leaders rather than imposing it *upon* them.

Commenting on this messy process of coalescing vision and energy for the future, one pastor recommends repeatedly asking staff and lay leaders some form of Lyle Schaller's famous planning question, "What year is it?" Denial of reality is a powerful, omnipresent coping trait common to all human beings, even laypersons with the highest aspirations for their congregation. Thus, the first step in arriving at the future often involves helping staff and lay leaders move from the past to the present.

Another pastor says that coalescing vision for the future takes much conversational seed-planting, over a long period of time. Not all of the seeds come up. Pastoral seed-planting may feel a bit like the American frontier farmer's saying regarding the need to plant four grains of corn in every hill: "One for the cutworm, one for the crow, one to rot, and one to grow." But the seeds that sprout often become powerful plants for positive change.

Still another pastor notes that all positive change requires some upstream rowing, against the status quo—not drifting downstream with every plea to "keep doing what we've always done in the way we've always done it." This is a major challenge, since the pastor must exercise that skill while (a) continuing to care about those staff members and lay leaders and (b) not moving so far and fast beyond tradition as to create conflict that becomes the focus rather than positive change.

In many such instances, the role of *leader* contrasts sharply with the role of *pastor*. Which role is the most important? The answer is yes. The effective pastor keeps both roles in dynamic balance. He or she does not (a) stop caring for individuals and (b) does not stop helping the congregation to move forward in its mission and ministries.

Despite the pastor's best efforts, major changes in direction typically lose a few key lay players and sometimes one or two staff members. But conflict so great that a dozen or more key players leave the court typically means that the pastor (a) involved an insufficient number of staff and key lay leaders in discussing the change options, and/or (b) moved so quickly to change-implementation that sufficient staff and lay buy-in did not occur, and/or (c) several staff members and key lay leaders felt so displaced and undervalued that they traveled from frustration to irritation to anger to retaliation. In other words, effective pastors must be willing to take the heat for trying new ideas but must avoid creating unnecessary heat that burns his or her leadership bridges and thus the congregation's ministry effectiveness.

In some instances, this may mean (a) lots of asking questions and listening before suggesting a new idea, (b) laying out a possible direction with inspirational preaching and teaching, (c) asking people to get on board, (d) asking uninterested people to give the new idea a chance by not prematurely vetoing it, (e) evaluating the new idea's results, and (f) making course corrections or burying the new idea after unintended consequences prove it faulty.

Whatever approach they take, pastors who focus only on appeasing the status quo are, by definition, not leaders. Managers help people to efficiently accomplish what they are doing. Leaders help people to move beyond where they are and get where they want to go. Leaders rally people to a better future. In many instances leaders help people to accomplish what they have not previously recognized that they want to and need to accomplish.

C. Effective change-coaches in large churches use principles and methods that fit a church of that size. The following list includes several of these size-specific tips, gathered from interviews with highly effective large- and mega-church pastors.

1. *Have or acquire the ten characteristics of effective large-church pastors.* "Today that list of desirable qualities begins with passion, followed by high energy, skills as a visionary leader, a clearly and precisely defined Christian belief system, potential long tenure, an entrepreneurial personality, a healthy and happy marriage, skills in interpersonal relationships, experience on the staff of a megachurch, and academic credentials." (Lyle E. Schaller, *A Mainline Turnaround* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), p. 24)

2. *Set a positive leadership tone and atmosphere.* Habitually associate with effective, large-church leaders. From them you learn the skills and hear about valuable resources such as John Maxwell's *The Leader within You*.

3. *Provide consistently strong preaching.* The first time members and worship visitors hear a sermon turns them on or turns them off. This requires consistently setting aside time each week for sermon preparation. Some goals are accomplished in crowds; sermon preparation requires solitary hours.

4. *Learn to control your time.* Develop a template in your head of requests to which you typically say “yes” and requests to which you typically say “no.” Reinforce that mental construct with the inner-directed emotional persuasion that you cannot allow every parishioner to control your time. Train your secretary to help protect you against the loss of this non-renewable resource. Of crucial importance: time for sermon preparation.

5. *Unlearn successful habits from experiences in smaller churches.* Learn to let go of the joy of numerous personal contacts with parishioners that were part of the leadership role in a smaller church. Learn to become increasingly comfortable with saying “no” to requests from parishioners for pastoral services and time expenditures that must be delegated to staff members in a large or mega congregation. Learn to let go of the idea that a large staff will have no incidences of friction and hurt feelings that require coaching. Death, taxes, and working with problem and/or feuding staff members is an ever-present element in the senior pastor’s leadership role in large churches. One mega-church pastor responds to someone requesting a funeral for extended family by saying, “I’m sure you know our church is growing. To meet the needs of our growing church family, we have several ministers on our staff. One of those specifically takes care of funerals for those who are not members of our church. His name is _____. May I have him contact you?” That same pastor, if the request comes from someone he knows extremely well, adds, “One of the difficult things for me personally is not being able to do all funerals (or weddings), but I’ve learned that I can’t do everything by myself. I would love to help you personally in this situation, but I hope you understand my need to share some of these responsibilities with other ministers on our staff.”

6. *Achieve small but visual successes during the first year.* Energizing the staff is essential to achieving some of these successes. Consistent pastoral care of members (hospitals and crisis situations) prepares the ground for success. Pastors often win minds by winning hearts through expressing personal concern and building relationships at times of acute life crisis.

7. *Through early experiences and relationships begin developing a vision.* You should not have “a vision of what I want us to do” the first day in this size congregation. If you arrive with such a vision, it is likely to be (a) partially inaccurate and (b) strongly resisted by staff and key lay leaders. A vision that fits this particular congregation is a process, not an instant concoction or a printed paragraph that the new pastor hands the staff and the governing board.

Effective vision for a particular congregation comes as the new pastor’s personality interacts—over a period of months and the first few years—with staff, governing board members, parishioners, and community residents. The new senior pastor should ask several people during the first months and year, “What does this church need?” Listen carefully. Test ideas with people who answer that question. God gives vision to people who listen and converse with numerous people; the fire and light of a large congregation’s burning bush develops slowly, not instantly.

Every church wants to great. Every church needs a positive self-identity. Build and reinforce those desires with everything you say. Example: “I’ve heard people in the community say good things about our congregation.” Many once-strong-but-now-declining-membership churches feel endangered. Board members frightened about the future cling to the security of their cherished traditions, so they unconsciously resist essential insights. Understanding that “mental color-blindness,” effective senior pastors affirm those cherished traditions before they try to change them.

8. *Become part of the staff team.* Do not hold yourself aloof from staff. Recognize that your positive relationships with staff members enable you to accomplish what you cannot do alone. Some staff relationships are built in *casual* ways. Examples: Always have time for a brief, spontaneous conversation with *every* staff member, such as custodians in the hallway or security guards in the entryway. At every opportunity, praise staff members in front of parishioners and other staff members. *Every* staff member, like every parishioner, contributes positive or negative feelings and information to the congregational grapevine. Skill in accomplishing your clergy tasks is important. How people feel about you and your skills is equally important. Those feelings are often built by casual, interpersonal interactions. As one pastor put it, “Don’t lose touch with your sales force!” When hiring new staff members, get input from present staff regarding “the personality qualities we need” and whether this staff member “will fit in with personalities around here.” People feel respected and become stronger parts of the team when the senior pastor treats them like team members. Other staff relationships are built in *formal* ways, such as through weekly staff meetings. Suggesting books to read and/or discussing key books with staff are important ways to build and reinforce a positive leadership-relationship with staff.

9. *Provide effective administration.* After setting aside sufficient time for sermon preparation and handling funerals, weddings, and crucial pastoral care matters, leading and managing staff is the most important way a large- and mega-congregation’s senior pastor uses time.

10. *Build a staff in which theological perspective is unified.* The staff in an effective large congregation must all be—or eventually arrive at—the same page. How else can this informal choir work together harmoniously to sing God-honoring, parishioner-motivating, and ministry-producing songs? That cannot happen at its best until staff members share a common theological perspective, especially in relationship to the congregation’s core values.

11. *Demonstrate through personnel management that you lead the team.* Build a reputation with the personnel committee (called Staff-Parish Relations Committee in some denominations). Recognize that laypersons on the personnel committee may need training in understanding their role—especially, how the functions of the personnel committee in a large or mega congregation differ from those of a personnel committee in a small church. One such resource, useful for individual or for group study and discussion: *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness.*

Motivational communication with staff contains content such as the following. (Adapted from George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* [Nashville: Word Publishing], p. 166)

- Address issues that matter to people in this group.
- Facilitate their enduring focus on a compelling vision.
- Offer them a concise, significant, and challenging role in fulfilling the vision.
- Package the vision in captivating ideas, persuasive words, and an inspiring example.
- Describe your reasonable performance expectations of them.
- Support them with resources, guidance, encouragement, and rewards.
- Always place the needs of the people ahead of the needs of program accomplishment.
- Provide generous praise, selflessly and genuinely deflecting credit to the entire team.
- Celebrate each small win along the path to the ultimate vision.

People who attain great goals influence the people around them to see the benefit of each goal—both to themselves and to their organization—and to work together for its achievement. Senior pastors in large and mega congregations who achieve significant results build and motivate their staff teams. The coordinated efforts of the staff win victories that Lone Ranger personalities find impossible.

12. *Identify and empower an “influencer team” to lead each change.* Staff members are an essential part of this influencer team. However, several laypersons also play essential roles in accomplishing any positive change. The following steps provide a road map for developing an influencer team:

- a. Do NOT begin by announcing to the staff and governing board that “we are going to make this change.”
- b. Involve the staff in identifying the lay influencers with whom we should discuss this particular change possibility.
- c. No single staff person knows all of the people who are influence leaders in this particular aspect of your congregation’s ministry. Brainstorming together, the staff can identify a significant number of these influencers. As the following steps unfold, the staff identifies additional lay influencers.
- d. Identify which staff members can most effectively communicate with each lay influencer. Give staff members a couple of weeks, or more, to conduct those individual conversations. Stress the importance of face-to-face conversations, not just telephone contacts. The goal of these conversations is genuine engagement of and respect for the influencer as an important player in the discussion process and on the “influencer team,” not just the type of opinion and information that people give in a telephone poll.
- e. Ask staff members to bring feedback to the staff from those individual conversations with lay influencers.
- f. From that feedback, begin developing a body of information regarding this proposed change—important pro and con arguments, implementation barriers, essential steps in the implementation process, and persuasive reasons for making this change.
- g. Begin to interpret the big picture possibility of making this change to the congregation at large. Do NOT present the change proposal as an already completed decision.
- h. Expect some resistance, additional feedback not heard in step e. above, some new pro and con arguments, and some new insights regarding the why this change is needed and how to achieve it.
- i. The bigger the change possibility, the more time you should allow for this congregational dialogue. For example, adding a new worship service usually requires a minimum of one year. Small changes may require only a few months. Even a micro change requires several weeks. When insufficient time is allowed, you will find yourself repeating several of the steps.
- j. Do NOT expect immediate acceptance of a change possibility. Give it time to simmer. Allow the dialogue process to do what it alone can accomplish—give people time to change their minds and move from active resistance to passive resistance to the point at which they are willing to “let it happen” without throwing grenades into the public opinion pool.

- k. Several weeks or months are essential to getting staff members to enthusiastically pull together on the oars toward a change possibility.
 - About 20 percent of the staff will affirm the idea the first time they hear it.
 - About 20 percent of the staff will actively resist the idea the first time, and perhaps the first two or three times, they hear it.
 - About 80 percent of the staff more information so they can think it over.
- l. Do NOT assume that the 20 percent of active, vocal resisters *cannot* change their minds.
- m. Understand that behavior styles influence the length of time a change-resister needs to change his or her mind. Some such change-resisters are not just control freaks; they are not just obsessed with keeping things the same. They are not just traditionalists who refuse to consider the value of new ideas; rather, they are psychologically uneasy with changes because they have experienced personal damage from sudden changes earlier in life.
- n. In this dialogue process, watch for the emergence of two or three “good reasons why we need to make this change”—reasons that make sense to staff and influencers and reasons that they can articulate to other people in thirty seconds or less.
- o. Toward the end of the dialogue process, begin to identify five important factors:
 - The timeline by which the change process should unfold
 - The specific steps needed in that timeline
 - The individual staff member responsible for shepherding the team or teams that make the change happen
 - When and how to evaluate the change’s progress
 - How to hold that staff member accountable for successful results.
- p. As implementation unfolds, evaluate frequently via checkup meetings with the staff member responsible and/or that staff member’s supervisor.
- q. Recognize the truth in the old military axiom that “no good strategy survives the first contact with the enemy.” When a flaw appears in the timeline strategy, quickly decide whether this problem is fatal or fixable. A flaw does not fix itself. Take action quickly. Immediately do whatever is necessary.

Congregational change, conflict, and transition are perpetual. Pastors, staff and, lay leaders never “arrive” at a point where these three experiences are behind them. “Therefore,” one pastor said, “learn to live prayerfully and learn to be happy in the midst of change, conflict, and transition. Since churches never get completely *beyond* them, learn how to live *in them* with a sense that God provides providential aid to those who focus on his missions and ministries.”

D. Formal change-coaching process. The following pages contain a highly organized, structured process in which the church’s governing board appoints a specific group and assigns that group responsibility for surveying attendee opinions, studying options, and leading in the accomplishment of specific congregational changes. Hundreds of congregations in many denominations have used this step-by-step planning process.”

IX. Celebrate Large Churches!

Many people who talk positively about churches use the metaphor, “our church family.” While the idea of the “family of God” is not a bad metaphor, two facts are worth nothing regarding that term:

1. Most families are closed systems; they seldom adopt.
2. Some of the most helpful institutions in the world are comprised of *teams of strangers* who are not family members.

Early in life I served as the counselor in charge of developing the psychological and psychiatric department at a medical center. One morning a physician called my office to see if I had time to evaluate a man he assumed was depressed: the man had tried to hang himself from an oil derrick that morning. Someone from the oil company had brought him to the clinic.

My secretary rescheduled patients. I saw the man, judged that he was suffering acute depression, recommended the type of antidepressant the physician should prescribe, and suggested that we admit him to the hospital and provide close nursing supervision until the antidepressants had time to take effect. The physician’s office staff, the hospital staff, and my staff pulled together with substantial energy and care to prevent this man from killing himself. We succeeded.

Again and again during those years I experienced similar kinds of teamwork from various helping professionals—many of whom did not know one another at all—as we worked together to do what none of us could have accomplished alone.

When lay leaders and staff come together for mission and ministry in large churches, they bring that same dedication to excellence. If your church is moving toward God’s vision of making more and better disciples, never let anyone tell you that this only happens in small, family-style churches. The spirit of God can work in groups of every size. God works in groups as small as two or three. God works in gatherings of thousands.

When Peter preached at Pentecost, 3,000 people responded. That was *not* a small church. Yes, the church of Jesus Christ may have *started small*—with Jesus and the twelve. But it did not *stay* small.

If you are serving God in a large church, you are serving a church the size Peter put together in Jerusalem. That is a high calling!