

Congregation Size & Dynamics

By J. Christy Ramsey

Congregations of similar sizes tend to act in similar ways - even if their theology is different. Probably the most widely used typology is Arlin Rothauge's. I have seen this struggle in the congregation in general and the PNC in particular as they work on the mission study. Here is a condensed version of information I shared with them. (The PNC handout is on the web and available at the church office, sources are cited there.)

The Family Church (1-50 at worship) has patriarchs and matriarchs who control the church's leadership needs. What Family Churches want from clergy is pastoral care, period. The Pastor is an outsider; functions like a chaplain, The church wants the functions of ministry, but not real leadership from pastor joining these churches is by 'adoption' by strong individuals/families.

The Pastoral Church (50-150 at worship) has clergy at the center. A leadership circle, made up of the pastor and a small cadre of lay leaders.

The power and effectiveness of the leadership circle depends upon good communication with the congregation and the ability of the pastor to delegate authority, assign

responsibility, recruit members, be the center of everything and recognize the accomplishments of others.

Members expect to have their spiritual needs met through a personal relationship with a pastor. A second expectation is that the congregation is a family where everyone knows everyone else.

Even the best pastors are unable to maintain this model when worship attendance approaches an average of 150. (Our average attendance the last 12 months is 150)

The Program Church (150-350 at Worship) grows out of the need for pastoral care to be supplemented by other avenues of spiritual feeding. Programs must now begin to fulfill that role. The Program Church has many cells of activity, which are headed up by lay leaders. These lay leaders take on some pastoral functions.

Clergy must spend their time planning with other lay leaders to ensure the highest quality programs and recruiting, training, supervising, and evaluating leaders and seeing to it that their morale remains high. The pastor must step back from direct ministry with people to coordinate and support volunteers who offer this ministry.

The Corporate Church (350 and up at worship) They will usually have the finest organ and one of the best choirs in town. A lot of work and resources go into making Sunday worship a rich experience. The head of staff spends much time preparing for preaching and worship leadership. The head of staff may not even remember the names of many parishioners. The head pastor becomes a symbol of unity and stability. Key to the success of the Corporate Church is the multiple staff and its ability to manage the diversity of its ministries in a collegial manner.

We have 511 on the active roll with 150 average attendance roll which pulls us between Pastoral and Program Church models. However, our resources and history pull us to the Corporate Church model. Finally, many of our active members come from a Family Church background and seek to find that experience at Latrobe.

The first part of working on a mission and a vision is to realize there are different ways of being a church, just like there are different ways of traveling, a truck isn't a big horse and a battleship isn't a bicycle. They can all move you to your goal, but all have strengths and weaknesses and need to be lead and fed differently.

How Should We Be Church?

**Mom & Pop Store?
Solo Family Doctor?
County Fair?
Mega Mall?**