

Mission Moments  
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From the Center for U.S. Missions  
Following Jesus into the U.S. Mission Field  
October 6, 2006

Size Matters: Mission, Ministry, Boards and Staff  
Part 1 of 3

by Glenn Lucas

I recently spent an evening training my home congregation's newly-elected Board of Ministry, which functions as the board of directors. The training focused on the roles of the senior pastor and board relative to church size because a problem became clear as I met with our Senior Pastor and talked with several board members in preparation for the training. Our church is what Arlin Routhage, in his book *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry*, calls a "Corporate Size Church," but our board has been functioning like a board in what Routhage calls a "Pastoral Size Church." This misalignment of the board and staff roles relative to the congregation's size has resulted in frustration for both staff and the board because each has a different understanding of its role. In addition, this misalignment has a Kingdom impact. One of the church's most important resources, people's time, is being misspent in trying to do ministry in a way that is less productive than when alignment of roles is in place. Fortunately, the board recognizes the problem and is making the necessary changes to align roles and move the ministry forward.

My experience working with congregations tells me that this misalignment of roles is not unusual in congregations that have changed in size, growing either larger or smaller. The end result of misalignment is a decline in mission and ministry. For the sake of mission and ministry, a congregation's leadership must understand its size and the roles of staff and the board. In the first two parts of this three part article, I will introduce you to various church sizes and the role of the pastor, staff and board in each. In part three, we will explore some common dangers and suggestions for effectiveness.

**The Family Church – Active Membership: 50 or less**

The role of the pastor in a Family Church is primarily as chaplain. Leadership is vested in one or more families and is usually exercised by a congregational patriarch and/or matriarch. The pastor spends his time caring for his small flock. It takes several years for the pastor to attain significant influence in this size church. Unfortunately, most pastors don't stay in these size churches very long and so about the time they would be accepted as a player in the leadership circle of the church, they leave.

If the congregation was once larger but has shrunk to the size of a Family Church, it likely still has a board and organizational structure of a larger church, with sub-boards, committees and meetings. This larger structure demands time and energy and may distract from substantive mission outreach in a Family Church. Such a church needs to

streamline its by-laws and create a less formal structure under which the board and pastor may function. A less formal structure would have the minimum number of officers required by law, board meeting agendas that include few reports, perhaps only from the pastor and treasurer, and action items that are almost always settled by consensus rather than a vote. Important decisions should still be preserved in formal minutes.

### **The Pastoral Church – Active Membership: 50-150**

In the Pastoral Church the pastor, as the name implies, is at the center of the mission and ministry. There are enough patriarchs and matriarchs that they need someone to organize and manage them. The pastor wields significant influence in this size church because he is the link for information and he executes most of the mission and ministry. The board is a “hands on” or “working board.” It prescribes and sets the direction for ministry, expecting the pastor to execute most of the ministry himself. At this size, the board needs a more formal structure because it now has the need and capacity to put one or two significant programs into place. The board may set up standing committees to support the programs and/or future growth of the congregation.

The added programs and committees or task forces require the board to work and act in a more formal way, with formal agendas and reports from committee chairs. Action items generally require more debate. While decisions will still be made by consensus, it is more likely a formal vote will be taken for each item and *Robert’s Rules of Order* may guide meetings.

If the church grew from a Family Church to a Pastoral Church, its structure may be too informal. Leaders may make assumptions about ministry needs based on a narrow set of data. If the congregation declined to the Pastoral Church size, the structure once again may be cumbersome and the congregation may be attempting to accomplish too much. Board and staff positions may exist that are no longer necessary. The board, pastor and staff may not be on the same page regarding roles and ministry outcomes.

In this size church, it is critical that the pastor openly shares information with the board. He also needs to help the board catch a vision for mission and ministry beyond the current status quo. He needs to resource the board so that they understand their role and grow into the potential that exists in their congregation. He also needs to develop and refine his leadership and ministry skills.

The role of boards, pastor and staff in the Program Church and Corporate Church will be explored in part two of this article, in the October 18 issue of *Mission Moments*.

## **Moment Extras**

### **Research**

“... the typical Protestant church has 89 adults in attendance during an average weekend. In total, 60% of Protestant churches have 100 or fewer adults on a typical weekend, while

slightly less than 2% have 1000 or more adults. Examining the figures in terms of where adults attend, however, the statistics show that about four out of ten church-going adults (41%) go to churches with 100 or fewer adults while about one out of eight church-going adults (12%) can be found in churches of 1000 or more adults.”

The Barna Group  
 Small Churches Struggle to Grow Because Of The People They Attract  
<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=148>

LCMS Congregations' 2002 Worship Attendance		
Average Attendance	Number of Congregations	Percent of Congregations
1-99	2292	45
100-149	921	18
150-299	1179	23
300-499	446	9
500-799	189	9
800-999	42	1
1,000+	46	1
Total	5115	100*
*Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding. Source: LCMS		

**Quote**

“...there is one central reason to have a board: Simply put, the board exists (usually on someone else’s behalf) to be accountable that its organization works.”

John Carver & Miriam Carver

**Links**

"Postmodern Church Governance" by Dick Hamm  
<http://www.netresults.org/online/2005/octnovdec/churchgovernance.htm>

"Small Churches Struggle to Grow Because Of the People They Attract" by The Barna Group  
<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=148>

**News from the Center**

New Delivery System - With this issue of *Mission Moments*, we have begun using Constant Contact to deliver this newsletter. Their expertise in understanding the variety of email delivery systems in use today will help us successfully deliver this newsletter to

our subscribers. Direct questions or comments to the *Mission Moments* editor,  
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