

Lay Biennial
Plenary Session
“Role of Laity in Healthy, Growing
and Relevant Churches”

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By:
Bishop Reginald Jackson



What Is Meant By Healthy Church?

There are a number of characteristics which determine whether a church is healthy. There is no one absolute list, but there are some characteristics which are common to every healthy church.

- 1. God's Empowering Presence**
 - 2. Impacting Worship**
 - 3. Commitment to Prayer and Study of God's Word**
 - 4. Making Disciples**
 - 5. Spiritual Discipline and Passion for the Things of God**
 - 6. Loving and Caring Relationships**
 - 7. Servant Leadership Development**
 - 8. Administration and Accountability**
 - 9. Ministry to Church and Community**
 - 10. Stewardship and Generosity**
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Too many lay persons are in positions for which they have not been trained or prepared. You cannot blame people for not doing what they don't know to do. There must be a partnership between clergy and laity if our churches are going to be healthy.



What can laity do to help our churches become healthy?

- 1. Be empowered by the Holy Spirit at work in their lives. Church can do nothing without the Holy Spirit.**
- 2. Each lay person must make a personal commitment to be spiritually healthy themselves. If a church is not healthy it is because those who make up the congregation are not healthy.**
- 3. Good leadership develops other leaders. The pastor must not be the only leader in the church.**
- 4. There must be effective administration and accountability**
- 5. Church must be engaged in ministry to church and community
Congregation must exercise good stewardship and be generous in their giving**

The Book of Acts describes a healthy church. (Acts 2:42-47)



Growing Church

Every major Protestant Denomination in the United States is in decline, they simply are not growing.

The AME Church has not taken in an additional member in almost 50 years.

There are more unsaved and unchurched people in the world than there has ever been. If we won the unsaved and unchurched people to Christ, we wouldn't have enough churches to hold them all.

The major reason our churches are not growing is because church growth is not the number one priority of the church. There is a demonic mindset prevalent in the church to "maintain" the church, rather than grow the church. We become caretakers. Caretakers soon become undertakers.

Eighty percent of people in the church (80%) have never brought anybody to Christ or to join the church.

What role can laity play in growing the church?

1. Mission and Vision

Every church must have a mission and vision. This produces a 3 to 5 year strategic plan for the church.

The mission statement says what the church is doing now.

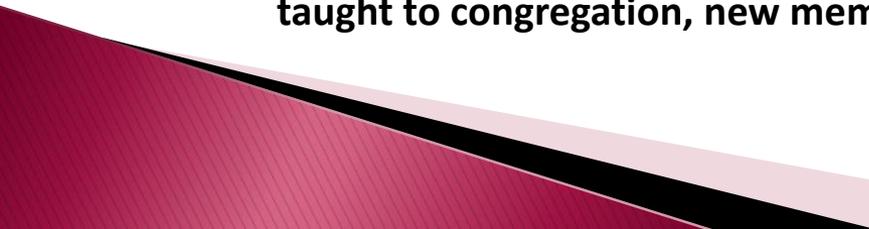
The vision statement is aspirational, and says what the church intends or seeks to become.

Mission statement not only says what the church does, but also lets us know what the church doesn't do.

It is like getting on a bus or a plane, let's everyone know where the church is going.

Mission and vision come from God to the pastor. Church can only have one vision.

Must be presented to and embraced by congregation. Printed in bulletin weekly, taught to congregation, new members class, organizations, etc.....



Example of Mission statement:

The mission of _____ church is to worship and praise God with joy, passionately proclaim and teach His Word, eagerly seek to win and make disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ, who will join with us in ministry, mission and outreach.”

Example of Vision statement:

The vision of _____ is to become Disciples of Christ, who know Him and make Him known, and passionately promote His kingdom in this community and beyond.



2. Make a Commitment to Grow

The church must decide it wants to grow. This must be a conscious and deliberate decision. Church does not grow by accident.

A. The most important measurement of church growth is not numerical but spiritual. If those already in the church aren't growing spiritually, the church will not grow numerically.

If people are growing spiritually, they will be passionate and eager to bring others to Christ.

Every congregant must make a commitment to bring at least one person to Christ. This alone will double the local church and denomination.

B. For every ten people who join the church, only two remain. This is a twenty percent (20%) retention rate.

Evangelism or church growth is the number one priority of the church, and Christian Education must be the second. Christian Education will help those who join to grow and remain and will help to grow the church.

It will also enable people to move from being members to being Disciples of Christ.

3. Be Inclusive

Too many churches have become exclusive rather than inclusive. We really don't want everybody in our church.

Many in the church fish with a rod. This way we can catch the kind of fish we want to catch. We want middle class, well educated, employed people in our church.

But Jesus told us to "let down our nets." (Luke 5:4)

When you fish with a net you catch all kinds of fish (people). The uneducated, unemployed, addicted, middle class, professional, etc..... This is the Lord's church, "whosoever will, let them come."

4. Children, Youth and Young Adults

Most of our congregations are primarily senior citizens. What is missing is children, youth and young adults.

The average age of blacks in the United States is 31 years of age.

If we do not bring children, youth and young adults into our church African Methodism will continue to decrease.

- 1. We must make children and youth a priority. They must be targeted by the church through schools, sporting events, etc....**
 - 2. Children and youth can grow the church**
 - 3. We must include young adults in the life of our church. Presently at the connectional and local church levels there is no viable role for young adults.**
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