



What Does It Take To Grow...

A Healthy Church

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THE CHURCH

Objective of this Collective Conversation:

- What are the Attributes of a healthy Church?
- How can we as Laity help churches become and remain healthy?
- Engage in frank conversation about the state of our Church



Questions to Ponder.



1. Just what is a healthy church?
2. What does It look like?
3. What can we do we do as members to promote church growth?
4. What is the primary purpose/mission of my local church in the community?
5. Does my church have a written mission statement that promotes the vision of the church?

CHURCH GROWTH QUIZ


A Self-Assessment

**Take ten minutes to silently, individually take the quiz...
SEE Handouts**



CHURCH GROWTH QUIZ

1. **The responsibility for growing the church rests primarily with the**
 - a) Minister
 - b) Board of Trustees
 - c) Membership
 - d) **All of the above**
 - e) None of the above




Church leaders often look to the Minister as responsible for “growing” the church. This is in part due to the belief that church growth is about increasing numbers of congregants - moving from a family size church to a pastoral size church, to a program size church, etc. For these developmental shifts to occur, **the entire living system of ministry must mature** to accommodate increasing numbers of participants.



CHURCH GROWTH QUIZ

2. When the church does not grow, it may be because
- a) The Minister is not cultivating new members
 - b) The Board is not cultivating new members
 - c) The church is not adequately being promoted in the community
 - d) There is too much talk about money
 - e) **There are underlying systemic and cultural issues**

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- Church growth is an effect of systemic and cultural shifts. Established relationships, for instance, must change and reconfigure in order for others to have a meaningful relationship to the community. **This is easier said than done.**
 - In addition, the church's identity and established patterns of behavior must adjust to align with demographics of those that comprise the church community. This adjustment challenges the status quo and tends to strain organizational systems and structure. Absent of an integral awareness of how ministry evolves as a living system, **church growth** initiatives can create a lot of **unexpected discomfort.**



CHURCH GROWTH QUIZ

3. In healthy “growing” churches, the process for becoming a member of the church community is
- a) Simple - having no specific requirements or financial commitments
 - b) Fulfilled over time as specific requirements and financial commitments are met, and membership competencies are demonstrated**




CONSIDER THIS...

Studies have shown that the harder it is for people to join an organization, the more responsible and accountable they become when they are in membership. The surest way to reinforce a high turnover in your church population is to make it easy to become a voting member.



CHURCH GROWTH QUIZ

4. **The most effective method of promoting the ministry is through**
- a) A diverse schedule of programs and activities
 - b) Newsletters, emails, mailings, newspaper and cable TV ads
 - c) **Word of mouth - people in the church bringing a family member or friend**
 - d) A dynamic slate of exceptional speakers and presenters
 - e) An innovative marketing program that targets a likeminded audience



Word of Mouth is by far the most effective method of promoting your ministry. If the people in your church are not your best promoters, better ask the question: How is it possible we are not promoting our church to our friends? What's up with that?



CHURCH GROWTH QUIZ

5. The most reasonable explanation for a person who has been coming to church for a while and then suddenly stops coming is
- a) They got what they needed and moved on
 - b) Conflict with the minister
 - c) Minister / Board conflict
 - d) For whatever reason, they decided that the church was not their spiritual home
 - e) They didn't like the music
 - f) Too much talk about money
 - g) They couldn't connect with the community
 - h) All of the above**



Keep in mind that there are **three cultures** in the church:
Congregation A, B, and C.

- Congregation A is the inner most circle, the minister / board culture.
- Congregation B is the culture of ownership, the 20% of the congregation that provides 80% of the resources.
- Congregation C is the culture of receivership, the remaining 80% that only provide 20% of the resources.



- *Typically, there is a 90% turnover in Congregation C. **They come and go.** They are the most affected by talk about money, conflict, etc, and tend to move on once they have gotten their need to receive satisfied.*

Those that leave the church who are in Congregation B tend to move on because of a failed relationship with the minister or some other upset relating to an established practice or tradition.



CHURCH GROWTH QUIZ

- * **6. When someone leaves the church, it is best to**
 - a) **Bless them on their way**
 - b) Have the Minister find out why they left the church
 - c) Have the Board find out why they left the church
 - d) Wait three weeks and then send them a “We Miss You” card.



*Those who are in Congregation C will move on as a natural migration **unless they become inspired** into a role of ownership.*

There may be a legitimate reason to check into the departure of someone from Congregation B. Chances are it is about a failed relationship with the minister. Or, it is possible they have come to a place in their spiritual journey where they have moved beyond what the ministry can offer that particular person (we cannot be all things to all people).

The more important issue here is what you are going to do with that information.

Studies have shown that people cannot be “talked back” into returning to the church. If they return, it is about their own process.



CHURCH GROWTH QUIZ

7. Which one of the following church growth scenarios do you prefer? Imagine you are a church with a Sunday attendance of 100 adults and you successfully implement one of programs below.
- a) The Sunday attendance stays the same, but the church income doubles
 - b) The Sunday attendance doubles, yet the annual church income only increases by 25%.



An honest look at these scenarios exposes a myth in ministry regarding the desire to increase numbers. **Often, we believe that if more people come to church, we will receive more financial support.** The difference between someone in Congregation B and C is a ratio of \$4,000.00 annual giving from someone in Congregation B in a Pastoral size church, and \$250.00 annual giving from someone in the same church who is in the culture of receivership (Congregation C). If you wish to impact your bottom line, **focus on growing ownership, not receivership.**



8. Which one of the following is not the responsibility of the Membership:

- a) Hold the Minister and Board accountable to creating a healthy organization
- b) Be financially committed and meaningfully involved in the organization
- c) Have a voice in who serves as pastor and who serves on the Board of Trustees
- d) **Determine the programs and activities of the organization**
- e) Help first-timers connect to the community by cultivating a welcoming environment



*The determination of programs and activities of the organization is the responsibility of the pastor in consultation with the Board of Stewards. It certainly **behooves the church leadership to value and respect** the input of the membership, and ultimately both the minister and the Board are accountable to the Membership.*



- 9. What's the most important question to ask church members?**
- a) What activities are you willing to support?
 - b) Do think the Pastor and Board are doing a good job?
 - c) How can this ministry better serve you?
 - d) What's missing for you, that if it were here and a part of this ministry, you'd bring a friend?**



All are valid questions. The underlying issue is: from where is the question being asked? If the question is being asked to manage the discomfort of financial stress, answers a, b, or c will get you more off principle.



A Healthy Church ... Purpose

- * **Fulfilling our Great Commission in the African Methodist Episcopal Church...**
- * The church is involved in all kinds of social action programs and political programs and community assistance, however these should never overshadow that Christ founded the church primarily to usher persons into the Kingdom of God. **Programs must not overshadow purpose.**
- * Our Church must be rooted in the great commission of Matt 28:18-20
Go Ye Therefore and teach all nations, baptizing.....



THE CHURCH

FOCUS

"Life of Worship"
Great Commandment
Matt. 22:37

"Life of Service"
Great Commission
Matt. 28:19

"Life of Love"
2nd Great
Commandment
Matt. 22:39

**Love God
Love Neighbor
Serve Others**

SECRETS OF HEALTHY CHURCH



Secret #1:

The church's leadership and the laity hold to a high view of Scripture.

While holding to a conservative and evangelical perspective of the Bible does not guarantee health in a church, we don't **find health in congregations where Scripture** is not held as authoritative.

This so-called secret has been revealed by many researchers beyond our own work.



Secret #2:


**The churches and their leaders
seek to be relevant.**

Is there a word of hope, encouragement??
Not about musical selections, per se....

Secret #3:

The churches and their leaders hold to the primacy of preaching.

In some churches, preaching has lost its power and emphasis. It is perceived to be an irrelevant ministry and style of communication. Or it may be a central part of the worship service, but the time and study involved in sermon preparation is lacking. There is preaching, but it has little power.



Among a study of churches on growth the churches, preaching was primary for those with healthy conversion growth and meaningful discipleship ministries.

Pastors who preached each week spent five times as much time in sermon preparation as those who preached in unhealthy churches.

There is a powerful correlation between sermon study time and health of the church.

NOTE: Of course, if the preachers are to spend significant time in the preparation of sermons, the church members must give them the time to do so. There cannot be an expectation that they attend every meeting, meet every pastoral care need, visit everyone, and provide hours of counseling. The members must give the preacher time to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). In other words, the laity must be unleashed to do much of the ministry of the church.

Secret #4:

The churches have a healthy small group structure.

For some churches, the primary small group was Church school; for others, it was home groups or small groups that met in diverse locations. **(CLASS LEADERS)** The churches that emphasized moving as many members as possible into a small group assimilated those members five times better than those who attended only worship services.



Secret #5:

Healthy churches emphasize corporate prayer and church prayer ministries.

They do more than give lip service to the importance of prayer.

Another common element in healthy churches' prayer ministries is that members pray for non-Christians by name. They are unashamed and unafraid to be vocal about the greatest need any person could have: salvation through Jesus Christ.



Secret #6:

Churches that are healthy take membership seriously.

Move from being so focused on inflated membership rolls that have little integrity, and be INTENTIONAL.


Church membership needs a level of accountability.


The concept of membership is not antiquated

Secret #7:

The healthy churches are highly intentional about evangelism. .

They have ministries, programs, and emphases that lead members to reach out with the Gospel to their unchurched friends, relatives, co-workers, and acquaintances. As a doctrinal note, the leaders in these churches believe in a literal hell. Their evangelism is thus motivated not only by the good news of the Gospel, but the bad news of rejecting the Gospel.

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- **Has your church had a health exam lately?**
 - How would it fare in your honest assessment of the seven secrets you just read?



May God provide your church with all she needs to be effective and healthy for God's glory.

And may you hear these words of encouragement: **“Everything looks good.”**



**What role does each of us play
in Church Growth?**



GROWING THE CHURCH

* 4 P's to Growing the Church

**PROMOTE THE
CHURCH**

PRINCIPLE FOCUS

PARTNERSHIP

**POWER AND
SPIRIT**



"Here's a résumé from a candidate who says he can't grow a church but loves attending conferences to learn how."

THINK ABOUT IT....

Scenarios that might occur in your Church



Can This CHURCH Be Saved?

- * **Church Name:** First Mount Lay AME Church, founded in 1894
- * **Pastor:** The Reverend Noah Techsavvy, age 70
- * **Background:**

There are 350 on the roll; 100 regularly attend. The average age of congregation is 60. Children of the members have grown up and moved away or have decided to attend church elsewhere. The pastor has not been proactive in embracing or leading the church in upgrading to a modern day status. The once premier church has now become one of many with a glorious past but an uncertain future. The seasoned members continue to take charge of the church business and hold a closed hand to allowing others to come in and learn the business of the church. There has not been much growth. The bustling neighborhood around the church has changed. In the last five years two apartment complexes have been built and an influx of young adults with families have moved into the surrounding community. From time to time, visitors attend the church who live in the apartments but no real outreach has been generated.



A HEALTHY CHURCH IS...

Like a magnet, a church with a contagious style draws people to its doors.

It is **biblical** in content.

Messages are **based on the Word of God**, not on the opinions or interests of the preacher.

It is **authentic** in nature. This is a church that believes what it says.

It is **gracious** in attitude. The church sees itself as a family, not as a corporation. It is relevant in approach.

This church shows how God's Word applies to today's needs, issues, and concerns.



Whenever you find a church

that

- Glorifies the Godhead
- Fosters a spirit of devotion to the Lord
- Dispenses the Word of God along with relevant application
- Generates personal warmth
- Touches outsiders with the wonderful news of Jesus

**All with a contagious style,
You have found a healthy church.**



The Perfect Church

I think that I will never see
a church that is all that it ought to be

A church that has no empty pews
a church where people never get the blues
A church whose music is always great
a church where people are never late



The Perfect Church

Such perfect Churches there may be
but none of them are known to me.
**If you should find the perfect church
Without one fault or smear,
For goodness sake! Don't join that church;
You'd spoil the atmosphere.
If you should find the perfect church
Where all anxieties cease
Then pass it by, lest joining it
You'd mar the masterpiece.**



The Perfect Church

**If you should find the perfect church
Then don't you ever dare,
To tread upon such holy ground;
You'd be a misfit there.**

**But since no perfect church exists
Made of imperfect men,
Then let's cease looking for that church
And love the church we're in.**



**Of course, it's not a perfect church,
That's simple to discern
But you and I and all of us
Could cause the tide to turn.**



The Perfect Church

If you should join the perfect church,
then don't you even dare
To tread upon such holy ground.
You wouldn't fit in there.
But since no perfect church exists
where people never sin
Then let's stop looking for that church
and love the one we're in.