

A Congregational Resource Guide Learning Pathway

Spiritual Strategic Journey: Tutorial for Congregational Redevelopment

Web site:

www.congregationalresources.org/Bullard.asp

or

www.ssjtutorial.org



Welcome to **Spiritual Strategic Journey, a Tutorial for Congregational Redevelopment.**

It is our hope and prayer that working through the tutorial will enable you to think, act, and use redevelopment resources effectively—so that your congregation will change and transition as it seeks to transform itself along its spiritual strategic journey to reach its kingdom potential.

Please begin by reviewing the tutorial's purpose and allowing us to tell you a little about the author and sponsors. Take a few moments to read "How to use this tutorial." Then you'll be on your way.

If you have questions about this tutorial, send a message to research@alban.org.

Thank you for joining us!

Table of Contents

	Page		Page
Purpose	4	Vision/Values	24
		When is this positive?	25
Author/Sponsors	4	Equipping order	25
How to Use This Tutorial	4	Experiential	26
		When is this positive?	26
Start Here	5	Equipping order	26
What is congregational redevelopment?	5		
What challenges do congregations face?	5	Routings: What's Next?	27
How does this tutorial help?	6		
What is the guarantee?	6	Coaching Development	28
Is coaching available?	7	Gestation to Birth Strategy	28
What is the first step?	7	Birth to Infancy Strategy	28
		Infancy to Childhood Strategy	29
		Childhood to Adolescence Strategy	29
Initial Considerations	7	Adolescence to Adulthood Strategy	30
Initial Inventory	7	Adulthood to Maturity Strategy	30
Interpreting Inventory Results	11		
Readiness	11	Coaching Redevelopment	31
Suggestions	13	Revisioning Strategy (Maturity Stage)	31
Questions for Dialogue	13	Revitalization Strategy (Empty Nest Stage)	31
		Renewal Strategy (Retirement Stage)	32
Choose Your Route	14	Reinvention Strategy (Old Age Stage)	33
Life Cycle and Stages	14	Resurrection Strategy (Death Stage)	33
Ten Life Cycle Stages	14		
Birth	14	Choices within the Journey	34
Infancy	15	Stay the Course; Remain the Same	35
Childhood	15	Merge with Other Congregations	36
Adolescence	16	Relocate	38
Adulthood	16	Multiple Communities Congregation	41
Maturity	17	Multigenerational Congregation	43
Empty Nest	17	Neighborhood Focused Congregation	45
Retirement	18	Multiple Site Congregation	47
Old Age	18	Metropolitan Regional Congregation	49
Death	18	Social Service/Special Purpose	50
Your Congregation's Place	19	Multiple Worshipping Communities	51
Corresponding Route	20	Multiple Congregations	52
		Multicultural Congregation	53
Routings	21	Congregational Multiplication	55
Incremental	21		
When is this positive?	22	Conclusion	58
Equipping order	22		
Systemic	23	Glossary	59
When is this positive?	23		
Equipping order	23	Resource Guide	67

Table of Contents (continued)

	Page		Page
Appendices	70		
Share and Prayer Triplets	70	The Empty Nest of a Congregation	103
		The Retirement of a Congregation	106
Equipping Activities:	74	The Old Age of a Congregation	109
Assessment	74	The Death of a Congregation	112
Evaluation	80	Revising a Maturity Congregation	115
Future Planning	80	Revitalizing an Empty Nest Congregation	118
Implementation	82	Renewing a Retirement Congregation	121
Learning	82	Reinventing an Old Age Congregation	124
Present Planning	82	Resurrecting a Death Congregation	127
Readiness	83	Congregational Vision	130
		Congregational Relationships	133
Articles:	85	Congregational Programs	136
The Birth of a Congregation	85	Congregational Management	139
The Infancy of a Congregation	88		
The Childhood of a Congregation	91	Charts:	142
The Adolescence of a Congregation	94	Levels of Conflict Chart	142
The Adulthood of a Congregation	97	Life Cycle Chart	143
The Maturity of a Congregation	100		

Purpose

This tutorial for congregational redevelopment seeks to provide a learning experience that helps the reader and congregation to:

- think and act creatively about redevelopment in their own context;
- understand and develop the capacity to act on the full scope of the redevelopment topic;
- select and use appropriate resources for their congregation in effective ways.

Author and Sponsors

George Bullard is the Executive Coach for Lake Hickory Learning Communities near Hickory, NC. George has been involved for 27 years in research, writing, consulting, and coaching in congregational redevelopment. Out of this vast experience he has compiled this tutorial.

Contact information:
Rev. George Bullard, D. Min.
Baptist State Convention of North Carolina
P.O. Box 1107 (205 Convention Drive)
Voice: 919-467-5100, ext. 106, Fax: 919-460-7507
E-mail: GBullard@bscnc.org

This tutorial is a joint effort of the Alban Institute and the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. Funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.

How To Use This Tutorial

This tutorial may be used in several different ways.

First, you may see this as a reference tool. You may have questions about congregational redevelopment. This tutorial has a lot of materials on various aspects of congregational redevelopment that might provide you with some great ideas.

Second, you may see this as a learning tool. You may want to read various sections where you would like to learn more about congregational redevelopment.

Third, you may see this as an orientation tool whereby pastors, staff members, lay leadership, and other congregational participants can become oriented to some of the factors concerning congregational redevelopment.

Fourth, you may see this as a tutorial you can use to guide you through a congregational redevelopment process. It would be great for a leadership community in your congregation to work through the various sections of the tutorial relevant to them.

Fifth, denominational leadership may see this as a resource to which to refer congregational leadership interested in considering a redevelopment process.

Start Here!

Let's start by considering the following questions:

What is congregational redevelopment?

Congregational redevelopment is a process by which congregations facing significant challenges engage in a new or renewed spiritual strategic journey leading to congregational transformation.

Congregations in need of redevelopment are ones that realize there is a growing gap between (1) the reality of their life and ministry and (2) their full kingdom potential.

- Once this gap was smaller because the congregation was thriving.
- Now the gap is widening because the congregation has lost its sense of spiritual strategic journey.
- It is wandering in a wilderness of chaos without the order that being in the midst of God's will can bring to them as a faith-based community.

What type of challenges do congregations face?

First, congregations face the challenge of demographic changes in membership. Congregations may be growing older in terms of the average age of the average person in attendance. This is particularly a challenge when more than 25 percent of the people in attendance are 60 or more years old.

Second, congregations face the challenge of diversifying ethnically, racially, socio-economically, or in lifestyle, and yet may still be trying to do worship, learning, fellowship, and service by old patterns that fit a former demographic majority.

Third, congregations may have passed their prime years and find themselves passive in spirit and declining in numbers. As an organic, holistic body they are aging. They have lost a sense of visionary direction that formerly fueled their forward progress. Tried and true programs are no longer successful.

Fourth, congregations face demographic changes and transitions in their community or context. Racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, lifestyle, and population density changes and transitions in their community or context may impact their congregation.

Fifth, congregations are confronted by shifts from a modern to a postmodern mindset or worldview—as younger, emerging generations approach congregational life with a different set of expectations, worship and learning style preferences, and approaches to discipleship and service.

Whatever the reason, the quality and quantity of congregational life may not be what it once was, and the congregation sees that as a challenge to address with proactive, positive action.

How does this tutorial help congregations face those challenges?

This tutorial seeks to assist congregational leaders to work through a process of congregational redevelopment, which means to once again be on a positive, spiritual strategic journey where the congregation (1) knows who it is and where it is headed and (2) is intentionally trying to get there through high quality relationship experiences and programmatic emphases.

It begins with an initial assessment that helps congregational leaders to determine two things.

First, is their congregation ready to engage in a congregational redevelopment journey?

Second, what type of journey might best fit their congregational situation?

The second phase of the tutorial introduces congregational leaders to skill sets related to assessment, evaluation, future planning, implementation, learning, present planning, and readiness. The tutorial seeks to help congregations understand which skill sets in what order seem to be best for their situation.

What is the guarantee?

There is no guarantee that your congregation will successfully redevelop by completing the skill sets suggested by this tutorial.

Less than 25 percent of all congregations successfully redevelop once they are more than 25 to 30 years old. So, why seek to redevelop?

However, up to 50 percent of all congregations redevelop who intentionally seek to make significant changes and do so with accountability to partner congregations or to an outside third party.

Often congregations really do not want to transform:

- They want to be fixed, to have less pain, or to restore past glory.
- They do not want to change, but they are afraid of dying.
- Persons with positions of leadership in the congregation do not want to risk losing those positions by giving permission for change.

None of these desires is likely to allow the congregation to be open to the new, future-oriented things that God might be doing in their midst.

Congregations who successfully redevelop are able to do so because they urgently feel that their congregation has a strong spiritual and strategic future, and they are willing to work over time on a solution-based approach that will enable them to experience transformation and achieve their full potential.

Is coaching available?

George Bullard of North Carolina has written this tutorial under the sponsorship of The Alban Institute of Bethesda, Maryland, and the Indianapolis Center for Congregations of Indianapolis, Indiana. Coaching assistance is available from:

The Alban Institute

Contact the consulting office at 1-800-486-1318 x229 or at consult@alban.org.

The Indianapolis Center for Congregations

Congregations in the metropolitan Indianapolis area should contact the Center at 317-237-7799 or at info@centerforcongregations.org.

Lake Hickory Learning Communities

Contact George Bullard at 1-919-467-5100, ext. 106 or at GBullard@bscnc.org.

What is the first step?

The first step is to go to the "**Initial Considerations**" section (below) and complete the ***Congregational Issues for a Spiritual Strategic Journey Initial Inventory*** to determine if a congregational redevelopment effort is the best change pathway and transition passage in which your congregation should engage at the current time.

The ***Initial Inventory*** will suggest the next steps to be taken. However, this tutorial is organized so that a congregation can deal with the skill set that seems to fit for the congregation in an order that seems to empower its future.

Initial Considerations

The ten issues considered in the ***Initial Inventory*** may be the subject of generative dialogue in congregations seeking to determine their readiness for transformational change and transition while traveling along a spiritual strategic journey toward reaching their full kingdom potential.

Initial Considerations: Initial Inventory

Ten issues are described on the following two pages. After you read each description, please rate your congregation, using a scale of 1 to 10. A rating as low as "1" would mean that your congregation does not reflect the description. A rating as high as "10" would mean that your congregation highly reflects the description. A rating in between these two extremes suggests the relative extent to which your congregation does or does not reflect the description.

Add all of the ratings together to arrive at a total score for your congregation. We'll suggest that you then turn to one of three different places in this tutorial, depending upon your score.

Remember that there are no "good" or "bad" ratings. Your congregation will benefit to the extent that the questions are answered honestly, thoughtfully, and prayerfully.

#1: Visionary Leadership

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statement?

"Our congregation has a strong, clear, and passionate sense of our identity involving mission and purpose (who we are), our core values (what we believe or highly value), our vision (where we are headed), and our spiritual strategic journey as a congregation (how we are getting there)."

"Visionary Leadership" rating *(circle one number)*:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>1=does not reflect description</i>					<i>10= highly reflects description</i>				

#2: Relationship Experiences

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"Our congregation is doing well at attracting people to a Christ-centric faith journey (evangelism) and a relationship with a congregational community (connecting). We are also doing well at helping people who are connected to be on an intentional and maturing Christ-centric faith journey (assimilation). Among the results of their faith journey is a deepening spirituality (spiritual growth), the development of numerous new leaders (leadership development), and a willingness by many people to get actively involved in congregational leadership positions and in places of ministry service within and beyond the congregation (lay mobilization)."

"Relationship Experiences" rating *(circle one number)*:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>1=does not reflect description</i>					<i>10= highly reflects description</i>				

#3: Programmatic Emphases

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"Our congregation has outstanding programs, ministries, and activities for which we are well known throughout our congregation, and our geographic community or the target groups we serve. Our programs, ministries, and activities seem to be growing in numbers and quality. Our programs are meeting real, identified spiritual, social, and emotional needs of people."

"Programmatic Emphases" rating *(circle one number)*:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>1=does not reflect description</i>					<i>10= highly reflects description</i>				

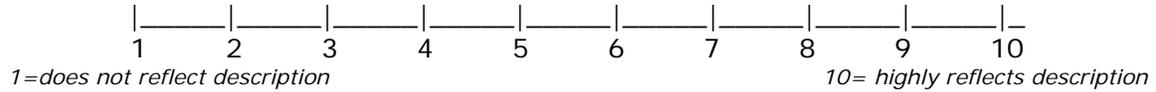
#4: Accountable Management

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"Our congregation has excellent, flexible management systems (teams, committees, councils, boards, leadership communities) that empower the future direction of our congregation rather than seek to control the future direction. Decision-making is

open and responsive to congregational input. Finances are healthy and increasing each year. The management systems are supportive of the visionary leadership efforts by the pastor, staff, and congregational leadership."

"Accountable Management" rating *(circle one number)*:

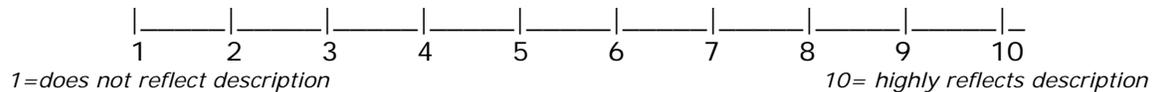


#5: Contextual Relevance

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"Our congregation is demographically similar to its geographic community or the target groups that it has served over the years. Little or no gap is developing between the persons attending our congregation, and the geographic community or the target groups we have sought to serve over the past ten years. We are demographically reflective of the people we seek to serve in gender, age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomics, and lifestyle."

"Contextual Relevance" rating *(circle one number)*:

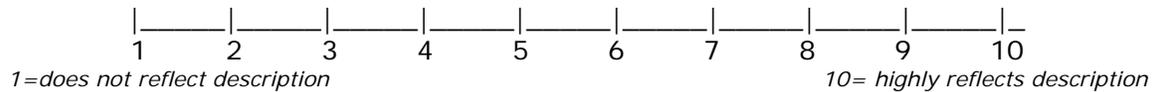


#6: People of Passion

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"I can name at least seven people or seven percent—whichever is higher—of the average number of active, attending adults in our congregation, present on a typical weekend for worship, who have a positive and passionate sense of urgency for change and transition that may lead to transformation and the achievement of the full kingdom potential of our congregation. They also have the spiritual, leadership, and strategic knowledge and maturity to appropriately initiate and champion change and transition within our congregation."

"People of Passion" rating *(circle one number)*:

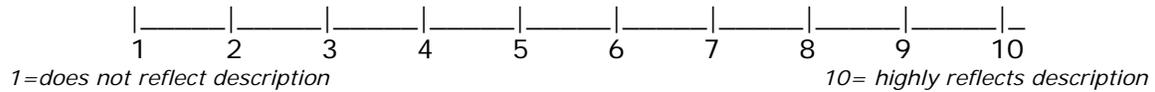


#7: Pastoral Leadership

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"Our pastor has a genuine commitment to change and transition for our congregation that may lead to transformation and the achievement of the full kingdom potential of our congregation. In addition, our pastor is highly respected by our congregation, and they will proactively support our pastor's initiating leadership and vision casting as part of a spiritual, strategic journey toward reaching their full kingdom potential."

"Pastoral Leadership" rating *(circle one number)*:

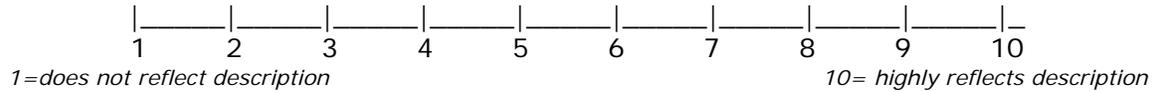


#8: People of Position

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"Our key lay leaders have a genuine commitment to change and transition for our congregation that may lead to transformation and the achievement of the full kingdom potential of our congregation. While not always the people of greatest passion about the future of the congregation, by position and power they are competent and committed to lead us to fulfill our full kingdom potential. In addition, our congregation highly respects them, and will proactively support their leadership in a spiritual, strategic journey toward reaching their full kingdom potential."

"People of Position" rating *(circle one number)*:

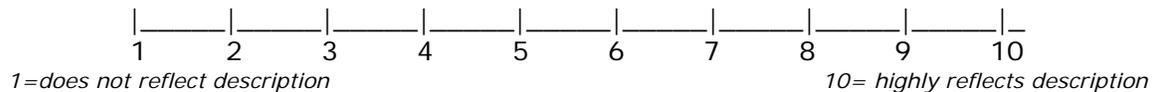


#9: Congregational Growth

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"Our congregation has grown in membership and weekly worship attendance during the past five to ten years by at minimum of 10 to 15 percent. (Or, compared to the change over the past five to ten years in population or size of the geographic community or the target groups we serve, our congregation has sustained or achieved an attendance that could be legitimately called growing compared to our geographic community or target groups.)"

"Congregational Growth" rating *(circle one number)*:

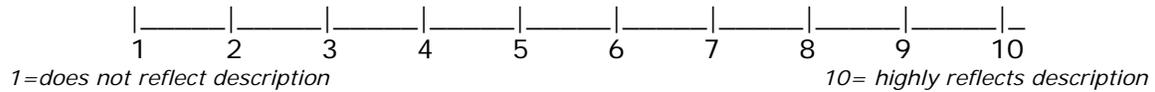


#10: Level of Conflict (For a more detailed presentation of this issue, see the "Levels of Conflict" chart on page 142.)

How highly does your congregation reflect the following statements?

"Our congregation has clear, open, healthy communication channels that allow the congregation to identify and deal with any issues that might disrupt the sense of fellowship and unity, and perhaps produce unhealthy conflict. Our congregation works hard at creating and nurturing healthy relationships as a Christ-centric faith community, and uses our diversity to build a deep, qualitative sense of being on a common journey. We know how to disagree with one another without being disagreeable in a way that can destroy our relationship with God and one another."

"Level of Conflict" rating (circle one number):



Total of all ratings: _____

Initial Considerations: Interpreting Inventory Results

A score of **40 or less** calls for significant "**Readiness**" activities (see below), as well as solid professional coaching. After reading through ""Readiness," consider the **suggestions** on page 13.

A score of **41-80** speaks to a readiness for change and transition. If your score is in this range, please consider the "**Questions for Generative Dialogue**" (page 13). Then proceed to "**Choose Your Route**" (page 14).

A score of **81-100** suggests the congregation is well along their journey and simply needs coaching. If your score is in this range, please go to "**Choices**" (page 34).

Initial Considerations: Readiness

Readiness involves engaging in the readiness activities necessary for a congregation to achieve the change and transition necessary for congregational redevelopment to take place.

Four aspects of readiness for change and transition must be addressed for a congregation to truly have readiness.

In addition, an important part of readiness is understanding the numerology of various leadership communities that needs to be developed.

Initial Considerations: Readiness: Four aspects

Four aspects of readiness for change and transition must be addressed for a congregation to truly have readiness: passionate readiness; spiritual readiness; leadership readiness; and strategic readiness.

Passionate Readiness

Strong positive passionate readiness concerning the future of the congregation exists among many persons within the congregation.

Urgency exists concerning needed changes and transitions that may lead to transformation.

This zealous sense of passion and urgency is derived from a positive feeling in favor of the future of the congregation, rather than a negative feeling that opposes or fights against some demon or negative factor in the congregation or its context.

Negative passion may lead to a future dysfunctional congregation with arrested development, rather than a transformed congregation.

Spiritual Readiness

Strong positive spiritual readiness where there is a belief that God is up to something transformational through this congregation.

Personal and congregational community spiritual processes are engaged in that help.

Spiritual readiness will require the congregation to engage in an intentional spiritual emphasis over a period of time such as "Share and Prayer Triplets" (page 70).

Leadership Readiness

Strong positive leadership is willing to exert empowering leadership to see that the congregation makes the changes and transitions necessary to achieve transformation and reaching its full kingdom potential.

Strong positive leadership is composed of people of passion, pastoral leadership, and people of position.

Strategic Readiness

A core of initiating leadership is fully aware of the types of strategies and tactics that will need to be used to make the necessary changes and transition leading to transformation and reaching the full kingdom potential of the congregation.

The Initiating Leadership Community participates in learning experiences that help them develop the capacity to guide each step of the spiritual strategic journey with full knowledge of the necessary steps.

Often initiating leadership communities seek external coaching assistance to mentor them along the journey.

Initial Considerations: Readiness: Various leadership communities

Readiness includes the development of various leadership communities: the Initiating Leadership Community; the Primary Leadership Community; and the Supporting Leadership Community.

The Initiating Leadership Community

The Initiating Leadership Community is made up of the people of passion, who are seven people or seven percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater.

This leadership community represents the innovators and early adapters in the congregation who have the strongest positive passion concerning the future of the congregation, but not necessary the key roles or positions in the congregation.

Persons identified and connected with the Initiating Leadership Community must have passionate readiness, spiritual readiness, leadership readiness, and strategic readiness.

The intensity of their readiness must be at least a "seven" in all four areas on a scale of one to ten with ten being high.

The Primary Leadership Community

The Primary Leadership Community is made up of the people of position, who are 21 people or 21 percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater.

The Supporting Leadership Community

The Supporting Leadership Community is made up of the people of participation, who are 63 people or 63 percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater.

Initial Considerations: Suggestions

If your score from the *Initial Inventory* was 40 or less, it may not yet be time to engage in the routings, strategies, and choices outlined in this tutorial.

However, we encourage you to consider these suggestions:

Begin a Spiritual Strategic Journey launch with "**100 Days of Share and Prayer Triplets**" (page 70).

Examine the "**Resource Guide**" (page 67) for publications, Web sites, and organizations that may be helpful to your congregation.

Think about working with a **professional coach** (page 7).

Take the *Initial Inventory* again at a later time to see how your score has changed.

Return to "**Interpreting Inventory Results**" (page 11) and explore the paths that apply to other score ranges.

Whatever choices you make, may God bless you on your journey.

Initial Considerations: Questions for Generative Dialogue

These ten issues for generative dialogue become ten critical questions your congregation must ask itself and seek to answer.

Which of the individual factors are rated as at least a 7?

- These are the ones your congregation should affirm and seek to build on.
- If none are rated at least a 7, why?

If at least two of the factors 1-4 did not rate at least a 7, and two of factors 6-8 did not rate at least a 7, then your congregation may need to engage in some readiness activities before it can engage in a successful spiritual strategic journey.

Which of the individual factors rated 4 or less?

- These are the ones in which your congregation must develop greater capacity to be able to redevelop.
- If at least two of the factors 1-4 are rated 4 or less, and two factors 6-8 are rated 4 or less, then your congregation must engage in some **readiness** activities (page 11) before it can engage in a successful spiritual strategic journey.

Choose Your Route

The best Route for your congregation's Journey is determined by its Life Cycle Stage.

Review "**Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development**" (below) and select the stage that seems most appropriate to your congregation's reality.

Once you've determined your congregation's life stage, discover the most appropriate corresponding route (page 20).

Choose Your Route: Life Cycle and Stages

Gestation is a preparatory phase before the launching of a new congregation. Gestation is that period of time, often six months to two years in length, when preparations are being made to publicly launch a new congregation.

This involves spiritual preparation, vision casting, ministry planning, formation of a leadership core, and resource development.

Following gestation are the ten stages of congregational development that fit into a life cycle approach to congregations.

The Ten Stages of Congregational Development

Here are the ten stages, beginning with "Birth" and extending through "Adulthood" and "Maturity" into "Old Age" and "Death." (Note: italicized words are defined in the glossary, beginning on page 59).

For a graphical view of the ten life stages, see my chart, "The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development" (page 143).

After exploring these stages, determine your congregation's place on the life cycle and discover the most appropriate corresponding route.

The Ten Stages: Birth

Birth is the first six months to two years of the public life of a congregation.

The Birth stage is driven by the expression of a passionate God-given *Vision* concerning the life of the newly emerging congregation.

Relationships, Programs, and Management activities are happening, but they are not fully developed at this stage.

Leadership is expressed through vision, and assists in fueling the forward progress of the congregation.

The Birth stage is discussed further in my article, "The Birth of a Congregation" (page 85).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Infancy."

The Ten Stages: Infancy

Infancy is the three to five years following the Birth stage when *Vision* and *Relationships* are dominant.

The expression of discipleship patterns that focus on worship, spiritual development, and the formation of warm and rich relationship patterns or a sense of true community in the congregation characterize infancy.

During Infancy the passion of the congregation to fulfill its vision will increase as people discover their role in this exciting spiritual and strategic journey.

Out of this passion people readily volunteer to do the work of the congregation because their congregation has the character of a movement they very much want to enhance and empower.

Healthy patterns of worship, evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, and ministry and missions are established during this stage.

The Infancy stage is discussed further in my article, "The Infancy of a Congregation" (page 88).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Childhood."

The Ten Stages: Childhood

Childhood usually begins around five to six years after the Birth of a congregation, lasts for five to six years, and focuses on *Vision* and *Programs*.

Childhood is initiated by the realization that the congregation is succeeding, but that its programs, ministries, and activities are unorganized and not developed in a form that will allow the congregation to reach its full kingdom potential.

The energy that was going into the development of deep, meaningful *Relationships* is now focused on developing and implementing the *Programs* structure for the congregation.

The Childhood stage is discussed further in my article, "The Childhood of a Congregation" (page 91).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Adolescence."

The Ten Stages: Adolescence

Adolescence begins around 10 to 12 years after the public launching of the congregation, and is a stage where *Vision, Relationships, and Programs* are all emphasized.

It is often a time of a great crescendo of qualitative and quantitative growth.

The congregation is able to relax following five to six years of program development and implementation. People can enjoy their relationship with God and one another.

It is also a time of some chaos as people begin to multiply the dreams they have for the future of the congregation, and the core dream or vision of the congregation may appear fuzzy.

The longer Adolescence lasts, the more the congregation begins to realize they must address the *Management* systems of the congregation.

The Adolescence stage is discussed further in my article, "The Adolescence of a Congregation" (page 94).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Adulthood."

The Ten Stages: Adulthood

Around 18 to 22 years after the public launching of the congregation, it reaches Adulthood when all four organizing principles—*Vision, Relationships, Programs, and Management*—are all fully developed.

The congregation is ready to soar as a fully development spiritual community with great resources and the proper balance or alignment of these resources.

Often, however, congregations do not soar because of one or both of the following reasons:

First, their fantasy of what it would feel and look like when they arrived at Adulthood does not match what they see. So, they are waiting for something else to happen.

Second, they may feel that what they have done is enough, and they may relax and begin to become complacent about their spiritual and strategic journey.

The Adulthood stage is discussed further in my article, "The Adulthood of a Congregation" (page 97).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Maturity."

The Ten Stages: Maturity

When congregations are around 22 to 27 years old, or approximately a generation from their Birth, they slip without much notice from Adulthood to Maturity.

Maturity is when *Vision* is no longer dominant or fully developed. The congregation is no longer living out the vision that God has given them. They are, instead, living out the patterns of *Relationships*, *Programs*, and *Management* they have developed.

Without the fueling and driving aspects of Vision, the congregation is being motivated by Management.

At the same time, Maturity may be a very high quality stage in the life of the congregation. There continues to be a crescendo of quality, even if Vision is diminished.

Often congregations will plateau numerically during Maturity.

Maturity represents the first stage when a congregation could redevelop or transform and move forward to a new partial life cycle.

The Maturity stage is discussed further in my article, "The Maturity of a Congregation" (page 100).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Empty Next."

The Ten Stages: Empty Nest

If a congregation does not redevelop during Maturity it will move on to the Empty Nest stage.

Empty Nest is when *Vision* and *Programs* are no longer dominant or fully developed. The congregation is experiencing disintegration of the quality and quantity of programs, ministries, and activities.

Management is driving the direction of the congregation.

Relationships, while still vital, are turning increasingly inward in their focus.

Empty Nest has three phases.

Phase one is characterized by nostalgia that carries with it a hope that tomorrow will bring the return of yesterday. Most stories are about the glories of the past and not the anticipation of the future.

Phase two is characterized by disappointment that triggers a renewed call for commitment by the faithful core. Overachieving persons demand that everyone be as committed as they are to the redevelopment of the congregation.

Phase three is characterized by anger that results in a pattern of blaming. Often blaming focuses on the leadership of the congregation, even the pastor.

Empty Nest represents what can turn out to be the angriest stage of the life cycle for a congregation.

The Empty Nest stage is discussed further in my article, "The Empty Nest of a Congregation" (page 103).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Retirement."

The Ten Stages: Retirement

If a congregation does not redevelop during Empty Nest it will move on to the Retirement stage.

Retirement is when *Vision* and *Relationships* are no longer dominant or fully developed.

Management is driving the direction of the congregation.

Programs are once again dominant as congregations seek to revitalize their programs, ministries and activities.

The Retirement stage is discussed further in my article, "The Retirement of a Congregation" (page 106).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Old Age."

The Ten Stages: Old Age

If a congregation does not redevelop during Retirement it will move on to the Old Age stage.

Old Age is when *Vision*, *Relationships*, and *Programs* are no longer dominant or fully developed.

Management is the only factor that is still dominant or fully developed. As such the habit or pattern, generally at a mediocre level, drives the direction of the congregation.

The Old Age stage is discussed further in my article, "The Old Age of a Congregation" (page 109).

If this description fits your congregation, go to "Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle" (page 19). If not, consider the next stage, "Death."

The Ten Stages: Death

If a congregation never redevelops, then it will die. Death is where a congregation ceases functioning as a Christ-centric faith community with regular worship, discipleship, and fellowship activities.

The Death stage is discussed further in my article, "The Death of a Congregation" (page 112).

Choose Your Route: Your Congregation's Place on the Life Cycle

For a graphical view of the ten stages, see my chart, "The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development" (page 143).

To determine your congregation's place on the life cycle, gather a representative group of adults from your congregation. A good number would be at least 21 people or 21 percent of the average number of active, attending adults present on a typical weekend for worship.

Present to them a 20-to 30-minute overview of the life cycle of a congregation.

Ask them to individually answer the following questions on a prepared written form:

- At what stage of the life cycle is your congregation today?
- What is the evidence of this stage?
- Describe the characteristics of Vision in your congregation. (For more about Vision, see "Congregational Vision" on page 130.)
- Describe the characteristics of Relationships in your congregation. (For more about Relationships, see "Congregational Relationships" on page 133.)
- Describe the characteristics of Programs in your congregation. (For more about Programs, see "Congregational Programs" on page 136.)
- Describe the characteristics of Management in your congregation. (For more about Management, see "Congregational Management" on page 139.)

At the bottom of the form ask them four demographic questions.

- What is your year of birth?
- How many years ago did you first join or connect with a faith-based congregation?
- How many years ago did you join or connect with this congregation?
- How long does it take you to travel from your home to this congregation's facilities for worship on a weekend day?

Then lead them in small group and large group dialogue concerning their answers to these questions.

Generally a majority of the participants will choose one of the ten stages as the one that best represents the congregation's current location on the life cycle.

One exception that often occurs is when a congregation is in the Retirement stage. At times, some persons—who are at least 60 years old, for whom it has been at least

40 years since they first joined or connected with a congregation, and who have been a member or connected with this congregation for at least 20 years—will declare that the congregation is in Maturity. But persons who do not share all three of these characteristics are more likely to say the congregation is in Retirement. If there is a large group affirming each of these two stages, it is likely the congregation is in Retirement.

Seek to develop a consensus as to the life cycle stage of your congregation that is most passionately held by the largest number of people.

Choose Your Route: The Route Corresponding to Your Life Cycle Stage

Select the route that corresponds with your congregation's Life Cycle Stage:

- Birth → **Experiential** (page 26) or **Vision/Values** (page 24)
 → Read about coaching strategies for Gestation to Birth (page 28).
- Infancy → **Experiential** (page 26)
 → Read about coaching strategies for Birth to Infancy (page 28).
- Childhood → **Systemic** (page 23)
 → Read about coaching strategies for Infancy to Childhood (page 29).
- Adolescence → **Vision/Values** (page 24)
 → Read about coaching strategies for Childhood to Adolescence (page 29).
- Adulthood → **Systemic** (page 23)
 → Read about coaching strategies for Adolescence to Adulthood (page 30).
- Maturity → **Incremental** (page 21) or **Vision/Values** (page 24)
 → Read about coaching strategies for Adulthood to Maturity (page 30) and
 revising strategies for Maturity (page 31).
- Empty Nest → **Incremental** (page 21)
 → Read about revitalizing strategies for Empty Nest (page 31).

- Retirement → **Experiential** (page 26)
 → Read about renewing strategies for Retirement (page 32).
- Old Age → **Systemic** (page 23)
 → Read about reinvention strategies for Old Age (page 33).
- Death → **Vision/Values** (page 24) or **Experiential** (page 26)
 → Read about resurrection strategies for Death (page 33).

Routings for the Journey

Routes for a congregational redevelopment journey can follow any of the following four models: incremental; systemic; vision/values; or experiential. An overview of the equipping order for each route is given below:

Incremental	Systemic	Vision/Values	Experiential
Present Planning	Readiness	Readiness	Learning
Implementation	Learning	Learning	Implementation
Evaluation	Assessment	Future Planning	Evaluation
Readiness	Future Planning	Implementation	Readiness
Learning	Present Planning	Assessment	Present Planning
Assessment	Implementation	Present Planning	Assessment
Future Planning	Evaluation	Evaluation	Future Planning

Routings for the Journey: Incremental Route

The Incremental Route focuses on Efficiency and Effectiveness.

It begins with the specific present tasks the congregation must engage in to begin a journey of change and transition.

It takes small steps, but takes them continually without long pauses in the action or stopping the incremental change and transition.

It engages in change and transition that is continuous with the patterns of the past, which means that radical breaks with the past are not appropriate, but small continual steps that may results in significant change within a one or two years are appropriate.

Thus it seeks to take the strengths of the congregation and continually make them more efficient and effective.

Incremental: When is this a positive route?

This Incremental Route is a positive route when:

The disconnect between the congregation and its context is not great.

A lot of the leadership of the congregation is comfortable with tasks, details, rules, traditions, holding to the ethos of their denominational family, and retaining the culture of the congregation because it is intertwined with their understanding of the Christ presence in their congregation.

The congregation is made up of a lot of older people who have been on a Christ-centric, faith journey for many years, and they have been members of this congregation for a long time.

The congregation has several years to respond to the challenge of change and transition.

What is the equipping order for an incremental route?

The equipping order for an Incremental Route:

- Present Planning (page 82)
- Implementation (page 82)
- Evaluation (page 80)
- Readiness (page 83)
- Learning (page 82)
- Assessment (page 74)
- Future Planning (page 80)

The congregation should **first** develop a short-term 12-18 month strategy for initial changes and transitions it needs to make.

Second, the congregation should faithfully, and with as much innovation in methodology as possible, implement their short-term plan to build on any areas of strength.

Third, the congregation should regularly evaluate its short-term efforts to guarantee that they are indeed embracing greater efficiency and effectiveness in serving their context or the target group of people they are seeking to reach.

Fourth, while the short-term plans are being implemented, the congregations should seek to engage in readiness activities that deal with the issues of passionate readiness, spiritual readiness, leadership readiness, and strategic readiness.

Fifth, the congregation seeks to discover the areas where they appear to need greater wisdom or learnings, and then seeks avenues to building the capacities they need to take the next steps in the change and transition journey.

Sixth, after a year into implementing the short-term plans, the congregation should honestly assess the strengths and potential of the congregation within its context, using the Congregational Issues for a Spiritual Strategic Journey Initial Assessment.

Seventh, when ready the congregation should write its future story of what it will be like ten years from now if it is successful in its spiritual strategic journey.

The strategy of the congregation then becomes one of seeking to live into its future story.

Routings for the Journey: Systemic Route

The Systemic Route focuses on **Exceptional Big, Holy, Almighty Goals**.

This is the route closest to traditional strategic planning. It involves the congregation setting forth objectives, goals and action plans it hopes to achieve over the next three to five years, and then continually updating these.

At some point the congregation should project a set of goals that seem outside their reach and challenge them to transform their congregational culture to reach them. Such goals are known as Exceptional Big, Holy, Almighty Goals, and represent change and transition patterns that are discontinuous with the past of the congregation.

Such goals call for new or renewed patterns of ministry, with new or renewed leadership, targeting new or renewed groups of people, and using new or renewed methodology.

Systemic: When is this a positive route?

The Systemic Route is a positive route when:

The congregation faces significant opportunities and challenges in its context and business as usual.

A lot of the congregational leaders are used to being part of organizations that focus change and transition on macro systems, strategies, and structures.

Much of the leadership consists of people who focus on issues of competence in congregations, their vocation, and their personal lives.

The vision of the future of the congregation is unclear, but it is clear that without significant change and transition the congregation will be in trouble in the near future.

What is the equipping order for a systemic route?

The equipping order for a Systemic Route:

- Readiness (page 83)
- Learning (page 82)
- Assessment (page 74)
- Future Planning (page 80)
- Present Planning (page 82)
- Implementation (page 82)
- Evaluation (page 80)

The congregation should **first** work on issues of passionate readiness, spiritual readiness, leadership readiness, and strategic readiness.

During the readiness time, building and initiating a leadership community composed of people of passion—supported by people of position—should be a priority goal.

The role of the pastor in vision casting is important during their step.

Second, the congregation seeks to discover the areas where they appear to need greater wisdom or learning, and then seek avenues to building the capacities they need to take the next steps in the change and transition journey.

Third, the congregation should honestly assess the strengths and potential of the congregation within its context using the Congregational Issues for a Spiritual Strategic Journey Initial Assessment.

Fourth, when ready the congregation should write its future story of what it will be like ten years from now if it is successful in its spiritual strategic journey.

Fifth, the congregation should identify the immediate actions that need to be taken over the next six to 18 months to live into its story, and those that need to be projected for the next three to five years.

Sixth, the congregation should faithfully, and with as much innovation in methodology as possible, implement their short-term plan to build on any areas of strength.

Seventh, the congregation should continually evaluate their spiritual strategic journey to adjust their future story as it becomes obvious that the progress of the congregation reveals modifications in their future story.

Routings for the Journey: Vision/Values Route

The Vision/Values Route focuses on a Future Story of Excellence.

Congregations who are ready to dream a new dream of the future of their congregation, or write a new story of meaning and significance that emanates out of their vision and values, need to travel along the Vision/Values Route.

It involves telling the future story of the congregation in the spirit of the storytelling of Jesus.

Such a story will talk about a movement of the congregation as a people on a pilgrimage towards reaching their full kingdom potential.

It will deal with (1) issues of trust and character among the congregation and (2) the achievement of high spiritual ideals.

It calls for an initiating leadership community of big dreamers with great passion for the ideal congregation. But also calls for deep values about what ought to characterize the people connected with such a congregation.

It is a style that is impatient to reach the destination or ideal, so strong emphasis will have to be placed on implementing the details of the journey as these will often be overlooked.

Vision/Values: When is this a positive route?

The Vision/Values Route is a positive route when:

The congregation (1) is ready for significant changes and transitions and (2) has a high level of passion.

The congregation has numerous visionaries within its passion and position people.

The strengths of the congregation far outweigh the weaknesses.

The context in which the congregation serves is in movement or transition itself and new patterns of connecting and building community are obvious within that context.

The congregation has a high sense of positive urgency to respond quickly to new opportunities and challenges.

What is the equipping order for a vision/values route?

The equipping order for a Vision/Values Route:

- Readiness (page 83)
- Learning (page 82)
- Future Planning (page 80)
- Implementation (page 82)
- Assessment (page 74)
- Present Planning (page 82)
- Evaluation (page 80)

The congregation should **first** work on issues of readiness that deal with the issues of passionate readiness, spiritual readiness, leadership readiness, and strategic readiness.

During the readiness time, building and initiating a leadership community composed of people of passion—supported by people of position—should be a priority goal.

The role of the pastor in vision casting is important during their step.

Second, the congregation seeks to discover the areas where it appears to need greater wisdom or learning, and then seeks avenues to building the capacities to take the next steps in the change and transition journey.

Third, when ready the congregation should write its future story of what it will be like ten years from now if it is successful in its spiritual strategic journey.

Fourth, the congregation should faithfully, and with as much innovation in methodology as possible, implement their short-term plan to build on any areas of strength.

Fifth, the congregation should honestly assess the strengths and potential of the congregation within its context using the Congregational Issues for a Spiritual Strategic Journey Initial Assessment.

Sixth, the congregation should identify the immediate actions that need to be taken over the next six to 18 months to live into its story, and those that need to be projected for the next three to five years.

Seventh, the congregation should continually evaluate their spiritual strategic journey to adjust their future story as it becomes obvious that the progress of the congregation reveals modifications in their future story.

Routings for the Journey: Experiential Route

The Experiential Route focuses on Greatest Experiences.

This is the route most likely to appeal to the postmodern mindset or new congregations composed of emerging generations of young adults.

It mirrors the experiential, fast-paced action of the Gospel of Mark.

It is the action and reflection model of congregational redevelopment.

It focuses on building an initiating leadership community who are longing to feel the rush of new spiritual experiences and who desire to build relationship communities that draw close to God and one another.

Worship in these congregations may focus more on the presence of the Holy Spirit than on God and Jesus. However, it will be Trinitarian in approach.

Experiential: When is this a positive route?

This route is a positive route when:

Truth is seen as experiential rather than absolute.

The congregation is open to radical change and transition.

The leadership of emerging generations of believers is affirmed.

Participants desire to be connected to a Christ-centric, faith-based community that is experiencing spiritual connectedness and personal growth.

Growing relationships with God and one another is seen as a higher value than is a clearly defined vision of the future.

What is the equipping order for an experiential route?

The equipping order for an Experiential Route:

Learning (page 82)

Implementation (page 82)

Evaluation (page 80)

Readiness (page 83)
Present Planning (page 82)
Assessment (page 74)
Future Planning (page 80)

First, the congregation seeks to discover the areas where they appear to need greater wisdom or learning, and then seek avenues to building the capacities to take the next steps in the change and transition journey.

Second, the congregation should faithfully, effectively, and with as much innovation in methodology as possible, implement their short-term actions in search of areas of new strength.

Third, the congregation should continually evaluate their spiritual strategic journey to adjust their future actions as it becomes obvious that the progress of the congregation reveals an emerging future story.

Fourth, the congregation should first work on issues of readiness that deal with the issues of passionate readiness, spiritual readiness, leadership readiness, and strategic readiness.

During the readiness time, building and initiating a leadership community composed of people of passion—supported by people of position—should be a priority goal.

The role of the pastor in vision casting is important during this step.

Fifth, the congregation should identify the immediate actions that need to be taken over the next six to 18 months to live into its story, and those that need to be projected for the next three to five years.

Sixth, the congregation should honestly assess the strengths and potential of the congregation within its context using the Congregational Issues for a Spiritual Strategic Journey Initial Assessment.

Seventh, when ready the congregation should write its future story of what it will be like ten years from now if it is successful in its spiritual strategic journey.

Routings for the Journey: What's Next?

There are three possible next steps. While there is no "wrong" step, you will need to determine what your congregation needs most:

If your congregation has successfully processed and assimilated all seven "equipping" steps within one of the routings, it might be time to explore some **Choices** for implementation (page 34).

If your congregation is in *Gestation, Birth, Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence, or Adulthood* on the "Congregational Development Life Cycle," you may want to consider some **Coaching Development** strategies (page 28).

If your congregation is in *Maturity, Empty Nest, Retirement, Old Age or Death* on the "Congregational Development Life Cycle," you may want to consider some **Coaching Redevelopment** strategies (page 31).

Strategies for Coaching the Development Journey

If your congregation is in *Gestation*, or is in one of the stages from *Birth* through *Adulthood*, (see "Ten Stages of Congregational Development" on page 14), one of the following development strategies may be most relevant:

- Gestation to Birth Strategy (page 28)
- Birth to Infancy Strategy (page 28)
- Infancy to Childhood Strategy (page 29)
- Childhood to Adolescence Strategy (page 29)
- Adolescence to Adulthood Strategy (page 30)
- Adulthood to Maturity Strategy (page 30)

If your congregation is in the *Maturity*, *Empty Next*, *Retirement*, *Old Age*, or *Death* stage, go to "Coaching Redevelopment" (page 31).

Coaching Development: Gestation to Birth Strategy

This is the strategy for launching, planting, or giving birth to a new congregation based on an empowering vision. It involves either a *Vision/Values* Route (page 24) or an *Experiential* Route (page 26).

Length of the Birth stage is six months to two years.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for a Gestation to Birth Strategy include the following:

- Develop a new congregational ministry plan.
- Launch the new congregation with a new Birth stage.
- Passionately cast the vision of the new congregation.

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Development: Birth to Infancy Strategy

This is the strategy for moving a new congregation from its Birth stage to Infancy where relationships with God and one another are emphasized. It involves an *Experiential* Route (page 26).

Length of the Infancy stage is three to five years.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for a Birth to Infancy Strategy include the following:

- Passionately cast the vision of the new congregation.
- Focus on developing deeper relationships with God and one another.

- Be intentional about personal disciple-making journeys.
- Encourage people to do the work of the congregation out of the overflow of their personal disciple-making journey.

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Development: Infancy to Childhood Strategy

This is the strategy for moving a young congregation from its Infancy stage to Childhood where the framework of programs, ministries, and activities that will characterize a congregation are developed. It involves a *Systemic* Route (page 23).

Length of the Childhood stage is five to six years.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for an Infancy to Childhood Strategy include the following:

- Passionately cast the vision of the young congregation.
- Focus on developing the programs, ministries, and activities relevant to the context and/or the affinity groups the congregation is successful attracting to its spiritual strategic journey as a Christ-centric, faith-based congregation.
- Encourage people to accept jobs in the congregation that fit their spiritual giftedness, life skills, and personality preferences.

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Development: Childhood to Adolescence Strategy

This is the strategy for moving a congregation from its Childhood stage to Adolescence where a crescendo of relationships and programs occurs. It involves a *Vision/Values* Route (page 24).

Length of the Adolescence stage is six to twelve years.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for a Childhood to Adolescence Strategy include the following:

- Passionately cast the vision of the congregation.
- Focus on celebrating the crescendo of quality in the congregation as both spiritual and fellowship relationships, and program excellence begin to soar in the life of the congregation.
- Begin to think about reengineering the management systems of the congregation in alignment with new size and complexity of congregational life.

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Development: Adolescence to Adulthood Strategy

This is the strategy that empowers a congregation to move from Adolescence to Adulthood, where all factors of the congregation are aligned and empowering. It involves a *Systemic* Route (page 23).

Length of the Adulthood stage is four to nine years.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for an Adolescence to Adulthood Strategy include the following:

- Passionately cast the vision of the congregation.
- Formalize the management systems of the congregation with planned obsolescence every four to five years.
- Focus on quality in all aspects of the congregation.
- Begin thinking about what type of vision might be next once the current vision is completed.

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Development: Adulthood to Maturity Strategy

This is the strategy that leads to reaching the highest quality stage of the congregational life cycle as vision diminishes, and the things the congregation does well become its focus. A congregation can fine tune the quality of its ministry and prepare for Revisioning. It involves an *Incremental* Route (page 21).

Length of the Maturity stage is difficult to determine. Generally it is probably at least seven to nine years.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for an Adulthood to Maturity Strategy include the following:

- Focus on quality in all aspects of the congregation
- Work to keep the management systems empowering of the future rather than controlling of the past.
- Begin dialogue within the congregation concerning *Revisioning* (page 31).

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Strategies for Coaching the Redevelopment Journey

If your congregation is in the *Maturity, Empty Nest, Retirement, Old Age, or Death* stage (see "Ten Stages of Congregational Development" on page 14), one of the following redevelopment strategies may be most relevant:

Revisioning Strategy (Maturity) (page 31)
Revitalization Strategy (Empty Nest) (page 31)
Renewal Strategy (Retirement) (page 32)
Reinvention Strategy (Old Age) (page 33)
Resurrection Strategy (Death) (page 33)

If your congregation is in *Gestation*, or is in one of the stages from *Birth* through *Adulthood*, go to "Coaching Development" (page 28).

Coaching Redevelopment: Revisioning Strategy (Maturity)

This strategy is most relevant for a congregation in the Maturity stage of the life cycle, and involves a *Vision/Values* Route (page 24).

Length of the redevelopment journey is six to eighteen months.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for the Revisioning Strategy include the following:

- Diminish the controlling aspects of management systems within the congregation. Cast new vision.
- Engage in a rate or pace of change and transition that is continuous with the past.
- Move forward to a new Adulthood.
- Reengineer the management systems in alignment with the new vision, and with planned obsolescence to keep it from becoming institutionalized.

The Revisioning strategy is discussed further in "ReVisioning the Life of a Maturity Congregation" (page 115).

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Redevelopment: Revitalization Strategy (Empty Nest)

This strategy is most relevant for a congregation in the Empty Nest stage of the life cycle, and involves an *Incremental* Route (page 21).

Length of the redevelopment journey is 18 to 36 months.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for the Revitalization Strategy include the following:

- Diminish the controlling aspects of management systems within the congregation.
- Revitalize the programs, ministries, and activities of the congregation.
- Cast new vision.
- Engage in a rate or pace of change and transition that is at least continuous with the past, and perhaps discontinuous if the congregation has been in the Empty Nest stage for three or more years.
- Move forward to a new Adolescence or Adulthood.
- Reengineer the management systems in alignment with the new vision, and with planned obsolescence to keep it from becoming institutionalized.

The Revitalization strategy is discussed further in "Revitalizing the Life of an Empty Nest Congregation" (page 118).

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Redevelopment: Renewal Strategy (Retirement)

This strategy is most relevant for a congregation in the Retirement stage of the life cycle, and involves an *Experiential* Route (page 26).

Length of the redevelopment journey is three to five years.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for the Renewal Strategy include the following:

- Diminish the controlling aspects of management systems within the congregation.
- Renew relationships with God and one another within the congregation.
- Revitalize the programs, ministries, and activities of the congregation.
- Cast new vision.
- Engage in a rate or pace of change and transition that is at least discontinuous in nature, and perhaps radical if the congregations has spun through the Retirement stage multiple times without being about to spiral forward to a new partial life cycle.
- Move forward to a new Childhood or Adolescence.
- Reengineer the management systems in alignment with the new vision and with planned obsolescence to keep it from becoming institutionalized.

The Renewal strategy is discussed further in "Renewing the Life of a Retirement Congregation" (page 121).

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Redevelopment: Reinvention Strategy (Old Age)

This strategy is most relevant for a congregation in the Old Age stage of the life cycle, and involves a *Systemic* Route (page 23).

Length of the redevelopment journey is 18 to 36 months.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for the Reinvention Strategy include the following:

- Diminish the controlling aspects of management systems within the congregation.
- Develop a new congregational ministry plan.
- Cast new vision.
- Engage in a rate or pace of change and transition that is at least discontinuous with the past, and perhaps radical if the congregation has been in Old Age for at least seven to nine years.
- Move forward to a new Infancy or Childhood.
- Reengineer the management systems in alignment with the new vision, and with planned obsolescence to keep it from becoming institutionalized.

The Reinvention strategy is discussed further in my article, "Reinventing the Life of an Old Age Congregation" (page 124).

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Coaching Redevelopment: Resurrection Strategy (Death)

This strategy is most relevant for a congregation in the Death stage of the life cycle, and involves a *Vision/Values* Route (page 24) or an *Experiential* Route (page 26).

Length of the redevelopment journey is six to eighteen months.

Congregational life cycle-related tactical steps for the Resurrection Strategy include the following:

- Develop a new congregational ministry plan.
- Launch the new congregation with a new Birth stage.

The Reinvention strategy is discussed further in "Resurrecting the Life of a Death Stage Congregation" (page 124).

If, at this point, you have completed your Route and reviewed your strategy for Coaching, consider "Choices" next (page 34).

Choices within the Journey

You may have reached this page from any number of places in this tutorial.

But if you are here, you and your congregation are considering the next steps for congregational development or redevelopment.

Below is a full list of thirteen choices to consider. Each choice explores these questions:

What → What is the essence of this choice?

Who → Who ought to consider this choice?

Issues → What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Resources → What are essential resources to embrace this choice?

After you have explored these questions and selected a choice that "fits," it will be time to conclude this tutorial. But the real "tutorial"—the challenging but grace-filled learning that accompanies congregational development or redevelopment—lies ahead.

Now, let's examine the full list of choices for the Journey.

Choices: The Full List

Here is the full list of choices. When you have completed the choice that most fits your congregation, feel free to move on to the conclusion (page 58).

Choice	Page #
Stay the Course and Remain Substantially the Same	35
Merge with Other Congregations	36
Relocate to a More Promising Location	38
Multiple Communities Congregation	41
Multigenerational Congregation	43
Neighborhood or Community Focused Congregation	45
Multiple Site Congregation	47
Metropolitan Regional Congregation	49
Social Service or Special Purpose Congregation	50
Multiple Worshiping Communities Congregation	51
Multiple Congregations Within a Congregation	52
Multicultural Congregation	53
Congregational Multiplication Movement	55

Choice: Stay the Course and Remain Substantially the Same

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to continue in substantially the same direction the congregation is currently headed.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Make this choice because:

- You feel the same direction is the best direction for the congregation at this time. No other choice has appeal to the congregation, and sufficient passion cannot be developed for a different choice.
- You feel that the current direction is the most faithful direction. Other choices would require the congregation to sacrifice core values it holds dearly and deeply.
- You cannot get consensus on a different direction so you must continue in substantially the same direction for now until there is greater passion for a different choice.
- You are aware that continuing substantially the same direction—if that direction results in diminishing the vitality of the congregation—may result in the eventual death of the congregation. While survival of the congregation may be an issue for some, it is a potential reality the congregation is willing to face.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Stay the course and remain substantially the same does not mean "do nothing."

It is still important for the congregation to visualize the future story of the congregation—both in the short-term of three to eighteen months, and the long-term of ten to twelve years.

Typically moving toward more diversity is not a change and transition issue these congregations address.

Rather, they seek additional harmony and homogeneity.

Therefore, a scenario and ultimately a future story should be developed.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency, to continue embracing the current ministry patterns of the congregation.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. It is essential to discover and dialogue with congregations who have made this choice within at least the past five years.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

- There must be a context or target group for the congregation that is demographically congruent with the membership of the congregation, so that they have new people to attract to their journey.
- The congregation must not have forgotten how to attract new people to their spiritual strategic journey as a congregation, and to a Christ-centric, faith-based journey as an individual.

A vision is incorporated into a future story of the congregation's life if it remains the same. One characteristic that is an essential resource is Hope. Present within the leadership of the congregation must be a positive sense of hope concerning the future.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

There must be a minimum of 21 adult leaders who can provide the passion, spirituality, leadership, and strategic knowledge necessary to lead this congregation forward. Without this minimum number for a leadership community, the congregation may not have the people resources necessary for a fulfilling journey.

Programs, ministries, and activities consistent with the past and present of the congregation.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Merge with Other Congregations

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to merge with other congregations to form a new congregation or a community of congregations.

A new congregation is where a single, integrative denominational, constitutional, corporate, worship, and fellowship system is developed and implemented at one or more locations.

A congregation of congregations is where multiple congregations exist at one or more locations in a covenant relationship, but maintain some identity distinctiveness in their denominational, constitutional, corporate, worship, and fellowship systems.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations who consider this choice should have part of the resources needed for the next steps in their journey. They need a close, meaningful relationship with another set of resources as represented by the membership of another congregation or two.

Congregations should consider this choice who have hope and vision, but lack the minimum number of adult leaders for making the changes and transitions necessary to transform.

Congregations should consider this choice whose context or target groups have so radically changed that to minister effectively in their current context they must bring cross-cultural or intergenerational leadership and resources to their ministry.

Congregations who have a healthy focus on their ministry—but their context, facilities, or leadership no longer matches their ministry—could consider merger.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Often the merger of two congregations:

- Is an action taken because of the weakness of one or both congregations.
- Leads to inevitable conflict through a them and us attitude that may develop.
- It may lead to the culture and core values of one congregation dominating, minimizing, and even eliminating the culture and core values of the other congregation.
- Results in a congregation the size of the larger of the two at the time of merger within three to five years.
- The merger of two congregations has within it the desire to resist diversity and to have more harmony.

The merger of three or more congregations is much better than the merger of two congregations:

- It creates enough strength that the merged congregation may be able to soar with quality and quantity.
- It minimizes the “them and us” attitudes that can characterize the merger of two congregations.
- It allows for the development of a new sense of mission, purpose, core values, and vision, and for a unique, transforming spiritual, strategic journey to develop
- The merger of three or more congregations is more complex, but will lead to greater diversity.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency. A commitment to create a new genuine congregational culture that is much more than simply adapting various parts of the culture of each merging congregation, but involves collaborative efforts to build a new sense of community and culture.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. It's essential to discover and dialogue with congregations who made this choice at least five years ago.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential. A clear vision of what the merged congregation will look like five to ten years after the merger to which there is passionate commitment on the part of the leadership of each congregation involved in the merger.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

- Leadership that looks into the future to see the next stages of the spiritual strategic journey of the congregation.
- Seven percent of the average number of active attending adults in each congregation participating in the merger must be highly passionate about the merger, and fully committed to spiritual, strategic, and leadership actions.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions. A commitment to and involvement in relevant actions that should result in at least fifty percent of the active members of the congregation within ten years being people who were never part of either of the merging congregations.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Leadership, finances, and facilities are critical resources for the institutional aspects of the merger.

Choice: Relocate to a More Promising Location

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to relocate the meeting place of a congregation for more effective growth and ministry:

- To a location that is closer to where a majority of your membership lives.
- Where congregational vitality is not negatively impacted by the context.
- Where a greater chance exists to reach new people into the congregation.

A location that becomes a liability is one that is too small to accommodate the size and diversity of programs, ministries, or activities of the congregation.

Without room to expand in the available space, and after various schedule alternatives have been tried or considered, relocation may be the best choice.

Why not transition to being a congregation who worships at multiple sites?

- This is certainly a viable choice in many situations, and ought to be considered before relocation is attempted.
- However, the size of the primary congregation's location may be too small or undesirable, and so relocation is a good choice.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations who are at least a generation old whose location has become a liability rather than an asset generally embrace the choice.

It can also apply to younger congregations who did not adequately project their natural growth potential, or were not able to afford a right-sized location during their birth and infancy as a congregation.

Congregations whose full kingdom potential is greater than their current location can accommodate ought to consider this choice.

So should congregations who get in a position where the long-term cost of renovating aging facilities or retrofitting them for a new generation of ministry is greater than the cost of relocating.

At times parking becomes an issue in relocation.

- Four to five decades ago the typical household might only have one car to a family of four or five people.
- Now it is not unusual to find that a household of three people has three cars at church.
- Past history indicates that a parking space would be needed for every 2.5 people attending a congregational worship service.
- Now that figure is almost always less than two people per car, and in some cases is as low as 1.5.
- Therefore, 40 percent more parking spaces might be needed to accommodate the same number of people as were coming to the church several decades ago.

Effective relocations emerge from the strength of the spiritual, strategic journey of the congregation and represent a natural next step in the journey.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Some congregations relocate out of strength.

- Their facilities can no longer contain the size and quality of their ministry.
- The fulfillment of their kingdom potential requires a relocation of their physical facility.
- Their current facilities would limit their ability to reach their full kingdom potential.
- The relocation takes them geographically closer to target groups of people with whom they have already established a positive track record of reaching for worship, programs, ministries, and activities.

Some congregations relocate out of weakness.

- They have lost their ability to bring new people into the active membership of their congregation from their current context so they relocate to a place where they may be able to reach new people into the active membership of their congregation.
- Their current location is a place that has become so different than who make up the congregation, that they are actually unable to or afraid to reach for church membership people who live in their immediate context.
- Their cultural positioning makes it difficult for them to love unconditionally the people in the context of their congregation, and if they are to survive, they must relocate.
- At times this cultural positioning is a permanent cultural position of the congregation, and they have lost the right to minister in their context.
- At times the congregation has realized that it must as Christian transcend its own cultural positioning and reach out to its context, but it realizes this too late and the context has rejected it.
- Relocation is a bad choice for congregations to take out of weakness.
- It is seldom effective in these cases without reinventing the congregation.

A ministry plan or future story is as important as is a facilities plan.

- Often a relocating congregation develops an excellent facilities plan, which is a programs and management focus.
- They also must develop a ministry plan or future story that will characterize them in their new location, and this helps them focus on vision and relationships of the nature of a spiritual, strategic journey.

Diversity is empowered through relocation as the congregation creates in its new facilities a minimum of three different types of places where worship can occur that reach a different age group, racial or ethnic group, socioeconomic group, persons seeking a Christ-centric faith experience, or persons seeking a spiritual experience that they do not know how to define.

- In a new location a congregation might start out with a multi-cultural vision in mind, and seek to develop a program, ministry, and activities strategy that affirms multiple cultures.
- It will also be important to develop a multi-cultural staff.

The construction of new facilities, or the renovation of existing facilities in the new location, should focus around a large gathering space or commons, which becomes the crossroads of the congregation where the diversity of people who make up the congregation can meet, greet, connect, and build community.

- Future congregational unity is not in everyone being in a single worship service, but in people having a common place where they can intersect and build deep and meaningful relationships.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. It is essential to discover and dialogue with congregations who have made this choice at least five years ago.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential. A ministry plan that covers the first ten years of the life of the congregation must be developed, perhaps in the form of a future story, before facilities for the new location are designed.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

- Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.
- A bunch of money, the ability to raise a bunch of money, and/or an extremely favorable selling price for the old facilities.

A commitment to and involvement in relevant actions that should result in at least fifty percent of the active members of the congregation within ten years being people who were never part of the congregation in the old location.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Multiple Communities Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to become a congregation that focuses both on people who reside within one to three miles of the congregational facilities, and people who reside farther away.

Seek to build an integrative congregation that does worship, programs, ministries, and activities together around a common spiritual vision and fellowship bond.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Ex-neighborhood or ex-community congregations who have people who drive to the facilities from outside the primary ministry area, and also have the ability to reach new people from the neighborhood[s] or overall community in which the congregational facilities are located.

Congregations where their context presents unique opportunities for mission and ministry that captivate the spiritual imagination and energies of people who reside in that text, people who once lived there, and people who want to be part of the ministry of the congregation in light of the unique opportunities.

Congregations who are located in urban areas of transition from which former residents have moved, and into which new residents have moved who are of a different set of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and lifestyle characteristics.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

The greatest risk of this choice is that people who reside farther away than three miles may use this as an opportunity to:

- Connect with a congregation closer to their residence.
- Drop out of regular or irregular church attendance.
- Leave when the worship, programs, ministries, and activities of their congregation no longer speak to their needs.
- Leave when the needs of their children, and even the urging of their children, motivates them to seek out a congregation with friends who are culturally closer to the culture of their children under 18 years old.

Often these congregations will depend on the financial and management leadership of those households who reside more than three miles away to sustain the organizational vitality of the congregation.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential. A clear vision of a positive future to which people are urged to commit, as opposed to a survival plan to keep the congregation from dying.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

- Leadership that is bicultural is essential. Such leadership can get deep in scope in the context of the congregation, and also minister effectively to people who drive into the context to worship, learn, fellowship, and minister.
- Long-term commitments from people outside the context to invest their spiritual, leadership, strategic, and financial resources in the congregation.
- An understanding that if this model is successful that all leadership groups must have persons from both communities genuinely and significantly involved in their activities.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Multigenerational Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

The essence of this choice is to have a congregation that embraces various generations of offering programs, ministries, and activities through worship, discipleship, and fellowship that address the unique needs of various generations.

Generations may be defined for the purpose of these congregations in at least two ways.

- First, is a typical discussion on generations in North America according to when people were born.

One perspective on generations is that we have five distinguishable generations of people who were born in the period of around 1910 through 2000, with a sixth generation just now being born since the turn of the millennium.

That means that the trailing edge of currently living generations are in their nineties, and the leading edge is less than two years old.

The worship, discipleship, and fellowship needs of these generations are extremely different.

What was going on in the world and in the church when each generation developed their Christ-centric faith patterns was very different.

The various perspectives that can be represented within one congregation that has numerous generations present are overwhelming.

In the sociology of churching one of the things we know is that a congregation with three distinguishable generations present can with relative ease stretch to meet the worship, discipleship, and fellowship needs of these three generations.

However, as congregations age and find themselves embracing a fourth or fifth generation of people, the diversity required to have authentic ministry to each generation is more than many congregations can handle.

A fourth generation adds significant tension to the day-to-day life of the congregation.

A fifth generation may add regular open conflict, and even a split in the congregation that can involve a significant group of people—generally the younger generation or two—leaving the congregation.

- Second, is what happens to new immigrant groups in a given country. The first generation primarily speaks the language of the country or culture from which they emigrated. The second generation is bilingual, and the third generation primarily speaks the language of the new country.

In these situations with the second or third generation there can be conflict and the lack of the ability to speak authentically to the worship, discipleship, and fellowship needs of the second and third generation.

Therefore, congregations that are both multigenerational and multicultural are difficult faith communities to sustain.

This is a both/and approach that indicates that the congregation should:

- Pay the rent with older generations.
- Allow the pastor, newer, younger leaders, and other leaders with vision, energy, and skills, to focus on younger generations.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations in situations where there is an opportunity to reach multiple generations of people ought to consider this choice.

Situations when three or more generations are present within a congregation. But some congregation may try to ignore this diversity.

Multi-tenure congregations are a subset of this choice.

Multi-socioeconomic congregations are a subset of this choice.

Often the diverse generations have separate worship services, do some programs, ministries, and activities together, and seek to have intergenerational and inter-tenure fellowships on a regular basis.

Offer worship services geared to the learning styles and cultural preference of each generation. Often this is a move from one or two identical worship services on Sunday mornings to three or more diverse worship experiences every weekend.

Older generations will tend to continue to attend the congregation because many of their needs are still being met.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

It will be important to incrementally assimilate the newer, younger, emerging leaders into the formal leadership roles of the congregation.

Diversity is empowered by the multiple generations, and the diversity of programs, ministries, and activities that emerge. Congregations who figure out how to benefit from the cacophony of sounds and qualities that emerge from generational diversity will be faith communities of great beauty and joy.

Harmony is achieved through two different types of spiritual and fellowship gatherings.

- First, are ones that are intergenerational in nature.

Regularly these congregations need to be intentionally building relationships between the various generations through face-to-face worship experiences that have representatives from all generations participating in worship and sharing elements of their worship style.

Experiences of worship or fellowship that gather the various generations together must happen monthly.

About three times per year these ought to be experience of sufficient scope where every active participant in the congregation who can is urged to be a part.

- Second, are inter-tenure fellowship experiences. New people may be clueless as to the dynamics of an inter-generational congregation, unless they are intentionally brought into the fold through fellowship, assimilation, and orientation activities.

In many congregational situations inter-tenure issues are more difficult to harmonize than inter-generational issues.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency. A commitment to diversity in the style and content of worship, learning, fellowship, and mission and ministry.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

- Tolerance for the viewpoints and approaches to spirituality and Christian growth of the various generations.
- Understanding of the generational similarities and differences.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership. A commitment to having people from each of the generations involved in all aspects of management and governance of the congregation.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Neighborhood or Community Focused Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to become a congregation that intentionally focuses on the programs, ministries, and activities that meet real needs, of real people, in real time who reside in the neighborhood (within one mile) or larger community (within two to three miles) near the location of the congregation.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations with a strong, deep, and abiding commitment to their location to such an extent that if they were not ministering their context they would feel a sense of loss.

Congregations who show a positive ability to reach for worship, learning, fellowship, and ministry people within their neighborhood or community.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

This choice involves risking losing, over a period of time, the support and participation of people who drive into the congregational location from the suburbs as they:

- Connect with a congregation closer to their residence.
- Drop out of regular or irregular church attendance.
- Leave when the worship, programs, ministries, and activities of their congregation no longer speak to their needs.
- Leave when the needs of their children, and even the urging of their children, motivates them to seek out a congregation with friends who are culturally closer to the culture of their children under 18 years old.

This is similar to the multiple communities congregation except:

- This choice does not intentionally seek to maintain worship, programs, ministries, and activities for people who reside farther away than three miles.
- Thus, it is appealing to a Christian missionary stance that should be taken by people who live farther away than three miles to lower their personal desires in favor of who comprises the current context around the congregation.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a Christian coach.

Choice: Multiple Site Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to become a congregation that worships in multiple locations.

Develop worshipping communities at various sites within a reasonable travel distance of a main campus in an attempt to reach various communities of people or target groups.

Often the activities offered at each site will differ according to the needs of the community or target group, and the capacity of the primary congregation to provide leadership.

This model is primarily where a base congregation sponsors satellite worshipping communities or congregations, but maintains an organic, collegial, or partnership relationship with the various locations. At the same time variations exist.

Some multiple sites are within the same geographic community, and are simply developed out of the necessity of having a place to do different types of worship, discipleship, and fellowship that cannot be accommodated within the primary facilities.

Other sites are strategically located around a metropolitan area to reach same or similar target groups of people who are attracted to the style of worship, discipleship, and fellowship characteristic of the primary congregation.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations that are out of space in their primary location,

Congregations that have a strong appeal to people who must travel more than 20 to 25 minutes on Sunday morning to get to their location,

Congregations that want to reach communities of people or target groups who are significantly different from the primary congregation,

Congregations that want to venture out with a radically different congregational model than they are now practicing without disrupting their current pattern,

Some congregations where the leadership feels that it needs to relocate, but the congregation is not ready to accept this choice, start worship services in other locations to enable them to continue to grow while the core congregation takes time to consider their longer-term choices.

Is the choice to worship at multiple sites primarily a choice for very large congregations? Absolutely not! Congregations of 80 to 85 in worship attendance easily qualify. It is an excellent method for midsize congregations to expand their ministry. Any congregation who would consider a second worship service, could conduct that worship service at a different site if it would enhance the style, quality, or ability to reach a chosen target group.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Examples of this choice:

- Congregations who use multiple sites but vary the activities at each.
- Mother congregations who sponsor children congregations, but maintain an organic, collegial, or network/partnership relationship. This is also known as satellite congregations.
- Congregations with a global constituency made possible by the Internet.
- Congregations who worship on different states, countries, or continents through sister congregation relationships.
- The classic example of this is the congregation that worships in a location in the city and a location in the suburbs.

Worshipping at multiple sites allows for experimentation with radically different worship, discipleship, and fellowship styles. It allows for a schedule of activities that competes with or compliments the schedule at the primary campus. It empowers a congregation to reach diverse groups of people that they could not reach because of the bounded culture present at their primary location.

Worship at multiple locations also allows for a primary congregation to partner with congregations that are generally smaller, very focused in who they are seeking to reach, and in need of a relationship with a larger congregation for the provision of various support services to carry their ministry.

This has been an effective model in urban areas for a multi-cultural partnership of congregations.

Harmony can be maintained as the ministerial staff from the primary location also provides leadership at the satellite locations.

Often when the satellite locations are created because the primary location is out of space, or the satellite location is more than 20 to 25 minutes away, the attempt is made for the senior pastor to preach at least two, if not three, locations.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

- One impact of this choice is that the congregation uses the resources of the suburban location to supplement the programs, ministries, and activities of the city location.

- Another impact of this choice is that it stretches the congregational resources to maintain two or more sites.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership, including a Minister of Missions.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a Christian coach.

Choice: Metropolitan Regional Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to become a congregation that seeks to appeal to people from a large region of the metropolitan area.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations who already have 350 to 500 people in average weekly attendance, and are located in a fast growing context with numerous transportation means and routes and make travel to the congregation site easy.

The ability to attract people who live more than 20-25 minutes Sunday morning travel time from their facilities.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

These congregations must be able to think and act in manner that will produce a congregation larger than ones with which 80 or more percent of the members have ever been affiliated.

Multiple worship services with multiple styles must be embraced.

Decision-making must be staff initiated.

Permission-giving of laity must be a basic method of ministry functioning.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Social Service or Special Purpose Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to determine that which is most unique and satisfying to the congregation as a social service or special purpose congregation, and pursue it.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations who have developed unique styles of programs, ministries, and activities that are more important to them than reaching a certain geographic community or a certain target group of people.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Being a social service congregation involves,

- Engaging in ministries to the social, physical, and psychological needs of people in the congregational context.
- Seeing the congregation as a social ministry outpost that serves its context and various target groups unconditionally.

Being a special purpose congregation involves,

- Focusing on a special purpose, target group, or social, political, or religious cause.
- Or, focusing on a special characteristic of a congregation that might be a characteristic of a small percentage of congregations. One of those would be to be open and affirming, welcoming and affirming.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Multiple Worshipping Communities Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to be a congregation that starts and nurtures multiple worshipping communities within an existing congregation.

Starting multiple worshipping communities involves,

- Starting new worship services that focus on target groups of people that the core congregation has not been able to reach, but who are located in the context.
- Typically the staff and lay leadership of the core congregation lead the new service with some outside assistance and expertise.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Many congregations over 125 in attendance ought to consider this choice.

Congregations with three or more age generations ought to consider this choice.

Congregations who have 80-85 in weekly worship attendance and want to make the numerical growth passage to 125 to 135 in weekly worship attendance ought to consider this choice.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Multiple, diverse worship experiences

- Each addresses a different generation mindset
- Each addresses different life stage issues
- Each addresses different spiritual development stages

Multiple, diverse learning experiences

Multiple, diverse fellowship experiences

Harmony Factors:

- One name
- One governing board
- One budget
- One staff
- One treasury
- One meeting place
- One belief system

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Multiple Congregations Within a Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

Choose to be a congregation that starts or nests multiple congregations within its congregation.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Allowing multiple ways to be a member, or not require formal membership at all.

In the place of formal membership, use of system of various stages of connecting.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Starting new congregations involves,

- Starting new congregations focused on target groups of people that the core congregation does not seem to be able to reach, but who are located in the context.
- Generally this would be done with separate pastoral leadership.

Nesting congregations involves,

- Allowing other congregations who do not have or cannot maintain their own facilities to be tenants, or to nest, in your facilities.
- These congregations would exist as separate congregations with their own structure and leadership.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregations who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Multicultural Congregation

What is the essence of this choice?

The essence of this choice is to develop a congregation that is clearly multicultural, and not dominated by a single culture.

Multiple racial and ethnic groups, and various nationalities are represented in the participating membership, as well as in the core leadership of the congregation.

Worship is often diverse, multicultural, and even multilingual.

Discipleship and fellowship experiences also represent the full spectrum of cultures attracted to the congregation, rather than small groups breaking off into homogeneous groupings.

Evangelism and new member recruitment efforts focus on continuing to reach persons from various cultural perspectives.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations who are located in a context that is multicultural should consider this choice.

It will be difficult to sustain for more than seven to nine years the multicultural nature of a congregation if its context is not also multicultural.

It is easier for a new congregation to embrace this choice than it is for an existing congregation to transition to this choice.

- Existing congregations may have too much ownership of their former culture, and may—even without meaning to—come across with paternalism to other racial, ethnic, and nationality groups.
- The core leadership community of a new or existing congregation must be multicultural from the beginning of any multicultural efforts for this choice to be effective.

It is easier to embrace this choice if the pastor's household is multicultural and even multilingual. The pastor's spouse might be of a different racial, ethnic, or national origin, and must be actively involved in the congregation.

- If this is not the case, then the staff of the congregation must be multicultural and multilingual.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

Diversity is obviously empowered by the presence of various races, ethnic groups, and nationalities.

- This presence must be authentic and genuine, and must permeate all dimensions of congregational life.
- Any tokenism will destroy the true multicultural nature of the congregation.
- While quotas for representing each racial, ethnic, or nationality within the congregation in every program, ministry, or activity is not the best approach, significant, obvious effort to embrace the full diversity of the congregation in everything that is done is an essential characteristic of true diversity.

A diversity of racial, ethnic, and nationality groups speaks very positively to a holistic application of the Gospel.

- That allows this model to represent the New Testament church in an ideal form.

Multiculturalism also affirms a diversity of approaches to reach people for a Christ-centric faith journey, and involving them in a spiritual, strategic journey. Harmony is empowered through this choice because it is probable that in the midst of great racial, ethnic, and national diversity there will be a significant unifying or organizing factor.

This can be a captivating vision the congregation is seeking to fulfill that may focus around a great spiritual perspective or missional goal.

One hunch is that a close analysis of many multicultural congregations will show that the clergy and laity leadership of these congregations have a similar socioeconomic, education, or cultural mindset.

- This common mindset is part of what holds the congregation together.
- In fact, in the leadership dimensions of the congregation it is much more difficult to have a diverse socioeconomic group of leaders represented than it is to have a diverse racial, ethnic, or nationality group represented.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Choice: Congregational Multiplication Movement

What is the essence of this choice?

The essence of this choice is to develop and sustain a strategy of starting new congregations where the fulfillment of this strategy leads to a self-perpetuating congregational multiplication movement that fuels itself with minimal external pushing from denominational or parachurch organizations.

This best happens when the concept of reproducing new congregations is built into the DNA of newly launched congregations.

- Within seven to nine years from the time a group of new congregations are launched, with reproducing new congregations as part of their DNA, these new congregations can be genuinely involved in multiplication movement actions.

It can also occur when existing congregations are captivated by a new or renewed vision for launching new congregations.

- Often these congregations see the multiplication of new congregations as the most effective means of evangelism, new member recruitment, and community transformation.

Within a congregational multiplication movement are some congregations who may launch one or more new congregations each year.

There may even be a few congregations who keep a minimum of five new congregations at some point of launch and development into self-sustaining Christ-centric faith communities.

Who ought to consider this choice?

Congregations who find themselves in a fast growing context, or a significantly changing context, must respond to this opportunity with the launching of new congregational expressions focused on reaching new residents migrating or immigrating to their area of ministry influence.

A few congregations will see this from a global and local perspective, and include in their multiplication efforts partnerships with congregations in various parts of the world.

What are strategic change and transition issues to address?

It is only through new congregations that a Christ-centric faith community can touch the full spectrum of God's creation.

- Congregational multiplication movements affirm geographic and demographic diversity, generation distinctions, racial and ethnic pluralism, and lifestyle uniqueness.
- No one congregation is pluralistic enough, or sufficiently diverse in its doctrine and methods, to reach all people within its context.
- Full diversity is best expressed through the fellowship of congregations within a given context, rather than one congregation falsely claiming that it has a ministry for and to everyone.

Many denominational families have an ethos that makes a significant contribution to the overall Christian movement.

- Through the launching of new congregations within that religious cultural context the harmony represented by that denominational ethos is maintained.

Many faithful, effective, and innovative congregations, who are the ones most likely to be part of a congregational multiplication movement, have a healthy spiritual community that when replication through launching new congregations, provides a creative harmony that benefits kingdom work.

- The DNA of such congregations begs to be cloned in the vibrant spiritual life of new congregations.

What are essential resources to have available to embrace this choice?

Readiness, including a sense of urgency.

Case studies to observe and from which to learn. Discover and dialogue with congregation who have made this choice at least five years ago is essential.

Knowledge of the strategic actions called for by this choice.

A vision incorporated into a future story of the congregation's potential.

A minimum critical mass of leadership.

Faithful, effective, and innovative actions.

Coaching from a coach for congregational leadership.

Four more essential resources are leadership, partnership, finances, and prayer.

- **Leadership:** It takes a large supply of pastoral and lay leadership to create and sustain a congregational multiplication movement.

The typical new congregation will need 10 to 20 households, of which at least two must be clergy households, who will commit to launching a new congregation for that congregation to have both short-term and long-term success.

Few seminaries have ministry preparation tracks that equip clergy and laity to lead the launching of new congregations.

Often skill development and ongoing learning must take place in a lead partnership congregation committed to a congregational multiplication movement.

Denominational organizations can mentor and provide resources to these mentoring congregations so they can function as new congregational ministry incubators.

- **Partnership:** It takes a number of congregations equal to 20 percent of the total number of congregations affiliated with a denominational organization, who are willing to be primary or secondary partners for launching new congregations, for a congregational multiplication movement to be created and sustained.

One-third of partner congregations must be faithful, effective, and innovative congregations who will serve as primary partners for launching new congregations.

The other two-thirds must be willing to be supporting partners.

These numbers may seem impossible to achieve.

That is why the creation of a congregational multiplication movement must be seen as a seven to nine year journey.

It will take that long to build the capacity for enough partner congregations.

Also, remember that many of these partner congregations will be ones launched during the first few years of the journey toward reaching a full multiplication movement, who within seven to nine years can themselves become partner congregations.

- **Finances:** Financial resources must be developed.

No denominational organization can budget for or accumulate sufficient financial resources to pay the launch costs for all the new congregations that are needed.

They can make funding new congregations a priority.

They can use strategically placed seed money as a magnet to draw other funds from the budget of partner congregations, individuals from within partner congregations, members of the new congregations, and other external resources that may not be immediately obvious.

- **Prayer:** Prayer for the congregational multiplication movement is essential.

It is unlikely that a congregational multiplication movement will be created and sustained unless a large number of people from at least 20 percent of the affiliated congregations are involved in regularly prayer for the movement.

A congregational multiplication movement is in part a spiritual movement. It is a God thing.

It is something that calls for the full heart, soul, mind, and strength of the greater Church. Anything less will be inadequate.

In Conclusion...

Let's review what you have covered:

You understand what "congregational redevelopment" means, as well as the challenges that congregations face and the opportunities for redevelopment coaching ("Start Here," page 5).

You have determined your congregation's level of readiness for change and transition ("Initial Considerations," page 7).

To help you decide the best route for your spiritual strategic journey, you have assessed your congregation's stage in the life cycle and explored the ways that vision, relationships, programs, and management support your life cycle stage ("Choose Your Route," page 14). (If your "initial inventory" score was higher than 80, you may have skipped this.)

You have selected a development or redevelopment route most appropriate to your life cycle stage and have examined the "equipping order" that applies to your route. ("Routings," page 21). (If your "initial inventory" score was higher than 80, you may have skipped this.)

You have considered various strategies for moving your congregation forward along your development or redevelopment route ("Coaching Development" for congregations in the *Gestation to Adulthood* stage, page 28; "Coaching Redevelopment" for congregations in the *Maturity to Death* stage, page 31). (If your "initial inventory" score was higher than 80, you may have skipped this.)

You have chosen the most appropriate "next steps" and will take action to realize them ("Choices," page 34).

We hope that you will browse our Resource Guide (page 67) for other resources that may help you along your path.

Whatever that path may be, may God bless you on your journey.

Glossary

Accountable management: Accountable Management is the fourth of four organizing principles of the assessment equipment for the Spiritual Strategic Journey related to the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation. Accountable Management deals with the management systems of the congregation that focus on decision-making, resources of various kinds, and the underlining culture that impacts these.

Adolescence: Adolescence is the fourth of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation. Adolescence during the first life cycle of a congregation begins around 10 to 12 years after the public launching of the congregation, and is a stage where Vision, Relationships, and Programs are all emphasized.

Adulthood: Adulthood is the fifth of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation. Around 18 to 22 years after the public launching of the congregation, it reaches Adulthood when all four organizing principles—Vision, Relationships, Programs, and Management—are all fully developed.

Assessment: Assessment seeks to define the current reality of the congregation and its context or community. It focuses on strengths or capacities present in the congregation. It seeks to characterize the relevance of the congregation ministry to the context in which it is located.

Birth: Birth is the first of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation. Birth is the first six months to two years of the public life of a congregation. The Birth stage is driven by the expression of a passionate God-given vision concerning the life of the newly emerging congregation.

Childhood: Childhood is the third of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation. Childhood usually begins around five to six years after the Birth of a congregation, lasts for five to six years, and focuses on Vision and Programs.

Cognitive style: The order or pattern in which the brain processes information. This may also be thought of as the thinking, learning, relating, or leadership style or pattern.

Community focused congregation: A congregation that intentionally focuses on the programs, ministries, and activities that meet real needs, of real people, in real time who reside in the larger community [within two to three miles] near the location of the congregation.

Congregation of congregations: A congregation of congregations is where multiple congregations exist at one or more locations in a covenant relationship, but maintain some identity distinctiveness in their denominational, constitutional, corporate, worship, and fellowship systems.

Congregational Issues for a Spiritual Strategic Journey: Ten issues for generative dialogue in congregations as they seek to determine their readiness for change and transition that leads to transformation while traveling along a spiritual strategic journey toward reaching their full kingdom potential.

Congregational multiplication movement: The development and sustaining of a strategy for starting new congregations where the fulfillment of this strategy leads to a self-perpetuating congregational multiplication movement that fuels itself with minimal external pushing from denominational or parachurch organizations.

Congregational redevelopment: Congregational redevelopment is a process by which congregations facing significant challenges seek to engage in a new or renewed spiritual strategic journey leading to congregational transformation.

Congregational time line: This involves a learning experience where at least 21 adults or 21 percent of the average number of active attending adults present on a typical weekend for worship (whichever is greater) gather for an evening to talk about the past, present, and future of the congregation, using a time line approach that discusses the characteristics of the various stages of congregational life.

Contextual relevance: Our congregation is demographically similar to its geographic community or the target groups that it has served over the years. Little or no gap is developing between the persons attending our congregation, and the geographic community or the target groups we have sought to serve over the past ten years. We are demographically reflective of the people we seek to serve in gender, age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomics, and lifestyle.

Core Ideology: The Core Ideology or Master Story of the congregation deal with the past to present life of a congregation, and includes the Eternal Mission (Theology), Everlasting Purpose (History), and Enduring Core Values (Culture).

Death: Death is tenth of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation. Death is where a congregation ceases functioning as a Christ-centric faith community with regular worship, discipleship, and fellowship activities.

Empty Nest: Empty Nest is the seventh of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation. Empty Nest is when Vision and Programs are no longer dominant or fully developed. The congregation is experiencing disintegration of the quality and quantity of programs, ministries, and activities.

Enduring Core Values: The Enduring Core Values or Culture of the congregation are the set of spiritual and social practices the congregational participants value the highest or hold most dearly. If these values or this culture are radically and rapidly changed then a congregation is propelled into chaos.

Eternal Mission: The Eternal Mission or Theology of a congregation relates to its foundational understanding as to what Christ-centric, faith-based congregations in general are all about. In the simple, symbolic terms it has to do with a congregation's understanding of the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment.

Evaluation: Evaluation seeks to measure in what ways a congregation is making successful progress towards making changes and transitions that produce transformation and allow it to reach its full potential.

Everlasting Purpose: The Everlasting Purpose or History of a congregation is the historical purpose or reason for which this particular congregation came into being. It

relates to the founding purpose of your congregation and answers the question, "why did we come into existence?" It is past-to-present in nature and does not imply that the future of the congregation will necessarily revolve around this same purpose.

Exceptional Big, Holy, Almighty Goals: Highly significant goals or key leverage points that will help the congregation reach its full potential, prioritize them, and identify the character, competencies, capacities, and connections that need to be developed for the effective implementation of these key leverage points.

Experiential Route: The route for a Spiritual Strategic Journey that focuses on Greatest Experiences. The equipping order for an Experiential Route would be Readiness, Learning, Future Planning, Implementation, Assessment, Present Planning, and Evaluation.

Fantasy Core Values: These are fantasy lists of what congregations wish were their core values. Often these are discussed and written during some type of planning process, but are not reflective of the true character and commitment of the congregation.

Focus group: A group interview and dialogue process that seeks to educate participants while at the same time solicit information from them concerning identified issues for the Spiritual Strategic Journey.

Future Core Values: These represent the core values the congregation is truly trying to live into. They become an emerging part of the life, ministry, and spiritual culture of the congregation. Then they are written down to challenge the congregation to stay with the journey they are currently experiencing.

Future Planning: Future Planning seeks to tell the future story of the congregation, and then identify the key leverage points that will help the congregation reach its full potential, prioritize these key leverage points, and identify the character, competencies, capacities, and connections that need to be developed for the effective implementation of these key leverage points.

Generative dialogue: Dialogue between individuals or within groups that seeks to generate new ideas from the initial or presenting ideas shared by participants around a chosen subject.

Gestation: Gestation is a preparatory phase before the launching of a new congregation. Gestation is that period of time, often six months to two years in length, when preparations are being made to publicly launch a new congregation.

GlobaLocal: GlobaLocal is the idea of simultaneously being equally concerned about global and local issues.

Implementation: Implementation involves the regular implementation and navigation of the fulfillment of the future story of a congregation along the path of its key leverage points.

Incremental Route: This route focuses on Efficiency and Effectiveness. The equipping order for an Incremental Route would be Present Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Readiness, Learning, Assessment, and Future Planning.

Infancy: Infancy is the second of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation.

Initial Assessment: The process of using the Congregational Issues for a Spiritual Strategic Journey instrument to help congregational leaders to determine two things: First, is their congregation ready to engage in a congregational redevelopment journey? Second, what type of journey might best fit their congregational situation?

Initiating Leadership Community: The Initiating Leadership Community is made up of the people of passion, who are seven people or seven percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater. The leadership community represents the innovators and early adapters in the congregation who have the strongest positive passion concerning the future of the congregation, but not necessarily the key roles or positions in the congregation. Persons identified and connected with the Initiating Leadership Community must have passionate readiness, spiritual readiness, leadership readiness, and strategic readiness. The intensity of their readiness must be at least a seven in all four areas on a scale of one to ten with ten being high.

Key leverage points: Key points of strategy that produce a leverage effect that causes transformational change and transition rather than simply incremental change and transition.

Leadership Readiness: Strong positive leadership willing to exert empowering leadership to see that the congregation makes the changes and transitions necessary to achieve transformation and reach its full kingdom potential. Strong positive leadership is composed of people of passion, pastoral leadership, and position.

Learning: To gain capacity or wisdom through experience that produces new knowledge.

Life Cycle: A progression through a series of differing stages of development. A series of stages through which an organism passes between recurrences of a primary stage.

Master Story: The master story deals with the past-to-present life of a congregation, and includes the Eternal Mission (Theology), Everlasting Purpose (History), and Enduring Core Values (Culture).

Maturity: Maturity is the sixth of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation.

Merger: To choose to merge with other congregations to form a new congregation or a community of congregations. A new congregation is where a single, integrative denominational, constitutional, corporate, worship, and fellowship system is developed and implemented at one or more locations. A congregation of congregations is where multiple congregations exist at one or more locations in a covenant relationship, but maintain some identity distinctiveness in their denominational, constitutional, corporate, worship, and fellowship systems.

Metropolitan Regional Congregation: Choose to become a congregation that seeks to appeal to people from a large region of the metropolitan area.

Mission: The Eternal Mission or Theology of a congregation relates to its foundational understanding as to what congregations in general are all about. It is the overarching concept of the calling or objective of a congregation.

Multicultural congregation: To develop a congregation that is clearly multicultural, and not dominated by a single culture. Multiple racial and ethnic groups and various nationalities are represented in the participating membership, as well as in the core leadership of the congregation.

Multigenerational congregation: To have a congregation that embraces various generations of offering programs, ministries, and activities through worship, discipleship, and fellowship that address the unique needs of various generations.

Multiple communities congregation: To choose to become a congregation that focuses both on people who reside within one to three miles of the congregational facilities, and people who reside farther away. Seek to build an integrative congregation that does worship, programs, ministries, and activities together around a common spiritual vision and fellowship bond.

Multiple congregations within a congregation: Choose to be a congregation that starts or nests multiple congregations within its congregation. Allowing multiple ways to be a member, or not require formal membership at all. In the place of formal membership, use of system of various stages of connecting.

Multiple site congregation: Choose to become a congregation that worships in multiple locations. Develop worshiping communities at various sites within a reasonable travel distance of a main campus in an attempt to reach various communities of people or target groups.

Multiple worshiping communities congregation: This is a congregation that starts and nurtures multiple worshipping communities within an existing congregation. Starting multiple worshipping communities involves starting new worship services focusing on target groups of people that the core congregation has not been able to reach, but who are located in the context. Typically the staff and lay leadership of the core congregation lead the new service with some outside assistance and expertise.

Neighborhood focused congregation: This is a congregation that focuses its active worship, discipleship, and fellowship on the geographic neighborhood in which it is located. Passive activities may also attract people from outside the neighborhood, but that is not the focus of the congregation. Many people who participate in the congregation from outside the neighborhood will once have lived in the neighborhood, or be a family member or friend of someone who did.

Nesting congregations: Nesting congregations involves allowing other congregations who do not have or cannot maintain their own facilities to be tenants, or to nest, in your facilities. These congregations would exist as separate congregations with their own structure and leadership.

Old Age: Old age is the ninth of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation.

Organizing principles: The organizing principles for a congregation and its life cycle and stages of development are Visionary Leadership, Relationship Experiences, Programmatic Emphases, and Accountable Management. Understanding, strengthening in a manner that empowers congregational transformation, and appropriately positioning these organizing principles is a crucial issue for congregations.

Passionate readiness: When urgency exists concerning needed changes and transitions that may lead to transformation. This zealous sense of passion and urgency is derived from a positive feeling in favor of the future of the congregation, rather than a negative feeling that opposes or fights against some demon or negative factor in the congregation or its context.

People of Passion: These are a minimum of 7 people, or 7 percent of the average number of active, attending adults, who have a high level of position, spiritual passion about the future of the congregation. They also have the spiritual, leadership, and strategic knowledge and maturity to appropriately initiate and champion change and transition within our congregation.

People of Position: These are a minimum of 21 people, or 21 percent of the average number of active, attending adults, who hold various formal or informal leadership positions in the life of the congregation. While not always the people of greatest passion about the future of the congregation, by position and power they are competent and committed to lead us to fulfill our full kingdom potential. In addition, the congregation highly respects them, and will proactively support their leadership in a spiritual, strategic journey toward reaching their full kingdom potential.

Present Planning: Present Planning involves aligning the current resources (budget, staff, calendar, facilities) to fulfill the future story along the path of the key leverage points. The focus should be on efficiency and effectiveness, and on the greatest experiences of the congregation.

Primary Leadership Community: The Primary Leadership Community is made up of the people of position, who are 21 people or 21 percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater.

Programmatic Emphases: Programmatic Emphases deals with programs, ministries, and activities. If effective your congregation is well known throughout your congregation, and your geographic community or the target groups you serve for the excellence of these programs, ministries, and activities. If effective your programs, ministries, and activities seem to be growing in numbers and quality. If effective your programs are meeting real, identified spiritual, social, and emotional needs of people.

Purpose: The historic reason for the beginning and existence of a congregation, or its founding story. It relates to the founding purpose of your congregation and answers the question, “why did we come into existence?” It also relates to the founding story of your congregation that is generally formed during the first five to six years of the life of your congregation. The founding purpose and founding story tend to blend into one understanding of the early years of the congregation. This understanding of the early years of a congregation tends to impact the life and ministry of the congregation long past the lives of the founding members. It

becomes an unspoken, and perhaps an unwritten, basic understanding of the driving purpose that impacts decisions made by the congregation long past the life and livelihood of the congregation.

Readiness: The condition of being prepared with passion, spirituality, leadership, and strategies to change and transition a congregation in a manner that leads to transformation and the reaching of the full kingdom potential of a congregation.

Reinvention Strategies: Strategies for the redevelopment forward of a congregation from the Old Age stage of its life cycle. They involve a Systemic Route. They help a congregation to intentionally reinvent itself.

Relationship Experiences: Relationship Experiences deals with how your congregation is doing at attracting people to a Christ-centric faith journey (evangelism), and at helping people who are connected with your congregation to be on an intentional and maturing Christ-centric faith journey (discipleship development). Among the results of the faith journey of people in your congregation should be a deepening spirituality, the development of numerous new leaders, and willingness by many people to get actively involved in congregational leadership positions and in places of ministry service within and beyond the congregation (lay mobilization).

Relocation: The movement of a congregation from one primary location—where it meets for worship, discipleship, and/or fellowship—to another primary location.

Renewal Strategies: Strategies for the redevelopment forward of a congregation from the Retirement Stage of its life cycle. They involve an Experiential Route. They help a congregation to renew relationship experiences, then revitalize programs, and finally cast new vision.

Resurrection Strategies: Strategies for the birth of a new congregation at the time of the death of a congregation at the end of its life cycle. They involve either a Vision/Values Route or an Experiential Route. They help a rechurching effort to take place at the death of a congregation.

Retirement: Retirement is the eighth of ten stages of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation.

Revisioning Strategies: Strategies for the redevelopment forward of a congregation from the Maturity Stage of its life cycle. They involve a Vision/Values Route. They help a congregation to directly cast new vision.

Revitalization Strategies: Strategies for the redevelopment forward of a congregation from the Empty Nest stage of its life cycle. They involve an Incremental Route. They focus on a congregation to revitalize programmatic emphases before it is ready to cast new vision.

Scenarios: Projected viewpoints, pictures, or narratives of possible futures—in this case for a congregation.

Social service congregation: Being a social service congregation involves engaging in ministries to the social, physical, and psychological needs of people in

the congregational context. Seeing the congregation as a social ministry outpost that serves its context and various target groups unconditionally.

Special purpose congregation: Focusing on a special purpose, target group, or social, political, or religious cause. Or, focusing on a special characteristic of a congregation that might be a characteristic of a small percentage of congregations. One of those would be to be open and affirming, welcoming and affirming.

Spiritual readiness: Strong positive spiritual readiness where there is a belief that God is up to something transformational through this congregation. Personal and congregational community spiritual processes are engaged in that help. Spiritual readiness will require the congregation to engage in an intentional spiritual emphasis over a period of time such as Share and Prayer Triplets.

Spiritual Strategic Journey: An approach to planning that is spiritual and strategic in nature that focuses on a journey or movement motif. It tends to be more right-brained than left-brained in nature, more postmodern than modern, and focused around telling the future story of a congregation or other organization rather than declaring a set or fixed future.

Stages of development: These are the ten developmental stages of a congregational life cycle. The names of the stages are Birth, Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, Maturity, Empty Nest, Retirement, Old Age, and Death.

Strategic readiness: When a core of initiating leadership are fully aware of the types of strategies and tactics that will need to be used to make the necessary changes and transition leading to transformation and reaching the full kingdom potential of the congregation.

Supporting Leadership Community: The Supporting Leadership Community is made up of the people of participation, who are 63 people or 63 percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater.

Systemic Route: This route focuses on Exceptional Big, Holy, Almighty Goals. The equipping order for a Systemic Route would be Readiness, Learning, Assessment, Future Planning, Present Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation.

Vision/Values Route: This route focuses on a Future Story of Excellence. The equipping order for a Vision/Values Route would be Readiness, Learning, Future Planning, Implementation, Assessment, Present Planning, and Evaluation.

Visionary leadership: Visionary leadership deals with who we are, what we believe or highly value, where we are headed, and how we are getting there. Visionary leadership are the people of passion who make up the initiating leadership community who craft and cast vision and fuel the spiritual strategic journey of a congregation.

Resource Guide

Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics (Book)

Stephen A. Macchia, Author. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999.

After visiting, interviewing, and evaluating many New England congregations and 1,899 of their members, Stephen Macchia has found what he believes are ten principles characteristic of healthy churches. The ten principles of healthy churches are not presented in this book as models, but with stories of real congregations and practical guidance for implementation. The principles include: seeking the empowerment of God's presence; excellent, diverse forms of worship; spiritual disciplines such as prayer and study; learning and growing in community; loving and caring relationships; servant-leader development; an outward focus to the church's ministry; wise administration and accountability; networking locally, nationally and globally; and stewardship and generosity. The questions after each chapter are designed for reflection, discussion, and self-evaluation. They are also intended to help implement the principles as a congregation moves toward health. Any denominational leadership team or congregation would benefit from studying this book.

Can Our Church Live?: Redeveloping Congregations in Decline (Book)

Alice Mann, Author. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1999.

Can waning and dying congregations actually live again? The author paints a picture of cautious but energizing optimism. Demographics, says Alice Mann, have not been friendly to mainline churches, but other factors can reverse a church's decline and give it new vitality. First, there needs to be a faith-based sense of purpose that extends beyond church walls, rather than a focus on survival and maintenance. To become vital, a church also needs a clear and positive identity, ongoing attention to nonmembers in the community, congregational harmony, positive relationships between clergy and laity, and small group programs where people can form deeper ties to one another and connect their faith with daily life. This study provides excellent theory, contextual case studies, and inspiration to allow leaders of congregations in decline to struggle through their wilderness and to imagine new possibilities for a more faithful and vital future.

Effective Church Leadership: Building on the Twelve Keys (Book)

Kennon L. Callahan, Author. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1990.

During the post-World War II era, the United States was a "churched" culture that encouraged the development of credentialed, professional pastors. With the current decline of mainline churches in our pluralistic culture, the "professional" pastor has become ineffective and must give way to the "missional" pastor. Effective Church Leadership defines and lists the major resources of a missional pastor-leader. The reader will find practical help with the four central tasks of a missional leader: helping people rediscover power in the whole of their lives; helping people become communities of reconciliation; helping people discover meaning in everyday life; and helping people discover how they can make a difference. The missional pastor helps church members discover who they are now on the mission field, their specific mission tasks, and the central convictions about ordinary life in light of the gospel. The author gives practical insight into how pastors and key leaders can transform themselves and their communities of faith into vibrant and true mission outposts. A plan for pastoral evaluation and an evaluation worksheet are included.

Futuring Your Church: Finding Your Vision and Making It Work (Book)

George B. Thompson, Author. United Church Press, 1999.

Futuring Your Church presents a detailed process for clarifying congregational vision. Author George Thompson illustrates how a congregation's heritage, context, and theological bearings are like stars in a constellation: while they appear random, their order can be revealed through the process of clarifying vision. Thompson suggests forming teams to discover and interpret these congregational stars, and from them to project a future vision of the congregation's calling. The book includes sample interview questions for discovering a congregation's heritage and theological bearings, resources for gathering demographic data, and clues for avoiding the pitfalls that often derail visioning processes. It also offers suggestions to help a team communicate its vision with the rest of the congregation. The process outlined is lengthy and may seem intimidating to congregations who want speedy solutions, but the author is convinced that haste is destructive to the visioning process. The resource is a helpful tool for clergy, lay leaders, and others involved in strategic planning and in re-visioning their congregations.

Growing Spiritual Redwoods (Book)

William M. Easum, Thomas G. Bandy, Authors. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997.

This is a creative, visionary book about defining and shaping the church of the future. "Spiritual redwood" is a metaphor for a new species of dynamic Christian church organism, led by visionary leaders, that is learning to flourish in the changed environment (or forest) of the twenty-first century. The "forest" is a metaphor for culture, the public, or people and the context in which they live. The forest is incredibly diverse, and growingly so. All the rules of the forest are in flux and they are completely different from the supposed "civilization" of the twentieth century institutional church. A new "pre-Christian" world is emerging from post-Christendom, and specific chapters center on spirituality and the changing nature of faith, worship, church organization, leadership, mission, and the future. Strong themes permeating the book are the thinning of boundaries between secular and sacred and a replacement of "machine" with "organic" imagery to define the church. Suggestions about future ecclesial styles and environments may be difficult to comprehend or appreciate, especially for persons born before 1946. The book is helpful, however, because it invites crucial reflection on a changing world and an evolving church.

The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier (Book)

Loren B. Mead, Author. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991.

Mead asserts that as the church's understanding of mission shifts, as once-familiar clergy and laity roles change, and as church executives are called to provide more support with fewer resources, a new church is being born around us. However, we are in a transitional period: the principles that have guided the church since the conversion of Constantine (a period Mead dubs the "Christendom Era") no longer apply. For example, it was once assumed that a church's mission was to convert persons in far-off lands; now churches must focus on crises in their surrounding communities. It was once assumed that clergy were powerful guarantors of community morality; now they must help laity engage in and serve a turbulent world. While alerting us to the challenges of reinventing the new church, Mead also offers hopeful signs of the future church's emergence. Church leaders will find in this book a deeper understanding of the critical opportunities facing those who seek to renew a church that will become, in Mead's words, "a centering presence from which we may serve the new world that God is creating around us."

Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World
(Book)

Leonard Sweet, Author. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000. Leonard Sweet helps us see the need for an EPIC church for EPIC times. EPIC means Experiential, Participatory, Image-Driven, and Connected. This new category of churches for the third millennium is postmodern rather than modern, focuses on relationship experiences rather than on program, is interactive and participatory rather than lecture and performance oriented, is driven by multimedia images of various types rather than words, and focuses on connectedness and sense of community rather than established groups and patterns.

The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission (Book)

Rick Warren, Author. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995. *The Purpose Driven Church* teaches that a healthy, purpose-driven church experiences consistent growth by balancing five biblical purposes: loving God, loving the neighbor, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching obedience to Christ's commandments. Author Rick Warren, the founding pastor of Saddleback Church, asserts that a purpose-driven church relies on a clear purpose that cuts through every ministry and every congregational assumption. Saddleback's purpose is "to bring the unchurched, irreligious people of our community to Christ." To fulfill its purpose, Saddleback's strategies foster depth through discipleship, strength through worship, breadth through ministry, and growth through evangelism. Vehicles for evolving discipleship include a series of classes that focus first on membership (knowing), then on maturity (growing), ministry (serving), and missions (sharing Christ). At each level, members sign a covenant to emphasize their commitment, clarify expectations, and encourage spiritual growth and maturity. The Purpose Driven Church provides a map for growth that values "people building process" over church building programs; it will inspire leaders who want practical insights and helpful principles on why and how to grow.

Recovering the Sacred Center: Church Renewal from the Inside Out (Book)

Howard E. Friend, Author. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1998. The author draws on his experiences as a Presbyterian minister and founder of the Parish Empowerment Network to show how churches can meet the new ways of society. Stories from actual church situations, scriptural references, and cogent metaphors or similes make specific and understandable the ways in which churches can meet their challenges. To recover the sacred center, individuals and congregations must create a temenos, or sacred space, and must act in response to the question "What do you long for?" Churches have in the past been "glue" for their congregations—bringing disarrayed lives together; now they must risk adding "solvent" —overcoming rigidity by letting things come apart and reassemble in a new way. Suggestions for action and explanations of principles are laid out in a lively, engaging way that make this book ideal as a basis for congregational study—abstract ideas are made concrete and interesting.

Appendices

Share and Prayer Triplets

Launching a Spiritual Strategic Journey with 100 Days of Share and Prayer Triplets

Overview

Prayer is a vital part of the ministry of congregations. It is a major part of the fuel that provides energy and empowerment to congregations. Prayer movements in congregations seldom happen without some forethought or intentional action.

More than a decade ago I was introduced to a vehicle for organizing a short-term movement, which was simply presented as 100 days of share and prayer triplets. This article sets forth some principles and methods of conducting a share and prayer movement in your congregation.

Why Launch a Spiritual Strategic Journey With 100 Days of Share and Prayer Triplets?

1. Launching a spiritual strategic journey is a great opportunity to initiate a renewed emphasis on in-depth dialogue among congregational participants. At times it appears that people connected with congregations have lost the ability to communicate and dialogue at an in-depth level. Too much conversation is shallow and does not produce close and mature fellowship within faith communities.
2. Launching a spiritual strategic journey is a great time for congregations as faith communities to commit to and covenant with one another that the interpersonal conflicts and congregational fights that have characterized many congregations during the previous two milleniums will not be allowed to characterize the new millennium. Beginning the new millennium with 100 days of share and prayer triplets is one way to seal this commitment.
3. Launching a spiritual strategic journey provides a new beginning for interpersonal relationships in congregations. With an increase in the diversity of many congregations, too many people connected with congregations do not know one another, do not understand each others' cultural perspectives, do not comprehend the generational differences, and fail to realize the diversity of religious practices and backgrounds that people bring with them to worship each week.
4. Launching a spiritual strategic journey provides a renewed opportunity to honor the Triune God. God is the focus of our worship. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. The Holy Spirit is our constant companion and guide. It is a fantastic idea to mark a new beginning by seeking to renew and strengthen our primary relationship with the Triune God.
5. Launching a spiritual strategic journey marks a new beginning. It is appropriate to anchor a new beginning with a spiritual process that involves a large percentage of the active people in your congregation.

6. Launching a spiritual strategic journey will bring significant changes and will require people to transition to new understandings. Some changes may threaten the spiritual or cultural comfort of people connected with congregations. Prayer is a way for people to deal spiritually and emotionally with the changes by which they are impacted, and the resulting sense of loss they are experiencing.
7. Launching a spiritual strategic journey provides a great opportunity to begin new Kingdom initiatives. Share and prayer triplets are a great way to build person-to-person, and household-to-household ownership of any new initiative.

What Should Be Your Expectations of the Results?

1. While 100 days of share and prayer triplets may not necessarily produce miracles in your congregation, it can sharpen the relational and spiritual sensitivity of many people connected with your congregation.
2. Share and prayer triplets can build relationships between people who have not had the opportunity to get to know one another. People of different age generations, tenure in their connection with the congregation, denominational and church backgrounds, and theological perspectives can build understanding of the faith journeys of other people.
3. Unfortunately many people in a congregation may never have learned how to pray for another person. This will provide an opportunity for them to experience the spiritual and emotional joy of praying unselfishly for others.
4. God answers prayer. Your congregation and the people connected with it may benefit greatly from answered prayer. Hopefully they will see the power of prayer and use it more often--especially in a servant way that benefits others.

How to Launch a Spiritual Strategic Journey With 100 Days of Share and Prayer Triplets

The concept of 100 days of share and prayer triplets is simple and straightforward.

First, people are challenged to come together in triplets 10 times for 100 minutes each time over a period of 100 days.

Second, the triplets are asked to spend their time sharing their personal hopes, hurts, and dreams, and sharing their affirmations, challenges, and vision for their congregation.

Third, the triplets are asked to pray out loud for one another and their congregation.

Fourth, the triplets are asked to share with the congregation the progress being made in their triplets.

Fifth, the congregation supports and unites around significance of the triplets through corporate worship and celebration.

Formation of the Share and Prayer Triplets: A leadership group in the congregation should take the initiative to form the share and prayer triplets. This may be the congregational staff, the deacons or elders, a congregational care team, a prayer ministry team, or a special group in the congregation.

Persons seen as participants in the leadership of the congregation should be specifically approached and asked to form a triplet. For this effort to be effective in impacting the entire congregation, a number of adults equal to one-half of the average weekly attendance by adults in congregational worship experiences needs to be involved in a triplet.

For example, if 150 adults are present on average in weekly worship experiences then the goal would be to have 75 adults to participate in a triplet, which would require 25 triplets to be formed.

Those persons asked to form a triplet should use the following guidelines in inviting people to be a part of a triplet.

First, they should not be members of their household, close friends, or close relatives.

Second, they should be people of a different age group, length of time connected with the congregation, and perspective on the life and ministry of the congregation.

Third, they should be willing to enter into a no-exit relationship. This means that each person will agree to stay actively connected to the triplet for the 100 days, even though there may be some challenging moments as the triplets seek deal with significant and meaningful issues.

Sharing in the Triplets: Triplet participants should share their personal hopes, hurts, and dreams, and their affirmation, challenges, and vision for their congregation. To initiate this they may need to engage in some trust building activities where they share their life story and spiritual journey with one another.

These trust building activities could be initiated in a large group setting where all the triplets come together for the first time and receive orientation and coaching. The pastor, staff ministers, and members of the leadership team should lead this orientation and coaching.

Praying in the Triplets: Triplet participants should pray out loud for one another and their congregation. Praying out loud is extremely important. This adds value to the ability of prayer to bless one another. Participants should lift one another up in prayer. The congregation and its health and Kingdom progress should be a subject of prayer.

Triplets could keep a journal of the key issues for which they are praying on an ongoing basis. Such a journal should include any statement of covenant and confidentiality the triplet establishes.

Sharing with the Congregation: A consistent and regular method should be used for the triplet participants to share with the congregation the progress being made in

their triplet. One method is to ask a participant from a triplet to take three or four minutes in each worship service to share the joy of what is happening in their triplet.

A second way would be to have a triplet participant to write a short article about their triplet that could be placed in the church's newsletter or on its web site. Third, would be for triplets to share prayer requests, particularly related to the congregation, that could be placed on a churchwide prayer list for use by other triplets, or by the congregation at times they gather in small, medium, or large groups.

Congregational Support for the Triplets: The congregation should support and rally around the significance of the triplets through corporate worship and celebration. One way to do this is to have the worship themes tied to the suggested agenda for the triplets. This would reinforce what the triplets are talking about, and connect to the triplet movement people connected with the congregation who are not in a triplet.

At the end of the 100 days of prayer a corporate worship celebration should be conducted to rejoice concerning answered prayer and new relationships, and the congregation's renewed sense of community.

Copyright 2002, Rev. George Bullard, D.Min.

Equipping Activities

Assessment

Assessment seeks to define the current reality of the congregation and its context or community. **Congregational assessment** focuses on two types of assessment: The core ideology; the four organizing principles. **Contextual Assessment** involves engaging in various assessment processes to determine the current and future reality for the context.

Congregational assessment: The Core Ideology or Master Story of the Congregation

Three elements—**Eternal Mission, Everlasting Purpose, and Enduring Core Values**—form the Core Ideology or Master Story of a congregation. Seldom are these elements all written down, yet they are still present and a part of the perceived reality of the congregation. The Core Ideology does not change much, often, or fast, or it is not truly core or foundational to the congregation. It is just a collection of nice ideas. For change and transition to take place in a congregation, it is not necessary to be bound by the core ideology. However, the core ideology must be discovered, understood, respected, and paraphrased to the congregation by those who desire to lead change and transition. Doing so will often gain permission for emerging leadership to make the necessary changes and transition leading to congregational transformation.

The **Eternal Mission or Theology** of a congregation relates to its foundational understanding as to what congregations in general are all about.

What are the spiritual, biblical, and theological underpinnings of congregations from the perspective of your congregational leadership?

Why do congregations, in general, need to exist?

What is their eternal mission that has always been, is, and shall always be?

The understanding of the eternal mission of a congregation is not congregational specific.

That means that eternal mission relates to the understanding within your congregation as to why any congregation ought to exist.

The **Everlasting Purpose or History** of a congregation is the historical purpose or reason for which this particular congregation came into being.

It relates to the founding purpose of your congregation and answers the questions, why did we come into existence?

It also relates to the founding story of your congregation that is generally formed during the first five to six years of the life of your congregation.

The founding purpose and founding story tend to blend into one understanding of the early years of the congregation.

This understanding of the early years of a congregation tends to impact the life and ministry of the congregation long past the life of the founding members.

It becomes an unspoken, and perhaps an unwritten, basic understanding of the driving purpose that impacts decisions made by the congregation long past the life and livelihood of the congregation.

The **Enduring Core Values or Culture** of the congregation is the set of social practices that the congregational participants value the highest or hold most dearly.

These are almost always unwritten, and seldom spoken in a manner that people can quickly and easily identify them. Yet, break one of the core values and core members of the congregation may remind you that your actions do not meet the cultural standards or expectations of the congregation.

The Enduring Core Values are one of **three types** of core values seen in many congregations. **First**, are **Enduring Core Values**. These are past to present values that have developed over the history of the congregation. Examples include worship style; seasonal or liturgical calendar events and how they are done; the role and authority of the pastor; who or which families are the leaders; how decisions are made; unique theological positions. Seldom are these ever written down. They may be so assumed by long-term members that their actual existence is invisible to these folks. New members discover or stumble across these. Wise new pastors and staff members know to intentionally look for these core values early in their ministry in a congregation.

Second, are **Fantasy Core Values**. These are fantasy lists of what congregations wish were their core values. Often these are discussed and written during some type of planning process, but are not reflective of the true character and commitment of the congregation.

Third, are **Future Core Values**. These represent the core values the congregation is truly trying to live into. They become an emerging part of the life, ministry, and spiritual culture of the congregation. Then they are written down to challenge the congregation to stay with the journey they are currently experiencing.

There are **four basic methods** of determining core values. **First method, direct generative dialogue**: This involves group interaction where the perceived core values are brainstormed, categorized, discussed in a dialogical manner that generates new ideas or perspectives, prioritized, and reduced to a list of no more than seven core values that are passionately held by the largest number of people. Someone inside or outside the congregation may facilitate this process. This process is best suited where there is general agreement on the core values and there simply needs to be a short process that allows for affirmation of the core values.

Second method, focus group interviews: This involves conducting a series of focus group interviews that ultimately involve at least 21 adults or 21 percent of the average number of active attending adults present on a typical weekend for worship, whichever is greater. The focus groups will have 7 to 12 person in them. Some of the focus groups need to be composed of people who have been members or connected with the congregation for approximately the same amount of time. Some of the focus groups need to be made up of people of various tenure of membership or connection in the congregation. The purpose of each of the focus group session would be to

discover what people feel to be core values of the congregation. Following the focus group interviews, two people from each focus group work on developing a common list of core values. This list is then presented to a representative group of the congregation for generative dialogue and consensus on the seven core values that are passionately held by the largest number of people. Someone inside or outside the congregation may facilitate this process. This process is best suited for congregations where there is some disagreement as to the core values.

Third method, congregational time line: This involves a learning experience where at least 21 adults or 21 percent of the average number of active attending adults present on a typical weekend for worship (whichever is greater) gather for an evening to talk about the past, present, and future of the congregation using a time line approach that discusses the characteristics of the various stages of the life of the congregation. Emphasis in the discussion is given to sharing what were or are the core values closely held by the congregation during its various stages. The goal for the evening is to focus on seven core values that are passionately held by the largest number of people currently members or connected with the congregation. Someone inside or outside the congregation may facilitate this process. This process is best suited for congregations who have a lot of new members who do not understand the culture and heritage of the congregation.

Fourth method, Christ and culture analysis: This involves the use of any of the other three methods (direct generative dialogue, focus group interviews, and congregational timeline). However, here the focus is on the things that characterize the congregation that are related to a Christ-centric faith journey, and the things that characterize the congregation that have been picked up from the external cultural of the context, or the internal culture of the congregation over the past generation or so. The goal is to focus on seven core values that are passionately held by the largest number of people currently members or connected with the congregation. Someone inside or outside the congregation may facilitate this process. This process is best suited for congregations who are stuck in their past, and their past to present culture appears to be suffocating their spiritual vitality.

Congregational Assessment: The Four Organizing Principles

The four organizing principles are **Visionary Leadership; Relationship Experiences; Programmatic Emphases;** and **Accountable Management.**

Throughout this tutorial Visionary Leadership may be referred to simply as Vision, Relationship Experiences as Relationships, Programmatic Emphases as Programs, and Accountable Management as Management.

Vision, Relationships, Programs, and Management correlate to the first four factors of the Initial Inventory.

Understanding, strengthening in a manner that empowers congregational transformation, and appropriately positioning these organizing principles are crucial issue for congregations.

Congregations who are growing younger and more vital as a representation of the body of Christ have more emphasis on Vision and Relationships than they do on Programs and Management. Congregations who are growing older and more passive

as a representation of the body of Christ have more emphasis on Programs and Management than they do on Vision and Relationships.

Visionary Leadership deals with who we are, what we believe or highly value, where we are headed, and how we are getting there. However, the majority of its focus is on developing an initiating visionary leadership community who are the casters and champions of vision. The pastor is the chief champion of vision, but not the sole or lone caster of vision. Vision must be cast by a passionate community of leaders who represent seven percent of the average number of active, attending adults in the congregation.

Visionary Leadership is discussed further in my article, *Congregational Vision* (page 130).

Relationship Experiences deal with how your congregation is doing at attracting people to a Christ-centric faith journey (evangelism) and at helping people who are connected with your congregation to be on an intentional and maturing Christ-centric faith journey (discipleship development).

Among the results of the faith journey of people in your congregation should be a deepening spirituality, the development of numerous new leaders, and a willingness to get actively involved in congregational leadership positions and in places of ministry service within and beyond the congregation (lay mobilization).

Relationship Experiences are discussed further in my article, *Congregational Relationships* (page 133).

Programmatic Emphases deals with programs, ministries, and activities.

If effective, your congregation is well known throughout your congregation—and your geographic community or the target groups you serve—for the excellence of these programs, ministries, and activities.

If effective, your programs, ministries, and activities seem to be growing in numbers and quality.

If effective, your programs are meeting real, identified spiritual, social, and emotional needs of people.

Programmatic Emphases are discussed further in my article, *Congregational Programs* (page 136).

Accountable Management deals with the management systems of the congregation that focus on decision-making, resources of various kinds, and the underlining culture that impacts these.

If effective your congregation has excellent, flexible management systems (teams, committees, councils, boards, leadership communities) that empower the future direction of our congregation rather than seek to control the future direction.

If effective decision-making is open and responsive to congregational input.

If effective finances are healthy and increasing each year.

If effective the management systems are supportive of the visionary leadership efforts by the pastor, staff, and congregational leadership.

Accountable Management is discussed further in my article, *Congregational Management* (page 139).

To illustrate this point further, I invite you to consider this metaphor!

Imagine a Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) as a metaphor for the spiritual strategic journey of a congregation.

For the most effective spiritual strategic journey, where would you place Vision, Relationships, Programs, and Management in the SUV?

Vision would be driving and fueling the forward progress of the SUV.

Relationships would be navigating and flavoring the quality of the journey.

Programs would be in the back seat behind Relationships providing a system through which the best Relationships could happen.

Management would be in the back seat behind Vision providing a managerial infrastructure that empowers Vision.

What type of journey results from the situation where Vision is driving and Relationships is navigating?

A youthful and active journey.

A GlobalLocal mission-focused journey.

A journey where the discovery of tomorrow is the focus.

A journey where many risks are taken to explore new discipleship frontiers.

A journey where people resources are focused on mission rather than maintenance.

A journey with a clear vision of the destination, rather than a controlled mission of rediscovery old habitats.

A journey with great excitement and increasing joy.

For the most effective spiritual strategic journey Vision, Relationships, Programs, and Management are all properly aligned in the SUV.

No organizing principles are left at home.

All four factors are dominant and being fully expressed.

Alignment is the key!

Everyone has discovered their positive role in the journey and is expressing it with excitement.

What happens when Vision grows weary and needs to take a nap in the back seat? Who drives?

Management drives and moves from empowering the journey to controlling the journey. Vision is not necessarily gone, but is asleep and must have an empowering catalyst to awaken it.

What happens when Relationships' eyes get blurry from constantly reading the digital navigation system? Who navigates?

Programs navigates and moves from providing a system through which the flavoring of the journey can take place, to institutionalizing a system where the successful fulfillment of Programs becomes the measuring rod for determining the success of the journey.

What type of journey results from the situation where Management is driving and Programs is navigating?

An aging and passive journey.

A self-centered journey.

A journey where the recovery of yesterday is the focus.

A journey where few if any risks are taken to explore new discipleship frontier.

A journey where people resources are focused on maintenance rather than mission.

A journey with no vision of the destination, but only a controlled mission of rediscovery old habitats.

A journey with little excitement and increasing despair.

Various Contextual Assessment Processes

Contextual Assessment involves engaging in various assessment processes to determine the current and future reality for the context.

First, is **observation** of the context to see the emerging changes and transitions in the context.

Yogi Berra was right when he said something to the effect that you can see a lot by looking. Driving and walking the congregation's context in groups of three, and then debriefing the experience, can reveal many characteristics of the context.

Second, are **interviews** with community social agents who are aware of the changes in demographics in the context that have not yet begun to be reported in statistical studies.

Who are organizations who notice early the changes in the demographics of a contextual setting?

Real estate owners and agents;
Schools;
Hospitals;
Grocery stores;
Law enforcement agencies;
Other organizations that deal with the public on basic life services.

Official reports from these organizations will not make it into published reports for use by demographic and psychographic information distribution channels until one to three years after significant trends have begun.

Third, is the securing of sophisticated **demographic and psychographic reports** for the context developed by government agencies, research and education institutions, and demographic distribution organizations.

These should be seen as a third channel in priority because they will lag behind emerging trends, and because they provide so much information that key leverage trends are difficult to determine. Such reports, where available, valid, relevant, and current may be used to document emerging trends. However, often these reports still have a basis in the government census figures that often are distorted, and less valid with each succeeding year following the initial research and report.

Evaluation

Evaluation seeks to measure in what ways a congregation is successfully progressing towards making changes and transitions that produce transformation and that allow it to reach its full potential.

Key questions:

What is the evidence that this congregation is making successful changes and transitions?

What is the evidence that this congregation is experiencing transformation?

What is the evidence that this congregation is reaching its full kingdom potential?

Future Planning

Future Planning seeks to tell the future story of the congregation, and then identify the key leverage points that will help the congregation reach its full potential, prioritize these key leverage points, and identify the character, competencies, capacities, and connections that need to be developed for the effective implementation of these key leverage points.

What is the future story of this congregation? What will characterize the life and ministry of your congregation ten to twelve years from now?

Focus on **Exceptional Big, Holy, Almighty Goals**: Identify the key leverage points that will help the congregation reach its full potential, prioritize them, and identify the character, competencies, capacities, and connections that need to be developed for the effective implementation of these key leverage points

Identify key leverage points related to visionary leadership and relationship experiences and develop a (spiritual, strategic) journey around them.

Let's explore the **crucial characteristics** of future planning and some **guidelines** that might help a congregation through the process of developing its future story.

What are the crucial characteristics of Future Planning?

It **imagines** a story of the congregation ten to twelve years into the future.

It seeks to **project** how the congregation will live into that story over the next three to five years.

It focuses on the five to seven **key leverage points** that will make a significant difference in the ability of the congregation to transform, rather than on all the things the congregation can think about that it wants to be doing.

It focuses on **visionary** leadership and **relationship** experiences.

It is **conceptual** more than perceptual.

It is **general** and **thematic** rather than detailed.

It may be **abstract** at points because it is not always sure what form it will take. Thus it may lack enough practicality.

It is **fuzzy** rather than clear.

It seems more like **chaos** than a controlled change situation.

It is a **journey** rather than a destination.

What are some guidelines that might help a congregation through the process of developing its future story?

Identify three scenarios (choices) your congregation would like to pursue. Explore redevelopment choices in order to stimulate ideas.

Brainstorm characteristics of the congregation if it follows each scenario (choice) for the next ten to twelve years.

Write three brief scenarios.

Choose one scenario to pursue more deeply.

Write the first draft of your future story.

Develop and implement a plan for sharing your story and building ownership.

Share your draft with other congregations for affirmation and challenge.

Rewrite your future story based on feedback and new insights.

Develop and implement a plan for sharing your story and building ownership.

Develop suggestions for how to live into the story.

Develop items to live into the story over the next 6-18 months (and the next 3-5 years).

Live into your story and reaffirm it through some celebration experience every 120 days.

Implementation

Implementation involves the regular implementation and navigation of the fulfillment of the future story of a congregation along the path of its key leverage points.

These key leverage points will be comprised of relationship experiences, programmatic emphases, and accountable management (see glossary). (These are three of the four Organizing Principles covered in Assessment.)

Learning

Learning involves engaging in education, training, and other experiences that develop the skill sets the congregation needs to fulfill its future story along the path of its key leverage points.

Learning experiences should be offered on **character**, **connections**, **competencies**, and **capacities**.

Present Planning

Present Planning involves aligning the current resources (budget, staff, calendar, facilities) to fulfill the future story along the path of the key leverage points.

The focus should be on efficiency and effectiveness, and on the greatest experiences of the congregation.

What are the crucial characteristics of Present Planning?

It **imagines** a **detailed** story of the congregation three to eighteen months into the future.

It seeks to **project** how the congregation will do well its important tasks over the next three to eighteen months.

It focuses on the **efficient operation** of the congregation in implementing its high priorities.

It focuses on **programmatic emphases** and **accountable management**.

It is **perceptual** more than conceptual.

It is **detailed** rather than general or thematic.

It is **practical**.

It is **clear**.

It is **controlled** in response to change situations.

It is **goal-oriented** and is concerned about **destinations**.

Readiness

Readiness involves engaging in the readiness activities necessary for a congregation to achieve the change and transition necessary for congregational redevelopment to take place.

Four aspects of readiness for change and transition must be addressed for a congregation to truly have readiness.

In addition, an important part of readiness is understanding the numerology of **various leadership communities** that needs to be developed.

Readiness: Four aspects of readiness

Four aspects of readiness for change and transition must be addressed for a congregation to truly have readiness: Passionate readiness; Spiritual readiness; Leadership readiness; and Strategic readiness.

Passionate Readiness: Strong positive passionate readiness concerning the future of the congregation exists among many persons within the congregation.

Urgency exists concerning needed changes and transitions that may lead to transformation.

This zealous sense of passion and urgency is derived from a positive feeling in favor of the future of the congregation, rather than a negative feeling that opposes or fights against some demon or negative factor in the congregation or its context.

Negative passion may lead to a future dysfunctional congregation with arrested development, rather than a transformed congregation.

Spiritual Readiness: Strong positive spiritual readiness where there is a belief that God is up to something transformational through this congregation.

Personal and congregational community spiritual processes are engaged in that help.

Spiritual readiness will require the congregation to engage in an intentional spiritual emphasis over a period of time such as Share and Prayer Triplets.

Leadership Readiness: Strong positive leadership is willing to exert empowering leadership to see that the congregation makes the changes and transitions necessary to achieve transformation and reaching its full kingdom potential.

Strong positive leadership is composed of people of passion, pastoral leadership, and people of position.

Strategic Readiness: A core of initiating leadership are fully aware of the types of strategies and tactics that will need to be used to make the necessary changes and transition leading to transformation and reaching the full kingdom potential of the congregation.

The Initiating Leadership Community participates in learning experiences that help them develop the capacity to guide each step of the spiritual strategic journey with full knowledge of the necessary steps.

Often initiating leadership communities seek external coaching assistance to mentor them along the journey.

Readiness: Various leadership communities

Readiness includes the development of various leadership communities: the Initiating Leadership Community; the Primary Leadership Community; and the Supporting Leadership Community.

The Initiating Leadership Community: The Initiating Leadership Community is made up of the people of passion, who are seven people or seven percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater.

This leadership community represents the innovators and early adapters in the congregation who have the strongest positive passion concerning the future of the congregation, but not necessarily the key roles or positions in the congregation.

Persons identified and connected with the Initiating Leadership Community must have passionate readiness, spiritual readiness, leadership readiness, and strategic readiness.

The intensity of their readiness must be at least a seven in all four areas on a scale of one to ten with ten being high.

The Primary Leadership Community: The Primary Leadership Community is made up of the people of position, who are 21 people or 21 percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater.

The Supporting Leadership Community: The Supporting Leadership Community is made up of the people of participation, who are 63 people or 63 percent of the average number of active, attending adults—whichever is greater.

Articles

The Birth of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the first of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Birth. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase One: Early Growth, involves the first five to seven years of the life of a congregation. It includes the stages of Birth and Infancy.

To appropriately understand the Birth stage, it is necessary to look at the period of gestation, explore how the organizing principles of vision, relationships, programs, and management impact the Birth stage, review the characteristics of the Birth stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Infancy stage.

Gestation

Gestation is a period of a couple of months to a couple of years before the Birth of a congregation when the idea of a new congregation is being developed through prayer, planning, and preparation.

Prayer involves seeking spiritual guidance about where and when new congregations ought to start to reach lost, unchurched, dechurched, or hurting people. Starting new congregations is a spiritual journey, not the franchising of a business. Therefore, to be successful it must embrace a God-led spiritual movement for the expansion and extension of His Kingdom through local New Testament faith communities.

Planning addresses the development of strategies for the starting of new congregations. These strategies can be denominational, parachurch, congregational, or individual. Traditionally denominations have taken the lead in developing strategies for new congregations. Increasingly parachurch organizations, congregations, and individuals who feel called to church starting are developing strategies in the vacuum left by denominational inactivity.

Preparation relates to specific steps to start a particular congregation. Usually a new congregation starts when a well-developed vision for a congregation emerges over a period. Seldom, except in the case of a split or separation group, does a congregation start without some preparation period.

Preparation must consider several factors. **First**, what is the vision that God has for this new congregation? **Second**, what will be the core ideology of this congregation, including its mission, purpose, and tentative core values? **Third**, what target group of people will this new congregation be uniquely situated to reach? **Fourth**, what are the logistics of the actual birth of this congregation, timing, location, and Birth methodology?

Fifth, what are the characteristics needed in the pastor of the congregation? **Sixth**, how will parenthood be handled as to sponsorship or mentoring by another congregation? **Seventh**, is this an intentional new congregation, or a split or separation group from another congregation?

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Birth Stage?

Birth is that period when vision is dominant, but relationships, programs, and management are not. Congregations at Birth are living out the mission, purpose, core values, and vision that God has given them for a new congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people. Vision is the fuel or energy that drives a new congregation forward.

Leadership is expressed through the vision, and assists in fueling the forward progress of the congregation. This leadership is God's leadership that empowers congregational leaders to seize the day. The period of Birth only lasts about six months to two years.

Vision should include a description of the audience to be reached, the methodology, the style of ministry, the outline of the belief system, and must be motivational. Vision must be sufficiently empowering to fuel a congregation forward for a generation.

New congregations engage in relationships activities, but generally not out of an intentional plan. Necessary programs are established, but few congregations take a long-term look at their program plans. Management is accomplished informally, and is generally put together as the congregation goes along.

What are the Characteristics of the Birth Stage?

The Birth stage of a congregation tends to last six months to two years. It is characterized by a passion to fulfill the spiritual strategic vision of the congregation.

During this time the congregation seeks to establish healthy patterns of worship, evangelism and growth, discipleship, and ministry and missions. These healthy patterns flow from the passion to fulfill the strategic spiritual vision, and do not yet represent the formal development of the relationships, programs, or management factors.

While Birth begins once the congregation is launched, the status of the congregation in some denominational traditions may be that of mission rather than formal church. At some time the congregation may actually constitute or formally organize and incorporate as an entity separate from its parenthood. Usually this should not occur until the Infancy stage.

During the Birth stage congregations must deal with various issues. **First**, is our vision generational? Is it intended to provide leadership and focus for us for the first twenty or more years of the congregation? **Second**, what evangelism and congregational growth philosophy are we following? What methods do we need to use to bring the people to whom God has called us into a faith journey and community?

Third, how can we be missionary from the first day, while being the product of missions? How do we develop a servant mentality within the congregation while simultaneously being served by our sponsorship or parenthood?

Fourth, what leadership and ministry styles are lay and pastoral leaders expressing? Will they be able to make the shift to different leadership styles as the congregation develops through the growing stages of the life cycle?

Fifth, will the founding pastor have to leave to allow a pastor with a different set of gifts and skills to take us to the next stage? Will the congregation be stunted in its growth and development because the pastor does not adapt his gifts and skills, and does not move on in favor of a pastor who does have the necessary gifts and skills? Sixth, will the lay leadership make same or similar adjustments as the pastor, or will they also need to turnover? How will this leadership style crisis affect the congregation's ability to grow and develop in a healthy manner? How will it impact the congregation's ability to successfully navigate the passage to the Infancy stage?

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Infancy?

The idea is for congregations that have been started to continue healthy development through the stages of the life cycle. The stage that follows Birth is Infancy. Dominant vision and relationships characterize this second stage, while programs and management have not been fully developed.

The relationships factor is the new dominant factor that joins vision. To successfully navigate the passage from Birth to Infancy, a congregation needs to begin acting like a congregation in Infancy. When it can do so comfortably, then it has probably navigated the passage.

The Infancy of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the second of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Infancy. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase One: Early Growth, involves the first five to seven years of the life of a congregation. It includes the stages of Birth and Infancy.

To appropriately understand the Infancy stage it is necessary to look at the transition from the Birth stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Infancy stage, review the characteristics of this stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Childhood stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage from Birth to Infancy?

Congregations at Birth are living out the mission, purpose, core values, and vision that God has given them for a new congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people. Birth is that period when vision is dominant, but relationships, programs, and management are not. Vision is the fuel or energy that drives a new congregation forward.

Leadership is expressed through the vision, and assists in fueling the forward progress of the congregation. This leadership is God's leadership that empowers congregational leaders to seize the day. The period of Birth only lasts about six months to two years.

Ideally, congregations continue healthy development throughout the stages of the life cycle. Congregations should move naturally from the Birth stage to Infancy. Both vision and relationships are dominant in this second stage, while programs and management have not been fully developed.

The relationships factor is the new dominant factor that joins vision. To successfully navigate the passage from Birth to Infancy a congregation needs to begin acting like a congregation in Infancy. When it can do so comfortably, then it has probably navigated the passage.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Infancy Stage?

Infancy is that period when vision and relationships are dominant, but programs, and management are not. The period of Infancy lasts three to five years.

Congregations in Infancy are continuing to live out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people. Vision is the fuel or energy that will drive the congregation forward throughout the growth side of the life cycle.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Discipleship patterns are expressed through the relationships factor, and assist in flavoring the congregation. These patterns hard wire the congregation's qualitative and quantitative growth patterns.

Infancy congregations engage in relationships activities that may represent an intentional plan. Necessary programs are continued, and some congregations begin to take a long-term look at their process and program plans. Management is accomplished informally, and is generally put together as the congregation goes along.

What are the Characteristics of the Infancy Stage?

The Infancy stage of a congregation is characterized by a passion to fulfill the strategic spiritual vision of the congregation. In Infancy a congregation is flavored; that is, is establishing more clearly its identity. The congregation asks itself such questions as, *Who are we?*, *What are our beliefs?*, and *What are our values?*

During this time the congregation seeks to establish healthy patterns of evangelism, growth, discipleship, leadership development, and ministry and missions. These healthy patterns flow from the desire to establish ongoing relationships processes to fulfill the strategic spiritual vision. They do not yet represent the formal development of the programs, or management factors.

If the status of the congregation in their denominational tradition is still that of mission rather than formal church, they will probably constitute or formally organize and incorporate as an entity separate from its parenthood.

The five phases of relationships that the Infancy stage must address are, evangelism and outreach; entry and initial assimilation; fellowship, care ministry, and full assimilation; spiritual growth and leadership development; and, kingdom involvement and missional life style.

During the Infancy stage congregations must deal with various issues. **First**, are our relationships intentional? What evangelism and congregational growth philosophy are we following? Do we know whom we, as a faith community, are gifted to reach for membership, and to make a focus of our outreach and missions efforts? Do we have regular, organized patterns of relationships?

Second, do we have a clear understanding of our values and belief systems, or our spiritual identity? Have we adequately grounded our members, regular attenders, and prospects in the doctrines and disciplines of our congregation, and-as appropriate-our denominational family?

The effort to clarify identity at times causes some people who have been a part of the congregation to seek another congregation because they do not agree with the emerging belief system, or the identity of the congregation as it was being clarified.

Third, do we actively work to assimilate people into the fellowship and care ministry life of the congregation? Do we go beyond being friendly to helping new people to develop lasting friendships within the congregational family?

Offering a definition is important at this juncture. Assimilation is the intentional process by which believers become identified with a congregation, and are included

in meaningful fellowship, care, spiritual growth, and leadership developing activities.

Fourth, what is our style of worship? Do we use a traditional pattern, a contemporary pattern, or a blended style of worship? What is the place of preaching and teaching in worship? What is the place of music and liturgy?

Fifth, what are our tactics for lay mobilization? How do we involve people in ministry and missions activities? Do we help people become fully devoted followers of Christ?

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Childhood?

When a congregation is about five to six years old it then begins to face a new set of issues. Many of these revolve around better organization for the congregation. At first this organizational energy is focused on the need to better structure the program life of the congregation.

The stage that follows Infancy is Childhood. Dominant vision and programs characterize this third stage. Relationships diminish as programs becomes the new dominant factor that joins with vision to fuel the next several years of a congregation.

To successfully navigate the passage from Infancy to Childhood, a congregation needs to begin acting like a congregation in Childhood. When it can do so without thinking about it, then it has probably navigated the passage.

The Childhood of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the third of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Childhood. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase Two: Late Growth, involves ten to twelve years of the life of a congregation that carries it from about five to six years old to seventeen to eighteen years old. It includes the stages of Childhood and Adolescence.

To appropriately understand the Childhood stage it is necessary to look at the transition from the Infancy stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Childhood stage, review the characteristics of this stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Adolescence stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage from Infancy to Childhood?

When a congregation is about five to six years old it then begins to face a new set of issues. Many of these revolve around better organization for the congregation. At first this organizational energy is focused on the need to better structure the program, ministries, and activities life of the congregation.

The stage that follows Infancy is Childhood. Dominant vision and programs characterize this third stage. Relationships diminish as programs becomes the new dominant factor that joins with vision to fuel the next several years of a congregation. The energy and resources that were going into relationships now go into programs.

To successfully navigate the passage from Infancy to Childhood, a congregation needs to begin acting like a congregation in Childhood. When it can do so without thinking about it, then it has probably navigated the passage. It has now left Phase One: Early Growth, and the numerical growth rate may slow down until potential strong surges some years later.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Childhood Stage?

Childhood is that period when vision and programs are dominant, but relationships and management are not. The period of Childhood lasts five to six years.

Congregations in Childhood are continuing to live out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people. Vision is the fuel or energy that will drive the congregation forward throughout the growth side of the life cycle.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people related to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

Childhood congregations engage in programs, ministries, and activities that may represent an intentional developmental plan. Necessary relationships are continued, but this factor does not have the same emphasis or excitement about it. Many congregations by Phase Two: Late Growth, have lost the natural, informal, relational appeal that characterized the founding years of Phase One: Early Growth.

Relationships came natural during Birth and Infancy, and very little effort was necessary to get people involved in new member recruitment and intentional spiritual discipleship. That early close fellowship period that seemed like the early church characterized in Acts chapter 2 is diminished, perhaps forever.

Management continues to be accomplished informally, unless the size and complexity of the congregation requires formalized management systems. Where this is the case, management is still done based on the personality of the managers, and not according to many formal, written systems. Something about structured management systems does not feel right, so they are avoided.

What are the Characteristics of the Childhood Stage?

The Childhood stage of a congregation is characterized by an urgency to build programs, ministries, and activities similar to a full service congregation. Energy and resources that were dedicated to an intentional discipling system during Infancy are now dedicated to program development.

It appears that the congregation has decided that it is going to be around for a long time. Therefore, it feels that it needs a more visible program, ministries, and activities structure. At first these are simply to give form to the informal discipling activities of Infancy. Later success of these programs, ministries, and activities may become the desired end results for the congregation.

During the Childhood stage significant emphasis is given to broadening the scale, and deepening the scope of the programs, ministries, and activities for the chosen high priority target groups. In a family/household-oriented congregation, this can result in major emphasis on programs, ministries, and activities for children under eighteen years of age.

It is interesting to note that in many family/household-oriented congregations during these crucial program development years little, if any, emphasis is given to single adults, marriage enrichment for young and median age adults, and programs for senior adults. Some congregations who have thought deeply about the needs of their congregational members may be an exception in one or two of these areas.

An implication is that later when an emphasis on these stated groups is overdue, the development of adequate programming may come out of some crisis or conflict when a specific program is demanded by the members and regular attenders.

Several resource issues arise during Childhood. **First** is, what programs, ministries, and activities do we have budget and special gifts dollars to support? What can we fund through undesignated gifts, what will require designated gifts, and for what will we have to charge a fee?

Second, how should we focus our staff resources? Many congregations at this juncture have a pastor, secretary, and music director. Some will also have added a youth director. Several of these may not be full-time, if any are. A key question will be what staff responsibilities to add next.

Third, facilities will be an issue. Few congregations can accurately predict exactly what type of facilities they will need for future programming. Facilities may need to be renovated, programs groups moved around within the facilities, new facilities

added, and new parking added. A key change and transition in the life of the congregation will be that more new members and regular attenders will indicate that it was the programs, ministries, and activities of the congregation that attracted them, rather than other elements.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Adolescence?

When a congregation is about ten to twelve years old it then begins to move forward with new power potentially created by the success of its programs, ministries, and activities established during Childhood. For the past five to six years it has struggled to provide the programming that fit its image of the potential of the congregation.

Now its hard work is beginning to pay off, and it shows signs of qualitative and quantitative success. Some of the sense of fellowship and informality of Infancy begins to join the high task orientation of Childhood to create a new sense of energy about the future of the congregation.

The stage that follows Childhood is Adolescence. Dominant vision, relationships, and programs characterize this fourth stage. To successfully navigate the passage from Childhood to Adolescence, a congregation needs to begin acting like a congregation in Adolescence. When it can do so without thinking about it, then it has probably navigated the passage.

The Adolescence of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the fourth of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Adolescence. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase Two: Late Growth involves ten to twelve years of the life of a congregation. It includes the stages of Childhood and Adolescence.

To understand the Adolescence stage appropriately it is necessary to look at the transition from the Childhood stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Adolescence stage, review the characteristics of this stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Adulthood stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Adolescence?

When a congregation is about ten to twelve years old it then begins to move forward with new power potentially created by the success of its programs, ministries, and activities established during Childhood. For the past five to six years it has struggled to provide the programming that fits its image of the potential of the congregation.

Now its hard work is beginning to pay off, and it shows signs of qualitative and quantitative success. Some of the sense of fellowship, identity and informality of Infancy begins to join the high task orientation of Childhood to create a new sense of energy about the future of the congregation.

The stage that follows Childhood is Adolescence. Dominant vision, relationships, and programs characterize this fourth stage. To navigate the passage from Childhood to Adolescence successfully, a congregation needs to begin acting like a congregation in Adolescence. When it can do so without thinking about it, then it has probably navigated the passage.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Adolescence Stage?

Adolescence is that period when vision, relationships and programs are dominant, but management is not. The period of Adolescence lasts six to eight years.

Congregations in Adolescence are continuing to live out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people. Vision is the fuel or energy that will drive the congregation forward throughout the growth side of the life cycle.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

What are the Characteristics of the Adolescence Stage?

The Adolescence stage of a congregation is characterized by a passion to fulfill the strategic spiritual vision of the congregation. Because fulfillment of this vision may be in sight, the congregation presses for a higher quality and quantity of ministry. Adolescence congregations engage in relationships and program activities focused on fulfilling their sense of their God-given vision.

Agendas addressed during Adolescence may include the following:

1. Staff and leadership
2. Buildings and equipment
3. Formalizing management systems
4. Dealing with competing priorities expressed by laity
5. Congregational emotions and awkwardness
6. Raising the quality of programs
7. Deepening personal spirituality and community relationships
8. Consideration of jumping the curve to a second life cycle rather than continuing into Adulthood in this life cycle
9. Doing significant and meaningful missions work and ministry projects
10. Working harder on assimilating new people who connect with the congregation.

Congregations in Adolescence truly act in an adolescent fashion. They have emotional extremes, and they are awkward in some of their actions and they are striving to be adults. Emotional extremes at times relate to attempts to over achieve as a congregation to meet self-imposed goals based on personal perceptions about what the congregation ought to look like by the time it reaches Adulthood.

Awkwardness occurs as the congregation seeks to deal with an infusion of new people and resources without an adequate management plan to handle these. The congregation may still be primarily operating on the management systems of Phase One: Early Growth. The current size and rate of growth that may be occurring causes inefficient and ineffective management practices based on this old style of management.

Competition is evident in the congregation. Two visions of the future seem to be dominant in the congregation. People who affiliated with the congregation during Birth or Infancy hold one vision. This is a vision of a strong worshiping community with intimate fellowship and care, and meaningful, corporate spirituality.

People who affiliated with the congregation during Childhood and Adolescence hold the other vision. The programs, ministries, and activities of the congregation that met specific needs of the family or household attracted them. Their vision is one of a full service, family-focused congregation with opportunities for meaningful, individual spirituality.

The competition shows up in various decisions the congregation faces. One relevant type of decision is what should be the responsibilities of the next staff person. Those who affiliated during Birth and Infancy would like for the next person to focus on enhancement of worship, pastoral care, and running the management of the church in a correct manner. Those who affiliated during Childhood and Adolescence would like age group ministers, and a focus on family life and marriage enrichment.

The competition also shows up in what function the congregation wants in their next building. Those who affiliated during Birth and Infancy are looking forward to the worship center or formal fellowship space, about which they have been dreaming. Those who affiliated during Childhood and Adolescence want more first quality, age-graded program space or recreational space.

At times this competition can result in unhealthy conflict situations. Usually these situations can be dealt with effectively during Adolescence because the greater good of the approaching Adulthood stage keeps the congregation focused on moving forward together. Occasionally these situations result in the congregation separating into two or more congregations in response to conflicting visions of the future.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Adulthood?

When a congregation is about eighteen to twenty-two years old, it begins to move forward with increased certainty and ease. If the formalizing of the management systems has occurred in an empowering and non-disruptive manner, then the congregation is operating with increased efficiency and effectiveness.

During Adolescence the congregation worked hard to deal with the ambiguity or fuzziness caused by the competition among high priority concerns. Its people and financial resource base, which was a struggle during Adolescence, begins to expand and lower the stress felt by leadership individuals.

With greater efficiency and effectiveness, and a broader resource base, the congregation's self-esteem increases, and it begins to show pride in the success of its ministry.

The stage that follows Adolescence is Adulthood. All four organizing principles are dominant during this fifth stage. To navigate the passage from Adolescence to Adulthood successfully, a congregation needs to begin acting like a congregation in Adulthood. When it can do so without thinking about it, then it has probably navigated the passage.

The Adulthood of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the fifth of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Adulthood. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase Three: Prime/Plateau involves seven to nine years of the life of a congregation. It includes the stages of Adulthood and Maturity.

To understand the Adulthood stage appropriately it is necessary to look at the transition from the Adolescence stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Adulthood stage, review the characteristics of this stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Maturity stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Adulthood?

When a congregation is about eighteen to twenty-two years old, it begins to move forward with increased certainty and ease. If the formalizing of the management systems has occurred in an empowering and non-disruptive manner, then the congregation is operating with increased efficiency and effectiveness.

During Adolescence the congregation worked hard to deal with the ambiguity or fuzziness caused by the competition among high priority concerns. Its people and financial resource base, which was a struggle during Adolescence, begins to expand and lower the stress felt by leadership individuals.

With greater efficiency and effectiveness, and a broader resource base, the congregation's self-esteem increases, and it begins to show pride in the success of its ministry.

The stage that follows Adolescence is Adulthood. All four organizing principles are dominant during this fifth stage. To navigate the passage from Adolescence to Adulthood successfully, a congregation needs to begin acting like a congregation in Adulthood. When it can do so without thinking about it, then it has probably navigated the passage.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Adulthood Stage?

Adulthood is that period when vision, relationships, programs, and management are all four dominant. The period of Adulthood lasts three to five years.

Congregations in Adulthood are continuing to live out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people.

Vision is the fuel or energy that will drive the congregation forward throughout the growth side of the life cycle. Vision is the current understanding of God's spiritual strategic direction for a congregation that is cast by leadership and owned by membership.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a

congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

The primary role of management is to provide the systems and structures that work in an integrative pattern to undergird the fulfillment of vision, and the implementation of relationships and programs.

What are the Characteristics of the Adulthood Stage?

Adulthood is characterized by a congregation that is in its prime. It is relaxed. It is successful. It has a positive spirit. It is focused. It is clear about its vision, and its vision shares broad ownership in the congregation. It is positive about its future. It feels that it can accomplish anything to which it sets its mind, as long as it matches the will of God for the congregation.

People are becoming connected and joining the membership of the congregation. An increasing number of people are involved in intentional discipling processes. Spiritual growth is occurring in the congregation.

The worship services, particularly the music, are considered excellent. The congregation may have multiple worship services, each of which appeals to a different target group of people. Attendance at worship services is as large or larger than it has ever been.

The programs, ministries and activities of the congregation are successful qualitatively and quantitatively. The congregation has several programs for which it is well known in community, metropolitan area, or county. It has quality, age-graded programs, and may have one or more age-graded programs that are considered the best in the area.

Its formal management systems are working well. Many of the management systems have been recently reengineered to match the size, complexity, and stage of the congregation.

The congregation has facilities of which they are proud. They have built most of the buildings they had planned to build, with the possible exception of a specialty building such as a leisure center, or an ultimate worship center or sanctuary.

The demographic characteristics of the congregation are more diverse than ever in the history of the congregation. Overall the congregation is beginning to age in terms of the mean and median age of members, and those otherwise connected with the congregation.

Until this point the congregations that have not had a significant senior adult population find that this group is growing fast. The congregation is having to respond to more senior adult-oriented ministry needs than ever before.

A crucial characteristic is that the congregation may not be aware that this may be as good as it gets. It may not know that this is Adulthood. Having never been there, if this is the first life cycle of the congregation, they do not recognize Adulthood. Often the high morale of the congregation parallels the strong sense of mission, purpose, core values, and vision. The congregation feels that it is contributing significantly to the work of the Kingdom. High levels of satisfaction are expressed related to the role and function of the staff.

Now that some stresses related to finances have begun to ease, the congregation is beginning to plan what new programs, staff positions, missions project, and facilities it will fund during the coming decade. Adulthood tends to last around four to six years. Then the congregation is ready to move forward to the next stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Maturity?

When a congregation is approximately a generation old—twenty-two to twenty-seven years old—it then moves to the second part of Phase Three, which is Plateau. Unlike some of the previous passages, it is not necessary for much intentional action to occur for the movement from Adulthood to Maturity to occur.

The congregation makes the passage from Adulthood to Maturity simply by relaxing and taking a breath as an organism following a generation of hard work. It takes its success and its vision for granted, and assumes that it will always be present and dominant.

After a generation of life, a congregation loses its sense of vision. This happens in several different ways for various reasons. **First**, after a generation the congregation may have achieved or fulfilled its founding vision.

Second, the congregation may have grown weary of seeking to achieve or fulfill its founding vision, and thus allowed the vision to drop from dominance. **Third**, the people who helped cast the founding vision might not be related to the congregation anymore, and there are insufficient carriers of the vision.

Fourth, the vision may no longer be relevant to the context or situation of the congregation so it has been cast aside. **Fifth**, so many new people may have joined the congregation who do not understand the founding vision, and it has not been adequately shared with them, that there is no longer a critical mass of people pursuing that vision.

For whatever reason, when vision is no longer dominant then the congregation quietly, without notice to many people, slips to the stage of Maturity.

The Maturity of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the sixth of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Maturity. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase Three: Prime/Plateau involves seven to nine years of the life of a congregation. It includes the stages of Adulthood and Maturity.

To understand the Maturity stage appropriately it is necessary to look at the transition from the Adulthood stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Maturity stage, review the characteristics of this stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Empty Nest stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Maturity?

When a congregation is approximately a generation old—twenty-two to twenty-seven years old—it then moves to the second part of Phase Three, which is Plateau. Unlike some previous passages, it is not necessary for much intentional action to occur for the movement from Adulthood to Maturity to occur.

The congregation makes the passage from Adulthood to Maturity simply by relaxing and taking a breath as an organism following a generation of hard work. It takes its success and its vision for granted, and assumes that it will always be present and dominant.

After a generation of life, a congregation loses its sense of vision. This happens in several different ways for various reasons. **First**, after a generation the congregation may have achieved or fulfilled its founding vision.

Second, the congregation may have grown weary of seeking to achieve or fulfill its founding vision, and thus allowed the vision to drop from dominance. **Third**, the people who helped cast the founding vision might not be related to the congregation anymore, and there are insufficient carriers of the vision.

Fourth, the vision may no longer be relevant to the context or situation of the congregation so it has been cast aside. **Fifth**, so many new people may have joined the congregation who do not understand the founding vision, and it has not been adequately shared with them, that there is no longer a critical mass of people pursuing that vision.

For whatever reason, when vision is no longer dominant then the congregation quietly, without notice to many people, slips to the stage of Maturity.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Maturity Stage?

Maturity is that period when relationships, programs, and management are dominant. Vision is no longer dominant. Management is controlling the direction of the congregation.

Congregations in Maturity are no longer living out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Relationships are still happening in the life of the congregation, but the focus has turned to the output of Kingdom involvement, and not the input of introducing persons to a spiritual and congregational journey.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

Programs may rise to their greatest qualitative height during Maturity. The momentum created during Adulthood propels many programs, ministries and activities forward to operational excellence. The financial and other resources are greater than they have ever been.

The primary role of management is to provide the systems and structures that work in an integrative pattern to undergird the fulfillment of vision, and the implementation of relationships and programs.

During Maturity the management factor moves into the driver's seat as the primary initiator of action in the congregation.

What are the Characteristics of the Maturity Stage?

A congregation that is past its prime characterizes maturity. It is more passive than active. It is still successful in many areas. For the most part it has a positive spirit.

However, it is no longer focused. It is no longer clear about its vision. The success culture of the congregation keeps it moving forward. It is blind to the fact that it no longer has an empowering vision that is fueling it forward.

The quality of intentional discipling processes is high. Spiritual growth is occurring in the congregation. Not as many new people are being added to the membership, or becoming connected as were added or connected during Adulthood.

The worship services, particularly the music, are still considered excellent. The congregation has several programs for which it is well known in its community, metropolitan area, or county. It has quality, age-graded programs, and may have one or more age-graded programs considered the best in the area.

Its formal management systems, while working well, are now in control of any movement of the congregation forward or backward. In their meetings, the agenda items of management groups focus around how to sustain and institutionalize the gains of the congregation, rather than taking new initiatives that involve risk.

The feeling is that what the congregation is currently doing is working. There is no felt need to change. Besides, the finances of the congregation have never been

better. In fact the congregation has probably oversubscribed its budget for the past several years.

Because finances are so good, and there are few other challenges for the congregation, they decide to construct the building they had always wanted to have, but could not afford. At times this building is a new sanctuary or worship center. Other times it is a family life or leisure center.

The demographic characteristics of the congregation are diverse. The congregation is continuing to age in terms of the mean and median age of members and those otherwise connected with the congregation.

The fastest growing demographic group is senior adults. Children and youth under age eighteen are plateaued or declining in number. The average tenure of attenders, or length of membership may be greater than ever in the history of the congregation.

In selected portions of the congregation the morale of the members and average attendee is beginning to decline. At the same time the congregation feels that it is contributing significantly to the work of the Kingdom.

Some of its missions and ministries projects are experiencing greater success than ever before. More people are volunteering for missions and ministries projects than at any previous time.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Empty Nest?

When a congregation is twenty-five to thirty-five years old, it then moves to Phase Four, which is Early Aging. This occurs when the lack of an empowering vision begins to have visible impact on the quality and quantity of programs, ministries, and activities.

It is not intentional effort that moves a congregation from Maturity to Empty Nest, but the lack of it. When a congregation does not respond to the incipient qualitative and quantitative changes of Maturity, it allows the need to hold on to past gains to give more control and authority to its management systems.

Congregational members and regular attendees begin to forget that it was an empowering vision that helped them to realize their greatest potential during Adulthood. A few people who realize what is happening begin to press the leaders of the congregation to respond with greater zeal to the opportunities and challenges the congregation faces.

The Empty Nest of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the seventh of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Empty Nest. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase Four: Early Aging involves an indefinable number of years in the life of a congregation. It includes the stages of Empty Nest and Retirement.

To understand the Empty Nest stage appropriately it is necessary to look at the transition from the Maturity stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Empty Nest stage, review the characteristics of this stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Retirement stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Empty Nest?

When a congregation is twenty-five to thirty-five years old, it then moves to Phase Four, which is Early Aging. This occurs when the lack of an empowering vision begins to have visible impact on the quality and quantity of programs, ministries, and activities.

It is not intentional effort that moves a congregation from Maturity to Empty Nest, but the lack of it. When a congregation does not respond to the incipient qualitative and quantitative changes of Maturity, it allows the need to hold on to past gains to give more control and authority to its management systems.

Congregational members and regular attendees begin to forget that it was an empowering vision that helped them to realize their greatest potential during Adulthood. A few people who realize what is happening begin to press the leaders of the congregation to respond with greater zeal to the opportunities and challenges the congregation faces.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Empty Nest Stage?

Empty Nest is that period when relationships and management are dominant. Vision and programs are no longer dominant. Management is controlling the direction of the congregation.

Congregations in Empty Nest are no longer living out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people.

Vision is the fuel or energy that will drive the congregation forward throughout the growth side of the life cycle. Vision is the current understanding of God's spiritual strategic direction for a congregation that is cast by leadership and owned by membership.

Programs, which had just finished rising to their greatest qualitative height during Maturity, now are in quantitative decline. Soon they will experience qualitative decline. However, congregations notice the loss of numbers first. It notices that worship attendance is decreasing, as well as the attendance in various programs, ministries and activities.

The quality drops as the same level of gifted and skilled people are not present to carry out the programs. As congregational members and attendees comment and act on the loss of quantity and quality, the loss intensifies.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

Relationships are still happening in the life of the congregation, but not at the rate that is sufficient to replace either the active people who are not longer attending, or the inactive people joining other congregations.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Management, which moved into the driver's seat during Maturity, is now well established in its new lead role. Any hope of a quick return of vision as the driving force is gone, and congregational members and regular attendees begin to realize this situation.

The primary role of management is to provide the systems and structures that work in an integrative pattern to under gird the fulfillment of vision, and the implementation of relationships and programs.

What are the Characteristics of the Empty Nest Stage?

Empty Nest is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is at first nostalgic, and later angry about the loss of the past. Ultimately the congregation will look for something or someone to blame for the situation in which they find themselves.

During Empty Nest the programs begin to disintegrate. This is the Avis Rent-A-Car period of the life of the congregation. The congregational motto is, we try harder, but we're still number two.

Congregations redouble efforts because attendance is down, money growth has stopped as compared to increases in the Consumer Price Index, usually outstanding programs are second best compared to what they used to be, and confidence in the ability of the pastor to lead the congregation has diminished.

Some people are convinced that it is a matter of commitment. If everyone were just more committed to the congregation, then things would be better. Harder work is requested from the pastors, staff, and lay leaders. More sacrificial offerings are insisted on. More regular attendance at events other than the primary worship services is held up as a sign of peoples' commitment.

Empty Nest starts with a spirit of nostalgia. The hope exists that tomorrow will bring a return of yesterday. The stories told by long-term members of the glory years are not recognizable to newcomers as identifying the same congregation. People talk specifically about the way things used to be. Most of the dreams are of events of the past instead of visions of the future.

The longer a congregation remains in Empty Nest, the more likely the nostalgia will turn to anger. When this happens, the barriers may not just be ones of aging, but also ones of dysfunction.

Blaming becomes a popular topic of congregational fellowships. A layperson, a lay group, a staff person, or the pastor may become the focus of blaming. The rhetoric becomes pagan as people want to symbolically sacrifice someone to the gods of success.

The thoughts are to get back, not move forward, to the way we used to be. Whatever is not functioning to past standards must be the object of increased efforts to make it work better.

The congregation in Empty Nest may telegraph its time focus by the age group it wants to target with the most efforts. Congregations who want to target teenagers want to focus on yesterday. Those who want to target senior adults want to focus on today. Finally, congregations who want to target adults ages 25 to 45 and their children want to focus on tomorrow.

Empty Nest congregations tend to have the most severe conflict of any stage of development. Second are Retirement congregations; third are Adolescent congregations; and fourth are Infancy congregations. In Empty Nest the conflict comes about as angry people clash, but do not necessarily leave the congregation in large numbers.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Retirement?

Time has broken down at this point in the life cycle. It is difficult to know how long a congregation may remain in Empty Nest. It appears that a congregation can go through multiple rounds of Empty Nest before either redeveloping or moving farther down the Aging side of the life cycle.

The key factor that sets in when a congregation is getting ready to move from Empty Nest to Retirement is private despair. Part of the despair may be weariness from the struggles of Empty Nest.

Long-term members begin to feel that their congregation is no longer a good place to invite new people to come for worship, spiritual growth, and fellowship. As a result they become hesitant in their ministry to lost, unchurched, dechurched, and hurting people.

Retirement begins to emerge when these same people begin to express excitement about making another major effort to turn around the congregation. They look forward to revitalized and new programs that a newer, younger pastor, and the new members that he can attract, can start.

The Retirement of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the eighth of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Retirement. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase Four: Early Aging involves an indefinable number of years in the life of a congregation. It includes the stages of Empty Nest and Retirement.

To understand the Retirement stage appropriately it is necessary to look at the transition from the Empty Nest stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Retirement stage, review the characteristics of this stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Old Age stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Retirement?

Time has broken down at this point in the life cycle. Knowing how long a congregation may remain in Empty Nest is difficult. It appears that a congregation can go through multiple rounds of Empty Nest before either redeveloping or moving farther down the Aging side of the life cycle.

The key factor that sets in when a congregation is getting ready to move from Empty Nest to Retirement is private despair. Part of the despair may be weariness from the struggles of Empty Nest.

Long-term members begin to feel that their congregation is no longer a good place to invite new people to come for worship, spiritual growth, and fellowship. As a result they become hesitant in their ministry to lost, unchurched, dechurched, and hurting people.

Retirement begins to emerge when these same people begin to express excitement about making another major effort to turn around the congregation. They look forward to revitalized and new programs that a newer, younger pastor, and the new members that he can attract, can start.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Retirement Stage?

Retirement is that period when programs and management are dominant. Vision and relationships are no longer dominant. Management is controlling the direction of the congregation.

Congregations in Retirement are no longer living out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people.

Vision is the fuel or energy that will drive the congregation forward throughout the growth side of the life cycle. Vision is the current understanding of God's spiritual strategic direction for a congregation that is cast by leadership and owned by membership.

Programs, which were diminished in Empty Nest, revitalize and are again dominant. This is because permission is given and resources are provided for new program emphases.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

Relationships are now diminished. The natural fellowship of the congregation is wounded. Few core leaders and long-term members invite people to become a part of the congregation.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Management, which moved into the driver's seat during Maturity, is now in firm control of the congregation. Any hope of a return of vision as the driving force is gone, and congregational members and regular attendees begin to realize this, and feel they must empower new programmatic efforts.

The primary role of management is to provide the systems and structures that work in an integrative pattern to under gird the fulfillment of vision, and the implementation of relationships and programs.

What are the Characteristics of the Retirement Stage?

Many long-term members and attendees decided at the end of Empty Nest that this is no longer a good place to invite people to come and be members and attendees. Simultaneously they want the congregation to be alive and vital long enough to help them with various life passages, including their own death.

Existing members and attendees may feel that new people will be disappointed in the congregation. Or, new people may want to change the congregation, and if it does not work, then the congregation may be weaker than it is already.

However, existing members would love it if some effort were successful at again filling the sanctuary with worshipers, and restoring the congregation to past glory. Therefore, the stakeholders in the congregation who have been members or regular attendees for 20 years or more, have been professing Christians for 40 years or more, and are 60 years of age or more give permission for the newer, younger members and attendees to try new programmatic directions.

At times this takes the form of an appeal made to a prospective pastor. The pastor search committee urges the new pastor to come lead them into a new era of transformation. Change, transitions, and new ideas are said to be welcomed and supported.

The stakeholders really do not realize what they have asked for. They want the congregation to experience qualitative and quantitative growth that is congruent with the patterns of the past. They do not realize that the necessary changes will probably result in forms and styles very different from the past.

Simultaneously, the new pastor, and the newer, younger members and attendees hear what they want to hear. They seek to move forward in new programmatic directions claiming that it is the new way of doing congregational ministry for the third millennium.

The stakeholders cannot usually articulate well the changes that are acceptable. They will affirm change, but they do not want to have to accept too many personal transitions, or create a congregation that is not held in high esteem in the denomination or the community.

The ideal new member or regular attendee household for the stakeholders to accept would be a family with the parents in the age range 25 to 45, the father only works full-time outside the home, the wife is available during the week for volunteer activities, they have two or three children, they are hard workers who volunteer for preschool, children and/or youth leadership responsibilities, they tithe their income through the congregation, and they do not aspire to top congregational elected leadership positions.

About 18 to 24 months into the changes initiated by newer, younger leaders the stakeholders may realize that things are not working the way they thought they would. If so, they seek to stop the change efforts, and—if necessary—get rid of or discourage the leaders of the changes.

Retirement congregations may actually split when this happens. Whether the stakeholders leave or the newer, younger leaders leave depends on how successful the changes have been, and for how long the change efforts have taken place.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Old Age?

Congregations in Retirement may repeat this stage several times before redeveloping, or moving onto the next stage, Old Age. How many times the congregation aborts attempts at redevelopment does not have a consistent pattern. It will vary from congregation to congregation.

A congregation in Retirement is like a truck without four-wheel drive stuck in mud to its axles, and cannot get out without help. At some point the congregation gives up hope, or runs out of resources to mount a change and transition effort.

Rather than give permission for a new round of programmatic efforts to redevelop the congregation, they give up. When this happens the congregation slips quietly into Old Age.

This may occur following a split, or following the leaving of a pastor they felt would be able to lead them forward, but instead he gave up.

Old Age comes when the congregation is at rest. The congregation becomes a preaching station or chaplaincy ministry.

The Old Age of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the ninth of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Old Age. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase Five: Late Aging involves an indefinable number of years in the life of a congregation. It includes the Old Age and Death stages.

To understand the Old Age stage appropriately it is necessary to look at the transition from the Retirement stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Old Age stage, review the characteristics of this stage, and determine how a congregation makes the passage to the Death stage.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage from Retirement to Old Age?

Congregations in Retirement may repeat this stage several times before redeveloping, or moving on to the next stage, Old Age. How many times the congregation aborts attempts at redevelopment does not have a consistent pattern. It will vary from congregation to congregation.

A congregation in Retirement is like a truck without four-wheel drive stuck in mud to its axles, and it cannot get out without help. At some point the congregation gives up hope, or runs out of resources to mount a change and transition effort.

Rather than give permission for a new round of programmatic efforts to redevelop the congregation, they give up. When this happens the congregation slips quietly into Old Age.

This may occur following a split, or following the leaving of a pastor they felt would be able to lead them forward, but instead he gave up.

Old Age comes when the congregation is at rest. The congregation becomes a preaching station or chaplaincy ministry.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Old Age Stage?

Old Age is that period when management is the only one of the four organizing principles which is dominant. Vision, relationships, and programs are no longer dominant. Management is the only thing left to control the direction of the congregation.

Congregations in Old Age are no longer living out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people.

Vision is the fuel or energy that will drive the congregation forward throughout the growth side of the life cycle. Vision is the current understanding of God's spiritual strategic direction for a congregation that is cast by leadership and owned by membership.

The last efforts from inside the congregation to be revitalized or renewed by programs have failed. During Retirement several valiant efforts were made to renew

the congregation, but they were not sustained long enough to bring about true transformational change.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

Relationships are no longer happening in the congregation. This factor was wounded during Retirement, and is now dormant. Relationships extend primarily to the people who have been members of the congregation for many years, plus their extended family members or long-term friends.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Management, which includes the formal and informal culture of the congregation, is the only thing bringing ongoing life to the congregation. Management may find itself struggling with issues of the congregational resources. These include the facilities, the finances, and the pastor and any remaining staff.

The primary role of management is to provide the systems and structures that work in an integrative pattern to under gird the fulfillment of vision, and the implementation of relationships and programs.

What are the Characteristics of the Old Age Stage?

Old Age is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is functioning on fumes rather than being fueled by vision. The habit or pattern of gathering for worship and fellowship is the primary factor keeping the congregation going.

The congregation is now at subsistence level. It is a preaching station, or a chaplaincy ministry. Death is not necessarily nearby, but proactive meaningful congregation life that is generating new energy is gone.

Worship life is full of precious memories. Homecomings and anniversaries still play an important part in the life of the congregation. Memorial gifts to the congregation almost become the object of worship rather than instruments or enhancements of worship.

The Jonah Syndrome controls fellowship life in the congregation. This is a fear of being swallowed up. So the congregation is afraid to take any risks that might diminish the precious few resources it has left.

The most significant numbers counted in Old Age congregations are the number of funerals, and the number of people who are homebound or in the nursing section of senior adult housing.

If the congregation moved to Old Age following a conflict, which may have included a split in the fellowship, then it carries a lot of bitterness into this stage. This bitterness

is actually energy that can be used to help the congregation do some significant Kingdom work during this stage.

Any positive, proactive ministry of the congregation will probably come from its management resources. For example, if its facilities are in relatively good shape, then they may become an incubation center for new congregations [particularly non-English language/culture], a community center for neighborhood organizations, or a source of income for a merger or relocation.

If the congregation now has low expectation of internal ministry, and is not burdened by salaries and facilities expenses, then it may be providing significant dollars to missions work, or community ministry projects.

If the demands on the full-time pastor are not high, then he may become meaningfully engaged in community or denominational ministries. It is also possible that this type of congregation will provide meaningful on-the-job training for persons new to pastoral or staff ministry. Many of these latter people will be bi-vocational.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Death?

Death is not necessarily imminent or inevitable for Old Age congregations. It is not imminent in that Old Age congregations generally have the ability and resources to survive long past any viable, proactive ministry life.

Particularly congregations in town and country areas where the context is not changing much can survive for generations at a subsistence level.

Death is not inevitable in that a radical turnaround process in a context with potential is possible at any time. To give up on Old Age congregations is to suggest a limit to God's ability.

However, when the resources of the congregation cannot sustain the life of the congregation, it may die. When the people who are the core group of the congregation no longer wish to continue the congregation, it will probably die.

When community change and transition eliminate the residential community around the facilities, or when the facilities are taken for community development projects, then the congregation will die—at least in this setting. It may live in another form in another setting.

In some cases, when a denomination with the authority to do so chooses to close down the congregation, then it dies. But death is not necessarily the end.

The Death of a Congregation

Overview

This article explores the tenth of ten stages of development in the life cycle and stages of congregational development: Death. The ten stages are grouped into five phases. Phase Five: Late Aging involves an indefinable number of years in the life of a congregation. It includes the Old Age and Death stages.

To understand the Death stage appropriately it is necessary to look at the transition from the Old Age stage, understand the place of the organizing principles in the Death stage, review the characteristics of the Death stage, understand when Death is not necessarily recorded as Death, and begin to understand what happens after Death.

How Does a Congregation Make the Passage to Death?

Death is not necessarily imminent or inevitable for Old Age congregations. It is not imminent in that Old Age congregations generally have the ability and resources to survive long past any viable, proactive ministry life.

Particularly congregations in town and country areas where the context is not changing much can survive for generations at a subsistence level.

Death is not inevitable in that a radical turnaround process in a context with potential is possible anytime. To give up on Old Age congregations is to suggest a limit to God's ability.

However, when the resources of the congregation cannot sustain the life of the congregation, it may die. When the people who are the core group of the congregation no longer wish to continue the congregation, it will probably die.

When community change and transition eliminate the residential community around the facilities, or when the facilities are taken for community development projects, then the congregation will die—at least in this setting. It may live in another form in another setting.

In some cases, when a denomination with the authority to do so chooses to close down the congregation, then it dies. Yet death is not necessarily the end.

What is the Place of the Organizing Principles in the Death Stage?

Death is that period when none of the four organizing principles is dominant. Vision, relationships, and programs are no longer even present. Management is the only organizing principle left, and its role is brief and confined.

The purpose of management at death is to handle an orderly transition of the resources of the congregation. Resources at this juncture may include, but not be limited to, facilities, equipment, materials, remaining financial reserves, the membership rolls of the congregation, and historical items.

For review, here is the general function of the four organizing principles.

Vision is the fuel or energy that will drive the congregation forward throughout the growth side of the life cycle. Vision is the current understanding of God's spiritual strategic direction for a congregation that is cast by leadership and owned by membership.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

The primary role of management is to provide the systems and structures that work in an integrative pattern to under gird the fulfillment of vision, and the implementation of relationships and programs.

What are the Characteristics of the Death Stage?

At Death a congregation ceases to exist as a community of worship, discipleship, and fellowship. The desire is gone to meet regularly to worship God, to engage in spiritual growth activities, and to actively organize for fellowship and mutual support.

Probably all three of these need to exist in some regular form for congregational life to be viable. What dies when these three are not present is the congregational movement.

Separate, in a sense, from the congregational movement may still be a corporation or institution in existence with which someone must deal. It is like the difference between a person dying, or life being gone, and the need to address the issues of a remaining temporal body.

Just as a funeral would typically be held for a person, with their body being the center of human focus, so it is appropriate to engage in a ceremony that commemorates the rites of passage related to a congregational body.

Many spiritual rites of passages have occurred within that congregational body. It is appropriate to celebrate these, and to help people deal with their grief. Just as dealing with the loss of a friend or family member is hard, dealing with the loss of a congregation and its facilities is hard.

During the latter stages of congregational life many members and regular attendees probably deepened their inability to divide their faith in Christ from the cultural practices of a specific congregation in a specific location.

Death is not inevitable for any congregation. The life cycle and stages of development are not deterministic; that is, if a congregation has a Birth, it is not inevitable that it will have a Death.

Congregations can and do redevelop and move forward to a new partial life cycle that may last a minimum of seven to nine years. Congregations at Death can have a Resurrection.

Having said that Death is not inevitable, congregations who are aging, are dysfunctional, and who wait until Phase Five: Late Aging to seek a turnaround are unlikely to experience a positive, successful future. They may not avoid Death.

Early intervention in the life of congregations is needed. Often when congregations die, it is because they did not cherish life enough.

When is Death Not Necessarily Recorded as Death?

The death of a congregation is not always recorded as death. At times actions are taken during Retirement or Old Age that help a congregation to escape death, but without this rescue the congregation would have died.

Rescues include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. A dying congregation merges with one or more congregations.
2. A dying congregation relocates into a growing area in hopes that people will join their congregation, but does so out of weakness rather than from an intentional, passionate vision for the future.
3. A dying congregation is adopted by another congregation and absorbed into their fellowship.
4. A dying congregation reverts to mission status, is managed by its denomination.

What Happens After the Death Stage? Is Death the End?

Death is the end for this particular congregation. However, a congregation that has experienced Death can live on in a resurrected form. Resurrection is one of the Redevelopment strategies that will be discussed in future editions of Congregational Passages.

As a preview, here is a list of some ways congregations who experience Death can live through a Resurrection:

1. Another congregation can purchase the facilities and provide Christian ministry to the community targeted by the former congregation.
2. The resources of the former congregation can be used to give life to other congregations.
3. A remnant from the former congregation can be part of the Birth of a new congregation.
4. Their denomination can use the financial asset of the former congregation to start new congregations.

Humanly we would call many of these an organ donation. In a spiritual sense they are in the spirit of a Resurrection.

ReVisioning the Life of a Maturity Congregation

Overview

Maturity is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is functioning well, with some sense of efficiency. However, it is no longer clear concerning its focus and sense of spiritual strategic direction.

Signs of malaise exist. The congregation is more passive than active. Members are no longer sure about the congregational vision, but they are in denial that anything significant is wrong. They are no longer certain about who they are, and where they are headed in the future.

A sign that vision is no longer dominant is that the core leaders of the congregation can no longer articulate a clear vision. They feel that something is missing from the congregation, but they cannot describe what it is.

Relationships, programs, and management are all dominant. Yet again, congregations in Maturity are no longer living out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people.

Relationships are still happening in the life of the congregation, but the focus has turned to the output of Kingdom involvement, and not the input of introducing persons to a spiritual and congregational journey.

Programs may rise to their greatest qualitative height during Maturity. The momentum created during Adulthood propels many programs, ministries and activities forward to operational excellence. The financial and other resources are greater than they have ever been.

During Maturity the management factor moves into the metaphorical driver's seat as the primary initiator of action in the congregation. Management is fueling and controlling the direction of the congregation.

Management, which was an essential part of the change and transition from Adolescence to Adulthood, has now become so strong that it is smothering the flexibility and innovation of the congregation.

An Intervention Framework for Redevelopment at the Maturity Stage

The organizational principle or genetic formula for Maturity stage is vRPM. This is a symbol for when relationships, programs, and management are dominant, but vision is no longer dominant.

The redevelopment formula of the organizing principles or genes is VRPm. This means that the primary emphasis needs to be on casting vision, and affirming and building on the relationships and programs factors in the congregation.

However, redevelopment does not usually begin with casting a new vision. First, management, which is now fueling controlling the direction of the congregation, needs to be diminished. This may happen when the congregation realizes it needs to

change, and decides to initiate new flexibility and innovation, and realizes that it must reduce its controllability first.

Management tends to keep growing, and not to diminish without intentional congregational effort to want ministry to be more important than management. Too often congregations at the Maturity stage are comfortable and do not have an urgency to change.

ReVisioning the Life of a Maturity Congregation

The process theme for congregational intervention in Maturity is revisioning, which is a process of developing a new sense of vision and spiritual strategic direction. Congregations in the maturity stage are generally very positive, strong congregations.

Since the primary principle missing is vision, efforts to revision are needed. This involves casting a new vision, or recasting the old vision if it is still relevant.

The rate or scope of the needed change is continuous with the past. That means that the congregation does not need to make changes that are revolutionary, but only those that are evolutionary or incremental.

Continuous change involves doing similar relationship activities and programs or ministries with the same or similar target groups as before. The difference is that when revisioning is occurring, the congregation is looking for the new thing that God is doing in the congregation through their new efforts.

The destination for the revisioning effort is a new Adulthood. This does not involve going back to Adulthood. All redevelopment progress is forward. So the congregation goes forward to a new Adulthood.

What Are the Redevelopment Steps at the Maturity Stage?

The strategy is to first diminish the management practices of the congregation that control rather than empower. This can happen by reducing the number of committees, councils, or boards, thus reducing the number of people involved in management activities.

Steps to develop and implement decisions can be eliminated, thus streamlining the decision-making process. **First**, persons who have been in leadership positions so long that they control rather than empower can be moved to new assignment in the congregation.

Second, reaffirm or create new vision as discussed throughout this article. **Third**, a congregation should then reengineer the management systems to empower the new sense of vision and spiritual strategic direction.

The time frame for this type of redevelopment is six to 18 months. The new partial life cycle can probably last for seven to nine years.

The Advantages to ReVisioning the Life of a Maturity Congregation

The Maturity stage is by far the best time to revision the life of a congregation for several reasons.

First, this is the earliest time when the vast majority of congregations will even have a hint that they need to redevelop. Achieving redevelopment is difficult until a significant urgency for change exists.

[Note: the idea of the Sigmoid curve exists in some literature. It suggests that the best time to redevelop is actually during the Adolescence stage before Adulthood is achieved. This excellent textbook idea is not reality for many congregations who hang onto their theology, history, and culture until they no longer serve them well.]

Second, congregations are very strong and vibrant in the Maturity stage. They have the best resources of their current life cycle available to them. These resources will serve them well in a redevelopment effort.

Third, since only vision is diminished during the Maturity stage, it is easy to use a simple, straightforward re-envisioning process. Redevelopment can be pastor initiated, or initiated by a larger leadership community.

Fourth, the redevelopment process takes less time with fewer emotional transition deficits during the Maturity stage. At Old Age and Death the time factor is also six to 18 months. However, the transition deficits at these stages can be emotionally disabling.

Fifth, while continuous change can also be the rate and scope of change early in the Empty Nest stage, the redevelopment time is longer.

Sixth, the ability to assess that the congregation is in the Maturity stage and engage in a re-envisioning effort is one sign that a congregation can remain in Prime rather than moving onto the Aging phases. Congregations who redevelop during Maturity seem to benefit from long-term success.

A Special Note

At the Maturity stage, the arrival of a new pastor following the retirement, or movement to a new ministerial role, of the former pastor may represent enough change and transition to create openness to the casting of a new vision. Therefore, the new pastor may be in an excellent position to provide well-timed leadership for a new partial life cycle.

If, however, the previous pastor left under pressure, or during a congregational internal or external crisis, the same sense of timing may be missing for the new pastor.

Only during the Maturity stage does a change and transition of pastor seem to be the right amount and type of change to potentially usher in a new partial life cycle.

Revitalizing the Life of an Empty Nest Congregation

Overview

Empty Nest is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is at first nostalgic, and later angry about the loss of the past. Ultimately the congregation will look for something or someone to blame for the situation in which they find themselves.

Empty Nest starts with a spirit of nostalgia. The hope exists that tomorrow will bring a return of yesterday. The stories told by long-term members of the glory years are not recognizable to newcomers as identifying the same congregation. People talk specifically about the way things used to be. Most of the dreams are of events of the past instead of visions of the future.

The longer a congregation remains in Empty Nest, the more likely the nostalgia will turn to anger. When this happens, the barriers may not just be ones of aging, but also ones of dysfunction.

Empty Nest is that period when relationships and management are dominant. Vision and programs are no longer dominant. Management is controlling the direction of the congregation.

Congregations in Empty Nest are no longer living out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people.

Programs, which had just finished rising to their greatest qualitative height during Maturity, now are in quantitative decline. Soon they will experience qualitative decline. However, congregations notice the loss of numbers first. They notice that worship attendance is decreasing, and also the attendance in various programs, ministries and activities.

Relationships are still happening in the life of the congregation, but not at the rate that is sufficient to replace either the active people who are not longer attending, or the inactive people joining other congregations.

Management, which moved into the driver's seat during Maturity, is now well established in its new lead role. Any hope of a quick return of vision as the driving force is gone, and congregational participants begin to realize this situation.

Management tends to keep growing, and not to diminish without intentional congregational effort to want ministry to be more important than management. Too often congregations at the Maturity stage are comfortable and do not have an urgency to change.

An Intervention Framework for Redevelopment at the Empty Nest Stage

The organizational principle or genetic formula for Empty Nest is *vRpM*. This is a symbol for when relationships and management are dominant, but vision and programs are no longer dominant. The difference between the formula for the previous stage, Maturity, and the current stage is that programs have joined vision as no longer being dominant.

As a result, it will no longer be possible to simply recast vision and expect a redevelopment to occur. It is necessary to engage in redevelopment activities that will change the core day-to-day activities, and help people transition through relationship patterns with which they are co-dependent.

The redevelopment formula is *vRPM*. *This means that the primary emphasis needs to be on revitalizing programs and regenerating a movement of relationships. The congregation can affirm and build on existing programs, and also incrementally focus on new programs.*

Congregations during the Empty Nest stage are moving from feelings of nostalgia to feelings of depression. They are angry that the congregation cannot function as well as it used to.

To trigger redevelopment, defining reality is necessary for congregations. They must admit that they are in the Empty Nest stage. Short-term victories that demonstrate that the congregation can still be successful may be a positive first step of intervention.

Therefore, casting vision is not the first thing that is done to redevelop a congregation at the Empty Nest stage. First, management, which is now fueling and controlling the direction of the congregation, needs to be diminished. This may happen when the congregation realizes it needs to change, and decides to initiate new flexibility and innovation, and realizes that it must reduce its controllability first.

Revitalizing the Life of an Empty Nest Congregation

The process theme for congregational intervention during Empty Nest is revitalization. This process involves revitalizing or creating new programs that lead to reaffirmed or new relationships, and that allows for a reaffirmed or new vision to emerge.

It is hoped that because of the initial defining of reality as a part of an intervention process, Empty Nest congregations will provide permission for renewed or new things to be attempted. New leaders will be empowered to attempt to renew existing programs, or to attempt new programs. Through these efforts a new spirit of relationships should begin to develop.

A key point that will allow for this is when core leaders let go of the past and begin to move toward the future to which God is drawing the congregation. This is a difficult step and will occur only when core leaders believe with their heart, soul, mind, and strength that a better future is emerging than the one that has existed in the past.

The destination for revitalization is Adulthood if change that is continuous with the past is attempted. If change that is discontinuous is attempted, then the destination is Adolescence.

The key point is to embrace the concept that redevelopment involves going forward to a new partial life cycle. It does not go back. It is always stretching forward to grasp the new thing that God is doing in the congregation.

Note on Rate of Change and Transition: The rate of change may be continuous, discontinuous, or radical. Change that is continuous in nature generally deals with natural transitions in things, people, and relationships. Change that is discontinuous in nature generally deals with sustainable changes in things that also require definable transitions in people and relationships. Radical change demands transformation of things, people, and relationships.

What are the Redevelopment Steps at the Empty Nest Stage?

The strategy is to first diminish the management practices of the congregation that control rather than empower. This can happen by reducing the number of committees, councils, or boards, thus reducing the number of people involved in management activities.

Steps to develop and implement decisions can be eliminated, thus streamlining the decision-making process. **First**, persons who have been in leadership positions so long that they control rather than empower can be moved to new assignment in the congregation.

Second, revitalize or create new programs. **Third**, affirm or create new relationships experiences.

When the second and third steps are developing well, then it is time to ask questions about a reaffirmed or new vision.

Finally, the management systems need to be reengineered to empower the new sense of vision and spiritual strategic direction.

The time frame for this redevelopment is 18 to 36 months. The desired end result is a revitalized congregation with a partial life cycle of seven to nine years.

The Challenges to Revitalizing the Life of an Empty Nest Congregation

Revitalizing the life of an Empty Nest congregation is a challenging experience that is much more difficult than re-envisioning the life of a Maturity congregation. Here are some of the challenges:

First, it takes longer. Redevelopment of a Maturity congregation may be accomplished within six to eighteen months. An Empty Nest congregation takes eighteen to thirty-six months to go through the redevelopment process because it must address programs and relationships before new vision can be successfully cast.

Second, emotions and attitudes are significant barriers to overcome. Core congregational participants are committed to the past, and cannot define reality with sufficient clarity to move forward. Most fixes call for a recovery of the past. Core participants urge commitment to the past vision and values.

Third, nostalgia may have turned to anger and created a dysfunctional atmosphere in the congregation. Dealing with conflict issues and dysfunctional personalities may be necessary before redevelopment can occur.

Renewing the Life of a Retirement Congregation

Overview

Retirement is the stage in a congregation's life when despair and hope are both present. Hope rests in new opportunities. Despair is evident in how long it has been since the prime of the congregation.

Long-term members begin to feel at the end of the Empty Nest stage that their congregation is no longer a good place to invite new people to come for worship, spiritual growth, and fellowship. As a result they become hesitant in their ministry to lost, unchurched, dechurched, and hurting people.

Retirement begins to emerge when these same people begin to express excitement about making another major effort to turn around the congregation. They look forward to revitalized and new programs that a newer, younger pastor and perhaps staff ministers, and newer, younger members can start.

Retirement is that period when programs and management are dominant. Vision and relationships are no longer dominant. Management is controlling the direction of the congregation.

Congregations in Retirement are no longer living out the vision that God has given them for a congregation that ought to be present in a certain place or target group of people.

Programs, which were diminished in Empty Nest, revitalize and are again dominant. This is because permission is given and resources are provided for new program emphases.

Relationships are now diminished. The natural fellowship of the congregation is wounded. Few core leaders and long-term members invite people to become a part of the congregation.

Management, which moved into the driver's seat during Maturity, is now in firm control of the congregation. Any hope of a return of vision as the driving force is gone, and congregational members and regular attendees begin to realize this, and feel they must empower new programmatic efforts.

The key question is whether these new programmatic efforts will be focused on a new emerging future, or on yesterday.

An Intervention Framework for Redevelopment at the Retirement Stage

The organizational principle or genetic formula for Retirement is vrPM. This is a symbol for when programs and management are dominant, but vision and relationships are no longer dominant.

It is the formula for what may appear to be an entrenched, aging congregation that will not move forward without significant effort. The congregation is really not as entrenched as it appears. It has simply been too long since it has experienced the joy of an energizing vision. Therefore, to long-tenured members who are depressed

about their congregation, it appears that there is too little hope for a strong, growing future.

The difference between the formula for the previous stage, Empty Nest, and the current stage is that now relationships join with vision as no longer being dominant. Programs, which were not dominant in the previous stage, are again dominant along with management.

As a result, it is no longer possible to focus directly on revitalizing programs, and then use this as a base for casting new vision. It is necessary to engage in the renewal of relationships to God, one another, and new people in the congregation. This is the process of relationships.

The redevelopment formula is *vRpm*. This means that the primary emphasis needs to be on renewing relationships and then building a basis for new programs.

Congregations during the Retirement stage are moving from feelings of depression to feelings of survival. They are afraid that the congregation cannot function as well as it used to. They are scared that the congregation may not be present with vitality and integrity to bury them.

To trigger redevelopment, defining reality is necessary for congregations. They must admit that they are in the Retirement stage. Spiritual renewal with the Heavenly Father, and earthly renewal in interpersonal relationships are mandatory as early steps in the intervening in the current situation. It will take longer than many people can wait to get to the point where a new vision can be successfully cast.

Renewing the Life of a Retirement Congregation

The process theme for congregational intervention during Retirement is renewal. This process involves renewing relationships in a congregation, followed by revitalizing the programs structure of the congregation.

Eventually this allows the opportunity for a new vision to captivate the congregation. This new vision will propel it forward to a new, partial life cycle that may have the ability to last seven to nine years.

The destination for the renewal effort is Adolescence if change that is discontinuous with the past is attempted. If change that is radical in regard to the past is attempted, then the destination is Childhood.

Note on Rate of Change and Transition: The rate of change may be continuous, discontinuous, or radical. Change that is continuous in nature generally deals with natural transition in things, people, and relationships. Change that is discontinuous in nature generally deals with sustainable changes in things that also require definable transitions in people and relationships. Radical change demands transformation of things, people, and relationships.

What are the Redevelopment Steps at the Retirement Stage?

The strategy is to first diminish the management practices of the congregation that control rather than empower. This can happen by reducing the number of

committees, councils, or boards, thus reducing the number of people involved in management activities.

Steps to develop and implement decisions can be eliminated, thus streamlining the decision-making process. **First**, persons who have been in leadership positions so long that they control rather than empower can be moved to new assignments in the congregation.

Second, renew or create new relationships experiences. **Third**, affirm or create new programs. When the second and third steps are developing well then it is time to ask questions about a reaffirmed or new vision.

Finally, the management systems need to be reengineered to empower the new sense of vision and spiritual strategic direction.

This time frame is three to five years. The desired end result is for the renewed period to last seven to nine years and form a new, partial life cycle.

What are the Challenges to Renewing the Life of a Retirement Congregation?

Renewing the life of a Retirement congregation is perhaps the biggest challenge of the entire life cycle and stages of congregational development. It is more difficult than a Maturity congregation, an Empty Nest congregation, or an Old Age congregation. Here are some of the challenges:

First, it takes longer than many people are willing to accept. The renewal process takes three to five years. Many people expect something significant and lasting to happen within two to three years. It is not possible when the redevelopment process must address relationships first and programs second before vision can be successfully cast.

Second, the focus of the permission-giving people may still be on the restoration of past glory rather than risky undertakings that seek to move the congregation forward to a new, partial life cycle. Long-tenured members may not reveal their wish for a return of past glory until major time and effort has been put into a redevelopment effort that they stop supporting.

Third, long tenured, permission-giving members have a fear that the change and transition efforts of redevelopment may not be successful. If they are unsuccessful, then they may further weaken the congregation, and not attempting them at all may have been better.

Therefore, about 18 to 24 months into the changes initiated by newer, younger leaders, the stakeholders may realize that things are not working the way they thought they would. They then seek to stop the change efforts, and—if necessary—get rid of or discourage the leaders of the changes.

Fourth, the risk of change and transition that is being taken relates to the organizational health of the congregation. If the change and transition efforts do not work in a manner that seems positive to the permission givers, it is possible that the congregation will have unhealthy conflict at a level that involves a corporate split of the congregation into two or more congregations.

Reinventing the Life of an Old Age Congregation

Overview

Old Age is that stage of a congregation's life cycle when it is functioning on fumes rather than being fueled by vision. The habit or pattern of gathering for worship and fellowship is the primary factor keeping the congregation going.

The congregation is now at subsistence level. It is a preaching station, or a chaplaincy ministry. Death is not necessarily nearby, but proactive meaningful congregation life that is generating new energy is gone.

Worship life is full of precious memories. Homecomings and anniversaries still play an important part in the life of the congregation. Memorial gifts to the congregation almost become the object of worship rather than instruments or enhancements of worship.

The Jonah Syndrome controls fellowship life in the congregation. This is a fear of being swallowed up. So the congregation is afraid to take any risks that might diminish the precious few resources it has left.

The most significant number counted in Old Age congregations is the number of funerals, and the number of people who are homebound or in the nursing section of senior adult housing.

If the congregation moved to Old Age following a conflict, which may have included a split in the fellowship, then it carries much bitterness into this stage. This bitterness is actually energy that can be used to help the congregation do some significant Kingdom work during this stage.

Any positive, proactive ministry of the congregation will probably come from its management resources. For example, if its facilities are in relatively good shape, then they may become an incubation center for new congregations [particularly non-English language/culture], a community center for neighborhood organizations, or a source of income for a merger or relocation.

If the congregation now has low expectations of internal ministry, and is not burdened by salaries and facilities expenses, then it may be providing significant dollars to missions work, or community ministry projects.

If the demands on the full-time pastor are not high, then he may become meaningfully engaged in community or denominational ministries. It is also possible that this type of congregation will provide meaningful on-the-job training for persons new to pastoral or staff ministry. Many of these latter people will be bi-vocational.

An Intervention Framework for Redevelopment at the Old Age Stage

The organizing principle or genetic formula for Old Age is *vrpM*. This is a symbol for when only management is dominant, and vision, relationships, and programs are not.

It is the formula for congregations who have reached a subsistence level of existence where the habit of being and doing church is the predominant theme. The congregation is generally not growing qualitatively or quantitatively. While there is passive openness to new members and tacit permission for new programs, ministries, and activities, neither is occurring with effectiveness. The leadership of the congregation, which tends to be dominated by people who are 60 or more years old, is at a loss for what to do, but feel a sense of desperation that something must be done.

The congregation is not hopeful, but it is also not necessarily about to die. Many Old Age congregations continue for a generation or more into the future.

For their denominations they may represent a level of financial support that is out of character with the total number of people they represent. They may even define their purpose for continuing as to support missions, to train young pastors, or other singular special interest purposes.

The redevelopment formula is VrPm. This means that redevelopment comes about only through the ability to cast a new vision, and to establish new programs that allow newly emerging relationships to be expressed.

At the Old Age stage the congregation is willing to attempt extreme measures that it was previously unwilling to consider. Some congregations are even willing to give up their autonomy and revert to mission status, or come under the watch care or authority of another congregation or their denomination.

Reinventing the Life of a Retirement Congregation

The process theme is reinventing, which involves a major redesign of the congregation for it to have a viable, vital, empowered future. Probably, only a radical change strategy will work, but some congregations may first attempt a discontinuous change strategy.

A discontinuous change strategy generally involves a congregation giving permission for a complete reengineering of the programs, ministries, and activities of the congregation.

Usually the congregation attempts this in partnership with others, such as their denomination, another congregation, or a parachurch group. This change pathway involves the historic congregation maintaining control of its destiny.

A radical change strategy involves the historic congregation giving control of its destiny over to its denomination, another congregation, or a parachurch organization. With new vision, a new congregation is truly reinvented on the remaining base of the historic congregation.

The destination for the reinventing is Childhood if changes are made that are discontinuous. If radical changes are attempted, then the destination is Infancy.

Note on Rate of Change and Transition: The rate of change may be continuous, discontinuous, or radical. Change that is continuous in nature generally deals with natural transition in things, people, and relationships. Change that is discontinuous in nature generally deals with sustainable changes in things that also require definable

transitions in people and relationships. Radical change demands transformation of things, people, and relationships.

What Are the Redevelopment Steps at the Old Age Stage?

The strategy is to diminish management practices of the congregation that control rather than empower. This can happen by reducing the number of committees, councils, or boards, thus reducing the number of people involved in management activities.

Steps to develop and implement decisions can be eliminated, thus streamlining the decision-making process. **First**, persons who have been in leadership positions so long that they control rather than empower can be moved to new assignments in the congregation.

Second, new programs, ministries, and activities can be attempted that will provide for the congregation a sense of momentum and success in the general area of programs.

Third, then cast new vision. It cannot be a reinstating or recycling of an old vision; it must be a new vision.

Finally, the management systems need to be reengineered to empower the new sense of vision and spiritual strategic direction.

The time frame is 18 to 36 months, but with substantial stability reached within six to 18 months. The desired end result is a period that may last seven to nine years and form a new, partial life cycle.

What Are the Challenges to Reinventing the Life of an Old Age Congregation?

First, Old Age represents the last opportunity for an existing congregation to redevelop. It is appropriate for congregations to be scared at this stage, and attempt unusual and radical things that they would never have attempted in earlier stages.

Second, Old Age congregations may change their theology, historic patterns, and enduring core values in an attempt to bargain for more life. For example, they may allow women in roles of leadership they would never have thought about earlier. They may cross barriers to minister to a different racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group they would never consider as a target of ministry during earlier stages.

Third, the changes needed are sufficiently radical that it is doubtful that discontinuous change that still allows the historic congregation to control their destiny will be sufficient change to reinvent the congregation.

Fourth, if radical change is attempted, there is no guarantee that the character and nature of the newly emerging congregation will match that of the historic congregation. In reality, the historic congregation may die in the sense that neither its core ideology nor its specific membership is represented long-term in the people connected with the newly emerging congregation.

Resurrecting the Life of a Death Stage Congregation

Overview

At Death a congregation ceases to exist as a spiritual community of worship, discipleship, and fellowship. The ability is gone to meet regularly to worship God, to engage in spiritual growth activities, and to actively organize for fellowship and mutual support.

Probably all three of these need to exist in some regular form for congregational life to be viable. What dies when these three are not present is the congregational movement.

Separate, in a sense, from the congregational movement may still be a corporation or institution in existence with which someone must deal. It is like the difference between a person dying, or life being gone, and the need to address the issues of a remaining temporal body.

Just as a funeral would typically be held for a person, with their body being the center of human focus, so engaging in a ceremony that commemorates the rites of passage is appropriate related to a congregational body.

Many spiritual rites of passages have occurred within that congregational body. It is appropriate to celebrate these, and to help people deal with their grief. Just as dealing with the loss of the friend or family member is hard, dealing with the loss of a congregation and its facilities is hard.

During the latter stages of congregational life many members and regular attendees probably deepened their inability to divide their faith in Christ from the cultural practices of a specific congregation in a specific location.

Death is not inevitable for any congregation. The life cycle and stages of development are not deterministic; that is, if a congregation has a Birth it is not inevitable that it will have a Death. Congregations can and do redevelop, and move forward to a new partial life cycle that may last a minimum of seven to nine years. Congregations at Death can have a resurrection.

Again, Death is not inevitable; however, congregations who are aging, are dysfunctional, and who wait until Phase Five: Late Aging to seek a turnaround are unlikely to experience a positive, successful future. They may not avoid Death. Early intervention in congregations is needed. Often when congregations die it is because they did not cherish life enough.

An Intervention Framework for Redeveloping at the Death Stage

The organizing principle or genetic formula for Death is *m*. This is a symbol for when only management is present, and it is present with diminished capacity. Vision, relationships, and programs are no longer present in any form.

It is the formula for a congregation that has died. It has ceased existence as an active, worshiping spiritual community. However, it still exists as a corporate entity or organizational shell, and the legal standing and assets of the congregation must be handled.

At times there is a board of trustees still in existence who have been given legal authority to dispose of the assets, and conclude any legal status. In some situations this falls under the responsibilities of the denomination, which may actually own the facilities.

The formula of redevelopment is *Vrpm*. This is the same as the formula for the Birth stage. The reason is probably obvious. Resurrection at the Death stage is a new Birth. It involves launching a new congregation that looks forward to the possibility of a generation of new qualitative and quantitative growth.

It involves the creation of something new, and not just the redevelopment of something old. It involves looking forward and not looking backwards. It is not a return to yesterday, but a passion movement toward the tomorrow that God is unfolding.

Redevelopment during Old Age represented the reinventing of an existing congregation. Redevelopment at Death allows the old congregation to die first. The old traditions, methodologies, and guiding coalition of leaders and managers have to be allowed to move on to something else. They generally cannot be a part of the new that will emerge.

Denominational assistance will probably be necessary to actualize this transformation. Many emotional transitions that need to be made are too difficult for people who were a part of the old congregation.

Resurrecting the Life of a Death Stage Congregation

The process theme is resurrection, which involves the creation of a new, transformed congregational life that bears little or no resemblance to the life that went before it. This is radical change. Neither continuous change nor discontinuous change is relevant at the Death stage.

Note on Rate of Change and Transition: The rate of change may be continuous, discontinuous, or radical. Change that is continuous in nature generally deals with natural transition in things, people, and relationships. Change that is discontinuous in nature generally deals with sustainable changes in things that also require definable transitions in people and relationships. Radical change demands transformation of things, people, and relationships.

The destination for the resurrection is Infancy if change that is radical is attempted. If a complete rechurched effort takes place, then Birth is the destination.

What is the difference between resurrection and Rechurched? The difference is that resurrection may involve the use of the same facilities. Rechurched involves focusing on the lost, unchurched, dechurched, and hurting people in or among the communities served by the Death stage congregation, but there is no point of identification with the previous congregation.

The lack of identification with the previous congregation includes no identity with the facilities, primary strategies, or many methodologies of the previous congregation.

What are the Redevelopment Steps at the Death Stage?

The strategy begins with seeking to discover if there is a vision for a new congregation that is sufficiently compelling to justify the spiritual, emotional, and physical effort to launch a new congregation. In other words, **first**, is there a sense of Great Commission urgency?

Second, is there a guiding coalition of leaders? Is there a pastoral leader who feels called to this new congregation? Are there lay leaders who want to form the core group and provide cutting edge leadership and resourceful management?

Third, are there obvious target groups of people the new congregation can reach through new qualitative and quantitative ministries?

Fourth, is there a sense that a healthy congregation is needed among the communities served or untouched by the existing congregation? Will the worship and discipleship qualities of this new congregation add to the needed collection of Christian movement that may already exist in this geographical area or among these target groups of people?

These last two issues deal with whether new patterns of relationships can be successfully established. Then, the time frame for resurrection is six to 18 months. It must happen fast. It cannot be delayed. The desired end result is a new life cycle whose growth side may last 15 to 18 years.

What Are the Challenges to Resurrecting a Death Stage Congregation?

First, what happens to the members of the congregation who have remained active until the point of death? The death of a congregation is not a surprise to them. People connected with the congregation knew it was coming.

One reason for the death of a congregation is that many members have already chosen for the congregation to die by their personal inactivity or the transfer of their membership to another congregation.

Second, if a new congregation is started in the facilities, what about members of the old congregation who want to continue to worship in a building they either legally or emotionally own?

Would their presence and resources be helpful or a barrier to the ministry of and focus on the new congregation? Is it right to try to stop them from being connected? Is there a ministry of obligation to elderly members who live in the immediate area and cannot travel to another congregation?

Third, just as people connected with a congregation often cannot separate the fellowship of the congregation from their identity with the buildings, the same may be true of the geographical context of the church facilities. Will the community see the new congregation that is emerging, or will they see the old congregation that may have stopped relating to the community in a positive way?

Congregational Vision

Vision is one of the four organizing principles of the life cycle and stages of congregational development. The others are Relationships, Programs, and Management.

The word vision probably rivals the word paradigm for overexposure during the 1990s. As such, vision is misunderstood, particularly in relationship to other concepts such as mission and purpose.

Core Ideology—Mission, Purpose, and Core Values

Mission relates to the overarching, timeless sense of God's direction that is relevant to a congregation. It is the eternal direction of congregations.

Mission is the ongoing sense of missional direction. It is generic and could apply to many congregations. In biblical terms, mission is the contemporary expression of a culturally relevant sense of the Great Commission and the Great Commandments. For a congregation, it expresses their understanding of a New Testament fellowship of believers.

The purpose of a congregation is the historical reason for its existence. It refers back to a founding purpose. It is a more concrete expression of mission that is congregationally specific. Purpose is everlasting. It is a past to present statement that characterizes a congregation's reason for being. It embodies the core values for the congregation.

The core values for the Kingdom of God are expressed in the core ideology. They are non-negotiable characteristics of congregations.

Vision

Leadership consultant Burt Nanus defines vision as "a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization." [Nanus, 1995]

Researcher George Barna defines vision as "a clear mental image of a preferable future, imparted by God to his chosen servants, based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances." [Barna, 1991]

Vision is the current understanding of God's spiritual strategic direction for a congregation that is cast by leadership and owned by membership. It is the ability to imagine with spiritual insight, and cast with inspired words, a vision of the future that may not be obvious, or discernable by linear projections.

Vision is not something written in fifteen words or less. It is a movement that is experienced and memorable. It is energizing. Vision embodies the current key leverage points or driving forces for a congregation. Proverbs 29:18 indicates that where there is no vision or current revelation from God, the people perish, or cast off all restraint. A healthy congregation has a strong, positive sense of the vision God has for it.

Congregations with clear vision find reasons to affirm what is right about their congregation, and build on that. The vision factor includes the attributes of hope,

excitement, enthusiasm, and potential. These congregations celebrate God's presence with great unity.

Vision is dominant in the life cycle of a congregation during the Birth stage. This founding vision generally has the strength to be relevant and active for up to a generation of time. Any succeeding vision may only be effective as fuel to drive the congregation forward for seven to nine years.

Source and Pathway of Vision

Simply stated, the source of congregational vision is God. Vision that is brought forth from within a congregation should be the best possible sense of God's spiritual strategic direction for the congregation.

It should not be the vision of just the pastor and the staff. It should not be the vision of just a small portion of the laity, or a special interest group in the congregation. It should come from a prayerful petition to God the Father.

Prayer and discussion about vision can originate anywhere in a congregation. However, whoever controls the congregational resources becomes the gatekeeper of the vision.

The pathway for vision is generally congregational leaders. The sense of God's strategic spiritual direction, or His preferred future, is likely already present in many congregations.

However, a catalytic role, best played by leadership, needs to nurture the vision. Therefore, the role of the pastor and other leaders is crucial in the envisioning process.

Determining or clarifying a vision is difficult due to the "cacophony of voices" seeking to advocate one approach or another [Nanus, 1992]. Having someone who casts the vision is necessary and initiates the spiritual strategic journey.

The pastor is in the best position to articulate the vision. He can cast the image of a future that is unfolding. He can provide inspiration and wording for a vision statement.

The congregation can respond and participate in the molding and nurturing steps for the vision journey until there is empowering ownership of the vision.

Characteristics of a Vision and a Vision Statement

Vision is something felt. A vision statement is something that is written down to have a set of words that delineate the vision. A vision statement can be beautifully written, and there still be no vision. A wonderful, fulfilling vision can exist, but never be written down.

When both the vision is present and powerful, and the vision statement is succinct and communicates; something of great beauty and power exists.

Here are a few characteristics of a congregational vision:

1. It represents God's strategic spiritual direction for the congregation. When members and regular attenders who have a commitment to the congregation consider their vision, they strongly feel this is something to which God has uniquely called them.

"Vision is the beacon, the sense of destination shared by the people who care most about the organization's future." [Nanus, 1995] The congregation must have fervent feelings about the vision.

2. It inspires enthusiasm and movement. People want to be a part of fulfilling this vision. They see in it the opportunity to grow spiritually and to serve faithfully.

"The right vision is an idea so powerful that it literally jump-starts the future by calling forth the energies, talents, and resources to make things happen." [Nanus, 1995]

3. It must be widely owned, and not just declared by leaders. Members and regular attenders feel the vision from the inside out. They embrace it as their own, and not just as a good religious cause, dynamic ministry, or charismatic pastoral image to which they can give allegiance.

4. It is future-oriented. Vision involves the ability to be like Merlin in Camelot. He lived in the future, and looked back at the present. His task was to help others bridge the gap between the future and where they were currently.

Vision involves pulling a congregation forward toward a possible future. This is as opposed to trying to push a congregation from the present toward a better future.

5. The vision must be appropriate for the congregational context and preChristian, unchurched, and hurting people to whom the congregation feels called to minister.

Here are a few characteristics of a congregational vision statement:

1. It is simple, easy to say, easy to remember.
2. It is fifteen words or less.
3. It is empowering.
4. It addresses the mission, purpose, and core values.
5. It is broad enough to embrace the entire congregation.
6. It is a trumpet call to excellence growing out of a passion call to Kingdom progress.
7. It acts as a measuring rod for utilization of resources.
8. It challenges the mind, and inspires the heart.
9. It is biblically sound.

Congregational Relationships

What are Congregational Relationships?

The word *relationships* does not have a clear, simple definition. This complexity is necessary to maintain the richness of the term and its use.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational processes by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

For simplicity the relationships process can be understood as the disciplemaking process in a local congregation. It is the process or spiritual journey by which persons are disciplined into fully devoted followers of Christ.

Vision is the driving force that fuels a congregation forward. Relationships is the image factor that completes the flavor or identity of a congregation.

Relationships refers to all that is done to include people in the life of the congregation through activities such as evangelism, outreach, assimilation, and discipleship. Relationships is person-oriented and process-oriented, rather than program-oriented or project-oriented.

The question of relationships is, how well are we doing in helping persons to be included in the Kingdom of God and the fellowship of a local New Testament congregation? Thus, there are both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

Ministry or outreach focused on the congregation's context and missions are a part of relationships. When an existing congregation sponsors a new congregation, this is relationships. The ultimate purpose of relationships is to turn people outward in ministry to others, and to be on mission to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandments.

The Five Phases of the Relationships Process

The relationships process can be thought of in five phases. Although these phases are presented in a linear format, disciplemaking or the relationships process is flexible and intuitive, and does not necessarily follow a sequential pattern. Various phases can be going on concurrently.

Relationships at its best focuses on the discipleship journey of each person. It is solution-oriented as opposed to offering a program fix or simplistic response to a person's need for spiritual growth and deepening relationships.

The relationships process as presented here is focused on necessary congregational actions, and not the actions of individual believers. Therefore, put on your congregational systems thinking hat as these phases are considered.

The five phases are Evangelism and New Member Recruitment; Entry and Initial Assimilation; Fellowship, Care Ministry, and Full Assimilation; Spiritual Growth and Leadership Development; and, Kingdom Involvement and Missional Life Style.

Evangelism and New Member Recruitment: The spiritual and relational process by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ.

Evangelism and outreach efforts relate persons to Christ. Involved is the process of nurturing lost persons or pre-Christians through evangelistic efforts to the point where they decide their relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

New Member Recruitment includes efforts to get believers who are unchurched involved in a regular, ongoing, and challenging congregational relationship. It also targets under-churched people who, although members or occasional attenders of congregational worship services or other events, do not have a regular, ongoing, and challenging congregational relationship.

Entry and Initial Assimilation: The spiritual and relational process by which persons become involved in a local New Testament congregation.

Entry and initial assimilation efforts relate persons to a congregation. Involved is the process of generating and responding to visitor or guest attendance and retention, and worship or large group participation and involvement.

This phase covers efforts to help persons who decide to join a congregation, make a commitment or show a pattern of regular attendance, to feel and act as part of the congregation. In traditional terms these are new members.

Initial assimilation includes efforts to orient and clearly express to new members and regular attenders how they can become more involved in the congregation, and in an intentional discipling process.

Offering a definition is important at this juncture. Assimilation is the intentional process by which believers become identified with a congregation, and are included in meaningful fellowship, care, spiritual growth, and leadership developing activities.

Fellowship, Care Ministry, and Full Assimilation: The spiritual and relational process by which persons are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation.

Fellowship, care ministries, and full assimilation efforts relate persons to a group within the congregation. Efforts are made to include persons in regular and special fellowship activities of some affinity group.

In this phase, persons are considered a natural and regular part of the care focus of one or more groups within the congregation. Some type of spiritual support group embraces newer persons to help them feel that this group is family and this congregation is home.

Intentional efforts are made as a part of this phase in membership retention. It is at this point that some people may drop out of regular participation because the proper spiritual and relational networks were not established. When separation from the congregation occurs, efforts are made at conducting exit interviews.

Spiritual Growth and Leadership Development: The spiritual and relational process by which persons have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development.

Spiritual growth and leadership development efforts relate persons to their calling. It involves spiritual gifts discovery and development. Persons are involved in gift-appropriate leadership development or learning experiences.

Individuals are nurtured in their spiritual journey. As persons mature spiritually, they can embrace and own their part in the vision casting of congregational leadership.

Kingdom Involvement and Missional Life Style: The spiritual and relational process by which persons are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Kingdom involvement and missional life style efforts relate persons to servanthood. It is the involvement of people in ministry that uses their gifts and skills.

For some it becomes a stewardship of their total life. It involves the movement from success to significance to surrender.

What is the Role of Relationships in the Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development?

Relationships joins with vision to fuel the forward progress of growing congregations. Congregations that are growing younger tend to focus on vision and relationships. Congregations growing older tend to focus on programs and management.

Infancy is the first stage of congregational development where relationships expresses itself in a fully developed or dominant form. At that stage it helps crystallize the identity and focus of a congregation. It also defines the discipling style of the congregation.

In practice relationships cannot happen haphazardly in a congregation. The relationships process must be an integral part of the strategies, structures, and systems of a congregation. Careful attention to the relationships process can enhance the effectiveness of the discipling process of a congregation.

Relationships is the main day-to-day factor contributing to qualitative and quantitative growth of congregations. After vision, it is the most important factor on which a congregation should focus its efforts.

Congregational Programs

What are Congregational Programs?

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people connected to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationships processes. Programs require planning, scheduling, budgeting, leadership recruitment, materials and equipment resources, implementation, and evaluation.

The programs aspect of the life cycle represents the specific projects, ministries, services, activities, and training characteristics of a congregation. While primarily focused on the membership of the congregation, they may also relate to programmatic attempts to provide services and ministries to the various communities, publics, target groups, and clients served by the congregation.

While some programs are present in a congregation from its first day of existence, concentrated effort to develop and implement programs comes during the stages of Childhood, Adolescence, Empty Nest, and Retirement.

Projects, ministries, services, activities, and training include, but are not limited to worship, music, education and training, and weekday and community ministries. Programs are focused on bringing new external resources into the congregation. They are task oriented. Specific, concrete projects that the congregation engages in, such as building programs, are examples of projects that fit the broader category of programs.

How are Programs Categorized?

Programs can be categorized or organized in many ways. Some congregations view their programs in multiple ways. They often follow categories set by their denominational family.

Functional: A common way to look at programs in the life cycle is to consider the generally accepted functions of a congregation. Worship, Sunday School, discipleship, evangelism and outreach, congregational care and fellowship, and missions and ministry are programs found in churches.

For many congregations the denomination or parachurch group with whom they are affiliated suggests these functional areas. The parent organization provides field service support and materials, which congregations may buy to support these functional areas. Loyal congregations are urged to organize their programs around accepted designs.

Calendar: Some programs revolve primarily around a calendar. The organizing category for some is the season of the year. For others, the liturgical calendar or the denominational event calendar sets the congregational focus.

The calendar determines which programs receive the greatest emphasis during certain times of the year, and what the curriculum content of that program will be. For example, family emphasis programs are often scheduled around Mother's Day and Father's Day. Obviously Christmas and Easter call for a unique set of productions, ministries, services, and activities.

Family or Age Group: A third approach to programs may be to organize by family and household characteristics, and by age categories. Emphases may relate to preschoolers, children, youth, young singles, singles again, young adult households, median adult households, senior adult households, and old age households. Within this context could be target ministries for men and for women.

Larger membership congregations often organize their staff around such family or age stratification. The goal is to provide an overall focus on the needs and desires of various age groups. The directional focus of a congregation can at times be seen by the age group to which they give the most focus.

Disciplemaking: An increasing number of congregations in the future will organize their programs around the phases of relationships or disciplemaking. These five phases are Evangelism and New Member Recruitment; Entry and Initial Assimilation; Fellowship, Care Ministry, and Full Assimilation; Spiritual Growth and Leadership Development; and Kingdom Involvement and Missional Life Style.

In these congregations, programs support the relational process of relationships. These programs will tend to be dynamic and empowering.

These four ways of looking at programs categories are merely beginning points, and not an exhaustive list. Also, they are not mutually exclusive; they overlap. Congregations will generally organize around several of these categories. Innovative, future-oriented congregations revolve more around family or age group, and disciplemaking. These two categorizations support the idea of relationships more closely.

What is the Role of Programs in the Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development?

Programs play an extremely important role in congregations. They provide structure and continuity for the relational emphases of congregations. Without the development of programs, many new congregations would not survive Birth, Infancy, and Childhood.

Programs developed during Childhood provide a foundation from which congregations can leap forward in response to the movement of God in their midst. Congregations keep moving forward through the vehicle of their programs during times when the vision and destination for the strategic spiritual journey are unclear.

Programs provide a clear, concrete vehicle to accomplish goals or to reach desired end results. Congregational members want plain, practical, and helpful activities of which they can be a part. Programs serve this role for many people.

Excellent, effective, and targeted programs attract people to a congregation. A first-class preschool program attracts families with young children. Youth look for a congregation with a dynamic program that appeals to their senses.

Single adults often move from congregation to congregation in search of a meaningful program that targets their needs and desires. A project or ministry that has a place in which they can be involved in meaningful learning and service may attract community residents.

Training or leadership development programs equip disciples to serve in various places of Kingdom responsibility. They provide the motivation and skills necessary for effective service, and teach disciples that their spiritual gifts are useful in Kingdom work.

What is the Difference Between Programs and Relationships?

The end result differentiates programs and relationships. If the desired result is the ministry, activity, service or training itself, then these elements act like the programs factor. Programs carried out in this manner can become the desired end result or goal themselves. The successes of the programs become the measurement of success for the congregation.

However, programs operated with a dynamic, flexible, process-orientation might be relationship activities. The desired end result or goal is changed spiritual behavior that should result from the project or activity. The measurement of success is the development of the individual believer or disciple.

Programs are task-oriented and provide stability for a congregation. Relationships activities are people-oriented and empower flexibility within a congregation. Programs are things that congregations do or carry out. Relationships activities are things felt or experienced.

For example, many congregations conduct Sunday School classes or worship experiences. If in the midst of these classes new insight to the Scriptures is discovered, or if God is truly experienced as Lord in worship, then relationships occurs.

They remain programs if the focus of Sunday School and worship is the habit, pattern, or doing what is culturally acceptable in a particular congregation.

When congregations focus on the vision of God that is shared within the fellowship of a local congregation, then the emphasis given to programs moves to an emphasis on people. Therefore, programs that are dynamic, flexible, and fuel the relationships process will also fuel the future direction of the congregation.

When congregations focus on management, the emphasis moves from relationships to an emphasis on maintaining programs. Congregations that are growing younger as the body of Christ will focus on vision and relationships. Congregations growing older as the body of Christ tend to focus on programs and management.

Congregational Management

The primary role of management is to provide the systems and structures that work in an integrative pattern to undergird the fulfillment of vision, and the implementation of relationships and programs.

Vision is the current understanding of God's strategic spiritual direction for a congregation that is cast by leadership and owned by membership.

Relationships are the spiritual and relational process by which persons are brought to faith in God through Jesus Christ, become connected to a local New Testament congregation, are assimilated into the fellowship life and care ministry of a congregation, have opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership development, and are mentored to use their gifts and skills through Kingdom involvement.

Programs are the functional attempts to provide projects, ministries, services, activities, and training for people related to the congregation by membership, fellowship, or through relationship processes.

What is Congregational Management?

Management is the administration of the various resources of the congregation, the formal and informal governance and decision-making structure of the congregation, the formal and informal traditions and culture of the congregation, and the readiness of the congregation for change and growth.

Management also relates to how congregations handle their day-to-day operations. This includes its operational planning process, and how this is implemented to bring about growth and change in the congregation. This factor provides a basis for deciding how the people, financial, facilities, and equipment and materials resources of the congregation are utilized.

Finally, management deals with the efficiency of a congregation. Once a congregation attains the stage of Maturity on the life cycle, its progress tends to be fueled by management rather than vision. During Maturity, Empty Nest, and early Retirement these management principles become increasingly controlling. By late Retirement these management principles begin to break down.

What are the Key Elements of Management?

Resources: The resources of a congregation are people and things. People include the pastor, staff, and lay leadership. Thus management will relate to the process of calling a pastor or other staff ministers. The infrastructure that mobilizes laity is addressed here. Lay mobilization as a movement is part of relationships.

Things include the finances, the facilities, the equipment and various materials. These things are not intended to be in a lead role in the life of a congregation. They are intended to be resources that help the congregation fulfill its vision by empowering relationships. Many congregations have this reversed.

Governance: Governance relates to the administration and decision-making structure of the congregation. This includes the formal committees, councils, and boards, as well as the process for making decisions.

Governance and decision-making is intended to help guide or navigate the congregational processes, and to continually develop ownership within the congregation. Some congregations mistake governance and decision-making as the manner by which they are to control the congregation.

Tradition and Culture: Management may seem like an odd place for tradition and culture. In reality they are commodities that congregations deposit like financial assets in a bank. Their tendency is to maintain more than it is to empower. Some congregations add elements of tradition and culture to the list of core values of the congregation, and overload core values with things that are really negotiable.

Readiness for Change and Transition: When management is handled in a flexible, supportive way, it helps congregations to be prepared for the new innovation or the new sense of God's movement. When management is used to control, it shuts down the readiness for change and transition in favor of maintaining the tradition and culture of the congregation. This is because change, even when for the better, is seen as loss.

Operations: Operations describes the day-to-day operations of the congregation. Operations should be first of all effective, and then efficient in support of the future of the congregation. Efficiency often dominates effectiveness.

What is the Role of Management in the Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development?

Management is present during the growth side of the life cycle, and helps organize the various stages, but is not fully developed until Adulthood. On the aging side of the life cycle it leads or fuels the process. This begins with Maturity when the vision of the congregation is no longer dominant.

Management is empowering when it is in a support role, and controlling when it is in a lead role. In its lead and controlling role it keeps congregations from redeveloping because they prefer to manage the resources they have rather than taking risks to acquire new and different resources.

It is important for congregations to see that the role of management must diminish, or unfreeze, during a change and transition process that is being attempted on the aging side of the life cycle. The controlling aspects of management, which include the tendency to keep things as they have been, will need to loosen for a congregation to try new patterns, create new energy, from which a new vision can emerge.

What is the Difference Between Management and Vision?

Vision fuels the birth and growth side of the life cycle and stages of development of a congregation. Management is present in these early stages, but not expressed in a fully developed form.

When a congregation reaches Adulthood both vision and management are dominant. Vision is near the completion of its journey, and management is still gaining strength. The vision journey is characterized by a high amount of flexibility until near the end of its journey. Management is characterized by increasing controllability until the Retirement stage when controllability begins to break down.

Once congregations reach the aging side of the life cycle they are being sustained by their management rather than fueled by their vision. At a time when congregations should be seeking to develop new vision as the next step or solution to their current situation, they instead redouble their efforts in management.

Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser in their book, *Managing the Congregation*, share these words about the management response on the aging side of the life cycle:

Religious organizations have "focused tightly on organizational structures as the source of their major problems. So when congregations get into trouble they almost always seek to apply structural remedies; i.e., firing the pastor, cutting the budget, excommunicating a few members, rewriting the church constitution and by-laws, or moving from a bicameral board system to a unicameral board." [p. 136]

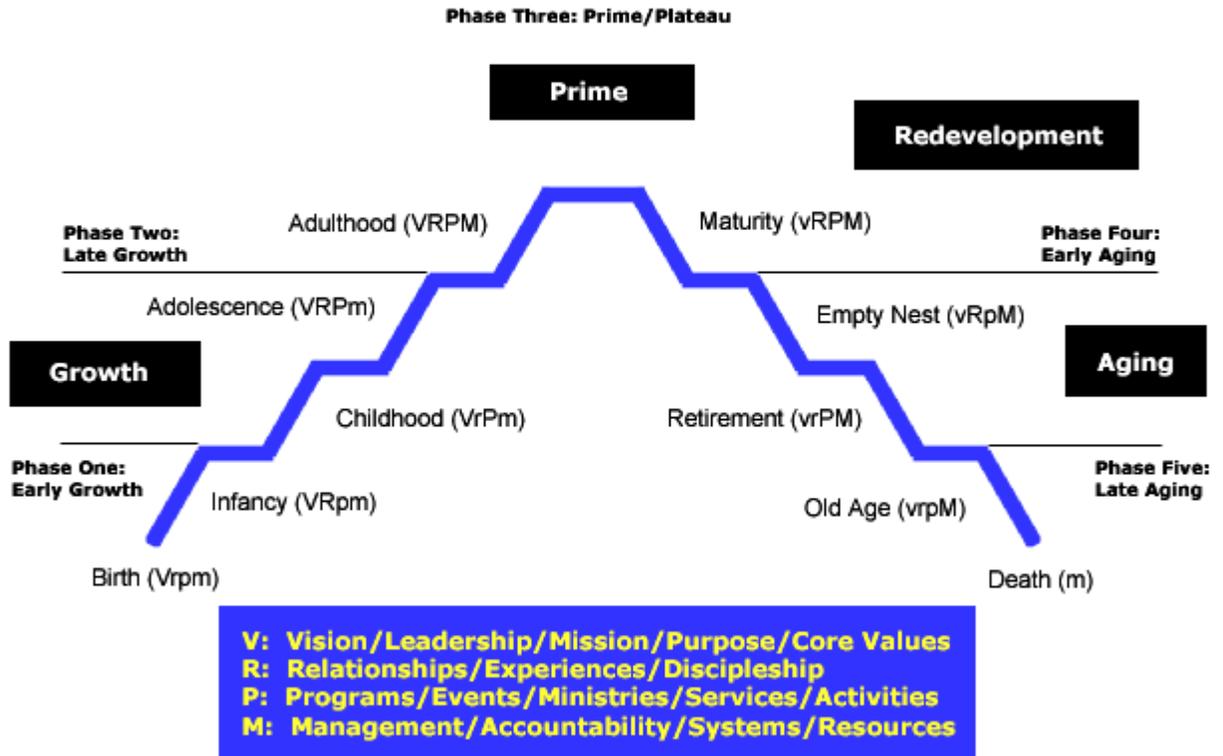
Shawchuck and Heuser feel that the appropriate response to management is to address the congregational belief systems and then deal with the organizational structure to align it with the belief system. This conforms to the idea of dealing with issues related to vision, which include values, vision, and belief systems.

Charts

The Levels of Organism or Organizational Conflict

LEVEL ONE	LEVEL TWO	LEVEL THREE	LEVEL FOUR	LEVEL FIVE	LEVEL SIX	LEVEL SEVEN
Healthy	Healthy	Healthy	Transitional	Unhealthy	Unhealthy	Unhealthy
Task-Oriented Problem to Fix <i>Win-Win</i>	Relationship-Oriented Disagreement <i>Win-Win</i>	Intra- or Inter-Group Contest <i>Win-Lose</i>	Organism or Organization-Wide Contest <i>Win-Lose</i>	Organism or Organization-Wide Fight <i>Win-Lose</i>	Pursuit Beyond the Organism or Organization <i>Lose-Leave</i>	Intentional Harm or Destruction <i>Lose-Lose</i>
Conflict Resolution [Chaplain] ----- ----- <i>Collaborate</i> <i>Persuade</i> <i>Accommodate</i> <i>Avoid</i> <i>Support</i>	Conflict Resolution [Chaplain] ----- ----- <i>Collaborate</i> <i>Persuade</i> <i>Accommodate</i> <i>Avoid</i> <i>Support</i>	Conflict Mediation [Coach] ----- <i>Negotiate</i> <i>Collaborate</i> <i>Persuade</i> ----- <i>Support</i>	Conflict Mediation [Coach] <i>Compel</i> <i>Negotiate</i> <i>Collaborate</i> ----- <i>Support</i>	Conflict Management [Consultant] <i>Compel</i> <i>Negotiate</i> ----- <i>Support</i>	Conflict Management [Consultant] <i>Compel</i> <i>Negotiate</i> ----- <i>Avoid</i> <i>Support</i>	Conflict Management [Consultant] <i>Compel</i> <i>Negotiate</i> ----- <i>Avoid</i> <i>Support</i>

The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development



Copyright 2001, Rev. George Bullard, D.Min.