



From Your “Choosing Growth” Pastor, Part III

Seats, Spaces, Staff

Seats - 300 or so in the main sanctuary. Spaces – it’s a sheer guess, but probably parking for somewhere between 150 and 200 cars. Staff - a core of one full-time Pastor, a full-time Custodian position shared by three part-time people, a part-time Secretary, a part-time Program Director, a part-time Director of Music, a part-time Organist.

On a given Sunday, we use fewer than half the seats and maybe a third of the spaces. In other words, we have room to grow. Our staff covers all the areas of necessity for the current congregation. If we filled the seats and the spaces, we would need more staff – more pastoral hours, professional hours, support hours, and custodial hours.

But, the logic of church expansion is counter-intuitive. If we really want to maximize the use of the facility our forebears built, we would have to provide additional staff BEFORE the yet-to-be-gathered new congregational members arrive. Why? Because when we stretch a staff beyond its capacity, we diminish quality. There is absolutely no doubt that quality is highly valued by church member prospects. More than that, a “program” church requires more leadership all around – including highly committed lay leadership.

Let’s back up. Feedback on my first two articles suggest that folks need more clarification about the use of the descriptors “pastoral” and “program” church.

The terms come from a typology developed by Arlin Rothauge, who studied the general behaviors of various sized churches. The Family-size church has up to 50 adults and children in worship. The Pastoral-size church has 51-150 in worship. The Program-size church has 151-400. The Corporate-size church has 401-1000 in worship.

First Baptist Church is on a plateau between the Pastoral-size and Program-size congregation. Rather than interpret these descriptions, I’ll provide the descriptions directly from Alice Mann’s book, Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition (Alban Institute, 2001):

Pastoral-size church (51-150): *A coalition of two or three family and friendship networks unified around the person and role of the pastor. Clergy time is largely taken up maintaining a direct pastoral relationship with each member, coordinating the work of a small leadership circle, personally conducting worship, and leading small-group*

programs such as Bible study. The governing board usually operates like a committee, arranging much of the day-to-day life of the congregation. Members recognize each other's faces, know most people's names, and will notice if someone new is present in worship.

Program-size (151-400): *Known for the quality and variety of its programs. Separate programs for children, youth, couples, seniors, and other age and interest groups provide entry points for a wide range of people. The pastor's crucial role is to recruit, equip, and inspire a small circle of key program leaders – lay and ordained, paid and unpaid. This ring of leadership might include, for example, the choir director, the church school superintendent, the youth group leader, the coordinator of lay visitors, and the head of a committee that tracks new member incorporation. Working as a team with the pastor, they reach out to involve others as program participants and as leaders. Decision making is broadly distributed within the wider leadership circle (perhaps 50 people) and pastoral care is shared by the laity. (p. 7)*

The question is: do we have the faith and will to fill the seats and spaces, and to provide the staff (paid and unpaid) to see that it happens?

Pastor Ken