

SECTION FIVE

THE STUDY GUIDE

The Basic Law of Congregational Life

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8b)

Churches grow when they intentionally reach out to people instead of concentrating on their institutional needs. Churches die when they concentrate on their own needs.
This is the Basic Law of Congregational Life.

As a young boy, I was fascinated by the effect of throwing pebbles into a pond. One tiny pebble would produce an ever-widening circle that eventually filled the entire pond, and if I had thrown the stone near the center of the pond, when the ripple reached the bank it rippled back to the point where it had originated.

The church of Jesus Christ is like an ever-widening circle. As it gives itself away on behalf of others, it grows. Everything we do on behalf of others comes back to us. This is the way life works. We give and we receive.

One week, after preaching a sermon entitled “The Ever-widening Circle,” I received a note from a member of the church: “It’s time for some sermons about personal and spiritual growth as well as institutional growth. We have some needs out here, too!”

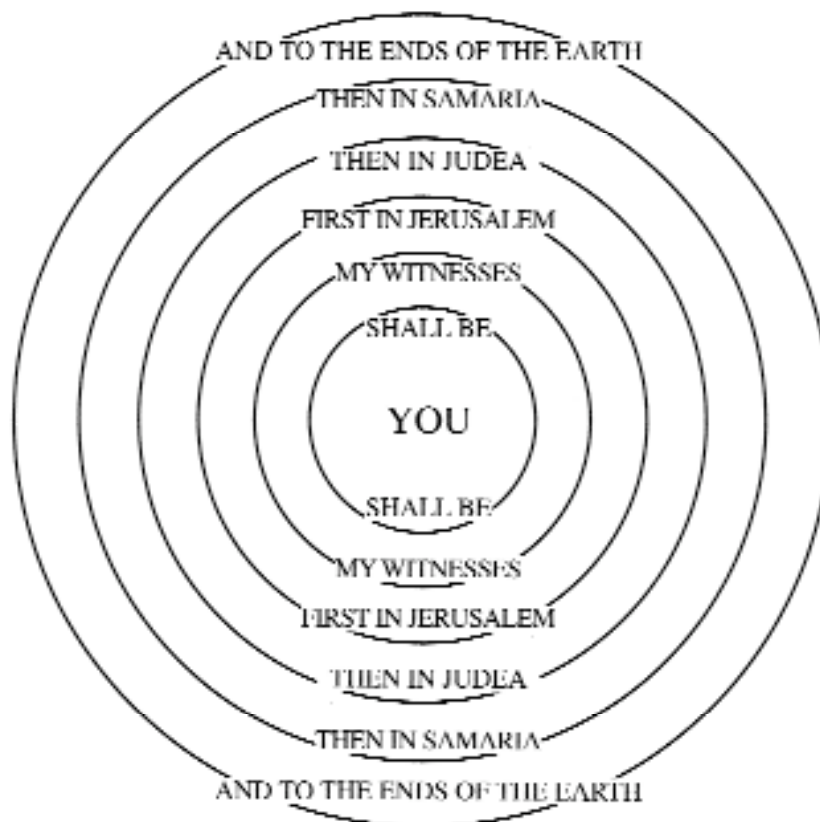
The member missed the point of the sermon. Churches are healthiest when they reach out. Members are best nurtured when they nurture others. The art of giving has healing effects. Jesus taught us this in all he said and did: those who lose their lives will find them (Matt. 10:39). We have a need to help others. God made us that way. We find emotional and spiritual health by moving beyond concern for self.

The Biblical Basis

The Bible is filled with references to the Basic Law of Congregational Life, such as “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39). The most gripping reference may be when Jesus talked about this law in the commission that he left with his disciples in the upper room. He instructed them in the law when he said, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8b). Our Lord’s last words are very clear—the mission of the church is to continually increase its ability to give itself away on behalf of all God’s creation.

Examine the diagram of the ever-widening circle. The circles represent the biblical life cycle of a church. It is the biblical affirmation that the farther a congregation

moves from the center, the healthier the church becomes. The less of “you” and the more of God there is at the center of the circle, the healthier the congregation becomes.



The third ring, “Jerusalem,” represents a local congregation. One of the more common excuses given by both clergy and laity for avoiding making disciples is that churches should take better care of their present members before reaching out for more. But life doesn’t work that way. The best way to nurture your members is for them to reach out to nurture someone else.

The fourth ring, “Judea,” represents the geographic area that surrounds a local church. Every local church must feel a responsibility for an area larger than its own parish. The larger the area, the healthier the church will be.

The next ring, “Samaria,” represents the unloved and unwanted people of our society. The Samaritans were the outcasts of Jesus’ day, but Jesus said that the churches must reach out to include the present-day Samaritans.

The sixth ring, “the ends of the earth,” represents world missions. A local church needs a vision for world missions that does not place a limit on its sphere of responsibility. For church growth with integrity, a church must really believe that with God’s help, there are no limits to the scope of its ministry. The circle always must be growing wider.

The Argument

The Basic Law of Congregational Life is the basis for biblical ministry because it focuses on life's fundamental challenge: to overcome self-centeredness. Jesus asked us to be his witnesses, not our own. He asked us to move away from considering ourselves the center of our universe, to put others in our place. He knew that when we do so, we become healthy.

One Sunday after worship I received an anonymous note scribbled on the back of a registration card: "Who says our church has to grow? I think [our church] has grown enough." On another occasion, when I announced a series of sermons on the ever-widening circle, I received this note: "Please make it clear at the beginning that growth for growth's sake is not what you're talking about." At another time I was handed one that read: "I hope we're not trying to reach more new members just to fund the budget."

In most churches, reaching out to non-Christians and unchurched people is almost as difficult to talk about as money or politics. Why? Probably because we do not want to lose control of our own church; new people mean less control for ourselves. We are comfortable the way we are, and we do not like to change to accommodate new people and new ideas.

The Basic Law of Congregational Life is a reminder that life does not revolve around self. As a rule, twenty-first-century Christians have not understood that life centers around our relationship with Christ and others, not around ourselves. We have viewed the mission of the church primarily in light of our own personal needs. We have failed to understand that we are made in such a way that our needs are nurtured best as we take care of the needs of others. When we talk about taking care of our own membership before being involved in evangelism or outreach, we reveal a lack of understanding of the mission of the church. The basic mission of the church is to help me nurture others; and in that process, I will be nurtured too!

Why Do Churches Grow and Die?

Allow me to introduce Joe. Joe has been married for ten years. He and his wife have two children: one is six years of age; the other, three months. Neither Joe nor his wife has been to church since they left their parents' homes. The older child is now ready to start school, and Joe's wife has decided it is also time for the children to receive a Christian education. Joe doesn't want to go to church, but he gives in because his wife insists.

The first obstacle Joe faces is a lack of convenient parking. By the time he gets to the church, he is irritated because he has had to walk a block. The second obstacle is the absence of directional signs to the nursery. No member of the church is willing to break away from a personal conversation to help Joe's family find their way. By now Joe is fuming.

Finally, Joe's family locates the sanctuary, only to sit shoulder-to-shoulder with a lot of strangers. Joe does not like to have strangers that close. He wants plenty of elbow room. As the service progresses, Joe is asked to hold up his hand so that everyone will know he is not a member. He does not want anyone to know he is there, much less that he is not a member.

Then without warning, the whole congregation suddenly rises and begins to sing something that all good Christians are supposed to know—the Doxology. Joe doesn't

know the Doxology. The page number is printed in the bulletin, so he frantically finds the right place, only to realize that the song is over.

The sermon puts Joe to sleep because it talks about things he cannot apply to his daily life and it uses words with which he is not familiar. When the service is over, Joe and his family leave without being greeted by anyone. Later, Joe informs his wife that he does not intend to go through that torture again!

Now allow me to introduce Max. Max is a long-term member of the church Joe just visited. His children are all grown. He is a few years from retirement, and he has helped the church with several building programs. Max has been a member for so long he can't remember what it's like to be uncommitted to Christ and his church.

When told about Joe's reaction to his visit to the church, Max said, "If he isn't any more committed than that, let him stay at home. I don't mind walking a block to church. Besides, he's probably not willing to help pay for a new sanctuary anyway."

Christian churches are filled with good people like Max, and because of that, they are dying. Dying churches fail to remember that many of their present members were once just like Joe. They were not committed, and they could not have cared less about attending church. On the other hand, today's world is filled with people like Joe—good people with families, but unchurched and uncommitted.

There is a world of difference between the value systems of Max and Joe. Max believes people should be as far out of debt as possible; Joe thinks the more credit he has, the more affluent he is. Max trusts institutions; Joe doesn't. Max serves God out of duty, obligation, and commitment; Joe serves out of compassion. Max has long-term plans and goals; Joe prefers instant gratification. Max married for life; Joe married in the hope that it would last. Max grew up in church; Joe did not. For growth to occur in mainline Protestant churches, Max must recognize the difference between his world and Joe's world.

Integrity Factors in a Biblical Church

Because there is always the danger that numbers and quantity can take precedence over a concern for people, any discussion about the growth of a church must include enough integrity factors to avoid the possibility that quantity will become the primary emphasis of ministry. There are at least seven integrity factors present in healthy church growth:

1. People take precedence over institutional maintenance.
2. Jesus is always the center of the message.
3. Ministry is balanced.
4. There is a high ratio between the membership and the number of people who attend worship.
5. There is a balance between money spent on the church and money spent on others.
6. A higher percentage of members join by profession of faith and restoration of vows than by transfer of membership.
7. An inclusive faith is stressed.

These seven factors are examined throughout this book along with the basic ingredients in a faithful, biblical church, which are:

- Being biblically grounded
- Maintaining cultural relevance
- Existing to transform lives of both Christian and non-Christian
- Equipping and mobilizing the congregation
- Establishing a community built on trust
- Structuring your church to grow disciples

The Basic Law of Congregational Life is that churches are healthiest when they reach out to others. Churches grow because they are intentionally concerned about the needs of others. Churches die because they concentrate primarily on their internal needs. With this law before us, we are now ready to explore how the growth principles affect our congregations.

Growth Principles 1 through 6: Growing People, Making Disciples

Growth Principle 1: Growth Is Not Concerned with Numbers but with Growing Disciples (Key Questions: 1, 2, 4–5, 6, 7, 8, 10)

Data Source: Worship Survey; Staff Survey, questions 1-7; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet “D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls,” questions 1-3.

Question 1: What is the age, sex, and marital status of adult worshippers?

The information for answering question 1 comes from the Worship Survey that you took on four consecutive Sundays. When figuring average attendance, count the children who are present even if they do not attend worship. Just count the average number of children in Sunday school and add that to the worship average. If you are using the spreadsheet file from the bonus CD-ROM, retrieve The Worship Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Worship Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls) and print a report, so that you can port the data to the Ministry Audit.

The Four Generations

The ages are broken down into the four key generations as described by William Strauss and Neil Howe in their book *Generations: The History of America's Future*. They explore the cycle of generations in American history. They are the G.I. generation, the silent generation, the baby boom generation, the baby buster generation, and the millennial generation. By studying these generations, a church can decide where to place its emphases.

People born from 1900 to 1924 make up the *G.I. generation*. The G.I. generation made up 7.3 percent of the national population in 1998. They made unprecedented progress in science, medicine, and the pursuit of individual liberties around the globe, especially as they overcame the tyranny and evil of two global wars that were sandwiched around a massive economic depression. Now this generation feels that its values and achievements are under attack.

The challenge the church faces is how to help this generation surrender some of its hard-earned privileges for the good of others and the future. Faced with uncertainty about health and longevity, this group will now begin to deal with the fact that they no longer have a future that is more promising than the past, and the future they now see may be filled with uncertainty and threats. The act of losing their lives that they may find them will be a practical issue as they experience the loss of power and control over their lives, society, and the church.

People born from 1925 to 1945 make up the *silent generation*. The silent generation made up 12.7 percent of the national population in 1998. They feel caught between the G.I. generation and the baby boom generation. They seek to find compromise, trying to balance the needs of aging parents and boomer children who have turned away from the values of their grandparents. Their inclination to find a middle ground between the two groups will not be appreciated by either group. They served as leaders in the 1990s, but this leadership was short, as society and the church made the shift to baby boom-generation leaders. The church must work hard to keep this age group in order to have the benefits of its sense of fairness and compassion. This will not happen without effort on the church's part. The church will need to be sure that it is keeping some members of the silent generation in leadership positions.

People born from 1946 to 1964 make up the *baby boom generation*. This generation made up 24.1 percent of the national population in 1998. The boom generation gets attention. Its size makes it a key group for any congregation that is seeking to plan its future. This group is not easy to work with as they turn their attention to reform the institutions in which they are members. The church is no exception. Women are seeking leadership and are not satisfied to play a secondary role. The church needs to focus on societal issues. Abortion is one of the key issues, and boomers are on both sides and hold uncompromisingly to positions that are difficult to reconcile.

Spiritual growth issues remain high on their agenda. While family issues are important to them, families are more diverse than anytime before. This generation sees the fading of early retirement from their plans. They are a healthier generation, and as their children grow up and move from home, boomers are traveling and continuing to seek experiences for growth. They want experiences that make a contribution not only to others but to their own growth as well. They now need help dealing with aging parents while rearing families that were begun later in life. They feel tension between these two responsibilities. Day care services for the parents of the boomers are beginning to be as important as day care for their children was in years past. Many of the women in this generation are charting untested waters and have little hope for help from the silent and G.I. generations. Women's concerns are becoming more important.

This generation is looking for ways to recapture the collective experiences of their youth, and as the most educated generation in our history, they are seeking more opportunities to explore their own spiritual and intellectual growth and will *find* them in many novel and new ways. The challenge to the church is to contribute to this generation's maturation, so that they are able to deal with their mortality and discover not only their need for grace but the need to be graceful toward others. It is hard today for a church to grow if it is not reaching baby boomers. Bill Easum's book *How to Reach Baby Boomers* discusses the challenges of that task in detail (see Recommended Reading on our Web site. Simply go to www.easumbandy.com, click Free Resources, then click Library).

People born from 1965 to 1982 make up the *baby buster generation*. The buster generation made up 30.1 percent of the national population in 1998. This generation presents a new challenge. One cannot assume that what has worked with the baby boom generation will work with the baby bust generation. Members of this generation will live their entire lives in the shadow of the boomers, and are facing a much less promising future than the boomers did at the same age. They are dealing with issues such as AIDS, a sluggish economy, governments having to raise taxes and cut benefits, and the elimination of many good blue- and white-collar jobs. Realism rather than idealism will be the mainstay of their lives. Practical concerns will remain important to them. They will need help to confront the harsh realities that they will face their entire lives. They will be pragmatic, and this will be an important balance for the idealism of the boomers. The church must now begin to focus serious attention on the busters.

“Twentysomething” adults are the primary target for church growth over the next thirty years. They will be even more important than baby boomers. The journey from the age of eighteen into the thirties is a turbulent time of transition. Times of transition are the best times to reach people. However, many of this generation will have no church background, and thus they may not turn to the church in times of trouble. It is essential that the church find ways to reach out to them.

People born from 1983 to 2003 make up the *millennial generation*. The millennial generation made up 25.4 percent of the population in 1998. We have already seen the first signs of interest in providing this generation with the best quality education, and that includes providing places of safety for learning in an increasingly violent world. There are also signs everywhere acknowledging that the needs of children have been ignored. Members of this generation will be rational doers, and the educational and emotional training we give them will steer them in that direction. The 1990s was the decade for any and all programs for children and youth, and this trend continues in the first years of the new century. It will pose important challenges to the church.

Interpreting the Worship Survey

With question 1 of the Ministry Audit, you will be calculating the adult percentages that are based on the Worship Survey. The following steps explain how to fill in the blanks. Keep in mind that the statistics represent only the adult population in worship.

1. M/M = male married; M/S = male single; F/M = female married; F/S = female single. Calculate the percentages of respondents who fall within
 - a. the four main age groups;
 - b. the sixteen categories.

Hint: Add the percentages for the G.I. generation and the silent generation. The lower the combined percentage for these two categories, the better. If more than 50 percent of the worshipping congregation is over fifty years of age, it is more difficult for the congregation to reach the unchurched because of the resistance to change. The higher this percentage, the more urgent it is that you act strategically.

In 2005, people fifty years of age have a life expectancy of 29.1 more years.

2. In the far-right column under question 1, note the gender and marital status of all the respondents to the Worship Survey.

Hint: On average, males make up 48 percent of attendees at churches in the United States. If the proportion of males attending your church falls significantly below 38 percent, consider developing ministries for men.

3. You can approximate the number of singles, separated, and divorced people in worship by counting the number of M/S and F/S people born between 1943 and 1961. Singles born between those years are more likely to be single, separated, or divorced—not widowed.

Question 2: Does our pastor understand the everyday world of our members?

This is the most complicated question and deserves your special attention. The score comes from the Official Body Survey (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls) on the CD-ROM, question 1. This question is important because the lead pastor must have a good image throughout the leadership before significant transformation or growth can occur.

There are several ways to interpret this question. For example, a negative score could mean that the pastor isn't competent, isn't liked, or is pushing the church too hard. Or it could mean that the lay leaders themselves are conflicted. Also, remember to see the big picture. This question alone may not give the whole picture so you need to look several other places to test what a negative score here might mean. So if you get a negative answer here you might do the following.

- Compare this answer with the leadership's answers to the questions about the pastor in Growth Principle 7, questions 5 through 8; and Growth Principle 9, questions 2 and 6 through 16. If the majority of these scores are positive (low), you don't have a problem. If the majority of these scores are negative (high), you may have a problem.
- However, before you panic, turn to Growth Principle 11 and see if the scores on questions 3 through 17 are negative or positive. If negative (high), then the odds are you have a conflicted or unhappy group of lay leaders and the scores regarding the pastor are unreliable. If these scores are positive (low), then a problem exists between the pastor and the lay leaders. What the problem is may not be evident but it needs to be resolved.
- Usually, the longer a pastor has been at a church, the lower and more positive the scores. Smaller churches that have had a high rate of pastoral turnover in recent years usually score higher than average (2.73).

Question 4: Has there been any major controversy or division in the preceding five years?

The most common conflicts I have encountered are (1) the adult choir does not cooperate, (2) the trustees exert far too much power in the decision-making process,

(3) the finance committee or the financial secretary makes life miserable for anyone wanting to start a new ministry that costs money, and (4) there are one or two long-term members of the church who have no office in the church but must be consulted before any decision can be made. Has the congregation settled and resolved the conflicts? Unresolved corporate pain is one of the top ten reasons why churches do not reach the unchurched. If serious conflict from the past still haunts your congregation, resolve the conflict before attempting any of the recommendations you might make as a result of this audit. The number one thing non-Christians need when they attend church is an environment of trust and community.

Question 5: Does our church deal openly with controversy?

As you can see from the average score, it is not unusual for a significant number of people to feel as if their church does not deal openly with conflict. This often means that there are people in the church who feel stifled. Perhaps they have had new ideas turned down.

Questions 6, 7, 8, 10: How do we make decisions?

All four questions deal with aspects of the same issue. The goal is to have as flat an organization as possible and to make the decision-making process open and accessible to anyone. Are there several layers of administration? Are numerous meetings required before a decision can be made? Are most of the decisions on new proposals “NO”? If so, these are signs of decay and too much structure. For more help in this area, see Bill Easum’s book *Unfreezing Moves*, published by Abingdon Press.

Hint: In question 8 of the Ministry Audit (the answer comes from the Staff Survey [D:\Spreadsheets\Staff.doc on the CD-ROM], question 5), look for comments such as “trustees” or “one or two people.” The most effective churches have no more than one level of withholding permission. People should be able to start new ministries by approaching one central committee that can give an answer, rather than having to go through a labyrinth of committees. For more information on permission-giving organizations, see Bill Easum’s book *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers*, published by Abingdon Press).

Action Items for Growing Disciples

1. If more than 50 percent of the worshippers in your church were born before 1942, begin new ministries specifically for young adults. The demographics, the resources suggested at www.easumbandy.com, as well as your knowledge of the community can guide you in the process.
2. Resolve any major conflict before attempting to start new ministries, unless the new ministries are the only way to resolve or do away with the conflict. Failure to do this has caused many churches to fail in this process.
3. Consider restructuring only if you have a lot of red tape or several layers of groups who withhold permission for new ministries. Don’t worry with restructuring unless it is absolutely impossible to get around or through it. Restructuring works only in a healthy church. But remember that restructuring does not help a church unless that church has vision and is willing to act on a plan.

4. If you simply can't afford a Percept Demographic Report, call the Chamber of Commerce and tell them you are a pastor or church leader trying to find out more about your community. Ask if they can send you any demographic information they have concerning the population, projects, trends, age, gender, income, working habits, or any other social, religious, or economic issue in your area.

Growth Principle 2: Growth Occurs When People Are Given a Wide Variety of Choices (questions 1 through 8, and 11 through 15)

Data Source: Staff Survey ("D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc"), questions 8 through 25.

Question 1: Does our church offer a balanced ministry?

One of the key features of the last part of the twentieth century was providing a wide variety of high-quality choices. The more quality choices a church can provide for both church and unchurched people, the healthier the church will be.

Balance is the key. Churches that are committed to social justice have ministries that approach pain and injustice in two ways: (1) through social justice ministries, such as Habitat for Humanity, clothes closets, and homeless shelters, that address immediate needs; and (2) the root-cause ministries, such as action groups that organize people to change the way economic decisions are made in one's community or state. Churches need more high-quality ministries in the mercy category than in the categories of love and justice combined, because more people are unchurched today than are church.

Questions 2, 3, 4.: Does our church offer weekday ministries for children?

A childcare program, run by the church as an extension of its children's ministry, provides a needed service, teaches values, and evangelizes as well.

Weekday ministries for children, including preschool, day care, Parent's Day Out, Parent's Night Out, kindergarten, or grade school, work best for the children, the parents, and the church if the ministries are considered an extension of the church. It is best if the person responsible for the ministries is part of the church staff and is accountable either to the pastor or to the person who gives regular supervision of the church staff. The weekday children's ministries and the Sunday school need to work closely together so that most toys and equipment can be used by both. The budget needs to be set by the official body of the church and the curriculum needs to include religious training and offer chapel once a week. In most cases the ministries should not only be totally self-sustaining but should also return some percent of their gross income to the church budget to help with other ministries that cannot sustain themselves, such as the children's Sunday school or a singles' ministry.

This program is so basic that it is worth designing the building program around it, keeping in mind that you will need to use these facilities twenty years from now for elder care weekday ministries.

Question 6: Does our church have adult day care?

Adult day care is needed more each year because the United States is graying at a fairly rapid pace. Although it is not as strong a need now as day care for children, the

need is growing and will continue to do so. This should be kept in mind if you are thinking of building in the next few years.

Questions 7, 12: How often do we start new Sunday school classes?

Sunday school classes more than six months old tend to be hard for new people to join. It's not that the classes are unfriendly, but that they have become close-knit families, and families do not take in new members easily. If you are a program-based church and are interested in cutting the inactive list, then establish new classes every six months. If you decide to develop a small-group ministry around the "meta" model, you do not have to worry about starting new classes. For ideas on how to start new classes, see some of the resources listed on our Web site under "Sunday school." Simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs.

Question 8: How many adults attend Sunday school, in how many classes?

Equipping adults is the most important ministry in the church. Adults bring children; children seldom bring adults. Skill training is the most challenging adult ministry today. It is increasingly common for adults to lack skills in such basic areas as parenting, social graces, making friends, and interpersonal relations. Most adults today know very little about the Bible. Until they do, it is very unlikely that serious ministry will occur. There are several Bible studies that can begin the process of educating adults about the Bible (see "Bible Studies-Print Resources"; simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs).

The best Sunday school classes are small-group Bible studies with a focus on outreach and assimilation. Keep these classes small by starting a new class every time the class attendance averages fifteen or twenty, even if it means there will be more than one class for some age groups. Large classes are good for singles and for those born before 1950. Ask each class to set a goal of 5 to 15 percent growth and to report the percentages to the person in charge of Sunday school. Ask the Sunday school class to appoint a shepherd to call all of the first-time visitors. Consider using conference calls for Sunday school classes that wish to talk with a member of the class who has been absent or who is having a special day such as a birthday.

Question 10: How many youth attend Sunday school, in how many classes?

It is essential to have Sunday school classes for youth if you are a program-based church. If you are a nontraditional church, youth ministry may occur Sunday evening or during the week. The best youth ministries today include mentoring, small groups, and youth-led worship designed for youth. Fellowship is also important but not nearly so much as in the past.

It does not work well to combine junior-high youth and senior-high youth. At this point in their lives, they are years apart in their interests. The only exception here is when some churches use the more mature seniors to lead and mentor the lower-junior-high grades.

Church leaders should get to know the youth in the church by name and provide mentoring opportunities for them. Do the leaders stop in the hallways to talk with the youth? Do the youth have any say in the affairs of the church? Parents should be involved in the youth program instead of having the youth worker simply taking care

of the youth. If you have a youth worker, that person should understand that he or she is working primarily with families who have youth and not just the youth.

Church leaders should provide a positive vision for the youth. This is helped by the amount of good space given to the youth. Do they have their own room that they can decorate? Do they have enough space for more than just sitting around in a circle to hear a lesson? How much money is in the budget for the youth? Are retreats and outings planned? Is there a regular trip planned each year open only to those who have been in worship, Sunday school, and any evening youth program on three out of four Sundays? And do the youth have to raise most of the money spent on youth trips?

Youth should never get the leftovers, such as old couches and broken furniture. Their rooms should be some of the best in the church. Facilities should not be better cared for than the youth. The congregation should be concerned more about the youth than about keeping the facilities clean.

The church should have clear-cut policies actively and consistently put into place and lived out by those who work with the youth, on alcohol, drugs, movies shown at the church, adult behavior, and so on. Background checks should be done on all youth workers. Check the resources listed under "Youth." Simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs.

Question 11: How many children attend Sunday school, in how many classes?

For traditional churches, it is best to keep all elementary grades separate and even to have a class for children who turned six too late to enroll in school. It is best to have a male and a female teacher. Male teachers can make an important contribution to the lives of children who do not have male role models at home. Most children learn better today through computers than through print. Put three or four computers in the children's Sunday school area and obtain some good Bible software. Arrange a schedule that will allow all the classes to use the computers.

Nontraditional churches are going out of their way to avoid the classroom look. The hallways and entries into the rooms are designed around a theme. Often the teaching is done in a large group using storytelling, music, and video to drive home the theme, followed by small group breaks-outs where the children reflect on what they have learned that morning. Check out "Children" on our Web site. Simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs.

To see pictures of how one church designed its children's area so that it didn't look like classrooms, go to <http://easumbandy.com/resources/index.php?action=details&record=1149>. To see how many churches are changing children's Sunday school, go to <http://easumbandy.com/resources/index.php?action=details&record=1333>.

Question 14: Does our church have midweek programs?

A major change during the past twenty years has been the increasing demand for seven-day-a-week churches. A healthy, traditional, program-based church will have two to three people on the property during the week for every one person in worship on Sunday. (Read Lyle Schaller's book *The Seven-Day-A-Week Church*, published by Abingdon Press.)

Often churches with fewer than three hundred people in worship fail to develop core ministries. Core ministries are those ministries that are as important to continue as worship and Sunday school. These ministries are carried over from layperson to

layperson, clergy to clergy. A core ministry is anything that is considered so important that no matter who the pastor is or what the skill level of the laity is, the program continues. As they grow, program-based churches often fail to expand their number of core ministries that bring new people into a relationship with the church, they stop meeting the needs of people, and they stagnate. Nontraditional churches tend to have fewer but better core ministries that are focused on growing individuals and the Kingdom rather than supporting the church.

In 90 percent of U.S. communities, people between the ages of twenty-eight and forty-five are the largest segment of the population, as well as the largest unchurched adult group. We know several important things about these people:

1. They do not trust institutions and have rejected the institutional church.
2. They are morally adrift but want help finding an anchor for themselves and their children.
3. They resist rules but respond to reason.
4. They have many legitimate questions about faith and Christianity.
5. They want an experience more than values and beliefs.
6. They are not joiners but are looking for a place to belong—a place for relationships.
7. They distrust authority but respond to personal mentoring and role-modeling.
8. They are not loyal to denominations but respond to churches that meet their needs.
9. They are tolerant of others' beliefs but expect their spiritual leaders to know where they stand and what they believe.
10. They may attend church if a friend invites them, but they often do not stay because the worship is boring.
11. They want anonymity.
12. They look for quality.
13. They expect “how-to” and “so what” sermons.
14. They do not like “holier than thou” sermons.

Traditional churches are basically missing these people.

The most helpful thing you can do to determine which new ministries to begin and which ones to drop is to conduct a demographic study of your ministry area. Concentrate on an area five to ten miles around your church. If you do not have access to a Percept demographic report (check under “Demographics” on our Web site; simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs), make sure questions 8 and 9 under Growth Principle 15 of the Ministry Audit have been filled out. You can gather demographic information about your area by calling the Chamber of Commerce.

Focus groups can help you determine which new ministries to begin. These groups need to be made up of either very new members (who have been members for no longer than one year) or unchurched people in the neighborhood. See “Focus Groups” on our Web site. Simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs.

Question 15: Does our church have Bible studies?

Weekday Bible study is essential today because the unchurched are on a spiritual journey. If the emphasis is on content, Bible study works best when it is done in large

groups led by the pastor. If the emphasis is on changing lives, then it is best done in small groups led by laypeople. Both emphases are essential.

Action Items for Giving People Choices

1. Based on your demographic study (if you have one), decide which new outreach ministries to begin, which present ones to strengthen, and which present ones to drop.
2. If you have only one adult class on Sunday, begin a second one.
3. If you have a weekday children's ministry that is not part of your church's ministry and which pays the church for renting the space, find a way to replace it with one that your church runs. Make it distinctively Christian.
4. Take a long look at your children's ministry. Compare it to the pictures on our Web site. If it doesn't measure up, make plans to change the environment. If you are still using only print curriculum, what can you do to insert storytelling, music, and video? For example, take a look at what VeggieTales now offers. Check out this site: <http://www.bigidea.com/>.

Growth Principle 3: Growth Occurs When People Are Matched with Their Gifts and Skills (Key Questions: 1, 2)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 26, 27.

Question 1: What is our nominating process?

Nontraditional churches match people with their gifts rather than putting them on committees. In traditional churches, most nominating groups are too small. It is best if the nominating group includes one person for every twenty-five people in worship. In nontraditional churches, nominations are not nearly as important and usually people are chosen in other ways such as through prayer and discernment. Nontraditional churches also have fewer committees.

Question 2: Do we encourage and use Spiritual Gift Inventories?

The emphasis is on how God made us, not what the institutional church needs us to do. Discovering spiritual gifts is more important than time and talent surveys that are dependent on people having some experience working in the church. Nontraditional churches are finding two ways to use the concept of gifts. One is to administer a Spiritual Gift Inventory, the other is through the guidance of a spiritual director who helps the people discern their gifts. The former is used more in boomer churches and the latter more in the buster generation. (Spiritual gifts are explained in detail in Bill Easum's book *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers*, published by Abingdon Press). You can also get our version of spiritual gifts, *Discovering Your Place in God's World*, by going to www.easumbandy.com and clicking "Store."

Action Items for Matching People with Their Skills

1. Traditional churches might want to consider finding ways to use spiritual gifts or enlarge the nominating committee so that there is one person for every twenty-five people in the average worship service.

2. Nontraditional churches might find it helpful to use both the inventory and spiritual director forms of helping people find their gifts.

Growth Principle 4: Growth Does Not Dictate That More People Will Become Inactive

(Key Questions: 2, 3-7, 9)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 28–36.

Question 2: What are our losses?

Concentrate on the number of deaths. Is the number growing? Does it equal or surpass the number of transfers or withdrawals? Many churches find themselves getting so old that it takes more and more of the pastor's time simply to bury the members or visit them in homes. A point is reached where there is little time left to reach the unchurched after providing spiritual and physical hospice care. In the book of Acts, Stephen and others are set aside to care for the widows and orphans so that the apostles can be about the primary work of the church—reaching the unchurched. This means that although no one should be overlooked or uncared for, the hospice needs of a congregation should not be the primary responsibility of the pastor or key laypeople.

Questions 3, 4, 9: Are we assimilating?

Studies show that 80 percent of the people who drop out of the church do so within their first year. Three out of four people say they left the church because they did not feel wanted. Those who make seven or more friends within their first three months in a congregation rarely drop out. This means that people may come to the church for a variety of reasons, but they stay if they make friends. Friends are seldom made in worship. It takes a program-based church a minimum of twenty hours per month to assimilate people. For this reason, assimilation works best when a paid staff person is responsible for seeing that it is done but not necessarily being the one doing it. Recruiting volunteers is essential.

Questions 5, 6: Do we have enough small groups?

Most life-changing events occur in small groups of five to seven people. I seldom see a thriving church that does not have a major emphasis on small groups. There are various types of small groups, but the most productive are the recovery, support, learning (nurturing), and mission (ministry) groups that focus on multiplication of the group as much as anything else. Very few denominational small groups such as the women's or men's groups are reaching people born after 1950.

Question 7: How many inactive families do we have?

Inactives are seldom recoverable, so don't waste time on them. It takes ten hours to recover an inactive for every hour it takes to reach an unchurched person. It is best to concentrate on preventing inactives with outreach ministries to your members and outreach ministries to the unchurched. I recommend working with the inactives only under the following circumstances: (1) when a church has a new pastor, or (2) when the church is located in a rural area with few people. Within a new pastor's first three months, it is helpful to invite all the membership, especially the inactives, to a catered

dinner to meet the pastor. See “Inactives” on our Web site. Simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs.

Hint: Most churches plateau because they do not have enough small groups that are open to new people; they reach the “single-cell ceiling.” They have just enough small groups to care for the number of people presently attending. Small groups reach the saturation point and tend to become closed to new people when they: (1) have been in existence for more than six months; (2) grow beyond eight people, and the purpose of the groups’ caring, sharing, and intimacy; (3) grow beyond fifteen, and the purpose is task achievement; and (4) grow beyond thirty-five and the purpose is fellowship.

Action Items for Preventing Inactives

1. Begin new groups if you do not have a small group for every fifteen people in worship. This is one of the most important issues facing your church.
2. Small churches need to recruit a volunteer to spend ten hours a week assimilating people. Larger churches need a paid staff person devoting twenty hours per month to assimilating people.

Growth Principle 5: Growth Provides a Wider Outreach to People in Need
(Key Question: 1)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), question 37.

Question 1: How much money do we spend on causes outside our congregation?

The United States is now considered by the rest of the Christian world to be the third-largest mission field in the world. This means that most of a congregation’s mission money needs to stay at home. A goal for effective churches is to devote 15 to 25 percent of their budget to missions. A good portion of this amount needs to be for hands-on mission in which people can participate. Usually, the more money a church gets the more it can give to missions.

Action Items for Providing a Wider Outreach

1. If the amount designated for such ministries is below 15 percent of your budget, look for ways to put more money into hands-on ministries.
2. Seek a balance between your passion for sending money away to missions and your passion for strengthening your church and growing disciples.
3. Consider developing within your church a center for church planting and staff it with a full-time paid person.

Growth Principle 6: Spiritual Leadership Is Required!
(Key Questions: 1-2, 4-13)

Data Source: Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet
(D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 4-16.

Questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 8-10: What is the spiritual depth of our key leaders (unpaid leaders)?

One of the most often overlooked pieces of transitioning or growing a church is the spiritual depth of the key leaders. It is essential that ministry and action flow out of hearts that are growing closer to God as the years go by. It doesn't matter how long they have been Christians. What matters is that they are growing in and exercising their faith. This can't happen without strong prayer support. Spiritual leaders never are offended by being held accountable.

Questions 5, 7, 11-13: How do our leaders serve?

It is important that service not be seen primarily as serving on committees. The most important type of service is that which is done away from the church on behalf of other people. The primary way you know your leaders are reaching some level of spiritual maturity is if they are beginning to think about and act on behalf of non-Christian people. Teams are different from committees. Teams are put together by the team leader and members are never elected to a team. In traditional churches you will regularly hear people say, "I can't wait till I finish my term and get out of this job." You will seldom hear that in nontraditional churches because people tend to serve out of gratitude rather than duty.

Action Items for Developing Spiritual Leaders

1. Cast your vision and see whose eyes light up and invite them to join you for a few months of prayer and Bible study. While doing this continue to cast your vision of what the church should become. Also, begin to talk about what spiritual accountability means. If you are a nontraditional church, you should also explore the biblical meaning of being in subjection to the authorities (usually this means the lead pastor or elders, or both).
2. Encourage your leaders to begin journaling. You will need to provide them with a template to follow.
3. If you have a heavy committee structure, begin allowing people with vision and passion to form teams to attempt some of their dreams.

Growth Principles 7 through 11: Worship, Leadership, and Ability

Growth Principle 7: Growth Will Occur When Worship Is Intentionally Emphasized (Key Questions: 1-2, 6, 10-12, 14)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 38-46; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 17-22.

Questions 1-2: How important is worship?

Worship is the most important thing a human being does. Without worship, the church is nothing. Worship is a better barometer of a church's health than membership. People can join and never be disciplined. People can attend without joining and still be disciplined. Count your worship attendance more than your membership.

To determine if your service flows well, record your service on audiotape and get into a quiet room, shut the door, play the tape, close your eyes, and count the number of times there is no sound for more than five seconds. If there is more than one, your service does not flow well, even if the silence occurs during the prayer time.

Videotape your service and compare it with MTV programming. It might be good for your worship leaders to gather each weekend before worship to go through the mechanics of the service. The more contemporary the service, the more important it is to do this.

In traditional churches, the emphasis has been on joining the church. Nontraditional churches focus on connecting people to Jesus. Those churches that allow people to join or register a faith decision every Sunday need to leave about seven minutes for this part of the service. If your church allows people to join only at certain times, you need to make certain you are not asking them to join only when it is convenient for you. Be intentional about setting time aside each month for people to join. Look for ways to make joining the church an important step. It is all right to raise your standards for joining.

In traditional churches with more than four hundred in worship, senior pastors need to be in the pulpit on forty-four to forty-six Sundays a year. This does not mean that the senior pastor has to preach all the services. Many churches have more than one preacher on the weekend (including Sunday). In nontraditional churches, the number of times the lead pastor preaches doesn't matter.

Question 6: Do the sermons speak to our personal needs?

If the pastor's sermons are not practical enough to speak to people's personal needs, the church will have a hard time growing. It complicates matters even further if the pastor has no idea what unchurched people need. We are on a mission field today; we must meet people's basic needs first, and then we can introduce them to Christ.

Question 10: Is our worship music pleasing to a majority of the congregation?

Obviously, most people in the church are comfortable with the music or they would not be there. The key is to see if their response falls within the norm toward the positive side. If not, you should pay close attention to why they are not happy.

Question 11: What is the size of adult and youth choirs?

If a choir sings in a service, the choir needs to include one person for every ten people attending that service. Music today is just as important as the sermon. If contemporary praise teams are used, each person needs to have a microphone.

The National Endowment for the Arts asked the U.S. Census Bureau to ask the public, "What are the top three types of music you listen to?" The results were as follows: country, 51.7 percent; easy listening, 48.8 percent; rock, 43.5 percent; rhythm and blues, 40.4 percent; big band, 35.5 percent; jazz, 34.2 percent; classical, 33.6 percent; show tunes, 27.8 percent; contemporary folk, 23.1 percent; opera, 12.6 percent. There were two problems with this survey. First, the survey allowed respondents to list only three types of music. Second, the survey did not include Christian music as an option. Christian music was the fastest growing segment of the music industry in 1995.

The vast majority of growing churches today use contemporary Christian music more often than they use the hymnal and are more likely to have a band than a choir.

Question 12: What is the percentage of worship attendance to membership?

The average percentage for all size churches is 39 percent. For churches with fewer than two hundred in worship, 60 percent. For churches with between two hundred and four hundred in worship, 45 percent. For churches with over five hundred in worship, 28 percent.

Question 14: What is our worship growth pattern?

Worship is one of the most important barometers of the church's health. There are four types of worship attendance patterns: yo-yo, declining, stable, or growing. In a church with a yo-yo pattern, the worship attendance goes up and down from year to year, usually peaking and bottoming out at the same basic levels. Determine if there is a yo-yo pattern. Do the tops and the bottoms of the yo-yo seem to be close to the same number every time? Yo-yo churches tend to have one of three problems. (1) They have either reached or surpassed the 80 percent of capacity limit in worship or in parking; (2) they have too many people attending for the number of paid staff; or (3) they have had pastoral changes at the point of the peak or the decline. I will discuss these problems later.

If worship attendance at your church is *declining*, it is important to ask several questions: Why are we declining? Are we content with this situation? What can we do to stop it? Are we willing to pay the price? Stopping a decline usually means new staff and new ministries.

In a church with a *stable* worship attendance pattern, the fact that the church is holding its own can be deceiving. Even though the attendance is the same as it was ten years ago, the odds are that most of the people in worship are ten years older. This means that the church is traveling along the top of a mesa, where worship attendance will eventually just fall off the edge.

If your church's worship attendance is *growing*, don't rest at ease in Zion. If it ain't broke, fix it. Are we willing to anticipate the future? How can we improve what we are doing? What new ministries do we need to begin? What programs no longer seem to be needed?

Action Items for Emphasizing Worship

1. If you are a traditional church, work out a schedule for your lead pastor to be in the pulpit forty-four to forty-six Sundays per year. If you have associate pastors who want to preach, they can do so if you have two preachers each Sunday. This will give people a choice. This is very easy to do when you have three services. However, in most traditional churches, the more an associate preaches the less likely the church will grow. This is not true in a nontraditional church.
2. Bring the membership in the choirs up to one person in the choir for every ten people in the average attendance at each service.
3. Provide a choir for each service and do not discontinue the choir's participation during the summer.
4. Set a goal to increase the ratio of the worship attendance to the membership by 10 percent over the next five years. Do not attempt to do this simply by cleaning the membership roles.
5. Decide what type of church you are and why you think you have this particular pattern.

6. Form a contemporary service that has a band and uses current music and video. Most traditional churches that do this have to have someone other than the choir director in charge of this service.
7. Perhaps the pastor needs to read some books on unchurched people, such as George Hunter's *How to Reach Secular People*, published by Abingdon Press.
8. Draw an imaginary line into the future following the downward direction of the worship attendance figures. Allow the impact of this to visually create a sense of crisis. What is going to happen to us if we do not do something?

Growth Principle 8: Growth Will Occur with the Addition of Each New Morning Service of Worship (Key Questions: 1, 3-9, 11-12, 14)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 47-59; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 23-24.

Questions 1, 8: How many worship services do we offer?

The most important decision a church can make is to add a second worship service. I know of very few traditional growing churches with one worship service. If you have just one service, look for ways to start a second, no matter how small you might be. It does not matter how empty the present worship service might be. The odds are that the present service is designed for people born before 1950. If what you have is traditional worship, make this second service very different from the present one. Usually, the addition of a worship service will increase the number of people hearing the gospel each week at your church by 12 to 20 percent in eighteen months.

Morning worship services that begin at 8:00 or 8:30 seldom reach many people, and usually when they do, most of the people are over sixty years of age. If that is your target audience, then begin the service at 8:00 or 8:30. The best time to start another service is between 9:00 and 10:00 even if you have Sunday school during that time period. There are at least ten important things to consider when starting an additional service.

1. Do not start a new service identical to what already exists. Instead, decide on one of three target audiences: busters (people born between 1965 and 1982), boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964), or seniors (people born before 1946). Each requires a different style of worship. Identify the key issues in the target audience (Do they see church as an option? When would they most likely attend? Why don't they attend now?). Focus groups with the appropriate age range can help you obtain this information.
2. Agree on the purpose for starting this new service. Make a statement of purpose that is measurable, theological, achievable, and controllable. If the service is different from what exists, refer to it as an addition, not a change. Introduce the service as an experiment that will be evaluated regularly.
3. Design the service to address the needs of the target audience. Do not plan it with the preferences of the present church members in mind.
4. Determine the time and place for the service. The fastest-growing time period in North America for worship is between 9:00 and 10:00 A.M. When you have multiple services, it is okay to have worship and Sunday school running at the same hour (it will not hurt Sunday school attendance). If you do not already have

three worship services on Sunday, put the service on Sunday morning. Weekday or Saturday services are much harder to establish than Sunday services. However, they will reach a different audience.

5. Spend at least six weeks communicating to your service area that you are starting this new service. This can be done through direct mail, announcements in the bulletin, radio, and so on. It is a mistake to start an additional service without telling the community. A good way to start such a service is to begin on the *first* Sunday in January and make a special invitation in the Christmas Eve services. Another good time to begin a new service is the second Sunday in September. In resort areas or in cold country, summer is a good time to initiate a new service.
6. Give the experiment at least a year's trial period before making any evaluations.
7. Make sure you have adequate leadership for whatever style of worship you intend to start. Multiple services are very hard on musicians, especially if they are being asked to develop an alternative style of worship. In some cases it is unfair to ask the current staff to provide a totally different service of worship. Additional part-time staff may be necessary.
8. If your target audience is busters or boomers, do not start the service until you have provided excellent child care and nursery facilities.
9. Be certain to have in place all the new support ministries you will need, such as ushers, greeters, a choir, and so on.
10. Put a follow-up procedure in place for guests.

Questions 3-6: How many worship options do we offer?

It is not uncommon today in nontraditional churches for worship to be held in more than one location with some of the services running at the same hour with either different teachers/preachers or video feeds of the message from one location to the other. Nor is it unusual for more than one preacher to be preaching each week. Satellite ministries can also help traditional churches that need space due to growth. Is there a vacant building nearby that the church can rent and use for some of its ministries?

Holding worship and Sunday school at the same hour results in more people spending only one hour at your church on Sunday; in other words, most of the newcomers will opt for worship, not Sunday school. However, most of these people would never be in Sunday school anyway and would not be in worship without an additional service. This arrangement results in more young adults attending worship and leaving their children in the nursery or Sunday school. But don't worry about a worship service during the Sunday school hour hurting Sunday school attendance. It will not; in fact, it will increase it. Some people will go to worship instead of going home while their children are in Sunday school. In time, some will commit to two hours.

Question 7: When was the newest service started?

In traditional churches it is usually effective to allow a new service to have eighteen months to develop before starting another service. Nontraditional churches don't seem to follow any rules here.

Question 9: Does each service have a regular choir or band?

In a traditional church it is essential to have a separate choir for every worship service. Do not rotate the choirs or allow a service to exist without its own choir.

Rotation between services is hard on old habits. It is good to allow adults to sing at two services if they wish. In a nontraditional church it does not matter if there is a choir. It is essential that if there is a group or ensemble that leads worship each member has a microphone. In a nontraditional church it is normal for every service to have a band.

Questions 11-12: On how many Sundays each year does
our adult choir sing?

Healthy churches that have choirs do not cancel their regular choirs in the summer. When relocating, most persons move near the end of the school year, and after getting settled they start looking for a church in July and August or on Christmas Eve night. The number one time unchurched young families and singles go to church is Christmas Eve. Easter is not nearly as fertile a field for reaching the unchurched as Christmas Eve. In anticipation of holiday travel, many churches have shut down their systems after the choral presentation the Sunday prior to Christmas Eve. In a similar manner, a signal is given to people when the church cuts back on their programs during the summer. When churches reduce their schedules during the summer, they tell people that it is okay to take a vacation from the organized body of Christ. This translates to many that faith is not really the most essential part of our life. Unless the church presents faith (experienced in the worship of God) as the most important aspect of our lives, persons born after 1950 do not take the church seriously. Continue worship at the same hours during the summer. Continue Sunday school during the summer. Continue the choir during the summer. The adult choir should sing even when the children's choirs sing. If you live in a warm climate, air-condition at least the sanctuary.

In nontraditional churches it is normal for the band to play year round. The service isn't a service without the music.

Question 14: How many Christmas Eve services does our
church offer?

As I have already noted, Christmas Eve is one of the most important days of the year. Often, more first-time visitors will attend on this night than on any other day of the year. Send out a Christmas card to every home within a thirty-minute drive from the church inviting them to the Christmas Eve services. The most popular times for worship on Christmas Eve night are 5:00, 7:00, 9:00, and 11:00. Candlelight is advised. Families with children might be encouraged to attend at 4:30 or 5:00 (let the children present a musical); a contemporary service may be offered at 7:00; a candlelight service with communion may be held at 9:00; and a traditional service may be offered at 11:00. However, in most areas attendance at the 11:00 service is waning.

Action Items for Adding Worship Services

1. If you have only one service, add one that is different from the present one. Focus on the largest adult age group in the area within ten miles of the church.
2. If your largest service on Sunday morning is 80 percent full, start another service on Sunday morning no matter how many services you already have on Sunday morning.
3. If you are a traditional church and do not have a regular choir in an existing service, develop one for that service.
4. If your choir does not sing every Sunday in each service, ask it to do so.

5. If any of your present Christmas Eve services are 80 percent full, add another Christmas Eve service.
6. If you are a traditional church with a contemporary service, make sure there is a contemporary service on Easter and Christmas.
7. Nontraditional churches should experiment with multiple preachers.

Growth Principle 9: Growth Is Directly Related to the Leadership Strength of the Pastor (Key Questions: 3-4, 6-16)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 60-62; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 25-37.

Questions 3-4: Do we experience long pastorates?

The average pastoral tenure in growing churches in the twenty-first century is fifteen to twenty years. The same is true for staff. When there is a match between the pastor or staff members and the church, encourage the pastor and staff to stay. However, the longer the pastor and staff stay, the more time away they will need for reflection and personal growth. Churches that change pastors every two or three years usually have some deep-seated problem within the lay leadership or they are very small churches that just can't keep a pastor because of limited finances.

Questions 6-16: Is our pastor a leader?

For the relevant data, see questions 27-37 on the Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls). The average score among two hundred churches surveyed for questions 6-16 is 2.30. If you compare the average of these scores with the scores on Growth Principle 1, question 7, and Growth Principle 7, question 6, they should be within .50 in either direction to be reliable.

I have never seen a church whose transforming vision began with someone other than the pastor. I am sure it happens, but I think it is rare. In growing churches the pastor and staff must take the laity where they would not go on their own. Mistakes are inevitable when churches are traveling into new areas. Pastors must delegate everything possible. The more they delegate, the more laity blossom and the more people are reached for Christ.

Some pastors are very effective in a church of one size and not effective in a church of another size. This is because churches of different sizes need different types of leadership skills (see the chart below). The world into which we are moving will be a diverse world of choices. To reach this world, pastors will have to be able to converse with a wide variety of lifestyles and value systems without feeling threatened. The ability to mediate between generations is essential. If the composite score of these answers is .50 above the average, ask why.

Relationship between Stages of a Growing Church and Leadership Skills Needed				
Stage of Development	Tendency in Attitude	Church Process Needs	Reason	Leadership Skills
0-199*	Survival “Water testers” “We can’t do that”	Recruitment	Ministry needs larger than pool	Catalyst, Change agent, Risk taker, Partnership, Entrepreneurial
200-499*	Resistance to change “We have arrived”	Training	Difficulty assimilating change; Pastoral staff overworked and ministry understaffed	Anticipates, adjusts to, and interprets change; Chief Operating Officer; Prioritize
500-999*	Confused about role of staff, laity, policy and procedure	Identifying	Large size and unknown quantity of pool	Visionary Decision maker Delegation
1000+*	Aloof Cold Fragile Tradition	Deploying	Reliance on staff and not enough staff	Preacher and Strategist
*Denotes average worship size				

Action Items for Valuing the Leadership Strength of the Pastor

1. If there is a match between your pastor and the church and if your pastor has the talent or is willing to develop the skills to lead the church, what do you need to do to keep the pastor for fifteen to twenty years?
2. Provide a minimum of fifteen hundred dollars in your budget per program staff person for continuing education.
3. If you are a traditional church, provide one program staff person for every one hundred people in worship, including children.
4. If the pastoral scores are way out of the norm to the negative side, encourage your pastor to work on his or her skills; however, make sure that a handful of people did not drive up the average by marking eight, nine, or ten on all the scores.

Growth Principle 10: Growth Is Directly Related to the Attitude of the Paid Staff (Key Questions: 1, 2, 6-7, 9-11, 18, 19)

Data Source: Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 38-42; Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 63-76.

Question 1: What is the main responsibility of the paid staff?

Healthy churches do not pay staff to do ministry. Staff is paid to equip the laity to do ministry. Staff does not replace volunteers. Staff identifies laity for ministry, recruits and deploys laity into ministry, and equips laity for ministry. The key text here is Ephesians 4:11-12. Hiring staff to do ministry is the number one mistake of traditional churches.

Most staff should be able to begin paying for themselves in two years through the number of volunteers they bring into the church. If you have the right staff you will begin to see the number of volunteers/servants grow exponentially.

Question 2: How many paid staff do we have?

The goal in a traditional church is to have the equivalent of one full-time paid program person for every hundred people in worship (including children, even if they are not in worship). More staff is needed today than in the 1950s because the world we live in today is far more complicated. In the 1950s, the nuclear family of Mom, Dad, and the kids came to church. Today, there are many types of families. In the 1950s, the church had very little competition for the lives of children and youth. Today, the church finds itself competing with a variety of things that pull children and youth away from the church. In the 1950s, the Judeo-Christian value system was reinforced in the home, the schools, and the church. Today, only the church reinforces the Judeo-Christian value system. Drugs and gangs were not nearly as widespread in the 1950s as they are today. Today, people are more mobile than they were in the 1950s and most often do not have an extended family nearby to help in times of crisis. In other words, it is far more difficult today than it was in the 1950s to minister to people and to equip them for a life that follows Jesus Christ.

Program staff includes the pastor and any paid staff members who work directly with people, with the exception of part-time musicians who are support staff. Music directors are considered program people only if they are serving as the equivalent of a full-time staff person and are constantly increasing the number of people involved in the church's music programs. Program staff should be able to function, most of the time, on their own with minimal input from the senior pastor.

The primary role of the lead pastor is to create an environment in which people are transformed and grow in Christ rather than being a nuts-and-bolts type of pastor. The larger the church, the truer this is. Support staff includes the organist, the pianist, any children's choir leaders, all handbell players, secretaries, custodians, administrators, business managers, and so on.

If the area around your church is highly populated, it is not necessary to be able to afford the staff when you hire them. If you have enough money to pay them for one year, and you get the right staff, they should be paying their way in one and a half years.

Count your present program and support staff in terms of total full-time staff members. (For example, two half-time staff members equal one full-time staff member.)

The best order in which to bring program staff on board is (1) Worship Leader; (2) Lay Mobilizer; and (3) Outreach (evangelism). Do not make the mistake of most churches and make your first hire a youth director. Start with worship and succeeding hiring will be more affordable.

Nontraditional churches will find that it is almost always better to hire from within the church than to go looking elsewhere. They also find that academic credentials

aren't nearly as important as demonstrated credentials so they focus on skill and passion rather than credentials.

Questions 6-7: How do the pastor and the staff relate?

If the scores from questions 39-40 on the Official Body Survey are over 3.10, investigate the relationship between the pastor and the staff.

Questions 9-11, 18, 19: How are staff meetings managed?

These questions are important only if you have the equivalent of more than two full-time people on staff. The primary role of the senior pastor in multiple staff settings is to cast vision. See chapter 7 of Bill Easum's book *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers*. Staff meetings need to be held weekly or daily for short periods of time. Staff meetings should be more vision oriented than nuts and bolts. Don't do "calendarizing" at staff meetings. Have someone do it before and hand it out at the staff meeting.

The larger the staff, the more important retreats become. Poor time management is rampant in church staffs. Most cities have short-term business courses on time management. If these are too expensive, see if you have a member who either teaches time management or knows someone who could volunteer to come in and work with the staff.

Action Items for Encouraging a Growth-Oriented Attitude among the Paid Staff

1. Pay staff only to *equip* laity to do ministry and then get out of the way. If you are paying staff to *do* ministry, you may need to compose new job descriptions.
2. If you are a traditional church, add enough staff to equal one staff person for every one hundred people in worship. If you are a nontraditional church, hire enough staff to equal one full-time person for every one hundred in worship up to two hundred, and then one for every two hundred thereafter.
3. Before hiring, have a clear picture of where your church is going and how this new staff will help you get there.
4. Don't be afraid to hire from within.

Growth Principle 11: Growth Is Directly Related to the Unpaid Staff's Perception of the Congregation's Size and Ability Rather than Reality (Key Questions: 1-19)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 77-80; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 43-57.

Question 1: Are we small, medium, or large?

Most churches do not realize how large they really are compared to other churches. The more clearly they understand their comparable size, the easier it is for them to take bigger steps of faith.

Questions 2-3: What is our perception of our size?

These two questions give you a reality check on how the leadership perceives the size of the church. Comparing the answer to question 2 with the answer to question 1 will show you how accurate or inaccurate your leadership's perception is.

Questions 4-15: How is our lay leadership functioning?

The composite average of all the scores for questions 4-15 is 4.1. You will notice this is higher (more negative) than the average of the scores evaluating the pastor's leadership. (I've never seen a church where the scores for the laity were lower than those for the pastor; if your church is an exception, please call me!) This means that laity do not appreciate their own skills as much as they do their pastor's. If you want your church to grow, the laity need to understand that they have incredible spiritual gifts to offer to the body of Christ. Raising the leadership's understanding of their importance to actual ministry is essential. As churches grow, leadership requires a considerable amount of training in order to keep up with the accompanying dynamics of growth. Leaders in small churches operate differently than leaders in a large church. For example, personnel committees can evaluate a pastor, but it is impossible for them to evaluate three or four staff people they never observe on the job. As the church grows, it is best if the pastor evaluates the rest of the staff or if the staff evaluates one another. Trustee committees can handle property issues in a small, Sunday-only church. In a larger, seven-day-a-week church, it is impossible for trustees to care for the property in a timely fashion.

All finance and trustee people will benefit from a good, solid training session on the best way to be good stewards of the foundation money in light of the different ways in which baby boomers and busters approach the subject of money. An excellent book on this subject is Lyle Schaller's *44 Ways to Increase the Financial Base of Your Church*. In churches with over two hundred in worship, personnel and finance people will benefit from reading Lyle Schaller's *The Larger Church and the Multiple Staff*. *The Abingdon Guide to Funding Ministry* is an outstanding almanac for good stewards. *Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church*, by Kennon Callahan, is also excellent. (See Recommended Reading on our Web site. Simply go to www.easumbandy.com, click Free Resources, then click Library.)

Question 16: How long do lay leaders lead?

In traditional churches, it tends to be best to limit the tenure of people holding office to three years to avoid power blocs within the decision-making process and to avoid burnout among people who are not power hungry. Also, such problems are less likely to occur among those people who are truly exercising their spiritual gifts. Nontraditional churches can ignore this question.

Question 19: How do we raise up leaders?

Adult leadership is *the* most important component to a thriving church. It is essential to have some form of farm system for raising up future leaders. This system needs to be one that takes people from being non-Christian to being the spiritual leadership of your church.

Action Items for Improving Perception of Ability

1. Provide training sessions for lay leaders to learn the differences between how a small church and a large church function.
2. If your composite average for the scores to questions 4-15 on the Ministry Audit falls above 4.45, you need to work on leadership development or self-image or conflict management.
3. Have your church members read Lyle Schaller's *The Larger Church and the Multiple Staff*, published by Abingdon Press.

4. I recommend that all lay leaders read the following books: *Unfreezing Moves* and *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers* by Bill Easum, and George S. Hunter III's *How to Reach Secular People* and *Church for the Unchurched*, published by Abingdon Press.
5. If you do not have a system for raising up new leaders, design one and implement it.

Growth Principles 12 through 16: Space, Distance, and Visitors

Growth Principle 12: When 80 Percent of Any Space Is in Use, It Is Time to Start Making Plans for More Space (Key Questions: 1, 3-4, 6-11)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 81-92; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 58-59.

Question 1: What level of commitment do we expect?

A high level of commitment is one of the key factors I see in every growing congregation. God does not honor leadership that is half-committed. If the majority of your leadership does not answer "high," you need to raise your church's expectations concerning its commitment level. This begins with a deeper appreciation of what it means to be a servant of Jesus Christ and of the absolute uniqueness of what the Christian church has to offer. Among the staff and key lay leaders is where this deeper commitment must begin. Usually, the problem lies with staff and laity who feel entitled to grace and do not act as role models of commitment.

Question 3: How much space can we use?

Anytime any facility is 80 percent full, it is time to provide more space. It is next to impossible to sustain growth beyond the comfort level of 80 percent capacity. This applies to everything the church does. The 80 percent rule is an invisible but powerful presence that works like the law of gravity. No one will tell you he or she is not coming back because the sanctuary, nursery, parking lot, or Sunday school class is more than 80 percent full. In fact, no one really notices that the space is 80 percent full. It just feels uncomfortable. In the western states, the comfort level can be as low as 75 percent.

Question 4: Do we need more worship space?

Anytime your main worship service is 80 percent full, growth is seldom sustained over a two-year period without adding another service or more space. If you do not do this, nothing else will matter. Consider this: It is immoral to continue to allow people to join the church while your worship attendance average remains the same because the primary worship service is too full. The same is true for parking. Educate your leadership on this important item. If your worship attendance average has been up and down like a yo-yo over a ten-year period, one of three things will be true: (1) you have had a new pastor at each high attendance point; (2) your largest worship service is at the 80 percent limit; or (3) your parking is at the 80 percent limit.

Question 6: Do we need more space for the choirs?

A full choir is good, but it does discourage people from joining the choir. Perhaps you need more choirs or you need to start that second or third service so that each service has its own choir.

Question 7: Do we need more nursery space?

The nursery needs to be the nicest room in the church. It also needs to be on the same level as the sanctuary. A paid sitter who also recruits volunteers is essential. It is also best if there is some consistency in the attendance of this person. Parents are used to seeing a familiar face when they drop their children off at day care.

The nursery should be open anytime the church is open. Separate the cribbers, crawlers, and walkers. Provide the visitors with a small brochure on the nursery. In growing churches it is best to require identification from parents as they are leaving a child in the nursery. Some churches require parents or caretakers to leave their drivers' licenses. Remember that kidnapping by noncustodial parents is a major problem. Check under "Nursery" on our Web site. Simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs.

Question 8: Do we need more education space?

This question is important only for traditional churches. Small groups that meet in homes take the place of supplement Sunday school in nontraditional churches.

Questions 9-11: Are the Sunday school classes full?

If any classes are filled to over 80 percent capacity, rearrange the classes to avoid as much of the problem as possible. Often, churches have small groups of older people meeting in rooms much too large and large groups of younger people meeting in rooms much too small because the older groups have met where they are for a long time (they used to need the space). Classes that do not want to move to make room for more people to learn about God do not understand what it means to follow Christ. If there are no rooms available, consider having classes in the pastor's office, in the kitchen, in hallways, and wherever you can find space.

Action Items for Providing Adequate Space

1. If the commitment level is not high, step up the preaching and teaching on servanthood. Staff should be role models of higher commitment. I am not suggesting that the solution is simply that "staff should try harder"; rather, I am emphasizing how the staff's commitment affects a congregation's perceptions of its own ability.
2. If you are over the 80 percent mark in worship, the first step is to add another service or a larger sanctuary or both.
3. If your choirs are full, provide more choir space or assign one distinct choir to each worship service.
4. Make the necessary nursery changes indicated by your analysis under question 7. This is one of the most important and urgent changes to make.
5. If your Sunday school is too full, either add another service, build, or start a small-group ministry that meets in homes. For small-group material, see the resources listed under "Small Group Ministries" on our Web site. Simply go to www.easumbandy.com and click Free Resources and then FAQs.
6. Find another location for Sunday school classes that are filled to over 80 percent of capacity.

*Growth Principle 13: Growth Is Encouraged When Parking Is Adequate
(Key Questions: 1-8)*

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 93-99; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), question 60.

Question 1: Does our church own enough land?

A minimum amount of land for a church in the twenty-first century is ten acres. Most churches planning on effective ministry are purchasing over thirty acres. If you plan to persist as a regional church, you must have eight acres. If you plan on being a megachurch (ten thousand or more in worship) you need at least sixty acres.

Questions 2-8: How many parking spaces do we need?

To figure out how many parking spaces you need, simply follow the directions. On question 2 make sure that you count the average attendance of the largest worship service during the previous year. The national average used in planning parking for major malls is 1.75 people per car. As we move further into the twenty-first century, more people will come to church in a ratio of one person per car. Studies also show that people tend not to walk more than six hundred feet to a door. Church parking lots are much like those at malls. If you plan on building a parking garage, keep in mind that people tend not to use them if it takes more than eight minutes to leave the garage.

When building a new sanctuary or developing a master plan, do not place the sanctuary near the street in front of the parking. Instead, put the parking lot in front of and around the sanctuary or other buildings. Many churches make the mistake of relying on using the parking lot of a nearby business, such as a bank or a supermarket. I know of one church that had virtually no off-street parking of its own, but they had all the parking they needed across the street at a large Sears store. They never dreamed the store would go out of business, but it did, and the church's attendance is rapidly declining.

You can determine the worth of each new parking space by dividing the number of present spaces into the total amount of money you received last year. Every time you reach 80 percent of your capacity, find a way to add 20 percent more parking. There are many ways to do this: (1) The staff and members of the official body who have no trouble walking can covenant together to park on the street in order to leave room for the "yet-to-be-committed"; and (2) You may want to use the "one, two, three" method of parking used by a growing number of churches. People park bumper to bumper in rows for one-hour parking, two-hour parking, and three-hour parking. Attendants in the lot help people find the right row. One car is always kept on hand for anyone to use in case of an emergency. Provide a parking lot just for visitors.

Action Items for Providing Adequate Parking

1. Add enough parking to provide one space for every two people on the property at the peak hour.
2. Alternately, start a "one, two, three" method of parking in rows.
3. Alternately, obtain a lease on adjacent property and use that property for parking.
4. Alternately, bus your leadership from nearby parking lots.

5. Encourage the staff, members of the official body, and choir members who are in good health to sign a covenant to park off the property. Leaders today need to be seen as servants. The staff should lead the way.

Growth Principle 14: Growth Can Occur Even Though the Church Cannot Afford to Build (Key Questions: 3-6)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 100-105.

Questions 3-5: What is our total and potential debt?

Two rules of thumb for debt are helpful: (1) Keep the amount of debt service (monthly mortgage) under 28 percent of the operating budget; and (2) keep the total amount of money owed at or under two times the present operating budget, including the debt service. If you are a rapidly growing church, it is possible to build even when all you have in the bank is eighteen months of debt service payments. You can engage in a bond program. There are three ways to administer bond programs: (1) sell all the bonds, mostly to members of your church; (2) hire someone to sell the bonds, in and out of your church; and (3) contract with a bond company to loan you the money and sell the bonds to their clients. More and more churches are paying for new construction as they go so that they do not owe anything after they move in.

Question 6: When was our last building program?

Fast-growing churches can build every two or three years because of the number of new people who are joining. Unfortunately, some people believe that if they build a facility, people will show up. This has not proved to be true, especially for educational facilities. Something significant has to be happening inside the new facility that addresses a felt need of the community. In the case of a new sanctuary, if the church is providing significant ministries and the area is growing, there is usually a 25 to 30 percent jump in worship attendance the day the new sanctuary is opened. Before you build, read *When Not To Build* by Ray Bowman and Eddy Hall, published by Baker Books.

Action Items for Deciding Whether You Can Build

1. How you fund the project does not matter if the mortgage payment, including debt service, is below 28 percent of your total budget.
2. See appendix 4: Evaluating the Site, Property, and Facilities.

*Growth Principle 15: Growth Can Occur without Merely Transferring Members from One Church to Another
(Key Questions: 1, 4-6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)*

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 106-117; The Worship Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Worship Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls); Chamber of Commerce.

Question 1: How are people joining our church?

How people are joining is very important, even though membership loss or growth means very little to the health of a church. Most mainline churches will lose 50 percent

of their present membership to death over the next twenty-five years. It is better for churches to focus on worship attendance than on membership. The goal is for the people joining by profession of faith (unchurched people) to outnumber the total of people joining by any other method. It is not healthy if the majority of the professions of faith are by confirmation of youth. So the number in the second column is very important. The farther we go into the twenty-first century, the more likely people will have no church background.

Questions 4-6: How far do our members drive?

The number of miles and minutes people drive to work often determines the number of miles and minutes people will drive to church, especially if the church is located along the same route they drive to work.

Question 8: Who are the unchurched in our area?

If you do not have a demographic study, call the Chamber of Commerce to get this information. Churches make a major mistake when they ask their members what should be done to reach the community. Church members have very little understanding of the needs of people who have never gone to church. Once a person has been a member of a church for five years, they have a difficult time understanding the needs of the unchurched.

Question 9: Which group is not being adequately ministered to?

Often it makes no sense to do something that other churches just like you are doing. Ask yourself whether these churches are just like you and whether what they are doing is of significant quality. Are they targeting the same kind of people you are? Look for the gaps, where your church can do what other churches are not doing and reach people whom other churches are not reaching.

Questions 10, 11: Is the population of our county or region growing, and are we keeping pace?

If the population of the area has grown over the past ten years, the church should have grown at or beyond the same rate. However, just because the population is not growing does not mean that the church should not grow. Studies show that communities that experience "turnover" are just as fertile to the church as areas that experience population growth. Turnover growth happens when younger families move into a community as older members of the community move away.

Question 12: Are the schools in our area full?

If the schools are full, the church should be full of children. However, often the schools are full of children of different ethnicities than those within the church. This raises a question of morality for the local congregation. Is the church ignoring a minority in the area or has the area changed so much that the majority is now the minority? If that is the case, what do you need to do to reach the changing neighborhood?

Action Items for Seeking Nontransfer Growth

1. Obtain a demographic study or call the Chamber of Commerce to learn more about the community.

2. Decide if the answer to question 9 is worth pursuing.
3. Strategize about how you can reach more adults by profession of faith.
4. What ways can you better become acquainted with your neighborhood?

Growth Principle 16: Growth Almost Always Occurs if the Congregation Is Friendly toward Visitors (Key Questions: 1-3, 5-6, 8, 9-10, 14, 17, 19)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 118-132; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 61-65.

Question 1: How much advertising do we do?

The larger the church, the more important it is to spend 5 percent of the budget for advertising. The Yellow Pages are the place to begin. Place an ad that stands out and gives a clue about the nature of the church. Avoid the newspaper unless you put your ad in the entertainment or sports sections. Radio advertising during drive time is an excellent way for churches of all sizes to target the people they are trying to reach. Direct mail is useful if you mail to the same people six times during the year. The only exception to this rule is a Christmas card inviting people in the community to the Christmas Eve services. Television is very helpful to large churches with over a thousand in worship. Thirty-second television spots six or more times during the week, supplemented by a broadcast of either the worship service or a portion of the worship service on Sunday and at one other time during the week are good. Flyers are the most useless form of advertising. Churches small and large are placing home pages on the World Wide Web. These advertisements include e-mail boxes for the staff, announcements, service times, and links to sites all over the Internet. The cost of advertising in cyberspace is less expensive but that might change in the next few years.

Questions 2, 3: How many new families visit each week
and how many join?

These are important indicators of the future growth of a church. The goal is to contact all the people who visit your church (including the people from out of town you may never see again). Studies show that traditional churches must respond within twenty-four hours to those who decide to give you their names, addresses, and phone numbers. This contact needs to be personal and made by the pastor in a church with fewer than four hundred in worship and by laypeople in the larger church. The layperson can call the visitor on the phone or make what some call a "doorstep visit," taking a gift of some kind and not going inside the door. The key to assimilating new people is introducing them to five to seven new people whom they will consider to be good friends within the first three months of their visiting.

Questions 5, 6: Are we contacting unchurched people?

Studies show that growing churches spend a minimum of twenty hours per week seeking ways to reach and respond to those unchurched people around them and those who attend. The staff does research and training, and laypeople do the research and responding. In small churches, usually the pastor responds to visitors. Often, in order to allow the pastor to do this, churches have to reduce the number of meetings they

require the pastor to attend. As the church grows, laypeople are trained to do most of the responding to visitors. In nontraditional churches, the major emphasis is on getting new people into small groups.

Question 8: Is every church event a point of entry?

Use every event as an opportunity to invite people to consider the Christian faith and as an opportunity to register the people attending. This applies to everything: musicals, bazaars, fairs, community dinners (consider offering a door prize at the appropriate events so that you can get names, addresses, and phone numbers from the registration forms). Be sure to follow up within the week on those who sign in. Churches tend to make the mistake of not seeing all events as an opportunity to reach into the lives of the unchurched. The best example is weekday childcare. Many churches rent out their facilities to childcare services instead of offering these services themselves. This is a major mistake. Weekday childcare has been one of the best ways to reach into the lives of the unchurched. A church should avoid focusing solely on its membership.

Questions 9, 10: Are we building a mailing list?

Put visitors on the mailing list the first time they register. Send them a letter from the pastor, the newsletter, and a gift and invite them to a small group. The invitation should be extended by the small-group leader or by a friend within the small group.

Studies show that friendly, brief visits to first-time visitors within thirty-six hours after they attend will cause 85 percent of them to return the following week. If this home visit is made within seventy-two hours, 60 percent will return. If it is made more than seven days later, 15 percent will return. If the pastor makes this call, each result is cut in half. A phone call by a layperson or the pastor instead of a personal visit cuts results by 80 percent. This immediate response by a layperson is the most important factor in reaching first-time visitors. The average person today visits several churches before deciding on a church. This means he or she may not come back for six weeks. By then, the average person decides which church to return to based on the friendliness and helpfulness of the members. If you wait until they return the second time, you lose 85 percent of your visitors.

Concentrate on building your prospect list. You can pick up names from Sunday registration, from contacts members encounter in the daily routine of business, from real estate transfers, from marriage notices in local newspapers, from families who move into homes next-door to members, from the welcome wagon, from birth notices, and from registration forms for any church programs attended by visitors.

Think of newcomers as “guests” instead of “visitors,” and members as “hosts” instead of “greeters.” Develop a consistent and workable registration of your visitors at every service, including the Christmas Eve service. The typical registration pad is not the best way to take registration. It does not get most people to register, nor does it get any confidential information. By the time the pad gets to the end of the pew, the rest of the worshippers are doing something else and there is no pressure to sign in. If the pad is passed back to the original position, everyone has the opportunity to see who is on the roll. This is not good because many unchurched boomers and busters want to be anonymous.

Instead of the traditional registration pad, place individual, confidential response cards in the bulletins or on the backs of the pews. Everyone registers at the same time. Encourage everyone to write any prayer requests on the back of the cards and fold

them over. Take registration during worship and have the ushers collect the cards right then. Do not do it before the worship service begins. Allow guests in worship to be anonymous if they wish. Do not single them out during worship by asking them to hold up their hands or having them stand or having the members stand. Do not pass the traditional registration pad down the aisle and ask the people to see who on the row is a guest and say hello to them.

Question 14: Do we designate visitor parking?

Designate ten parking spaces for visitors close to the sanctuary door. Paint “Guests” on the curb, car stops, or pavement, and put signs up telling visitors that such parking exists. Downtown churches with limited parking need to change “reserved for staff” to “reserved for visitors” on Sunday. Downtown churches with on-street parking can put out A-shaped signs that say “Visitor Parking” and take them down after worship.

Question 17: Do we provide information packets for visitors?

No one should leave a church without having the opportunity to take information home or receive it in the mail. The younger the person, the more important it is that the information be available on a short video instead of print.

Question 19: Do we have a decision booth?

Information booths for people arriving is one thing; it is quite another thing to have a decision booth after worship where people can share any spiritual decision they made during worship. In the case of salvation, they can receive prayer and a packet full of resources for new Christians. To see a decision booth called “Say Yes” go to <http://easumbandy.com/resources/index.php?action=details&record=1154>.

Action Items to Capture Visitors

1. Provide 5 percent of your budget for advertising.
2. Set a goal of doubling the number of first-time visitors if you have fewer than five per week.
3. Respond to visitors within twenty-four hours. Use laypeople.
4. Establish a gift ministry. This means having laypeople deliver a plant, a loaf of bread, or some gift made or grown by the congregation to first-time families within two hours of their visit. To do this you will need color-coded registration cards—one color for members and one for visitors. Take up the cards during worship, sort them during worship, and have the gift, a map, and the gift card ready to be picked up by volunteers after worship and delivered on their way home. Most cities have vendors that provide 8” x 11” “key” maps that break the city into small segments. These are the best kind of maps to give to the people delivering the gifts. Request that the volunteers not go inside; these are “doorstep visits.” Using this method, people do not have to go home and then go back out. They can deliver the gift on the way home. Be sure to register attendance on Christmas Eve night.
5. The staff needs to spend twenty hours a week on evangelism.
6. Look at the events you have planned and find ways to involve unchurched people in them.
7. Build up the visitors’ mailing list by putting first-time visitors on the list.
8. Provide more visitor parking.

9. If you have access to the World Wide Web, use your Web browser to search for the word *worship* and check out how many churches are advertising or conducting communications through the Internet. This number will continue to grow as a major source of communicating with the baby busters and millennials over the coming years.

Growth Principles 17 through 19: Money, Planning, and Change

Growth Principle 17: Asking for Money Encourages Growth (Key Questions: 1, 4-6, 9-11, 14, 17, 19-21, 26, 28)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 133-158; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 66-68.

Question 1: What are our budget totals?

For the purpose of this section, combine operating and building budgets into one figure. The vast majority of churches have seen their budgets increase over the past ten years even though their worship attendance is declining. Increasing income is never a sign of strength or vitality. However, since that fateful day of September 11, 2001, many church and denominational budgets have begun to decline. We expect this trend to become much worse in traditional churches over the next two decades.

Question 4: Do we do a pledge drive for the annual budget?

Traditional churches need to do annual pledge drives for the budget and involve at least one-fourth of their congregations in the preparation for the actual week or Sunday of gathering the pledges. A minimum of three weeks' preparation is necessary so that everyone is aware of the coming pledge drive and has time to think about his or her pledge. Traditional churches that do not do a pledge drive are losing a sizable portion of their potential income. Traditional churches need to hold a stewardship drive each year if they want to develop solid stewards and budgets. Most churches that rely on a "faith promise" type of stewardship seldom have an annual average giving of one thousand dollars per person in worship, including children.

Nontraditional churches may be more likely to focus exclusively on tithing and beyond tithing for their income. They may not do capital fund drives for large projects or they may raise the money up-front. In these churches, tithing is expected of all of its key leaders and is considered to be a goal for everyone in the church. Traditional churches transitioning to nontraditional need to exercise great caution in making the shift from pledging to tithing. In most cases it takes years to make this transition.

Nontraditional churches that do not do pledge drives can skip questions 4-11, 14-18.

Questions 5, 6: When and how often is our pledge drive?

The best time to conduct a stewardship drive is usually between January and Mother's Day. This means that pledges would not follow a calendar year.

Questions 9-11: What is our average pledge?

Is the actual number of pledges increasing? Is the average amount of the pledges increasing each year? Growing churches need only 70 percent of their budget covered by the pledges. As the church grows beyond a half-million-dollar budget, the percentage of the budget covered by pledges needs to decrease.

If you have demographics for the area, you need to consider the relation between your budget and the average household income of your members. The goal is for the average family to give 3.5 to 5 percent of its total household income to the church. Average church members in traditional churches give around 2.5 percent of their annual household income. In an exceptional church the average giving will reach up to 5 percent of the annual household income. Also, the more money people make and the larger the home they live in, the smaller the percentage of their income they tend to give.

Question 14: Do we contact new members for a pledge?

Traditional churches need to be intentional about asking new members for pledges within the first month after they join. Develop a method of getting a pledge from each new member of the church. Perhaps start asking them during the membership class. You may want to develop a team of laity who feel comfortable calling those who have not made a pledge. As soon as a person joins, the pastor should send him or her a letter of welcome. This letter should be followed by a letter from the finance chairperson explaining the mission and ministry of the church and its cost. This letter should focus on the mission and ministry, not the financial cost. Enclose a commitment card. If the new members do not return the card within two weeks, do no more at this time until they are welcomed into a small group. Many nontraditional churches (much like synagogues) require a pledge before joining, though many nontraditional independent churches prefer not to have “membership.”

Question 17: How are our stewardship campaigns conducted?

It is best not to use the same stewardship campaign more than two or three years in a row. Churches with over three hundred in worship with a large number of people born between 1946 and 1964 need to consider “target stewardship” instead of generic mailings. Targeted stewardship is customizing mailings and small-group sessions around the actual amount people are presently giving to the church. To see such a program go to www.easumbandy.com and click “Store.”

Question 19: Do we encourage designated giving?

Designated giving always results in more income in traditional churches and better stewards if a large portion of the congregation is under forty-five years of age. Designated giving will not harm the general budget of a traditional church. Non-traditional churches talk about second-mile giving or “beyond the tithe” giving.

Question 20: Do we have regular special offerings?

It will help traditional churches to have two or three special offerings for the budget during the year: at Easter, during summer, and at Christmas.

Question 21: How much does each worshipper give?

The minimum goal for a traditional church is to reach an average annual gift of one thousand to fifteen hundred dollars per person, including children. The amount is double in nontraditional churches.

Question 26: What are our financial resources?

Many traditional churches have enough money squirreled away in a variety of accounts to turn themselves around. Often these funds have been lying around in these accounts for several years. No one is ever helped to mature in Christ by money gaining interest in the bank. Your task is to put that money to good use. Quit waiting for a rainy day. How much of this money absolutely cannot be used? How much is really designated for a specific item or ministry? It is better to use this money for new ministries or staff that you are certain will meet a need in the community and thus lead to more people hearing the gospel in your church.

Endowments to thrive on, rather than survive on, are essential to the future of many congregations. Allow people to designate their gift to a variety of long-term options such as (1) giving without any instruction as to how the money can be used; (2) giving with only the interest to be used, designated or undesignated; (3) giving with both the principal and interest to be used; (4) giving money to be used only for building or maintenance; or (5) giving money to be used only to establish or sustain a ministry or staff person.

Use the endowment to help you thrive instead of just survive. Use it in a way that secures the future of the church's ministry. It is not a matter of whether it is used for capital improvements or whether it is used for programs. It should be used so that it doesn't become a crutch. Place the responsibility for the endowment ministry with a group concerned with ministry instead of with the trustees. This way the people will understand that the money can be used for a variety of ministries, not just for buildings. Too many churches have enough money set aside for the buildings to be taken care of long after all the people are gone.

Question 28: When was our last capital fund drive?

In a growing church, capital fund drives can be done every three years.

Question 29: Does our pastor or someone on the paid staff know what each member gives?

The issue here is that no one should be in leadership who is not doing his or her part with all areas of life, including money. Nontraditional churches understand the need for accountability; traditional churches often struggle with this one. Either they don't trust one another or they are afraid they might lose members if they are open about the money.

Action Items for Asking for Money

1. Involve one-third of the church in the leadership of stewardship education before the actual drive.
2. Change your stewardship year from a calendar year to April through March or May through April.
3. Begin an endowment ministry.
4. Set a goal of receiving 3.5 to 5 percent of the average member's household income by talking about tithing and "stepping up to tithing."
5. Nontraditional churches should never be afraid of raising the bar when it comes to teaching their people to tithe.

Growth Principle 18: Regular Strategic Mapping Must Be Done for Growth to Be Healthy (Key Question: 1)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staffdoc), questions 159-161; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 69-72.

Question 1: Do we have a clear mission statement?

Perhaps the most important thing a church can do is to understand why it exists and how it is going to live out its ministry. There are three types of statements a church needs to make in order to clarify its reason for existence. The *mission statement* is the basic, bottom-line mission of the church. It is why the church exists. It is what keeps the leaders and various teams in alignment. The more diverse the ministries of the church, the more important the mission statement is. It is seldom longer than a sentence, is easily memorized, and is general in nature. The *vision statement* is the narrowly defined mission of the church. It is slightly longer and much more specific than the mission statement. It steers individuals and teams in the direction a particular body is going and what it hopes to accomplish. A church must be clear about its bottom line in order to develop mission and vision statements. The *value statement* sets the boundaries of opportunity in which individuals and groups within the congregation can live out the above two statements without having to get permission to act. It provides the subtle boundaries that informally sanction or prohibit behavior.

The following are the mission, vision, value, and bedrock belief statements for Easum, Bandy & Associates. I have used our statements as examples only because we are not a church and our statement will not directly influence you as you develop your own statements.

Mission: Guiding Christian leaders for ancient mission in the contemporary world.

Vision: To prepare congregations and faith-based organizations for mission in the twenty-first century by training innovative leaders with a passion to grow disciples of Christ, and by providing resources, services, and networks to equip faithful and effective Christian ministries.

Core Values: Embedded and modeled in every member of EBA.

- Teams . . . instead of committees
- Accountability . . . instead of control
- Servanthood . . . instead of hierarchy
- Risk-taking discipleship . . . instead of institutional membership
- Networks and alliances . . . instead of bureaucracy
- Respect for Creator, creature, and creation
- Constant spiritual growth
- Equal emphasis on evangelism, social justice, and Christian nurture

Bedrock Beliefs: Affirmed and articulated by every member of EBA.

- Jesus, fully human and fully divine, is the irrational mystery of faith that beckons all creation into living relationship with God.

- All that matters is the gospel.
- Become all things to all people, that by all means some may be rescued (see 1 Corinthians 9:22)

Action Items for Laying a Solid Foundation

Develop your mission, vision, and value statements if you have not done so already. I've found the following questions helpful in developing a vision and mission statement:

- Will our church focus ministry primarily on the needs within our congregation or will we focus as much attention on the needs of the unchurched in the community as we do on ourselves?
- Can a church be a church without concerning itself about the unchurched around it?
- Are we going to be a church that depends mostly on the pastor for congregational care and evangelistic outreach or are we going to develop a laity-driven ministry that incorporates both pastoral care and evangelistic outreach?
- Are we going to be a program-based church that invites people to attend programs led by a professional staff, or are we going to be a small-group-based church that relies less on program and staff and more on the priesthood of the believers and the networking between members and their friends outside the church?
- Are we going to be basically a Sunday church or are we going to be a seven-day-a-week church? And if so what are our core ministries during the week?
- Will all of our ministries be conducted on the church property, or will we develop satellite ministries?
- Are we content with developing worship designed basically for people who are over fifty or who may be under fifty but have never left the church? Or are we going to also provide worship designed for people especially in their twenties and thirties who have left the church?
- What does Acts say about the role of stewardship of money in our lives, and are we living up to the New Testament understanding of tithing?
- Are we willing to add staff members to the church in order to reach the unchurched, or will we remain staffed as we are?

Three excellent resources for exploring these questions are *Moving Off the Map* by Thomas G. Bandy, *Unfreezing Moves* by Bill Easum, and *The Path* by Lauri Beth Jones.

The ability of your church to reach the unchurched people in your community depends largely on how you decide to answer the above questions.

It might also be helpful to review the essential pieces of the New Testament church: it is biblically grounded, is culturally relevant, exists to transform and disciple, mobilizes the congregation for mission, and is a community built on trust.

Growth Principle 19: It Takes More Effort to Implement Change than to Maintain the Status Quo or to Exercise Veto Power (Key Questions: 1-7)

Data Source: Staff Survey (D:\Surveys\Staff\Staff.doc), questions 162-164; Official Body Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Body Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 73-76; Worship Survey Totals Spreadsheet (D:\Spreadsheets\Worship Survey-Totals Spreadsheet.xls), questions 12-14.

Questions 1, 2: Is our church free from power cliques?

Every church has power cliques; however, the more powerful that the cliques become, the less capable of moving forward the church will be. When one or two people have the ability to sway the direction of a vote, this inhibits the church's growth. The best thing you can do is to quit listening to the negative power cliques. If you determine a handful of people are derailing the wishes of the majority, confront them with the information, and either correct the situation or ask them to leave.

Questions 3, 4: How long have we been members?

In traditional churches the longer that leaders have been members of the church, the less likely they will understand the hurts and hopes of those who have never been inside a church. If the average leader filling out the Ministry Audit is over forty-five years of age and has been a member for more than five years, it is highly important that you do focus groups with people under forty-five years of age who do not go to church in order to gain insights into who they are and how to reach them.

Questions 5, 6: How many participated in the audit?

The more people who fill out the Official Body Survey, the more accurate it will be. If you have a small cadre of leaders fill it out and the scores are high, be sure and check to see if one or two of the group answered eight, nine, or ten on many of the questions.

Question 7: Do we make summer schedule changes?

The only changes that should be made in the summer are adding ministries. For example, offer an outdoor worship service or plan more youth activities. Avoid combining worship services, changing the times, or dropping Sunday school. Cutting back in the summer is planning for a summer slump and makes the fall that much harder. Traditional churches are the worst offenders here. It is rare to find a thriving church that cuts back in the summer.

Action Items for Making Changes

1. Identify the power cliques and address the problem if they are too powerful. Matthew 18 is a good example of what disciples should aspire to be.
2. Do not reduce the schedules in the summer; instead, add to the choices.
3. As an indicator of ability to change, see the comments on the totals for the Staff and Official Body Readiness Surveys in section 3. (Hint: Use the files on the CD-ROM to compile the survey results and easily obtain these totals.)
4. In order to get an indication of how much power is given to cliques, even at the top, see the comments on how to interpret the Staff and Official Body Permission Giving Totals in section 3. (Hint: Use the files on the CD-ROM to compile the survey results and easily obtain these totals.)

