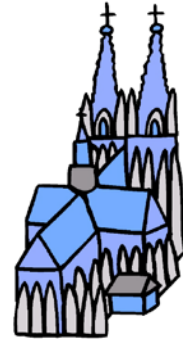


Church Size & Its Implications

Resource Section



Purpose

To expose participants to church size theory and have them apply it to their current ministry situation.

Theological Understanding

As the early church grew (for example, see the Book of Acts), it faced different issues of inclusion, acceptance, new member incorporation, and leadership. So, too, present day congregations face different issues and congregational dynamics depending upon their size. Looking at the theories and data of church size, along with our own experience and that portrayed in scripture, helps us to understand better the living work of the Spirit in our midst and will better prepare us for ministry.

Special Instructions

You may want to tailor this module by giving more emphasis or time to the congregational sizes represented by the participants. Be sure, however, to cover all sizes in your presentation. If there are multi-cultural congregations in your diocese you may want to explore in more depth how size is affected by culture.

Related Modules

- Conflict Modules I & II
- Habits, Norms and Expectations
- History-Sharing and Understanding
- Leading Planned Change
- Role Clarity

Bibliography

Beaumont, Susan. "Beyond 'Corporate': New Insights on Larger Churches". Congregations, Summer 2008, pp. 6 – 11 – a new theory using operating budget rather than ASA to look at church size transitions in larger congregations.

Gaede, Beth Ann, ed. Size Transitions in Congregations. Herndon, VA, The Alban Institute, 2001 – a collection of essays on church size and growth by a variety of authors.

Hadaway, C. Kirk. "Congregational Size and Church Growth in the Episcopal Church." The Episcopal Church Center, 2000. Download from (http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/documents/CDR_ChurchSizeandChurchGrowth.pdf) – a research study, it divides data into new church size categories.

Mann, Alice. The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations. Herndon, VA, The Alban Institute, 1998 – step-by-step approach to church growth with an emphasis on the impact the change has on congregations and their systems.

_____. Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition. Herndon, VA, The Alban Institute, 2001 – Specifically focused on this particularly difficult size transition; contains methodology for congregation to decide whether it should grow and if so, what might be needed.

Martin, Kevin C. The Myth of the 200 Barrier: How to Lead Through Transitional Growth. Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 2005 – an exploration of the cultural differences between a "small church" and a "large church" with some questions for reflection about leadership and relationships.

McCollum, Marlis. "Congregation Size: What the Research Tells Us". Congregations, Winter 2005, The Alban Institute. Download from www.alban.org (click on Publishing, then on *Congregations* and go to the Winter 2005 issue) – a summary of research from a variety of sources; would make a good handout.

McIntosh, Gary L. One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing Out the Best in Any Size Church. Grand Rapids, MI, Fleming H. Revell, 1999 – a different model of church size with clear descriptions of how size impacts pastoral relations, governance, etc.

_____. Staff Your Church for Growth: Building Team Ministry in the 21st Century. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2000 – a detailed explanation of the impact of church size on staffing and ministry.

Rothauge, Arlin. Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry. New York, NY: The Episcopal Church Center, 1995 – Volume 1 of the Congregational Vitality Series, this is the classic study on church size; out of print and somewhat outdated, it is easiest to find through the web-based Congregational Resource Guide (www.congregationalresources.org); enter the author's name or book title in the search engine.

General Outline of Session

1. Opening prayer/meditation (suggested reading Acts 11:19-30)
2. Check-in
3. Overview of church size theory (PowerPoint 1 - 13; Talking Points; Handout 1)
4. General discussion of reaction to theory, experience with congregations of different size
5. Impact of size on dimensions of congregational life (PowerPoint 14; Talking Points)
6. Small or large group discussion of characteristics of current congregations (Handout 2)
7. Large group discussion of how true to type (PowerPoint 15; Talking Points)
8. Small group discussion of implications for ministry (PowerPoint 16; Talking Points; Handout 3)
9. Large group debrief
10. Wrap-up and closing prayer

Church Size & Its Implications

Handout 1

Family size

- Under 75 ASA (47% of Episcopal congregations; 15% of the worshippers)
- Single cell
- Group-centered
- Governance: by key family or families
- Pastor as chaplain
- Fights are family feuds

Pastoral size

- 76-140 ASA (25% of Episcopal congregations; 22% of the worshippers)
- Pastor-centered
- Governance: key family(ies) still on Vestry, but new groups forming
- Pastor at center of program and new member incorporation
- Fights are over the pastor (and his/her attention)

Transitional size

- 141-224 ASA (15% of Episcopal congregations; 23% of the worshippers)
- Stretched cell
- Governance: key family(ies) still on Vestry, but many new groups, some outside influence – subgroups form
- Pastor stretched – at cusp of needing additional staff, but resources may not be there
- Fights are over inclusion, information/communication, attention of clergy

Program size:

- 225-800 ASA (15% of Episcopal congregations; 23% of the worshippers)
- Multi-cell
- Group-centered
- Governance: committees have power; Vestry moves to oversight/direction; more relational and less task-focused
- Pastor is administrator/delegator (danger of micromanaging)
- Fights are over resources and priorities

Resource size:

- 800+ ASA (0.5% of Episcopal churches; 4.5% of the worshippers)
- Multi-cell
- Pastor-centered
- Governance: staff
- Pastor is CEO of the operation; manager
- Fights are between program units and staff

Church Size & Its Implications

Handout 2

Family Size — Pastoral — Transitional — Program — Resource Size

Focus

Relationships _____ Program _____ Organization

Role of Rector

Chaplain _____ Administrator _____ Leader

Role of Vestry

Doing _____ Leading _____ Visioning

Decision Making

Informal _____ Formal

Change Driven

Bottom-up _____ Middle-out _____ Top-down

Tone of Conflict

Emotional _____ Subjective

Place your current congregation on each of the above scales.

Is the culture consistent with a given size across all the scales? What is different?

Is the culture consistent with the typical attributes of a congregation its size? What have you observed that supports your response?

What about the congregation's history, generational or ethnic/cultural make-up may be contributing to how it behaves?

Church Size & Its Implications Handout 3

Thinking about the analysis that you just made and factoring in any thoughts you might have about other aspects of church size, what are the implications for your ministry?

What are the strengths of your congregation's size (both actual and how it behaves)?

What are the challenges of your congregation's size (both actual and how it behaves)?

What do you want to do as a result?