



CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

A Church Planting Resource

Provided by

Dr. Tom Cheyney

&

www.PlanterDude.com

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Ninety-four percent of the Churches in the United States today, have an attendance of 350 participants or less. Tens of thousands of churches today never will face the need to understand critical issues necessary to break the 400 barrier in church growth. Around the 400 barrier in attendance growth, many churches start to realize that their is a new group of challenges to be faces. Issues that were before now minor, now are smack before our eyes requiring immediate attention. There are four pastoral leadership issues that require careful attention during this stage of growth. Failure to observe and confront these issues can lead to eventual plateauing and stagnation. The four pivotal issues to be considered are Pastor Tenure, Church Administration, Additional Staffing, and Characteristics of Worship.

THE PASTOR'S TENURE

The tenure of the senior pastor is very important in growing churches today. Paul Powell says, "the most important factor in determining whether a church grows or declines is its leadership." C. Peter Wagner makes a similar statement when he says, "in America, the primary catalytic factor for Church growth in a local church is the pastor." Many young churches have not yet realized this very important factor, but pastoral leadership and tenure are critical to the growth pace of the local church! Little research has been used to back up the notion that pastoral leadership is the key determinant of church growth. Many authors of church growth books use the cliché "research has demonstrated" to help strengthen their arguments, but they fail to support it with solid references.

Still other consultants use examples of large churches across America and say "look and see" as if the size validates these consultants conclusions. Just about every person in the church growth field has said at one time or another that pastoral tenure and leadership is critical to growth! I am not arguing this point. What does seem strange is the lack of solid research and justification. There are those who believe that if your church is large enough to host a church growth conference, that you ought to be able to say, "just do it the way we have," and pastors will run home saying, "I want to be like this or that church." Some of what is shared in these books and seminars may indeed work for your local church, but the best way to test these theories concerning church growth is not to study the already large growing church, but those that are on the way up and see the strength of these pastor led churches. Considering only the "superstars" gives a very distorted picture of the type of pastor it takes to achieve rapid growth because these charismatic and talented individuals defy emulation in most cases. In the words of Howard Snyder in The Problem of Wineskins, "the church of Jesus Christ cannot run on superstars, and God never intended that it should. There just are not that many, actually or potentially, and there never will be."

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Superchurch pastors are unusual individuals, many with great personal charisma and preaching gifts. Much of what they have done is because of who they are, and that cannot be copied. So rather than focusing on these churches, research should look at a wide range of growing churches, plateaued churches, and declining churches to discover if there are any characteristics held by growing church pastors which sets them apart from the pastors of churches which are not growing. Kent Hunter in his book, Foundations for Church Growth believes: A church growth pastor is not just a talented, hard-driving empire builder. On the contrary, various types of pastors head rapidly growing churches. They are not all dynamic preachers. In fact, some preach rather dull sermons!. They are not all outgoing personality types. Many are very quiet humble men. They are not all management manipulator wheeler-dealer types. On the contrary, many church growth pastors wouldn't even stand out in a crowd.

When a pastor is called to a church that appears to be stagnant in its growth cycles it will usually take quite a few years to lead a stagnant church back to growth. Lyle Schaller states, "the most productive years for the typical pastorate are years five, six, seven, and eight." Robert H. Kilgore, Church Loans

Representative at the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention says that, "these churches did not become exceptional until the pastor had served a long term in office - usually ten years or longer." Even the Here's Life Family out of San Bernadino have an opinion on tenure of a pastor. They say, "it takes a new pastor seven to twelve years to energize an established congregation."

Careful understanding should be observed with all of these statements. None of these church growth consultants are saying that the larger one's stay at a church, the faster it will grow! What is being stated is that it takes a certain amount of time to get a passive, stagnant, or plateaued church moving and a pastor's tenure is a crucial part of the formula for breaking this growth barrier.

Are there any correlations between the pastor's length of tenure and church growth? In a survey of growing, plateaued, and declining Southern Baptist churches it was found that growing churches were more likely to have pastors with tenure of four years or more than were plateaued or declining churches. Conversely, declining churches were much more likely to have pastors with

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

tenures of under two years than were plateaued or growing churches. So it would appear that longer tenure is related to church growth.

The findings of this report is that in the Southern Baptist Churches which were selected which reported in 1987 that their pastor came to the church in 1977-tenure of ten years. The growth of these churches was then examined for two year intervals, beginning with their 1975 to 1977 membership change. Results of this analysis indicated that the median percent membership change for these churches was at its lowest level for 1975 to 1977 (the median church declined 1.0 percent, meaning that 50 percent of the churches declined more rapidly and 50 percent did better). Growth then rose substantially to a median gain of 4.2 percent for 1977-1979, and to a median gain of 5.4 percent for 1979-81. Growth then slowed somewhat in 1981-83 to 4.2 percent, before dropping rather drastically to only 2.1 percent for 1983-85 and 1985-87.

The same type of analysis was performed for pastors called in 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, and 1983--all of whom remained at the same church through 1987. In each case church growth was lowest in the year the pastor came. Subsequent

analysis showed that the year after the pastor came was also generally unproductive. Growth began to pick up in the third year (second full year) and remained high through years four, five, and six, before dropping off in year seven. This suggest that growth does tend to increase along with the tenure of the pastor, but it does not do so indefinitely.

Lyle E. Schaller states that the most productive years on average for a pastor tends to be years five through eight. This research suggests, however, that for most Southern Baptist pastors the best years are three through six. The problem, of course, is that the average tenure for Southern Baptist pastors is less than three years. Thus, many churches do not experience the best years of a pastorate. Further, the cycle often continues for pastor after pastor and the result is decline. Survey results show that 25 percent of declining churches have had four or more pastors in the past decade, as compared to only 5 percent of growing churches. Research among Southern Baptist churches clearly shows that the majority of churches which grow off the plateau began to grow rapidly by the second year of a new pastor's tenure. In addition, roughly the same proportion of churches began to grow the same year that a new pastor arrived, as churches which took more than five year to see renewed growth.

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

If revitalization is to occur, it generally occurs rapidly. For some churches the process takes longer, generally six to eight years, but since few pastors stay that long or have the skills necessary to redirect a church satisfied with stability, the proportion of all breakout churches where it took this long is quite small. By contrast, many examples of rapid (but lasting) revitalization exist. The relationship between pastor tenure and church growth clearly is not as simple as has been suggested in the church-growth literature. The findings can be summed up in this way: rapid pastor turnover hurts growth, and for the majority of pastors, the most productive years for growth seems to be years three through six. However, in those few churches which have been able to grow off the plateau in dramatic fashion, renewed growth generally begins before the third year of a new pastorate or after the fifth year. Most of the largest churches in the United States do have very long-tenured pastors. But it is true as well, that very long-tenured pastors (over ten years) are more a characteristic of churches on the plateau than of growing churches. Therefore it is very important what the pastor is doing during this tenure to break growth barriers. Pastors can bring new ideas and life to old congregations. Pastors can place a high emphasis on growth expectancy as compared to the past. Pastors can emphasize the "building up" of the laity for sustained growths. The simple conclusion, then, is that it is really no surprise to find pastors with long tenures

in churches which are experiencing growth. There is really no motive for the pastor to leave, either on the part of the pastor or on the part of the church. Therefore very long tenures are more a result of growth than a cause of growth. But look at the other side of the coin. For pastors of dying churches or plateaued churches, there is also a lack of desire to leave such a church and the result in their cases is that a plateaued church is even more likely to have long tenured pastors than growing ones!

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

The second pivotal issue in breaking the 400 barrier in church growth is church administration. As a church moves past the 200 barrier in church growth and approaches the 400 barrier, it needs to make particular organization moves in order to continue growing. One of the most challenging for the church breaking the 400 participant barrier is how will the church be administrated for effective ministry? In the small church, the planning and administering is done through the church council. The church councils task is to plan, implement, and evaluate the work of the church. As the church climbs over the 200 barrier and approaches the 400 barrier in church growth, the planning and administration of the church must move from a council function to a staff function. It can no

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

longer be a council responsibility. This transition needs to be firmly in place as Carl George says, "by the time the church is approaching the 400 barrier."

When a church is small, its perceptions of executive officer, board, and ministry are tightly linked together. To most small-church eyes the tasks of these three cannot be differentiated.

At the smaller stage, the patriarchs, matriarchs, and heavy donors run the church, whether or not they are on the board. The real votes almost never take place in the board meetings. Instead, the decisions that determine whether the big donors and people of influence will back something are made in living rooms, on the phone, or over coffee. The board simply plays catch-up with what has been decided. The real power is based in an informal group, not in the pastor or board.

As a church increases in size, the oligarchy of power tends to be centered in the one or two closest friends of the senior pastor (or of the senior pastor's spouse),

plus the pastor's closest aides on the staff. This group, typically fewer than a dozen people, exercises most of the control over the church.

If such a clan is right with God, orthodox in doctrine, and balanced in its view of the church's mission, the church will accomplish great things. The board in this case merely documents and approves what has already been decided.

When a church reaches an average attendance of four hundred or so, generally the members of the board are the people who can make a difference or are the spouses of the people who can make a difference. The formal and informal power structures have come together. These boards are "dangerous," because they can actually accomplish something!

Church administration by way of staff function through boards is essential for this stage of growth. The pastor who tries to lead a church without a board or to play games with it will soon encounter great trouble. The households represented on the board are typically of the primary donors, the primary

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

influencers, the primary recruiters of volunteer energies, and even the primary conduits for reaching large segments of unchurched people.

The need for shared vision and camaraderie at the board level is so critical that it cannot be left to chance. An enthusiastic "Glad to see you! How 'ya been doing?" makes a huge difference in building an esprit de corps, as do pats on the back, good natured ribbing, and other gestures of personal concern. As the church enlarges beyond an attendance of four hundred, it becomes crucial to identify what roles are played by certain groups: (1) the chief executive officer and staff, (2) the board, (3) and the ministry leaders. Based on this analysis, certain shifts must occur to prepare for continued growth.

The team that must drive the program, provide the vision, do the planning, and create the budgets is the church staff, not the board. The term staff refers to people in management roles in a church's organization, regardless of whether they are paid or volunteer, organization, regardless of whether they are paid or volunteer, ordained or lay, full-time or part-time, as long as they meet this

qualification: They have agreed to take assignments from the senior leadership and be held accountable.

This staff then goes to the board mainly for approvals and policy. The board, as well as the other people of influence, comes to understand that the staff will provide direction, the board will provide policy, and everyone else--95 percent or more of the church--will be involved in hands-on ministry. For many pastors there is a great danger at this level of growth. The reason for this danger is that the majority of pastors have been trained to lead small churches. I realize that when they took these classes they did not know they were being trained for a small church mentality, but they were. This is why a lot of pastors have trouble breaking this 400 barrier. They have never been trained just how to break it and stay above it.

When the church is smaller, board members see themselves as the structurally empowered leaders of the church. They want to set the budget, the plan, and the dream. Then they want the paid, professional clergy to carry it out. In other words, board members designate themselves as the managers and the

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

church staff as the ministers. That leaves the majority of the church in a spectatorish, inactive role at worse, and a semipassive dependency at best. This pattern helps explain why many North American churches do not grow. If a church is to become bigger, the staff must commission ministry and take policy direction from boards. That represents a world of difference from the typical small-church arrangement. This new set of roles requires an important transfer in the focus of initiative taking. Staff member's pick up management responsibilities and keep their hand off the direct primary-care shepherding, except when they train laypeople for such ministry.

This new assignment causes dismay for many staff people who may feel the loss so deeply that they seek out a smaller church or a church with a smaller vision that will allow them a continued shepherding role. Or they feel that they do not want to handle the level of heat associated with the change. Many such staff people are too dependent on others to give them leadership to want that amount of accountability and responsibility to be laid on themselves. As a consequence, they bail out and go to places where someone else will take care of them.

Not only pastors and staff might buck the change, but certain lay members who desire a sense of power will as well. Clergy staff persons who previously allowed those powerful people to stay on the board while they themselves did the ministry must break two patterns: their own and that of their board. If lay resistance surfaces during this transition, the reason often is that the "old guard" fear that if they cannot influence who leads the church they will lose control of "their" church. Carl George says:

To grow beyond an attendance of eight-to twelve hundred, a church must have a staff-initiated leadership. The long process of making this shift, both in attitude and administrative structure, must begin when a church is crossing the four-hundred mark. It must begin to operate in a way that the staff is not driven by a volunteer-controlled board.

At this point the church has become so big that it is no longer practical for part-time workers to manage the church's co-ordination tasks. Too many details arise that cannot wait until the board convenes each month. No matter how efficient the board tries to be, it can regularly bottleneck the staff's efforts to build

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

growth momentum. George gives eight roles that a governing committee for a church breaking the 400 barrier in church growth should have. They are:

1. Authorize policy.
2. Nominate others.
3. Select the senior staff.
4. Resolve staff conflicts.
5. Implement Mission and plans.
6. Approve budgets.
7. Be a safety valve.
8. Participate in a growth regimen.

Pastors are forever having to ask themselves. "How should I spend my time?" The most strategic answer is to work with leaders, such as your staff and your board. Give them some quality time. They should expect that you will not leave them in the same spiritual condition as when they first came on the board.

ADDITIONAL STAFFING

The third pivotal issue for a church breaking the 400 participant barrier in church growth is additional staffing. W.A. Criswell says, "happy is the church who is blessed with useful staff members." He continues when he states:

"It would be impossible for me to emphasize too much the care that ought to be taken in the choice of a staff member. It is a lot easier to secure a staff member than to go through the tearful trauma of dismissing one. The dismissal of a member of the vocational church leadership is without doubt one of the saddest and heaviest assignments the pastor ever faces. The pastor can work through review committees, but ultimately the responsibility is his. He is finally chargeable for it all, both in the eyes of the people and in the actual structure of the church life."

Is there a specific sequence for adding staff to a growing church? Yes! A Most important step is for the senior pastor to understand a need for a change in role. This is necessary to be an effective leader of the eventual staff. It is a change from being a manager to being a leader. The difference, stated briefly is that

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

leaders set a direction while managers outline the steps to the destination. Many a church is over managed and underled. Far too many ministers are more obsessed with doing things right rather than doing the right things. Attention is given to efficiency than effectiveness.

A leader gives direction by calling for a vision to come into reality. A manager sees to it that the vision gets accomplished through others. "This is the way to the promised land, and the journey starts right over there," says the leader. Everything else can be done by someone else. Joe H. Cothen writes: "Few churches question their need for a pastor, but many have problems in moving beyond that point. In fact, a vast majority of churches have no paid staff other than the pastor and perhaps a custodian, and they have no legitimate needs in this area. The pastor who prepares himself and his church for the employment of staff workers is wise, and he finds himself, the staff, and the congregation happier because of his wisdom and care." There is a big difference in leading a staff between pacing and pushing ones staff. A pastoral pacesetter is always preferred to a pastor who has to constantly push his staff. There are at least four things that need to be considered when seeking the appropriate staff members.

The first step in bringing on new staff is to determine how you will disengage this person in the event the arrangement goes awry. My observation has been that a large-church pastor's first few experiences in hiring lead to a lot of bruising; then he or she copes with the pain by resolving not to hire anyone again.

Instead, pastors learning how to work in a multiple-staff situation need to deal with the root bruising, which usually stems from the assignment-and-evaluation process being mucky. If no clear expectations have been set, the level of accountability cannot be focused.

The next step is to select the best candidate. That means taking the time to evaluate at least three nominees. The cost of the interviewing process and of checking multiple references on each person is small compared with the damage, legal and otherwise, that could result if you bring on the wrong person and do not handle the termination swiftly and decently.

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Then prepare a description of what you want this next staff member to do. Remember, though, that you will have a harder time getting work out of people than hiring them. While most pastors profit from having clerical or administrative assistance, the tendency is to hire trained program-staff caliber people and then offer the new-comer no greater opportunity than that of being a sidekick.

Instead, pinpoint the results you want and determine your staff needs accordingly. My recommendation is that you hire leaders to produce new lay leaders. If staff members are not in the business of grooming leaders, then you cannot afford to hire them. A new staff member ought to be able to produce fifty new lay leaders (people who lead others) within a three-year period. A willingness to work hard because of a deep love for God and His people could also be a strong qualification for a good staff worker.

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF WORSHIP

Worship characteristics are very crucial when it comes to breaking the 400 barrier in church growth. Growing churches have a different character for

worship than in plateaued and declining churches. Though it is usually hard to define, terms such as an air of celebration, exciting, a spirit of renewal, and powerful are employed. Regardless of terms one quickly realizes that the worship experience in growing churches is one of the pivotal issues that set it apart.

Bryant Wright in The Christian Index writes of his visits to thirty six of the well known churches that are growing rapidly in the United States, "there was an excitement in the air--people were eager to get inside to worship and to fellowship with one another." It was an atmosphere which he could only describe as similar to "the crowd that gathers before a big sporting event...this is the place to be at this hour." Another word used to describe growing churches is special according to C. Peter Wagner. He says, "when a lot of people come together, hungry to meet God, a special kind of worship experience can occur. That experience is what I want to call 'celebration.'" A final word used to describe worship in growing congregations is offered by Medford H. Jones. He concludes that there is a spirit of freedom spontaneity, and even exuberance in growing churches.

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

The pastors of many nongrowing churches may realize that worship in their church is anything but a "celebration," but they do not know how it can become a celebration. Conversely, the pastors of growing churches may know that there is something special about worship in their church, but they may not understand how it got that way or how to restore the special spirit when the "celebration" begins to turn into a wake.

THREE KEY INGREDIENTS

There are three key ingredients related to worship in growing churches. The setting, content, and spirit of the worship service are crucial to understanding and then leading the church past this growth barrier.

THE WORSHIP SETTING

Exciting worship can occur in all types of churches, but apparently it is encouraged by the presence (or appearance) of a crowd. Despite the rule of thumb that a worship service in which more than 80 percent of the seats are filled is too full, such is the norm among large growing churches. In fact, in a

survey of growing, plateaued, and declining Southern Baptist churches, it was found that the worship services in slightly over 80 percent of the growing churches with large total memberships (over 485 resident and nonresident members) were more than 80 percent full. According to Lyle Schaller, "there is no question but that when all the pews or chairs are filled, this has a positive impact on the morale of the worshipers, and especially on the preacher. The appearance of a crowd creates the sense that "something is happening here." Morale is higher, as Schaller says, and it is easier to create the feeling of a "festival or "celebration." For a large church, the exciting feeling of a crowd only comes when the church is full or nearly full. When a large church is half empty, persons are scattered around the sanctuary with large spaces between them. The first five or six rows are empty. Participants do not interface much with one another. They sit and wait for the "show." The impact of a crowd is never more evident than when a congregation moves into a much larger worship facility.

Large growing churches face a dilemma. A church which is 80 percent full has little room for future growth, yet it cannot afford to lose the dynamic which occurs when large numbers of excited Christians worship together in a crowded sanctuary. This spirit feeds the growth of the church. Not only do visitors feel

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

excited and impressed, but a larger proportion of resident members will regularly attend. As Wright observed, "this is the place to be" and members will not miss the experience if they are in town.

The lesson here is that churches should never overbuild to accommodate growth for the next five or ten years. Instead, they should go to multiple services prior to new construction, and then build when these services are filled. The new sanctuary probably should be no less than 65 to 70 percent filled when the services are consolidated.

For larger churches which are not filled, efforts should be made to make the worship service seem filled--"forcing" members to sit closer to one another and removing the impression of a few people rattling around in a large room. Rows of pews can be removed from the front and rear, or the pulpit can be moved forward. Other changes may be possible. This may not immediately create a spirit of celebration, but if a church can begin to grow through other means, the worship experience can be transformed from a liability into an asset. As the church grows, and as members sit closer together, a new dynamic may be

created which enables the church to grow at an a faster rate.

Another feature regarding the setting for worship, other than size and fullness, is the appearance of the sanctuary or auditorium. Common sense would suggest that churches should be kept in good repair--and all should be. Yet it is easy to overlook the peeling paint, water spots, stained carpet, missing light bulbs, and so forth. Just as we get accustomed to the flaws in our own homes, church members get used to flaws in the church--so much so that they do not even notice the. But visitors do notice the flaws, and too many flaws give the impression that the church is having financial problems or that the members just don't care.

Appearance is less of a problem for small rural churches or for churches in older urban neighborhoods. In fact, in such settings there is no relationship between the "need for work" on the sanctuary and church growth. For large churches the situation is entirely different. They cannot get away with shabby sanctuaries. Large, growing churches tend to be in good repair. It is also true that larger churches which have grown off the plateau tend to have worship facilities

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

which are in better repair than churches which remain on the plateau. Thus, it would appear that the symbolic step of renovating, restoring, painting, or just fixing long-standing flaws can be of value in restoring morale and creating the impression that the plateaued church is about to get moving again.

THE WORSHIP CONTENT

A worship service is a dynamic mix of congregational singing, prayer, choir anthems, announcements, ritual, testimony, liturgy, solos, instrumentals, organ music, a sermon, an offering, Scripture reading, sitting, standing, and interacting with persons seated nearby. Some churches may add to this mix other elements such as a children's sermon, drama, clapping and swaying to the music, "passing the peace," a processional, a recessional, and so forth. The nature of this content, and its quality affects the character of worship in terms of meaning, enjoyment, boredom, excitement, morale, and whether one feels they have encountered God in the experience. There is no central core or worship elements or a particular style which characterizes all growing churches. As Wright concluded after his visits to many congregations, "the styles of worship varied greatly; there simply is no set formula. Some were very formal and

structure; some were very free." Still, research shows that certain styles of worship may be somewhat more conducive to church growth than others. There are at least three elements of worship to understand. They are Liturgical qualities, The message, and the quality of music.

Liturgical qualities today are characteristic of churches on the plateau than it is of growing churches (or of declining churches) in the Southern Baptist Convention. Plateaued churches are also much more formal, on average, than are declining churches or growing churches. Growing churches are less likely to have liturgy and are less formal on average than declining churches, but the major difference is between plateaued churches and churches which are not on the plateau.

Liturgical Southern Baptist churches tend to be stable, staid, and upper-middle class. Their worship may be very meaningful, but it does not tend to have the quality of celebration or revival spirit which is so characteristic of growing churches. Liturgy in Baptist churches is like caviar. One must learn to like it, and only upper-class Baptists have the inclination to do so. There are so few of

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

such individuals available that most liturgical Southern Baptist churches are unable to grow. In denominational traditions where liturgy and formality are the norm, it is not the presence of these elements which tends to restrict growth, but how they are done. Liturgical worship can be very meaningful and, in fact, it may help create a greater sense of spirituality and of an encounter with a living God, than does the traditional task-oriented conservative Protestant worship service. Unfortunately, in too many mainline churches, the services tend to produce boredom rather than meaning.

The Message is a second element of worship that needs mention. There is really not as much correlation between church growth and the style of preaching as might be expected. Some pastors may be able to cause a church to grow by the sheer force of their excellence as preachers. Such pastors are few and far between, however, and for the bulk of churches, the objective "quality" of sermons has relatively little to do with growth. More important is the centrality of the Bible in sermons, being able to generate enthusiasm in worship, the communication of a vision for the future of the church, and maintaining high morale. Which is more important? That is highly debatable, but Doug Murren, pastor of a rapidly growing Foursquare church in Washington says, "spiritual

climate control is my number one role as the pastor of my church."

The third element of worship to be considered is that of music and its quality. One interesting point for consideration, is that in a small church (35-125 participants) the emphasis is on participation, but in a large church (400 plus) the emphasis is on quality of performance!

Warren Hartman and Robert Wilson, in their study of large Methodist churches, indicate that music is more important for the members of larger churches than it is for mid-sized and small churches. A full 90 percent of large, growing churches rate their music program as excellent or good, as compared to 78 percent of plateaued churches and 53 percent of declining churches. Among smaller churches, 65 percent of growing congregations rate their music program as excellent or good, as compared to 37 percent of plateaued churches and 35 percent of declining churches. Obviously, a strong relationship exists for large and small churches. Music makes a difference to the growth of a church; so pastors, worship leaders, choir directors or ministers of music should take planning music very seriously.,

Kennon Callahan states in his book, Twelve keys to an Effective Church, "a strong music program has three parts: Planning and spontaneity, balance and variety, and quality and depth. An evangelistic church should be especially sensitive to the musical tastes of the unchurched in their community. In rural areas, a church might find that local residents enjoy traditional hymns, but if a suburban church wishes to reach the baby boom generation, it would do well to add a healthy dose of tasteful contemporary Christian gospel along with more traditional church music. Before condemning such music because of its beat, church leaders should listen to the words and ask themselves how serious are they about reaching the lost. Do we only want members who grew up in Protestant churches and who only like eighteenth-century hymns? If so, then we will have to rely on the many independent churches, which are less bound by tradition, to reach large numbers of baby boomers who were raised on rock and roll.

One gauge of success is whether or not the music stirred one's heart. If it does so for both members and visitors then music will likely help your church to grow. If it does not, then change should be made to add spontaneity, balance, variety, quality, and depth in what ever quantities your church lacks. A few elements to

also consider should be bulletin announcements which are usually boring. Prayers and long Bible readings can stall the pace of a worship service if done improperly.

THE WORSHIP'S SPIRIT

According to Kent Hunter, "worship should be a celebration." But there also are things it should not be if the church expects to grow. Hunter goes on to say worship "is not intended to be a dull, drab, funeral atmosphere." Peter Wagner adds that there is nothing unauthentic about boring worship but if it is boring, members will not be very enthusiastic about inviting unsaved friends. Research data on Southern Baptist churches tends to support these generalizations. Plateaued and declining churches are more likely to say their worship sometimes (or frequently) is characterized by monotony, boredom, and formality.

Growing churches are primarily those churches which are being successful in attracting the thirty-to forty-five year old baby boom generation. Why? This is the largest age segment of the population in its own right, and it also is the age

CLIMBING PAST 400 IN NEW CHURCH ATTENDANCE

segment most likely to have children in the home. Add the boomers and their children together and you have a huge group of people--a large proportion of whom have either dropped out of the church or have adopted a "mental member" status, where they identify with the church but rarely attend. Churches which are able to reach this group will grow because middle age and older persons are already in the churches, and young single adults are even more difficult to reach than are the baby boomers. For the majority of churches, the focus in the area of worship should be on adding variety, sound planning, spontaneity, expectation, excitement, celebration, warmth, and quality of music to their worship services.

Breaking the 400 barrier in church growth is extremely hard. Not every pastor nor church will desire to do so! But chances are that many God-gifted people in your church have not yet reached their full potential. Help them reach their potential by enlarging the tents for God.

