

## Leadership by the Numbers

Assets and Issues Game

### Connie Goodbread

Have the four kinds of growth one on each of four pieces of newsprint posted:

Organic

Maturational

Incarnational

Numeric

Have handout of simple definitions of the four kinds of growth. Pass out, discuss and answer any question that may arise about these four kinds of growth.

We can not have true sustainable growth without addressing congregational needs in each of these four areas.

## Four Kinds of Growth

### Maturational Growth

The ability of a congregation to challenge, support and encourage each one of its members to grow in the maturity of their faith, to deepen their spiritual roots, and to broaden their religious imagination.

### Organic Growth

The task of building the community, fashioning the organizational structures, developing the practices and processes that result in a dependable, stable network of human relationships in which we can grow and from which we can make a difference.

### Incarnational Growth

What are the “outputs” of the congregation’s ministry? What is it that the congregation seeks to export from its life back into the life of the world, the social environment in which it exists? What are the good works that we are doing that will make the world a better place?

### Numerical Growth

Adding new members while maintaining the numbers that are already within the congregation. Keeping track of losses and understanding why they happen. Changing the things that need to be changed in order to retain healthy

members. Never compromising ethics or principals.  
Understanding that some losses are healthy or inevitable.

Leaders - Write congregational assets on individual pieces of green paper – green is a visual for growth. (You can use post-its or regular paper.)

Put these assets in a hat, basket or a bucket and pass them around so that people can take one. Have each participant read the assets they have chosen and decide under which of the heading for growth does this asset belong. Have them put it on the appropriate piece of newsprint. (If you are using this as an outline for your congregation make up a list of your congregations assets.)

**Assets List Examples** - These are only suggested examples – make up your own list if these do not fit the congregation

Minister	Administrator	Choir
Multigenerational Worship	Adult Discussion	Committee on Ministry
Director of Education	The New UU Class	Council structure
Fair Compensation Congregation	The Chalice Class – <i>Multigenerational</i>	Sunday Morning Co- ordinator
Land	Chalice circles	Worship associates
Building(s)	Children’s classes	Volunteer accompanists
Labyrinth	Bridging ceremonies	Volunteer teachers
Memorial garden	<i>The Meaning of Membership Class</i>	Great newsletter
Butterfly garden		Volunteer staff in the office
A nursery with an attendant	Welcoming Congregation	Multi-racial congregation
Youth Group	Gay Pride march	Multi-economic congregation
Trained <i>Our Whole Lives</i> leaders	Social hour after the service	Money
Trained Adult Advisors	Quality worship services	Music Director
	Board of Trustees	

Have the group now come up with their own assets that are not on this list, write them on pieces of green paper, read them aloud and attach them to the appropriate kind of growth. Discuss.

How do the assets look?

Have participants discuss what they see.

Are there hole?

Now pass out pieces of blue paper for the participants to write issues on, one issue to each piece of paper. Let them write for a while and then have them begin to read what they have written and talk about which of the four kinds of growth the individual issue belongs under. If more issues are simulated by this discussion write them on pieces of blue paper and put them under the kind of growth they affect.

(If an issue comes up about conflict or bad behavior from a member or member of the congregation or staff impropriety those issues go on red pieces of paper – they are red flag issues. Someone who is expert trained to deal with conflict, covenantal behavior or staff issues needs to be contacted. If there is no one appropriate in the congregation – and most of the time there is not - the District Executive should be called.

You could have little red flag issues (pink) around money or communication that the congregational leadership can go ahead and deal with. Most of the time you will have no red flag issues.

Once all of the issues have been written and put on one of the pieces of newsprint discuss the pattern that is now visible.

Give everyone a break while leaders divide the issues into categories.

Divide the issues into categories:

Stewardship – the care of the congregation

Communication – internal and external

Resources – funds, people and stuff

Processes - policies and procedures

Leadership – recruit, training support

Programs – needs for maturational (child and adult) and growth and outreach classes

If these categories are not to your liking make them other names to suit your congregation.

### **Leading For Change**

Discuss change theory

Discuss congregational size theory

Systems

Hand out *Leading for Change* – Discuss

### **Visioning**

After the issues are divided have the participants come back together.

Have everyone close their eyes and get comfortable.

Take a deep breath – another – another.

It is ten years from today. This congregation has over come each of the issues on this list.

The programs are all that they could or should be.

The ministry is all that it could or should be.

The leadership is all that it could or should be.

You did it.

You made all of the changes that were necessary.

What did you do?

What did you do?

What did you do?

Give them time in the quiet to think about how they solved the issues. Then ask them to come back to the group.

Break them up into groups three to six – how ever many categories. Divide them by numbering off do not let them go to the things they usually do within the congregation or their typical interests. We need a good mix of people and creativity.

### **The Plan**

Each group will come up with a plan by answering these questions for each of the issues under their categories.

What did success look like?

How much did it cost?

Who was in charge – person, staff member, committee, council, Board etc?

Who needs to know about this plan?

Who else needs to know?

How do we tell everyone who needs to know?

Give them up to 45 minutes to come up with a plan.

Have them report back to the large group.

Have them set a date when they can all meet to talk about how the plan is going.

Remember to apply *Leading for Change*

## *Who Owns a Congregation?*

by Dan Hotchkiss

Comparisons are useful but tricky. New Testament writers compare the church to a human body, a herd of sheep, a bride, and a vineyard. Synagogues are often likened to a house, a tent, or an extended family. None of these analogies is meant to be exact or literal—a church may act in some ways like a herd of sheep, but a wise leader doesn't plan on it. Poets do exaggerate sometimes.

In the same spirit of poetic license, it may at times it may be useful to compare the clergy leader of a congregation to a corporate CEO, its members to customers or stockholders, or its staff to the employees of a charity. We can draw many useful analogies between congregations, other nonprofits, and businesses, but ultimately congregations need ideas and language of their own. It is easy to say that “the church should run more like a business,” without recognizing that in some respects the church should and does run very differently. I often ask members of a congregation's governing board to describe their job. Someone usually answers, “We're here to represent the members of the congregation.” The analogy at work here is political: the board is like a city council or the U.S. Senate, whose members are elected by the people to make law in their behalf. Most American congregations elect the governing board by congregational vote. In New England, churches of the congregational tradition sometimes actually mirror, in their structure, the town meeting form of government.

Another answer I frequently hear is, “We are ministers alongside of the pastor.” This is a powerful idea, codified in Reformed theology as the idea of the ruling elder, ordained to lead alongside teaching elders, or pastors. In current Presbyterian practice, elders are elected, but the rite of ordination makes them more than representatives; as ministers they “exercise their responsibilities according to the guidance of their own nurtured consciences and not merely as spokespersons of particular interest groups.” (Edward Le Roy Long, *Patterns of Polity: Varieties of Church Governance* [Pilgrim Press, 2001].) While not so explicit in most non-Reformed traditions, the idea that a lay board member's work is ministry is worth considering in any congregation.

Almost always, when I ask about the board's job, someone says, "The board is a fiduciary." And what might that be? A fiduciary (in Latin, *fiduciarius*, "trust," from *fides*, "faith") is anyone with a duty to act in faithfulness to the interest of another, even at cost or peril to himself or herself. A parent, for example, has a fiduciary duty to care for his or her children no matter how much sacrifice that might require. The board of a business holds the corporate assets as fiduciary for the stockholders. Since the stockholders' main interest, ordinarily, is in making money, corporate boards generally try to maximize stockholder value. If they pursue other goals—pumping up executive compensation, making sweetheart deals with other companies owned by board members, or sometimes even trying to be responsible corporate citizens—they can expect to be accused of failing as fiduciaries.

By this analogy, a congregation's board exists to represent the owner. But who is the owner? Often board members answer this question too quickly: "The owner is the congregation!" And the owner's interest? Satisfactory worship, education, social action, and so on. The fiduciary duty of a congregation's board, then, is to know what the congregation wants and to provide it.

This way of thinking sometimes produces good results, but in my opinion it is based on a false analogy. A congregation does exist to serve its owner—but the members are not owners in the same way stockholders own business corporations. Who, then, is the owner? Jesus? God? Perhaps, but a more useful answer, I believe, is "The owner of a congregation is its mission." A congregation exists to serve its mission. The duty of a congregation's leaders is to discern the piece of God's will that constitutes this congregation's mission, to articulate the mission well, and to ensure that what the congregation does will realize the mission. The "bottom line" is not the balance in the bank (important though that is) but the degree to which the mission is fulfilled.

And what is the mission? The great management consultant Peter Drucker wrote that the core mission of all social-sector organizations is "changed lives." The specific mission of a congregation is its answer to the question, "Whose lives do we intend to change and in what way?" A congregation that limits its vision to pleasing its members falls short of its true purpose. Growth, expanding budgets, building programs, and such trappings of success matter only if they reflect positive transformation in

the lives of people touched by the congregation's work.

The job of congregational leaders—boards, clergy, lay leaders, and staff—is not to “give the members what they want.” For one thing, if the only mission is to current members, the congregation will soon die. And so the mission must be not only to change the lives of members but of others yet to join. A real problem with democracy in congregations is that future members do not vote. If they did, at every meeting they would make up a majority.

Another reason congregations cannot simply “give the members what they want” is that part of the mission is to teach people to want things that they don't want. Members of vital congregations testify to many ways the congregation has drawn them out of themselves into voluntary service, sacrificial changes of career, and hard work for social justice. Sometimes I ask such people, “What would you have done if someone warned you how joining this congregation would transform your life?” Generally they admit, “I would have run the other way!” Pleasing people—members, future members, leaders, or anybody else—is not the mission. The mission is to change lives.

Who, then, is the owner of a congregation? Who plays the role of stockholders in a business? Not the members. Not the board. Not the clergy or the bishop or the staff. These all are fiduciaries whose duty is to serve the owner. Symbolically, we might say God or Jesus is the owner. But God's whole will is too big to guide one congregation. Instead, the board's job is to discern our mission, the small piece of God's intention that belongs to us. Or to put it differently, our job is to find the mission we belong to, the real owner for whose benefit we hold and deploy the congregation's resources.

## **Choice Points for Clergy (and Religious Leaders)**

from Alban Institute publications

*If your minister has only limited time available in a week how should that time be spent?  
Select A or B in each choice*

- a) Do more visiting to shut-ins
  - b) Put more time into sermon preparation?
- 
- a) Attend a wedding reception?
  - b) Go on a retreat with parish staff?
- 
- a) Call on prospective members?
  - b) Conduct a training session for church officers?
- 
- a) Visit a bereaved family?
  - b) Help two church officers resolve a conflict?
- 
- a) Make a hospital call on a fringe member?
  - b) Attend a continuing education event?
- 
- a) Engage in pastoral counseling with members?
  - b) Attend a planning event with officers?
- 
- a) Do more parish calling?
  - b) Recruit leaders for parish events?
- 
- a) Attend an activity with parish youth?
  - b) Critique a meeting with a church officer?

## Ten Reasons to Avoid Anything New Ever

The following are the most effective reasons to give if you wish to stop a good idea in its tracks! Bring these ten excuses to your next board meeting and you will be able to effectively derail any changes or improvements presented, regardless of what they are.

1. What about the budget? It will cost money and we can't afford to do what we want now!
2. I have concerns about our growth. (No matter what size we are, that is the IDEAL size.)
3. What do you want us to do about it? Everyone is too busy already. We will never find anyone to do what you are proposing.
4. I am still not clear. I need something more in writing.
5. What effect will this have on our existing programs?
6. I still have a lot of unanswered questions.
7. We have a bad history of similar projects. Someone tried to do this a few years ago and it did not work.
8. This solution does not fix another problem we have (that it was not designed to fix).
9. Other churches have tried this exact thing in the past and it did not work.
10. If we do this, then it will go to the N<sup>th</sup> degree, so we shouldn't even try any of it.

*Credit to the DBLE 1999 Organizational Development Pink Group: Mark Westergard, Michelle Bohls, LuAnn Faulkner-Schneider, Freida Gillespie, Mary K. Issacs, David Johnson, Gay Lambirth, and Gary Paramore.*