



MORLING COLLEGE

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

CONGREGATIONAL SIZES

Though there are differing suggestions of where these divisions lie, I believe the following sized congregations best describe the changing dynamics of Australian churches. Each size requires a different approach by pastors. The numbers refer to the average number of attending adults (15+ years) attending weekly worship. Congregational size is also a matter of attitude.

Small-sized Congregation (Patriarchal/Matriarchal or Family Church) [1-50/70 regular adults]

Characteristics.

- * Historically, this has been the dominant expression of protestant christianity.
- * The pastor is usually peripheral and only becomes a member of the family if adopted by the patriarch or matriarch.
- * There are strong family structures. Kinsfolk ties are very important - who is related to who. This encourages social pressure to conform to customs and traditions as well as impacting decision-making (patriarchal and matriarchal).
- * These churches are strongly relational in which relationships are usually more warm and intimate. Relationships are more important than functions/ministry.
- * These churches usually only have short pastorates (see Schaller). There is a high turnover of pastors.
- * The church is built around the ministry of the laity, especially long term members.
- * Strong emphasis on congregational decision-making (rather than representative) on all matters. Decisions often driven by history.
- * Often resilient during times of crisis – difficult to kill off.
- * Dependent upon volunteers for most tasks rather than paying for help.
- * Individuals, rather than committees often do the work. They do not have/need large organisational structure with the diaconate acting as a general committee without sub-committees.
- * High ownership for survival. It is tough and resilient as often have existed for a long time and has been able to survive a succession of disasters.
- * Care more for people than performance; that is, will have more tolerance for amateurs having a go with it not having to be a polished performance.
- * Have a place for everyone. They will accept people who may feel rejected in larger congregations. However, everyone knows their place.
- * Grapevine is an important communications network; more important than the newsletter or formal communication (gossip).
- * Members are usually better financial givers, giving according to perceived needs.
- * Much more face-to-face intergenerational activities.
- * Social meetings important. They can sometimes dominate the agenda.. Meetings tend to be longer as relationships an important part of the meeting process.
- * Demand a strong commitment of time and involvement.
- * Organ or piano is often the central instrument.

- * Limited resources and manpower.
- * Tend to devote resources to “proven” programs from one’s past - less risk-taking.
- * Reward generalists rather than specialists. It appreciates the pastor who can also fix the plumbing, etc.
- * The pastor is wanted so as to provide traditional care (a chaplain). He is a generalist or Jack-of-all trades.
- * These churches often survive by not taking the pastor’s leadership too seriously.
- * New members are assimilated by adoption. It is difficult for newer people to be part of the inner family.
- * Judicators try to merge or disband the church.
- * They are often considered “first call” churches and yet are the toughest places for new pastors. The pastors are often not theologically trained and are inexperienced.
- * These churches often survive better with unordained pastors or use a bivocational pastor; that is, a layperson who works but also has the part-time role of pastor.
- * These churches usually outlive the pastor.
- * Lay leadership becomes a permission-giving and permission-withdrawing body.
- * Planning is fairly short-term.
- * Often feel threatened by larger congregations nearby.

Implications for Pastors

- * The church may grow if a pastor stays for a long time (patience) – not a stepping stone to a bigger congregation. The longer a pastor stays, the more influence he/she gains. Often takes 10 years before becoming a leader. A crisis for the church usually occurs after 4 to 5 years if the pastor remains.
- * Loves the people – pastoral carer.
- * Pastor needs to have good interpersonal skills and be prepared to visit often and long.
- * To be people-first in theology and philosophy of ministry.
- * Needs to know everyone by name and walk alongside them in life’s transitions.
- * Expect the pastor to be readily available and willing to focus on the member’s agenda.
- * The pastor doesn’t need to be a strong preacher if he/she has good relational skills.
- * The pastor will usually succeed if he/she consults with the patriarch or matriarch. If they see the pastor as being untrustworthy, then the pastor will not survive for too long.
- * Befriend the patriarch and matriarch and work alongside them. Beware of those who would triangle the pastor in against the patriarch and matriarch.
- * Change happens slowly after much talk and discussion – key family members must be won over first. The pastor’s role is not to take the congregation in new directions.
- * The pastor ought not seek to build his/her own power-base or to control the decision-making, particularly in the first 5 years.

Medium-sized Congregation (Pastoral Church) [70-150/175 regular adults]

Characteristics

- * This church is pastor centred. The pastor visits a lot and usually has good interpersonal skills, thus being available to most of the congregation. The congregation needs someone to manage a number of parental figures.
- * The influence of the patriarch and matriarch diminishes.
- * The pastor attracts others to the congregation.
- * The congregation prefers a pastor who is theologically trained.
- * Everyone knows everyone, though more on the surface. There is usually a sense of belonging.

- * There is normally one worshipping community.
- * Loss of perceived intimacy experienced previously in a “family” church.
- * Less intergenerational activities.
- * Some decision-making authority delegated to others (e.g. pastor and deacons).
- * More of a willingness to give new things a try - greater risk-taking.
- * Local family structures not as influential.
- * Sense of loss of power by some long-term members.
- * The need for small groups begins to emerge.
- * Other musical instruments besides the organ.
- * Some speciality areas need developing (e.g. Sunday School, Youth).

Implications for Pastors

- * Communication procedures need to be more formalised without neglecting the grapevine.
- * The pastor needs to have strong interpersonal skills with direct involvement with the highs and lows of people’s lives.
- * Pastor has contact with most ministries within the life of the church.
- * Most need to know the pastor personally. The pastor knows most people to some depth.
- * Need for some part-time administrative assistance.
- * The pastor is readily available in times of crisis and personal need.
- * As the church approaches 150 worshipping adults the pastor has to start making choices in regards to priorities - where do I spend my time? Tension emerges and often the church needs to shift to two services thus creating two congregations.

Middle-sized Congregation (Program Church) [175-350/400 regular adults]

Characteristics

- * The pastor is still at the centre but his/her role changes. The role becomes more middle management in style involving delegation and authority. The pastor focuses more on leadership.
- * Increased administration. Increased committees.
- * Greater emphasis on professional performance.
- * Quality programs and small groups need to be in place.
- * Lay people take on more key roles (especially in small groups). Lay leaders take more initiative. Ministry leaders require training to become more competent.
- * Spiritual needs are met more in smaller groups.
- * Sometimes more difficult to enlist volunteers; people often feel others are more qualified and/or competent or feel others will be able to fill the position.
- * There is more diversity of ministry.
- * Ownership of parts of the building becomes an issue: control of one’s turf; e.g. “my room”, “..belongs to thegroup.”
- * Do not know everyone - need for name tags.
- * People often have to make appointments to see the pastor at the church office.
- * Congregation may feel distanced from decision-making.
- * More complex communication systems.
- * Decision-making is delegated more to representatives. It is mostly driven by changing needs.
- * Multiple congregations are more likely (2 morning services).
- * Entry points into the church’s life is spread throughout the week.
- * Skills, training, vision, future orientation and commitment seen as important within leaders.
- * Long-term planning important.

Implications for Pastors

- * The pastor is drawn more into administrative roles.
- * Administrative assistance is essential.
- * High quality relationships with every member needs to be supplemented.
- * Team ministry – appointment of associates with a team leader.
- * The pastor needs skills for planning ministries and training others – includes supervision and evaluation.
- * The pastor gives high priority to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the team members and lay leadership.
- * Pastoral care networks need to be developed as the pastor can no longer visit everyone on a regular basis.
- * Lay leaders need to head up ministries where they have authority as well as responsibility to lead. Some of these leaders have a pastoral function as part of their role.
- * The emphasis for pastors is on transformational leadership. Key skills include pulling together the diverse elements of the congregation into vision and mission statements, helping the church to arrive at a consensus about its direction. He/she then needs to be able to lead the congregation in the direction of that vision.
- * Need for intentional community building.
- * The pastor needs to show professional competence.
- * Motivation of capable lay persons important.
- * [There is great resistance in the transition process between the pastoral and the program church; in fact, the hardest transition of all.]
- * Lay leaders need to understand this theory and be willing to support the pastor through this transition period - are they committed to the cost?
- * It usually takes 2 to 5 years to go through.
- * There is a real danger of clergy burnout during this time with trying to maintain pastoral and program models at the same time.

Large Congregation (Corporate Church) [400+]

Characteristics

- * The quality of worship is important – usually an abundance of resources and a lot of energy goes into ensuring it is a rich experience.
- * The pastor becomes a head of staff with associate pastors and administration staff.
- * Job descriptions become important.
- * It easier for people to choose to remain on the periphery.
- * Crucial for teams to work together.
- * It takes time to build a team.
- * A healthy team will influence the church to be healthy.
- * Church meetings are mainly occasions for affirming policy and reporting.
- * Organisational structures are more clear and formalised.
- * Diaconates/Church Councils usually decrease in membership.
- * Increased ad hoc committees rather than standing committees.
- * Leadership group concerned more with long-range planning than detailed management which needs to be delegated. Decision-making driven by vision.
- * Change usually occurs top down through key leaders.

Implications for Pastors

- * Teams need to stay together for a long period as a high turnover of staff will lead to a turnover of people.

- * The congregation expects professionalism and high level of competence.
- * Pastors are usually multi-skilled with proven experience but become more specialised in this role. The need to be able to delegate and empower others.
- * A collegiate model of pastoral team is essential. This means allowing others to do things their way.
- * Significant preaching skills important.
- * The pastoral team, especially the Senior Pastor, has strong influence over direction and policies of the church.
- * The pastor is usually an influential leader.
- * The pastor may not even know the names of all the congregation in a larger church.
- * The senior pastor would rarely visit in hospital or do regular visitation.
- * Pastoral care from the pastor focuses primarily upon leaders.
- * The senior pastor becomes a symbol of unity and stability in a very complicated congregational life.
- * The diaconate/church council may become the new patriarch or matriarch.

READING:

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| Schaller, Lyle | <i>The Small Membership Church</i> , Abingdon, Nashville, 1994 |
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