



EQUIPPER

The monthly e-magazine from the Church Administration and Development team of Grace Communion International

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MinDev.gci.org

Dear pastors and ministry leaders,

As a result of our transformation, along with other factors, most of our congregations in GCI are small. Sometimes we wring our hands decrying that smallness, but perhaps we have overlooked some facts of history and maybe we have not understood some current cultural realities.

According to Steve Willis in *The Small Church* (at Alban.org), most churches throughout history have been small. Contrary to popular opinion, that is still the case. Despite the attention given to a few mega-churches, the recent Duke University *National Congregations Study* found that the median church in the U.S. has 75 regular participants in its weekly worship service.



One of the reasons most congregations are small is that the influence of the church in the culture at large has waned. The church now finds itself on the periphery of a society that increasingly is post-Christian. As a result, congregations and ministries are losing membership and income.

So what should we in GCI do? Well, we can be distressed. We can “curse the darkness” and withdraw. Or, we can face these realities with “eyes wide open,” put our trust in the Lord of the Harvest and follow the Holy Spirit in developing our existing churches and in starting new ones that are well-positioned to impact the world *as it is*. I am delighted that many of our churches are capitalizing on the flexibility offered by their small size to refocus and move forward.

Doing so is no small task, but it is a task that the Spirit is well able to accomplish through us—showing us what to do, how to do it and providing needed resources.

A key challenge is to focus resources on what really counts instead of on activities and programs that no longer have Kingdom impact. On page two, we share an article from Charles Arn that speaks to this challenge. I hope you find it helpful.

Let us link hearts, minds and arms as we pray, learn and move forward together. In that regard, let us share stories about our journey here in *Equipper* and in the related “Church Development” feature in *GCI Weekly Update*. Please email your stories, with pictures, to Ted.Johnston@gci.org.

On journey with Jesus and with you,
Dan Rogers, CAD director

P.S. I wish you all an inspiring Holy Week culminating in a joy-filled celebration of Jesus’ resurrection on Easter Sunday. Watch *GCI Weekly Update* for some resources.

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Deploying members for mission

A key factor in multiplying new leaders, new disciples and new churches in a post-Christian world is deploying church members for active participation with Jesus in his mission to the world. An article from Charles Arn, excerpted below, speaks helpfully to this factor (read the full article at <http://pastors.com/are-you-helping-or-hurting-your-mission/>).

Are you helping or hurting your mission?

By Charles Arn

One of the keys to a church's missional success is how its members are deployed. There are two approaches—one facilitates the church's mission; the other often frustrates it. Few in the church ever clarify this choice, but every church makes it, and every church lives with the consequences of its choice.

The *institutional* approach to lay ministry begins with the needs of the institution. Every church needs Sunday school teachers, committee members, musicians, ushers. In the institutional approach, when a job opens up, the response is to search for a person who seems most suitable to fill it and/or is most likely to say yes. Success, in such churches, is when a member says, "Okay, I'll do it." Hopefully the person is qualified, gifted, and motivated for that ministry; but there are no guarantees. If it turns out there is a mismatch between member and task, the result is a job poorly done and a member mostly frustrated....

The *individual* approach is far less widely practiced, but significantly more effective for missional success. Here the goal is not to fill a vacancy but to find or create a place where members can joyfully and productively participate in the mission. Rather than beginning with the needs of the institution, the individual approach begins with the strengths of the person. Church members are encouraged to try a position related to their interest and see how it fits. If it does, the member may choose to spend more time in that ministry and/or receive additional training. If the task is not comfortable, or the person does not feel a sense of calling, he or she is guided to explore other ministries that might be a better fit. If a match cannot be found, creating a new ministry is explored.

Ministry Measure	<i>Institutional</i> Approach	<i>Individual</i> Approach
Percent of the church community involved in ministry	Less than 20%	More than 20%
Individual's satisfaction with ministry task	Often frustrated	Usually fulfilled
Personal energy level as a result of the task	Drained	Rejuvenated
Reason for participating	Doing what I must	Doing what I like
Effect on interpersonal church relationships	Friction	Fusion
Number of people declining to serve	Many	Few
Resignations from the task throughout the year	Frequent	Infrequent
Church leaders' motivation for filling the role	Institutional need	Individual growth
Frequency of new ministries created	Seldom	Often

In the individual approach to lay ministry the institution exists for the benefit of the people rather than the people for the benefit of the institution. Some of the implications of this are examined in the chart above.