Congregational Size Model

The size of a congregation matters strategically & spiritually

Why Size?

- Size matters – but not always in the ways you think

- Many of us have been through a size transition in the past few decades

- Understanding the best practices for your size can improve the health, faithfulness and effectiveness of your congregation

- Systems want to stabilize in all areas – including size.

- It is possible to make strategic changes to either right-size after a transition down in size or to prepare for a transition to a larger size

What size is best?

- Congregational life is dynamic – the best size is the size God is calling you to be
  - Duet
  - String Quartet
  - Jazz Band
  - Symphony
  - Symphony with Choir

All can make beautiful music

Very Small

- Average Sunday Attendance less than 50
- Limited resources: clergy is part time if present, program is essentials
- Tight knit group – everyone knows everyone
- A few lay people set tone and direction, often the same people rotate through formal leadership roles year by year
- The most effective communication is informal and direct – phone calls, direct email, informal interactions
- Planning is spontaneous and informal

Small

- Average Sunday Attendance 40-100

- Usually no full time clergy – may work with other congregations to provide program or utilize lay volunteers

- Homogenous group – everyone knows at least about each other

- Core leadership group stays the same from year to year, and manages most of the formal and informal leadership roles. Will rotate through formal positions, but actual roles may not change

- The most effective communication is informal and direct – phone calls, direct email, informal interactions, but supplemented with formal communication such as bulletins, email, newsletter, website

- Planning is spontaneous and informal, carried out by members and based on data that is available in members' experience

Medium

- Average Sunday Attendance 75-200
- Full time clergy, supplemented with part time staff. Financially self sufficient, or close to it.
- Several sub-groups around a larger core center. Pastor and maybe a few others have information about everyone, but most people don't know/recognize every person in congregation.
- Elected and appointed leadership determines policy and procedures, works strategy with clergy, but not without influence of key informal leaders
- Informal communication with core and sub-groups, but formal communication is necessary to reach whole congregation, or to reach across sub-groups
- Planning is more formally carried out by vestry/BC, or leadership within subgroups. Based on data available to members in sub-groups, and occasionally formal research

Moderately Large

- Average Sunday Attendance 150 - 400

- Full time clergy and program, with at least part time specialized program staff.

- Diverse association of individuals and groups. Pastor has current information on almost all members. A nucleus interact regularly with each other, others primarily interact within subgroups.

- Elected and appointed leadership determines policy and procedures, lay leaders share responsibility with paid staff for program.

- Generally done by formal media, some direct and less formal communication within sub-groups, but sub-groups also use formal communication methods

- Planning is formal, carried out by board and clergy, using formal research methods to generate data

Very Large

- Average Sunday Attendance 300+

- Comprehensive program, specialized full time staff.

- Complex association of many groups. No one person has information on everyone. Regular interactions are confined to sub-groups, even in large gatherings such as worship and major events.

- Boards manage strategy, vision, and policy. Admin, maintenance and program coordinated by paid staff, within sub-groups. Staff play most key program roles.

- Communication is formal across the board.

- Planning is formal, carried out by board and clergy, using formal research methods to generate data, and often with the use of consultants