

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Closing Our Doors: Part 1

Consider this reality: According to Win Arn, "Each year 3,500 to 4,000 churches close their doors forever; yet only 1,100 to 1,500 new churches are started. How do you know when your church is in imminent danger of shutting its doors for the last time?

Here are 10 reasons to consider why your church may be in trouble and what you can do to stop the bleeding. They are:

"Common sense tells you that if you continue losing members, no one will be left."

-Danny R. Von Kanel

Door Slammer 1 - We are losing more members than we are gaining.

This is an immediate red flag. Common sense tells you that if you continue losing members, no one will be left. You can even pinpoint the date. Get an average of how many people you are losing in a year. Divide that into the number of active members. Add that number to 2011 and you will have an approximate year your doors will close if this trend continues.

Solution: Ask why? And then address honestly those reasons.

Churches must truthfully look at what is causing people to leave the church. Ask why? Many of the other nine door slammers should occupy your questioning. If fewer babies are born compared to senior adults dying, that affects your numbers. If the community's population is in decline, most likely membership will be, also. Use the following nine solutions for they directly affect membership gains.

Door Slammer 2 - We are

predominantly a senior adult church.

Seniors are a precious group - some of your most faithful members. But if they greatly outnumber other age groups, it's a sign membership will decrease in coming years as they go home to be with the Lord.

Solution - Change how you do worship and begin an outreach to younger families.

People enter our churches, according to the latest research, through the worship service.

With the popularity of Contemporary Christian and Praise and Worship music, young and middle aged adults want music to which they can relate. Hymns will

Check out Dr. McIntosh's new website for additional articles.

New website address:

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Giving moves churches to action!

Reach the demographic groups or relocate.

always be with us but allowance of other genres in our worship are one way to reach the younger generation.

Door Slammer 3 - We are a declining inner city church.

Inner city churches struggle to maintain their identity when the population surrounding the church changes. If the new ethnic or socio economic group does not filter into the church, decline will continue - church death will follow.

Solution - Make a decision to reach other ethnic groups or relocate.

Churches have two choices: reach the new demographic groups in the area or relocate. Reaching other ethnic or socioeconomic groups will challenge your willingness to follow The Great Commission. Expect resistance. The other option, relocating, will challenge your finances. If building a new facility, build a smaller one than what you currently have now.

Door Slammer 4 - We are barely able to pay the bills.

Financial issues are another sign your church may be in trouble. Bills must be paid. Cutting programming or staff only weakens your efforts to grow. Unless corrected, it will contribute to a slow demise.

Solution - Do a large stewardship emphasis or reach more adults who tithe.

StewardCAST, Make It Simple, or Celebrate Generosity are great tools to address stewardship needs. If your church has never done a church-wide stewardship emphasis, you'll need to sell the idea and then go all out in implementing the program.

Door Slammer 5 - We had large sums of money left in wills to the church and people have quit giving.

Tithing moves churches to action. When people quit giving because of large sums of money left to the church, they abandon their responsibility. Think about it: Anything that lacks our investment, whether time, energy, or money, tends to take a back seat. A whole army of church goers forfeiting this biblical admonition are inclined to reap stagnation and decline. Over time, church demise is evident.

Solution: Give the money away to needy organizations, groups or individuals; place money in a foundation; or/and stress the importance of tithing.

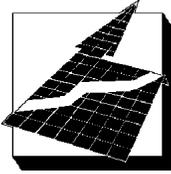
A church in north Louisiana faced dealing with large sums of money. The Haynesville Shale oil discovery made people rich overnight. The churches reap a financial windfall. Smartly, the church began giving it away. The money did not destroy the church. Used meaningfully, it helped change our world.

[continued next issue]



Danny R. Von Kanel is this month's guest writer. He can be contacted at dannyvon@bellsouth.net.

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Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views

Ministry Insights for Church Leaders

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Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views

Gaining form and momentum over the second half of the 20th century, the Church Growth Movement has become an enormous shaping force on the Western church today. You may love it, you may hate it, but you can't deny its impact.

But what exactly is Church Growth? In what ways has the movement actually brought growth to the church, and how effective has it been in doing so?

What are its strengths and weaknesses? This timely book addresses such questions. After providing a richly informative history and overview, it explores—in a first-ever roundtable of their leading voices—five main perspectives, both pro and con, on the classic Church Growth Movement:

- Effective Evangelism View (Elmer Towns)
- Gospel and Our Culture View (Craig Van Gelder)
- Centrist View (Charles Van Engen)
- Reformist View (Gailyn Van Rheen)
- Renewal View (Howard Snyder)

Each view is first presented by its proponent, then critiqued by his co-contributors. The book concludes with reflections by three seasoned pastors who have grappled with the practical implications of Church Growth.

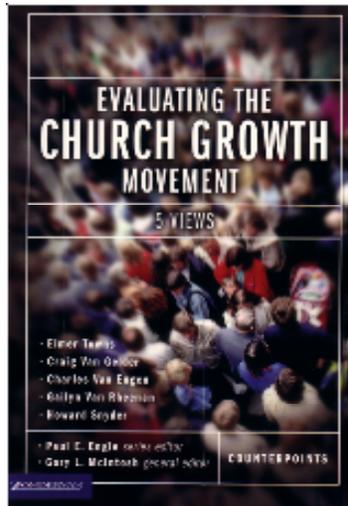
The interactive and fair-minded nature of the format allows the reader to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each view and

draw informed, personal conclusions.

Each of the contributors agree that the Church Growth Movement has been, and continues to be, extremely influential. Of course, some believe this influence is positive, while others see it as somewhat negative. But they all admit the Church Growth Movement cannot be ignored.

The positions and responses of each contributor will stimulate a great deal of personal reflection.

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