

**KNOW
& GROW
INSIDE
AND
OUTSIDE
YOUR
CHURCH
WALLS**



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CHURCH
GROWTH
BEST
PRACTICES

As a pastor or church leader, the first of the year is a busy time for you and those on your staff. It's the time when you often ask those you serve to reevaluate many of the programs, processes, and technology solutions your church uses. Many of you have either launched new solutions or are in the midst of launch, but don't let one of the most important goals your church should be focused on lapse. Remember to focus on the health of your church body.

Church health is a broad category consisting of various items that can be measured quantitatively and qualitatively, such as giving, discipleship, small group development and involvement, outreach, missions, and evangelism, among others.

In Matthew 28, Jesus gives his disciples the "Great Commission."

"GO, THEREFORE, AND MAKE DISCIPLES

of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you."

This strategy was put in place in Acts 1:8 when Jesus tells his disciples to begin in Jerusalem, then go to Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth.

The early church experienced rapid growth. At the time of Pentecost, about 120 Christ-followers were in the upper room. When the Holy Spirit empowered them, 3,000 people came to know Christ! Three. Thousand! Scripture also tells us new believers were added to the church daily! Here's the thing, though - the early church didn't have what we have right now from a technology perspective. They didn't have access to demographic data, mass mailings, or social media. They did this through word of mouth. While times have changed and technology has changed how we consume content, the Church remains.

THE FACT IS THIS: *HEALTHY CHURCHES GROW!*

But how do you expect to grow if you don't know what you need to know? Let's focus specifically on church health, what you need to know, and how both of those items directly correlate growth of your church.

When you think of church growth, what comes to your mind? More people in the pews every Sunday? More involvement in small groups? Wednesday night Bible study engagement? Hopefully, all of the above and more. But how do you get new people in the pews, active in small groups or, come on Wednesday night? It's all about outreach, right? Outreach and growth have a very symbiotic relationship. Essentially, outreach is anything your church does to connect itself with the community. How is your church connecting with her community?

Many people may not put these two terms together - outreach and church growth.

THE REALITY IS THIS: **OUTREACH SHOULD LEAD TO CHURCH GROWTH.**

In order to grow, you must *know* your community.

If you are a pastor who has been at your church for a long time, or you have a staff member or two who are pillars of the community, it's likely you know quite a bit about the community in which your church resides. For those new to the pastorate or the senior pastor role at a relatively young church or who haven't lived in the area before, perhaps you don't have a vast amount of knowledge about your community.

God doesn't call us to be satisfied with where we are. We are not to be complacent. He calls us to be obedient in our service to Him. Some of the fastest-growing churches in the Bible were those who were committed to serving their community! Knowing your community, its interests, and the people who live in it should help shape the outreach of our church. Knowing helps you craft strategies to engage with more individuals and families like those already in your church.

1

Leverage your church management software platform to learn more about your current congregation, things like:

HOW INVOLVED THEY ARE IN YOUR CHURCH

- Are there specific segments that are more or less active?
- How does involvement compare with trends in other churches nationally?

THEIR AGE GROUPS

- Do you have a comprehensive children's and youth program for families with children??
- Do you offer services and programs catered to seniors?
- Do your worship services, events, groups, and programs appeal to millennials?

HOW MANY CHILDREN AND STUDENTS ARE INVOLVED IN MINISTRY

- What percentage of families with children are part of your children's and youth programs?
- How many children and youth are receiving religious education or sacraments?

GIVING TRENDS

- What percentage of members are regularly tithing?
- What percentage of gifts are cash, online, text, or via pledges?

ATTENDANCE TRENDS

- Is your worship attendance stagnant, increasing, or decreasing?
- What is your mix of in-person vs. online attendance?
- What percentage of your members attend your church or parish events?

VOLUNTEERING

- What percentage of your church or parish have volunteered?
- How many members are actively volunteering or doing so regularly?
- How many volunteers have you cleared for service via background checks?

SMALL GROUP ENGAGEMENT

- How many small groups do you offer?
- How many congregants or parishioners are active in small groups?
- How many members are acting as small group leaders?
- Is group attendance stagnant, increasing, or declining?

2

Now that you know your congregation better, you need to understand your community better.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- Are there predominant or growing populations you need to serve, such as a specific ethnicity or age group?

SOCIOECONOMIC DATA

- Is there a disparity of income or education within your community?
- Are there clear areas of need you're serving or could serve?

RELIGIOUS PREFERENCES

- Who aligns with your denomination's beliefs?
- Who shares your church's value?

PROXIMITY TO YOUR CHURCH

- How many people are within a 10-minute driving distance of your church?
- Is public transportation available?

POPULATION DENSITY AREAS

- Are there hot spots of growth in your community?
- Is the population declining in specific areas?

CHURCH TYPE PREFERENCES

- What do community members desire in a worship experience?
- Do people prefer a more formal or casual church?

SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICES

- How many people are active on social media in your area?
- What social media channels are most people using?

3

Now that you've created a holistic view of your congregation and community, you need to evaluate your outreach and communication tactics.

ARE YOU OFFERING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS THAT WILL ATTRACT NEW PEOPLE AND FURTHER ENGAGE MEMBERS?

ARE YOUR LOCAL OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES WHAT THE COMMUNITY NEEDS MOST?

ARE YOU LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA OR OTHER CHANNELS TO ATTRACT NEW PEOPLE OR INCREASE ENGAGEMENT?

ARE YOU DELIVERING RELEVANT CONTENT BASED ON INTERESTS, BEHAVIORS, AND DEMOGRAPHICS?

DOES YOUR WORSHIP STYLE MATCH THE PREFERENCES OF YOUR COMMUNITY?

ARE YOU PERSONALIZING YOUR MESSAGING TO SPECIFIC AUDIENCES?

People have a strong desire to be in a community with others with similar interests. You must have a holistic view of your church and her members, and your community. This data will prove valuable and will help inform the decisions you make at your church. It will allow you to start the right additional small groups, choose which ministries to invest in to a greater degree, or communicate more effectively with your community. It will help you better understand what activities or topics your members and your community enjoy or care about. This knowledge can shape your worship, care, missions, outreach program, events, giving, and so much more.

IN ORDER TO GROW, YOU MUST COMMUNICATE YOUR VISION.

As a pastor, it is imperative that you communicate your desire to reach more people in your community for Christ. Although there are various mediums to engage with your community, all of which are probably so obvious we are telling you what you already know, but we will anyway.

- 1** Your website is the virtual door to your church. People in your community will visit your website multiple times before visiting your church to learn more about who you are as a church, your staff members, what you believe, and what kind of programs, activities, and small groups you offer. Make sure you have your sermon archive on your website. Make it inviting!
- 2** Live streaming is more ubiquitous now than ever in the past simply because churches have been forced to get their content out in a digital medium thanks to the current pandemic. If you aren't live streaming your services, you are missing a very large chunk of your community.
- 3** Emails from the pastor to church members and recent guests. This is so important. People will read emails from their pastor. Including guests is a great way to make them feel part of the family.
- 4** Social media campaigns that are composed of several ad variants targeted to your community. What are their interests? Do they have children? Are they widowed, divorced, single or married? Tailor your messaging to specific groups of people within your community.
- 5** Phone calls. We can't stress the importance of how it makes people feel, especially guests, to receive a phone call from someone on staff personally inviting them to an event, a small group, or just to inform them of something happening that you want them to be part of.
- 6** Handwritten note from the pastor - This is by far the one that should leave the most lasting impression.

Additionally, it is important for you to have a global perspective on Church growth. Are you involved in church planting or missions? Do you currently or desire to plant new churches in cities close to you or other countries? That's still church growth!

There are others, but the point we are aiming to drive home here is this – communicating to your community and nurturing them goes a long way in getting people to step back into your church week after week.

How many people have set foot in your church on a Sunday morning only to make the decision not to go back simply based on the friendliness of the members and the follow-up that never happened the week following their visit?. People want to be part of a church that cares about them, their family and their spiritual growth.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THIS: *AS DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, WE ARE COMMANDED TO GO AND MAKE MORE DISCIPLES!*

Disciples who refuse to pursue evangelism, outreach, and discipleship are simply not following through with what God has commanded. Growth will not occur if we don't live out evangelism, outreach, and discipleship in our churches.

Of course, it's very hard to properly reach your community without Biblical stewardship. Stewardship is a touchy subject in churches today. It's something pastors often don't like to preach about. But it's inevitable.

It's no secret that online giving is becoming more prominent in our churches today, especially because of the Covid-19 pandemic we faced in 2020 and are starting to see recycling itself again right now. If the pandemic did one thing for churches, it forced them to think about continuing to receive tithes and offerings from its members while not physically meeting on campus each week. Do any churches actually pass an offering plate anymore?

If you don't already offer online giving, please let us encourage you to do so. Signing up is the first step, but the rocket won't launch if you don't put in the launch codes. Make sure you are telling people about new ways to give online. Give them the launch code. It will unleash a spirit of generosity in your church.

- 1 Introduce your members to online giving.** Tell them what it is, why your church is choosing to offer members the ability to give electronically and why it benefits the church.
- 2 Lead by example.** The churches that see a large percentage of their members give electronically are those whose pastors and staff members give electronically as well. When the pastor gets up in front of members and says, "this is the way your church leadership is giving," it sets the tone.
- 3 Keep the idea of online giving in front of your church.** Include verbiage in your bulletin about online giving. Tell your members how to give electronically, whether it's on your church website, through your mobile app, a kiosk in the lobby or via text-to-give.
- 4 Keep it coming.** Don't just limit your communication to one week. Keep it constant. The communication shouldn't be limited to just a bulletin. Make it part of everything you do. Emails, letters, text messages, call campaigns, social media, etc. (we'll dive more into this in a minute). Make sure your members are being made aware multiple times in different mediums about online giving being a way to give their tithes and offerings.
- 5 Make it personal.** When someone gives electronically for the first time, have your executive pastor write a handwritten note to that member. In an age of electronic communication, a personal note goes a long way.

“EACH OF YOU SHOULD GIVE WHAT YOU HAVE DECIDED IN YOUR HEART TO GIVE, NOT RELUCTANTLY OR UNDER COMPULSION, FOR GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER.”

2 Cor. 9:7

The most important aspect of giving is that people give with a cheerful heart. Don't forget that. Encourage Biblical stewardship. Preach it.

Let God lead you in this.

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to start something new and fresh. Many people make resolutions at the first of the year, and sometimes visiting a church, going to church on a more consistent basis, being more involved and growing in their walk with Christ are some of those resolutions. It's a time of year when people are hungry for the Gospel. Maybe as hungry as ever! Don't be complacent. Know your community. Rely on sources of data to help you deploy strategies for meaningful growth in your church. Healthy churches grow, but in order to be healthy you must know where you are strong and where you are weak. You must know your community like your own family and closest friends. You must know their background and their interests and what their preferences are. Use what you know to help you grow.

How do you plan to focus on knowing your community better in 2022? How do you plan to grow? What strategies do you plan to deploy to help your church remain healthy? Will you pray fervently and ask God to do more than you could ever ask or imagine in His Church and in your community so that He is magnified beyond all expectation?

**WE'D LOVE
TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**

To let us know how you leverage data and analytics, your church management software platform, your website texting, social media and other technology solutions for church health and growth,

please visit acstechnologies.com/KandG.



There is no better time to focus on church growth than now!



Growth is incredibly challenging though, especially given where we find ourselves today. But, it is a new day in what we are capable of. We can now more than ever before...

- Gain a holistic view of your congregation and community
- Understand the full engagement and assimilation process
- Prevent people from falling through the cracks
- Equip pastors, staff and volunteers with the data they need
- Identify and attract new people to your church
- Select which ministries you should invest in
- Identify needs for new small groups
- Find community outreach opportunities
- Centralize and understand church financials and reconciling giving
- Know your staff and volunteers and protect your members through background checks
- Attract potential visitors through your digital presence
- Increase engagement, attract new people and increase attendance through streaming
- Recruit and train leaders and volunteers to understand best practices

ACST provides what you need to accomplish your potential growth goals.

Church Management Software, providing a holistic view of your church and her members, assimilation, attendance, giving history, children's check-in and more. We have ready to use and ready to customize options to fit your needs.

MissionInsite gives you a robust amount of demographic, socioeconomic and religious preference information that allows you to easily identify areas of growth for your church including people in your community who are ideal candidates for your church, new programs you can offer, or outreach opportunities.

Realm Accounting and ACS Financials are easy-to-use tools that centralize all of your financial reporting. From online giving to payables and payroll, we have it covered.

PocketPlatform is your content hub for congregants and parishioners where you can share events, sermons, communications and more.

Refresh Websites provides a professional and welcoming experience where people can learn about your church and her ministries before even setting foot on your campus.

Streaming allows you to reach, engage and disciple your congregation and community outside of the walls of your church.

Higher Ground is a managed service provider that provides consulting, security, management, and support for every part of your church's network, ensuring stability, dependability, and scalability so your church can focus on ministry.

Learn more about our growth-focused solutions

Regardless of the growth challenges you face, we have the solution sets to help you manage growth the right way. We're here to partner in ministry with you.

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