

## **Understanding the dynamics of various church sizes**

The size of a congregation affects how members and visitors interact with one another and with the minister. It's important for a minister to be aware of these dynamics in order to seek a position in a church size that corresponds to the minister's leadership style.

### **Family size church**

- This church has fewer than 50 people, and most of them are related to one another.
- This congregation experiences little numerical growth because it is difficult for visitors to enter a system that feels like (and usually is) a family.
- The pastor functions primarily as a chaplain. The pastor preaches weekly and provides pastoral care, but decision-making is the purview of the members.

### **Pastoral size church**

- This church has 50-150 people. Often there is a solo minister, though sometimes there is an associate minister or part-time specialized minister (e.g., youth minister).
- New people primarily come into church through the minister. Either the minister has cultivated relationships with them or visitors are drawn to the minister's sermons or worship leadership.
- The minister is involved in (and likely drives) all facets of ministry, including providing most or all of the pastoral care and attending most or all committee meetings. Safeguards must be put into place to prevent burnout.

### **Program size church**

- This church has 150-350 people. There are multiple ministers on staff.
- New people primarily come into church through small groups. Without a foothold in a small group, visitors get lost in the congregation and usually stop attending.
- The senior minister casts a vision and equips other staff to oversee the vision's implementation in their respective ministry areas.

### **Resource size church**

- This church has 350+ people and a large staff of ordained and lay people.
- New people primarily come into church through ministries and/or activities (e.g., Upward basketball, recovery ministries, quilting groups).
- The senior minister manages the staff and tends to the institution's development, functioning like a CEO.

[Information summarized from *Interim Ministry for Today's Church (2008 edition)*, published by the Center for Congregational Health in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.]