

12-1-1991

Staffing a Church for Growth: A Church Planting Model

Gary L. McIntosh

Biola University, gary.mcintosh@biola.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/jascg>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McIntosh, G. L. (1991). Staffing a Church for Growth: A Church Planting Model. *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth*, 2(1), 63-69. Retrieved from <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/jascg/vol2/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the American Society for Church Growth by an authorized editor of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange.

STAFFING A CHURCH FOR GROWTH: A CHURCH PLANTING MODEL

Gary L. McIntosh

Gary L. McIntosh is Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Talbot School of Theology where he also serves as Associate Professor of Practical Theology. He is editor of church Growth Network newsletter. 3630 Camellia Drive, San Bernardino, California 92404. (714)864-3101.

What is the best way to staff a church so that it grows? Historically this has not been an urgent question for church leaders. Throughout most of church history few churches were large enough to have multiple church staffs. It has only been since the Industrial Age of the mid 1800's that enough people were clustered in cities to produce churches large enough to need multiple staffs. Even then multiple staffing did not become a well known phenomenon until the 1950's when the growing complexity of the so called Information Age sprang upon the church increasing mobility, diversity and technology.

It is not the purpose of this paper to dissect all the reasons why today's churches need multiple staffs. The increasing complexity of our world makes it nearly impossible for a single pastor to deal with all the issues and needs of people. Just as the secular world has moved toward specialization and subspecialization, so the church must respond with specialization to effectively minister to people's complex needs.

However, a simple observation of the majority of churches with multiple staffs reveals that many (perhaps most) are staffed for a decline or numerical plateau rather than for growth. Is there a model of staffing a church which will aid in the growth of churches rather than contributing to their stagnation? This paper suggests that there is and that insight may be gained by tracing the development of a new church.

New Church Development

Observers of growing churches find that the best years of a church's numerical growth are often the first 15 to 20 years of its existence. Stated another way, the fastest growing churches are new churches. While there are several reasons why newer churches grow faster than older ones, part of the reason must be related to priorities. To understand this new model of staffing, let us walk through the early years of a new church.

When a church planting pastor goes into a new area the first responsibility on his desk is to find some new people. This finding of new people is evangelism. Since the new pastor has no people to care for, no program to administer and no worship service to lead, all his energy, prayer, and effort is directed toward finding new people. With this focus on evangelism is it any mystery why newer churches are the best way to evangelize new people? If the church planting pastor and his core group don't win new people to Christ, the new church won't get off the ground. Thus the first priority of the new church is evangelism and is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

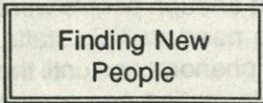


Figure 1

Once the new pastor begins to reach people, a second responsibility is placed on his desk. He must now try to keep as many of the new people as possible. Church growth writers refer to this keeping of new people as assimilation. Now the new pastor has two priorities to occupy his time, energy, and thought. He must continue to reach out and find new people while trying to keep as many as possible. Thus the priorities on his desk now look like Figure 2.

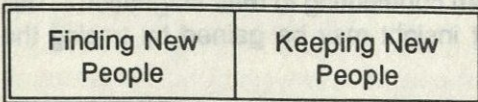


Figure 2

At this point the new ministry begins to increase in complexity. A third priority is placed on the pastor's desk. The pastor must now begin to lead a celebration of the Lord with his people. This is the worship service. In the

normal course of events in church planting, the public worship service starts after a significant mass of people has been gathered to insure a celebrative worship event. This places an additional responsibility on the pastor's desk as he must now begin to coordinate a worship service, prepare and deliver a message. The priorities on his desk begin to look like Figure 3.

Finding People	Keeping People	Celebrating with People
----------------	----------------	-------------------------

Figure 3

What began as a simple task -- to find new people -- now has grown to include a fourth priority. The pastor must begin to train these new people. In most churches this new priority is referred to as Christian education. This education includes the establishment of age graded ministries, teacher training and committees. His responsibilities begin to look like Figure 4.

Finding People	Keeping People	Celebrating with People	Educating People
----------------	----------------	-------------------------	------------------

Figure 4

As you can see, the number of responsibilities on the pastor's desk has increased significantly. Hopefully at this point some of the people have been trained to take over some of these responsibilities. But another responsibility is now added to these first four. The pastor must now begin to administer the church program. By this point in the lifecycle of a new church, several ministries have been started: perhaps a children's ministry, a youth ministry, a ladies group, a Sunday school, etc. These all cry out for oversight and the pastor finds that he is being stretched by the demands of all the responsibilities he finds on his desk each morning. His desk now looks like Figure 5.

Finding People	Keeping People	Celebrating People	Educating People	Overseeing People
----------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------	-------------------

66 Gary L. McIntosh

The pastor of our fictitious new church has much to keep him busy but there is still one more responsibility that is placed on his desk. He now must care for the people that are part of the new church. When he first began planting this church there were no people so there were no hospital calls to be made, no counseling to be done and no weddings or funerals to conduct. But now there are many needs and the people push their concerns, calls and visits upon him in greater numbers each week. At last the pastor's desk looks like Figure 6

Finding People	Keeping People	Celebrating with People	Educating People	Overseeing People	Center for People
----------------	----------------	-------------------------	------------------	-------------------	-------------------

Figure 6

It is certain that a new church plant does not take place in quite this linear sequence. It should be obvious that as the church grows many of these priorities are integrated simultaneously. Even so, this model is instructive as it provides an understanding of why churches begin to plateau and decline in later years as well as insight into how a church might be staffed to keep it growing.

Why does a new church grow in its early years but begin to plateau and decline in its later years? While there are several intersecting factors that we could point to, a major reason is the shift in priorities over the years. For example, in the early years of a new church the priority is on the left side of the side of the continuum. While in the later year, the priority shifts to the right side. Figure 7

Priority in early years

Finding People	Keeping People	Celebrating with People	Educating People	Overseeing People	Center for People
----------------	----------------	-------------------------	------------------	-------------------	-------------------

Priority in later years

Figure 7

I like to envision this change as a lever on a fulcrum. In the early years of a new church, the priorities are on the left and the weight pushes the lever to the ground. As the years go by, and different priorities are added, the

pressure gradually shifts until the weight gets heavier on the right and pushes that side to the ground. See figure 8 below.

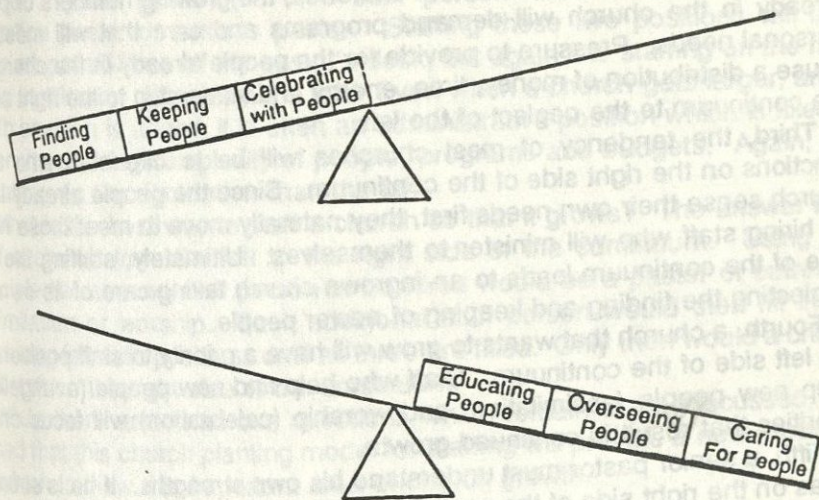


Figure 8

Part of the reason a new church grows is due to the emphasis it places on finding new people, keeping them and celebrating with them. As the years go by and more people, programs and facilities are added, the priorities move to pastoral care, church administration and education to the point that the earlier priorities are either diminished or totally abandoned. Thus the church moves into a maintenance mode of taking care of what they have (people, programs, facilities) and abandoning the priorities that got them there (finding people, keeping people and worshipping).

Insights for Staffing

This church planting model gives us several insights into staffing a church for growth.

First, it teaches us that as a church grows, the responsibilities on the solo pastor's desk become complex and numerous. A single pastor will find it impossible to give adequate attention and emphasis to all of these six areas. A church with a solo pastor will stop growing when it reaches the limit

of the pastor's ability to give adequate emphasis and time to all these priorities.

Second, in the lifecycle of most churches, the growing numbers of people already in the church will demand programs and care that will meet their personal needs. Pressure to provide for the people already in the church will cause a distribution of money, time, energy and leadership to the right side of the continuum to the neglect of the left.

Third, the tendency of most churches will be to hire staff who serve functions on the right side of the continuum. Since the people already in the church sense their own needs first, they naturally move to meet those needs by hiring staff who will minister to themselves. Ultimately, staffing the right side of the continuum leads to an ingrown church taking care of its own, but neglecting the finding and keeping of newer people.

Fourth, a church that wants to grow will have a priority to staff positions on the left side of the continuum. Staff who help find new people (evangelism), keep new people (assimilation) and worship (celebration) will focus on the priorities that result in continued growth.

Fifth, a senior pastor must understand his own strengths. If he is strong in areas on the right side of the continuum, he should seek to hire an associate who has strengths on the left side. Of course, if the senior pastor has strengths on the left, he might hire an associate who has strengths on the right so that he is freed to give his time to the priorities on the left.

Sixth, all of the six priorities are necessary to provide a supportive environment for church growth. A church that seeks continued growth will not neglect any of these priorities.

Seventh, a growing church will place a higher emphasis on the priorities on the left rather than those on the right. People in the church will adopt a servant attitude which sees and responds to the needs of those outside the church over those already inside.

Summary

Think for a moment how most churches add staff. The second staff person is usually a youth pastor. Adding a youth pastor is a response in many cases to the demands of parents. Parents are rightfully concerned about their own children and desire a youth pastor who will take care of their young people. To be ruthlessly honest, hiring a youth pastor is often more pastoral care of the adults of the youth. This obviously is staffing on the right side of the continuum. The youth pastor is hired to care for the adult's concern for their

own children. While this is not necessarily wrong, it does not place a priority on the side of the continuum which creates church growth.

After a youth pastor, the third staff person hired is often a Christian education pastor or senior's pastor. Staffing these two positions will take some responsibilities off the pastor's desk, but again it is staffing on the right of the continuum rather than the left. Even when a church gets larger, and a fourth position is added, it is often an administrative position which is filled to cover the growing complexity of people, programs and budgets. Again, this is staffing on the right rather than the left.

What is the best way to staff a church so that it grows? The answer is to staff a church from the left to the right side of the continuum. Using this principle the second staff person to be hired would be a pastor of outreach, assimilation or worship. Each additional staff person would then fill in the remaining left side positions until all three are filled. Only then would a church add staff on the right side of the continuum.

While there are numerous questions which remain to be discussed, it is hoped that this church planting model for staffing will provide a new paradigm by which to view this important area of church growth.