LEADING THROUGH GROWTH: THE ROLE OF THE LEAD PASTOR IN THE LARGE CHURCH

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Abstract

In order to be an effective leader, the large church lead pastor must recognize and respond to the ever-shifting organizational dynamics of his church. This article highlights the distinctive organizational dynamics of large churches as opposed to churches of other sizes. It will seek to identify the unique responsibilities that leading a large church places on the lead pastor. Finally, this article will describe the particular organizational perils and opportunities present as the lead pastor transitions a church through the various stages of organizational growth.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is complex. Today's leaders need to hold in tension the power they wield over and trust they need to gain from their followers.[1] To be successful, the modern leader needs to develop strong relational and administrative acumen. Church leadership is no exception to this prevailing reality. Lead pastors are increasingly required to be both relationally and technically proficient.

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[1] C. Green, "Why Trust Is the New Core of Leadership," *Forbes,* April 3, 2012, http://www.forbes.com.

The leadership responsibilities of the local lead pastor are many. At any given time, the lead pastor is responsible to manage the staff of a church, cast vision for the organization, effectively preach and teach the Word of God, lead a board, manage a budget, and assimilate new individuals into the organization. These responsibilities all hinge on the lead pastor's ability to exercise his or her leadership well. As a local church grows, the importance of this fact is only exacerbated.[2]

In order to be an effective leader, the large church lead pastor must recognize the ever-shifting organizational dynamics of his church. The purpose of this article is to properly define at what point a church might be considered "large." It will highlight the distinctive organizational dynamics of large churches as opposed to churches of other sizes. It will seek to identify the unique responsibilities that leading a large church places on the lead pastor. Finally, this article will describe the particular organizational perils and opportunities present as the lead pastor transitions a church through the various stages of organizational growth.

ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS OF LARGE CHURCHES

This section of the research deals with defining and explaining the unique traits of a large church. It first focuses on adequately determining the appropriate threshold for considering a church to be large by tracing the development of various church size classification taxonomies. It then considers the structure of a large church staff with a particular focus placed on the role of a lead pastor within the large church.

A Review of Church Size Taxonomies

The characteristics of a church change along with the size of the congregation. One aspect of a church that grows increasingly complex the larger the congregation becomes is organizational structure. McIntosh offers an excellent overview of the various ways individuals have grouped churches by size (Figure 1).[3] While authors have used differing terminology, what must be discovered is a general point at which a church is considered sizeable enough to be "large."

Schaller, one of the first to group churches based on size, initially suggested that a large church was any church with 200 or more congregants. Over the years, Schaller continued to observe churches and classify them

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[2] L Schaller, *The Multiple Staff and the Larger Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980); L Schaller, *Growing Plans* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983); G.L. McIntosh, *Taking Your Church to the Next Level: What Got You Here Won't Get You There* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009).

[3] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

FIGURE 1

Summary Comparison of the Breakdown of Church Sizes According to Church Growth Writers

Schaller (1975)	Womack (1977)	Schaller (1980)	George (1991)	McIntosh (2009)
30-35	50	<35	35	35
70-85	90	35-100	50	85
115-135	120	100-175	100	125
175-200	200s	175-225	200	200
	300s	225-450	400	400
	600	450-700	800	800
	1,200	>700	1,000	1,200
			3,000	3,000

(McIntosh, 2009 p. 127)

based on their size.[4] He amended his original classification in 1980 and offered a more detailed taxonomy of churches based on size. For Schaller, a church with 225 or more congregants was large. Schaller also suggested two greater categories beyond what he defined as a large church. These two categories were the huge church, which had 450 or more congregants, and the minidenomination church, which had 700 or more congregants.

Another early categorizer of churches by size was David Womack who suggested grouping churches at the 280, 400, 600, 800, and 1,200 marks.[5] Womack noted that observable plateaus in church growth often occurred at or near each delineation. Womack deduced from the observation that one of the problems facing churches that have plateaued is that the strategies of church organization that had allowed them to grow needed to change as the church grew larger.

In the 1990s, Carl F. George offered another taxonomy of churches based on the size of their congregation.[6] In this early work, George noted that a large church was one that had 200 or more congregants. He named three grander categories, as well. Later, George further defined his taxonomy and suggested grouping churches at the 200; 400; 800; 1,000; 3,000; 6,000; and 30,000 marks.[7] He observed how church growth was related to overall

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[4] L Schaller, *Hey, That's Our Church!* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1975).

[5] D.A. Womack, *The Pyramid Principle of Church Growth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1977).

[6] C.F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1991).

[7] C.F. George, *How to Break Growth Barriers: Capturing Overlooked Opportunities for Church Growth* (Grand Rapides, MI: Baker, 1993).

population growth trends. He also suggested that "churches have more in common by their size than by their denomination, tradition, location, age, or any other single, isolatable factor."[8]

After offering an excellent overview of the development of the categorization of churches by size, McIntosh proposed his own taxonomy.[9] McIntosh suggested grouping churches at the 200; 400; 800; 1,200; 3,000; 6,000; and 10,000 marks. McIntosh particularly noted how the role of the lead pastor changes predictably in each grouping. He also noted that effective leadership is a critical component for a church to successfully move from a smaller classification to a larger one. He argued that churches have more in common with secular organizations than many might think at first.[10]

A Synthesis of Key "Large Church" Identifiers

With a variety of differing taxonomies, it is important to select a clear mark by which one can understand a church to be large no matter the language used to describe it. Three points help determine this number. First, the number must take into account the significant sociological shifts and population trends that have occurred in the United States as they relate to religion in the past three decades. Some of the earlier works, particularly that of Schaller and Womack, did not take into account the global population growth and culture trends that would take place in the decades following their research, a point Schaller later admitted.[11] Second, the number should be large enough that the church requires multiple paid staff in addition to the lead pastor.[12] Finally, the number should require a clear change in organizational structure that reveals the lead pastor must transition from a manager to a leader.[13]

Sociological Shifts and Population Trends Related to Religion in the United States

One way to understand how sociological trends have influenced what most people consider a large church can be understood by reviewing the development and growth of megachurches within the United States. In the year 2000, the Leadership Network commissioned a study of some of the larg-

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8 Ibid., 129.

9 McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

10 Ibid., 116–121.

11 L Schaller, *The Very Large Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000).

12 George, *Prepare Your Church*; G.L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing out the Best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revel, 1999); McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

13 C.C. Green, "Pastoral Leadership, Congregational Size, Life Cycle Stage, and Church Culture: A Grounded Theory Analysis," ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text database (3170687), 2005; McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

est Protestant churches in the United States.[14] In this particular study, Scott Thumma served as the principal researcher. Since then, the Leadership Network and the Hartford Institute for Religion Research have commissioned several more studies focused on these churches.[15] David Travis and Warren Bird later joined Thumma in this research. They have become respected leaders within the field of those who study the largest Protestant Churches within the United States.

The widely accepted standard for a church to be considered a megachurch is a Sunday attendance of 2,000.[16] In the 1970s, there were approximately 50 megachurches in the United States.[17] In a 2011 survey of megachurches in the United States, the Hartford Institute for Religion Research identified 1,611 megachurches.[18] When compared to United States census data, the growth of megachurches in the United States is actually outpacing the growth of the general populace.[19] In the past three decades, there has been a massive growth of very large churches within the United States.

Several scholars have attempted to pinpoint the reasons for such growth since the 1970s. Ellingson suggests three reasons for the growth of megachurches.[20] First, he states that religious consumerism has allowed for the growth of the megachurch. The megachurch is growing faster because it can produce the desired religious goods demanded by religious consumers more quickly than smaller churches can. Second, Ellingson suggests that the church as sect theory fuels megachurch growth. In his opinion, the megachurch is able to create a clear culture tension between itself and secular society. Lastly, Ellingson suggests that organizational dynamics explain the explosive growth of the megachurch. In this way, he proposes that the mega-

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[14] S.L. Thumma, *Megachurches Today 2000: Summary of Data from the Faith Communities Today 2000 Project* (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2001).

[15] W. Bird and S. Thumma, *A New Decade of Megachurches: 2011 Profile of Large Attendance Churches in the United States* (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2011); S. Thumma and W. Bird, *Not Who You Think They Are: A Profile of the People Who Attend America's Megachurches* (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2009); S. Thumma and W. Bird, *Recent Shifts in America's Largest Protestant Churches: Megachurhces 2015 Report* (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2015); S. Thumma and D. Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2007); S. Thumma, D. Travis, and W. Bird, *Megachurches Today 2005* (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2005).

[16] Thumma and Bird, *Recent Shifts*.

[17] S. Ellingson, "New Research on Megachurches," in *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, ed. B.S. Turner (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[18] Bird and Thumma, *A New Decade*.

[19] Ibid.; P.J. Mackun et al., *Population Distribution and Change: 2000 to 2010* (US Census Bureau, 2011); Thumma and Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths*.

[20] Ellingson, "New Research."

church approach is fundamentally different than the approach of smaller churches in that both the leadership and the laity seek to involve new people in the organization on a regular basis and are willing to change methodology in order to stay relevant with their communities.

Chaves suggests that the growth of the modern megachurch is economically driven.[21] He notes that the problem facing churches is the same problem faced by other struggling organizations like the orchestra and the theatre. The church has no ability to reduce its overhead through efficiency. Chaves points out that a preliminary analysis of financial data collected by 20 denominations revealed that real giving did not keep pace with the actual costs of churches. This means that many churches have been forced to curtail ministries and programs. The one notable exception is the megachurch. The megachurch is able to keep offering programs because it has the financial resources to do so. Chaves argues that the data supports a reality in which people of a consumerist culture will go to the church that offers more choices and avoid the church with fewer choices.

Among other points, Karnes, McIntosh, Morris, and Pearson-Merkowitz note that the growth of megachurches is strongly and positively associated with population and urbanization.[22] They note that in order for megachurches to thrive, they need *both* an adequate population from which to draw and an adequate infrastructure to support the populations' attempts to join the megachurch. Because the United States population is growing more numerous and more urbanized, accessibility to megachurches is also growing.[23] Thumma and Travis note that 80% of the population within the United States lives within a ninety-minute drive from a megachurch.[24]

How has this reality and all the research changed the thinking of people as it relates to religion in the United States? Thumma and Travis suggest that all of this focus on the megachurch has fundamentally altered what people think is the structure of a typical church.

> The predominance of small churches contributes to the general mental picture of churches in our culture. The assumption is that the 'typical' church is a small organization that is fortunate if it has one full-time pastor. . . . In the last century, with the increasing urbanization, research has focused more on larger churches and in some ways has shifted the mental image. In many denominational and congregational studies, the mental picture of a representative

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[21] M. Chaves, "All Creatures Great and Small: Megachurches in Context," *Review of Religious Research* 47, no. 4 (2006).

[22] K. Karnes et al., "Mighty Fortresses: Explaining the Distribution of American Megachurches," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46, no. 2 (2007).

[23] S.L. Colby and J.M. Ortman, *Projections of the Size and Composition of the US Population: 2014–2060* (US Census Bureau, 2015).

[24] Thumma and Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths*.

church is one that has a few staff members in addition to a pastor and has an attendance of around three hundred. These mental images of the 'typical' church carry considerable power and influence when one begins to assess the place of the megachurch.[25]

Furthermore, Thumma and Travis also put forth that while many smaller churches exist, fewer people worship in these smaller churches than in churches with 300 or more in attendance on a Sunday morning. More pragmatically, they argue, "the top 20 percent of churches account for 65 percent of the total resources that might be found in churches in the United States."[26] The United States is growing more populous and urban. Research, resource allocation, and the cult of personality all have conspired to transform society's view of the common church.

Trends in Hiring Paid Staff Within the Local Church

In his research, McIntosh notes that in order for a church to break the 125 barrier, it needs to place an additional pastor on its staff.[27] However, upon further investigation, the ratio at which a church should add a second pastor seems to have shrunk over time. In the 1960s, the ratio was one pastor for every 350–500 congregants.[28] In the 1980s, the ratio was drastically decreased to around one pastor for every 100 congregants.[29] Later, McIntosh increased the number of congregants to 125 partly due to the pragmatic reason that, in his opinion, most churches struggle to finance such a ratio.[30]

Recent research conducted by Warren Bird highlights the fact that the larger a church becomes, the lower the staff to church attendance ratio actually becomes.[31] In summary, it seems that churches have approximately one professional staff member for every 125 Sunday morning worshippers until they reach mega-church status or slightly below. At this point, the ratio tends to decrease the larger a church becomes.

McIntosh considers a church of 200–400 people to be a midsized church. In order for the midsized church to grow, it must add professional staff.[32] He

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[25] Ibid., 5.

[26] Ibid., 6.

[27] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

[28] M. Anderson, *Multiple Ministries: Staffing the Local Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing, 1965); H.J. Sweet, *The Multiple Staff in the Local Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1963).

[29] Schaller, *The Multiple Staff*.

[30] G.L. McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 39.

[31] W. Bird, *Leadership Networ/Vanderbloemen 2014 Large Church Salary Report: An Executive Summary of Research Trends in Compensation and Staffing* (Leadership Network, 2014).

[32] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*, 149.

suggests that in order to break the 400 barrier, a church needs to hire a third full-time pastor. According to McIntosh, this hire should take place sometime when a church has 300–400 in attendance. In addition, the third pastoral hire, often a pastor of education, should have as his primary focus that of finding and keeping new people engaged in the life of the church.[33] Thus, according to the research, a true pastoral staff, one that includes multiple professional staff beyond the lead pastor, likely originates when a church has between 300–400 Sunday morning worshipers.

The Impact of Organizational Change Within the Local Church

As churches grow, they experience significant organizational change.[34] Figure 2 identifies some of the significant organizational changes that occur within churches as they grow. Several clear organizational metaphors aptly describe the church as it grows. This section will seek to articulate how the large church is organizationally different than churches of other sizes. In order to do so, it will first observe how both small and medium churches operate, next it will review how the medium to large transitional church operates, and finally it will reveal how the large church operates. Further-

FIGURE 2

Mcintosh's Typology of Church Sizes

Factors	Small Church	Medium Church	Large Church
Size	15-200 worshipers	201-400 worshipers	401+ worshipers
Orientation	Relational	Programmatical	Organizational
Structure	Single Cell	Stretched cell	Multiple Cell
Leadership	Resides in key families	Resides in committees	Resides in select leaders
Pastor	Lover	Administrator	Leader
Decisions	Made by congregation, Driven by history	Made by committees, Driven by changing needs	Made by staff and leaders, Driven by vision
Staff	Bivocational or single pastor	Pastor and small staff	Multiple staff
Change	Bottom up through key people	Middle out through key committees	Top down through key leaders

(McIntosh, 1999 p. 130)

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[33] McIntosh, *Staff Your Church*, 26–27.

[34] McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All*.

more, this section will summarize the key transition point within the growth of a church at which the lead pastor must significantly change his approach to leadership in order to allow the church to grow in a healthy manner.

The Small-Sized Church as a Family

McIntosh suggests that when considering the small church, one needs to envision it as a large extended family.[35] What keeps the small church functioning properly is genuine relationships within the church family. As in a typical family, celebration plays a significant role in small churches, and one should not be surprised to find the members of a small church celebrating many of life's milestones together.

Because of their importance, relationships often drive the decision-making process in the small church. Thus, in order for the lead pastor of a small church to lead effectively, he must be adept at developing and nurturing key relationships within the church family.[36] What one quickly discovers, however, is that as a church grows, the way it is led must change in order for leadership to continue to be effective.

The Medium-Sized Church as an Organism

In his classic work, *Images of Organization,* author Gareth Morgan suggests that an organization acts as an organism when it does the following two key things: first, when it focuses on advancing its mission while developing its human capital, and second, as it advances its mission in light of its unique environment.[37] He goes on to argue that in order for an organization to succeed as an organism, it needs to develop interrelated sub-systems within the organization and allow for managerial variance within each sub-system.[38] However, while managerial variance may exist, the successful organization as organism will still ensure alignment among its subsystems in order to "identify and eliminate dysfunctions."[39] When healthy, the medium-sized church functions as an organism.

Figure 2 notes that the medium-sized church is often programmatically oriented, led by a committee, and administrated by pastoral oversight. In many ways, the medium church functions like Morgan's organism. In the medium-sized church, each various ministry exists to meet a particular need within the local environment. For instance, a church might offer an addiction recovery program in order to deal with high levels of alcoholism within the local community.

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] G. Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006).

[38] Ibid., 39–54.

[39] Ibid., 39.

Medium-sized churches most likely have a small staff that includes a second full-time pastor. However, the likelihood that the second full-time pastor will be able to manage all ministry programs is impractical for two reasons. First, the most common church hire for a second pastor is the position of youth pastor.[40] These pastors are typically not entrusted with the care of adult programs. Furthermore, the ability of a single pastor to oversee all the programs, youth and otherwise, of the church grows increasingly unlikely the larger a church grows. Thus, the medium-sized church would normally place a committee over an addiction recovery program or any other adult ministry in order to direct the ministry and details of that program. The lead pastor of the medium-sized church would regularly connect with the committee in order to stay up to date on the effectiveness of the ministry and to monitor the needs of the program relative to the larger organizational goals of the church. This process would repeat itself for each major program functioning within the local church. In the end, the lead pastor is responsible to make sure that the various programs within the church are aligned to the overall mission of the medium-sized church. Furthermore, the lead pastor would be responsible to deal with dysfunction when it appears in the various programs of the church.

The healthy, medium-sized church should resemble an organism. This means that the medium-sized church is highly aware of and responsive to its unique environment. It means that the medium-sized church creates various programs to meet the needs of those it hopes to serve and that the programs function as sub-systems within the organization. There is a reasonable amount of variance among these programs in order to meet the particular mission of the program. At the same time, the lead pastor seeks alignment among the various programs of the church by administrating each sub-system. However, as the medium-sized church grows and transitions into a large church, it faces the danger of becoming a machine.

The Medium to Large Transitional Church as a Machine

As a church grows, it faces unique organizational and leadership challenges. Schaller notes that both growth and decline do not occur in a smooth, linear fashion, but rather, growth and decline may be visualized as a stair step in which churches regularly hit plateaus which require them to do things differently.[41] Furthermore, Schaller argues that what works for one church size may not always work for a church of another size. One unique challenge that churches face as they transition from being a medium-sized church to being a large church is the risk of becoming an organizational machine.

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[40] McIntosh, *Staff Your Church*.

[41] Schaller, *Hey, That's Our Church*, 41–47.

Morgan notes that an organization functions as a machine when the primary concern of the organization becomes meeting predetermined goals in the most efficient manner possible.[42] One of the primary differences between the organism and machine metaphors, as laid out by Morgan, is their ability to adapt to their environment. The organization that functions as a machine is at a significant disadvantage when it comes to changing in order to meet the unique needs of its environment. Furthermore, the organization that functions as a machine can contribute to the development of oppressive bureaucracy and can actually harm those within the organization because it places organizational goals above the particular needs of those within the organization.[43]

As a medium-sized church grows, it faces the need to adjust the way it functions. The medium-sized church is able to respond quickly to the unique needs found within its environment. However, as the church grows, it can no longer rely on more and more programs to sustain its growth. It needs to transition to a more individualized approach to growth. Where growth came through key programs in the past, future growth will come through the word of mouth communication of those who attend the church. If this transition is not realized, the likelihood that the medium to large transitioning church will become an organizational machine greatly increases. McIntosh notes that churches are never static; they are always growing or shrinking.[44] If churches cannot master the needed growth transitions, they will, by default, shrink. It is imperative then, that the medium to large transitional church avoids becoming a bureaucracy-driven, organizational machine.

The medium to large transitional church becomes an organizational machine when it struggles to let go of a growth model that holds programs as the key to growth. If a church becomes too big, the program approach begins to become more important than the people who run them. This means that increased turnover, within both the volunteers who run certain programs and the participants who are involved in these programs, will become a reality. The larger the church becomes, the more difficult it will also become for a church to adapt to the needs within the environment.

The Large Church as a Culture

Morgan identifies that an organization functions as a culture when it successfully develops shared meaning and value among its organization.[45] Further, an organization as a culture requires that the organization has sufficient

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[42] Morgan, *Images of Organization*.

[43] Ibid., 26.

[44] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

[45] Morgan, *Images of Organization*.

buy-in to the shared meaning and values among its members. Morgan also notes that an organization that is functioning as a culture recognizes that the relationship between an organization and its environment is shared—that is it is socially constructed.

Figure 2 identifies the fact that the large church is organizationally ordered, leader led, and top down in its approach to decision making. Vision becomes increasingly important in the large church as it is the primary driver of change and decision-making. The large church seeks to define what the shared values of the church are and then helps its members internalize those particular values through various venues, such as through membership classes and select church-wide programs. The large church is also concerned with developing a relationship with its environment that is shared. It seeks to have a healthy relationship with the community in which it is situated. This relationship is often forged by the lead pastor who spends time interacting with those who are in positions of influence outside the church itself.

The healthy large church develops as a culture. It works to develop shared meaning among those involved with the church. It works diligently to imprint its shared values into every person who regularly attends the church. It also seeks to develop a harmonious relationship with its environment.

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF THE LARGE CHURCH LEAD PASTOR

From the above review of organizational change that occurs in the growing church, it has been demonstrated that the role of the expression of leadership by the lead pastor is dynamic. The function of the lead pastor will change given the size of the church. In medium-sized churches, a lead pastor needs to function as a manager or administrator of various programs and committees. However, as a church grows, the lead pastor needs to shift focus. Rather than managing programs, the lead pastor of a large church needs to focus on casting a common vision and ensuring that the vision is embedded within the various individuals who constitute the church. This transition seems to take place as a church enters into the 300–400 range of Sunday morning attendees, as will be further demonstrated below.

A Review of the Changing Roles of the Lead Pastor Based on Church Size

Literature dealing with both church growth and pastoral leadership notes that a significant leadership shift needs to occur as a church becomes a large church. This transition seems to take place when a church has 300–400 regularly attending members. While the numbers vary slightly between authors, experts do agree on the basics of what type of shift is required.

Green has done some considerable work in understanding the veracity of the various classifications first put forth by Routhauge and adapted by

Crow.[46] Routhauge originally categorized Nazarene churches into four main groups based on size. Crow later redeveloped the groupings, keeping their size classifications while changing their titles.[47]

Originally, Routhauge noted that a significant change occurred in pastoral leadership as a church transitioned between being a family enterprise church (150–350 members) and a corporate enterprise church (350+ members) as can be seen in Figure 3. For the smaller church, "the pastoral work of the clergy is carried out in the setting of administration."[48] However, in the larger church, the lead pastor becomes the symbol of unity and stability for the church."[49] Green agrees with this observation, noting that "organizational complexity increases with size, the way pastors function is reshaped, new and different pastor skill sets are required, and congregations exhibit very different expectations."[50]

In his discussion of how the lead pastor needs to change as a church transitions from being a smaller church to being a larger church, Green

FIGURE 3

Comparison of the Lead Pastor's Role Based on Size of Church

Role of the Lead Pastor in a Extended Family Enterprise Church (150-350)	Role of the Lead Pastor in a Corporate Enterprise Church (350+)
Sustain physical points of contact with parishioners.	Ministers *through* others.
Be present in times of crisis.	Willing to sacrifice relationships for the sake of the vision.
Desire to know everyone.	Narrow the scope of relationships to strategic contacts.
Relate to larger body through structure.	Relate to the larger body through communication (i.e. - preaching)
Manage specialized leaders (i.e. - children's pastor, youth pastor, etc.)	Define mission, vision, values
	Oversee business aspects of the church

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[46] C.C. Green, "Church Size: Reframing Our Understanding and Conversations," *Associaton of Nazarene Sociologists and Researchers* 23, no. 15 (2007); C.D. Crow, "Enduring Cultures of Laity," *Church of the Nazarene* (1997); A.J. Rothauge, *Sizing up a Congregation for New Member Ministry* (Produced for the Education for Mission and Ministry Office: Seabury Professional Services, 1984).

[47] Crow, "Enduring Cultures of Laity"; Rothauge, *Sizing up a Congregation.*

[48] Rothauge, *Sizing up a Congregation*, 18.

[49] Ibid., 26.

[50] Green, "Church Size," 5.

noted several important milestones. "Essential qualities in the Corporate Enterprise church included the following: the ability to release ministry to others; trusting others with ministry tasks, responsibilities, and authority; delegation."[51] The role of the lead pastor at this level also shifts in that he spends more of his time interacting with key staff, the governing board of the church, and the community in which the church is situated.

McIntosh titles a church of 200–400 individuals as the "managerial church."[52] One of the key characteristics of a church of this size is that lead pastors function as an administrator of the organization. They may have at their disposal a small team, but they are primarily responsible for making sure each committee accomplishes the right work. They manage the work. However, for a church to grow larger, "the senior pastor must begin thinking as a leader more than an administrator."[53]

McIntosh names a church of 400–800 an "organizational church." At the 400 mark and above, a church is required to take on a certain level of organizational complexity that requires the lead pastor to lead. The lead pastor begins to spend less time directly overseeing or running ministry and more time casting vision for the future to a skilled team of staff and volunteers.

George argues that a large church must slowly begin to hire staff whose primary role is to develop other leaders.[54] McIntosh agrees, suggesting that in the church of 400 or more, the lead pastor begins to function as one who trains other leaders.[55] The larger the church grows, the further down the organizational structure the leadership development travels. Large churches are those that have a staff focused on developing teams to do ministry.

A Review of the Unique Competencies of the Large Church Lead Pastor

It has been demonstrated thus far through the literature that a church transitions to being a large church at some point between having 300–400 regular attendees. As a church approaches this transition, it is important to note what competencies the lead pastor must gain or sharpen. The core competencies of the lead pastor of a large church should be focused. The large church lead pastor must cast vision for the board and staff.[56] The larger the church, the greater the expectancy on the part of the membership that the lead pastor will actively cast a vision for the future.[57] He must lead through

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[51] Green, "Pastoral Leadership."

[52] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

[53] Ibid., 150.

[54] C.F. George, *The Coming Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994).

[55] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

[56] Green, "Pastoral Leadership"; McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*; Schaller, *Growing Plans*.

[57] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

developing relationships with other key leaders within the church.[58] The lead pastor must also lead through effectively communicating and by functioning as the church figurehead within the community.

Leading Through Strategic Vision Casting

The large church lead pastor must be skilled in casting a strong vision for the future. Thumma and Bird note that larger churches are almost twice as likely as smaller churches to say that they have a clear purpose and mission.[59] In his discussion of the large church minister, Keller suggests that not only must the large church minister be a vision caster, but he must also be a vision keeper.[60] In this way, Keller suggests that two key ways the large church pastor keeps vision is through intentional assimilation and intentional staff hiring. As it relates to assimilation, the large church minister must cast vision for potential new members ensuring that they have a solid understanding of the type of church they are seeking to join. As it relates to hiring staff, the large church minister must not only look for skill and tenure, but according to Keller, must also look for a vision fit since the large church only does two or three key things very well.

Generally, the larger the church, the more the lead pastor is independent of any denominational ties as it relates to casting vision.[61] One particular place that this is clearly seen is in the area of global missions. The smaller denominational church most often participates in denominationally developed mission programs while larger churches will often create their own partnerships or programs. This is not to say that this is done against the wishes of the denomination, but rather in most cases, the larger church is more directly involved in the strategic development and vision casting of the mission initiative. This, in turn, requires the large church lead pastor to be a strategic thinker and vision caster in a variety of settings beyond the walls of the church.

Vision casting also includes the concept of strategic planning. Shah, David, and Surawski note that larger churches are more likely than smaller churches to engage in strategic planning.[62] Furthermore, among the churches that do utilize strategic planning, Barna notes that large church pastors are more interested than pastors of smaller churches in measuring

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[58] Ibid.; George, *The Coming Church Revolution*.

[59] Thumma and Bird, *Recent Shifts*.

[60] T. Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics," *The Movement Newsletter*, 2006.

[61] S. Gramby-Sobukwe and T. Hoiland, "The Rise of Mega-Church Efforts in International Development: A Brief Analysis and Areas for Further Research," *Transfomration: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 26, no. 2 (2009); Keller, "Leadership."

[62] A.J. Shah, F.R. David, and Z.J. Surawski, "Does Strategic Planning Help Churches?: An Exploratory Study," *Coast Business Journal* 2, no. 1 (2004).

demographics, revamping financial processes, and working with fundraising consultants.[63] The larger the church, the more the lead pastor must be adept at reading numbers, engaging experts and/or consultants, and crafting long-term strategies for the church.

Leading Through Relationships with Other Leaders

The large church lead pastor must develop a core leadership team that supports him in running both the staff and daily ministries of the local church. For the large church at the lower end of the scale, this may simply be one or two other associate pastors who, in turn, run a core team of volunteers. For the lead pastor of a large church at the higher end of the scale, this team is a critical group of executive pastors or associate lead pastors who help run the rest of the staff and set vision with the lead pastor. This process of ministering through a key team is actually a critical part of the process of the lead pastor transitioning from the role of manager to the role of leader.[64] In figure 4, McIntosh illustrates how the lead pastor's role changes as the church grows increasingly large.[65]

Not only must the large church lead pastor relate to the governing board of the church, but he also must begin to rely on the collective leadership of a governing group. Malphurs suggests that a governing board should be primarily focused on praying, monitoring, deciding, and advising with and for the lead pastor of the large church.[66] He points out that the governing board

FIGURE 4

The Changing Nature of the Lead Pastor's Shepherding Role

Church Size	Senior Pastor's Shepherd Role
Up to 200	Shepherd all people personally
200-400	Shepherd all people through volunteers
400-600	Shepherd all people through leaders
800 or more	Shepherd all people through pastoral staff

(McIntosh, 2000, p. 77)

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[63] Barna Group, "How Pastors Plan to Improve Their Churches," https://www.barna.org/barna-update/congregations/560-how-pastors-plan-to-improve-their-churches#.VpRk1lIoQfF.

[64] J.T. Hawco, "The Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor Team: A Contemporary Paradigm for the Larger Church Staff," Covenant Theological Seminary, http://www.xpastor.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/hawco_john.pdf, 2005).

[65] McIntosh, *Staff Your Church*.

[66] A. Malphurs, *Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005).

is ultimately responsible for the church but invests most of its authority into the lead pastor. In this situation, the lead pastor must relate well to the governing board. He must guard against micromanagement while avoiding the pitfall of getting ahead of the governing board.

The relationship between lead pastor and board is particularly dynamic. "There is no single determinant of board power and influence *over senior managers*."[67] However, the lead pastor would do well to develop informal relationships with board members while at the same time provide the right amount of information for board members to be well-informed decision makers. One of the key markers of an effective board-manager relationship is the ability for the board to be comfortable and informed enough to ask the right questions of senior management.[68]

Leading Through Communication

The large church lead pastor needs to be able to communicate effectively in a large group setting.[69] Communication is a critical aspect of leadership. Hackman and Johnson broadly define communication as "the transfer of symbols, which allows individuals to create meaning."[70] They further suggest that "leadership is human (symbolic) communication that modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to meet shared group goals and needs."[71] Communication is what builds and develops the relationships necessary for leadership to exist.[72]

The large church lead pastor must be a highly effective communicator on the stage. A brief glance over job descriptions for large church lead pastors reflects expectancy on the part of large churches that their lead pastor has extensive experience and skill in the discipline of preaching. A survey of large church pastors done by the Leadership Network note that the majority of large church pastors choose to identify as "preacher-teacher" rather than pastor.[73] The same study noted that pastors of the largest churches

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[67] C. Cornforth, "Power Relations Between Boards and Senior Managers in the Governance of Public and Non-Profit Organisations," in *2nd International Conference on Corporate Governance and Direction* (Henley Management College, UK: 1999), 26.

[68] Ibid.

[69] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*; Schaller, *Growing Plans*.

[70] M.Z. Hackman and C.E. Johnson, *Leadership: A Communication Perspective*, 6th ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2013), 5.

[71] Ibid., 11.

[72] A. DuBrin, *Leadership: Research Findings, Practice, and Skills*, 8th ed. (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015); G.B. Graen and M. Uhl-Bien, "Relationship-Based Approach to Leadership: Development of Leader-Member Exchange (Lmx) Theory of Leadership over 25 Years: Applying a Multi-Level Multi-Domain Perspective," *Management Department Faculty Publications* Paper 57, (1995).

[73] W. Bird, "Teacher First: Leadership Network's 2009 Large-Church Senior Pastor Survey," http://www.leadnet.org.

spend more time preaching and more time in sermon preparation than do pastors of smaller churches.

Recent research also notes that the larger a church becomes, the more likely it is that the church, and by necessity its lead pastor, will be adept at utilizing social media for religious purposes.[74] In her discussion, Foegenay notes that large churches are more likely to utilize Facebook and Twitter for community among their congregants. A 2013 Barna report effectively supports this research by noting that large church pastors are among those who utilize both Twitter and Facebook most frequently.[75] Further, this same Barna study noted that most large church lead pastors believe that social media would comprise "a significant part of their ministry" in the next two years. Thus, the large church lead pastor must be able communicate effectively both in person and via social media.

Leading by Functioning as the Church Figurehead Within the Community

Finally, the large church lead pastor must connect well with the community in which the church is situated. Rananaware conducted research that sought to discover whether Mintzberg's model of leadership roles applied to church leadership.[76] In his research, he concluded that 90% of pastors play the role of figurehead in the church and represent the church to the entire community. He also noted that 100% of pastors play the role of spokesperson for the church. As spokesperson, the pastor is required to represent the church well within the community, society in general, and within the denomination if applicable.

While all pastors fill the roles of figurehead and spokesperson, the larger a church becomes, the more vital it is that the lead pastor functions exceptionally well in these roles. The larger a church becomes, the more well known it is to the community in which it is situated, the denomination of which it is a part, and society in general. McIntosh notes that part of the function of the large church lead pastor is brand management.[77] One of the key functions of the large church pastor is to ensure that the church develops and keeps a solid reputation within the community. He must be comfortable interacting with key political, social, and religious leaders within the community, and he must be ready to engage with clarity and warmth those who would

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[74] K. Fogenay, "A Christian Mega Church Strives for Relevance: Examining Social Media and Religiosity," ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text database (1553232), 2013.

[75] Barna Group, "The Rise of the @Pastor," https://www.barna.org/barna-update/congregations/615-the-rise-of-the-pastor#.VpRlUFIoQfF.

[76] V.S. Rananaware, "Leadership Roles: Application of Mintzberg's Leadership Roles to the Church Leadership," *Intercontinental Journal of Human Resources Research Review* 3, no. 11 (2015).

[77] McIntosh, *Taking Your Church*.

confuse the brand of the church. By doing so, the large church lead pastor will ensure that the church is understood correctly in the community.

THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF LEADING

THROUGH GROWTH

The research above has demonstrated that a correlation exists between the size of a church and the function of the lead pastor. As a church grows, it is important for the lead pastor to think differently about ministry and leadership. As the role of the lead pastor changes, he or she must guard against certain organizational land mines while seeking to develop other organizational opportunities through leadership.

Leadership That Creates Psychic Prisons

Large church lead pastors must constantly fight against allowing their leadership to turn their organization into what Morgan refers to as a psychic prison.[78] Morgan suggests that a psychic prison is simply an organizationally or self-constructed version of reality that competes with actual reality.

Large church lead pastors can create psychic prisons by allowing groupthink to become part of their organizational culture. Groupthink occurs when a group of people seeks decisional harmony over making the right choice. This can occur when the lead pastor fails to recognize the power of position as it relates to teams. Those in power can cause those who are not in power to communicate less frequently and less honestly if they are not intentional about the way in which they communicate.[79] When large church lead pastors underappreciate the amount of power they are perceived to hold, they may accidentally allow their staff or board to think that the only right way is the lead pastor's way, thus paving the road for groupthink to exist.

Another way large church lead pastors create psychic prisons is by allowing the church to function as the patriarchal family. This occurs when the large church lead pastor is allowed to take the place as the family patriarch. Churches that exude male dominance and male values alone are churches that may have fallen victim to this danger.

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[78] Morgan, *Images of Organization*.

[79] C. Anderson and J.L. Berdahl, "The Experience of Power: Examining the Effects of Power on Approach and Inhibition Tendencies," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 6 (2002); T.G. Pacleb, "The Relationship Between Leadership Styles, Leader Communication Style, and Impact on Leader-Member Exchange Relationship Within the Banking Sector in the United States and the Philippines," ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text database (3583465), 2013.

Leadership That Creates Domination

Large church lead pastors must also guard against allowing their organization to become an "instrument of domination."[80] An organization becomes such when it consistently places the goals of the organization above that of the people within them. At times, a large church lead pastor may exploit an organization's staff in the hopes of advancing the mission. This may be observed in high levels of turnover, in higher than normal rates of failing health, or even by the presence of failing marriages or troubled families within the staff of the organization.

Leadership That Creates Transformation

Ultimately, large church lead pastors must become efficient at managing complexity. When complexity is managed well, the lead pastor will create organizational transformation. Morgan suggests one way that leaders can manage complexity well is through the creation of "new contexts."[81] For an organization, context is simply the structural patterns and parameters that help define how the organization relates to itself. Thus, the large church lead pastor needs to be adept at creating stable spaces within the organization that can allow for self-organization (referred to as decentralization by McIntosh) to occur. When done well, this will allow the church to respond uniquely in each situation in order to meet the particular needs within the church. For instance, the lead pastor should seek to create a relatively stable worship environment in which the ministry team of the church can adapt to various contingencies that present themselves. One week, a national catastrophe may occur, such as was the case on September 11, 2001. This would demand a certain response on the part of the ministry team in order to effectively minister to the people in a Sunday morning service. Another week, the organization may launch a new building fund campaign. In this scenario, what worked as a response for a tragedy like 9/11 would not work for the kickoff of a major fundraising initiative. The lead pastor must create a stable environment that allows for those within the organization to self-organize and meet unique and varied needs as they arise.

CONCLUSION

Leadership in the modern world is indeed complex. However, the large church lead pastor need not be overwhelmed by the complexity of the task. With a clear understanding of the organizational dynamics at play, the large church lead pastors can successfully transition their church no matter the

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[80] Morgan, *Images of Organization*, 293.

[81] Ibid.

size or situation it faces. By focusing their leadership in the key areas of vision casting, leader development, and large group communication, and by functioning as the organizational ambassador, the chances for organizational success only increase. Further, by implementing the right decisions, large church lead pastors can help their organization avoid the negative attributes that would surely induce decline.

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