

Why Do Some Churches Grow More Than Others? By Pastor David Luecke

Big changes are happening on the American religious scene....Many in the declining traditional Protestant churches often seem perplexed. Why are those community churches growing while we are going down? There is no simple answer, but some explanations are emerging.

In the 1980s and 90s, there was a ministry discipline called Church Growth. It grew out of the observations of Donald McGavran, who studied mission movements. His work was popularized by C. Peter Wagner. Both worked out of Fuller Theological Seminary, where I was in the 80s. One of McGavran's key insights was that people don't become believers individually; they do so in groups. Out of this came the controversial homogeneous principle. People like to go to church with others like themselves.

In the early 20th century most churches in America were made up of immigrants who shared the same language and home culture. Most remained vibrant through their second generation. By mid-century, they were into their third and four generations. Most of these younger members had lost their ethnic loyalty by then. Many did carry on their church loyalty into the suburbs through the 1950s-70s. Their grandchildren are the millennials who are no longer in our churches. In retrospect, the churches were coasting on family loyalties. Those days are now gone. To survive, those former ethnic churches need to develop new approaches to ministry.

Church Growth advocate C Peter Wagner wrote like a journalist about the big successful congregations of the day. Implied was that if yours does as they do, you will grow, too. The market for church growth advice and materials is huge.

The fundamental issue is whether specific methods and leadership are the real explanation for growth. The best answer would come by researching many, perhaps 100, congregations that claim they are using the featured methods and see what they look like ten years later. Some will have grown very large, most will have stayed about the same, and many will have declined or even collapsed. Indeed, many of the church growth "winners" did collapse in the following years for a variety of reasons.

I know first-hand the story of the growth and plateau of Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church in North Royalton, Ohio. The then-senior pastor did consciously decide, for authentic mission purposes, that this congregation should reach out more effectively. Because he was highly trusted as a pastor, he could make some basic organization changes. He started a contemporary service in 1990 and lost an organist and assistant pastor in reaction. By the late 90s, we were growing at five to ten percent a year.

Usually untold is that a new religious editor for the Cleveland Plain Dealer chose Royal Redeemer for his article on contemporary worship. His story was on the Sunday issue front page with a large photograph of our worship service. Attendance was up by 200 six months later. Also, we received a totally unexpected gift of \$1 million dollars that enabled us to build a gym/worshiper center much larger than otherwise.

At about 1,000 in attendance, we stopped growing. One explanation is that the other three large Protestants congregations in our area each opened a new sanctuary in that decade. New sanctuaries almost always result in higher attendance. Old sanctuaries become a competitive disadvantage.

My conclusion? Significant church growth is a special providential blessing of God. When it happens, leaders need to run like mad to accommodate future growth, which of course is not guaranteed.

Consider the analogy of taking a sailboat out on a lake. Putting a sail up does not assure a wind. But if the wind does blow and you don't have your sail up, you will miss out on what could be a great adventure. In this analogy, the sail is ministry practices. If you are still using old practices you are likely to miss the Spirit's wind that is moving forward other boats (non-denominational community churches). Review your ministry practices.

Heritage Free Will Baptist Church

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www.heritagefwb.com

Tim W. Stout, Pastor - Mike Ellis, Family & Youth Pastor

Jacob Lute, Music a Discipleship Pastor - Stephanie Wolfe, Secretary



welcome

THE LORD'S DAY -MAY 19, 2019

-FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM-

THANKS FOR JOINING US FOR WORSHIP TODAY! IF YOU ARE A VISITOR PLEASE TAKE TIME TO FILL OUT A CONNECTION CARD AND BRING TO PASTOR TIM AFTER THE SERVICE AND RECEIVE A FREE GIFT. WE ARE SO GLAD YOU ARE HERE!

Last Week's Attendance

Sunday School: 101

Wednesday Classes/Bible Study: 56

Sunday Worship Service: 245

Nursery Workers - Today

AM Babies:

Toddlers:

Carol & Sandy Fraley

Mandy & Morgan Steele

Next Sunday - May 26

AM Babies:

Toddlers:

Paula Fraley & Lauren Stout

Mary Dussault & Peach Young

Church Ushers

Today: Emmett Allen, Carlos Harr, Ed Highfield, Rob Johnson,

Jared Konkle, Ted Murphy, Jerry Rosebrock, Don Wiles

May 26: Michael Clark, Rusty McKnight, Dennis Snavelly, Ken Vaccariello, Don Wiles, Mike Woltz, William Wycuff, Dave Young

Welcome Center

Today: Michael & Kaylene Clark

May 26: Shirley Johnson & Marsha Kessler

Greeters

Today: Fred & Josephine Adams and Jerry & Marlyne Rosebrock

May 26: Donna Davis & Sharon Hoover and Mike & Rennee Woltz

Heritage Golden Seniors

June 4, 2019 11:30am

Der Dutchman Restaurant \$13.29 for food & salad buffet

(drink, dessert, & tip NOT included)

Bus will leave the church at 10:30am

Please sign up at the Welcome Center

*It is our goal to purchase a new LED Church Sign to be placed at Obetz Road and Parsons Ave (replacing present sign on Obetz). This sign is costly but we believe will help us get information about Heritage FWBC to our community. We are asking you to give special gifts toward this project. Earmark your tithing envelop "CHURCH SIGN" and help us today! As of last Sunday, we have raised **\$17,603.00!***

AT HERITAGE THIS WEEK

Today

9:30am

10:30am

Sunday School (for all ages)

Membership Class / Pastor Tim's office

Worship Service

SuperKids (ages 4 - 6th grade)

Tuesday, May 21

9:30am

7:00Pm

Shut-In Visitation

Women In The Word Life Group / Sheila Bowen

Wednesday, May 22

7:00pm

Prayer Meeting / No Limits Worship / Kid's Class

Thursday, May 23

8:00am

6:00pm

6:30pm

Heritage Yard Crew

Everyday People Life Group / Mike & Kaylene Clark

Heritage Choir

Pastor Mike is looking for helpers for Wednesday night kid's class for the summer. If you would be willing to sign up for a week, please let him know!



Attention Men & Boys - Saturday, June 8 - Columbus Clippers Game (7:15pm) - The bus will leave the church at 6:15. The cost is \$15/ticket. Please sign up by **May 22nd** so tickets can be ordered. If have any questions see Pastor Mike.



Please subscribe to Flocknote to receive updates and information from Heritage. Just text the word heritage to 84576 to sign up now!