

Descriptions and Characteristics of Congregations by Size (ASA)

“Size is the most obvious factor affecting congregational life.” -- Arlin Rothauge

The Family Size Church

- Operates like an extended family (and may in fact be a biological family network). Just as in the famous tavern from the television series Cheers, “everybody knows your name.”
- Organized around one or two anchoring figures called matriarchs and patriarchs by Rothauge to indicate their tacit authority in the system.
- Often have part-time pastors, and their clergy tend to adopt a chaplain role—leading worship and giving pastoral care.
- A pastor who challenges the authority of a patriarch or matriarch, or who presumes to be the primary leader of the congregation, generally will not stay long.

The Pastoral Size Church

- 51-150 ASA all services
- 2 or 3 cells: membership, fellowship, leadership
- Rector is central as leader; entire parish dependent on the rector for direction, inspiration, pastoral care
- Vestry are leaders and sometimes still doers of ministry
- Need money for programs; little of it
- History of conflict between cells; typically clergy focused, which is not the real problem

The Transitional Size Church

- 151 to 250 ASA all services
- Pastor/rector can't maintain pastoral contact with all, due to size
- Vestry overworked because church not empowering other committees
- Overworked staff without funds for more
- Conflict similar to pastoral church unless more diversity in programs
- Most stressful size for clergy and leaders
- High burn out rate for clergy and laity

The Program Size Church

- 251-450 ASA all services
- Life centers around programs, ministries & multiple worship services
- Great delegation & empowerment of the laity for ministry
- Priest responsible for management of staff; trains & empowers others to do most pastoral care
- Numerous leaders at many levels work with staff to run programs & ministries
- Members removed from conflict; not clergy focused