CHAPTER 10:
STEP 6: Evaluate Your Success

**NO SUBSTITUTE FOR EVALUATION**

**Thwarting the Choke Law**

It was another of those phrases that resonated loudly with our experience. In *10 Steps to Church Growth*, Donald McGavran and Win Arn had told of a Tanzanian missionary who warned that strategies are doomed to fail if they do not take into account the “choke law.” This law is what happens when a church grows and existing members start “to absorb the entire time, attention, and budget of both laymen and pastors.”

A subsequent maintenance mindset soon chokes off evangelistic outreach. Before long, growth will slow and eventually cease.

As consultants, we had regularly seen this law in action. Most growing churches we had studied enjoyed growth patterns for three to 10 years. But a closer look at their growth rates revealed a gradual slowing. Eventually, growth would stop and maintenance would ensue. Once the maintenance mindset had subtly worked its way into the church’s philosophy, growth was effectively choked out of the life of the congregation.

Recognizing the tendency of maintenance to choke off growth is the first step toward arresting this ailment, but noticing its subtle onset is often difficult. The only procedure for identifying the onset of the choke law is to measure the tri-generational church’s vital signs. As a doctor would not
think of conducting a physical checkup without examining a patient’s blood pressure, heartbeat and temperature, so too there is a congregational vital sign that reveals the choke law’s subtle approach. This vital sign is the measurement of numerical growth or decline, and the tool is accurate record keeping. Accurate recording keeping should be the routine diagnostic tool among leaders of the Tri-Gen. church the way a blood pressure gauge, stethoscope and thermometer are the standard tools of a health provider’s profession. “Measurement enables each congregation to monitor its own state of health. If it is not growing, something is wrong” write McGavran and Arn.ii

Measuring a church’s growth, or lack thereof, allows the church to implement tri-generational strategies while keeping abreast of progress or regress. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the Tri-Gen. church model may not be suited to your situation. And though the Tri-Gen. model may seem appropriate initially, how are leaders to know if it is appropriate in the long term? Measuring the church’s growth is the best way to monitor suitability of the Tri-Gen. model. In Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate, McGavran warns that leading a church without growth analysis is like working “blindfolded.”iii

The measurement of growth is an important antidote for exaggeration as well, according to George Hunter. While analyzing the methods of John Wesley, Hunter noted, “Wesley had no interest in puffed statistics … (and) in reflecting on a case of the society in Dublin, he interpreted it as ‘a warning to us all, how we give in to that hateful custom of painting things beyond
life. Let us make a conscience of magnifying or exaggerating any thing. Let us rather speak under, than above, the truth. We, of all men, should be punctual in what we say; that none of our words may fall to the ground’ (Journal, March 16, 1748).”\textsuperscript{iv} This punctuality of Wesley led to what Hunter calls a sanctified pragmatism, that included rigorous analysis of growth and decline within the Methodist societies. Hunter demonstrates again Wesley’s meticulous approach by quoting this passage from Wesley’s journal: “I returned to Norwich, and took an exact account of the society. I wish all our preachers would be accurate in their accounts, and rather speak under than above the truth. I had heard again and again of the increase of the society. And what is the naked truth? Why, I left it 202 members; and I find 179. (March 21. 1779).”\textsuperscript{v}

**Four Types of Church Growth**

If measurement of church growth is necessary to monitor the ongoing suitability of the tri-generational approach, how then is it to be conducted? Is growth merely a numbers game, counting heads like counting sheep? Hardly, for in actuality church growth is really comprised of four distinct types of growth, only one of which is numerical.

The nexus for understanding church growth is Acts 2:42 – 47. In this passage four types of church growth are present.

- **Growing in maturity.** “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many
wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:42, 43). Immediately after the Holy Spirit’s visitation at Pentecost, the young church drew together in a time of maturation growth. The significance of its members’ devotion to teaching and fellowship, combined with the attesting miracles, testifies to a congregation maturing in its understanding and practice of spiritual principles.

- **Growing in unity.** “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God ...” (Acts 2:44 – 47a). The early church drew together in a unity and harmony that led to selfless acts of inter-reliance. Though pooling their money was not the norm for all or even most New Testament churches, unity and interdependence is certainly a growth goal of all Christian communities. Unity and harmony create an atmosphere of mutual dependence and reciprocity, that bonds participants to the community and their Lord.

- **Growing in favor.** “...and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:47b). Church growth includes growth in testimony and respect among the unchurched people of the community. The result can be openness to the Good News. Too often however,
an adversarial role develops between the church and the community. In reality, the role should be one of mutual respect, appreciation and communication. When a church is meeting the felt needs of the community, as outlined in Chapter 7, the church will receive the community’s gratitude and acknowledgement. This gratitude then becomes a powerful conduit through which the Good News flows into a community.

- **Growing in numbers.** “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (v. 47c). The aftermath of the first three types of church growth is the last; growth in numerical size.

It is unfortunate that so many churches measure the last type of growth and ignore the first three. No accurate picture of the tri-generational church can take place without a careful study of all four types of church growth. The propensity to measure the latter is undoubtedly because it easily lends itself to statistical measurement. However, the authors have proposed several strategies for analyzing all four types of growth. But first let us briefly address a criticism that is often leveled against the practice of counting.

**Is Counting Biblical?**

Few principles in the church growth field have garnered so much controversy as the principle of measuring numerical growth. Donald
McGavran counters that “the Church is made up of countable people and there is nothing particularly spiritual in not counting them. Men use the numerical approach in all worthwhile human endeavor.”

But some have argued that there is something spiritual about “not counting.” They would point to God’s displeasure with King David for ordering a census of the people in 1 Chronicles 21:1 – 30. However, 1 Chronicles 21:1 reveals that it was Satan who inspired David to conduct this counting of his troops. Even against the counsel of his commander Joab, who discerned David’s inappropriate motivation, David conducts the census. David’s motivation for the census was to revel in the strength of his army. But God wanted David to put his trust in God’s protection, rather than the size of his forces. Hence, wrong motivation and wrong instigation led to an inappropriate counting.

Elsewhere in the Bible, numberings are conducted for meaningful reasons with helpful results. In Numbers 1:2 and 26:2 God commands numberings of all Israel along with every segment of each tribe before and after the desert wanderings. In the Gospel accounts we witness accurate countings of Jesus’ team of disciples, and in Luke 10:1 – 24 we see a company of 72 disciples sent out two by two. In the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:3 – 7, only by counting the sheep does the shepherd become aware that one is missing from the fold. If counting those we are entrusted were odious to Jesus, certainly he would eliminate such imagery from his teaching. And in Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4; Luke records the growth of the church by a careful record of its numerical increase. McGavran
concludes “on Biblical grounds one has to affirm that devout use of the numerical approach is in accord with God’s wishes. On the practical grounds, it is as necessary in congregations and denominations as honest financial dealing.”

**Measuring Four Types of Growth**

**Growing in Maturity: Maturation Growth**

The first three types of growth can be challenging to measure, due to their subjective nature. What is growth in maturity in one type of Tri-Gen. congregation may not be in another. For example, a congregation with an emphasis on social action ministries might assess its maturation growth by counting the number of volunteers training for its philanthropic ministries. The number of people training for and carrying out ministries such as a food shelf, clothing exchange, or homeless shelter might be a good indicator of people maturing in discipleship. However, in a tri-generational congregation emphasizing discipleship in small groups, calculating the number of people actively involved in the small group network might be a better method for ascertaining maturation growth.

However, there are some common categories of ministries within many Tri-Gen. churches that can give a general assessment of growth in maturity, but first let us define what we mean by maturation.

Jesus’ Great Commission of *Matthew 28:18 – 20* entrusts the church with a commission to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching
them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Within this commission are four verbs, three of which are participles. Participles are helping verbs that modify or describe further another verb. Only one of the verbs in this passage is not a participle, and it is in the imperative and continuing tense. This verb would be the primary verb of the passage which the other three would describe. “Go,” “baptize,” and “teaching” are the participles in the above passage, and as such must describe further or modify the primary verb. The spelling of the Greek word matheteusate tells us that “make disciples” is this primary verb and that it is an imperative verb in the continuing tense. Being an imperative verb means that “making disciples” expresses the central command of the Great Commission. Thus going, baptizing and teaching are parts of the process, and as Wagner says, “(they are) never ends in themselves. They all should be used as a part of the process of making disciples.”

In addition, the continuing tense of “making disciples” signifies that this learning must be an action that is continuing at the present. Thus, being a disciple is not just something one has completed in the past, but something that is happening presently and that will continue in the future. R.V.G. Tasker points out that “the ‘school days’ of a Christian are never over.” Therefore, to count disciples, we look for ministries and programs in the tri-generational church that reveal that active learners are present.

Maturation growth may to a certain degree be measured by numbering a congregation’s “active learners” who are regularly inculcating Biblical lessons. Therefore, measuring the number of participants involved
in educational and training opportunities can give an approximate idea of the active learners in a congregation. The statistic that totals the people involved in these areas we have labeled the “composite maturation number” (CMN). Figure 10.1 tells how to compute this aggregate number for your congregation.

**Figure 10.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to Compute Your Composite Maturation Number (CMN):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Opportunity Attendance (EOA):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How many people are involved in educational opportunities per week? EOA =__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educational opportunities include Sunday School classes, cell groups with a learning format, Bible studies, Bible institutes, membership classes, newcomer classes, confirmation classes, classes in basic doctrine, or any gathering or class promoting Christian education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Attendance (AA):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compute the average attendance per weekend. AA =__________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composite Maturation Number (CMN): To compute your maturation growth ratio use the following formula:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| \[
| \frac{\text{Your EOA}}{\text{Your AA}} = \text{Composite Maturation Number (CMN)}
| \]
| * The composite maturation number is read as a percent. |
The composite maturation growth should be recorded and then compared with subsequent years. Increase in this composite number signifies an increasing percentage of attendees involved in ongoing educational opportunities. Thus, computing this number can reveal a general idea if tri-generational strategies are producing active learners who are maturing in the principles and practices of Christianity.

**Growing in Unity: Measuring Oneness**

Growing in unity is another highly subjective area. But a general idea of success can be determined through an analysis of how common identity, shared goals, and church-wide vision are developing among the different generations of the congregation. If a congregation can state and identify its tri-generational goals and vision, then unity is being shared at least intellectually among the different generational groupings. A congregational questionnaire is one of the best methods for uncovering this information.

In Chapter 6 we saw in Figure 6.5 how a congregation can establish its generational ratios with a simple congregational questionnaire. To uncover growth in unity it will be necessary to deploy a slightly more inclusive congregational questionnaire designed to uncover an understanding of shared goals, vision and identity. Figure 10.2 gives an example of congregational questions that can be asked to ascertain how pervasive intellectual unity is becoming in regards to goals, vision and identity.
Figure 10.2

Please tell us when were you born.

|----------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|

Please check the box that represents the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Use the “do not know” box only if absolutely necessary.

**Agreement That Statement Describes You**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strong (1)</th>
<th>Moderate (2)</th>
<th>Slight (3)</th>
<th>Disagree (4)</th>
<th>Do Not Know (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If asked, I could roughly state for visitors and non-members, our church’s <em>mission</em> statement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If asked, I could summarize in my own words for visitors and non-members, our church’s <em>vision</em> statement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have a sense of excitement about the future of our church.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have a clear understanding of the goals for our church.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Our church feels like a network of individuals and age groups with the same goals, but with different expressions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6. Combined worship services (unity services) are highly valued in our church.

7. Though we are a network of individuals and age groups, we have a unified identity in the community.

In Figure 10.2, questions 1, 2 and 3 deal with the degree to which a common vision is understood and embraced. Questions 4 & 5 address whether shared goals are present. And questions 6 and 7 assess the degree to which common identity is exhibited.

A congregational questionnaire is most effective when given at all church celebrations, twice a year on two consecutive weekends. On the second weekend it is important to ask those who have taken the questionnaire the week before to not take it again. The questionnaire should be compared with earlier questionnaires to determine growth in shared goals, vision and identity. If over time there is an increase in the numerical outcome on the questions of Figure 10.2, it should be obvious that at the very least mental assent to unifying factors is increasing.

Another gauge of unity is participation in “unity” services. In Chapter 8, we described how to host a periodic unity celebration. This combined worship event is a celebration of one Lord among different generations. Attendance at unity events can be another indicator of emerging unity.
However, the Tri-Gen. congregation must not expect attendance at this combined celebration to equal exactly the combined total of individual generation-specific celebrations. As noted in earlier, worship is a highly individualized and personal activity. Some attendees at the parallel worship celebrations may not like the blended format of the unity celebration. Therefore, it is not wise to gauge success based upon the degree to which the unity service attendance equals the combined attendance of the individual celebrations. For example, it would be imprudent to expect that a church with a Builder celebration of 120, a Boomer celebration of 175 and a Gen.-X celebration of 90 would garner 385 attendees at a unity service. A more realistic number might be 250 from these three worship expressions. In addition, unity services tend to attract a higher percentage of guests. Another 30 to 50 guests might be expected to bring the total to nearly 300. However, this is still short of the 385 that might be erroneously expected.

Therefore, due of these variables, compare the attendance numbers of a unity celebration only against earlier unity celebrations. Comparing proverbial apples to apples exposes a healthier picture of unity growth.

**Growing in Favor: Measuring Community Awareness**

Growing in favor indicates the extent to which a church is establishing and maintaining a positive image and mutual respect in the community. Data gathering of this information will take place in a manner similar to the process employed with the community survey of Chapter 7. As mentioned earlier, though the door-to-door interview has been popular, it
has fallen into some disfavor as of late. The telephone interview has subsequently emerged as less intrusive than the face-to-face visit.

Figure 10.3 gives sample questions that may be used for a community awareness survey.

**Figure 10.3**

**TELEPHONE COMMUNITY AWARENESS SURVEY**

**Introduction:**

“Hello. My name is ____ (name) ____ and I am conducting a short survey for ____ (name of congregation) ____ in ____ (city/town) ___. Would you mind if I asked you a few anonymous and short questions?”

- If “YES” continue.
- If “NO” conclude by saying. “Thank you for your consideration, good bye.”

**Survey Parameters:**

“We are undertaking a study of different generations in our community. Were you born ...

- ☐ In 1984 or more recently?
- ☐ In or between the years of 1965 to 1983?
- ☐ In or between the years of 1964 to 1946?
- ☐ In or between the years of 1927 to 1945?
- ☐ In or before 1926?

**Open-ended Questions:**
**Question #1:** “Are you aware of ____ (name of congregation) ____ in (city/town) ____?” If yes continue. If no conclude interview by saying, “That concludes our interview. Thank you for your time. Good bye.”

**Question #2:** “How would you describe this church to a friend?”

**Question #3:** “In general, do you have a positive, negative or undecided view of this church?”

**Question #4:** “What advice could you give this church so it could more effectively help people in your age group?”

**Question #5:** “Are you currently actively involved in a church, synagogue, mosque or other religious house of worship?”

**Conclusion:**

Thank you for your time. Your advice will help ____ (name of congregation) ____ of ____ (city/town) ____ better address the needs of people in our community(ies). Thank you. Good bye.

Do not forget to call only at a convenient time. Do not call during meals or late in the evening. Figure 7.7 in Chapter 7 reveals the best times to call are evenings between 6:30 and 9 PM, Saturdays from 10 AM to 4 PM and Sundays from noon to 9 PM.

The rule of thumb for the minimum number of calls needed in a community awareness survey is that 0.3% of the population should be
sampled. Therefore, if 50,000 people live within a 20 minute drive of your congregation, a good sample would be 150 phone calls.

Following guidelines similar to those for the Need Assessment Questionnaire of Chapter 7, begin a four phase process to correlate your responses to the phone calls.

1. Write down short phrases that summarize the response you are receiving. See Figure 10.4.

2. Immediately upon completion of all interviews, interviewers should review the responses and rank “key words” in frequency. See Figure 10.4 again for an example of how this may be accomplished.

3. Next all interviewers should compare their results, looking for common responses and key words.

4. All interviewers should compile a composite list of key words and phrases that describe, in order of frequency, the perspective people have about this congregation.
5. Finally, convene all interviewers to correlate their responses. Ask this group the following questions.

- Are their common key words found?
- Classify key words into two groups: positive and negative.
- Next, two options for analyzing and comparing these key words can be used.
  
  a. With the group prioritize the key words by frequency and list the top 10 positive and negative key words. Compare your lists of 10 annually.
  
  b. With your group, count the number of times certain words (or their synonyms) appear. Do this for both positive and negative words separately. For example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Responses</th>
<th>Key Words:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendly church with a good youth program.</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music is important.</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many wealthy people</td>
<td>Wealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in a food shelf,</td>
<td>Food shelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity and a women’s shelter</td>
<td>Habitat for Humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After-school care for school age children with a youth choir.</td>
<td>Kid’s Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Choir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“unfriendly” or its synonyms (“cold,” “cool,” “aloof,” “indifferent,” “detached” or “indifferent”) might decrease in frequency from 32 citations in year one of the survey, to less than 10 in year two.

**Growing in Numbers: Attendance Growth**

Evaluating your numerical growth begins with accurate recording keeping. But what type of numerical records will be kept? This is an important question, for a haphazard or inaccurate counting will lead to confusion and distortion. Even terminology must be monitored. Donald McGavran observed that “baptized believers” can mean “adult baptized believers in good standing” for a Churches of Christ congregation, and “all the baptized, infants and adults” in an Episcopal congregation. Thus, the Episcopal church would appear larger than the Churches of Christ, when in actuality the opposite is true.xi

As a result, measuring membership is not a good universal barometer of church growth. Instead, church attendance can give a more accurate picture of church growth or decline. To evaluate your attendance growth, you must undertake a four-step process.

**Step 1:** Determine whether or not you will count children. Children will skew the data in favor of congregations with large families. And, since determining age is difficult, it is almost impossible to count only adults when counting heads during a church service. For example, if a congregation wished to count everyone 13 years and older, the counters

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would have a difficult task determining if a person was 12 or 13 while counting from the back or balcony of a church sanctuary. Some congregations have solved this by counting the congregation after the children have been dismissed for a children’s sermon or children’s church. In order to not risk missing adults who are working with the children at this time, congregations then send counters to the children’s activity rooms to count adult volunteers. This may be the most accurate way to count adults. However, because of the difficulties involved, many congregations will opt for counting adults and children in attendance. Whichever process is adopted, it is important to be consistent. A good determining factor will be to investigate what the church has done in the past.

**Step 2.** Determine your past Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR). The AAGR is your net increase or decrease in church attendance over a period of years. Figure 10.5 demonstrates how to compute your AAGR as well as how to compute your annual growth rate (AGR). The AGR is used for comparing data between two consecutive years.
Figure 10:5

How to Compute Your Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR)*

\[
\text{This year's membership/attendance figure.} - \frac{\text{Your base membership/attendance figure.}}{\text{Your base membership/attendance figure.}} \div \frac{\text{Number of years being examined.}}{\text{Number of years being examined.}} \times 100 = \text{AAGR}
\]

This is read as a percent of annual growth.

How to Compute Your Annual Growth Rate (AGR)**

\[
\text{This year's membership/attendance figure.} - \frac{\text{Last year's membership/attendance figure.}}{\text{Last year's membership/attendance figure.}} = \text{AGR}
\]

This is read as a percent of annual growth.

* Use the average annual growth rate (AAGR) when you are seeking an average over a period of years, i.e. when analyzing your past figures.

** Use the annual growth rate (AGR) if you are comparing two consecutive years, such as yearly comparisons conducted in the future.

Computing your AAGR will ensure that large numbers do not skew your data. For example, an average small church of 100 attendees might grow to 200 in five years. A large-sized church of 500 might grow to 600 in the same period. Using Figure 10.5 we can compute that the small church has an average annual growth rate of 20, while the larger church has an
AAGR of only 4. Both have added 100 members, but the smaller church has grown faster.

**Step 3.** Annually tracking your annual growth rate (AGR) to ascertain growth or decline. Display this information prominently with a chart or graph. Furthermore, provide copies to leaders and make sure it is in visual sight of areas where planning is undertaken.

For recording attendance, there are two methods worth considering.

- To maintain the highest degree of accuracy, count every Sunday to yield a yearly average.

- However, some congregations prefer a sampling method, where the congregation is counted approximately four times a year. This method requires less effort and can yield results almost as accurate as those of the every weekend method. Small churches may find this approach easier to conduct with their limited person-power. At other times the sheer size of larger congregations may require this. However to maintain accuracy in the sampling method it is important to keep several guidelines in mind. First, sample four *typical* weekends each year. Exclude holidays, church events, special guests and any unusual factors. And be sure to count at the same time each year. The best times are once between late September and early November, again between mid-January and early March, then again between late April (after Easter) and before the end of May, and finally once over the summer in June or July.
**MONITOR GENERATIONAL RATIOS**

**In Your Community**

In Chapter 7 we saw how census data can reveal the generational ratios within the sphere of influence of your church. Return to this chapter if you need to review how to gather and use the data available from the U. S. Census Bureau. It is important that you yearly monitor the ratios of all generations in your community. A community’s generational ratios will provide the goal which a healthy Tri-Gen. church will attempt to proportionally mirror in congregational makeup.

**In Your Church**

At the same time it is important to monitor generational ratios in your congregation. A simple questionnaire like the one suggested in Figure 6.5, can be administered one to four times a year. The sampling guidelines from above can be applied here to ensure the sampling of generational ratios is accurate. In addition, use Figure 10.4 to contrast the changes in your generational ratios.
Figure 10.6

Comparing Changes in Generational Percentages (GP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth Years</th>
<th>YEAR 1</th>
<th>YEAR 2</th>
<th>YEAR 3</th>
<th>YEAR 4</th>
<th>YEAR 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%*</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965 - 1983</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964 – 1946</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945 &amp; before</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* To discover your generational percentage (GP) of each age group, divide the number of attendees (or members) in each age group by the total membership. For example:

\[
\frac{\text{Number of attendees/members of each age group}}{\text{Total membership}} = \text{GP Generational Percentage of a particular age group.}
\]

Goals and Timelines

The goal of the evaluation process is to grow among all three generations, and to do so in a generational ratio that approximates the ratio present in the community. Only by an ongoing analysis of community generational ratios, church ratios and church growth patterns will evaluation be adequate to gage true numerical growth.

In addition, a timeline must be employed. An old adage is that “if you don’t have a target, then you are sure to miss it.” For each congregation, the time limit will vary. Most large congregations (401+ members) are discovering that three years is the minimum time needed to grow into a healthy tri-generational format. Medium-sized congregations (201-400 in
regular attendance) have discovered that four years is typical. Surprisingly, the flexibility of small-sized congregations (200 or less attendees) has allowed them to be the quickest to adopt the Tri-Gen. model. Many churches under 200 attendees are making the move to the tri-generational format in a minimum of two years. However, in most cases these are minimums. But when the alternative of a slow decline and eventual closure is considered, the energy and time required pale in comparison.

Establishing deadlines is the only way to ensure that time and energies are not squandered. Eddie Gibbs, in his dry English humor, sums this up nicely, “When there are no deadlines, most of us are tempted to extend our lines indefinitely.”

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EVALUATION**

Evaluation is the fundamental tool that keeps practitioners abreast of progress. Consequently, a natural aversion among church leaders toward exaggeration and/or ignorance regarding numbers must be curtailed at once. And, the suspicion and cynicism that have been the flotsam and jetsam of our statistical phobia must be quickly abandoned. It is time the church recognizes that its ability to effectively carry out the Great Commission depends upon an accurate assessment of those methodologies that demonstrate God’s hand of blessing. The church seeking to attain a healthy and contagious tri-generational personality must be willing to evaluate progress or regress openly, diligently and accurately.
WE’VE ALMOST ARRIVED AT THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP OF ALL

Now that we have completed six steps, the final step is before us. And this step, which we shall cover in the next chapter, is the most crucial step of all. This is the foundational role prayer plays in reaching people. Because it is the Holy Spirit that draws people to Christ and His church, prayer becomes the cornerstone of our strategy. George Hunter concisely addresses this dynamic when he entreats,

“Pray to be led to receptive people … We are not teaching a nonspiritual technology for evangelism. Indeed, such is not possible because evangelism is the Holy Spirit’s work at every point: he prepares those who he desires to call; he prepares and leads those who he sends out; and if receptive people sense his approach through our outreach, and respond in faith – this too is his work.”

Footnotes:


ii Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, Ten Steps For Church Growth, op. cit., p. 85

iii Donald A. McGavran, Effective Evangelism, op. cit., p. 48, 49.


v Ibid., p. 46

vi Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, op. cit., p. 93.
vii Ibid., p. 94.


x Typically a guest can be expected to drive up to 12 1/2 minutes to attend your congregation. However, in metropolitan areas this drive time can increase to 35 minutes. And in mountainous terrain and/or areas dotted by small lakes, marshes and other natural impediments drive time can drop to 15 minutes or less. Return to Chapter 7 if you need to look again at the three steps to computing the distance that potential congregants will drive to your church.

xi Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, op. cit., p. 81.
