

# A Checklist for Healthy Congregations

In our leadership circles, you will often hear: Growth is a natural outcome for an healthy and effective congregation. I sometimes hear people say that they are opposed to growth- well, let me tell you, if you aren't growing, you're dying. Members will pass away and move away, and if new folks aren't joining, your numbers will shrink. As the late Suzanne Meyer said, *Do you love your church so much you're ready to take it to your grave?* Here is a starter list, and I won't pretend it's comprehensive.

## ✚ COVENANTAL BEHAVIOR

✚ **Boundaries**- Do y'all respect and affirm each other? If someone's behavior is inappropriate or abusive, are they gently, politely, and firmly corrected, or allowed to run amok?

✚ **Gate-keeping**- Do people share responsibilities or are they territorial, keeping committees to themselves?

✚ **Triangular communication**- With interpersonal issues, do folks complain about them and any 'culprits' or do they get together and work things out?

## ✚ POSITIVE INDICATORS

✚ Do you develop new leaders? ✚ Are people open to ideas, giving them time and backing to succeed? ✚ Are you on the side of momentum or inertia? ✚ Are you welcoming of guests? ✚ Is there generational balance, and passing on of traditions and heritage? ✚ Conflict- do you try to 'resolve' it, or simply manage it? ✚ Anytime we have passionate and dedicated people, there WILL BE CONFLICT. ✚ Are leaders self-differentiated? (Calm and detached, or do they get emotionally involved in situations and debates?) ✚ And how are you about talking about money?

## ✚ FOUR KINDS OF INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH (OMNI)

✚ **Organic growth** - the land and buildings, including the parking lot, staff who manage the facility and implement programs, and other tangible assets.

✚ **Numerical** - easy to measure- members, average pledge, size of budget.

✚ **Maturational**- How does the congregation make decisions, and handle conflict? What is the process? Emergencies- are they handled according to procedures, or do people run around with their hair on fire? Do you foster growth, both personal and institutional? What types of resources are present and used in this congregation, both for crisis and usual situations?

checklist questions- Decision process? Conflict? Crises? Growth? Resources?

✚ **Incarnational**- How is your congregation and its ideals manifested in the community? What do the neighbors say about you? How do other churches in town describe you?

If you offer strong and vibrant programming, people will come and join. If you don't have such, why not? Aren't you worth it?