

# Profiles of Successful Growing Congregations: What Do They Look Like, and Why Are They Growing?

## What Does a Successful Church look like to Jesus?

First, He commands us to love one another. Second, He has called us to fulfill the great commission to make Disciples of Christ throughout the world. Third, He has equipped us and instructed us in what we are to do. Fourth, he has promised us that we will succeed, and He will add to our numbers if we remain in Him.

## What do leading, research-based texts tell us?

In Natural Church Development, Christian Schwarz identifies 8 “quality characteristics” that lead to quantitative church growth:

2. Empowering Leadership
3. Gift-Oriented Ministry
4. Passionate Spirituality
5. Functional Structures
6. Inspiring Worship Service
7. Holistic Small Groups
8. Need-Oriented Evangelism
9. Loving Relationships

In The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission, Rick Warren describes the five purposes of the Church drawn from the greatest commandment and the great commission:

- #1: Love the Lord with all your heart
- #2: Love your neighbor as yourself
- #3: Go and make disciples
- #4: Baptizing them
- #5: Teaching them to obey

## Surveying Our Own Churches we learned:

<i>Empowering leadership</i>	Traditional clergy/laity roles drive churches and their decisions
<i>Gift-oriented ministry</i>	Alignment of spiritual gifts w/ roles/needs is beginning to impact assignment of leaders; all are interested in expanding
<i>Passionate Spirituality</i>	Growing, as clergy and laity move closer to the Word & prayer
<i>Functional Structures</i>	Traditional or slightly modified UMC structure; programs increase with size of congregation; desire to grow in this area to reach more groups
<i>Inspiring worship service</i>	Seen as a key strength of these churches
<i>Holistic small groups</i>	Traditional (Sunday school, Bible study, UMW, UM Men); some are expanding small groups; one Church is intentional about small groups' role in building body of Christ; recognized need of all churches
<i>Need-oriented evangelism</i>	All want to do more to grow the Kingdom – how? is the key question
<i>Loving relationships</i>	Responses were very strong and positive – it's the basis of the Church community's continued existence

## A Profile of a Growing Successful Congregation:

Mission-driven churches reach out to churched and un-churched. They are guided by God's Word and respect tradition. They will thrive if they can ensure:

1. Clergy and laity are partners in ministry and roles are clearly defined
2. All are committed to building God's kingdom
3. Bible-based teaching and decision-making
4. Continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of a church's ministries
5. Strong sense of Christian community built on accountable, small group relationships
6. Passionate, intentional evangelism
7. Members are aware of and empowered to use their spiritual gifts
8. Are willing to explore new ways to expand and enrich worship services