

Growth Points

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Increase Giving Units

A church needs a minimum of twenty-five giving units to be financially stable and independent.

This rule applies primary to new churches and/or smaller churches. However, every church must have some kind of financial base from which to provide the essentials of effective ministry.

The variables of meeting space (owned, rented, or donated) and

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salary (full-time, part-time, or volunteer) are the two most financially influential items for newer congregations. But at some point, unless the paradigm of “doing church” dramatically changes from the traditional structure of most churches today, the rule of thumb is a need for at least twenty-five giving units for the church to be financially stable.

A giving unit is considered to be an individual, couple, or family who financially contributes to the church at least once during the year. It is wise to track your total number of giving units as a measure of your church's health and strength.

The rule of thumb of at least 25 giving-tithing-units is based on the assumption that a church desires the services of a full-time pastor. It normally takes at least that many giving units to financially support a full-time pastor and still have enough money to finance a basic church program.

For example, let's assume that

each of the 25 giving units donates 10% of their income to the church each year. Let's also assume that the church desires to provide a salary package equal to the average income of each giving unit. Finally, let's assume that the pastor's financial package makes up forty percent of the church's total budget. Based on these assumptions, one budget scenario would look like this:

- Average income per giving unit: \$50,000
- Ten percent tithe per giving unit: \$5,000
- Number of units needed for a pastor's salary package: ten ($10 \times \$5,000 = \$50,000$)
- Number of additional units needed for ministry budget: fourteen ($14 \times \$5,000 = \$70,000$).

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How many giving units do you presently have?

It takes a minimum of 25 giving units to support a church.

Total number of giving units needed to support a full ministry: twenty-four (24)

Of course, this simplified example assumes each giving unit is a tithing unit. Thus, two giving units of \$2,500 would equal one tithing unit of \$5,000. But you can begin to see how the minimum critical mass for most churches is around 25 tithing units. It simply takes that many dollars to provide a significant and growing ministry.

Research the following about your church...

First, how many giving units do you presently have? Tax receipts or giving reports mailed at the first of each year can be a start. The average offering collection should be factored in, although it is difficult to tell where all the funds are coming from.

Next, determine the average amount given to your church per giving unit. Divide the total income from total contributions by the total number of giving units.

Third, determine how many *potential* giving units are in your church. Cross-reference your list of giving units with your regular mailing list to see who has not given financially to your church in the past year.

Fourth, add the number of potential giving units to the number of present giving units and multiply the total by the average amount given last year per giving unit. This is the potential income to your church *if* all giving units were contributing at the average giving rate. Of course, there are many variables. But having *any* figure is better than operating in the blind.

Once you have this basic information you will have a better handle on (1) your financial situation, (2) tracking giving, (3) insight for stewardship campaigns, and (4) ideas for future planning.

If you discover that the total number of giving units is low, or that the total amount of giving is below normal, consider the following.

First, train your congregation in the principles of stewardship. The Bible speaks quite often about the importance of stewardship, so begin to teach and preach on this topic. If you feel uncomfortable speaking on stewardship issues, bring in an outside speaker to address this need. At least once a year, focus on the importance of financially supporting the church's ministry.

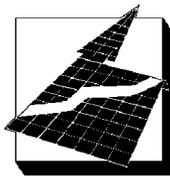
Second, challenge your people to evaluate what their checkbook says about their priorities, and to adjust their spending appropriately.

Third, ask your people to try giving 10% of their income for three months and then determine how they might adjust their giving for the future



For additional ideas on financial stewardship, see *What Every Pastor Should Know* (Baker Books 2013).

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Five Views of Church Growth

Ministry Insights for Church Leaders

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Evaluating the Church Growth Movement

Gaining form and momentum over the second half of the 20th century, the Church Growth Movement has become an enormous shaping force on the Western church today. You may love it, you may hate it, but you can't deny its impact.

But what exactly is Church Growth? In what ways has the movement actually brought growth to the church, and how effective has it been in doing so?

What are its strengths and weaknesses? This timely book addresses such questions. After providing a richly informative history and overview, it explores—in a first-ever roundtable of their leading voices—five main perspectives, both pro and con, on the classic Church Growth Movement:

- Effective Evangelism View (Elmer Towns)
- Gospel and Our Culture View (Craig Van Gelder)
- Centrist View (Charles Van Engen)
- Reformist View (Gailyn Van Rheen)
- Renewal View (Howard Snyder)

Each view is first presented by its proponent, then critiqued by his co-contributors. The book concludes with reflections by three seasoned pastors who have grappled with the practical implications of Church Growth. The interactive and fair-minded nature of the format allows the reader to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each view and

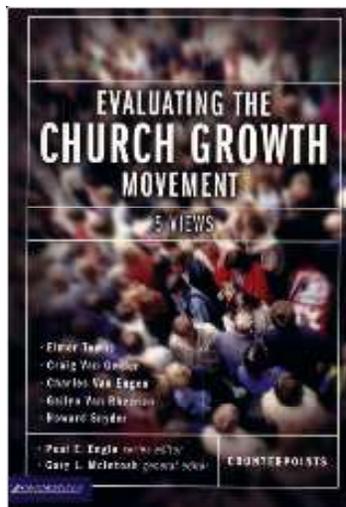
draw informed, personal conclusions.

Each of the contributors agree that the Church Growth Movement has been, and continues to be, extremely influential. Of course, some believe this influence is positive, while others see it as somewhat negative. But they all admit the Church Growth Movement cannot be ignored.

The positions and responses of each contributor will stimulate a great deal of personal reflection.

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