
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Upgrade Your Ministries

When we first begin to think of welcoming people to church, it's usually the warm fuzzy things that come to mind like smiling and being polite. Positive attitudes and actions are a necessary part of a growing church. But, we can smile all we want, if people don't find they are being served well through our various ministries, they aren't likely to be back anytime soon.

Rising Expectations

Anyone who has been around churches for many years realizes that people have higher expectations today than they did years ago. A good example of the rise of expectations can be seen in what today's parents expect from the childcare ministry of a church.

Childcare has always been a contributing factor in growing churches. Parents are naturally concerned for their children and want to place them into capable hands while they participate in church activities. However, our changing lifestyle has meant that childcare has taken on a major emphasis in our society. Today's parents approach childcare with higher expectations than those of just a few years ago.

Core Ministries

Serving people inside and outside of your church means we must upgrade your church as much as feasible in all areas of ministry.

Three core areas that you will want to focus on first: facilities, worship and child care.

Facility

How we decorate and present our facilities tells people a lot about our church and our values. It also sends a hidden message that we care and are interested in serving those whom God directs our way. The inherent message from well designed, decorated and kept facilities says, "We care about our church and we care about you." Periodically look at your grounds, buildings and facilities and ask, "Is there anything we need to change?" Look at it like a visitor would. Does it look

**Put Dr. Gary L. McIntosh on
your church's research team.**

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inviting? Is it done in good taste? Does the carpet need to be replaced? Is there anything that looks out of date? Is there anything that would cause people to say, "I like that?" You want people to feel a sort of "wow" factor when they drive up or walk into your church building. The furniture, fixtures, lights—every detail—should contribute to making people's visit to your church a pleasant experience.

Child Care

One place that must be clean and up-to-date is your child care rooms. Parents notice whether these areas are clean or dirty. Provide a hazard free environment. Replace broken toys, books and furniture. Fix peeling paint, protruding nails, leaking plumbing and lighting problems. Use fire alarms and check them on a regular basis. Maintain good ventilation, heating and air-conditioning. Develop childcare policies; Post one near the entrance of all childcare rooms. Train all childcare workers. Explain to them how they are a vital link in your culture of service and how they fit into the overall philosophy of your church. Require workers to take first aid training and CPR for infants and children. Recruit and hire workers who interact well with children. It's even wise to screen all childcare personnel for past history of child abuse.

Worship

The basic principle to remember is that your message is not the sermon; your message is the service. Your entire worship service from beginning to end is sending out a message. Excellent worship services send out a unified message by building the entire worship service around one theme. Once a broad theme has been selected then each aspect of the service— music, introductions, announcements, scripture reading, prayers, drama, sermon—are selected to support the theme.

Only One Percent

It doesn't always take major changes to upgrade your ministries. A few changes can make dramatic improvements. Realistically you can't make big changes all the time but you can make small improvements and make them continuously.

If we don't see small improvements taking place regularly, the quality of our ministries may be heading downward. There is no need to see major improvements take place all at once. Our challenge is to make small incremental improvements each and every year. Raising the quality of twelve key ministries by only once percent each amounts to about a twelve percent increase in a year. Doing that for five years in a row would equal a 60% improvement.

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