



Strategic Options



Option One: Small & Strong


- Source material: Kennon Callahan, *Small, Strong Congregations*

Note: Callahan language needs adaptation for local ministry teams




1. Small, strong congregations...

- “Share one excellent mission as their gift with the whole community”
 - Frequent
 - Consistent
 - Outward-looking
 - Relationship-building




Example

- A church that excels in offering one-time, seasonal and short-term events for *children and families*





- What is the one special thing you can be and do passionately as a gift of love toward your community?



2. Small, strong congregations

- “Are compassion-driven...not vision-driven”
- Compassion shows in:
 - Everyday lives of members
 - Church’s “one excellent mission”

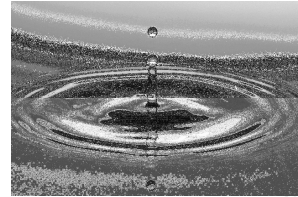



Forgiveness



3. Small, strong congregations

- Create widening circles of community and belonging



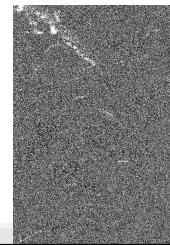
Help us live well in the world

- Different “neighborhoods” gather
 - Relational
 - Vocational
 - Sociological
 - Geographical
 - Genealogical



One, three or more

- Two-cell fights can be endless
- Three-cell congregations fight, but they take turns!



4. Small, strong congregations

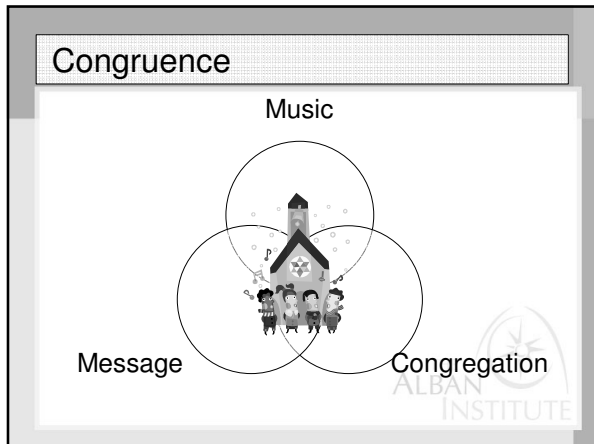
- “Have a consistent spirit of self-reliance”
 - Improvise and act creatively (in a few key areas)
 - Draw upon community resources
 - Find pastors* who do “just enough” or develop local ministry teams



5. Small, strong congregations

- Worship in a way that:
 - Touches hearts
 - Stirs longing for wholeness
 - Deepens understanding of life
 - Gives hope for the week ahead





- ### 6. Small, strong congregations
- Live and share as a team
 - Pay attention to the whole
 - Love the variety of gifts
 - Appreciate the pastor's* strengths or build gift-based local teams
- THE ALBAN INSTITUTE

- ### Key pastoral* gifts
- Good shepherd (sheep-dog?)
 - Helpful preacher
 - Wise, caring leader
 - Community pastor
- THE ALBAN INSTITUTE

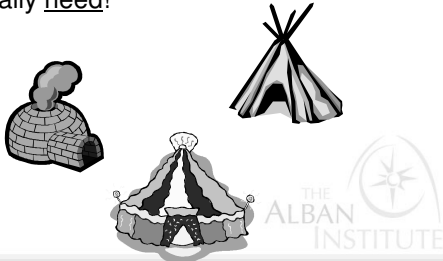


- ### 7. Small, strong congregations
- Have facilities that are:
 - “Just enough” for special mission
 - Both sacred and shared
 - A blessing, not a burden
-
- THE ALBAN INSTITUTE

- ### Mission first
- When you know what gift you've been given to share...
 - When you know who you are supposed to reach with that gift...
- THE ALBAN INSTITUTE

Mission first

- Then you will know what facilities you really need!



8. Small, strong congregations

- Open many doors of giving:
 - Spontaneous-giving causes
 - Planned special-purpose offerings
 - Short-term major projects
 - Enduring gifts
 - Annual appeal



Option Two: Strong & Regional

- High quality
- Critical mass (ASA of 250+)
- Resource: *Raising the Roof*



Option Three: Strong Coalition

- A: Shared Campus
- B: Cluster
- C: Service Coalition



Variation A: Shared Campus

- Beyond “landlord”
- Real shared ownership and management
- Allocated expenses
- Each congregation keeps own identity
- Often different denominations
- Good track record

www.churchcollaboration.com



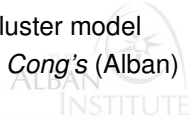
Variation B: Cluster

- Multiple churches create a joint ministry structure (council / board)
 - Option 1: All share a single staff team
 - Option 2: All support specific ministr(ies) only, e.g. youth or senior citizens
- Each church retains facility and identity
- Mixed history



Variation C: Service Coalition

- Churches form a joint ministry structure—often a nonprofit
- Purpose is a specific form of service to people *outside* the church
- Work well when they start with passion about a *specific* unmet need
- Sometimes included in cluster model
- Resource: *Co-Operating Cong's* (Alban)



Option Four: Strong & Merged

- A: Continuation
- B: Rebirth
- C: Absorption



3. Continuation Merger

- Blending of styles and programs
- Forestalls closing, pattern of decline often continues
- Least likely to result in growth, most likely to result in closing, within 20 years

- www.churchcollaboration.com



4. Rebirth Merger

- Intentional dissolution of previous entities
- New start, new identity
- Works best with new location, new clergy leadership
- Sometimes called consolidation
- Better track record than continuation

- www.churchcollaboration.com



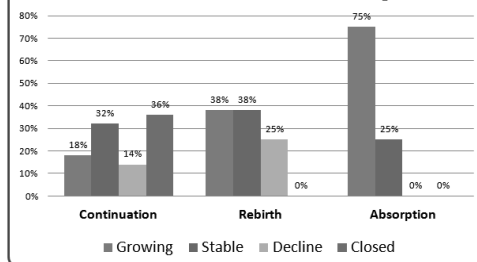
5. Absorption Merger

- Small congregation joins with larger, healthy one
- Larger doesn't change its name (usually) or basic approach
- Larger church becomes custodian of heritage, records—plus a few selected traditions of the smaller
- Best track record of all

- www.churchcollaboration.com



Track Record of 3 Forms of Church Mergers



- www.churchcollaboration.com



What Helps Mergers Succeed?

- High dissatisfaction with status quo
- Take advantage of a transition point
- Build new leadership team (including new clergy)
- Mission shapes worship and property decisions
- Build around signature ministries



What Hinders?

- Satisfaction, stability, sacred cows
- Failure to change leadership
- Fear of “losing anyone”—timidity about strategic decisions
- Inward focus—failure to engage wider community
- Denominational restrictions



Option Five: Strong & Specialized

- Designed for single ethnic or language group
- Specialize in serving one population



Option Six: Strong & Experimental

- Full commitment to *one* innovative style or approach—no compromise
 - “Emergent”
 - Online social network
 - *Irresistible Revolution*
 - Search “Shane Claiborne” on Youtube



Option Seven: Strong Ending

- “We have run the race, we have finished the course...”
- A planned ending with
 - Celebration of the best
 - Healthy grief for what is no more
 - Generous stewardship of assets for valued purposes
 - Help for remaining folks to re-attach
- Resource: *Ending with Hope* (Alban)

