

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Seven Trigger Points

There is no guarantee that a church can grow. However, we can develop positive ministry habits. Eventually, these habits result in healthy church growth.

Focusing on the right ministry habits brings growth because each acts as a "trigger point," i.e., powerful action that brings results.

The seven trigger points that have been found to be the most important for church growth are as follows.

Trigger Point #1: Outreach

Reaching and winning new people

**"Every team has to learn that excellence is not a destination but a process that must be continually improved. Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better."
—Pat Riley**

to Christ is the first action that brings growth to a local church. Unless a church finds a way to effectively share the gospel with new people, there is little chance for long-term growth.

Trigger Point #2: Assimilation

After a church learns to reach new people for Christ, the next action that brings growth is finding ways to help newcomers connect with the church family. If a church cannot discover ways to assimilate new people, there will be little fruit that remains.

Trigger Point #3: Leadership Development

Recruiting, training, and releasing new leaders must happen if ministry is to expand. It takes new ministries to reach new people, and new ministries are most often empowered by new leaders.

Trigger Point #4: Worship

Few churches can grow without an inspiring worship service. Designing a worship service that engages the minds, hearts, and emotions of worshipers is clearly needed if a church is to grow.

Trigger Point #5: Preaching

A recent study found that 91% of people, who have attended church for less than two years, rate the

pastor's preaching as extremely important. The main factor that kept these new people in the church was preaching that applied the Word of God to life.

Trigger Point #6: Spiritual Development

People in growing churches sense that they are maturing in their faith. They sense that their participation in the life of the church has a positive affect on their lives. The basic principle is "Growing people grow churches."

Trigger Point #7: Loving Care

Growing churches provide pastoral care for each member. But . . . it is not the pastors who provide the care, rather pastoral care is given by the people to each other, normally through small groups and classes.

Which of these trigger points does your church need to focus on in the coming year?

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Schedule early morning prayer times.

Pray the Scriptures to find biblical solutions.

We live in one of the greatest prayer revivals of modern history. The following are ten prayer trends I've observed in the last decade, which you may use as ideas for increasing prayer in your own ministry.

Trend #1: Praying the Scripture. Although the concept seems foreign to most believers, praying the Scriptures provides a meaningful avenue for revealing needs and finding biblical solutions. God is in the process of reshaping our thoughts, values, and lives through the Bible and prayer.

Trend #2: Concerts of Prayer. A Concert of Prayer is the uniting of pastors, leaders and churches—cross-denominationally—in prayer for the spiritual awakening of a community or city.

Trend #3: Onsite Praying. Recruit a group of 15 people in your own church who will pray onsite during special events. Divide them into five groups of three people each. Then assign one group per week to pray onsite throughout your worship services.

Trend #4: Spiritual Warfare. Organize some of your best "prayer warriors" into a team that will do spiritual battle through prayer on behalf of your church. Look for people who pray at least one hour a day, train them in a mode of spiritual warfare that fits your church, and start them praying.

Trend #5: Team Prayer. Have your staff set aside time each day for prayer as a regular part of their quiet time. Once each week have the staff pray together for themselves, your church, and requests from the congregation. Ask each staff member and leader to recruit a prayer team that will cover them and their ministry in prayer each day.

Trend #6: Prayer Partners. Organize leaders to pray for each other on a rotational basis each quarter. This partnering of people encourages bonding and appreciation for one another. I have found "triads" to work best, two lay leaders for each staff in a large church, or simply three leaders in a group for medium and smaller churches.

Trend #7: Small Group Prayer. Divide your church into prayer groups to meet once each month

in homes. Perhaps the first Sunday evening of each month could be used for this special purpose. In this way, each person has the opportunity to share prayer requests and answers to prayers in their own lives.

Trend #8: Prayer Seminars. Prayer seminars are being used today to raise the consciousness for prayer and teach people prayer skills. Schedule a seminar at least every other year on the basics of prayer. Encourage both leaders and laity to attend. Introduce and model a variety of ways to pray.

Trend #9: Prayer Retreats. Prayer retreats can be planned and executed with great impact for your church. As you take people away from the everyday routine, they are freed to focus on the still small voice of God.

Trend #10 Early Morning Prayer. Churches are finding that early morning is a good time to meet for prayer. Consider hosting an early morning prayer time at your church. Provide a room with soft lighting and quiet background music. Allow people to come and go as they please.

Are you using any of these ways for prayer in your church? Which types of prayer could you begin to use in the coming year?

[Dr. Glen Martin provided this article on prayer trends. He serves as pastor of Journey of Faith Church in California.]



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For information about training workshops, seminars, and church consultations call 951-506-3086.

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