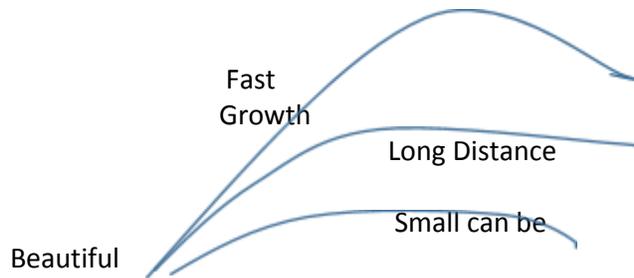


Viability: The Right Size and Structure for Ministry

The pace of growth—whether as a new start or as a renewal—changes the model for ministry which will emerge. The faster and more intense your growth the more intense the disappointment and congregation pain when decline sets in. Many congregations find equilibrium within a few years and seek to maintain that size and ministry model for generations.



Some congregations start small and stay small. They seek the closeness of the relationships which grounded them in the first place. They do not intend to have a full time or even half time pastoral leader.

Viability is directly tied to the model or structure the community decides to claim as its identity. This does not mean that the community cannot move to a different size and structure. This move is best made intentionally rather than just declining into a new smaller size. The same is true for congregation that want to grow into a new model. Both will meet resistance. It is hard to make the change because the propensity—the will to do so—often follows too late behind the capacity to make the change.

A congregation is viable when the resources match the size and structure. Sustainability of the model is very important. This is most true on the decline side of the congregation life cycle. There are ways to change your model, the question is: Does the community want to do so?

Factors in Viability:

People Resources	The congregation has people who desire and where with all to be about God’s Mission. They are willing to be equipped to do the work of ministry. They act as the Body of Christ in the community.
Leaders-current and potential	Leaders are constantly being raised up and encouraged. The job of leaders is to make new leaders, not just followers. Current leaders make room for potential leaders to step forward and mentor them
Leaders are Trained and nurtured into new work	Congregations that emphasize the training of leaders will always discover new energy. Encouraging, even expecting, leaders to go to training brings new ideas and skills to the “mission table.”
Positive ratio of earned income giving to retirement asset giving	One sign of viability is the ratio of giving that comes from income earners to giving from retirement assets. Whenever possible, you want this to be a positive number, e.g. ratio of 2/1 is \$2 of earned income to \$1 of retirement giving. When this ratio is a fraction (e.g. 1/10), viability is at risk. <i>This is the case in most congregations.</i>
Resources—leaders, people and money—to engage beyond the internal congregation ministry	The work of the Church is to engage lives with the Gospel. When this work is only internally focused, the Great Commission is not accomplished. Neighbors & community needs is part of the work.

Ability to “See” beyond the scarcity of the moment	We often see what we don’t have now, rather than what we do have. To see beyond scarcity and act accordingly, lets a congrega-tion move to a more vital ministry.
Investment in facilities annually	Congregations that invest in facilities are preserving assets. One rule of thumb is an average of at least \$25,000 per year.