



The Myth of the 200 Barrier: How to Lead through Transitional Growth

Kevin Martin

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"This is the best book I have ever read on congregational development! I wish I had written it." (Lyle E. Schaller, Parish Consultant)

The common experience of large congregations getting larger and small congregations getting smaller has given rise to the belief that growing congregations tend to hit a barrier at the 150-200 attendance mark. The dividing line in American Church attendance is 150 people on an average Sunday. Churches below this seem to have a harder time growing. Above this, churches seem to have an easier time growing. Trying to grow a smaller church can feel like trying to break through what Martin calls the "200 barrier." Martin explains that there is no barrier; there are just two different ways of being a church—the "Pastoral Size" church and the "Program" church. The "Transitional Church" is really a hybrid of these two cultures, and this dual nature produces stress and tension where the idea of a 200 barrier often becomes a self-fulfilling expectation.

How does the Pastor Size church culture really work? What are the key elements of the larger American Church? How does this create a large church culture that becomes self-supporting? Martin looks at these elements and shows how the Transitional Church can avoid mistakes in their effort to grow "beyond the barrier," and why transformation and change is so difficult.

Drawing on sociological and anthropological studies about the significance of numbers in human organizations, Martin proposes practical steps that leaders of Transitional Churches will want to take.

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