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12 Metrics for Measuring the Health of Your Church

Earlier this year I got on the scales and thought “Oh no, my holiday has just caught up with me!”

I was suffering the consequences of too many snacks and an overindulgence in delicious foods. So, in January I said no to the sugar laden snacks and committed myself to lose some weight.

Thankfully I was successful and could start the working year in better shape.

Measurements are Important. As the old proverb says, if you measure it you can manage it.

How do you measure the health of a church?

Some people like to measure membership while others prefer attendance. Others like to count salvation decisions or baptisms.

However, others completely forgo the emphasis on numbers. They say these measurements bear no relation to church health and are therefore meaningless in a health assessment. They prefer the intuitive and qualitative approach which focuses on relationships, culture, attitudes and atmosphere.

I think there's room for both a **quantitative and qualitative approach** to measuring the health of your church.



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Quantitative Measurements

There are several quantitative elements I like to measure when assessing the health of a church.

1. Membership

The total membership of a church should be segmented into three areas: adults, high school youth, and children.

When I talk about total membership I'm not referring to formal membership but to everyone who attends your church and has attended in the last 6 months.



Total membership should be calculated at least every 3 months and trends noted.

2. Attendance

Weekend service attendance should be counted and again segmented into three areas: adults, high school youth, and children.

Attendance ratios for these three areas can be an indicator for assessment of the health of a church.

Normative ranges are 70% adults, 10% youth and 20 % children.

If children and youth numbers are too low the church is in danger of decline and ultimate death as the members grow older.

Demographics of the surrounding region will obviously impact these ratios.

3. Average age

I recommend that churches compare their average age to their region.

It's a relatively simple exercise to discover the average age of your church.

If you have the info in your church database, then it's super easy.

If not, then here's a simple process. Every Sunday for 3 Sundays just ask everyone (children and youth included) to write their age on a piece of paper. Average out the results and you'll have a solid estimate of the average age of your church.

Now compare that with the average age of the community in the surrounding suburbs.

Discovering that your church is markedly older than the surrounding community should be a

red alert wake up call to a church and probably indicates ill health.

Realising you are markedly younger means you may have a fruitful decade awaiting you or it may indicate you are not offering programs to connect with middle aged and older citizens which will have an impact of your financial health.

Your nations' census stats will be a helpful guide to learn demographic information of your region.



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4. Small Group Involvement

I think medium and large churches should aim to have over 50 % of their adult members involved in a small group.

Significant relationships are harder to form in these size churches so small groups are vital in developing the health of a church which is inseparably linked to strong personal relationships.

I believe that small groups are not as vital in small churches under 100 members because the relational links are usually strong since everyone knows everyone well.

However, small churches should still consider providing small groups for relationship and discipleship when they discover that the Sunday gathering is not meeting the relational needs.

5. Serving

The health of a church is closely linked to the ratio of members serving.

When people make a conscious contribution to a church they not only get more involved and connected they *feel* more connected. Plus, they gain and develop skills as well as build better relationships.

All these factors combine to build hope and confidence within the heart of a believer which in turn yields healthy attitudes and thus culminates in a healthy church.

In small churches this percentage should be over 80%.

In medium size churches pastors should aim to have this number above 65%.

In larger churches this ratio will drop due to several factors.

6. Coming to Faith

The health of a church can be measured in part by the number of people coming to faith.

I like to measure these 'decisions' in three distinct ways:

- a. first-time decision records the first time a person makes that decision to follow Jesus.
- b. rededication is when someone returns to faith after a significant amount of time away from Christ.
- c. people make what I call a refresh decision when they are seeking assurance of their decision to follow Christ.

Accurate measurements of these salvation decisions made in your church helps towards assessing the health of your church.

If there are very few first time and rededication decisions, then that is a sign of ill health.

7. Baptisms

Baptisms are a concrete number that helps ascertain the health of a church.

How many baptisms is considered healthy?

7% - 9% of your church's average attendance number is considered a mid-range number when it comes to assessing church health.

For instance, if your average attendance is 200 then you would expect to see 14 people baptised in any given year. I think a ratio lower than this number is a sure indicator that a church is not in good health.

Healthy churches make disciples and baptism is a key indicator in that journey and must be considered a primary number in assessing the health of a church.



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8. Visitors

Counting your visitors makes sense on a whole range of levels. You can track your visitor numbers against your history and arrest trends that indicate poor health.

A dearth of visitors is a definitive sign of an unhealthy church.

9. Finance

Giving per head is another indicator of health.

People give when they make a strong connection to the church's leadership, direction and culture.



You can assess your giving per head by simply dividing your average weekly giving by your average weekly attendance.

The difficulty is assessing this against the norm because local demographics play a major role in giving levels. Assessment is best done against your own historic levels of giving and other churches in your region.

A rarely measured number is the percentage of secondary giving programs.

Let me explain.

If a church receives \$200,000 in its general Sunday tithe giving over a 12-month period, then how much can it expect to receive in other giving programs e.g. building or missions?

I believe churches can regularly expect to receive 30% - 50% of their tithe in secondary

giving programs like building or missions' giving programs.

Churches may run these secondary giving programs but too rarely analyse their expectations or consider how to increase this percentage.

I've helped many churches increase their income by measuring their current reality and coaching them into strategic methods for increase.

Qualitative Measures

Qualitative measures are difficult to measure and the most accurate assessments are done by leaders outside the church or by newcomers who look at things through fresh eyes.

I've restricted myself to three elements so this is not an exhaustive list and they are just as important as the quantitative measurements.

1. Sustained Implementation of a Clear Focus

Firstly, is there a clarity of mission and purpose that is based on the key New Testament elements of discipleship and evangelism?

If not, then a church will operate in a fog of uncertainty and confusion and health will undoubtedly deteriorate.

If yes, then is there a sustained focus on implementing the mission? Sustained implementation of New Testament mission is evidence of good health.

2. Warmth of Relationships

Language reveals the warmth of a church.

Is the language cynical, negative, unbelieving and critical? Is the language supportive, candid, kind and faith filled?

Is their laughter, encouragement and prayer or is there a brooding, negative atmosphere of discouragement and difficulty?



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3. Clear Communication

Clearly communicating essential information gives people confidence and hope and thus impacts church health.

As a church shifts from small to medium it's important to help people move into a "It's



impossible for everyone to know everything” mode otherwise people will perceive there is poor communication when in fact the church has outgrown its historic communication channels.

Healthy churches regularly communicate the main things with clarity and precision.

So, there you have it, my incomplete list.

Assessing the health of a church is a complex mix of art and science and best done with the help of mature outsiders who bring fresh eyes and an objective view.

John Finkelde

[Grow a Healthy Church](#)