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## A2J SPECIAL REPORT

# Measuring Church Health

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Around 1980, the era of the large local church truly began in America. Prior to this time, sizeable congregations occasionally, but rarely emerged amidst the parish or neighborhood churches that dominated the landscape. Churches were typically small, led by relational leaders, and often took on the characteristics of the family.

But, as the Baby Boomer generation and its value system began to assert its influence in every societal structure, the local church would find different priorities. With their passion for quality, success, and a “bigger is better” ethic, this generation redefined what the idea of a successful local church or at least wouldn’t stand for one that wasn’t trying to be its absolute best.

Several additional factors contributed to this shift, like the increasing role of media ministries and networks, the Church Growth movement of the 1990s, and the shifting of influence among pastors from denominational leadership to their colleagues who were leading the largest congregations.

Today, this trend continues and perhaps has solidified in psyche of the American Church. For motives, both good and uncertain, pastors want their congregations to grow and they labor under the expectations of their parishioners to make that happen.

But, questions of this focus on size are beginning to emerge and with increasing frequency. Pastors have begun to wonder about their local church’s health, even in places where size has been successfully achieved. For decades, the traditional measures of effectiveness, the so-called “nickels and noses” data, offered sufficient evidence of jobs well done, but now they seem less certain. Pastors today seem more aware than ever that in the local church bigger doesn’t necessarily mean healthier.

The pastor’s interest in church health shouldn’t be thought of as a new idea. Healthy church initiatives, strategies, and tools have been among us for more than two decades and many pastors have engaged them. Believing that any healthy life form should grow, the desire for health in the local church is on the radar of nearly every pastor. Still, those traditional measures prove far easier to monitor than ideas of health that can seem somewhat subjective.

So, while our hunger for health rather than growth seems to be a better priority, we continue to lean on the same growth measures to determine our effectiveness.

## WHY METRICS?

While most of us recognize that the relationship between church size and church health should not be assumed, the effectiveness of the local church often continues to be judged by its size, whether measured by attendance or financial resources. Frankly, in the absence of other means of measurement, such raw data measures as “nickels and noses” become the sole voice in any discussion concerning local church effectiveness.

While the term “metric” can refer to any form or standard of measurement, in modern use the term typically refers to the combining of two or more measures in order to demonstrate relationships between these elements and the efficiencies that can be achieved. For example, the relatively new science of baseball metrics generally refers to various calculations that combine at least two raw data measures into a single result or ratio for comparison. So, in baseball, a pitcher’s *WHIP* is the calculation of *walks* and *hits* to *innings pitched*. Of course, *walks*, *hits*, and *innings pitched* are raw data elements that can also be measured independently, but combining them into a single calculation will better demonstrate a pitcher’s efficiency and overall effectiveness.

If you’re a fan of baseball, you know how metrics have changed the ways teams strategize during the game and even which players they want on their teams. In fact, because of metrics entire organizations are run differently today than before. For example, every fan loves to see his team hit home runs and that fan will get excited when his team adds a big homerun hitter to its lineup. But what if that player also strikes out a lot or plays bad defense. In many cases that player’s weaknesses can prove more costly to the team than the occasional benefit of his homerun hitting. How do we know that? Metrics.

Today, these types of metrics are used in nearly every industry or organization. They tend to dig a bit deeper and tell a more complete story of our efficiency or effectiveness. And, while at first glance they might seem to be more complicated than their raw data predecessors, some of the most helpful metrics are surprisingly simple to measure.

As with other metric measures, church health metrics are distinguished from the local church's raw data measures (like attendance, offerings, conversions, baptisms, etc.) in that they combine two or more such measures to more clearly demonstrate a local church's effectiveness. For example, suppose a local church of 500 attenders reports 10 conversions in a year and another local church of only 50 attenders also reports 10 conversions. In both cases, attenders and conversions represent raw data measures that can be easily tracked by the local church and, in this story, we certainly have 20 reasons to celebrate as every individual conversion is to be treasured.

At the same time, we can also note a much greater efficiency in the smaller of these two congregations as they achieved the same total result (10 conversions) though employing only 1/10 of the people available for the outreach efforts of the larger church (50 compared to 500). So, while both churches report the same raw data result of 10 conversions, the church of 50 demonstrated either greater efficiency or overall effectiveness in their collective effort to lead people to Christ.

## WHY MULTIPLE MEASURES?

In recent years, the science of metrics has begun to provide these types of metric measures to help provide simple ways to greater accuracy when determining church health. Of course, a single measure or even a complex metric cannot provide a full picture of church health all by itself. To determine if you're physically healthy, a medical doctor will likely want to measure many different factors—your height/weight, body temperature, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and perhaps take a couple of x-rays, just to name a few. None of these alone can determine if you're healthy, but taken together they can provide an accurate picture.

In the same way, any effort to fully determine church health will likely require us to measure many different factors as no single measure can tell the full story of church health. Another advantage to multiple measures occurs when we can be encouraged by the healthy efforts in our church and focus our efforts on addressing those areas that are less healthy. A variety of metrics allows us to uncover individual areas of need so that we can address them and improve our congregation's overall health.

Since 2012, the Acts 2 Journey Team has been using various church metrics to help local, state, and national leaders better determine the health of local congregations. In the pages that follow, these and other suggested metrics are explained and illustrated so that any pastor can take advantage of the insights they provide. As you will see, each suggested metric seeks to answer a specific question of effectiveness within the local church, identifies the data to be used in the metric, and provides a healthy target to work toward. Additionally, the primary ways to impact each metric are prescribed so the pastor and his leadership team can begin identifying steps to take to improve that particularly factor in the health of their congregation.

## 1. MISSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS and the AC RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *How many of us does it take to produce a convert each year?*

Measuring raw attendance simply answers the question of *how many worship with us*, but like other metrics, the AC Ratio reveals more clearly *our effectiveness with those who do*. To what degree are our people engaging the mission and leading others to Christ?

In Romans 10:14-15, the Apostle Paul speaks of the effort to bring people to faith in Christ.

*"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

While the focus of his context differs somewhat from our current discussion, his description of the team effort necessary to bring people to Christ is highly relevant. For people to come to Christ through the ministries of our local church, someone must connect with them and bring them to a setting where the Gospel is proclaimed. In a real way our congregation is sending our people into their worlds with this task.

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So, we return to our metric’s question: How many of us does it take to produce a convert each year? This is a matter of missional effectiveness.

As previously stated, every decision to follow Christ should be celebrated and Heaven surely does that (Luke 15:7), but in a healthy church the number of conversions we produce should increase as we have more people contributing to the effort. So, as we noted in a previous section, a congregation of 50 who produce 10 converts would be more missionally effective than a congregation of 500 who also produced 10 converts.

**THE METRIC:** The AC Ratio measures our worship attendance against the number of conversions or salvation decisions our efforts produce. So, a congregation with an annual average attendance of 50 that produces 10 reported conversions in a year would have an AC Ratio of 50:10 or 5:1 (6.0).

**THE TARGET:** *A healthy AC Ratio is anticipated to be 5.0 or lower.*

The AC Ratio of growing and plateaued churches has generally been observed to be 5.0 or lower throughout the four decades of our research. Simply put, an AC Ratio has been 5.0 or lower among congregations who are at least sustaining their current size; therefore, it is believed that such a level is necessary for the congregation to sustain itself. Conversely, declining churches typically demonstrate a higher (often much higher) AC Ratio, meaning they are not reaching people at a rate necessary to sustain their local church long term.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

To determine this metric in your local church, take your average attendance for a calendar year and divide that number by the number of reported conversions during that same year. The result is your calculated AC Ratio. If you are producing converts at a rate that will sustain your congregation, that resulting AC Ratio should be 5.0 (5:1) or less.

Example 1				Example 2			
CHURCH A	Average Attendance	50		CHURCH B	Average Attendance	75	
	Reported Conversions	10			Reported Conversions	10	
	AC Ratio	5:1 or 5.0			AC Ratio	7.5:1 or 7.5	
	Result:	<b>A healthy AC Ratio</b>			Result:	<b>Not a healthy AC Ratio</b>	

**ASSEMBLIES OF GOD NATIONAL REPORTING**

Healthy Church: Attendance / Conversions < 5.0  
*It is estimated that in a healthy church, the AC of a local congregation will likely be 5.0 or lower.*

AC < 5.0	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
1-49	8.15	6.29	6.92	6.70	6.36	6.20	6.28	6.09	6.17	6.08	6.36
50-99	7.25	6.63	6.60	6.71	6.65	6.00	5.67	5.74	6.32	6.35	6.26
100-199	7.15	5.93	6.29	6.57	6.09	5.51	6.01	5.96	5.75	6.21	6.18
200-399	6.06	5.41	5.39	5.43	5.66	4.95	4.90	5.55	5.32	4.62	5.01
400-699	4.72	3.75	3.86	3.66	3.56	3.73	4.34	4.18	3.94	4.27	3.69
700-999	5.32	3.91	4.05	3.95	4.09	2.94	2.53	4.60	4.45	3.25	3.76
1000+	3.21	2.88	2.96	2.76	2.60	3.08	3.12	2.68	2.59	2.46	2.78
2000+	2.71	2.53	2.70	2.46	2.35	2.88					2.60
5000+	1.90	1.95	2.14	1.90	1.98	2.95					2.96

As you can see, local churches with fewer than 400 in average weekly attendance have typically had an AC Ratio that is higher (less healthy) than 5.0 and these average ratios are trending in a higher direction. Conversely, congregations with more than 400 in average weekly attendance generally have reported an AC Ratio that is below 5.0 (healthy).

While awareness of these national averages can be helpful, especially to those who lead at that level, a pastor’s more important focus would center on the metrics of his/her own congregation. Once you have calculated your local church’s AC Ratio, you now have an answer to the question, “How many of us does it take to produce a convert each year?” And, you can determine whether your AC Ratio is healthy enough to sustain your congregation or focused effort is needed to help your congregation more effectively reach others with the Gospel.

## 2. EFFECTIVE ASSIMILATION and the CW RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *Are we keeping our converts long enough to lead them to be baptized in water?*

The idea of assimilation seeks to measure whether or not those who visit our congregation choose to continue to be a part of us and become an ongoing part of our local church. Of course, the people who visit our church come to us in a variety of situations, such as those who have moved to our town or are looking for a new local church, those with previous church experience and those who are considered unchurched, those who identify as Christians and those who don't, etc. So, any effort to measure all of our efforts of assimilation and our overall effectiveness with all these different groups of visitors would require several different measures.

One of those efforts looks at those who we report as conversions and whether or not they remain a part of our church. Since these friends have attended our local church and responded to our message, we would expect that they are prime candidates to become an ongoing part of our congregation—if we can keep them with us.

The CW Ratio (Conversions: Water baptisms) provides a metric to help us determine how well we are maintaining connection with this portion of those who are new to our local church and can provide some general insight into how we might be doing with all of those who are new to us. After all, if we're not keeping those who respond to our message, it would seem unlikely that we're doing much better with those who don't.

**THE METRIC:** The CW Ratio identifies the conversion decisions that will ultimately be solidified by the act of water baptism by taking the total number of conversions for the year and comparing that number with the total number of water baptisms reported that same year. So, a local church that reports 20 conversions in a single year and five water baptisms would have a CW Ratio of 20:5 or 4:1 (4.0). A CW Ratio of 1.0 would mean that we baptized the same number of people as made conversion decisions.

The lower our CW Ratio, the more effectively the church is maintaining connection to its converts long enough to guide them toward the decision to be baptized. A higher CW may indicate that we aren't baptizing a good percentage of our converts, either because we are not sufficiently prioritizing water baptism or we are not effectively assimilating our converts into the ongoing life of the congregation.

**THE TARGET:** *A healthy CW Ratio is anticipated to be 3.0 or lower.*

A reasonable anticipation given that some conversions may occur among those who had a naturally limited contact with the local church (people are members have led to Christ but who have yet to come to our church, out of town guests who respond to our message, church outreach ministries where ongoing connection isn't possible, etc.). In truth, we would hope that the local church would maintain connection with most, if not all of their reported converts, but we would expect that they should ultimately be able to lead no less than 1/3 of their reported converts to water baptism, if their assimilation efforts are healthy.

**Example 1**

CHURCH A      Reported Conversions    20  
                          Water Baptisms                8  
                          CW Ratio                        2.5:1 or 2.5  
                          Result: **A healthy CW Ratio**

**Example 2**

CHURCH B      Reported Conversions    20  
                          Water Baptisms                4  
                          CW Ratio                        5:1 or 5.0  
                          Result: **Not a healthy CW Ratio**

### ASSEMBLIES OF GOD NATIONAL REPORTING

	Healthy Church:				Conversions / Water Baptisms < 3.0							
	CW < 3.0	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
1-49		2.70	2.95	2.58	2.55	2.68	2.63	2.61	2.69	2.72	2.57	2.53
50-99		2.28	2.22	2.13	2.12	1.98	2.17	2.32	2.31	2.08	2.11	2.15
100-199		2.49	2.39	2.15	2.10	2.23	2.37	2.18	2.15	2.31	2.16	2.19
200-399		2.61	2.66	2.62	2.53	2.52	2.81	2.76	2.52	2.70	3.13	2.88
400-699		3.78	3.81	4.00	4.35	4.23	3.72	3.43	3.14	3.65	3.30	3.79
700-999		3.67	4.11	4.05	4.01	3.87	5.13	6.42	3.23	3.31	4.20	4.13
1000+		5.62	5.30	5.14	5.17	5.44	5.19	4.79	5.38	5.65	7.02	6.42
2000+		6.42	5.76	5.35	5.56	5.79	5.56					6.94
5000+		7.34	6.56	6.33	6.83	6.60	5.70					6.70

*It is estimated that in a healthy church, the CW of a local congregation will likely be 3.0 or lower.*



As you can see, local churches with fewer than 400 in average weekly attendance have typically had a CW Ratio that is lower (healthier) than 3.0. Conversely, congregations with more than 400 in average weekly attendance generally have reported a CW Ratio that is above 3.0 (not healthy).

When we consider that churches with more than 400 in weekly attendance also report a higher rate of conversions (according to the AC Ratio), we can see an important message in this metric. If we are reaching people so effectively with our message, why are we having such difficulty in helping them take their next step on the journey with Christ?

Again, the metric that matters most is the one you calculate for your local congregation. Once you have calculated your local church's CW Ratio, you now have an answer to the question, "Are we keeping our converts long enough to lead them to be baptized in water?" Now, you can determine whether your CW Ratio demonstrates that you are effectively prioritizing water baptism and assimilating your new believers into the ongoing life of your church.

### 3. TRUE KINGDOM GROWTH and the AW RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *How effectively are we contributing to true Kingdom growth in our local church?*

Have you ever wondered how to measure your local church's efforts to grow Christ's kingdom? Perhaps you've heard another pastor question a growing church's real impact with "Oh, that's mostly transfer growth," suggesting that the growth includes only a few new believers. The AW Ratio provides us with a means of seeing past the natural (and unnatural) shuffling of congregants to discover our deeper impact.

Since most of churches require new members to be both converted and baptized, comparing our average attendance to the number of water baptisms each year can reveal how effective we are in producing potential members for the local church. Yes, transfer growth can give us new members and not positively affect this ratio, but the AW Ratio can demonstrate a local church's actual contribution to **kingdom growth**.

**THE METRIC:** The AW Ratio measures the number of water baptisms against our average worship attendance. So, a church with an average attendance of 60 that celebrated three baptisms last year would have an AW Ratio of 60:3 or 20:1 (20.0). We can also say that in this congregation it takes 20 of us to produce a water-baptized convert each year.

The lower our AW Ratio, the more effectively the church is combining its efforts to reach people with the Gospel and lead them to water baptism. A higher AW may will indicate that we either aren't reaching people with the Gospel at a healthy rate or baptizing a good percentage of our converts, or both. To determine which is our struggle, we can look at our AC and CW ratios, which are combined into the AW Ratio.

**THE TARGET:** *A healthy AW Ratio is anticipated to be 15.0 or lower.*

Another way to calculate this measure is to simply multiply the AC Ratio and CW Ratio as such a calculation will yield the same result. Since we have noted that a church's AC Ratio should be 5.0 or below and the CW Ratio should be 3.0 or less, then a healthy AW Ratio would be expected to be 15.0 or less.

NOTE: A healthy AW Ratio should be inspected to make certain that the local church has both a healthy AC Ratio and a healthy CW Ratio. It is possible for a local church to have an unhealthy AC Ratio, say 8.0, and a very healthy CW Ratio of 1.5, and thus yield a healthy-looking AW Ratio of 12.0. In such a case, we would want to note that while we're baptizing a very strong percentage of our converts, we're actually not producing enough converts to sustain the health or future of our congregation. (This has been the case with many smaller congregations.)

Example 1		Example 2	
CHURCH A	Reported Conversions 60	CHURCH A	Reported Conversions 60
	Water Baptisms 5		Water Baptisms 3
	CW Ratio 12:1 or 12.0		CW Ratio 20:1 or 20.0
	Result: <b>A healthy AW Ratio</b>		Result: <b>Not a healthy CW Ratio</b>

Healthy Church:

Attendance / Water Baptisms < 15.0

*It is estimated that in a healthy church, the AW of a local congregation will likely be 15.0 or lower.*

AW < 15.0	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
1-49	21.99	18.57	17.84	17.08	17.07	16.34	16.37	16.35	16.79	15.65	16.05
50-99	16.49	14.71	14.05	14.19	13.16	13.00	13.16	13.28	13.13	13.38	13.44
100-199	17.82	14.18	13.50	13.83	13.58	13.04	13.08	12.84	13.28	13.38	13.53
200-399	15.84	14.37	14.11	13.73	14.26	13.91	13.55	13.98	14.36	14.47	14.41
400-699	17.85	14.26	15.43	15.92	15.09	13.89	14.86	13.15	14.37	14.09	13.98
700-999	19.52	16.10	15.75	15.85	15.85	15.07	16.26	14.89	14.75	13.67	15.54
1000+	18.04	15.30	15.22	14.29	14.15	15.97	14.96	14.43	14.62	17.27	17.81
2000+	17.38	14.59	14.44	13.70	13.64	15.99					18.05
5000+	13.93	12.78	13.54	12.98	13.09	16.84					18.26

As you can see, with the exception of our smallest churches (1-49), the various size groupings report similar AW Ratios. Since we remember that churches under 400 struggle to achieve a healthy AC Ratio while churches over 400 struggle to record a healthy rate of water baptisms, we can imagine how much stronger these AW Ratios would be if each group strengthen their weak area. Imagine the kingdom impact if churches under 400 were able to reach a healthy number of converts while maintaining their effective baptism rates. Likewise, imagine the growth in potential members if churches over 400 local churches could begin baptizing a healthy percentage of the converts they report.

Once again, the metric that matters most is the one you calculate for your local congregation. Once you have calculated your local church’s AW Ratio, you now have an answer to the question, “How effectively are we contributing to true Kingdom growth in our local church?” With your AW Ratio, you can focus more clearly on the nature of your church’s growth or areas that need greater effectiveness.

## 4. EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP and MOBILIZATION and the CS RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *Are we effectively producing Spirit-empowered believers and mobilizing them toward the mission of the Church?*

In the work of the local church, discipleship and mobilization of Spirit-empowered people should always work in tandem. If we’re truly making disciples, those disciples will also produce other disciples. Unfortunately, we can be failing to disciple people effectively and also struggling to mobilize those we have produced.

Of course, we recognize that there would be other elements of discipleship for us to measure besides Spirit baptism. Still, much like our CW Ratio speaks only to assimilating new converts but perhaps also gives us insight into how effectively we’re assimilating others, measuring those we lead to Spirit baptism can provide some insight into how effectively we’re likely leading people into all elements of discipleship.

More importantly, as a Spirit-empowered local church, we cannot afford to underestimate the importance of Spirit baptism for both discipleship and the impact of our local church in its community. More than once we see the apostles giving urgent priority to the Spirit baptism of those who were coming to faith (Acts 8; Acts 19), and we even see one effectively evangelist being instructed more fully (Acts 18) with what the context suggests was his lacking focus on Spirit baptism. Other documents are more conducive to a fuller argument for Spirit baptism’s priority, and such arguments are likely unnecessary for truly Spirit-empowered local churches.

What may be necessary is understanding that Spirit baptism is both an essential discipleship step for the believer and a mobilization of that believer toward Christ’s mission. Sadly, some have received Spirit baptism but have not engaged its greater purpose. While the book of Acts shows the direct (and seemingly immediate) response of Spirit-baptized people toward the harvest field before them, that connection cannot be assumed as automatic. We must both disciple people toward Spirit baptism and mobilize them when they have received that baptism.

**THE METRIC:** The CS Ratio measures our reported converts against the number of Spirit baptisms we report in a year. So, a local church that reports 15 conversions in a year and also reports three Spirit baptisms would have a CS Ratio of 15:3 or 5:1 (5.0).

Now this metric can potentially speak to us concerning both discipleship and mobilization. First, this can be a discipleship metric as it will reveal how well we are bringing our converts to Spirit baptism—an essential step in their true discipleship (Acts 19). So, the higher our reported Spirit baptisms, the lower our CS Ratio. *For example, if the congregation identified above actually reported five Spirit baptisms (rather than three), they would have a CS Ratio of 15:5 or 3:1 (3.0).*

At the same time, we know that if we are producing Spirit-baptized individuals and mobilizing them into Christ’s mission, we should also be producing more converts, which would cause the conversions side of our CS Ratio to increase. Simply put, the more Spirit-baptized believers we have, the more converts we should be producing.

The result would tell us that a CS Ratio that is too high might reveal that we’re not effectively discipling people to Spirit baptism, but one that is too low could indicate that we’re not effectively mobilizing our Spirit-baptized converts to our mission. So, it is likely that a healthy CS Ratio would not be too high or too low, but land between two targeted measures as explained below.

**THE TARGET:** *A healthy CS Ratio is anticipated to be greater than 3.0 but less than 4.0.*

As a discipleship ratio, a healthy CS Ratio is anticipated to be less 4.0, indicating that at least 1/4 of our converts are moving forward to Spirit-baptism. While certainly we would want every convert to experience Spirit baptism, we recognize that some of our converts might experience Spirit-baptism elsewhere or not pursue Spirit baptism at all, but such cases would not necessarily suggest that our efforts are deficient. If we want to see a minimum of 1/3 of our conversions to be water baptized, a target of no less than 1/4 of our conversions experiencing Spirit baptism seems reasonable.

As a mobilization ratio, a healthy CS Ratio is anticipated to be higher than 3.0, indicating that our local church is reporting three conversions for every Spirit baptism. This suggests that our Spirit-baptized people are engaging our mission and helping the congregation impact the lives of others with the Gospel. A CS Ratio that is too low indicates that the number of converts is more closely approximating the number of Spirit-baptisms, perhaps indicating that the Spirit-baptized people in our congregation are not engaging mission sufficiently.

Simply put, if we are leading our converts to Spirit-baptism, we should also see our number of converts grow significantly. If one grows and the other does not, we have a problem to address.

Example 1	Example 2
CHURCH A	CHURCH B
Reported Conversions 30	Reported Conversions 40
Spirit Baptisms 8	Spirit Baptisms 8
CS Ratio 3.75:1 or 3.75	CS Ratio 5:1 or 5.0
Result: <b>A healthy CS Ratio</b>	Result: <b>Not a healthy CS Ratio</b>

*A healthy CS would likely fall between 3.0 and 4.0. So, if our numbers are outside those parameters, we can identify whether we have a mobilization problem (<3.0) or a discipleship problem (>4.0).*

3.0 < CS < 4.0	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
1-49	3.34	3.77	3.56	3.94	4.23	3.97	4.24	3.93	4.01	3.84	3.73
50-99	3.45	3.55	3.47	3.50	3.35	3.64	3.69	3.84	3.51	3.57	3.37
100-199	3.88	4.03	3.63	3.80	3.97	4.12	3.69	3.67	4.00	3.59	3.49
200-399	4.48	4.25	4.28	4.29	4.39	4.57	4.68	4.26	4.46	4.65	4.49
400-699	7.00	6.96	7.03	7.38	7.23	6.79	5.66	5.67	5.79	5.27	5.41
700-999	7.78	6.23	5.99	6.73	6.28	8.91	10.78	5.76	5.19	6.42	6.17
1000+	7.26	7.29	6.88	7.43	6.60	8.92	7.95	8.08	8.75	9.12	7.36
2000+	7.42	7.00	6.69	7.42	7.98	9.89					6.95
5000+	8.22	6.49	6.67	7.60	7.99	15.16					6.16

As you can see, churches under 200 report generally healthy CS Ratios, but remember that these churches are not reaching people sufficiently to sustain their congregations. This illustrates why it is critical to take multiple measures in determining church health. If we are leading a healthy number of our converts to Spirit baptism, why are we not producing a healthier number of converts? Greater mobilization of our Spirit-baptized people toward their mission would be the best solution.



The national chart also raises concern with the CS Ratio of churches with more than 200 (especially those with more than 400) in average attendance. The metric shows that of those being reached with the Gospel in these churches, only 1 in 7 (or fewer) of these new believers will ever experience Spirit baptism. In several of these size groupings, the CS Ratio has trending upward (an unhealthy direction). What is the future for a priority of Spirit-baptism in a congregation if such a small percentage of its kingdom growth never experiences Spirit baptism?

As before, the metric that matters most is the one you calculate for your local congregation. Once you have calculated your local church's CS Ratio, you can now answer to the question, "Are we effectively producing Spirit-empowered believers and mobilizing them toward the mission of the Church?" Your CS Ratio can reveal whether or not this area of your local church is healthy or if you need greater focus on discipleship or mobilization.

## 5. DISCIPLESHIP REPRODUCTION and the AS RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *To what degree are we reproducing Spirit-empowered disciples with potential for future ministry service (i.e., deacons, pastors, missionaries, etc.)?*

While we in the local church are tasked to disciple every individual, we recognize that for our church to continue, we must be producing some who will serve leadership roles in the future. In our Pentecostal/Spirit-Empowered churches, we must have leaders who are Spirit-baptized. Of course, Spirit-baptism is typically a requirement for primary leadership roles such as pastor, elder or deacon, etc. In a broader sense, we also want to be producing ministry leaders who may serve beyond our congregation in other ministry leadership roles such as evangelists, missionaries, denominational leaders, etc. In our settings, these individuals will also come from the ranks of the Spirit-baptized.

While we have already looked at how effectively we are moving our converts toward Spirit-baptism with the CS Ratio (above), but we can also compare our reported Spirit baptisms to our average attendance to determine the rate at which we are producing individuals with the potential to serve in leadership roles either now or in the future.

As we did with water baptism in the AW Ratio, we can combine Attendance and Spirit baptism numbers in an AS ratio. By measuring Spirit baptism against average worship attendance, we can measure the reproduction of Spirit-filled disciples taking place in the congregation. Our collective efforts to continue pursuing Christ's worldwide harvest in the future hinge on the continued reproduction of Spirit-filled believers who are capable of leading us.

**THE METRIC:** The AS Ratio measures our reproduction of Spirit-empowered disciples. This metric is calculated as a ratio of Attendance to Spirit Baptism and can answer the question, "To what degree are we reproducing Spirit-empowered disciples with potential for future ministry service (i.e., deacons, pastors, missionaries, etc.)?" So, a church with an average attendance of 60 that celebrated three Spirit-baptisms last year would have an AS Ratio of 60:3 or 20:1 (20.0). We can also say that in this congregation it takes 20 of us to produce a Spirit-baptized convert each year.

**THE TARGET:** *A healthy AS Ratio is generally anticipated to be greater than 15.0 and less than 20.0.*

Another way to calculate this measure is to simply multiply the AC Ratio and CS Ratio as such a calculation will yield the same result. Since we have noted that a church's AC Ratio should be 5.0 or below and the CS Ratio should be greater than 3.0 but less than 4.0, then a healthy AW Ratio would be expected to be greater than 15.0 and less than 20.0.

**NOTE:** A healthy AS Ratio should always be inspected to make certain that the local church has both a healthy AC Ratio and a healthy CS Ratio. It is possible for a local church to have a healthy AC Ratio, say 3.0, and a very unhealthy CS Ratio of 6.0, and thus yield a healthy-looking AS Ratio of 18.0. In such a case, we would want to note that while we're producing converts at a very strong rate, we're actually struggling greatly in our efforts to disciple our converts toward Spirit-baptism (revealed by the CS Ratio). This has been the case with many larger congregations.

Healthy Church:  $15.0 < \text{Attendance} / \text{Spirit Baptisms} < 20.0$

*It is estimated that in a healthy church, the AS of a local congregation will likely be greater than 15.0 and less than 20.0.*

3*AC < AS < 4*AC	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
0-49	27.25	23.69	24.61	26.36	26.94	24.61	26.60	23.94	24.75	23.34	23.71
50-99	24.97	23.54	22.92	23.49	22.27	21.85	20.91	22.02	22.18	22.65	21.07
100-199	27.70	23.88	22.85	24.98	24.16	22.70	22.14	21.91	22.99	22.26	21.57
200-399	27.19	23.00	23.04	23.28	24.87	22.62	22.94	23.68	23.75	21.49	22.49
400-699	33.06	26.07	27.14	27.00	25.77	25.36	24.54	23.71	22.82	22.51	19.95
700-999	41.38	24.40	24.23	26.61	25.70	26.19	27.28	26.52	23.10	20.86	23.20
1000+	23.32	21.01	20.39	20.53	17.17	27.46	24.83	21.67	22.66	22.44	20.43
2000+	20.08	17.73	18.06	18.29	18.79	28.43					18.08
5000+	15.61	12.64	14.28	14.44	15.84	44.78					18.26

As you can see, this ratio seldom proves to be within the healthy parameters we've targeted. Churches of all sizes (except those with average attendance of 2000 and above), report an average AS Ratio of above 20.0

However, it's critical to remember that we must look deeper into this ratio to be certain that its component parts—the AC Ratio and CS Ratio—are also healthy. As we have noted with these metrics, the AC Ratio of smaller churches tends to be at unhealthy levels. While the CS Ratio for these churches may be at or near our target for that metric, the higher AC Ratio means the AS Ratio will be higher than our target. Conversely, for the larger churches, the higher than targeted AS Ratio is due to a CS Ratio that is typically too high among these churches. On this chart, we know that even though the AS Ratios of churches 2000+ look healthy, this calculation stems from a very low and healthy AC Ratio and a CS Ratio that is not at healthy levels (very high).

Once again, the metric that matters most is the one you calculate for your local congregation. Once you have calculated your local church's AS Ratio, you now have an answer to the question, *"To what degree are we reproducing Spirit-empowered disciples with potential for future ministry service (i.e., deacons, pastors, missionaries, etc.)?"* Armed with your AS Ratio, you can focus more clearly on the increasing the number of eligible Spirit-empowered leaders that your congregation is producing. Remember to look inside this metric to make sure that your AC Ratio and CS Ratio are healthy. If one isn't, then you have identified the area you can target to improve your AS Ratio.

## 6. MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT and the AM RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *What percentage of our people are actively involved in serving in ways that truly fulfill Christ's mission?*

When surveyed, most pastors indicate that their greatest leadership challenge is in their attempts to get people involved in the local church's ministry efforts. Frankly, it makes sense that this would be difficult given that people initially come into the church with needs to be met. All of us first engaged God out of an awareness that we need Him. But making disciples must, at some point, shift from what God is doing for me to what He desires to do through me. This is why the local church proves to always be a blending of those receiving from God and those serving for Him.

But a further, and perhaps more challenging question for church leaders to consider is whether or not our ministry efforts are truly focused on our primary task of making disciples. *"In our serving, who's needs are we really meeting?"* Local churches can be very busy places, but we need to determine if our efforts are simply caring for our own needs or *is all this activity engaging Christ's mission effectively?* We can serve a lot, but if much of that is actually serving ourselves, we can't expect those efforts to produce significantly for Christ's purposes, either in reaching others or even in truly growing ourselves.

So, when we evaluate our serving, there's a quality issue, as well as a quantity question to consider. Given that today's congregation is filled with people who have decreasing levels of availability, being certain that we are maximizing that availability with meaningful opportunities for kingdom impact must be our priority.

As has been wisely noted, *"You can't really be following a servant if you're not serving."* There is something, perhaps many things, that God has and will equip us to do for His kingdom, once we truly align our thoughts and actions with His purpose. So, we serve not just because the church needs available workers (though it does), or

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even because there is much for us to do (though there is), but because such moments are also important and necessary to what God desires to do in our lives.

**THE METRIC:** Measuring our effectiveness at connecting people with meaningful opportunities for serving and equipping them to be effective can be measured very simply. When we compare our average attendance to the number of attenders that are currently serving regularly, we get a AM Ratio by dividing the number of those involved in ongoing ministry by our total average attendance. For example, if a congregation with an average attendance of 60 reports that 15 people in their congregation are serving regularly in some ministry effort, then we can calculate an AM Ratio of 60:15 or 4:1 (4.0).

**THE TARGET:** *A healthy AM Ratio is generally anticipated to be above 3.33.*

While calculating the AM Ratio is quite simple, understanding its implications can be a bit more complex. If our target is an AM Ratio of 3.33, that means we want to see 30% of our congregation involved in ongoing ministry opportunities.

Now some might say that we'd want everyone to be involved in ministry, and ultimately that is true. But as we have said, all of us initially come to Jesus as "consumers" or those who are focused on having our need(s) met. When we help people engage meaningful ministry efforts that fulfill Christ's mission, we are able to reach more and more people who engage us at that "consumer" level. Truth is, the more people will involve in ministry, the more people we should be reaching—if those ministry efforts are productive for Christ's mission.

### Example 1

CHURCH A	Reported Attendance	80
	People serving regularly	20
	CW Ratio	4:1 or 4.0
	Result: <b>A healthy AM Ratio</b>	

### Example 2

CHURCH B	Reported Conversions	80
	People serving regularly	40*
	CW Ratio	2:1 or 2.0
	Result: <b>Not a healthy AM Ratio</b>	

*\*involvement is strong, but not producing mission results*

2020 All Churches	Sunday Att.	Volunteers	Attendance: Ministry Ratio (AM)
1-49	93,931	32,357	2.90
50-99	158,612	53,791	2.95
100-199	198,052	68,733	2.88
200-399	198,636	73,977	2.69
400-699	152,225	56,400	2.70
700-999	77,493	27,952	2.77
1000+	398,221	106,894	3.73
2020 All Churches	Sunday Att.	Volunteers	Attendance: Ministry Ratio (AM)
Growing Churches	434,506	105,146	4.13
Plateaued Churches	243,779	75,629	3.22
Declining Churches	531,703	217,929	2.44

When we consider the percentage of people involved in local church ministry, we might be surprised to learn that declining churches of all sizes have more people involved in ministry (yielding lower AM Ratios). In fact, growing churches report a much lower percentage of people actively involved in ministry opportunities—yet these churches are growing!

So, what does this mean? It seems evident that though these declining churches report more than 40% of their congregation actively involved in serving, the nature of their ministry activity don't seem to be producing effectively for Christ's mission. Simply put, many of these churches are too focused inward in their ministry efforts. They have much activity and many involved, but that activity is not impacting their communities in ways that help connect with and meet the needs "out there."

Ultimately, historical data tells us that a healthy congregation will be comprised of around 70% of its people who are at a stage where they currently engage the local church primarily to have their needs met (more of a consumer mindset) while around 30% have reached the discipleship level where they are serving the needs of others. If our serving efforts are effectively aimed at needs beyond our walls, then as we involve more and more people in serving, we will also minister to the needs of more and more people. The percentages of these two

groups won't change much as the more we serve, the more we are able to reach—if our serving is effective for Christ's mission.

Of course, we again focus on your individual congregation's serving. Once you have calculated your local church's AM Ratio, you now have an answer to the question, "*What percentage of our people are actively involved in serving in ways that truly fulfill Christ's mission?*" If that ratio is too low, you have both a quantity question and a quality question to consider: First, how can we help more people find their place in meaningful ministry; and second, how can we better connect our ministry efforts to those beyond our walls. If your church is growing but your AM Ratio is too high, likely your solution is to get people more involved in ministry. If your church is experiencing plateau and decline, but you have a high percentage of people involved in ministry activity (a low AM Ratio), likely you need to get more of those ministry efforts outside of your walls.

## 7. EFFECTIVE SMALL GROUP MINISTRY and the AG RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *How effectively are we getting people involved in our small group opportunities?*

A local church's small group efforts form a major part of its strategic effort to provide fellowship, discipleship, and serving opportunities to its people. Regardless of what form or focus such groups may take, the desire is to provide settings that are more intimate than the church's large worship gatherings. However, most local churches find that getting people to engage these opportunities can be challenging, due to time commitments, social uncertainties, and various logistical challenges. In the past, a small group ministry such as Sunday School could boast of remarkably high levels of congregational participation (often 80% or more) as the time and logistical issues were easily and consistently addressed. In the years since many churches shifted away from this long-standing discipleship tool, engaging people beyond the worship service has grown more challenging.

In order to assess our effectiveness in small group ministry, we must acknowledge that all small group efforts are not alike so determining healthy levels of participation will likely vary, depending on the nature of the groups. Surely the math itself is simple enough as we would compare our average worship attendance with our average small group attendance. But determining a healthy ratio will be affected by the type of groups we are measuring.

Likely there are three general types of groups to consider—relationally-based groups, discipleship-focused groups, and service-related groups. While some groups can potentially offer some impact in all three areas, a wise small group leader will need to identify the primary purpose for their small groups in order to make the best decisions, answer the critical logistical questions, and properly assess the impact and success of the small groups themselves.

For example, relational groups tend to maintain an openness to new participants and can provide a place for people who are engaging a growing local church to immediately begin connecting with others. This type of group is primarily designed to provide opportunities for people to build relationships with one another beyond the worship service. Sermon-based groups are often of this type as they usually prioritize relationship-building while making use of content that we have already experienced together. The principal goal is connection, though we also hope that the impact of Sunday's message will grow deeper. Other types of groups that form around fun activities, hobbies, or special interests would be considered relational groups as building relationships is the primary goal.

Discipleship groups have teaching and learning as their principal focus. These groups typically center on their content and often require a higher level of preparation by the leader as our "teacher" of the content that has brought us together. These groups often struggle to remain open to outsiders as the experience of the content can make "joining in the middle" difficult or unrealistic.

Service-related groups center on a shared ministry project and often require a shorter overall time commitment. Here the project takes center stage, though developing relationships is also an important byproduct. Generally, these can remain open to outsiders or those who can't participate on a regular basis.

**THE METRIC:** As stated, the math is not difficult here. An AG Ratio would result when we compare average attendance (worship service) with average group participation. So, a congregation that averages 80 in weekly attendance and reports that 40 people are involved in its small group ministries would have an AG Ratio of 80:40 or 2:1 (2.0).

**THE TARGET:** A healthy AG Ratio is would likely be 1.67 or lower, but a greater goal would be to see the AG Ratio get healthier (lower) each year, no matter how high its initial level.

Example 1			Example 2		
CHURCH A	Reported Attendance	80	CHURCH B	Reported Conversions	100
	People in small groups	60		People in small groups	50
	AG Ratio	4:3 or 1.33		AG Ratio	10:5 or 2.0
	Result:	<b>A healthy AG Ratio</b>		Result:	<b>Not a healthy AG Ratio</b>

Again, determining a healthy target can be complicated by the nature of our groups and other elements that may be unique to our setting. Our desire would certainly be to get every individual involved in some setting where our goals of connecting, growing, and serving can be experienced, but a 1:1 ratio is likely unrealistic and certainly not required to indicate that our efforts here are healthy.

At the current time, national data for small group participation is not available to the Acts 2 Journey Team, but other sources indicate that 60% of adults report that they participate in a Bible study or small group experience offered their local church (<https://churchexecutive.com/archives/church-trends-statistics-6>).

Making use of this and other available data, we can suggest that 6 in 10 (1.67) would be an appropriate minimum target for our AG Ratio. However, the best target for the local church would be to see the AG Ratio increase year-by-year within that same church. The closer we can get to 1.0, the healthier our small group efforts will be.

## 8. EFFECTIVE HOSPITALITY and the GR1 RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *How effectively are we helping our first-time guests have a positive experience among us?*

When people visit a local church for the very first time, there are many factors that contribute to whether or not they will decide to return. Of course, there can be several settings for one’s initial encounter of a local church, but most first-time guests take their first steps among us by attending the Sunday morning worship service.

Studies have demonstrated that most people are very quick to decide how they feel or what they think of us when they visit our church. First impressions can be formed very quickly, sometimes even before the worship service has begun as people encounter the condition of our property, the expressions of welcome as they enter, and even the cleanliness of our restrooms. There are many elements to consider as we seek to help our guests feel at home with us and we’ll likely need to walk in their shoes for a bit in order to prepare effectively.

Knowing what is happening among our guests takes some effort. To answer our questions in this area, we will need to keep track of those who visit our church and there are various metrics that can help us. The first of these will simply ask the question, “Do our first-time guests return?”

**THE METRIC:** This GR1 metric measures Guest Return. We calculate the metric by comparing our total number of guests with the number of those who returned to attend a second worship service or another event or activity of our local church. Churches that maintain their current attendance levels or experience growth will generally find that 50% or more of their first-time guests come back again. Conversely, many declining churches will note that even though people visit their church services, they don’t seem to return. Of course, you’ll need to keep track of this information in order to know how you are really doing in this area.

**THE TARGET:** A healthy GR1 Ratio is would likely be 2.0 or lower, meaning that of those who visit our worship service, at least one-half return to attend again.

Example 1			Example 2		
CHURCH A	Total guests attending	12	CHURCH B	Total guests attending	15
	Guests attending a 2 <sup>nd</sup> time	8		Guests attending a 2 <sup>nd</sup> time	6
	GR1 Ratio	3:2 or 1.5		GR1 Ratio	5:2 or 2.5
	Result:	<b>A healthy GR1 Ratio</b>		Result:	<b>An unhealthy GR1 Ratio</b>

As stated, there are many factors that contribute to our guests’ decisions to return to our church a second time. Chief among these is the friendliness of people toward them. Studies have demonstrated that the desire for



friendship is often the primary reason people visit a local church. On their first visit, people must leave convinced that such friendships are possible, even likely, among us. That impression comes through when our people are friendly.

As mentioned, the cleanliness and attractiveness of our facilities matter to our guests. These impressions can suggest what kind of people we are or how important our local church truly is to us. Is there adequate signage to help guests find their way? Are there helpful people ready to assist who understand the uncertainties our guests may be feeling?

We also want to consider what a guest will experience during our service itself. Are there elements of our worship that need to be explained? Remember that everything our guests see or experience communicates who we are and what matters to us, so some clear explanation or guidance may be needed.

Good follow-up efforts after the worship service are certainly important, but even the best such efforts will find it difficult to overcome the decision a guest may have already made not to return.

While there are several factors to consider when evaluating your local church's guest experience, but armed with your GR1 Ratio, you can now answer the question, *"How effectively are we helping our first-time guests have a positive experience among us?"*

## 9. EFFECTIVE ASSIMILATION and the GR2 RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *How effectively are we assimilating our first-time guests into the ongoing life of the congregation?*

Guest Retention is the next-level calculation that naturally follows Guest Return. With Guest Retention we are looking beyond our hospitality efforts and seeking insights into our more complete efforts of assimilation, such as relational connections, small group participation, and ministry involvement. While each of these may not be required in all cases, these types of steps are typically necessary if people will become an ongoing part of our local church.

Every congregation experiences a flow of gains and losses of people over time. Births and deaths are a natural part of this flow and an older congregation should note that the latter are likely more common. Of course, people leave the congregation in a fully healthy state too, whether by leaving the geographic area or simply choosing to worship elsewhere. So, at what rate must we also bring new people into the congregation in order to compensate and sustain our congregation or even see it grow?

To offset the losses it will commonly experience, the standard affirmed by many church consultants suggests that a church must retain a minimum of 10% of its guests when measured over a one-year period. (This means that we want to determine how many of our first-time guests are still with us one year later.) Growing churches typically report a retention rate of 20% or more.

Again, knowing what is happening among our guests takes some effort. To answer our questions such as this, we will need to keep track of those who visit our church and be able to determine their participation one year later. With such information, we can make use of a metric that can help us answer the question, *"Do our first-time guests stay with us?"*

**THE METRIC:** The GR2 metric measures Guest Retention. We calculate the metric by comparing our total number of guests with the number of those who are still attending our local church one year later. Churches that maintain their current attendance levels will generally find that no less than 10% of their first-time guests go on to become a part of the congregation. Congregations that experience and sustain growth can expect that at least 20% of their guests will assimilate into the life of the congregation. Conversely, many declining churches will note that even though people visit their church services, few seem to return and those who do seem to have difficulty connecting for the long-term.

**THE TARGET:** *Determining a healthy GR2 ratio would depend on our goals. A healthy GR2 Ratio would likely be 10.0 or lower if our goal is to sustain the size of the congregation, but a GR2 Ratio of 5.0 or lower would be needed if numerical growth is our target. As with the GR1, the lower the GR2, the more effective we are at assimilating our guests into the life of the congregation.*

*NOTE: This metric can be calculated monthly or annually. So, we would use the total number of guests from the same month in the previous year or the total number of guests from the previous year. For example, all 2020 guests still attending in January 2022. If we are using a monthly GR2, we would likely need to consider at least three consecutive months of metric calculations before drawing any firm conclusions from this metric.*

Example 1			Example 2		
CHURCH A	Monthly guests (last yr.)	30	CHURCH B	Monthly guests (last yr.)	40
	Those who remain w/us	6		Those who remain w/us	2
	GR2 Ratio	5:1 or 5.0		GR2 Ratio	20:1 or 20.0
	Result:	<b>A healthy GR2 Ratio</b>		Result:	<b>An unhealthy GR2 Ratio</b>

While the goal of any review of metrics would be to assess current realities, we also make use of metric calculations for strategic purposes. In the case of the GR2, if we discover an unhealthy current reality, there are many possible elements to consider.

First, we would want to look at the previously described GR1 Ratio to see if our guests are returning at a healthy rate. If they are not, this will limit the potential for the GR2 Ratio. If the GR1 is healthy but the GR2 is not, the next step would be to review assimilation efforts that are subsequent to the first visit (relationship connection opportunities small group invitations, opportunities for ministry involvement, etc.).

Some studies have been done that demonstrate the importance of establishing meaningful friendships in one’s first few weeks in a local church or the need to get involved in some ministry activity within the first three months, etc. as there are various windows where new friends may disconnect from a congregation. We may gain some insights if we are able to determine the point at which our returning guests drifted away.

There are several factors to consider when evaluating your local church’s assimilation efforts, but armed with your GR2 Ratio, you can now answer the question, “How effectively are we assimilating our first-time guests into the ongoing life of the congregation?”

## 10. VOCATIONAL MINISTRY LEADERS and the AV RATIO

**KEY QUESTION:** *How effective are we at developing and launching vocational ministry leaders for Christ’s Church today?*

Once we begin to make use of metrics to better understand our church health, there are many possible measures for us to engage. In fact, a complete list would only be limited by our creativity and available data. For example, one unique but potentially important measure to consider would be our congregation’s effectiveness in producing vocational ministry leaders for Christ’s Church today. Pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and others are needed to lead both within and beyond our local congregation.

One would anticipate that where the Great Commission is prioritized and vocational ministry is modeled in healthy ways, some and perhaps many would align their paths to such vocational destinies.

**THE METRIC:** The AV metric seeks to measure our congregation’s developing and launching of vocational ministry leaders. While this is surely a meaningful measurement, there is some uncertainty as to the nature of the measure and the identification of healthy targets. First, we acknowledge that the number of vocational ministry leaders produced should likely be considered over a greater period of time than one year. We would also expect to compare this number to the size of our congregation as larger churches would be expected to produce more vocational ministry leaders simply because they are working with more people. So, this metric would compare our current average attendance (church size) with the number of vocational ministry leaders produced over a set period of time, say the previous ten years.\* If a congregation averaging 300 in weekly attendance has launched five of its people into vocational ministry leadership over the past ten years, the AV Ratio would be 60:1 or 60.0.

*\*While the average tenure of one serving a vocational ministry leadership position in a particular local church is less than ten years, the number of such positions in a local church does not change as frequently. Absent specific research in this area, considering the number of vocational ministry leaders produced in a ten-year period seems reasonable at this time. A five-year measure could be used, but may prove to be too narrow of a window to evaluate.*

**THE TARGET:** *Given the lack of research in this particular arena, determining a healthy AV ratio is a bit challenging. However, we can note the vocational ministry leadership resources currently required to lead our own congregation and recognize that we must be producing at least that many vocational ministry leaders to meet the demand of our own congregation, much less contribute to the leadership larger Church beyond us. So, perhaps we can say that we should compare our weekly attendance to the number of vocational ministry leaders employed by our own congregation to determine our minimum AV Ratio.*

In our previous illustration, suppose our congregation of 300 employs six vocational ministers in either full-time or part-time capacities. That would mean a 300:6 or 50:1 rate would be needed to match our own usage of such leadership resources and a lower ratio would demonstrate that we are producing and launching enough of these leaders to contribute beyond our own needs. So, our 60:1 AV Ratio would not be sufficient. Let's consider a few other examples:

Example 1			Example 2		
CHURCH A	Average attendance	100	CHURCH B	Average attendance	200
	Voc. Min. leaders we need	2		Voc. Min. leaders we need	5
	Voc. Min. Ldrs. launched (10yrs)	4		Voc. Min. Ldrs. launched (10yrs)	4
	Result: <b>Our 25.0 AV Ratio is healthy</b>			Result: <b>Our 50.0 AV Ratio is unhealthy</b>	

Again, given that the lack of national research available for better understanding this metric, there would be room for discussion of the established target, but it does make sense that we would want to be producing at least as many vocational ministry leadership resources as our congregation is currently using. If our AV Ratio is not healthy, we should look for ways to better present or portray the opportunities for vocational ministry and encourage those who are considering such a path.

## NEXT STEPS FOR YOUR CHURCH

**KEY QUESTION:** *How can these metrics help our congregation?*

As we noted at the outset of this report, measuring church health will likely require input from a number of different measures as no single data point can tell a complete story. As you consider the various metrics you have calculated for your congregation, you may discover that certain areas are in need of special focus.

Much as one would when receiving a medical report that highlights an area in need of special or deeper diagnosis, one would be wise to begin addressing an unhealthy metric with the attempt to more fully understand what that particular metric is revealing. Because each of these metrics brings at least two data points or areas into the calculation, discerning which is out of alignment with a healthy result will be important if we will target improvement most effectively. For example, an unhealthy AC Ratio (Attendance: Conversions) generally would have us focus on increasing our efforts to connect with people and communicate their need for Christ. In so doing, we can hopefully increase the number of conversions in our AC Ratio. We wouldn't try to improve our AC Ratio by decreasing our attendance.

Once we bring an area into focus, we would then identify the various ways that we might strategically improve that particular area. When a medical doctor seeks to improve an area of our health, he may decide that an improved diet, a certain medication, or a surgical procedure would be the most effective way to influence that particular health need. In the same way, once we see an area to improve, we must consider the various strategic options that can influence that improvement.

We should always keep in mind that these metrics can be interconnected or significantly affect one another and too much strategy in one area can be counterproductive for others, especially when resources such as time and available people hours are limited. For example, putting our complete focus on evangelism may improve an unhealthy AC Ratio, but a corresponding failure to give time and energy to discipleship efforts or other assimilation needs may cause us to fail in our larger mission of making disciples—especially ones that endure.

*KEY QUESTION: How many different metrics should I monitor?*

Certainly, too much data collection effort can take on a life of its own and become unproductive, but a pastor and local church leadership team should have at least one means of assessing each of their stated ministry priorities. For example, the Acts 2 Journey identifies the five functions of the Church as revealed in Acts 2:42-47. One would think that at a minimum one measurement that addresses each of these functions should be monitored. Where available, it's likely that two or three such metrics in some of these areas would be most useful.

Perhaps what should be abandoned is the significant use of measures or metrics that aren't truly addressing church health. While event attendances or offerings collected can provide momentary reasons for celebration, it's unlikely that these types of measures provide significant health information unless combined with other data in a ratio or percentage type of metric.

Ultimately, these measures can help us maintain focus on the primary assignment we've been given to make disciples. While numerical growth is certainly desired, in most cases viewing such growth as a result of successful discipleship efforts will prove healthier for us than making numerical growth an end in itself.

*KEY QUESTION: What support is available as I engage church health metrics*

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