

## Trends in Church Staffing

### When Is the Right Time to Add More Staff—and Where Are Churches Finding Them in 2006?

By Cary Vaughn

IN THE 1980S, MAJOR CHANGES OCCURRED in the personnel selected to fill church staff positions. The surprising thing is that it didn't come about because of the lack of trained seminary and Bible school graduates. In fact, at no time in the history of the American church has there been more trained clergy.

A great deal of the change has to do with a new mind-set in the church. People who are trained in parallel professions and who have served the church faithfully in lay positions are often chosen over inexperienced recent graduates with seminary degrees.

Experienced people from within the congregation are known quantities. They have exhibited gifts and proven character. Someone with a business degree or a teaching certificate, who has grown up in the church, has been faithful in his or her personal walk with the Lord, and served faithfully in the church, may be the first choice for the new minister of Christian education. The pastor and search committee's attitude may be, "We know just what we're getting."

Joan had volunteered in a suburban Michigan church in the children's department for many years while her children were growing up. The nest was empty now. When their church was looking for a children's worker, they hired Joan.

She started out with a 10-year advantage over outside candidates because of her experience in working in the children's department. And the church committed to provide her with professional development opportunities in any areas where she needed them.

Another excellent and growing source of potential church staff are those within the congregation who are retired or semi-retired (neither term, incidentally, is found within the Bible!). A church which fails to challenge its members in their later years to consider utilizing their experience and expertise in a position within the church may be missing out on a marvelous opportunity to not only acquire excellent staff but to provide a wonderfully satisfying ministry opportunity to the individual.

Of course, there are many formal and traditional ways to find very well qualified personnel. Seminaries are equipping people for ministries in greater numbers than ever before. Average age for seminarians is now 32, reflecting a growing number of second-career candidates with experience beyond their seminary education. And, of course, denominational headquarters often provide services in matching candidates available with open positions.

Another trend that can be especially helpful for small churches is the concept of *shared* ministry—that is, sharing support and non-pastoral staff the way rural churches have shared itinerant pastors for years. This is especially true of ministers of Christian education and college and high school ministry directors. Some large churches who give birth to a small congregation share their staff with the new congregation for training and service.

#### 4 Opportunities for Adding More Staff

The question often arises regarding when is it right to add additional staff?

Perhaps the cardinal rule to keep in mind is the passage from Ephesians 4:11-12, that the role of staff is to "prepare God's people for works of service..." (NIV) Another way to say it is that the primary function of staff is to equip the saints for ministry.

Far too often staffs see themselves as being responsible to do the ministry, rather than to equip others to do so. With that in mind, let's consider some factors in adding new staff:

#### 1. Numerical growth necessitates it.

Obviously, the sheer numerical growth of the congregation may necessitate the hiring of additional personnel. When current staff are insufficient to recruit, equip and motivate the lay leadership to carry out the vision God has given the church, additional staff are required.

In the 1960s, the guideline often stated was a pastoral level staff person for every 250-300 members. Some writers are now suggesting that number may be as low as 100-125. Other writers, however, are stressing the need for existing staff to become much more adept at attracting, connecting, training and sustaining strong volunteer structures that can provide ministry that previously was seen to be the purview of paid staff.

**2. The vision calls for it.** Sometimes the need to strengthen a department, based upon new priorities called for by a sharpening of the church's vision, may create the rationale for additional staff in a particular ministry area.



For the rest of this article, go to [CMAonline.org/mrc](http://CMAonline.org/mrc) and click on "Christian Management Report."

Then click on "February 2006" and you'll find Vaughn's article.

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