

## How Smaller Churches Grow

*The secret includes goals and Wal-Mart.*

Many smaller churches reflect a rural mindset, marked by crisis and hardship. A few show growth and vitality. What makes the difference? A recent survey of 109 growing smaller churches in the middle United States shows 15 common characteristics. The growing churches exhibited a majority of these traits:

1. The pastor and members were involved in community activities.
2. They were located in towns of 2,500 people or more.
3. They were fewer than ten miles from a Wal-Mart.
4. The population was in transition.
5. They were pastored by younger pastors.
6. The church was "very friendly," not just friendly.
7. The church was open to new methods.
8. Evangelism was a number one priority.
9. The atmosphere of the church was open and safe for newcomers.
10. The church had multiple children's ministries.
11. Mentoring activities were available for newcomers.
12. A high percentage of members were involved in ministry.
13. Evangelism was the strongest skill of the pastor.
14. Guests were welcomed and treated as though they were members.
15. The church had written plans and goals.

—*The McIntosh Church Growth Network newsletter.*

## Ideas That Work

### » Beating Summer Slump

Many of our members have vacation homes, and in the summer our worship attendance drops by almost half. So we started a Thursday evening service especially for people going away for the weekend. In its third year, "SummerSong" is popular for its convenience and its outdoor setting. And so is "Pastor Popsicle," who hands out treats to the kids following worship. With this service drawing one-third of our usual weekend attendance, the slump is virtually erased.

*Steve Molin  
Stillwater, Minnesota*

### » Dinner and a Movie

Taking a cue from the combo movie/cooking show on TBS, our single adults meet once a month at a member's home for a "meal and a movie." The films are usually recent releases. After the video, the group discusses how the movie relates to their faith, the actions of the characters, and their ethical and moral choices. The night is so fun and thought-provoking that other groups in our church are now having their own movie night discussions.

*Eric Strattan  
Fruitport, Michigan*

**» Send us your ideas!**

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