

## **A Kingdom Growth Mindset in the Midlands of South Carolina**

Serving as a Family of Baptist Congregations – Words of Challenge for CMBA  
*Second Dispatch*

By

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*The First Dispatch addressed the dichotomy of a church growth vs. a Kingdom growth mindset. It mentioned a church sustainability mindset vs. a Kingdom growth mindset without providing the details. This dispatch addresses these two mindsets. (See the dispatches at [www.BullardJournal.org](http://www.BullardJournal.org).)*

Once a congregation is about a generation old from its birth, it reaches the life cycle stage of Adulthood and is seen as a Thriving Congregation. It then may shift into a church sustainability mindset vs. Kingdom growth mindset. This does not happen to all congregations, but it probably happens to 80 percent of congregations.

What is this?

This life cycle stage occurs when the founding dream or vision of a congregation diminishes for the first time. When the traditions of the congregation start dominating the ministry of the congregation. When the people who connected with the congregation during its first generation of life want to be sure the church sustains the cultural patterns that are now very familiar to them and create an environment of acceptable predictability.

It is when the first generation people who grew up in the church begin to move to other states, towns, communities and even to other nearby congregations. This happens when the management and governance systems of the congregation become stronger and more directive than the visionary leadership of the people of positive spiritual passion in the congregation.

When the congregation rejoices over how fast it is paying down its debt rather than how much risk they are taking and sacrifices they are making to engage in evangelism, outreach to new households, and missional engagement in their community and beyond. When the congregation initiates new building campaigns not so much because they are out of space, but because *if we build it they will come*. Or, perhaps, they will stay if we have that new facility.

When non-personal missional activities of donating money or commodities to people the majority of the congregation may never see nor have the opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus with becomes the accepted norm, rather than the exception. When the congregation begins to panic because it no longer has the programs, ministries, and activities that appeal to households with children under 18 years old.

Whereas during the first generation of the congregation, church growth and Kingdom growth were in competition for dominance – in spite of attempts at a synergy of the two – now church sustainability and Kingdom growth are in competition. These two are, for the most part, incompatible and cannot operate in synergy.

For all the above reasons, many congregations turn inward. They are glad for other congregations to focus on Kingdom growth, but they are captivated by survivability and continually decrease their focus on growing God's Kingdom through direct, personal missional engagement.

Indirect, non-personal, or at-a-distance missional engagement may be a high priority in congregations concerned about their own survivability at the quality and quantity level they desire. These congregations often are among the most faithful congregations in the financial support of missional engagement through their denomination, parachurch organizations, and community-based ministries. They may be the support groups to put together a generous quantity of commodities needed in various ministry settings.

They are known for their food and clothing drives. They provide a large number of health and gift kits for lower income households, homeless people, migrants, persons who are incarcerated, and other similar people groups. Without their efforts, the resources needed for many ministries would not exist.

They do this as the average congregation member grows older, the attendance of their congregation declines, and the critical mass of member leaders grows smaller. Eventually the buildings constructed because *if we build it they will come*, begin to be bypassed for essential maintenance, upkeep, and retrofitting. In the long-term, these buildings get to a place where parts of the facilities are no longer in use nor useable.

Regarding buildings, there are exceptions. These are congregations who adore their buildings so much that they put extraordinary financial resources and efforts into keeping up their buildings to the extent that this seems to be the primary mission of their congregation.

Ultimately, survivability drowns out a Kingdom mindset. But this did not have to happen if the congregation had developed a concept of renewing the core while extending the ministry of the congregation during their first generation of life. Let's look at that in the *Third Dispatch*.