

**Gaining Traction for a Radical Congregational Transformation**

*Or, Fixin’ to Get Ready to Commence to Begin to Start to Do Something – Maybe!*

*Part One*

By

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When congregations move to the aging side of the congregational life cycle, and are no longer captured by God’s empowering vision, some form of transformation is needed. Congregational transformation can help congregations spiral forward to a new partial life cycle that can be sustained for up to seven years. Several factors confuse the need to gain traction for congregational transformation.

* **First**, the rate and pace of transition and change that can lead to transformation is different at each stage of the aging side of the life cycle – Maturity, Empty Nest, Retirement, Old Age, or Death. No one rate or pace works for every stage.
* **Second**, some congregations need transition and change that is continuous with their past, some that is discontinuous, and some that is radical.
* **Third**, the best time for congregational transformation is when they are in the Maturity stage, However, the response of many of these congregations is denial.
* **Fourth**, the hardest time for congregational transformation is when congregations reach the late part of Retirement, or the Old Age or Death stages. The emotions during these times is survival and desperation.
* **Fifth**, from late Retirement through Death it is necessary to engage in transition and change that is a radical departure with the past.

**Gaining Traction**

The greatest challenge in the period of late Retirement through Death is gaining traction to engage in radical congregational transformation. Retirement calls for Renewal of the congregation. Old Age calls for Reinventing the congregation. Death calls for a Resurrection.

Often late Retirement congregations have the resources to Renewal if they can gain traction. Old Age congregations seldom have the resources to Reinvent and must seek to be adopted by another congregation or family of congregations. Or, they must give authority to a new pastor or leadership group to lead their transformation. Congregations at Death must transfer their assets to another congregation or the denomination to use in a Resurrection effort.

How can congregations who are in late Retirement, Old Age, or Death gain traction? The truth is there is no simple answer. There is no silver bullet. There is no short-term fix. There can be God’s triple-D (the direct, dramatic, divine intervention of God), but no one truly knows the secret formula to guarantee this. Some actions can begin to deal with the symptoms.

* Focused congregational prayer can be a beginning point.
* Open, in-depth, honest dialogue about the past-present-future of the congregation can help.
* Taking the leadership of a congregation to visit other congregations who have successfully transformed may relieve some of the fears about transformation.
* Realizing the congregation is running out of money to pay staff and operate their facilities may create a desperation that leads to an openness to do something radical.