

Top Ten Most Pressing Issues Facing EPC Ministers of Small Churches

Rank	Issue
1	<u>Church ministries</u> : Members and visitors to small churches often expect a full range of programs. Small churches only have the resources to do a few, meaning visitors don't return and members get tired and/or discouraged. In isolated settings, support ministries (e.g., counseling, substance abuse programs) may be lacking. These ministries are difficult for a small church to sustain.
2	<u>Lay leadership</u> : A small church has a small pool of people from which to choose their leaders. The rule of 20% of the people doing 80% of the work seems to apply even in small churches. As a result, lay leaders in small churches tend to "recycle" and to over-commit which means that creativity may be lacking and that leaders are tired. There may not be enough leaders to handle all the activities the church has or wants to do, and existing leaders may be resistant to training. Pastors may not have been trained to train leaders.
3 ^a	<u>Resources: financial, human, and physical</u> : A large proportion of small church's income is devoted to basic staff and building expenses, leaving little for programs and outreach. This, along with scarce human resources and sometimes a less than adequate meeting place can lead to a survival mentality, stretching the pastor financially, physically, and emotionally.
4	<u>Assessment of Worth/Value</u> : In a culture of "bigger is better" the small church and the pastor feel that they must be doing something wrong. There is a sense that the small church has less to offer their community and the kingdom of God and that the pastor is not being successful. Denominations and larger churches measure success with numbers, implying that smaller churches come up short
5 ^{ab}	<u>Closed Fellowship</u> : Close relationships in a small church are an asset that can become a detriment if turned inward. A sense of "family" can lead the small church to be a closed group, not wanting others to come in and thereby change their equilibrium. The "family" may not realize that they are closed. A closed fellowship has little interest in evangelism or mission to their community
6 ^{ab}	<u>Vision/Mission</u> : Articulating a vision that stimulates passion for the church's impact in the community can be more difficult for small church leaders. A church's small size can limit people's thinking about what may be possible. There is little confidence or desire to move forward
7	<u>Expectations on the pastor</u> : Members of small churches may expect the pastor to do it all, be always available, and have a role-model family. Some small church members expect their pastor to be a personal chaplain and are reluctant to acknowledge that people other than the pastor could handle ministry tasks. Some expect the pastor to be more like a CEO. The Pastor and family experience tremendous pressure to meet the expectations.
8 ^a	<u>Worship</u> : Small churches may lack quality and consistency in music leadership, which can be a significant hurdle to overcome. They face the challenge of finding a style of worship that communicates to the cultures within and outside the church.
9 ^a	<u>Cultural attitudes</u> : A consumer mentality and a reluctance to commit to an organization work against the small church. Prevailing religious attitudes in certain areas make outreach difficult.
10 ^a	<u>People's busy schedules</u> : Whether reality or an "excuse," busyness (for both adults and children) is the norm for many U.S. households, even in small towns. It is difficult for people to make time to participate in church programs and to take on volunteer tasks. People seem reluctant to make long term commitments.

These issues were determined by a Delphi Survey administered in 2007 designed to enable a group of pastors of small churches who were not gathered in the same place to reach a consensus on the question “What are the most pressing issues facing small church leaders?” About 30% of EPC pastors of churches with average worship attendance under 200 participated.