

Why Churches use Consultants

By Thom S. Rainer

An analysis of over 700 church consultation requests we received during the last five years reveals both *reactive* and *proactive* reasons why church leaders seek qualified, outside church consultants.

Typically a senior pastor or minister (or a person calling on his or her behalf) contacts a consultant with questions about a specific issue, usually a painful one, within the church. Chief among the problems and *reactive* reasons for seeking a consultation include:

- Attendance has plateaued or declined.
- Planned giving and/or offerings are declining.
- Persons attending do not return or join the church.
- There is conflict within the church, specifically between pastoral leadership and lay leadership or between groups of laity.

Consultation requests based on a desire to *proactively* address the church's health and growth fall into three primary areas:

- The church does not have a plan for ensuring its growth either short term and/or long term, and wants to have a plan.
- The church desires to start a major effort in its life and ministry; e.g. building expansion, mission effort, capital campaign, etc.
- The church is doing okay, but is not sure what its strengths and weakness are at this point in its life.

As part of our analysis, we sought to understand why the number of consultation requests more than doubled over the past two years. The answer, very clearly, has to do with time. Specifically, the church leaders requesting the consultation needed to assess and address issues more quickly than it could with its own staff. I expect this trend to continue.