

Taking Your Church to the Next Level:  
What Got You Here Won't Get You There

Session and Maintenance Committee  
Session Starter #20

Can the congregation's budget be amended at the annual meeting?

Tori Smit, Associate Secretary, ext. 289

*The Vine: Connecting people,  
places and programs*

Don Muir, Associate Secretary, ext. 223

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The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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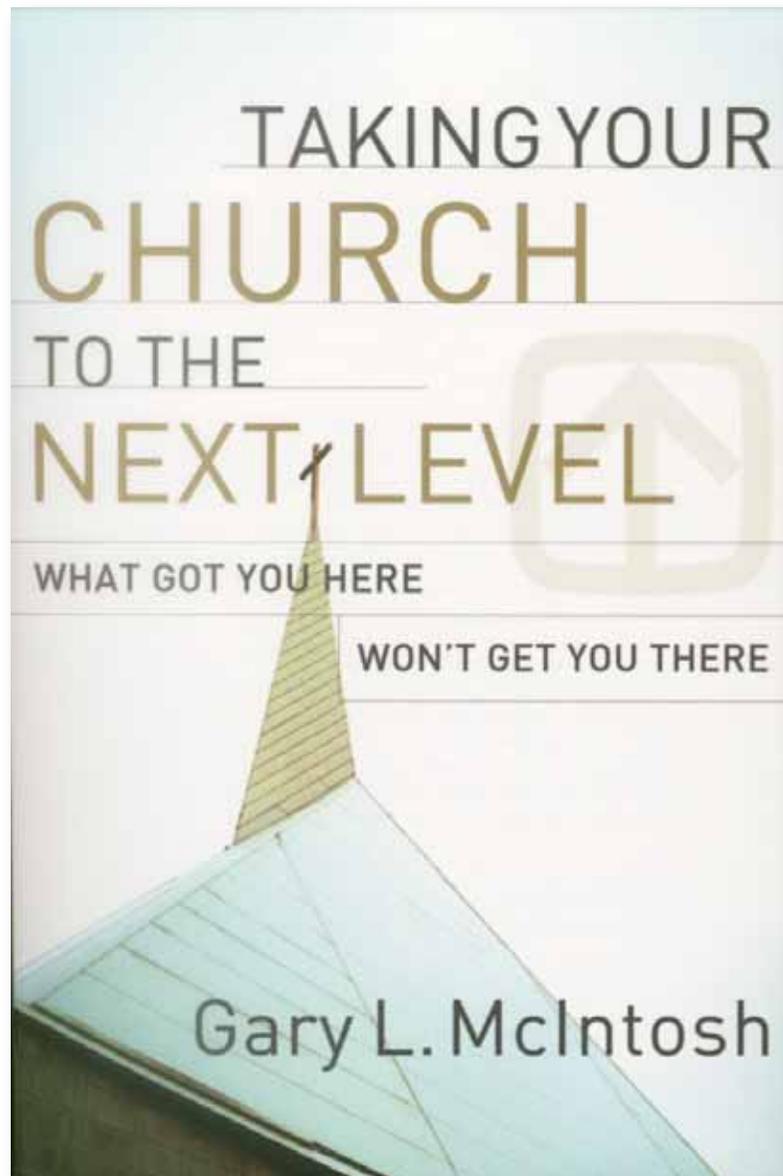
## ***Taking Your Church to the Next Level: What Got You Here Won't Get You There***

By Gary L. McIntosh (Baker Books, 2009)

Book Review by Tori Smit, Associate Secretary, *The Vine*

Many factors affect a congregation's ministry and growth, but two of the most important are the size of a congregation and its age. These are not new insights. For about 20 years, Lyle Schaller and others from The Alban Institute have identified and discussed common characteristics of congregations at a particular size. Likewise, David Moberg identified the life cycle of congregations as early as 1962. The value of *Taking Your Church to the Next Level* is that Gary McIntosh explains and links these factors in a manner that is clear, insightful and useful for congregational leaders to understand and translate to others.

The content of *Taking Your Church to the Next Level* is framed by a series of fictional conversations between Mike, Wes and Phil, friends and pastors in



# *Taking Your Church to the Next Level: What Got You Here Won't Get You There (cont.)*

three separate congregations. Each of their congregations has areas of concern, including frustration about the congregation's direction, growth and energy. McIntosh uses these stories to clearly identify and characterize the life cycle of congregations and their size. The last third of the book integrates these two congregational dimensions. It discusses what resources are required to negotiate size changes and describes the leadership models required for each size level.

At first glance, *Taking Your Church to the Next Level* is both American centric and large church centric. Mike, Wes and Phil all lead large congregations by Canadian Presbyterian standards. In spite of this, one quickly realizes that McIntosh's analysis is every bit as valuable and accurate in a Canadian context. There is much to be found in its pages for each of our congregations.

McIntosh provides an excellent introduction and description of congregational life cycles and the common characteristics of congregations at a particular size. His analysis is clear, insightful and particularly helpful for those who are unfamiliar with these concepts. McIntosh summarizes all this information in easy-to-understand graphs and charts at the conclusion of each chapter. Adding to the user-friendly nature of the book, McIntosh provides questions and descriptions for congregational leaders to apply to their individual situation. As I read the book, I found myself applying the insights to congregations I have served; the descriptions were spot on.

*Taking Your Church to the Next Level* is available through [online order form](#) and is well worth the read and application.

## **We've collected all of the articles together and created...**

A well organised compendium of the best of the *Equipping For . . .* resources suitable for clergy and elders alike

This resource is available for download at [www.presbyterian.ca/elders](http://www.presbyterian.ca/elders)

