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SWOT Analysis

Christian Life Church

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SWOT ANALYSIS FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE CHURCH

Introduction

This S.W.O.T. Analysis will assess the Strengths & Weaknesses (internal factors) and Opportunities & Threats (external factors) (see Figure 1) of a non-profit religious organization, a Protestant church called Christian Life Church (hereafter referred to as “CLC.”)



Figure 1 - SWOT Analysis of CLC (Marketing teacher, 2010, ¶ 2)

My wife and I have been members of CLC since 2008. CLC is a non-denominational church of approximately 400 congregants (including children and youth). CLC is located at 745 Cason Lane in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Their web site can be found by [clicking here](#). I am currently employed at CLC as the Director of Discipleship.

Like any religious organization, CLC has a great number of strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, CLC faces both tremendous opportunities and potential threats. First, the S.W.O.T. Analysis of CLC will consider some important demographics that directly and indirectly impact the success of the organization.

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Demographics

Population and Income.

CLC is located in Murfreesboro, the county seat for Rutherford County. According to the Chamber of Commerce (2009), “Rutherford County is the fastest growing county in Tennessee. The population growth combined with high incomes continues to give Rutherford County a competitive edge” (Chamber of Commerce, 2009, ¶ 1). The Chamber reports population and income in 2009 to be:

- 2009 Population Estimate: 255,239
- 2009 Average HHLI Income: \$61,011
- 2009 Median HHLI Income: \$51,712 (Chamber of Commerce, 2009, ¶ 2).

CLC’s location in the geographic center of the State of Tennessee perfectly situates it for future growth. Murfreesboro offers a smaller “home town” feel but has access to “big city” amenities like excellent educational opportunities, business climate, outstanding roadways (I-24 / I-840 near CLC), adequate housing, modern telecommunications network, access to prestigious healthcare, and abundant recreation. The City of Murfreesboro reported that from 1990 to 2000 the city experienced a 39.6% growth rate (City of Murfreesboro, 2008, ¶ 1). CLC is strategically located in one of the fastest growing residential neighborhoods of the city where city planners have projected expanded roads, schools, restaurants and commercial properties, All this to say, demographically speaking, CLC is poised for growth.

Racial Composition.

The majority of CLC’s adherent’s are white, Non-Hispanics. This is only important in terms of projecting viability to the predominant culture, again, exclusively in demographic terms.

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Figure 2 reports statistics that CLC is likely to succeed from the perspective of racial composition.

Races in Rutherford County, Tennessee:

White Non-Hispanic (84.5%)

Black (9.5%)

Hispanic (2.8%)

Other race (1.3%)

Two or more races (1.2%)

Other Asian (1.2%)

American Indian (0.6%)

(Total can be greater than 100% because Hispanics could be counted in other races)

Figure 2 Racial Composition of Rutherford County (City Data, 2003, ¶ 1)

Age and Gender.

CLC has a relatively young team of pastoral leaders and constituents. The senior pastor is 49 years of age, with the Associate and Children's Pastor (a female) having a median age of 32 years. The congregation is comprised of about a 50/50 split of males and females. According to the statistics in Figure 3 below, these facts indicate that Rutherford County residents may consider CLC to represent a homogenous match.

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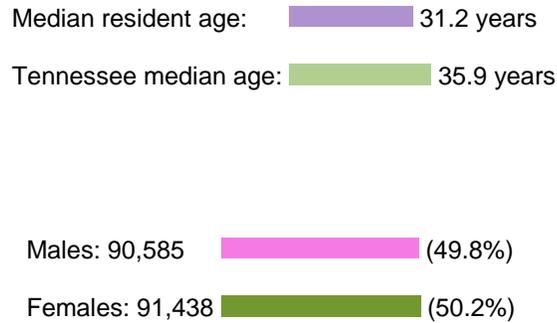


Figure 3: Rutherford County Age and Gender Demographics (City Data, 2003, ¶ 4)

Churches.

There are a high number of churches in Rutherford County. These churches range from AME (African Methodist Episcopal) worship centers to Vinyard houses of worship (and many denominations and expressions of worship of God in between), CLC's location offers a rich and diverse menu to choose from for potential worshippers.

Figure 4 indicates that there were 212 congregations in 2002, CLC included among them (the church was founded in 1994).

Percentage of population affiliated with a religious congregation: 37.64%



Total adherents in this county: **68,519**, state total: 2,905,619

Total congregations in this county: **212**, state total: 9,634

County population: **182,023**

Figure 4: Religion Statistics (City Data, 2003, ¶ 21)

The impact that these statistics reveal are compelling. 62.4% of Rutherford County is not affiliated with any church and therefore CLC has the capacity, willingness, and according to its leadership team – mandate – to reach these un-churched people.

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Strengths

Location.

The demographics of Rutherford County, where CLC is located, has shown that CLC's campus is located in a prime location. Situated in a residential area, in a middle-class side of town, near Sam's Club and Wal-Mart and dozens of other successful stores and restaurants, and located near major interstate highways, CLC's campus site is most assuredly a strength.

Facility.

The physical plant and property is located on a sprawling piece of level acreage with adequate parking with plenty of room for expansion. After having met in a skating rink for years, in 2006 CLC broke ground on the current property and the congregation now enjoys a state-of-the-art modern worship facility less than five years old. The facility is certainly up to building codes hosting the latest in multimedia technology, ADA handicapped accessibility, child safety measures, and comfortable seating in a tastefully decorated sanctuary that seats about 350 comfortably.

Leadership team.

One of the greatest strengths of CLC is its human resources.

Senior Pastor.

The Senior Pastor, Rev. Ron Kairdolf, is also the founding pastor. He and his wife, Kerri, provide a high level of leadership to the congregation. A Bible-college trained minister, Pastor Ron brings a deep theological expertise to the pulpit. He is clearly gifted to preach and teach the Word of God effectively. He is an outstanding public speaker and communicator. He is also an excellent business man: Cautious, wise, and conservative when it comes to managing the church's finances. Finally, he is a team player, giving liberal latitude to staff members like

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me and lay leaders to exercise their own spiritual gifts in an environment that encourages mutual respect and idea exchange.

Staff.

The full-time pastoral and administrative staff is also made up of persons of excellence. The Associate Pastor (Jim Murray), the Administrator (Rhonda Chunn), and the Children's Pastor (Rena Luketic) are each an expert in their respective areas of ministry. The staff is well loved, congenial, and efficient. A part-time media person (Kevin Neeley) rounds out the staff to oversee sound, lighting, and video/computer technology.

Elders.

The senior pastor and staff are supported by a group of volunteer elders who bring another level of wisdom, insight, and professional aptitude to the church leadership core. Each man is highly respected and provides accountability for the pastoral team. These men serve in a variety of spiritual and administrative roles including financial oversight.

Executive presbytery.

The church government includes an executive presbytery that oversees the senior pastor. They operate mostly in an advisory role unless the situation would ever arise where there is an accusation of financial impropriety, moral failure, or a departure from biblical doctrine.

Non-denominational.

Another strength of CLC is that it is a non-denominational church. This orientation positions the church well to receive family units who may have had negative experiences in a denominational church. It also frees the organization to innovate and be creative in its evangelistic endeavors. CLC is a sovereign church meaning that it is self-governing and is not

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required to report or justify its decisions, expenditures, etc. to a hierarchal governing body. The local board of elders works in concert with the remotely located executive presbytery to provide governance.

Full-gospel.

CLC exists as a full-gospel church. Most particularly, this can be understood to mean that CLC embraces the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as taught in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. For a full disclosure of the statement of faith of the organization, [click here](#). Many in the community of believers who are seeking a fuller expression of the Spirit-filled life find that they are more comfortable in an atmosphere that embraces these truths.

Contemporary.

CLC offers a contemporary worship experience. With a relaxed dress code (the pastor often preaches wearing jeans and his shirt un-tucked), a full band, a team of singer who sing high energy worship songs while the congregants sing along with words broadcast through a projection system, CLC offers a worship environment that some consider invigorating. A free coffee bar and café area to congregate before and after services lends itself to an enjoyable atmosphere.

Multiple services.

CLC offers two services to fit the needs of attendees. The decision to go to multiple services, even when the congregation conceivably could fit into a single service serves two purposes. First, it accommodates people's schedules with an early service (8:30am) and a late service (10:30am). Secondly, it combats the church-growth rule-of-thumb that once a church sanctuary is 80% filled church growth will plateau.

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High tech.

Another strength of CLC is its reliance on powerful and visual multimedia to convey the timeless truths of the Bible. The sound room and multimedia booth are as up-to-date as any modern organization whose job it is to conduct large public meetings or conferences. Access to the equipment is limited to authorized personnel which results in an engaging presentation of messages using PowerPoint, sophisticated graphics software using motion to enhance the worship experience, video, full Internet capabilities, and advanced sound and lighting to choreograph with the message as needed.

Relevant.

One of the greatest strengths reported to CLC leaders is how relevant the messages are to the congregation. The pastor and his speaking team present messages that are real and relevant. Often the pastor will lead the church through a series of teachings complete with fill-in-the-blank notes that listeners can store and reference later. Examples of relevant sermon series are found in the Figure 5 below. Themes that appear in Figure 5 can also be found on bulletins, handouts, on the computer projection slides, as well as the CLC web site to tie ideas together.

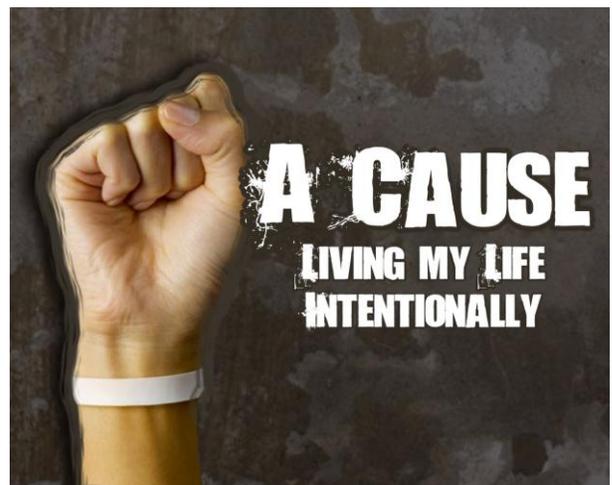
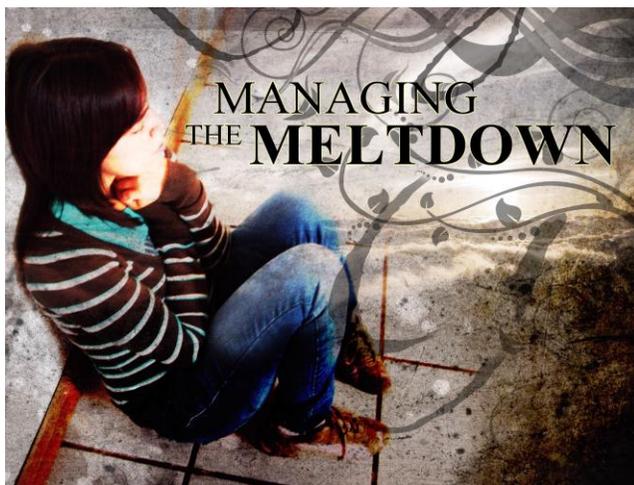


Figure 5: Samples of Relevant Sermon Series

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Healthy.

Working with people can be messy. That is to say, human beings can have “junk in their trunk” and carry a good deal of baggage of hurts, wounds, trauma, and drama in to any church setting. One of the greatest strengths of CLC is that hurt people can become healed in this environment. CLC is composed of former addicts, perverts, felons, adulterers, liars, thieves, con artists, and a host of other unsavory characters. Many of them have been set free by the power of God to deliver them from addictive behaviors and life controlling issues. CLC is a healthy church that tends to help spiritually unhealthy people get healthy.

Bible based.

One would assume that all churches preach the truth. That is not necessarily so and the source of endless debate throughout the millennia. A factor that CLC considers a strength is that it relies on the Bible, the holy Scriptures, to be its all-sufficient rule for faith and conduct. This simplifies things immensely and reduces ethical, moral, and truth issues down to a single question: “What does the Bible say on the matter?” If the Bible speaks on a issue, then CLC will stand firm on that issue as being biblically-based. If the Bible is silent on an issue, then CLC looks for biblical principles to apply. CLC attempts to keep out of the crosshairs of controversy on divisive issues that are not explicitly recorded in the Bible. Like Nehemiah who refused to “come off the wall” (Nehemiah 6:1-4) to fight about petty issues, CLC chooses to focus its energy on reaching unchurched people and discipling interested students. CLC has found that to convince a crooked stick that it is crooked, you don’t argue with it, you simply place a straight stick next to it. According to CLC, the Bible is the straight stick, the plumb line by which all truth is determined.

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Family-oriented.

Growing families want to know if a church has a clean, organized and safe nursery. If mom doesn't approve, the visiting family is gone! CLC has a stringent safety and tagging policy for children. Background checks are done on nursery workers, and no male is permitted to change a diaper. Other family-oriented ministries exist to serve every age group from babies to the elderly.

Inviting.

CLC offers a clear and easy pathway to assimilation and connection for new families. The goal of CLC is make the experience of assimilating into a new church family easy, inviting, and low pressure. CLC aspires to be a "Velcro" church where new families stick instead of a "Teflon" church where newcomers slide out the back door because they do not get connected to body life. A "Get Connected" ministry exists expressly to facilitate these goals. The pastor and his wife host a "Discovery Luncheon" at the church every other month to sit down in a more relaxed setting over lunch and get to know new families. A "Discover CLC" class provides more information about the church for interested parties. A special "Get Connected" booth is staffed at every service to welcome newcomers with a gift and an opportunity to ask questions. A "meet and greet" time is offered at each service to encourage veteran Christian-Lifer's to reach out to new faces in the crowd. Making people feel welcome is a priority at CLC.

Creative.

CLC is not as much into following trends as setting them. CLC is a collection of brilliant minds working in unity and partnership to create an environment to help people become fully devoted followers of Christ. CLC is currently in its pilot year of a new approach to discipleship

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called the Journey. The Journey is a life development process to help individuals live a balanced, blessed life. Figure 6 shows the Journey logo and tag line: “Somewhere on Purpose.”



Figure 6: The Journey logo and tag line.

The Journey discipleship program is a new wineskin in discipleship. Traditional models of Christian Education consisted of homogenous groups sitting in Sunday School classes. Regarding adult discipleship methods, the old model usually provided one teacher (and perhaps an assistant) lecturing 15-30 (or more in larger churches) people in a room. There was little time for small group discussion, breakout sessions, and interpersonal contact at the meeting. The Journey has taken the concept of life coaching and embedded it into the biblical mandate to “go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV). The Journey is a one-year process whereby discipleship coaches mentor people homogeneously (men with men and women with women). Discipleship coaches are trained leaders and receive continuing education every week via the Internet and coaching calls made to them by coaching captains. In turn, discipleship coaches place weekly calls to mentees who have enthusiastically desired to have a mentor in his or her life to help them through the Journey. The Journey consists of a series of

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discipleship levels taught personally by the senior pastor (and videotaped for future training).

Table 1 shows the Journey process, which CLC refers to as “The Ladder of Success.”

Table 1						
<i>The Ladder of Success in the Journey</i>						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
						Become a Discipleship Coach
					School of Leaders	
				Balanced, Blessed Life Series		
			Basic Training 2			
		Basic Training 1				
	Discover CLC Class					
Discovery Luncheon						
0% commitment	25% commitment	50% commitment	75% commitment	85% commitment	95% commitment	100% commitment

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Table 1

Each successive level leads to a deeper understanding of biblical truth (and heightened commitment). Coaches help mentees unpack the lessons for practical application. Everyone on the Journey is asked to read the One-Year Bible (see www.oneyearbibleonline.com) to complete the reading of the entire Bible in one calendar year. Although this pilot program is relatively, it has already created excitement and momentum and is transforming lives. It is already having an impact beyond the scope of the church in that an author is chronicling the Journey for publication in a book after the first cycle of the Journey completes the pilot year.

Outward-focused.

CLC is a church interested in reaching “outside the walls” (see Figure 7) of the church to positively impact as many people as possible for the cause of Christ. Pastor Ron Kairdolf is the leader of Inline Pastors Fellowship, a group of city pastors who gather together weekly for prayer and fellowship. Together with city pastors, he has organized multi-church outreaches to go outside the walls on a Sunday morning to serve the community instead of attending a usual morning worship service. Recently, five pastors and their entire congregations joined together across denominational lines to go “outside the walls” to serve area schools, a domestic violence shelter, and nursing homes to clean vehicles, mow, mulch, trim, paint, clean up, and haul off trash.

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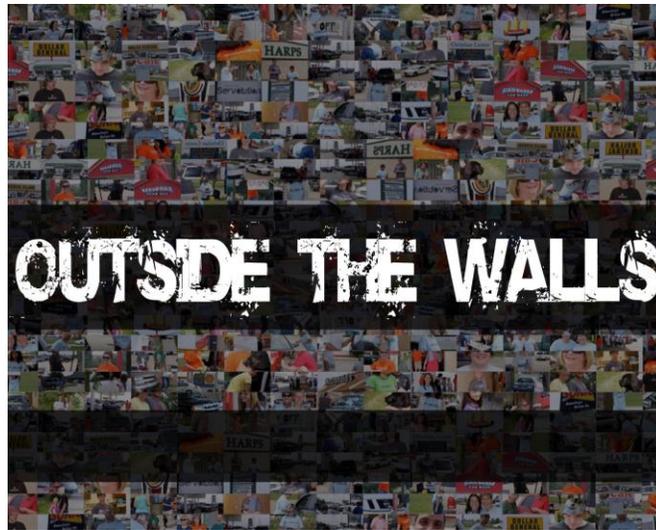


Figure 7: Outside the Walls Campaign

Ten percent of every dollar collected at CLC is earmarked for missions giving. CLC not only invests dollars but human resources in its mission relief efforts by sending teams to Haiti, Africa, Nepal, and other remote locations to spread the gospel, train pastors, equip leaders, and provide other practical assistance at ground zero.

Weaknesses

All organizations have weaknesses and its leaders are in denial if they think otherwise. The focal point of this SWOT Analysis, my employer Christian Life Church, is certainly no exception. In fact, when the stakeholders are 99% volunteers and have no compulsion to be there other than intrinsic motivation, any weakness in a church or non-profit organization becomes all the more important to identify and resolve. Following are a few (not exhaustive) of the more glaring weaknesses of CLC.

No single church can hold the harvest.

The volume of spiritual need in a community is staggering. So many people to serve, so little time. Actually, there is no church in any town the size of Murfreesboro (100,000+) that can

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logistically fit the unchurched in their building even if, on a given Sunday, they might want to attend church. It will take partnership, trust, community, and cooperation among pastors and churches to get the job done.

Limited space.

CLC admits to this weakness and as was mentioned in the point on going to double services, there is limited space to seat people. Already the most popular service, the 10:30am service, is bursting at the seams. Ushers set out uncomfortable folding chairs to accommodate the swelling crowds. The entire upstairs wing is unfinished and city codes cannot issue a certificate of occupancy to the wing until more monies are collected to complete construction. The facility has relatively few classrooms which prevent new ministries from forming to serve the congregation.

Intra-church competition for resources.

The recession of 2009 affected CLC (and most churches) in a significant way. In a Leadership Summit conducted by Pastor Ron on March, 6 2010, the pastor revealed that the expenses of the church were about \$50,000 per month. Most churches took a hit financial with lower giving and CLC experienced this trend over a series of months as well. Departments in the church each lobby for their projects, events, and supplies. Like thirsty critters at an evaporating watering hole in the dry season, church staff and ministries compete for dwindling resources.

Insufficient staffing.

CLC is a thriving, growing church but insufficient funding prohibits sufficient staffing. As a result, existing workers pull double-, and triple-duty, each wearing multiple hats of responsibility. This can burn a staff out in short order if steps are not taken to provide relief

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either through increased staff or volunteers, reduced workload, or additional time off to cope and recharge.

Church DNA.

While being a non-denomination, full-gospel church is appealing to some it is, at the same time, a deterrent to others. No single church is capable of pleasing everyone. As birds of a feather flock together, so people of like faith join together in communities. CLC has a unique DNA that makes it who it is as does every other church on the planet. This DNA expresses itself in church culture, climate, and personality that may or may not attract and retain new members. This is not wrong; it simply is what it is. Nevertheless, by virtue of having a unique DNA, it is, paradoxically, a strength and a weakness at the same time.

Opportunities

Harness the social networking phenomenon.

CLC is embracing the opportunities to harness the 21st century phenomenon of *social networking*. CLC has a visually appealing and utilitarian web site that can be seen by [clicking here](#). It has capitalized on the amazing success of Facebook. One can even get short, timely tweets from Pastor Ron on [Twitter](#).

Assimilated into the technological revolution.

The entire pastoral staff has iPhones. Their smartphones sync with the church database to keep the status of the congregation in the palm of their hand. The office enjoys a Local Area Network that allows each employee to print to an advanced photocopier that 3-hole punches print jobs in addition to stapling. Texting is a normal way to receive information from the pastor. The Journey Discipleship Program uses Internet-based mentoring software. CLC has been upgraded and is ready to make the most of the every opportunity to do church in a 21st century context!

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Mentoring at Starbucks.

The innovative life coaching model is designed to enable a discipleship coach mentor a person at Starbucks if they so desire. One-on-one coaching can also be done over cell phones while commuting. CLC sees life coaching working in tandem with discipleship to be a win/win combination.

The balanced, blessed life.

CLC has the opportunity to use the Journey Discipleship Program (with built in accountability partners – discipleship coaches) to help its constituents live a balanced, blessed life. As the SWOT Analysis alluded to earlier, most families bring a boat load of issues into the church upon arrival. Most are in debt. Many are overweight or in poor health. Some are struggling in a relationship as a married or single person. A few have serious addiction issues. Others have sexual hang-ups.. Still others need to become better workers or prepare for a new career altogether. In the summer of 2010, the Journey launched the *Balanced, Blessed Life Series* (and associated focus groups and web sites) which will help bring individual and families into balance in the following areas:

- Finances
- Health & Fitness
- Career
- Marriage
- Family
- Dating
- Manhood
- Womanhood

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- Freedom (from addiction)

CLC sees these are real opportunities to help people. CLC feels that helping to bring people into balance in key life areas will build strong people. Strong individuals make for strong marriages and families. Strong families comprise strong churches. Strong churches make communities strong. Strong communities add up to strong states. And strong states equal a strong nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Threats

Just like the war on terror involves every citizen to be vigilant against all threats, so CLC faces tangible and intangible forces that could threaten its success.

Cultural norms.

Something as innocuous as people's schedules can threaten the success of CLC. The greatest sermon ever preached is useless to the person who is not there to hear it. Today's culture is busy! Some Christian-Lifer's work two (or more) jobs just to make ends meet. Extracurricular activities at school gobble up the precious commodity of time. If a child plays soccer or softball, then all bets are off whether church members can even attend scheduled church functions, let alone special events. As a culture, Americans are jammed packed with activity and obligations. Right on wrong, for some in our culture, they just don't time to get to church to get their life in balance.

Economic pressure.

Lay-offs, reduced hours, suspended COLA's, increased healthcare costs, etc., add up to economic pressure felt at the grassroots level. Not only does reduced household income reduce church income, but job loss for some means finding employment in another city or state.

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Benevolence programs are threatened to be put on hold or cancelled altogether for lack of funding.

Post-Christian era.

In some circles, there is a movement of not only “freedom of religion” but “freedom from religion.” The separation of Church and State is taken to the extreme with large groups of people not wanting to have anything to do with organized religion at all. Each Sunday of the year, people with this mindset vote with their feet by going bowling, to the mall, the movies, shopping, or a thousand other places instead of going to church. Other people mentally ascent to the existence of God but live like He doesn’t exist. These might be called “practical atheists.”

Figure 8 shows a graph of church attendance versus population from 1990-2008.

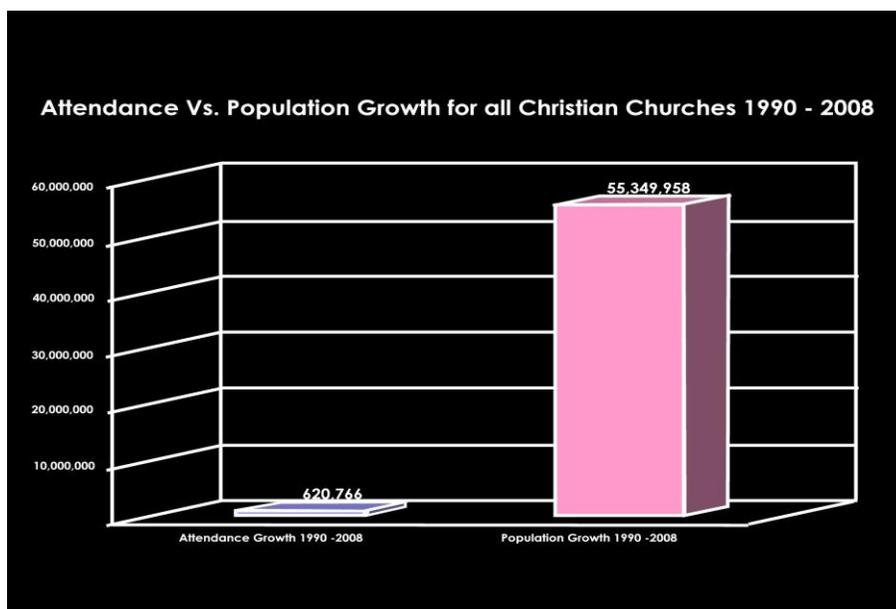


Figure 8. Attendance v. Population Growth for all Christian Churches 1990-2008 (The American Church Research Project, 2010)

What Figure 8 tells us is that of the over 55 million increase in the American population over a ten-year period, church attendance grew by only 620,766. This bar graph offers a

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pictorial explanation as to why religious illiteracy and increased apathy towards organized religion is prevalent in our society.

Financial stress.

As has been stated, CLC already carries a hefty \$50,000/month debt load. This puts pressure on the pastor and leaders to be miserly and thrifty with every penny that comes into the offering. Inability to pay the bills could threaten the church's reputation in the community.

Governmental control and intervention.

CLC cannot assume that the government will always be congenial in their treatment of churches as 501c3 tax-exempt entities. The possibility exists that one day government may take away tax exempt status from religious institutions. Government may attempt to "gag" certain preaching content (i.e., messages decrying homosexuality) or face fines or imprisonment.

Other widespread issues.

While CLC does not currently face such harsh issues, many churches are dealing with threats of various descriptions. Pastors are leaving the ministry in epidemic numbers in some denominational circles. Many pastors struggle personally with the national blight of Internet pornography. In-fighting and competition among churches is common place and most church growth occurs from transfers more so than conversions. These all threaten to diminish a church's effectiveness and efficiency as a change agent in the culture.

Spiritual warfare.

Finally, this paper would be remiss if it did not at least acknowledge that any spiritual enterprise will be threatened by spiritual warfare. The Bible plainly teaches that there is not only a God and angels but a devil and demons. These opposing forces are in a constant and epic battle for control. Fortunately, the last book of the Bible (Revelation) reveals that at the

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consummation of God's plan for the ages, we find Jesus Christ reigning on the throne and the fallen angel, Lucifer (Satan) ending up in the Lake of Fire to be eternally tormented (Revelation 20:10).

Conclusion

This SWOT Analysis has examined some of the primary Strengths & Weaknesses (internal factors) and Opportunities & Threats (external factors) of Christian Life Church. The SWOT Analysis is a powerful tool that can be used in conjunction with other tools to forecast potential success and identify probable pitfalls. It is very simple to use and probably more effective if additional key leaders (a team or committee) participate in the process.

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