

## WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR CHURCH?

*This is the first of a series of articles on the dynamics of church size.*

*“This isn't the same place it used to be!”*

That is a comment you may have heard, or made yourself, when talking about Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church. The statement is true. This isn't the same place it used to be because it can't be. A major reason ECRC is different has to do with our size. By virtue of our average worship attendance church consultants would categorize us as a large church, or more likely, a very large church. Large churches have to function differently than small churches. Size has a tremendous impact on how a church functions. It impacts how decisions are made, how relationships flow, how effectiveness is evaluated and what ministers, staff, and lay leaders do.

In writing about the difference between large churches and small churches, Dr. Timothy Keller writes, *“A large church is not simply a bigger version of a small church. The difference in communication, community formation, and decision-making processes are so great that the leadership skills required in each are of almost completely different orders.”*

Larger churches have a harder time keeping in touch with members. At ECRC we have two services every week that average a total of approximately 850 people. Some people alternate the services they attend. Some attend both on occasion! Obviously with a total membership of 1,600 (children and adults), not everyone is here every Sunday. Because of size dynamics no one can really keep track of who is here on any given Sunday. Larger churches have to be creative in designing the kind of community that naturally exists in small churches. In larger churches it is impossible for us to notice who might be missing for a while, or who may be facing personal difficulties. Therefore, in larger churches members need to initiate letting leaders know of their needs, or changes in their worship patterns.

By necessity, larger churches need to centralize leadership. For instance, the staff plans, develops and organizes programming. A smaller group of people must make the administrative decisions on day-to-day operations which is why our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was formed and the reason we have an Executive Director.

*“This isn't the same place it used to be!”* No it isn't, and it can't be. God has enabled us to be a larger church and that changes everything.