

## The #1 Factor in Church Growth Paper No. OCCG-027

Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E.  
OC Church Growth Institute

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** The #1 factor in church growth is the number of prospects who come within your congregational influence, or briefly stated as your “visitor traffic.” DelCon has added a Personal Evangelism module to support visitor tracking.

### KEY WORDS:

Visitor traffic  
Delcon

### GLOSSARY:

**Visitor Traffic:** How many prospects come within your congregational influence.

**Congregational Influence:** Any situation involving a religious teaching or discussion between your members and a prospect.

### REPORT:

There are Several factors which are typically associated with church growth, such as the following.

### VISION AND GOALS

If you don't have an idea where you are going, you are not likely to get there. However, most dying congregations have a vision and some even have a goal.

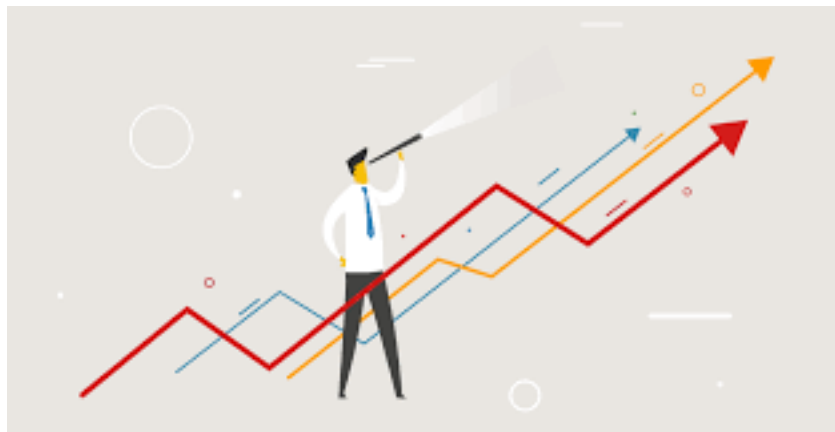
**PREACHER:** Having a good preacher is usually a first consideration. A good preacher is certainly supportive of church growth and a bad one can certainly

discourage growth.

**WORSHIP SERVICES:** Your worship services and especially your song service say a lot about who you are. The worship service may be the only chance you get to make a “first impression” or the “only impression” of the church to a prospect.

**FACILITY:** Facilities are certainly important as they make a statement on how important you think Jesus is. If you have a poorly maintained facility and a prospect passes you by for some other church, in some sense your maintenance becomes a salvation issue if you deflect a prospect off to an unscriptural denomination.

**BIBLE CLASS:** Bible classes can be a very evangelistic tool if they are used



intentionally for that. In some cases they can be a stumbling block for evangelism when harsh judgmental statements are made. You can literally have no Bible classes and still have evangelism.

**WEBSITE:** Websites are important today

and becoming more important all the time. They are a factor in your efforts at church growth, but if they are your primary method, you likely do not have much growth. They would only tend to attract current Church of Christ members and those with little or no religious background.

## PROGRAMS

Your members can be very busily engaged in the programs of the church, while the church is still dying.

These factors mentioned are all subjective factors, where it is ultimately opinion as to how well you are doing. A church can be doing poorly on any of these, while telling itself that it doing well. Some people will think some are good and others will judge the same issue or program as performing poorly. It is well known that we are not good objective analyzers of our own situation.

The ultimate measure of whether your church is doing well or badly is whether it is fulfilling the Great Commission. Is it growing? You may well justify no growth on the basis that some Old Testament prophet preached for years without a convert, but you should be concerned about taking that result to judgment day.

All these factors are important, but they are not the #1 factor. With a second class attempt at any of these, you can still grow. With a first class attempt at all of these you can still not grow. There is something more important.

## THE #1 FACTOR:

On the #1 factor, if not present, guarantees a lack of growth. It is something objective that can be measured, its performance can be tracked. It is something you can influence and make better.

The good news is this #1 factor puts no extra work on the Shepherds, only benefits.

**The #1 factor, we want to suggest to you, is how many prospects come within your congregational influence, which we will refer to as simply “visitor traffic”.**

Congregational influence is any situation involving a religious teaching or discussion between your members and a prospect. It is intended to be broader than simply how many unchurched come through a church’s front doors.

If a member has a religious discussion with someone at a coffee shop or their home, it would be “visitor traffic” in this sense. A social event of any kind where prospects are at least exposed to teaching posters.

If you went to a football game with a prospect, with no implied teachings at all, it would have been a social event only.

In this context we are suggesting rather that your congregational growth is highly likely to be proportionate to its level of “visitor traffic”. It is certain that if the church has no visitors coming in its front doors, and its members are not engaging prospects otherwise, it is not only not going to grow, but it is going to die. It may be a long slow death, but an inevitable one.

It is a simple matter. Your church can have a great preacher, a great facility, outstanding Bible Classes, an outstanding website, and an inspiring song service—but with no visitors, it will not grow.

Conversely, with an average preacher, an average facility, average Bible Classes, an average website, and an average song service but a good “visitor traffic”, that church is highly likely to grow.

Beyond your regular worship services,

Bible classes, and personal member contacts, you can review the paper OCCG-014: Evangelism Thru Side Door Events at [occg.institute/papers/member-involvement/](http://occg.institute/papers/member-involvement/) for suggestion on events that may work for your congregation in helping to engage prospects.

Back to the “good news”. As stated before, this is no extra workload put upon *Shepherds*; but likely it would be extra work on Elders. The distinction here is the recognition that Elders too often try to micromanage everything and have to make sure they are in control of collecting and reporting on this #1 factor. The connotation of *Shepherds* is that their primary job is in doing Shepherding and mentoring Deacons, assigning others to do “Deacon’s” work. This means that *Shepherds* will locate a detail-oriented person and assign to that person the task of documenting visitor traffic and sending them reports on what is happening. The DelCon Church Operating Software is specifically programmed to help do this, and your detailed person would be in charge of this. The Shepherds receive reports and use them for their shepherding activities, monitor the completeness of the work done, and mentor/replace the detail

person as required.

### **DelCon**

In light of the conclusion that “visitor traffic” is the #1 factor in church growth, the OC Church Growth Institute has added a Personal Evangelism Module to the DelCon Church Operations Software Package which is solely directed at tracking visitors for your congregation.

The package collects information from various congregational sources and makes regular summary reports to leadership. Good reporting on visitor traffic is an early sign of how your congregation will be doing in the future.

### **WHAT’S NEXT?**

After you have tracked your visitor traffic and know what is happening, you still need to do something to promote personal evangelism, but at least you have objective data on where to focus. See OCCG-028 STEPS OF SUSTAINED CHURCH GROWTH for suggestions on the continuing process beyond establishing the culture of developing good “visitor traffic”.

Reviewers: Judy Haley, Melissa Rowell