

Thoughts on Emerging Metrics
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In a time of reduced attendance and resistance to formal membership in any organization, the metrics we have used to measure congregational life need to change. We typically measure what we can measure in a church – attendance and finances, but we need metrics that will allow us to see a clearer picture of how many people are impacted by and involved in a congregation's ministry. Here are three possible metrics that can help us look at the ministry of our congregations through a new lens. While these metrics do not measure depth of faith, they do paint a helpful picture of engagement. Here is a summary of the three metrics I suggest, plus one variant.

Persons Served in Mission - those people directly impacted by the ministry of the congregation during the month/year. This included everyone who attends to a worship service, those who receive assistance from a helping ministry, community contacts, etc. Admittedly this number is a bit subjective, but it tells a helpful story.

Actively Participating - those individuals who take an active role in a congregation's core ministries like worship or education and those actively volunteering to help ministry happen. If for example, a congregation has a large number of community members who volunteered on a weekly basis in a helping ministry based at the congregation, they would be included in this number.

Total Worship Family (Unique Worshipers) - individuals who participate in worship at least once during the course of the year. Since even regular worshipers seem to come at most 32-36 times a year, looking at the total worship family (unique worshipers) provides a better understanding of the impact of the congregation's worship ministry and the number of people involved.

One additional possibility . . .

A variation on Total Worship Family would be **Total Worship Family Per Month** – individuals who participate in worship at least once during a month. The advantage to tracking this number is that you could compare year-to-year to see how overall participation was in an individual month. This approach may give you a better idea of shifting worship attendance/worship engagement patterns.

Using metrics like this can help us to know for example if a decline in average worship attendance is truly a decline in the impact of the congregation or if the decline in average worship attendance is simply a reflection of changing cultural patterns. The goal of metrics like these is not to measure the value of our ministry, but to equip leaders with the information needed to more accurately assess changing patterns in congregational life and implement appropriate interventions and actions.