



Crucial Conversation:

Critical Issues Facing the Local
Congregations of NACOG



Purpose: To inform, involve, and innovate
so the Church can thrive into the

FUTURE





**WE
ARE
HERE**

Here is where we are:

(David Sebastian Church of God in 2025)

- 2200 + COG Congregations in N America
- 97% COG Congregations are 1 to 200 in members
- 75 members is the average size of COG Congregation
- 57 years old is the average age of COG Congregants
- 6000 Credentialed Ministers in the COG
- 23% Credentialed Ministers in COG are Women
- 60 years old is the average age of Credentialed Ministers in the COG



Future Financial Viability of our Local Congregations

(Dickerson: Evangelical Recession)

- **Ages 65+** account for 46% of total annual donations to the local church
- **Ages 55-64** account for 22% of total annual donations to the local church
- **Ages 55+** account for 68% of total annual donations to the local church
- **Ages 35** and under account for 4% of total annual donations to the local church
- **Younger generations** don't just give less, they also give less consistently



Future Financial Viability of our Local Congregations

(Dickerson: Evangelical Recession)

- Projecting 30% to 40% decrease in Local Church Donations in 5 to 10 years (C Myricks)
- Massive change in the dollars available for ministry at the local church
- More congregations will face financial unviability
- Raises serious questions about the sustainability of the funding model for State, Ethnic and National COG Organizations



Imminent Wide-Spread Pastoral Transitions



- **65% to 70%** of COG Congregations will experience a Pastoral Transition in 5 to 10 years (C Myricks)
- **Even if only 20%** of COG Credentialed Ministers retire by 2025 almost 1500 new ministers would be needed to replace them. (D Sebastian)
- Unusually high demand for Credentialed Ministers who desire to Pastor
- Women are severely underrepresented in the role of Senior Pastors in the COG (M Hawkins)
- Many denominations currently report an “empty pulpit crisis”. They cannot find ministers willing to fill positions. (Pastor Care Inc)
- Pastoral transitions are a very important and potentially volatile time in the life of a Congregation
- The COG will enter a window of high vulnerability due to concurrent, pervasive pastoral transitions which will impact the connected life of the COG



The State of the Health of Pastors

- **90%** feel they are inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands
- **70%** reported that the only time they spend in the Word of God was while they were preparing for sermon or teaching assignments
- **57%** cannot pay monthly bills
- **70%** constantly fight depression
- **80%** believe that pastoring has negatively affected their families
- **70%** do not have someone they consider a close friend
- **1700** leave the ministry every month
- **1 pastor in 10** will retire in ministry (90 % do not retire in ministry)
- Young people are less inclined to enter full-time pastoral ministry



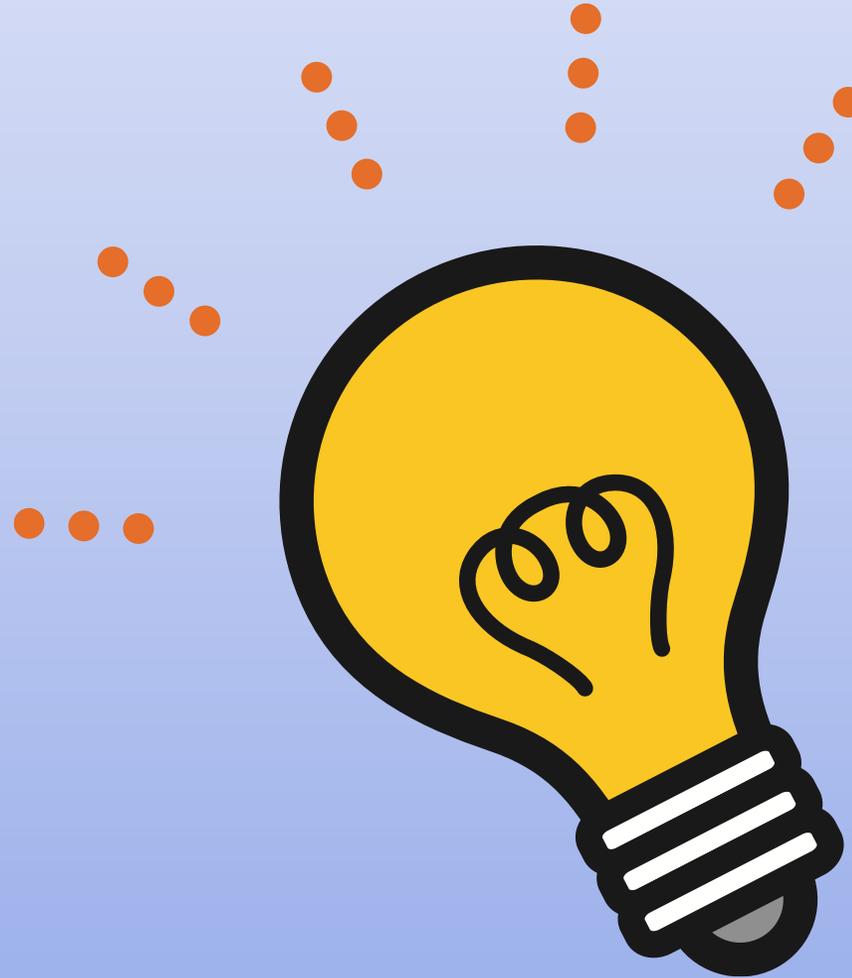


Table Talk Questions

1. What will happen to our local congregations if nothing changes?
2. What should we do about it, as individual congregations and collectively as the National Association?



Ideas/Active Responses



Crucial Conversation: Responses #1



1. What will happen to our local congregations if nothing changes?

- Die – community and development of others
- Die – run out of money, lose pastor, then die
- Church will decline and close; hope will depend on younger people; younger people will leave and go elsewhere
- They will close – you must have people to sustain a congregation; there will be less light in the community
- Slowly die
- Death – congregations and leaders; no replacements; traditional church will cease; loss of hope; loss of effort; sense of hopelessness; loss of faith; fewer workers and less effort to evangelize
- Doors will close; buildings sold to pay off the debt; pastors will lose their jobs; communities will lose a place of worship; young people will lose a place to grow and mature in Christ.
- Church will die out; aging/dying and not coming in; when younger members come, high demands but no resources

Crucial Conversation: Responses #2



2. What should we do about it – both locally and nationally

- Culture shifting – recognize truth – not working; prepare for change; identify methods to reach others; training in discipleship
- Local – target varying culture and young people
- National – start with your own family; develop a leadership mentorship program for those attending our camp; partner current leaders with newer leaders for development
- Need younger families; get on board with technology; how we do what we do...meet people where they are
- We are trying to get congregations to raise up leadership and disciple them; church mergers; family ministry
- Merge; make ministry more attractive
- Greater levels of leadership coaching; identify relevance; increased level of prayer; better pastoral care and mentoring
- Let go of tradition; mentorship programs for future leaders; give young people ownership of responsibilities; NACOG can mirror this
- 20% is top heavy; older generation retires; younger people use technology; “shift”
- Need to reach, teach and disciple new members; include members in plan and get them to buy in; educate them that they are the present church and they matter; recruit and train younger members with support (financial and prayer)