

PASTORPEDIA™

Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders

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How do we help the fringe people of the church?

Do we have to hold their hands?

Maybe so, but figuratively, of course.

But most of us have heard that times have changed. Just a bit. Taking a loaf of bread or a little gift to neighborhood homes or someone whose name has been given to you as a prospect for the church, may not be as productive as it was when some of us started pastoring.

Actually, Siri wrote “pestering” when I dictated that last sentence, and that just may be how people would take it today. So what to do?

The three of us have struggled with the changes in society and church culture in the last years.

And with the growing number of people who are on the fringe. The people who come one out of four weekends and think they are regular attenders... the ones who skip all summer... those who watch church online and occasionally give that way also... the people who, if hospitals still asked what church they go to, would name yours, but might forget your name.

Shall we punt, just go with the regulars, or try to draw these people closer?

*Frustrated at times, but knowing how inviting our Good Shepherd has been,
Knutte, with Jeff and Jim*

Why are there so many more these days? Are there good and bad reasons?

Jeff Bogue

- There are so many more these days because of life rhythms. Life does not work in the normal rhythms or cycles that it used to work.
- We do not work in seasonal cycles, hourly cycles, or weekly cycles anymore. So, the rhythm or routine of weekly church services has been affected in those ways as well.
- Also, the definition of faithfulness and connectedness has changed a lot and people feel connected differently. They don't necessarily need to see you to feel connected to you.
- Of course, there are good and bad reasons, but mostly it is what it is.

Jim Brown

- Life often includes a drive-through mentality where people grab something and move on because their lives are extremely busy!
- Other things have crept in that take the place of weekend gatherings—sports, camping, recreational activities, and family trips.
- Buffet mentality too, which moves people to select from different churches what suits their family best. So they go to multiple venues.
- The church can be at fault too by not finding ways to connect and care for the people.
- Technology now has the church competing with podcasts, live-stream messages, and other ways to do church in independence.
- Connectedness is not a rich value for many families today. Loyalty is no longer a high value.
- Yes, there are always good and bad reasons.
- Often it could be a health issue with a family member.
- Sometimes the person just needs time to recover and find refreshment from a difficult season in his or her life.

Knute Larson

- Not many young adults love the Lord and the church together as a package as much as their parents or their grandparents. Especially the number of activities.
- Self-focused activities have reproduced so rapidly in recent decades—Sunday sports, brief getaways, big games, reunions, shopping sales, work-out groups. Way back the church service was one of the big events of the week!

Some people may not say it but will decide to support only what profits them or serves their true felt needs. Don't mention the ON MISSION idea.

- There is not the felt need for many of the church activities that there once was. Very few now attend every time the church doors are open, as once was true for my grandparents.
- Some people are rather fringe about many issues and organizations these days. Commitment is weak on other fronts also.

- Of course there are good and bad reasons for this. The bad ones relate to lack of commitment or concern about the mission of the church.

But on the good side, we are grateful that some people at least start touching the church a little even if you would call them fringe. Our goal is to bring them into things that are vital and that produce a true relationship with Christ, spiritual growth, and ministry.

What are some specific ways to draw them in?

Jeff Bogue

- The key is multiple platforms, so you want to have live services at different times—maybe a Saturday night and Sunday morning—maybe do midweek services.
- Use social media.
- Do live streaming.
- Do experiential things like service events or missions trips.

Jim Brown

- It's amazing what a handshake will do on a Sunday morning. Walk around your church building before and after services to greet people. Don't hide away in your office!
- Train people to connect with others and start conversations.
- Invite an individual to a gathering that happens during the week so you don't go alone. A simple invite pulls the fringe people in.
- Spend time praying over your people and ask God to reveal who you haven't seen in a while. We often sit around and ask, "Have you seen _____ lately?"
- Ask them to serve with you and find a way they can do an outreach with you. If you get them involved in serving they will get connected.
- Obviously, use all the social media platforms to give them chances to connect online.
- Urge them to plug into a small group where they can't hide and can find more personal interaction.

Knute Larson

- One on one or one on two, over coffee, if possible, if you know who they are. The personal touch and interest in them are still effective many times.
- Really meaningful services and sermons that draw them back when they do come. Every Sunday is important in that way. There is no room for boredom or business as usual at church.

We must also give excellence to the extras like parking, greetings, and a welcoming mood.

Strong worship that is meaningful and brings the regulars into heartfelt worship is one of the best evangelistic and compelling ways the church can witness. If regulars just sit in the back row and yawn or wait for their favorite song, what does that say to those checking out the church?

- Friends. Remind regulars who are faithful at the church to invite their friends to be more involved in really good things, or to attend church with them, or to try a Sunday or home community group with

them. 80% of people try a church because they are invited by a friend, and some may get involved more for the same reason.

- Really good communication involving social media. Include a brief, pure joy blast every Thursday or Friday—not a bunch of announcements and activities, but a joyful emotional word from the pastor.
- Pray. The last is first.

How much involvement is healthy? What is unhealthy?

Jeff Bogue

- Whatever causes you to be connected is what is healthy.
- Unhealthy is when you're not known or missed. That means you're not actually in relationship with anybody.

Jim Brown

- Healthy is when you are using your gifts to make the body stronger yet not to the detriment of your marriage and family. Learn to say yes to the best options!
- Unhealthy is when you find your identity in everyone needing you!

Knute Larson

- Healthy is when you are part of worship regularly, attend a community group where you make true friends (Sunday or home ABF), and you also have a meaningful way to serve.
- Healthy is when you enjoy church in the proper sense and therefore invite acquaintances.
- Healthy is when you have learned from the Lord and His Word that the church is to be ON MISSION to reach new people and to help them really get involved with Christ and His Spirit.
- Unhealthy is when you become a church “groupie” and make your family (think husband usually) angry because of the competition.

A “groupie” can be someone who goes several times on the weekend, is in a men's or women's group, another small group, a Wednesday group, a morning breakfast group, and maybe a couple more.

Pastorpedia is a resource provided to you by CE National, a church effectiveness ministry. Please contact us at cenational@cenational.org or 574.267.6622 if we may be of any help to you or your ministry!

Jeff Bogue, of [Grace Church](#), in several locations in the Bath-Norton-Medina areas of Ohio; Jim Brown, of [Grace Community Church](#) in Goshen, Indiana, a church known for its strong growth, family and men's ministries, and community response teams; and [Knute Larson](#), a coach of pastors, who previously led The Chapel in Akron for 26 years. Pastorpedia is brought to you by [CE National](#). Visit cenational.org/pastorpedia for more issues and to read the bios of our contributors.