

### **Part 3**

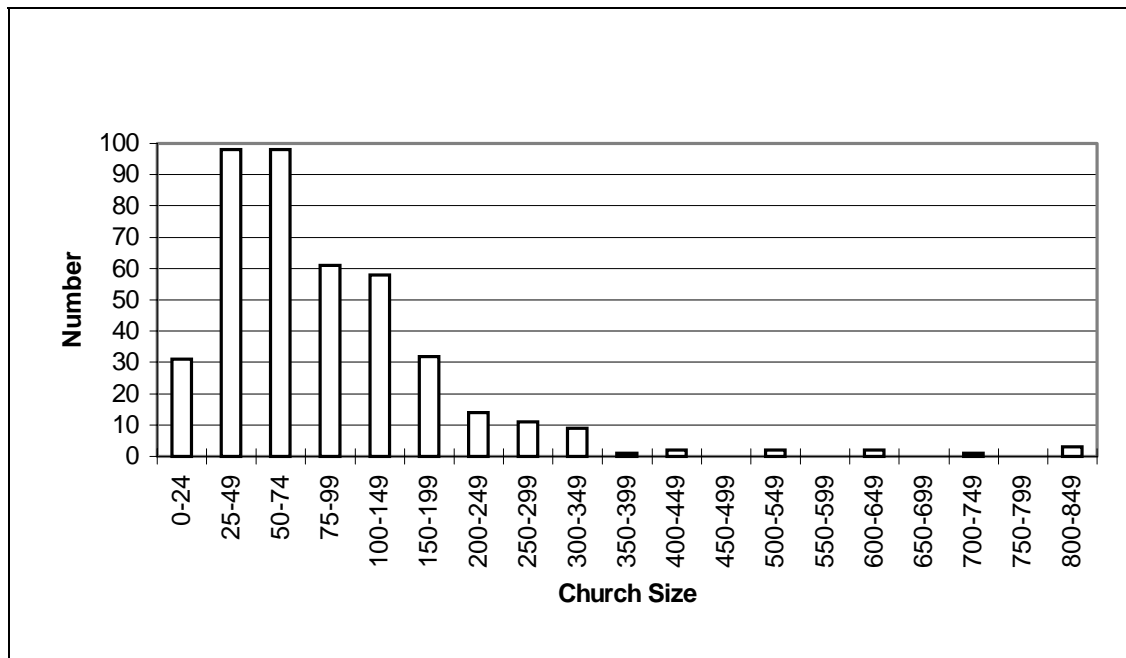
#### **Small-church Pastors vs. Large-church Pastors**

In all, 423 out of 431 (98.1%) pastors responded to the question about the size of their churches. The general data base was divided into two parts using the average attendance figure of 99 people per congregation as the dividing point. Small churches are defined as those with 99 or fewer people and large churches are those with 100 or more people. This definition was chosen to simplify the segmentation of data for analysis. For comparison purposes, the frequency of the responses was translated into percentages based on data presented by each group. When percentages are presented in the text or in graphs they represent the percent of pastors within their own group (i.e. small-church pastor or large-church pastor).

In this study there were 288 (68.1%) churches that had 99 people or fewer and 135 (31.9%) churches with 100 people or more. That means that for every church over 100 people there are 2.0 small churches as well. Churches that had between twenty-five (25) to seventy-four (74) members accounted for 46.4% of all the churches surveyed. Mean attendance (Md) among the 288 small churches was 54 people. Mean attendance among the large churches was 199. In this study there was a significant drop in the number of churches with over 350 people (cf. Figure 4.45). Only 11 churches reported an attendance of 350 people or more. Three of those churches had 800 in attendance. This would lead us to conclude that most pastors are dealing with small churches of 99 people or fewer and

that most of the remaining pastors are dealing with congregations of 100 to 349 people. Relatively few pastors (an estimated 2.6%) in Costa Rica are dealing with congregations of more than 350 people.

Figure 4.44  
Size of Churches  
(n = 423)



Geographically, 12.5% of the small churches (f.= 37) and 29.6% of the large churches (f.=40) were located in the greater metropolitan area, representing a disproportionate number of large churches nationwide although a near parity in the absolute number of churches. In the rural areas there were 246 small churches and 88 large churches, a ratio of 2.8 small rural churches to one large rural church.

Distribution by provinces (cf. Table 4.7) shows that San Jose (where the greater metropolitan area is) has the most large churches (f.= 57 or 41.3% of all San Jose churches in the sample) and that Limón has the fewest (f.= 9 or 6.5%). Alajuela is the

province with the most small churches in the sample (f.= 68 or 23.9%). In this study, Alajuela has nearly 50% more churches than do the other provinces represented. Cartago had the fewest churches (f.= 10 or 3.5%). This is not a surprise because Cartago had the fewest churches in comparison to all the provinces (see Table 1.3 on page17). On the other hand, Cartago is one of only two provinces (Heredia is the other) where large churches outnumber small ones. There were eight churches (1.9%) that did not fill in enough data to be used to classify them as small or large.

Urbanization is a big factor as to why the province of San José has the most large churches. Each of the other provinces have major cities (like Alajuela) which serve as the capital of the province, hence there is some degree of urbanization but by far (and by official definition, see page 23) San José is the most urbanized city in Costa Rica.

Table 4.7  
Distribution by Province

State	Small f.	Large f.	Unknown f.	Total f.
Alajuela	68	21	1	90
Cartago	10	12	0	22
Guanacaste	43	13	0	56
Heredia	13	14	0	27
Limón	44	9	5	58
Puntarenas	39	11	1	51
San Jose	64	57	0	121
Unknown	4	1	1	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>431</b>

Denominational distribution for small churches was congruent with the general findings. There were 218 Pentecostal churches (76.5% of all small churches in the sample), 35 (12.3%) Bible churches, 18 (6.3%) Methodist churches, and 14 (4.9%) churches of other denominations. Among the large churches 91 were Pentecostal (65.9%

of all large churches in sample), 13 (9.4%) were Bible churches, 13 (9.4%) were Methodist, and 21 (15.3%) were churches of other denominations.

By denominational family the figures show that 69.2% of Pentecostal churches were small, while 28.8% are large. There were six Pentecostal churches that did not indicate their size which represented the remaining 2.0%. Smaller Methodist churches were slightly more numerous (f.= 18 or 58%) than were large ones (f.= 13 or 42%). For the Bible churches 72.9% (f.= 35) were small churches and 27.1% (f.= 13) were large. The reason that there is such a high percentage of small Bible churches is because they are primarily found in the rural areas of the country. In the “other” category were 14 (37.8%) small churches, 21 (56.8%) large and 2 (6.4%) that did not give information about their size. The “other” category would cover independent churches that do not consider themselves part of the church categories offered in the survey. As can be seen in these data, there are a significant number of large churches that do not consider themselves Pentecostal.

Table 4.8  
Denominational Distribution

	<b>Pentecostal f.</b>	<b>Methodist f.</b>	<b>Bible f.</b>	<b>Other f.</b>	<b>Total f.</b>
Small	218	18	35	14	285
Large	91	13	13	21	138
Unknown	6	0	0	2	8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>431</b>

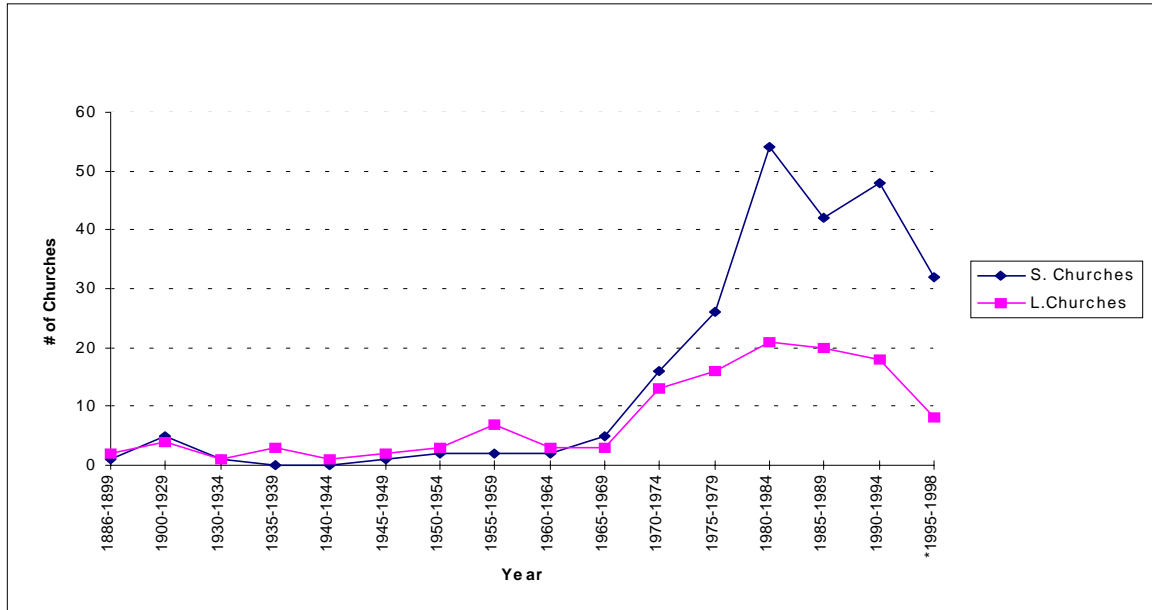
Attendance percentages of men, women, and children were the same between small and large churches. In both cases 28% of the congregations consisted of men, 39% were women and 33% were children. Both small and large churches have about 19% of their people involved in some form of leadership.

Figure 4.45 shows that prior to 1965 the number church plants per year was few and so growth was flat. In 1965 and following the number of church plants began to rise and the number of those churches which grew also increased. Beginning in 1975 there began to be divergency in growth rates between church plants that remained small and those that today are large (since almost all large churches start out as small churches). In the period between 1975 and 1979, there were 26 small churches started per year compared to 16 large churches, a ratio of 1.6 small churches to every 1.0 large church. In the peak period between 1980 to 1984 there were 2.6 small churches being planted to every large church (54 small churches vs. 21 large churches). In the last period covered by this study (1995-1998) there were 32 small churches started as compared to 8 large churches. It is also noteworthy that the overall rate of church plants has decreased and may even be declining. Nonetheless, the number of churches that are planted and remain small as compared to churches that are planted and grow large is high with the current ratio being four small churches to every one large church.

This phenomena, of an increase in the ratio of small churches to large churches, may be due to several factors. One, Costa Ricans may prefer to congregate in small churches as compared to large ones. In that small churches offer more intimacy and accountability people may gravitate to small local churches rather than distant (in terms of travel) large churches. Second, the leadership abilities of the men (many first-generation believers) planting the churches may only be good enough to care for small groups of people. Perhaps their own training and expectations have led them to only expect to plant only small churches and not how to make small churches into big ones.

Yet a third factor could be that small churches haven't had time to grow large (cf. Figure 4.45).

Figure 4.45  
Years the Churches were Started  
(n = 361)



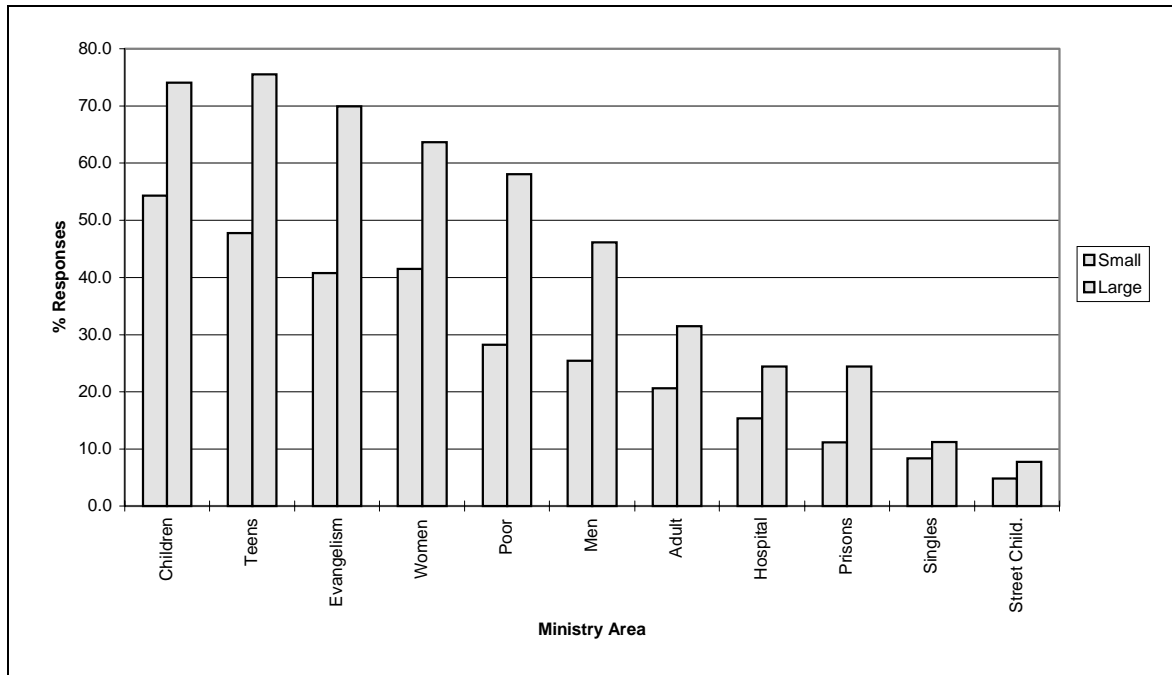
\* figure is factored for five-year equivalency

### Ministry Realities

While children's ministry was the number one ministry area for the small churches this was not so for the large churches. The number one ministry area among the large churches was directed to the teens. Data collected in the survey indicates that small churches were twice as likely to have ministries for children than did the large churches (18.2% vs. 9.2%) but large churches did show more of a tendency to have programs aimed at the teen age population than did the small churches (18.3% vs. 16.0%). While among the small churches the top three ministry areas were children (18.2%), teens (16.0%), and women (13.9%) the top three areas for the large churches were teens

(18.3%), evangelism (15.1%), and women (14.6%). Another area of difference (> 2%) was that large churches showed more of a tendency to have ministries to the poor than did the small churches (11.7% vs. 9.5%).

Figure 4.46  
Ministries in Churches



Missionary involvement by small-church pastors is poor. Only 15% of the small-church pastors in the study responded affirmatively that they had helped to sponsor a missionary to another country for more than one year. This compared with 25% of the large-church pastors that responded to the same question. Perhaps large-church pastors, because they have more resources are able to support missionaries outside the country better than rural pastors who are living on small salaries and few resources.

Perception of community openness is an important part of a pastor's work environment. Eighty percent (80%) of large-church pastors felt that the communities they

are working in are “very open” to “open” while only 57% of pastors from small churches felt the same way. Seventeen percent of large-church pastors felt that the community is “indifferent” to “closed” to them while a higher percentage (37%) of small-church pastors felt the same way. The option of marking “hostile” to describe their communities was only chosen by 3% of large-church pastors and 5% of small-church pastors. Perhaps small churches are more aware of their minority status in the country whereas large churches are more confident and less threatened. Not surprisingly, this would affect their view of the community.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of small-church pastors said that they feel they understand the problems that their communities are facing, but more pastors of large churches feel that they understand their communities (82%). In terms of formal contacts the data collected showed that both groups have high percentages of involvement in their communities (83% small and 88% large). It may be because the pastors of large churches interact with more people that they feel they have more of a grasp of the problems in the community.

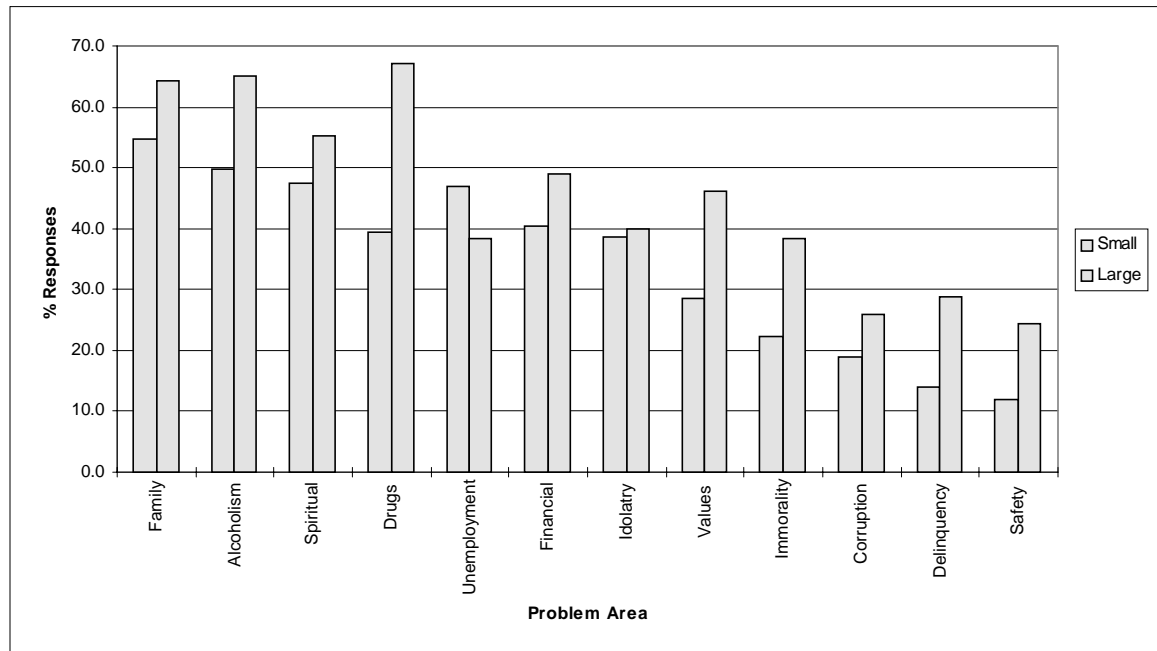
The perception of the kinds of problems facing the communities was different in several areas for pastors from the two groups. Though in all but one area (unemployment) the large-church pastors responded with more frequency. It may be that the small-church pastor is more aware of unemployment because it more directly affects the finances of the church than do large-church pastors who have more resources.

Small-church pastors tended to prioritize community problems in the areas of family (54.7%), alcoholism (49.8%), and spiritual health (47.7%) while the large-church pastors emphasized problems in drugs (67.1%), alcoholism (65.0%), and the family



(64.3%). These last data are very similar to rural/urban realities where rural pastors felt that the principle problems of the communities were family, alcohol, and spiritual health and drugs, family, and alcohol were the main concerns of the urban pastors (see page 87).

Figure 4.47  
Community Problems



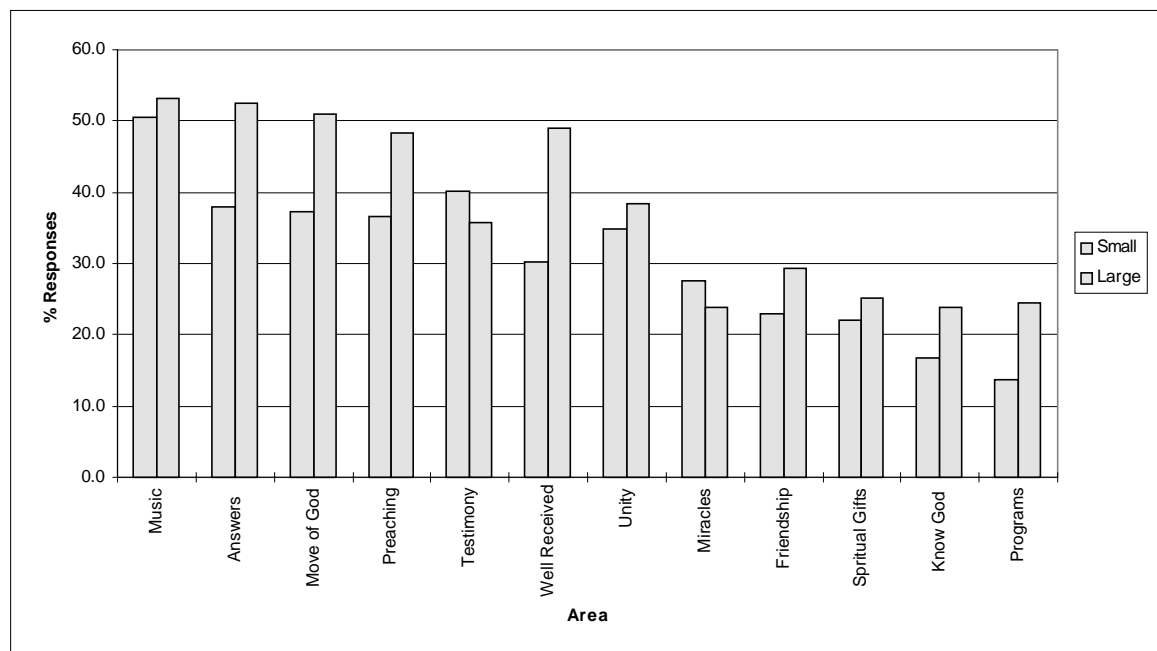
When it came to the question about what was most influential in attracting people to evangelical churches the good testimony of believers and good treatment of visitors were the two areas of difference between small and large-church pastors. Small-church pastors responded that a good testimony was very important in attracting people to the church (40.1% small vs. 35.7% large). On the other hand, good treatment received by visitors was higher for large-church pastors (49.0%) than it was by pastors from small churches (30.3%).

Smaller churches receive fewer visitors and those that do come are probably attracted by the testimony of the members. In larger churches more people are likely to

visit because of the church's reputation in the community or because of programs offered therefore the testimony of the members is less critical.

Both groups of pastors felt that music was the number one influence as to why people felt attracted to the evangelical churches. Large-church pastors ranked this as the number one influence (53.1% large vs. 50.5% small) rating it close to the people "seeking answers"(52.4%) and "a move of God" (51.0%). This may mean that large-church pastors see music as important, but that they also feel meeting people's needs in the other two areas also is important.

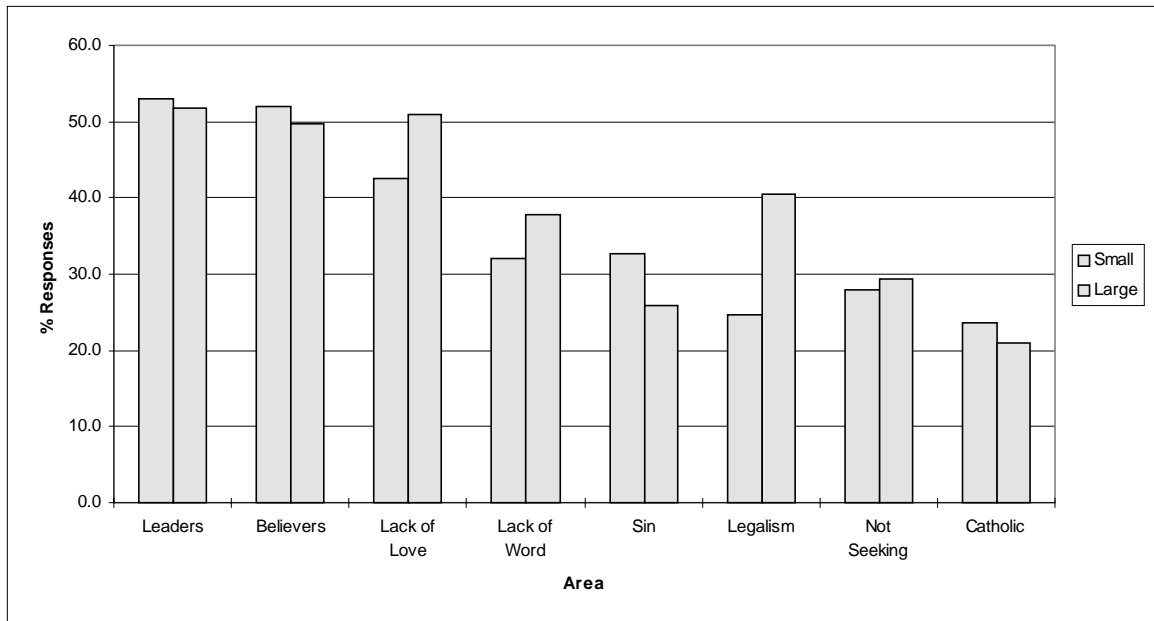
Figure 4.48  
What Attracts



As to why people are not attracted to the evangelical churches there was a fair amount of agreement, but there were two areas of discrepancy noted in the data. Large-church pastors placed more emphasis on the problem of legalisms in the church than did small-church pastors by ranking it number four out of nine while small-church pastors

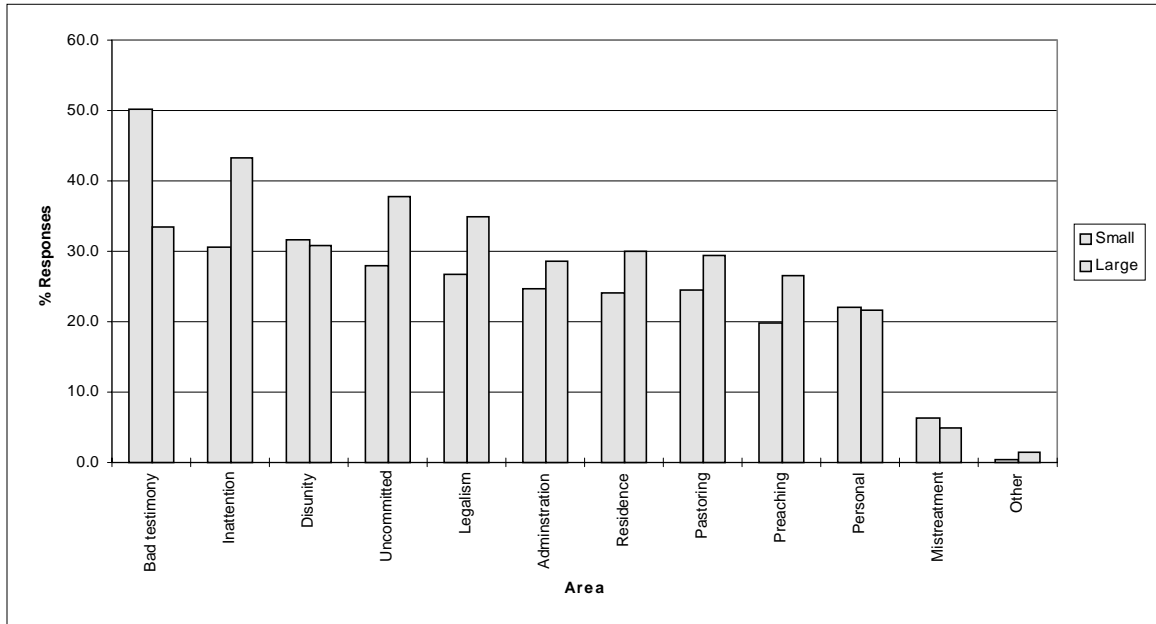
ranked it seven out of nine. Sin in evangelical churches was the second area where a difference was noted. Pastors from small churches placed more of an emphasis on this problem by ranking it fourth (13.2%) while pastors from large churches ranked in seventh (8.6%). Here again, the testimony of the members of small churches may play a role.

Figure 4.49  
What Repels Unbelievers



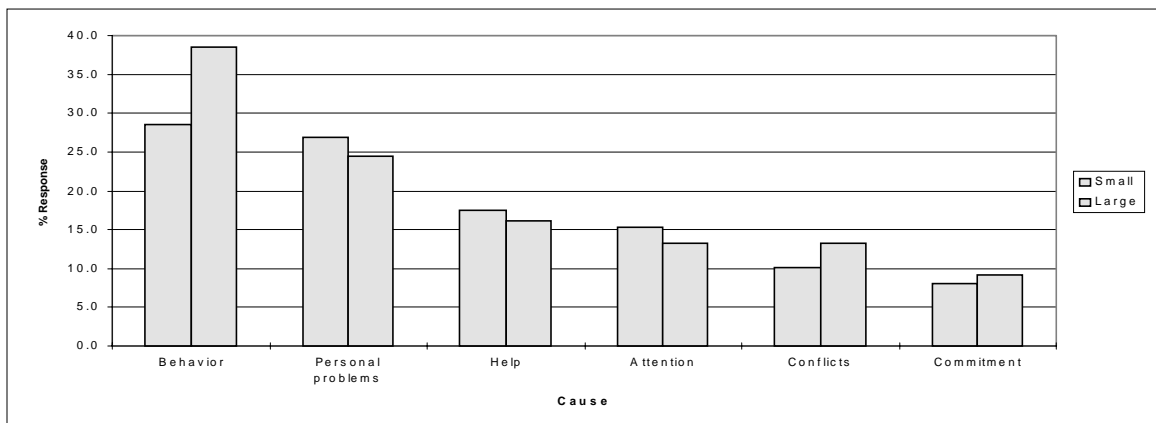
When it comes to why evangelicals leave, the testimony of the church members plays a vital role in small churches. Small-church pastors chose to blame the bad testimony of other believers (17.4%) as the main problem while large-church pastors blamed a lack of love and attention (13.4%) as the main cause for desertion. For large-church pastors the problem of the bad testimonies of believers ranked fourth, behind a lack of love, lack of commitment, and legalisms. For small-church pastors the lack of love was ranked third behind members bad testimony and a lack of unity. The following chart shows these differences clearly.

Figure 4.50  
Why Evangelicals Leave



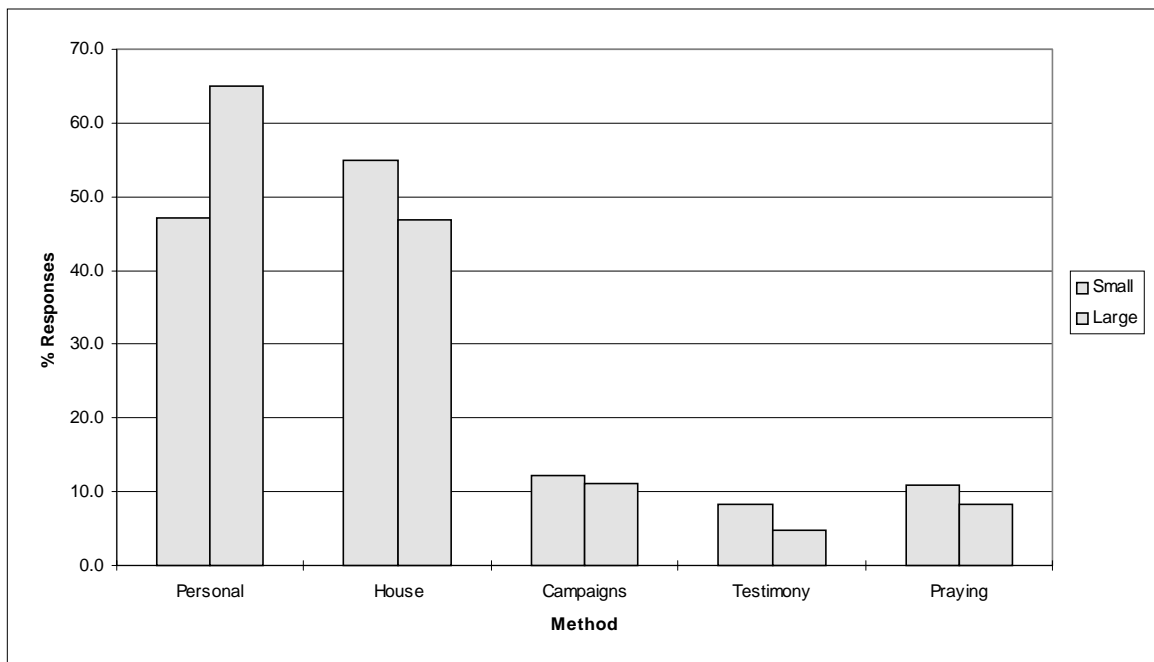
The basic reasons why pastors abandon their vocation has been dealt with before in this chapter. The only difference in the opinions of the small-church pastors and large-church pastors related to emphasis on the bad conduct of the pastor himself, 33.5% of large-church pastors indicated this as the reason for pastors leaving, while 26.6% of small-church pastors offered bad conduct the reason for pastoral attrition.

Figure 4.51  
Why Pastors Leave



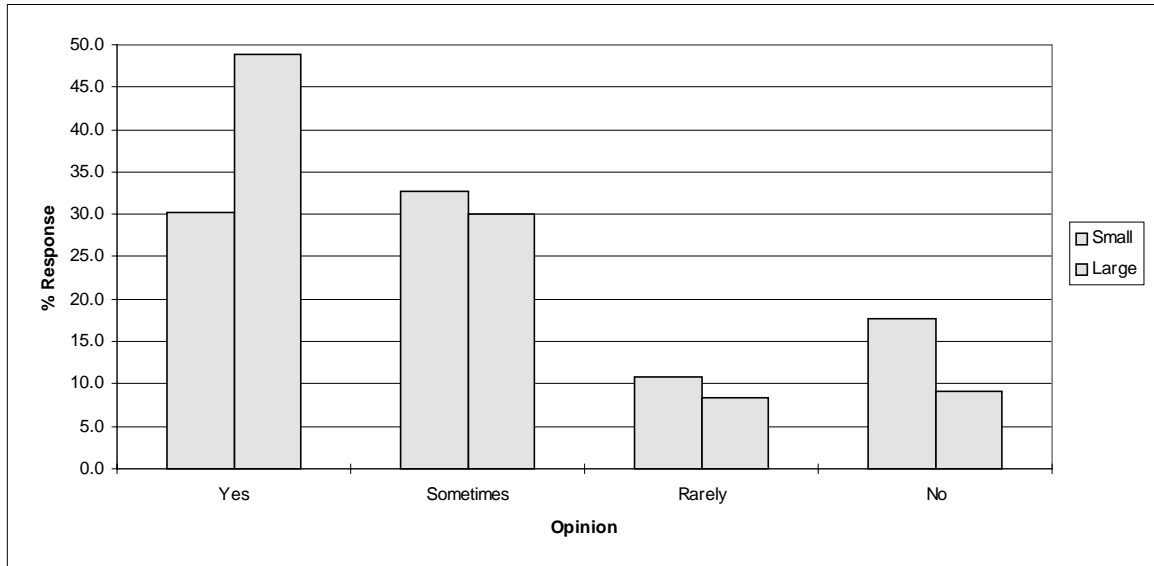
In the analysis of the general data, person-to-person evangelism (or friendship evangelism) was the number one means to win people to the Lord. When the data were segmented it was found that 47.7% of large-church pastors, who constituted 32% of the churches, placed a greater emphasis on person-to-person evangelism as the most preferred evangelistic method, while 41.3% small-church pastors (68% of the survey sample) voted for visiting people house to house as the number one way to evangelize. The difference in these two positions may have to do with pastoral expectations between large and small churches. In the large churches there may be more of an emphasis on the individuals' responsibility to witness to others while in the small churches there may be a feeling that the pastor should spend more time visiting people's home and dealing with the families on a more intimate level.

Figure 4.52  
Evangelism Method



Cooperation between churches, as noted earlier in this chapter, is high among Costa Rican evangelical pastors, but it is among the pastors of large churches that this is especially true. Pastors of the large churches marked “yes” 50.7% of the time when asked if their churches cooperated with other churches in evangelistic events while pastors of small churches marked “at times” most (35.7%) often. Also, small-church pastors were more than twice as likely to say “no” (19.4% small vs. 9.4% large) as large-church pastors. This may be because the small church pastor, whose income depends on the number of members he has in his church, is concerned about losing his people to another church (especially a large one) if he cooperates with them.

Figure 4.53  
Cooperation Level



### The Pastors: Small vs. Large

This study revealed that the median age of small-church pastors is 40.0 years old while the median age of the large-church pastors group is 39.0 years old, yielding an average of one year difference between the two groups. The modal age differences were slightly greater with most small-church pastors reporting that they were 39 years old and the large-church pastors 37 years producing a two year difference in the ages of the two groups. Pastors that are pastoring small churches had a tendency to have accepted Christ at a slightly older age (23.1 yrs) than pastors in large churches (20.6 yrs), but pastors in large churches have been involved in their pastorates longer (average of 11.6 years) as compared to small church pastors who have been pastoring for an average of 9.9 years.

Subtracting the pastor's number of years in the ministry from his present age shows that small-church pastors entered the ministry when they were approximately 32.2 years old and large-church pastor when they were 28.8 years old. Through this data we see that small-church pastors tended to accept the Lord at a later age than large-church pastor. Small-church pastors also entered the ministry at an older age and have been in the ministry as a vocation less time than pastors from large churches.

An analysis of the number of years that each group has been serving in the church where they are presently working showed that large-church pastors have been in their present positions a median (Md) average of 3.5 years, while small-church pastors have an average of 2.0 years. This is 43% less time than pastors from large churches and may indicate that small-church pastors are more prone to move between churches. This may be because of the poor salary they are paid. In terms of the number of churches served in their careers, both groups showed about the same result with the pastors of small

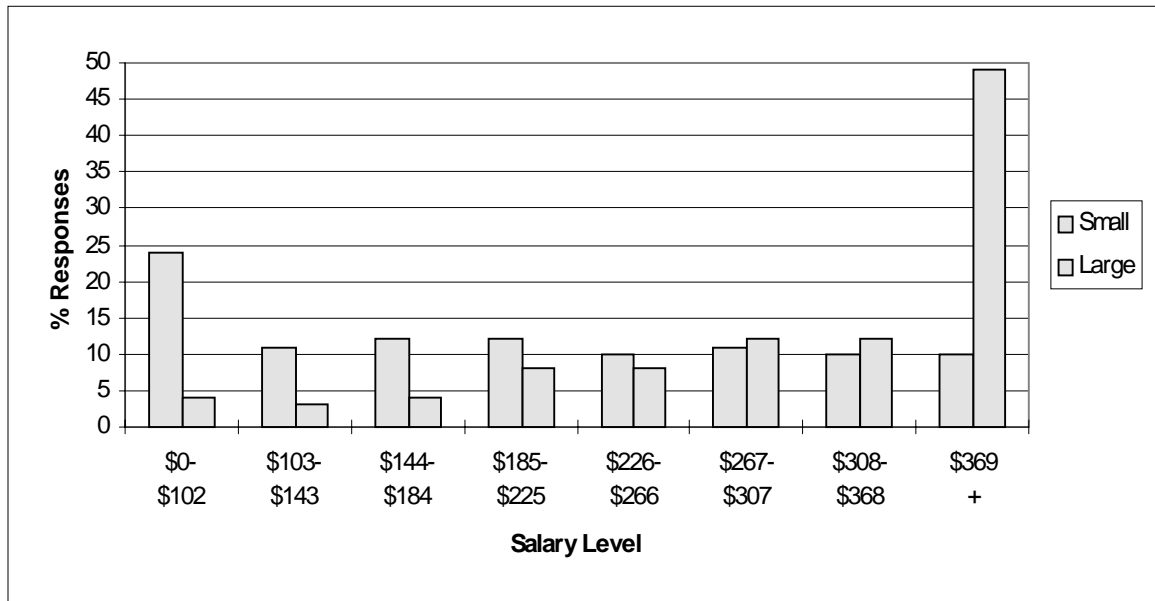
churches having served in 3.0 churches and pastors from large churches 2.9 churches. The average length of stay in churches for both groups (before their present assignment) is 3.3 years per church.

There little about small and large-church pastors' home background that differed from the total sample. Most pastors came from Catholic households (83% in the case of both groups). Large-church pastors had a slightly higher tendency to come from evangelical households (14%) than did small-church pastors (10%). On the other hand, small-church pastors were slightly more likely to come from "other" religious backgrounds (7%) than did pastors of large churches (3%).

As to be expected, pastors in small churches earn less than pastors of large churches. For small-church pastors the average salary was in the range of \$144.00 to \$184.00 per month. For large-church pastors their average salaries were in the \$308.00 to \$368.00 per month range. Thus, on the average, large-church pastors make twice as much money than do small-church pastors. The distributions of salary ranges (cf. Figure 4.56) demonstrates that 47.0% of small-church pastors make \$184.00 a month or less, which is below minimum salary, while only 10% make more than \$369.00 a month. For large-church pastors however, 11.0% make \$184.00 a month or less while 49.0% make more than \$369.00 a month. This leads us to the next area, the source of salaries for the two groups.



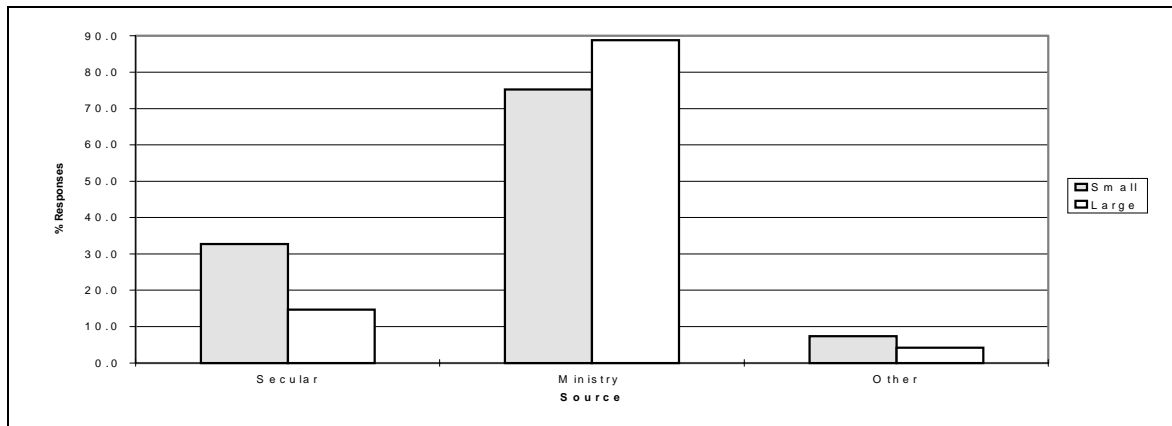
Figure 4.54  
Pastoral Salaries



The research indicates that small-church pastors are twice as likely to have a secular job to support them while they pastor a church. In the survey data, 32.8% of small-church pastors said that their main source of income was from working a secular job compared to 14.7% of large-church pastors. The majority of small-church pastors (75.3%) make their living from the ministry as do 88.8% of the large-church pastors. Only 7.3% of the small-church pastors and 4.2% of the large-church pastors have “other” sources of income to support themselves (see Figure 4.55).

It is surprising that the difference between the number of small-church pastors and large church pastors who only have their ministries as their sole source of income is so small. Between the two there is only a 15% difference. On the other hand, it is not surprising that small-church pastors are almost twice as likely (32.8% small vs. 14.7% large) to have to depend on a secular job to make ends meet.

Figure 4.55  
Pastoral Salary Source



As with rural and urban pastors, most small and large-church pastors feel they have a mentor (80.8% small and 78.3% large). Most have social security, though there are fewer small-church pastors covered than large-church pastors (62.4% vs. 80.4%). About the same percentage of small-church pastors (58.5%) and large-church pastors (60.1%) own their own home. As far as pension plan participation, 63.1% of small-church pastors and 51.7% of the large-church pastors *do not* have a pension to help them when they retire.

Educational levels between the two groups showed wide differences at almost all levels. Pastors of large churches were almost twice as likely to have finished High school as small-church pastors (45.5% large vs. 25.4% small). They were also 1.5 times more likely to have completed a Bible Institute degree (38.5% large vs. 27.9% small). The greatest difference between the two groups appeared in the area of university training where twenty-one point seven percent (21.7%) of the large-church pastors claimed to have earned a university degree compared to only six point three percent (6.3%) of small-church pastors. This demonstrates that on the whole, pastors of large churches have a

higher level of formal educational than small-church pastors. It is possible that because most large churches are in urban areas there is more access to educational institutions. Whether these data imply that the churches grew because of the pastors have a higher level of education is out of the scope of this study. It could be that, due to the demands of a growing church, the pastor has had to continue to upgrade his education. Yet another possibility is that the large-church pastor feels a need to continue his education due to social pressures and to present himself as more of a “professional” to his congregation.

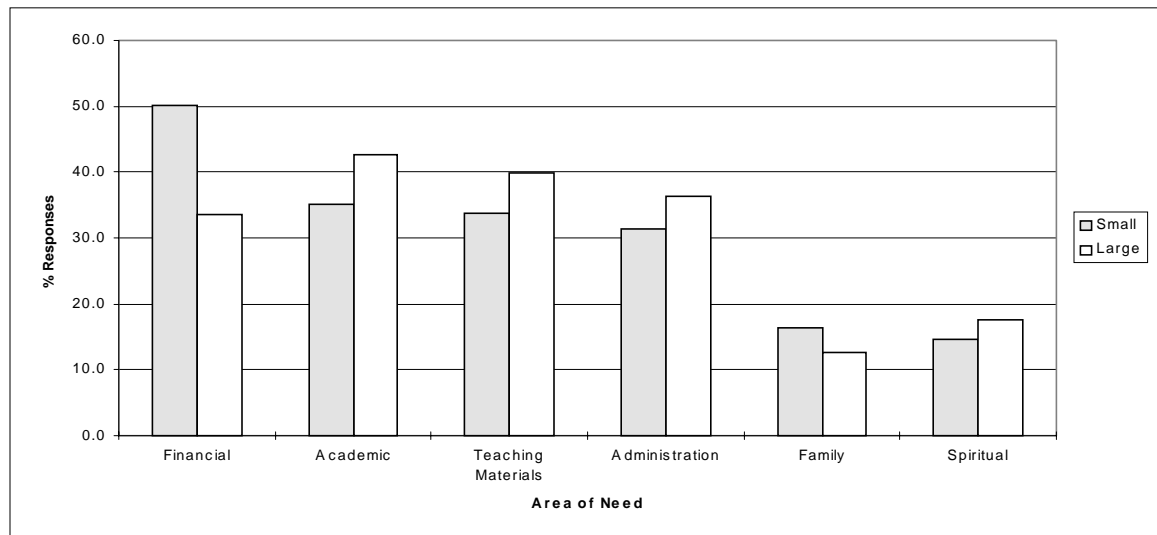
Table 4.9  
Pastor’s Educational Level

Level Achieved	General % (n = 422)	Small % (n = 285)	Large % (n = 138)
School	94.0	83.0	85.0
High School	34.2	25.0	48.0
Bible Institute	33.0	28.0	41.0
University	12.0	6.0	23.0
Seminary	30.6	26.0	37.0
Other	7.3		

Results from the data showed that academic preparation is the number most frequently marked need of pastors from large churches (42.7%) while pastors from small churches indicated it less often (35.2% of responses) than having their financial needs met (50.2%). Having financial needs met was the fourth most frequent area of need indicated by large-church pastors (33.6%). Teaching materials and administrative preparation were more important for large church pastors (39.9% and 36.4% respectively) than the same choices made by pastors from small churches (33.8% and 31.4%). Since so many small-church pastors (47.0%) are living below the poverty line it is not surprising that they would need more help in the area of finances more than large-church pastors.

With so much financial stress it is surprising that the responses for the “family” category were not higher. Perhaps small-church pastors and their families are more accustomed to living on small salaries.

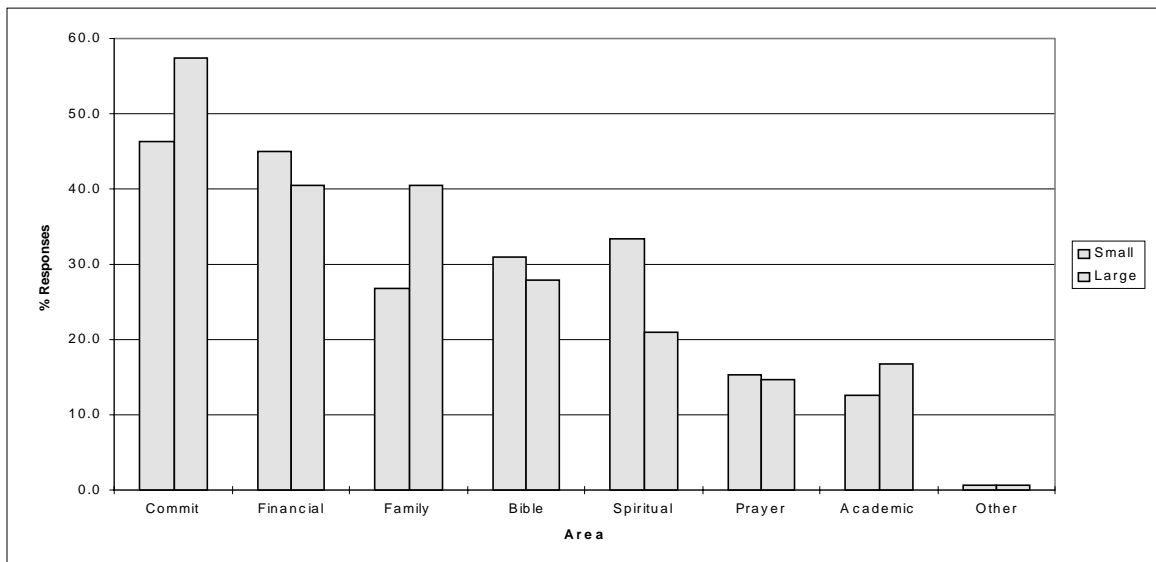
Figure 4.56  
Pastor’s Area of Most Need



The needs that the pastors perceive for their congregations had differing responses in terms of the priorities for their churches. Small-church pastors marked the areas of financial needs (44.9% vs. 40.6%), spiritual development (33.4% vs. 21.0%), , and Bible teaching (31.0% vs. 28.0%) more often than large-church pastors did. Large-church pastors marked commitment (57.3% vs. 46.3%), family needs (40.6% vs. 26.8%), and academic preparation (16.8% vs. 12.5%) as more important. It would seem that pastors of large churches perceive that the people attending their churches have more problems in the areas of commitment and family than do pastors of small churches where perhaps there is more intimacy and accountability. Perhaps because of the pressures of urban life (where there are more large churches) and the increased problem with drugs in the community combine to make addressing the needs of the families more of an issue than in

a small-church setting. Small-church pastors on the other hand, seem to be more concerned for the financial and spiritual well-being of their people. Perhaps because a small church offers more intimate person-to-person contact the pastors are more sensitive to the spiritual side of the congregations needs.

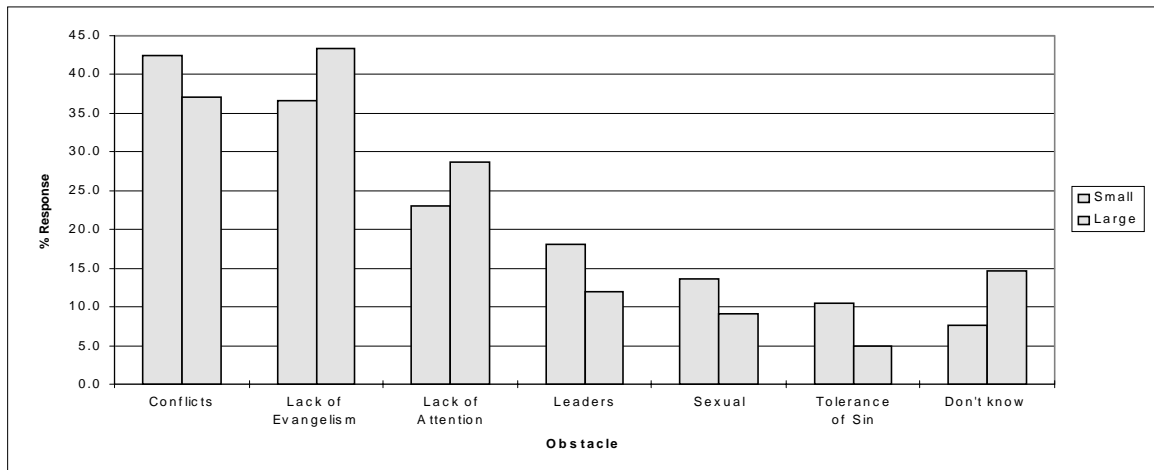
Figure 4.57  
Congregational Needs



For pastors from small churches, the most frequently mentioned obstacle to church growth was conflicts in the church (42.5%). For the pastors of large churches this was second to the need for the church to be evangelizing (43.4%). A lack of personal attention and discipleship was the third most often indicated response in both groups (23.0% small and 28.7% large). Other differences found in the analysis of these data between the two groups included; problems in leadership (18.1% small vs. 11.9% large), sexual sins (13.6% small vs. 9.1% large) and too much tolerance toward sin (10.5% small vs. 4.9% large). It would seem from these data that small-church pastors are more

sensitive to internal conflicts in their churches than are large-church pastors, though both groups see this as a major obstacle to growth. The fact that small-church pastors marked the need for people to be involved in evangelism less frequently than their large-church counterparts may show that small-church pastors have less vision and drive to motivate people into evangelism than do pastors of large churches. Large-church pastors seem to be more aware of the problem that a lack of attention to people can cause to church growth.

Figure 4.58  
Obstacles to Growth



### Summary

In this part significant differences between small-church pastors and large-church pastors were found in the areas of growth ratios, community problems, salary, and educational levels.

Data revealed that prior to 1970 there were about as many small churches being planted in Costa Rica as large ones. Between 1975 to 1979 there were 1.6 small churches being planted to every large church. Currently there are four small churches being planted

to every large one. This demonstrates a clear increase in the number of small churches being started. Of course, all large churches were at one time small churches. What these data may indicate is that there will be more large churches in the future and hence more of a need to train small-church pastors how to minister to larger groups of people.

The ministry environment for small-church pastors is focused on community problems revolving around the family while for large-church pastors there is more concern about the impact of drugs on their communities. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that small-church pastors will seek resources to meet the needs of the families in his community more than will the large-church pastor. The large-church pastor, on the other hand, will seek out information and resources that will help him deal with the problems he perceives to affect his people more. This is very similar to the results found between rural and urban pastors.

Average salaries for small-church pastors fall in the range of \$144.00 to \$184.00 a month while large-church pastors average salaries fall in the range of \$308.00 to \$368.00 which is almost twice as much as the salary for the small-church pastor. Survey data also showed that 47.0% of small-church pastors have salaries that are below the minimum wage set by the government. Clearly the pastors of small churches face more difficulties in the financial areas of their lives.

Survey responses indicated that pastors from large churches are almost twice as likely to have finished high school and almost four times more likely to have a university degree as were small-church pastors. Thus, large-church pastors are generally better educated than small-church pastors. This may mean that more needs to be done to help further the educational opportunities of small-church pastors.

Throughout this section many similarities were found between small church pastors and those from rural churches (i.e. growth, community problems, and finances). Strong similarities also exist between urban church pastors and large church pastors in the same areas. Most likely this is because 87.5% of the churches in Costa Rica are rural, small churches.

Now that we have seen how the ministry circumstances of small-church pastors differ from large-church pastors, the last part of this chapter will present the information gathered from interviews carried out with thirty pastors.