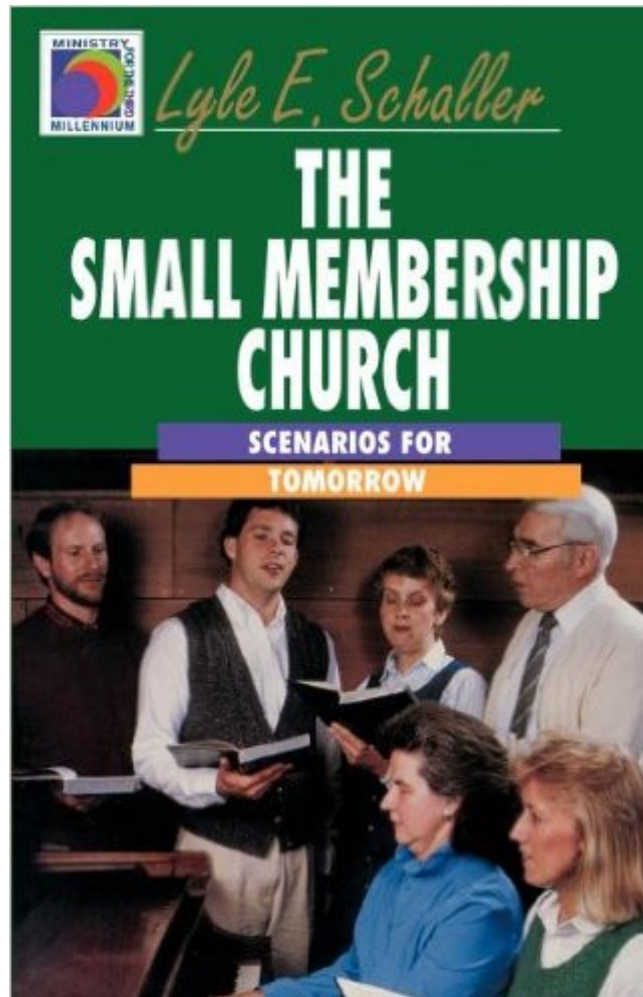


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# The Small Membership Church: Scenarios For Tomorrow (Ministry For The Third Millennium Series)



## Synopsis

For nearly four centuries, the small congregation has been the dominant institutional expression of Protestant Christianity. Meanwhile the societal context for the small Protestant church has changed from supportive to neutral to--in many places--a hostile environment. The small church thrived in a society once dominated by small institutions that were friendly and supportive. But today, small churches cope in a world of large institutions that do not make any effort to be supportive of organized religion. For example, consider the retail chain stores that make no effort to stay closed before noon on Sunday mornings. Lyle Schaller demonstrates that the small membership church has a bright and promising future if the leaders will adapt to new roles in the culture. He suggests many alternative scenarios that can lead to better use of resources and more focused energies in ministry.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Defining small as fewer than a hundred members, Schaller argues that the current societal context has become hostile to small churches. The author points out that small churches, where everyone is known by name, are organized around the principle of loving one's neighbors as opposed to mega-churches which are largely organized around the first great commandment. Many of these small churches average 75 people at worship on a given Sunday and have to rely on bivocational ministers since they do not have the budget for sustaining fulltime leaders. This characteristic is also evidenced in the fact that many small churches model the individual lone-ranger leader rather than

the leadership team style of larger congregations. Schaller points out that many of these small churches are not wholly endangered species and have a promising future in which they can compete with mega-churches by adopting a niche strategy. A niche strategy allows these small churches to overcome the erosion of institutional loyalties and meet the demand for quality. The few that are endangered are those which do not have viable reasons for their existence but continue drifting along in a goalless manner and those that are connected to a polity with authority to close churches. A possible strategy for many small churches is interchurch cooperation with larger churches in their vicinity. By remaining proactive small churches can find a broad array of choices that will ensure their continuity. The success of such choices is depicted in non-denominational mega-churches which model many options for ministry, as opposed to denominational congregations, which incidentally supported the existence small churches, but tend to have narrower options. The book is a good and quick read.

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