

## Signs of Life: Seven Positive Indicators the Church You Are Leading is Still Alive

There is an old dogwood tree in my yard. It has been a beautiful addition in a yard dominated by tall long leaf pines.

Unfortunately, I think it's dead. I first noticed a problem late last fall when the leaves seemed to die prematurely. As spring approaches I'll be looking for any signs of life. I'm not ready to write it off as a victim of drought or disease, but I'm not very hopeful. I really think it's going to end up as firewood.

I'm the transitional pastor of a church that has experienced serious trouble in the recent past. The church has lost many members and is struggling to survive in many ways. Some believe the church is almost dead, if not already dead, a victim of internal conflict and spiritual disease. Others aren't ready to write it off, but aren't very optimistic about its future. I see reasons for hope.

If you're the pastor of a church that seems lifeless or at the point of death, you are surely straining to see any sign of life. Below are 7 positive indicators I have observed that give me reason to be hopeful. You might want to look for similar signs in your church.

- **People seeing and seizing opportunities to be on mission.** When people take the initiative to offer themselves for a specific ministry or mission **opportunity** and not just offer suggestions, that's a good sign.
- **Change without drama.** In a church where division has been more the norm than unity, it gives you hope when a significant change is adopted almost unanimously without the usual drama and with a **spark** of enthusiasm.
- **Unsolicited, unbiased comments from guests.** When people who visit your church make positive comments and offer unsolicited compliments, it makes you think that maybe they sense something good and inviting about the church that the “regulars” might be overlooking.
- **Resources supplied.** In struggling and unhealthy congregations there is never enough people and financial resources. However, resources supplied in time of need gives one cause for believing that God is still at work.
- **A core of courageously committed.** The fringes of the fellowship may be unraveling to some extent, but as long as there is a core of courageous and stubbornly committed, there is hope.



- **Transformed lives.** Maybe there's not a lot of fruit being harvested, but when you see even a few lives being transformed by the power of the Gospel, there's reason to be optimistic.
- **New growth.** When spiritual pruning takes place in a church it's painful. But later when new growth appears, there's reason to rejoice. The growth may not be in terms of great numbers, but in terms of spiritual growth, emerging new leadership, and depth of prayer. That's a sure sign of life.

Source: [churchcentral.com](http://churchcentral.com)