

Congregational Life Cycle

BIRTH

DEATH

Every Living Thing
and System has a
Natural Life Cycle.

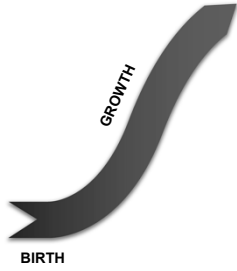
The Cycle Begins at Birth



BIRTH

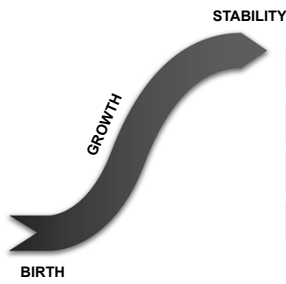
- Potential
- Purpose and Vision
(assumed or stated) — DNA
- Constant Care/Protection

Birth Is Followed by a Period of Growth



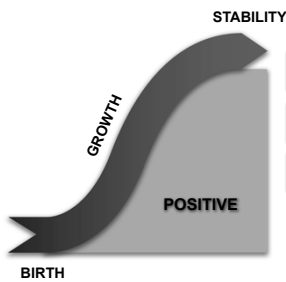
- Energy and Excitement
- Unexpected
- Progress

Growth Is Followed by Stability



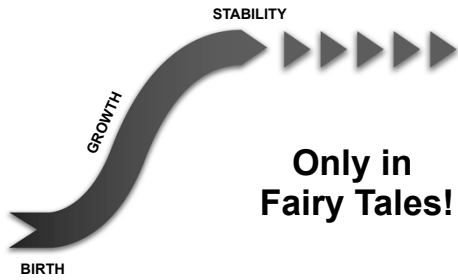
- Fulfillment
- Accomplishment
- Predictability
- Nostalgia

Growth Half of Life Cycle Is a Time of:



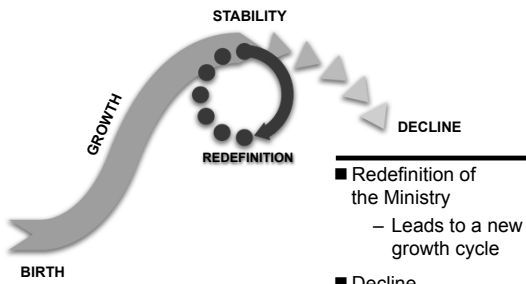
- Vitality
- Health
- Strength

... And They Lived Happily Ever After!



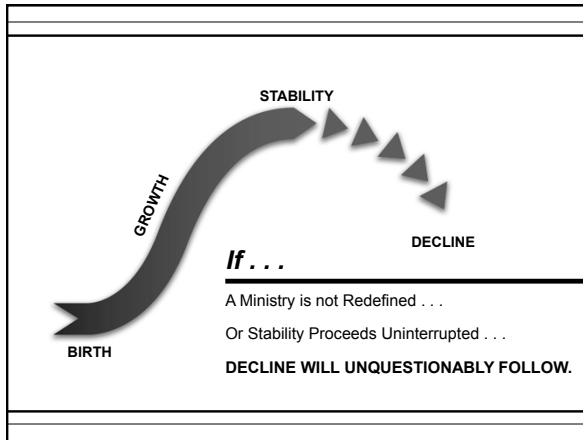
**Only in
Fairy Tales!**

One of Two Things Follows Stability



**Ministry Can Be Re-defined by
Answering These Questions**

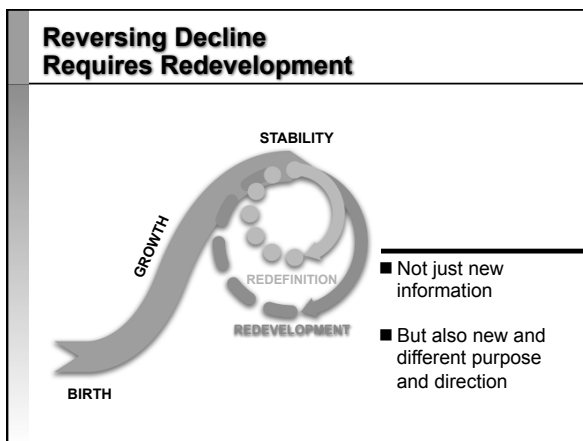
- What was the original vision of the ministry?
- What has been accomplished?
- What is new that was not anticipated?
- Where do we want to see this ministry in three to five years?



Once a ministry is in decline
there is still the possibility
of new life.

—

But the cost of new
life is greater.



Redevelopment

- New information alone will not reverse decline
- A new, different purpose and direction can reverse decline
- New purpose will be experienced by the congregation as significant change, and by some as loss

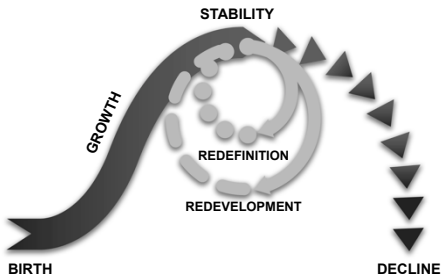
Intervening in decline is difficult.

—
It requires skilled and differentiated leadership.

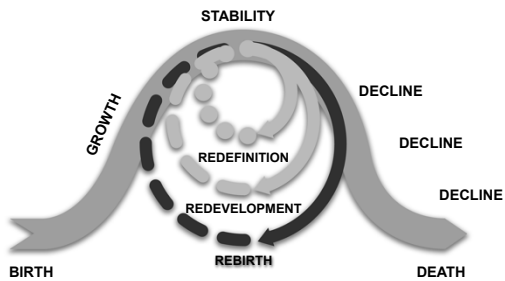
Differentiated Leaders

- Don't require affirmation from the congregation
- Do not change course in response to the discomfort provoked by change

Without Redefinition or Redevelopment, Unchecked Decline Will Only Lead to More Serious Decline



To Reverse Serious Decline Requires Rebirth



To rebirth a seriously **DECLINING** ministry requires *radical* change.

Rebirth will involve a different purpose or ministry.

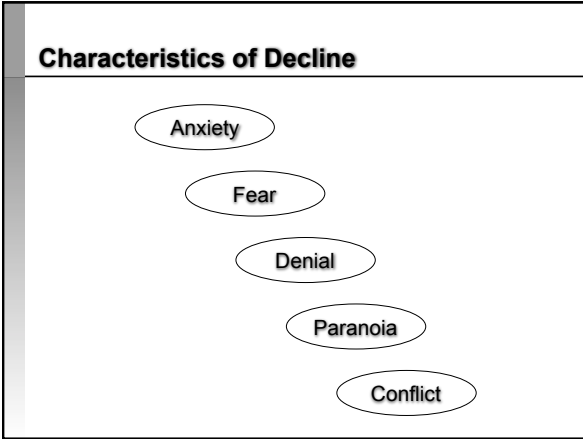
—

It is not just doing the old thing differently, it is doing a new thing. And, perhaps in a different place or with different people.

Without rebirth, decline will lead to death.

Some facts about decline.

As the depth of decline increases, more interruption and letting go is required.



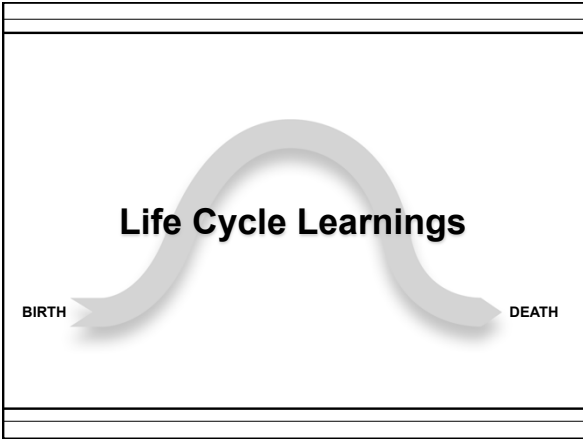
It is the nature of congregational decline to deny the decline as long as possible, to underestimate the decline, and then to *under* respond.

Declining congregations —

- Ignore the congregational cold
- Treat congregational pneumonia with aspirin
- Embalm with penicillin

There is no gain for underestimating decline.
—
There is no penalty for overestimating decline.

Resurrection does not follow denial —
Resurrection (new life) follows death (truth telling)
The questions are:
■ What needs to die?
■ What needs to be let go of?



Life Cycle Learnings

When *Growing*:

■ **Encourage** the Growth

■ **Maximize** the Growth

■ **Resource** the Growth

Life Cycle Learnings

When *Stable*:

■ **Redefine/Revision** the Ministry

■ **Identify the "New Information"**

■ **Use Demographic Data** — Both About the Congregation Itself and the Congregational Context

Life Cycle Learnings

When *Declining*:

Intervene —

■ **Early**

■ **Accurately**

Life Cycle Learnings

When *Dead*:

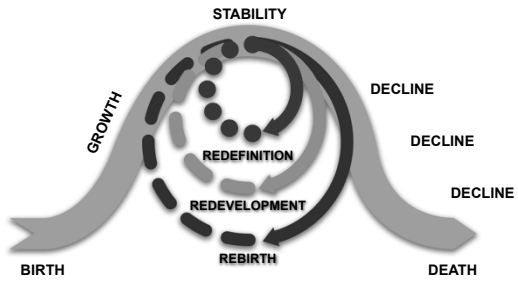
Bury

■ Remember

■ Entrust

■ Let Go

The Congregational Life Cycle





For more information contact us at the
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