NEXT SAGE
CHURCH CATALYSTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Church Catalysts and Vitals

How, when, and if your church should activate its catalysts

Most church leadership teams are not short on effort. Services run, teams serve and the calendar is full, and still it is hard to say whether people are moving anywhere. The answer is usually in the data your church already has, but rarely in the obvious numbers. It sits underneath them, in the Church Catalysts.

The big idea

DEFINITION

A Church Catalyst is a measure, built by joining two or more sets of your data, that shows one place your church can act and that one leader can own.

Weekend attendance tells you the result. It can't tell you what to do. A Church Catalyst passes five tests:

1. **It's a rate or a ratio, not a total.** Weekend attendance is a result. The share of guests who reach a fourth visit is a catalyst.
2. **It joins data that normally lives apart,** such as your church management system and your giving platform.
3. **You can explain what it changes:** if this moves, more people take a next step.
4. **One leader can own it,** and your church picks the method.
5. **It has a trend and two forecasts:** where it lands on its current path, and where it lands if you activate it. The gap is the case for activating it.

If, when and how to activate one

IF **Start with the Church Vitals**

Participation Trend comes first: is participation moving at the pace you want? A Church Vital out of range, like Available Space or Leader Span, is a constraint. Address it before activating a catalyst that would push it further out.

WHEN **Measure weekly**

Church data moves by the week and the season. Most catalysts are read over a 13-week window, so a real change shows within a quarter. The full picture lands on Sunday night.

HOW **One owner, one goal, two forecasts**

Name one owner, set a goal and a date, track it every week and review it every month. Your church picks the method. The Season Plan shows whether it is working.

2–3 catalysts at a time is usually right. Sometimes four. **Never five.** Every catalyst spends something real: leaders' time, money and relational equity with staff, volunteers or the congregation. Activate one only when the gain clearly outweighs that cost.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE · ILLUSTRATIVE

53% → 31%
Sunday adults who serve

1.8 → 3.2
People on the weekend for each volunteer

–9%
Weekend attendance in a year

In our fictional example church, few new volunteers joined and the same ones were scheduled more often. The calendar stayed full, so it looked busy. Serving Load showed the strain before the weekend fell, and then guests stopped coming back. Its Season Plan, led by Serving Connection, puts the weekend about 417 people ahead of its current path by October 2027. A forecast, not a promise.

Data shows participation, not faith. No person gets a score. Giving counts as yes or no for each person, and amounts appear only as church-wide totals.

The 13 Church Catalysts

Each one answers one question about how people move in your church.

NEXT STEPS

SR **Sunday Rhythm** 50%
Of the people we see on Sundays, how many come consistently?

GC **Group Connection** 61%
How many of our Sunday people are in a small group?

SC **Serving Connection** 53%
How many of our Sunday people serve?

GV **Giving Connection** 62%
How many of our Sunday people are in a household that gives consistently?

MOVEMENT

SF **Steps Forward** 15%
Each month, what share of our people move to deeper participation?

SG **Second Gift** 60%
Do first-time givers give again?

REACH

OR **Outreach** 2.2 times
When we rally to invite, how many first-time guests come?

PV **Plan a Visit** 5%
Of local people who look us up, how many take a step toward coming?

FF **First to Fourth** 45%
Do first-time guests reach a fourth visit?

FD **First 90 Days** 19%
Do new people find a place here in their first three months?

WB **Welcome Back** 47%
When people drift, do they return?

LEADERS

BL **Bench to Leader** 30%
Are the people who are ready to lead becoming leaders?

EVENTS

EB **Event Bridge** 21%
Are events followed by a next step?

The number beside each name is what a thriving church sees. It may read as aspirational, but we've seen thriving churches stay at these levels for long stretches. It always takes focus.

The 10 Church Vitals

Each has a healthy range, and both ends are a problem. Your own history sets the real ranges.

CHURCH VITAL	STARTING RANGE	TOO LOW MEANS	TOO HIGH MEANS
Participation Is participation moving, and are people settling in and going deeper?			
Participation Trend	10% to 35%	Shrinking or stalled	Moving faster than groups, teams and leaders can absorb
Front Door and Back Door	4 to 10	The back door is gaining on the front door	New people arriving faster than they can be connected
Full Participation	15% to 30%	Few people reach what the church hopes for	Rare. It may mean few new people are arriving.
Room Is there room for the next person, on Sunday and in a group?			
Available Space	50% to 80%	The room feels empty	No seat or kids' space for the next guest
Group Room	65% to 90%	Groups too small to last	No room for the next person who says yes
Leaders and volunteers Are leaders and volunteers carrying a load they can sustain?			
Leader Span	6 to 10	More leaders than groups and teams need	Leaders stretched too thin to know their people
Leader Participation	70% to 95%	Even the church's own leaders aren't doing what it hopes everyone will	Rarely a problem
Serving Load	3 to 7 times in 13 weeks	Volunteers not used enough to feel needed	Burnout, and the next volunteer to step back
Foundations Can the church rely on its giving and on its data?			
Giving Dependence	50% to 75%	Rarely a problem	Losing a few households would threaten the budget
Data Coverage	35% to 70%	The picture misses most of the room	Evidence credited too widely, or headcounts too low

Nine churches, nine Season Plans

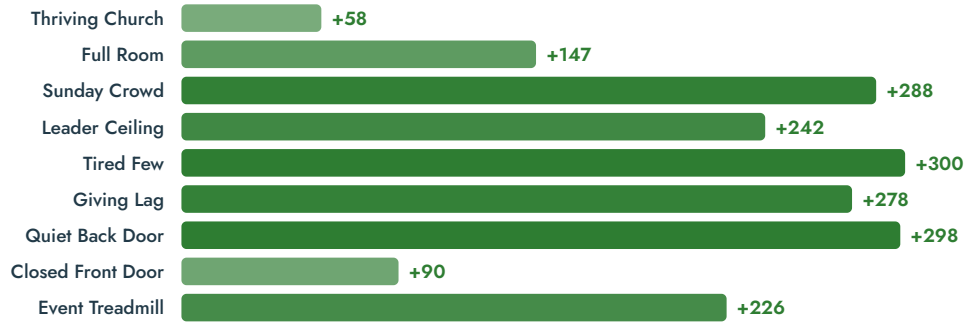
Sage Ridge Community Church, run nine ways.

We built two years of data for Sage Ridge, about 1.7 million records across nine versions, shaped by patterns from real churches. The Thriving Church sets a high bar on every catalyst. Each of the other eight faces one condition, kept narrow so it is easy to see. A real church may be facing more than one. For each, we forecast 12 months on its current path, picked the catalysts its numbers point to and forecast the same 12 months with its Season Plan.

CHURCH	WHAT'S HAPPENING	SEASON PLAN	CURRENT PATH	WITH THE PLAN	ADULTS ADDED
Thriving Church	A thriving church, up a little over 20% a year.	BL FD SR	2,431	2,904	+58
Full Room	Out of seats and kids' space, so guests don't come back.	FF FD SG	1,607	1,857	+147
Sunday Crowd	Most people stop at Sunday.	GC SC BL FD	1,482	1,911	+288
Leader Ceiling	People are ready to lead and almost none become leaders.	BL SC FD	1,887	2,228	+242
Tired Few	The same volunteers carry every Sunday, and are stepping off.	SC BL FD	1,361	1,778	+300
Giving Lag	First-time givers rarely give again.	SG GV	1,659	1,902	+278
Quiet Back Door	Involved people drift out while guests keep the number steady.	WB SF GC BL	1,569	1,865	+298
Closed Front Door	Healthy inside, with few new people finding the church.	OR PV FF	1,405	1,695	+90
Event Treadmill	A full calendar of events that don't lead to a group or a team.	EB GC SC FD	1,427	1,788	+226

Average weekend attendance in October 2027, adults and everyone under 18. Adults added is adults in full participation (in a group, serving and giving) with the Season Plan, against its current path. Catalyst codes match page 2. Illustrative.

ADULTS IN FULL PARTICIPATION ADDED BY EACH SEASON PLAN, NEXT 12 MONTHS



WHAT THE NINE CHURCHES SHOW

1. **Conditions compound.** A church that doesn't move people into groups and serving runs short of volunteers, then of guests who stay, then hits a ceiling.
2. **Serving Connection.** It is the strongest catalyst in four churches. It lifts the volunteer limit, raises how often people attend and raises giving.
3. **The same catalyst, two results.** Outreach restores The Closed Front Door and would hurt The Full Room.
4. **Longer than a year.** Some conditions take longer than a year. The Quiet Back Door's plan slows the loss. It doesn't stop it in 12 months.

How we work with a church

We do the work first.

1. **A Discovery Meeting**
   In 45 minutes we learn your church and agree what data to use. A mutual NDA is signed before any data is shared.
2. **We do the work first**
   We connect your data and build your Season Plan at no cost.
3. **A Reveal Meeting**
   In one hour we show you your church in its own data: the big picture, the next steps, the catalysts with the most potential and what a plan could do.
4. **Then you decide**
   If you go ahead, we finalize your Season Plan with your leadership team and launch it live, on a 12-month agreement. If you don't, we delete your data.
5. **A steady rhythm**
   We read what moved with you every month, and choose the catalysts again each season.

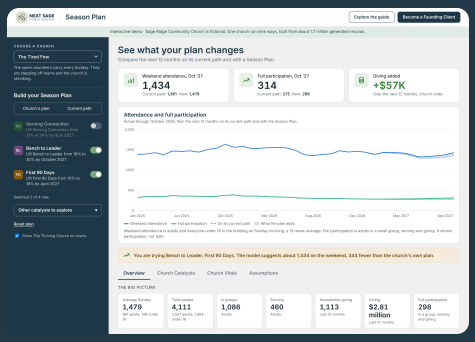
YOUR DATA STAYS YOURS

It is stored only in your church's own private Quickbase app, encrypted at rest and in transit. Leaders see counts. Name lists are for the staff your church authorizes. We never import notes, prayer requests or care records, and we never show or share your data with another church or any other organization.

IN THE SEASON PLAN

Try a plan

Switch any catalyst on or off, up to four, and the next 12 months redraw: weekend attendance, full participation, giving and every Church Vital. It is how a leadership team sees why one catalyst belongs in this season's plan and another can wait.



Where to start

You don't need all 13 Church Catalysts. You need the two or three your church should activate this season, read often enough to see them move.

Become a Founding Client

Up to 10 churches get the $900 setup waived and three months of service at no cost, a $1,950 value.

Founding Client Program

Try a Season Plan

Choose one of the nine churches, switch catalysts on and off and see the next 12 months.

demo.nextsagecatalysts.com

Talk with Bruce

A 45-minute Discovery Meeting on Google Meet, at no cost. 224-770-0751

Request a Discovery Meeting

Illustrative example. Sage Ridge Community Church and all its data are fictional, built from patterns in real churches. Data shows participation, not faith. Forecasts are projections, not promises. © 2026 Next Sage Group, LLC. Next Sage Church Catalysts is a line of Next Sage Group.