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Depth Perception

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[Terrence Daniels](#)

offers keen insight into financial and accounting problem-solving that organization's face.

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A Denominational Future

I received an e-mail from a national women's conference. Their special representative had singled me and seven other pastors out for a VERY SPECIAL VISIT, where I would learn firsthand how my congregation's women's ministry could maximize its impact. I simply needed to indicate which hour I would be available (all visits needed to start on the hour and last thirty minutes or so).

It was easy to correlate this VERY SPECIAL invitation to the number of conversations I've had recently with prominent church leadership thinkers who declare that denominations are dead or dying. Indeed some are. Some, however, are retooling as competent resource providers and gateways to expertise to help congregations and leaders remain healthy.

I believe it is only a matter of time before the new church associations with the multi-site mega-churches at their epicenters get into pastoral placement and credentialing services. They already offer national conventions, international missions programs and publishing houses.

One of the giant killers slaying denominations is the need to keep this same kind of infrastructure funded. The mission shifted from the mission to sustaining program. Interaction with denominational officials became centered on what a local congregation would do to feed the denominational beast. The questions "*what can we do to help you congregation reach its community for Christ?*" stopped being asked. Why will the new church associations with their leadership events, women's conferences, short-term missions programs and publishing ventures be any different?

The e-mail I received indicates someone wants to visit who bears only a transitory and institutionally self-serving interest in our congregation's welfare. Their hope is we will spend more on a three day women's conference than we give to missions, our denomination and local ministry on an annual basis. And, oh yes, more than we spend on Christian Education, choir music and women's ministry.

So: two concluding observations.

1. Denominations are not disappearing altogether. They are, however, re-arranging with new players entering a constricting marketplace. Look for more overlap and stronger competitive behaviors in the future between denominations and service providers.

2. Denominations as resource centers are competent and economically sustainable models in comparison to expensive and event driven, super-hyped ministry products with three day shelf lives.

-mark I vincent

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