Economic Downturn Boosts Church Growth

A study of past recession cycles found that the growth rate among evangelical churches dramatically increased while mainline Protestant churches declined.

[] A study last year by economics professor David Beckworth showed that during each recession cycle between 1968 and 2004, the rate of growth among evangelical churches grew by 50 percent, while mainline Protestant churches continued their steady decline. With the economy sinking, more churches are now verifying this trend and seeing remarkable growth *The New York Times*.

“It's a wonderful time, a great evangelistic opportunity for us,” said A.R. Bernard, founder and senior pastor of the Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, New York to the *Times*. “When people are shaken to the core, it can open doors.”

The key, many pastors say, is staying relevant with the average churchgoer's biggest concern today-which means offering more insight, guidance and hands-on assistance on money matters. To that extent, churches nationwide have begun financial management classes and opened food pantries, while pastors are delivering more sermons on what the economic downturn means.

“We need to leverage this moment, because every Christian revival in this country's history has come off a period of rampant greed and fear,” said Seventh Day Adventist televangelist Don MacKintosh according to the *The New York Times*. “That's what we're in today-the time of fear and greed.” –