

5 Reasons Why Smaller Churches Are Making a Comeback

Smaller churches are poised to make a comeback.

I'm serious. I see too many signs and indicators to believe otherwise.

For certain, I know the bad news. The median size of a church has declined from around 100 to 70 in worship attendance in a decade. That means one-half of all-American congregations have fewer than 70 in worship attendance.

And I am aware that more people are attending larger churches today than they were 20, 15, 10 and 5 years ago. To be clear, I am aware that around 8,000 churches close every year.

Yes, I know those facts. But I feel the winds of change. Before we look at those change factors, let's look at the size of churches in America. I cannot be absolutely certain about these numbers, but there are a lot of good bodies of research by some good organizations (National Congregations Study, Faith Communities Today 2015, 2014 Religious Landscape Study 2014 by Pew Research, and others).

Smaller Standard: 0 to 49 worship attendance; 40% of churches in America.

Larger Standard: 50 to 124 worship attendance; 27% of churches in America.

Mid: 125 to 249 worship attendance; 18% of churches in America.

Large: 250 to 499 worship attendance; 8 % of churches in America.

Very Large: 500 to 999 worship attendance; 4% of churches in America.

Mid Mega: 1,000 to 1,999 in worship attendance; 2% of churches in America.

Mega: 2,000-plus in worship attendance; Less than 1/2 of 1% of churches in America.

Two-thirds of churches have an attendance under 125. The smaller church is the norm, not the exception. And though the news has not been that promising for smaller churches in recent years, I do see some very promising signs for the years ahead. Why do I make such an apparently contrarian statement? Here are five reasons:

1. **There is a revitalization of revitalization.** The increased emphasis on church revitalization portends well for all churches, particularly smaller churches.
2. **More pastors are content in Christ at smaller churches.** They don't see their present assignment and call as a stepping stone to something bigger. They love their churches and the communities they serve.
3. **The church replanting movement will help many struggling smaller churches.** Instead of closing, these churches will be given new life with the leadership and resources of another church.
4. **There is a renewed commitment to neighborhood churches.** Those churches were once the witness and ministry of Christ in a very specific area. There is a renewal of that emphasis.
5. **Smaller church pastors no longer need to feel isolated.** There are new networks and informal groups connecting these pastors. Indeed, we are honored that over 1,600 church leaders connect with us at Church Answers.

I am encouraged. Pastors, leaders and members of standard churches should be encouraged as well. I can't wait to see

what God will continue to do in these churches.

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This article was originally published at on July 8, 2018.