

8 Trends in American Churches in 2016

I have been writing on trends in churches for two decades. I certainly don't have a perfect record with my predictions, but my overall record is pretty good.

My methodology is simple: I observe emerging issues in some churches and extrapolate them into major trends.

This year I take this approach with a higher level of confidence than previous years. I have seen most of the following issues grow month by month in 2015, so I don't have to be the brightest person in the world to project them as major trends in 2016.

Here are the first eight trends. Later, I will write about eight more:

1. Church security as the fastest growing ministry. Shootings in churches and sex abuse of children mandate this unfortunate trend. No church can afford to be without serious security measures, policies and equipment. It will evolve into a major church ministry.

2. Decrease in worship center size and capacity. The large worship gathering is not as popular as it has been. Through multiple services and multiple sites, churches will follow this preference with smaller capacity worship centers.

3. Increase in successfully revitalized churches. More church leaders sense a call to lead revitalized churches. Because of this desire and intentionality, we will see more success stories of churches that have experienced significant revitalization.

4. Rapid growth of coaching ministries for pastors and church

staff. The current trend is anecdotal, but it will soon be verified and obvious. Pastors and staff who have the humility to be led, and the willingness to invest resources in coaching are becoming the most effective church leaders.

5. Increase in the numbers of churches in gentrified communities. Thousands of older urban communities are becoming revitalized. Churches are following the increased numbers of residents to these communities.

6. Increased emphasis on practical ministry training. Church leaders in America have seen a much needed two-decade renewal of training in classical disciplines and doctrine. That need remains, but more leaders are crying for training in leadership, relational skills, and other practical ministries.

7. Increasing emphasis on groups in churches. Church leaders are getting it. When church members are a part of some type of group, such as a small group or Sunday school class, they attend more faithfully, evangelize more frequently, and give more abundantly.

8. Fewer segregated churches. For most of American history, 11:00 a.m. on Sunday was the most segregated hour of the week. That is changing. A church that is not racially and ethnically diverse will soon become the exception instead of the norm.

Stay tuned for eight more trends for 2016. {eoa}

Thom S. Rainer is the president of LifeWay Christian Resources. For the original article, visit [.](#)