

Look for These 7 Church Trends in 2020

Offering trends are a worthless exercise if they have no connection to reality.

For over 15 years, I have suggested trends in churches that may become movements of reality. On an occasional basis, I review all of my prognostications to see if they came close to reality in just a few years forward. So far, my prediction accuracy rate has been almost 90%, depending on how long you allow the trend to become a reality. For me, three years is the time frame by which I usually judge my accuracy.

To be clear, I am not the brightest bulb in the chandelier. Not close. But because we receive voluminous amounts of information from churches at Church Answers, I am able to see thousands of “dots.” I am then able to connect those dots and often see a trend in the making.

My list is not exhaustive but, as we head into 2020, I see seven major trends developing. They are likely to change the landscape of churches in the next few years.

- 1. Worship sizes will grow significantly smaller.** Please don't mistake this trend to be synonymous with attendance decline. Even in growing churches, we are likely to see smaller worship gatherings. The growing churches will obviously have more services, venues and sites. This trend is congruent with the next trend.
- 2. There will be a significant increase in the number of worship services offered at times other than Sunday morning. In most communities, one-third of the workforce has to work on Sunday morning.** That number includes some of your most active church members who have to work one or two Sunday mornings a month. We accommodated the

farmers well with 11 a.m. worship on Sunday morning in the 1800s. We are due for some major changes 150 years later.

3. **Church facilities will undergo a dramatic transformation.** The two preceding trends lead to this third trend. With both smaller worship-gathering and more service options, the need for large worship centers or sanctuaries will diminish greatly. The “big box” worship center is a Baby Boomer phenomenon that is disappearing. Another major change in church facilities will be the sharing of those buildings and rooms with other organizations, even secular organizations.
4. **Attendance will become a greater emphasis.** For years, we have seen an aversion toward church leaders stressing attendance. Some critics say church leaders focus on numbers too much. Others say the church is wherever the people are. The result has been a diminished commitment to attend regularly. Why should someone attend if attendance is really not that important? We are now seeing a reversal of that attitude. More church leaders realize that the gathered church was a vitally important part of church life in the New Testament. It should not be less so today.
5. **Evangelism will return to its rightful place of importance and priority.** Too many churches have been doing good things while they are neglecting the priority of evangelism. Good becomes the enemy of great. In fact, many church leaders and members think they are evangelistic simply because they have community-invited events. Evangelism is the explicit sharing of the gospel message in the power of the Holy Spirit. Evangelism will return to its place of prominence in many churches.
6. **Fewer pastors and church staff members will be compensated full-time wages.** There are many factors contributing to this reality. Only one of them is related to declining church budgets. Indeed, a number of pastors and church staff will choose the bi-vocational

or co-vocational option.

- 7. Fewer churches will align exclusively with denominations.** Some of the churches will leave their denominational alignment altogether. But more of these churches will see their respective denomination as but one of many ministry partnerships. They will align with and fund multiple organizations and networks.

As we move into a new year, let me again thank you for being on the front lines of ministry. We at Church Answers are grateful to God to serve you and work alongside you. May you see the abundance of God's blessings in 2020. {eoa}

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