

The Rise of Mini-Denomination Congregations and 7 More 2016 Church Trends

In a previous post, I shared trends one to eight. Today, I conclude with trends nine to 16. Here is the introduction I wrote to the earlier post:

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 trends nine through 16:

9. The rise of the mini-denomination church. This trend is an acceleration of the increased number of multisite churches. As churches grow with four or more sites, they will take on some of the characteristics of a denomination.

10. Increased pastoral tenure. For a number of reasons, the tenure of a pastor at a given church will increase. More pastors will make it to the five-year mark where the most fruitful years of ministry typically begin.

11. Rise of alternative ministry placement organizations. Old and existing systems of how churches find prospective pastors and staff are falling apart. They are being replaced with effective and independent ministry search organizations.

12. Increase in the number of millennials who are Christians. I am projecting the number to increase from 15 percent of the generation to 18 percent of the generation. That is an increase of 2.3 million millennials who will become believers in 2016.

13. Accelerated decline of 100,000 American congregations. Historically, American congregations have been tenacious and survived beyond most expectations. That reality is no longer true. Ineffective churches will decline rapidly as churchgoers are unwilling to be a part of congregations that are not making a difference.

14. Churches no longer viewed favorably by many governmental units. As a consequence, it will become increasingly difficult for churches to expand their physical facilities or to be able to hold functions in the community.

15. More bivocational pastors and staff. This trend is increasingly becoming the result of choices by pastors and staff, rather than financial limitations of congregations.

16. Dramatic changes in senior adult ministries. The baby boomers will not participate in the way most churches do senior adult ministry. They will force change, particularly from the entertainment model to an activist model.

In many ways, I see 2016 as a pivotal year for thousands of congregations. Unfortunately, many church leaders and church members will elect not to change anything. Those congregations will be among the 100,000 rapidly declining churches.

But for other churches, new opportunities abound. For decades, churches could choose a path of modest to no change and do OK. That is not the case today. For those congregations that are eager and willing to face the culture in God's power and strength, they will likely see incredible opportunities for ministry and growth.

It is becoming that simple.

Change or die.

I look forward to hearing from you.{eo}

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