

Metro Church Mega Growth Fulfills 15-Year-Old Prophecy

Metro Church has come a long way in a short time, overcoming obstacles that have held down many other churches in New England. A year ago at Easter time, the Marlborough, church was seemingly stuck, with little-to-no growth in more than five years.

Heading into this Easter, however, Metro Church is now the fastest-growing church in Massachusetts.

The church is preparing for record numbers in attendance this week, thanks to God's grace, the **evangelistic** equivalent of an Easter egg hunt, and a laser focus on being as relevant as an empty tomb on Resurrection Sunday.

"Contrary to popular belief, rapid growth in a church is possible in New England," Don Braswell, senior pastor of Metro Church, told Charisma News. "We made a decision to no longer let trends and tradition define our church. We embraced a growth strategy birthed in prayer, and it was as if God was just waiting for us as a church to step out by faith."

Based in a region known as a "graveyard" for Christian ministries, Metro Church has experienced 53 percent growth in church attendance in just the last six months, reaching as many as 400 people in attendance in a single week. Recently, the church had to add a second service on Sunday morning to accommodate the increasing demand.

Not bad for a non-denominational church once limited by an all-too-common 200-member barrier that was seemingly insurmountable. Braswell cited research that estimates 85 percent of U.S. churches have fewer than 200 members.

God started to provide signs of oncoming growth at Metro

Church after last year's Easter Sunday, a day when the church overflowed with people seeking God or at least seeking answers to life's challenges. It wasn't long until unusual things started to happen.

For example, about six months ago, the church leadership team moved dozens of children into a different room before the beginning of the service for a special time of children's ministry and was expecting to see empty seats in the main sanctuary. Instead, all the previously vacated seats were surprisingly filled with 50 new people.

"I always knew Metro Church would experience an avalanche," Nadine Tanoury, who has been attending the church for more than a decade, told Charisma News. "The surprise—more excitement than anything—came in the timing. We have prayed and believed for years and now we are seeing the answer."

Like virtually all other Bible-based churches in Massachusetts, if five new people come to a service on a Sunday, it is a major advancement—never mind 50 new people!

Doors have opened for Metro Church.

For example, Metro Church is the only church in Massachusetts that Joel Osteen Ministries recommends on its website page that points people to a local church outside the reach of Houston-based Lakewood Church, the biggest church in the United States. Joel Osteen Ministries invited Braswell on stage at the Osteen's "Night of Hope" in Boston last year, which helped expand church's visibility.

Beyond this affiliation with well-known and successful ministries outside the region, increasing evidence points to the Holy Spirit being up to something bigger and very specific for Massachusetts residents through Metro Church.

Metro Church has seen an increase in miracles and answered prayer—people being healed of cancer and muscular dystrophy,

marriages being saved, families being restored and unemployed people getting new jobs. Moreover, the hearts of men and women have been changing as a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit being given free reign within Metro Church. A man covered in tattoos once cried after a service, uttering "I met Jesus today."

Indeed, several factors have contributed to the surge in the number of people who are encountering God at Metro Church, not the least of which is evangelism.

The church's leadership and creative team developed innovative ministry tools to help all members carry out the Great Commission without a sense of guilt for not doing enough.

These tools included a "Who's In Your Wallet?" outreach card; a bold campaign called (Seeing. Uniting. Reaching. Giving. Enjoying.) accompanied by collateral, bracelets and videos; free digital photos of families on Easter; and a simplified practice for church members to simply "tell your story."

"Once the amazing, well-intentioned people in our church really grasped that they don't have to be overly religious or be Bible thumpers to facilitate an outreach movement, they started to relax and simply tell their story, and God began connecting people to Himself through these simple accounts of God's goodness," Braswell says. "Communicating one's personal experience is uncomplicated and requires no theological prowess. Every believer can do that. By doing so, we fulfill the Great Commission and God's vision for Metro Church."

The church has expanded its footprint and influence locally through multimedia, the Internet and cable television. Metro Church is now also on 30 community cable access television stations across Massachusetts—an anomaly in New England.

It has taken more than 25 years for the rapid growth to unfold at Metro Church, but it doesn't exactly come as a total surprise to long-time members.

Fifteen years ago, Frank Houston, the father of the well-known **Hillsong Church** senior pastor Brian Houston, introduced Pastor Don and Nita Braswell in his church the day prior to the Hillsong Conference in Sydney, Australia, suddenly stopped and said **prophetically**, “One day, Don and Nita, not right now, but in time, your church will be mega.”

Braswell says that he believes the fulfillment of this vision for Metro Church is beginning to happen.

“2011 was the year of opportunities for our church. We pulled together. We implemented best practices in innovative ministry. We told our stories. Now in 2012 we are launching out with God impressions—those gentle, internal nudges that the Lord uses to guide us. Deep down inside, the people of Massachusetts are yearning for the reality of the Holy Spirit,” says Braswell, noting that he sees this region in the Northeast being transformed from a graveyard for Christian ministries into a new birthplace and what ultimately will be a launching pad.