

Study: Fastest-Growing, Largest Churches Share Common Ground

Worship locations at multiple sites. Breaking into smaller groups during the week. Serving the local community.

Those are the strategies that many of the 100 largest and fastest-growing churches in America are pursuing, according to *Outreach* 100. *Outreach* magazine partnered with Lifeway Research to survey more than 25,000 churches to compile the list of the 100 biggest and fastest growing congregations.

According to the study, 75 of the 100 churches on the "Largest" list reported that they are using a multisite approach to ministry. Of those 75 churches, 19 have two campuses, while the remaining 56 have three or more campuses. Among the 100 "Fastest-Growing" churches, 59 are multisite, with 38 churches on the list having three or more sites. Four in 10 of the Fastest-Growing churches are meeting in a single location.

"It appears that once churches reach a certain level of growth, they are choosing to expand via satellite campuses," says LifeWay Research President Ed Stetzer. "This annual profile is an opportunity to see things that benefit churches of every size, shape and location. It's also helpful for us to see what these churches have in common, what kinds of strategies God seems to be using across the board in getting the Gospel to unbelievers."

The 2011 Largest list includes churches with an attendance of more than 5,994, while this year's Fastest-Growing list includes churches with attendance greater than 1,000. That's a numerical gain of 249 or more; and a percentage gain of at least 6.5 percent. Almost half (47) of the Largest churches

identify themselves as “nondenominational.”

The state with the most churches on the “Fastest-Growing” list is Texas, with 11. California has nine, followed by Florida (eight), Arizona (seven) and Georgia (six). The youngest church on the Fastest-Growing list is Transformation Church, Fort Mill, S.C. (No. 14), founded in 2010. The oldest church is Huntsville First United Methodist Church, Huntsville, Ala. (No. 74), founded in 1808.

Here is a list of the top 5 Fastest-Growing U.S. churches:

1. Richmond Outreach Center, Richmond, Va., Geronimo Aguilar
2. Elevation Church, Charlotte, N.C., Steven Furtick
3. Real Life Church, Valencia, Calif., Rusty George
4. The Potter’s House Church of Denver, Denver, Colo., E. Christopher Hill
5. Christ’s Church of the Valley, Peoria, Ariz., Donald J. Wilson

Here is a list of the top 5 Largest U.S. churches:

1. Lakewood Church, Houston, Texas, Joel Osteen (43,500)
2. North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, Ga., Andy Stanley (27,429)
3. Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Ill., Bill Hybels (24,377)
4. Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Ky., Dave Stone (20,801)
5. Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif., Rick Warren (19,742)