

10 Traits of Effective Churches During the Global Pandemic

In the past few years, the global pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of many local churches. Friends from around the world have told me that many churches have closed their doors for good.

Although most churches have not returned to their pre-pandemic attendance numbers, some have remained effective during the crisis. As I pondered why some churches remained effective, I came up with 10 traits:

1. Effective churches did not center their ministry on a Sunday meeting. Some churches were already functioning as a family of families with much contact and interaction during the week. Other churches (pre-pandemic) focused all of their ministries on Sunday, and when that was taken away during the lockdown, they lost these ministries. Consequently, we are called to plant churches that function as a family of families, instead of merely focusing on Sunday gatherings.

2. Effective churches adapted their methods commensurate with the challenge. The only thing that never changes in this life is that change is always inevitable. Influential churches are constantly adapting to their environment. Thus, based on what is going on in society, they change their communication and ministry methods even though the gospel's message never changes.

3. Effective churches were disciple making churches. Jesus never told us to make new converts but to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). A disciple is a disciplined Christ follower who puts the kingdom of God, with their time, talents and treasures, first. Hence, a church replete with disciples

continued to thrive despite the global challenges.

4. Effective churches already had online giving platforms.

Years ago, I made sure our church adapted our giving to an online platform. I did this despite the objections of a few of our older staff members because I knew the next trend of transactions would primarily be online. I reasoned this would also ensure that when people are away on vacation or unable to attend church services, they would still be able to give faithfully. Consequently, churches that adapted to this new financial trend, before the pandemic lockdown, already had the systems needed for monetary sustainability.

5. Effective churches already had relationship equity and community.

Local churches with a lot of personal ministry and relationships never skipped a beat during the lockdown because most of the members were already doing life together. Consequently, because they were already emotionally connected during the lockdown, they just continued to relate through any means necessary.

6. Effective churches had apostolic and prophetic visionary leadership.

Jesus chose 12 disciples to initiate His global movement because God equipped them to be entrepreneurs who adapted and multiplied in various situations. Ergo, those graced by Jesus with apostolic ministry DNA view every crisis as a challenge and opportunity for new growth (Eph. 4:11). Prophetically inclined leaders as futurists are prescient, analyze the times in which they live and understand what to do (1 Chr. 12:32). Consequently, local churches and movements that were led by apostolic and prophetic leadership had the greatest ability to navigate through the global crisis.

7. Effective churches cared for the personal needs of their people.

Despite the lockdown, many of the influential churches I know of stayed connected to and ministered to the needs of their most “at risk” people. Those afflicted with COVID had food and goods dropped to their doorstep. Churches that did

not minister to the personal needs of the flock lost many after the lockdown was over.

8. Effective churches knew well the condition of their flock. Proverbs 27:23-27 says, "Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations." Churches that were able to navigate through the global crisis (which included political and social unrest) already knew well the worldview and demographic of their congregation. Thus, the lead pastor knew what trigger points to avoid during preaching and was able to deal sensitively and guide the flock towards biblical balance during unsettling and controversial times. Pastors ignorant of the worldview of their congregation triggered anger and sowed division in their churches with unwise preaching, assumptions and declarations.

9. Effective churches were not over-leveraged in debt to a huge facility. Many churches with huge edifices focused on garnering large crowds were often over-leveraged with debt. Hence, many had to close, go online or greatly downsize their ministry when they saw a huge drop in their tithes and offerings.

10. Effective churches had a robust prayer ministry. Since 2020 the number of people isolated, fearful and suicidal has reached academic proportions. Churches that did not have a vital prayer ministry were left vulnerable to the forces of darkness wreaking havoc on the minds of their congregation. The first thing we did at one of our church campuses when the lockdown occurred was to facilitate zoom prayer meetings on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. This was in addition to all the prayer calls we already had in place every weekday morning as well as Saturday. On another campus, we established a nightly prayer meeting via conference call entitled "Faith Over Fear" that was populated by more than half of our congregation. Consequently, churches with a robust prayer ministry were able to overcome the spiritual darkness and fear

over their congregation and community. {eoa}

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