



OREGON CHURCH PLANTING NEWS

August 2008 Issue

“When a New Church comes to town... Lives Change.”

Three Reasons America Need More Churches

1. The overwhelming majority of existing churches will not grow larger than they are at present.

A. The 15 year factor. It is a very rare to see any church grow larger than the size it reaches after 15 years. It can be done if costly and behavioral changes are made.

B. The 150 to 250 factor. Eighty percent of all churches, of all denominations, have a practical maximum of 200 people (plus or minus 50). Like a human body, a congregation grows in its beginning years and then levels off and maintains at a certain size for decades. Despite 30 years of emphasis on church growth, churches, on average, have not grown.

C. Presently, half of the approximately 600 Vineyard churches in the USA are 142 people or less. This median size has been plateaued for at least 16 years and is not likely to change. Our response to this is not to feel bad about small churches, but to plant many more.

Churches of this size can have significant impact on their communities by serving a couple thousand people in various ways even though those people do not attend the church's Sunday gatherings.

D. Eighty-five percent of the existing churches in the USA have plateaued or are declining in size. Most of these will never grow larger. Of the other 15% that are growing, only 1% are growing by conversion growth; most are growing by transfers from other churches.

E. Where is Christianity growing? The only places in the world where Christianity is growing are those places where the number of churches is growing. And those places where the church is growing rapidly, such as in China and Bangladesh, are experiencing a 'church planting movement,' which is a rapid multiplication of churches. Those who study the growth of God's kingdom worldwide have observed that a church planting movement does not occur unless half of the existing churches are involved in starting new churches. Let that observation settle deep in your heart. (Randall Adams "When is Enough, Enough?")

2. The number of churches in America is decreasing! Most denominations or associations are not producing enough new churches to replace the ones that are closing.

A. America has fewer churches per capita than at any time in her history. Although the number of churches in America has increased by 50 percent in the last century, the population has increased 300 percent. (Bill Easum, "The Easum Report," March 2003) **There are now nearly 60 percent fewer churches per 10,000 persons than in 1920.**

B. In 1900, there were 27 churches for every 10,000 people. In 1950, there were 17 churches for every 10,000 people. In 1996, there were 11 churches for every 10,000 people. (Tom Clegg and Tim Bird, *Lost in America* (Loveland CA: Group Publishing, 2001), 30)

C. Many more churches die each year than are birthed. Each year 3,500 to 4,000 churches close their doors forever; yet only

1,100 to 1,500 new churches are started. (Win Arn, *The Pastor's Manual For Effective Ministry* (Monrovia, CA: Church Growth, 1988), 41.)

Good News! By 2007, it appears that church planting is up, it is thought that there are presently 4000/year (Stetzer, LifeWay Research) It is now much more varied than in the past with "missional," "seeker-sensitive," "purpose-driven" and ethnic church planting models being developed. Still about 1 out of 100 churches close doors each year. (Religion News Service)

D. Large Church Mentality. One reason there are less new churches being planted is that the idea of one large church is more attractive to some leaders than multiple smaller ones.

E. Territorialism. As urban and suburban areas have grown, new churches have often not been started because of the feeling that a new church would be too close to an existing church of the same denomination.

One denomination that has not let territorialism stop them in the Northwest is the Foursquare Church. They have over 40 churches in the broader metropolitan area of Portland-Vancouver. Some of them are quite large.

F. From 1987 to 1997, combined membership of all Protestant denominations declined by 9.5 percent (4,498,242), while the national population increased by 11.4 percent (24,153,000). (Tom Clegg, "How to Plant a Church for the 21st Century," seminar materials, 1997)

3. The number of unchurched adults in America has almost doubled since 1991.

A. From 1991 to 2004, the number of adults who do not attend church has almost doubled, rising from 39 million to 75 million adults. If you count children and

teenagers there were 100 million unchurched Americans in 2007.

B. The American church is in the midst of one of the largest mission fields in the world today. Only three other nations—China, India, and Indonesia—have more lost people. (Justice Anderson, in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History and Strategies of Word Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 243.)

C. The various revival movements the last couple decades have brought various blessings and perhaps slowed the decline, but they have not increased the percentage of Christians in our country. There is not a single county in America that has a greater percentage of church people today than a decade ago! (Ron Sylvia, *High Definition Church Planting* (Ocala, FL: High Definition Resources, 2004), 26.)

D. Jim Henderson, a Vineyard guy and a former pastor along with an avowed atheist visited a dozen churches together and wrote the book "**Jim & Casper Go To Church.**" Then they offer offers some conclusions about the church's decline which include...An alarming amount of Christians are indifferent towards non-Christians ...Privatized faith far exceeds the notion of communal faith...Overemphasis on programmed religious activities and worship performance rather than on helping people experience the presence of God...Virtually no "marching orders" are given; church members are allowed to simply come and attend with little call for action ...Unwillingness to grapple with tough questions and to allow divergent opinions or dissent. (<http://www.journeyguy.com/unchurched-number-in-us-reaches-100-million/>)

Conclusion - we need thousands more missional churches!

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