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THE NEW CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCHES THAT WILL BE IN DECLINE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW

By Carey Nieuwhof | 49

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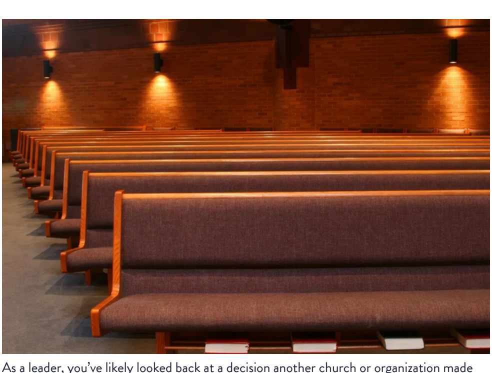

As a leader, you've likely looked back at a decision another church or organization made and thought to yourself, "how could they *not* have seen how **bad** that decision was…I mean, didn't anybody realize where that would take them?"

And of course, the answer is no…they didn't see it.

Which is the point of this post.

Five years from now, what will declining churches have done that pushed them into…well, decline? Because right now, leaders are making the decisions that will lead them either into growth or decline.

In the midst of all this uncertainty, you're making decisions that will shape the future. We all are.

How do you know you're making the right ones?

As you look back over the last few decades, it's not that hard to see that churches who refused to change, embraced blended worship (out of fear of offending people), didn't make tough staffing calls, failed to plan for timely succession, got weird theologically or made a myriad of other unfortunate decisions generally faced decline rather than growth as their dominant story.

While the future is impossible to predict accurately and anyone who tells you they know where it's all going is either lying or deluded, there are often *clues* as to what's ahead.

So very tentatively—and with an openness to being very wrong—I want to offer 7 new characteristics of churches that will be in decline five years from now. I say new, because all of these factors are tied to real-time decision making that's happening in light of the coronavirus, meaningful cultural change and the dislocation that has become life today.

The decisions you make today impact the future you live tomorrow.

Five years from now we'll see how accurate these are, but here are 7 new characteristics of churches that will I suggest lead them into decline in the future.

> The decisions you make today impact the future you live tomorrow.
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1. The Leaders Bet Everything On A Physical Return To Church

Is physical church coming back? You bet it is. As long as there are people, people are going to want to connect in person.

Is in-person church the whole future?

Well, that's a very different question.

These are hardly perfect conditions, but the few leaders who are seeing 70% of their pre-COVID attendance back at in-person services are declaring victory.

I don't want to rain on any parades, but when did reaching 30% fewer people became a win when there's a world desperately in need of the Gospel?

I'm talking to a growing number of leaders who are seeing 20-40% as the new normal for physical attendance, and while that might indeed improve in the future, there's also growing talk of sizable groups of people who have just disappeared from church altogether.

Indeed, according to the Barna Group, the number of pastors who believe their church will grow after the pandemic has dipped to 13% from a high of 34%. 33% see it being the same, and fully 49% believe it will be lower.

If that's the case, churches that invest all of their time and energy on in-person gathering may not see the impact and reach they're hoping for.

On the other hand, churches that embrace the reality that everyone they want to reach is online, and who invest in their online presence heavily stand a better chance of seeing future growth.

I outline more reasons I'm wary of wagering your *entire* future on in-person facility-based gatherings in these posts.

> When Your Church Re-Opens, What Will Be Left and Who Will Still Come?
>
> In-Person Attendance v. Online Attendance and the Emerging Trap of Doing Nothing Well
>
> Avoid This Big Mistake: Stepping Back Into the Past When You Step Back Into Your Building

> When did reaching 30% fewer people became a win when there's a world desperately in need of the Gospel?
> Click to Tweet

2. Success Is Still Measured By The Number Of People Who Attend Physical Locations

What you measure as a leader influences what you value.

For years, pastors (for better or worse) measured success by the number of people who attend weekend worship.

If that was a problem in the last era, it will be an even bigger problem in the future.

> If you want more on helping your team accomplish what actually matters, I've got a free training on it here.

If people engage with church differently via digital, home-based or community-based gatherings, the leader who defines success by worship attendance alone in a church building or campus will grow more and more frustrated.

> What you measure as a leader influences what you value.
> Click to Tweet

So pick some new metrics. Measure what's really happening online (this will help you do that). Track engagement. Figure out how to measure spiritual growth. Look at your *actual* impact, not just pure attendance numbers.

Although written pre-COVID, here a post that outlines 7 ways to grow engagement.

> If growing churches in the future will be digital organizations with physical locations, then leaders who focus only on physical locations will see a tougher future.
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3. Online Ministry Is Seen As An Afterthought Or Lesser Form

It's not that most churches won't have an online ministry. Almost every church does now thanks to COVID-19.

It's just that in the future, declining churches will see it either an afterthought or a lesser form of ministry.

I know there are genuine theological questions that have yet to be answered. And we'll figure that out as we go along. If that statement bothers you, just read the New Testament. The Gospel moves forward, and the leaders figure out what it means in real-time.

> It's not that most churches won't have an online ministry. It's just that, in the future, declining churches in the future will see it either an afterthought or a lesser form of ministry.
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Meanwhile, people keep moving on. People are living more digitally than ever, and most businesses continue to rethink their strategy in light of it, reducing physical locations and pivoting to online.

You can see online church as an obstacle or an opportunity. Since everyone you want to reach is online, though, that makes it a pretty big opportunity.

Again, physical gathering will always plan a role in the future of the church, but wise churches will realize there is much opportunity beyond that.

> You can see online church as an obstacle or an opportunity. Since everyone you want to reach is online, though, that makes it a pretty big opportunity.
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4. All Feedback Comes From Their Echo Chamber

Leaders who are looking for ways to confirm their biases have never had more ways to do it.

Social media is designed to give you more of what you want, and, apparently, we love it that way.

So many pastors feel the pressure from their members to reopen and reopen fully. And that's predictable. People always crave what they've known. Think about that for a moment. Even when it comes to food, you've never craved anything you haven't tried.

You'll also be highly motivated to return to the way things were because that's what *you* know. And, as I shared here, those who succeeded most in the past are most motivated to preserve the past or recreate it.

All of which puts leaders at risk of listening only to their echo chamber.

Church people are going to love in-person worship because, for the most part, that's all they've known. As a leader, *you* are going to love it because that's basically what you've led. All your skills, training and experience point you back to it.

In addition, you are probably surrounded by people who will tell you you're right, that others are wrong, and add to that the fact that algorithm that controls your social media feed will automatically find you more content that agrees with you, and you can convince yourself you're right. Here's the irony: in an online culture run by algorithms, you don't actually get more choices, you get fewer.

> In an online culture run by algorithms, you don't actually get more choices, you get fewer.
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Wise leaders expose themselves to different voices: voices: outside voices, younger voices, varying opinions and voices beyond their field of discipline.

Different opinions lead to better decisions.

Leaders of declining churches surround themselves with like-minded voices and influences, convinced they're right and everyone else is wrong.

> Leaders of declining churches surround themselves with like-minded voices and influences, convinced they're right and everyone else is wrong.
> Click to Tweet

5. They Quickly Went Back To 3 Songs And A Message As Their Service Formats

Even pre-COVID, it was becoming clear that attractional churches were past peak and more charismatic churches were growing (here are 5 reasons why). Recent research confirms that.

But the COVID disruption and mass move to online has meant most churches quickly discovered that what 'worked' in terms of in-person weekend services didn't translate online, and many pivoted to shorter services, less music and more engaging, interactive formats to engage people.

Some pastors even hired YouTubers to help with message creation and delivery.

It's still uncertain what the future design of church services online or in-person will reveal, but if this crisis is the accelerator and disruptor many think it is, then a return to a format that had stopped resonating deeply before is likely not the best move.

The key is to keep faithfully experimenting and exploring what helps people best connect with God.

What's happened so far in the crisis isn't innovation, it's adaptation. Most of the innovation lies ahead.

If you're already thinking, well, everyone I know likes it that way, see point 4 above and point 7 below.

> What's happened so far in the current crisis isn't innovation, it's adaptation. Most of the innovation lies ahead.
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6. The Church Building, Not The Home Or Community, Was Re-Established As The Sole Locus Of Ministry

One thing this crisis has revealed is how facility-centric the dominant model of ministry has been for generations in the Western Church. Take away our buildings, and we're all a little lost.

One trend developing before our eyes is the home as the new center of life. In the last six months, work, food preparation, entertainment, school, and shopping are now more home-based than ever. And for 6 months, that's been true of church.

> One thing this crisis has revealed is how facility-centric the dominant model of ministry is. Take away our buildings, and we're all a little lost.
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Some of that will shift. Not all work will stay remote, but my guess is online shopping, working from home, take-out food, and entertainment will trend toward more home-based ventures.

A few churches have already pivoted toward moving from a church with 5 locations to a church with hundreds or thousands of locations—those being peoples' homes.

Wise church leaders will cooperate with this trend rather than compete with it. They'll get over their building addiction and the ego boost of full rooms and work on reaching people, which is kind of the point anyway.

In the future, dying churches will see their building—not the home and community—as the primary locus of ministry. Growing churches won't.

> In the future, dying churches will see their building—not the home and community—as the primary locus of ministry. Growing churches won't.
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7. The Leaders Excluded Gen Z From The Inner Leadership Circle

Keeping young leaders around your leadership table is one of the best ways to keep the next generation in your church.

Whether you think generational difference are overblown or not, just because you have a 30-year-old on your staff doesn't mean you're ready for the next generation.

> Keeping young leaders around your leadership table is one of the best ways to keep the next generation in your church.
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Gen Z, whose oldest members were born starting around 1995 (some say 1997), is now graduating college and moving into the workforce. They're distinguishing themselves from Millennials, sometimes giving Millennials the same slamming Boomers have taken. While this sounds trivial (and in many respects it is), every generation is defined by something a little different.

Gen Z is the first truly digital native generation to emerge, and their cultural formation is being shaped by all kinds of things like Corona-virus, racial justice, climate change and much more.

Plus, the oldest Gen Z was only 10-years-old when YouTube was born and 12 when the iPhone was launched. They have always consumed and created content differently than any other generation.

If you're wondering how the thinking and experience between generations varies, watch this video of Fred and Tim Williams, twenty-two year-old twins hearing Phil Collins *In the Air Tonight* for the first time.

The average senior pastor is 57 these days. Surrounding yourself with leaders two or three generations below you and giving them actual influence, authority and responsibility is one of the best ways to keep you and your church young.

And if you're worried they're not ready for that kind of responsibility, neither were you when someone handed you the keys. Neither was I. We figured it out. They will too.

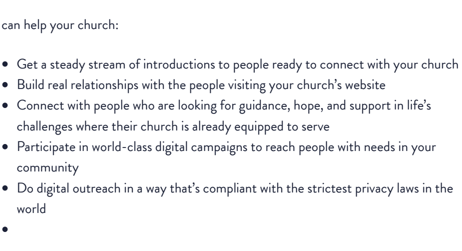
Mentoring doesn't just happen older leader to younger leader; it happens the other way around too.

> Mentoring doesn't just happen older leader to younger leader; it happens the other way around too.
> Click to Tweet

Once I turned forty, one of the best decisions I made was to intentionally keep young leaders at the senior leadership table. These days, with everything changing faster, don't wait until you're forty.

If you're looking for more on Gen Z, check out this post on 7 habits of Gen Z your church might be ignoring. It was written by one of my 22-year-old staff members and is quite insightful.

Turn Your Online Audience Into Real Relationships



Ever wondered how to turn online viewers into real relationships?

Every day, people visit your church website and access your content, but few ever really identify.

GlooConnect is a new solution that gives people watching the opportunity to introduce themselves to your church.

It can help your church:

- Get a steady stream of introductions to people ready to connect with your church
- Build real relationships with the people visiting your church's website
- Connect with people who are looking for guidance, hope, and support in life's challenges where their church is already equipped to serve
- Participate in world-class digital campaigns to reach people with needs in your community
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GlooConnect lets you pastor while GlooConnect programs. No extra staff. No complex tech. Get started in as little as 15 minutes, and get ready to meet the people already connecting with you online.

Today (Monday, November 16th, 2020) is the last day to get GlooConnect at introductory pricing.

To get instant access to GlooConnect and learn more, click here, and make 2021 a year of unprecedented growth for your church.

What Are You Seeing?

I hope this is helpful. I am not saying I know the future. No one does.

But I think we have clues as to how decisions we make today impact the future we live tomorrow.

What do you see? What are some decisions leaders will regret five years down the road?

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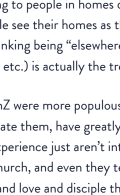

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Posted in Church Growth, Leadership and tagged Carey Nieuwhof, change, Change Resources, church attendance, church growth, declining churches, digital church, growing churches, how to improve church attendance, Leadership, ministry, online church

49 Comments

Walter Swaim on November 16, 2020 at 5:44 pm

Two thoughts, thinking out loud (so sorry, just now saw this article somehow between the rest):

1. Shifting to people in homes during – and after – Covid is not happening where I am at. People see their homes as the protective refuge away from people – and Covid. So we're thinking being "elsewhere to meet" (i.e., at church, or coffee shops, open air, drive-in, etc.) is actually the trend for the soon forseeable future.

2. If GenZ were more populous within church environments we would be glad to incorporate them, have greatly desired to do so for years. They just aren't around (and in our experience just aren't interested unless engaged from an early age on in the life of the church, and even they tend to drift away anyway no matter what you do to engage and love and disciple them).

Not being critical, just thinking out loud in context of the realities in our environment here – I would LOVE for it to be otherwise as stated in the article and would embrace it if it were.

Thanks again,
Walt

Reply

Lowell Vessey on November 16, 2020 at 5:28 pm

Hi Carey! Thank you for opening up cans of worms every day, lol 😉

I have been reading the passionate replies to this post and I am so glad that you are getting folks to really think about this shift in reaching people for Christ. However, I am not sure that most folks "get" what online church needs to become to meet it's awesome potential.

Let me first say that I don't believe that anyone, who doesn't normally attend your church, wants to watch your live-stream. It doesn't matter whether you have a simple service streamed from a phone/tablet or you're a mega-church with million-dollar lights and sound. That's because the worship leaders, speakers, etc. should be connecting with the congregation that is sitting in front of them, and rightly so. The viewer ends up watching other people experience something, leaving them feeling cold and disconnected. We need to do better in order to reach people for Christ.

So what should online church actually look like? First and most importantly, it involves making online content that is different from your in-person service and designed specifically for online church. It should be formatted as if it is one-on-one, because IT IS! The content needs to be real and vulnerable, not preachy. Viewer feedback should be incorporated, such as answering comments from the last session. The other thing

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be incorporated, such as answering comments from the last session. The other thing to keep in mind is that online church needs as many staff and volunteer resources as your in-person service. Volunteers and pastors can guide live chat sessions, be available for prayer and follow up with comments and new viewers.

One of the most effective ministries in my area is a Facebook Live scripture and prayer time, held each day at 7am. It is just one pastor, using only his phone. As people log on, he says "hi" to pretty much everyone and takes a few minutes to answer questions posted in the comments from the previous day. He then reads a scripture and says a simple prayer. It is not polished or programmed and he often shares from his heart how much he needed to hear that scripture that day. Online church does not have to be difficult.

I don't think I have to argue that the vast majority of people spend a significant amount of time on the internet. Many people have never been more willing to allow church content into their homes, mainly because they are scared out of their wits right now! How long have we been waiting for that opportunity? Yet some churches are willing to squander this opportunity because they are "too small" or would prefer to continue having their in-person services as normal.

Now, I am not saying that in-person services will ever go away, but I strongly believe that effective churches will blend in-person, online, in-home and community partnership ministries. Moreover, the days of in-person services being the entry point of newcomers have passed. Online is best poised to be that entry point for the future.

Reply

Gary Reynolds on August 16, 2020 at 1:11 pm

Some people like the remote technology services in their house on a computer! I DO NOT!
The building is not the be all and end all but it is a Holy Place with Symbolism, the ambience of accessories which enhance peaceful contemplation and reverence and the sense of purpose by gathered minds and souls seeking connectivity to the Divine nature of God.
Flashing AV media and rousing new music is fine and has its place. I enjoy it live as well.
However the Church, especially ones who have been around for a while and aged with and served a community, are special places in my opinion!
I would prefer to have a quiet serene chapel for contemplation, prayer,weekly worship service and shared social interactions than the most glitzy online production imaginable.
Many will disagree but the online mobile phone, apps and Internet have eroded some of the foundations of our Churches. Sure society schools, culture and government have play a role as well. I for one lament those changes in our Nation and the World's societies. as a whole. Values, Integrity, humbleness, kindness and perseverance are enhanced through Prayer and a relationship with God. I find those things in walking into a Church.

Reply

Steve Heisner on August 13, 2020 at 11:08 am

Would it be possible to get this in a printable or PDF format? I've tried to print it and I don't get a good readable result. Thanks.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 14, 2020 at 11:23 am

Hi Steve,

Wish we had that option but right now we don't. Sorry!

Carey

Reply

Nate Walter on August 20, 2020 at 10:14 am

Copy and paste it into a Word/Pages document.

Reply

Beverley Smyth on September 22, 2020 at 11:08 am

Copy, paste and reformat

Reply

Gayle Fisher-Stewart on September 29, 2020 at 1:01 pm

In the URL, to the left, you see what looks like lines on a page. Click on that and you get a readable format that can be printed out. Hope this works for you.

Reply

Chestly Lunday on August 12, 2020 at 10:48 am

I love this… Carey, It is so hard to put "new wine into old wineskins" with out ruining both— what is awesome is when an older lead pastor locks arms with a younger one like me and says I will support your next move, and will advise and cheer you on. We are seeing the building as hindrance to reaching young professionals and teens. I believe a digital infrastructure that puts community first and promotes spiritual growth—with a few strategic large events— is the future.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 14, 2020 at 11:10 am

Thanks Chestly!

Reply

Paul Wilkes on August 29, 2020 at 1:15 pm

Where is any mention of God? All this is advice but what about waiting on God in prayer and the Church mobilized in the power of The Holy Spirit as in early days of the Church?

Reply

Ian Clarkson on August 18, 2020 at 11:19 pm

A lot of 'mix and match' I observe. Go with what the Lord gives you to go with not trying to find some overall pattern that seems to suit the majority. Your small piece is part of what makes the bell curve but where you are on that is the 'Go' that He has given you. Listen for the Spirit and listen deeply-He is not rushing and He expects us to seek and wait on Him. Go!

Reply

Greg on August 11, 2020 at 11:58 am

I disagree completely with the thought that online is the future of church. It may be for some of the mega churches, but for the average church, interpersonal relationships are everything. The reason that they tune in to hear us on you tube is because they already have an in-person relationship with us. Once you remove personal face to face relationships that were build on Sunday morning in a building or a house, then an online presence is hit or miss. We also enter the marketplace of online worship services that now become competitive. For the average church, competing online is out of the question. Online church also assumes a North American or European level of technology or sophistication as well. Even in North America, not everyone is online or will bother to go online to watch a church service. Keep in mind, they are "watching" and not actually in the room participating. Now if you can be online with worship, you should do this if you can. But I am willing to bet that face to face will still be the future of church and always will be. And yes it will be on a much smaller scale of meeting.

Reply

Pastor Shirley on August 12, 2020 at 9:00 am

I agree Greg. My husband and I pastor a church where only three families plus ourselves are online. When we were online only, most of the congregation didn't have access to worship services of any kind. We tried to call and keep in touch with each family and minister to them via the phone, but it was not the same as worshiping together. Online is not the answer to everything.

Reply

Bob Wiseman on August 12, 2020 at 7:04 pm

I love how churches adapted to the pandemic by going online. To be honest, I enjoy seeing small churches faithfully pounding out streams that are a little cringy, that show they are not very adept at technology, and have camera zoomed so far back to get the screen in the frame that you can't actually see the screen. I'm not being sarcastic. I enjoy it, because it's an example of faithfulness.

But the truth is, none of those churches should continue their online services as they currently stand.

When making the decision to stream your full service, here's the question to ask: WOULD I WATCH THIS? Considering all the options, and all the churches, if I had to watch a church service online, would I choose mine? If not, why?

When competing with the internet, your church will lose. There are better preachers, better praise bands, better productions. So if you put all your eggs in that basket, be prepared to see your resources go to waste. Instead, focus on getting people back to church.

Find new ways to meet. Find unique, creative ways to build fellowship. You can watch the big, booming church in another city and state any time. You'll never be a part of their church, and you'll never have a way to be the church. Get people plugged in. Even in a pandemic. Find ways.

Our church has people going to the houses of those uncomfortable with large gatherings and watching the service in a small group. It's great. We have safe, socially distant options for worship, prayer, and community.

Yes, we stream, and yeah, we'll likely continue our stream well beyond this pandemic (thanks to generous donors of streaming equipment), but if that's what you're working toward—better online presence—be prepared to waste your time.

The church isn't meant to be experienced online. And if you're successful at online church, my guess is you're not successful at the things God has called the church to be.

Reply

James on August 22, 2020 at 1:35 pm

Well said Bob! Our church has adapted to the situation and is fortunate to be able to put out a pretty high quality live stream service. We will most likely continue it after the pandemic is over. But we are not going to throw out what I believe is one of the most crucial elements to our faith and that is walking with people through life and all of its challenges. We see the live stream as an "add" to our reach, but we most definitely will still put face to face connection as a top priority. People can call it old fashioned if they want, but your digital device is no substitute for in person. All you have to do is pay attention and see what never having to deal with real people is doing to our kids. Use technology, just don't let it take the rightful place of actually walking through life with your people. People need actual live people. We were created that way.

Reply

Gary Reynolds on August 16, 2020 at 1:03 pm

Some people like the remote technology services in their house on a computer! I DO NOT!
The building is not the be all and end all but it is a Holy Place with Symbolism, the ambience of accessories which enhance peaceful contemplation and reverence and the sense of purpose by gathered minds and souls seeking connectivity to the Divine nature of God.
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Many will disagree but the online mobile phone, apps, Internet has eroded some of the foundation of our Churches. Sure society schools, culture and government have play a role as well: and I for one lament those changes in our and the World's societies.

Reply

Naoma Bird on August 20, 2020 at 4:25 pm

Agree!

Reply

Krissi on August 10, 2020 at 6:53 pm

I appreciate this post, but my favorite part is the video of the twins. Thanks for the intro, I love them!

Reply

LindaBeth Greet on August 10, 2020 at 6:50 pm

So exactly how we have been feeling! Thanks for articulating so well.

Reply

Jeannie Martin on August 10, 2020 at 4:28 pm

"Mentoring doesn't just happen older leader to younger leader; it happens the other way around too."
This is indeed a season of so much learning and adapting. A leader who is willing and able to foster an environment of reciprocity creates a valuable learning community within their team. It's fun to imagine the exuberant overflow of such a team dynamic on a church and community!

Reply

Brad Pope on August 10, 2020 at 6:00 pm

You failed to mentioned chasing cultural approval. And getting away from Biblical Authority. I know that sounds boring but it also has a practical application – the church can never compete with secular opportunities when it tries to water down or secularize it's message, there will always be better options for that outside the church. What the church has to offer is unique – the unapologetic exciting message of the gospel. When that is offered in a watered down or in an apologetic manner, in no time congregants run out of reasons to keep coming

Reply

Danielle on August 12, 2020 at 12:42 am

Love thinking about how the church will change just as it has over 2,000 years. But curious what this looks line for children's ministry? Is it just a YouTube video? If you are doing smaller watch parties is there childcare?

Reply

Jill on August 14, 2020 at 8:16 am

Hey Danielle – my thoughts, too! What does this look like for children's and youth ministry? I know Carey is very connected with the folks at Orange and must have some thoughts on this. Might need its own blog post;)

Reply

JT Sims on August 12, 2020 at 8:41 pm

Great thoughts. You might want to proofread your next post. Typos are a killer.

Reply

Steve on August 10, 2020 at 3:55 pm

Great thoughts, my 25 year old is not a fan of online church. Everything else he does is online so online church does not excite him. Living genuine and doing life together is what's important to him. The house church movement in his eyes is the way he and his friends are moving.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 10, 2020 at 4:26 pm

Thanks Steve. Appreciate this. That's not surprising, but notice it has little/nothing to do with a church building. And my guess is his interaction with his friends will have a ton of online convo with it. Online is so much more than streaming.

Reply

Bob Wiseman on August 20, 2020 at 10:35 am

Carey,

Go look at the statistics on online, social media usership (is that a word?). Teens and college kids are now less likely to use websites like Twitter, Facebook, and even Instagram and Snapchat.

The statistics certainly represent a reality that social media use is dying among those 29 and under, but also, a very rudimentary survey will tell you the same. Go look at who is commenting on major celebrity posts on Twitter: they aren't teens or young adults. Go look at the top Instagram posts & comments: also, not teens. Facebook got over taken by parents and grandparents. Even Snapchat is seeing a mass exodus of users.

It's not so much that young people aren't online—they absolutely are, but they just don't stick around on any one platform or site for a long period of time. They move to a new app once parents join. And in a lot of ways, the younger, non-teenage group, is beginning to focus more on face-to-face interaction.

So in ways, sure, young people are connected online. But there's also this question: if we're already connecting online, why do we need to change the dynamic? Why suddenly inject "church" into it? They already have tons of opportunities to connect online, and yet, they aren't using them. Why would church leaders think they'll change sociological norms?

Right now, in a time when *everything* is online, perhaps the best practice is to shift: go offline. Find unique ways to get people safely interacting in person. Trust me, the average young person doesn't want more online interaction. We've been doing that for 5 months now. We want to connect with people.

If you're looking at COVID and thinking, what happened during COVID is the new reality, then you're probably more irrelevant than I thought. Things will change drastically when we're on the other side of this. And I have a gut feeling that in-person interaction will rule the roost.

Reply

Genetta Y. Hatcher on August 10, 2020 at 2:47 pm

Thank you for keeping us grounded while pushing us to leave the ground.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 10, 2020 at 3:21 pm

I appreciate that phrasing Genetta! Thanks!

Reply

Stanley Herrod on August 10, 2020 at 1:57 pm

I believe it won't be the same because there will be a falling away. Lots of events cause a falling away. Along with the growing trend that a church is anywhere a person is. I will agree one can worship the Lord no matter the situation one may be in oe..Daniel, However it is more a move of people away from people due to mistrust and bad experiences from church members who have offended and never worked towards healing the offense. I believe until people are able to once again swallow pride seek God earnestly in prayer we will or may never see a revival of the church. For yrs and yrs. Pastors have been on maintain mode. We havent been really growing but maintaining what we have. A few new converts here and there replacing those who move or have flown to glory ahead of us all. Churches who's main focus over the yrs. Has been to increase parishioners knowledge and understanding of the word through study and prayer and resulting in a closer relationship with the Lord Jesus. Is small because the entertainment church is much more appealing to the carnal man. The Spiritual part of man is greatly in need but few that v seek it there are found.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 10, 2020 at 3:22 pm

For sure falling away may be part of it. So is denial and losing touch though. I think that's a greater danger.

Reply

Dr. Jennifer Baker on August 10, 2020 at 11:45 am

I try to read these every week and consider the implications for a non-profit that offers much of its content in person in a small group format. Change is hard, but I believe you're giving us some clarity about many important things.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 10, 2020 at 3:22 pm

Thanks Jennifer! Means a lot.

Reply

Mark on August 10, 2020 at 11:37 am

You can look back 5, 10, or 15 years and the same things should have been done but likely weren't. It is very difficult if not impossible to break into any organization as a new person. The way you prove you should be listened to or that your idea has any merit is to donate a large sum of money. Until you can do that, you are wasting your time offering advice or asking for anything. As for #7, Gen X was excluded too, and still is.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 10, 2020 at 3:23 pm

Sounds like a really sad culture you're describing Mark. That's too bad.

Reply

Christie Mandas on August 10, 2020 at 10:32 am

Love the Williams twins and Phil
Collins. So, just gave a listen to their 'first hear' of Collins "In the Air Tonight" and thought it ironic how the twins heard "Oh Lord" as "Hold on." I can think of many reasons why they may have heard it that way…..

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 10, 2020 at 3:23 pm

I've spent all my life thinking it was hold on too. There you go.

Reply

Jon Price on August 10, 2020 at 3:36 pm

How funny Christie, I saw the Williams twins on Youtube last night for the first time and I watched several of their videos – and actually commented a few times. I was drawn in because of their honest reactions to songs that had been powerful to me, and their commentary. I think this type of video has much more chance of engagement than the typical 3 songs and a sermon that most of us are putting up right now. Thanks Carie, something to be looking at as we move forward to reach our online community.

Reply

Jon Price on August 10, 2020 at 3:37 pm

*Carey (sorry)

Reply

Mark Wilhelm on August 10, 2020 at 10:25 am

Thank you, Carey! As usual, your writing is thoughtful and on point. Thank you for the humility to say you're not certain of all these things, but the courage to say it anyway. If there is a point or two that doesn't age well, there won't be many. We're about the same age and years of experience in ministry. For me, the biggest struggle isn't so much finding good information to work with on what's next (thanks to you and others) it's having the emotional bandwidth to make the leadership shifts required. I serve in a very tradition-rich church setting. For me there are two major temptations: walking away and letting the under forty crowd fix it or keep trying to reform the setting I'm in (or one very much like it). Neither sounds attractive at the moment. It is encouraging to read your work. it really is.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof on August 10, 2020 at 3:24 pm

Mark, so glad it's encouraging. I know it can feel hard sometimes. I'd encourage you to keep going. 🙂

Reply

Gary on August 10, 2020 at 9:26 am

The more things change, the more they remain the same for some churches. Items 1 thru 6 have been discussed in many forums in recent years with some change here and there happening. However, #7 is fairly new and quite telling. Excluding the next generation of leaders or worse, inviting them to the table but ignoring or trivializing their input is tantamount to driving another nail in the coffin.

Reply

Naoma Bird on August 20, 2020 at 4:21 pm

With you 100% on this Brother.
I, for one, believe that we need cooperate fellowship on a regular basis. We are admonished to "…not giving up meeting together…" Hebrews 24-25
Yes it can be done in homes, but would it?
However, for those who cannot get to church the digital church service serves well and we should develop a quality digital service to be available for them.
The other thing to consider is those who do not have access to digital services. Although some, especially the younger generations may find it hard to beleive, there are still many who are unable to "connect".

Reply

John Plunkett on August 10, 2020 at 9:05 am

Great Read. Now if more church leaders get it and make church not something we have to conform to in order to worship weekly to collect the offering and count the attendance to mark our success. How about we leave this stuff behind like those early church Reformers and bring the church into the world and meet in homes and small gatherings for communion and fellowship like those early Restorationists. I am so over stained glass and pipe organs and cushioned pews and heavy laden hymn books. Architecture and comfort are poor substitutes for the Great Commission.

Reply

Irene Lem on August 10, 2020 at 9:51 am

Great article, thank you, Carey! I agree that church will not be the same.

Reply

Deb Kearney on August 13, 2020 at 10:19 am

Boy, wish there was a 'Like' button!

Reply

Ethan on August 26, 2020 at 9:00 pm

That's amazing you posted that. I actually got here from watching a video that said the same thing three days ago.
I've been looking for conformation of what I have been dealing with for a while. You and this lady have confirmed I am not alone.

I'm certain the lady that made the video is a gen x member.

It really hit me that I am sick and tired of what the run of the mill churches offer. And I agree with you whole heartedly that intimate worship should be with a just a few people in a home and the only overhead to worry about is pizza and Pepsi. I love being around people. I detest the singing. I detest hearing the same Bible stories year after year. I detest the "Little Johnny Stories", the old creaky smelly pews, the old hymnals with the same worn out pages because of singing the same songs year after year.

LOL everything else I love. Yes, I'm a crotchety old fart.

Any way if your interested in someone who said the same thing (Small churches in homes)
look on Youtube for "I think Mom and Pop churches should accept the inevitable."

Because of her I am going to try going to a megachurch.
I'm not trying to plug the video, so if this is a problem I'm very sorry.

Reply

Bram Groeneveld on August 10, 2020 at 8:50 am

Great article and so true

Reply

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