

2010

Brought to you this month
by Neil Westbrook



The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

Eight trends church leaders should consider in 2010

As a church leader, you will want to consider what trends will likely impact your church in the new year. Following are some trends that will likely have the greatest impact on congregations in 2010.

1. New economic realities and perceptions.

To cut costs, closely examine your budget for line items that may not be prudent or that are no longer effective. One approach is to use a zero-based budget. Cuts may need to be made only temporarily. Seek to ease the attitude of fear among members who may hold on to their money; encourage them to be faithful and to continue to tithe.

2. Shift from nuclear family to diverse meanings of family.

The word “family” used to mean a husband and wife and their kids. Today’s family may be two people living together who are unrelated, a household filled with extended family members, or a group living together to share costs. These are often less stable than traditional, nuclear families and may require more help from churches. In addition, churches will have to wrestle with the challenges of accepting new family models into the church and finding ways to minister to these families.

3. Increasing number of single adults (of all ages).

Studies show that the total percentage of married people in America is at its lowest point in more than 30 years. Many younger people who are choosing to stay single find it difficult to fit in to traditional churches predominantly attended by married couples with children. Often times when couples divorce, the husband and/or wife also chooses to divorce him/herself from the local church. As the divorced population grows, so will the percentage of unchurched Americans. In addition, the senior adult population is one

Resources:

- Beckhard, et al. *The Community of the Future*.
- Callahan, Kennon L. *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*
- Garfield, Bob. *The Chaos Scenario*.
- Hammett, Edward H. *The Gathered and Scattered Church: Equipping Believers for the 21st Century*.
- www.transformingsolutions.org
- www.factfinder.census.gov

of the fastest growing single populations in America. According to SeniorJournal.com, “Beginning in 2011, the population 65 and older will grow faster than the total population in every single state.”

4. Importance of social media networking.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs and other social media networking websites continue to grow not only in popularity of use, but also in importance. The Internet has actually outpaced television in terms of where people get their news and connect with friends. Churches should consider developing an online presence in order to “get in the loop” and keep their information in front of members. Additionally, when people move into a new community they often use the Internet to find their next church home. Blogging represents another option for pastors and church leaders, providing an opportunity to connect on a deeper or more personal level.

5. Rampant church planting. Many denominations have all but given up on the churches that have supported them for decades, and now are turning their attention and resources toward starting new churches as their strategy to sustain denominational structures and to reach tomorrow’s generation. Unfortunately, established churches will actually have

to compete with these newer, niche church plants for members. While new church plants do reach unchurched and dechurched people, they also gain membership from other churches.

6. Anti-denominational attitudes. Many people are tired of old denominational rules and politics that seem to be divisive rather than unifying. Most new churches do not put their denominational affiliation in their names.

The general population is less impressed with a church’s denomination and more concerned about a church’s witness, community involvement and the programs offered.

7. Aging population. By 2030, people 65-plus are expected to make up about 20 percent of the American population. Many of these senior adults have been the foundation of support for local churches for more than 50 years. Younger generations have been slower to make the same level of commitment. Financially, this means that when local churches lose their older members it may take two or three families to make up the difference. However, the aging population is still very active. Churches may consider starting new ministries to capitalize on the passions and energy of their aging members.

8. Desire for authentic, meaningful religious experiences with real people. Although the Internet has provided a means for connecting people with old friends and making new friends across geographical borders, people are looking to connect with others in deeper and more meaningful ways. Affinity groups, men’s and women’s groups, ministry teams, and other small groups will serve to help people connect with one another. Authenticity and intimacy are slowly replacing the big or mega-church experience. **BT**

THE RESOURCE PAGE is provided by the Congregational Life office of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in partnership with *Baptists Today* and for those dedicated lay leaders working in the educational ministries of local churches. This month’s page was written by Neil Westbrook, pastor of Neel Road Baptist Church in Salisbury, N.C. Resource Page Archives are available at <http://www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page>.