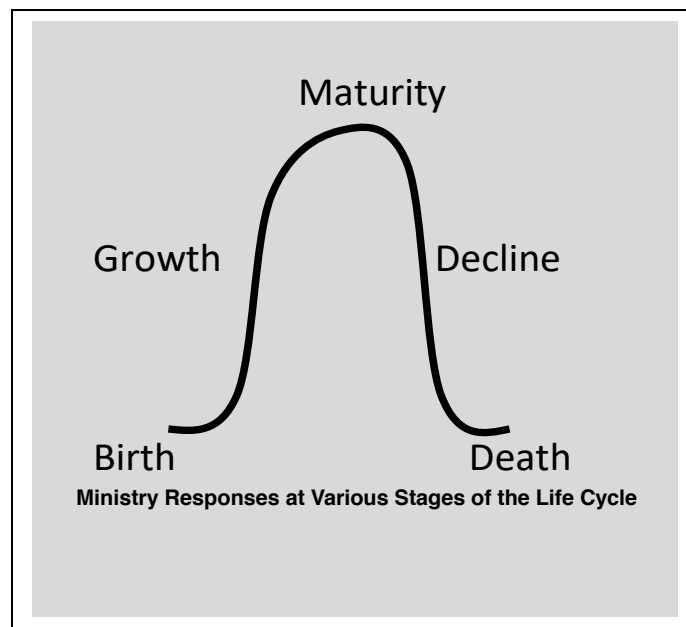


The State of the Church in America

**Highlights the Need to Develop Pastors Who
Lead Churches from Life-Support to New Life!**

Defining Terms:



We want to look at two present realities of church life.

Then we want to look at Risks and Responses to our current need.

1. The State of the Church

A. The Majority of Churches Plateaued or In Decline

80-85% of the churches in America are either plateaued or declining in worship attendance!

The State of the American Church—Wake Up Call

Today, of the approximately 350,000 churches in America, four out of five are either plateaued or declining. . . . Many churches begin a plateau or slow decline about their fifteenth to eighteenth year. 80-85 [percent] are on the down-side of this cycle.¹

David Olson

In summary, the future looks grim for the American church. The conditions that produce growth are simply not present. If present trends continue, the church will fall farther behind population growth.

Olson demonstrates that the percentage of the population attending a Christian church each weekend will decline from 20.4% in 1990 to 14.7% in 2020.²

Bob Humphrey

Bob Humphrey, the founder of Fresh Start Ministries and pioneer in developing turnaround ministry strategies, speaks to the issue of the health of the church in America:

- Seven to ten churches close daily. (GEP recently heard that today
- 6,000 churches close each year)
- In America, 80% of the churches are plateaued or in decline, which means that most are irrelevant, powerless, and in survival mode.
- Each week 53,000 people leave church.³

Better news? Olson

Olson offers the following statistics extracted from a database of more than 200,000 churches. His research demonstrates that 31% of churches in America are growing, while 17% are stable (plateaued, according to terminology in this boot camp) and 52% of the churches are declining.

¹ Win Arn, *The Pastor's Manual for Effective Ministry* (Monrovia, CA: Church Growth, 1988), 41, 43.

² David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of over 200,000 Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 179-180.

³ Bob Humphrey, "Fresh Start Ministries," (Rockport, IL: Fresh Start Ministries Strategic Church Consulting, n.d.), 8. Note that the final figure of people leaving the church originated from Bill Hendricks, *Exit Interviews*.

This means, according to Olson, that 69% of all churches in America are either in a stage of plateau or decline.⁴

Olson demonstrates that the percentage of the population attending a Christian church each weekend will decline from 20.4% in 1990 to 14.7% in 2020.⁵

⁴ Olson, 132.

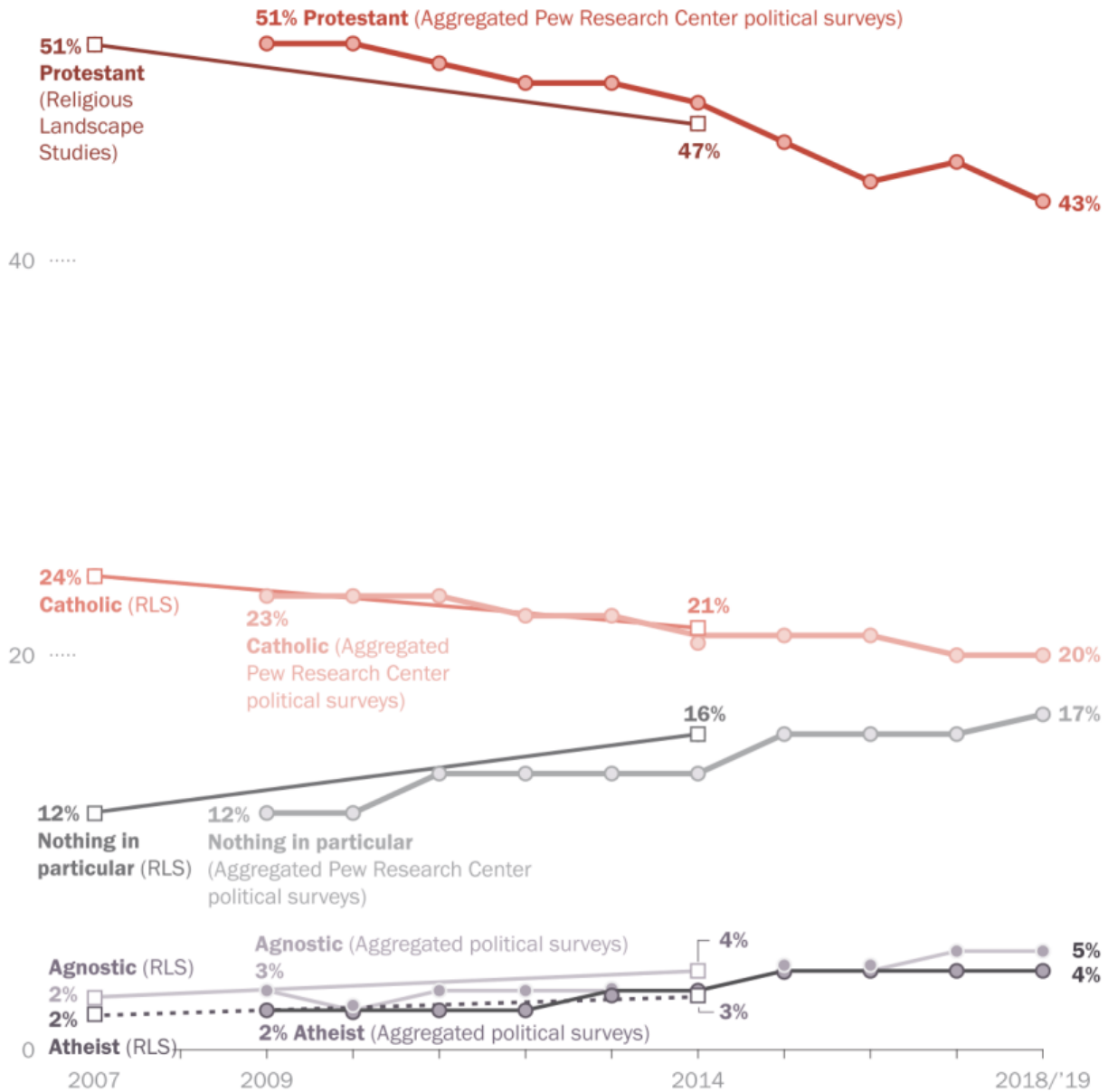
⁵ Olson, 179-180.

More Recent Statistics (October 2019)

<https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/> Accessed October 23, 2019

Protestants and Catholics shrinking as share of U.S. population; all subsets of 'nones' are growing

% of U.S. adults who identify as ...

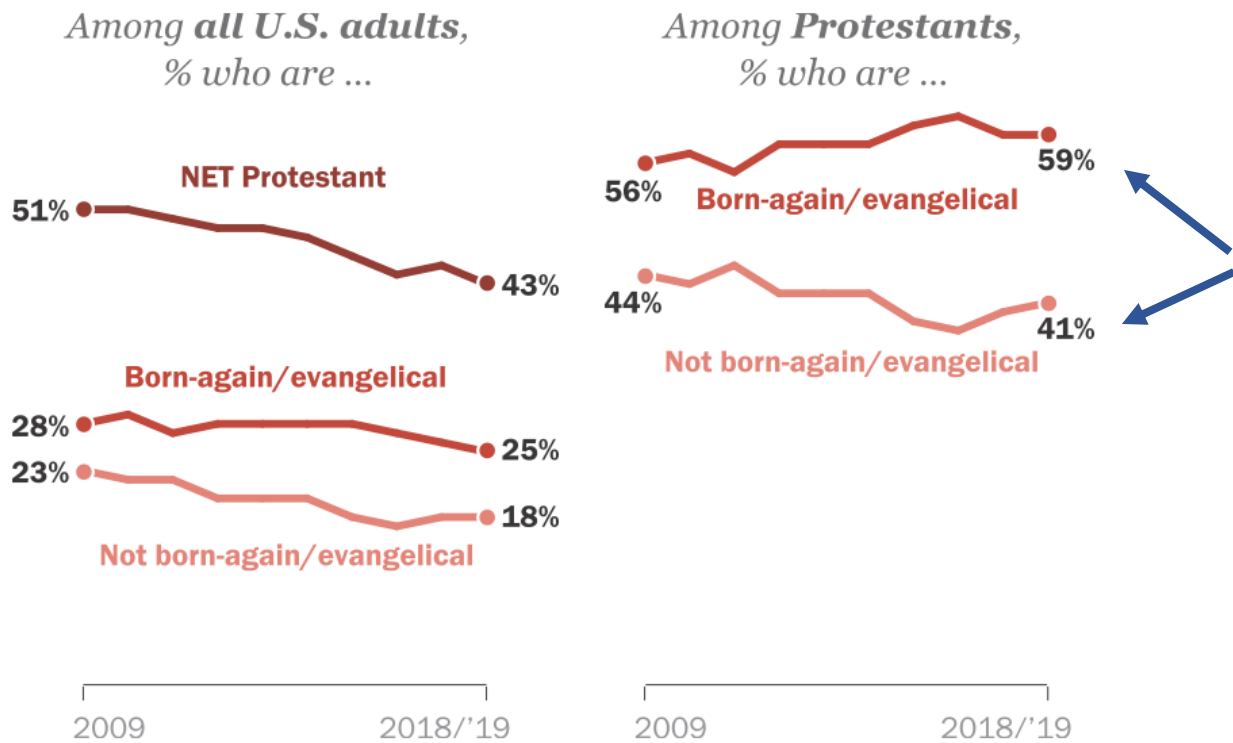


Source: Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Studies (2007 and 2014). Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted 2009-July 2019 on the telephone.

"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Among Protestants, share who say they are 'born-again or evangelical' Christians is as high as or higher than a decade ago



Source: Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted 2009 and January 2018-July 2019 on the telephone.

"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

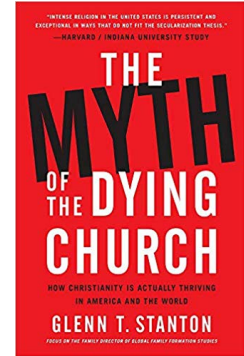
Note that the Born-again/ evangelical group is down 3% of the total population

Note also the blue arrows +3% vs -3%. A lot of transfer growth is taking place.

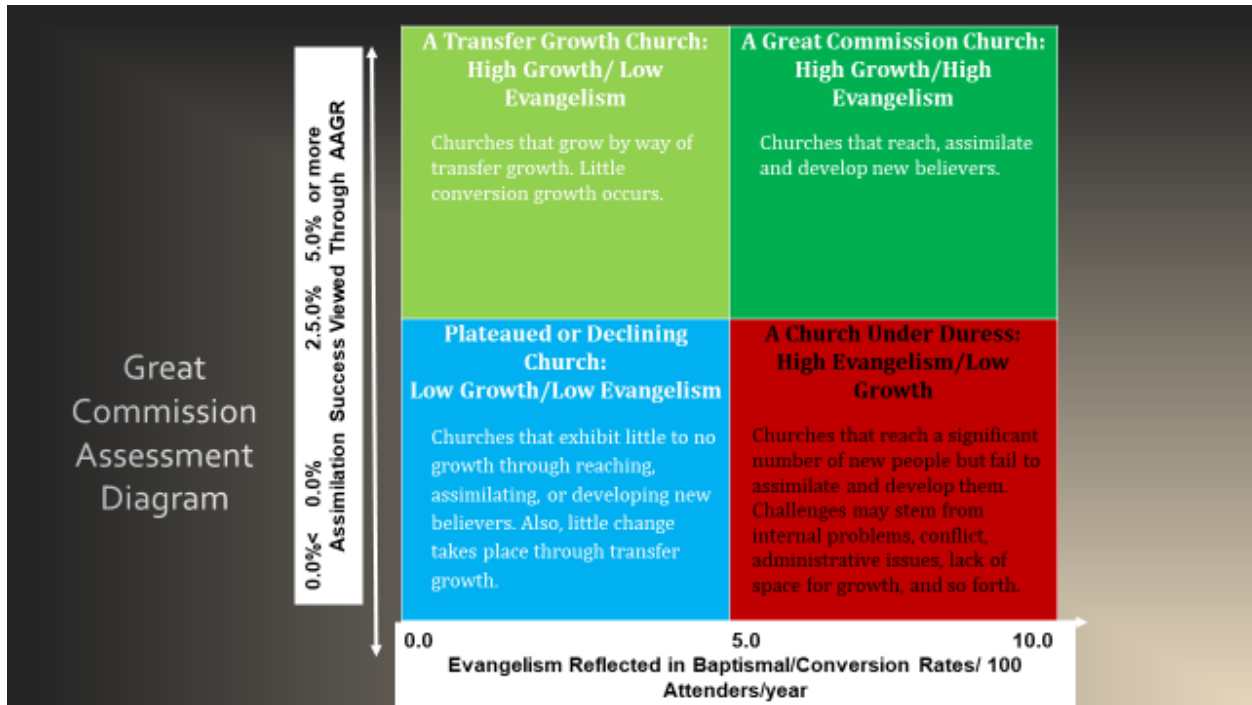
Not all agree that the American Church is in Trouble

The Myth of the Dying Church

Internationally—About 50,000 new believers a day
 About 1,000 new churches a day



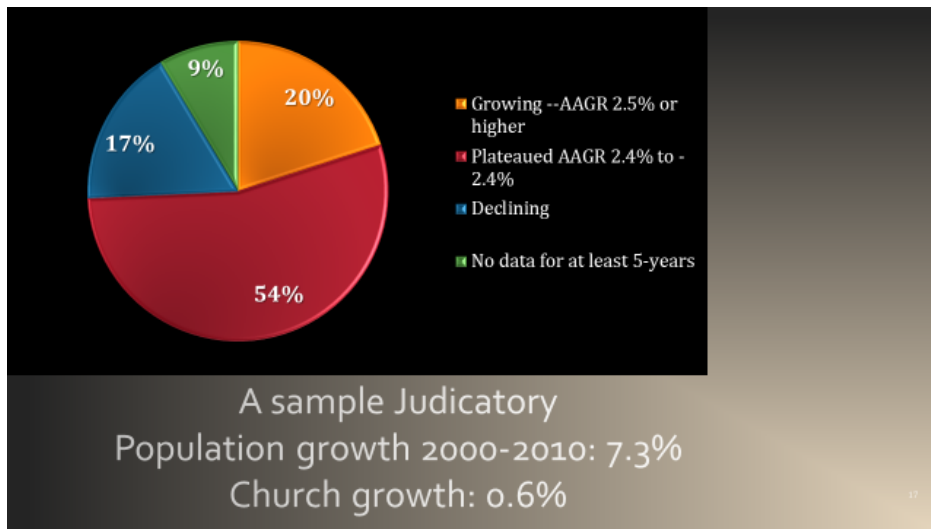
Four types of churches



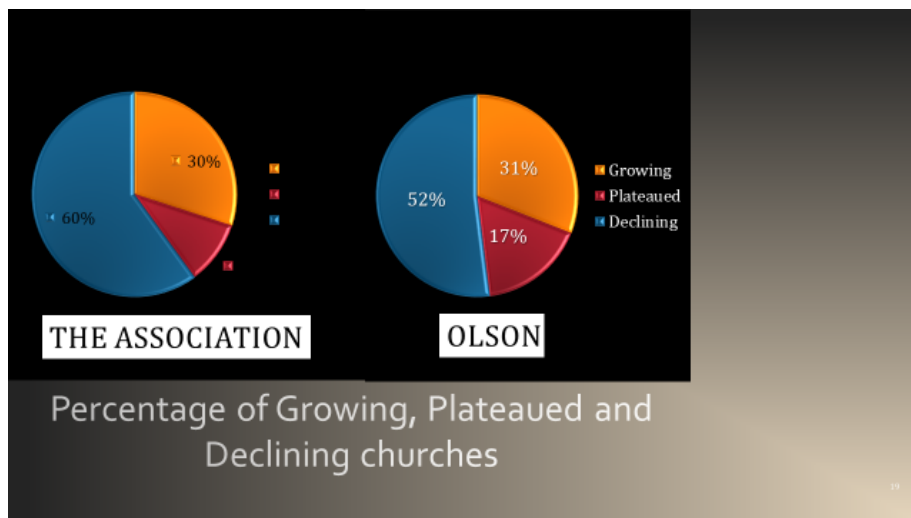
Two Sample Judicatories

A judicatory . . . is book defined as a subgroup of churches in a denomination or association of churches, often called districts, associations, or presbyteries) . . .

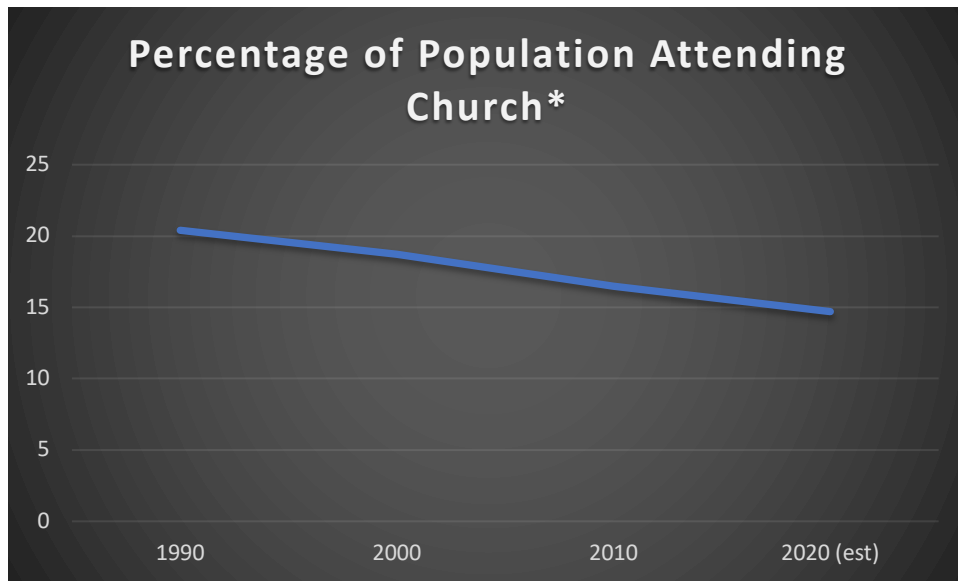
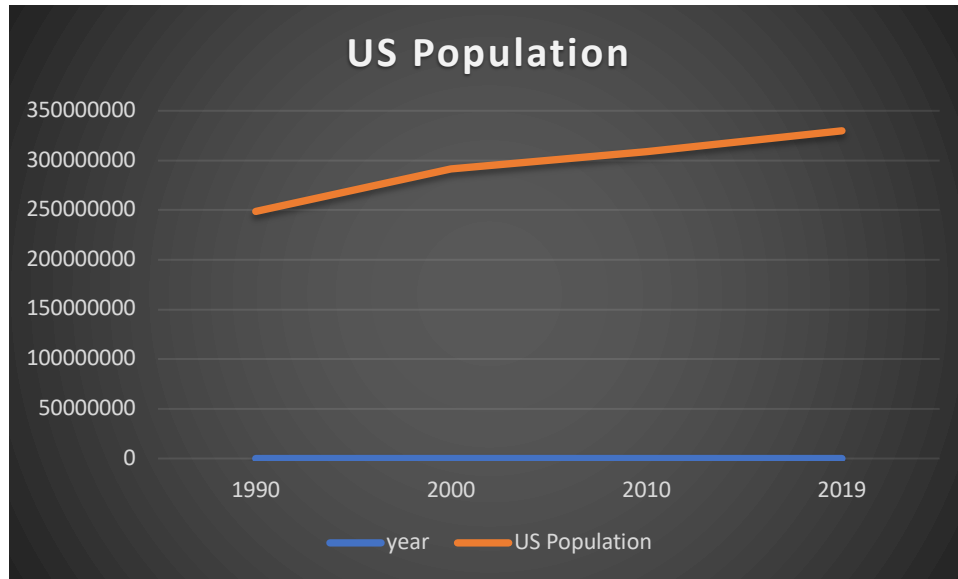
Malphurs, Aubrey. *Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church* (p. 16). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.



A Second Judicatory (Association)



B. Percentage of Church Attenders Declining



*David Olson, *The American Church in Crisis*, 180.

The Raw Numbers

	1990	2010	2019
Worshippers	51.8 Million	51.7 Million (estimated)	
US Populaton	248,709,873	308, 745,538	329,863,000
		% gain	% gain
Population AAGR=		1.1% per year	1.0% per year
Population growth between 1990 and October, 2019			0.74%

Had the church kept pace with population growth and an AAGR of 1.0%, current church attendance would be in the neighborhood of . . .

69,130,000, a gain of 17.4 million souls

Maps can be found at:

© 2008 by David T. Olson www.TheAmericanChurch.org

C. Young People Are Leaving the Church

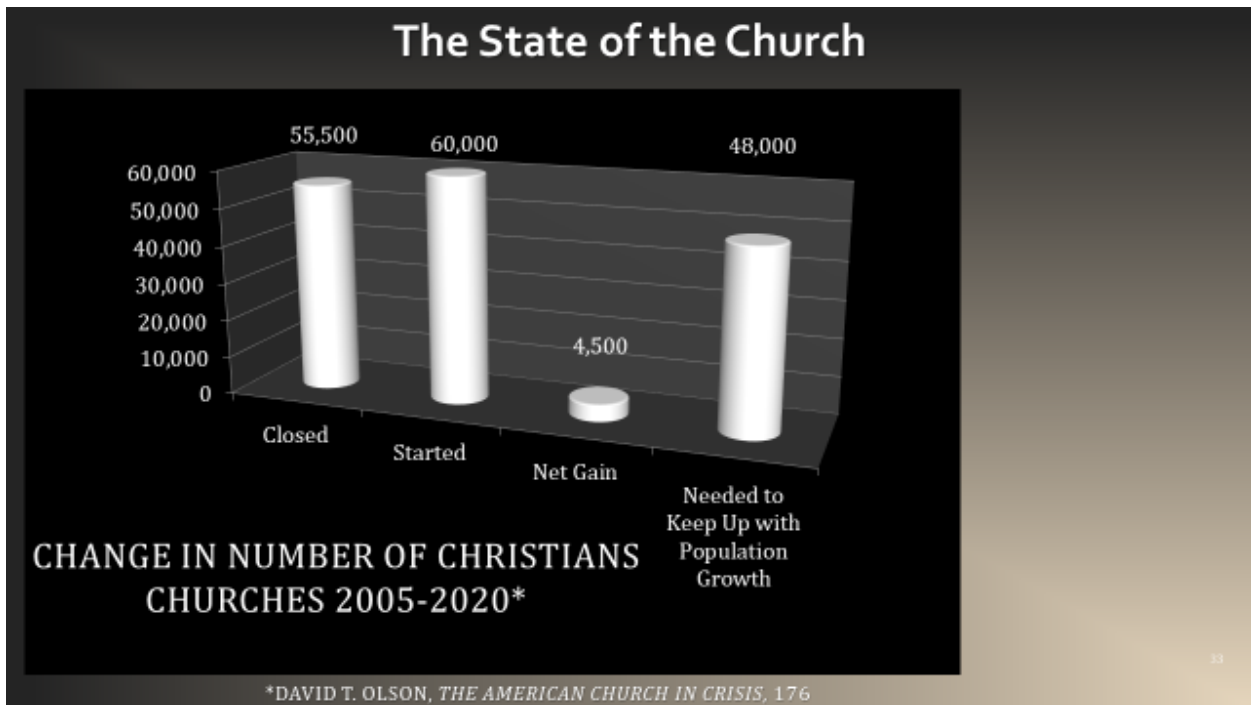
The ages of eighteen to twenty-nine are the black hole of the church attendance; this age segment is “missing in action” from most congregations . . . Overall there is a 43 percent drop-off between the teen and early adult years in terms of church engagement. These numbers represent about eight million twentysomethings who were active churchgoers as teenagers but who will no longer be particularly engaged in church by their thirtieth birthday.⁶

⁶ David Kinneman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church...and Rethinking Faith*. (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2011), 22.

D. Growth of Cults and non-Christian Groups

Groups	Average Annual Growth Rate
Mormons	
Jehovah's Witnesses	
Muslims	
Buddhists	
Wiccans	
U.S. Population	
U.S. Church Attendance	

E. Church Planting Needs Versus Church Planting Ability



The Forklift Analogy

A Sobering Reality

2. THE STATE OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP

A. Leadership—A Key to Success or Failure

Leadership in Ancient Israel

2 Kings 21:10-13

Jesus/ Words to the Scribes and Pharisees

Matthew 23:21-35
(esp. vs. 35)

New Testament Statements Concerning Leadership 1 Corinthians 11:1

Hebrews 13:7

Hebrews 13:17

Jesus' Communication with the seven churches of The Revelation

B. How Are Church Leaders Doing?

Only 15-20% of the pastors are leading growing congregations.

The state of the church reflects the state of church leadership in America. If 80 to 85 percent of our churches are struggling, what does that say about our pastors?⁷

A great number of churches are characterized by an inward, self-serving focus, territorialism, bullies, power brokers, passivity, disillusionment, lack of a clearly defined purpose and vision, all accompanied by division and conflict. The result of such attitudes and actions is a mass of churches that are plateaued or declining in membership, attendance and vitality. Many have become havens for the disgruntled and fortresses against the Great Commission. These “country clubs” have become the antithesis of everything that the Gospel represents.

Where are the pastors in all of this? Many pastors feel they have their backs against the wall. They want to make changes, but either they are afraid to roil the waters or they don’t know how to lead. Church bullies intimidate them. Church boards are uncooperative and controlling. Consequently, pastors struggle and the churches they pastor struggle. Because of the gridlock in many churches, attenders leave in frustration.

Other pastors are simply on cruise control. They draw their pay and don’t rock the boat. Many are content to leave Jesus outside knocking at the door (Revelation 3:20). Many also lack the skill and backbone to develop a vision of a preferred future and pursue it to a fitting conclusion. Others simply walk down the path of ministry blissfully ignorant of the impending cliff before them.⁸

Only about **10+-12%** of pastors are naturally capable of producing a turnaround in a plateaued or declining church.

This number can increase to perhaps 30-40% with proper training and coaching.

Bottlenecks of Ministry

⁷ Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re: Vision, The Key to Transforming Your Church*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2011), 26.

⁸ Malphur and Penfold, , 29.

C. The Problem

Lack of Strong, Visionary Leadership

Andy Stanly Quote—leadership

Pastors, preachers, and teachers who are not gifted in the area of leadership default to management. Best-case scenario, they take what's handed to them and nurture it, protect it, defend it, and in some cases, improve it. Worst-case scenario, they focus on pastoring, preaching and teaching, and delegate key leadership decisions to committees. They are reticent to move outside the lines they were hired into. It's neither intuitive nor comfortable for them to abandon the approach they inherited in order to lead out in a new direction. Consequently, they end up married to the model they were hired into.⁹

Lack of Seminary and Bible College Training

United Methodist pastor Stephen Portner writes:

In order for the churches of the Central Pennsylvania Conference to make a leap of faith, we will need more turnaround pastors. Almost every church vitalization consultant I know will tell you that if a church doesn't have a pastor who will lead, the congregation, with few exceptions, will just be spinning its wheels or, worse, just digging a deeper hole in the mud. In my experience pastors are generally not trained to be leaders. We are expected to take care of people and keep everybody happy. In my first four years as a pastor I was better suited to be a spiritual doormat than be a spiritual leader.¹⁰

⁹ Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide, Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2012) 295.

¹⁰ Stephen Portner, "Transformation 101: Turnaround Pastors," *Link* 39, No. 5 (August/September 2009) (accessed September 28, 2009).

D. The Challenge

Bill Hybels

The local church is the hope of the world and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders. For the first time, I realized that from a human perspective the outcome of the redemptive drama being played out on planet Earth will be determined by how well church leaders lead. Many churches are filled with sincere, talented, godly people who would love to leverage their spiritual gifts in order to impact the world for Christ. The question is this: Will the men and women who have been entrusted with leadership gifts take their gifts seriously, develop them fully, and deploy them courageously, so that the willing and gifted believers in their churches can work together to make a difference in the world?¹¹

3. AT RISK

- Millions who do not know Christ who consider the church irrelevant or passé
- Our future unborn generations
- A potential post-Christian America that resembles post-Christian Europe

4. RESPONSES

- Ignore the 70-85% of the plateaued or declining churches.
- Plant 113,000 churches to keep up with population growth (assuming all 113,000 remain viable)
- Extend the useful life of churches through a church renewal movement

¹¹ Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan 2002), 23.

- Increase the average size of churches by 25 members (gain 10 million NEW BELIEVERS)

Look back at the top of page 12 and list any of the descriptors there that fit you and your ministry situation.

What personal barriers do you sense in ministry?

How do you feel you might begin to deal with these personal barriers?

Do you feel “secure” in your ministry, or do you feel you are always treading on thin ice? Please explain your feelings as best you can.

Three requirements for Church Turnaround

- ❖ The Lord’s blessing
- ❖ A capable pastor
- ❖ A willing congregation

**Ministry as usual is not acceptable.
The status quo has got to go!**

Summary

Therefore our strategy much include both

The Promise:

I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:18

Leading Change While Preventing Church Splits



Bob Whitesel, *Staying Power*, has identified the six stages churches traverse in responding to change. Each stage has its own characteristics and a unique triggering event that pushes the process of mass exit to the next stage. If the pastor mishandles the triggering events, there will be a serious, harmful result: a church split. But by exerting firm leadership, the pastor or ministry leader can change triggering events #2 and #4. In this way, the church usually avoids the exodus. Both groups will remain in the church and eventually negotiate harmony around the changes.

6 Steps to Mass Exits or Church Splits

Step 1: Relative Harmony

Although there may be a few points of tension and disagreement (because no church is entirely free of turmoil), it enjoys widespread peace and unity.

Trigger #1: Catalyst

Someone reads a book, attends a seminar, or experiences some other idea-generating event. They get excited about new ideas that conflict with the status quo.

2: New Idea

The catalyst causes someone – perhaps several people –to feel that change is needed.

Trigger #2: Approval

The pastor, a church leader, or an influential church member, gives the new idea(s) the green light – prematurely.

3: Change

The approval energizes the change proponents. They seek out others to join them in the change initiative. Eventually, a vocal subgroup begins to push for change.

Trigger #3: Alarm

The change proponents push too hard, usually with little consideration to the thoughts and feelings of those who may be opposed to the idea. This causes alarm and status quo proponents to coalesce into their own subgroup.

4: Resistance

The status quo proponents organize to resist the changes. The change proponents work to overcome the resistance.

Trigger #4: Polarization

Emotional intensity peaks as controversial decisions are made that alienate the two groups.

Triangulation occurs with the pastor; both sides try to recruit him or her to “join us” against “them.” (This will be addressed in a future presentation, “The Pastor Stands Apart”).

Often the status quo succeeds in dismissing the pastor for failing to keep the change proponents in line.

5: Intense Conflict

Both subgroups recruit other church members to take sides. The “argument” goes public, and both sides use “us” versus “them” language.

Trigger #5: Justification

Both groups issue ultimatums. Both sides see the other as operating in bad faith. One group threatens to leave, and the other agrees that they probably should. This becomes the justification for leaving.

6: Group Exit

The rift becomes so deep that one group breaks away from the church. Most often, the change proponents exit en masse and either join another congregation or start a new church.

Although the status quo proponents have “won,” the church is left weakened and deprived of energetic voices and resources that are needed for church revitalization.

A. Leadership Interventions

You can arrest this process and void a church split by changing Trigger #2 and Trigger #4 from negative to positive events. The research shows that this strategy will thwart group exits. Instead, the groups will work together to deliberately and amicably implement change in the church.

Intervention #1 (at Trigger #2): Dialog

Rather than granting an inadvertent or unplanned blessing to new ideas advanced by the change proponents, the pastor leads a planned process. Dialogue is encouraged, people are summoned to prayer, stakeholders are consulted, and permission is sought from the church’s leadership team.

Intervention #2 (at Trigger #4) Harmonization

Church leaders now spend time listening to all concerned. They seek common ground. The pastor especially focuses on corporate identity. The church, rather than the groups, is celebrated. The objective is widespread focus on the unity of the church and a commitment to stick together. The result is harmony, cohesiveness, and commitment to the church.

Appropriately handled, Intervention #2 will avoid Stage 5 (Intense Conflict). There will be a period of “dissonant harmony;” both sides work toward unity that makes room for diversity.

- Disagreements remain.
- Emotional outbursts and clandestine meetings cease.
- Suggestions that dissidents leave are avoided.
- People are willing to compromise.

Eventually, the two sides will come to a negotiated agreement. Stage 6 (Group Exit) is replaced by Group Retention. In time, the church then returns to Stage 1 (Relative Harmony). Harmonious relations that may at times include a touch of dissonance, now guide congregational life.

Vision Basics

Purpose answer the question, “why?”

Mission answers the question, “what?”

Vision answers the question, “how?”

1. Purpose answer the question, “why?”

To glorify God through

Evangelism

Worship

Fellowship

Edification

Service (Ministry)

Rick Warren—*Purpose Driven Church*

Two Crucial Elements missing in most churches:

Mission

Vision

2. Mission answers the question, “what?”

Nothing precedes purpose. The starting point for every church should be the question, ‘Why do we exist?’ Until you know what your church exists for, you

have no foundation, no motivation, and no direction for your ministry. If you are helping a new church get started, your first task is to *define* your purpose. It's far easier to set the right foundation at the start of a new church than it is to reset it after a church has existed for years.

However, if you serve in an existing church that has plateaued, is declining, or is simply discouraged, your most important task is to *redefine* your purpose. Forget everything else until you have established it in the minds of your members. Recapture a clear vision of what God wants to do in and through your church family. Absolutely nothing will revitalize a discouraged church faster than rediscovering its purpose.¹²

Churches and pastors are often confused as they consider where they should go and how they should minister.

Please write down the core values of your church. What are the essentials that make your church tick?

Please write your vision for the church or ministry where you serve.

Be as clear and succinct as possible.

3. Vision answers the question, “how?”

Note: These following vision statements are taken from Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold *RE: Vision, The Key to Transforming Your Church*, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2014), 37-48.

¹² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1995), 81.

Biblical foundations for turnaround (transformational) Ministry

The Role of Vision

Examples of Transformational, Vision-Driven Ministry

Please note that all of these leader's behaviors were governed by Core Belief, Core Values/Behaviors, Mission, Vision, and Alignment!

Moses' Vision

His vision was to take a nation of Hebrews and to move them from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land.

Consider Deuteronomy 8:7-9

Hezekiah's Vision

His vision consisted of two parts. The scars of his past drove him powerfully and emotionally

- 1) to separate the nation from the reprehensible deeds of his father and
- 2) to return Israel to spiritual fruitfulness through restored worship and consecration to the Lord God of Israel

2 Kings 16:2-4

2 Chron 29:3-11

Elijah's Vision

The prophet's vision for transformation is plainly seen when he confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. His vision:

To destroy Baal worship and restore the nation to the worship of YHWH, the God of Israel.

Paul's Vision

To glorify God by reaching a growing number of unreached people groups with the Gospel through
1), preaching the Gospel,

- 2) planting churches, and
- 3) developing an ever-expanding leadership base which would in turn would
 - 1) preach the Gospel,
 - 2) plant churches and
- 3) develop an ever-expanding leadership base—
And so it continues!

Christ's Vision

Christ's vision was, in accordance with His covenants and promises, to bring an innumerable company of believers to glory (Hebrews 2:10) from every nation, tribe, people and language (Revelation 7:9) through His finished work, resulting in the thunderous ovations of praise, honor, and glory due the Triune God from all creation for all eternity.



<https://media.thetab.com/blogs.dir/90/files/2016/08/row.jpg>

What can we learn from this photo?

	Mission	Vision
Definition:	Statement	Snapshot
Application:		
Length:		
Purpose:		
Source:		
Development:		

What is Vision?

**“A vision is a clear and exciting picture of God’s future for your ministry as you believe that it can and must be.”
Malphurs and Penfold, *Re: Vision*, 154.**

**“Moving a church in a direction by passion—that’s vision.”
Bob Humphrey**

The legendary Walt Disney died before Disney World in Florida was completed. On opening day in 1971, almost five years after Disney’s death, someone commented to Mike Vance, creative director of Walt Disney Studios, “Isn’t it too bad Walt Disney didn’t live to see this?”

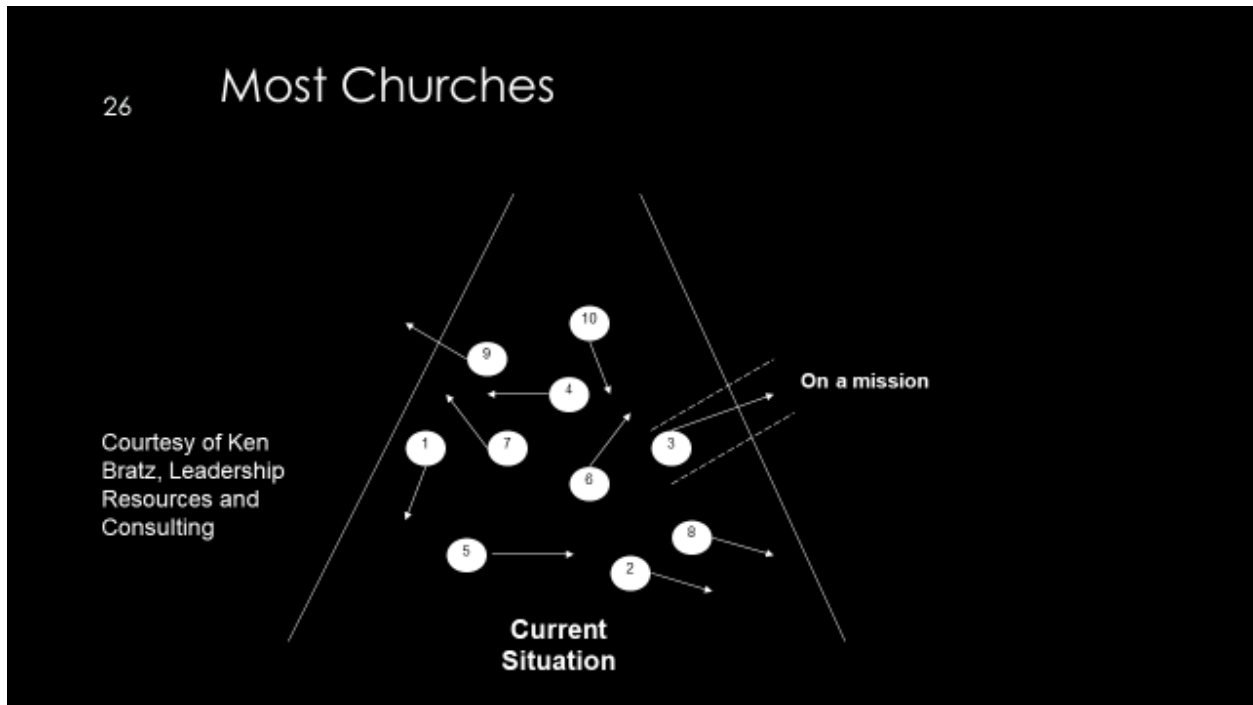
“He did see it,” Vance replied simply. “That’s why it’s here.”¹³

Foundations for Developing a Ministry Plan for Yourself and the Church

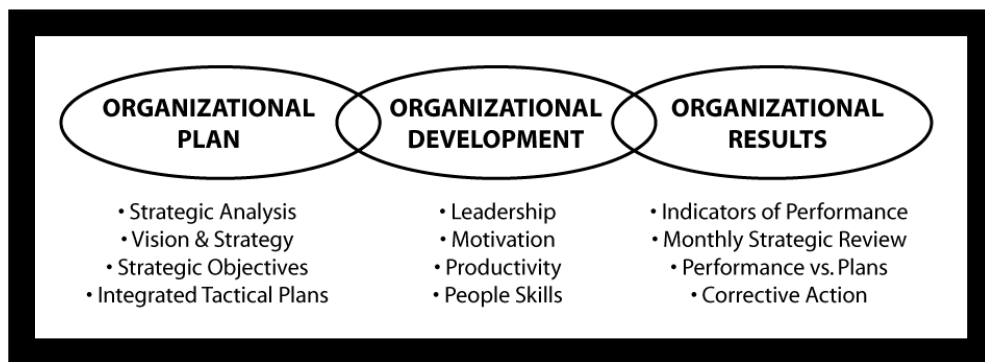
- 1. Understand (know) God--Be Deeply Immersed in the Word of God and Prayer**
- 2. Understand (know) your Gifting**
- 3. Understand (know) your Congregation**
- 4. Understand (know) your Community**
- 5. Understand the enemy of your souls.**

¹³ Craig Groeschel, *IT, How churches and leaders can get it and keep it*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2008), p 48.

- 6. Understand your mission
- 7. Count the cost.



Plan It / Do It / Measure It



Vision Statement

- **The church must have a single, clear, concise, widely-known, broadly accepted Vision**
- **A good Vision is compelling**
- **The larger the church, of necessity, the sharper the statement**

Here are some sample statements:

- **Ten percent of Prior Lake’s population will be in weekly contact with our church, where they will become partners in God’s plan to shape our community, country, and world.**
- **We envision a growing movement of transformed people reshaping the culture to reflect God’s heart.—Waterstone Church**
- **Our Vision is to be a community of people who love Christ, live like Christ, serve Christ, and share Christ.**
- **We see FBCP in the heart of the community with the**
 - **Sanctuary filled with worshippers**
 - **Building filled for God’s purposes**
 - **Community filled with transformed lives and**
 - **World filled with disciples who share Christ’s love.**

South Denver Church

We want to glorify God by providing a safe place where . . .

**We love like Jesus loves
 Forgive like Jesus forgives
 Serve like Jesus serves and
 Extend grace the way Jesus extends grace
 by
 Touching 1500 people per year with the love of Christ**

Sharing the gospel with 150 people this year

**Asking God for 15 new believers this year,
 And by adding a new Saturday night service
 within two years to reach out to those
 who cannot attend a Sunday morning service.**

The Promise:

**I will build My church,
and the gates of Hades
shall not prevail against it.
Matthew 16:18**

The Church has been hijacked!

Let's roll!!!