

# 10 Challenges for Church Ministry in the Next 10 Years

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## #1 – Consumeristic Discipleship

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Consumeristic Discipleship is where people look to church as something that should meet their needs or match their preferences.

We have often unintentionally formed or drawn people to us or the gospel with a false understanding of discipleship. When we then try to move people toward a Christ-Centered form of discipleship they recoil.



# #1 – Consumeristic Discipleship

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- Church should be about me and my preferences.
- Making the scripture fit my desire for my life.
- Christianity is about the accumulation of knowledge.
- My identity as \_\_\_\_\_ is more important than my identity as a Christian.
- We pay others to do ministry for us.
- We fight over stupid stuff in the church.
- We are formed by our devices and disciplined by our news service.



## #1 – Consumeristic Discipleship

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### Matthew 22:36-40

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **mind**.”<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: **‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**<sup>[40]</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”



# #1 – Consumeristic Discipleship

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## **We have an opportunity**

Christianity grew in the early church because it was so radical in its behavior, especially toward the “other”. At the same time as they were incredibly counter cultural to the morality of the day.

The reality is there is great openness to Jesus but little openness to the church.



## #2 – Involved doesn't mean what it used to

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In the 1970-90s

- Regular Church Attenders went to church 3-4 times a month

In the 2000s-2020

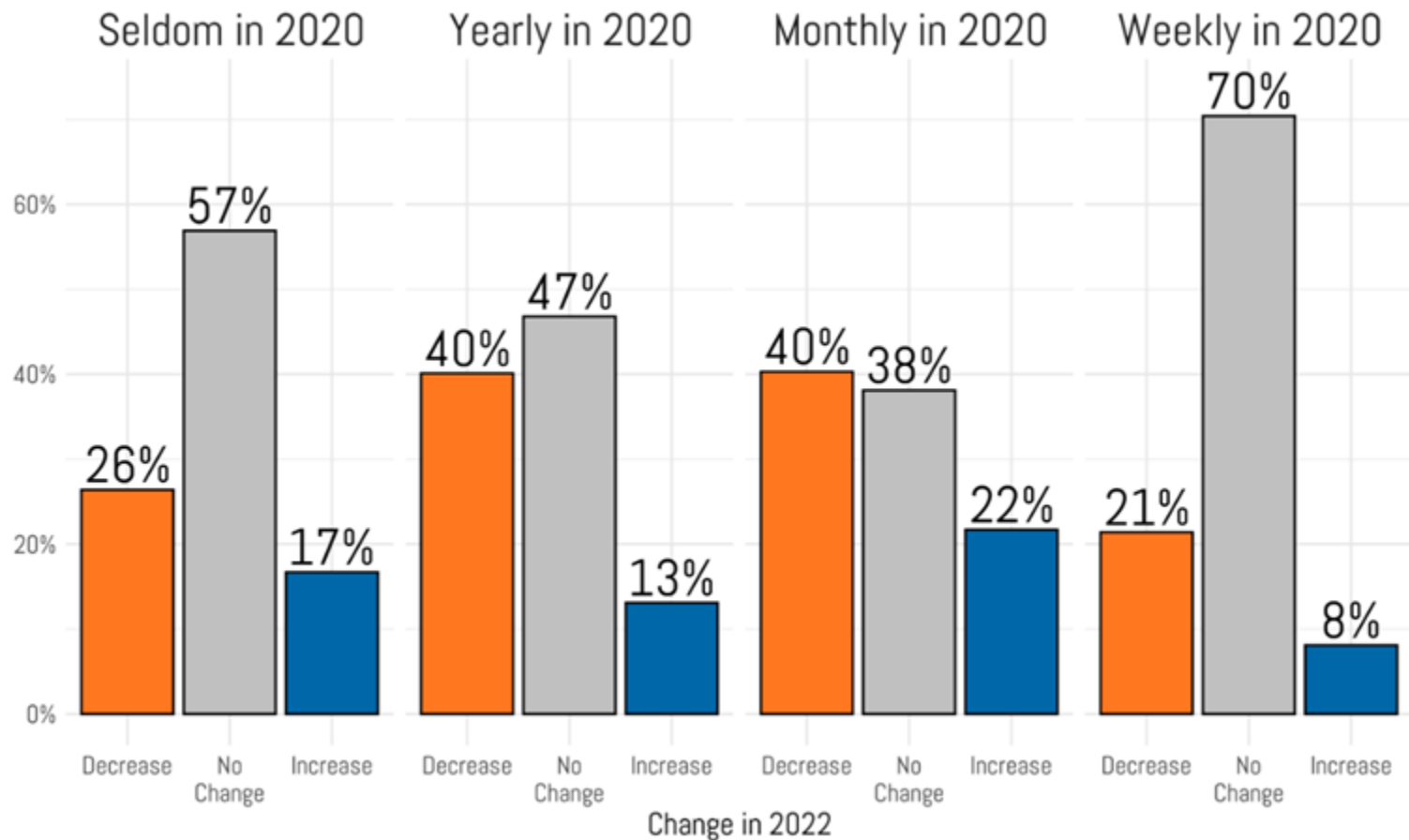
- Regular Church Attenders went to church 1.8 times a month

Post 2020

- Regular Church Attenders might go 1.2 times a month

Most churches are reporting 20-30% decrease in average worship but giving is similar or increasing overtime.

# Did Attendance Increase or Decrease in 2022 Based on 2020 Attendance?





## #2 – Involved doesn't mean what it used to

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A church that has 150 "regular attenders"

- In 1983 had 120 on a Sunday
- In 2003 had 75 on a Sunday
- In 2023 will have 50 a Sunday





## #2 – Involved doesn't mean what it used to

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The Good News: Your Church may not have shrunk as much as it appears

The Bad News: Your people are only attending when it is convenient for them to do so

Everyone is taking a step back

- From Leader to Volunteer
- From Volunteer to Attender
- From Attender to Observer
- From Observer to Absent



## #3 The Culture and Civic Christianity are more Disconnected than Ever

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- It used to be that the cultural magnet was toward a Judeo-Christian worldview even if the people were not Christian themselves
- The middle however no longer identifies as “Christian”
- Most demographics in areas all over the country predict that in the next 10 years:
  - 3% of people who don’t identify as Christian will do so in 2030
  - 13% who say they are Christian will not say so in 2030.
- The missional distance between culture church has moved from M1 to M3-4



## #3 The Culture and Civic Christianity are More Disconnected than Ever

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Culture is moving fast

- It took 40 years for the LGB agenda to significantly move the needle in the United States.
- It took about 4 years to move the needle on the transgender agenda.
  - It went from being unheard of to many public school kids now having to identify their pronouns.
- Although abortion law has changed, that was more of a legal decision rather than a change in the beliefs in our culture as evidence by 2024 elections.
- With the change in abortion, it has unfortunately made our society even more anti-Christian and anti-evangelical.



## #4 – Financial Realities are Changing

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- Giving patterns and approaches to giving have drastically changed and will continue to do so
  - Older generations would give their "tithe" regardless of how they felt about the church, the pastor, or the mission
  - Younger generations are more relational in giving well but they spread out their giving and they want to see impact
  - We can't make giving about meeting budget

\*Upcoming webinar on FUEL - Creating a Culture of Generosity



## #5 – Church Plants are going to look very different

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The idea of a 3-year trajectory from scratch plants toward self-sustaining churches in suburban America is few and far between. The next wave of church planting will likely lean toward:

- Bi-vocational and Co-vocational pastors
- Multi-use and/or permanent rental space/building
- House or network of micro-churches



## #6 – Leadership in the church is going to be different

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The skills, training, expectation of leaders are going to be drastically different especially for those churches that are smaller.

- Lay pastors and leaders will need more training
- Just as in church planting Bi-vocational and co-vocational are going to be a growing reality
- Students won't pay \$60k+ for a Master's degree that sets them up for a decreasing job market that doesn't have livable wages



## #7 – Increased Polarization within the church

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People tend to be identified with their constituency or demographic group, they look for their church to agree with their political persuasion. It is much more likely to have people in our church assume that the only Christian way to vote is their way.



## #8 – Increased Hostility Toward the Church

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These are coming in many forms

- Potential Tax exemption – 5 years ago experts were saying there was no way clergy and churches would lose tax benefits. Now people are seeing it on the horizon.
- It isn't/won't be ok to agree to disagree in our culture.
- Legal ramifications for holding biblically orthodox positions.
- We receive what collateral contempt – where non-Christians tend to view Christians through one cultural lens to which they have been exposed.





# Reality #9 – The Face of America is Changing

**Table 1**  
U.S. Population, Actual and Projected:  
2005 and 2050

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2050</b>
Population (in millions)	296	<i>438</i>
<b>Share of total</b>		
Foreign born	12%	<i>19%</i>
<b>Racial/Ethnic Groups</b>		
White	67%	<i>47%</i>
Hispanic	14%	<i>20%</i>
Black	13%	<i>13%</i>
Asian	5%	<i>9%</i>
<b>Age Groups</b>		
Children (17 and younger)	25%	<i>23%</i>
Working age (18–64)	63%	<i>58%</i>
Elderly (65 and older)	12%	<i>19%</i>

Note: All races modified and not Hispanic; American Indian/  
Alaska Native not shown. See "Methodology."

Source: Pew Research Center, 2008



## #10 – Digital Connection and AI is only going to increase

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We assume the following:

- People will check you out online before they show up in person.
- People will ask the compelling reason to go to church when they can just listen to messages or music online?
- AI is already starting to change how people connect to machines. The implications and ramifications are going to be huge for the larger culture and work as well as the church.



## Reflection Question

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What current realities are most threatening or disruptive to the mission of your church?

Are there any of the current realities that you see as an opportunity for the gospel?

## Shift #1

A redesign of the ministry and focus to engage in the formation of disciples



## Shift #2

We can no longer outsource:

- Important ministry to paid professions
- The exclusive training of ministry to outside organizations



## Shift #3

We must engage winsomely  
(individually and corporately) to  
evangelize our contexts



## Shift #4

We must engage in planting churches  
and micro expressions.



## Shift #5

We must rethink the goal posts of ministry and change our models.





More information

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