

Startling Statistics on the Decline of Christianity in the US and the Need for Church Planting

Posted by Bob Young

In 2010 "Mission Alive," a church-planting organization, published some statistics on population growth, church decline, the decline of Christianity in the US, and the opportunity and need for church planting. The link points to a blog published by James Nored on Missional Outreach Network. The information is also reprinted below for your convenience.

[\[http://www.missionaloutreachnetwork.com/profiles/blog/show?id=2422312%3ABlogPost%3A36951&xgs=1&xg_source=msg_share_post\]](http://www.missionaloutreachnetwork.com/profiles/blog/show?id=2422312%3ABlogPost%3A36951&xgs=1&xg_source=msg_share_post)

Here is the bad news:

- Between 1990 and 2000 there was a net gain of 4600 churches in the US; however, to simply maintain the pace with population growth a gain of 38,800 was needed.
- Between 80-85% of churches in the US are in numeric decline.
- From 1990-2001 the percentage of Americans identifying themselves as "Christian" dropped nearly 10%. At that rate, non-Christians will outnumber Christians of any denomination by 2042.
- Many churches struggle with our changing society and increasingly post-modern culture. Perhaps out of fear, many turn inward and are unable to reach their community with the good news.

Here is some demographic data:

- The US population is expected to reach 392 million by 2050, up from 300 million in 2006. Most of the increase will be in metropolitan areas. This represents a 31% increase in 42 years.
- 10 US metro areas grew in excess of 40% in the past decade: metro areas as divergent as Naples, FL., Yuma, AZ, Fayetteville, AR, and Boise, ID.
- Estimates are that 60% of the population increase in the US in the next 50 years will be among immigrant peoples.
- By 2050, less than 53 percent will be non-Hispanic White, 16 percent will be Black; 23 percent will be Hispanic; 10 percent will be Asian and Pacific Islander.

Here are the opportunities:

- American suburban life is changing to be characterized by isolation, individualism, and consumerism, providing both challenges and entry points for the gospel.
- New churches tend to grow faster than existing churches, have a greater percentage of young people and incorporate people faster than existing churches.
- Churches less than 15 years old gain 60%-80% of their members from people not attending any worshiping body, while in churches more than 15 years old 80%-90% of new members transfer from other churches.

It is clear from these statistics that Christianity in America is on a dramatic downward trend. Only God can reduce this decline. The influx of immigrants represents both a challenge and an

opportunity for us. Legal immigration has been very good for America. In fact, this country was built by immigrants, who came motivated and inspired to live a better way of life. As far as minorities and churches, historically, our fellowship has not done a good job of reaching the non-White population. But immigrants are often very open to new faith, as the rest of their lives are in flux already. This is why groups such as Genesis Alliance, a Latino church planting group are so important. We need to plant many new "minority" churches to reach these growing populations.

It is also clear that predominantly white churches and established churches of all ethnicities are needed to plant churches. The sad fact is, very few churches are growing at all, and those that are growing are doing so through transfer growth. Unfortunately, most churches are satisfied if they merely meet the budget and gain members through transfer growth.

We need to plant many, many new churches, as this is one of the best evangelistic methods there is.