

**News and Current Events :: Survey: 1,200 MegaChurches in US****Survey: 1,200 MegaChurches in US - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2005/7/28 23:55**

[Image: [http://www.sermonindex.net/images/forum/2004/may/featured\\_news.gif](http://www.sermonindex.net/images/forum/2004/may/featured_news.gif)]

A new study found there are at least 1,200 MegaChurches in the United States – 50 percent more than previously thought by most religion researchers – and the number may be growing.

“Our preliminary research for the major survey effort indicates there could very well be another 200 to 400 megachurches in addition to these,” said Warren Bird, the Director of Leadership Community Intellectual Capital Support at the Leadership Network.

Earlier this year, the Leadership Network – the foremost networking and resource organization for very large churches – joined with the Hartford Institute for Religion Research for one of the most extensive mega-church project ever undertaken. Together they found there were at least 1,200 Protestant churches claiming more than 2,000 weekly worship attendees.

In the past, each organization held a database of around 850 “very large churches” in the U.S. When the two groups compared their records, they found only 600 churches overlapped on both list, leaving hundreds of churches unaccounted for.

In terms of affiliation, the greatest number of megachurches is non-denominational or Southern Baptist, followed by the Assemblies of God, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and the United Methodist Church.

**Re: Survey: 1,200 MegaChurches in US, on: 2005/7/29 7:45**

Will I get clobbered over the head for saying ~ Oh how sad ? (probably - I better run)

No, what I wanted to say is... David Wilkerson started in the AoG and so did we, 30 yr.s ago.

But, in '85 we left ... as in my husband turned in his license.

I'm not picking on just them as a denomination, but in a Pastor's conference (District Office meeting), they hired a guy who had no Bible Ed, but was hired because he had been a big Corporate man who bragged that he made a few Corporations turn into multi-millions of profit ... that's all he talked about for 45 min.s.

Then went on to say how he was going to grow the AoG by putting up Billboards, etc. etc..

We wondered when he would talk about "building up the Body of Christ."

That was when we got out.

Since then, a Pastor told us, that at his District Office's meeting 2 yr.s ago, that all the Pastors were told, to "throw away their Hymnals, ease up on the Hell, Fire, etc., change the music to overhead projector modern stuff, and if anyone over 50 gripes, find a way to get them to leave."

Hmmm !

Well, that 'is' how you grow a mega-church, isn't it ?

So, that's why I think it's sad. The AoG college we met at, had OLD retired missionaries as Professors, and they were the greatest men I've ever met. Of course they're all long gone to Heaven now ... Thank God, cuz they'd die anyway, if they saw what's become of things in the last 25 yr.s, since they've been gone.

Now I'll duck & run. (:

Re: - posted by Eli\_Barnabas (), on: 2005/7/29 8:58

Quote:  
-----Since then, a Pastor told us, that at his District Office's meeting 2 yr.s ago, that all the Pastors were told, to "throw away their Hymnals, ease up on the Hell, Fire, etc., change the music to overhead projector modern stuff, and if anyone over 50 gripes, find a way to get them to leave."  
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That is an atrocity!

Re: Survey: 1,200 MegaChurches in US - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/7/29 9:13

Man has always been fascinated by numbers - the bigger, the better, it seems. Quite sad that this attraction for numbers is also a characteristic of Christians today.

The words of the Lord comfort me more than any of those figures:

"Where two or three have gathered in My name, there I am in their midst.", Matthew 18:20

Re: - posted by taco, on: 2005/7/29 9:21

Jesus said, "I will build **my** church".

If he is not building it; it's not his church.

If it's not his church; he won't bulid it.

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2005/7/29 9:47

Quote:  
-----  
taco wrote:Jesus said, "I will build **my** church".  
If he is not building it; it's not his church.  
If it's not his church; he won't bulid it.  
-----

Yes I believe Jesus builds MegaChurches also, No comment here on MegaChurches , only comment I have is whatever it takes to get the lost sheep in, I use to comment on pastors but God place this in my spirit that Mr. Bill I have every Pastor placed strategically in just the right place to minister to those in that certain area and I feel the same way about the Church large or small he has a reason for their being. Unless I had a direct line to God and can talk to him verbally, he is the almighty he can take out Churches, People, etc. anytime he wants, I am still trying to get my own personal life right and I still have a long ways to go, so I need to concern myself with myself right now and let God take care of the Pastors and Churches, because it will take someone bigger than me to correct this if it's wrong.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/7/29 11:23

Quote:  
-----...whatever it takes to get the lost sheep in,  
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Statistically speaking, are the lost sheep the reason these churches are growing so fast? Does anyone know of a study looking into this question?

MC

Re: - posted by inotof (), on: 2005/7/29 11:28

Most of the comments here remind me of 10 shekels and a shirt, Paris told a story about the cadillac. (I won't go into detail, you NEED to listen to it if you have not)

Meaga churches built with P/R skills. Since when is building churches about marketing? It's sad. Let's all pray for churches to get back to the Gospel. plain and simple. Remember, LIFE ETERNAL is relevant no matter what generation. Thanks for the info greg.

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/7/29 13:17

Quote:

-----  
Statistically speaking, are the lost sheep the reason these churches are growing so fast? Does anyone know of a study looking into this question?  
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Here's some quotations by Rick Warren from that "Myths of the Modern Mega-Church" forum that has been recently discussed in another forum here on SI. (I don't know how to do the link thing but if someone wants to please feel free to just throw it in here). I am not aware of any studies concerning all mega-churches, but at least as far as Rick Warren's church in Saddleback, I think this is very helpful. He also distinguishes 2 types of mega-churches, which I think is key to understanding this topic.

Quote:

----- In fact, when I started Saddleback 23 years ago, I said we would never go on TV and we'd never go on the radio because I didn't want to be a celebrity. I think always being in the spotlight blinds you. I think that you get more done under the radar, behind the scenes. And I actually was able to do it for about 23 years until this blasted book kind of blew my cover. But I was able to just keep behind the scenes, and while I wasn't known like a Jerry Falwell or a Robert Schuler or some of these media personalities, every pastor in America knew who I was because I put all of my sermons on an Internet site and it gets 400,000 hits a day from pastors. And so, instead of me teaching it on the radio or TV, we put it on the Internet and we allow other pastors to take this material and use it..

Another myth is that mega-churches require little or no commitment. What I mean by that is that people think if you're big, you must be shallow. And I would just say to that -- the reality is that most members of typical churches could not join Saddleback because they would not be willing to meet the requirements. We have very strong standards for requirements. They're pretty tough, and we're not interested in the big membership; we're interested in turning an audience into an army and mobilizing it for good...

The last one that I'll give you is the myth that mega-churches grow by marketing. I'm so tired of this story; I've heard it over and over and over -- the latest being the most recent issue of Business Week, where it basically says the mega-churches are big business. Now that is just such a superficial, unrealistic view of what actually goes on. The implication is that if a church is this big, it must be because of marketing. No, it's because of changed lives. When people's lives are changed you'd have to lock the doors to keep them out, because they want to go where their lives are changed. We put people in a tent for three years where we would freeze in the winter and it would rain on us all spring and we'd burn up in the summer and the howling winds could come through -- and people would walk about a mile through the mud to get to this tent. I mean, everything was inconvenient. And why did they come, why did they show up? Because their lives were getting changed; that is what was happening. So they put up with inconvenience...

Really there are two kinds of mega-churches. They don't grow the same way. Some grow by transferred growth and some grow by conversion. And anytime you see a mega-church that grows instantly -- it just kind of explodes -- and all of a sudden they go from zero to 5,000, that's a church that's growing by transfer growth, which means they've just become the hot act in town and everybody goes, "Let's just all go over there. That's the place to go so we'll all go." And as a pastor, I don't consider that legitimate growth. Jesus said, "I'll make you fishers of men." This is like swapping fish in the aquarium. It's like we pop them from one place to another, and they grow at the expense of other churches...

Saddleback is unique in that 78 percent of the members of our church had no religious background prior to joining the church. It is a church of conversion growth. We've baptized about 14,000 adults in the last eight years. So that means this is not a church that grew at the expense of other churches.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/7/29 14:43

Quote:  
-----...the reality is that most members of typical churches could not join Saddleback because they would not be willing to meet the requirements... we're interested in turning an audience into an army and mobilizing it for good...

Saddleback is unique in that 78 percent of the members of our church had no religious background prior to joining the church. It is a church of conversion and growth. We've baptized about 14,000 adults in the last eight years.  
-----

Thanks Todd. I appreciate your helpful post.

Warren mentioned his church is unique among mega-churches in that its growth is not through transfer.

Does this mean saddleback is atypical for a mega-church?

I'm curious about another facet of this issue. Our recent church was not quantifiably a "mega-church" but our leadership so admired the mega-church methods and success that they acted mega themselves. (I'd be happy to elaborate but don't want to appear overly-negative on this.) How is the gravity of the Mega-churches affecting the vision of the local pastor in smaller churches? Do pastors have mega-envy?

MC

Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/7/29 15:14

Quote:  
-----Thanks Todd. I appreciate your helpful post.  
-----

Your welcome. Glad it was helpful to you.

Quote:  
-----Warren mentioned his church is unique among mega-churches in that its growth is not through transfer.

Does this mean saddleback is atypical for a mega-church?  
-----

Now I think you need to be careful here. Warren did say Saddleback is unique, but he didn't clearly state that it was unique "among mega-churches." In context I can see why you would infer that, but I'm not absolutely sure he meant that.

He also did not clearly say that they are unique because "its growth is not through transfer." He said it's unique and then gives some stats as to what makes it unique. Again, I think I can see why you'd infer that in the context, but in his actual statement about why it's unique, he does not clearly state it as you put it. Perhaps many mega-churches have most of their growth through transfer, just not as high of a percentage.

Would those statistics be unique among churches in general? I would think so, but I am not sure.

You offer an interesting follow-up question.

Quote:  
-----Do pastors have mega-envy?  
-----

I would hope not, but this would not be shocking either. I can understand being interested in thier methods of growth. F or example, it seems Rick Warren's church really has had legitimate growth. So I can see why pastors would be interest ed in studying and perhaps incorporating his methods into their churches.

Maybe we need to be open to distinguish between envy and stirring for souls. When you look at figures like Warren's, I could definately understand a pastor getting stirred about getting more souls saved.

But it seems clear that to be envious is not healthy. Hopefully pastors who might be struggling with mega-envy, which I could imagine, will get help and get over it.

But I don't know if we would be able to distinguish between a pastor being envious or just being stirred and excited abou t souls which might result in trying some different things and maybe making some adjustments in mentality and methodo logy.

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/7/29 15:43**

Quote:  
-----I can understand being interested in thier methods of growth. For example, it seems Rick Warren's church really has had legitimate growth. So I can see why pastors would be interested in studying and perhaps incorporating his methods into their churches.  
-----

I see your point. I need to be careful not to project my limited experiences onto every church!

So there are several things for me to consider...

- 1) It may be an oversimplified assumption that skillful marketing is the force behind the mega-church.
- 2) Mega-churches may be more successful at evangelism then they are given credit for.
- 3) The difference between wanting to see numbers added daily to the church and wanting to see church-growth may be in the eye of the beholder.

MC

**Re: - posted by todd, on: 2005/7/29 16:29**

Exactly. Very well said. These considerations you bring up are great. I have come to consider similar ideas lately, especially since I read the "Myths of the Modern Mega-Church" transcript.

Quote:  
-----1) It may be an oversimplified assumption that skillful marketing is the force behind the mega-church.  
-----

Yes, I definately agree. Especially behind "all" mega-churches, which would be even more of an overgeneralization.

Quote:  
-----3) The difference between wanting to see numbers added daily to the church and wanting to see church-growth may be in the eye o f the beholder.  
-----

I am convinced by this that you understood what I was trying to get at as far as pastors are concerned. Well stated.

I have been helped by how you phrased your considerations. Thanks. Excellent.

**Re: - posted by Christisking (), on: 2005/7/29 18:00**

I wonder how many have been to any of these "mega-churches"? I have been numerous times in the past and will continue to go in the future, because I believe many of these pastors need to be openly and publicly rebuked in front of the entire congregation for mis-handling the Gospel and preaching a false Jesus and a false plan of salvation.

I understand that there are exceptions to the rule, but the majority of these mega-churches experience their growth by preaching a sugary sweet, watered down easy believism and thus a false gospel and a false Jesus. They preach Jesus wants you to be happy, happy, happy, not Jesus wants you to be Holy, Holy, Holy.

One personal example is of a mega-church I attended this past Easter. They had over 20,000 "seekers" attend their 10 services. They never spoke of the cross, never spoke of the resurrection, never spoke of repentance and only mentioned Jesus a few brief times, the message was about Peter being a fisherman. At the end of the service they had people sign a paper that was provided in the bulletin that stated to the effect "I believe Jesus is the son of God and has already forgiven me for all my past sins and all sins I will commit in the future" Upon signing this paper and tossing it into a wading pool set up on the stage as a symbol of throwing away your sin and casting them upon Jesus voila "your saved, going to heaven and nothing you do or say in the future can ever change that" "You are already forgiven for every sin you will ever commit." This church proudly claims that it patterns itself after Saddleback and purchases much of their material from them. They follow the Saddleback pattern to a tee.

The fastest way to grow your numbers is to not preach hell, judgment, sin, wrath, holiness, cross bearing, the blood of Christ, repentance, self denial, death to self and flesh, righteousness - just preach love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, peace and happiness mixed in with some pop psychology and Dale Carnegie type motivation and I guarantee your numbers will grow and your converts will become twice the children of hell.

I think if most people would head down to their local mega-church and see what's actually going on, they would be truly shocked!!! I believe many more people would agree with me that most of these pastors need to be openly and publicly rebuked in front of the entire congregation for mis-handling the Gospel and preaching a false Jesus and a false plan of salvation. Most of these pastors are demons disguised as angles of light. They need to be stared down, called out and shut down!!!

What would Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, Peter, John Wesley, George Fox, Charles Finney etc. do if they walked into one of these churches this Sunday?