

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



7 Reasons

Your Church Should Merge With Another Church in 2020

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In this season, many churches have been stalled by their plateaued or declining attendance, while other congregations are thriving and making an impact. 94% of all churches in the country are losing ground against the communities they serve. That means that if this trend continues, the message of Jesus will in turn lose ground in cities across the country. **Is there a way for churches to combine forces and draw on each other's strengths to increase the impact of the message of Jesus?**

While 2020 has presented challenges for some churches, it has offered unique opportunities for others. This might be the perfect year for your church to consider a church merger to drive the message of Jesus forward!

In some ways, the pressure of coronavirus and the resulting economic fallout is simply accelerating changes that already existed before this crisis came into play. While it's still too early to gain a statistical analysis on exactly what's happening, it does seem like churches that were struggling before coronavirus continue to struggle now at an even deeper level because of debt and leadership issues. On the other hand, churches that are thriving are using this season to reach new people, expand their influence and ultimately see more people get connected with the message of Jesus.

I believe there's no better time than today for your church to consider being a part of a merger.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of churches involved in mergers. **Joining churches**

are those looking to combine their ministry with a stronger church to further their mission. **Lead churches** are churches with more momentum that are looking to potentially adopt or rebirth another church.

I've been a part of multiple church mergers. In my experience, something incredible happens in the heart of a leader when they connect with the bigger vision of what God is doing and ultimately work together with other believers to see the mission of Jesus grow. **It's humbling to see what takes place in a church as it turns around to pursue that mission.**

3 Reasons this is a Great Season to be a Joining Church

Your Mission is Bigger Than the Troubles COVID-19 Brought

Why did God start your church?

What was the original vision behind why the church started?

What is it that has animated your church for all these years?

That mission is so much bigger than any troubles brought on by this current crisis. The missional drive to connect with people and to care for your community is bigger than the problems that your church is facing.

If you and your leaders are not sure what step to take next because of the pressure that COVID has put on your church, then this is a perfect season to consider becoming a joining church.

Now is the time for you and your leadership to ask the question, *“What other churches have a similar heart as us and have a similar mission that we could potentially join with?”*

This could be the time for your church to consider joining a lead church in order to pursue the mission that God has given you.

If it's just financial resources and leadership that's holding you back, then maybe the answer for you is to join with a lead church. Before you consider closing or any other drastic measures, consider joining with another church in this season.

Pastoring People Means Making Tough Calls

You know that you started leading in the local church to make a difference. Over the years, you've had to make a lot of tough calls.

The pastoral leaders in joining churches are some of the bravest leaders I've ever seen. It takes a lot of internal drive and gumption to lead your church through the experience of dying in order to be reborn and rebirthed, to be a part of a resurrection of the church.



You've been caring for and loving these people. **Now is the time to create the kind of structure that will ensure that the ministry will continue on, albeit in a different form, for years to come.** This will be a tough call, but you're used to caring for people in tough ways.

Others Have Gone Before You

If you're considering becoming a joining church in this season, you should reach out to other leaders in churches that have been a part of a merge to learn about their experience.

(If you're looking for some personal references, reach out to me. I'm happy to point you in the right direction.)

The reality is that church mergers are becoming increasingly normalized across the country as joining churches like yours consider how to continue the mission in a new form in their communities. **We've seen time and again how these mergers, when done right with thoughtful, caring leaders like yourself, can ultimately produce more fruit and help churches reach even more people.**

You can be confident that if you walk through this in a measured and caring way with the right lead church, you will see an acceleration of your mission, not a deceleration.

4 Reasons Lead Churches Should Accelerate Merger Plans

The Big-C Church is Bigger than Your Church

Your church is a great outpost of the kingdom of God and maybe over the last few years, you've seen increased effectiveness. You've been reaching people and seeing them get connected to your church. You've found a way to communicate that seems to resonate within your culture. **That's great, but the Church is bigger than your individual local church.**

God is already at work in the communities around you and there are churches that could use your help. Although your church might have a lot to offer as a lead church, joining churches have much to bring to the table as well. They bring length of service in a community. They bring deep relationships. They bring the ability to localize the ministry in a way that you may not be able to if you just launched another campus in that location.

The Church is bigger than yours.

God is Already at Work There

The amazing thing that I've seen time and again in these merger scenarios is that God has been laying the foundation for them long before the lead churches get engaged.



Oftentimes we see joining churches who have tried multiple things over many years to reach their community. For whatever reason, those efforts are not bearing the fruit that the team in the joining church was finding satisfactory. **Maybe God was leading them through that process so they would come to the decision to join your church.**

We know that many joining churches have been trying different things in an effort to reach out to people, but those things may not be working or resonating. Today would be an incredible time for you to begin connecting with churches that could potentially want to join you. But remember, God has already done an amazing thing in that community. He's been at work there for a long time.

The work of God doesn't begin when you open a church. You get the opportunity to join with him and partner with what he's already doing.

Don't Let False Humility Slow Your Church Down

Can we be honest for a minute?

I think the best church leaders to lead these merger scenarios are the ones who have a real sense of humility. The ones that aren't sure why another church would want to join them in the endeavor. **However, that can sometimes bleed over into a false humility that ultimately limits your church's ability to reach more people.**

If your church is growing and making a difference, I believe God may be calling you to be a lead church in this season. What you're experiencing at your church is different than what is happening in other churches across the country. **You have something different to offer to the body of Christ, and this could be your next step.**

However, if you pull back and hesitate to lead out of a sense of false humility, you may actually limit the work that God wants to do through you. He could be calling you to be a part of what he's doing to make a difference in this new community.

Let's be honest, it's God that's at work in your church, not you. It's his work. **So why not try to see your role in the spread of his work into new communities?**

Your Community and Their Community Need Thriving Churches

The good, hard work that will have to be done in your heart, leadership, systems and approaches in order to merge will honor the Lord and ultimately help grow his plans for your community and beyond!

Taking time to actually love the joining church leadership and their community will have a profound impact on you as a lead church. Take time to think through what it would look like to translate your church into a different community and think through the systems that will be needed to move the mission forward.

We know that a minority of churches are in the same position as yours. Your community, and the community of the joining church, need more

thriving churches.

2020 is a perfect year to think about merging.



Do you want to dive deep and get more information on church mergers?

Thousands of churches are perplexed by plateaued or declining attendance, while other congregations nearby thrive. Is there a way for them to combine forces and draw on each other's strengths in ways that also increase their missional impact?

Join us for a free webinar designed to help your church:

Wednesday, August 12th, 2020, 1:00 - 1:45pm (EDT)

We will be joined by two leading experts in church mergers:

- **Warren Bird** // Warren Bird, Ph.D., is Vice President of Research and Equipping at ECFA.org (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability). Previously, he held the position of Research Director at Leadership Network. He is widely recognized as one of the nation's leading researchers of megachurches, multisite churches, large church compensation and high-visibility pastoral succession.

- **Jim Tomberlin** // Over four decades of diverse ministry, Jim has pastored churches in New Mexico and Germany, grown a megachurch in Colorado and pioneered the multisite strategy for Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago. In addition to being a multisite and merger specialist at The Unstuck Group, Jim currently serves as the Chief of Staff at Christ Fellowship in Miami.

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