THE COMING REVOLUTION IN CHURCH ECONOMICS

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Why Tithes and Offerings Are No Longer Enough, and What You Can Do about It

MARK DEYMAZ
WITH HARRY LI

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To the elders and the people
of Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas,
who have inspired, encouraged,
and supported disruptive innovation since 2001.
In so doing you have become a beacon of hope for others
daring to walk, work, and worship God together
as one on earth as it is in heaven,
beyond the distinctions of this world
that otherwise divide,
for the sake of the gospel.

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FOREWORD

My grandfather was a cowboy preacher dedicated to serving God and the hardscrabble working poor of the Texas Panhandle. My parents were small family entrepreneurs. Therefore, I grew up thinking that I needed to choose one life or the other . . . so I chose business. Over the next thirty years, I earned a CPA, became a partner in a global accounting firm, and served as the head of a large private investment banking practice. I also spent several years building the country's largest independent distributor of truck parts, sold it to AutoZone, and then retired at an early age.

When I was fifty years old, an Anglican bishop from Rwanda in East Africa challenged me to spend the rest of my life building businesses in his country. He said, "After the genocide, Rwanda had to rebuild every aspect of its society, but in the long run nothing is more important than creating jobs and a vibrant economy." He reasoned, "You're an investment banker and an entrepreneur. You build businesses, and help others build them. Surely God has prepared you to use business to build his kingdom."

That is why I am so excited about this book! Similarly, it will help you recognize opportunities, think like an entrepreneur, and create a vibrant economy in your church—one that will strengthen the financial bottom line and better position it for long-term kingdom and community impact.

In time, I accepted the bishop's invitation and began a sixteen-year journey of building a bridge from the United States to Rwanda that would transform lives at both ends. The organization we founded in 2007, Bridge2Rwanda, has helped encourage entrepreneurship, launch businesses, attract foreign investors, earn international scholarships, and develop a fellowship of globally educated young African leaders in Rwanda as well as in three of its conflict-torn East African neighbors.

As part of this journey, I have also had the opportunity to serve on the advisory council of Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame, and witness Rwanda's extraordinary demonstration of national reconciliation and robust nation building. In 2000, when the post-genocide conflicts had ceased and the nation had been secured, Rwanda's leaders across all sectors—public, private, social, and church—came together and created a vision of the country they wanted to build for themselves and their children. Working together, they have made spectacular progress, so much so that two years ago the United Nations named Rwanda the fastest-developing country in the world. It is a place to see God's hand at work for those with eyes of faith.

The church leaders I have worked with in Rwanda have been notably different from those I have met in traditional American churches. The Rwandans believe they and their churches have a critical role to play in building the country and are wholeheartedly committed to helping fulfill the national vision. Many are fearless social entrepreneurs who plunge into solving problems and meeting the needs of their communities and country, whatever they might be. They zealously search for and befriend widows, single parents, street kids, the sick, the poor, and other marginalized people in their communities. They comfort victims of the genocide and gently reconcile them with its perpetrators. Out of necessity and with scarce resources they build schools, hospitals, churches, homes, farms, and businesses. They mobilize others, innovate, and bring hope to desperate situations.

After working in Rwanda and with its church leaders for several years, my wife, Judi, and I began looking for a church in Little Rock that was not afraid to get out of its comfort zone, pursue fearless social entrepreneurship, and address current realities affecting both the American church and a rapidly changing society. We found these things in Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas. Like the churches in Rwanda, Mosaic does not compartmentalize spiritual, social, and financial concerns. Like church leaders in Rwanda, leaders at Mosaic are pursuing disruptive innovation in ways I believe all churches should and will have to do someday, not only to bring the hope of Jesus to desperate situations but also to remain financially solvent.[1]

With this in mind, I commend to you this important, informed, and groundbreaking work.

Dale Dawson
founder and CEO, Bridge2Rwanda
board of directors, Halftime Institute
Kigali, Rwanda, and Little Rock, Arkansas

INTRODUCTION

On May 17, 2001, Linda and I (Mark) responded in prayer to a very specific call of God on our lives. That day we committed ourselves and our families to a journey of faith, courage, and sacrifice that would lead to the establishment of a multiethnic and economically diverse church in the heart of central Arkansas, a church founded in response to the prayer of Jesus Christ for unity and patterned after the New Testament church at Antioch (Acts 11:19–25; 13:1), a church for all people—a church we called Mosaic.[1] By October 2002, Harry and Melanie Li, along with their three daughters, had joined us as colleagues in pursuit of the dream.

From the beginning, due to the multiethnic and missional nature of our church plant in Little Rock's urban center, tithes and offerings alone have never been enough to pay the bills, fund our vision, or expand our impact in the community. Therefore, we determined early on to get beyond tithes and offerings in order to establish the church and effectively engage the needs of people.

For more than twelve years (2003–15), we rented an abandoned building that formerly housed a Walmart. Today, we own and occupy a nearly 100,000 square-foot former Kmart, as we'll discuss further in chapter 6. At the time of this writing, we make more than $150,000 a year (12–13 percent of our annual budget) by renting parts of our facility to other businesses. The rent checks total $12,000 or so a month, almost enough to cover our $16,000-a-month mortgage payment. With approximately 18,000 square feet of space still available to rent, we are hoping to pick up an additional $4,000 a month in rental income so that soon we can look our people in the eye and say that not one penny of their tithes and offerings services the debt. In addition, $100,000 or so (just over 8 percent of our budget) comes each year in the form of staff support raised outside the church by members of our team and another $100,000 is aggregated through other means.

By shifting works of compassion and justice out from under the church's budget and into the budget of an umbrella nonprofit we launched in 2008, named Vine & Village, Mosaic has also been able to repurpose what would be another $150,000 to $200,000 in related ministry costs. Vine & Village is underwritten primarily through local, state, and federal grants, contributions from other churches, interested donors, and the like. Volunteers from outside the church also serve the city through Vine & Village in ways the people and staff of Mosaic might not otherwise have the capacity to do.

All totaled, approximately 30 percent of Mosaic's $1.2 million annual budget today is funded outside of tithes and offerings.

Conventional wisdom suggests that a church whose budget is not 100 percent supported by tithes and offerings is not sustainable. Recent research from Barna

> found that *church stability*—defined by church attendance and the percent of the budget comprised of tithes and offerings—is correlated with higher pastor salary, less personal debt, a location with a population that is less dense and sustained funding sources, (i.e., those without an end date). New churches in rural and suburban areas tend to be more stable, and those where the pastor is more amply compensated are more likely to become self-sustaining than those in urban areas or where the pastor subsidizes the ministry with his or her own money. But these indicators are not as common as they should be if we hope to see more new churches become self-sustaining communities of faith.[2]

Barna's right. These indicators are not as common as they should be, particularly where sustained funding is concerned. We believe, however, that a coming revolution in church economics will necessarily redefine the notion of church stability altogether, as an increasing number of congregations find they are not stable or sustainable by this definition. To expect that churches will be so apart otherwise, apart from a revolution in their approach to finance and funding, is to take for granted the status quo.

In addition, churches that rely solely on tithes and offerings unnecessarily limit their capacity. Imagine what your church could do if it generated an additional 30 percent of its revenue through for-profit business enterprise. On the other hand, imagine how much less your church would accomplish if it was forced to cut 30 percent of its budget, resulting in a significant reduction of staff, programming, community engagement, and giving to missionaries overseas. Such a scenario is already playing out in many churches across the United States as tithes and offerings are stagnant and/or in decline. Given the possibility (if not a probability) that local governments may someday assess church real estate to collect property taxes and/or that the federal government could take away tax-exempt status for churches altogether, we believe the time to pivot is now. In part, we have written this book to help you understand the why and how of positioning your church financially in preparation for any future changes to local or national policy.

Before continuing, it may be helpful for you to learn a bit more about Harry and me—that is, who we are and from where we've come. By the way, wherever first person is used throughout the book you should assume it's me (Mark) writing, unless otherwise noted.

Mark's Story

I was born out of wedlock in 1961 and the only child of a single parent, Dorothy, at a time in American history when only 6 percent of children were living without fathers in the home.[3] Because my mother had to work two jobs to support us, I was a "latchkey kid" before the term was popularized.[4] Though she had a full-time job working for the federal government in San Francisco, California, together my mother and I sold and delivered Avon on weeknights throughout a five-block territory in Alameda. In 1972, at eleven years of age and following our move to Phoenix, Arizona, I began sweeping the parking lot of a local convenience store. Two years later I became a dishwasher, and throughout junior and senior high school continued to work in the food industry, first by busing tables and then as a waiter. Simultaneously, I worked in rectories for the priests who lived in them, as part of work scholarship programs at the Catholic schools I attended.

It was from my mother that I learned how to gig and hustle, as well as to remain tenacious and resolved in seeking to overcome financial challenges. She taught me to value frugality, set my sights high, and trust God to provide for the dreams of my heart. Thus, I know what it's like to work hard. I've also learned to work smart, how to stretch dimes to dollars, and to obtain in time what I might not otherwise be expected to achieve or afford.

Through the years, then, I have journeyed from lower middle class to middle class, and following my mother's passing (2016) to upper middle class. But this does not make me a financial expert, though I continue to gain expertise. Rather, I share these things because context is important and, in this case, foundational to my understanding and approach to church economics. For instance, at times in my thirty-six years of full-time ministry, I have had to generate my own personal income, income for others, and the collective income to plant, grow, and sustain a healthy multiethnic and economically diverse church in the urban center of Little Rock, Arkansas. In other words, I have learned how to fund and advance effective ministry in spite of challenging financial circumstances, difficult contexts, and lack of resources. Today, I enjoy helping others overcome these obstacles as well.

Over the past eighteen years, desperation has led to innovation at Mosaic, and in this we are not alone. A still small but growing movement of economic innovation is under way in local churches throughout the United States, one that is indicative of a fundamental, necessary, and systemic shift that is taking place. Embracing this shift can help you lead a church from survival to stability and in time from stability to sustainability, where finances and funding are concerned.

Harry's Story

My father immigrated to this country from China in the late 1940s with $500 in his pocket. His own father died when he was young, and as the only son in a family of five he became the man of the house at an early age. Together, they lived destitute in a small town outside Shanghai. In time, pinning all their hopes and dreams on my father, his family sacrificed and sold nearly everything it had so that he could come to America and receive a Western education.

Years later and for me personally, growing up in the 1960s, the son of first-generation Chinese immigrants living in Tennessee, was quite an experience. Outside our home, I lived a good ol' southern boy life. I learned to fish, walk railroad tracks, play baseball, eat grits, and talk with a southern drawl. But inside our home, my parents maintained a very traditional Asian household. For instance, as children we were required to choose a musical instrument at an early age. Every day we were expected to practice our instruments and to finish our homework after school before being allowed to go outside and play. Likewise, performing poorly in school was never an option.

In terms of household economics, my father was lavishly generous when it came to spending money on things he strongly believed to be essential. Yet he was notoriously practical when it came to spending money on what he considered to be lesser priorities in life. Because of this, I grew up thinking we were poor. For example, we never used air-conditioning in the summer or heat in the winter. Instead, in the humid summers I would take cold showers, cool off in front of a fan, and jump into bed to fall asleep before I started sweating. In the winter it was so cold in our house that at times I could see my breath.

Given his mindset, my dad taught me to live without want, to always shop for the best deal, as well as to fix and maintain things for as long as possible in order to keep from having to buy something new. Many times he would rig up the most absurd Rube Goldberg solutions to maintain an ailing lawn mower or clothes dryer through one more season of service.[5] Only later in life did I learn that we were not poor. On the contrary, my father had invested all of his money in the stock market so that he could pay every penny of our education, for each university and post-graduate degree that I and my siblings aspired to earn . . . and he did so.

Prior to 2002, I was a tenured professor of engineering at the University of Idaho and living comfortably on the position's salary, supporting my wife and three children. So when Mark invited me to join the fledgling staff at Mosaic money was certainly a concern, but I refused to let it be a deal breaker. My first year's salary at the church was just $24,000. Nevertheless, God graciously sustained me and my family in those early years, and the church too, as he does to this day.

Why This Book?

Given our collective life experience and understanding of local church planting, growth, and development, we have written this book to share the why, how, and what of funding local churches beyond tithes and offerings. Ultimately, our purpose is to help your church improve its bottom line in consideration of resources, mission advance, and long-term gospel impact. Since most pastors are not taught economics in Bible college or seminary, we hope to propagate understanding that we believe will be necessary for pastors everywhere to apply going forward, whether they are serving established congregations or seeking to plant churches in urban, suburban or rural settings.

To be clear, we did not write this book to reduce your faith in God; to suggest that tithes, offerings, and generosity are not biblical expectations and therefore primary mechanisms for funding God's work; or to suggest that pastors and churches can get to a point where they are no longer dependent on God for money. Rather, this book is about developing and executing a plan to sustain life-giving ministry in and through the church over a long period of time, directing a greater percentage of tithes and offerings to missional community engagement, and establishing vibrant congregations in areas of a city where they might not otherwise exist. For instance, current understanding has led to an inordinate number of church planters "sensing a call" to start churches in more affluent neighborhoods throughout the United States. We want to disrupt such thinking and open minds to possibilities whereby people in every area of a city can benefit from access to a Christ-centered, exegetically sound, multiethnic, economically diverse, socially just, and economically sustainable church.

Throughout the following pages we will provide and explore seven specific directives to help you strengthen the financial viability of your church. In addition, we have included an afterword from Dr. Christopher Benek, the world's foremost clergy expert on artificial intelligence (AI), whose comments will stretch your thinking even further in consideration of automation, the lives of individuals and, therefore, on church economics in the future.

So turn the page. Let's begin by understanding the need for revolution.

1

Understanding the Need

> When any system fails to withstand the inrush of change, it fails to live up to its promise.
>
> Travis G. Mason

Brotherhood Mutual is the second-largest provider of property and casualty insurance in the United States, primarily serving churches, schools, and camps. More than a commercial enterprise, the company views its insurance business as "a platform to accomplish [its] mission: to help America's churches and related ministries build the Kingdom."[1]

In August 2017, Brotherhood Mutual hosted its one hundredth anniversary celebration in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and invited me to participate. Mark A. Robison, its chairman of the board and president, had heard me speak earlier in the year and was specifically interested in my take on economics, sustainability, and the future of the local church, as I first wrote about in my book

Disruption: Repurposing the Church to Redeem the Community.[2] Other speakers at the event included my good friend Albert Tate, founding pastor of Monrovia Fellowship in Los Angeles, California; Brooke Hempell, senior vice president of research at the Barna Group; comedian Michael Jr.; and legendary financial adviser Ron Blue. In 1979, Ron founded a financial planning firm that grew to manage over $2 billion in assets for more than five thousand clients nationwide. He went on to launch Kingdom Advisors, an international network of Christian financial advisers, write seventeen books on personal finance from a biblical perspective, including the bestseller *Master Your Money*, and serve on a number of corporate boards such as Crown Financial Ministries and the National Christian Foundation.[3]

Having never met Ron, I wondered what he thought of my presentations. Following the event, I had the chance to ask him over lunch at the Fort Wayne International Airport. In a very positive and affirming tone he said, "Mark, I've been in financial services for fifty years. In all that time, I have never heard a pastor use the words *church* and *economics* in the same sentence. I'm no prophet, but I'd say you're on to something significant here, perhaps the early stages of a movement!"

Since that day, I've become increasingly convinced that Ron was right. Indeed, there is a growing movement and a need for disruptive innovation . . . a coming revolution in church economics.

Contributing Factors

As to the problem, there are at least four contributing factors driving the need for economic innovation in the local church today.

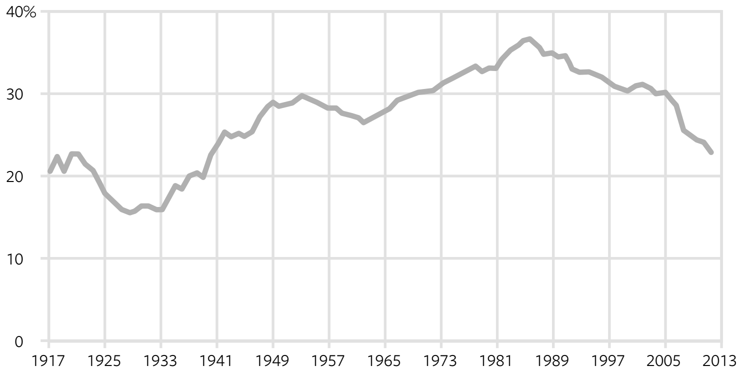
A Growing Burden on the Middle Class

Any objective consideration of the so-called American middle class faces a challenge when attempting to draw conclusions. The term is used widely to describe anywhere from 25 to 66 percent of households in the United States, depending on qualifiers such as income levels, educational achievements, aspirational values, and more. "One of the narrowest definitions limits it to those who are literally in the middle fifth of the nation's income ladder. A wider characterization includes everyone but the poorest 20 [percent] and the wealthiest 20 [percent]."[4] According to the Pew Research Center, America's middle class includes those making anywhere from two-thirds to two times the national median income ($46,960–$140,900 annually for a household of four).[5]

We should also note that inflation (rising prices for goods and services over time), higher standards of living, the increasing cost of education, the decreasing purchasing power of the United States Dollar (USD) coupled with widely available access to credit, has led Americans in general, and particularly the middle class, to borrow more money than ever before. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York (the New York Fed), "Total household debt—a category that includes mortgages, student loans, and car loans along with credit card and other debt—dipped in the wake of the Great Recession, but it has steadily rebounded in the years since. Overall, Americans' debt hit a new high of $13 trillion last year [2017], surpassing the previous record set in 2008 by $280 billion."[6] As one writer recently put it, "Americans have fallen back in love with debt."[7]

Figure 1. The Rise and Fall of Middle-Class Wealth

The share of total US wealth owned by the bottom 90 percent of families, 1917–2012



While debt is up, wealth is down. Mark Gongloff cites research to show that the "middle-class share of the US wealth pie roughly doubled between the Great Depression and the early 1980s. But since then, the middle-class share has shrunk back to its lowest level since 1947"[8] (see figure 1).

On a more personal note, when asked by CNN what being middle class meant to her, Connie White (age thirty-seven) of Turtletown, Tennessee, who owns a cleaning business with her husband, said this:

> Middle class, to me, means making your own way without assistance. I feel like being middle class should mean that you can relax a little, that you are saving for retirement and not still living paycheck to paycheck. I'm afraid that those days are gone, though. I feel I should be middle class. We're able to pay the bills and don't have a lot of debt. We have insurance. I feel lucky in that regard, but I feel we never get ahead. There's barely

> anything left at the end of the month. With two people who work hard consistently, you shouldn't have to stress about money.[9]

America's middle class is largely understood to be the demographic group upon whose back churches are built and growth is dependent, through its investment of discretionary time and money. If so, and to the degree that Connie White echoes the current challenges, complexities, and conditions of America's middle class, churches will continue to struggle alongside it in the future.

Considering her words and sentiments we might restate them this way, with the local church in mind:

> I feel like our church should be able to relax a little, have some savings in the bank, and not live offering to offering. I'm afraid those days are gone, though. Sure, we can pay our bills, in spite of our debt, but we never get ahead. There's barely anything left at the end of the month. Needs are pressing, and even more demands on our budget are coming in the future. If everyone would just tithe or give generously, we wouldn't have to stress about money.

A growing burden on the middle class, coupled with a marginal increase in religious giving, as we'll next discuss, suggests that it's unrealistic to expect tithes and offerings alone to fully fund or sustain local churches in the years ahead.

A Marginal Increase in Religious Giving

As noted in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, "Religious giving [as of 2014] remains strong but is losing ground to giving to other causes. While religious organizations gained, generating $114.9 billion or 32 percent of total gifts, more than any other cause, they are slipping from previous years when they commanded 40 to 50 percent of all giving. Giving to religious causes was 56 percent of the total from 1985 to 1989 but just 33 percent from 2010 to 2014. Last year's growth was just a 0.9 percent increase."[10]

According to a more recent Giving USA report, giving to religion increased 2.9 percent in 2017 (0.7 percent when adjusted for inflation).[11] Yet this accounted for the lowest increase in overall charitable giving to the nine major categories of recipient organizations tracked by the report from year to year. Consider that in the same year, giving to arts, culture, and humanities increased by an estimated 8.7 percent (6.5 percent when adjusted for inflation), while giving to environmental and animal organizations increased by 7.2 percent when adjusted for inflation.[12]

As you might imagine, comparatively marginal increases in religious giving impacts local church finances. For example, a Faith Communities Today report found that the median church budget fell from $150,000 in 2009 to $125,000 in 2014.[13] With this in mind, Karl Vaters suggests that there are at least four assumptions pastors can no longer afford to make.[14] One of these involves new believers and their understanding of church funding. He writes, "Many new believers don't think about how the church's bills get paid any more than you spend time thinking about how you get email for free. . . . They think there's some unknown entity paying the main bills, while the money they give is for extras. We can't assume anything anymore. New believers need to be informed of the church's financial realities and their biblical responsibilities."[15]

Yes, they do. However, sustaining innovation based on assumptions rooted in the past will not likely be enough to provide for the financial needs of local churches hoping to grow, multiply, and impact their communities. What is needed is disruptive innovation where church funding is concerned.[16] The entirety of our understanding must change. Indeed, leaders today must learn to think and to act in ways different from the past if they are to see churches well-resourced and sustained in the future.

There are many reasons for only marginal increases in charitable giving to religious institutions. In a 2016 article for *Ministry Today*, Thom S. Rainer suggests at least six, including changing tax laws and declining frequency in attendance.[17] Two other reasons concern differences in generational giving as we'll next explore.

A Shift in Generational Approaches to Giving

According to Rainer, "Those born between 1980 and 2000 (Millennials) are often reticent givers. They want to be certain the church is a good steward of the contributed funds."[18] In addition, he writes, "Giving to the institution is the motive of most of the Builder generation (those born before 1946). Subsequent generations are more likely to give to a cause or a vision. As the Builder generation fades, so does institutionally motivated giving."[19]

Sobell and Co., LLC, is an accounting firm whose report "Generational Differences in Philanthropic Giving" is well worth the time it takes to read. According to its synopsis, the "white paper addresses the observable characteristics of four generations and their impact on charitable giving attitudes. . . . Recognizing the disparity between the generations' decision-making approaches can help a nonprofit determine what types of fundraising initiatives will be most effective for each target audience."[20]

Among other things, authors of the report highlight the following:

> A distinct difference in attitude [toward giving] emerges from a discussion with the different generations. The Silent Generation (born between 1929–1945) and the Baby Boomer Generation (born between 1946–1963) feel they make the biggest difference through the money they contribute. . . . The Silent Generation is more likely to assist religious organizations than any of the subsequent generations. . . . Where 45 percent of Boomers say their financial contribution is key, only 36 percent of Gen Xers (born between 1964–1981) and 25 percent of Gen Ys (Millennials, born after 1981) think that what matters most is a difference made by money. Instead, they believe that volunteering and spreading the word is more impactful.[21]

Given this information, a number of philanthropic consulting firms provide assistance to customers seeking to increase giving by understanding specific generations—how they think, where their passions lie, and what motivates them to give. For example, and specific to Generation X, Abigail L. Coleman shares that since this generation "is thought of as self-reliant, skeptical, savvy, and more traditional, a blended fundraising approach is likely to be most effective."[22] Citing a report titled "The Next Generation of American Giving," she provides strategies to consider when approaching Gen Xers for funding. They include:

- Demonstrate impact.
- Blend method of appeals.
- Solicit more than once per year.

She goes on to say, "The top two ways Gen Xers feel they can make a difference are by donating money and volunteering. Donating goods and spreading the word are other important methods of engagement. Fundraising and advocating are less important, each selected by just 4 [percent] of respondents."[23]

The fact is that "Fundraising is undergoing rapid and irrevocable change."[24] Understanding that emerging generations see, define, and value investment differently than previous generations means "that nonprofit organizations have to be ready for a whole new world of giving [see figure 2]. They will need to be innovative, positioning themselves to attract and engage with this global, impulsive, technology savvy generation . . . [as] fundraising [grows increasingly] reliant on a complicated and comprehensive mix of options."[25]

Throughout this book, we'll refer to the complicated and comprehensive mix of options as "multiple streams of income." Whether yet validated by your experience or not, churches will become more reliant on multiple streams of income in the future and soon need to leverage their assets in order to generate a financial return on investment (ROI).

A Rapidly Changing Population and Demographic

When it comes to understanding and adapting to rapidly changing demographics, the American church remains largely aloof, resistant, and unprepared for what lies ahead. Failure to

Figure 2. Priority Cause by Generation[26]

Cause	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Silent Gen
Local social services	19%	29%	36%	37%
Place of worship	22%	36%	38%	37%
Health charities	20%	24%	19%	23%
Children's charities	29%	28%	22%	20%
Education	17%	16%	14%	20%
Emergency relief	11%	18%	11%	19%
Animal rescue/ protection	16%	21%	18%	11%
Troops/veterans	6%	10%	15%	22%
Environment	4%	10%	9%	9%
First responders	6%	8%	10%	9%
Arts	4%	7%	6%	14%
Advocacy	6%	4%	5%	10%
Election campaigns	2%	2%	2%	5%
Human rights	12%	10%	4%	6%
Victims of crime/abuse	7%	6%	3%	4%

recognize, validate, and adjust to seismic shifts already afoot will lead to even more churches losing ground in the years ahead. Again, the time to pivot is now. Over the next fifteen to twenty-five years, a rapidly changing population will have a significant impact on local churches in the United States. Among other things, church planting, growth, and development must be necessarily altered if local congregations are to remain credible and viable in the years ahead.

For example, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report titled "Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060," "The rate of population growth is slowing."[27]

- 2.3 million per year—projected growth rate of US population 2010–30
- 1.8 million per year—projected growth rate of US population 2030–40
- 1.5 million per year—projected growth rate of US population 2040–60

In addition, the population is aging.[28]

- By 2030, one out of five Americans will be sixty-five years or older.
- By 2035, older adults are expected to outnumber children for the first time in US history.
- Between 2016 and 2060, the population under age eighteen is projected to grow by only six million people, compared with a growth of forty-six million for the population sixty-five years and over.

Finally, the report demonstrates that the population is changing in terms of racial and ethnic pluralism (see figure 3).[29]

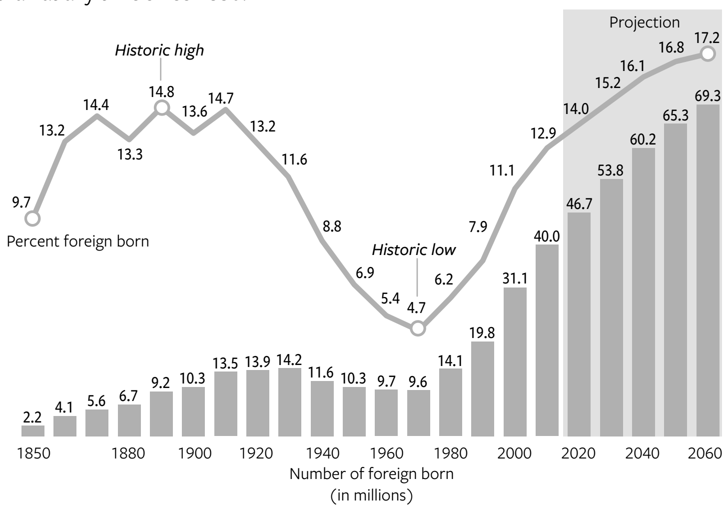
- "By 2020, fewer than one-half of children in the United States are projected to be non-Hispanic White. . . . The non-Hispanic White-alone population is projected to shrink over the coming decades, from 199 million in 2020 to 179 million in 2060—even as the United States population continues to grow."
- "By 2028, the foreign-born share of the US population is projected to be higher than any time since 1850. . . .

Just two years later, by 2030, net international migration is expected to become the primary driver of population growth in the United States—another demographic milestone for the country."

- "'Two or More Races' is projected to be the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group over the next several decades, followed by Asians and Hispanics. . . . The share of children who are 'Two or More Races' is projected to more than double in coming decades, from 5.3 percent today to 11.3 percent in 2060."

Figure 3. Foreign-Born People Living in the US 1850–2010, Projected 2020–2060

By 2028, the foreign-born share of the US population is expected to be higher than at any time since 1850.



Source: United States Census Bureau, 1850–2000 Decennial Censuses, American Community Survey 2010, 2017 National Population Projections for 2020–2060

In short, the "2030s are projected to be a transformative decade for the U.S. population. The population is expected to grow at a slower pace, age considerably, and become more racially and ethnically diverse. Net international migration is projected to overtake natural increase in 2030 as the primary driver of population growth in the United States, another demographic first."[30]

As with the growing burden on America's middle class, marginal increases in religious giving, and a shift in generational approaches to giving, rapidly changing demographics—given income disparity between people groups—will greatly affect church budgets. Such things will likely lead to a loss in revenue and to a fundamental reshaping of the way congregations are funded.

Lean In

As we've shared, we are not formally trained economists. Rather, what we've learned about church economics has been biblically and experientially informed over the past eighteen years. Desperation led to innovation on our part in seeking to establish a multiethnic and economically diverse church in an underresourced area of our city, an area to which organizations rarely send church planters due to the challenges of funding and sustainability. In fact, due to the financial risks associated with new church starts as well as erroneous definitions and metrics of success, such as the myth of sustainability that we'll discuss in chapter 4, most denominations and church-planting networks remain highly skeptical and/or reluctant to partner with pastors seeking to do what we have done. This leaves people in many parts of a city disenfranchised from the hope and promise of the gospel that churches like ours can deliver—the very hope and promise that those stuck in cycles of injustice and generational poverty need most. Surely we can and must do better in the future, for the sake of the gospel.

In this opening chapter, we've identified and discussed some of the contributing factors that are driving the need for economic innovation in the church today. With that as a goal, to lean into the coming revolution you must first free your mind.