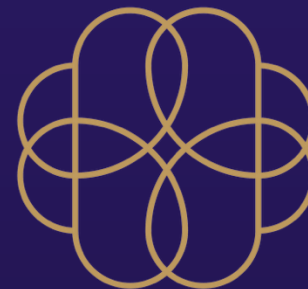


5 Trends

Shaping the Church

Right Now

Rev. Dr. Blair Thompson
Chief Learning and Innovation Officer
bthompson@texasmethodistfoundation.org



TEXAS
METHODIST
FOUNDATION
STEWARDSHIP POTENTIAL

Balcony Space allows for...

- Seeing the bigger picture
- Remembering your WHY
- Applying concepts to your context
- Attending to the Holy Spirit's movement
- Clarifying Next Steps

Three Types of Leadership Conversations

- Maintenance Conversations
- Preferential Conversations
- Missional Conversations





Choluteca Bridge, Honduras

What does it mean to be the church in
this landscape?

At a time of this much deep change,
what's the most important thing for us
to do and how do we do it?

Isaiah 43:19 –
“Look! I’m doing a new thing;
now it sprouts up; don’t you
recognize it?”

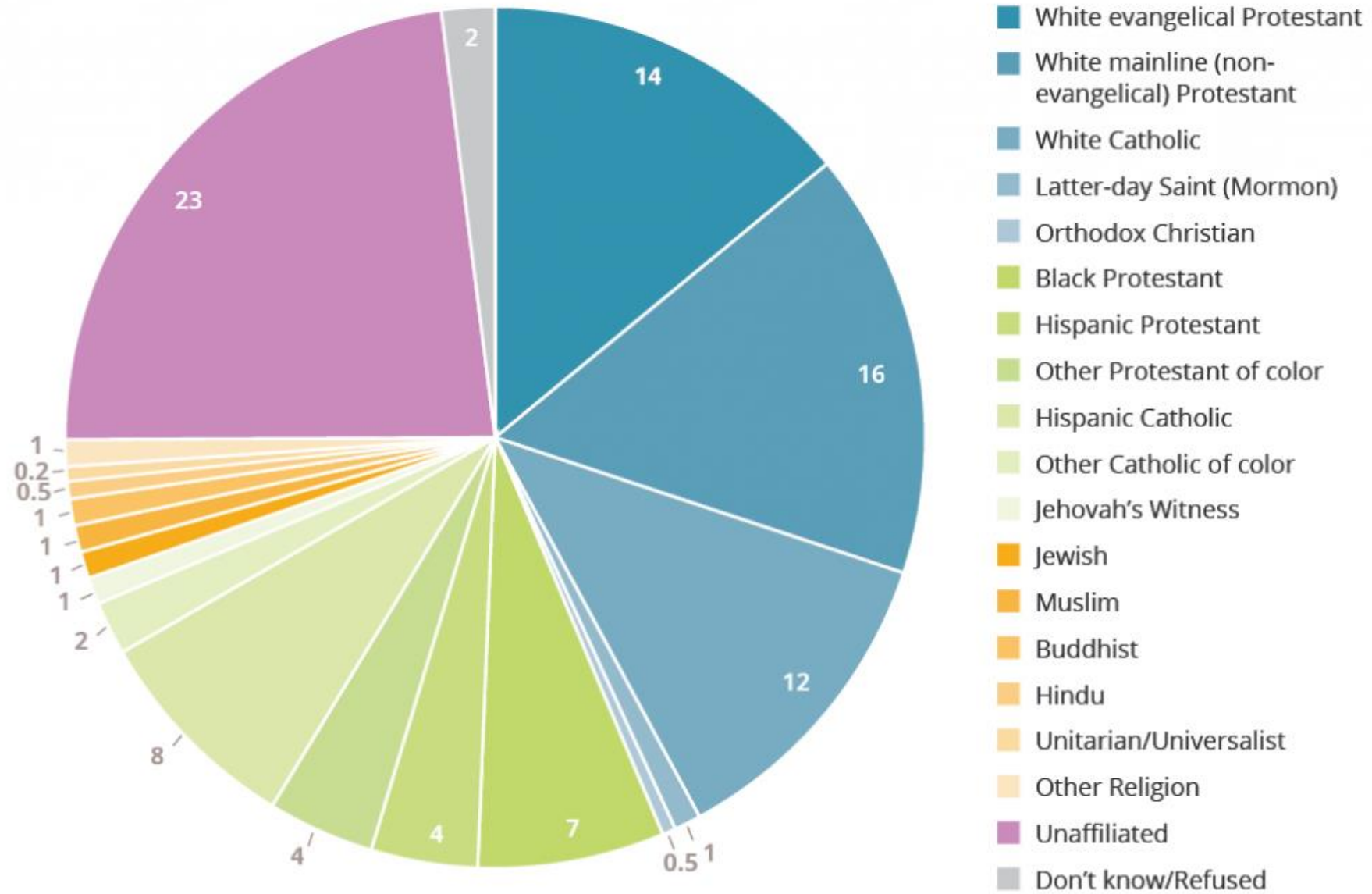


Trend # 1

- Decline in affiliation; Rise in Spirituality
 - Change in where meaning making is happening and how it's being organized

FIGURE 1. The American Religious Landscape in 2020

Percent who identify as:



Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Atlas.

World:



Me:



43 percent of Gen Z “Nones”**never**
went to church to begin with

Four Constructs of Meaning-Making (Durkheim)

- Meaning
- Purpose
- Community
- Rituals



New forms of meaning-making are
bubbling up everywhere, even if they don't
look like church as we've known it.

Our task is not to shore up the old maps, but to **pay attention** to the new terrain, **nurture small refuges** of renewal, and **experiment boldly** for the sake of the gospel.

Summary from Gil Rendle's *Reimagining and Remapping the Religious Landscape: Chaos before a New Order*

Question for Leaders

Where are people in our community already seeking meaning—

and how might we meet them there rather than expecting them to come to us?

Trend #2

- The “Tech Supercycle” is happening
 - From “automated” to “augmented identity”
 - Ministry is Phygital (physical and digital) and *still* about soul care

dare to lead[™]

with **BRENÉ BROWN**

VOXMEDIA

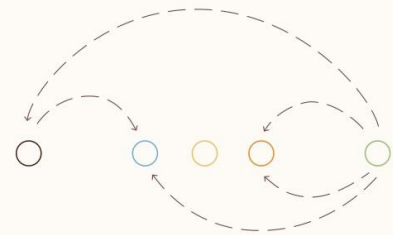
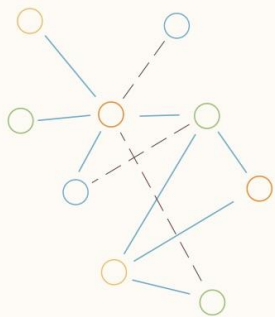
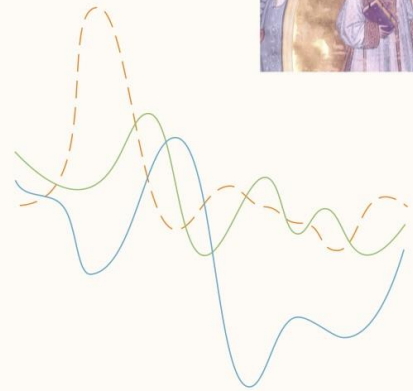
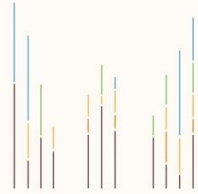
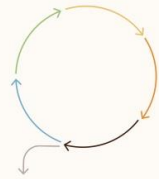
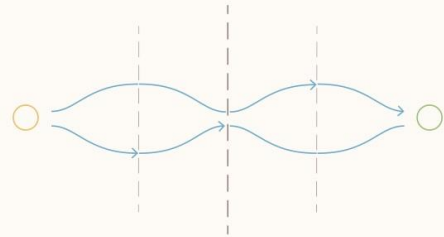


“Fifty years from now, people are going to look back at everybody alive today as the group of people who lived through the great transition. We are collectively Gen T — Generation Transition. I don’t know how long this transition is going to last, but in a way this is mind bending and exciting. And, it also means everybody alive today is going to go through an unprecedented amount of change.”

-FUTURIST AMY WEBB

on What’s Coming (and What’s Here)

RELIGIOUS LEADERS AS TECHNOLOGISTS



SUE PHILLIPS
Fall 2025



Question for Leaders

How is technology shaping the people we serve—

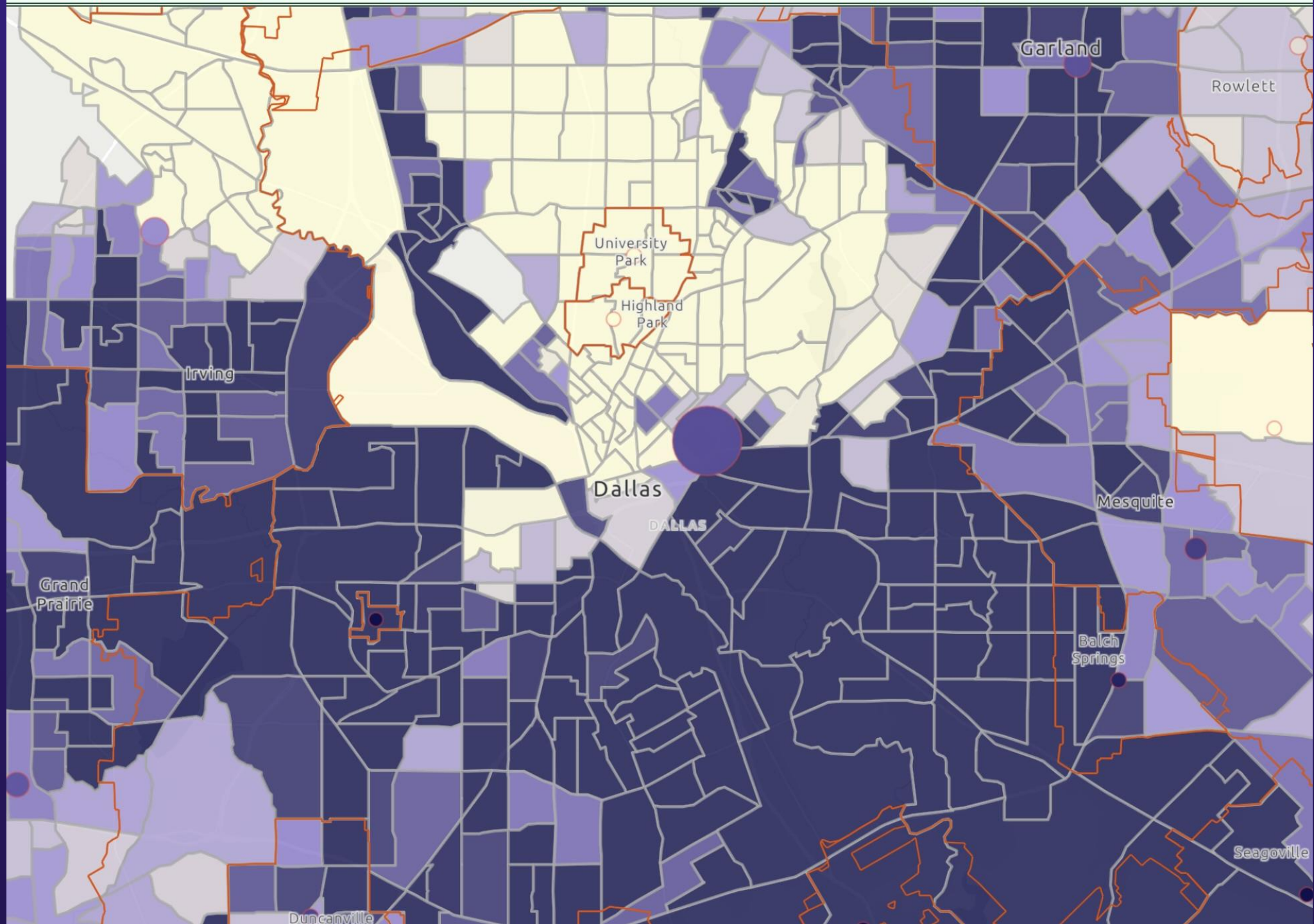
and how might we engage it as a space for formation rather than just communication?

Trend #3

- Neighborhoods are the primary unit of change
 - Churches *can* be central to that change

A person's zip code can determine up to **60%–80%** of their health outcomes, often serving as a stronger predictor of life expectancy and chronic disease risk than genetic code. Neighborhood, environment, and social factors—including income, housing, and access to care—drive significant disparities, with life expectancy differences of 18–30 years possible between nearby areas

- –National Institutes of Health



Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation



2023

The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the
Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community



Trend #3

- Neighborhoods are the primary unit of change
 - Churches *can* be central to that change



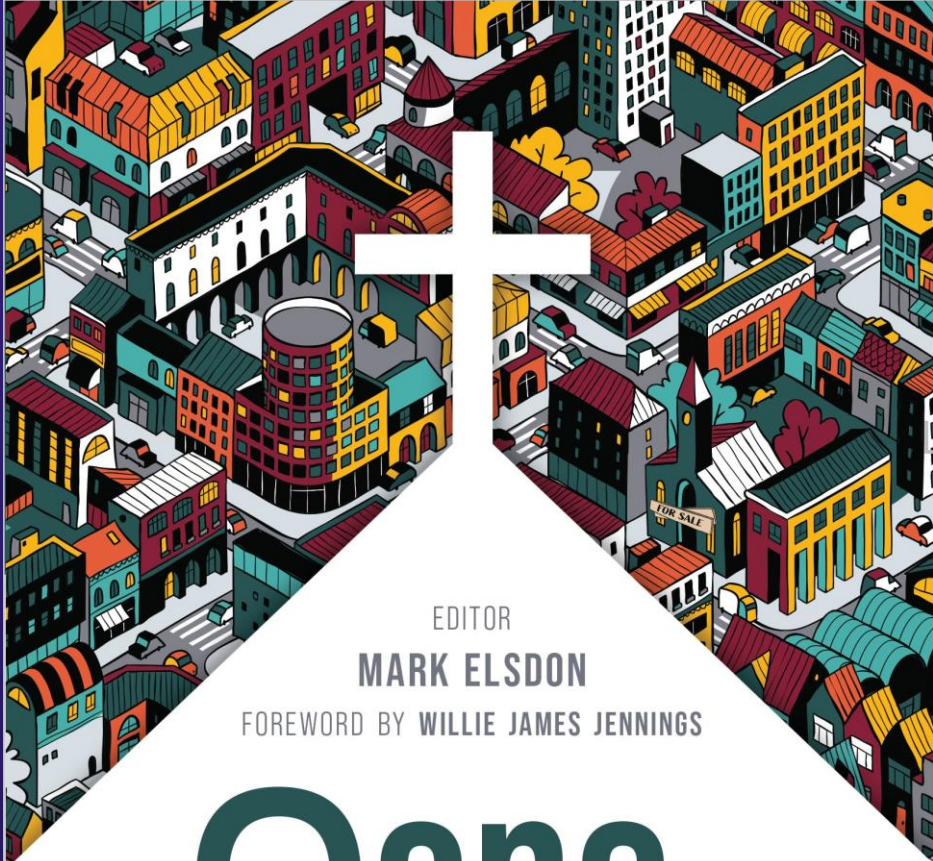
Question for Leaders

If our neighborhood—not our building—was
our primary ministry context,

what would we do differently?

Trend #4

- As many as **100,000** church buildings are expected to be sold or repurposed by 2030.
 - Experts estimate that **\$500 billion to \$1.2 trillion** in church-owned equity is currently in play



EDITOR
MARK ELSDON
FOREWORD BY WILLIE JAMES JENNINGS

Gone **FOR** Good?

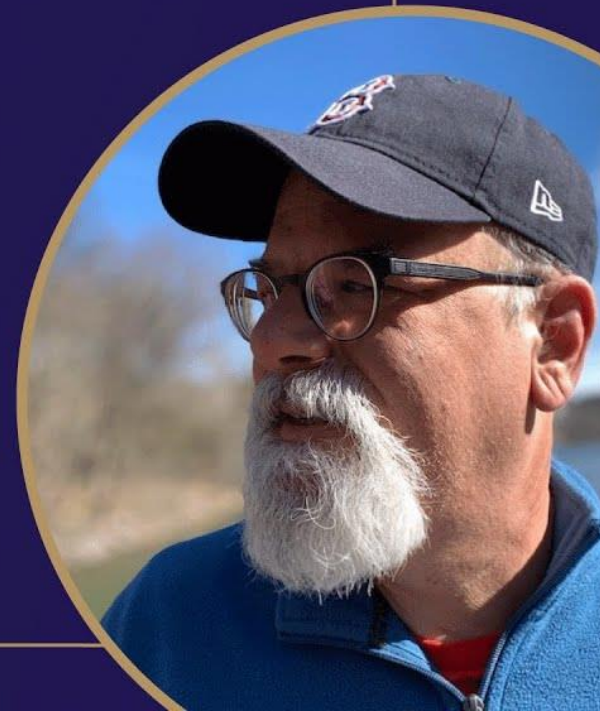
Negotiating the Coming Wave of
Church Property Transition

IGNITING
imagination.
PODCAST

SEASON 13 EPISODE 2

Why Are We Talking About Church Property?

WITH BOB SMJETANA



INTRODUCING ROOTEDGOOD'S

GOOD FUTURES ACCELERATOR

ROOTED
GOOD



Question for Leaders

What would it mean for us to follow Jesus
all the way to the dirt?

Trend #5

- The offering plate is no longer a sustainable financial model for many congregations
 - Congregations need to leverage assets for multiple streams of income



THE COMING
REVOLUTION
IN CHURCH
ECONOMICS

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

MARK DEYMAZ
WITH HARRY LI

WEALTH BY GENERATION

AS OF Q1, 2020



SILENT GENERATION AND EARLIER



BABY BOOMERS



GENERATION X



MILLENNIALS



0 10 20 30 40 50 \$60 TRILLION

SOURCE: FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD. DOES NOT INCLUDE LIABILITIES

FORTUNE

Question for Leaders

How are we forming people to see their resources as part of God's mission?

5 Trends Shaping the Church Right now

- Decline in affiliation; Rise in Spirituality
- The “Tech Supercycle” is happening
- Neighborhoods are the primary unit of change
- Great transfer of property
- Great transfer of wealth

5 Questions Leaders Can Discern

1. Where are people in our community already seeking meaning—and how might we meet them there?
2. How is technology shaping the people we serve and how might we engage it as a space for formation?
3. If our neighborhood was our primary ministry context, what would we do differently?
4. What would it mean for us to follow Jesus all the way to the dirt?
5. How are we forming people to see their resources as part of God's mission?

Decision Making vs Discernment (Susan Beaumont)

Process:

- Defining the problem
- Looking for root causes
- Gathering the data
- Interpreting the data
- Brainstorming alternatives
- Establishing decision criteria
- Evaluating alternatives
- Assessing risk and return
- Selecting an optimal solution
- Allocating resources

Process:

- Framing the focus of discernment
- Grounding in guiding principles
- Shedding ego & biases
- Rooting in the tradition
- Listening for the Holy Spirit
- Exploring through imagination
- Weighing options
- Closing; moving toward selection
- Testing the decision with rest

Decision Making vs Discernment (Susan Beaumont)

Tools:

- Parliamentary procedures
- Majority rule
- Fishbone diagrams/root cause analysis
- Decision Trees
- Decision models
- Probability Scenarios
- Simulations
- Strategy Maps
- Radar charts

Tools:

- Consensus
- Prayer
- Silence
- Scripture
- Listening circles
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Storytelling
- Clearness Committees
- Consolation/Desolation

