Trends in the Black Church 2022 | 2022 Leadership Summit
Preparing the Future through Strategic Implementation

Disclaimers

1. This presentation is a review of statistical data and research complied from several sources. It is not a sermon or Bible study. However, as I make references to the Bible and scripture; I will not necessarily abide by the rules of hermeneutics, textual analysis, or expository homiletics.

2. This is not a history lesson, though I wish it were. I have a passion for church history and history in general. This presentation would be of greater value if I had time to put the data into historical context, but time will not allow for such an exercise.

3. I wrestle internally with the concept of the "Black Church." I know that there is one universal Body of Christ; however, for analytical and strategic purposes it is prudent to consider the Body of Christ from various perspectives. I began my ministry career focusing on the Church that Jesus built. Yet, overtime, I have come to embrace the logic of studying and encouraging the continued success of Black and multi-racial churches.

4. I don't have all the answers, and neither does any other researcher. We only know in part. Yet, my lack of knowledge propels me to discover more about the Body of Christ.

5. The data is incomplete. In particular, the statistical analysis that I conducted is neither complete, nor does it stand the muster of accepted standards of statistical analysis. For example, the sample sizes are too small to be representative of the cities denoted. Yet, the data does shed some light the state of ministry in the cities represented.

6. Survey data is only a snapshot that fades with time. That which was true yesterday may not be true tomorrow. This is why I advocate for the continual study of the Black Church.

Data Collection is Biblical

In my presentation, I referenced the following passages of scripture. I encourage you to dig deeper into God's Word for yourself. As a theologian and ecclesiologist, I am convinced that data collection is biblical. I don't have access to every document ever written to validate my thesis, but to my knowledge, Numbers 13 records the first commissioned data collection project in human history. It is not surprising that the Lord Jehovah, Himself, commissioned this endeavor.

When it comes to God and ministry, the acquisition of KNOWLEDGE is king.

Scriptures
- Numbers 13:1-2
- Numbers 13:17-20
- Joshua 18:3-4
- Hosea 4:6a
- Isaiah 5:13a
- Proverbs 18:15
- Luke 11:9-13

Compiled by Tom Edwards, PhD **|** August 4, 2022 **|** drtomedwards@live.com

Trends in the Black Church | An Unofficial History

My name is Tom Edwards, and some consider me to be an expert on Black Church data. What I mean by some, are the few people who are intimate with my work and scholarship. For the better part of 25 years, I have served the Body of Christ as a consultant to pastors, churches, and denominations. My area of expertise is ecclesiology, the theological rational, formation, and present-day application and implementation of Jesus' strategic plan for His Church.

During my service to churches, I became interested and involved in the field of Church data analysis. My initial interest was the universal body of data generated and compiled by various researchers in my desire to understand the American Body of Christ. Early on, I was satisfied to glean from the work of the Pew Research Center, the Barna Group, Lifeway, and the scholarship of Dave Olson (author of "The American Church in Crisis"). http://www.theamericanchurch.org/TACIC.htm

Later, I became intimately involved in conducting internal surveys within local churches. For nearly 10 years, I facilitated Healthy Church Surveys (https://www.healthychurchtools.com/) in numerous local church communities. Two of the pastors I consulted with, Apostle La Fayette Scales of Rhema Christian Center and Bishop Howard Tillman of the New Covenant Believers Church, challenged me to find pertinent data pertaining to the Black religious experience.

The subsequent quest for knowledge led me to embark upon a multi-year study of the Black Church. This culminated in an invitation to address the Joint of College of Bishops to deliver a lecture on Trends in the Black Church.

In 2014, I stood (intimidated) before the Joint College of Bishops during their annual meeting in Cleveland, Ohio. I told them that there had been NO significant study of the American Black Church in nearly two decades, and that the data I was presenting was to be considered partial and hypothetical. Accordingly, I implored them to sponsor a unique endeavor. I asked the assembled leaders to sponsor, underwrite, and fund a group of Black ecclesiologist and sociologist to study the Black church, and culture the broader of the African American community.

All assembled agreed that this was a worthwhile project. However, we did not count the cost adequately. After two years of false starts and disappointments, I abandoned the project out of frustration, and turned my attention to my local ministry responsibilities.

A Seismic Shift

Eight years after I threw in the towel, in 2021, a seismic shift occurred. After I abandoned hope that a serious research project would ever be undertaken to ascertain the trends of the Black Church and the faith of African American Christians; not one, but two studies of the Black Church were released.

First, on February 16, 2021, the Pew Research Center released "Faith Among Black Americans." You can access the complete report from this link on Pew's website

(https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans/). This study was Pew's most comprehensive exploration of religious beliefs of Black Americans. This in-depth study was monumental in its scope. Not only did Pew survey 8,660 adults who identify as Black or African American, they also conducted a series of guided small group discussions and interviewed numerous Black pastors. Since this study is not the focus of this presentation, I will highlight only some of its findings:

- Black Americans remain more religious than other Americans, yet fewer are attending predominantly black churches.
- 4 in 10 now attend non-Black congregations, including 50% of millennials and Gen Z.
- Only 3% of Black Americans identify as atheist or agnostic; while 18% claim to have no religious belief in particular (this group is referred to as 'Nones').
- About 60% say Black congregations should diversify.
- About 60% say when church shopping, finding a congregation where most attendees share their race is unimportant.
- About 50% of Black church attenders say services include speaking in tongues.
- Black women are the most religious segment of America's population. When responding to the questions, religion is very important to me, the yes responses was follows: 80% Black women, 69% Black men, 65% Hispanic women, 55% White women, 53% Hispanic men, and 43% White men.
- Weekly church attendance by population subgroup: 52% Black women, 45%, Hispanic women, 40% Black men, 37% White women, 33% Hispanic men, and 33% White men.
- Daily prayer by population subgroup: 79% Black women, 66% Hispanic women, 65% Black men, 60% White women, 48% Hispanic men, and 43% White men.
- Certain belief in God by population subgroup: 83% Black women, 70% Black men, 67% White women, 65% Hispanic women, 54% Hispanic men, and 54% White men.
- Weekly church attendance by population subgroup: 52% Black women, 45% Hispanic women, 40% Black men, 37% White women, 33% Hispanic men, and 33% White men.

Again, I strongly encourage you to download the complete report from Pew's page. Before I transition to the next part of the seismic shift that occurred 2021, I will briefly address a concerning finding from the pew report.

If is very clear that the majority of Black church attenders desire that their predominately African American congregations to diversify. It is also evident that most Black church attenders do not think race is an important factor when church shopping. Finally, Black Christians are increasingly choosing to attend multi-cultural churches. However, there are several things we must consider when considering the openness of Black Christians to diversity and inclusion in the household of faith.

- The desire to diversity appears to be a one-way street. While 25% of Black church attenders are part of multi-racial congregations, according to Ken Dougherty, a socialist at Baylor University, "The percentage of Black congregations bringing in white worshippers is less than

1%." (citation | https://religionnews.com/2020/11/12/study-multiracial-churches-growing-but-racial-unity-remains-elusive/)

- 29% of Black Christians who attend multi-racial churches have experienced racial prejudice. (citation | https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/april/racial-division-church-multiracial-diverse-study.html).
- "More than one-quarter of Black practicing Christians feel pressured to give up part of their racial or ethnic identity in a multiracial church." (citation | Barna: Racism a reality even in multiracial churches – Baptist News Global).
- Black Americans are more comfortable in assimilating into White culture (including predominately White churches); however, White citizens are less predisposed to assimilate into environments in which they are not the majority or in the chief leadership positions. According to Korie Little Edwards, a sociologist at the Ohio State University, "In many ways (people of color) are expected to assimilate to the dominant white culture. They end up having to hide or let go of their own cultural preferences and minimizing their ethnic and racial identity." (citation | https://academic.oup.com/book/32732?login=false)
- In addition, one-third of Black congregants in multiracial churches said it was difficult for them to move into leadership positions. (citation | https://www.barna.com/research/multiracial-church/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Barna+Update%3A+Black+Practicing+Christians+Share+on+Challenges+Met+in+Multiracial+Churches&utm_campaign=2021-04-28_Beyond+Diversity+Launch_BU).

Barna's Trends in the Black Church

Section One: Congregations

1. About half of Black adults in the U.S. say they need religion to be fulfilled. This means that about half don't feel this way. As church leaders, how do we reach the people who don't consider religion to be vital for their satisfaction and purpose?

2. There is a notable proportion of Gen Z and Millennials who say they are "religious but not spiritual" (30% Gen Z, 17% Millennials). Additionally, overall, there is a strong generational decline of Black Americans who say they are "both spiritual and religious." This suggests a dissociation of belief, practice, and identity in the next generation.

3. Black adults are more likely to hold firm to Christian beliefs than the rest of the U.S. population.

4. 56% of Black adults consider themselves at least moderately knowledgeable about the Bible.

5. Black Church experiences in urban, suburban, small town and rural settings are notably different.

6. Three-quarters of Black Church churchgoers agree that family ties matter to them when choosing a church.

7. One-quarter of Black Church pastors reports wishing their church facilities were different.

8. Barna researchers found that having a fulfilling Black Church experience is tied to agreeing with this statement: "My church understands and addresses my most significant needs in life."

9. When Black Church pastors were asked what they wished were different at their church, the top items selected were: level of member participation and/or engagement, use of technology, digital communications, church building or facilities, the representation of all age groups, music style and programs for teens.

10. When Black Church churchgoers were asked which church attributes they wished were different, the top items selected were: approach to money, length of service, programs for teens, use of technology and programs for kids.

11. Overall, Black Americans see the Black Church in a positive light. It is perceived as being safe, important, reliable, and healing by many.

12. The vast majority of Black adults believes that being associated with a Black church is comforting because it is a place where Black people have control over their lives.

13. Remarkably, three-quarters of today's unchurched Black adults (72%) say they attended church regularly during some period of their lives. This tells us that the majority of those who aren't connected to the Church today previously were.

14. When asked why people might leave their church, Black Church pastors typically assume "our church doesn't have the types of programs that certain people want," "people are too busy to get involved with church programs" or "people prefer a different type of worship."

Section Two: Communities

1. When comparing 2020 data to 1996 research, more Black adults today agree that "to understand the African American experience, it is necessary to understand the role of religious faith in the lives of Black people."

2. Over the past 25 years, Black adults have become less likely to say that having a relationship with God is desirable. Good health and providing for family are now considered just as desirable as a relationship with God, which used to be a clear top priority.

3. Barna research suggests that observing spiritual disciplines as a family and having spiritual conversations as a family are important ingredients for building strong, long-lasting faith. The Black community, however, is seeing an alarming decline in family faith formation in the home.

4. Today, 4 percent of Black Church churchgoers say they were born outside of the U.S. How prepared is our church to meet the unique needs of immigrants?

5. When it comes to politics, there is certainly diversity of thought present in the Black Church. With social issues, 48 percent of Black Church churchgoers take a moderate stance, while 33 percent lean liberal, and 20 percent lean conservative.

6. While a strong 76 percent of Black Church churchgoers overall identify as Democrat today, younger generations are increasingly likely to call themselves Independent.

7. The majority of Black adults in the Church agrees that "when it comes to politics, Black people generally feel powerless."

8. When asked about the role of the Black Church in the community, opinions are fairly split as to whether the Church should prioritize providing hands-on help or advocating for solutions.

9. To most Black adults, a church's involvement with the community should be spiritual and social.

10. When asked where the Black Church should get involved socially, the top answers were: local poverty issues, caring for elderly and widows, racial justice issues and emotional / mental health.

11. Overall, about half of Black Church pastors acknowledge that the racial makeup of their neighborhood is changing, and 35 percent select gentrification as an important issue for Black Church involvement.

12. Two in three Black Church pastors say racial justice issues are something the Black Church should get involved with.

13. Many say younger generations today are experiencing and responding to racism differently than previous generations.

14. Few Black adults feel that their relationships are truly as satisfying as they would want them to be.

Section Three: Leaders

1. The vast majority of Black adults agrees that the pastors of Black Churches are the most important leaders within the Black community.

2. About one in four Black Church pastors says the role of the pastor has changed for the worse over time.

3. Barna research suggests that younger generations in the Black Church have a heightened sensitivity to the influence of pastors, in both positive and negative directions. They are more likely to emphasize the integrity, care, and style of leadership.

4. The positive emotions that Black Church pastors most often feel are: hopeful, confident and supported. The negative emotions that Black Church pastors most often feel are: overwhelmed by responsibility, lonely and annoyed.

5. Barna research consistently shows that pastors name preaching as the favorite part of their job and an area of ministry in which they feel especially confident. This is true in the Black Church as well.

6. Three in four Black Church churchgoers report attending churches where the preaching is primarily expository.

7. Only 27 percent of Black Church pastors are confident in the overall balance they have in their life.

8. Many Black Church pastors admit they struggle making time for friendships.

9. The vast majority of Black Church pastors says they first go to other pastors outside of their church for advice / input on personal and leadership challenges.

10. Through the lens of the congregant, about half of Black Church churchgoers strongly agree that their church empowers women to become leaders.

11. Barna asked respondents to select from a list what they might not have enjoyed about their experience in a Black church. The approach to money was the clear top choice.

12. Few Black Church pastors are very confident in their ability to lead their church in the digital era.

13. As leaders of the Black Church continue to age, Barna research reveals some warning signs of a retirement preparation gap in the church.

14. Eighty-one percent of Black Church churchgoers feel there is a clear training pathway for developing leaders in their church.

2022 Ministry Trends Survey (Dr. Tom Edwards)

At the behest of Bishop Scales, I replicated the portions of the "Trends in the Black Church" survey are germane to the senior pastor's role, and the churches' preparation for the future. In our quest to be representative, we initiated five surveys (see below). Please click on the hyperlinks to access the data. As more individuals in each city complete the survey, the PDFs will be updated accordingly at the URLs below. There will be no need to acquire new web addresses.

Please encourage the pastors in your city and/or region to complete the survey. If you would like us to provide text links, please notify me at drtomedwards@live.com. If your city and/or region is not represented below, and you would like us to create a survey, please contact me at the email address provided.

2022 Ministry Trends Survey Leadership Summit Participants
https://www.crccolumbus.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Ministry-Trends-Survey-LS-Participants.pdf

2022 Ministry Trends Survey Central Ohio Pastors
https://www.crccolumbus.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Ministry-Trends-Survey-Central-Ohio.pdf

2022 Ministry Trends Survey LaPlace_New Orleans, LA
https://www.crccolumbus.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Ministry-Trends-Survey-LaPlace_New-Orleans.pdf

2022 Ministry Trends Survey Sumter, SC
https://www.crccolumbus.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Ministry-Trends-Survey-Sumter-SC.pdf

2022 Ministry Trends Survey Covington, KY
https://www.crccolumbus.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Ministry-Trends-Survey-Covington-KY.pdf

Looking Toward the Future

As we look toward the future, I will focus my attention and study on the following areas:
- African & American Black Church History
- Black Church and Community Data Collection
- Hybrid Ministry Models

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- Black Church Leadership Development
- Diversification Escalation
- Social & Political Institution Erosion
- Graying of Black Elders
- Emerging Black Nones
- From Social Media to Social Ministry
- Community Analysis & Engagement
- Ministry Partnerships & Mergers

Time does not permit to delve into each of these topics; however, I below please find an overview of the community analysis process. In summary, community analysis can be down in an active or passive manner. Community analysis is a precursor to, and an active part of the community engagement process.

I've been actively involved in church-based and parachurch community engagement. For more information please email me at drtomedards@live.com.

Community Analysis (Passive)

- Passive Community Analysis is easy, but potentially costly. Simply, just hire someone to do the hard work for you. However, the impact is limited. Don't get me wrong. You will get some really good, actionable data, but you will garner better data if you do the hard work yourself.
- Subscribe or purchase a church / community demographic application.
- Best in Class
    - ACS Technologies' (American Church Systems) ***MISSIONINSITE*** Application
    - Website | https://www.acstechnologies.com/missioninsite/

    MISSIONINSITE Overview
- **Know Your People** (Demographic Data)
- **Know Your Location** (Geographic Area)
- **Discover What Matters Most** (Surveys & Reports)
    - **The Mission Impact Guide**
      The Mission Impact Guide is a proprietary ministry application solution tied to Experian's 71 unique Mosaic Household Portraits. The Mission Impact Guide assists church leaders in planning relevant contextual ministry based upon the presence of Mosaic Household Types in their Congregation and Community. Using 9 "Ministry Filters" for Leadership, Hospitality, Education, Small Groups, Worship, Outreach, Facilities, Finances, and Communication, churches will increase their mission vitality as they focus upon the household lifestyles present in their congregation and community.

Community Analysis (Active)

- Active Community Analysis is just that...active. It requires not only for you to do the hard work yourself, but to involve a team and other significant community stakeholders. This will take more time and effort, but the harvest of information will be more bountiful.

- Do the hard work yourself.
    - Impact...profound
- Start from scratch or look for best practices
- Best in Class
    - ***Church and Community Mobilization Process Facilitators Manual***
    - Compiled by Francis W. Njoroge of Tearfund

- **About Tearfund | https://www.tearfund.org/**
  Tearfund is a Christian charity which partners with churches in more than 50 of the world's poorest countries. We tackle poverty and injustice through sustainable development, by responding to disasters and challenging injustice. We believe an end to extreme poverty is possible.

- About the ***Church and Community Mobilization Process Facilitators Manual***
  https://learn.tearfund.org/-/media/learn/resources/tools-and-guides/2019-tearfund-ccmp-facilitators-manual-en.pdf

  Since its inception and rollout in the late 1990s, the church and community mobilization process (CCMP) has increasingly gained acceptance in thousands of churches across different countries of the world. In Africa it has spread to more than twenty countries. The results everywhere are astounding – the church impacting its immediate community in such a way that it influences important decisions that affect the way of life of the community; the church motivating its immediate community to transform its situation sustainably; the community beginning to take charge of its destiny without having to depend on external support; relationships among people being restored in a lasting manner; people supporting one another to meet their most basic needs; people addressing their physical and spiritual poverty deeply and extensively; people honoring and worshipping God more consciously; and much more.

Following is a synopsis of the Tearfund process of community analysis. It must be noted that this process has a built-in community engagement strategy. Again, for a through overview, click on the link above and download the manual. I am available if you have questions.

- **Stage 1: Church Awakening**
    - Envision the Church for Integral Mission
    - Foundational Bible Studies
    - Resource Mobilization
    - Relationship Building
        - Determine neighbors

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- o Prepare leaders to meet and build relationships with citizens, community leaders, and community stakeholders
- o Leverage relationships of members of church to build community relationships
- o Create community stakeholder database
- o Create community relationship opportunities to meet, greet and know

- **Stage 2: Church and Community Description**
  "Where we came from? Where are we today?"
    - Introduce "Description" in the Church
    - Conduct Church and Community Description – People Describe Their History
    - Conduct Church and Community Description – People Describe their Current Situation
    - Initiate Relationship Building Process

- **Stage 3: Information Gathering**
    - Understand the need for specific information
    - Understand a biblical perspective for information gathering
    - Develop a plan to gather specific information
    - Recruit an IGT (Information Gathering Team)
    - Designate IGT Leader
    - Train IGT to gather information
    - Determining IG Sources
        - o Paid Sources | ACS Technologies; EDDM; etc.
        - o Free Sources | Census Bureau, local Colleges & Universities, Chamber of Commerce; DJFS, local government, law enforcement, local community agencies
        - o Media & Web Sources | local new media, search engines, social media, etc.
        - o Congregational Focus Groups, Roundtables & Surveys
        - o Community Focus Groups, Roundtables, & Surveys
    - Compile Information Gathered
    - Validate Information Gathered

- **Stage 4: Process of Analyzing the Information**
    - Process for Analyzing the Information
        - o Prepare for analysis – writing the specific baseline
        - o Analyze the information validated
        - o Analyze the problems and concerns
        - o Turn problems and concerns into objects, opportunities, programs, and ministries
    - Generating the Full Baseline Report
        - o Write the report

- o Validate the report

- **Stage 5: Decision**
    - Introducing the Decision Stage
    - Understanding the Biblical Perspective for Decision Making

        - o Undertaking Decision 1 – What to change or not to change?
        - o Undertaking Decision 2 – 'Dreaming Dreams'
        - o Undertaking Decision 3 – Prioritizing the Desired Changes
        - o Undertaking Decision 4 – Setting Goals
        - o Undertaking Decision 5 – Determining Indicators
        - o Undertaking Decision 6 – Designing Monitoring Systems
        - o Undertaking Decision 7 – Action Planning
        - o Undertaking Decision 8 – Selecting Structures to Oversee Implementation of the Action Plans