

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

How Large Churches Are Widening Their Front Door - Episode 281

What's Working in Large Churches Now

This week, we're kicking off a series focused on what's working in large churches across the U.S., sharing insights from [Christ Fellowship](#) in Miami, [Transformation Church](#) near Charlotte, [Sun Valley Community Church](#) in Phoenix, and [North Point Community Church](#) in Atlanta. After talking to leaders from each of these ministries, **four key themes came to the surface:**

1. They are intentional about widening the front door and inviting people to follow Jesus.
2. They are encouraging people to engage next steps and connect with other people beyond Sunday morning.
3. They are leveraging multisite strategy as a reaction to growth that enables more growth.
4. They are focused on shaping a strong team culture that leads to a healthy culture in their church.

In this episode, we'll focus on theme #1 and unpack the strategies these four churches are using to widen their front door and invite more people to follow Jesus.

Widening the Front Door

When it comes to widening the front door and growing their reach, these churches are **creating more opportunities for people to invite new people.** Here were some common themes:

1. **Encouraging people in the church to get back to attending onsite services rather than online services.**

The leadership at Christ Fellowship attributes their resurgence to a strong challenge that their lead pastor, Omar, made to encourage people to get back to onsite worship. It was a simple, compelling challenge to practice Hebrews 10:24-25: "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."

2. **Creating "invaluable" experiences on Sundays for people to invite their friends.**

North Point explained that they always want to create 50 special events a year on Sunday morning to serve as invite opportunities for people to invite their unchurched friends and family. However,

with changing attendance patterns, they've started to more intentionally elevate a few weekends a year to serve as "come sit with me Sundays" to make the invitation simpler and more compelling. During those times, North Point tries to have something special for the whole family and provides next steps of engagement to encourage new people to come back. The data they are collecting indicates that this strategy is working: People are coming back.

3. Reaching new people helps create momentum to reach more new people.

Vicki Gray at Transformation Church explained, "We have had an influx of new people connecting at TC, and as we are seeing these new people grow, in turn, they're inviting others to join them in the life of the church."

Key Question: Are you creating "invaluable" experiences in your weekends services and otherwise for people to invite their friends?

Helping More People Say Yes to Jesus

Sun Valley has about 7,000 people attending one of their locations every Sunday, and they are baptizing more than 1 in every 10 people who attend their church services every year. Sun Valley shared that the pandemic did not change the mission that Jesus gave their church—because of that, they didn't allow it to be an excuse. For the SVCC ministry team, it wasn't acceptable to *not* reach new people for Jesus just because they couldn't host weekend worship services in person on their campuses for a season.

There's no doubt about it: They did not stop reaching new people—about 1/3 of the people at SVCC are brand new within the last three years. While part of that has to do with the growth of the Phoenix-metro area, a large part of why SVCC is growing and reaching new people is because of *how* they engage their mission: "We exist to help people meet, know and follow Jesus, and we strategically staff and organize around that mission." The pastors at SVCC have also found that the more opportunities that they provide people to say yes to following Jesus, the more people say yes to following Jesus.

Key Question: Are you giving people the opportunity to say yes to following Jesus?

Strategies to Engage New People

There's a key difference we've noticed through the years when it comes to why some churches experience health and growth and others get stuck and experience plateau and decline: Healthy,

growing churches tend to embrace change, especially when it comes to reaching new people. For example:

- Christ Fellowship started to offer new online experiences for kids, students, young adults and older adults. They've also started a new follow up process to better engage first-time guests and their first-time givers.
- Transformation Church is getting ready to launch their first multisite location—because their church is growing and they want to continue reaching new people in their region.
- SVCC has started new campuses in new locations to reach new people. They've launched new Alpha groups to have spiritual conversations with people who don't know Jesus.

All of these churches are taking some calculated risks to expand their Kingdom reach. Every church should be making at least one bold move to help point more new people to Jesus.

Key Question: What bold moves are you making to reach new people for Jesus?

Maintaining an Outsider Focus

All of these churches are focused on making a difference in people's lives—and not just the people who are already connected to the church. For example:

- At TC, Pastor Derwin Gray has held the conviction from the very beginning of the church that he is called to disciple people with the Gospel through cultural hot button issues. He explained that people have flocked to the church in recent years because they want a kingdom of God perspective on divisive cultural issues. It's one of their values as a church: They want to “communicate the timeless truths of God's Word in a way that displays the relevant nature of the Gospel to address contemporary issues.” By being willing to engage these tough topics head-on, TC is growing significantly.
- North Point has added a new word to their ministry strategy: ENDEAR. They want to endear themselves to the people in the community—so, instead of just working to get the people into the church's space, they're looking for opportunities to make a difference in their space through service projects with local non-profits as well as trying to partner with local organizations and the special events they sponsor. NP shared, “We've realized that the days of turning on the lights and having people just show up are over. We have to go out and endear the community in order to engage with it.”

Key Question: What are you doing to make a difference in the lives of people who are not a part of your church?

Final Thoughts

Many churches have a defined spiritual formation strategy, but are lacking a strategy to reach new people. If that's your church, [we'd love to help you](#) get clarity around how you can widen your front door to connect more people to church and faith.

Listen to the full episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode281.

Free Webinar: What's Working in Large Churches Now

Are you a pastor pursuing greater health and growth for your church in 2023? At this free webinar on February 23, Tony Morgan and Amy Anderson are sitting down with senior leaders Chris Hodges (Church of the Highlands), Omar Giritli (Christ Fellowship Church in Miami), and Miles McPherson (Rock Church) to discuss what's actually working in their large churches now to reach new people and engage people in the life of the church a few years post-pandemic. [Register now to join us.](#)

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