

SPECIAL EDITION
Q2 2020

THE UNSTUCK CHURCH REPORT

HOW CHURCHES ARE
POSITIONING
FOR THE FUTURE

THE UNSTUCK GROUP
— WE HELP CHURCHES GET UNSTUCK. —

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INTRODUCTION

In an ongoing effort to learn more about how the coronavirus crisis is impacting the Church, The Unstuck Group, in partnership with Blackbaud, wanted to take a closer look at the data.

We surveyed 561 churches from May 18 to May 29, 2020, including churches ranging in size from under 100 to more than 50,000 in attendance prior to the Covid-19 shutdowns.

When compared to survey information collected from a prior survey in early April, the current data indicates that churches find themselves in a better financial position than they previously anticipated. Online engagement remains strong compared to in-person attendance as most churches are beginning to plan for reopening their buildings for weekend services.

Read on for some of the key takeaways from the most recent survey results in the categories of weekend service engagement, finances, staffing and other ministries of the church.

SUMMARY OF THE DATA

561 churches surveyed from May 18 – May 29, 2020

| How Churches are Responding to the Coronavirus Crisis | Small Church 1 - 199 | Medium Church 200 - 799 | Large Church 800 - 1999 | Megachurch 2000+ | All Churches |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Average attendance | 108 | 434 | 1245 | 4151 | 818 |
| Finances & Staffing | | | | | |
| Agreed they had adequate cash reserves set aside in preparation for a crisis like this | 72% | 87% | 82% | 94% | 82% |
| Giving has decreased during this crisis | 35% | 27% | 34% | 40% | 32% |
| Average change in giving across all churches. | -8% | -4% | -3% | -3% | -5% |
| Have initiated staff furloughs or layoffs | 10% | 7% | 9% | 15% | 9% |
| Have reduced staff compensation | 6% | 0% | 5% | 13% | 5% |
| Planning permanent staff reallocation to digital strategies | 42% | 58% | 74% | 72% | 56% |
| Received financial assistance through the Paycheck Protection Program | 46% | 65% | 72% | 82% | 61% |
| Weekend Services Engagement | | | | | |
| Have reopened building for weekend services | 8% | 7% | 3% | 0% | 6% |
| Have a plan to reopen building for weekend services | 63% | 56% | 55% | 51% | 58% |
| If reopened, attendance is lower than pre-shutdown | 87% | 92% | 100% | n/a | 90% |
| If reopened, in-person attendance is lower than online engagement | 92% | 50% | 100% | n/a | 76% |
| Compared to in-person attendance, engagement has increased online | 66% | 61% | 65% | 74% | 65% |
| Average increase in engagement online | 69% | 84% | 49% | 61% | 70% |
| Other Ministries | | | | | |
| Offering online small groups during the crisis | 71% | 94% | 98% | 100% | 87% |
| Engagement in groups has increased compared to pre-crisis | 53% | 37% | 36% | 49% | 45% |
| Offering content and/or ministry environments outside of weekend services | 85% | 96% | 95% | 100% | 92% |
| Actively discussing longer-term changes to ministry methods | 86% | 91% | 96% | 96% | 90% |
| New people added to the church's database since the crisis began | 17 | 17 | 73 | 127 | 33 |

WEEKEND SERVICE ENGAGEMENT

Only 6% of churches have resumed in-person services in their buildings. The smaller the church, the more likely they are to have reopened. None of the megachurches had reopened at the time of the survey.

Almost all churches that have reopened their buildings are experiencing lower attendance than pre-shutdown. And, for this group, their online engagement is still outpacing in-person attendance.

More than half of the churches surveyed have plans to reopen their buildings in the coming months. The smaller the church, the more likely they are to be actively planning for reopening their buildings.

More people continue to be viewing online services than were attending services at church buildings. Two-thirds of churches indicated online engagement since the crisis began has increased compared to in-person attendance prior to Covid-19. This percentage has held steady since the beginning of the crisis.

Online engagement continues to remain strong though declines have occurred since Easter. Churches that reported either increases or decreases in viewers compared to in-person attendance, the average change was a 70% increase. Though it's still a strong increase, it's lower than the 115% increase reported by churches in early April.

FINANCES & STAFFING

The percentage of churches that agreed they had adequate cash reserves set aside in preparation for a crisis like this has increased over the last couple of months. Four out of every five churches indicated they have adequate cash reserves. The biggest increase in confidence was among the small churches and the megachurches on both ends of the spectrum. In both categories, churches had more than a 10% increase in confidence regarding their financial position.

Giving has decreased in a third of all churches. In early April, close to 60% of churches were reporting giving decreases. Though the financial impact has been challenging for many churches, it isn't as devastating as was experienced in the initial weeks of the shutdowns. Megachurches are most likely to have experienced a decline in giving.

The average decrease in giving across all churches is 5%. Small churches are experiencing the biggest declines with an average giving decrease of 8%.

Three out of every five churches received financial assistance from the Paycheck Protection Program. The larger the church, the more likely they were to receive funding. More than 80% of megachurches were awarded financial assistance while less than half of small churches received funding.

Megachurches continue to be more proactive with staff furloughs or layoffs and reducing compensation. The biggest increase in furloughs and layoffs, though, was among small churches.

Larger churches are more likely to be considering permanent staff reallocation to support digital ministry strategies. More than 70% of large churches and megachurches are planning permanent shifts, while only 42% of small churches are considering similar changes.

OTHER MINISTRIES

Most churches are now offering online small groups. That includes every megachurch and now more than 70% of small churches. Additionally, 45% of churches indicated that small group engagement has increased during the coronavirus crisis.

Most churches are also offering content and/or ministry environments outside of their weekend services. More than 90% of churches continue to offer additional ministries during the week.

Few new people appear to be connecting with churches during the crisis. On average, churches of all sizes have only added 33 new people to their databases since the crisis began.

Larger churches are more likely to be actively discussing longer-term change to ministry methods. That includes 96% of both large churches and megachurches that are anticipating a new normal.

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For more information related to this survey and the summary of the learnings, contact The Unstuck Group at help@theunstuckgroup.com.

The Unstuck Group helps pastors lead thriving churches by guiding them to focus vision, strategy, team and action. Our core services include leader coaching, ministry health assessments, strategic planning, staffing and structure reviews, multisite and merger planning. Learn more by visiting theunstuckgroup.com.

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