

State of the Really Large Church: Trends for 2025

If yours is a church of over 2,000, you are not just big. I'd even say you're not just "mega." You are officially in the top 0.005% of all churches in the United States (for our international clients, the stat is about the same, but the numbers are harder to gather). As a reminder, there are roughly 365,000 Protestant churches in the United States. So being in the top 0.005% in terms of size makes you exceedingly rare, if not otherworldly.

It also makes your staffing challenges for 2025 unique. I know this because we have served the vast majority of domestic churches your size. And if we had more time, I would write an article just for the churches over 10,000 in attendance. But let's start here.

What does being a really large church mean for your staffing?

You should expect turnover.

Let me start by first saying, your central team probably won't experience much turnover. And it shouldn't. The smartest churches we deal with pay their top people very very well.**

The middle and lower parts of your org chart, however, will likely see turnover no matter what you pay. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- People growing weary of niche jobs
- Staff not seeing a path to develop and get promoted
- Employees wanting to have a more generalized position of leadership in a smaller setting

None of these are wrong, and none of them are bad. So if your turnover in the middle and lower parts of your org chart is high, that doesn't necessarily mean that your culture is unhealthy.

What it *does* mean is that you need to constantly work on your pipeline. I don't know of any more challenging search for us these days than a search for student pastors for churches your size. There are a number of reasons for this that I will outline in an article later this year, not the least of which is that the talent pool is very scarce for this type of position. That means that you should always have someone ready to go when your student pastor decides to leave.

Smarter churches are spending more time on leadership development, both within their congregation and within their personal networks. We're asked to do student pastor searches a lot,

and I'll tell you, it's very difficult. It's less difficult with us than without us, but even so, the landscape is rough out there.

It's time to get smart about AI.

A church your size should be dedicating part of its time, energy, and budget toward integrating AI across all the platforms it uses. Why? It will reduce staffing costs over time. Think about who on staff is—or should be—in charge of that integration. If yours is like most churches, the conversations around AI tend to be conversations that are kicked around but never owned. But the smartest churches of your size make AI integration part of someone's job description. AI can help with everything from sermon preparation to children's ministry to sanctuary acoustic logistics.

As I've said many, many times, humans likely won't be replaced by AI. However, humans will be replaced by humans who know how to use AI. That is nowhere more true than in a large church like yours. Having someone sharp in charge of using AI to better your church begins with a job description and a salary commitment. It will pay off sooner than you think.

You've got to smell like the sheep.

With tech dominating the landscape of 2025, the human touch will be more valuable than ever. Ask yourself how you can be more in and among your people in 2025. If you find that answer, you'll find great fruitfulness in the coming year.

The human touch is the new gold standard for a church your size. All good pastors know their flock and walk among them, but it's a particular challenge for pastors of mega churches. If you haven't already, it's time to learn how to scale the human touch. Try these hacks for reaching more, more easily:

- **Reinvest in social.** Did you know that when Twitter first launched, pastors had more [influence, engagement, and retweets than celebrities](#)? Twitter gave pastors a new platform to communicate directly with their congregants that was both personal and efficient. If you're not engaging across all social media channels, you're probably not reaching your people.
- **Don't underestimate the power of pastoral visits.** A story of a personal touch can be exponentially powerful. When I was called to lead First Presbyterian Church of Houston, I was headed to pastor a church that was larger than any church I'd ever attended. One of my biggest fears was that I wouldn't be able to see everyone who was hurting. I wondered how I could ever get to all the hospital visits, or how to know which hospital visits to even try to get to. It was overwhelming.

But then, I'll never forget what the chair of our search committee, Tom Bellows, told me. He said, "William, we don't expect you to be at every bedside. But we expect to believe that you wish you could be at every bedside."

Think about how you can create that sentiment among your congregants. Think about who on staff can help your pastors use their time for visits wisely and effectively.

- **Consider adding a pastoral care minister.** Your church might need to bring back the old school role of pastoral care pastor. We attend a large Methodist church here in Houston, and our pastoral care pastor used to call every single congregant on their birthday. I still have the voicemail from the last year he was serving our church: "William, this is Bill. You don't need to call me back. I just wanted to leave you a voicemail to tell you happy birthday and how glad we are to have you as a part of the congregation." Bill went on for about a minute, talking about me and talking about the church. And I still have the voicemail. Bill literally made about 5,000 of those calls every year. That's something like 15 a day. But that means it was only about 30 minutes out of each day, and it made a lasting impression on me and made me sure that I'm part of a church that has a human touch and cares deeply.

Say goodbye to Google as you know it and lean on content.

If you've been relying on Google as the way people find your church, get ready for a new reality. My prediction is that Google will be replaced by AI in the near future. If you don't believe me, go Google something right now. The first result you will see is an AI result. You don't actually see links to answers to your question until you scroll down further. The same will be true for visitors looking for a church home. They will ask AI, or Google will give them an AI answer. So how is your church supposed to show up in an AI result? Content.

The more content you're putting into the public domain (aka the internet), the more AI will find you. What valuable content can you put out about your community? That will register in an AI result. What content can you put out in the form of pastoral letters about current events? That will show up in an AI result.

Ask yourself if you're creating enough content. That may mean you need to hire a copywriter. AI generated articles will not yield AI results when people are searching for a church. That is to say, your content needs to have a human touch. Consider hiring an hourly freelance copywriter or an intern looking for writing experience. You don't need to spend a lot on this: A copywriter combined with the power of artificial intelligence can create volumes of content for you and your church in the coming year. And that will cause you to be recognized quicker and better by AI, which hopefully will result in new visitors to your church and new members of Jesus' family.

Conclusion

I think these trends are ones that you can easily embrace, and I believe they will set you apart as a church that is never labeled as one “that’s too big,” “doesn’t know me or care,” or “behind the times.” I truly believe a big church can make a really big difference. Keep doing what you’re doing, and thanks for serving on the front lines of Team Jesus.

**To make sure you’re paying your people fairly, you may need to do a [compensation study](#). You’ve got enough on your plate without keeping track of who is paying what, and that’s why we spent the better part of 17 years aggregating all of the data on what churches pay their pastors.