

—The Average—

PASTOR

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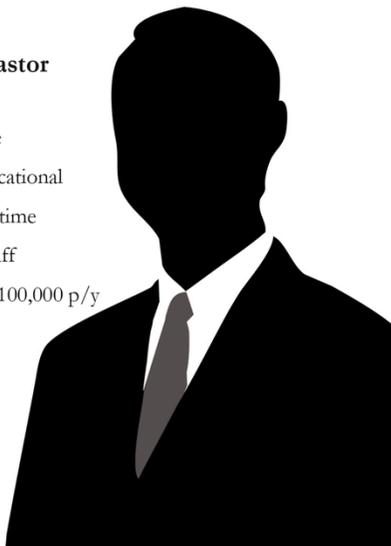
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Part One: The Average Church

THE AVERAGE PASTOR

The Average Pastor

Pastors 76 people
Is 38% likely to be bi-vocational
Earns \$31,000 if full-time
Has no full time staff
Church income is less than \$100,000 p/y



You Are Average

No that is not an insult. It is the data. If you are a pastor of a church of under 100 you probably feel small. The recent trend of mega-churches and multi-site churches has made you feel this way. Not to mention that all the pastors conferences are focusing on these churches. But it is not true. You and I are not small church pastors. We are Average Pastors of Average Churches.

What is average? When it comes to describing quality, people often think of average as being the middle of the road: not exceptional but not terrible. But in statistics, average is a statement of what is typical. It is not a value statement for quality, it is a numerical statement of quantity. Average is the number that represents the most common result of a given range of data sampled. On a bell curve, the average is where most people are. This means that the most common human experience is the average experience, not the exceptional experience.

One of the first leadership books I remember hearing about was “The Enemy Called Average.”¹ Nobody wants to be labeled as “average”, especially not pastors. Everyone of us believes that we will be the exception to the rule. We want to be the one that starts a church that grows to 10,000 people or who takes over a struggling church and builds it into a mega church. Every pastor I have ever met has always started thinking they were that person. I have come to realize that the my experience as a pastor of 100 people is the rule, not the exception. Consider the data:²

- 66.8% of churches are 100 people or less³
- 87.2% of churches are under 250 people
- Average church attendance is 76 people
- Only 2.4% of churches are over 1000 people
- 62% of pastors of less than 100 people are full time
- Average salary is \$31,000 for FT pastor⁴
- 72% of churches under 100 have an annual income of less than \$100,000⁵

The Barna group tells us, “Despite the enormous cultural impact of mega-churches and mega-church pastors like Joel Osteen and his 40,000+ Lakewood Church, the largest group of American churchgoers attends services in a more intimate context. Almost half (46%) attend a church of 100 or fewer members. More than one-third (37%) attend a midsize church of over 100, but not larger than 499. One in 11 (9%) attends a church with

¹ John Mason, “The Enemy Called Average” (Insight Publishing, 1990).

² <http://www.thearda.com>

³ http://www.thearda.com/conqs/qs_295.asp

⁴ “The 2012-2013 Compensation Handbook for Church Staff” Christianity Today, 2011, p. 35.

⁵ http://www.thearda.com/conqs/qs_314.asp

between 500 and 999 attenders, and slightly fewer (8%) attend a very large church of 1,000 or more attendees.”⁶

What these stats tell us is that the pastor of a church of 100 is normal. It is average. The truth is the mega-church and the large church are both very rare. They are the exception, not the norm! Yet, have you noticed everyone expects all churches to grow to a mega church? Have you noticed that the conference speakers are always pastors of the exception, not the norm? Have you noticed all the books written by the 2% and not the 98%? Why are so few resources available for the pastor leading a volunteer staff or the church in the rural community?

If you are reading this book, chances are you are an Average Pastor. Average is not a sign of poor leadership, difficult people or lack of God's blessing. Average is the normal experience for most pastors of most churches. It is not a problem to be fixed, its normal. It certainly has challenges, that when compared to the experience of larger churches seem to be huge disadvantages. But those challenges are simply normal challenges. If we continue to compare ourselves with the exception we will always feel like a failure. But if we can compare ourselves to the normal church experience, we will see we are not failures at all. We are normal churches with normal challenges to be faced with faith and courage. You are an Average Pastor with an average size church in America. And that is OK!

⁶ <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016>