

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



Have You Noticed This Subtle Trend
**IN THE FASTEST GROWING CHURCHES
IN THE COUNTRY?**

RICH BIRCH



Church leaders who are wanting to make a difference in their communities are always studying what is happening at prevailing churches. I'm sure you've taken time to learn from the church across town that is trying some new stuff and seeing what you can apply to your church. At unSeminary, a huge part of [the reason we host the podcast every week](#) is to expose you to church leaders from growing churches.

In fact, we've focused on the fastest growing churches in the country because we want your church to grow more. **94% of the churches in the country are losing ground against the growth of the communities they serve.** [\[ref\]](#) We've taken a keen interest in the 6% of churches that are bucking this trend and we spend a lot of time and energy talking with you about what they do because we want all of our churches to learn from them.

Over the last 10 years, I've noticed a subtle trend in the fastest growing churches in the country. These churches mobilize their people to get out of their seats and serve on the streets of the community. **Prevailing churches take the mass engagement of people towards acts of service in their community very seriously.** More than just simply "social justice", these initiatives are getting high percentages of people directly involved in making a difference.

Rather than just a fringe dynamic in a few churches, you can see this trend in all kinds of

churches that are making a huge difference. In fact, recently I just flipped through a list of the fastest growing churches in the country and did a quick dive onto their websites to see if I could find this trend, and sure enough, it just kept coming up time and again; below are some examples of what I found:

Examples of Fast Growing Churches Employing Mass Community Service Experiences

Crossroads Church in Cincinnati hosts a large-scale Thanksgiving Food Drive. Just last year, they brought in enough food for over 60,000 Thanksgiving dinners. They've also taken on the churchwide responsibility of sponsoring over 6,000 children in a developing country. This church has been declared to be the fastest-growing church in America for two years in a row by Outreach Magazine, which shouldn't come as a surprise when you see a church doing so many good things in the community.

Red Rocks Church in Littleton, Colorado runs an event called Hope for the Holidays, which is essentially a gift drive and wrapping event. The church and the community wrap up and deliver thousands of gifts every year to various social service agencies in the community. The church also runs a prison ministry known as God Behind Bars in which the men of the church bring the hope of Jesus to the prisoners.

The Traders Point Church in Indianapolis, Indiana runs a special needs prom where they annually help young adults who could never go to a prom to experience one. This particular prom requires three to four volunteers for every guest that comes; it literally requires more volunteers than the number of guests in order to run smoothly. That night, you get an opportunity to see the last become the first. (Plus, it looks like so much fun... when Jesus is around there always seems to be a party close by!)

The Eastside Church in Anaheim, California is one of the fastest growing churches in the country and has even won that title for multiple years in a row. Compassion is listed at the top priority and concern on this church's website. It's right up there with messages and giving. In fact, this church has done so much community outreach that a documentary called *Bravely Forward* is now being put together to tell the story of all the various things that this church has accomplished.

The Next Level Church has locations all across New England; in a part of a world where frankly the church just doesn't exactly grow, this church is exploding and launching new campuses all the time. They did a gas buy-down event where they offered gas for 80% of the normal price at a time when the price of gas was very high. Their lead pastor, Josh Gagnon, said, "God said it's better to give than it is to receive," and they realized how important something like gas can be; so, when the price was high, the church mobilized its people and its financial resources to make a difference in such a practical way.



5 Ways Large-Scale Community Service Events Help Churches Grow

- **Good Thing & God Thing** // We think that Jesus calls us to serve the poor, it's

a God thing. Our community sees these events as a good thing to do; people want to make a difference. Rather than squabble over the definition, these events give us a chance to find common ground with our communities and leaders.

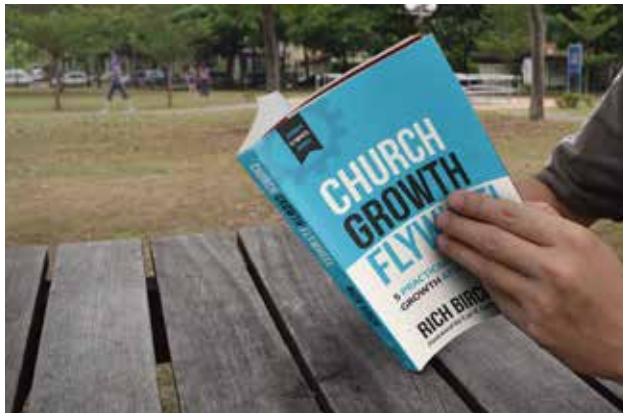
- **They're Remarkable** // When these events are executed well they become the sort of things that people want to talk about with their friends and family. They invite their close relatives and friends to the community to be a part of it and are excited to share the outcome once it takes place. Friends telling friends about your church is how your church will grow.
- **Volunteer Intensive** // These events take a lot of people to pull off. I've been a part of planning and executing these events when they take literally 1,000s of people to take place smoothly. The level of vision casting, communication, and mobilization that needs to take place for these events to materialize has all kinds of spillover impacts on your church.
- **Ruckus Causing** // Did you ever notice that throughout the New Testament there always seems to be some sort of ruckus following the move of God? (Water is being turned into wine, pigs are running down the hill in the lake, people going to the river en masse to be baptized, riots breaking out after preaching.) These events create some of that "positive chaos" in your city!
- **Total Focus** // It takes all the creative energy of your church to implement these events. Churches' can become "siloed" and these experiences are natural ways to break down those silos. The teamwork that's required to pull this off ends up influencing the rest of your church and drives more growth.

Obviously, we're called to serve the poor in our communities. **The clear evidence of the New Testament is that the church is called to meet the practical needs of the last, least, and lost.** In a very real way, these large-scale community service events are just living out that mandate at scale. It shouldn't surprise us then that God seems to be blessing the churches who are engaged in what he's called us to do from the beginning.

So, what about your church? **Could this be the year you get your people out of their seats and into the streets to serve your city?**

Help for Church Leaders Wanting to Engage in Mass Community Service

Are you ready to see your church impact more people than it has ever done before? Are you tired of church leadership books that are long on theory but short on practical help? **Have you wanted to reach more people in your community but weren't sure where to start?** Are you worried that your church isn't reaching its full potential? "[Church Growth Flywheel: 5 Practical Systems To Drive Growth at Your Church](#)" is full of practical insights to help your church reach more people, starting today!



As a part of this book, I pulled together a discussion about how this mass community outreach events are being employed in some of the fastest growing churches in the country. I pulled this from my own experience in leading in a church that regularly does these sorts of experiences as well from my research on 200+ prevailing churches across the country. In this section, we:

- Discuss why the shift in the broader culture away from a traditional Judeo-Christian mindset leads us to this approach as a cornerstone of community impact.
- Take a deep dive into one of the fastest growing churches in the country and look at how they've leveraged this tactic for years.
- Provide examples of other churches who are employing this approach with descriptions of what they are doing.
- Give a framework for skeptics of this approach to think about this approach

and how it might be implemented in their church.

- Provide a quick start guide that gives an overview of your first steps towards your first event.
- Discuss practical tips that I have learned from seeing lots of these events up close and what you need to do to maximize the "remarkability" factor.

The book launches in February 2018. However, you can read Chapter 1 now by visiting [ChurchGrowthFlywheel.com](#) and joining the interest list. You'll get front-of-the-line access about the launch and a few other freebies along the way.

Visit [unSeminary.com](#) for more free resources!

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