

Prepare for the ‘post-everything’ age, church leaders say

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CHAPIN, S.C. (BNG)—Churches already overwhelmed by the postmodern, post-denominational and post-Christian eras should brace themselves for another layer of change—the “post-everything” age.

Baptist pastor and congregational coach Mark Tidsworth uses that term to roll together all the known and unknown “posts” facing the present-day church.



Mark Tidsworth Post-everything is “the descriptor I would like to use for describing what’s happening in the larger world around us, including what’s staring God’s church in the face,” Tidsworth said [in an online article](#) on the Pinnacle Leadership Associates website. That post was taken from a new book he’s written, *Shift: Three Big Moves for the 21st Century*, due out in October.

Tidsworth, president of [Pinnacle Leadership Associates](#), noted the idea struck him as he summed up the variety of seismic shifts hitting churches

since the late 20th century.

Since then, congregations are facing shifts away from membership toward discipleship, and from attractional to missional models—among others.

As a result, trying to design worship, membership and missions programs to keep current and attract new members is like trying to hit multiple moving targets.

“It seems we are in a post-everything time” when many “pastors find themselves leading modern-era churches in a postmodern time,” he said.

No doubt, countless plans and programs claim to help congregations navigate these complex and fluid times. But some Baptist ministers say it’s best for churches and Christians to keep it simple and stay true to their callings.

“If you really love the ecclesial tradition that your church operates with, and it speaks to you and works for you on a personal and theological level, then by all means do that,” said Eric Minton, a writer and blogger who serves as youth and young adults pastor at Monte Vista Baptist Church in Maryville, Tenn.



Eric Minton Too many churches, he said, fall into the trap of revamping worship and programming to lure Millennials. Yet often those groups still don’t come to church or aren’t even there to be attracted, he

noted.

“It’s such a waste of time,” Minton said.

When it comes to seeking adults in their 20s, he added, many congregations are overwhelmed with countless coaching programs promising to help them reach that younger demographic.

“It’s become a cottage industry,” he said.

But those options often lead church leaders to become even more fearful and uncertain about the course of action to take, he said.

Discerning that course may be more simple than many expect.

“Just be who you are,” he said.

Being who you are means remembering the purpose of every church program and ministry, said Aileen Lawrimore, minister with youth and children at First Baptist Church in Weaverville, N.C.

In Lawrimore’s own approach to ministry, the core is relationship building.

“It starts by getting to know people,” she said.

Whether it’s an English-as-a-Second-Language class, a Zumba class open to the entire community or an after-school program for Hispanic children, it all begins with a desire to get to know those participating in the programs, she said.



Aileen LawrimoreIt's even true for traditional programs like Vacation Bible School, which brings church members and staff closer together each year and creates opportunities to meet local families.

"The program is VBS, but the purpose is relationship building," she said.

Lawrimore said she saw this approached modeled by her father, a Southern Baptist pastor who always put the well-being of people ahead of himself. It's an approach that worked in the 1960s and '70s—and even works in a post-everything age.

Church leaders today don't need to determine if they are ministering to Baby Boomers or Millennials or to a postmodern or modernist mindset, Lawrimore asserted.

"We just have to get to know them and spend time together," she said. "You start with the relationships, and the programs grow out of that."

If the purpose is to attract young people, she added, they probably won't come.

"Go out and meet young people. Take them out to coffee. I do it all the time."

The putting-first-things-first approach always is what works, Tidsworth said. But churches sometimes need help finding that for themselves.

Many fall into the notion they need to attract new members, young or old, so they can help provide funds for the continuing existence of the church, Tidsworth said.

Instead, they should put the needs of the church last to determine what the needs are in the communities around them.

“The way to find your soul as a church is to join God’s movement in the world—and wherever that takes you in your community,” he said.