

# The Church Isn't Shrinking; It's Shifting

By Rick Warren

A  finishing  
the task White Paper

The Church is not shrinking. For those in the Northern Hemisphere, it might be easy to look around at the state of culture and believe that Christianity is on the decline. The encouraging reality is that's actually not the case.

The Church isn't shrinking; it's shifting. The center of Christianity has already shifted from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere. In the past 1,000 years, most of the Christians in the world lived in either Europe or North America. Most of the Christians were in the Northern Hemisphere.

That's simply not true anymore. The majority of Christians in the world now live in the Southern Hemisphere, south of the equator. And it's growing. You can hear Westerners say things like, "We're in a post-Christian era." However, that point of view is not talking about the whole world; they are just talking about their area. For someone to say we're in a post-Christian world is nonsense.

Let me give you the facts about the growth of Christianity. Since the year 2000, the world population has grown at a rate of about 1% each year. But in the same timeframe, the Christian Church has grown at a rate of 2% each year. What does that mean? It means that the Church is growing 100% faster than the population.

In some countries in Europe and in North America, it might feel like Christianity is declining, or at least stagnant or plateaued, but it is exploding in places like South America, Africa, and parts of Asia.

Now, here's an interesting thing. Of all the tribes of Christianity, there are two that are growing faster than the others. Both Pentecostalism and Evangelical churches are growing at four percent each year. They are the two fastest-growing segments of the church.

Those two groups are growing four times as fast as the population. Today is not a day to be sad and sorrowful and think we're on the losing side. We are not! The Church is outgrowing the population every year.

Because the center of Christianity has shifted—because there are more Christians in the Southern Hemisphere—Finishing the Task needs to be led by leaders from the growth areas where most of the Christians are. We're going to need leaders and laypeople from all parts of the world, all parts of the Church stepping up together if we're going to make the progress we need to make toward the Great Commission by 2033.

## ARE YOU IN?

*Join a coalition of thousands of believers, churches, denominations, and organizations coming together to fulfill the Great Commission. Finishing the Task is a call to mobilize all of Christ's Church, to do all Christ commands, with all people, in all places, using all of God's gifts, all for God's glory by 2033, the 2000th anniversary of the instructions given to us by Jesus.*

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