

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Finding Church Health Again - Episode 213

An Unstuck webinar replay

Sean Publitz recently hosted a live webinar conversation between Tony Morgan and Amy Anderson around “Finding Church Health Again.” In this webinar, they discussed assessing your ministry’s health in this unique season, making a strategic plan for the future, and optimizing your structure to accomplish your vision. Here’s what they had to say:

Assessing Church Health Today

Could you share a broad assessment of what you’re seeing across North America?

Tony: “Depending on what part of the country you're in, what size church that you are, and where your church is located (rural, urban, or suburban), we're seeing attendance patterns all over the board. Many churches that we engage with right now are indicating that giving has remained fairly healthy throughout all of these months. And the other common theme I'm hearing from churches in this season is an increasing number of new people that are showing up to churches for the very first time.”

How are you advising churches to approach assessment of ministry health differently in this unique season? How can they get a reliable picture TODAY?

Amy: “We have to set some new baselines. I'm not exactly sure how helpful it's going to be if we keep going back 12-18 months to compare against pre-COVID numbers. That's history. We need to be thinking about setting new baselines, and when we pick things that we need to measure, we have to measure across [this spiritual engagement journey](#) if we're really going to understand the health of our church.”

Are there any specific metrics you sense are misleading in this season or that are giving pastors a false understanding of ministry health?

Tony: “Let’s start with attendance. We have to disconnect where we are today from where we were a couple of years ago. This is our new launch point. And rather than trying to get back to where we were, how can we continue to re-engage people that are in our congregation? Secondly, I would just caution you about measuring giving and assuming that that's an accurate measure of your mission impact or the effectiveness of your ministry strategies. We have known for quite some time that there is a giving lag: n

churches that are healthy and growing and thriving, the giving lags behind, and the reverse we have found to be true as well.”

Planning for the Future

How are you seeing churches shift from how they’ve approached clarifying vision in the past?

Tony: “I’m seeing churches take a shorter term view of future direction and vision. Rather than thinking 10 years out, or 15 years out, they’re just looking three to five years out. So a shorter term view of that long-term future vision. Secondly, I’m hearing churches articulate vision differently on this side of COVID. There’s a bit of a nuance and there seems to be more focus on: What are we going to do as a church to specifically engage our mission field? How are we going to impact people in our community? How are we going to impact their communities? And then the third is just the intentionality of clarifying future direction in this season where there’s still so much uncertainty in place.”

What questions do churches need to be asking right now to evaluate core ministry approaches and see what needs to change to find health again?

Amy: “First the vision must be clarified. From there, do you know what success looks like for your church? Have you defined the organizational goals for the next 12 months? Once those are defined, you can start working on the unique strategies for each goal. Then you’ve just got to think about the results you’re looking for and evaluate if that strategy is working.”

How are you seeing this issue of lack of vision clarity affecting staff teams?

Amy: “I always come back to [the strategic alignment pyramid](#). You have to have vision, and then you need to know what success looks like. But if we stop there, we are still dysfunctional because even though we all know our strategies, we’re missing this piece: How does my work and ministry area contribute to these goals? We want teams united in mind and purpose because when they are, they’re more focused, they’re pulling in the same direction. And that’s where church teams find health.”

Evaluating Your Structure

There’s so much staff transition happening right now. And research is telling us that people who haven’t left yet are thinking about it. How are you advising pastors in this season?

Amy: “If staff are leaving your church, don’t miss this opportunity to reassess your structure. Don’t just let your structure grow into the next person you hire, because your

structure is part of your strategy. And if your structure isn't changing, now may be the time to reconsider it and make sure you have the right people in the right seats. Lastly, people like to be in an organization where there is clarity. So make sure to bring clarity to the wins. Everybody needs to know what they're being asked to do and what the win looks like."

Where are churches getting stuck when it comes to organizational structure right now?

Tony: "Often churches look at people first—so who do we have, and what roles can they fill? Then they ask, what does that structure look like? From there, they determine their strategy and direction as a church. However, we tend to reverse that, and ask the strategy question first. So don't start with the people and don't start with the roles, start with the ministry strategy and then kind of work your way backwards. Related to that, another common way we see churches getting stuck is that they tend to structure around programs rather than strategy. When we do that, we end up with ministry silos where every team is kind of competing with the other ministry teams of the church. And as a result of that, because we're competing for people's time and attention and resources, we don't get the alignment of having a shared mission and a shared vision."

What best practices are you seeing from churches successfully restructuring and finding health again over the last few months?

Amy: "First, they're aligning their top-level staff around the spiritual engagement journey. So there is a designated leader for reach, for discipleship, for family ministry, etc. Second, they're maintaining a healthy [span of care](#). Third, they're ensuring that their senior pastor is freed up to focus on the things [only they can do](#). Fourth, they have a dedicated team for digital strategy. Fifth, they have people on their team with [task and mission-based strengths](#) and wirings."

Next Steps

Discover The Unstuck Process

Learn more about how [our unique process](#) can help you get perspective on where you are today, clarify a path forward, and structure your team to start achieving wins in the first 90 days.

Listen to the episode on Apple Podcasts or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode213.