

Church Leader, I think it's past time we have some serious conversations about the spiritual, mental, and emotional health of our pastors.

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Leadership  Network *Advance*



## Encouraging Healthy Leaders

*By Ron Edmondson, CEO*

We were all stunned by the death of Lead Pastor Andrew Stoecklein from California. Pastor Stocklein's wife wrote an incredible tribute to her husband on her blog and I posted it to my personal Facebook page. The response was overwhelming. I was encouraged by the compassion people shared.

I sensed, though, that Leadership Network needed to also have some sort of response. As an organization, we are all about leadership in the church and growing churches, but we consistently remind ourselves that if we aren't growing healthy churches, and encouraging healthy church leaders, all of our work will be in vain.

I asked one of our board members, Mindy Caliguire, to put some thoughts together for us. Mindy has a long background serving the church. In 1998 Mindy founded Soul Care, a spiritual formation ministry that exists to increase "soul health" in the body of Christ. She works at the intersection of spiritual formation and leadership. Here are a few words from Mindy:

My passion for leader's souls began many years ago as I emerged from my own confusing and ultimately life-giving journey of soul recovery amidst ten years planting a church in Boston. My husband suffered greatly as well, and in different ways. My symptoms presented physiologically, but his went deep into the mind as my "golden boy" high-achieving husband could no longer get out of bed, shake fear and paranoia, or control his anger.

We had no idea back then what depression was... only that it probably shouldn't be something that pastors and church leaders experienced. But there we were. Only a very few people were close enough to know something wasn't right. Our family pictures looked very much like those of Andrew and Kayla. My heart breaks for them.

Our recovery has been slow and studded with divine intervention along a rocky path. But we are still taking family pictures, and for this I am incredibly grateful. And humbled, as I consider how the story might otherwise have gone with either of us. Truth is, we really don't know what to do with such scary levels of anxiety in ourselves or others. There are no pat answers, no simplistic ways through or around. We can merely create time and space to be present to other's pain. Or even our own.

**But it matters that we do this simple thing. That we remain engaged.**

Over many years I've talked with many leaders about the wellbeing of their souls. Countless stories of darkness and despair in the midst of ministry. I also hear stories of light, but they are more rare. My deep prayer is that this narrative would change greatly, and soon. There is too much at stake.

I am glad that the topic of mental health is gaining awareness for our population at large. I hope those who follow Jesus might lead the charge in raising awareness and offering true support and guidance, not additional shame or shallow answers to million dollar questions. Many individuals and organizations are doing this very thing, whether from a ministry, therapeutic, or spiritual formation perspective. And it's vital that those in need reach out--sooner than later.

If you or someone close to you may be struggling, there are many immediate resources. Anxiety can creep up easily, with the [Mayo Clinic](#) list of symptoms reading like a typical day in a pastor's life.

As I shared my reaction to the tragic loss of Lead Pastor Andrew Stoeckleim, my son mentioned that it reminded him of one of his favorite spoken word artists, [Levi the Poet](#). Perhaps you are familiar with Levi's work. I'll admit, some of Levi's stuff is pretty edgy, but I remember where I was when Jeffrey first played a particular track of Levi's spoken word poetry for me in our home last year. I all but fell apart. Jeffrey tells me that Levi's dad was a pastor, whose mental illness led to suicide. It's raw, real, and shows us the true heart shared by many in our churches and in church leadership.

Levi's own battle with anxiety and grief bleeds through the courageous, yet harrowing and honest lyrics of his poetry. In particular, the piece Jeffrey played for me that day that expresses Levi's plea to anyone who might be thinking their life may not be worth living.

[His post on the "To Write Love On Her Arms" blog](#) tells the backstory of this piece, and links to a beautiful compilation of the poem put to videos from Levi's fans who sent clips in response to his question, "Would you send me a video you've taken that acts as a reminder for why life is worth living?"

The reality now coming to light in so many levels is there is such deep unhealthiness in many of our churches, and in particular in our leaders. My prayer, if you are one of those pastors or ministry leaders struggling today, is you will find hope and courage through these lyrics.

Walk gently today friends. As we are often reminded, "Everyone you meet is fighting a great battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always."

And I would add, beyond kindness, please CARE. Ask. Reach out. Get involved. Remind someone why their life is worth living.

Below are different kinds of resources available to bring healing and hope I'm sure there are many more, but I pray these are a start.

- [Full Strength Ministries](#)
- [Grafted Life Ministries - Find a Spiritual Director](#)
- [Transforming Center: Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership](#)
- [Leadership Transformations, Inc.](#)
- [Soulcare](#)
- [Onsite Workshops](#)

Thanks, Mindy. Pastoral health is one reason I believe in our ministry here at Leadership Network. Our Leader Groups were designed largely to put pastors in community to help them lead with health:

- [NextGen Lead Pastors Leader Groups](#)
- [Executive Pastors Leader Groups](#)
- [Next Level Pastors Leader Groups](#)

But, we must all be in this together.

Friends, if you know of other resources, feel free to send them to me personally. We will collect them and share as requested or where we see opportunity.

At Leadership Network, we want to see healthy churches and church leaders. And, we do care.

God bless,  
Ron Edmondson

Need immediate help? If you are struggling with thoughts of ending your life... call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

## **Compensation Report Top Finding #1: How Does Attendance Growth Impact Compensation?**

*By Tim Nations, Director of Communication and Design*

For those of you that have already read our Free Compensation Survey Summary Report, *7 Vital Benchmarks in Church Compensation*, you will have noticed that our first key finding from the data relates to **how the annual growth rate of a church influences compensation** (page 3). As noted in the report, many different factors influence pay raises, and it's hard to isolate just one or two. Among the variables we tracked, the strongest relationship seems to be with annual growth rate.

If you haven't grabbed your free copy, [download 7 Vital Benchmarks in Church Compensation here](#) and refer to the table on page 3 for annual growth rate and four additional factors.

Also included in that table are findings about per capita giving and how that figure relates to compensation. Dave Travis, Senior Consultant for Leadership Network, recently wrote a post about per capita giving and our compensation report, explaining how that figured was calculated in our research. Dave writes:

"For the purposes of our analysis, **the per capita figure was calculated by dividing total giving by worship average attendance**. A few points to make there:

- That is the most accurate way to do this to get a comparison across a wide range of churches in a survey format.
- Based on feedback we know lots of people measure it different ways.
- Some tell us they measure it by only looking at total giving divided by households that actually give during the year. In some cases that makes the per capita look like DOUBLE or TRIPLE the number shown in the survey data. You have to remember that in many churches almost half the attenders give no recordable contributions.
- Some don't look at average worship attendance, but instead look at it by those that attended at any point during a year. We all feel we know people are attending less frequently on a weekend basis, and those that work it out this way calculate a different per capita. (Usually lower per capita)
- Some want to look at it as only examining what comes through regular giving channels that are recorded. This means those that give electronically, by check, or other means by which a giving statement can be developed and recorded. They desire to exclude "cash offerings" that are unrecorded or attributed to one person. (On a percentage basis though these tend to be small in large churches.)"

**If you've read the report already, you may want to re-read it with this information in mind.**

In the same article, Dave also includes his own commentary on per capita figures, suggesting that leaders need to employ a more sophisticated analysis of giving in their churches. Bottom line: **church leaders should be more concerned with individual growth in giving rather than static per capita giving figures.**

For more of Dave's thoughts, read the post on our blog: [Per Capita Giving And Our Large Church Compensation Survey](#).



## Things You Want to Know About

*Opportunities and resources for you and your team*

### **CORRECTION: Big Data & Church Digital Summit - November 15, 2018**

In our previous edition of Advance we published an incorrect date for this free event hosted by our data partner, [gloo](#). Below is a brief description of the event with the correct date included.

#### **Who Should Attend**

The Summit is for church leaders, marketers, and data strategist who are interested in hearing from experts and want to gain confidence with data and digital technologies to better reach their communities.

#### **When & Where To Join**

The Summit kicks off on November 15 at 12PM EST. It will be held as a live webinar. Receive more details and ongoing updates when you register.

#### **What Experts Will Cover**

Hear how to use data to tailor your sermon series, bring in new members from the community, increase giving, choose church plant locations and more!

For more information and to reserve your spot, **click or tap on the button below**.

[Register Now](#)

### ***New Blog Series: How Do You Create a Culture of Radical Generosity in Your Church?***

For more than 10 years, Leadership Network has worked with leaders to try to help them understand what it takes to create a culture of generosity and stewardship and giving in their churches. We just completed a short series of blog posts in which we share a few of

the things that we've learned from working with hundreds of churches over those years. Chris Willard, Director of Generosity Initiatives for Leadership Network, has framed these insights as **six questions that you'll want to ask yourself or ask your team as you are working to cultivate generosity and stewardship in your church.**

To catch up on this blog series and additional resources on generosity and stewardship, click or tap on the banner below.



## Miss a Previous Edition of Advance?

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