

Leith Anderson in his book, Dying for Change, lists 10 trends that the church must understand and deal with in order to be effective.

1. **Mobility.** People have fewer family ties and more shallow relational and societal roots. Church is no longer where you join and stay for life, but rather a “way station” along the journey.
2. **Coloring.** Immigration and the high birth rate among “persons of color” will continue. Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other non-whites are increasing in population, while the Anglo population is declining.
3. **Graying.** There are more Americans over 65 than there are teenagers. While the youth population is declining, the over-65 age group is expected to increase over 75 percent during the next 40 years.
4. **Women.** It is expected that 61 percent of women will work outside the home. Currently 55 percent do. This may account for the difficulty in finding volunteers. More single and working mothers mean they are committed elsewhere and unable to be as involved in the church as in past generations.
5. **Pluralism.** Our society has become increasingly tolerant of all kinds of ideals, beliefs, and rights. This has moved us away from moral absolutes to moral relativity. Many Americans do not have clearly defined convictions. Right and wrong have become subjective and relative.
6. **Shifts in Segmentation.** Our society used to be segmented into lower, middle, and upper classes. Today the segmentation has been expanded and is determined more by age, gender, race, education, income, marital status, ethnic background, and so on. No longer do people go to a church because it is geographically close to them. They may drive to a different community if the church “fits them better.”
7. **Short-term Commitments.** Americans place high value on self, personal fulfillment, and independence. People don’t want to do anything to limit their options. Also, whenever a society experiences rapid change, mobility, and an emphasis upon self, long-term commitments are nearly impossible to obtain. Classes that once lasted 4 to 13 weeks are crammed into 1-day seminars. Task force assignments are more acceptable than long-term board assignments.
8. **Decline in the Work Ethic.** Young people today are more interested in material success than in serving others. People used to be satisfied with doing a good job regardless of the remuneration. Today people want remuneration and personal advantage.
9. **Conservatism.** Younger Americans are more conservative than their parents. However, they may be politically conservative and morally liberal, or they may be religiously conservative but politically liberal.
10. **Cocooning.** For some time, the trend has been back to the home as the center of life’s activities and relationships. The family is closing itself in, distancing itself from strangers, more inclined toward privacy. This directly impacts the church. People’s privacy must be respected in evangelism and visitation efforts, or the church may lose more than it gains.

How will you respond to the needs of a changing world? Will you be an old wineskin, screaming, “I hate change!” If you want to be a new wineskin, there are some things you can do:

- a. Prayerfully seek God and His Word for a new vision.
- b. Study your church and community.
- c. Identify and learn about unreached people.
- d. Plan an effective strategy for reaching them.
- e. Make the changes necessary to reach them.