

THE DAILY NEWS

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LOSING OUR RELIGION?

*25 million fewer Americans
have religious affiliations*

We are headed for a religious apocalypse -- if we are to believe the statistics and the commentators, that is. Study after study tells us that Americans are leaving religion in droves, with the number of spiritual but not religious (SBNR) increasing dramatically. In fact, the "nones," as they are often called, now account for one-fifth of all Americans -- a significant number from anyone's perspective. Based on these statistics (as well as anecdotal information), some religious scholars predict the death of Christianity and maybe even the end of religion as we know it. Although I suspect that some of these predictions may be an over-dramatization, I do think that significant changes in organized religion are inevitable and necessary. And while sweeping changes are necessary on a societal level, the most urgent need for transformation lies with the Church. In Mark Sandlin's recent post, "Church Where the Sidewalk Ends," he encourages the Church to follow the "[c]halk-white arrows" to "the place where the sidewalk ends" in order to maintain relevance. He writes: Church after Church ends (or, at least, the way we currently practice it ends). For all of its messiness and the growth that can happen there, it is ultimately limited and insular when it stays on the sidewalk. True, we are called to be in the world but not of it -- but that still calls us to be decidedly in it. It is time for the institution of Church to once again live more fully into the image of its God who is continually doing a "new thing." If you look closely, you can already see a few places where the Church is stepping off the sidewalk -- the expansion of energetic emerging congregations like Urban Village Church in Chicago, the

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bring people back to the Church?

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