

The U.S. Congregational Life Survey

**Fastest Growing
Presbyterian
Churches**

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The U.S. Congregational Life Survey: Fastest Growing Presbyterian Churches

Background

Over 500,000 worshipers in more than 5,000 congregations have participated in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, the largest religious attendee survey in the United States. Congregations were selected to be representative of all congregations and their attendees. Three types of surveys were used in each participating congregation: (a) an Attendee Survey completed by all worshipers age 15 and older who attended worship services during the weekend the survey was conducted; (b) a Congregational Profile describing the congregation's facilities, staff, programs, and worship services, completed by one person in the congregation; and (c) a Leader Survey completed by the pastor, priest, minister, rabbi, or other leader. Together, the collected information gives a unique three-dimensional look at American religious life.

To learn more about congregations that have been successful in increasing their size, we invited the 345 fastest-growing congregations within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to take part in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey. To identify fast-growing churches, we examined the percentage change in average worship attendance in all PC(USA) congregations over a five-year period (2004 to 2009). Congregations with missing or inaccurate attendance data were excluded. Of those invited to participate, 128 agreed to do so, and 117 returned completed survey forms (a total of 8,071 attendee surveys) after conducting the survey in the fall of 2011.

Responses from these growing churches are compared here to those from a random sample of 521 Presbyterian churches and their 40,555 worshipers that completed the same survey forms in the fall of 2008 and the spring of 2009. For convenience, this sample will be referred to here as "other Presbyterian churches."

How Do Growing Presbyterian Churches Differ from Other Presbyterian Churches?

Information from the Congregational Profile completed by each congregation provides the first way to compare growing Presbyterian churches to other Presbyterian churches. Profile data describe participating congregations and their worship service(s), programs, finances, and staff.

Size

Are growing churches bigger than typical PC(USA) churches? How fast are growing churches gaining new worshipers?

- Growing congregations are larger than other PC(USA) congregations. The median size of fast-growing PC(USA) congregations is 150 (based on average worship attendance); for other PC(USA) congregations the median is 78.
- Not surprisingly, fast-growing PC(USA) churches reported that their average worship attendance increased by about 17% in the previous five years (a median increase of about 24 people over five years). In contrast, other PC(USA) congregations, on average, reported no change in worship attendance (a median increase of less than one percent).
- Growing congregations report larger numbers of regularly participating youth (46 children and youth under the age of 19 in growing churches, compared to 21 in other congregations). However, the *percentage* of participants who are under the age of 19 is about the same in both groups of congregations—around one-quarter in the typical congregation are children and youth.
- Despite these size differences, the average seating capacity does not differ as much—growing Presbyterian congregations can seat 300; other Presbyterian congregations can seat 220 (medians).

Age and Finances

Were growing churches founded more recently? If congregations are growing, do they have the resources to support that growth?

- Growing churches are younger churches. Half of growing PC(USA) congregations are less than 100 years old, while only one-third of other PC(USA) congregations are less than 100 years old.
- In terms of room to grow, both growing PC(USA) churches and others have plenty of capacity. The sanctuary has space for two times the average number of worshipers in growing churches and more than three times the number of worshipers (3.5) in other churches.
- Given their larger size, it is not surprising that growing PC(USA) congregations receive more contributions, and have larger budgets and more staff than other PC(USA) congregations. Contributions *per person*, though, are similar (\$1,763 in growing churches; \$1,807 in others).

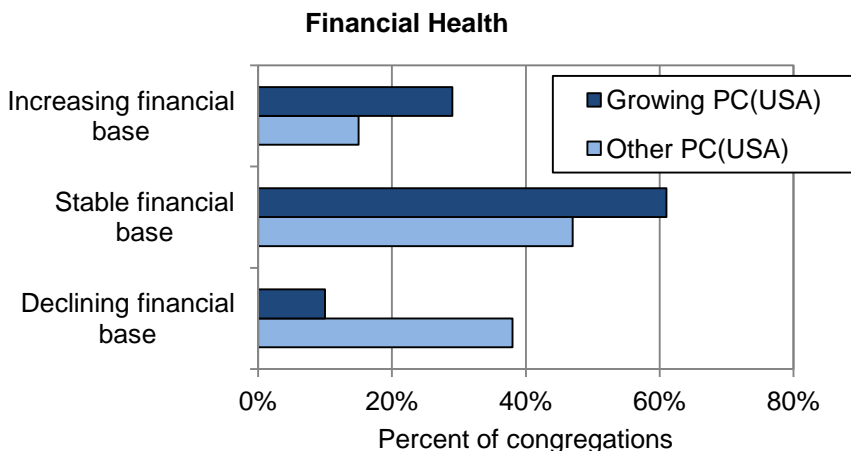
Congregational Finances

	Growing PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Medians:		
Income from all sources.....	\$336,668	\$165,875
Income from contributions.....	\$274,098	\$125,234
Congregation’s budget.....	\$321,269	\$165,858
Congregation’s operating expenses	\$284,197	\$142,784
Percentages:		
Share of all income that comes from individual donations	94%	88%
Share of the budget that goes to operating expenses	88%	86%

- Likewise, the percentage of congregational income that comes from worshipers’ donations and the percentage of the congregation’s budget that goes to operating expenses are also similar. In both growing churches and other churches, a large

majority of income comes from individual donations (94% of income in growing churches and 88% in others).

- Three in ten growing PC(USA) churches (29%) but only 15% of other PC(USA) churches describe their congregation as having an *increasing financial base*. Only 10% of growing churches report a declining financial base, but two in five other PC(USA) churches (38%) describe a declining financial situation.



- More growing PC(USA) churches (85%) than other PC(USA) churches (74%) conduct an annual stewardship campaign. Online giving, though rare, is available in more growing PC(USA) churches (17%) than in other PC(USA) churches (4%).

Spiritual Connections

What are congregations doing to nurture worshipers' faith?

- More growing PC(USA) churches offer prayer groups: 88% of growing PC(USA) churches and 74% of other PC(USA) churches have prayer groups including those that meet at certain times of the year; as part of their small group program; or in conjunction with specific classes, groups, or ministries.

- Fully 59% of growing PC(USA) congregations offer more than one worship service in the typical week. Among other PC(USA) congregations, just 26% offer more than one service.
- What happens in the worship service with the largest attendance? The following table shows many similarities between the two groups. Worship in most Presbyterian congregations—whether growing or not—includes a sermon, singing by the congregation and by a choir or soloist, an offering, and use of a printed bulletin.

Elements of the Congregation’s Largest Worship Service

	Growing PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Largest service includes:		
<i>Similarities</i>		
Sermon	100%	100%
Singing by the congregation	98%	99%
Offering.....	98%	98%
Singing by choir or soloist	91%	81%
Written service outline or bulletin	90%	95%
Use of hymn books	82%	91%
Lord’s Supper	78%	79%
Use of organ.....	75%	81%
<i>More common in growing churches</i>		
Use of amplification equipment.....	86%	77%
Use of visual projection equipment	45%	22%
Participation by teens.....	40%	30%
Use of drums	24%	11%
People raising hands in praise.....	23%	10%
Use of electric guitar	20%	10%
Time for testifying/witnessing	12%	7%
Use of language(s) other than English.....	5%	2%
Unplanned jumping, shouting, dancing	4%	<1%

- The largest service in growing PC(USA) churches is more likely than in other PC(USA) churches to include several elements that reflect a less traditional, more relaxed worship experience: use of amplification equipment; use of visual projection equipment; participation by teens; use of drums; people raising their hands in

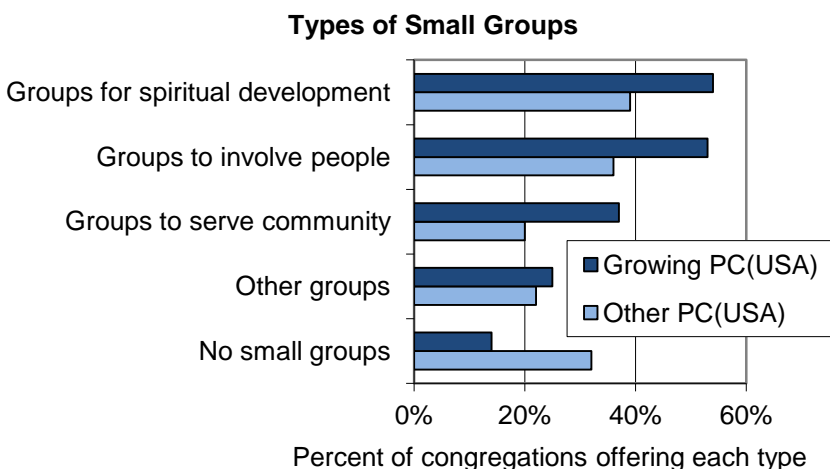
praise; use of electric guitar; and unplanned jumping, shouting, or dancing.

- The largest worship service in growing PC(USA) churches is similar in length to that in other PC(USA) churches. The majority of growing and other churches (about 85%) report services lasting between 1 and 1½ hours.
- Though most sermons run 20 minutes or less (growing churches, 67%; other churches, 78%), more growing churches report their sermons run longer than 20 minutes (growing churches, 33%; other churches, 22%).

Inside Connections

What programs and services do congregations offer to ensure their worshippers connect with one another and with the church?

- Growing PC(USA) churches are more likely than other churches to offer small groups (or cells) as part of their spiritual development or discipleship strategy, as a method to involve people in the congregation, and to involve people in community service.



- Almost all growing PC(USA) congregations (99%) and other PC(USA) congregations (96%) offer religious education classes

such as Sunday school. Yet more growing churches (96%) than others (87%) have educational programs including church school classes for adults.

- As would be expected given their larger size, more people are enrolled in such classes in growing PC(USA) congregations—the median enrollment is 66 in growing PC(USA) churches and 28 in other PC(USA) churches. But the *percentage* of worshipers involved in religious education classes does not differ (typically almost four in ten worshipers attend church school classes—37% in growing churches and 39% in others).
- Fully 92% of growing PC(USA) churches use email to communicate with worshipers. Just 72% of other PC(USA) churches do.
- Similarly, almost all growing PC(USA) churches (96%) but only two-thirds of other PC(USA) churches (63%) communicate with their worshipers via a church website.
- Growing PC(USA) congregations are more likely than other PC(USA) churches to use specific procedures to ensure that new people are integrated into the life of the congregation (see following table).

Ways Congregations Help Integrate New Members

Integration method:	Growing PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Invitation to serve in the congregation.....	74%	62%
Invitation to join a group	62%	49%
Group or course for new members.....	61%	46%
Follow-up visits by clergy or laity	49%	42%
Invitation to serve in the community	43%	24%
People extend hospitality	29%	20%
Other	25%	11%
No planned procedures	5%	15%

- Growing churches also take more steps to integrate new worshipers (growing churches use a median of four of these methods; other churches, only three).

Outside Connections

What efforts are congregations making to reach out to their neighbors and to welcome new people?

- Growing congregations use more—and different—methods to reach out to non-members. The average growing PC(USA) congregation uses eight of the techniques shown in the following table; other congregations report using an average of seven.

Ways Congregations Have Reached Out to Non-Members

Outreach method:	Growing PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
<i>Similarities</i>		
Encouraged people to invite others.....	86%	88%
Mailed or distributed newsletters.....	72%	70%
Held event to meet neighborhood people	58%	50%
Placed ad in newspaper or magazine	57%	60%
Committee working on recruitment	40%	37%
Event to bring people to the church	35%	41%
Visited recent visitors	35%	31%
Placed ad in phone book	33%	40%
Contacted people new to the area	29%	32%
Survey of the community.....	18%	12%
Advertised on radio or TV	16%	13%
 <i>More common in growing churches</i>		
Established or maintained a website	97%	71%
Sent letter to recent visitors.....	92%	81%
Sent an email to recent visitors	60%	29%
Phoned recent visitors.....	56%	43%

- Growing congregations offer, on average, eight of the community service programs listed in the next table. These programs might be designed to serve those who worship in the congregation and/or those in the local community. Other PC(USA) churches offer, on average, six programs. The larger average size of growing churches gives them more resources to offer a wider variety of service programs.

Congregational Community Service Programs

	Growing PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Community service program:		
Emergency relief.....	85%	78%
Counseling or support groups	69%	44%
Programs for children and youth.....	61%	42%
Arts, music, cultural programs.....	60%	44%
Health programs.....	57%	40%
Other leisure activities	56%	47%
Transport people to worship	54%	46%
Hobby or craft groups	54%	36%
Substance abuse programs	39%	27%
Day care or pre-school	36%	24%
Activities for college students.....	32%	14%
Housing for others	28%	16%
Prison ministry.....	26%	18%
Sports or athletic teams.....	25%	15%
Financial literacy programs.....	18%	9%
Immigrant support programs.....	18%	8%
Programs for unemployed people	16%	4%

- More growing PC(USA) congregations (78%) than others (54%) sponsored a mission trip in the previous year, sending people to provide help to those in need either in the United States or in another country.
- More growing PC(USA) congregations report that other groups not connected to the congregation use their facilities at least weekly (77% of growing churches; 60% of other churches).
- While 41% of growing Presbyterian churches started a new worship service in the previous five years, only 19% of other congregations did so. In fact, 12% of growing churches and 4% of others started a new service specifically for people who do not usually attend (“seeker services”).
- Few PC(USA) congregations—growing and others—hold services in more than one location (4%).

Identity Connections

How do congregations perceive their theological and political identity?

- When describing the *theological position* of their congregation, more PC(USA) churches consider themselves *right in the middle* (46% of growing churches, 42% of other churches) than either *liberal* (19% of growing, 16% of others) or *conservative* (34% of growing, 41% of others).
- The largest numbers of growing PC(USA) congregations (46%) describe their congregation's *political position* as *right in the middle*. Among other PC(USA) churches, *more on the conservative side* is the most common political position (46%).

Reasons for Growth

What important factors have fueled the increase in worship attendance in growing PC(USA) churches?

- Seven in ten pastors in growing churches cite hospitality to visitors as a major influence.

Factors Influencing Growth (Pastors' Responses)

	Major Influence
Our hospitality to visitors	69%
A new pastor	43%
The pastor, but not a new one	42%
Other staff	42%
New vision or plans for the future	41%
Openness to social diversity.....	40%
A new program or ministry.....	31%
A new worship service.....	30%
Our theological orientation	31%
Variety of worship services offered.....	25%
Located in a growing community	23%
New, remodeled or expanded facilities	22%
Our stance on social or political issues	17%
Reaching those who are unchurched.....	15%

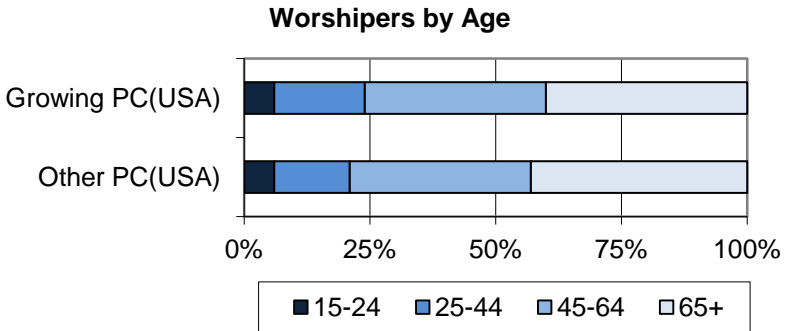
How Do Worshipers in Growing Presbyterian Churches Differ from Worshipers in Other Presbyterian Churches?

Now let us look at the responses of attendees who completed surveys in these participating congregations. What do their answers tell us?

Demographics

Who worships in growing Presbyterian congregations and how do they compare to worshipers in other Presbyterian churches?

- Worshipers in growing Presbyterian churches are similar in age to worshipers in other PC(USA) churches. In growing Presbyterian churches, 40% of worshipers are age 65 and older, and the median age is 60 years. In other PC(USA) congregations, slightly more are age 65 and older (43%), and the median age is 61.



- More worshipers in fast growing churches (43%) report household incomes of \$75,000 or more (38% in others).
- More worshipers in growing Presbyterian churches are college educated (62% have at least a college degree) when compared to worshipers in other PC(USA) churches (58%).
- Worshipers in growing Presbyterian congregations are more ethnically diverse. While 94% of worshipers in other congregations identify as White or Caucasian, fewer in growing churches do (89%). In addition, more worshipers in growing churches were born outside the United States (8% in growing;

4% in others) and more had at least one parent born outside the United States (14% in growing; 10% in others).

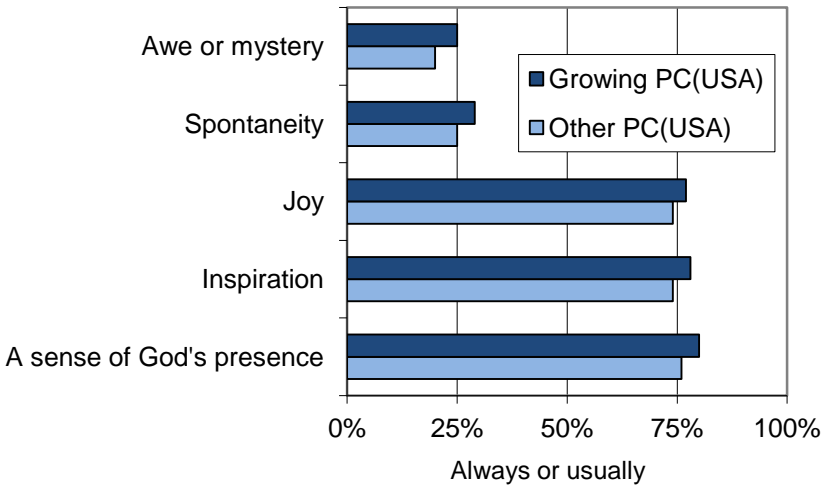
- Demographic similarity is found in several other areas: employment status, marital status, and family composition. Worshipers in growing PC(USA) churches are just as likely to be employed (49% are, compared to 48% in other PC(USA) churches), to be married (69% vs. 68%), to be living in a household with children (35% vs. 34%), and to be living alone (16% vs. 18% in other churches).
- Worshipers in growing Presbyterian churches are similar to worshipers in other PC(USA) churches in terms of their gender (about six in ten are female) and number of children (about 80% have children; typically between one and three children).

Spiritual Connections

Spiritual Connections are made through worshipers' private devotions and their participation in congregational activities such as worship. What do attendees in growing Presbyterian churches say about their faith and spiritual development?

- Worshipers in growing PC(USA) churches are more likely than others to report a specific moment of decisive faith commitment or conversion—52% in growing churches have had such conversion experiences, while fewer in other churches (48%) have.
- More worshipers in growing churches (69%) than in other PC(USA) congregations (66%) spend time in private devotional activities such as Bible reading, prayer, or meditation at least a few times per week.
- Differences in attendees' spiritual growth may be associated with what they experience in congregational worship. More worshipers in growing churches than those in other PC(USA) churches experience a sense of God's presence, joy, awe or mystery, inspiration, and spontaneity during services.

Frequency of Experiences During Worship

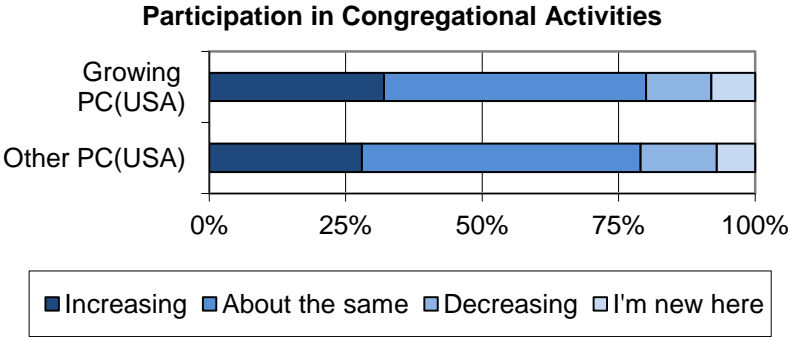


- In both groups, the style of music most preferred in worship is traditional hymns; yet more worshipers in other PC(USA) congregations prefer traditional music compared to those in growing congregations: 70% in growing congregations and 75% in other churches favor this style.
- Otherwise, there is a range of musical tastes in both types of congregations: 31% in growing churches (and 28% in other congregations) prefer praise music or choruses; 21% in both groups favor contemporary hymns; 16% of worshipers in growing churches prefer gospel music (18% in other churches); and 12% in growing churches enjoy other contemporary music or songs (11% in other PC(USA) congregations). (Note that worshipers could choose two from a list of ten musical styles.)
- More PC(USA) worshipers in growing churches believe their spiritual needs are being met in their congregation (86%, compared to 83% in other churches).
- Similarly, about 90% of all PC(USA) worshipers report that their congregation’s services and activities help them with everyday living.

Inside Connections

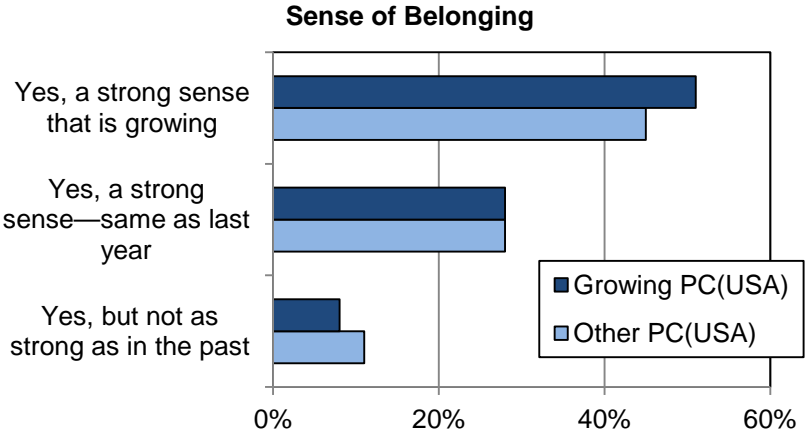
Worshippers connect with the congregation and its attendees through group activities (such as church school, prayer and study groups, and fellowships and clubs), leadership roles, and financial support. How are worshippers in growing churches involved in their congregations?

- Participation in congregational activities is more often increasing among worshippers in growing churches. One-third in growing PC(USA) churches (32%) and 28% in other PC(USA) churches say they now participate more in activities of the congregation than they did two years ago.



- An equal percentage of worshippers in growing and other PC(USA) congregations hold at least one leadership role there—58% serve on the governing board, a leadership group, or other committee; lead or assist in worship; teach church school; lead or sing in the choir; or serve as the officer or leader of a women’s, men’s or youth group.
- A similar percentage of worshippers in growing and other Presbyterian congregations report occasionally or often participating in congregational decision making (49% in growing churches and 51% in others). Large majorities in both samples say they’ve been given the opportunity to be involved in the congregation’s decisions (78% in growing churches; 79% in others).

- Worshipers in growing PC(USA) congregations are just as likely as others to be involved in congregational groups. About two-thirds of worshipers in PC(USA) churches participate in their congregation’s group activities, including fellowships and social groups, church school, and prayer or Bible study groups.
- Most worshipers in the typical PC(USA) congregation (81%) and in growing churches (79%) are members. About 10% regularly attend but are not members. In both types of congregations, 2% are in the process of joining.
- More worshipers in growing congregations than worshipers in other congregations have a strong sense of belonging to their congregation. A majority of worshipers in growing congregations (51%) feel a *growing* sense of belonging there; 45% in other congregations have that feeling.



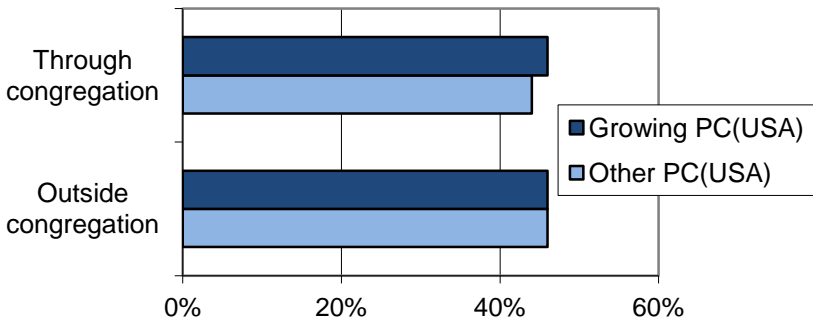
- A majority of Presbyterians have close friends in their church. About three-quarters in growing PC(USA) churches (75%) and in other PC(USA) churches (76%) say that some or most of their closest friends also attend there.
- Financial support connects worshipers to the congregation and its mission. About half of worshipers give at least 5% of income to the congregation (54% for both groups).

Outside Connections

How do worshipers in growing Presbyterian congregations connect to the community and to non-members? Outside Connections consist of inviting others to attend, caring for neighbors, and welcoming new people.

- Half of worshipers (50%) in growing Presbyterian congregations have invited someone to worship in the past 12 months. Only 44% of worshipers in other Presbyterian congregations have done so.
- New people are those who started attending the congregation in the past five years. Not surprisingly, growing Presbyterian churches have a larger percentage of new people (36%) than other PC(USA) congregations (28%). Congregations where *many* worshipers are new in the past five years benefit from the talents, gifts, and fresh ideas that new people bring.
- New worshipers come from four different backgrounds: (1) first-timers, who have never regularly attended church anywhere; (2) returnees, who are coming back after not attending church for several years; (3) switchers, who previously participated in a congregation of another denomination or faith group; and (4) transfers, who were participating in another PC(USA) congregation immediately prior to coming to their current congregation. In both types of congregations, the largest numbers of new people (about four in ten) are switchers. About three in ten are transfers, and one-quarter are returnees. Few new worshipers are first-timers with no faith background (8%).
- Community service and outreach activities help many worshipers and congregations connect with their communities. Similar percentages of worshipers in growing Presbyterian churches and other Presbyterian churches are involved in such activities, whether through their congregation or through groups not connected to their congregation. (See figure below.)

Involvement in Community Service/Justice Activities



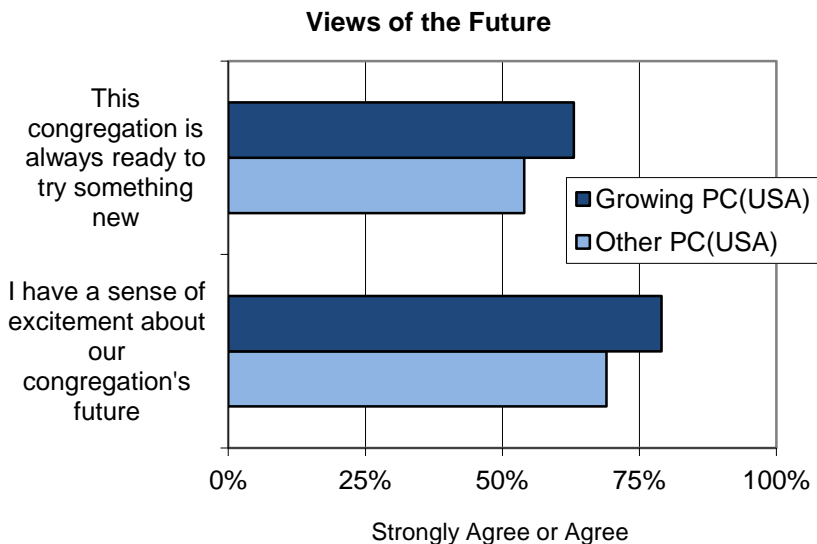
- Despite being more likely to have invited a friend to worship, people in growing churches are no more likely to be involved in their congregation’s evangelism or outreach activities. About one in five attendees in the typical congregation take part in such programs and activities.
- As in other Presbyterian congregations, most worshippers in growing congregations live near the church: 55% in growing churches (58% in other churches) can get to their congregation within 10 minutes. Somewhat more worshippers in growing churches (25%) than in other churches (22%) travel more than 15 minutes to worship.

Identity Connections

Worshippers have an individual identity based on their age, education, and other factors described in the earlier demographic section. Worshippers also have an impact on the congregation’s identity through their values, beliefs, and dreams for the future.

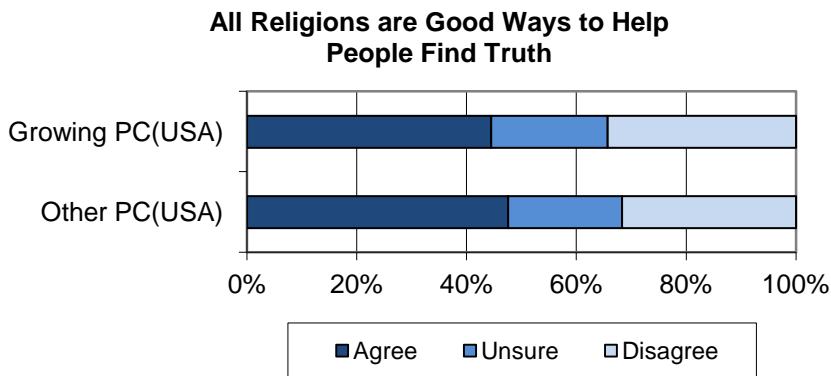
- Worshippers in growing congregations have a more positive outlook about the church’s future. More of these worshippers, compared to worshippers in other PC(USA) congregations, say they “have a sense of excitement about our congregation’s future” and believe their congregation is “always ready to try something new.” (See figure below.) In addition, 61% of worshippers in growing churches say the congregation is deciding on or moving

in new directions. The number in other PC(USA) congregations is only 57%.



- More worshipers in growing Presbyterian churches (82%) than in other PC(USA) congregations (75%) say their congregation has “a clear vision, goals, or direction for its ministry and mission.” Furthermore, 76% in growing churches and only 69% in other churches are committed to those goals.
- Worshipers in growing churches also view their leaders more positively. Larger majorities in growing congregations see a good match between their congregation and the pastor (90% in growing congregations; 86% in other congregations). Further, in growing congregations more worshipers describe their pastor’s style as “inspiring others to take action” (57% in growing churches; 50% in others).
- About 80% of worshipers in both types of congregations say their pastor takes into account the ideas of worshipers either to a great extent or to some extent.
- Fewer worshipers in growing Presbyterian churches endorse an inclusive view of other religions. Almost half of people in other PC(USA) congregations (48%) but only 44% of those in growing

PC(USA) churches agree with this statement: “All the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.”



- When asked to pick the three items from a list of 14 items that they most value in their congregation, worshipers in growing PC(USA) churches and in other PC(USA) churches select the same ones most often: sermons and preaching, traditional worship and music, sharing in the Lord’s Supper, and wider community care or social justice emphasis. Yet the order of their most valued items is different. The largest numbers in growing churches value their pastor’s preaching, and the largest numbers in other churches value traditional worship.
- Perhaps because of the greater number of children and youth participants in growing churches, a larger majority of worshipers in growing PC(USA) churches (67%) than in other PC(USA) churches (59%) are satisfied with what their congregation offers for children and youth.

Congregational Strengths

Using worshipers’ survey responses, we looked at ten congregational strengths (see the table on page 21). The average strength scores are *higher* in growing PC(USA) churches for these seven aspects of congregational vitality:

- **Growing spiritually**—more worshipers in growing churches say they are growing in their faith and feel the congregation meets their spiritual needs.
- **Meaningful worship**—more worshipers in growing churches experience God’s presence, joy, inspiration, and awe in worship services and feel worship helps them with everyday life.
- **Sense of belonging**—more worshipers in growing churches feel a strong sense of belonging and say most of their closest friends attend the congregation.
- **Caring for children and youth**—more worshipers in growing churches report satisfaction with the children and youth program and more have children living at home who also attend there.
- **Welcoming new people**—more worshipers in growing churches began attending in the past five years.
- **Empowering leadership**—more worshipers in growing churches feel the congregation’s leaders inspire others to action and take into account worshipers’ ideas.
- **Looking to the future**—more worshipers in growing churches feel committed to the congregation’s future vision and are excited about the congregation’s future.

Other congregations show *greater* strength than growing PC(USA) churches in one area:

- **Participation in the congregation**—more worshipers in other churches give 5% or more of their income to the congregation and attend worship weekly or more often.

Growing congregations show a level of strength that is *similar* to other congregations in two other areas:

- **Focusing on the community**—similar percentages of worshipers are involved in social service or advocacy activities and work to make their community a better place to live.
- **Sharing faith**—similar percentages of worshipers are involved in evangelism activities and invite friends or relatives to worship.

Strengths Scores¹

Strength:	Growing PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Growing spiritually	45	42
Meaningful worship	64	60
Participation in the congregation	57	58
Sense of belonging.....	31	28
Caring for children.....	58	52
Focusing on the community	44	42
Sharing faith.....	23	23
Welcoming new people	36	25
Empowering leadership	53	45
Looking to the future	42	32

¹ Higher scores indicate greater congregational strength in that area. Strength scores are calculated using the combined responses of all worshipers in each congregation. With the exception of “welcoming new people,” strength scores combine responses to several related questions. Questions with different response scales make up each overall strength score so it is inappropriate to compare scores from one strength to another.

Conclusions

Growing churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) show greater vitality when compared to other PC(USA) congregations. Growing congregations:

- Are bigger than the average PC(USA) church, attracting an average of 150 worshipers each week. Their larger size enables them to offer more programming for youth and children—a powerful magnet for families.
- Build on their larger size by further enhancing their visibility through a church website and electronic outreach. Growing churches are more likely to stay in touch with members and worship visitors through email.
- Use multiple methods to reach out to neighbors, including offering more than one worship service. Growing churches are more likely to have started a new worship service in the past five years.

- Use multiple approaches to integrate and engage new people, such as groups for new members, other small groups, and opportunities for service and leadership.
- Offer many ways for members to engage in ministry, such as community service or advocacy activities and mission trips.
- Are no more likely to be theologically and politically conservative when compared to other churches. This finding is in contrast to what many church observers believe—that most growing churches are theologically conservative churches.
- Attribute their recent growth to their hospitality to visitors.

Worshippers in growing churches feel strongly connected to their congregation. These worshippers:

- Find worship services more meaningful and spiritually nurturing than worshippers in other congregations.
- Report an increasing level of participation in congregational activities.
- Have more often invited others to attend worship or visit their congregation.
- Are more optimistic about the church's future and see the pastor as more empowering than worshippers in other congregations.
- Are aware of—and committed to—the congregation's vision for mission and ministry.
- Are more satisfied with the congregation's activities for children and youth.
- Have higher educational levels and earn more than worshippers in other PC(USA) congregations.

However, growing churches face challenges as well. Their worshipers:

- Are no more likely than those in other Presbyterian congregations to be participating in group activities or taking on leadership roles in the church. For many, attending worship is their primary connection to the congregation.
- Are no more generous when it comes to financial giving than worshipers in other congregations. Yet a growing church places hefty demands on the staff and the congregation's financial resources.

What efforts can growing congregations—and other congregations—take to ensure that their worshipers are fully integrated into the life of the congregation? Is your congregation doing its best to warmly welcome those who are first-time visitors or fairly new worshipers? How can your congregation ensure current worshipers do not go out the back door or become inactive members?

What Matters?

Since 2000, the PC(USA) has experienced a 20% net loss (509,239 fewer members). The average congregation size (median) fell from 120 members to 95 in that period.

Yet this does not capture the whole picture. Many PC(USA) congregations have experienced significant membership growth in recent years. This brief report provides a snapshot of some of these growing congregations. We invite Presbyterians in all types of congregations to learn from the voices of worshipers in growing churches.

We believe all congregations have strengths. Can we use the strengths of these growing congregations as inspiration for creating a more positive future?

Want to Know More?

Other resources available from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey:

A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations, second edition (Woolever and Bruce, 2010) presents an up-to-date, comprehensive portrait of congregational life in the United States. Order from Westminster John Knox Press (800-277-2872 or thethoughtfulchristian.com).

A Field Guide to Presbyterian Congregations (Woolever and Bruce, 2010) compares Presbyterian congregations that participated in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey to a national random sample of congregations. The report is available for \$5.00 (call PDS at 800-524-2612 and order item 02056-10000) or as a free download at www.pcusa.org/research. Learn about the unique strengths of PC(USA) congregations!

Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths in U.S. Congregations (Woolever and Bruce, 2004) details the specific strengths evident in vital congregations. It can be ordered from Westminster John Knox Press (800-277-2872 or thethoughtfulchristian.com).

Places of Promise: Finding Strength in Your Congregation's Location (Woolever and Bruce, 2008) challenges leaders to reframe their thinking about whether location determines church vitality. Order from Westminster John Know Press (800-277-2872 or thethoughtfulchristian.com). Now available as an Amazon e-book. A study guide for examining your congregation's location is available for free at www.USCongregations.org/pdf/leaderguide.pdf.

Leadership That Fits Your Church: What Kind of Pastor for What Kind of Congregation helps clergy and lay leaders understand their partnership in effective ministry (Woolever and Bruce, forthcoming from Chalice Press, Fall 2012).

The website for the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (www.USCongregations.org) and the project blog (presbyterian.typepad.com/beyondordinary) provide background information and additional findings from the survey.

How Does My Congregation Compare?

Compare *your congregation* to the national average, to the Presbyterian average, or to the average of growing or new Presbyterian churches by taking a snapshot of your worshipers. Your congregation can take part in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey to learn more about who worships there and what they value, to identify your congregation's strengths, to deal with change whether your congregation is growing or declining, to get ready to call a new pastor, or to renew or update your strategic plan.

Call 800-728-7228, ext. 2040 to get information about using the U.S. Congregational Life Survey in your congregation, or see the section titled "Survey Your Congregation" on our website (www.USCongregations.org).

What Pastors Are Saying About the U.S. Congregational Life Survey

- "This was a quick, painless way to get a lot of information—especially to see our strengths. It also helped us pinpoint some areas where we want to grow stronger."
- "Thank you for the U.S. Congregational Life Survey results! They are exciting!"
- "We are using it to evaluate, plan, and shape some of our future thinking about our church and the various needs of our congregation. The study is a great contribution to the health of churches."



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For additional copies (\$5) call 800-524-2612
and order item 20056-12101