

The U.S. Congregational Life Survey

**New
Presbyterian
Congregations**

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U.S. CONGREGATIONS



2013

Published by Research Services

A Ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

New Presbyterian Churches

Results from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey

Background

Since 2001, 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. Each participating congregation uses three types of surveys: (a) an Attendee Survey completed by all worshipers age 15 and older who attended worship services during a particular weekend; (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 provides a unique three-dimensional look at American religious life.

To learn more about new churches, we recently invited all Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations that were organized between 1990 and 2009 to take part in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey. (Churches that were created as a result of a merger were excluded.) Of the 426 churches invited to participate, 117 agreed to do so and 97 returned completed survey forms after participating in the survey in the fall of 2011.

Responses from these new churches are compared here to those from a random sample of 521 Presbyterian churches and their 40,555 worshipers that completed the same survey in the fall of 2008 or the spring of 2009. While this random sample also includes some new congregations (3% were organized between 1990 and 2009; the median year organized is 1888), for convenience this sample will be referred to here as "other Presbyterian churches."

How Do New Presbyterian Churches Differ from Other Presbyterian Churches?

The Congregational Profile completed by each congregation provides comparative data on participation, facilities, worship services, programs, finances, and staff.

Size and Facilities

Are new churches growing in worship attendance? Do new congregations have larger facilities than other churches?

- New congregations are about the same size as other PC(USA) congregations. Based on average worship attendance in 2008, the median size of new PC(USA) congregations is 82; for other PC(USA) congregations the median is 78.
- The median new PC(USA) church reports that its average worship attendance decreased by 8% in the previous five years (a median decrease of about five people). In other PC(USA) congregations, the median reported change is an increase of less than 1%.
- New and other congregations have similar numbers of regularly participating youth (a median of 19 children and youth age 18 or younger in new churches, compared to 21 in other congregations). The *relative share* of participants 18 or younger is also about the same in both types of congregations—around one in four.
- Similarly, median seating capacities do not differ much—the median new Presbyterian congregation can seat 200; the median other Presbyterian congregation can seat 220.
- Almost two in ten new PC(USA) congregations (18%) operate in a space owned by another group—either for a rental fee (16%) or for free (2%). This compares to the 99% of other congregations that own their own facilities.
- One in five new PC(USA) churches (20%) but few other churches (1%) moved to a new location in the past five years.

- Though rare in both groups, twice as many new PC(USA) churches (6%) as other PC(USA) churches (3%) hold worship services in more than one location (multi-site churches).

Age and Finances

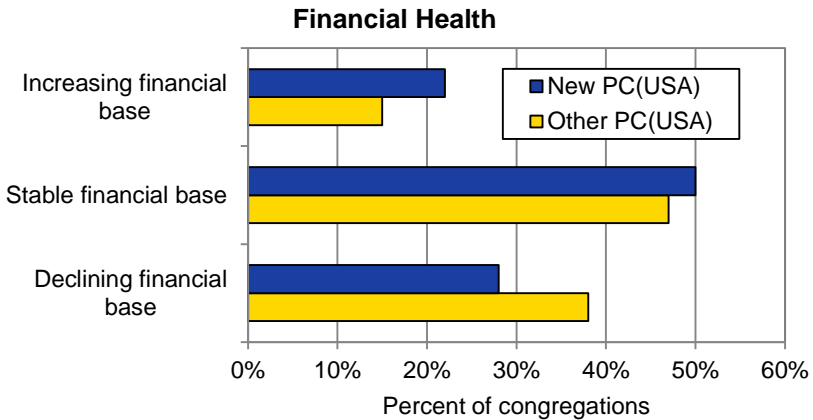
How do the resources of new churches compare with other Presbyterian congregations?

- Not surprisingly, new churches are younger churches. The median new PC(USA) congregation was founded in 1996, while among other PC(USA) congregations, the median founding year is 1888.
- Some new Presbyterian churches (15%) were started in the past five years as a result of “church planting” by another congregation or a presbytery.
- The median new PC(USA) congregation receives more contributions, has a larger budget, and has fewer staff than the median other PC(USA) congregation. Contributions per worshiper, though, are similar (a median of \$1,871 for new congregations and \$1,807 for other congregations).

Congregational Finances

	New PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Medians:		
Income from all sources.....	\$171,482	\$165,875
Income from contributions.....	\$154,500	\$125,234
Congregation’s budget.....	\$176,308	\$165,858
Congregation’s operating expenses	\$152,036	\$142,784
Percentages:		
Share of all income that comes from individual donations	94%	88%
Share of the budget that goes to operating expenses	89%	86%

- More new (22%) than other PC(USA) churches (15%) describe their congregation as having an *increasing* financial base. Three in ten new churches (28%) and four in ten other churches (38%) report a *declining* financial base.



- While only one in ten new PC(USA) churches (11%) has any income from investments or bequests, a majority of other PC(USA) churches do (56%).

Spiritual Connections

What are congregations doing to nurture the spiritual faith of worshipers?

- More new PC(USA) churches offer prayer groups: 84% of new 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.
- One-third of new PC(USA) congregations (33%) offer more than one worship service in a typical week. Among other PC(USA) congregations, just 26% offer more than one. The median number of weekly services is one in each group.

What happens in the worship service with the largest attendance (or the only worship service, in the case of many congregations)? As the following table shows, in new PC(USA) churches worship is more likely than in other congregations to include:

- Use of visual projection equipment, electric guitars, and drums.* Other churches rely more on hymn books and organ music in their services.

- *Laughter, applause, calling out “amen,” raising hands in praise, and witnessing about personal religious experiences.* Worship in other congregations more often includes a written service bulletin, reading or speaking in unison, and silent prayer.

Elements of the Congregation’s Largest (or Only) Worship Service

Features Included in the Largest (or Only) Service:	New PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Sermon	100%	100%
People greeting one another	87%	81%
Written service outline or bulletin	86%	95%
Lord’s Supper	86%	79%
Laughter	79%	72%
People speaking, reading in unison	73%	84%
Use of hymn books	72%	91%
Silent prayer or meditation.....	68%	80%
Time directed at children	67%	80%
Use of visual projection equipment	56%	22%
Applause	53%	40%
Use of organ.....	43%	81%
Participation by teens	37%	30%
Use of electric guitar.....	35%	10%
Use of drums	34%	11%
People raising hands in praise.....	28%	10%
Calling out “amen”	21%	12%
Witnessing about religious experiences.....	17%	7%
Use of language(s) other than English.....	11%	2%

- *Participation by teens as worship leaders.* Other churches are more likely to have a time during the service directed at children.
- *Use of language(s) other than English.* This finding reflects that some new churches were founded to serve an immigrant population.

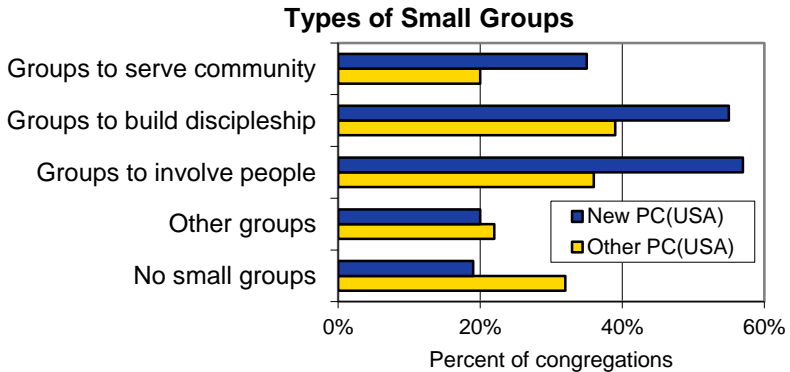
Sermons in new PC(USA) churches tend to be *longer* than in other churches. Most leaders in other PC(USA) congregations (78%) report that sermons last no longer than 20 minutes. Somewhat fewer, but still more than half, of new church leaders (57%) say their sermons are that short.

Half of new churches (50%) but three quarters of other churches (74%) describe the largest (or only) worship service as traditional. Almost half of new (46%) but fewer other churches (30%) offer a blended style of worship combining both traditional and contemporary elements.

Inside Connections

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

- New PC(USA) churches are more likely to offer small groups (or cells), particularly as a method to involve people in the life of the congregation, for discipleship, or to involve people in service to the community.



- Almost all PC(USA) congregations (94% of new and 96% of other PC(USA) congregations) offer religious education classes such as Sunday school.
- More people are enrolled in religious education classes in new than in other PC(USA) congregations—the median enrollment is 36 in the new churches and 28 in the others. Also, a higher *percentage* of worshipers in new churches are involved in religious education classes (a median of 45% of worshipers in new churches and 39% of worshipers in other churches).
- Nine in ten (90%) new PC(USA) churches use e-mail to communicate with worshipers, compared with 72% of other PC(USA) churches.

- Similarly, more new PC(USA) churches (86%) than other churches (63%) use a website to stay in touch with attendees.
- New congregations are more likely than other PC(USA) churches to use a variety of specific procedures to ensure that new people are integrated into the life of the congregation.

Ways Congregations Help Integrate New Members

Integration method:	New PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Invitation to serve within the congregation...	73%	62%
Invitation to join a group	61%	49%
Group or course for new members.....	55%	46%
Follow-up visits by clergy or laity	49%	42%
Invitation to help lead worship	44%	41%
Invitation to serve community	33%	24%
People extend hospitality	20%	20%
Other	18%	11%
None.....	5%	15%

Outside Connections

New churches are often begun to reach specific populations. More than half (60%) of new church pastors say their congregation was started at least in part to minister to one or more specific groups. The following table reveals some of the groups new churches seek to reach.

New Congregations Started to Reach Certain Groups

Population Type:	New PC(USA) Churches
Seekers; those who do not currently attend	39%
Families with young children	39%
People who live in a growing suburb.....	35%
Young adults	20%
Older adults.....	20%
Immigrants and their families	17%
A particular racial-ethnic group	17%
People who live in an unchurched area.....	17%
College students.....	7%
Other targeted group	17%

What efforts are congregations making to reach out to neighbors in the community and to welcome new people?

- New PC(USA) congregations use various methods to reach out to potential new members, as do other congregations. For both groups, the median number of outreach techniques used is seven.

Ways Congregations Reach Out to Non-Members

Outreach method:	New PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Encourage people to invite others.....	89%	88%
Establish or maintain a website.....	87%	71%
Send letter to recent visitors.....	80%	81%
Mail or distribute newsletters.....	71%	70%
Hold event to meet neighborhood people	64%	50%
Phone recent visitors	61%	43%
Place ad in newspaper or magazine	55%	60%
Send email to recent visitors	54%	29%
Event to bring people to the church	44%	41%
Visit recent visitors	42%	31%
Place ad in phone book	35%	40%
Contact people new to the area	31%	32%
Committee working on recruitment	30%	37%
Survey of the community	12%	12%
Advertise on radio or TV	5%	13%

- Majorities of PC(USA) congregations report that other community groups (those not connected to the congregation) use their facilities at least weekly (59% of new churches; 60% of other churches).
- New congregations offer a median of five of the community service programs listed in the following table (next page). These programs may be designed to serve those who worship in the congregation or those in the local community. Other PC(USA) churches offer a median of six programs.

Congregational Community Service Programs

	New PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Community service program		
Emergency relief.....	78%	78%
Other leisure activities	47%	47%
Arts, music, cultural programs.....	47%	44%
Counseling or support groups	43%	44%
Hobby or craft groups	43%	36%
Transport people to worship	42%	46%
Programs for children and youth.....	42%	42%
Health programs.....	35%	40%
Other welfare services and activities	32%	31%
Programs for seniors	31%	42%
Day care, before/after school care	26%	33%
Sports or athletic teams.....	24%	15%
Substance abuse programs	21%	27%
Care for those with disabilities	17%	14%
Community organizing	17%	13%
Immigrant support programs.....	16%	8%
Prison ministry	15%	18%
Housing for others	14%	16%
Programs for college students.....	14%	14%
Social justice activities.....	13%	13%
Financial literacy programs.....	13%	9%
Animal welfare, environmental activities	11%	11%
Voter registration/education.....	8%	9%
Programs for unemployed people	4%	4%
Housing for seniors	1%	6%
Services for persons with HIV or AIDS	1%	4%

Identity Connections

Leaders in both new and other PC(USA) churches describe their congregations' theological and political perspectives similarly. On both measures, most congregations are either moderate or conservative.

- The largest percentage of churches in each group describe the congregation's *theological* position as *right in the middle* (new churches, 44%; other churches, 42%).
- Almost as many view their church as *more on the conservative side* (39% of new PC(USA) and 41% of other congregations).

- *Politically*, more new Presbyterian churches would consider themselves *right in the middle* (46%, with 42% of new churches identifying as *more on the conservative side*). Other PC(USA) churches have a similar distribution, though a higher percentage consider themselves *more on the conservative side* (46%) than *right in the middle* (41%).

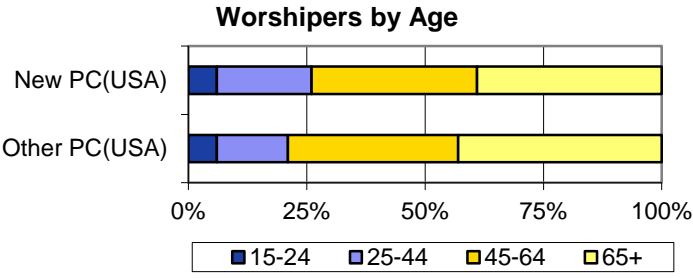
How Do Worshipers in New Presbyterian Churches Differ from Those in Other Presbyterian Churches?

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

Worshiper Demographics

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

- Worshipers in new Presbyterian churches are slightly younger than worshipers in other PC(USA) churches. In new Presbyterian churches, 39% of worshipers are 65 or older, and the median age is 59 years. In other PC(USA) congregations, 43% of worshipers are 65 or older, and the median age is 61.



- New Presbyterian churches are more ethnically diverse than other churches. While 94% of worshipers in other PC(USA) churches identify as white, only 82% in new churches do.
- Worshipers in new PC(USA) churches are demographically different in several other areas. More are married, college educated, attend worship with a spouse, have children living at home, and report a household income of \$100,000 or more. Fewer are female or live alone.

- Though still a minority, more worshipers in new PC(USA) churches were born outside the United States. Five in six worshipers in new Presbyterian churches (83%) were born in the United States, while almost all in other Presbyterian churches (96%) were born in this country. Not surprisingly, 19% of worshipers in new churches report that *both* parents were born in another country. This rate is much higher than worshipers at other Presbyterian churches, only 5% of whom have parents who were both born in another country.

Demographic Profile of Worshipers

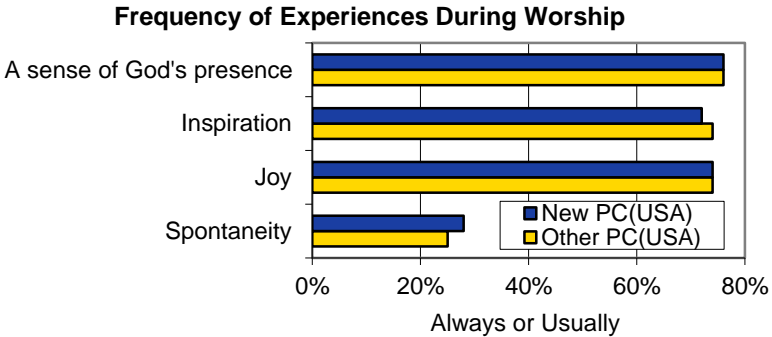
	New PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Born in the United States	83%	96%
White or Caucasian	82%	94%
Married.....	73%	68%
College educated.....	62%	58%
Attend with a spouse or partner	59%	53%
Female.....	58%	62%
Employed full- or part-time	47%	48%
Age 65 or older	39%	43%
Retired.....	39%	40%
Have children at home	37%	34%
Household income of \$100,000 or more.....	28%	24%
Live alone	13%	18%

Worshippers’ Spiritual Connections

Spiritual connections are made through worshipers’ private devotions and their participation in congregational activities such as worship. Do newer Presbyterian congregations do a better job of nurturing their worshipers’ faith?

- Worshipers in new PC(USA) churches are equally as likely as worshipers in other PC(USA) congregations to report *much growth* in their faith in the previous year—growth that they attribute to activities and services of their current congregation. Three in ten worshipers (31%) in both types of congregations report this type of growth.

- Worshippers in new churches experience worship in much the same way as those in other PC(USA) churches. Many experience a sense of God’s presence, inspiration, and joy.



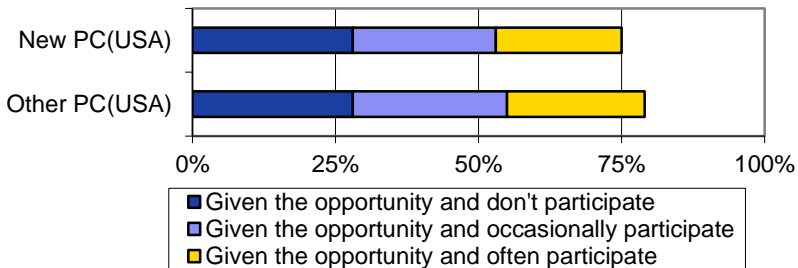
- A majority of worshippers in new PC(USA) churches (54%) report a specific moment of faith commitment or conversion; slightly fewer (48%) in other churches report a conversion experience.
- The musical preferences of worshippers in new PC(USA) congregations differ somewhat from those in other PC(USA) congregations. In longer-established PC(USA) churches, the style of music most preferred in worship is traditional hymns (75%), while fewer in new churches prefer traditional music (63%). Worshippers in new congregations have more varied musical tastes: 37% (vs. 28% in other congregations) prefer praise music or choruses, 27% (vs. 21%) favor contemporary hymns, and 14% (vs. 11%) enjoy other contemporary music or songs. (Note that worshippers could choose two from a list of ten musical choices.)
- Like worshippers in other PC(USA) congregations, two-thirds of those in new churches participate a few times a week or more often in private devotional activities such as Bible reading, prayer, or meditation (new, 67%; other, 66%).
- More than eight in ten PC(USA) worshippers (new, 83%; other, 84%) believe their spiritual needs are being met in their congregation. Similarly, in both groups nine in ten worshippers (92% and 90%, respectively) report that their congregation’s worship services and activities help them with everyday living.

Worshippers' Inside Connections

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

- More worshippers in new PC(USA) congregations attend worship services usually every week or more often (80%, compared to 76% in other churches).
- A similar percentage of worshippers in new and other PC(USA) congregations hold at least one leadership role there. Six in ten (new, 59%; other, 58%) serve on session, a leadership group, or other committee; lead or assist in worship; teach church school; lead or sing in the choir; or serve as an officer or leader of a women's, men's, or youth group.
- A smaller percentage of worshippers in new than other PC(USA) churches report that they occasionally or often participate in congregational decision-making (47% vs. 51%). Nonetheless, large majorities in both groups report having been given the opportunity to be involved in their congregation's decisions (75% in new churches; 79% in others).

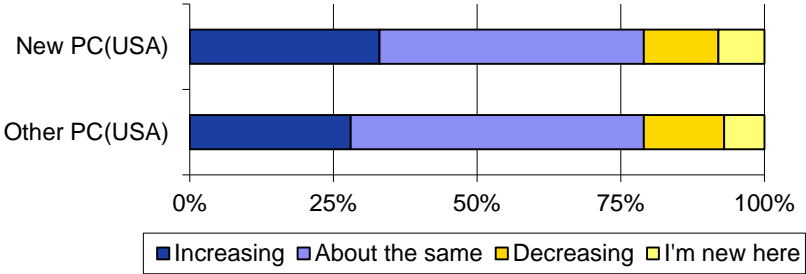
Involvement in Congregational Decision Making



- About two-thirds of worshippers in both new (69%) and other PC(USA) churches (67%) participate in congregational group activities. More worshippers in new churches (37%) than in other churches (29%), however, participate in prayer and Bible study groups.

- More worshipers in new than other congregations describe their participation in congregational activities as increasing. One-third in new PC(USA) churches (33%) and 28% in other PC(USA) churches say they now participate more in activities of the congregation than they did two years ago. More worshipers in other PC(USA) churches say their participation is about the same as in the past (new, 46%; other, 51%).

Participation in Congregational Activities

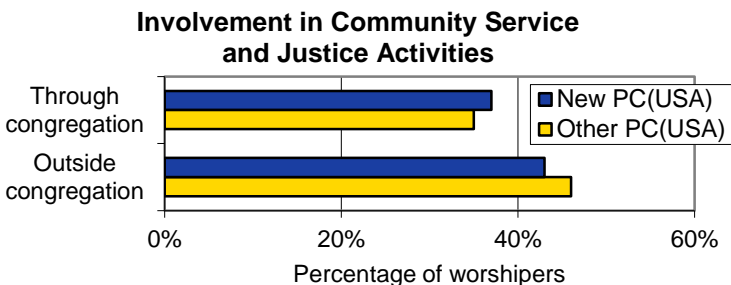


- Most PC(USA) worshipers (new churches, 82%; other churches, 83%) are members of their congregation or in the process of joining.
- About three-quarters of worshipers in new and other PC(USA) congregations have a strong sense of belonging there (73% in new and 76% in others). This sense of belonging may stem in part from having close friends who also attend the same church. About three-fourths of worshipers in new (73%) and other PC(USA) churches (76%) also say that some or most of their closest friends attend the same congregation they do.
- Financial support connects worshipers to the congregation and its mission. Slightly more than half of worshipers give at least 5% of their income to the congregation (56% in new Presbyterian churches and 54% in other churches). Yet more worshipers in new Presbyterian churches (23%) than in others (18%) give 10% or more to the congregation.

Worshippers' Outside Connections

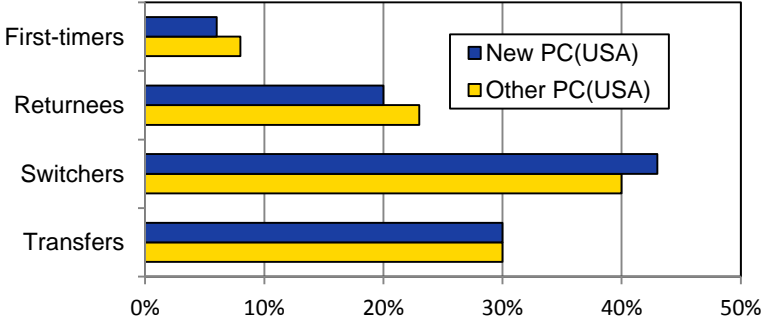
How do worshippers in new Presbyterian congregations connect to the community and to non-members? Outside connections consist of inviting others to attend, caring for neighbors, and welcoming new people.

- Half of worshippers (50%) in new Presbyterian congregations have invited someone to worship in the past 12 months. In contrast, 44% of worshippers in the other Presbyterian congregations have done so.
- In addition to inviting others to worship, slightly more worshippers in new churches are involved in their congregation's evangelism or outreach activities: 23% of worshippers in new congregations take part in such programs and activities, compared to 20% in other congregations.
- Similarly, more worshippers in new congregations (18%) than in others (13%) say they are at ease talking about their faith and seek opportunities to do so. Most worshippers in both groups (58%; 56%) talk about their faith only if it comes up.
- Community service activities help many worshippers and congregations connect with their communities. Similar percentages of worshippers in new Presbyterian churches and other Presbyterian churches are involved in such activities through their congregation and through groups not connected to their congregation. About one-third participate in their congregation's community service work, and even more (over four in ten) do so through groups outside their congregation.



- New people are those who started attending the congregation in the past five years. Not surprisingly, new Presbyterian churches have a much larger percentage of new people (42%) than other PC(USA) congregations (28%). At other Presbyterian churches, half of all worshippers (56%) have been attending more than ten years. At new churches, many of which aren't even ten years old, only 29% are veterans of more than ten years.
- New people come from four different backgrounds: (1) first-timers, who have never regularly attended church anywhere; (2) returnees, who are coming back to church after not attending for several years; (3) switchers, who participated in a congregation of another denomination or faith group immediately prior to coming to their current congregation; and (4) transfers, who were participating in another PC(USA) congregation immediately prior to coming to their current congregation. The largest share of new people in new churches (43%) and in other churches (40%) came from other denominations (switchers).

Worshippers Attending Five Years or Less



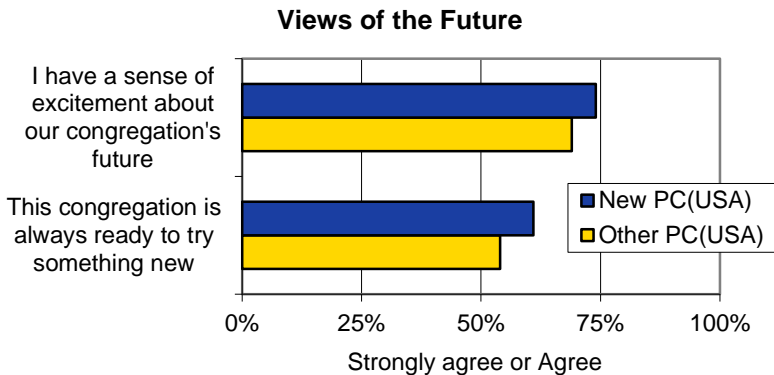
- People in new churches are willing to travel farther to attend worship services. In other Presbyterian congregations, almost six in ten can get there within ten minutes (58%); about eight in ten (78%) travel no more than 15 minutes to worship. In new churches, however, less than half of worshippers (47%) travel ten minutes or less, and seven in ten (70%) travel 15 minutes or less.

Worshippers' Identity Connections

Worshippers have an individual identity based on their age, education, and other factors described in the section on demographics.

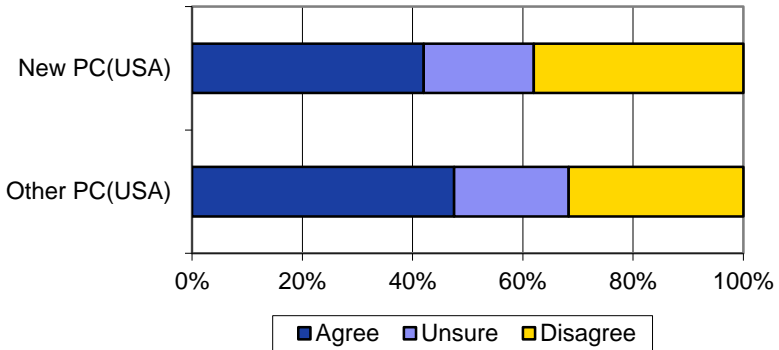
Worshippers also have an impact on the congregation's identity, which includes what they value, their beliefs, and their dreams for the future.

- New congregations have a more positive outlook on the future. Their worshippers are more likely than worshippers in other PC(USA) congregations to say they “have a sense of excitement about our congregation’s future” and to say that their “congregation is always ready to try something new.”



- Three-quarters of worshippers in new PC(USA) congregations (75%) say their pastor takes into account the ideas of worshippers either to a great extent or to some extent. In other PC(USA) congregations even more express this opinion (79%).
- Five in six worshippers in new churches (83%) and slightly more in other churches (86%) say their pastor is a good match for the congregation.
- Worshippers in new Presbyterian churches are somewhat less likely to endorse an embracing attitude toward other religions. Almost half of people in other PC(USA) congregations (48%), but only 42% of those in new PC(USA) congregations agree with this statement: “All the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.”

All Religions are Good Ways to Help People Find Truth



- Similarly, more worshipers in new churches (53%) than in others (47%) agree that only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved.
- Eight in ten worshipers in new Presbyterian churches (80%), but only three-quarters in other PC(USA) congregations (75%), say their congregation has “a clear vision, goals, or direction for its ministry and mission.” Furthermore, 73% in new churches but only 69% in other churches are committed to those goals.
- When asked to pick from a list of 14 items the three that they most value in their congregation, worshipers in new PC(USA) churches and in other PC(USA) churches select the same three most often (although not in the exact order): sermons and preaching, traditional worship and music, and sharing in the Lord’s Supper.
- Among worshipers in new churches, Bible study or prayer/discussion groups is the fourth most important. Wider community care/social justice is fourth for other churches.
- Equal percentages of worshipers in new PC(USA) churches and 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 20). The average strength scores are *higher* in new PC(USA) churches for these aspects of congregational vitality:

- **Growing spiritually**—more worshipers in new churches say they are growing in their faith and feel the congregation meets their spiritual needs.
- **Participation in the congregation**—more worshipers in new churches give 5% or more of their income to the congregation and attend worship weekly or more often.
- **Sense of belonging**—more worshipers in new churches feel a strong sense of belonging and say most of their closest friends attend the congregation.
- **Sharing faith**—more worshipers in new churches are involved in evangelism activities and invite friends or relatives to worship.
- **Welcoming new people**—more worshipers in new churches began attending in the past five years.
- **Looking to the future**—more worshipers in new churches feel committed to the congregation's future vision and are excited about the congregation's future.

New congregations show a level of strength that is *similar* to other congregations in four other areas:

- **Meaningful worship**—similar percentages of worshipers experience God's presence, joy, inspiration, and awe in worship services and feel worship helps them with everyday life.
- **Caring for children and youth**—similar percentages of worshipers report satisfaction with the children and youth program and have children living at home who also attend there.
- **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.
- **Empowering leadership**—similar percentages of worshipers feel the congregation's leaders inspire others to action and take into account worshipers' ideas.

Strengths Scores¹

Strength:	New PC(USA) Churches	Other PC(USA) Churches
Participation in the congregation	61	58
Meaningful worship	60	60
Caring for children and youth	53	52
Empowering leadership	47	45
Growing spiritually	45	42
Focusing on the community	42	42
Looking to the future	40	32
Welcoming new people	38	25
Sense of belonging.....	30	28
Sharing faith.....	26	23

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 not appropriate to compare scores from one strength to another.

Conclusions

New congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are distinct from other PC(USA) churches in several ways. What did we learn from these new churches and their more than 7,500 worshipers?

Age and Resources

- The age gap between new and other Presbyterian churches is huge. The median other Presbyterian congregation was organized in 1888, while the median new PC(USA) congregation was founded in 1996. This is a median age difference of more than 100 years.
- One in five new churches hold their worship service in rented space, compared to only 1% of other PC(USA) churches.
- A larger percentage of the overall income in new than in other Presbyterian churches comes from what individuals donate to the congregation. And newer churches use a larger share of their budget for operating expenses.

- New PC(USA) churches have fuller offering plates than other churches. These new churches receive more contributions and have larger budgets and more staff than the typical Presbyterian congregation. While contributions per worshiper overall are similar in both types of PC(USA) churches, a higher percentage of new church worshipers give 10% or more to the congregation.
- Only one in ten new PC(USA) churches have endowment income. Income from investments or bequests is relatively common among other Presbyterian churches: about half receive endowment income.

Worshiper Diversity

- New PC(USA) churches have more racial-ethnic diversity than do other Presbyterian congregations. In fact, new churches are even more racially diverse than the fastest growing PC(USA) churches.
- Worshipers in new PC(USA) churches represent a greater range of birthplaces as well. While large majorities of Presbyterian worshipers were born in the United States, worshipers in new PC(USA) churches are far more likely to have been born in a non-English speaking country.
- Many worshipers in new PC(USA) churches are second-generation immigrants—both parents were born in another country. In fact, one in five worshipers in new Presbyterian churches report that both parents were born outside the United States, compared to 4% in other churches.
- Worshipers in new PC(USA) churches are younger than those in other Presbyterian congregations. They are also more likely to be married, college-educated, and have children living at home.
- New churches attract more denominational switchers than other congregations.
- Because new churches attract many new worshipers, they make special efforts to ensure their worshipers connect with one another and with the congregation. More of them assimilate worshipers by emphasizing religious education, using small groups or cells, issuing invitations, personal contacts, and using electronic communication.

- Most Presbyterians say they prefer traditional hymns. New church worshipers, however, have slightly less enthusiasm for traditional hymns in worship. Praise music comes in second as new church worshipers' music of choice—almost four out of ten pick praise music or choruses as one of two musical preferences in worship services.

Congregational Strengths

- Presbyterians in both new and older congregations share similar values. Both groups of worshipers say they value the sermons and preaching, traditional worship and music, and sharing in the Lord's Supper in their church. In new churches, worshipers also see Bible study or prayer/discussion groups as important.
- New Presbyterian churches exhibit strength in welcoming new people and looking to the future. All PC(USA) congregations show strength in caring for others in the community.

What Matters?

We've all heard the statistics about the membership decline in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Since 1983, the denomination has experienced a net loss of 1,178,941 members, or almost 38%. The average congregation size has fallen from 269 members to 187.

Yet this doesn't capture the whole picture. Many PC(USA) congregations have been established in recent years. This brief report provides a snapshot of some of these new congregations. We invite Presbyterians in all types of congregations to learn from the voices of worshipers in new congregations. We believe all congregations have strengths. Can we use the strengths of these congregations as inspiration for creating a more positive future? How can your congregation use what we've learned to help it capitalize on its unique set of strengths?

Want to Know More?

Several other resources from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey are also available:

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 all congregations that participated and is available for \$5.00 (call PDS at 800-524-2612 and order item 02056-10000) or for free online (<http://www.uscongregations.org/pub-ofgeneralinterest.htm>).

Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths of 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).

The website for the U.S. Congregational Life Survey provides background information and additional findings from the survey (www.USCongregations.org).

How Does My Congregation Compare?

Compare *your congregation* to the national average, to the Presbyterian average, or to the average of fast growing or new Presbyterian churches by taking a snapshot of all 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 deal with change when your congregation is new or declining, to get ready to call a new pastor, or to renew or re-evaluate 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).



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