

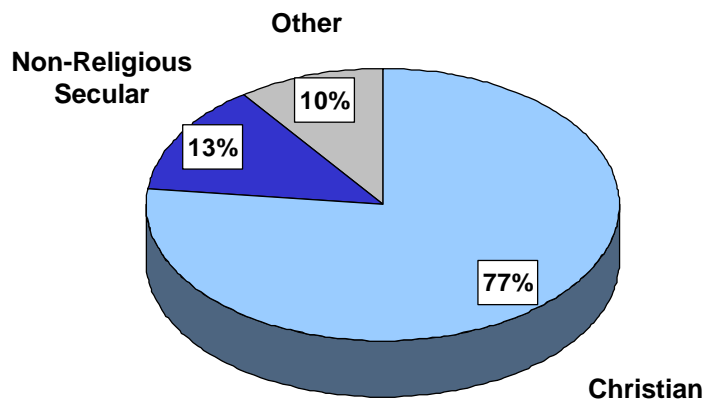
The Connectional Table
Conversations Across the Church
Phase 1: Secondary Research Summary



MARTEC®

77% of the U.S. population is Christian; 7% are United Methodists. One-third of the world's population is Christian.

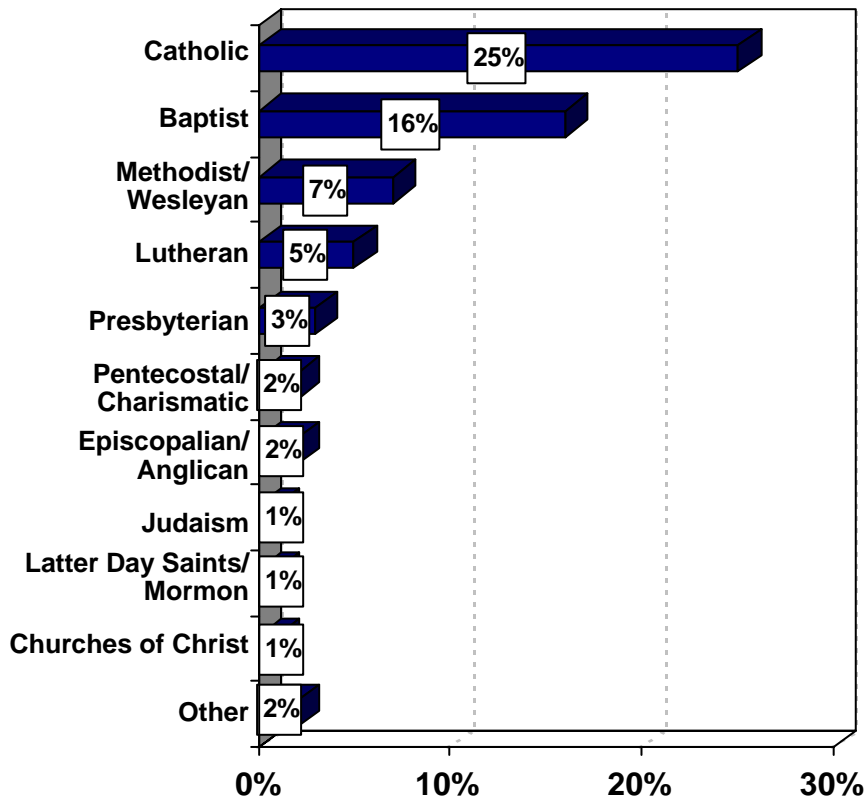
**U.S. Religious Affiliation
2001**



Others include:

- Jewish
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Agnostic
- Atheist

**Largest U.S. Denominations/
Denominational Families
2001**



Source: American Religious Identity Survey (ARIS), conducted in 2001 by the Graduate School of the City University of New York. Sample size was 50,000 Americans. http://www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research_briefs/aris.pdf.

The Roman Catholic Church has the largest number of members in the United States. United Methodist Church membership is 8,040,587 in the United States; worldwide, it is 11,547,779.*

**Source: United Methodist General Minutes 2005 (GCFA)—These are 2004 figures.*

Top Ten Religious Bodies in the United States

Religious Body	Membership
Roman Catholic Church	67.2 million
Southern Baptist Convention	16.4 million
The United Methodist Church	8.2 million
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saint	5.5 million
Church of God in Christ	5.4 million
National Baptist Convention (USA)	5.0 million
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	4.9 million
Presbyterian Church (USA)	3.2 million
Assemblies of God	2.7 million

Source: 2005 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches based primarily on 2003 denominational reporting data. Figures represent U.S. membership only. <http://www.nccusa.org/news/050330yearbook.html>.

United Methodist “membership globally is increasing, but in the United States membership has slipped. . . . Where the church is growing in Africa, Asia, Europe and the United States, it is also reaching out to people through evangelism with energy and purpose.”
(Provocative Propositions Executive Summary)

Statistics were collected for 2004, audited and prepared for publication in the 2005 General Minutes. Major findings include:

- U.S. membership is 8,040,587, the lowest level seen since 1930 when membership for The United Methodist Church's predecessor denominations stood at 7,986,419.
- U.S. attendance is 3,402,617, down 0.89%, almost completely erasing the gains made between 1994 and 2001.
- No U.S. jurisdiction reported overall membership or attendance growth in 2004.
- Reported Hispanic membership was up 6.18%, the eight consecutive year of growth.
- Reported Asian-American membership was up slightly, the fourth consecutive year of growth.
- Total U.S. church expenditures per member adjusted for inflation increased to \$687.17, compared to the adjusted 1993 figure of \$501.49.
- Of all U.S. churches reporting statistics in 2004, 35.9% reported membership increases.
- In 2000, United Methodist professing members made up 2.94% of the U.S. population in counties where U.M. churches are located. In 2004, that percentage was 2.76.
- United Methodists are most common in Central Pennsylvania, Kansas West, Peninsula-Delaware and Oklahoma conferences, with professing membership in 2004 comprising more than 7% of the population in counties of those conferences where churches are located.
- United Methodists are least common in California-Pacific, Desert Southwest, California-Nevada, Alaska Missionary, Oregon-Idaho, New York, New England and Pacific Northwest conferences with professing membership in 2004 comprising less than 1% of the population in counties of those conferences where churches are located.
- Total United Methodist lay and clergy membership in Africa is 1,638,346 (2003 figures). This includes Angola, Burundi, Cote D-Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
- Total United Methodist lay and clergy membership in Europe is 73,777 (2003 figures). This includes Austria, Bulgaria, Czech and Slovak republics, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia.

Statistics for year end 2005 are still being collected.

A common trend is evident among U.S. mainline denominations.

As U.S. mainline churches shrink and age, many reasons have been discussed.

- Criticism directed at the church has placed blame for everything from the Holocaust to arrogance and oppression in dealing with other communities of faith, race, gender and sexual preference.
 - Old-line churches have been placed on the defensive morally as well as intellectually.
- Losses of young-adult members are attributed to several factors:
 - Lack of meaningful adult education/programming directed at them
 - A feeling that the church is not relevant to spiritual growth or does not provide “life-changing” experiences
- Denominational loyalty has declined as young church “shoppers” choose churches based on the character of the congregation, not the denomination.
- Higher education seems not as supportive as in past in the integration of faith and learning.
 - Onus now on churches

Many experts have provided similar observations. The consensus is that U.S. churches are evolving, and their future depends on how they respond to current trends.

George Barna (best-selling author and internationally respected researcher) studied the results of interviews with thousands of people conducted in 2005. He offered four factors that he described as "indicative of the reshaping of the church in the U.S." Two are cited here.

1. Shift in priorities by church leaders

"Most local churches essentially ignore three critical spiritual dimensions: ministry to children, ministry to families and prayer."

- Less than one out of every five Protestant churches deems ministry to families or to children to be among the top priorities of the church.
- Less than one of 25 churches labels prayer as a priority.

2. Congregations are rapidly incorporating new technologies into their activities.

"These are tools that draw people to church events and help them communicate more effectively."

- Two-thirds of all Protestant churches now use big-screen projection systems.
- More than one-half also use Web sites and e-mail to communicate.

Source: *The Barna Update*, "Barna Reviews Top Religious Trends of 2005," December 20, 2005 (www.barna.org)
<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=214>.

Whether classified as small-, medium- or large-membership churches, 21st-century congregations face new challenges.

One-half of all United Methodist churches have fewer than 55 people in attendance each week. These very small congregations face unique challenges.

- Some older members seem wary of change and prefer to “keep things simple.”
- Often financially strapped
- Limited Sunday school class offering

Large churches pose different challenges. Very large United Methodist churches comprise only 4% of all U.M. churches but provide 22% of total revenue.

- Typically have enough money and need for curriculum and supplies, yet often have the capability to create their own resources

The megachurch movement in the United States provides insights from which other churches can learn.

A study recently released by Leadership Network and Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religious Research reveals much about today's megachurch. Called the "Megachurches Today 2005 Survey," it includes several key findings.

Megachurch Characteristics

1. At least 1,210 Protestant churches in the United States have an average weekly attendance of more than 2,000. This is double the number of megachurches that existed five years ago.
2. 34% are nondenominational; the rest are affiliated with a particular denomination.
 - 5% are United Methodist.
3. They are more geographically dispersed today, though the Sunbelt (California, Texas, Florida, Georgia) still shows the largest number. United Methodism's 10 largest churches are located in Alabama (Montgomery); California (San Francisco); Georgia (Atlanta); Kansas (Leawood); Oklahoma (Tulsa); and Texas (Dallas, Fort Worth and three in Houston).
4. Megachurches are concentrated around the largest cities, in suburbs.
5. Worship styles may be defined as contemporary and continually evolving.
 - Vast majority use electric guitar/bass/drums in service; all use visual projection equipment.
6. 56% describe the theological identity of congregation as "evangelical."
7. Small-group study/discussion and education garner strong participation.

The study also suggests that the senior pastor is a key component in the success of the U.S. megachurch.

Megachurch Leadership Characteristics

1. For 83% of these churches, the dramatic growth of the church occurred during the tenure of the current pastor.
 - Median year this person became senior pastor: 1992
 - Average age: 50
 - 89% Caucasian
 - Well educated; 92% with college degree or higher
2. Average of 20 full-time paid leadership staff and nine part-time positions
 - 22 paid full-time and 15 paid part-time administrative/support staff
 - Average number of volunteers giving 5 or more hours per week: 284
3. Volunteer leaders are critical to success
 - Ratio of 10 attendees to one staff or volunteer leader

While U.S. megachurches show phenomenal growth and recruitment savvy, it is not clear whether they actually retain members as well as small- and medium-sized congregations do.

Megachurches tend to have a strong emphasis on evangelism and recruitment.

- Congregations grow primarily by word of mouth.
- Megachurch members follow encouragement of church leaders and are actively involved in recruitment of new members.
 - The churches with the highest level of member participation in recruiting new members have the highest growth.
 - Regarding member retention, the jury is still out.

More research is needed to understand accurately the dynamics of these large, influential congregations.

As congregations age, one important step in maintaining church membership is to attract new, younger members/families.

Many agree that a key demographic critical to the future of many churches is the 18-39 age group.

- More singles wait longer to marry.
 - More than half of all United Methodist churches are in zip codes where at least 31% of the population is single.
- This population is less loyal to the denomination, instead seeking an opportunity to "make a difference."
 - Growing churches focus more attention on this population. Adult education is critical to attracting and maintaining members in this age group.

Increasing diversity is another important concern. As U.S. demographics change significantly, new opportunities emerge.

Traditionally The United Methodist Church has not demonstrated/promoted racial diversity.

- 85% of United Methodists believe addressing racism must be a priority of the church. Racism within the church is still prevalent.
- Many local churches remain homogeneous despite growing diversity of the communities in which they are located.
 - Lack of ability to be present and welcoming
 - Lack of leadership training

Source: "A View of Reality," General Commission on Religion and Race, 2005

Most studies show that the single most important step in establishing a growing church is leadership.

One key concern is the age of United Methodist clergy is getting disproportionately older than the population the church seeks to reach.

- The %age of young elders (under 35) dropped dramatically from 1985-2005 (15% to 5%).
- Local pastors are traditionally older than elders, the percentage of young pastors has remained the same since 1995.

Attracting new, younger pastors has become increasingly difficult. Only about half of those graduating with a master of divinity degree now enter parish ministry.

- Driving a need for a strong, well-trained lay leadership, especially in smaller churches

Source: "A Lewis Center Report on Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church: 1985-2005," Lewis Center for Church Leadership, Wesley Theological Seminary, 2006 (http://www.churchleadership.com/research/um_clergy_age_trends.htm).

Impact on The United Methodist Church

- 1. About two-thirds of United Methodist churches in the United States have one to 199 members; about one-fourth have 200 to 749 members; and the remainder constitutes congregations of 750 members or more.***
 - UMPH found theory to be generally accurate (Fall 2005).
 - In March 2006, Richard Day Research conducted a study to identify predictors of United Methodist Church health and sustainability.

*Key finding was that 81% of the churches that closed never achieved an average attendance of 50 or higher...by far the strongest predictor of sustainability.
- 2. Today's young adults are tomorrow's church leaders and members. The consensus is that this group (ages 18-30) is largely underserved in today's mainline churches.**

**Source: 2004 General Minutes*

Many agree on what struggling congregations should do to revive/grow.

1. Emphasize spirituality; focus on ultimate questions of faith.

- Evaluate current worship services to determine connection with all ages and other factors.
- Focus on helping members grow spiritually through meaningful worship experiences.

2. Place certain demands on congregants and engage them.

- Encourage participation.
- Recruit new members to serve on committees and to become actively involved. This builds a sense of ownership.

3. Build youth and young adult programs.

4. Stress a program of evangelism and invitation.

- Welcome new people.
- Nurture all members to keep them motivated and involved.
- Follow up on formerly active members.