



Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.
This is our story.

"This is the story of our church in our time."



What we do together makes a difference

churches in
50
countries

45,176
clergy

missions in
65
nations

active on
5
continents

34,106
local church weekday ministry
programs serving
1.2 mil.
people a year

\$180 m
in shared denomin
giving in 200

47,820
congregations

13.7 million
professing and
baptized members

(that's more people
than live in 45 U.S.
states, or the nation
of Greece)

\$5.86 bi
given by United M
in the U.S. in



INTRODUCTION

This is a story about our Church in our time.

This is the story of a faithful, generous people in dozens of nations who continue to make a difference in the lives of people around the world.

It is the story we can be proud of and also challenged by as we live in a new age. It is the story we tell through the millions of pieces of data we've shared and collected about ourselves for over 200 years.

We have collected and analyzed the data of our local churches and believe this is a story that's important to tell, share, and discuss. It is not the one and only story of The United Methodist Church; there are others from different perspectives and opinions that are worth hearing and telling too.

Our hope is that this document may encourage a conversation that the people of The United Methodist Church will have from time to time: What will God have our Church do in our time?

There is a tremendous future ahead for this church of ours. We pray you'll see it too.

CONTENTS

A Faithful Church - Membership and Attendance	4
Telling the Story - A Look Behind the Numbers	10
A Generous Church - How We Give	14
A Global Church - Statistics Around the World	16
A Future Church - Signs of Hope Amidst Challenges.	18

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Membership matters

The fact that membership matters in our churches shouldn't come as a surprise. Membership, and professing membership in particular, signifies the commitment United Methodists make to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ through active participation in a local church community. The data collected on our membership is one of the most basic gauges for examining the health of our individual churches and our denomination as a whole. This section takes a look at membership in the United States and how it's changing.

Why are we only looking at the United States? Currently there is highly detailed data for each local church in the U.S. available going back several decades - data that is not yet available for churches in other nations. Later in this report you will see how trends in the United States compare to those of Africa, Europe, Eurasia, and the Philippines (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

Figure 1.1 depicts professing membership and worship attendance from 1974 to 2005. Membership has decreased in the United States by over 19% or 1.9 million members since 1974. There is no denying or avoiding the reality that many churches are not growing. Over the last three decades, the share of churches reporting membership increases from year to year has consistently remained about 35% of all U.S. churches.

It should be noted however, that there's another story being told in Figure 1.1. Membership levels have decreased, but attendance tells us a somewhat different story. While the attendance number has decreased over the last 30 years - down over 7% since 1974 - it has, at times, also increased.

Figure 1.2 represents attendance as a percentage of membership, or to put it a little differently, the percentage of members you can expect to show up at an average United Methodist church on an average Sunday. In 1974, it was 36%; in 2005 it was nearly 42%.

What does this tell us? The commitment that comes with membership appears to be increasingly important to United Methodists. Members today are more active in their local churches and, as we look at giving patterns, are more willing to give of the gifts God has given them.

There is more to this story. As Figure 1.3 notes, while our professing membership has decreased, the number of constituents - people who are not baptized or professing members, but do have a relationship with a United Methodist church - has increased. Although the definition of a constituent varies from church to church, this trend is worth noting. How do we respond to this changing dynamic if greater numbers of people come to our churches but have not chosen to join them as members? As we will see, in a world of increasing secularism, and ever-present human need, the call for all United Methodists to reach out to their communities has, perhaps, never been greater.

Figure 1.4 depicts the number of baptized members who have not become professing members (what we used to call preparatory members) and has remained at a relatively consistent share of total membership (baptized and professing) over the last 30 years. These persons - primarily children up to the age of 13 - make up about 13.5% of our total membership. That share decreased somewhat in the 1980's, increased somewhat in the 1990's, and has leveled off in this decade. Note that the large decrease in 2005 levels is likely due to changes in reporting methods rather than a sudden drop in the number of baptized members.

Although our membership numbers in the United States should give us cause for concern, data indicates that United Methodists have become more committed, more engaged, and more generous with their churches and the world around them.

That's a story worth celebrating, and a strong foundation to build upon.

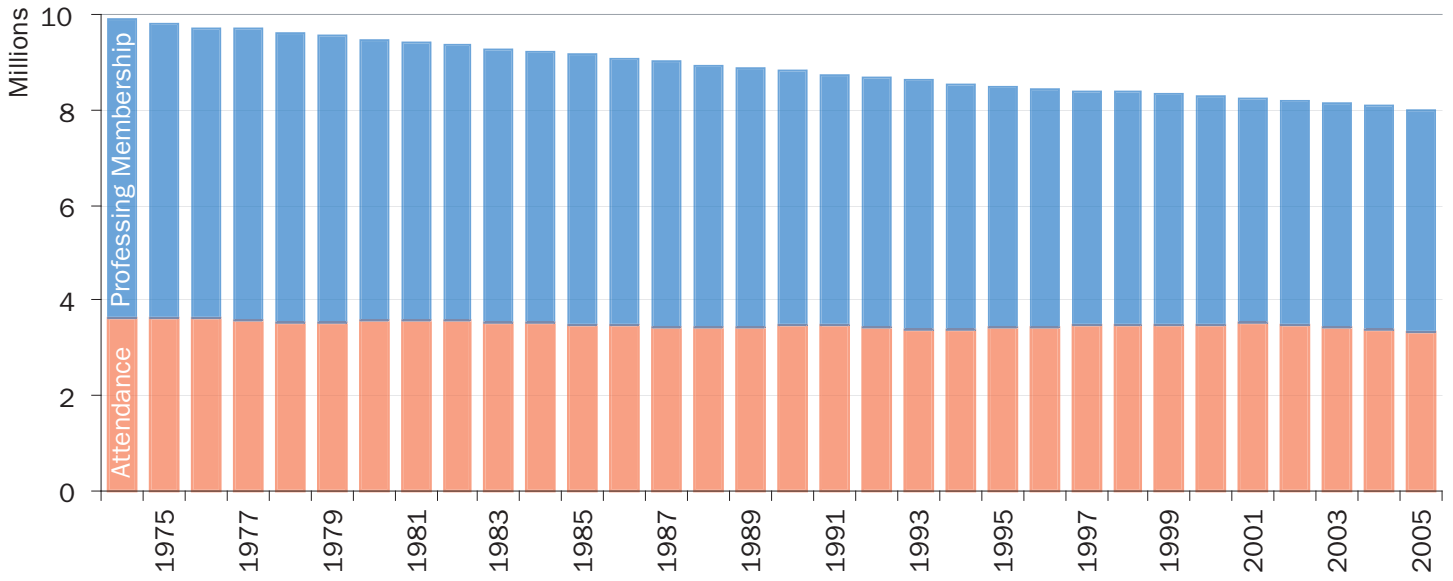
Faithful membership in the local church is essential for personal growth and for developing a deeper commitment to the will and grace of God. As members involve themselves in private and public prayer, worship, the sacraments, study, Christian action, systematic giving, and holy discipline, they grow in their appreciation of Christ, understanding of God at work in history and the natural order, and an understanding of themselves.

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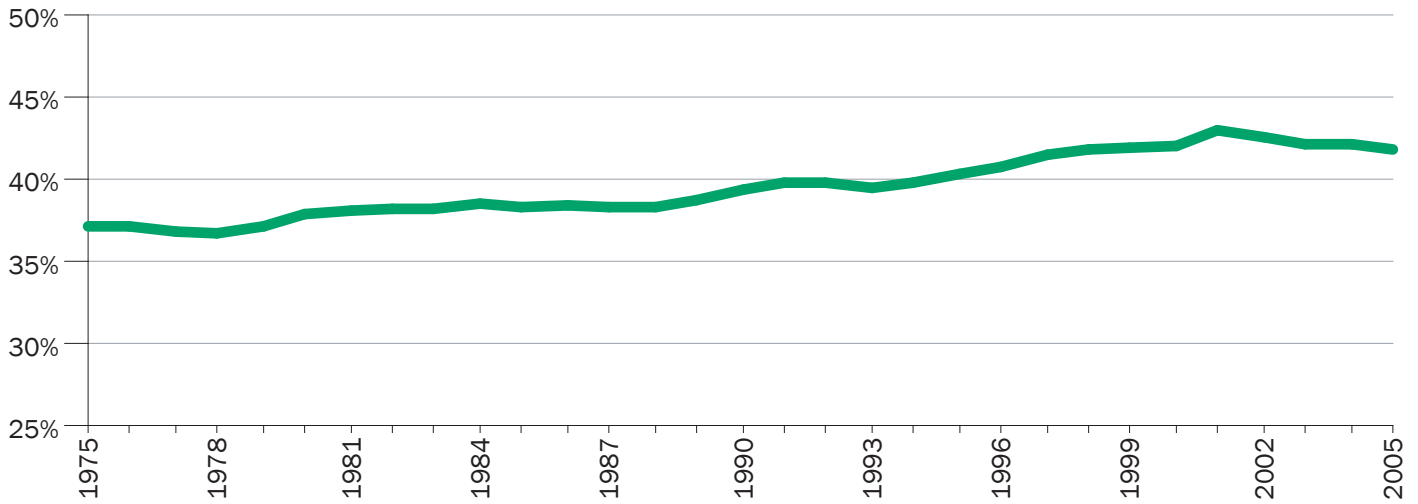
2004 Book of Discipline

**Baptized Membership numbers for 2005 are likely artificially low. Due to changes in the definition of membership in The United Methodist Church and subsequent terminology changes in local church statistical reporting forms, the drop is likely a result of reporting error, rather than a sudden drop in baptized membership.*

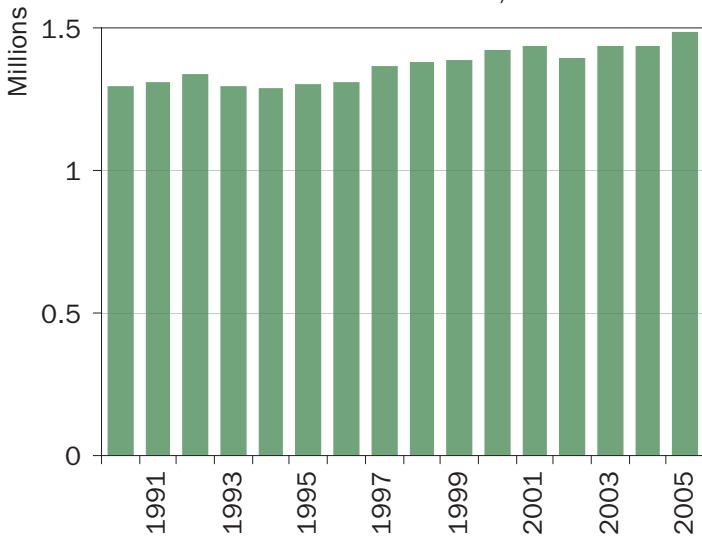
1.1 - U.S. Professing Membership and Attendance, 1974-2005



1.2 - U.S. Attendance as a Percentage Share of Membership



1.3 - U.S. Constituents, 1990-2005



1.4 - U.S. Baptized Membership, 1990-2005*

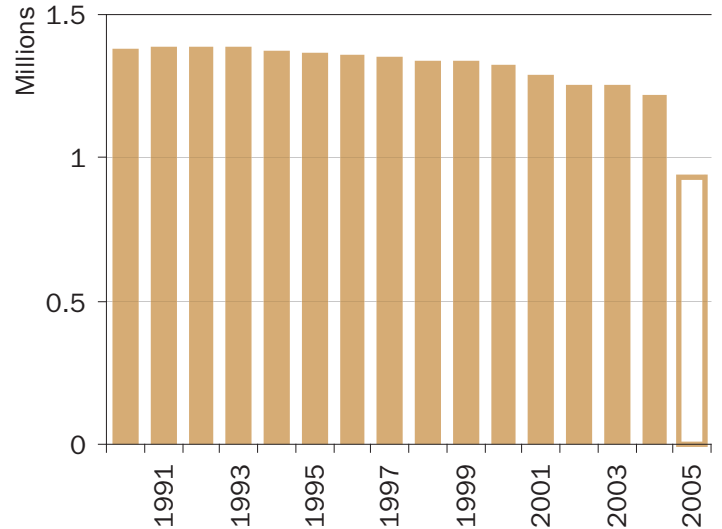


Figure 1.5 provides a quick look at the number of members who have joined or left our churches since 1974. The total number of people joining or leaving our churches, as well as member inflow and outflow as a percentage of total membership have decreased very slightly over time, from 10.6% in 1975 to 9.6% of total professing membership in 2005.

So how are members joining our churches? As you can see in Figure 1.6, the majority of members join on profession or restoration of faith. Persons who are joining a church for the first time are professions of faith. Persons who were members of a church some time ago, but no longer have a membership relationship with a church join by restoration of faith. When we talk of "making disciples of Jesus Christ," these are the two ways it occurs.

Professions and restorations of faith made up nearly 46% of new members in 1975; today they make up over 51%. Increasingly, people joining a church for the first time, aren't youth in confirmation classes: 78% of professions or restorations of faith were coming from confirmation classes in 1975; in 2005 it was 52%.

A number of our members also come by transfer. An important trend to note is the number of members transferring in from other United Methodist churches. As figure 1.6 shows, that number has dropped dramatically over the past 30 years by nearly 10% as a share of total membership. When leaving a church, as in the case of moving from one place to another, United Methodists are less likely to join another United Methodist church in their new location than they might have been in the past. This trend indicates that solidarity of members to The United Methodist Church as a denomination is decreasing.

This is not new; we have heard for decades that lay persons increasingly perceive little difference between different denominations in the United States. Potential members are more likely to choose a church because of its pastor, people, or programs, than out of a sense of denominational loyalty.

The general decline in solidarity with denominations in the U.S. also means an increasing share of new members are coming from other denominations: from over 16% in 1975 to over 20% in 2005. Although The United Methodist Church has seen a drop in the denominational solidarity of its members, our churches continue to be attractive and inviting communities for Christians of different traditions.

Most of the names removed from our Professing Membership are removed by withdrawal or charge conference action. In some cases these persons moved without notifying the church - a significant challenge to local churches in our increasingly transient society. In 2005, over 47% of the names removed from membership were removed by charge conference action or withdrawal, compared to 40% in 1975.

Death has taken an increasing share of our removals. Over 26% of removals were because of death in 2005 compared to 20% in 1975.

Fewer members are transferring out of our churches to other denominations, or to other United Methodist churches. The reduction in the number of transfers to other United Methodist churches is especially significant, 17% of membership outflow came from transfers to other UM churches, whereas 30 years ago the share was nearly 28%.

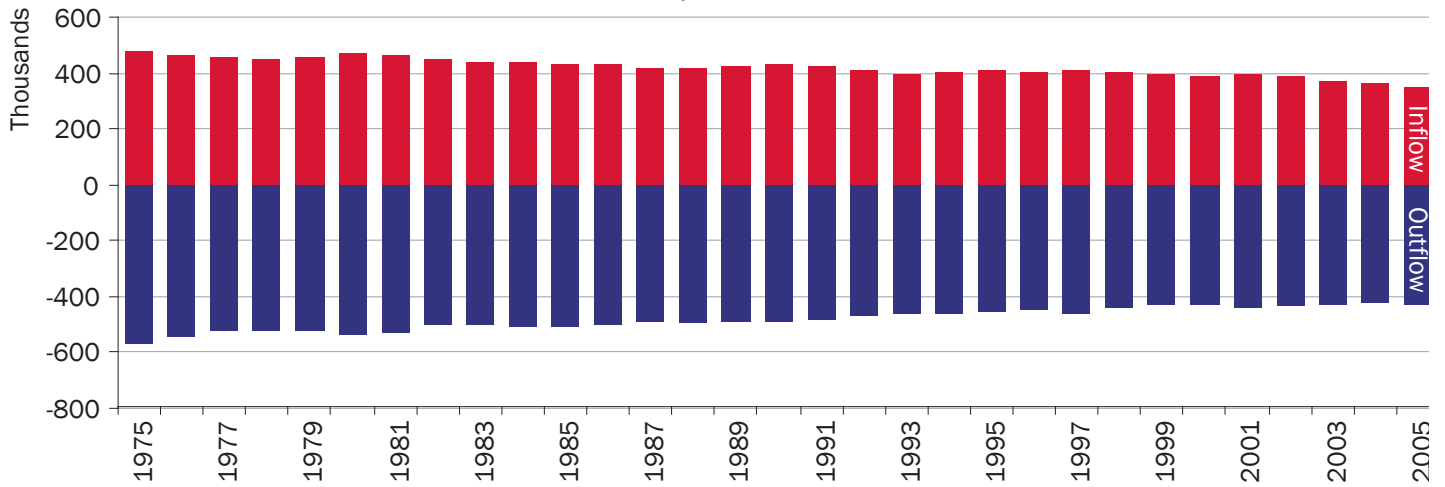
Of course, issues with local church reporting are a significant cause of this trend in transfers. The discrepancy between transfers in and out has grown wider and wider. In 1975 there were 15% more transfers in than out. By 2005 there were 30% more transfers in than out. By looking at Figures 1.6 and 1.7 it is clear that churches report more members transferring into other UM churches than transferring out to other UM churches (it is assumed many of these non-reported transfers out are included on removals by charge conference action or withdrawal).

Faithful discipleship includes the obligation to participate in the corporate life of the congregation with fellow members of the body of Christ. A member is bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members. A Christian is called to speak the truth in love, always ready to confront conflict in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

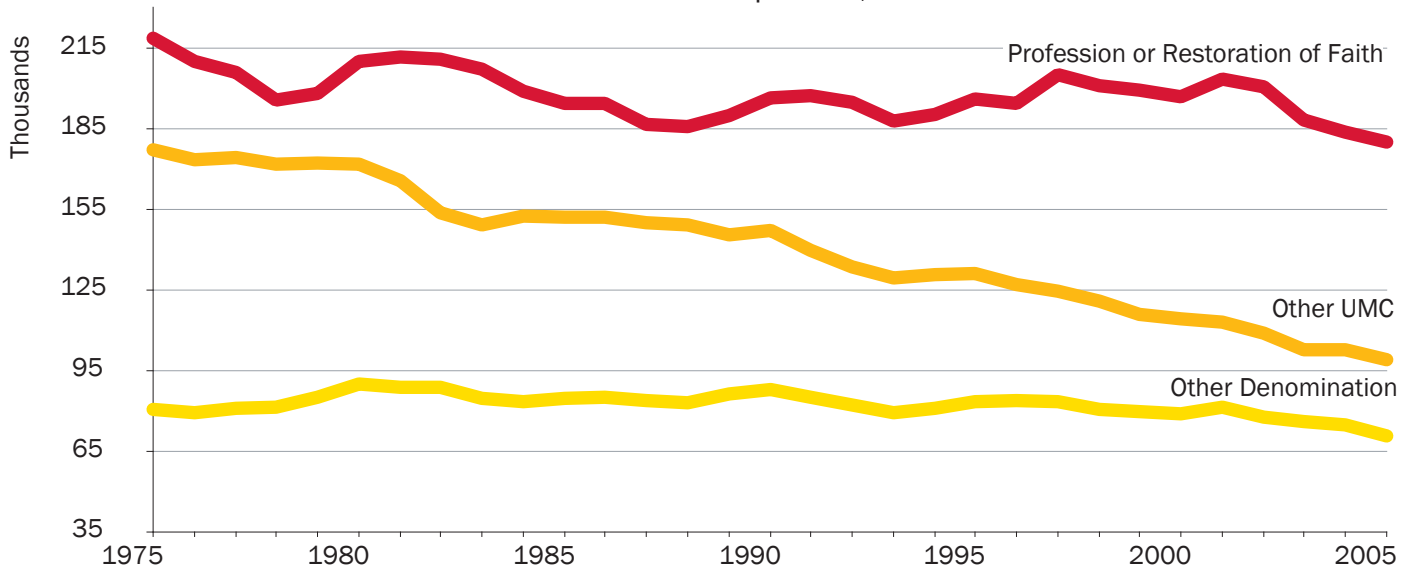
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2004 Book of Discipline

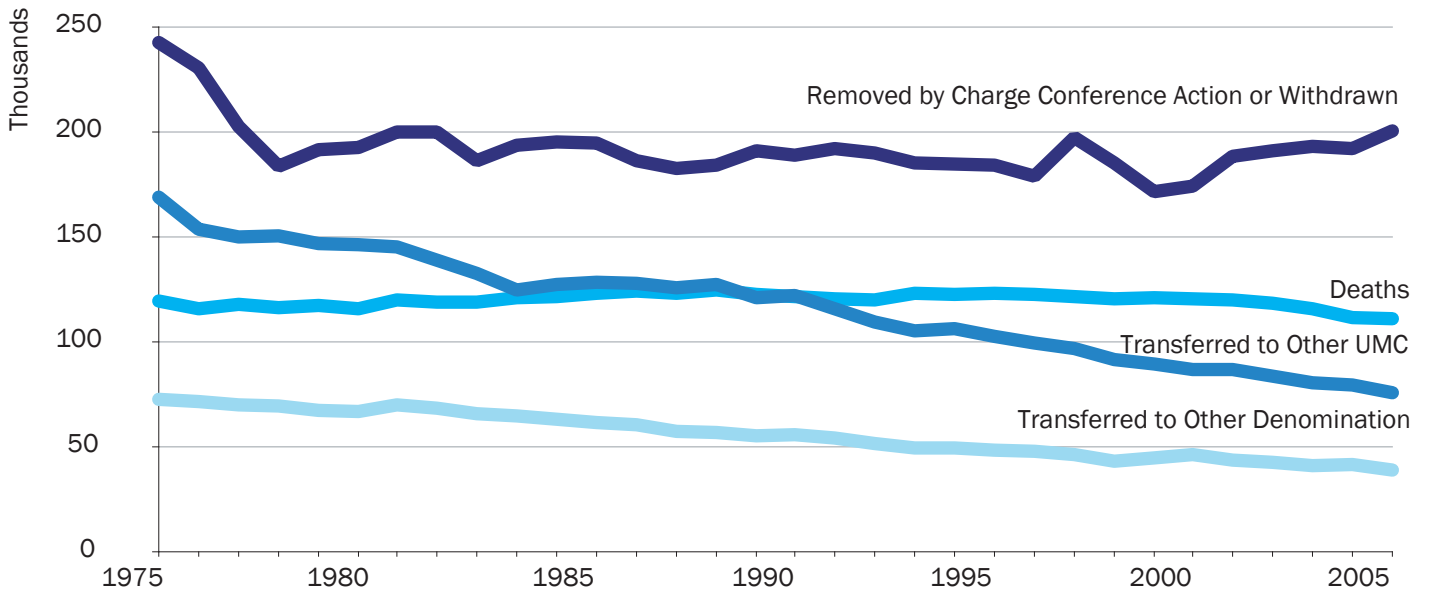
1.5 - Total U.S. Membership Inflow and Outflow, 1975-2005



1.6 - Total U.S. Membership Inflow, 1975-2005



1.7 - Total U.S. Membership Outflow, 1975-2005



A slice of congregational life

Aggregate statistics provide a wealth of information and insight. They are an excellent way of seeing overall trends and can provide a quick gauge of our churches' health. They are not, however, the complete story. Aggregate totals of statistical data provide only the roughest outline of the stories of our local churches.

The rest of our discussion on membership in the United States is devoted to slicing the data up a little more. We'd like to introduce you to a word you probably don't use very often: quintile. Simply put, a quintile is a grouping of five. It's a way of putting large populations of data into smaller categories for comparison purposes. In this case, 34,925 U.S. churches were placed in order according to membership, then divided into five equal groups of a little over 1.6 million members each.

Since the churches are ranked according to membership, there is one group (quintile 1) of 1.6 million members comprised of many small churches, and another group (quintile 5) of 1.6 million members is made up of a few, very large churches. Figure 1.8 shows the average membership size of churches in each group. The first quintile averages 73 members per church, the fifth quintile consists of churches with an average membership of 2,405 members.

Figure 1.9 shows how many churches fall into each grouping, from the smallest group of 667 churches, to the largest group of 21,999 churches. In other words, 667 of our largest churches account for about as many members as 21,999 of our smallest churches. Most of our churches are small-membership churches.

The stories of our smallest and largest churches are often very different. Over the last ten years, the smallest churches (Quintile 1) saw membership shrink by an average 8.73% per church. The largest churches (Quintile 5) grew in membership by an average of nearly 40% over the same period.

With the dramatic rise of the "Megachurch" phenomenon, these trends should not come as a surprise. It is generally expected that large churches - commonly located in growing urban areas - will grow. And it's generally expected that small churches - often in more rural, slower-growing areas - will shrink.

As shown in Figure 1.10, trends of membership inflow indicated on Figure 1.6 generally hold for churches of all five size categories. We expected the large church quintile to bring in more members than the small church quintile, even though their total membership was about the same size. Indeed, churches in Quintile 5 brought in over 77,000 new members, about 11,000 more than the smallest churches in Quintile 1.

What we didn't expect, however, was to find that the smallest and largest churches, in Quintiles 1 and 5, are bringing in about the same number of professions of faith. It is also interesting to note that the churches in Quintile 1 brought in significantly more members by restoration of faith than congregations in Quintile 5. The difference therefore, is accounted primarily by transfers from other United Methodist churches and churches of other denominations to the larger churches.

We believe this information serves as a challenge to our largest churches. Although their ability to attract members should be celebrated, all of our churches need to do a better job of reaching out to the unchurched - an ever-growing segment of our general population - if we are to fulfill our primary mission: *making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

At the same time, our smallest churches face significant challenges as well. Figure 1.11 indicates that churches in Quintile 1 lose more members through charge conference action and withdrawal. Aging populations also pose a significant challenge; smaller congregations are far more likely to lose membership through death. The churches in Quintile 1 would have needed to receive over 98,000 new members in 2005 in order to have kept membership steady for that year. That would mean increasing overall membership inflow by over 50%.

The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.

¶ 120

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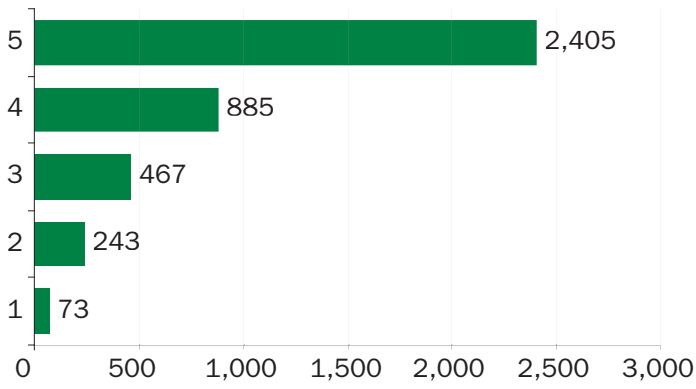
Net Professing Membership Change by Quintile, 1995-2005

Quintile	Membership Change
1	-381,998
2	-249,578
3	-130,726
4	.6,919
5	.244,844

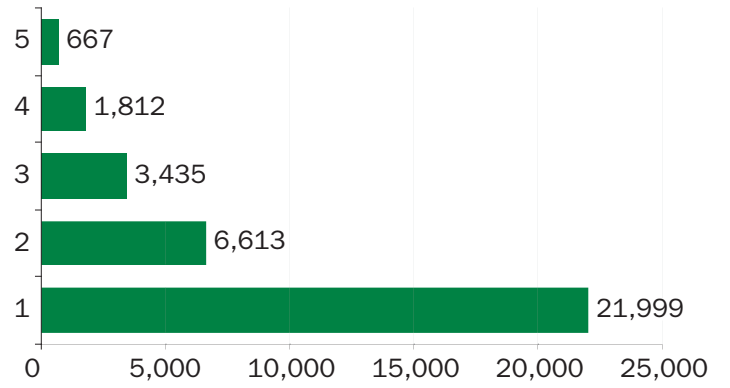
Net Professing Membership Change by Quintile, 1995-2005

Quintile	Membership Change
1	-8.73%
2	-2.76%
3	.1.76%
4	.13.13%
5	.33.99%

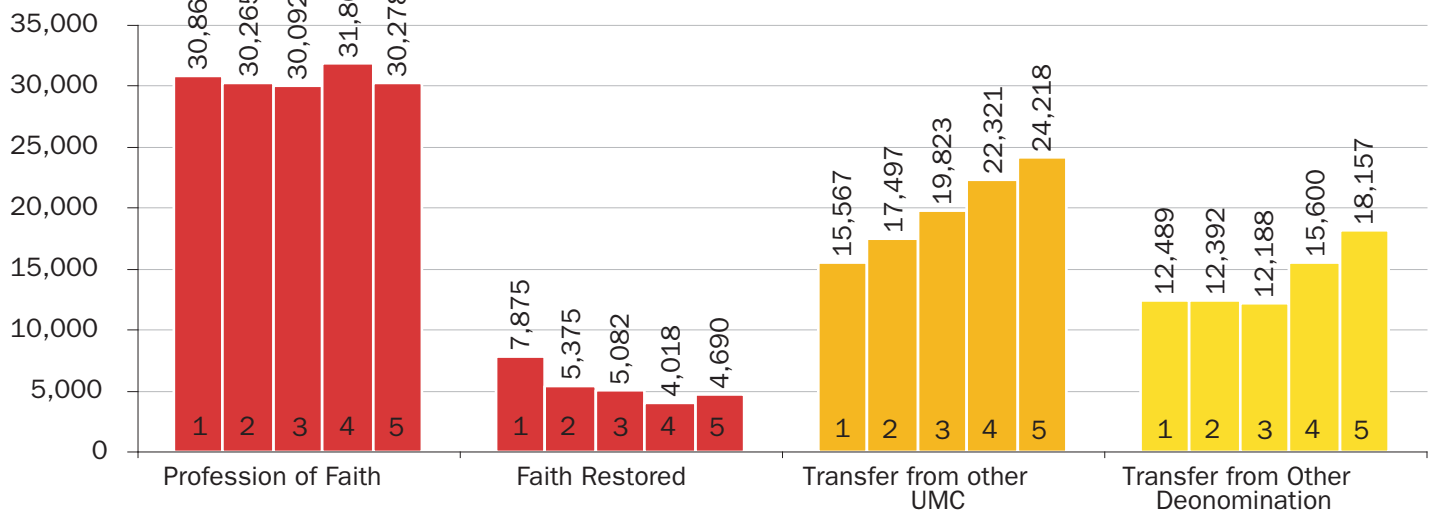
1.8 - Average Church Membership by Quintile



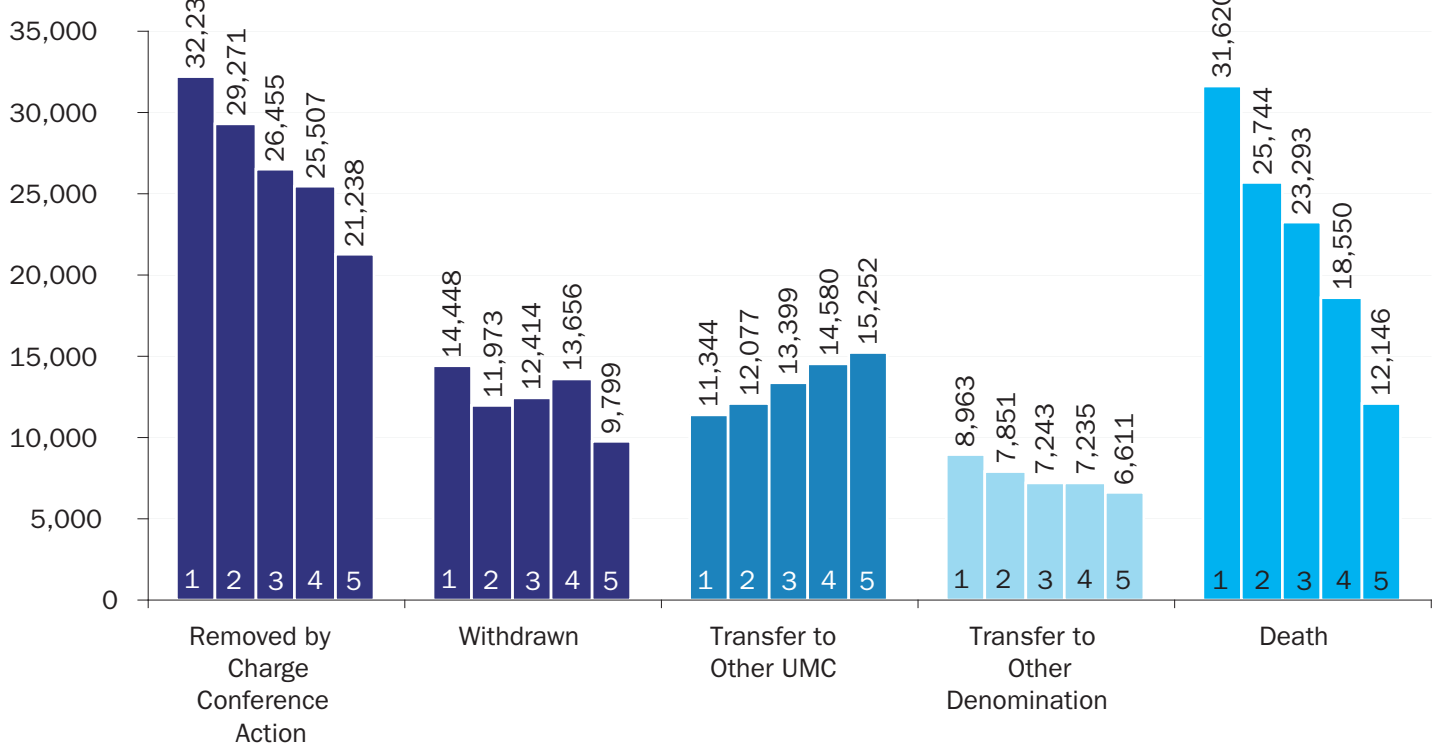
1.9 - Number of Churches by Quintile



1.10 - Membership Inflow by Quintile



1.11 - Membership Outflow by Quintile



TELLING THE STORY

What's behind the numbers

Behind every number there is a story. Every member counted in these statistics is a life changed by Christ and our Church. Every dollar is an offering to God. Every church is a community of faith. Numbers are important, but they aren't the whole story. To get a better sense of the reality these numbers reflect, we talked with a few churches that caught our eye because of their consistent growth and vital ministry. Here is some of what we heard.

BELFAST UMC, BELFAST, MAINE

Knowing God's real presence

Sitting along the coast a little over 30 miles northeast of Portland, Belfast, Maine is a small town with a growing tourist trade. The population hasn't increased much in the town, but you couldn't tell that from looking at their United Methodist Church.

Belfast UMC is growing: membership is up 23% since 2000, and attendance has increased 51%.

"It's been about a 10 year process, says Rev. David Abbott, pastor of the church since 1997. "I was sent to try to help the church discern if they wanted to grow and move. If they wanted to look at other areas of growth or remain as they were."

Less than a year later, a member donated land for a new church, "and things have continued to move right along," Rev. Abbott says.

Six years ago, Belfast Church built a new building and they've kept on growing since then. "Sometimes I think maybe we've gotten used to growing," he jokes.

As a growing and increasingly diverse congregation, Belfast Church has moved forward through faith, and, Rev. Abbott says, God has blessed them. "God seems to bring in the people that we need. When we were looking to build a new facility, I asked if anyone knew how to tile. One guy who was there for the first time knew how to tile and he volunteered."

Rev. Abbott says that much of what's happening in Belfast is the direct result of God's tangible presence in the life of the church. "I think it's been a story of continued faith and seeing God really at work," Rev. Abbott says, "and not just financially. We have seen healings. We've seen people's lives turned around. You can talk about the presence of God, but when people stand up in your sanctuary and share how God has changed them and given them a purpose in front of the congregation, that really shows it."

GRACE UMC, PUTNAM VALLEY, NEW YORK

Making a difference

Ten years ago, Grace UMC of Putnam Valley, NY was one church on a three-point charge averaging 30 people at worship. Then, after some prodding by their pastor, Grace decided to take a leap of faith and work to grow. Today, attendance has doubled and the church is home to a slew of ministries and activities, serving a rapidly changing community.

"Over the last few years we've been growing in numbers, ministries and presence to the community," says Rev. Tony Mecca, the church's pastor since 2003. "We've been transforming ourselves. I think we're more in touch with the community today."

With housing prices skyrocketing in the New York metropolitan area, many families have found a new home in Putnam Valley. That in turn has helped to raise local housing prices making the homes of some long-time residents unaffordable.

Seeing the need that surrounded it, the people of Grace took action. "The first thing that we did is our food pantry," Rev. Mecca says. "We realized that a lot of the older folks, who are very proud, didn't have any food. They would pay their bills and then have nothing left. And the young families who moved in before the housing boom didn't have money left either."

The church got together with other local churches, synagogues, and service clubs to organize a food pantry that's hosted at the church. They're now serving 85-100 families a week, providing canned foods, meats, laundry and cleaning supplies, paper goods, and even vitamins. "Whatever we can get a hold of we distribute," Rev. Mecca says.

"The budget for the food pantry has ballooned to \$30,000 for 2007," he adds. "This is well beyond our means and those of our partners. We applied to the Bishop's Partners in Mission Fund and received a very generous contribution. We are still seeking additional grants and donations."

The church also works in homeless ministries, including a Men's group that provides home-cooked meals to men once a month. The UMW unit holds baby showers for expectant mothers who are in prison. And Grace sends volunteers to Lynchburg, Virginia each year to support a congregation there that's been at the forefront of serving the homeless, impoverished, and advocating for racial justice.

Grace has been intentional about being a welcoming community. Much of their recent growth has come from single-parent households and families with children who have physical challenges. "We really practice open hearts, open minds, open doors here. The pastor can greet everyone who walks through the door," he says, "but if the lay people don't respond, forget it. I've actually had an instance where a family from another church recommended a family to our church. Not theirs, but ours."

"We're a church where everyone has a voice, young, old, and all in between. This is truly an intergenerational commitment here. Everybody, no matter how old, contributes - all the way up to folks in their 90's. We're a church that is a household with God at its head, and we challenge ourselves in ministry to each other, to our community, and to the rest of the world."

BETHLEHEM - WILEY UMC, CHATTANOOGA, TN

Something old, something new

Bethlehem-Wiley UMC in downtown Chattanooga, Tennessee, is a bit of something old and something new. Started three years ago, the congregation is an innovative merger of Bethlehem UMC - a younger congregation that was worshipping out of a United Methodist community ministry, the Sallie A. Crenshaw Bethlehem Center - and Wiley UMC - a historic downtown church. With a proud history and a bold vision, Bethlehem-Wiley is making a difference in Chattanooga.

"They say it was a merger but the way I looked at it, it was a new church," says Rev. Lurone "Coach" Jennings, pastor of the church since its founding. "We didn't want the baggage of either church, but we wanted to use the best of both to the vision God would give it."

"Coming together as one took time and intentional work by the leaders of both congregations. It is a challenge any time you do something new by bringing different cultures together. We spent about a year praying about what the new church would look like and what the focus would be. We went through a process of really getting to know each other and we really feel like God was calling us to start this church together," Rev. Jennings says.

Based out of Wiley's historic downtown building, the church is keeping active in the community. "Our approach is that this is a ministry site. The church building became the ministry site for Sunday worship, and the Bethlehem Center became a ministry site for outreach during the week. When the church merged, we made a commitment not to leave the Center out."

With two major ministry sites - the church building and the Bethlehem Center - the church is in ministry with a broad range of people. Downtown, Bethlehem-Wiley has kept the church building open for various groups in the community including Wednesday noon services for office workers in the downtown area, many of whom have church homes elsewhere. "It has become a ministry site not just for the church, but for the whole city," Rev. Jennings says.

The church is also impacting the lives of young, primarily African American people through the Bethlehem Center with after school literacy and empowerment programs. Plans are being made to reach out to younger families in a more multicultural contemporary setting by holding Saturday worship services at the Bethlehem Center.

Rev. Jennings is also working with congregations in the Holston Annual Conference

and churches around the country to learn from the lessons of Bethlehem-Wiley UMC as they strive to make the gospel known in their communities. "I think churches need to get outside their walls, whether it's starting new ministries or partnering with centers or schools. We can't be confined to the church. We need to be spreading the Gospel, combating social issues, dealing with poverty, and helping families in the community. That's where God wants us to be."

BROOKE ROAD UMC, ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

Making people welcome

Brooke Road UMC is a welcoming community of believers on the primarily blue collar southeast side of Rockford, Illinois. And it shows: membership is up 25% since 2005, and worship attendance has increased nearly 50%.

Rev. Cynthia Zolk, the pastor since last July says a lot of the credit goes to her predecessor, Rev. James Preston. "I think when he came here the church was in need of a lot of healing," Rev. Zolk said. "He really gave them a jump start."

Brooke Road UMC is active in a diverse array of small groups including bible and lectionary studies, older adult ministry, as well as United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, and United Methodist Youth Fellowship. The church has also taken a concerted effort to reach out to those in need through direct grants and a community food pantry. A group provides yard work for those unable to do it themselves, giving any money raised back to mission. For the fourth summer in a row, passionate volunteers will be working in the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

A lot of Brook Road's growth is due to their openness. "My sense is that we're not a real pretentious church. There have been a lot of people who have come because they feel comfortable. They didn't have to prove anything, they were pretty much accepted as they were. Everyone is very comfortable and very well-accepted here."

FIRST UMC, FERRIS, TEXAS

Radical hospitality

First United Methodist Church of Ferris, Texas, had a bit of a face lift recently.

Members there decided it was time to make their building look like their church. "They decided they wanted to make the church building look as warm and inviting outside as the people inside," Rev. Cathy Mordecai, the church's pastor for the last two years says. Through the giving of time and talents, the church has been completely landscaped, including a new prayer garden featuring a fountain.

Like the landscape, Ferris First has been blooming as well.

Straddling I-45 about 20 miles southwest of Dallas, the church serves a town of 2,500. Although small, suburban development has begun to reach the town. "Most Dallas growth has been north, but we are seeing there is the potential of great growth coming south," Rev. Mordecai says. "I feel like God has called us to prepare for that growth and to reach out to new people."

In the wake of Hurricane Rita in 2005, the church helped lead community efforts to meet the needs of evacuees moving along I-45. This church of less than 250 hosted 90 people in the aftermath of the storm and provided food, water, medical care, and showers for over 1,000. "The church looked like an ant hill with all the people coming in and out," Rev. Mordecai remembers.

The experience with Rita has helped move the church to better understand God's call to reach out to all people. Primarily a Caucasian congregation, the church has begun to see increased participation by Ferris's significant Hispanic community. "I've been very surprised how many Hispanic people are coming to worship with us now," Rev. Mordecai says. "Hurricane Rita changed the congregation's hearts in some ways."

Ferris First served about 350 persons enrolled in weekday ministries in 2005 and the building has been a focal point for community activity including service clubs, scout troops, support groups, and recycling. Volunteers also reach out into the community by

providing handyman services, building wheelchair ramps, and donating air conditioners to those unable to afford them.

The church's ministries have expanded gradually but deliberately in large part due to the innovative leadership of the laity. "We try to focus on one new thing each year. When God lays something on their heart, they do it." Rev. Mordecai says. "If it works we embrace it, and if it doesn't we move on to something new."

"I really can't say enough good things about this church. It's truly a blessing to serve here."

FIRST UMC, SAN FERNANDO, CALIFORNIA

The miracle in the Valley

When I came to this church last November, I think we were averaging 60 at worship," Rev. Joseph Choi, the pastor of First UMC, San Fernando, California says. "One of the parents came to me and said my first Sunday here was their family's last. Their teenage daughter was not getting any spiritual support at this church."

Six months later, the teenage daughter and her family are still coming on Sunday, and so are a lot more families. Attendance has more than doubled, and the church has added a youth group and a youth bible study.

"We are investing our resources and time for our children and young people. The three youth members that we had when I came here are inviting their friends, and their friends are inviting their friends," Rev. Choi says.

By focusing on ministry with children and youth in their community, the older members of First UMC have found a cause that unites them. "I think they are seeing the future and hope in this congregation," Rev. Choi says. "There used to be a lot of conflict. Nowadays we don't see that."

"The lay people are very essential for our growth. Each one of the church leaders knew that we had to change. And when we added our contemporary service they were very supportive of the idea. We have a lot of older folks joining our contemporary service now. At the same time they've taken ownership of the church. It's their church. They have also been very open to newcomers and very active in inviting back previous members," Rev. Choi says.

First UMC is working to be an example of God's diverse kingdom: "This Caucasian church is pastored by a Korean American in a Latino community," he says. "I think that as we invest in the lives of young people, especially Latinos, we will raise young people who live godly lives and support their communities."

The church has a daycare, preschool and elementary school, all of which provide education for a minimal price. Support groups, including Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous use the facility for meeting, and the church hosts a group of Sunshine girls. A group is planning a mission trip to Argentina.

And amidst its work of mission and ministry in the community, worship at First UMC is moving people to seek God's love. "A 60-year-old woman was baptized on Easter", Rev. Choi said. "Deeply moved by a recent service, a young Muslim man - who was dragged to a service by his girlfriend - now donates his time and money to maintain the church's website."

With new hope and new growth, Rev. Choi believes this is just a beginning for the church: "In ten years our church will be averaging 500 each Sunday, I believe. We will have a new education building. We will have more students attending our private school and nursery and will have three different services each Sunday. We will have a vibrant Hispanic ministry and more opportunities for short term missions."

"Honestly sometimes I don't know how it's happening, here," Rev. Choi says. "We were the first church in the area, 127 years ago. I think we'll continue to be the first in a spiritual sense, reaching out and making God present in people's lives."

When we give of what God has given us

United Methodists are a giving people. In every corner of the world, in places of plenty and scarcity, United Methodists generously offer what God has given them. We give of our wealth: Over \$200 million to disaster relief and \$475 million in additional benevolent giving. U.S. churches reported over \$4.3 billion given as offerings for the local church ministry, operations, and benevolences for 2005, and an additional \$1 billion raised through capital campaign and memorials. In fact, in 2005, giving adjusted for inflation increased for the fifteenth consecutive year.

In 2005, United Methodist churches across the United States began providing a wealth of information on how they fund their ministries. Figure 2.1 shows income for local church ministry, connectional giving, and other benevolences. Most United Methodists give through pledges (50%), while many others give through identified, but unpledged giving (36%). Loose change offering and income through investments, fundraisers, and all other sources make up the rest. In all, income for church budgets and benevolences account for over \$4.7 billion.

And where does that money go? As Figure 2.2 shows, offering dollars are used in a number of different ways, and adjusted for inflation, the amount continues to increase. Spending on benevolent causes increased over 36% in the last ten years. Over the same period, staff salaries and benefits increased 46%, while expenditures for clergy salaries and connectional clergy support increased a little over 11%.

On average, United Methodists gave about \$85 for benevolent causes in 2005 and over \$710 total per member, an increase of over 45% in the last 10 years. As United Methodists, we know God expects us to share out of our abundance. That means we give dollars, but it also means we give of our time. In 2005, United Methodists in the U.S. volunteered their time to over 600,000 leadership positions in church schools, and over 138,000 United Methodists lent a hand working in over 11,000 United Methodist Volunteer in Mission groups.

*“Having, First,
gained all you can,
and, Secondly
saved all you can,
Then ‘give all you
can.’”*

*Sermon 50 (text from the
1872 edition)*

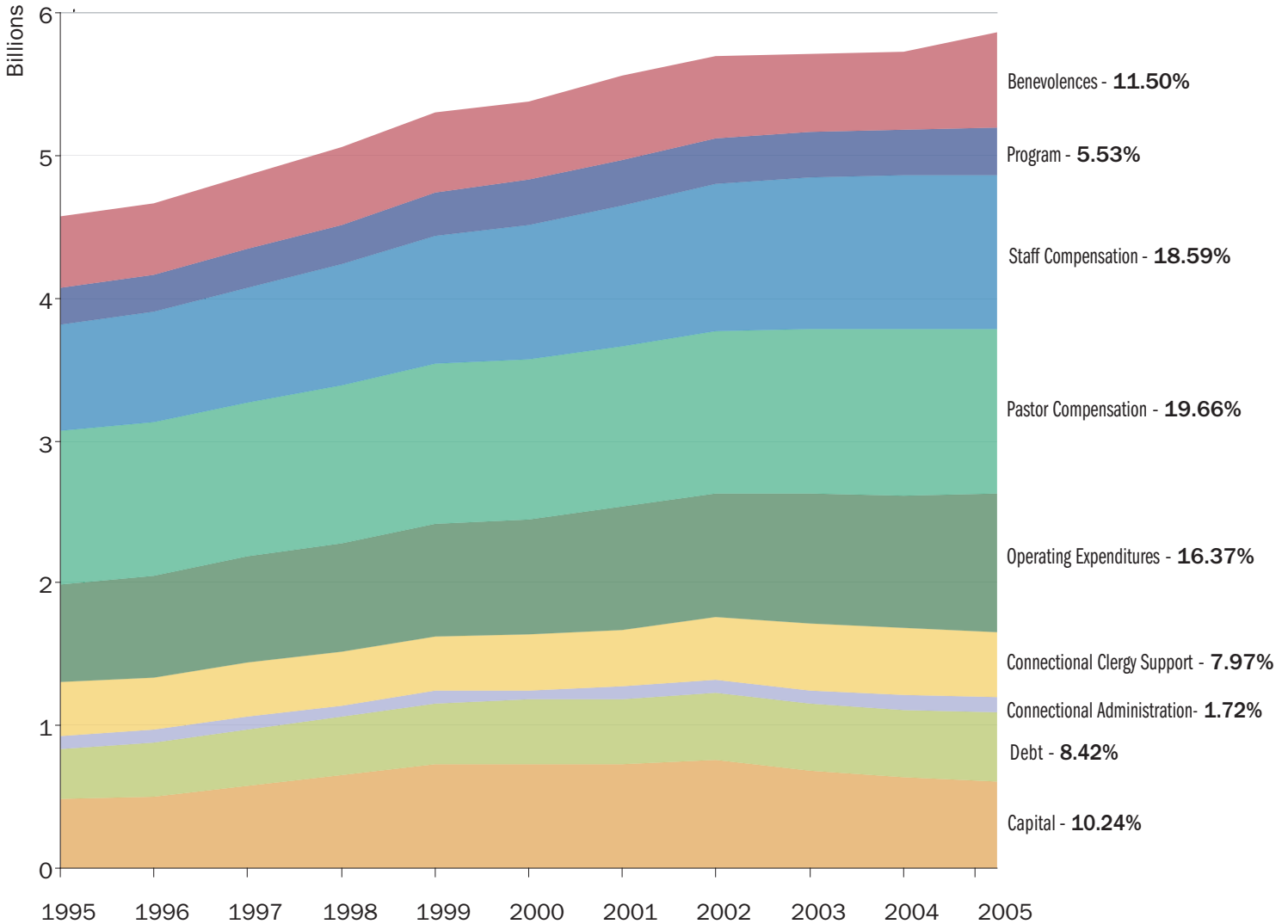
THE USE OF MONEY

by John Wesley

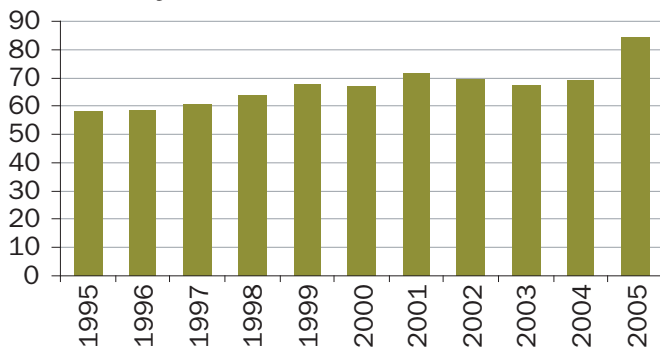
2.1 - Sources of Funding in the Local Church, 2005



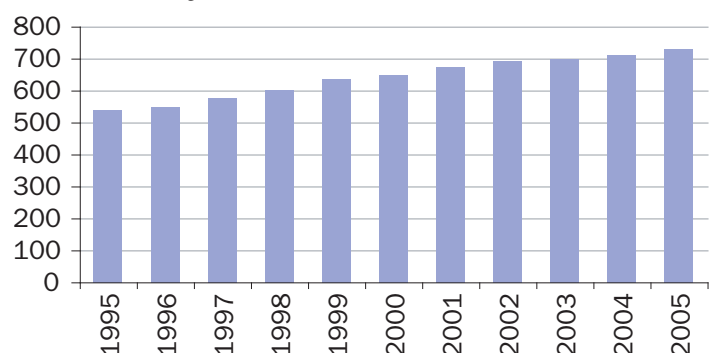
2.2 - Total Local Church Spending in Major Categories of Expenditure, Adjusted for Inflation, 1995-2005



2.3 - Benevolent Spending Per Member, Adjusted for Inflation, 1995-2005



2.4 - Total Spending Per Member, Adjusted for Inflation, 1995-2005



The United Methodist Church is a global church

One out of every three United Methodists lives outside the United States. Around the world, millions have professed their Christian faith through The United Methodist Church in the last ten years.

Figure 3.1 gives a glimpse at the global scope of our church. Nearly 3.5 million of our 11.5 million professing members, and 1.3 million baptized members, live outside the United States.

Over the last ten years, as Figure 3.2 shows, significant growth has occurred in Africa and the Philippines. Indeed, overall membership outside the U.S. has increased 177% in United Methodist conferences existing over the last ten years, and when we include the over 677,000 members in Cote D'Ivoire (who united with The United Methodist Church in 2004), that percentage increases to over 223%.

Over the last decade, baptized membership outside the United States increased nearly 241%. There are 86% more churches outside the United States than there were in 1995, and nearly 83% more ordained clergy.

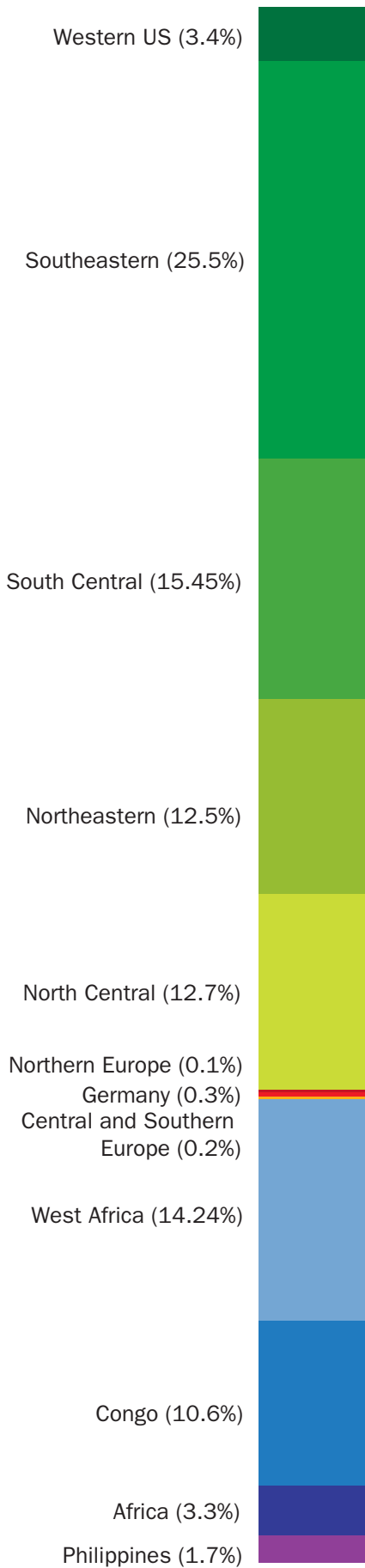
As exciting as these facts are, however, we still have much to learn about the lives of United Methodists and churches outside the United States. With the leadership and vision of our bishops, data collection capabilities outside the United States are expanding. It is our hope that in the coming years, we can more adequately tell the story of our whole church, regardless of geography.

Connectionalism in the United Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in thrust. Our connectionalism is not merely a linking of one charge conference to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships.

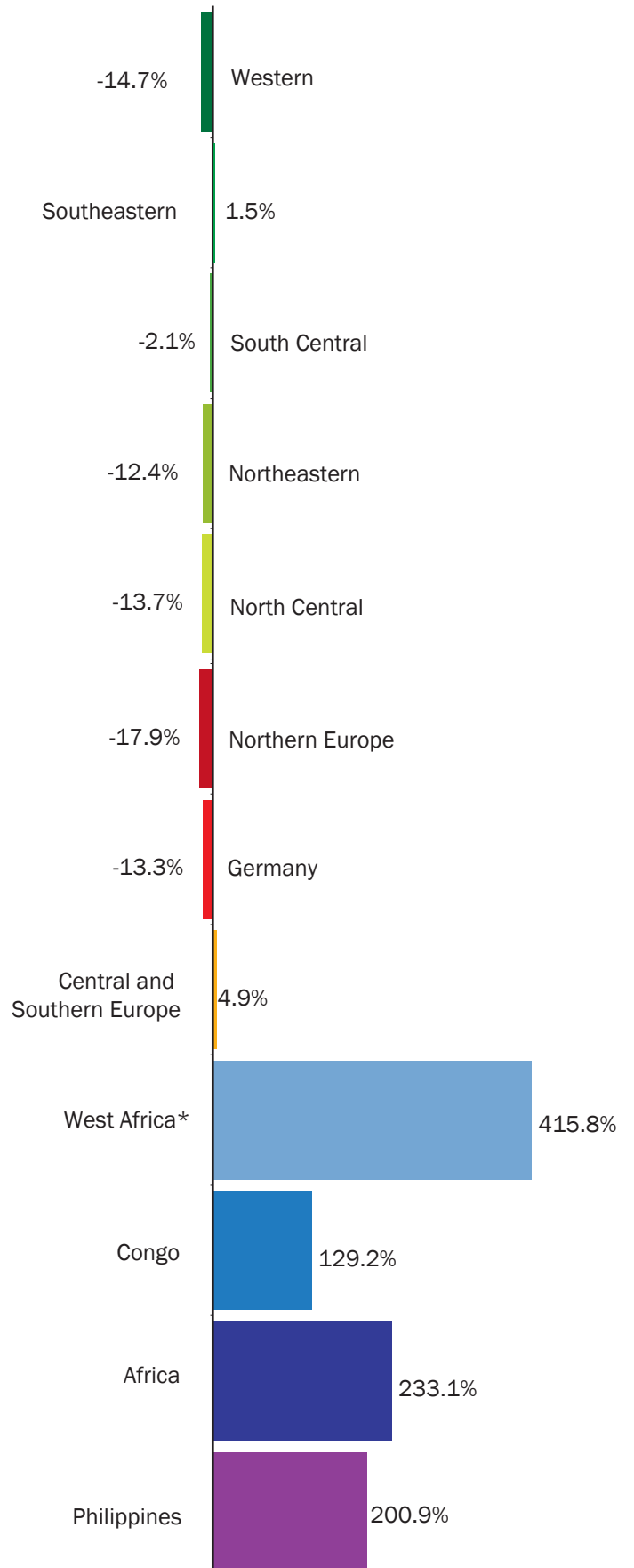
¶ 130

2004 Book of Discipline

3.1 Global Professing Membership by Central or Jurisdictional Conference, 2005



3.2 Percentage Change in Professing Membership by Central or Jurisdictional Conference,



Looking forward to our future together

As United Methodists, we are always challenged to do better. Our commitment can always be stronger, our ministries more relevant, our churches more welcoming. There are sobering realities that confront us: 35% of our churches grew from 2004 to 2005, and 41% of U.S. churches did not report a single member received by profession of faith or restored.

However, the survival of our denomination as an institution is not and should not be our focus. When we ask ourselves the question, "What will God have our church do in our time?" the answer does not lie in local church statistics. Indeed, as we struggle for answers to this important question, we need to look beyond our walls and towards the world that surrounds them.

There is much out there for us to do.

We face an increasingly secular culture. Based upon data provided by 149 of the largest denominations in American Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and other faith traditions, nearly 50% of Americans have no relationship with a religious congregation. At the same time, over 41% of our churches in the United States received no members by profession or restoration of faith in 2005.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 15.9% of the U.S. population - 46.6 million Americans - didn't have health insurance in 2005, and 11.2% of American children had no health coverage. The bureau estimates that 17% of American children live in poverty.

Around the world there are more sobering numbers. An estimated 300 million cases of acute malaria were contracted around the world in 2005, resulting in over 1 million deaths, most of them young children in Africa. UNICEF estimates that over 1 billion children - nearly half of the total global population younger than 18 - live in poverty. UNICEF also estimates that 30,000 children die each day from poverty-related causes.

But amidst those difficult facts, there are reasons for hope and even celebration. Worldwide professing membership has increased by nearly 20% in the last ten years. Giving in the United States has risen 9% in the last five years.

There are other stories of hope as well - stories of changed lives and thriving churches. In this report you've read about just a few examples of churches who asked the question, "What will God have our church do in our time?" and found the Spirit move them in new and exciting directions.

There is a sense that God is leading The United Methodist Church to do something different. Through the leadership of our bishops, the Connectional Table, and our general boards and agencies, The United Methodist Church is starting to write a new chapter of our story. A vision has been cast for our whole church in our time:

+ **Develop new leaders.** Recruit and develop dynamic new leaders, both lay and clergy, who are motivated to lead a church that seeks to achieve nothing less than transformation of the world through making faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

+ **Build congregations.** Leverage and complement an influx of dynamic young leadership to start new faith communities and renew existing ones, resulting in congregations that are energized in the faith and eager to recapture the Wesleyan spirit of authentic Christian movement.

The people of God, who are the church made visible in the world, must convince the world of the reality of the gospel or leave it unconvinced. There can be no evasion or delegation of this responsibility; the church is either faithful as a witness- ing and serving community, or it loses its vitality and its impact on an unbelieving world.

128

2004 Book of Discipline

+ **Ministry with the poor.** Continue the long Wesleyan tradition of ministry with the poor, on a worldwide scale, as an active expression of, and pointed focus for, an authentic Wesleyan movement of Christian discipleship.

+ **Combat the preventable diseases of poverty.** Reverse the greatest damage caused by poverty, which is disease; ease the pain and suffering of the world's poor and those without access to affordable health care as a powerful, tangible method of witnessing to God's desire that all should experience life abundantly and flourish; and to create a sense of a great uniting purpose for United Methodists the world over.

As these priorities are developed and implemented, our United Methodist Church will have new and specific means of meeting the challenges we face as a global church.

But the real work of our denomination, and the place where lives are changed, remains in the hands of our churches and the faithful people who call them home. The future for our church depends upon the leadership, vision and hard work of each of us - lay and clergy. How do we remain a faithful people? What will God have us do in our time?

Like the wind of hope over the earth in the creation story, the spirit of God is moving through us and creating a wind of change - a transformational change that inspires us as we, the people of The United Methodist Church, move forward into a future with hope. This is our story.

The Office of Analysis and Research of the General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church would like to thank the thousands of committed United Methodists who report, collect, and audit the data that makes this report possible. Your tireless and conscientious effort is a great gift.

For more information on this report and the analytical, research, and consulting services provided by our office, please contact us at research@gcfa.org.



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