

# The Other Half of Health: Patterns in Declining Churches

Cynthia Woolever

Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford Seminary

woolever@hartsem.edu

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## Congregational Vitality Measure

Subscales	Survey Items in the Measure
Growing Spiritually	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Growing in faith through participation in activities of their church</li> <li>2. Spend time at least a few times a week in private devotional activities</li> <li>3. Feel their spiritual needs are being met in the congregation</li> <li>4. Report Bible study and prayer groups as one of three most valued aspects of their congregation</li> <li>5. Report prayer ministry of the congregation as one of three most valued aspects of their congregation</li> </ol>
Meaningful Worship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always or usually experience God's presence during services</li> <li>2. Always or usually experience inspiration during services</li> <li>3. Always or usually experience joy during services</li> <li>4. Always or usually experience awe during services</li> <li>5. Rarely experience boredom during services</li> <li>6. Rarely experience frustration during services</li> <li>7. Report sermons, preaching, or homilies as one of three most valued aspects of their congregation</li> <li>8. Report worship services/activities of the congregation help them with everyday living to a great extent</li> </ol>
Participating in the Congregation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attend worship services usually every week or more often</li> <li>2. Involved in one or more small groups (e.g., Sunday school, prayer or Bible study, discussion groups, fellowships)</li> <li>3. Hold one or more leadership roles in the congregation</li> <li>4. Often participate in decision-making in the congregation</li> <li>5. Give 5% or more of their net income to the congregation</li> </ol>
Having a Sense of Belonging	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participate more in the activities of the church than 2 years ago</li> <li>2. Most of closest friends are part of same congregation</li> <li>3. Have a strong sense of belonging to the church that is growing</li> </ol>

Caring for Children and Youth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are satisfied with what is offered for children and youth</li> <li>2. Report ministry for children or youth as one of three most valued aspects of their congregation</li> <li>3. Percentage of children and youth (living at home) who worship in same congregation</li> </ol>
Focusing on the Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involved in social service/advocacy groups through the church</li> <li>2. Involved in social service/advocacy groups in their community</li> <li>3. Contribute to charitable community organizations</li> <li>4. Report wider community care or social justice emphasis as one of three most valued aspects of their congregation</li> <li>5. Report openness to social diversity as one of three most valued aspects of their congregation</li> <li>6. Worked with others to try to solve a community problem</li> <li>7. Voted in the last presidential election</li> </ol>
Sharing Faith	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involved in evangelistic activities in the congregation</li> <li>2. Feel at ease talking about their faith; seek opportunities to do so</li> <li>3. Invited to worship in the last year a friend or relative who does not currently attend</li> <li>4. Report reaching those who do not attend church as one of three most valued aspect of their congregation</li> </ol>
Welcoming New Worshipers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percentage of worshipers who began attending this congregation in the last 5 years</li> </ol>
Empowering Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feel the congregation's leaders encourage them to find and use their gifts and skills to a great extent</li> <li>2. Feel the minister, pastor, or priest takes into account the ideas of worshipers to a great extent</li> <li>3. Describe the leadership style of the pastor, minister, or priest as one that inspires people to take action</li> <li>4. Strongly feel there is a good match between the congregation and the minister, pastor, or priest</li> </ol>
Looking to the Future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feel the congregation has a clear vision, goals, or direction for its ministry and mission and they are strongly committed to them</li> <li>2. Have a sense of excitement about their congregation's future</li> <li>3. Feel the congregation is currently moving in new directions</li> <li>4. Feel the congregation is always ready to try something new</li> </ol>

Source: C. Woolever and D. Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary: Ten Strengths of U.S. Congregations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004)

**Table 1**  
**Mean Scores by Faith Group:**  
**Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and Evangelical Protestant Congregations**

	<b>Catholic Parishes</b>  (n=100)	<b>Mainline Protestant Churches</b>  (n=180)	<b>Conservative Protestant Churches</b>  (N=129)	<b>F</b>  (df =1/408)	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Congregational Demography Measures:</b>					
Average age of worshipers	52.51	55.62	51.08	14.22	***
Average income of worshipers	\$43,316	\$48,100	\$37,254	41.19	***
Percent of worshipers who are white	65.54 %	86.47 %	79.75 %	11.49	***
Percent of worshipers who are female	65.02 %	63.98 %	60.67 %	10.48	***
<b>Congregational Characteristics:</b>					
Size of the congregation	716	125	123	72.97	***
Congregational Growth	4.71	4.67	4.68	.23	n.s.
<b>Local Institutional Measures – Key informant:</b>					
Conflict in previous 5 years	8.50 %	35.09 %	32.52 %	6.06	**
Financial situation	2.13	2.34	2.49	1.92	n.s.
<b>Dependent Variable:</b>					
Congregational Vitality	36.44	39.93	49.00	122.88	***

\*\* p < .01    \*\*\* p < .001

**Table 2**

**Logistic Regression by Faith Group:  
Dependent Variable = 20<sup>th</sup> Percentile or Lower on Congregational Vitality**

	<b>Catholic</b>		<b>Mainline Protestant</b>		<b>Conservative Protestant</b>	
	Logit (Exp (B))	Sig.	Logit (Exp (B))	Sig.	Logit (Exp (B))	Sig.
<b>Congregational Demography Measures:</b>						
Average age of worshipers	.167 (1.181)	n.s.	.144 (1.155)	*	.052 (1.053)	n.s.
Average income of worshipers	.603 (1.828)	n.s.	.564 (1.757)	n.s.	-.171 (.843)	n.s.
Percent of worshipers who are white	.002 (1.002)	n.s.	.003 (1.003)	n.s.	.029 (1.030)	n.s.
Percent of worshipers who are female	-.221 (.801)	n.s.	-.110 (.896)	*	.029 (1.030)	n.s.
<b>Congregational Characteristics:</b>						
Size of the congregation	-.001 (.999)	n.s.	.000 (1.000)	n.s.	.001 (1.001)	n.s.
Log of congregational growth	2.541 (12.698)	n.s.	-4.761 (.009)	**	.255 (1.291)	n.s.
<b>Institutional Measures—Key Informant:</b>						
Conflict in previous 5 years	.700 (2.014)	n.s.	-1.602 (.201)	*	-.551 (.576)	n.s.
Financial situation	-.380 (.684)	n.s.	-2.288 (.102)	***	-.340 (.712)	n.s.
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.338		.622		.174	
Model Chi-Square (df)	9.483 (8)	n.s.	77.035 (8)	***	18.636 (8)	*
Percent of cases classified correctly	86.3%		87.7%		81.1%	

\* p < .05    \*\* p < .01    \*\*\* p < .001

