

# 2015 SURVEY of NORTH AMERICA'S LARGEST CHURCHES

## Worship

Please estimate the **average attendance at all total regular weekend worship services (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) for the last several years**. If you have more than one weekend worship service, estimate the attendance for all weekend services combined (for all physical campuses).

### AVERAGE ATTENDANCE

\_\_\_\_\_ 2014                      \_\_\_\_\_ 2012                      \_\_\_\_\_ 2010  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2013                      \_\_\_\_\_ 2011                      \_\_\_\_\_ 2009

2. How many persons (including children) **regularly participate** in worship or other religious activities in your congregation? **Mean 4710 Median 3800 Total in any way Mean 2678 Median 2350**

3. Do you have more than one weekend worship weekend service? 99 %Yes 1 % No

If **YES**, are all the services of the same type or style, or do they vary? 51 % All the same 49 % Vary

4. How many total weekend worship services do you offer at all your locations? Mean 4 Median 3

5. What is the approximate seating capacity where **your largest worship** service is held? Mean 823 Median 750

6. Do you hold services at **satellite (off campus) locations**? 36 % Yes 47 %No 17 % Not yet, but thinking about it.

**IF YES**, How many locations do you have? Mean 2.8 Median 2.0

Do you consider yourself a "multisite church?" 24 % Yes 64 % No 13 % We are, but we don't use that term  
What spaces are your multisite services located in?

7. Do you offer an online campus worship experience (i.e., more than just watching sermon video stream)?  
26 % Yes 59 %No 15 % Not yet, but thinking about it.

8. IF YES, roughly how many unique individuals participate in online worship on an average week? mean 182

9. IF YES, what year did you begin offering your online campus? Mean 2012 Median 2013

10. IF YES, do you have staff whose primary task is to serve the online campus? 34 % Yes 66 % No How many? 1

11. How often are the following a part of your congregation's **regular weekend worship services**?

| <b>✓ ONE ON EACH LINE</b>                          | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|--|-------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|
| Organ .....  | 64 %  | 12 %   | 4 %       | 8 %   | 12 %   |
| Rehearsed Choir led by a staff member              | 39 %  | 11%    | 9 %       | 16 %  | 25 %   |
| Video segments shown during worship                | 3 %   | 6 %    | 26 %      | 38 %  | 27 %   |
| Image magnification projection of the preacher     | 31 %  | 12 %   | 7 %       | 5 %   | 46 %   |
| Reading or performing by children or youth .....   | 13 %  | 49 %   | 25 %      | 12 %  | 1 %    |
| Interactive use of social media during the sermon. | 24 %  | 37 %   | 28 %      | 8 %   | 3 %    |
| Communion .....                                    | 1 %   | 10 %   | 33 %      | 37 %  | 19 %   |

12. How well do these words describe your church's largest weekend worship service?

| <b>✓ ONE ON EACH LINE</b>                   | Not at all | Slightly | Somewhat | Quite Well | Very Well |
|---|------------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|
| Reverent .....                              | 5 %        | 19 %     | 43 %     | 27 %       | 7 %       |
| Filled with a sense of God's presence ..... | 0 %        | 1 %      | 8 %      | 55 %       | 36 %      |
| Thought-provoking .....                     | 0 %        | 1 %      | 15 %     | 47 %       | 38 %      |
| Nurturing of people's faith .....           | 0 %        | 1 %      | 8 %      | 48 %       | 43 %      |
| Innovative .....                            | 1 %        | 13 %     | 34 %     | 32 %       | 21 %      |
| Joyful.....                                 | 0 %        | 1 %      | 10 %     | 45 %       | 44 %      |
| Inspirational.....                          | 0 %        | 3 %      | 7 %      | 45 %       | 46 %      |

## Programs

1. Does your congregation have any of the following selected programs or activities? **If YES**, how much emphasis is given to the activity?

|   | No   | Yes           |                   |                               |
|---|------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
|   |      | Some emphasis | A lot of emphasis | Specialty of the congregation |
| <b>✓ ONE ON EACH LINE</b>   |      |               |                   |                               |
| Prayer/meditation groups or spiritual retreats .....                    | 9 %  | 56 %          | 32 %              | 3 %                           |
| Bible, scripture or theological studies (other than Sunday school)..... | 1 %  | 16 %          | 61 %              | 21 %                          |
| Fellowships or other social activities.....                             | 2 %  | 41 %          | 49 %              | 7 %                           |
| Recovery ministries .....   | 16 % | 46 %          | 26 %              | 11 %                          |
| Music program .....   | 15 % | 26 %          | 34 %              | 23 %                          |
| Community service activities or helping those in need.....              | 0 %  | 16 %          | 43 %              | 41 %                          |
| Young adult (18 – 34) activities or programs.....                       | 8 %  | 51 %          | 33 %              | 8 %                           |
| Youth (13-17) activities or programs.....                               | 0 %  | 9%            | 57 %              | 34 %                          |
| International/Global mission efforts .....                              | 5 %  | 21 %          | 41 %              | 34 %                          |

2. Does your congregation intentionally use informal space (atrium/café/coffee shop) during services where persons can participate on the margins while listening to the sermon or electronically viewing the service?

60 % Yes 40 % No

**If Yes**, do you assign staff to monitor and minister to these persons? 38 % Yes 62 % No

3. Do you have age-graded worship experiences simultaneous to the adult service? 74 % Yes 26 % No

4. In addition to worship services, do you have formal set-aside “second hour” times specifically for “Sunday School” or religious education **for children**? 60 % Yes 40 % No

And/or **for adults** (excluding small group ministry)? 55 % Yes 45 % No **IF NO to both, skip to question 7.**

5. Approximately what percent of the congregation (including adults and children) regularly participate in “Sunday School” or religious education program/classes (excluding small group ministry)? Percent **Mean 40 Median 30**

6. Of your regular Sunday School/religious education participants, please estimate the **PERCENT** who are:

|     |                                |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| 20% | Senior adults, age 65 or older |
| 10% | Adult, age 35-64               |
| 10% | Young adults, age 18-34        |
| 15% | Youth, age 13-17               |
| 25% | Children and preteen 0 – 12    |

7. Many churches make **use of small groups** for fellowship, spiritual nurture, and religious education (in addition to church school or mission groups, etc.). Which statement best describes the situation in your congregation?

1% Such groups do not exist within our church

22% A few such groups meet, but are not central to our church’s program

77% We have many such groups; it’s central to our strategy of Christian nurture and spiritual formation

8. What percentage of the adult congregation is typically involved in a small group? Mean 41 Median 40

9. What is the average size (number of participants) of your typical small group? Median 12

10. How much does your congregation emphasize the following *personal and family religious practices*?

| <i>✓ ONE ON EACH LINE</i>   | Not at all | A little | Some | Quite a bit | A lot |
|---|------------|----------|------|-------------|-------|
| Personal prayer, meditation, scripture study, devotions or other spiritual practices .....  | 0%         | 3%       | 14%  | 46%         | 37%   |
| Talking with friends and other members of the congregation about one's faith (that is, about religious beliefs, values and commitments) ..... | 1%         | 6%       | 24%  | 43%         | 26%   |
| Inviting unchurched family/friends to church events   | 1%         | 7%       | 15%  | 41%         | 36%   |
| Tithing (giving 10% or more of one's income) .....  | 4%         | 19%      | 36%  | 26%         | 15%   |
| Parents talking with their children about faith .....   | 0%         | 1%       | 31%  | 37%         | 31%   |
| Living out one's faith in all aspects of one's daily life – work, family, civic engagements, etc .....  | 0%         | 1%       | 8%   | 39%         | 52%   |

11. During the past 12 months, has your congregation been involved in any of the following ecumenical or interfaith activities?

| <i>✓ ALL THAT APPLY ON EACH LINE</i>      | No  | Yes                         |                             |
|---|-----|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|   |     | With other Christian groups | With other faith traditions |
| Worship services .....                    | 54% | 29%                         | 8%                          |
| Educational or fellowship activities..... | 47% | 35%                         | 10%                         |
| Community service activities .....        | 20% | 49%                         | 25%                         |

**Mission and Identity**

1. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? *✓ ONE ON EACH LINE*

| <i>Our congregation:</i>   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral/ Unsure | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------------|-------|----------------|
| Has a clear mission and purpose.....   | 0%                | 2%       | 4%              | 27%   | 68%            |
| Is quite different from other congregations in our community .....                   | 1%                | 4%       | 13%             | 50%   | 33%            |
| Is good at incorporating newcomers into the congregational life.....                 | 0%                | 5%       | 23%             | 54%   | 19%            |
| Is spiritually vital and alive .....   | 0%                | 0%       | 7%              | 60%   | 33%            |
| Is working for social justice . . . . .  | 1%                | 10%      | 37%             | 37%   | 15%            |
| Is caring and supportive of members in need . . . . .                                | 0%                | 0%       | 2%              | 60%   | 37%            |
| Is willing to change to meet new challenges.....                                     | 1%                | 2%       | 15%             | 48%   | 34%            |
| Is intentional about maximizing the number and variety of small groups we offer..... | 2%                | 6%       | 21%             | 46%   | 25%            |
| Uses Internet and social media tools effectively....                                 | 0%                | 12%      | 17%             | 57%   | 15%            |

2. What is your congregation's specific denomination or faith group? (e.g., Church of Christ, Southern Baptist, United Methodist, Nondenominational/independent, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is your church also part of a **Network, Fellowship, or Association of Churches**? 54% Yes 46% No  
**IF YES**, What is the name(s) of this/these Group(s) or Organization(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

4. If your church is **Nondenominational or Independent**, was it founded that way? 74% Yes 26% No

5. Has your congregation seriously considered changing denominations or becoming independent in the last 10 years?

- 84% No
- 4% Changed denomination affiliation
- 3% Went independent
- 2% Seriously considered but did not switch denominations
- 4% Seriously considered but did not go independent
- 3% Became dually affiliated

## Participants

1. Of your participants,

Please estimate the **PERCENT** who are:

|     |                                |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| 10% | Senior adults, age 65 or older |
| 20% | Adults, age 50-64              |
| 20% | Adults, age 35-49              |
| 15% | Young adults, age 18-34        |
| 10% | Youth, age 13-17               |
| 15% | Children and preteen (0 – 12)  |

**100% Total**

2. Of your participants, please estimate the **PERCENT** who are:

- \_\_\_ White
- \_\_\_ Black or African American
- \_\_\_ Asian
- \_\_\_ Hispanic or Latino/a
- \_\_\_ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- \_\_\_ American Indian/Alaskan
- \_\_\_ Biracial/multiracial

3. Which label comes closest to describing the theological outlook of the majority of your regularly participating adults?

- 2% Fundamentalist
- 1.4% Pentecostal
- 12% Moderate
- 0% New Age
- 11% Missional
- 68% Evangelical
- 1.4% Charismatic
- 1.4% Liberal
- 2% Seeker
- 0% Other

4. Overall, to what extent are your regular participants involved in the congregation's programs, committees and service projects outside of worship?

- 0% Not at all
- 4% A little
- 27% Some
- 59% Quite a bit
- 10% A lot

5. Overall, to what extent are your congregation's regular participants involved in recruiting new people?

- 1% Not at all
- 15% A little
- 49% Some
- 29% Quite a bit
- 7% A lot

6. Which of the following best describes your congregation's approach to how members hold each other accountable for active participation and faithful living?

- 7% This is really not something we emphasize
- 30% We have no formal way of monitoring and doing this, but members *occasionally* do it informally
- 31% We have no formal way of monitoring and doing this, but it *regularly* happens informally
- 22% This is something we say is important and we have mechanisms in place for it, but we are really rather passive about doing it.
- 10% It is an important and regular practice of our congregation.

7. How easy or difficult is it for your congregation to recruit people for volunteer leadership roles (for example, serving on governing boards or committees, or leading small groups)?

- 25% We have no problem recruiting volunteer leaders
- 71% Recruiting volunteer leaders is a continual challenge, but we eventually find enough people to serve
- 4% We often can't find enough people who are willing to serve

8. Do you have formal membership? 91% Yes, and we call it (membership, partnership, etc) 9% No

9. What one type of marketing (direct mail, billboards, etc.) is most effective? \_\_\_\_\_

10. During the past 5 years has your congregation experienced any disagreements or conflicts?  **ALL THAT APPLY**

- 25% Yes, but it/they were not serious
- 29% Yes, and in at least one instance, some people left
- 10% Yes, and in at least one instance, some people withheld donations
- 14% Yes, and in at least one instance, a pastor or staff member left

11. How important is your denominational or nondenominational identity and affiliation to the majority of your members?  
 26% Not important at all    39% Not very important    21% Relatively important    12% Very important    3% DK

**Young Adult Ministries (Ages 18-34)**

1. How high of a priority is it to engage young adults in your congregation?  
 19% It is a top priority  
 41% It is a main priority, along with a few other main priorities  
 36% It is a priority, but other priorities are more immediate  
 4% It is not really a priority
2. Has the number of young adult participating in your congregation increased or decreased in the past 3 years?  
 68% Increased    26% Stayed about the same    6% Decreased
3. Of the young adults who participate in your congregation, please estimate the *percent* who are:  

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| 25% Single                         |
| 5% Living together but not married |
| 20% Married without children       |
| 40% Married with children          |

|   |
|---|
| 90% Attend worship  |
| 50% Participate in programs and activities other than worship |
| 10% In positions of leadership                                |
4. How many full-time equivalent paid staff do you have whose specific responsibility includes programming or engaging young adults? Mean 4 Median 1
5. Of the young adults who participate in your congregation, please estimate the *percent* who were drawn from:  
 46% Families in the congregation    26% Nearby companies/ places of employment  
 6% Nearby military bases    23% Nearby colleges or universities

6. Does your congregation have any of the following groups, programs or activities that are specifically intended for young adults? If YES, how much emphasis is given to the each?

| <i>✓ ONE ON EACH LINE</i>                                | No  | Some emphasis | Yes<br>A lot of emphasis | Specialty of the congregation |
|--|-----|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Worship service(s) specifically for young adults         | 57% | 18%           | 18%                      | 7%                            |
| Prayer/meditation groups or spiritual retreats .....     | 46% | 38%           | 13%                      | 4%                            |
| Scripture study groups/classes .....                     | 14% | 37%           | 39%                      | 10%                           |
| Theology or contemporary issue study groups/classes      | 44% | 37%           | 16%                      | 3%                            |
| Fellowships groups .....                                 | 12% | 37%           | 39%                      | 12%                           |
| Singles groups.....                                      | 50% | 35%           | 11%                      | 5%                            |
| Pre-engagement dating groups/classes .....               | 60% | 29%           | 10%                      | 1%                            |
| Engagement/pre-marital groups/classes .....              | 37% | 39%           | 19%                      | 5%                            |
| Marriage groups/classes .....                            | 22% | 45%           | 28%                      | 6%                            |
| Parenting groups/classes .....                           | 17% | 49%           | 24%                      | 10%                           |
| Recreational, sports or other physical activity groups.. | 34% | 46%           | 13%                      | 8%                            |
| Community service activities .....                       | 16% | 39%           | 23%                      | 22%                           |
| Mission trips/international travel .....                 | 22% | 32%           | 28%                      | 19%                           |
| Social justice engagement.....                           | 45% | 32%           | 15%                      | 8%                            |
| Web or social media sites.....                           | 27% | 34%           | 31%                      | 9%                            |

## Leadership

Please describe the *pastor* or *principal leader* of your congregation (if co-pastors, answer only about your oldest co-pastor).

1. Age Median 53\_Years old Male 98.5% Female 1.5% White 96% African American 2% Latino 1% Other 1%

2. This person became the principal leader in what year? 1988

3. Did the church's most dramatic growth occur during the tenure of this pastor? 69% Yes 31% No

4. What was the approximate worship attendance (not membership), when your senior/lead pastor became that position in your church? Mean 700 Median 700

5. What Board format does your church have to guide the congregation and assist the senior pastor?

89% An internal board of members 1% An external board 4% A mixed board of members & external persons  
2% Both an internal and an external board 4% A different board configuration, please specify

6. How would you rate efforts at planning for the senior pastor's eventual succession from this church, relative to where you feel that planning should be at this point?

25% Poor 22% Fair 23% Good 21% Very Good 10% Outstanding

7. Do you offer formal internships for promising lay leaders or pastors-in-training? 69% Yes 31% No

If yes, what is the approximately length of internships? 12 months

If yes, Are these internships done in conjunction with a seminary? 30% Yes 70% No

## History, Location and Finances

1. In what year was your congregation officially founded? Mean 1964 Median 1964

2. In what **Region** is your "main campus" **physically located**? NE – 10% S – 44% NC – 25% W – 22%

3. What was the approximate dollar amount of your congregation's total budget for 2014? (Do not count funds for capital improvements or primary/secondary schools) Mean 2.4 million Median 2.1 million

4. What percent of the 2014 budget was dedicated to all mission activity? % Mean 16% Median 15%

5. What percent of the 2014 budget was dedicated specifically to international mission efforts? Mean 7.5% Median 6%

6. How would you describe your congregation's financial health today and five years ago?

| Today                    | 2010                      |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 0% In serious difficulty | 8% In serious difficulty  |
| 5% In some difficulty    | 14% In some difficulty    |
| 24% Tight, but we manage | 34% Tight, but we managed |
| 39% Good                 | 32% Good                  |
| 33% Excellent            | 12% Excellent             |

## Vitality and Change

1. Which of the following best describes your congregation? (check one)

- 2% We need to be changing to increase our vitality and viability, but the congregation does not seem to realize it and/or doesn't want to make the necessary changes
- 14% We are slowly changing, but not fast nor significantly enough
- 9% We are fortunate enough to be doing pretty well without having to think about significant changes
- 53% We are doing pretty well making the changes we need to make
- 22% We pride ourselves on our embrace and success in constantly changing to improve and adapt.

2. **If your congregation is having or had difficulty changing**, to what extent has each of the following made it **more difficult** for your congregation to change? *√ ONE ON EACH LINE*

|  | Not at all | A little | Some | Quite a bit | A lot |
|--|------------|----------|------|-------------|-------|
| Leaders' not wanting to be too far ahead of the congregation.....  | 37%        | 30%      | 18%  | 12%         | 3%    |
| Lack of unifying and energizing vision or direction.....   | 38%        | 29%      | 18%  | 9%          | 6%    |
| Lack of workable, concrete models that provide realistic, but vitalizing alternatives to the status quo... | 34%        | 22%      | 33%  | 8%          | 2%    |
| Lack of resources – particularly of energy and finances....  | 21%        | 30%      | 33%  | 12%         | 4%    |
| The strong resistance from some members .....  | 31%        | 47%      | 16%  | 5%          | 1%    |
| Other _____  |            |          |      |             |       |

3. How important are/were each of the following in helping your congregation change?

| <i>√ ONE ON EACH LINE</i>  | Did <b>NOT</b><br>Try or Use | Not at all | A little | Some | Quite a bit | A lot |
|--|------------------------------|------------|----------|------|-------------|-------|
|  |                              | 41%        | 12%      | 4%   | 4%          | 2%    |
| Assistance of an outside consultant or program .....   | 17%                          | 21%        | 26%      | 21%  | 12%         | 3%    |
| Leadership with training and expertise in leading change.....  | 15%                          | 9%         | 15%      | 30%  | 21%         | 11%   |
| Familiarity with concrete models that provided realistic, vitalizing alternatives to the status quo..... | 11%                          | 12%        | 16%      | 31%  | 24%         | 6%    |
| Rigorous assessment and planning study of the congregation and its community .....                       | 11%                          | 11%        | 26%      | 22%  | 21%         | 10%   |
| A crisis or opportunity that left no choice but to change.....   | 21%                          | 43%        | 13%      | 10%  | 6%          | 7%    |
| Leadership Network products or programs.....   | 19%                          | 19%        | 27%      | 25%  | 8%          | 2%    |
| Other _____  |                              |            |          |      |             |       |