



Horizons of Mission

**Challenges
and
Opportunities**

“The Power and Pitfalls of the Past”

- Purpose
- Goal
- Format
- Topics

Topics:



- Power and Pitfalls of the Past
- Knowing our Community
- Fresh Expressions: The Church in the PostModern World



- **The past (our perceptions of the past) have a great deal to do with...**
 - who we understand ourselves to be
 - what we are capable of
 - what we will do
- **How we understand our history determines our identity and influences our present and future decisions.**



What are some defining events in
history of our country?

Defining Events for US

1600-1776	Colonization by English Plantations
1620-1787	Settlement by Religious Refugees
1641/61- 1808/65	Import and traffic of African Slaves
1776	Revolution and Founding of USA
1800s	Westward Expansion into Frontier
late 1700s, late 1800s	Religious Revival

1840s-1950s	European Immigration
1860s	Civil War
1910s-1940s	Involvement in WW I and WW II
1930s	Great Depression
1960s-1970s	The Sixties
1960s-today	Post-Modern Era



How have these events made
America the country it is today?

Effects on US Identity

Colonization by English Planters	Entrepreneurs; indentured Servants
Settlement by Religious Refugees	Religious Plurality
Import and traffic of African Slaves	Legacy of racism; black underclass
Revolution and Founding of USA	Constitutional republicanism, rebellion against tyranny, external authority
Expansion into Frontier	Land of bounty, Manifest Destiny, exploitation of Native Americans
Religious Revivals	High religiosity; revivalism; hellfire preaching, temperance, abolition, and women's rights

European Immigration	Ellis Island: "give me your humbled masses"; social pluralism; urbanization
Civil War	reflected regional differences; tested limits of federal government and national identity
Involvement in WWI and II	end of isolationism; involvement in world affairs as (super) power; hero of WWII
Great Depression	speculation and unregulated markets ruined economy; led to Keynesian economics, Democratic party rule, and institution of Social Gospel
The Sixties	Civil Rights Movement; identity politics; anti-war protests; Hippies; sexual revolution; Watergate; disillusionment with (state) authority; rock-n-roll; counter-culture
Post-Modern Era	Corporatization, Globalization, Digital Age, Environmental Anxiety, Counter-Terrorism, post-Christendom, ideological pluralism

Exercise:



- Share with your neighbor a memory or two from when you were growing up that is important to you.
- Explain how you think that memory has affected who you are today.



- The Past can be power or pitfall for the future.
- What determines the effect of the past is not whether memory is positive or negative, but rather *how one relates to the memory*.



- **Role of memory is best seen when in crisis.**
- **When our situation becomes difficult, we naturally long for the time in our past when things were better, “made sense.”**

Israelite Nostalgia



“So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD burned among them. Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, ‘Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this *manna* to look at!’”

Numbers 11:3-6

Exercise:



- Remembering your entire experience at Good Shepherd, when were you most “alive,” most motivated, and excited about your involvement?
- What made it exciting? Who else was involved?
- What happened? What was your part? Describe what you felt.



- Difference between way things should be (*ideal*) & way things are (*reality*), gives rise to anxiety.
- Anxiety (*dis-ease*) generates desire to return to “the way we were” as fast as possible.

Question:



What characterizes the “ideal” church?

- Growing membership and budget
- Many children in Sunday school, youth in youth group
- Regular baptisms
- Protected
- Gentility
- Conflict-Free
- Church in 1950s/ 60s!

Reality for Mainlines Today



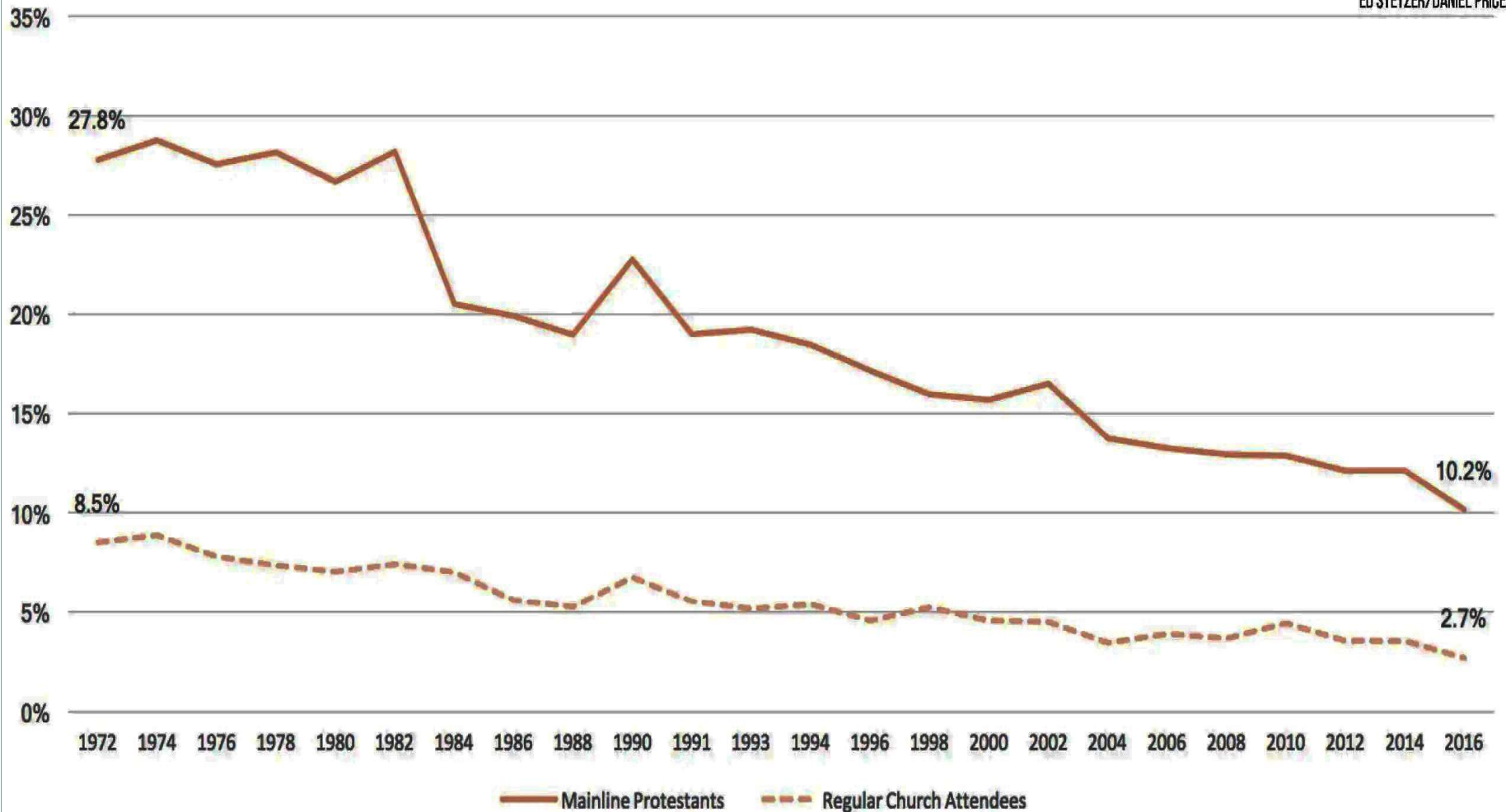
- From 1958-2018, mainline church membership dropped by more than 30% to roughly 15.9mil—5% of all American adults.*
- From 1998-2008, there was a 22% drop in the percentage of adults attending mainline congregations who have children under the age of 18 living in their home.
- In 2014, nearly 45% of mainline church attendees were single.
- From 1998-2008, volunteerism dropped 21%; adult Sunday school participation decreased 17%.
- Mainline churches today have lowest retention rates—45%
- Average age of mainline Protestant is 50 (US 47).
- Pastors on average remain with a congregation for four years, twice that length for non-mainline church leaders.

Among Americans: Mainline affiliation and regular church attendance



BILLY GRAHAM CENTER
at Wheaton College

ED STETZER/DANIEL PRICE



Membership Decline in Mainline Protestant Churches: 1960-2018

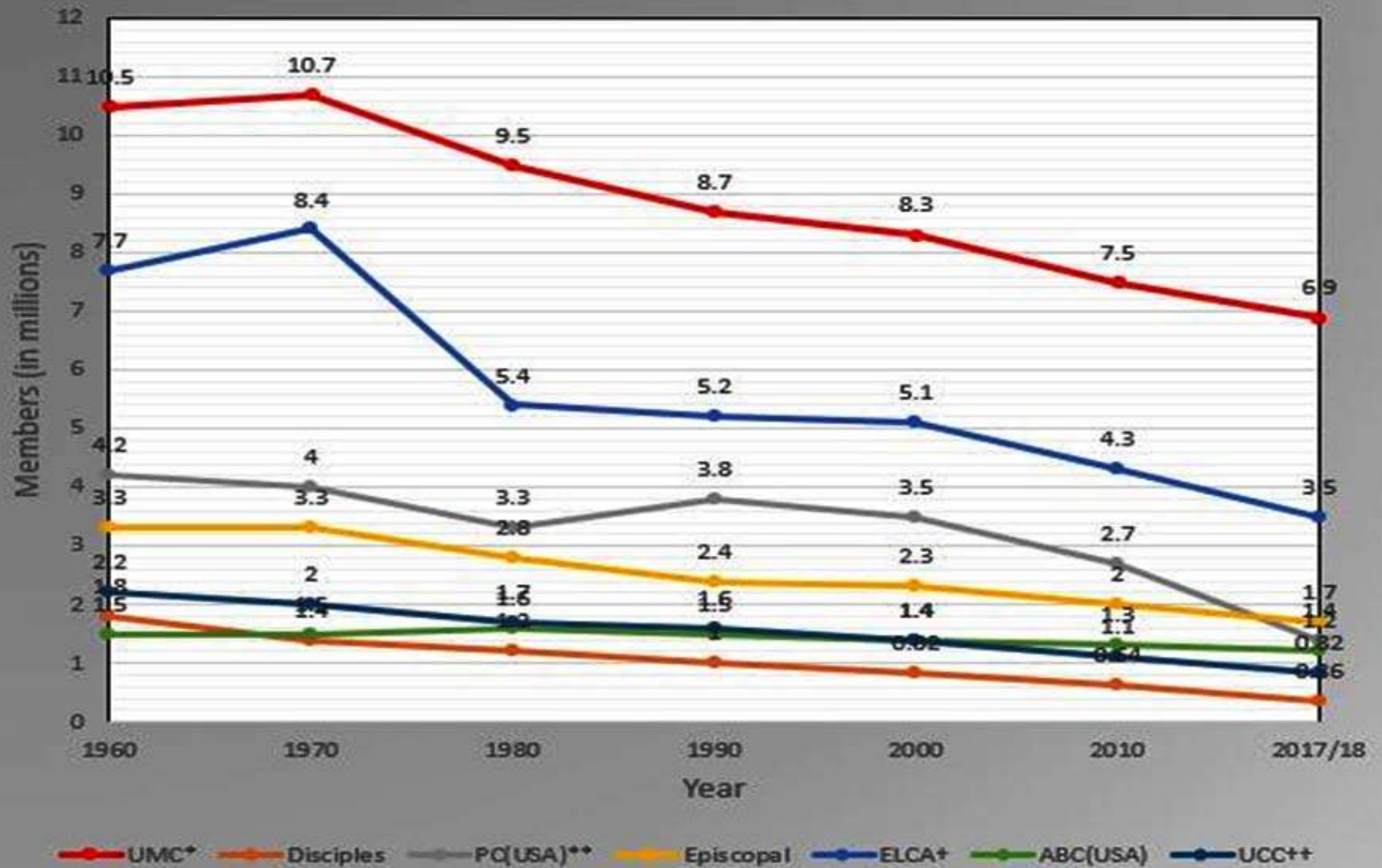
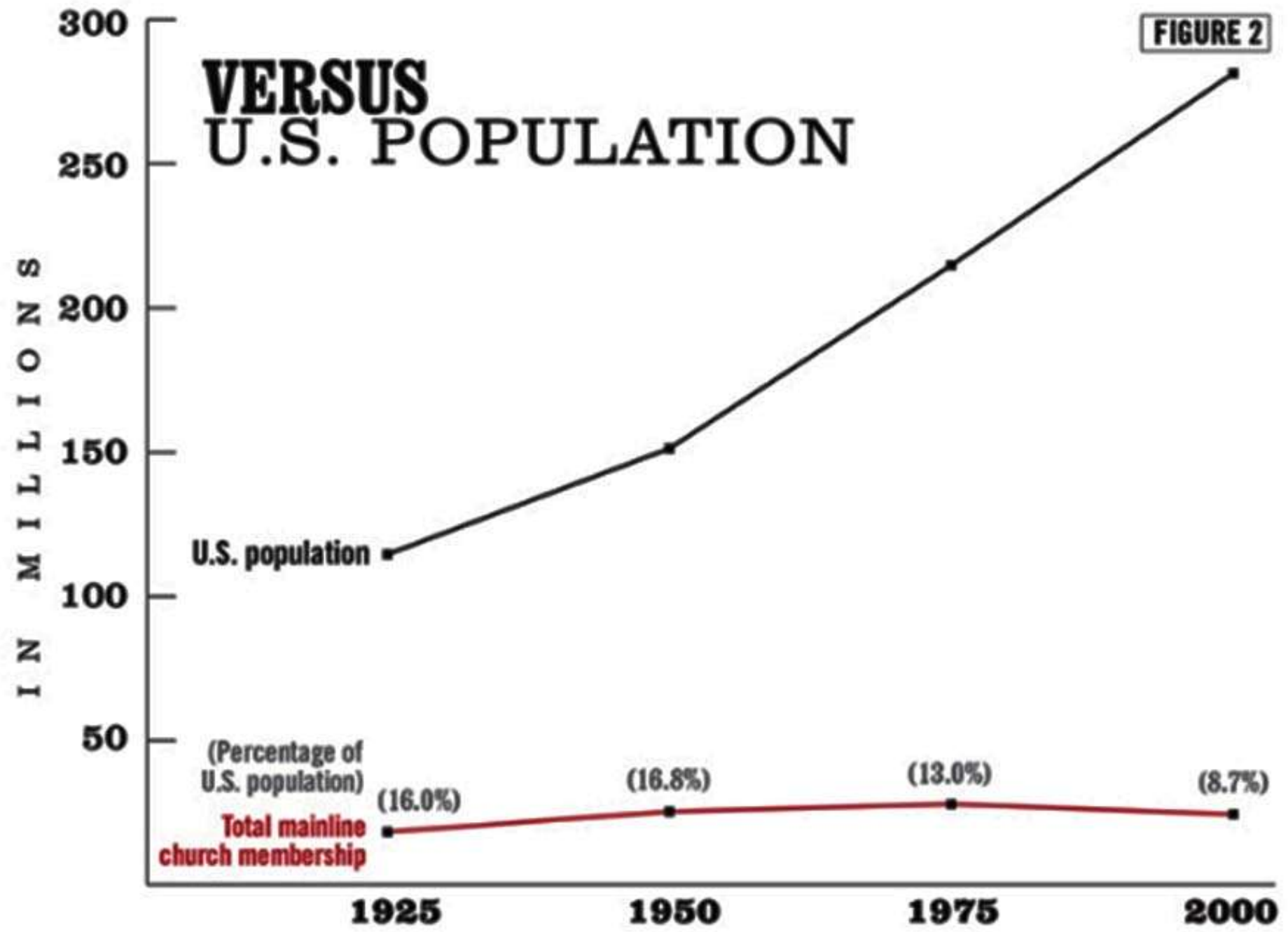


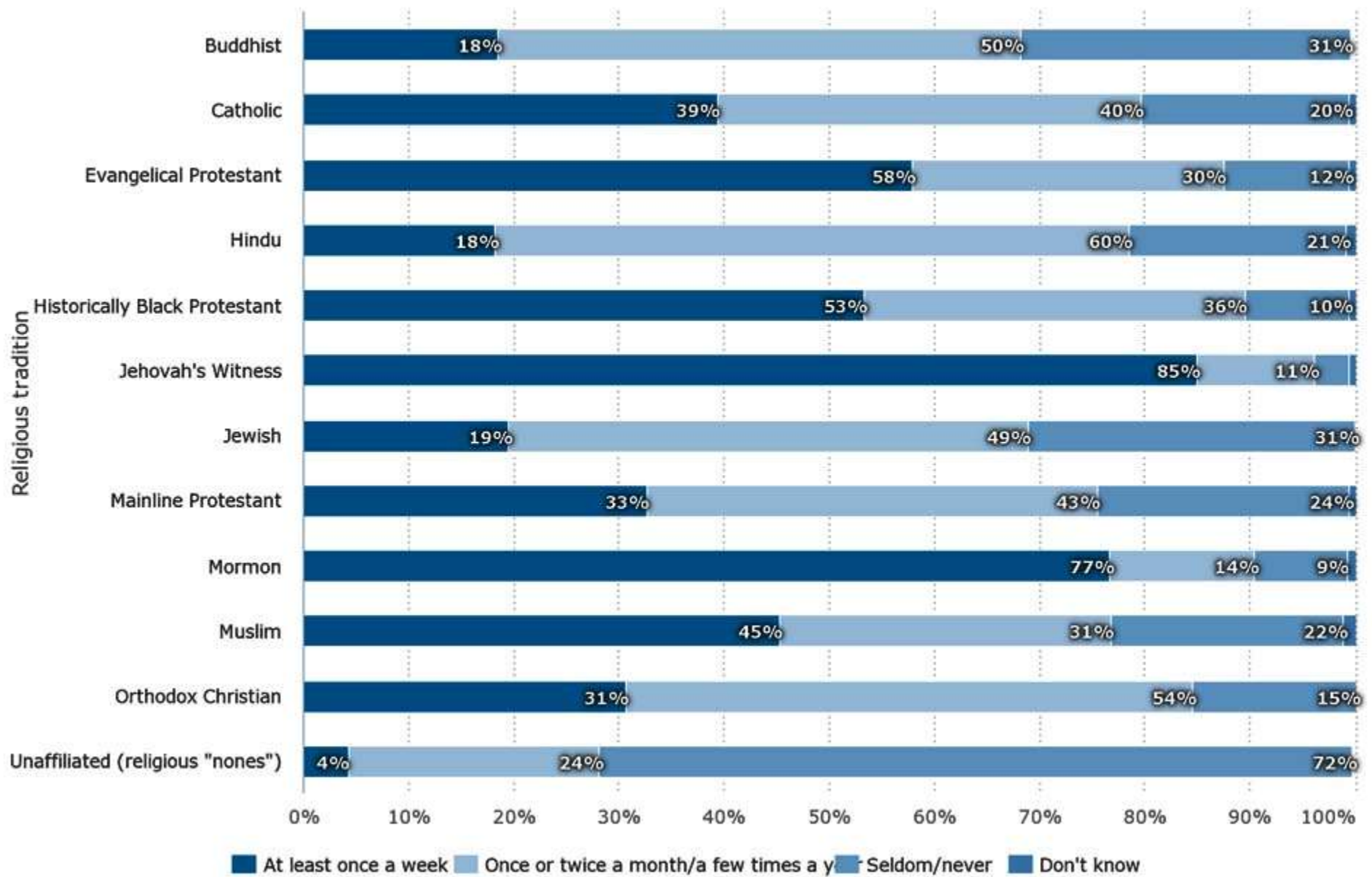
FIGURE 2

VERSUS U.S. POPULATION

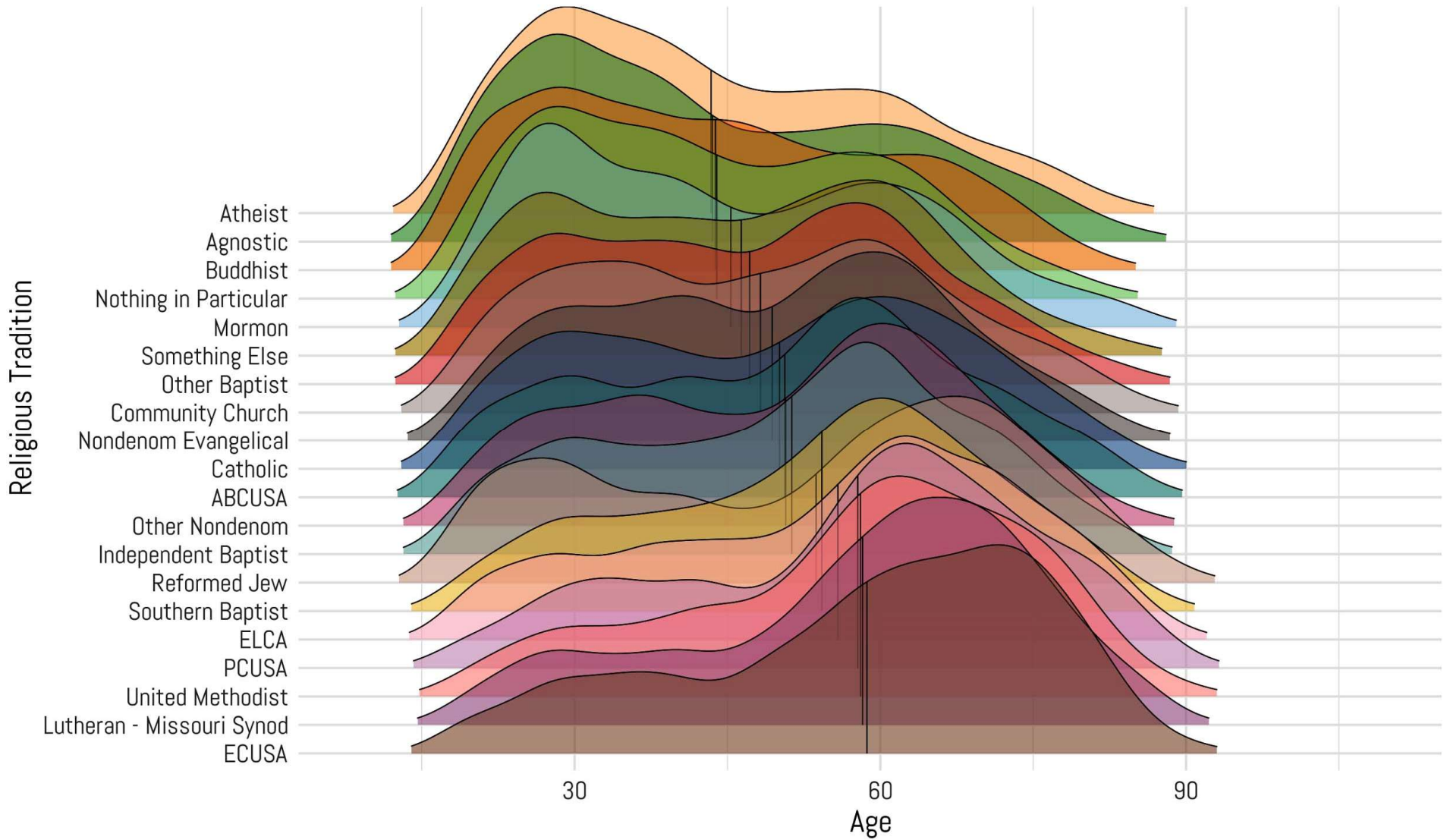


Attendance at religious services by religious group

% of adults who attend religious services...



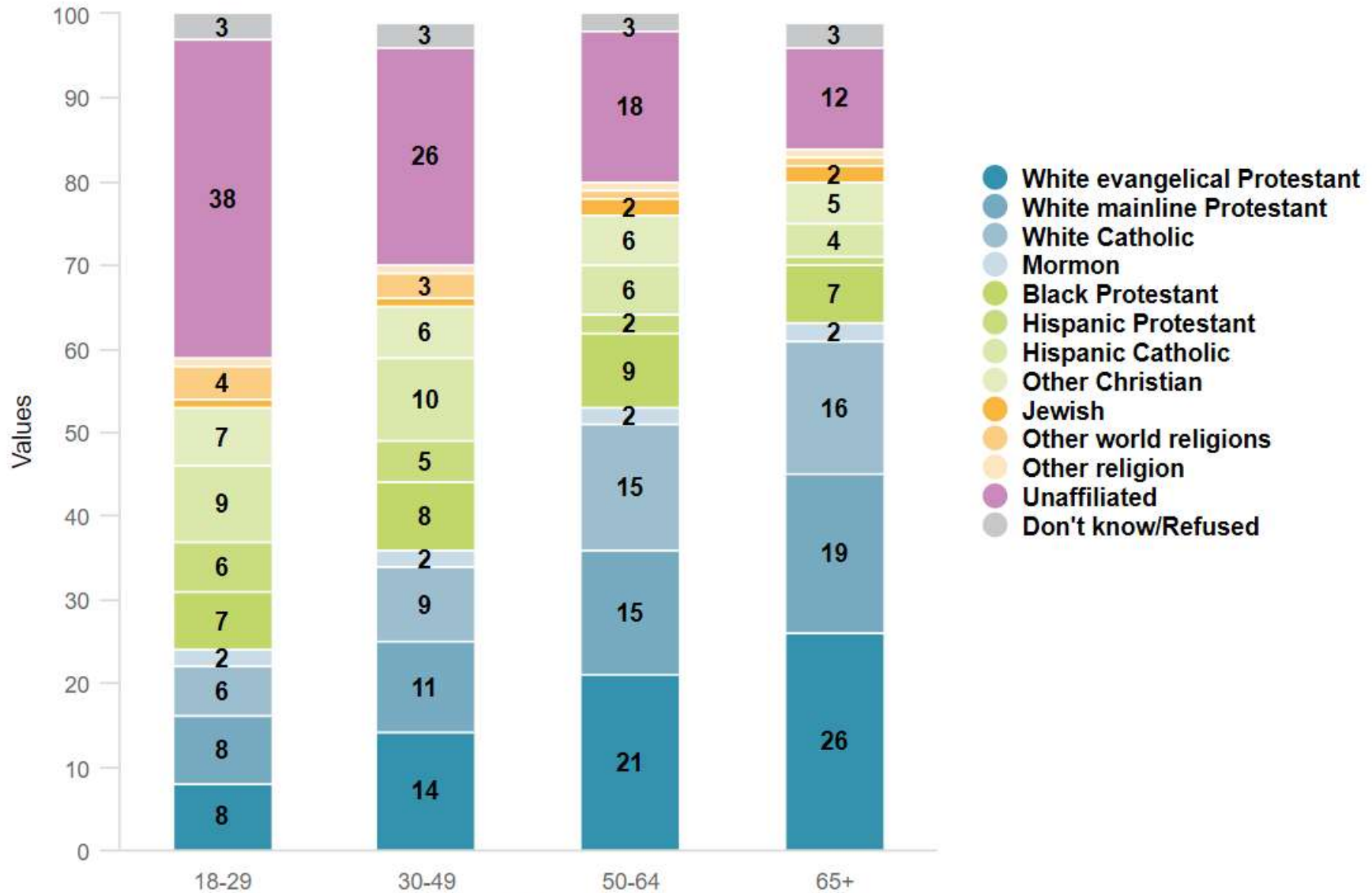
Age Distribution of Religious Traditions



Median Age of Episcopalian in 2021: 69

@ryanburge
Data: CCES 2017-2019

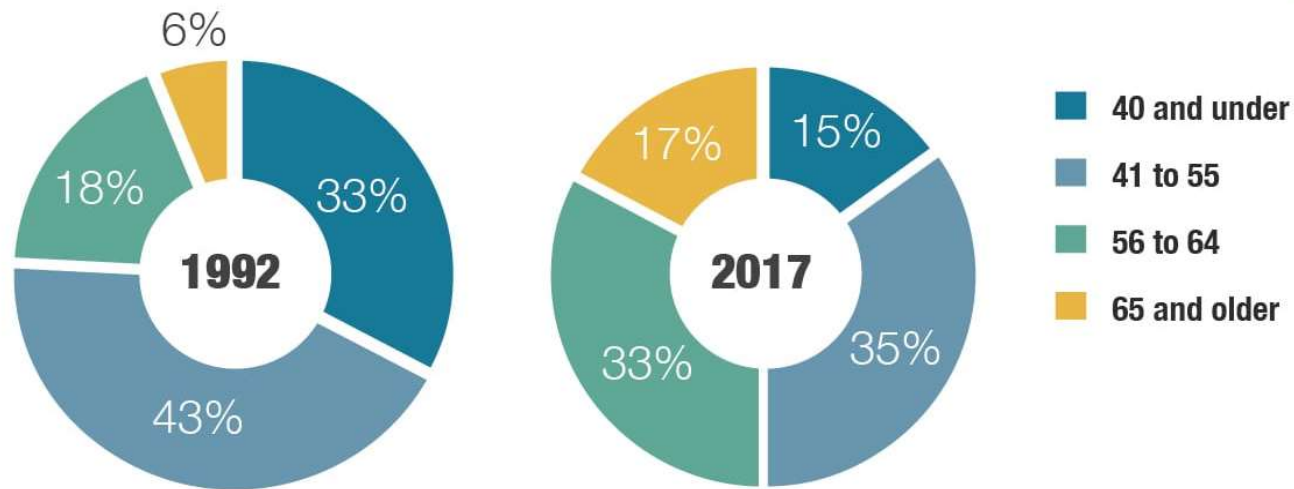
A Generational Shift in Religious Identity



Source: PRRI 2016 American Values Atlas.

Pastor Age Brackets: 1992 vs. 2017

Barna



n=1,033 U.S. Protestant pastors 1992 | n=5,067 U.S. Protestant pastors 2011-2016

- In 1968, 55 percent of all Protestant clergy were under the age of 45—i.e. majority of all church leaders were in 20s, 30s and early 40's.
- In 2017, just 22 percent are under 45.
- Episcopal priest median age: 59

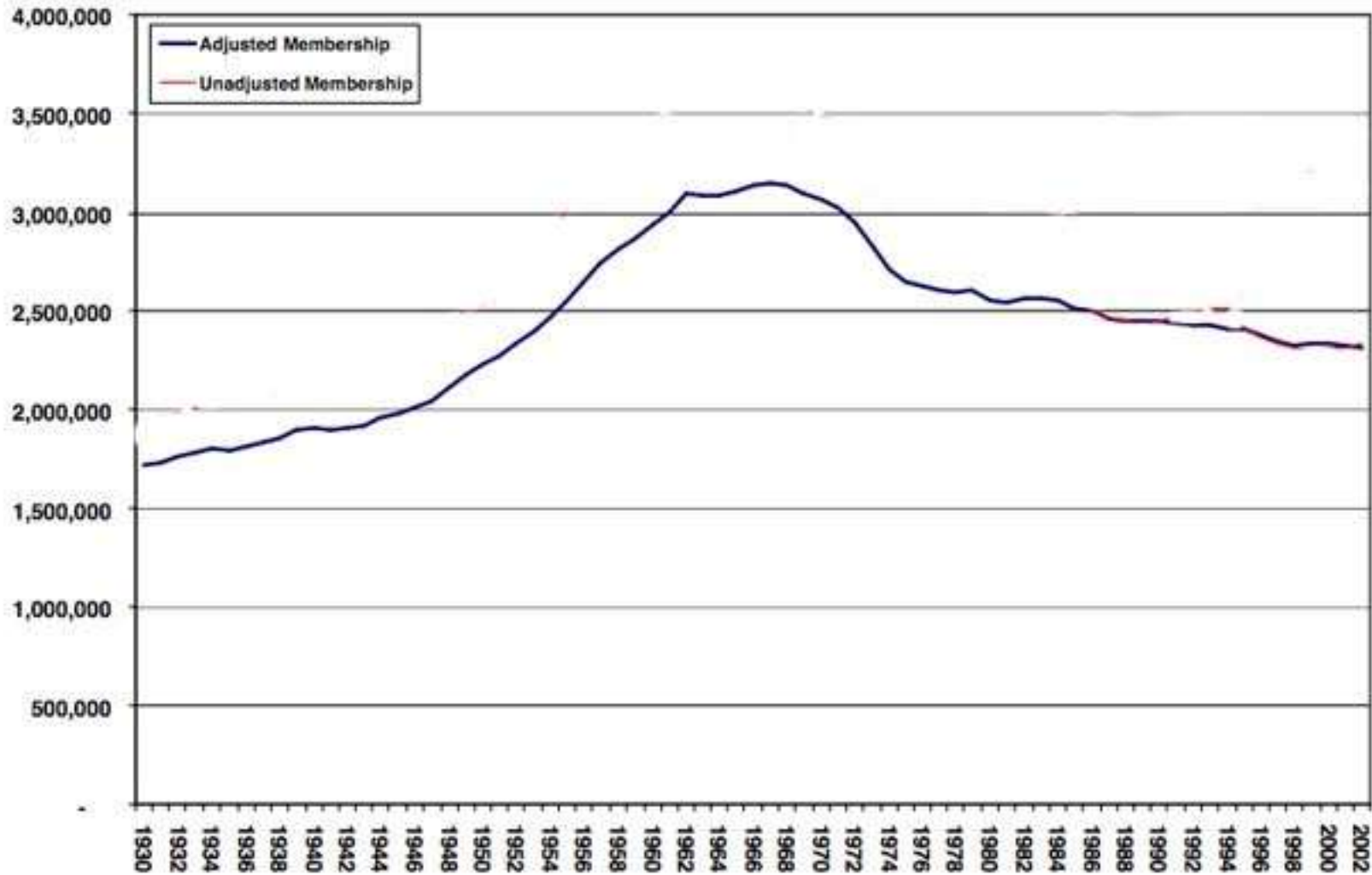
THE

Episcopal

CHURCH



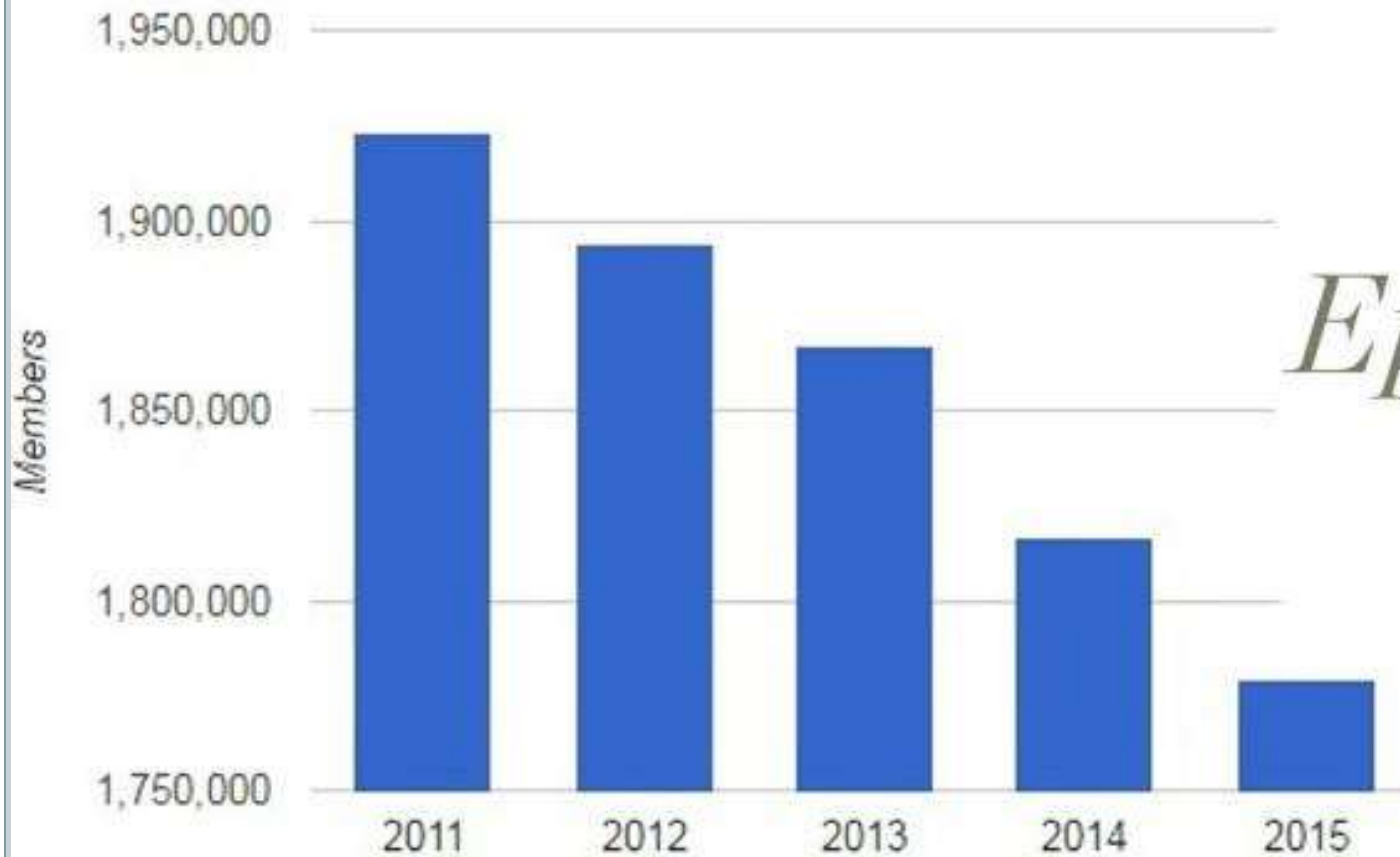
Figure 2
Episcopal Church Membership Trends: 1930-2002



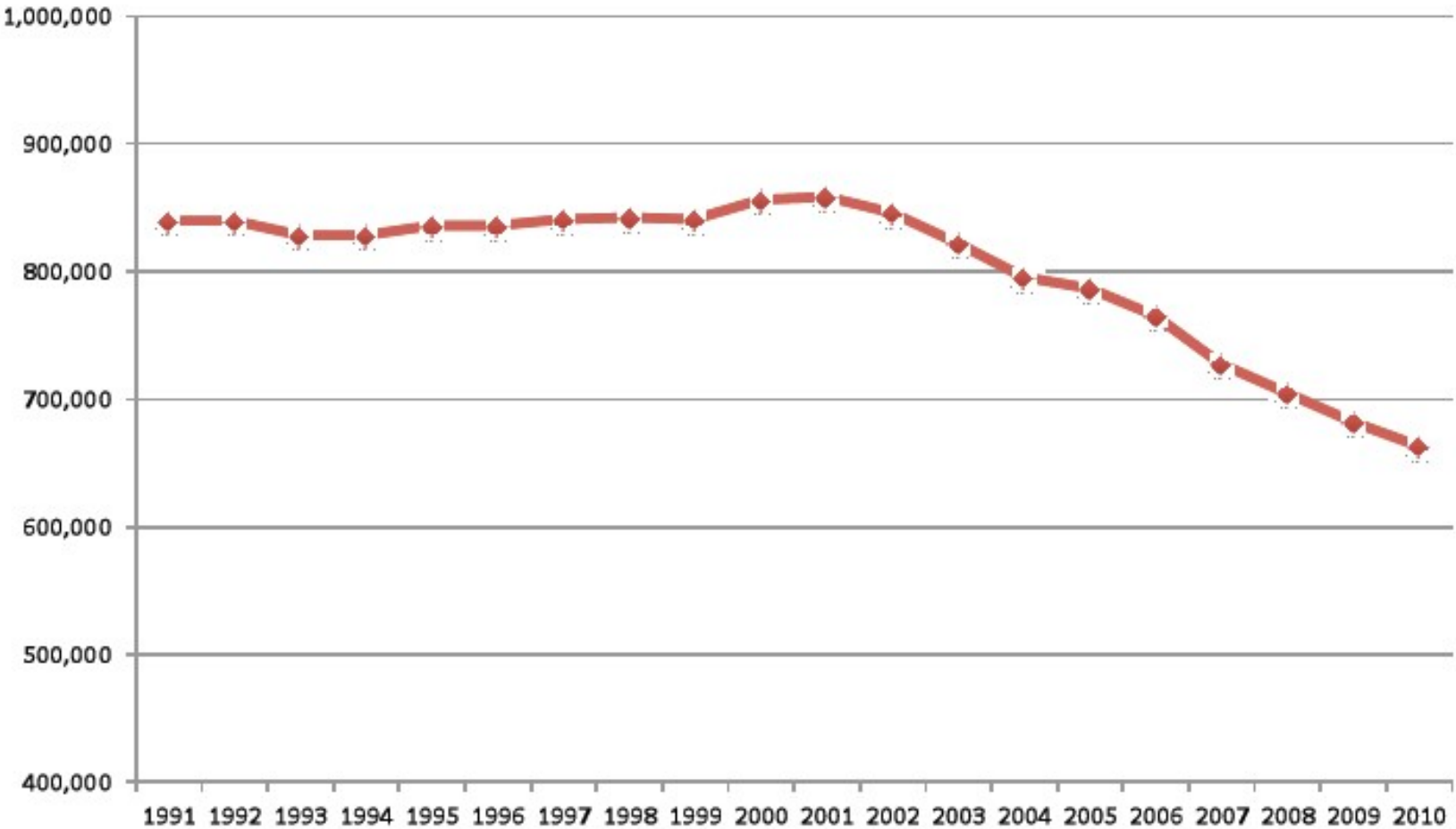
NATIONAL ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP



THE
Episcopal
CHURCH

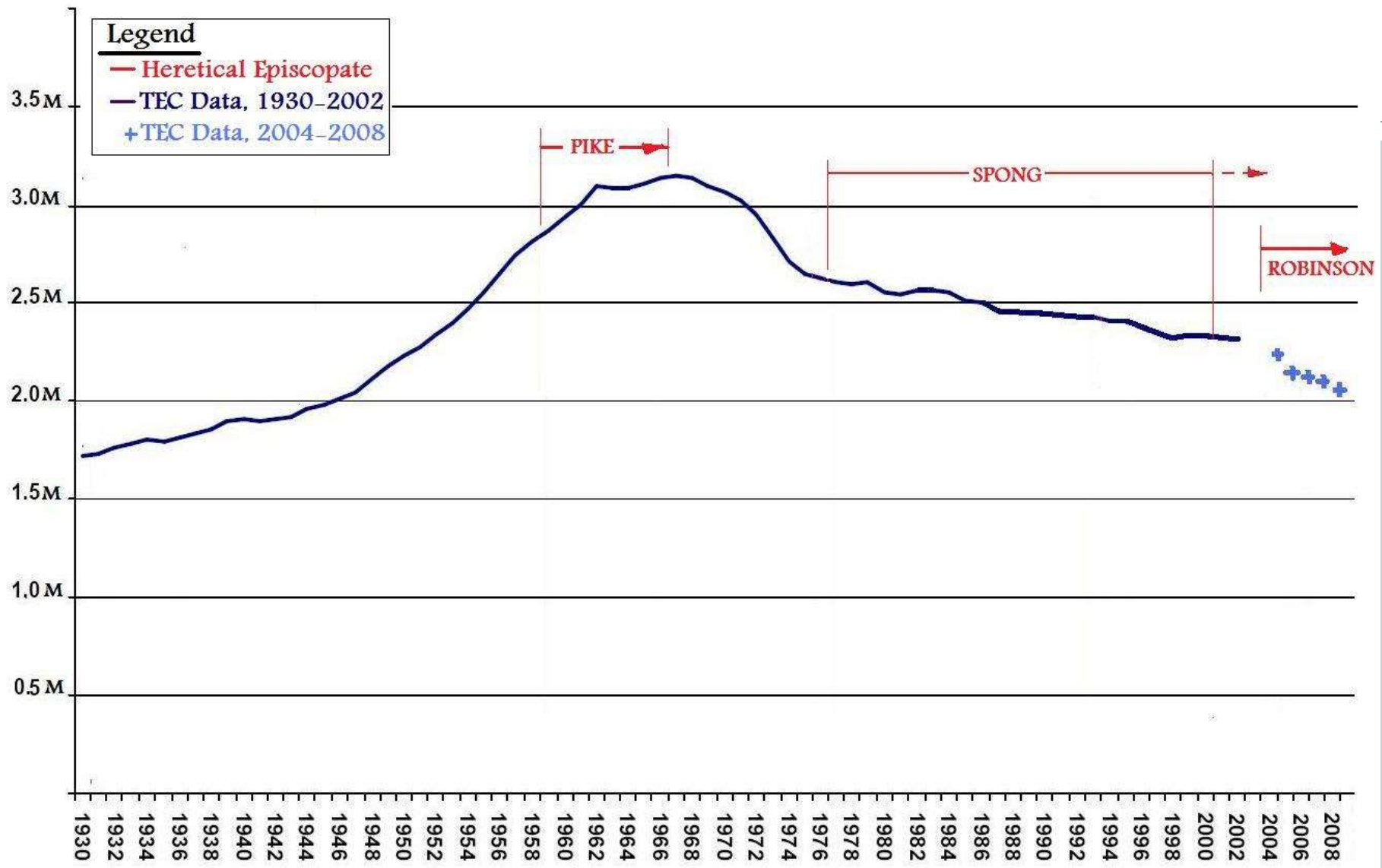


Episcopal Domestic Average Sunday Worship Attendance: 1991 – 2010



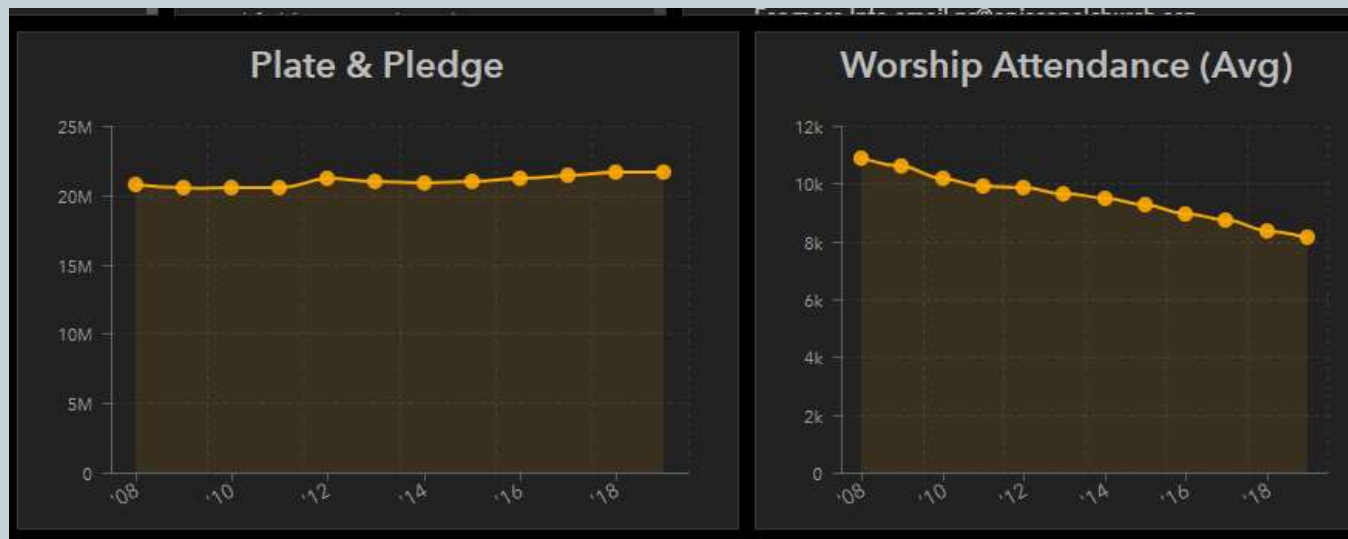
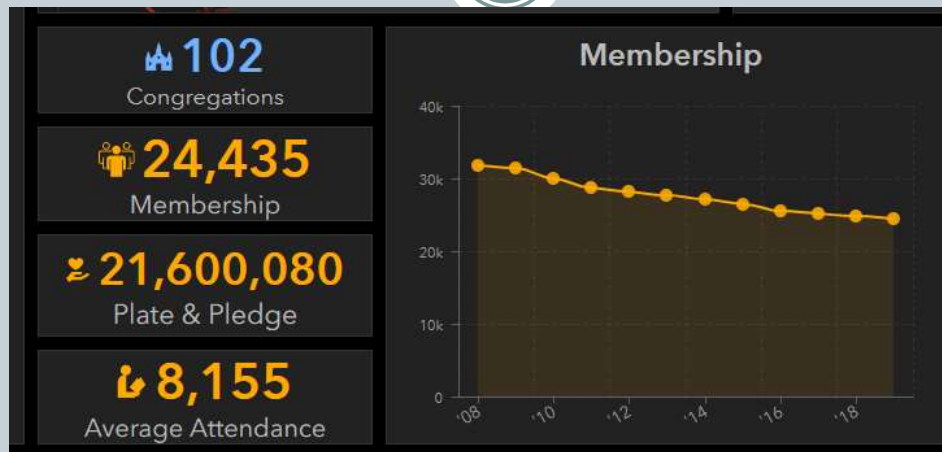
“Upheaval” in The Episcopal Church today

- Decline in Membership
- Decline in Giving
- Aging Membership, Leaders
- LGBT Rights Agenda
- Other Controversial Social Issues (abortion, environment, race, etc.)
- Splits and Divisions (ACNA, et al.)

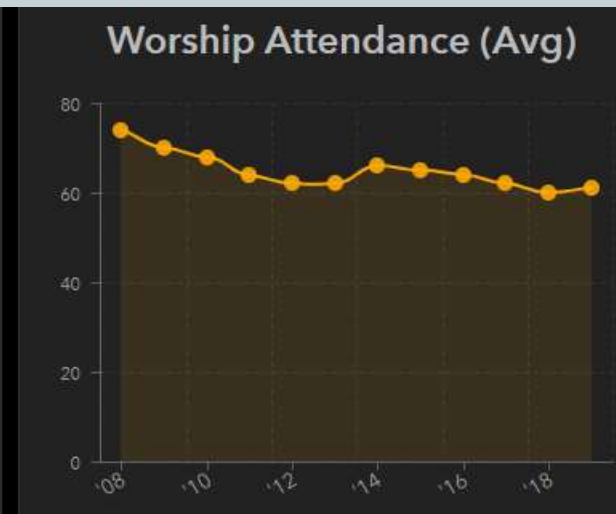
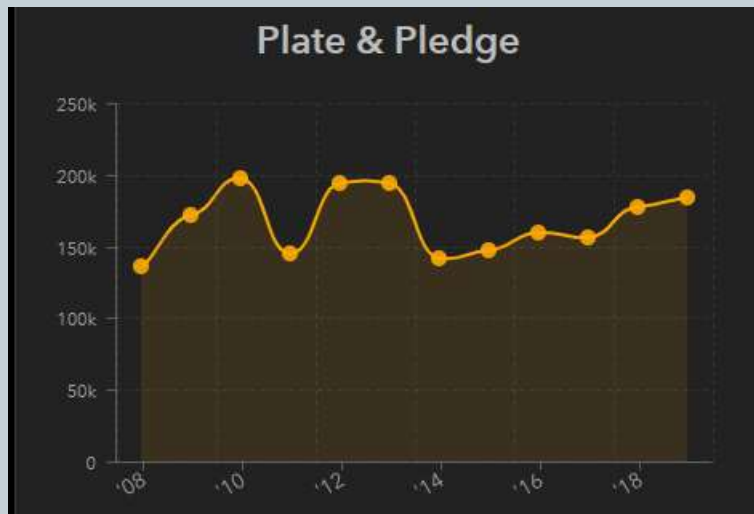
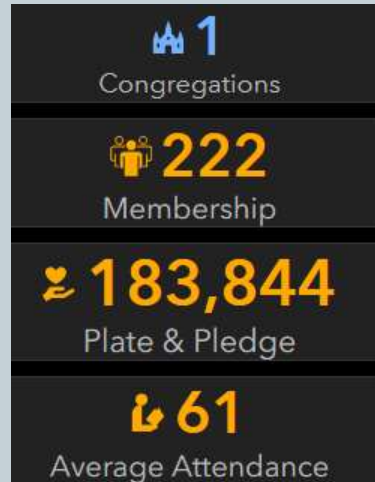


Elder's Chart of Membership Trends in the Episcopal Church, pt. I

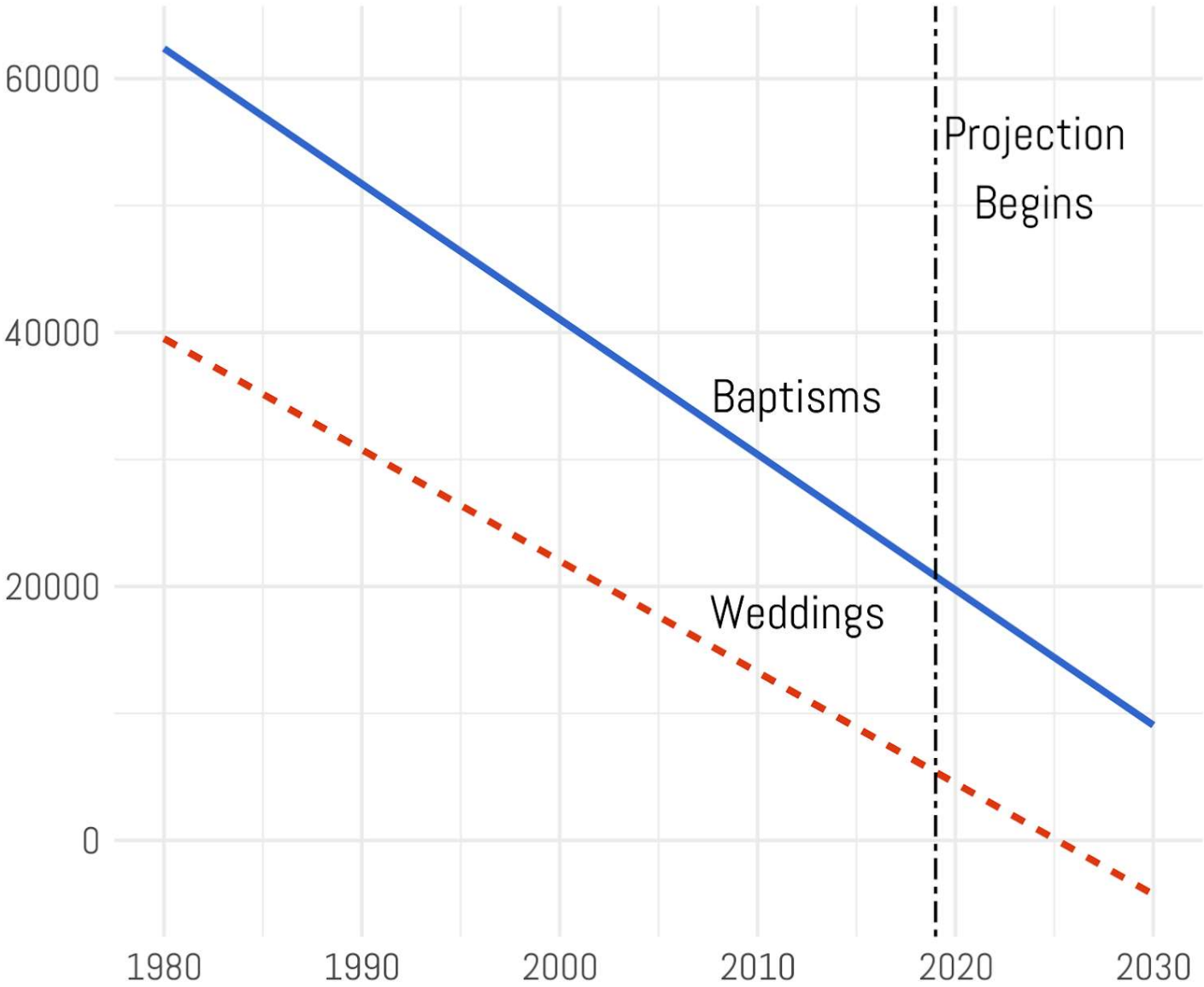
Diocese of Southern Virginia



Good Shepherd's figures



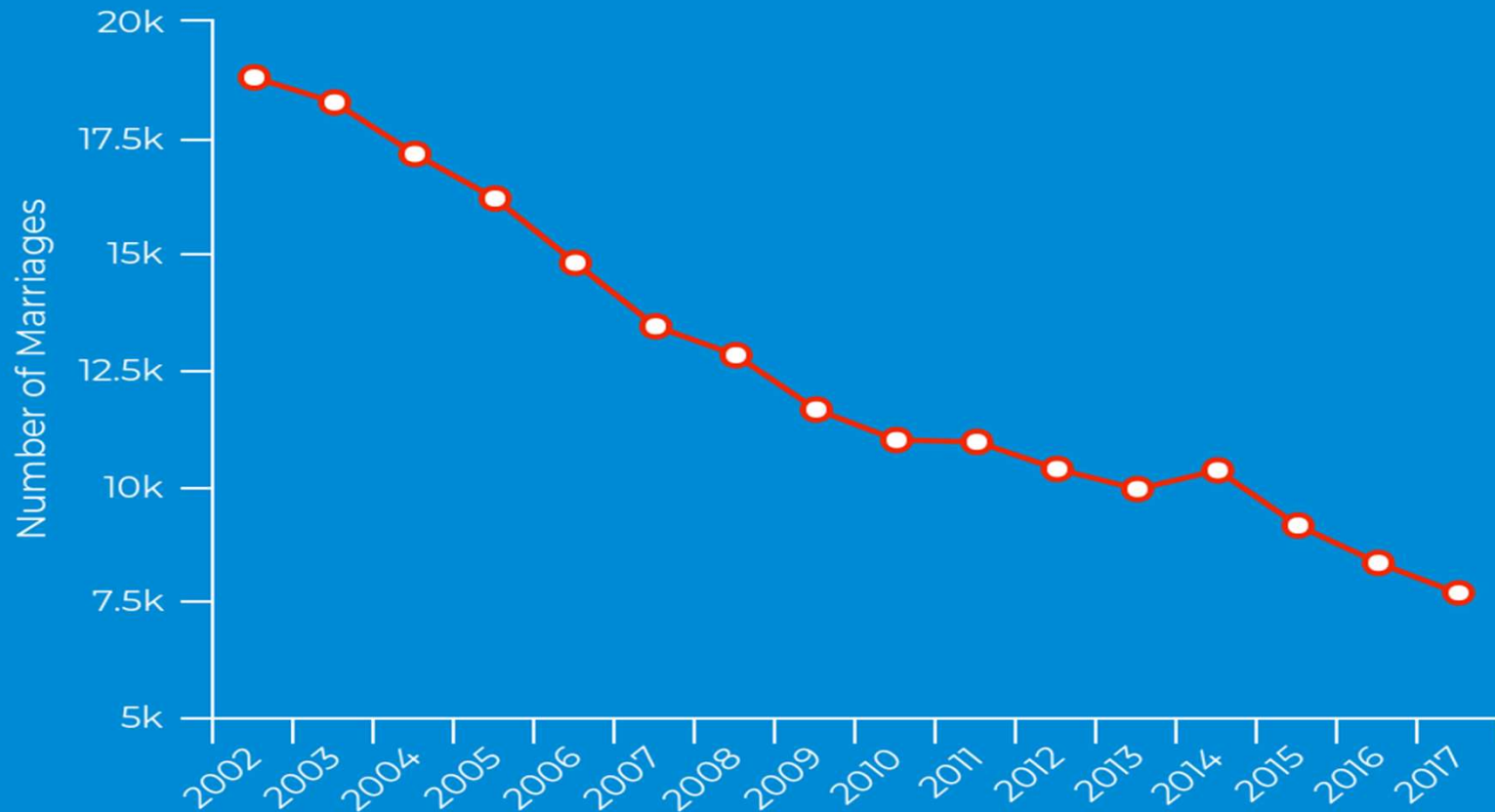
Baptisms and Weddings in the Episcopal Church



@ryanburge

Data: <https://livingchurch.org/covenant/2021/01/11/the-episcopal-church-in-2050/>

Marriages Performed in Episcopal Church Domestic Dioceses



Source: Executive Office of the General Convention

Growing “Market” for TEC?



- 543,000 same-sex married couple households vs. 61.4 million opposite-sex married
- 469,000 households with same-sex unmarried partners living together vs. 8 million opposite-sex unmarried partner households
- Gay marriages represent just 0.8% of all marriages
- Gay couples represent just 5.5% of all couples living together.

Questions:



- What is it about your experience at Good Shepherd that makes you feel nostalgic?
- Have you ever found yourself feeling anxious about changes taking place in your church? How do you cope with this anxiety?



Nostalgia

Nostalgia is...



- Way of thinking about oneself that provides one with a sense of continuity with past.
- Matter of both head and heart, thinking and feeling
- Way of bonding with others by reference to shared experience.
- Form of retrospective ideologizing or mystifying of the past.
- Often used as a cultural commodity and transformed into a market segment.



Two Types of Nostalgia:

- Restorative
- Reflective

Restorative Nostalgia



- “Linus Blanket” nostalgia, comforting and securing.
- Seeks to return to “golden age”, point in time when ideal is perceived to have been reality.
- Asks, “Why can’t we return to 1950?”
- Involves 2-step process:
 - getting back to the way things were, &
 - identifying target of blame for way things have become.



- Restorative nostalgia seeks to restore “homeostasis.”
- Explains why people & systems are often resistant to change.
- Not a judgment, but nevertheless makes positive, proactive change more difficult.

Reflective Nostalgia



- **Not reactionary, non-anxiousness**
- **Characterized by a sense of irony.**
- **Like high school reunion**
- **As church, we can worship God the best we can now and let God deal with the details.**

Contrast Sets of Questions:



- What have you valued most about the church?
What activities or ingredients or ways of life have been most contributed to your life?

--and--

- What do you value most about the church now?
What activities or ingredients or ways of life are most important? What are the best features of this church?

How do we not live in the past?



1. Past as Pattern and Promise

Psalm 77

- 1 I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, and he will hear me.
- 2 In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out
without wearying; my soul refuses to be
comforted.
- 3 When I remember God, I moan;
when I meditate, my spirit faints. *Selah*

4 You hold my eyelids open;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

5 I consider the days of old,
the years long ago.

6 I said, “Let me remember my song in the night;
let me meditate in my heart.”

Then my spirit made a diligent search:

7 “Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be favorable?

8 Has his steadfast love forever ceased?
Are his promises at an end for all time?

9 Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?”

- 10 Then I said, “I will appeal to this,
to the years of the right hand of the Most High.”
- 11 I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
yes, I will remember your wonders of old.
- 12 I will ponder all your work,
and meditate on your mighty deeds.
- 13 Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is great like our God?
- 14 You are the God who works wonders;
you have made known your might among the peoples.
- 15 You with your arm redeemed your people,
the children of Jacob and Joseph.



- 1. Past as Pattern and Promise
- 2. Redeeming, Re-framing,
Re-narrating the Past.



Processing Questions

(see handout)