

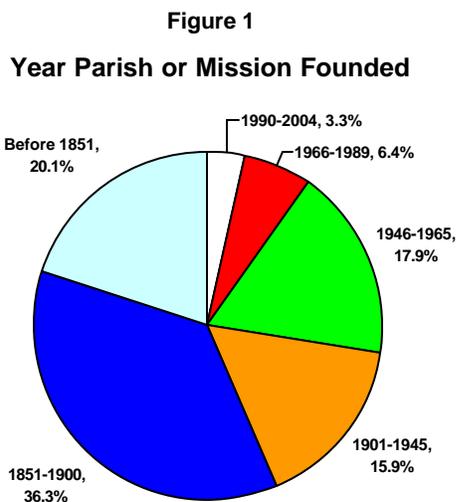


Episcopal Overview: Findings from the 2005 Faith Communities Today Survey

A *Congregational Development* publication from the research office, Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, The Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. (800) 334-7626

Parishes and Their Settings

- A majority (56%) of Episcopal parishes and missions were founded before 1901. The post-war baby boom years (1946-1965) saw a boom in new church development as many churches (18% of all congregations) were organized in very few years.



- The median seating capacity in parish worship facilities is 175 persons. Only 16% of Episcopal congregations have facilities that seat more than 300 people, while one in four seats 100 or fewer. Half of the reporting churches are able to seat between 101 and 250 persons.
- Most congregations (74%) have facilities that are in good or excellent condition, a few (5%), however, are in *serious* need of improvement and repair.
- The largest proportion (45%) of Episcopal congregations is located in cities or towns of between 2,500 and 50,000 in population. Many other congregations (38%) are located in or near larger cities with populations of 50,000 or more.

- Small towns, rural areas and open country are home to only 17% of Episcopal congregations.
- Of congregations in or near a city of at least 50,000 population:
 - 28% are located in the downtown or central city area
 - 28% are located in older residential areas of the city
 - 31% are located in an older suburb
 - 13% are located in a newer suburb

Worship

- The vast majority (98%) of Episcopal congregations hold regular worship services every week of the year. The other 2% hold services a few times a month, several times each year, seasonally (such as during the summer) or use some other pattern. Sunday is the only day regular weekend worship services are held in 77% of congregations (all holding weekly services). Another 21% hold weekend services on more than one day.
- More than half of Episcopal parishes and missions (60%) offer two or more services on the weekend. Worship style varies to some degree among services in three quarters of the congregations that report more than one weekend service.
- Less than half (39%) of Episcopal churches report that attendance is more than 60% of seating capacity at the service with the largest attendance. Only 12% have services that are very full (more than 80% of capacity). Growing congregations are most likely to be very full, some with standing room only.
- Majorities of congregations report that worship *often* or *always* includes:
 - Eucharist (98%)
 - Organ music (88%)
 - Kneeling by the congregation (80%)
 - Choir (66%)

... but only small minorities report that worship often or always includes:

- Visual projection equipment (3%)
- Drums or other percussion equipment (6%)
- Incense (7%)
- Electric guitar or bass (7%)

➤ Only 15% of congregations report that their primary worship service has changed a lot in format or style during the last five years. Most churches report that worship has either changed a little (31%) or changed moderately (30%).

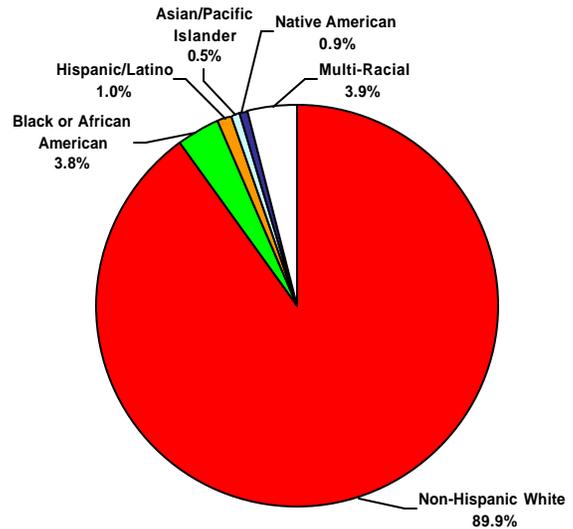
➤ Congregations were *most* likely to say the following descriptors characterized their worship services “very well”:

- Filled with a sense of God’s presence (40%)
- Participatory (40%)
- Welcoming to newcomers (39%)
- Formal liturgy (32%)

... and congregations were *least* likely to say the following descriptors characterized their worship services “very well”:

- Disorganized (1%)
- Contemporary (5%)
- Contemplative (6%)
- Informal (6%)

Figure 2
Predominant Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Episcopal Congregations



➤ 56% of Episcopal parishes and missions report that more than half of their members are age 50+.

➤ Episcopalians tend to be older than the general population. Overall, 27% of Episcopal church members are age 65+, as compared to only 12% of the U.S. population in 2005.

Participants and Members

➤ The percentages of congregations reporting that most, nearly all, or all of their adult participants:

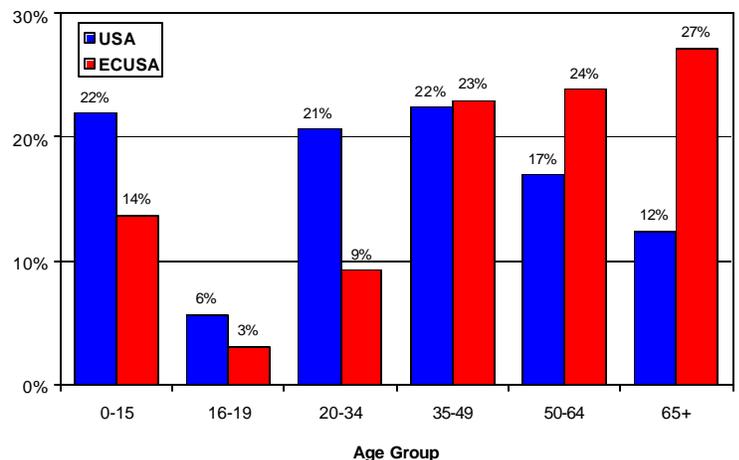
- are college graduates: 40%
- are female: 27%
- live very near the church: 14%
- live in households with more than \$85,000 in annual income: 11%
- are life-long Episcopalians: 10%
- are newcomers in the past 5 years: 6%
- are in households with children under 18: 4%

➤ The median Episcopal congregation had 177 active members and average worship attendance of 75 in 2004 (from Parochial Report data).

➤ Most (89.9%) Episcopal congregations are at least 60% white/European American. Another 3.8% of Episcopal congregations are predominantly African American or Black. In 3.9% of Episcopal churches no racial/ethnic group predominates.

Figure 3

Age Structure of the USA and ECUSA: 2005



➤ Episcopal parishes and missions with greater proportions of older members (age 65+) are typically smaller in membership and are more often found in rural settings.

➤ Episcopal parishes and missions with larger proportions of households with children and higher household incomes tend to be larger congregations.

Figure 4

Percentage of Parishes with at Least 35% Older (Age 65+) Members by Size (ASA)

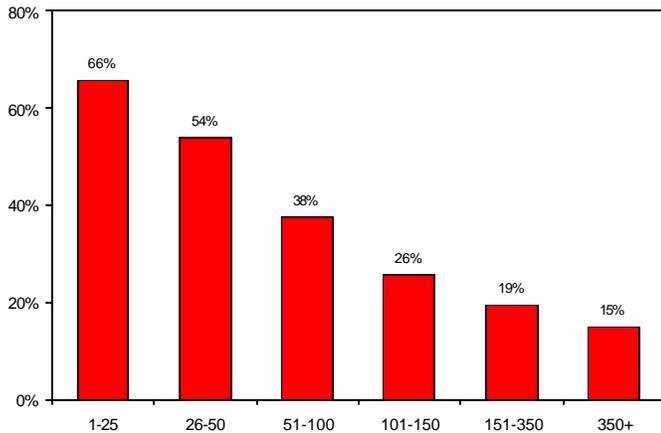


Figure 5

Percentage of Parishes in Which Some to All (21-100%) of Households Have Children Under 18 at Home by Size (Average Sunday Attendance--ASA)

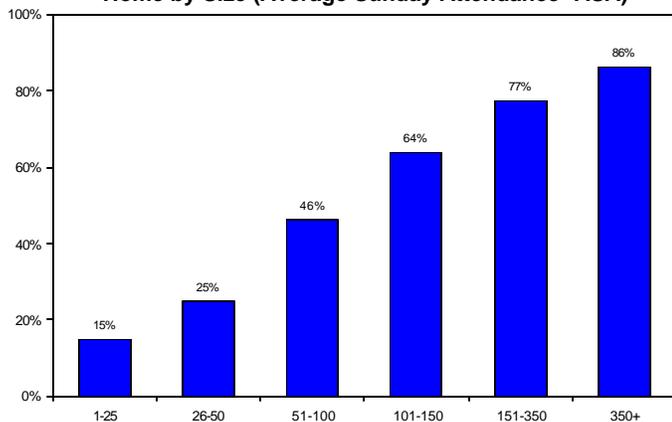


Figure 6

Conflict in Episcopal Parishes Over Last Five Years

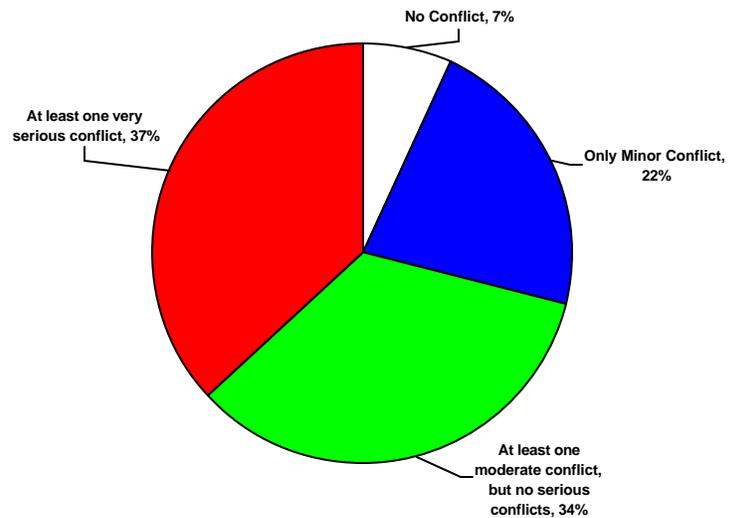
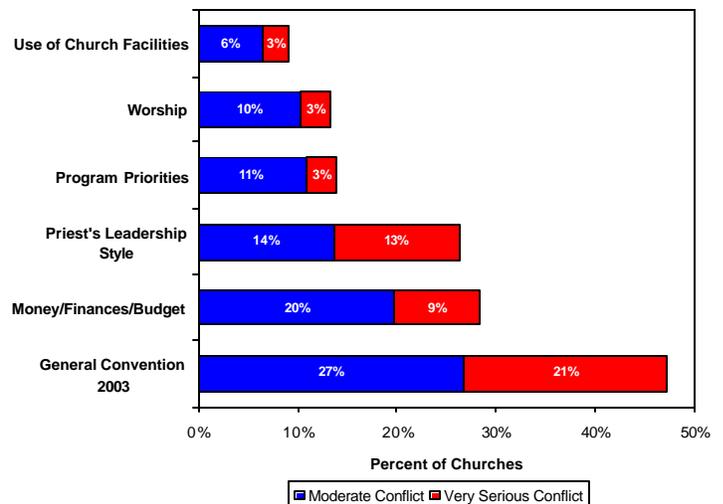


Figure 7

Prevalence of Conflict in Episcopal Congregations by Type



Conflict

- 93% of Episcopal congregations reported having disagreements or conflicts in the last five years (up from 86% in 2000). 37% of churches reported very serious conflict (up from 32% in 2000).
- Of congregations that had very serious conflict:
 - Some members left the church: 91%
 - Some members withheld funds: 74%
 - A special meeting was called: 73%
 - The Bishop intervened: 40%
 - A staff member resigned or was fired: 38%
 - The congregation split: 6%
 - The conflict was resolved: 53%

- Rates of resolution by type of conflict:
 - Only minor conflict: 72% were resolved
 - Moderate conflict: 72%
 - Very serious conflict only over priest: 79%
 - Very serious conflict only over money: 61%
 - Very serious conflict only over GC 2003: 35%
 - Multiple very serious conflict: 54%

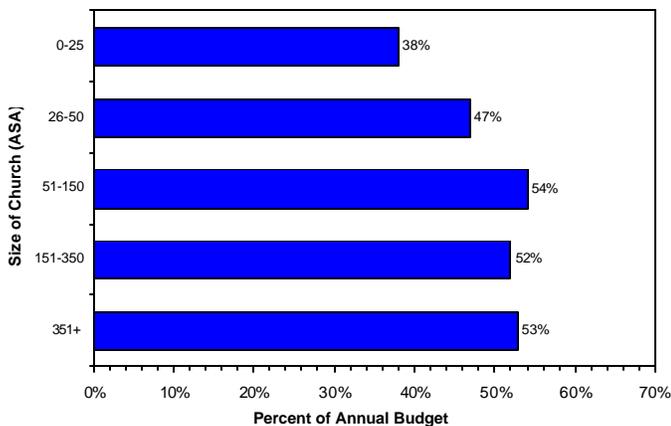
Finances

- About the same proportion of congregations (9%) describes the current financial health of their congregation as excellent as say they are “in serious difficulty.”

- About one third of parishes and missions report that their finances are “excellent” or “good.” The proportion with excellent or good financial health declined from 56% to 32% between 2000 and 2005. The proportion in some or serious financial difficulty almost doubled, increasing from 13% in 2000 to 25% in 2005.
- The typical (median) congregation reported total revenue for 2004 of \$152,367 and total operating revenue of \$128,348 (from Parochial Reports).
- The typical expenditure (median and average) for all staff salaries and benefits was 50% of budget in 2005. Smaller churches tend to spend a lower proportion of their budgets on staff salaries and benefits because such congregations tend to rely more heavily on part-time and volunteer staff.

Figure 8

Average Percent of Budget for Staff by Church Size



- The majority of Episcopal parishes and missions (58%) report no gifts to Episcopal seminaries or divinity schools. Overall, the mean (average) gift to seminaries is 0.7% of annual budget.
- Only 7% of Episcopal congregations report having made a commitment to contribute 0.7% of their annual budget in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

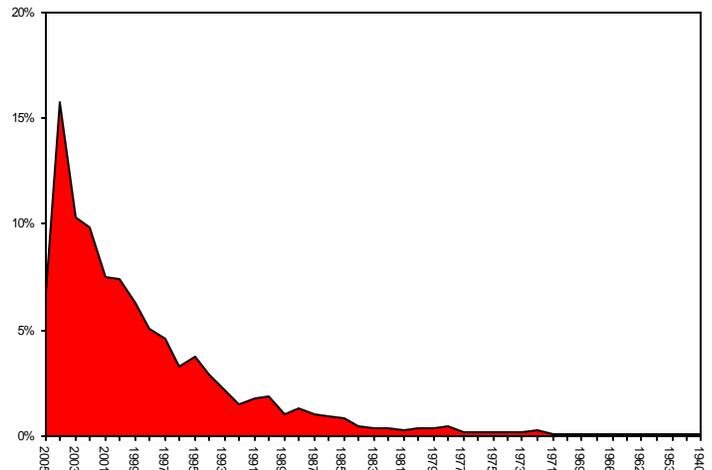
Leadership

- Nearly three quarters of Episcopal congregations (72%) report having a solo rector or vicar. Another 19% have multiple priests with one serving as senior minister. Only 2% of congregations have co-rectors or co-vicars and another 7% have no priest at the present time.

- 27% of current parish clergy describe their call to their congregation as part-time. Those serving part-time are almost evenly divided between those with other employment and those that are only employed by their parish or mission.
- The typical (median) rector or vicar is 57 years of age and was called to his or her congregation in 2001 (note: survey was completed in mid-2005). The median age of clergy in this survey is higher than the figure typically referenced for Episcopal parish clergy (age 53) because the FACT survey includes priests who are not active in the pension system (such as retired clergy who serve parishes).
- 76% of rectors and vicars are male. 19% have a doctoral degree.

Figure 9

Year Called to Current Parish (Percent of Clergy)



- Descriptors which a majority of Episcopal rectors and vicars say fit them *very well* include:
 - Cares about people (68% say fits very well)
 - Effective worship leader (59%)
 - Good liturgist (56%)
 - Hard worker (51%)
 - Knows the Bible (51%)
- Descriptors which Episcopal rectors and vicars say fit them *least well* were charismatic leader (lowest), evangelistic, effective administrator, “knows how to get people to work together,” and “knows how to get things done.”

Programs, Practices and Ministries

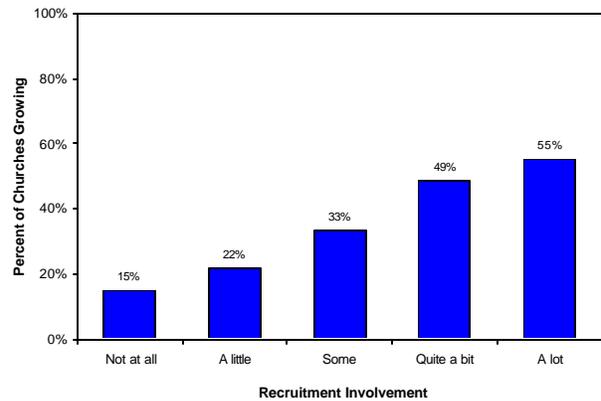
- Programs that at least half of congregations consider to be a “key activity” or program include:
 - Church School (reported by 73%)
 - Fellowships and social activities (71%)
 - Choirs and music programs (59%)
 - Community service activities (57%)
 - Children’s programs (51%)
 - Bible study groups (50%)
- Programs that larger percentages of congregations do not conduct (as key or minor activities) include:
 - Parenting or marriage enrichment (71% do not offer)
 - Support groups (50%)
 - Senior adult programs (50%)
 - Spiritual retreats (49%)
 - Evangelism or recruitment activities (31%)
 - Youth ministry (30%)
- Most Episcopal congregations emphasize personal religious practices in addition to attendance at worship services. Over half (59%) of Episcopal congregations put “quite a bit” or “a lot” of emphasis on personal prayer, meditation or devotions. Around half also stressed studying the Bible and tithing or sacrificial giving. Smaller percentages emphasized keeping the Sabbath day Holy (38%) and family devotions (32%).
- Most Episcopal congregations (81%) operate or participate in a food pantry or soup kitchen to help persons in need. 35% report that many members are involved in that ministry and another 46% say that a few members are involved.
- Other service programs offered by fairly large proportions of congregations include:
 - Cash or vouchers given to families or individuals (68% report involvement)
 - Hospital, nursing home, assisted care (57%)
 - Counseling services (32%)

Recruitment and Evangelism

- Very few Episcopal churches report that their members are heavily involved in recruiting new members. Only 17% say their members are involved “quite a bit” or “a lot.” The more typical involvement is “a little” (38%) or “some” (39%).

- Churches with greater involvement in recruitment activity are more likely to have experienced growth in membership and worship attendance.

Figure 10
Percentage Congregations with Growth (2000-2005) by Recruitment Involvement



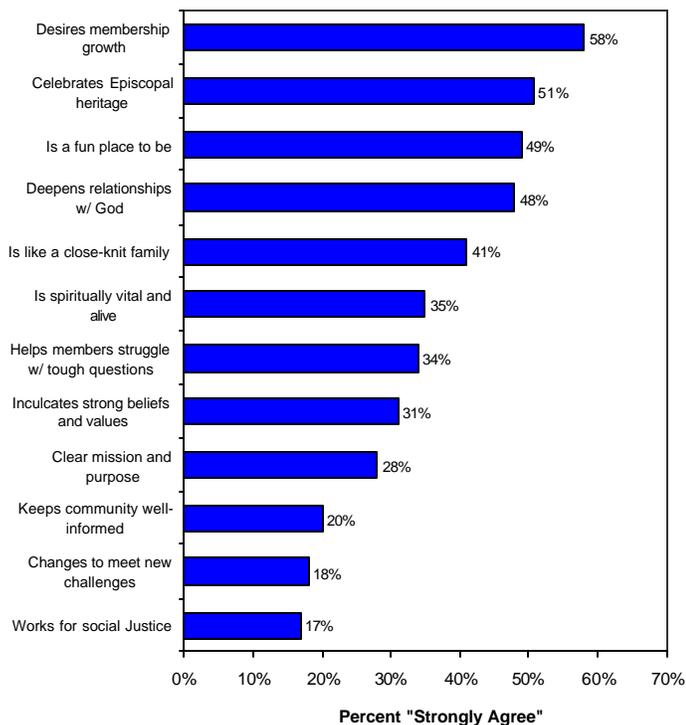
- The most frequently mentioned method of contacting worship visitors is by the mail:
 - We contact visitors by mail (68%)
 - We contact visitors by phone (55%)
 - We send materials to visitors (46%)
 - We contact visitors by personal visit (44%)
 - We contact visitors by email (19%)
- Only a few Episcopal congregations say that they rarely, if ever, have any visitors to their worship services (13%), and even fewer (8%) say that they rarely, if ever, contact the visitors that they have.
- In a typical month, the leaders of a typical (median) church make three visits or phone calls to “prospective members, worship visitors, or newcomers in the community.” Almost a quarter (21%) report that they make no contacts with church prospects.
- Most Episcopal churches have conducted some form of recruitment or evangelism the last year:
 - Encouraged members to invite non-members (86% report doing)
 - Advertised on radio/TV/newspaper (75%)
 - Encouraged members to talk about their faith with non-members (72%)
 - Held special events to attract non-members (60%)
 - Developed a recruitment plan (43%)
 - Contacted newcomers to the area (33%)

Congregational Identity

- Desire for growth in membership and attendance is the top pick in terms of 12 characteristics that were posed to Episcopal congregations. Working for social justice and being able to change to meet new challenges were selected by the fewest congregations. Ironically, churches that change in order to meet new challenges are much more likely to grow than churches that simply desire to grow.

Figure 11

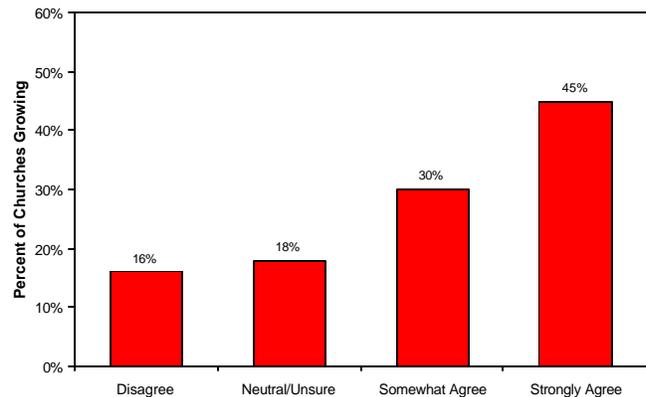
Congregational Characteristics



- Growing congregations were more likely to strongly agree that they have a clear mission and purpose, are spiritually vital and alive, change to meet new challenges and are a fun place to be.
- Responses to: "is like a close knit family," "celebrates its Episcopal heritage," and "desires growth in attendance and membership" were unrelated to growth.
- Congregations that say they are like a "close knit family" tend to be smaller churches and are more likely to be located in rural areas and smaller towns.

Figure 12

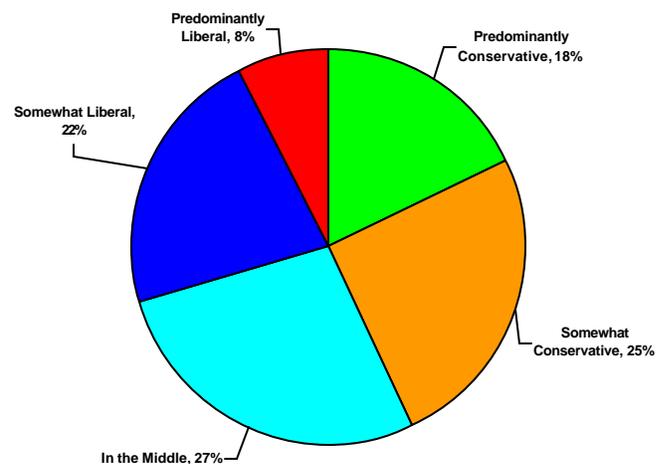
Percent Congregations Growing (2000-05) by Response to: Has a Clear Mission and Purpose



- Episcopal congregations are varied in their theological outlook. Relatively few (only 8%), however, say that the majority of their members are *predominantly liberal*.
- Conservative Episcopal congregations were much more likely to have experienced very serious conflict during the last five years than moderate or liberal congregations (a similar, but weaker relationship was also discovered in the FACT 2000 study).
- Predominantly liberal and somewhat liberal churches are somewhat more likely to have experienced growth during the last five years than more conservative congregations.

Figure 13

Theological Liberalism and Conservatism



Episcopal Overview is based on responses from 4,102 Episcopal parishes and missions that completed the all-church 2005 Faith Communities Today Survey (57% response rate). The data were weighted by size and region to be representative of all Episcopal congregations. A more detailed report of findings will be published and posted on the Episcopal Church web site later in 2006. See www.episcopalchurch.org/research.htm