

American Congregations 2010

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FAITH  
*Communities*  
TODAY

FACTs on  
Worship: 2010



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# FACTs on **W**orship: 2010

In the United States, people worship in a variety of ways, both among and within faith families. Congregations differ greatly in the extent to which they have adopted innovations such as drums, electric guitars and visual projection equipment, and practices such as frequency of celebrating the Eucharist or kneeling. Some faith families, such as Orthodox Christians, work to preserve tradition, valuing worship that is reverent and helps people feel the presence of God. Others, such as Non-denominational and historically Black denominations, enjoy innovation, emphasizing joy and new styles of music. However, when leaders of different faith families describe their worship in terms such as thought-provoking or inspirational, differences nearly disappear. Worship practices and worship styles seem to make little difference in whether worship is seen as inspiring or helping people feel the presence of God. Apparently, different kinds of worship are satisfying to different kinds of people, hardly surprising in an increasingly diverse America.

Worship is changing, particularly among Christian faith families, although change generally is slow and incremental. Non-denominational congregations and those from historically Black denominations have led the way in introducing contemporary worship styles and instruments and other innovations, and most other groups are following in that change, to differing extents. Faith groups that emphasize preserving the tradition such as Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and congregations in the Peace Church family, are far less likely to have changed than other groups, but even in these groups some change has occurred. Some congregations are also combining elements from contemporary and very traditional practices, such as is practiced by the Emerging Church movement.

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Worship is changing in another way. As non-Christian groups such as Muslims and Baha'i increase their presence, and congregations of all faith groups attempt to be more sensitive to the diversity of members' schedules, people worship at many different times from Friday through Sunday evening and in many different languages.

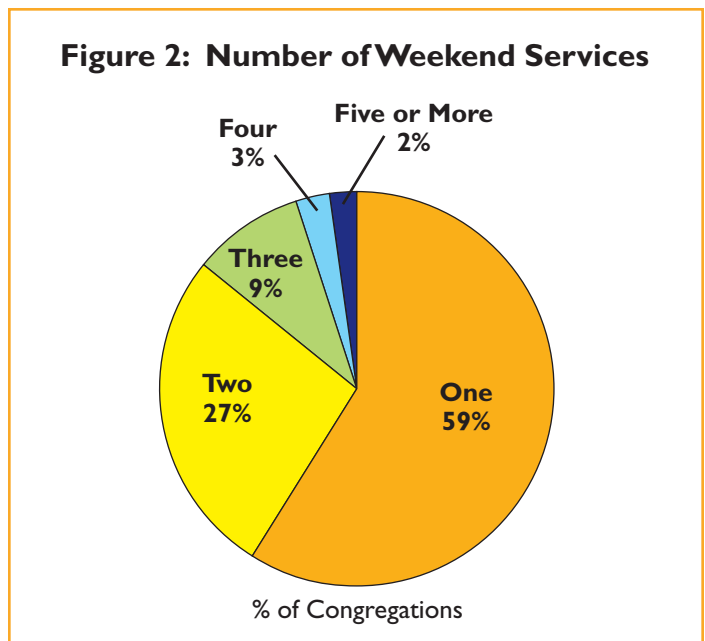
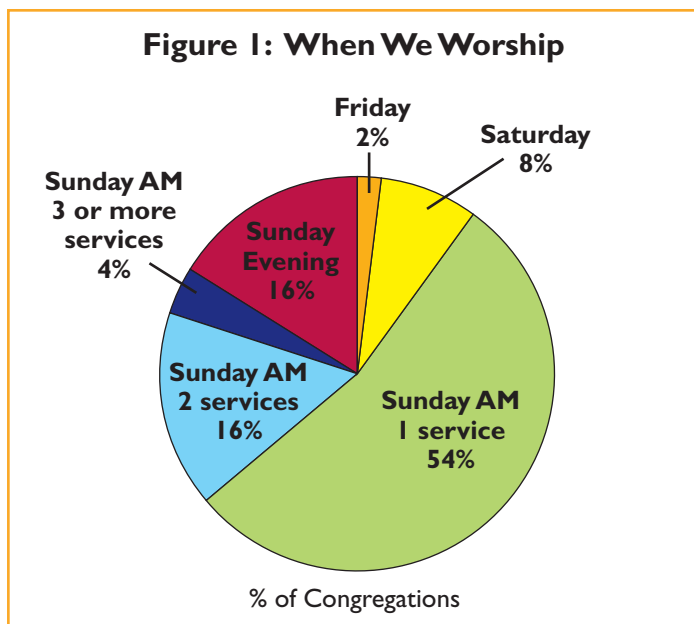
Congregations that have adopted innovative worship and contemporary worship styles are significantly more likely to have grown in the last five years. However, this relationship is strongest among Oldline and Conservative Protestant congregations and is not significant among Roman Catholic, Non-denominational and historically Black Protestant families. Contemporary worship seems particularly important in attracting young adults.

## Worship in the United States in 2010

Worship is the central, most quintessential act of religion and the major setting in which people congregate to grow in their faith. The 2010 FACT survey provides a snapshot of the United States at worship across denominations and faith groups. It includes responses from 11,077 randomly chosen individual congregations from over 100 separate faith groups, including most major Protestant groups, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Conservative and Reform Jews, Muslims, and Bahá'í. The picture of worship that emerges from this mosaic of groups is one of both variety and similarity.

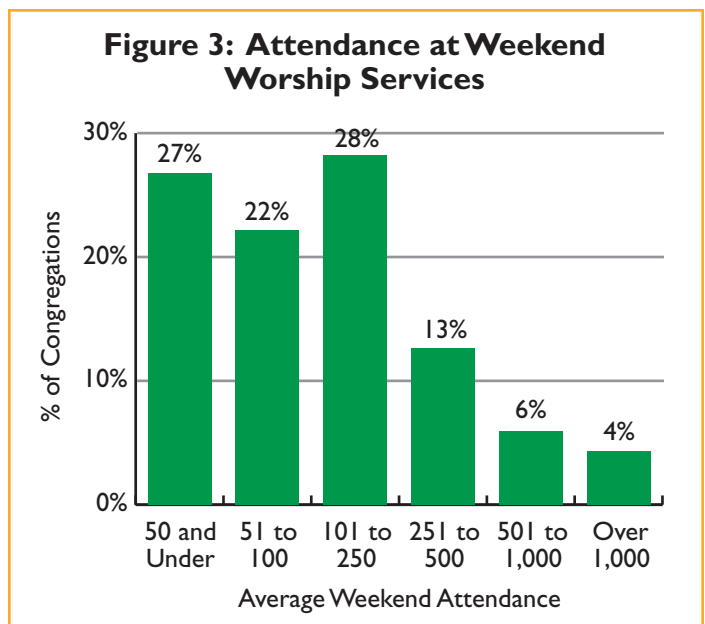
Worship is no longer confined to Sunday morning at 11:00 AM, even for Christians. Although as Figure 1 shows, Sunday morning is still the most common time for worship with nearly three-fourths of congregations having one or more services at that time, 2% worship on Friday evenings (mostly Muslims and Jews), 8% worship on Saturdays (generally Jews, Seventh-day Adventists and Roman Catholics, but some Protestants as well), and 16% worship on Sunday afternoons or evenings. Congregations that share a building represent about a third of this last group. About two thirds of the remainder are congregations offering an additional evening service for their members, while a third are those with an additional early afternoon service.

While the majority of congregations in Figure 2 (59%) hold only one service per weekend, over a quarter (27%) hold two services and another 14% hold three or more. Multiple opportunities for worship are more typical of groups with larger numbers of constituents, such as Roman Catholics and Muslims.

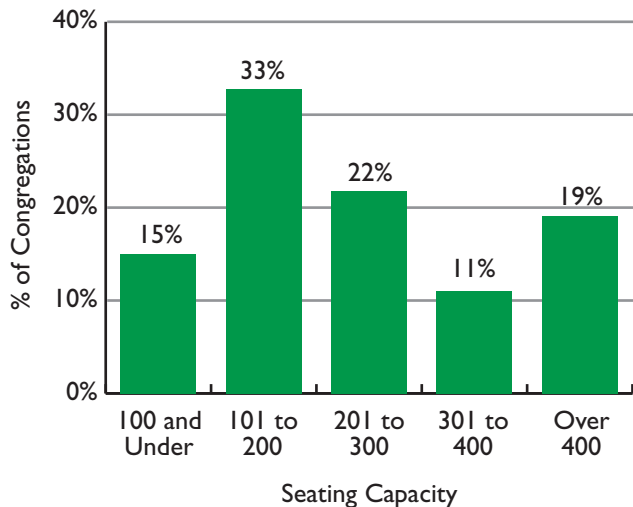


Although mega-churches with over 1,000 in attendance garner media attention, most congregations worship in much smaller groups, as can be seen in Figure 3. About half of all congregations report having fewer than 100 attendees in worship on any given weekend. *At the other extreme, 10% report having more than 500 in worship. This does not mean that 10% of all congregations have a worship service with 500 or more in attendance, however. Because about 40% of congregations report having more than one weekly service, the number attending are divided among the number of services.*

Attendees have no trouble finding a place to sit in most congregations, as can be seen in Figure 4. With a median average attendance of 105 and a median seating capacity of 225, most congregations have seats



**Figure 4: Lots of Seats**



enough for all. When asked about their seating capacity, most leaders agreed, with 40% saying their seating was “just about right,” and only 12% saying they had less seating capacity than they need and 7% saying much less. Too much space is a much greater problem than not enough, with 26% saying they have more than they need and another 15% saying they have much more.

Finding a place to park is a bigger issue than finding a place to sit, with about a third of all congregations needing more parking. Fifteen percent of congregations say they have much less parking than they need, and another 19% have less than they need, although 16% and 9%, respectively, have more and much more than they need.

US congregations worship in an amazing number of languages. About 10% of congregations use a language other than English at least occasionally in their worship. About half of these are liturgical languages, including Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Slavonic, Arabic, and Persian. Half are languages used to reach out to new immigrants. Spanish is the most common second language with 5% of congregations saying that they use it in worship. In addition, congregations reported using Korean and 22 other south and east Asian languages, 8 languages from the Pacific Islands, 15 European, 13 African, 5 Native American, 2 Caribbean, and American Sign Language for a total of 66 different languages. While this number is still well below the estimated 400 languages spoken in the US, it undoubtedly would be larger if all US congregations had been included and represents a significant effort to reach out to immigrant communities. Among Protestants, twice as many conservative as Oldline

Protestants report using a language other than English, with nearly 10% of Conservatives, 6% of Non-denominational Protestants and nearly 5% of Oldline Protestants reporting use of another language. About 7% of Peace churches and Holiness denominations report using another language, while 20% of Seventh-day Adventist congregations do so.

## **Worship Wars and Other Changes**

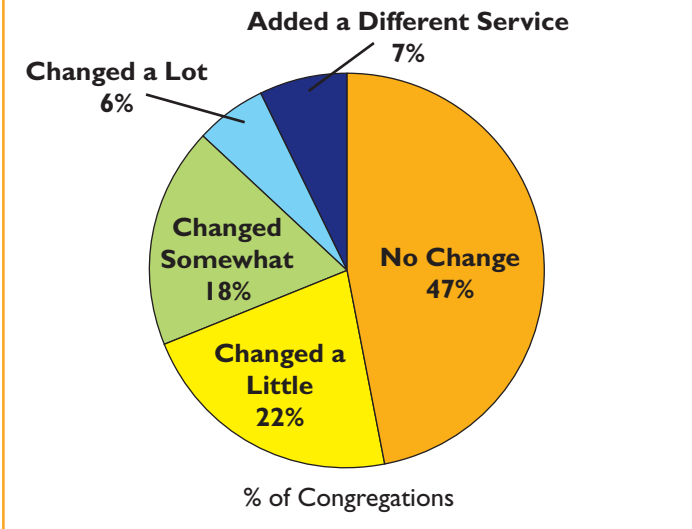
The last twenty years in the United States have seen great changes in worship from Traditional to Contemporary, as, in some places, praise bands with electronic keyboards, drums, and electric guitars have replaced organs and choirs, and worship now includes multimedia presentations, rather than only the spoken word from the pulpit. Some have called these the Worship Wars, as different generations with different tastes in music have struggled to coexist. Some congregations have started new services that are very different in style from their traditional offerings, while others have experimented with blended services that include elements of each.

The Emerging Church movement has also appeared on the scene, advocating Alternative Worship as opposed to contemporary styles. This emphasizes celebration in worship, which often includes contemporary elements as well as a return to traditions of the early Church. Such worship deemphasizes the role of the leader, with informal discussions or stories in place of sermons, and popular music in place of traditional hymns. It also includes both ancient ritual and newly-created multi-sensory experiences.

The FACT 2010 survey provides an opportunity to see how this time of change has affected US congregations. When asked how much they had changed in the last five years, nearly half of all congregations said they had not changed at all according to Figure 5. Most who had changed (40% of all congregations) reported changing only a little or somewhat, while 6% changed a lot and 7% added a new service. Of course, for some, major changes may have occurred more than five years ago. Nevertheless, the last five years were not a time of great change.

Change, when it occurs, is not without its costs. When congregational leaders were asked about conflict in their congregations in the last five years in a variety of areas, 42% reported conflict over how worship is conducted. Although two-thirds of these reported that the conflict was not serious, 27% of those reporting conflict (and 13% of all congregations) said that

**Figure 5: Not a Lot of Change**



some people left as a result. In general, conflict was higher among congregations that had made more changes, as can be seen in Figure 6, with 48% of those making small changes also reporting some conflict, and 60% of those changing their worship style a lot reporting conflict. Even adding a new and different service was related to conflict, with 60% of those congregations reporting at least some conflict.

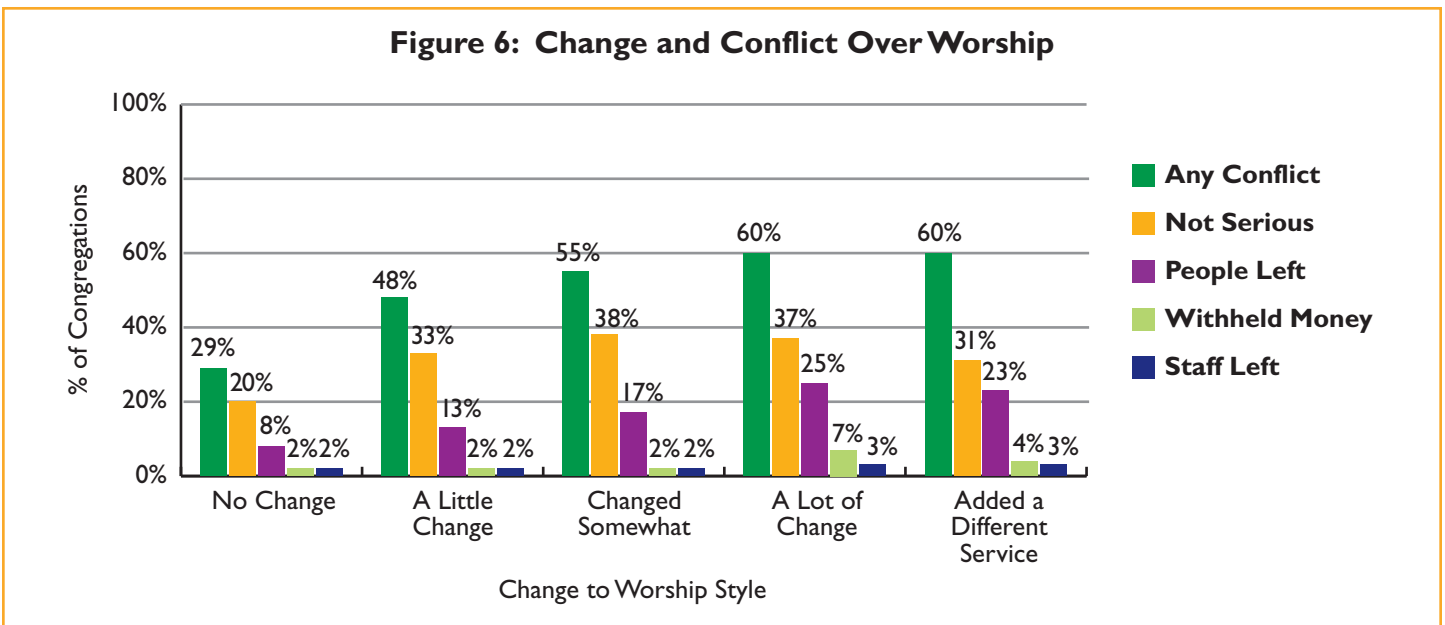
Although change in worship certainly is related to conflict, several interpretations are possible, and all are probably valid for some congregations. First, in some congregations, the worship changes could have occurred before the conflict, while in others the changes could have resulted from conflict over worship. Second, the conflict over worship may have been only a part of a larger conflict. A new pastor may have made changes in several areas including

worship style. The conflict may have originated with the change in leadership, but been played out in many areas, including worship. In fact, two thirds of those reporting conflict over worship also reported conflict over finances or program priorities or the pastor's leadership style. Also, while adding a new service with a different style might be seen as a way to make changes while keeping the status quo for those who prefer it, levels of conflict in congregations adding a new service were just as high as in those making major changes.

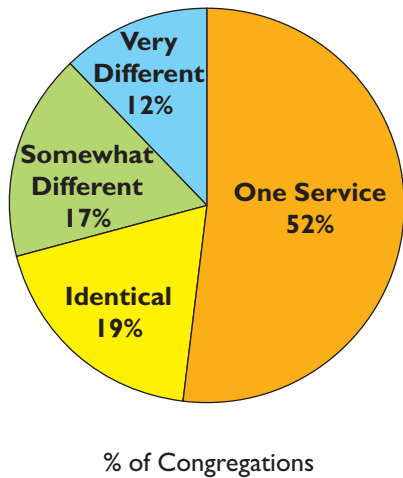
Finally, 29% of the leaders who reported that they had made *no* changes in worship in the past five years also reported conflict over how worship is conducted. Although, for most, this conflict was not serious, some people left the congregation as a result in 28% of these conflicted congregations (8% of all congregations not making changes). Not making any changes in worship does not necessarily avoid conflict and has its costs, as well. Because worship is such a central act of religion, worship is a prime area for conflict, regardless of changes.

The majority of congregations are not using the opportunity of multiple services to tailor them to different groups, as can be seen in Figure 7. About half (52%) have only one service. Another 19% have a second service that is very similar or identical to the first. This alternative seems most common for large congregations, particularly those with smaller sanctuaries. However, the remaining 29% offer somewhat (17%) or very (12%) different services. Of these, 14% include languages other than English, others differences in style, others, perhaps a third of them, an evening service that compliments the morning one.

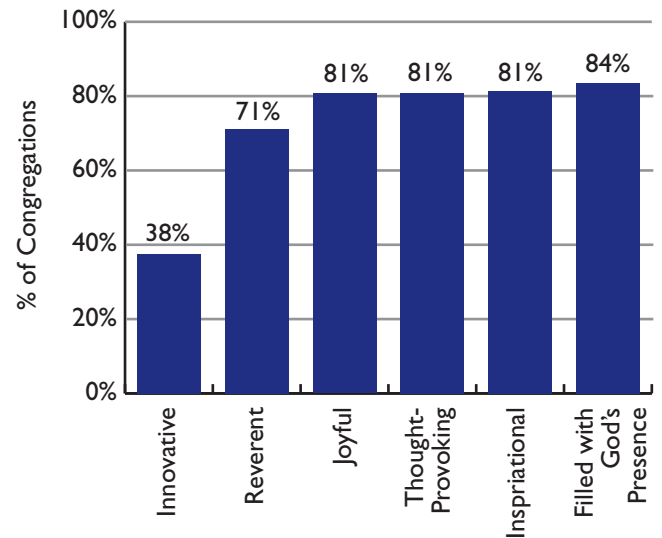
**Figure 6: Change and Conflict Over Worship**



**Figure 7: Not a Lot of Difference, Either**



**Figure 8: Worship is Meaningful, not Innovative**



When asked to describe worship in terms of six characteristics, most respondents said that Reverent, Joyful, Thought-Provoking, Inspirational, and Filled with God's Presence described their worship well or very well, as can be seen in Figure 8. These quite positive descriptions are not surprising because most survey respondents probably were the clergy leaders of the congregations. Respondents were far less likely to say that their worship was Innovative, although over a third (38%) agreed. Ratings of all of these characteristics except Innovative were lower in congregations experiencing conflict over worship than in others. In some cases, conflict may have diminished people's worship experiences, while in others, less effective worship may have initiated the conflict. Although ratings of Reverent, Inspirational and Filled with God's Presence were high in nearly all congregations, they were slightly lower in congregations that had made changes to their worship style in the last five years, while ratings of Joyful, Thought-Provoking and Innovative were slightly higher in congregations making changes.

Correlations were high among the items, indicating that people believe that worship can be thought-provoking and innovative and still be reverent, for example, or both reverent and joyful. Although those using contemporary music were more likely to say that their worship was joyful and those having an organ and choir were more likely to say their worship was reverent, many believed that contemporary music with projection screens was both reverent and inspirational. And worship that was filled with God's presence included all kinds of music.

### Differences by Faith Family

Of course, people do not worship "in general," they worship within a specific faith tradition. Faith families differ widely in how they worship, although many similarities exist. To examine some of these differences and similarities, participating congregations were grouped into the following categories or faith families:<sup>1</sup> Oldline Protestants, Conservative Protestants, Peace churches, Holiness denominations, congregations affiliated with the historically Black denominations, non-denominational Protestants, Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Baha'i. Because each faith group tailored their survey to their own practices, not all questions were asked of every group, and because FACT policy is that interpretations of data within denomination or faith group are the

1. **Oldline Protestants** included American Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran, Reformed Church in America, United Presbyterian, United Methodist, Unitarian Universalist, United Church of Christ. **Conservative Protestants** included Assembly of God, Southern Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of God, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Christian Reformed, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and many other smaller denominations. **Peace** churches included Quakers, Mennonites, Moravian, and Church of the Brethren. **Holiness** denominations were mostly Nazarene, but also included other members in the Christian Holiness Partners. **Historically Black** churches included those from the African Methodist family, the National Baptist Convention, Church of God in Christ, and other non-Oldline Protestant groups where the congregational membership was more than 75% African-American. **Non-denominational Protestants** included congregations labeling themselves as such or as community churches, most of which were large and half of which were formed since 1980. **Jewish** congregations included both Conservative and Reform, although these represent different traditions within Judaism.

privilege of the group itself, only Christian faith families, not individual denominations or faith groups, are included in most of the remaining charts and discussion of differences.

Because faith families differ in several of the characteristics that are related to differing worship styles, such as congregational size, region of the country, type of community, average age of members, time since the congregation was founded, and age of clergy leader, among others, the effects of these factors must be examined within family.

One of the largest differences among faith families is in the size of the gatherings in which they worship. The first column in the table in the Appendix shows the median<sup>2</sup> average attendance for each denomination or faith partner group. Figure 9 shows the differences in average attendance within and between faith groups. In this figure, the bar represents the middle half of the range of attendance for congregations in each faith group, with the line representing the median. For Conservative Protestants, for example, the bottom quarter of congregations have fewer than 55 attendees, the next quarter have between 55 and 120 attendees, the next quarter have between 120 and 250 attendees, and the top quarter have more than 250 attendees. Roman Catholics and Muslims report the largest congregations and the greatest variation in congregational size, with Baha'i the smallest. Among Protestants, Conservative groups report the largest average attendance, Holiness groups the smallest, with Peace churches and Oldline Protestants nearly as small.

Even among Christians, faith families differ greatly in worship practices. For example, although the Eucharist is a key sacrament in Christianity, not all

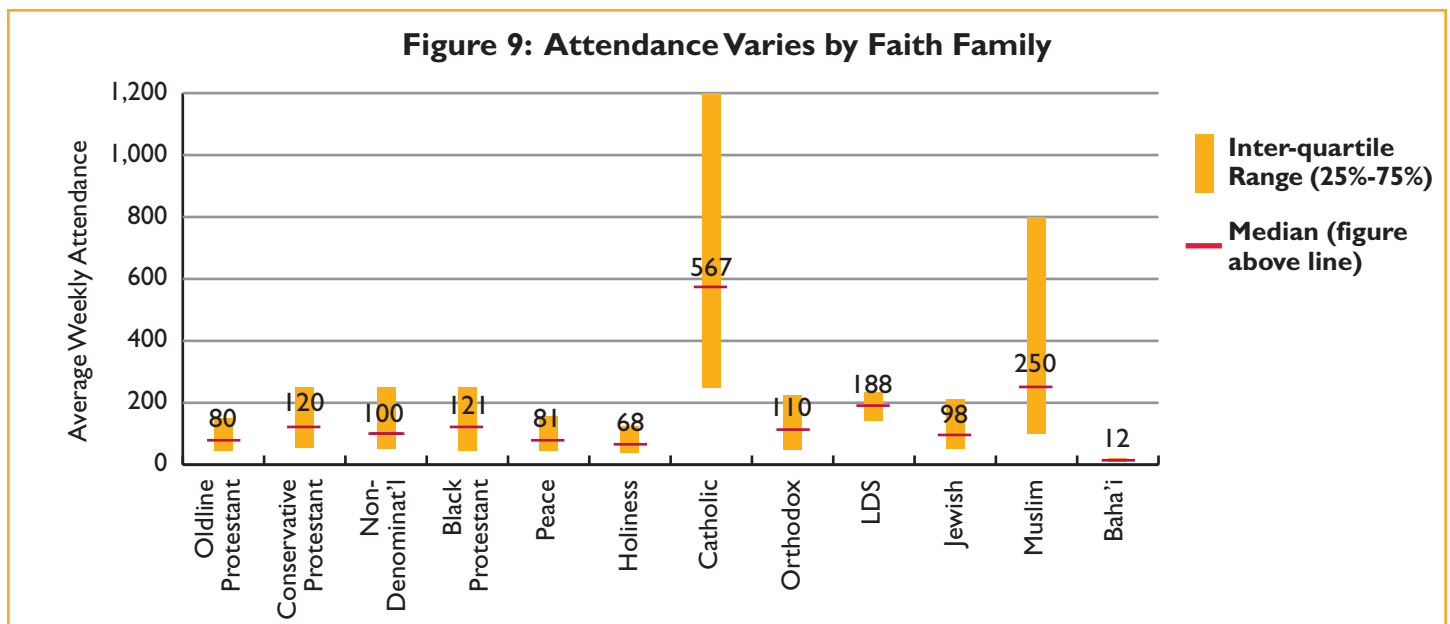
Christian faith groups include it in worship with equal frequency, as can be seen in Figure 10. Nearly all congregations include it in worship at least sometimes. The exception is the Peace Churches, in which only 56% include the Eucharist at least sometimes. The Peace church group includes Quakers, some of whom do not recognize the sacrament. Among other Christian groups, most Roman Catholics and Orthodox always include the practice, while much smaller percentages of Protestants always include it.

Faith families differ greatly in their use of contemporary music and visual projection equipment can be seen in Figures 11 through 13. Although drums and electric guitars and bass both are used in contemporary praise bands, they have been adopted at different rates by different families. Drums are a common element in historically Black denominations, with over 60% of congregations saying they always use them and another 15% using them at least sometimes. About 60% of Non-Denominational Protestants use drums at least sometimes, and Conservative and Holiness families are nearly as high. Orthodox churches do not use them at all.

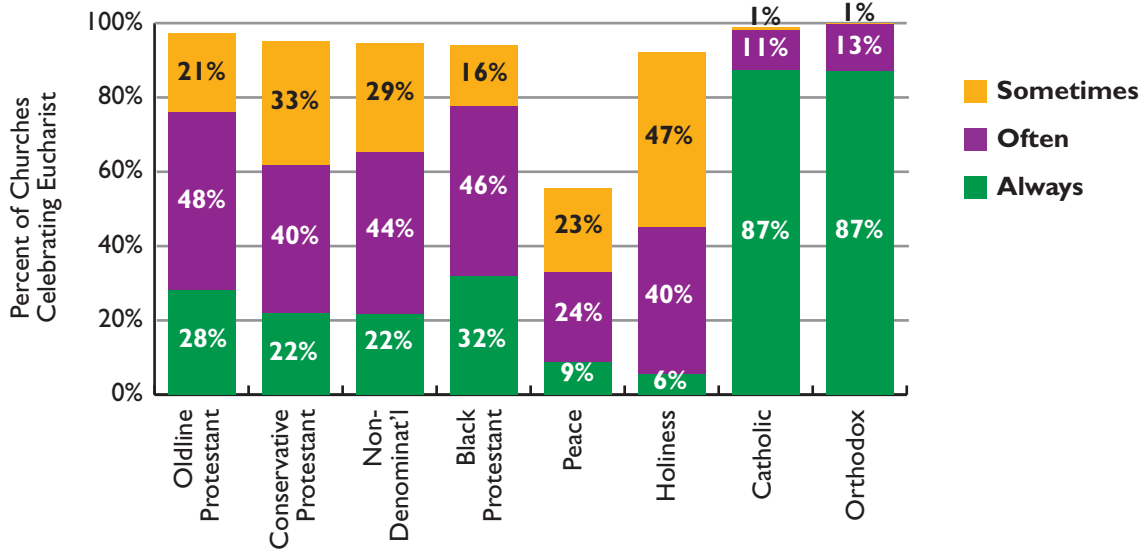
Non-denominational and Holiness churches lead in the use of electric guitars or bass, with a majority, over 60%, using them at least sometimes. Conservative Protestants and Roman Catholics are next, and, again, Orthodox churches do not use them at all.

Although Oldline Protestants are more likely to use visual projection equipment than they are to use

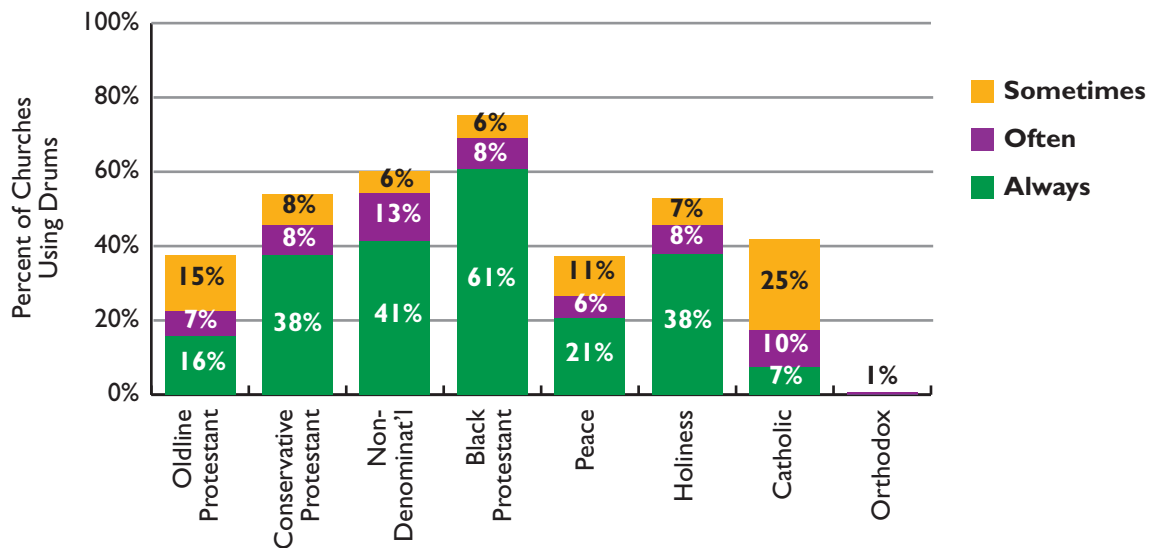
2. The median is the middle number when all congregations are ranked. Half the congregations are smaller and half larger. The median is less affected by a few very large or very small numbers than is the mean, the statistic more often used as an average.



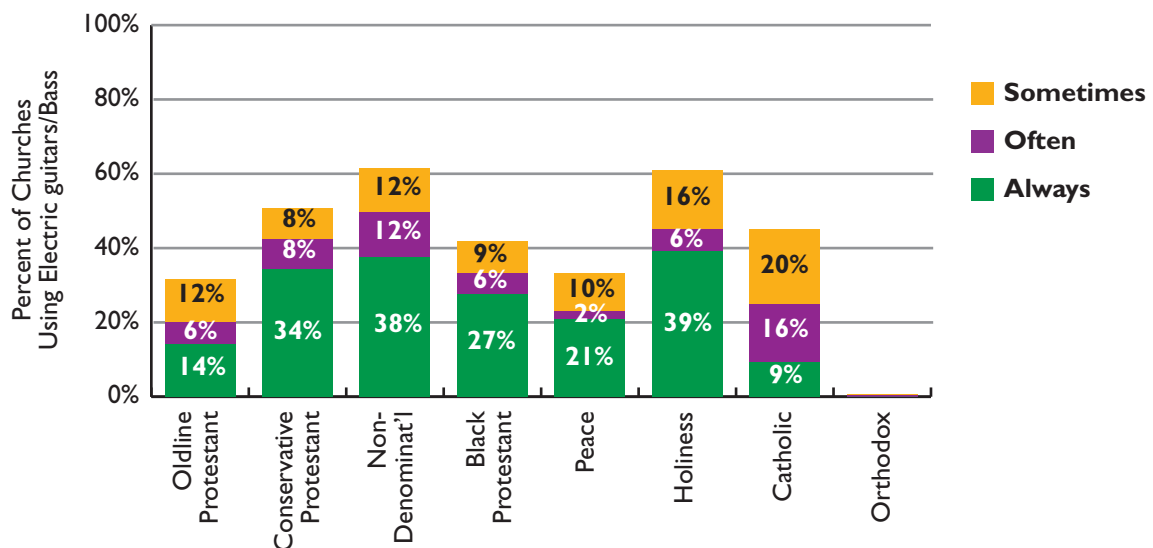
**Figure 10: Frequency of Eucharist**



**Figure 11: Who Uses Drums?**

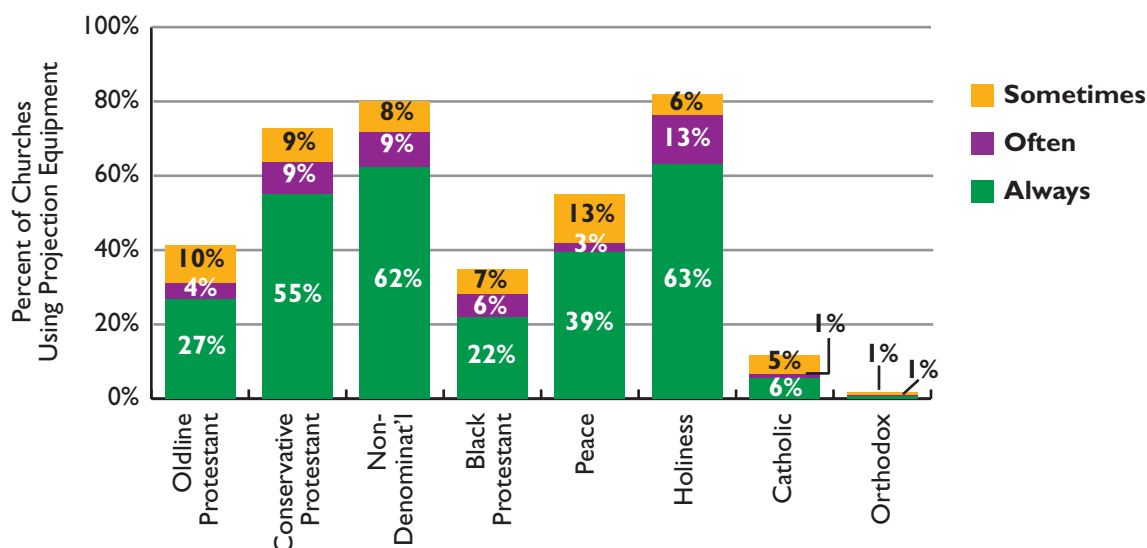


**Figure 12: Who Uses Electric Guitars/Bass?**





**Figure 13: Who Uses Projection Equipment?**



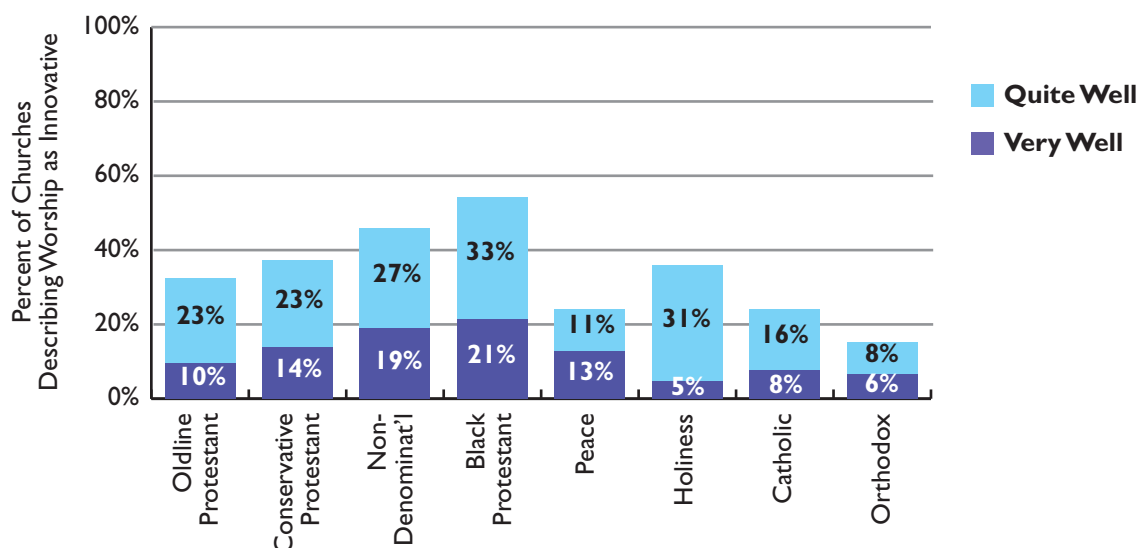
drums or electric guitars, their use at least sometimes at 44% still trails behind Holiness, Non-denominational and Conservative Protestants, in which over half their churches always use them. Use among Roman Catholics is not common, perhaps partially because of the larger size and architecture of their sanctuaries, and Orthodox do not use them at all.

In general, Non-denominational Protestants are the leaders in adopting contemporary worship. Although this group is very similar to Conservative Protestants, it differs in several significant ways. Non-denominational congregations are newer than others, with 17% founded since 2000, as compared to 11% of Conservative Protestants and only 3% of Mainline Protestants. Non-denominational Protestants have somewhat larger congregations, larger sanctuaries, more services, and

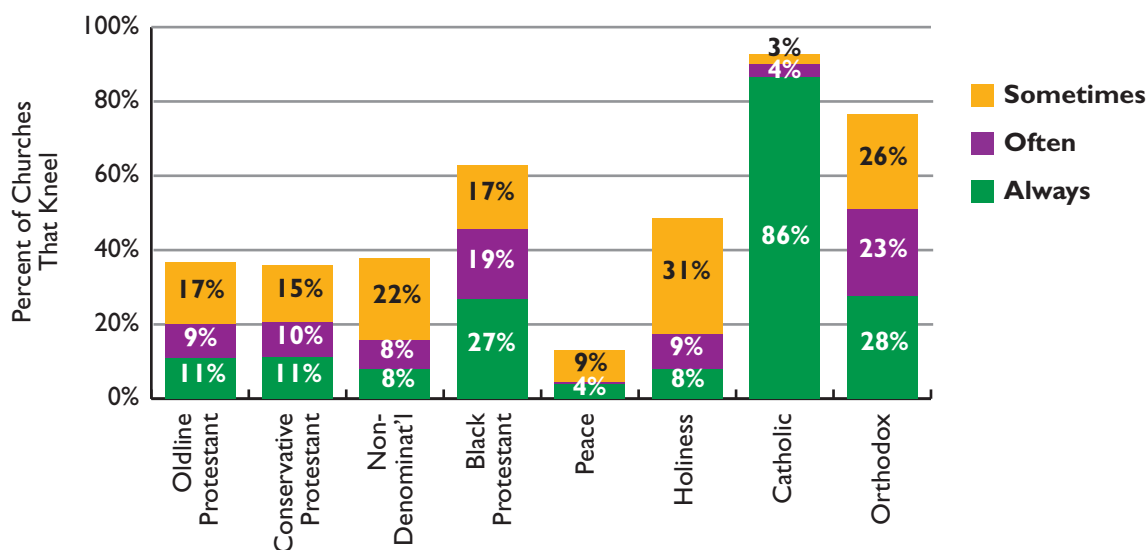
more services that are very different from each other per week. They are much more theologically conservative than the Oldline, with 93% describing themselves as somewhat or very conservative, as compared to 47% of the Oldline and 82% of Conservatives. They are more likely to be located in the West. They also have the highest percentage of young adults of any faith family.

Faith families differ greatly in how innovative they consider their worship to be, as can be seen in Figure 14. In addition, the Appendix compares participating denominations and faith group partners on a composite measure of Innovative and Contemporary Worship. This measure combines information about whether a congregation uses drums and/or electric guitars or bass with the self-rating of innovativeness. In Figure 14,

**Figure 14: Some Have Innovative Worship**



**Figure 15: Some Include Kneeling**



Historically Black Protestant denominations consider themselves the most innovative, followed by Non-Denominational Protestants, with Conservative and Oldline Protestants and Holiness groups next. The Christian faith groups most dedicated to preserving tradition, Orthodox and Roman Catholic, are least likely to say they are innovative. Peace churches, that preserve a different tradition, also are less likely to say they are innovative.

However, innovation has a different meaning in different contexts. Congregations in different faith families consider different elements in worship to be innovative. Congregations that rated their worship as innovative were compared with those saying they were not innovative to learn how they differed. Among Oldline Protestants, Conservative Protestants, and Roman Catholics, innovative congregations were much more likely than others to include drums, electric guitar or bass, and projection equipment in worship. For example, 59% of the Old-line Protestant leaders who said that “innovative” described their worship very well included drums at least “sometimes,” while only 19% of those that said they were not at all innovative did so. Among Black Protestants, however, drums were not considered to be particularly innovative. Among Non-Denominational Protestants, drums, electric guitars, and visual equipment all were not considered to be innovative because the vast majority of congregations use them.

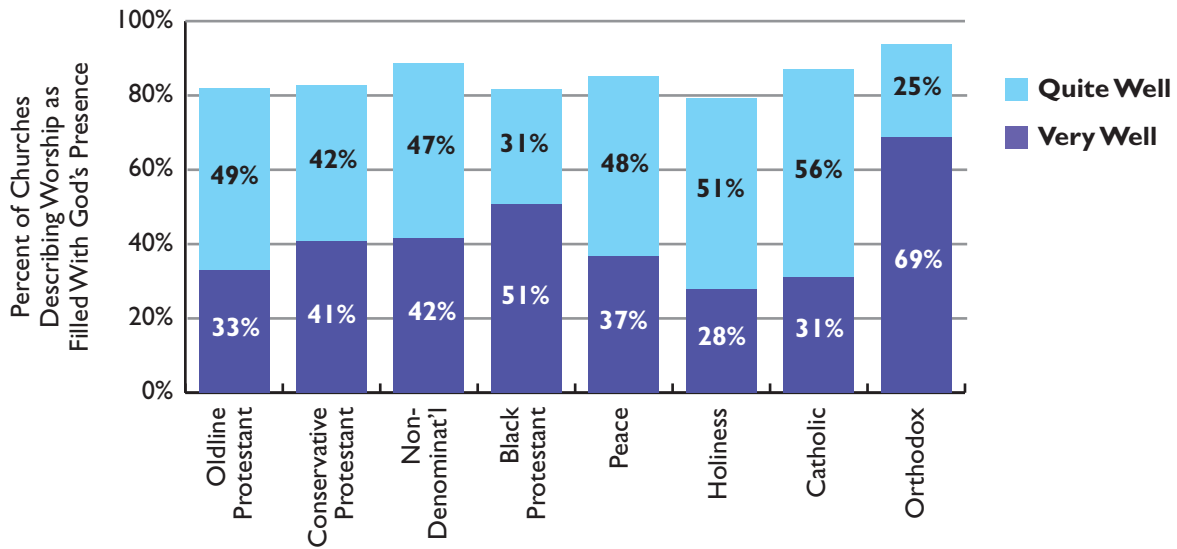
Similarly, as Figure 15 illustrates, kneeling is seen as innovative in Non-denominational and Black Protestant groups, but not at all among Roman Catholics, for whom kneeling is a part of most services. It is common for Orthodox Christians as well, although

not included as frequently. Over half of historically Black Protestant groups also kneel during worship, as do nearly as many from the Holiness family. Kneeling is done in about a third of other Protestant groups, except the Peace churches who generally do not kneel.

In spite of quite different worship styles, leaders of most congregations rate their worship as joyful, reverent, inspirational, and thought-provoking. Differences, although statistically significant, are not large. Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian congregations are more likely than others to rate their worship as reverent and historically Black churches are more likely to rate their worship as joyful, but the vast majority of leaders of all congregations say that these characteristics describe their worship “quite” or “very well.” As Figure 16 displays, most congregations in all faith families say that their worship is “Filled with a sense of God’s presence,” although Orthodox Christian leaders are most likely to agree.

Size affects worship in several ways. Larger congregations have more resources with which to enrich the worship experience, so larger congregations are more likely to use drums, electric guitars, and visual projection equipment. Larger congregations also have more people to support multiple services, which may be different in style, and also to offer worship in different languages. However, when congregations were examined within faith tradition, most size differences were small and most of the differences were found between the smallest congregations and all others. In general, even within faith families, leaders of larger congregations tended to rate worship as higher in being reverent, innovative, joyful, inspirational, thought-provoking, and filled

**Figure 16: Worship is Filled With God's Presence**



with God's presence. However, differences were quite small, much smaller than differences in the use of drums or projection equipment.

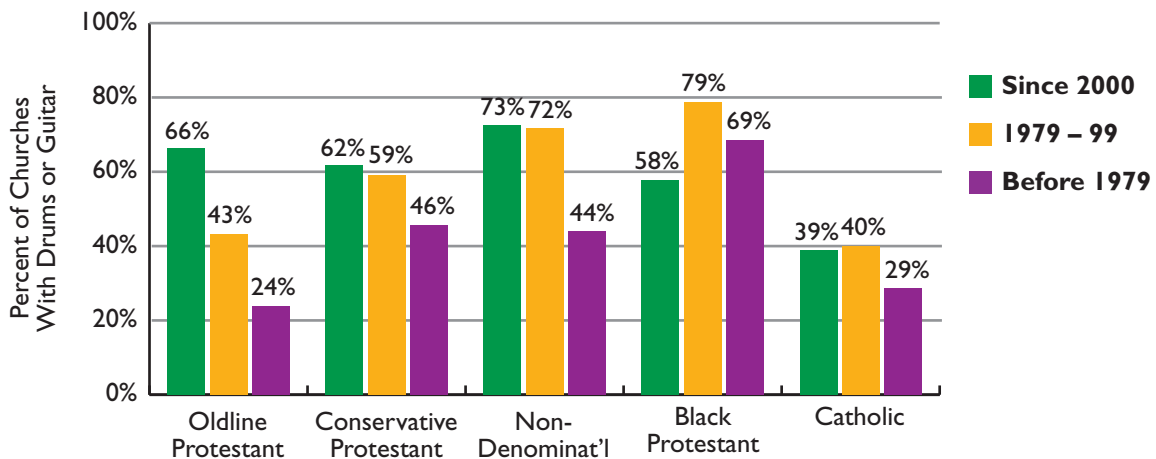
In most faith groups, innovation in worship is more typical of the West and South than it is of the Northeast. Congregations in the South are more likely than others to include choirs and children in worship, and also to kneel during worship and describe their worship as both joyful and reverent. Innovation also is present more in urban areas, downtown and both older and newer suburbs, and less in rural areas. However, because the mix of faith groups varies widely in different parts of the country and in different types of communities, untangling the effects of denominational tradition, geographic region and community setting is difficult.

In some faith families, newer congregations, particularly those founded since 2000 are much more

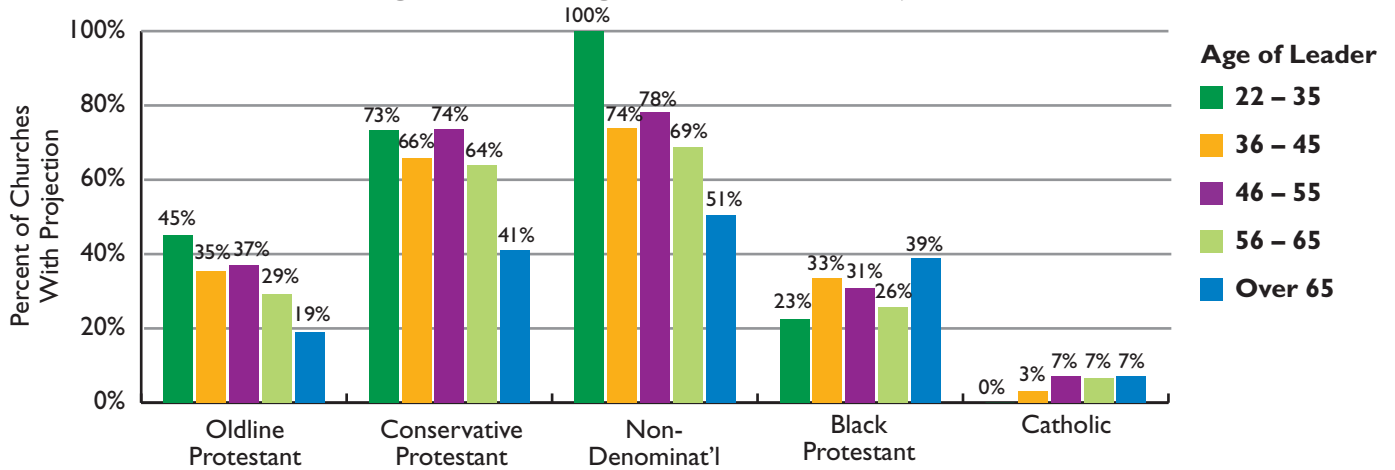
likely to have contemporary worship. In Figure 17, for example, the newest congregations among Oldline Protestants were much more likely to use drums and guitars, with those founded since 1976 next most likely. For Conservative and Non-denominational Protestants and Roman Catholics, both congregations founded since 1976 and the newest ones were more likely than older ones to do so. For Black congregations, those founded between 1976 and 1999 were the most likely to do so. Use of projection equipment was similar, although no new Roman Catholic congregations used it often or always. In each of these faith families, leaders of newer congregations also were more likely than those founded before 1976 to describe worship as innovative.

Across faith families, congregations with a high proportion of older members are far less likely than others to include innovations and more likely to use

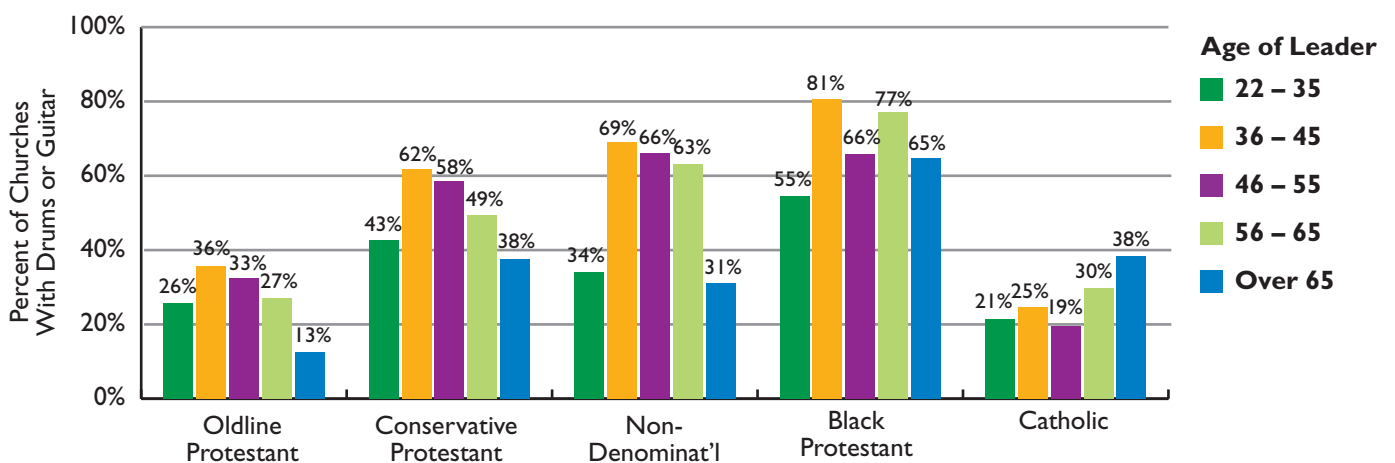
**Figure 17: Newer Churches Have Contemporary Music**



**Figure 18: Younger Leaders Use Projection**



**Figure 19: Younger Leaders Use Drums/Guitars**



the organ in worship. Worship in congregations with older members was more likely to be described as reverent, and less likely to be described as joyful. The relationship was reversed for those with higher percentages of younger members.

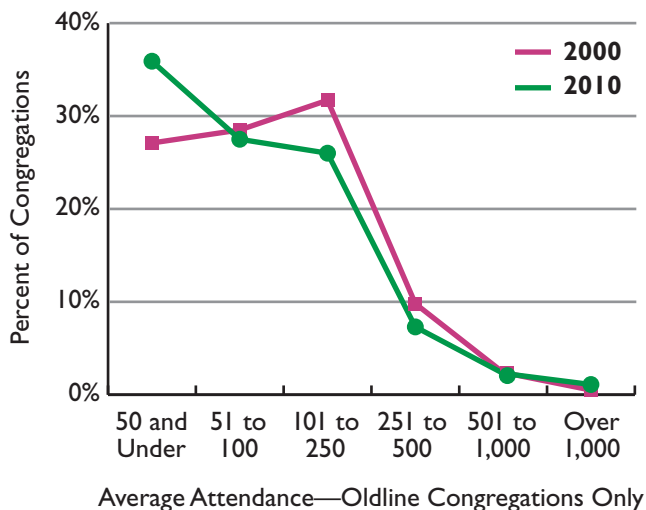
Younger clergy also are more likely to incorporate contemporary music, projection equipment, and other innovations in worship. However, as Figures 18 and 19 show, the youngest leaders are more likely to use projection, but those between 36 and 45 are most likely to use contemporary music. This may be because the youngest leaders are more likely to serve small or rural congregations that are less open to such innovations. Also, Roman Catholic and historically Black denominations do not fit this pattern. In these families, older clergy, who may be serving larger congregations, are more likely to report having these innovations.

## Changes in Worship Since 2000

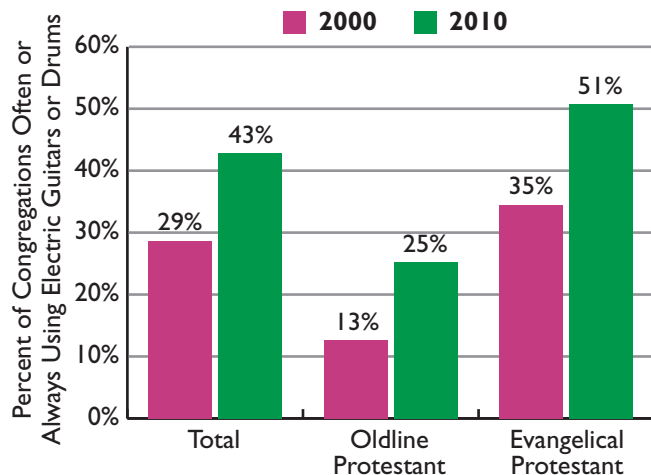
Decreasing average attendance is the biggest difference in worship since 2000, and the one that drives many others. This decrease in attendance was widespread. The median size of the congregation decreased in every Christian denominational group over the period, although it increased for Muslims.

Figure 20 shows that the decreases among Oldline Protestants occurred largely among congregations in the mid-range of size. This is important because these congregations are most likely to begin or to stop holding a second service, a significant opportunity for change and innovation. In 2000, 59% of Oldline congregations reported having only one service; by 2010 the percentage had increased to 63%. Likewise, Conservative Protestants, Peace churches, Holiness denominations and Adventists all reported more congregations with only one service in 2010 than in

**Figure 20: Congregations Are Smaller**



**Figure 21: Contemporary Worship Continues to Surge**



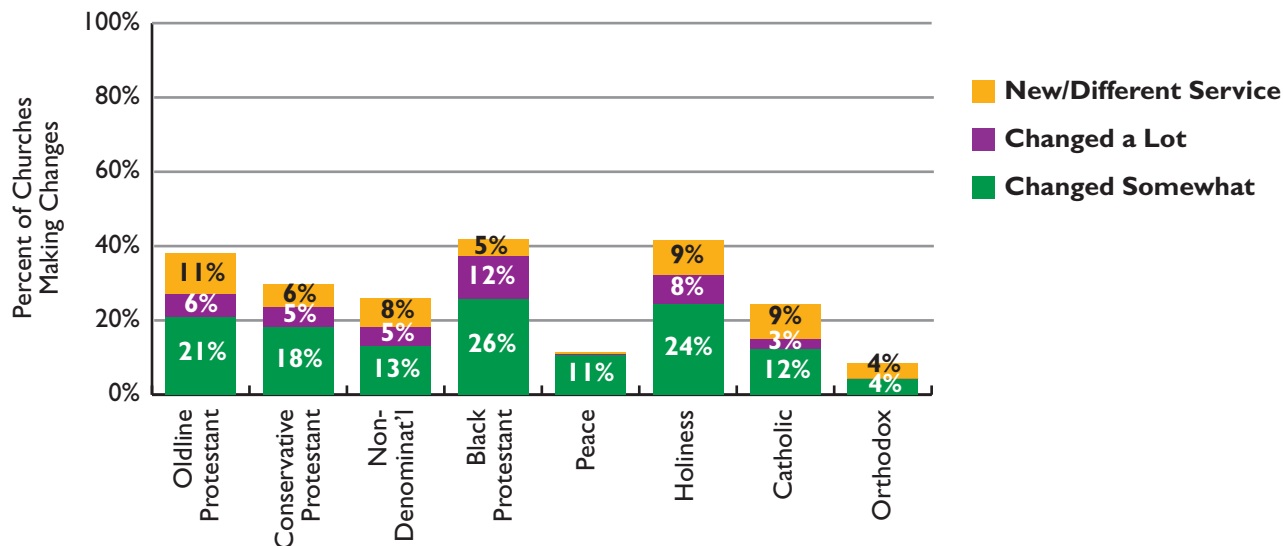
2000, although most of these differences were small. Of those having more than one service, however, more congregations in 2010 than in 2000 reported that they were very different in style.

In *A Decade of Change*, Roozen reports large increases between 2000 and 2010 in both Contemporary worship (using drums and electric guitar or bass) (see Figure 21) and leaders' ratings of worship as innovative, both overall and among Oldline and Conservative Protestant families. When faith families were examined in greater detail, the picture was somewhat more nuanced. For example, when asked about whether and what kinds of changes they had made in worship in the past five years, faith families differed greatly in how much change they reported, as can be seen in Figure 22. Although Conservative Protestant



and Non-denominational Protestant churches are more likely to include contemporary elements in worship, Holiness and Oldline Protestants reported making the most changes in recent years, including adding a new, different service. Because Conservative and Non-denominational congregations have led the way in contemporary worship, they may have changed already, while Oldline congregations are moving toward more contemporary worship. Congregations from historically Black denominations, however, reported the greatest amount of change, as well as the highest use of drums and the most innovation. For them, innovation appears to be ongoing. Orthodox Christian, Peace churches and to a lesser extent Roman Catholic and Non-denominational churches reported the least change.

**Figure 22: Change Varies**



One mark of the style of worship espoused by the Emerging Church is inclusion of both old traditions, such as kneeling, and new ones, such as multimedia presentations. FACT 2010 results suggest that this mix is occurring and probably increasing, particularly among Oldline, Conservative, and Non-denominational Protestants. About 11% of Non-denominational Protestants and 12% of Conservative Protestants combine use of projection equipment with the practice of kneeling, and 10% and 15% respectively combine projection with weekly celebration of the Eucharist. In Oldline congregations, 4% combine the practice of kneeling and 7% combine weekly celebration of the Eucharist with use of projection equipment. The use of projection equipment along with these more traditional practices has increased slightly since 2000. In addition, the newest congregations in Oldline, Conservative and Non-denominational Protestant families and those with the youngest clergy are more likely than others to include both kneeling and projection equipment.

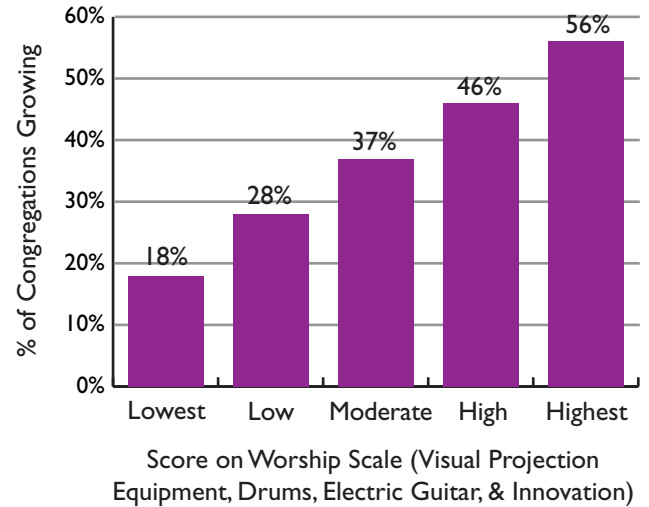
The number of languages in which worship is held appears to have increased in the last decade, although this conclusion can only be tentative because this question was not asked of all faith groups in 2000. Congregations in 2000 reported using only 28 other languages, as compared to 66 languages in 2010, a number that likely would have increased had all congregations responded to the question. Given the dramatic increase since 2000 in immigrant congregations documented in the *Decade of Change* report, the number of languages spoken in worship is very likely to have increased greatly as well.

## Worship and Congregational Growth and Vitality

Hadaway reported in *FACTs on Growth: 2010* that several characteristics of worship were positively related to growth in attendance between 2005 and 2010. Congregations with multiple worship services per week were more likely to be growing, with more worship opportunities attracting more attendees and more attendees supporting more worship services. Congregations with worship that is described as joyful, innovative and inspirational, as well as thought-provoking and filled with a sense of God's presence were more likely than others to have grown between 2005 and 2010. The use of drums, electric guitars, and projection equipment all were positively related



**Figure 23: Innovative Worship Scale and Growth**



to growth, as can be seen in Figure 23. In addition, involving children and youth in worship was related to growth.

When examined separately by faith families, these relationships were strongest among Oldline and Conservative Protestants, and weaker for other groups. Innovative worship was NOT significantly related to growth for Non-denominational Protestants, perhaps because most have innovative worship, and for Roman Catholics and historically Black denominations.

Contemporary music and innovative worship both were particularly helpful in attracting young adults. Congregations that included these elements in worship had a significantly higher percentage of young adults ages 18 to 35 in them than those that did not. This relationship was stronger than that between innovative worship and overall growth in attendance. It also was found in every faith family except Non-denominational Christians (probably because most Non-denominational congregations were high both in innovation and the percentage of young adults). Also, contemporary music had a bigger effect on the presence of young adults than it did on overall growth, which was more affected by innovation in general. Of course, making worship more innovative and adding more contemporary music also may be easier to do in congregations with a large number of young adults than in congregations with many senior citizens.

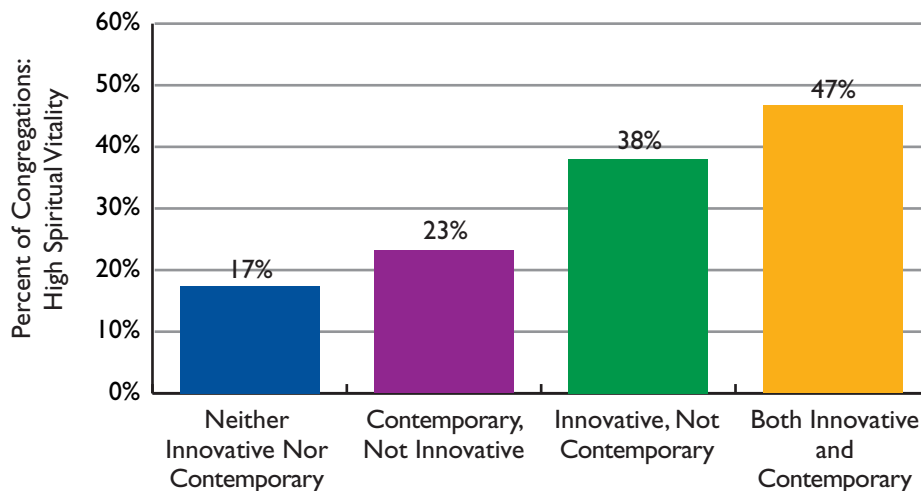
Not all congregations may be in a good position to grow, due to factors such as location, community growth or decline, and age of congregation. Congregational vitality is another measure of congregational health and strength, and

congregations that are not growing in attendance may still serve their members and their communities in a vital way. On the FACT 2010 surveys, this sense of congregational vitality was measured by having leaders rate their congregations on whether they are “spiritually vital and alive.” The last column in the table in the Appendix lists the percentage of congregations within each participating denomination and faith group who rate themselves as having high vitality. As Figure 24 shows, congregations whose worship was described as innovative were far more likely than others to be rated as spiritually vital and alive. Across faith families, leaders who rated their congregations high in vitality also described their worship as joyful, inspirational, filled with God’s presence and other positive characteristics. Figure 24 also shows that congregations with contemporary worship elements were more likely than others to be rated as vital, although the relationship was not as strong.

All in all, a quality worship experience is important for congregations that want to grow. Particularly in Oldline and Conservative Protestant families, congregations that provide a solid worship experience, including worship that is joyful, inspiring, and full of a sense of God’s presence, are more likely to be spiritually vital and growing in numbers. Because our culture is changing, congregations may need to change and innovate in their worship to create such an experience. And if congregations hope to attract and incorporate younger adults, that change may need to include drums, electric guitars, and visual projection equipment. However, faith tradition *is* important. Drums and projection screens do not fit in every tradition

or with every age group. Innovation and change need to occur within a congregation’s faith tradition. Finding the balance between the two is one of the major challenges of worship in the 21st Century.

**Figure 24: Innovative Worship Pays Vitality Dividend**



## Appendix

### FACT 2010 Denomination and Faith Group Partner Surveys

Named partner conducted or contracted for survey. For Partner contact information and links to partner reports on their respective surveys see [www.faithcommunitiestoday.org](http://www.faithcommunitiestoday.org).

#### Worship and Congregational Growth and Vitality

Median Average Attendance <sup>a</sup>		Innovative & Contemporary Worship <sup>b</sup>	High Spiritual Vitality <sup>c</sup>
80	American Baptist Churches USA <sup>O,1</sup>	.17%	.21%
89	Assemblies of God <sup>E</sup>	.51%	.35%
12	Baha'is of the United States	.0%	.15%
75	Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) <sup>O</sup>	.17%	.24%
160	Christian Reformed Church <sup>E</sup>	.25%	.16%
188	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints <sup>E</sup>	.0%	.34%
68	Church of the Nazarene <sup>E</sup>	.22%	.19%
65	Churches of Christ <sup>E</sup>	.0%	.25%
100	Conservative Judaism <sup>2</sup>	.1%	.15%
104	Episcopal Church <sup>O</sup>	.5%	.28%
100	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America <sup>O</sup>	.11%	.15%
120	Historically Black Denominations <sup>E,3</sup>	.46%	.35%
104	Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod <sup>E</sup>	.9%	.17%
80	Mennonite Church USA <sup>O</sup>	.20%	.16%
250	Muslim <sup>4</sup>	NA	.39%
105	Non-denominational <sup>E,5</sup>	.34%	.45%
110	Orthodox Christian <sup>6</sup>	.0%	.28%
70	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) <sup>O</sup>	.9%	.26%
125	Reformed Church in America <sup>O</sup>	.22%	.22%
95	Reform Judaism <sup>2</sup>	.6%	.19%
567	Roman Catholic Church <sup>7</sup>	.9%	.21%
55	Seventh-day Adventist Church <sup>E</sup>	.8%	.16%
170	Southern Baptist Convention <sup>E</sup>	.23%	.24%
80	Unitarian Universalist Association <sup>O</sup>	.3%	.15%
70	United Church of Christ <sup>O</sup>	.8%	.17%
60	United Methodist Church <sup>O</sup>	.14%	.20%
150	Non-Partner Denominations/Traditions <sup>E,8</sup>	.30%	.31%

<sup>a</sup> See discussion related to Figure 8

<sup>b</sup> See discussion related to Figure 13

<sup>c</sup> See discussion related to Figure 23

Protestant Families: E – Evangelical; O – Oldline/Mainline

<sup>1</sup> Response rate warrants caution.

<sup>2</sup> Conducted by Synagogue 3000. Includes the Conservative and Reformed Traditions.

<sup>3</sup> Conducted by the Interdenominational Theological Center. Low response rate warrants caution.

<sup>4</sup> Conducted by the Islamic Society of America. Low response rate warrants caution.

<sup>5</sup> Conducted by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research. Low response rate warrants caution.

<sup>6</sup> Conducted by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America. Includes the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Orthodox Church in America.

<sup>7</sup> Conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA).

<sup>8</sup> Conducted by a subcontractor of the Cooperative Congregational partnership. Low response rate warrants caution.



## Appendix Sample Description

### The Faith Communities Today Surveys

The FACT 2010 national data set brings together the 26 individual surveys of congregations listed on the previous page. Twenty-four were conducted by or for denominations and faith groups in the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership (CCSP), representing 32 of the country's largest denominations and traditions. Partners developed a common core questionnaire of just over 150 questions consisting of items from the FACT 2000, FACT 2005 and FACT 2008 surveys. Copies of all FACT questionnaires are available at: [www.faithcommunitiestoday.org/](http://www.faithcommunitiestoday.org/). They should be referred to for the exact wording of items used in this report.

Using the common questionnaire, CCSP partner groups conducted their own, typically mail and online survey of a representative, random national sample of their own congregations. Usually a congregation's leader completed the questionnaire. CCSP also conducted a national survey of non-denominational congregations based on a random sample drawn from several mailing and marketing lists purchased from national vendors. Finally, CCSP contracted with a denominational agency to survey a sample of non-partner denomination congregations, also based on a random sample drawn from several mailing and marketing lists.

For purposes of the overall national analysis, the 26 FACT 2010 sub-surveys were combined in such a way that, through the use of statistical weights, each partner denomination and faith group, and each non-partner cluster of congregations are represented in the national FACT 2010 data proportionate to their representation in the total population of congregations in the United States. This aggregated dataset includes responses from 11,077 congregations, and over 120 denominations. Return rates were typically good for surveys of this type—in the 40% range. Sub-surveys with lower return rates are noted in the appendix. Sampling error for a survey such as FACT 2010 can only be roughly estimated. We believe a conservative estimate is +/- 4% at the 95% confidence level.

### The Faith Communities Today Project

The FACT series of national surveys of American Congregations is a project of the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership (CCSP). CCSP is a multi-faith coalition of denominations and religious groups hosted by Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religion Research. The primary purposes of CCSP are developing research-based resources for congregational development and advancing the public understanding of the most numerous voluntary organization in the U.S.—our religious congregations. More information about CCSP, its partners, its publications, the FACT surveys and how to subscribe to its monthly newsletter is available at [www.faithcommunitiestoday.org](http://www.faithcommunitiestoday.org).

***FACTs On Worship: 2010*** was written by Marjorie Royle, Ph.D., of Clay Pots Research. Her religious research projects have included a major study of worship in the United Church of Christ. For a list of other FACT publications and contact information visit the Faith Communities Today web site at: [www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org](http://www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org).

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