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# News from Faith Communities Today

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## Faith Communities Today Newsletter

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Worship renewal is one of the strong elements of congregational vitality today. The percentage of congregations changing their worship style is up and it is contributing to the life of local religious groups. As contemporary worship styles are adopted by more and more congregations, they are more likely to report increased growth and vitality. Changes in worship are also likely to be controversial in most faiths. Change of this kind can be the cause of conflict. Does this lead to the observation that conflict can be a good thing, related to growing vitality in at least some congregations?

### Changing Worship Styles & Growing Congregations



The number of congregations among all faiths who report "a great deal" of change in worship style over the past five years rose from one in eleven in 2005 to one in eight in 2008. In other words there were a third more



not focus on the topic of conflict over changes in worship style.

Boys Scouts of America provides a [PDF](#) with Islamic readings that have a more contemporary feel.

### **FACT Data Reported in *Christian Century***

An article by Lovett Weems in the October 5 issue of *Christian Century* includes data from *American Congregations 2008* and a quote from David Roozen, chairman of the coalition that produces the FACT reports. The information provides key evidence for Weems' analysis that church attendance is down across the board among Protestant denominations. He states that "regular" attendance patterns have slipped to twice a month instead of weekly. Weems is distinguished professor of church leadership at Wesley Seminary in Washington DC and director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership.

### **New Presbyterian Panel Reports**

Research Services of the Presbyterian Church (USA) recently released several reports from the Presbyterian Panel administered by Perry Chang, who is also a member of the FACT steering committee. A survey from May 2009 focuses on [environmental issues](#). The other two reports include a range of topics related to denominational priorities, goals, confessions and resources from [August 2009](#) and [November 2009](#).

### **Leadership Network Research**

Two research reports were released in the last month by Leadership Network, one of the organizations that make up the FACT coalition. Warren Bird, director of research and intellectual capital for Leadership Network and a regular participant in FACT meetings, is the primary author of both reports. *Lean Staffing* is a look at large congregations that keep their personnel costs at 35 percent or less of their total budget. The *2010 Large Church Salary and Benefits Report* is the latest annual tracking survey on the topic. Both can be downloaded [here](#).

### **New Religion Research**

Over the past few weeks four reports have been published with new research on religion from a variety of organizations. The *U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey* was released September 28 by [Pew Research Center](#) with considerable media attention. A study by a religious trade journal *Our Church* explores how congregations are using Facebook and similar social media. It can be downloaded [here](#) and does not have a rigorous methodology. Child Trends, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children distributed in September a paper entitled [The Demographics of Spirituality and Religiosity Among Youth](#). The [Lewis Center for Church Leadership](#) published *Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church*, an update this year of similar research in 2008. The First Amendment Center completed a poll in August about American attitudes on issues related to religious rights, according to Religion News Service (RNS). Earlier this year Austin Presbyterian Seminary released [A Study of the Effects of Participation in SPE Pastoral Leader Peer Groups](#).

