



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact:
Sarah Brown
Executive Director
Faith Communities Today
802-505-6395
sbrown@hartsem.edu

Faith Communities Today Releases Findings from Largest Survey of U.S. Congregations Ever Conducted

HARTFORD, CT – [Faith Communities Today](#) (FACT), a multireligious and collaborative research initiative that has been tracking trends in the U.S. religious landscape since 2000, has just released the findings of its 2020 survey of 15,278 congregations from across 80 denominations and religious groups, the largest national survey of congregations conducted in the U.S. to date.

The report “Twenty Years of Congregational Change: The 2020 Faith Communities Today Overview” captures a pre- and early pandemic picture of America’s faith communities and affirms many of the trends evident in the religious landscape over the past few decades, while also highlighting some distinct areas of change.

Key findings include:

- Prior to the pandemic, many congregations were small and getting smaller, while the largest ones keep getting more attendees
- Despite continued declines in attendance overall, about a third of congregations are growing and are spiritually vital
- Being a larger congregation offers some distinct advantages, but each size grouping has certain strengths
- Congregations have continued to diversify, particularly in terms of racial composition
- A dramatically increased utilization of technology can be seen over the past two decades, even pre-pandemic
- The fiscal health of congregations has remained mostly steady
- There is a clear and demonstrated path toward vitality with characteristics that are consistent across the two decades of our survey efforts

“This research is thrilling both to collect and to explore. Having 20 years of results to reflect upon the trends shaping American congregations, and simultaneously examining over 15,000 recent cases to dive deep into patterns and dynamics just prior to the pandemic gives us considerable insight into what congregations are facing and the paths to emerge from the past two years with

resilience and vitality,” said Scott Thumma, Director of the [Hartford Institute for Religion Research](#) and Co-Chair of Faith Communities Today.

Sarah Brown, Executive Director of Faith Communities Today echoed Thumma’s sentiments.

“To have collected this volume of responses from across such a wide spectrum of religious traditions and denominations is a remarkable feat and to have successfully done so amid a global pandemic is even more noteworthy. Our amazing network of partners who have worked collaboratively on this initiative for two decades make our ongoing research model unique and unparalleled,” she said.

Over the next two years, Faith Communities Today will be releasing a series of focused reports that offer a deeper dive into specific topics explored through their 2020 survey data. These reports will be available free of charge to faith leaders and other interested parties on the [Faith Communities Today website](#). Many Faith Communities Today partners are also participating in a large national study conducted by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research entitled *Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations: Innovation Amidst and Beyond COVID-19*. Learn more about this project and stay up to date on the findings at www.covidreligionresearch.org.

Access the full report: <https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/fact-2020-survey/>

Access graphics from the report: <https://bit.ly/FACT2020Graphics>

About Faith Communities Today: Faith Communities Today is a series of ongoing research surveys and practical reports about congregational life, conducted and published by the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership, a multireligious group of religious researchers and faith leaders. The research partnership includes members from 25+ different faith groups, working in conjunction with Hartford Institute for Religion Research at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (formerly Hartford Seminary). For more information on Faith Communities Today, visit www.faithcommunitiestoday.org or follow the initiative on [Facebook](#).

About Hartford Institute for Religion Research: Hartford Institute for Religion Research at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (formerly Hartford Seminary) has a 40-year record of rigorous, policy-relevant research, anticipation of emerging issues and commitment to the creative dissemination of learning. This record has earned the Institute an international reputation as an important bridge between the scholarly community and the practice of faith. For more information on Hartford Institute, visit www.hartfordinstitute.org.