



ANNUAL CONFERENCE COMPARISONS 2011–2012

This is the final edition of the General Board of Global Ministries' Background Data for Mission newsletter. In the future, Good News, through its resource hub Wesley 21, will be working with the same editor to continue sharing this information. If you wish to receive this newsletter through that channel, please send an email to jsouthwick@goodnewsmag.org.

Note from Thomas Kemper, General Secretary, General Board of Global Ministries

As this is the final edition of Background Data for Mission issued by Global Ministries, I want to express my sincere appreciation to John Southwick. We are truly grateful for John Southwick's service that assisted churches in creating church and community profiles over the past 10 years. We wish him well as he continues as the editor of Background Data for Mission in his new position with Good News.

While the most recent General Minutes data follows the same general trending that has been seen for some time, the good news is that things seem to follow last year's mild moderation, and even show a surprising uptick in a critical indicator. The membership decline of 88,729 (-1.2%) was very comparable to last year, which had been a mild improvement over the previous years. Seven annual conferences showed membership increases, with North Georgia again on top, growing by 3,262 members. Kentucky was the only other conference growing by four figures, with a 1,077 pop. No churches in the northern and western jurisdictions showed a membership increase. The South Central Jurisdiction had the lowest percentage decline, at -0.6%, with the Western Jurisdiction having the greatest decrease, at -2.9%.

The number of churches again held to a more moderate loss, at -217, contrasted to the previous period's -186. Path1 has announced the increased number of new church starts in recent years, so perhaps this is helping offset the closing of churches.

Six conferences showed an increase, with several more holding even. Worship attendance, however, was not so encouraging. The official statistics indicated a -1.7% decline (-1.2% most recently), leaving the total at less than 3 million for the first time. As always, non-reporting by churches influences these numbers.* Adjustments improve the unofficial number up to -1.4%. Nine annual conferences were in the black with their worship attendance. The South Central Jurisdiction had the least decline, at -0.7%, while the Northeast had the greatest decline, at -2.5%. California Pacific led all conferences with an increase of 960 attenders. They also led in increase in churches, with 17. Presumably these are related, though inconsistent with previous years.

The final category reported here is for new members received by profession of faith. This category proved to be startling. Whereas this category had shown an average decline over the previous decade of roughly 5,000 per year, the latest yearly comparison indicated an increase of 672, or +0.5% (vs. -3.6% the previous period). These increases only correlated to overall membership increases in four annual conferences. The percentage of churches receiving no new members by profession of faith was 48%, very close to the previous period, and well higher than the typical 41% common prior to that. (This does not mean that nearly half did not have new members in this way, since churches failing to report receive a zero in this field.*) No explanation has been offered for this remarkable turnaround in this singular category, which contrasts so vividly with the rest of the statistics.

Summary statistics continue to reflect a downward trend. Average members per church dropped one again, to 224. This number had held at 230 for the three years prior to 2009. Half of all United Methodist churches had more than 104 members, a drop of one from the previous year. Average worship attendance was 90 when calculated on the raw data, down one from the previous year. When non-reporting churches are removed from the calculation, this number is 93. Half of all churches had an average worship attendance of 45 or higher, down one from the previous year. When non-reporting churches are adjusted out, this becomes 47, also down one.

The following chart (.pdf version) contains individual annual conference figures and has not been altered per the footnote below. All data used here has been provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA), which gets its numbers from annual conferences, who in turn get their numbers from year-end reports filled out by the churches. In recent years, however, more churches are reporting directly to GCFA using their online system. The sea of red can be discouraging, obviously, so the above-mentioned easing of the rate of decline should be kept in mind. It is too early to tell if this is a common statistical variation, or if the trend has truly moderated.

**When congregations fail to report statistics, such as attendance levels, in the year-end report from which the General Minutes data comes, a zero is entered. The exception is membership, for which GCFA assigns a number consistent with church history. When a congregation does not report attendance and has a zero one year and the actual number the next year, it will show an increase of that*

amount, though in reality it may have decreased or remained the same. Likewise, when the actual is reported the first year and a zero appears the next, the reverse occurs, showing a marked decrease.

To the extent this happens cumulatively to a greater or lesser degree from year to year, the statistics will be biased accordingly. Subsequent unofficial calculations have been able to remove most of this bias, though these revised numbers are not reported here. Describing the impact of the non-reporting in detail would comprise an entire report in and of itself.

Rev. Dr. John H. Southwick, Editor

research@umcmision.org

Wesley21 is a resource center supporting renewal of churches and ministers with links, book reviews, articles, sermons, and 10-year church profiles. Wesley21 also provides the same type of demographics and statistical services formerly provided by the Research Office of Global Ministries. Wesley21 is a ministry of Good News. <http://wesley21.com/>

Copyright © 2014
General Board of Global Ministries

Published by:
General Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115

John H. Southwick, Editor

BACKGROUND DATA FOR MISSION—APRIL 2014

CONFERENCE DATA COMPARISONS 2011–2012

Annual Conference	# of		Members	Change	Worship		Rec'd.	
	Churches	Change			Attendance	Change	Prof. Faith	Change
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	370	(2)	94,196	(1,911)	35,967	(1,299)	1,746	(275)
DAKOTAS	253	(4)	36,512	(220)	20,427	285	758	118
ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS	856	(7)	133,753	(2,349)	63,718	(637)	2,198	99
INDIANA	1,166	(7)	196,564	(1,353)	111,352	(2,909)	4,237	444
IOWA	799	(9)	171,694	(3,761)	54,857	(945)	2,474	(35)
DETROIT	445	0	89,660	(1,250)	41,627	(1,044)	2,093	0
WEST MICHIGAN	402	(2)	60,570	(1,300)	35,975	(355)	1,350	(157)
MINNESOTA	362	(3)	67,731	(2,263)	32,255	(1,286)	1,409	(125)
EAST OHIO	766	(6)	158,169	(2,408)	61,024	(1,686)	2,468	80
WEST OHIO	1,074	(29)	188,059	(5,199)	109,983	(1,060)	4,304	248
WISCONSIN	468	(3)	73,778	(2,940)	35,888	(808)	1,792	(53)
North Central Jurisdiction Totals	6,961	(72)	1,270,686	(24,954)	603,073	(11,744)	24,829	344
		-1.0%		-2.0%		-1.9%		1.4%
NEW ENGLAND	630	(8)	91,333	(2,279)	31,516	(984)	1,547	88
SUSQUEHANNA	922	(16)	154,994	(3,083)	63,988	(1,373)	2,300	(87)
GREATER NEW JERSEY	576	(3)	92,403	(1,252)	47,311	(619)	2,357	(439)
NEW YORK	470	(2)	110,229	(1,212)	33,797	118	2,392	(82)
EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA	440	(10)	110,998	(2,216)	41,819	(908)	2,086	100
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA	847	(3)	173,928	(3,291)	56,205	(2,116)	2,207	(192)
UPPER NEW YORK	916	(3)	168,241	(3,737)	47,074	(1,739)	1,710	(48)
BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON	645	(14)	173,791	(3,509)	64,415	(1,093)	3,593	17
PENINSULA-DELAWARE	435	(5)	82,801	(971)	31,753	(1,222)	1,619	41
WEST VIRGINIA	1,130	(4)	98,710	(831)	43,613	(1,583)	1,318	(125)
Northeastern Jurisdiction Totals	7,011	(68)	1,257,428	(22,381)	461,491	(11,519)	21,129	(727)
		-1.0%		-1.8%		-2.5%		-3.4%
ARKANSAS	681	(8)	134,864	(715)	51,986	(672)	2,138	(18)
CENTRAL TEXAS	305	(5)	166,859	327	47,040	433	2,149	43
NORTH TEXAS	305	(1)	148,891	(1,864)	59,943	(269)	3,320	158
RIO GRANDE	84	(1)	13,087	(476)	4,224	(256)	197	46
TEXAS	669	(3)	284,206	(262)	105,231	(604)	5,068	(611)
KANSAS WEST	356	(5)	78,358	(930)	30,089	(636)	1,448	203
KANSAS EAST	321	(4)	70,236	188	30,429	(313)	1,738	388
LOUISIANA	500	(2)	120,935	945	41,185	(403)	1,788	(29)
MISSOURI	842	(9)	163,449	(1,229)	80,946	615	3,735	403
NEBRASKA	378	(1)	74,415	(1,942)	30,479	467	1,532	(67)
NEW MEXICO	144	0	34,440	(824)	14,126	(614)	497	(56)
OKLAHOMA	524	(1)	234,608	(426)	54,362	(1,563)	2,174	(56)
OKLAHOMA INDIAN MISSIONARY	85	3	6,149	(37)	2,150	78	90	11
NORTHWEST TEXAS	209	(2)	62,100	(583)	19,107	(416)	847	214
SOUTHWEST TEXAS	331	(6)	114,884	(1,956)	45,785	(410)	2,167	77
South Central Jurisdiction Totals	5,734	(45)	1,707,481	(9,784)	617,082	(4,563)	28,888	706
		-0.8%		-0.6%		-0.7%		2.4%

BACKGROUND DATA FOR MISSION—APRIL 2014

CONFERENCE DATA COMPARISONS 2011–2012 (CONTINUED)

Annual Conference	# of		Members	Change	Worship		Rec'd.	
	Churches	Change			Attendance	Change	Prof. Faith	Change
NORTH GEORGIA	901	(10)	363,505	3,262	127,186	(2,120)	6,469	447
SOUTH GEORGIA	630	(5)	125,067	(3,053)	50,016	(900)	1,703	(1)
ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA	633	(6)	145,049	(1,029)	65,781	617	2,542	130
NORTH ALABAMA	733	(3)	135,458	(4,077)	68,132	(2,209)	2,318	(127)
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA	1,114	1	286,589	(4,232)	117,638	(2,549)	4,159	(278)
SOUTH CAROLINA	1,009	(3)	235,520	37	90,790	(1,716)	3,297	(81)
FLORIDA	633	2	263,274	(7,434)	133,577	(2,058)	5,296	21
MISSISSIPPI	1,084	(8)	179,320	(1,122)	69,618	(1,765)	2,034	40
KENTUCKY	810	7	152,224	1,077	56,315	(437)	2,099	(81)
RED BIRD MISSIONARY	25	(2)	1,479	12	676	(7)	40	10
HOLSTON	900	(2)	165,455	(34)	68,467	(221)	2,174	(23)
MEMPHIS	423	(1)	82,117	(70)	29,953	(307)	951	230
TENNESSEE	602	(3)	118,916	(655)	48,435	(822)	1,800	1
NORTH CAROLINA	813	(5)	229,064	(2,205)	79,743	(1,514)	2,698	(365)
VIRGINIA	1,187	(3)	332,637	(2,133)	105,018	(1,792)	4,395	79
Southeast Jurisdiction Totals	11,497	(41)	2,815,674	(21,656)	1,111,345	(17,800)	41,975	2
		-0.4%		-0.8%		-1.6%		-1.6%
YELLOWSTONE	123	(1)	12,611	(773)	6,193	20	190	(31)
ROCKY MOUNTAIN	267	0	63,318	(1,278)	30,257	(393)	1,656	190
CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC	373	17	76,237	(1,400)	48,047	960	1,923	128
DESERT SOUTHWEST	140	(1)	35,883	(1,224)	24,885	(127)	1,025	(14)
ALASKA	28	0	3,508	(33)	2,054	(90)	126	1
OREGON-IDAHO	204	(1)	27,917	(341)	13,660	(74)	542	0
CALIFORNIA-NEVADA	358	1	75,826	(2,117)	32,461	(3,453)	1,605	99
PACIFIC NORTHWEST	252	(6)	46,085	(2,788)	19,954	(419)	770	(26)
Western Jurisdiction Totals	1,745	9	341,385	(9,954)	177,511	(3,576)	7,837	347
		0.5%		-2.9%		-2.0%		4.4%
Total USA	32,948	(217)	7,392,654	(88,729)	2,970,502	(49,202)	124,658	672
		-0.7%		-1.2%		-1.7%		0.5%