



CONFERENCE DATA COMPARISONS 2010–2011

Once again, this annual issue of the newsletter will compare the newest General Minutes statistics with the previous year. This one actually is modestly more hopeful than in previous years. While the sea of red dominates the attached statistical chart as usual, when one looks more closely it is apparent that some of the categories of decline have lessened. It is too early to pronounce a turnaround, yet we can ease off the normal gloom a bit. For example, the number of churches did drop by 182 to 33,165, but compared with drops above two or three hundred in recent years, this is an improvement.

Membership also had an easing in the rate of decline, but not by as much. Whereas the previous period had a 1.4% annual drop, the latest period indicated -1.2%. This represented -109,309 members previously lost, as opposed to -89,158. All jurisdictions were in the red, with the Northeast showing the largest decrease. This also represented the largest percentage loss at -2.3% (-2.1% previously), with the Western following at -2.1%. Seven annual conferences showed a membership increase, though all but two were less than 350. Texas had an increase of 619, with North Georgia's increase at 2,502. North Georgia now has more members than the Western Jurisdiction, with Virginia also not far from that distinction.

Worship attendance is increasingly becoming the most recognized single statistic for identifying the strength of a congregation or denomination, in spite of its shortcomings. In recent years the pace of decline in this area has been alarming, with last year's drop being -2.4%. This year saw that drop cut in half to -1.1%. When compensated for non-reporting*, this actually

improves a few tenths of a percent. One jurisdiction, the South Central, actually saw an increase in attendance of 0.2%. The Western Jurisdiction changed by -2.5%. Fifteen conferences saw official increases, though four would show decreases if non-reporting* were compensated for. North Georgia was the champion with an increase of more than 3,000. Four declining conferences would report an increase if non-reporting* were factored in.

New members brought in by profession of faith are an important indicator of vitality. This statistic also improved from the previous year's abysmal drop of over 5%. However, the most recent figure of -3.6% is slightly worse than the average of the previous three years. Just as attendance, this statistic is highly influenced by non-reporting and the resulting zeroes reflect that no number was reported. Nearly half of all congregations had zero in this field. This does not mean that half did not have new members in this way, given non-reporting concerns, but this percentage is up from the 40% neighborhood of recent years.

Summary statistics continue to reflect a downward trend. Average members per church dropped one again, to 226. This number had held at 230 for the three years prior to 2009. Half of all United Methodist churches had more than 105 members, also a drop of one from the previous year. Average worship attendance was 91 when calculated on the raw data, down one from the previous year. When non-reporting churches are removed from the calculation, this number is 94. Half of all churches had an average worship attendance of 46 or higher, down one from the previous year. When non-reporting churches are adjusted out, this becomes 48, also down one.

The following pages contain individual annual conference figures and have 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 normal one-year statistical variation, or if a new trend is developing.

**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. When a congregation 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 calculations by the Research Office have been able to remove most of this bias, though these revised numbers are not official, so are not reported here. Describing the impact of the non-reporting in detail would comprise an entire report in and of itself.

Copyright © 2013
General Board of Global Ministries

Published by:

The Office of Research
General Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church
475 Riverside Drive, Room 300
New York, NY 10115

Tel: 212-870-3840 **Fax:** 212-870-3876

Email: research@umcmmission.org

Website: umcmmission.org/newsletters

Subscriptions: FREE via email, or \$14.00 yearly via US Mail

John H. Southwick, Editor

BACKGROUND DATA FOR MISSION—FEBRUARY 2013

CONFERENCE DATA COMPARISONS 2010–2011

Annual Conference	#of Churches	Change	Rec'd. Prof. Faith	Change	Members	Change	Worship Attendance	Change
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	372	(1)	2,021	(255)	96,107	(1,657)	37,266	(1,827)
DAKOTAS	257	(3)	640	(84)	36,732	(708)	20,142	826
ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS	863	(9)	2,099	(78)	136,102	(2,693)	64,355	(1,105)
INDIANA	1,173	(10)	3,793	(336)	197,917	(2,569)	114,261	(3,248)
IOWA	808	(3)	2,509	6	175,455	(4,161)	55,802	(927)
DETROIT	445	(2)	2,093	26	90,910	(1,716)	42,671	(956)
WEST MICHIGAN	404	(2)	1,507	184	61,870	(947)	36,330	18
MINNESOTA	365	(10)	1,534	(88)	69,994	(2,236)	33,541	(701)
EAST OHIO	772	(5)	2,388	(107)	160,577	(4,215)	62,710	(1,355)
WEST OHIO	1,103	(11)	4,056	147	193,258	(6,742)	111,043	(1,350)
WISCONSIN	471	(2)	1,845	(204)	76,718	(2,607)	36,696	(1,026)
North Central Jurisdiction Totals	7,033	(58)	24,485	(789)	1,295,640	(30,251)	614,817	(11,651)
NEW ENGLAND	638	1	1,459	(102)	93,612	(2,187)	32,500	(1,128)
SUSQUEHANNA	938	(6)	2,387	(77)	158,077	(2,530)	65,361	(1,475)
GREATER NEW JERSEY	579	1	2,796	2	93,655	240	47,930	(766)
NEW YORK	472	(4)	2,474	362	111,441	(2,716)	33,679	(715)
EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA	450	6	1,986	(209)	113,214	(2,027)	42,727	(1,123)
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA	850	(6)	2,399	203	177,219	(2,453)	58,321	(1,359)
UPPER NEW YORK	919	(10)	1,758	(263)	171,978	(4,723)	50,603	(1,393)
BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON	659	(7)	3,576	(149)	177,300	(3,757)	65,508	(737)
PENINSULA-DELAWARE	440	(1)	1,578	(95)	83,772	(2,532)	32,975	(996)
WEST VIRGINIA	1,134	(22)	1,443	113	99,541	(427)	45,196	(213)
Northeastern Jurisdiction Totals	7,079	(48)	21,856	(215)	1,279,809	(23,112)	474,800	(9,905)
ARKANSAS	689	(2)	2,156	(214)	135,579	(154)	52,658	(1,350)
CENTRAL TEXAS	310	(3)	2,106	99	166,532	352	46,607	1,612
NORTH TEXAS	306	1	3,162	(30)	150,755	(54)	60,212	109
RIO GRANDE	85	0	151	(26)	13,563	(282)	4,480	(117)
TEXAS	672	(7)	5,679	(804)	284,468	619	105,835	986
KANSAS WEST	361	(2)	1,245	(10)	79,288	(1,283)	30,725	(281)
KANSAS EAST	325	0	1,350	(271)	70,048	(496)	30,742	250
LOUISIANA	502	1	1,817	78	119,990	(476)	41,588	705
MISSOURI	851	(2)	3,332	(106)	164,678	(847)	80,331	739
NEBRASKA	379	(4)	1,599	(64)	76,357	(612)	30,012	(107)
NEW MEXICO	144	0	553	31	35,264	(962)	14,740	(336)
OKLAHOMA	525	5	2,230	(60)	235,034	(1,185)	55,925	(289)
OKLAHOMA INDIAN MISSIONARY	82	0	79	(61)	6,186	1	2,072	(55)
NORTHWEST TEXAS	211	(1)	633	(75)	62,683	(696)	19,523	144
SOUTHWEST TEXAS	337	(2)	2,090	(111)	116,840	(1,741)	46,195	(968)
South Central Jurisdiction Totals	5,779	(16)	28,182	(1,624)	1,717,265	(7,816)	621,645	1,042

BACKGROUND DATA FOR MISSION—FEBRUARY 2013

CONFERENCE DATA COMPARISONS 2010–2011 (CONTINUED)

Annual Conference	#of Churches	Change	Rec'd. Prof. Faith	Change	Members	Change	Worship Attendance	Change
NORTH GEORGIA	911	16	6,022	(347)	360,243	2,502	129,306	3,091
SOUTH GEORGIA	635	(7)	1,704	(66)	128,120	(2,587)	50,916	(850)
ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA	639	(2)	2,412	(163)	146,078	(674)	65,164	(1,220)
NORTH ALABAMA	736	(18)	2,445	(115)	139,535	(3,935)	70,341	(276)
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA	1,113	(5)	4,437	132	290,821	(830)	120,187	(736)
SOUTH CAROLINA	1,012	(3)	3,378	(41)	235,483	(350)	92,506	(1,197)
FLORIDA	631	(15)	5,275	(405)	270,708	(11,634)	135,635	(1,367)
MISSISSIPPI	1,092	(16)	1,994	(78)	180,442	(914)	71,383	(963)
KENTUCKY	804	(5)	2,180	239	151,147	325	56,752	461
RED BIRD MISSIONARY	26	1	30	(7)	1,467	(49)	683	13
HOLSTON	902	(3)	2,197	16	165,489	(644)	68,688	(85)
MEMPHIS	424	(9)	721	(79)	82,187	(1,059)	30,260	159
TENNESSEE	605	(3)	1,799	132	119,571	284	49,257	211
NORTH CAROLINA	818	8	3,063	284	231,269	(453)	81,257	(39)
VIRGINIA	1,190	(1)	4,316	(68)	334,770	(491)	106,810	(4,388)
Southeast Jurisdiction Totals	11,538	(62)	41,973	(566)	2,837,330	(20,509)	1,129,145	(7,186)
YELLOWSTONE	124	0	221	(38)	13,384	(218)	6,173	(745)
ROCKY MOUNTAIN	267	12	1,466	(167)	64,596	(715)	30,650	21
CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC	356	(1)	1,795	(713)	77,637	(2,531)	47,087	(464)
DESERT SOUTHWEST	141	1	1,039	(83)	37,107	(744)	25,012	(617)
ALASKA	28	0	125	32	3,541	(57)	2,144	(33)
OREGON-IDAHO	205	(3)	542	(89)	28,258	(767)	13,734	(657)
CALIFORNIA-NEVADA	357	(3)	1,506	(200)	77,943	(1,015)	35,914	(1,041)
PACIFIC NORTHWEST	258	(4)	796	(117)	48,873	(1,423)	20,373	(1,002)
Western Jurisdiction Totals	1,736	2	7,490	(1,375)	351,339	(7,470)	181,087	(4,538)
Total USA	33,165	(182)	123,986	(4,569)	7,481,383	(89,158)	3,021,494	(32,238)