

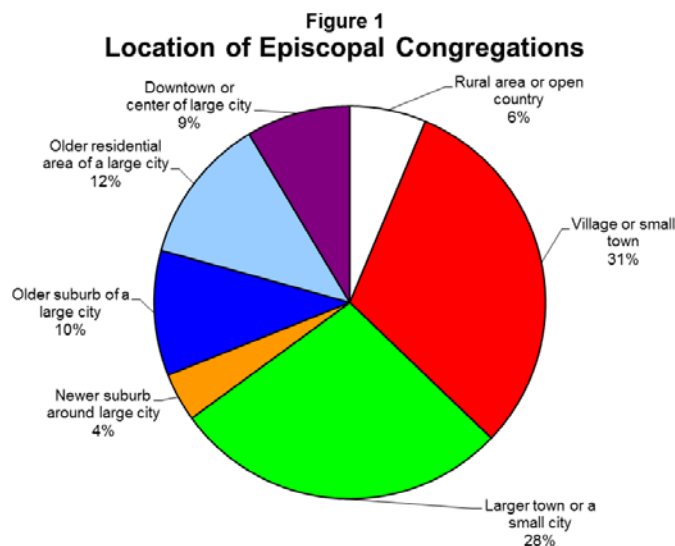


Episcopal Congregations Overview: Findings from the 2014 Survey of Episcopal Congregations

A congregational research report from the Mission Department, The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. By C. Kirk Hadaway, October 2014.
<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/research>

Parishes and Their Settings

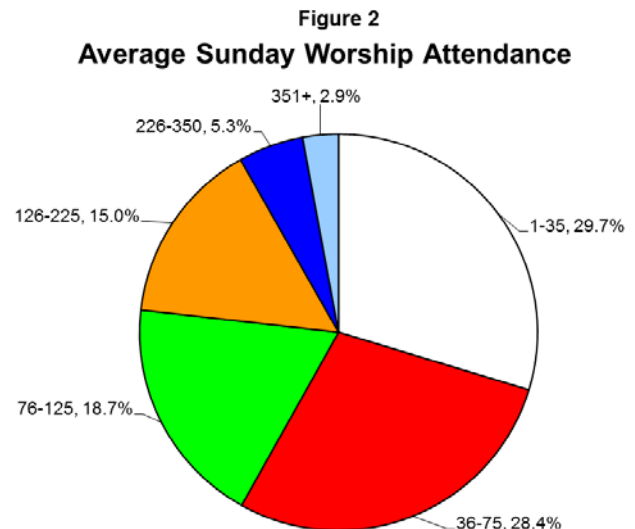
- The largest proportion (59%) of Episcopal congregations can be found in villages, towns and small cities. Overall, 31% are located in villages or towns of less than 10,000 persons and 28% are in larger towns or small cities.
- Larger cities with a population of 50,000 or more are home to 35% of Episcopal congregations. Churches in these metropolitan settings were more likely to have experienced growth since 2008.



- A majority (53%) of Episcopal parishes and missions were founded before 1900. The post-war baby boom years (1946-1965) saw a huge rise in new church development as many parishes (18% of all congregations) were organized during those twenty years. Only 3% of Episcopal congregations were founded in the last twenty years.
- The typical (median) church seats 192 persons in worship. Only 15% of Episcopal congregations have a worship space that seats 300 or more people. One in five seats 100 or fewer.

Worship

- Over half of Episcopal congregations (58%) are small, family-sized congregations where average worship attendance is 75 persons or less (2013 Parochial Report data). Pastoral-sized congregations make up the next largest proportion of parishes and missions (19%). Corporate-sized congregations with 351 or more in worship represent only 3% of Episcopal congregations.
- The median Episcopal parish had 61 persons at Sunday worship in 2013 according to the annual Parochial Report—down from 66 in 2009 and 77 in 2003.



- The largest proportion of Episcopal congregations (45%) offers a single worship service each weekend. Many others (38%) hold two services on a typical Sunday. Another 13% have three services, while only 3% have at least four services. Churches with one service typically use Rite II or alternate between Morning Prayer and Rite I or Rite II.
- Among congregations with a single worship service each weekend, less than one in four indicate that the service is more than half full on a typical Sunday.

- Most churches with three or more services hold a weekly non-typical or non-traditional service (Contemporary, Taizé, Compline, etc.). Only 8% of churches hold a weekly “Sunday” service on Saturday afternoon or evening.
- Only 13% of congregations indicated that their amount of space for worship could be much better or needs improvement. These churches had full services typically, and were growing.
- Majorities of congregations report that worship *often* or *always* includes:
 - Eucharist (99%)
 - Organ music (87%)
 - Kneeling by the congregation (73%)

... but only small minorities report that worship always or often includes:

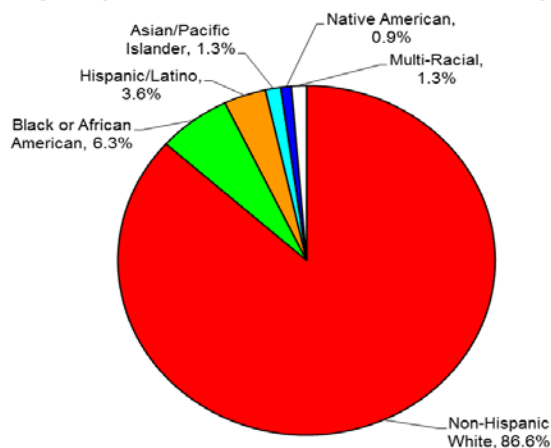
 - Acoustic instruments (21%)
 - Drums or other percussion equipment (8%)
 - Electric guitar (7%)
 - Personal testimony (3%)
- Well over half of Episcopal churches reported that the style and format of worship did not change (45%) or only changed only a little (24%) over the last 5 years. Major changes were made by other congregations through adding a new service (9%) or by alterations to existing worship services (4%).
- Congregations were *most* likely to say the following descriptors characterized their worship services “very well”:
 - Filled with a sense of God’s presence (36%)
 - Fun and joyful (28%)
 - Vibrant and engaging (23%)
 - Thought-provoking (23%)
 - Reverent (22%)
- Churches that reported that their worship services are “vibrant and engaging” were most likely to be growing, as were churches where worship was “fun and joyful.” Churches characterized by being “reverent” were more likely to have experienced decline.

Participants and Members

- The median Episcopal congregation had 152 active members in 2013, down from 182 in 2003.

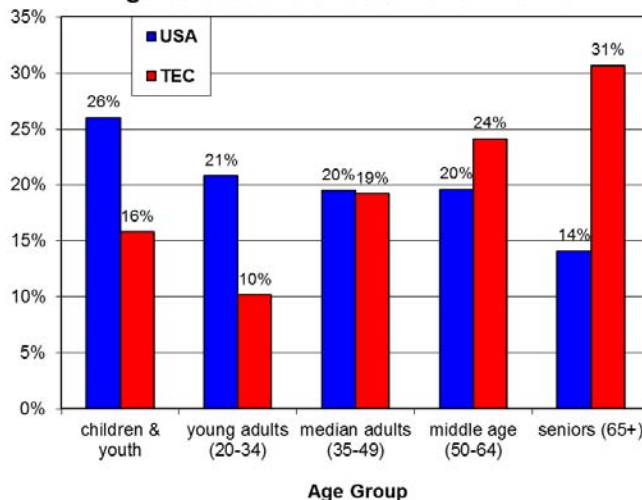
- In the median Episcopal congregation, 60% of members are women.
- A majority of Episcopalians are white/European American (86.6%). The second largest racial/ethnic population is African American or Black (6.3%), followed by Latinos (3.6%).

**Figure 3
Episcopal Domestic Racial/Ethnic Membership**



- In 94% of Episcopal congregations one racial/ethnic group predominates (with 70% or more of their members). 86.0% of Episcopal congregations are mostly white and 4.9% are predominantly Black.
- A large majority (73%) of Episcopal congregations report that more than half of their members are age 50+. 27% of Episcopal congregations report that more than half of their members are age 65 or older.

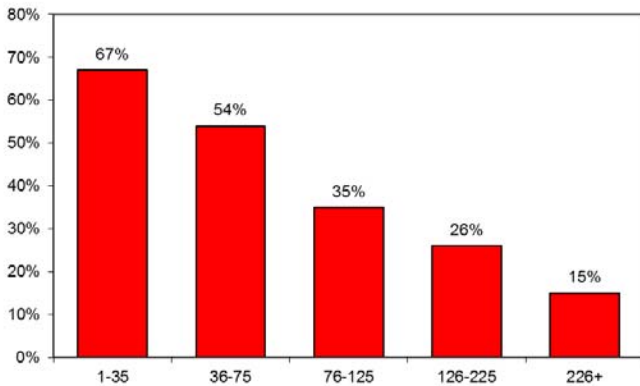
Age Structure of the USA and TEC: 2014



- Episcopalians tend to be older than the general population. Overall, 31% of Episcopal members are age 65+, as compared to only 14% of the U.S. population.

- The Episcopal Church has proportionately fewer children, youth and young adults.
- Episcopal parishes and missions with greater proportions of older members (age 65+) tend to be smaller (see Figure 5 below) and are more often found in rural and small town settings.

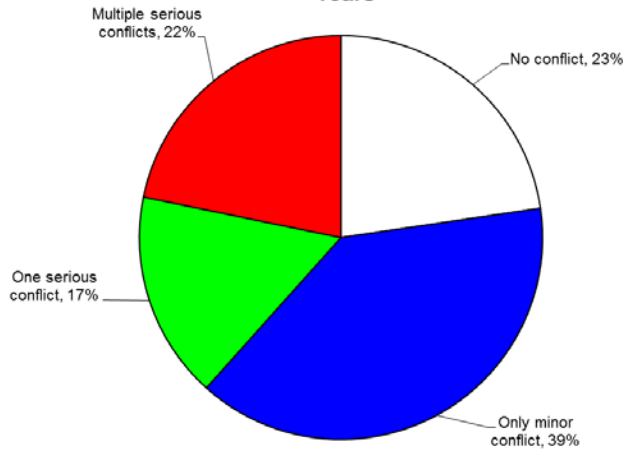
Figure 5
Percentage of Parishes with at Least 40% Older (Age 65+) Members by Size (ASA)



Conflict

- 77% of Episcopal congregations reported having conflicts or disagreements in the last four years (which is considerably lower than the high levels of conflict in 2005 and 2008 when 93% and 90%, respectively, reported conflict). At least one area of serious conflict was reported by 38% of churches in 2014.

Figure 6
Conflict in Episcopal Parishes Over Last Four Years

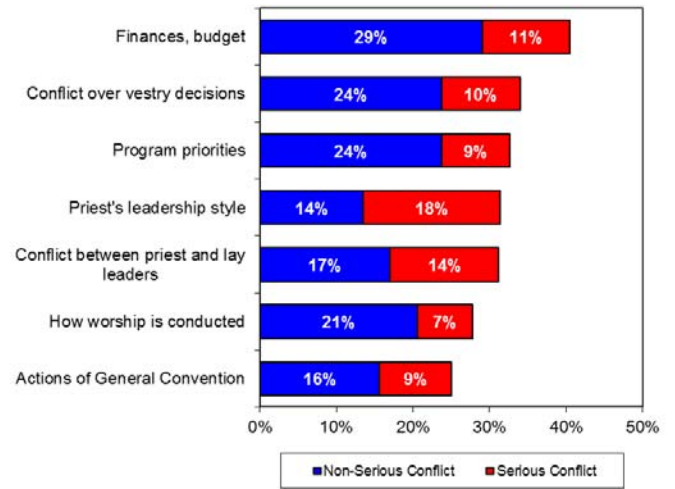


- Declining congregations tended to have more overall conflict and more areas of serious conflict.
- Conflict over *actions of General Convention*, *how worship is conducted* and conflict over *priest's*

leadership style were the areas most strongly related to decline in average Sunday attendance.

- Of congregations that had serious conflict:
 - Some members left the church: 74%
 - Some members withheld funds: 35%
 - The conflict was dealt with openly: 56%
 - The conflict made the congregation stronger: 36%

Figure 7
Sources of Conflict in Congregations in Last Four Years



- Finances was the most frequently mentioned source of conflict overall, whereas conflict over the priest's leadership style was the most frequent source of *serious* conflict.
- Other areas of conflict volunteered by congregations:
 - Same sex marriage
 - Termination of staff

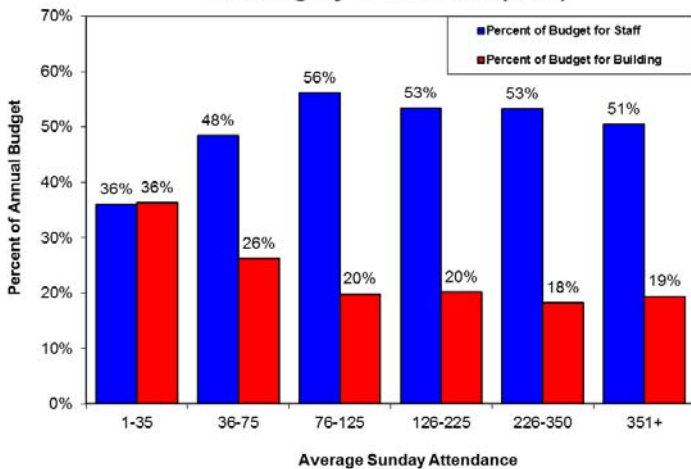
Finances

- More congregations report that their finances are "excellent" (14%) than said their finances are "in serious difficulty" (7%).
- Many Episcopal congregation's finances remain constrained in 2014 (40% said their finances are "tight, but we manage"), but the situation of most congregations improved since the recession. In 2014 38% said their financial situation was good or excellent, as compared to only 28% in 2010. However, the financial situation of most congregations was even better in 2000, when the proportion in excellent or good financial condition was 56%.

- The proportion of Episcopal congregations in serious or some financial difficulty almost doubled from 2000 to 2005, increasing from 13% to 25%; it remained unchanged in 2008, increased to 28% in 2010 and dropped to 22% in 2014.
- The median expenditure for all staff salaries and benefits was 50% of budget in 2013. Small churches tend to spend a lower proportion of their budgets on staff because they often rely on part-time, non-stipendiary, retired or supply clergy and lay leaders. Congregations averaging 76-125 in average Sunday attendance tend to spend the most on staff, 56% on average.

Figure 8

Average Percent of Budget for Staff and Building by Parish Size (ASA)



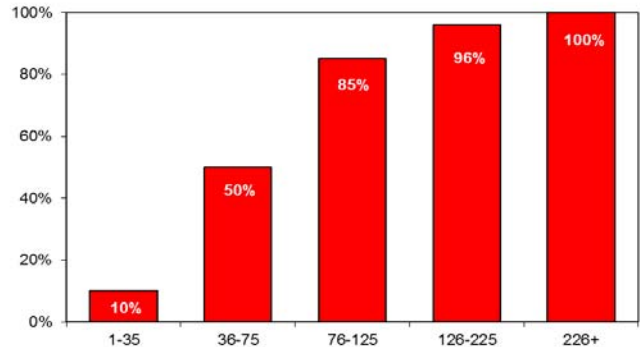
- Small parishes tend to spend proportionately more on building operations. Larger congregations spend proportionately more on program support.

Leadership

- Two thirds of Episcopal parishes (67%) report having a solo rector, vicar, dean or priest-in-charge. Another 15% have multiple priests with one serving as senior minister. Only 5% of congregations have co-rectors, co-vicars or a ministry team (with no one serving as senior minister); another 10% use either long-term or short-term supply clergy and 3% currently have a lay pastor or no regular clergy support.
- Smaller parishes are much less likely to have full-time paid priests than are larger parishes. Less than one third (29%) of parishes with attendance of 75 or less have full-time paid clergy.

Figure 9

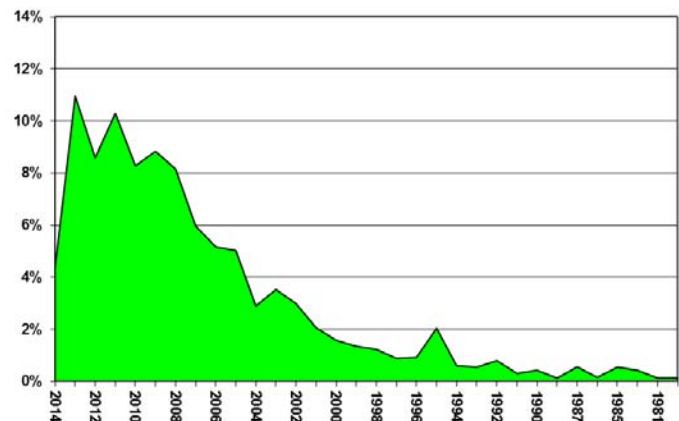
Percentage of Parishes with at Least One Full Time Paid Clergy by Size (ASA)



- Overall, 56% of Episcopal parishes have at least one full-time, paid priest. Part-time clergy serve another 29% of congregations. The remainder report having no priests at all (other than short-term supply) or say they are served by unpaid priests.
- Churches with multiple priests (at least one full time) were most likely to be growing, followed by churches with solo full-time priests. Churches with only supply priests or lay leaders were most likely to be in decline.
- The typical (median) rector, vicar or priest-in-charge is 59 years of age and was called to his or her congregation in 2009 (note: survey was completed in mid-2014). These figures exclude interims and supply priests. 34% of regular priests were called in 2011, 2012, 2013, or in the first half of 2014.

Figure 10

Year Called to Current Parish (Percent of Priests)



- 36% of rectors and vicars and priests-in-charge are female (excluding interim and supply priests).

- Descriptors which a majority of Episcopal parish priests say fit them *very well* include:
 - Cares about people (89%)
 - Is friendly and engaging (73%)
 - Hard worker (56%)
 - Is a person of deep faith (53%)
 - Knows the Bible and theology (53%)
 - Good liturgist/worship leader (52%)
- Descriptors which Episcopal rectors, vicars and priests-in-charge say fit them *least well* were evangelistic (lowest), charismatic leader, effective administrator, “has a clear vision for the congregation,” and “knows how to get people to work together.”

Programs, Practices and Ministries

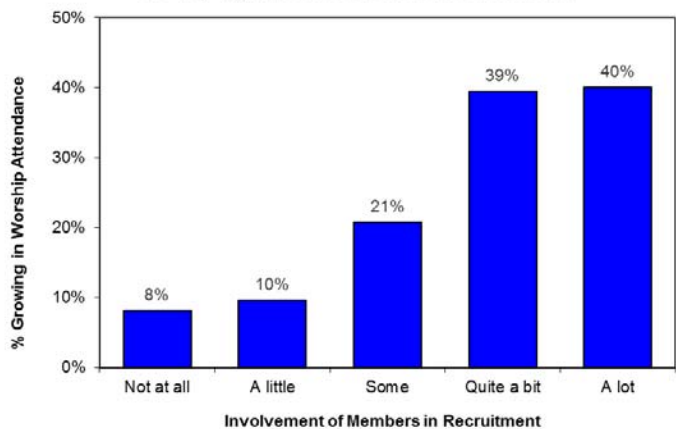
- Programs and activities most often listed by parishes as a “specialty” or “a lot of emphasis”:
 - Pastoral care (listed by 80%)
 - Fellowships and other social activities (75%)
 - Community service activities (71%)
 - Church school or Sunday school (59%)
 - Children’s activities (50%)
 - Adult religious formation (46%)
- Programs that larger percentages of congregations do not offer at all include:
 - Parenting or marriage enrichment (65% do not offer)
 - Young adult activities (52%)
 - Youth activities (29%)
 - Prayer or meditation groups (29%)
 - Special events (concerts, seminars) (24%)
- Most Episcopal parishes are embracing the use of new or newer communication technology. The vast majority (82%) of Episcopal congregations send frequent emails to members. Having a church website is even more widespread, and in 73% of Episcopal congregations the website is regularly updated. Communication via e-newsletters (62%) has become commonplace and many churches are wired for Wi-Fi (44%).
- The use of social media has exploded in recent years and in 2014 62% of Episcopal congregations indicated that they have an active Facebook page, up from 41% in 2010. Relatively few churches tweet or have a Twitter feed (9%).

- Ministries most often provided (by the parish or with another group for members and people in the community) included:
 - Food pantry, soup kitchen or meal projects (listed by 84% of congregations)
 - Cash assistance or vouchers (58%)
 - Overseas sponsorships; Haiti relief (52%)
 - Support groups (44%)
 - Programs for the elderly or homebound (43%)
 - Clothes closet/thrift store (31%)
 - Community organizing/organized social issue advocacy (28%)

Recruitment and Evangelism

- Relatively few Episcopal churches reported that their members were heavily involved in recruiting new members. Only 21% say their members are involved “quite a bit” or “a lot.” The more typical involvement is “a little” (31%) or “some” (43%).
- Churches with greater involvement in recruitment are more likely to have experienced growth in worship attendance.

Figure 11
Percentage of Parishes with Growth (2009-2013) by Recruitment Involvement



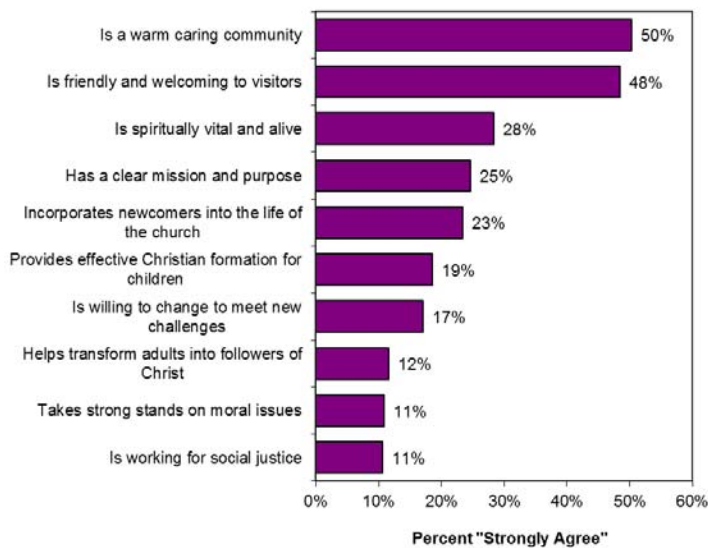
- Only a few Episcopal congregations (9%) say that they rarely, if ever, have any visitors at their services. Another 21% rely solely on greeters at services or informal contacts by members to make visitors feel welcome. Many more Episcopal churches ask for a means to contact visitors and make an effort to do so (70%) through a card, phone calls, email and in some cases with an effort to meet with visitors personally.
- Churches that have few visitors or that do not contact their visitors tend to be declining.

- Churches that describe their coffee hour as “vibrant with lively conversation” or “somewhat chaotic with lots of food” were much more likely to be growing than congregations that had no coffee hour or described their coffee hour as “typical” or “rather formal.”
- The vast majority of Episcopal congregations (97%) conducted special events and/or fellowship activities to attract people from the area and to build community in the congregation. 39% did so at least once a month. Another 36% held such activities 5-10 times a year. Congregations with more special events and fellowship activities were more likely to be growing.

Congregational Identity

- Among the characteristics that can be used to describe Episcopal congregations, the two most frequently selected out of ten possibilities in Figure 12 dealt with friendliness and community. When combined with “agree” responses almost 100% of Episcopal congregations view themselves as warm and caring and welcoming to newcomers. Being friendly and caring is related to growth, but without much variation in response, the relationship is not extremely strong.

Figure 12
Congregational Characteristics

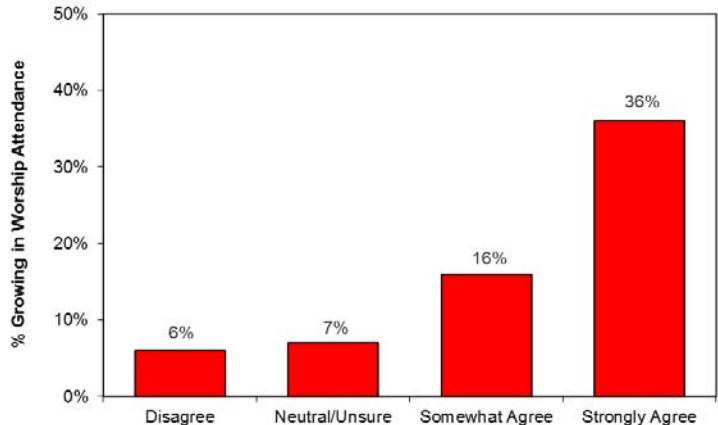


- Growing congregations were most likely to strongly agree that they are “spiritually vital and alive” (see Figure 13).

- Growing churches tend to have a “clear mission and purpose,” “provide effective Christian formation for children,” are “willing to change to meet new challenges,” and “incorporate newcomers into the life of the church.”

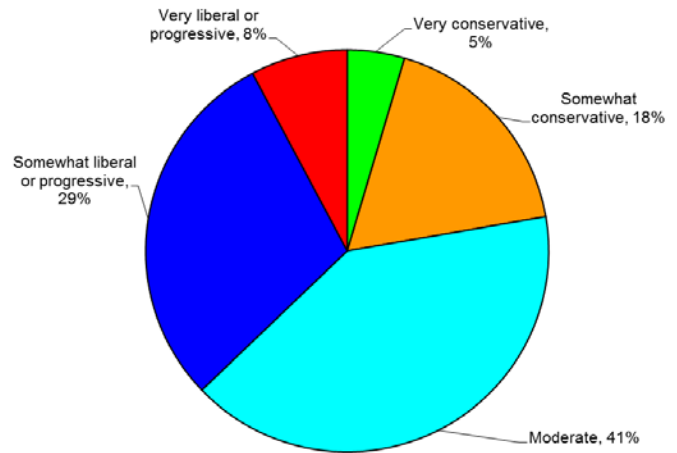
Figure 13

Percentage of Parishes Growing (2008-2013) by "Is Spiritually Vital and Alive"



- Episcopal congregations are varied in their theological outlook. However, relatively few say that they are very liberal or very conservative. Most are either “moderate” or somewhat liberal or conservative.

Figure 14
Theological Liberalism & Conservatism



- Congregations that are “very liberal” were most likely to have grown in worship attendance (34%) followed by congregations that are “moderate” (22%) or “somewhat liberal or progressive” (22%). Conservative Episcopal congregations were more likely to have experienced decline from 2008 to 2013 (57%).

Episcopal Congregations Overview is based on responses from 762 Episcopal parishes and missions that completed the 2014 Survey of Episcopal Congregations (70% response rate). The data were weighted by size to be representative of all Episcopal congregations. A more detailed report of findings will be published and posted on the Episcopal Church web site later in 2014. See www.episcopalchurch.org/research.htm