

THE  
*Episcopal*  
CHURCH



ANALYSIS  
OF THE 2023  
PAROCHIAL  
REPORT DATA



*Prepared for the Executive Officer of The Episcopal Church by  
Hartford Institute for Religion Research  
Charissa Mikoski, Assistant Professor of Research  
B. Clarvón Watts, Postdoctoral Research Fellow*

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## SUMMARY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN 2023

**6,754**  
TOTAL  
CONGREGATIONS

**1,547,779**  
TOTAL  
MEMBERS

**410,912**  
TOTAL  
ASA

**107**  
MEDIAN  
MEMBERSHIP

**38**  
MEDIAN  
ASA

**\$2.5 Billion**  
TEC TOTAL  
INCOME

**\$2.4 Billion**  
TEC TOTAL  
EXPENSES

**\$1.4 Billion**  
TEC TOTAL PLATE  
AND PLEDGE

**\$192,128**  
MEDIAN CONGREGATIONAL  
TOTAL INCOME

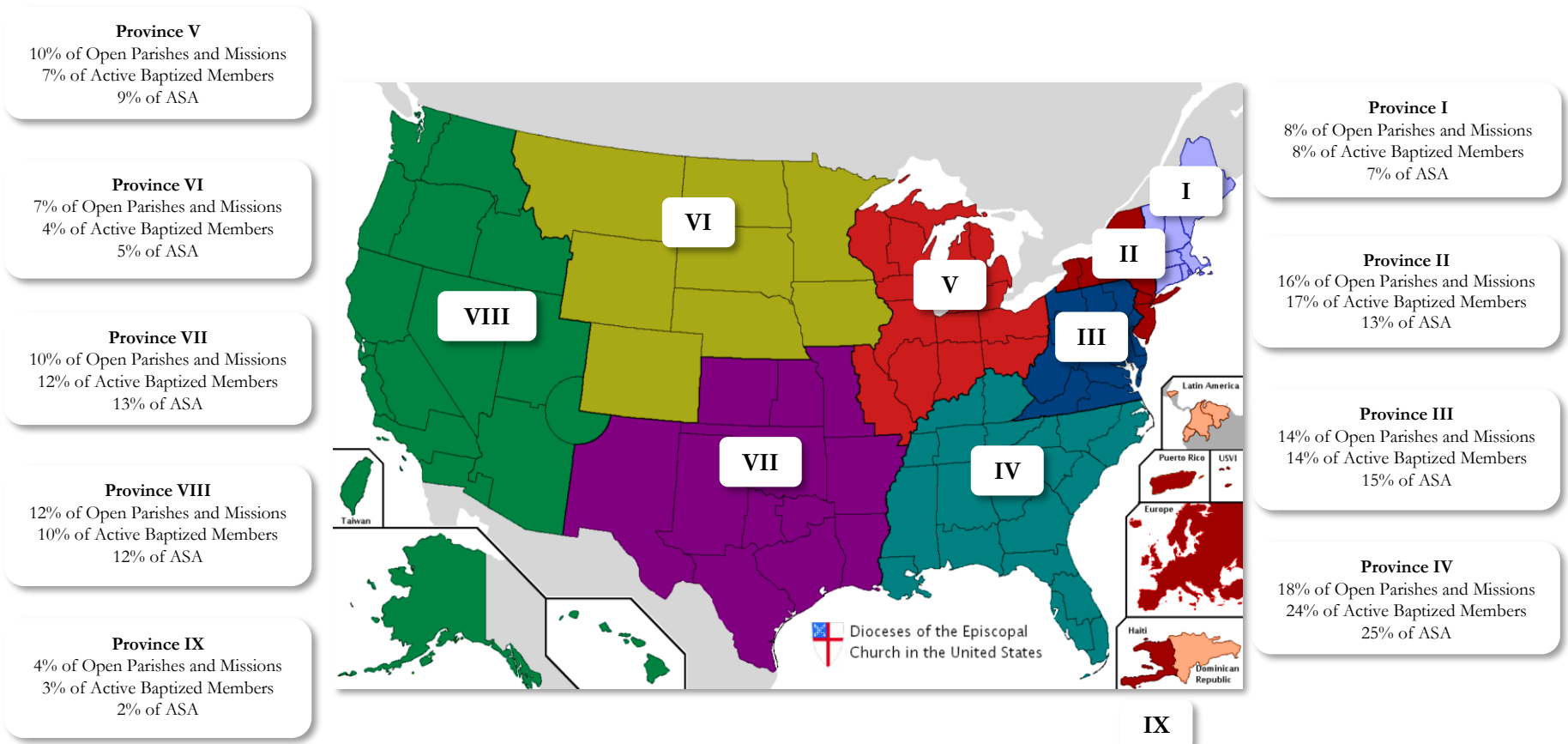
**\$3,650**  
AVERAGE  
PLEDGE

## VITAL STATISTICS

### MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (ASA), AND CONGREGATIONS

#### Map of Congregations, Members, and ASA by Province

- ❖ In 2023, The Episcopal Church had a total of 6,754 open parishes and missions, 1,547,779 active baptized members, and a total average Sunday worship service attendance (ASA) of 410,912.
- ❖ Provinces II, III, and IV contain a concentration of congregations, members, and ASA. These Southeastern and Middle Atlantic states are home to 48% of parishes, 55% of members, and 60% of ASA. Most notably, Province IV has 24% of total members and 27% of total ASA.



### Congregations, Members, and ASA by Province

|               | NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS IN 2023 | % OF THE TOTAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH | NUMBER OF ACTIVE BAPTIZED MEMBERS IN 2023 | % OF THE TOTAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH | SUM OF AVERAGE SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE IN 2023 | % OF THE TOTAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| PROVINCE I    | 559                             | 8%                              | 124,622                                   | 8%                              | 30,368   | 7%                              |
| PROVINCE II   | 1,083                           | 16%                             | 264,709                                   | 17%                             | 54,518   | 13%                             |
| PROVINCE III  | 959                             | 14%                             | 224,099                                   | 14%                             | 60,283   | 15%                             |
| PROVINCE IV   | 1,243                           | 18%                             | 372,468                                   | 24%                             | 104,578  | 25%                             |
| PROVINCE V    | 709                             | 10%                             | 111,524                                   | 7%                              | 34,967   | 9%                              |
| PROVINCE VI   | 463                             | 7%                              | 62,609                                    | 4%                              | 18,536   | 5%                              |
| PROVINCE VII  | 658                             | 10%                             | 184,184                                   | 12%                             | 51,798   | 13%                             |
| PROVINCE VIII | 819                             | 12%                             | 159,602                                   | 10%                             | 47,271   | 12%                             |
| PROVINCE IX   | 261                             | 4%                              | 43,962                                    | 3%                              | 8,593  | 2%                              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>6,754</b>                    | <b>100%</b>                     | <b>1,547,779</b>                          | <b>100%</b>                     | <b>410,912</b>                                   | <b>100%</b>                     |

## Largest Dioceses and Congregations

### CONGREGATIONS

- ❖ The Dioceses with the largest number of congregations are New York, Virginia, Texas, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Together these dioceses equal about 13% of all parishes.

### MEMBERS

- ❖ The Dioceses with the largest number of members are Haiti, Texas, Virginia, Atlanta, and Massachusetts. Together these dioceses equal about 21% of all members.
- ❖ The congregation with the largest number of members is St. Martin’s in Houston, TX with 10,022 members.

### ASA

- ❖ The Dioceses with the largest ASA are Texas, Virginia, Haiti, New York, and Atlanta. Together these dioceses equal about 16% of the total ASA.
- ❖ The congregation with the largest ASA is St. Martin’s in Houston, TX with an ASA of 1,285.

| Diocese       | Congregations |
|---------------|---------------|
| New York      | 191           |
| Virginia      | 179           |
| Texas         | 165           |
| Massachusetts | 162           |
| Connecticut   | 152           |

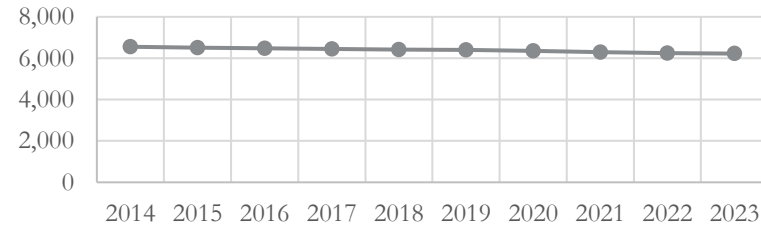
| Diocese       | Members |
|---------------|---------|
| Haiti         | 98,403  |
| Texas         | 72,268  |
| Virginia      | 61,591  |
| Atlanta       | 43,211  |
| Massachusetts | 41,888  |

| Diocese  | ASA    |
|----------|--------|
| Texas    | 18,141 |
| Virginia | 15,229 |
| Haiti    | 10,828 |
| New York | 9,866  |
| Atlanta  | 9,814  |

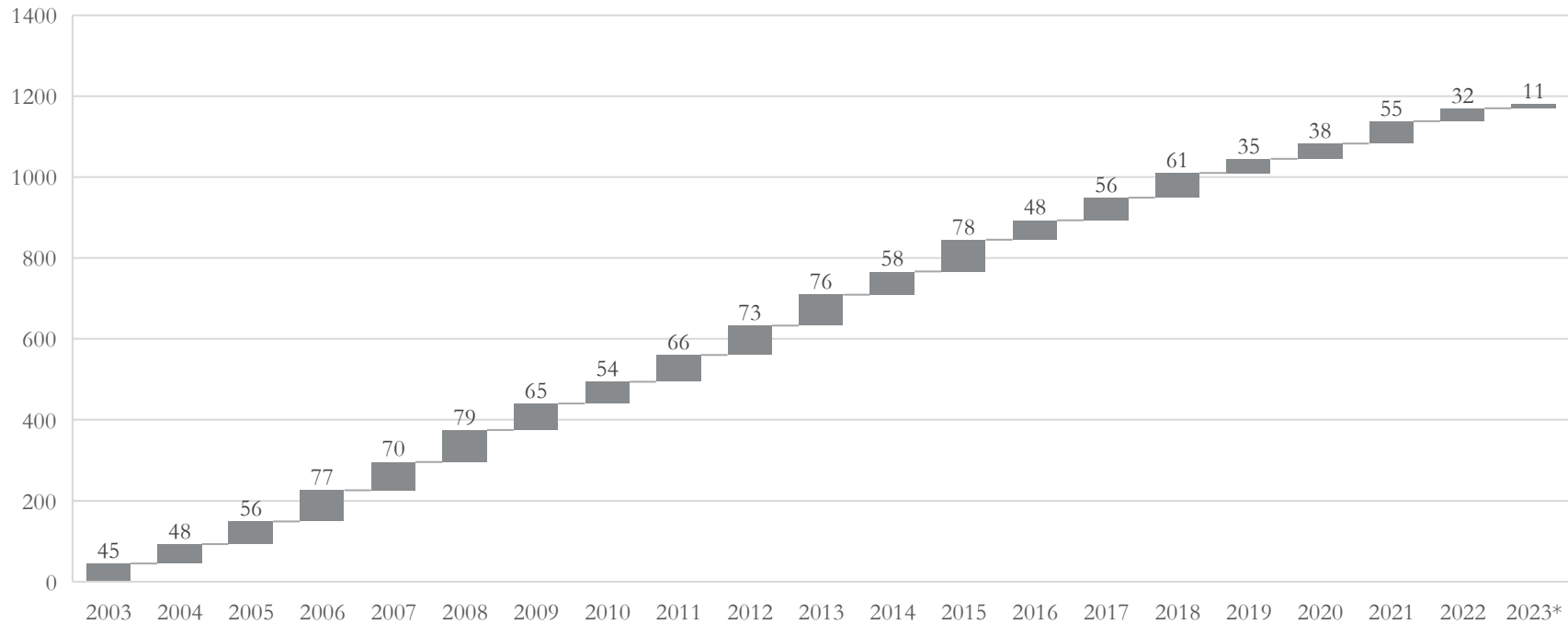
## Changes in the Number of Episcopal Congregations Over Time

- ❖ Over the past decade, the number of domestic open parishes and missions has held fairly steady with only a slight, gradual decline over the years.
- ❖ Since 2019, there appears to be a slowing of congregation closures. Over the past two decades, the mid-2000s (2006-2015) saw the highest rate of closures, largely driven by other significant changes within The Episcopal Church.

Open Parishes and Missions



Number of Closed Congregations 2003-2023

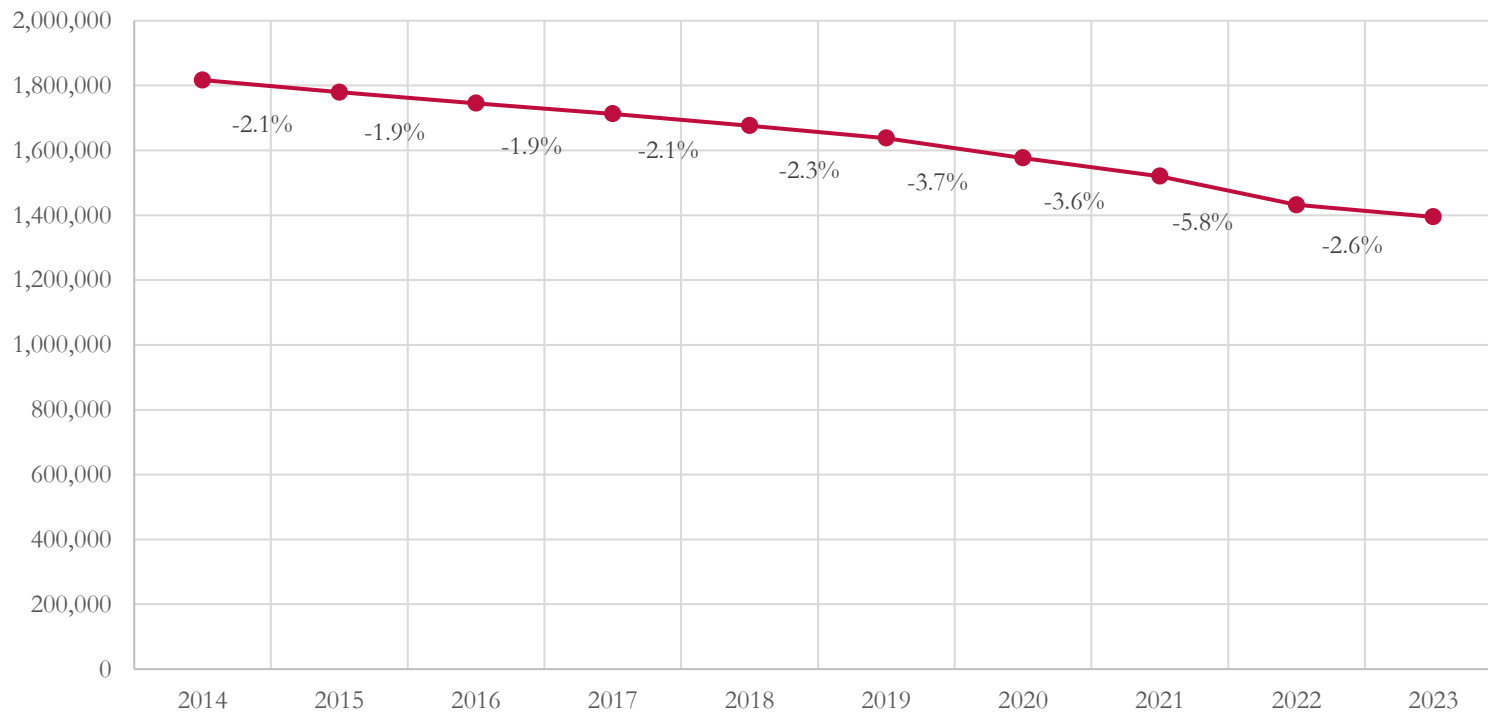


\*The number for 2023 may be undercounted due to a lag between when the congregation closes and when it is recorded in the data.

### Changes in Membership Over the Past Decade

- ❖ Over the past decade, the number of domestic active baptized members has steadily declined. This trend may reflect a combination of consistent membership role updates, declining birth rates, increased average age of members, and fewer newcomers to congregations.
- ❖ In 2023, the year-to-year rate of decline appears to be stabilizing. Between 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, the drop was steeper than in previous years, but by 2022-2023, it returned to a more typical range—around 2% annually.

Active Baptized Members

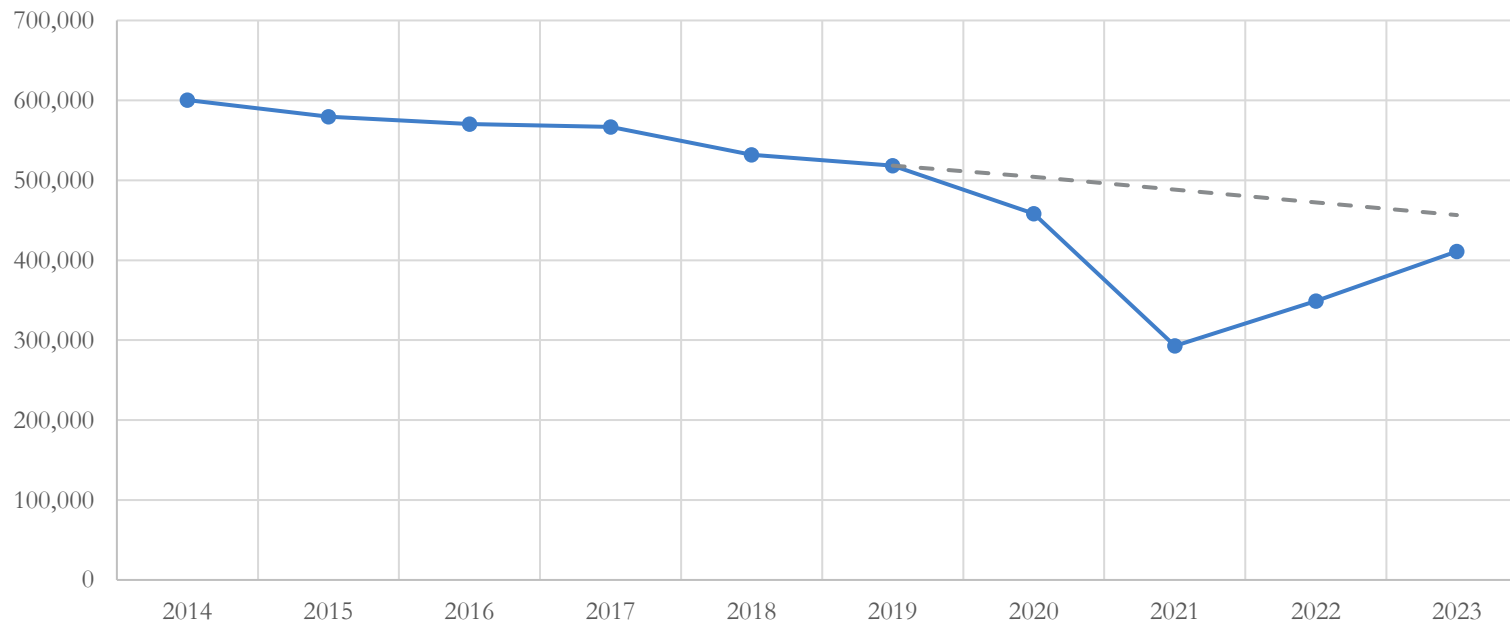




## Changes in ASA Over the Past Decade

- ❖ Similar to the trend in membership, domestic ASA has been on the decline since 2014. This could be due to a variety of factors, including shifting priorities in society more broadly, increasing demands on people’s time, health reasons, etc.
- ❖ While ASA saw a sharp decline during the pandemic (2020-2021), it began to recover in 2021-2022, with even more improvement in 2022-2023. In fact, the 2023 total ASA is almost exactly where it would be expected to be if following the projected pattern from 2014-2019 (shown below as the gray, dashed line). While the pandemic created an unnatural dip, it did not radically alter the general pattern of ASA decline due to other factors.
- ❖ It is important to note that ASA reported here only reflects in-person attendance. About three-quarters of Episcopal congregations offered online or hybrid worship at some point during 2023. While about two-thirds of those congregations track virtual participation, there is no standardized way to measure it— whether by counting people, counting connected devices, using a formula to estimate based on other metrics, etc.—therefore online attendance numbers are not included in this report.

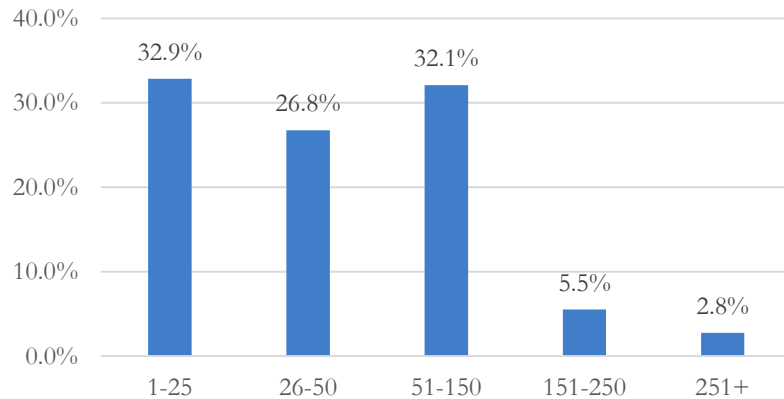
Average Sunday Attendance



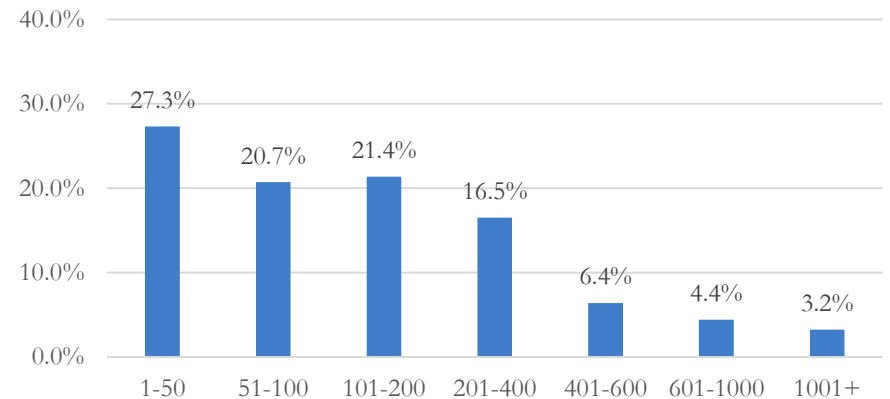
### ASA and Membership Size Groups

- ❖ The Episcopal Church has many small churches. In fact, about a third of churches report an ASA of 25 or fewer people. 92% of congregations have an ASA of 150 or fewer while only about 3% of parishes see attendance exceeding 250 people. The median ASA is about 38, meaning half of congregations have fewer than 38 people in attendance on Sundays, and the other half have more.
- ❖ Similarly, the majority of churches in The Episcopal Church (69%) have 200 or fewer members. At the other end of the spectrum, nearly 14% have memberships of over 400. The median membership is 107, meaning half of congregations have more than 107 members, while the other half have fewer.

Percent of Congregations in ASA Size Groups



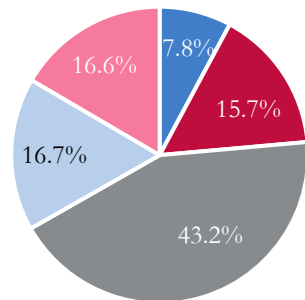
Percent of Congregations in Membership Size Groups



### Distribution of Congregations and Sunday Worship Attenders in ASA Size Groups

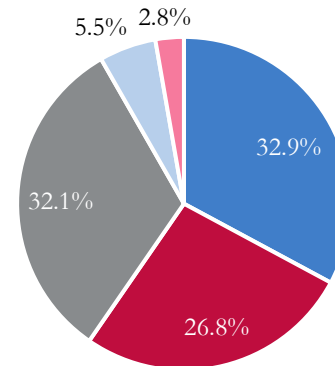
- ❖ While more than half of congregations have small Sunday services, the majority of attendees are actually participating in a mid-sized service. 43% of all Sunday worshipers participate in a congregation with an ASA of 51-150.
- ❖ Although nearly 60% of congregations have an ASA of fewer than 50 people, these smaller congregations account for only 24% of total Sunday worship attendees.
- ❖ Interestingly, around 17% of Sunday worship attenders gather in the largest 3% of churches (an ASA of over 251).

Sunday Worship Attenders by ASA Size Groups



■ 25 or fewer ■ 26-50 ■ 51-150 ■ 151-250 ■ 251+

Congregations by ASA Size Groups

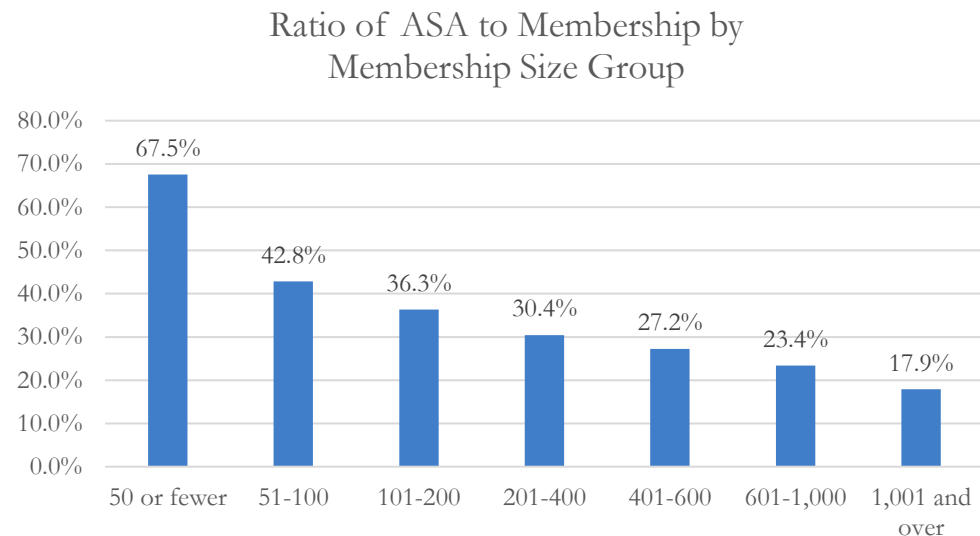


■ 25 or fewer ■ 26-50 ■ 51-150 ■ 151-250 ■ 251+

### ASA to Membership Ratio

- ❖ The average ASA across all domestic congregations is about 61 people but this figure varies significantly by congregation size. Churches with less than 50 members have an average ASA of about 15 people, while those with over 1,001 members (only 3% of Episcopal congregations) have an average ASA of about 310 people.
- ❖ The ratio of ASA to membership reveals the proportion of a congregation’s reported members who participate in worship service on Sundays. In small churches of 50 or fewer members, approximately two-thirds of their members are in attendance on a Sunday. In contrast, larger churches see less than 20% of members participating in services. This trend shows that the smaller the parish, the higher the percentage of its members attending Sunday worship.

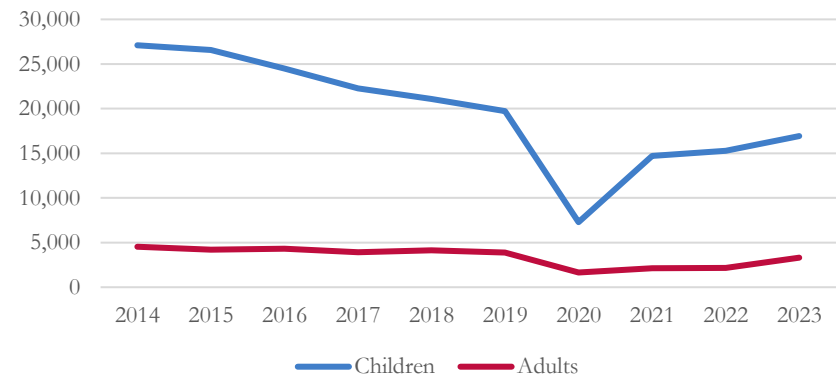
| Membership Size Group | Average ASA |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1-50                  | 15          |
| 51-100                | 31          |
| 101-200               | 51          |
| 201-400               | 86          |
| 401-600               | 132         |
| 601-1,000             | 176         |
| 1,001 and over        | 310         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>61</b>   |



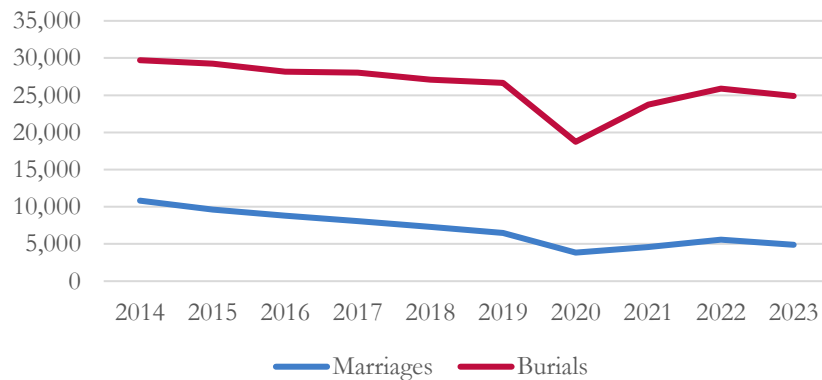
## BAPTISMS, CONFIRMATIONS, RECEPTIONS, MARRIAGES, AND BURIALS

- ❖ While baptisms, confirmations, and the number of individuals received by a Bishop all saw a decline in 2020 due to the pandemic, each of these categories has since experienced a recovery that continued into 2023, even surpassing predicted levels.
- ❖ The same recovery can be observed in the number of marriage ceremonies and burials conducted, reflecting a broader return to normalcy post-pandemic.

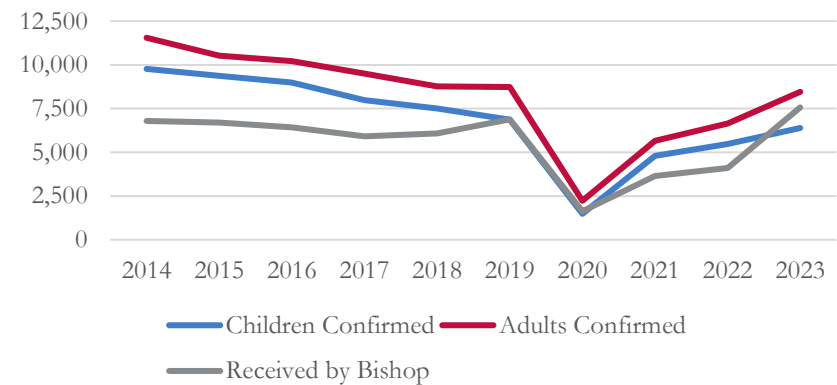
Baptisms



Marriages and Burials



Confirmations and Receptions

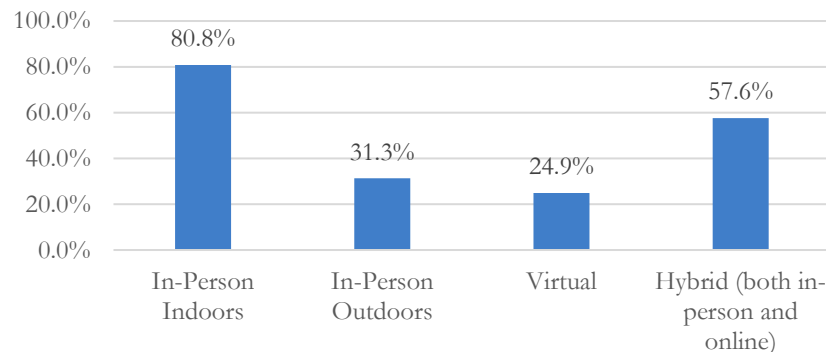


## WORSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

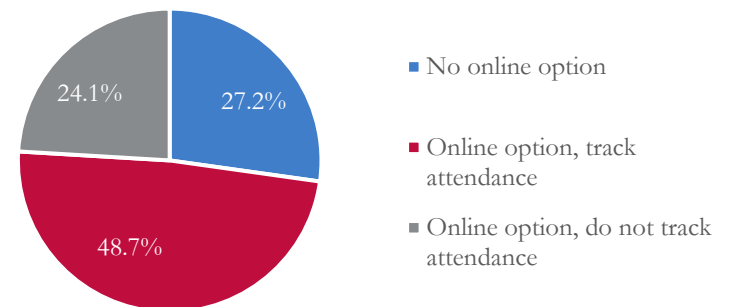
### Worship Mode

- ❖ In 2023, nearly all Episcopal congregations (81%) conducted worship in-person indoors. Additionally, a third of congregations offered worship outside at some point during the year. A quarter of congregations offered at least one virtual worship service during the year, while 62% utilized a hybrid model, allowing participants to join both in-person and virtually. Almost three-quarters of congregations offered some form of online worship in 2023 (virtual only or in a hybrid format).
- ❖ The percentage of congregations meeting in-person indoors (81%) and in-person outdoors (31%) are nearly identical to those in 2022 (82% and 33% respectively). However, the percentage of congregations meeting online and in a hybrid format have both declined (36% to 25% for virtual services and 63% to 58% for hybrid gatherings).
- ❖ As mentioned above, tracking virtual participation in online or hybrid worship services can be difficult. Nevertheless, about two-thirds of congregations who provide a virtual option try to record how many people participate this way. Some modes of online worship are easier to track than others (for example, Zoom meeting attendees vs. livestream viewers).

Worship Mode in 2023  
(check all that apply)



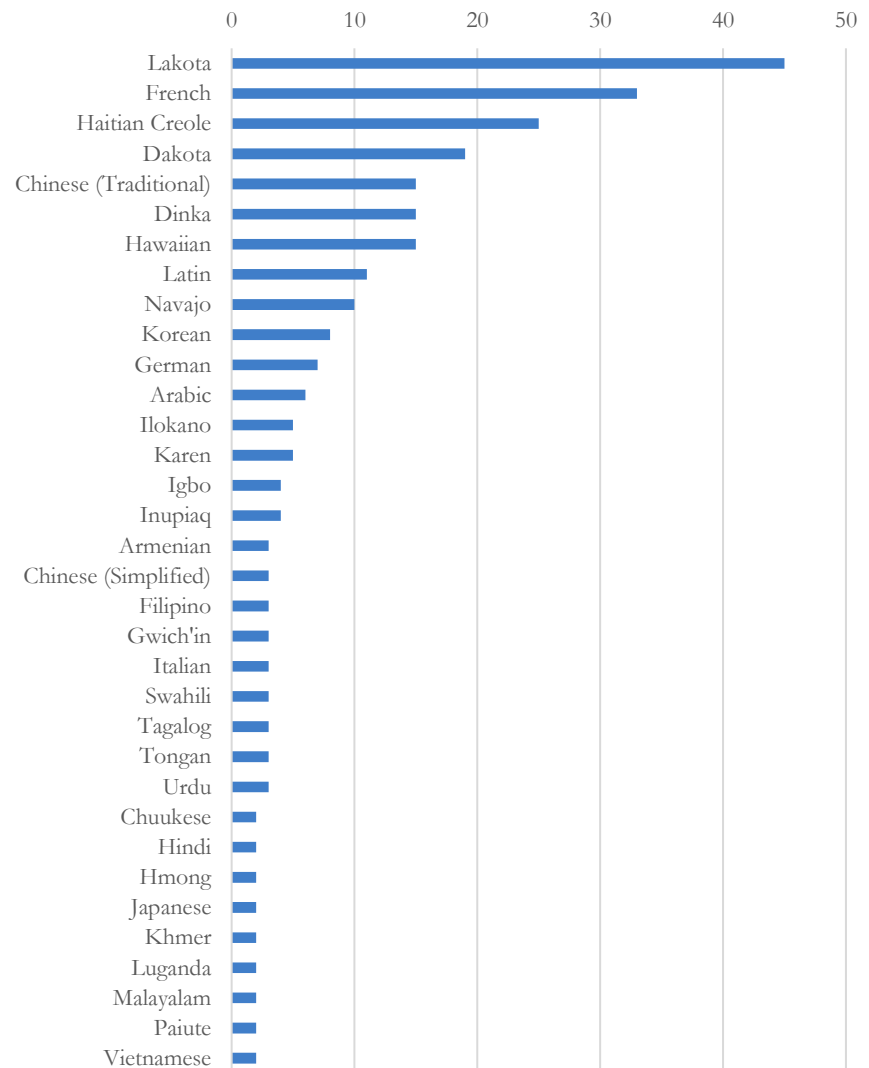
Tracking Online Service Attendance



## Languages Used in Worship

- ❖ Parishes of The Episcopal Church conduct worship in a diverse array of languages. When asked about the languages used for worship, congregations reported a total of 53 different languages.
- ❖ 86% of congregations use only English, while 14% use a language other than English or multiple languages.
- ❖ Additionally, 9% of congregations include more than one language in their worship services. Among these multilingual congregations, 91% utilize two languages, while 9% use 3 or more.
- ❖ Remarkably, two congregations report using as many as 6 different languages in their worship services.
- ❖ The most commonly used language after English is Spanish, with about 11% of congregations using Spanish in their worship. Among congregations that do not exclusively use English, a notable 73% use Spanish in their services.
- ❖ A list of the 34 languages used in worship other than English and Spanish is shown here.
- ❖ Additionally, the following 17 languages—Amharic, Bengali, Esperanto, Farsi, Greek, Marshallese, Myanmar Burmese, Ojibwe, Papiamentu, Persian, Polish, Punjabi, Scots Gaelic, Sundanese, Swedish, Tamil, and Telugu—are each utilized by one congregation.

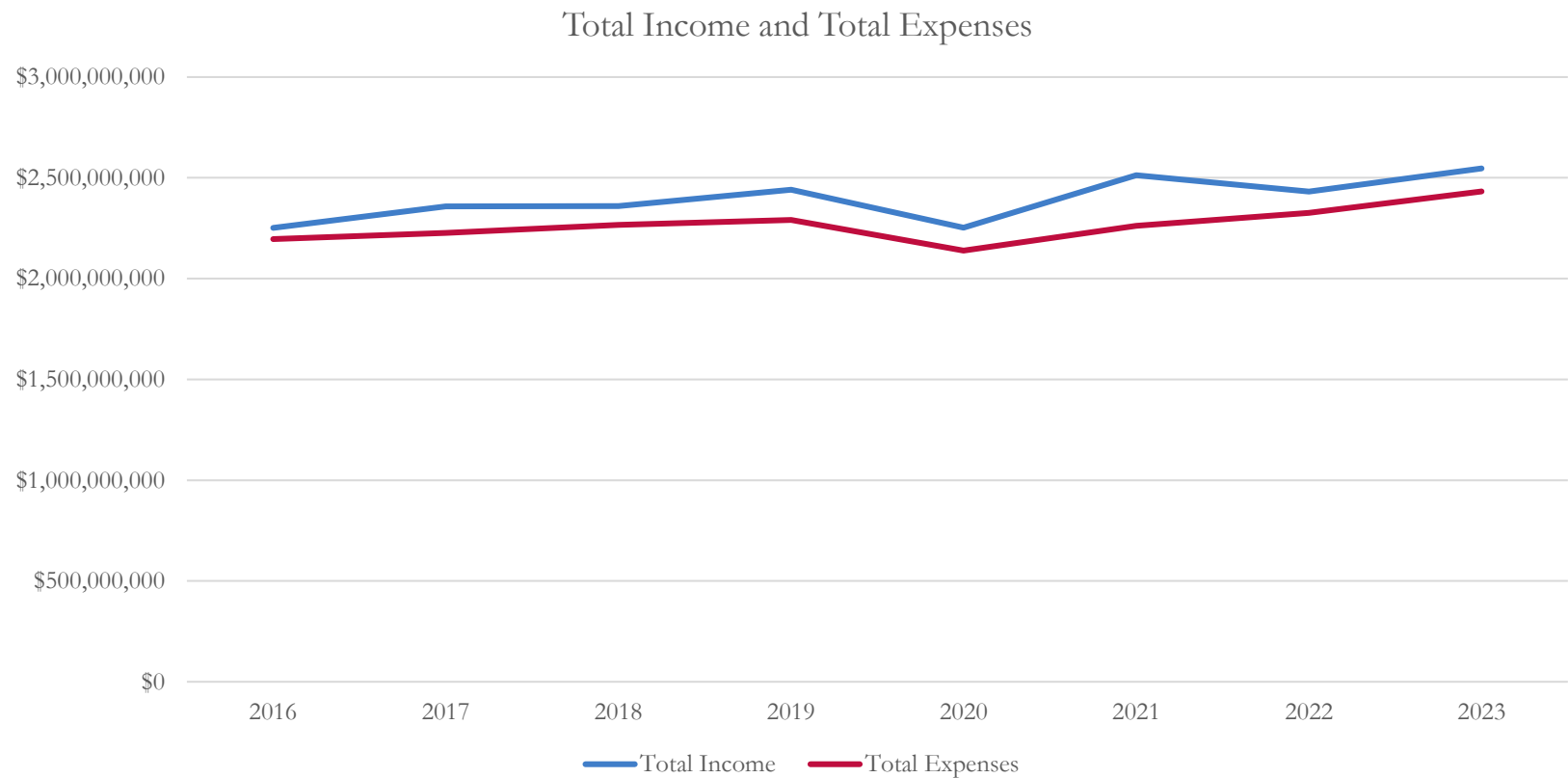
Languages used in Worship  
Excluding English and Spanish (Count)



## FINANCES

### OVERALL FINANCES OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- ❖ The total income and expenses for The Episcopal Church have steadily increased since 2016, with total income consistently exceeding total expenses each year.
- ❖ In 2023, the total income for The Episcopal Church was approximately \$2.5 billion, while total expenses amounted to around \$2.4 billion.
- ❖ The median income for a congregation in 2023 was \$192,128, with median expenses recorded at \$187,622.

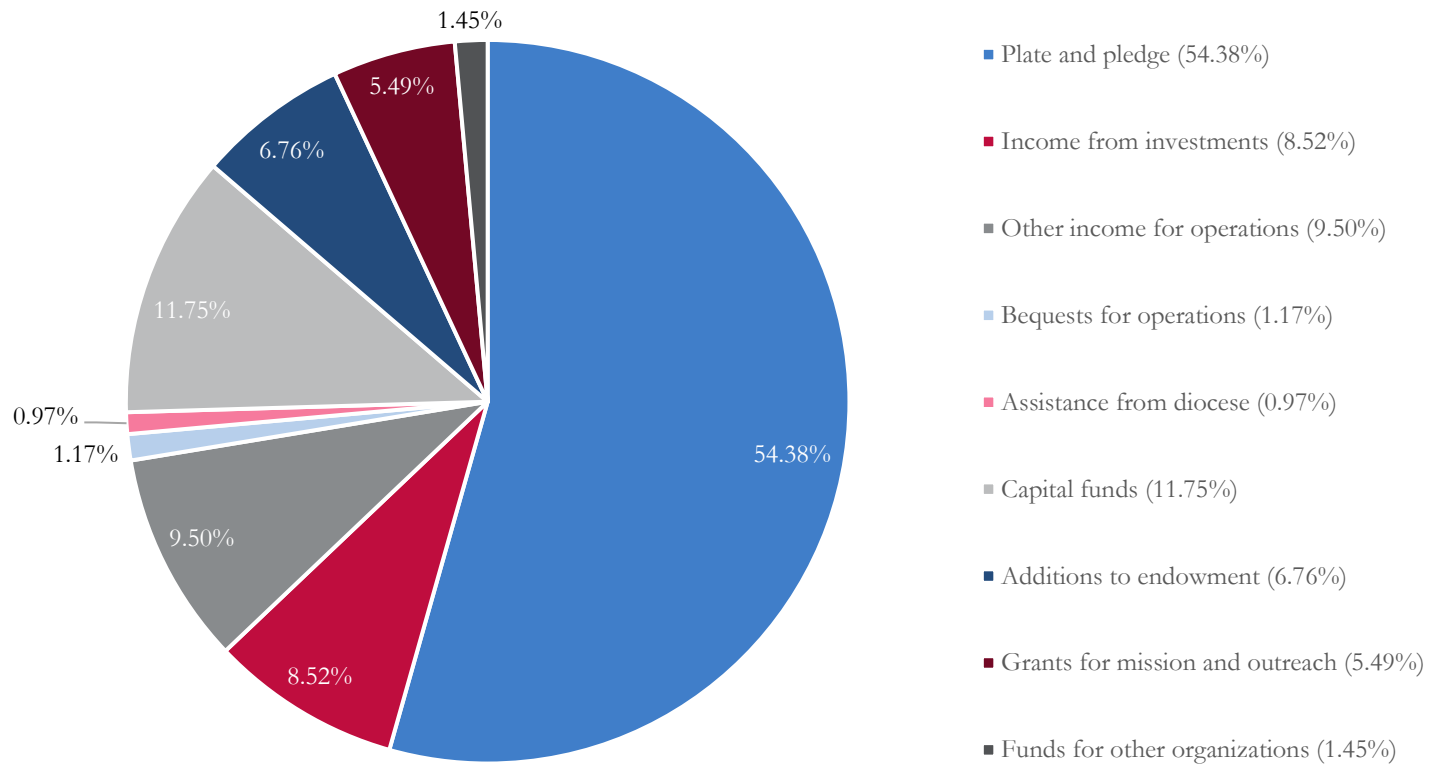




## TOTAL INCOME

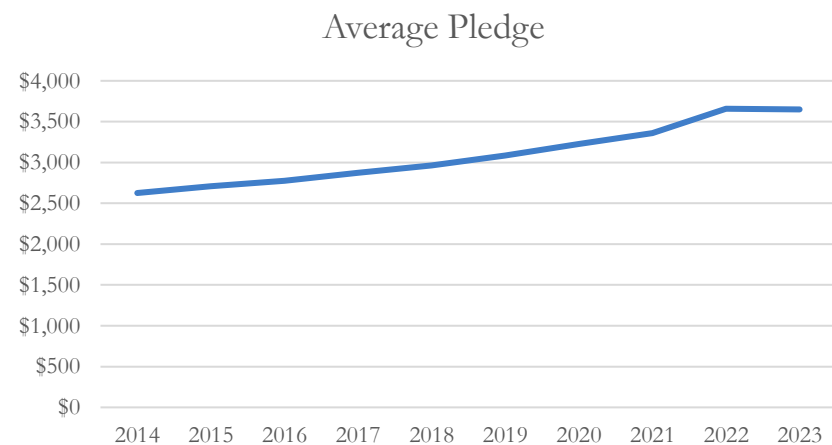
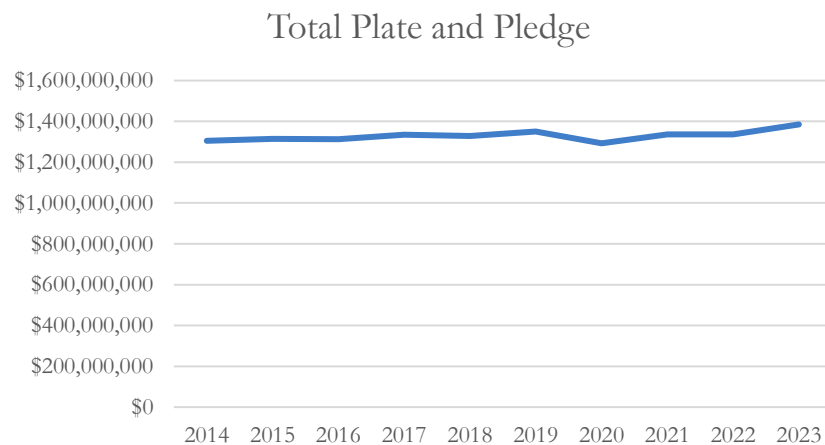
- ❖ Income is derived from a variety of sources, which can be categorized into operating income and non-operating income. Operating income includes plate offerings, pledge payments, and regular support; money from investments; other operating income; unrestricted bequests; and assistance from a diocese. Non-operating income encompasses capital funds, gifts, and additions; additions to endowments or other investment funds; contributions and grants for outreach and mission; and funds for transmittal to other organizations. Below is a detailed breakdown of total income by these components.

Breakdown of Total Income 2023



## Plate and Pledge Income and Average Pledge

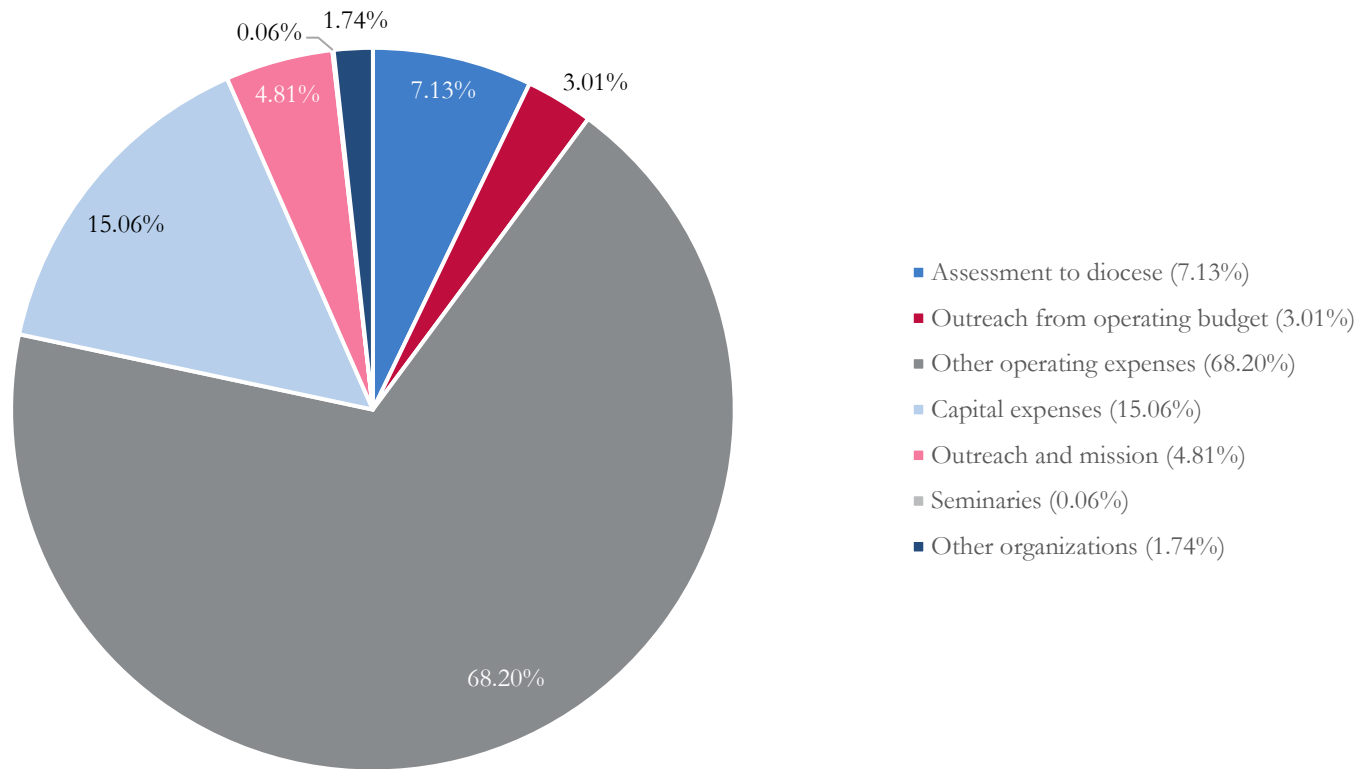
- ❖ The largest source of income comes from plate and pledge offerings for 54% of total income. The amount received from pledges and donations in the offering plate has also remained relatively stable over the past decade.
- ❖ In 2023, the total plate and pledge income for The Episcopal Church was approximately \$1.4 billion.
- ❖ The median total plate and pledge for a congregation stands at \$108,452.
- ❖ The average pledge has risen steadily over the past decade, increasing from \$2,626 in 2014 to \$3,650 in 2023. However, the average pledge has remained flat between 2022 and 2023.
- ❖ Additionally, the median number of contributing households without a pledge is 15. This indicates that, among the congregations who answered this question, half reported more than 15 households without a pledge while the other half reported fewer. This is a slight increase from 2022 when it was only 9 households without a pledge.



## TOTAL EXPENSES

- ❖ Expenses are categorized into operating expenses and non-operating expenses. Operating expenses include assessments to a Diocese, outreach from the operating budget, and all other operating expenses. Non-operating expenses encompass major improvements or capital expenditures, expenses for a congregation’s outreach and mission, funds contributed to Episcopal seminaries, and funds sent to other organizations. Below is a breakdown of total expenses by these various components.

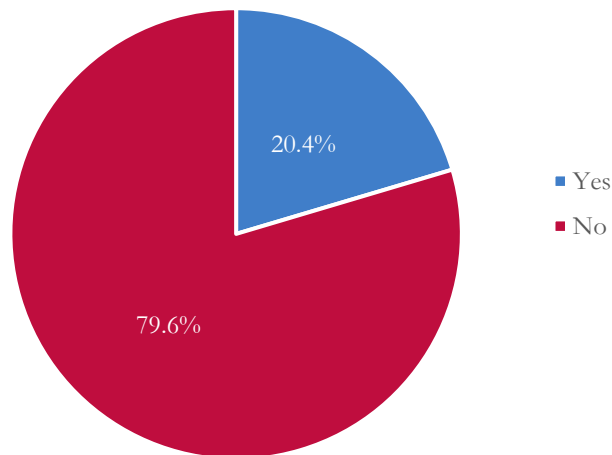
Breakdown of Total Expenses 2023



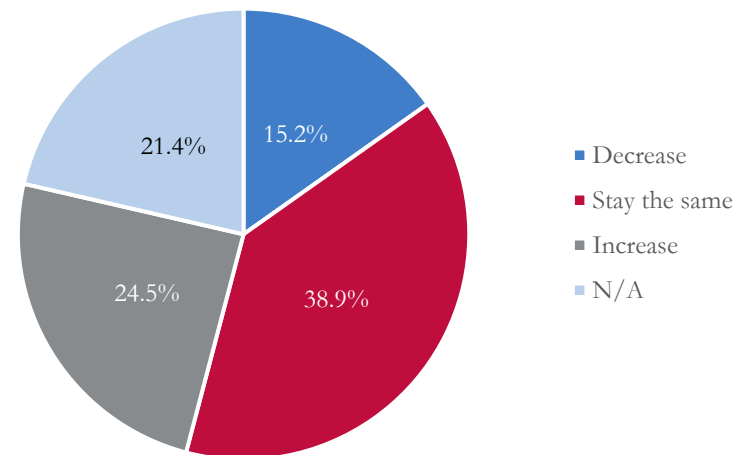
## DEBT AND USAGE OF RESERVE FUNDS

- ❖ In 2023, 20% of congregations reported having outstanding debt. Among those with debt, the median amount owed is \$70,084, while the remaining 80% of congregations who answered this question indicated that they had no debt.
- ❖ The most common reasons for having outstanding debt include mortgages or loans related to building expansions or renovations. Other factors contributing to outstanding debt include COVID-related loans, debt from installing solar panels, and other outstanding operating expenses.
- ❖ Additionally, 15% of congregations report decreasing their usage of endowment or reserve funds as compared to 2023. Meanwhile, 39% of congregations are using their endowment or reserve funds to the same level as they did in 2023, and 25% have increased their usage this year. These align closely with those reported in 2022 regarding changes from 2021 to 2022.
- ❖ Among congregations that have increased their usage of reserve funds, the mean draw percentage is 5.3%. In contrast, this percentage is only 1.9% among congregations that have not altered their usage compared to the previous year. For congregations that have decreased their use over the past year, the draw percentage stands at 4.7%.

Outstanding Debt



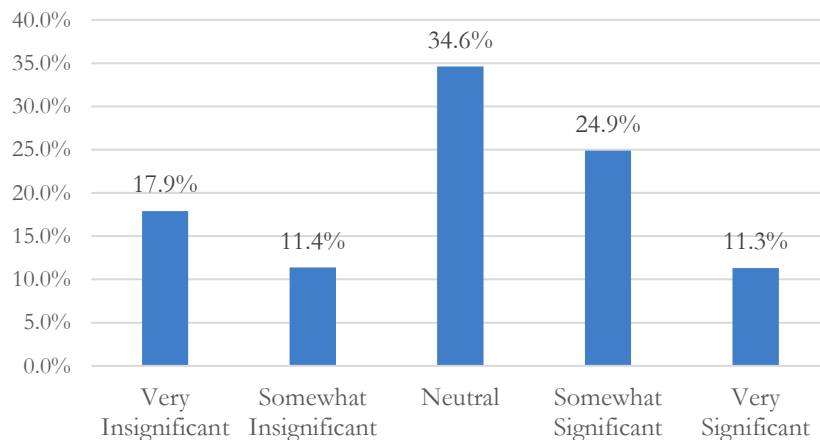
Change in Reserve Usage



## PANDEMIC IMPACT ON FINANCES

- ❖ Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on their financial situation, about a third of Episcopal congregations reported a somewhat significant or very significant negative impact on their finances for 2023. Another third expressed a neutral opinion, while the remaining approximately a third indicated that the pandemic had a somewhat insignificant or very insignificant impact on their finances for the year.
- ❖ Although a third of congregations still appear to be significantly affected, this percentage represents a decline from 2022, when about half of congregations reported that the pandemic had a somewhat significant or very significant impact on their finances that year.

Negative Impact of Pandemic on Finances for 2023



- ❖ Congregations that reported significant financial impacts from the pandemic on their 2023 finances cite losses of key members, challenges in encouraging people to return post-pandemic, and a slower-than-expected recovery from the peak of the pandemic.
  - *“We have lost parishioners to attrition and death during and after the pandemic. Being closed during the pandemic did not help in bringing members back. Some went on to other churches who didn't close down.”*
  - *“The pandemic has caused workers to leave the area and not return due to lack of work and especially the affordable housing shortage.”*
  - *“The pandemic brought simmering tensions to the forefront and members withdrew pledges.”*
- ❖ In contrast, congregations that experienced insignificant impacts of the pandemic on their 2023 finances mention that attendance and pledges have either remaining steady or have quickly returned to their pre-pandemic levels. While some are still on the path to recovery, they anticipate a full return in the near future.
  - *“Our congregation is finally showing positive signs post-COVID and is starting to improve financially. The congregation is growing and we have a positive budget going into 2024 for the first time since we began in 2008.”*
  - *“2023 provided a pleasant rebound from the previous three years.”*
  - *“No real impact. Giving remained constant for the most part”*

## OVERALL FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

When asked about their financial outlook over the next five years, congregations fall into four broad groups:

**POSITIVE OUTLOOK :** Congregations in this category are experiencing dynamics such as stable or increasing pledge income, growing membership, and effective stewardship practices.

- *“We are very optimistic and are seeing a trend back in a positive direction as we move in to 2024. Although we see a rise in operational costs, we are also seeing some increases in pledges and giving.”*
- *“The financial outlook is stable and expected to remain healthy.”*

**CHALLENGING OUTLOOK :** These congregations face financial challenges due to shifts in membership, an aging participant base, declining pledges, and rising expenses. While these changes present obstacles, congregations in this category recognize the issues at hand and are actively seeking solutions, such as cutting expenses and exploring alternative funding sources.

- *“Cash flow is tight, and we are still running a deficit budget. However, with enrollment in the school increasing, and the increase in pledge income through a higher average pledge and new members, we believe a balanced budget is achievable by late 2024. Additionally, we expect an income from our solar installation within 4 years, as well as likely endowment income.”*
- *“We are aware of some potential financial money raisers that we are looking into. Our resort town continues to grow in the number of tourists it attracts which benefits our Air B&B. We have an aging building and an aging congregation. We are not sure how all of these factors will combine.”*

**UNCERTAIN OUTLOOK :** Similar to those with a challenging outlook, these congregations are also experiencing changing dynamics that adversely affect their financial health. They may be dealing with leadership transitions or the need for significant repairs rendering their path forward unpredictable or unclear.

- *“Without changes, parish outlook is extremely distressed. Operational funds continue to diminish in the current outlook.”*
- *“Very challenged. Our 2024 budget is very uncertain and based on guesswork given the loss of our rector and uncertain future of efforts to call a half time priest or a shared rector with another parish...”*

**DIRE OUTLOOK :** Congregations in this category are grappling with severe financial challenges and are anticipating a major financial crisis unless significant changes occur in the next few years.

- *“We are facing serious deficit budgets ongoing; the treasurer predicts, at current pledging, without significant bequests, we will burn through 40-50% of our reserves in the next five years. We need diocesan assistance to identify new revenue streams, otherwise the parish may close in 10 years.”*
- *“Dire. Our congregation is so small and getting small. The concern is that money coming in will not be enough to keep the church open.”*

## OUTREACH

❖ In 2023, Episcopal congregations engaged in a wide array of outreach ministries and volunteer activities. More than 372,000 volunteers—including approximately 92,000 new volunteers—contributed their time and effort to over 27,000 ministries and outreach programs, collectively serving more than 6,600,000 people.

|   | NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS | % OF THE TOTAL | NUMBER OF NEW VOLUNTEERS | % OF THE TOTAL | NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED | % OF THE TOTAL |
|---|----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Total   | 372,575              | 100%           | 92,224                   | 100%           | 6,661,609               | 100%           |
| Food pantry, soup kitchen or meal projects                      | 143,215              | 38%            | 30,996                   | 34%            | 2,100,260               | 32%            |
| Sustainable food garden/cooperative (such as "Farm to Tray")    | 10,185               | 3%             | 3,236                    | 4%             | 122,568                 | 2%             |
| Cash, vouchers or help with rent/utilities                      | 9,684                | 3%             | 3,078                    | 3%             | 30,062                  | 0%             |
| Day care, pre-school, before or after-school programs           | 5,949                | 2%             | 2,016                    | 2%             | 49,790                  | 1%             |
| Tutoring or literacy programs                                   | 5,380                | 1%             | 1,465                    | 2%             | 30,149                  | 0%             |
| Health programs (parish nurse, clinics, health education, etc.) | 5,809                | 2%             | 1,820                    | 2%             | 77,905                  | 1%             |
| Community organizing, organized social issue advocacy           | 16,826               | 5%             | 4,529                    | 5%             | 1,699,969               | 26%            |
| Job placement, job training, employment counseling              | 1,269                | 0%             | 339                      | 0%             | 7,288                   | 0%             |

*(table continued on next page)*

|   | NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS | % OF THE TOTAL | NUMBER OF NEW VOLUNTEERS | % OF THE TOTAL | NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED | % OF THE TOTAL |
|---|----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Building projects (such as Habitat for Humanity)                            | 6,377                | 2%             | 2,280                    | 2%             | 8,329                   | 0%             |
| Support groups (bereavement, divorce, job loss, 12-step, etc.)              | 12,236               | 3%             | 4,165                    | 5%             | 259,081                 | 4%             |
| Programs for the elderly and homebound persons                              | 14,923               | 4%             | 4,129                    | 4%             | 75,261                  | 1%             |
| Clothes closet, thrift store  | 22,822               | 6%             | 5,712                    | 6%             | 602,815                 | 9%             |
| Homeless or no-freeze shelter   | 13,803               | 4%             | 3,461                    | 4%             | 96,630                  | 1%             |
| Overseas sponsorship or partnerships, Sister parish or Diocese relationship | 13,715               | 4%             | 2,769                    | 3%             | 336,078                 | 5%             |
| Refugee resettlement  | 7,102                | 2%             | 2,546                    | 3%             | 75,153                  | 1%             |
| Ecumenical or Interfaith Partnerships                                       | 16,188               | 4%             | 4,772                    | 5%             | 451,772                 | 7%             |
| Other, not listed*  | 67,092               | 18%            | 14,911                   | 16%            | 638,499                 | 10%            |

\*Other outreach efforts not explicitly listed encompass a variety of initiatives, including backpack programs, school supplies drives, scouting activities, holiday meal distribution, dental clinics, hygiene product drives, laundry services, disaster relief efforts, maternity aid, support for veterans, knitting groups, environmental clean-ups, and many more.

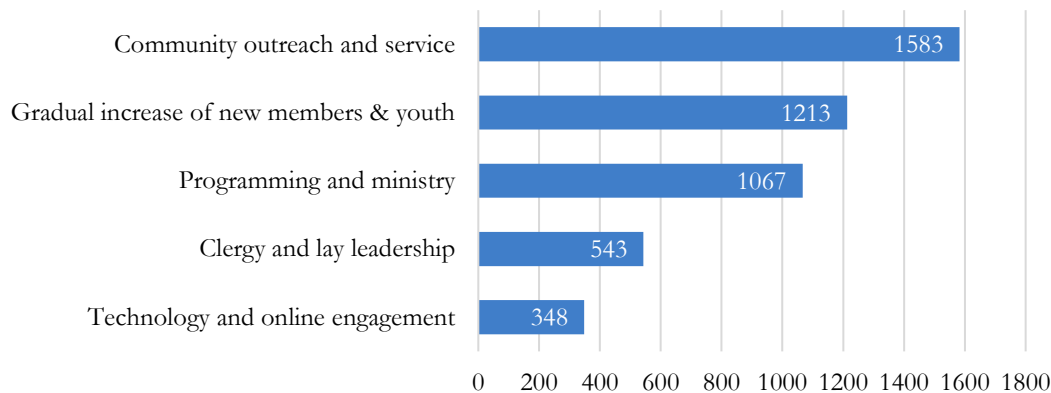


## NARRATIVE RESPONSES

### OPPORTUNITIES

Out of the 4,877 responses to the question, “what opportunities and challenges did the congregation face in 2023?” congregations named several opportunities falling into these five categories. The most frequent theme mentioned is community outreach and service which discusses reigniting prior programs, creating new initiatives, and addressing various social needs of the community, like food insecurity, housing, and education.

**Top Five Opportunities**



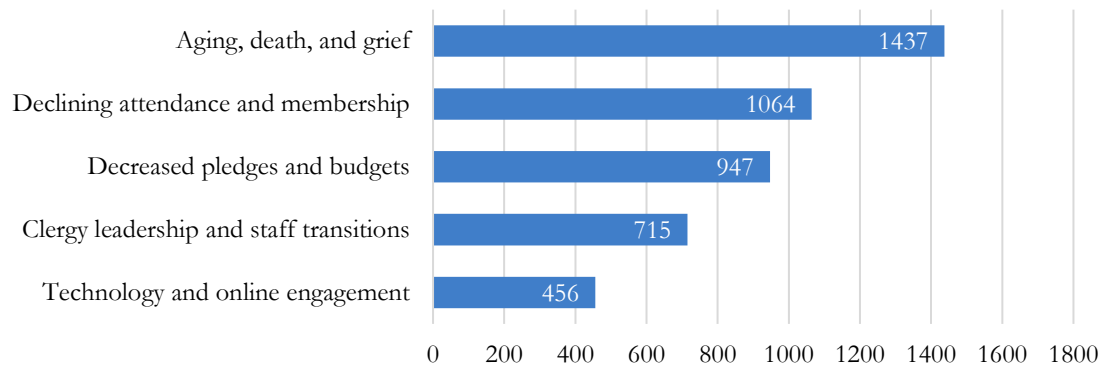
*“Our congregation has grown steadily, welcoming new families of young children and teens...In the past year, our congregation underwent internal staff changes in both the leadership of our music ministry and in financial management. We have embraced these opportunities and while a certain amount of anxiety accompanied the changes, adjustments have been well received. Last but not least, our [ministry name] exploded during the past year. We were successful in negotiating a long term relationship with a national Diaper Bank enabling us to access free diapers, wipes and pull ups for families in need...At year end we were giving away approximately 12,000 diapers per month to approximately 130 children.”*

- ❖ **Community outreach and service:** Churches identify frequent efforts to engage with their community through food ministries, clothing drives, and programs to support the homeless and marginalized groups.
- ❖ **Gradual increase of new members & youth:** Churches describe the gradual increase of attendance of families and youth, as well as emphasizing efforts to involve younger generations in church activities and programs.
- ❖ **Programming & ministry:** Churches identify how they rebuilt and created new programming and ministries that cater to the needs of members, attract younger audiences, as well as build Christian discipleship.
- ❖ **Clergy leadership & staff:** Churches mention the critical role of effective leadership in fostering active participation, stability, trust, and hope among members about the present and future of the congregation.
- ❖ **Technology & online engagement:** Churches discuss the shift to online services and opportunities presented by digital technology, including livestreaming services, improving online engagement, and using technology to reach broader audiences.

## CHALLENGES

In response to “what opportunities and challenges did the congregation face in 2023?” congregations also named several challenges falling into the five categories shown below. The most frequent theme mentioned is aging, death, and grief which included concerns for aging congregations and the shared grief experienced after deaths in a congregation due to age, health, and social conditions.

### Top Five Challenges



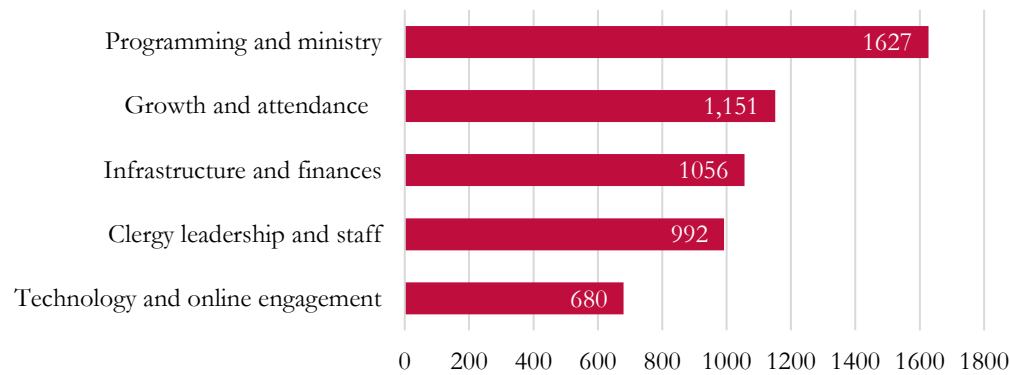
*“In 2023, we still feel that we have not recovered completely from the effects of the pandemic. Attendance remains inconsistent and we continue to struggle financially, with a year-end deficit of \$35,000. We do not have adequate members for a choir which is disappointing to the congregation. We have had a significant number of deaths and an increase in the number of shut-ins. Additionally, we struggled when our rector was on short-term disability medical leave for three months at the end of the year...”*

- ❖ **Aging, death, & grief:** Connected with declining attendance, churches express concerns about having an aging congregation with few younger members as well as the number of deaths their congregations experience annually.
- ❖ **Declining attendance & membership:** Churches describe concerns about declining attendance post-pandemic and the challenges of attracting and retaining members.
- ❖ **Decreased pledges & budgets:** Financial challenges are frequently mentioned, especially in relation to maintaining aging buildings, paying staff, and supporting outreach programs.
- ❖ **Clergy leadership & staff:** Churches describe leadership transitions and challenges, such as the absence of full-time clergy, reliance on visiting priests or lay leadership, the need for leadership training to sustain church operations, and new leadership hierarchies regarding sharing roles and responsibilities.
- ❖ **Technology & online engagement:** Churches identify the challenges in shifting to online services, particularly the incorporation of livestreaming services, resources to support reaching broader audiences, and personnel.

## HOPES FOR FUTURE CHANGE

Out of the 4,221 responses to the question, “looking toward the future, what changes do you hope to see in your faith community?” congregations identify several places for growth that fall into the themes listed below. The most frequent theme mentioned is the continued development of relevant programming and ministries, seeking to attract and keep members and gain more youth and families. Leaders express a desire to build programming and resources for the community across churches and non-faith-based organizations.

**Hopes for Future**



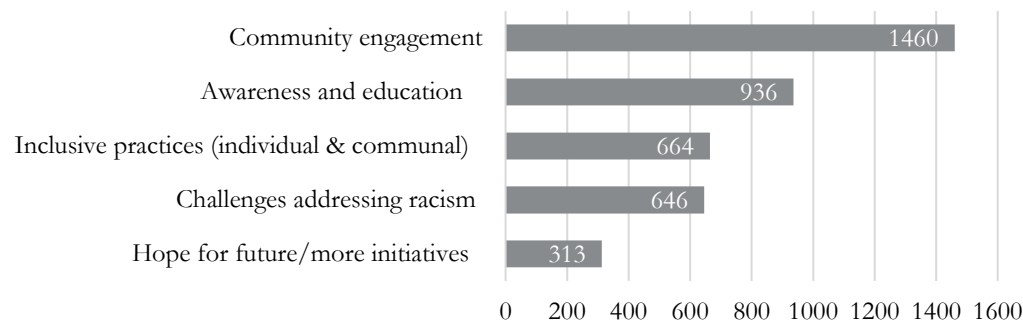
*“We work towards our goal of a fully realized Lay Lead - Clergy Support Congregation for which we are receiving assistance from Bishop's Office Staff. While our Community outreach activities of gathering and donating back packs/school supplies, summer children's snack packs, clothing drive in conjunction with Epilepsy Foundation, responding to other special community needs is meaningful, our goal for 2024 is to be engaged in activities serving our neighbors onsite at other organizations. We have chosen two organizations in which to be engaged serving meals; meeting and shopping with clients of the local food pantry. The organization within our building is not in need of volunteers at this time so we'll be out of our building and in the community.”*

- ❖ **Programming & ministry:** Churches describe the intersection of spiritual growth and attendance, and leaders show a yearning to continue or create new programs and partnerships that meet the needs of the communities they serve, specifically seeking to attract and keep youth and families.
- ❖ **Growth & attendance:** Churches discuss seeking and maintaining growth through regular attendance and participation to sustain and build congregational life.
- ❖ **Infrastructure & finances:** Congregations report financial difficulties related to maintaining aging buildings, funding operations, and managing the costs associated with outreach programs.
- ❖ **Clergy leadership & staff:** Churches discuss the impact of clergy transitions due to sabbaticals, retirements, or other staffing changes. They also highlight the need for leadership training, particularly for lay leaders and vestry members, to maintain the development of church programming and activities.
- ❖ **Technology & online engagement:** Congregations describe a desire to improve technology usage, such as setting up livestreams, creating engaging digital content through social media, and improving websites.

## NAMING, ADDRESSING, AND DISMANTLING RACISM

Out of the 3,134 responses to the prompt, “tell stories of how you have spent the last year naming, addressing, and dismantling the injustices of racism in yourselves, congregations, and your communities,” congregations identify several responses following into the themes shown below. The theme mentioned most frequently is community engagement. Clergy describe several ways congregations engage in action-oriented initiatives to meet community needs within and outside the parish walls, such as participating on advocacy councils, developing programming for the unhoused, and collaborating with local grassroots toward a shared cause.

### Responses to Dismantling Injustices



*“We concentrated on two areas in our social justice work...: (1) The Outreach Committee continued their work and partnerships with local agencies in helping improve conditions for the homeless and those affected by affordable housing in the local community. (2) Continuation of group study, which selects books to read and discuss, exploring various religious and spiritual issues/theology that reflect indigenous, white, multi-racial or ethnic experiences.”*

- ❖ **Community engagement:** Congregations identify numerous ways they engage in service work within their community and externally. They talk about efforts to collaborate across churches and with grassroots organizations to support action-oriented initiatives towards dismantling systems of injustice and racism.
- ❖ **Awareness & education:** Churches identify the importance of learning, understanding, and acknowledging racism and unjust systems.
- ❖ **Inclusive practices (individual & communal):** Churches describe responses emphasizing the need to be inclusive and welcoming to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Particularly, they highlight collective efforts to create a supportive environment.
- ❖ **Challenges addressing racism:** Congregations discuss difficulty in directly addressing issues related to racism, particularly in less racially or ethnically diverse congregations. Leaders discuss the complexity of addressing the need for their community to be more inclusive while also realizing the limitations in understanding and then addressing systemic issues.
- ❖ **Hope for future/more initiatives:** Churches discuss a desire and hope to increase outreach and participation in community conversations about justice and inclusivity in future years.