FACT 2023—
United Church of Christ

Study findings and 2020 Comparisons

Center for Analytics, Research & Development, and Data
United Church of Christ
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Overview

Aims and Methods

Topics

• Facilities
• Leadership
• Church Activities
• Mission and Identity
• Technology
• Finances
• Pandemic Experiences
Overview—About FACT 2023

- The 2023 FACT survey is the latest in a series of national, interfaith surveys conducted since 2000
  - Previous FACT surveys were released in 2000, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2015, and 2020
- The 2023 FACT survey was especially collected to assess trends among congregations that have emerged since the last survey in 2020
  - The 2023 FACT survey is also part of the Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations (EPIC) project
    - https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/
  - The next FACT survey will be conducted in 2025
- For more information on the overall FACT survey effort and details on the 2023 data collection, visit [Faith Communities Today](https://www.fact.org/)
Overview—UCC Survey Distribution

- Random sample drawn of 1,000 churches
  - 4,603 UCC congregations as of Dec. 31, 2022
- Survey in the field from March 7–April 3
- 296 useable responses received
  - 30% response rate
  - Responses weighted to match UCC geographic prevalence
Facilities

Forms, Uses, and Satisfaction
Facilities: Uses and Compensation

Use of Space by Other Organizations:
• 70.5% of congregations share space with other organizations

How Organizations Provide Compensation for Space (organizations could choose all that apply):
• Rent – 63.9%
• Free Use – 60.6%
• Expense Sharing – 23.1%
• Other – 18.8%
Which best describes your congregation’s relationship to its primary place of worship?

- Owned by Congregation: 93.7%
- Rent: 4.1%
- Have Use of a Facility for Free: 1.0%
- Owned by Denomination: 0.7%
- Other Agreement: 0.4%
Facility Satisfaction

Space for Religious Services/Worship

- Much more than we need
- Slightly more than we need
- Just about right
- Slightly less than we need
- Much less than we need

Space for Parking

- Much more than we need
- Slightly more than we need
- Just about right
- Slightly less than we need
- Much less than we need
Leadership
Clergy Characteristics, Fit, and Well-Being
Leadership: Senior/Solo Clergy Characteristics

- **Age**
  - Average: 57.0
  - Median: 59.0

- **Employment status:**
  - Full-Time: 55.2%
  - Part-Time: 44.8%

- **Compensation:**
  - Paid: 98.9%
  - Unpaid: 1.1%

- **Median first year of service:**
  - 2015

- **Part Time Clergy: Average hours worked in congregation:**
  - 21.4
Leadership: Senior/Solo Clergy Race and Ethnicity

- African American (non-Hispanic): 4.4% (2023), 3.1% (2020)
- American Indian/Alaska Native (non-Hispanic): 0.4% (2023), 1.0% (2020)
- Asian (non-Hispanic): 1.1% (2020), 1.6% (2023)
- Hispanic or Latino(a): 1.2% (2020), 1.2% (2023)
- Multiracial: 0.7% (2023), 1.6% (2020)
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (non-Hispanic): 1.2% (2023), 1.2% (2020)
- Other: 1.0% (2023), 0.8% (2020)
- White (non-Hispanic): 89.7% (2023), 89.0% (2020)

*Note: respondents could select more than one Race/Ethnicity*
Leadership: “Fit” Between Leader and Congregation

- Very Good: 72.7% (2023), 74.3% (2020)
- Good: 25.5% (2023)
- Just Okay: 1.7% (2023)
- Not Good: 0.0% (2023), 0.4% (2020)

Comparison between 2023 and 2020 data.
Leadership: Health and Challenges

In general, How Would You Rate Your...

- Physical Health:
  - 7.3/10

- Mental Health:
  - 7.6/10

- Spiritual Health:
  - 7.7/10

- Relational Health (i.e., Your Relationships with Other People):
  - 7.9/10

- Financial Health:
  - 7.2/10

Since the start of 2020, how often have you:

Doubted that you are called by God for ministry

- Very Often
- Fairly Often
- A Few Times
- Once or Twice
- Never

Seriously considered leaving pastoral ministry

- Very Often
- Fairly Often
- A Few Times
- Once or Twice
- Never

Seriously considered leaving this congregation for another one

- Very Often
- Fairly Often
- A Few Times
- Once or Twice
- Never
Church Activities

Attendance, Demographics, and Programming
Activities: Worship

Average In-Person Attendance

- 2023: 47.9
- 2020: 67.1
- 2018 (2023 Estimate): 65.5
- 2015 (2020 Estimate): 77.4

Percent Offering Virtual Worship

- 2023: 85.8%
- 2020: 38.2% (live streaming)
Activities: Participant Characteristics

2020
- Number of Regular Participants: 98.2
- Percent Female: 62.3%
- Percent Volunteering Regularly at the Congregation: 53.5%
- Are New to the Congregation in Last Five Years: 16.7%

2023
- Number of Regular Participants: 68.0
- Percent Female: 62.7%
- Percent Volunteering Regularly at the Congregation: 45.0%
- Are New to the Congregation in Last Five Years: 11.5%
Mean Regular Participants: Race and Ethnicity

- American Indian/Alaska Native: 0.2 (2023), 0.5 (2020)
- Asian: 1.2 (2023), 2.5 (2020)
- Black or African American: 3.1 (2023), 2.8 (2020)
- Hispanic or Latino(a): 1.6 (2023), 1.8 (2020)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.8 (2023), 0.9 (2020)
- White: 57.9 (2023), 71.0 (2020)
- Other: 1.7 (2023), 0.0 (2020)
## Activities: Programs Offered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (a lot or a little)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer or Meditation Groups</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education for Children</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education for Adults</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth (13-17) activities or programs</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young adult (18-34) activities or programs</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (65+) activities or programs</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities: Programs Offered</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (a lot or a little)</td>
<td>Yes, In-Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice/advocacy groups</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool and/or daycare center</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship/community-building events</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School (Primary or secondary)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service activities</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison ministry</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mission and Identity

Purpose, Vitality, and Community Involvement
Mission and Identity

Our Congregation...

Has a Clear Mission and Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is Striving to be Diverse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mission and Identity

Our Congregation...

Is Good at Incorporating New People into the Congregation

- Strongly Disagree: 1.1% (2023), 4.5% (2020)
- Disagree: 4.8% (2023), 9.0% (2020)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 14.0% (2023), 18.3% (2020)
- Agree: 28.3% (2023), 44.2% (2020)
- Strongly Agree: 28.1% (2023), 47.8% (2020)

Is Actively Looking for New Members

- Strongly Disagree: 1.5% (2023), 4.4% (2020)
- Disagree: 4.4% (2023), 11.4% (2020)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 11.7% (2023), 25.1% (2020)
- Agree: 25.8% (2023), 37.9% (2020)
- Strongly Agree: 22.1% (2023), 36.1% (2020)
Mission and Identity

Our Congregation...

Is Spiritually Vital and Alive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is Willing to Change to Meet New Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mission and Identity

Our Congregation...

Is Actively Involved in Our Local Community

- Strongly Disagree: 0.9% (2023), 4.9% (2020)
- Disagree: 6.6% (2023), 7.5% (2020)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 10.3% (2023), 13.4% (2020)
- Agree: 36.4% (2023), 37.5% (2020)
- Strongly Agree: 42.8% (2023), 39.7% (2020)

Participates Actively in the Wider UCC

- Strongly Disagree: 5.4% (2023), 3.8% (2020)
- Disagree: 16.8% (2023), 14.2% (2020)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 25.9% (2023), 30.3% (2020)
- Agree: 35.5% (2023), 40.9% (2020)
- Strongly Agree: 12.1% (2023), 15.1% (2020)
Technology
Uses, Platforms, and Trends
Technology: Tools and Platforms

Frequency of Use:
- **A few times a year**
- **Approximately monthly**
- **Approximately weekly**
- **Do not use**

Percent New Since the Pandemic:
- **Online Archiving**: 14.9%
- **Online Giving**: 12.0%
- **Email**: 4.1%
- **E-Newsletters**: 6.5%
Technology: Tools and Platforms

Frequency of Use:
- A few times a year
- Approximately monthly
- Approximately weekly
- Do not use

Percent New Since the Pandemic:
- Online Meetings, Small Groups: 29.4%
- Online Meetings, Administrative: 36.7%
- Social Media, Event Planning: 8.9%
- Social Media, Connection and Care: 10.5%
Average Percentage of Regular Monthly Giving Received Through Online Giving: 24.8%

Approximate Percentage of Participants Donating Online: 22.7%

2020
- Percent with Wi-Fi Access: 79.7%
- Percent having Website: 82.0%

2023
- Percent with Wi-Fi Access: 89.6%
- Percent having Website: 85.0%
Finances

Expenditures, Revenues, and Sense of Financial Health
Finances: Revenues and Expenditures

Average Total Revenues:
• 2020: $323,442.91
• 2023: $210,816.12

Average Total Expenditures:
• 2020: $205,883.69
• 2023: $241,006.46
How Would You Describe Your Congregation’s Financial Health Today?

- Excellent: 10.0% (2023), 15.5% (2020)
- Good: 26.4% (2023), 27.7% (2020)
- Tight, but We Manage: 40.1% (2023), 38.7% (2020)
- In Some Difficulty: 17.3% (2023), 11.0% (2020)
- In Serious Difficulty: 6.2% (2023), 7.2% (2020)
How Would You Describe Your Congregation’s Financial Health Five Years Ago?

- **Excellent**: 10.5% (2018), 10.1% (2015)
- **Good**: 34.1% (2018), 31.9% (2015)
- **Tight, but We Manage**: 37.3% (2018), 34.7% (2015)
- **In Some Difficulty**: 13.2% (2018), 17.7% (2015)
- **In Serious Difficulty**: 4.9% (2018), 5.7% (2015)
Pandemic Experiences

Challenges, Successes, and Future Outlook
Pandemic Experiences: Concerns and Successes

Most Frequently Named Concerns for Future
- **2020:**
  - Membership/Attendance Levels
  - Finances
  - Aging Membership
- **2023:**
  - Membership/Attendance Levels
  - Finances
  - Aging Membership

Most Frequent Points of Success
- **2020:**
  - Openness, Welcoming Attitude
  - Fellowship, Mutual Support
  - Activity in and Impact in Community
- **2023:**
  - Fellowship, Mutual Support
  - Openness, Welcoming Attitude
  - Activity in and Impact on Community

Since the Start of 2020, has Your Congregation Experienced any Disagreements?
- Yes, Clergy/Staff Departure(s): 16.0%
- Yes, Donations Withheld: 14.6%
- Yes, at Least One Person Left: 32.7%
- Yes, Not Serious: 32.8%
- No: 30.9%
How Would You Rate the Level of Tension in Your Congregation Surrounding Social and Political Issues (Excluding COVID-19) Now Compared to 2018?

- **Nonexistent**: 9.7% (2023) vs. 9.3% (2018)
- **Relatively Low**: 32.7% (2018)
- **Average**: 41.7% (2023) vs. 36.8% (2018)
- **Moderately High**: 11.2% (2023) vs. 8.7% (2018)
- **Very High**: 2.9% (2023) vs. 3.5% (2018)
Changes Since Pandemic

Congregation Has Identified and Embraced New Ministry Opportunities
- Strongly Agree: 35.8%
- Agree: 30.9%
- Somewhat Agree: 23.2%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 16.4%
- Somewhat Disagree: 11.7%
- Disagree: 4.8%
- Strongly Disagree: 3.1%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 3.3%

Congregation Thinking in New Ways About Future Mission and Direction
- Strongly Agree: 35.5%
- Agree: 30.9%
- Somewhat Agree: 23.2%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 16.4%
- Somewhat Disagree: 11.7%
- Disagree: 4.4%
- Strongly Disagree: 1.8%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 3.3%

Congregation Emerging Stronger From Pandemic
- Strongly Agree: 28.7%
- Agree: 23.8%
- Somewhat Agree: 20.0%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 13.4%
- Somewhat Disagree: 5.7%
- Disagree: 5.2%
- Strongly Disagree: 3.3%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 3.3%
What is Your Current Outlook on this Congregation’s Future?

- Very Positive: 30.7%
- Somewhat Positive: 43.0%
- Neither Positive nor Negative: 11.0%
- Somewhat Negative: 14.3%
- Very Negative: 0.9%
Additional Information and Resources

Faith Communities Today

- Partners
- News
- 2020 Report

Hartford Institute for Religion Research

The Association of Religion Data Archives (The ARDA)