

Guide to Yearbook Reporting Categories: Total Church Participants

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Church membership is changing; in fact, it has been shifting for some time. As data collectors and researchers, it is incumbent upon the Research and Data Team to provide space for these changes to be documented and measured in the most accurate manner possible. To that end, in 2016 we introduced a new category for annual church Yearbook reporting that will assist in this documentation and tracking process.

Total Church Participants

The total number of individuals, of any age, who participated regularly in worship, programs, or other church activities or groups within the past year; includes both active members and non-members

This category of reporting is different than both Total Membership and Average Weekly Worship Attendance. Total Membership has typically been used to report the number of individuals who hold a more formal, expressed level of engagement in a congregation. Average Weekly Attendance has historically reported the average weekly number of individuals who attend worship services only.

With many congregations creating alternative models of participation and some redefining the historical meaning and criteria for membership, as well as individuals and families opting to participate in a diverse array of programs with varying frequency, the category of Total Church Participants seeks to capture the number of all regular participants in the life of a congregation, *active members and active non-members included*.

What should be included in this category?

All individuals (members and active non-members) who participate in your congregation on a regular basis should be included in this figure. (You are free to define what is meant by “regular”—this varies by context.) The total should include:

- Regular participants in any of your church’s worship services (regardless of whether they are members.

- Regular participants, both members and active non-members combined, in any programs or activities of your congregation (such as affinity groups, committees/teams, Bible studies, Sunday School or Christian Education/Faith Formation programs, etc.).
- Individuals who look to the church and its minister(s) for current and future pastoral needs (such as hospital and nursing home visitations, funerals, weddings, and baptisms)

Do not count people twice—if a person is a regular worship attender and a regular Bible study attender, only count them once.

What should not be included in this category?

Do not include individuals in the wider community (beyond regular church participants) who have been impacted by your church through attending church-sponsored community events or through having been served by the church's outreach ministries. You should report the number of wider community individuals impacted by your church in the **Community Engagement** category (formerly known in 2015 as the Community Participation category). *Likewise, those counted in the Community Engagement category should not be included in the Total Church Participants category.*

What if Total Church Participants is the same as the Average Weekly Attendance and/or Total Membership category?

That's fine! Small congregations may have similar (or the same) numbers for multiple categories. Just try to report these numbers as accurately as you can (knowing that even the most scrutinized numbers may not be completely accurate). For some churches, this number might also be larger than your membership total alone because it includes both active members and active non-members.

To summarize, the **Total Church Participants** category seeks to more accurately reflect the number of individuals who regularly participate in the internal life of your congregation (remembering that the *Community Engagement* category seeks to reflect those who have participated in activities beyond those specifically designed for church participants).

Additional Questions?

We know that these categories don't make it any easier to report annual data, but we do hope that this is a helpful addition for many UCC congregations. If you have questions about this category, please contact the Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization (MESA), Research and Data Unit by emailing yearbook@ucc.org. For additional resources such as a Church Field Guide with detailed category definitions for Yearbook reporting, as well as instructions for reporting through UCC Database and Directories, please visit [our research](#)

[page](#). For all other questions regarding Yearbook reporting, contact your Conference or Association office.

Helpful Hints for Reporting

First, **try not to count people twice**. This means that no one in the Community Engagement category should be reported in the Total Church Participants category, and vice versa. In addition, do not count an individual twice in the same reporting category. If someone who received food from your food pantry also regularly attends AA meetings in the building, that individual should only be counted once in the Community Engagement category.

Also, if programs or activities were done in partnership with other congregations or agencies, it's ok to count the total number of individuals as being served by your congregation for the Community Engagement category. The question to ask when considering your congregation's Community Engagement total is this: ***Was this experience of community engagement something of which you perceive individuals were aware—at some level—that their lives were touched by this church (its facilities, outreach, or programs) in a meaningful way, big or small, directly or indirectly?***

Guide for New Yearbook Reporting Categories: Total Church Participants and Community Engagement

The **Total Church Participants** category might include the following (*those who actively participated in ministries of your congregation in the last year*):

- People who attended worship services regularly (both members and non-members)
- Regular participants in any on-going programs or activities of your congregation including:
 - Affinity groups (women's groups, youth/young adult groups, parenting groups, men's groups, singles' groups, etc.)
 - Other small groups and Bible studies
 - Committees, teams, or councils
 - Sunday School or Christian Education/Faith Formation programs
 - Regular weeknight programs for families
 - Choir/music program participants
- Regular volunteers or leaders of specific events, fundraisers, or programs including:
 - Sunday School teachers and volunteer nursery attendants

- Volunteers to assist with coordination of annual events such as a fall harvest festival, “trunk or treat” event, chili cook-off, or community pancake breakfast
- Volunteers for the coordination of the annual stewardship campaign
- Individuals who look to the church and its minister(s) for current and future pastoral needs (such as hospital and nursing home visitations, funerals, weddings, and baptisms)
 - Members and non-members who reside in nursing homes and cannot attend worship or events but are connected with the church
 - Families related with the congregation (may or may not be members) who rely on the church as their main pastoral support for times of joy and crisis (hospital visits, hosting and performing weddings, and hosting and performing funerals)

Remember: Total Church Participants = Active Members + Active Non-Members

The **Community Engagement** category might include the following (*those who were served/impacted by your congregation in the last year*):

- People (adults and children) served by the daycare center in your church building (whether owned by the congregation or just renting building space)
- People (children and youth) who attended your church’s Vacation Bible School
- People served at a homeless shelter or food pantry hosted in your church building
- People who attend scout troops, AA meetings, or other social or civic programs on a regular basis
- People who receive scarves, blankets, prayer shawls, or other items crafted by church fellowships or guilds
- People who benefit from volunteer ministries of your congregation within nursing homes, assisted living facilities, children’s homes, etc.
- Children and youth who benefit from after-school programs at your church
- People who attend interfaith or special holiday services hosted by your congregation
- People who are served by the church through pre-marital counseling and/or single-event (one time only) ceremonies such as weddings and funerals (who are non-members with no connection to the congregation)
- People who attend (but did not volunteer to coordinate/lead) community-wide events hosted by your church
- People who attend (but did not volunteer to coordinate/lead) fundraising events such as craft/gift fairs, yard sales, dinners, concerts, car washes, etc. from the wider community

Remember: Use the guiding question in the Helpful Hints for Reporting section to discern which efforts are counted in this category.