

New Congregational Development in an Age of Narrow-Casting

Marjorie H. Royle, Ph.D.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ecumenical Partners in Outreach surveyed 260 ministries started since 2006 from six old-line denominations in order to obtain an accurate description of new ministries in the 21st Century and to learn what factors might be important in helping them grow in attendance, and reach out to young adults and the unchurched. To help capture the variety of new ministries, three major types were studied, new congregations developed using a traditional model, ones developed using alternative models and aimed at seekers, and those developed among new immigrant communities. Major findings include:

- New congregations differ from established ones, with younger members and worship blending traditional and alternative practices. Pastors spend more time in outreach and promoting a vision and less in pastoral care than do pastors of established congregations.
- New congregations vary widely among themselves. Three major types (72% of the total number) include new congregations that replicate established ones, alternative congregations that use different models, such as seeker-oriented, emerging worship, and small-group relational, and congregations of recent immigrants from around the world.
- Overall, growth of new congregations is slow, with many taking 8 to 10 years to grow to a viable size, and 30% having not increased attendance in the last two years.
- Most factors that predicted new congregational growth in the past no longer do so, do so only weakly, or do so only among more traditional congregations.
- Use of the Internet helps congregations grow and reach out to young adults and the unchurched, regardless of ministry type. Use of social media is particularly important in reaching young adults and the unchurched.
- Younger pastors are more likely to attract young adults. Previous pastoral experience generally is not related to growth in attendance and is negatively related to attracting the young or unchurched.
- Traditional congregations appeal to traditional churchgoers and grow more quickly. Alternative and new immigrant congregations minister to more young adults and unchurched people.
- Traditional congregations grow better when they emphasize programs, activities to make themselves know in the community, and follow-up of guests.
- Alternative congregations grow better when they emphasize their differences from traditional and particularly conservative churches by involving new people in activities of interest to them so they get to know the group before inviting them to worship.
- New immigrant congregations grow better when they are involved and well-known in the immigrant communities, and when they receive support from sponsoring congregations.
- Different types of new ministries require different skills and temperaments of their leaders.
- Because the correlates of growth differ among ministry types, developing and promoting a vision for the type of ministry and target group helps the congregation use their efforts in the most important ways to attract and involve people.

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The 21st Century in the United States and Canada might be described as the Century of Choices. Technology and the Internet have multiplied our options. From less than a half dozen television channels, we can now choose from hundreds, or watch television on our computers or hand-held devices. We can choose our news according to our political beliefs, or join “RSS feeds” that allow us to keep up on just the topics that interest us. We can shop at the mall, a small local business, or the Internet. Grocery stores stock an enormous variety of items, and their personal shoppers will fill an order and deliver it to our doorstep. The media and the advertising industry now refer to this change as “narrow-casting,” addressing many small niche markets rather than “broadcasting,” or aiming at one big market.

Is it no wonder then that variety and choice are key concepts in the development of new ministries in this age of narrowcasting? The traditional “parachute drop” method of development in which a church planter is sent by a denomination into a new suburb with 3 to 5 years of funding and expected to start a new church in that time is no longer the method of choice. Instead, new church developers are using an array of different models, methods, and funding sources to reach new people. Even the name has changed. While denominations started new churches in the past, now they may start a worshipping community or even a ministry.

In 2012, the Ecumenical Partners in Outreach, a group of old-line denominations in the US and Canada that cooperate on evangelism activities, and six of its member denominations – the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (DOC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the United Church of Canada (UCCan) and the United Church of Christ (UCC) -- joined with the Center for Progressive Renewal to conduct a major two-year study of recent new ministries in their denominations. The purposes were two-fold: First to obtain an accurate description of church planting at present, and second, to identify some factors related to successful plants in the different kinds of new congregations. This study represents the only major effort to examine new congregations since a similar effort ten years ago¹. Details of the study methods and procedures are provided in Appendix A.

Describing New Ministries in the 21st Century

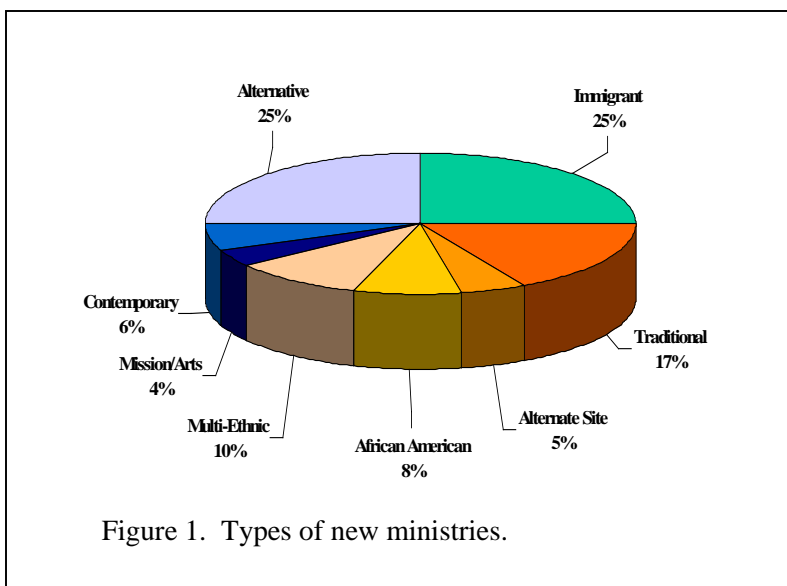
The first important question in examining new congregations and new ministries in the 21st Century is “what is happening?” What do these new efforts look like and how do they differ from each other, from denomination to denomination, and from existing congregations?

¹ Wood, H. Stanley (Ed.). *Extraordinary Leaders in Extraordinary Times: Unadorned Clay Pot Messengers, Volume 1*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Variety

The first impression one gets from a study of new ministries is the enormous variety. New ministries come in many types and differ on many dimensions. Some look like existing churches, while others push the definitions of church and worship, meeting in warehouses or even on the internet, or having simple prayers with the homeless or intellectually challenged. Nearly a quarter of the new ministries have no members over 65, over 10% have half their members over 65. Nearly half have no openly lesbian or gay members, in others the majority are lesbian or gay. Worship is held in the languages of every continent except Antarctica. In 15%, the congregation itself is a rainbow blend of people from different races and ethnicities.

In spite of this diversity, the 260 new congregations or ministries described in this study can be grouped into three main types and five additional subtypes, as seen in Figure 1. In past years, the common model for starting new congregations was to replicate existing congregations in growing, new areas. In this study, these congregations are referred to as **traditional**, although they might be more accurately described as white congregations using a traditional model with somewhat more modern music and informal practices than existing congregations. They describe their worship as traditional or blended in style, they feature programs for all ages, and are often in growing areas. Members are younger, on the average, than those in existing congregations. Far from being the norm, however, this group represents only 17% of the congregations surveyed, in orange in Figure 1.



Two variations on the traditional model were identified. The first was **alternate sites** of existing congregations that were essentially replications of those congregations in a new location, representing 5% of the congregations.² The second was new African-American congregations with **traditional African-American** church style, comprising 8% of the total group. These were considered a separate subgroup because in worship style and other characteristics they differ considerably from traditional white congregations. They include both new plants in urban areas and small congregations in small towns, often pastored by a non-seminary trained leader.

The second major type is congregations of **new immigrants**, including one quarter of the new congregations in the study and 31% of all the new congregations in the Ecumenical Partner

² If the new congregation used an alternative model or style of worship and programming to attract seekers or younger people, it was included as an alternative congregation, rather than an alternate site congregation.

denominations. While some, such as Chinese congregations, are new congregations that are an outgrowth of older Chinese congregations, others such as the Haitian, African and many Latino congregations include many who have arrived in the US recently. Some may have been members of churches of their denomination in their home countries, while others, particularly Latino/as come from Roman Catholic backgrounds. These congregations sometimes are mission projects of existing congregations, meeting in their building on Sunday afternoons. Some pastors are called up from within the congregation rather than through a search or other assignment and may receive seminary training after they are called, while others have been trained as pastors in their home country. Some organize themselves around a pastor and his or her family and then approach the denomination for recognition. Often these congregations bring styles of worship and organization from their home countries.

The third major type of new congregations is **alternative** congregations, comprising 25% of the total congregations surveyed. This type is the most varied, with its defining characteristic being that it is doing something different. It includes congregations that describe their models as seeker-oriented, relational, or Fresh Expressions³ or their worship as Emerging Church.⁴ Worship often is informal and not necessarily held in a sanctuary or on Sunday morning. Younger adults and those not attracted to traditional churches and worship are a target group.

Congregations with **contemporary** worship comprise an additional subtype of alternative ministry, and represent another 6% of the sample. These often begin as alternative worship communities of existing churches, providing a different style of worship to attract new, younger people. Their contemporary worship and emphasis on small group Bible study give them a style closer to mega-churches than to the other alternative types.

Four percent of all the reporting congregations use an affinity or **missional** model of ministry, attracting people around music and the arts, yoga, or missional activities to create a worshiping community. They include several prison congregations.

A final 10% of the congregations are **multi-ethnic**, with at least 20% of their attendees coming from a different racial/ethnic group than the majority, with some being a blend of more than two racial/ethnic groups. In most, this racial/ethnic diversity is part of their identity. Like their racial/ethnic blend, their worship style and other characteristics seem to be a blend of other types, particularly African-American congregations.

Results for each survey question are provided in Appendix B both for the sample as a whole and for the three major types, **traditional**, **alternative**, and **new immigrant**.

³ Fresh Expressions are congregations within denominations that are intentionally designed to reach out to unchurched by listening to them and entering into their culture, involving them in mission, making disciples and forming a new congregation. The movement began in Great Britain.

⁴ Emerging Church worship often includes elements of both ancient and modern, formal and informal, to speak to post-modern unchurched people with the Gospel.

Size

Most new congregations are small and slow-growing. In 2012, the average weekly attendance for all new congregations was 55, with an average of 8 guests. The average attendance at church activities was 38. However, some of these congregations had begun to gather people in 2000 while others had just started in 2013. When congregations in their first few years were examined, the average attendance was 25 in the first year, 30 in the second year and 39 in the third year.

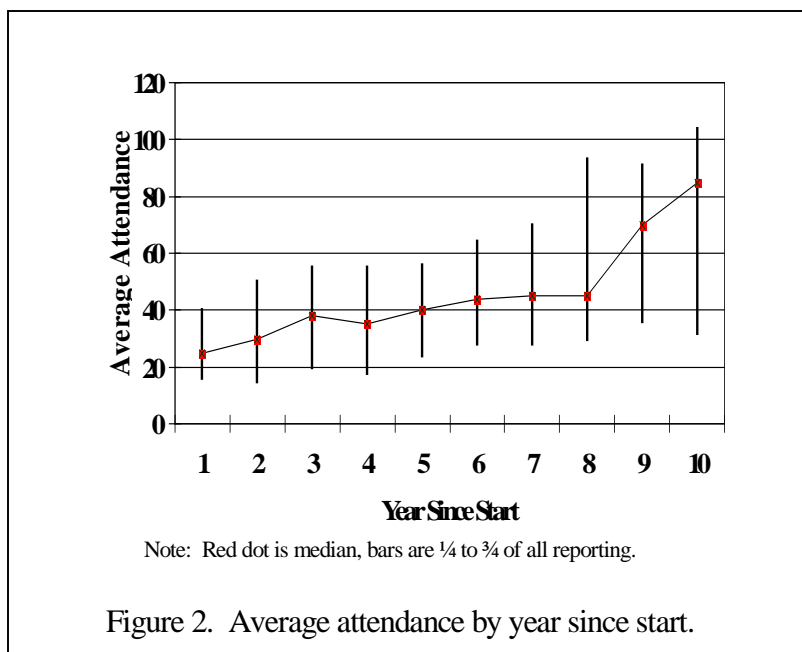


Figure 2. Average attendance by year since start.

Figure 2 shows growth in average attendance over time. The bars represent the range of the middle 50%, with the bottom end of the line indicating the 25th percentile and the top end the 75th percentile. It shows that both the average attendance and the range of congregational sizes increase over time, as some grow considerably while others grow very little.⁵

One reason that growth is slow is that many congregations did not grow at all or decreased in attendance (see Figure 3). From 2010 to 2012, nearly a third of the congregations showed no growth in attendance. When growth in attendance from the year when the congregation began to hold worship services

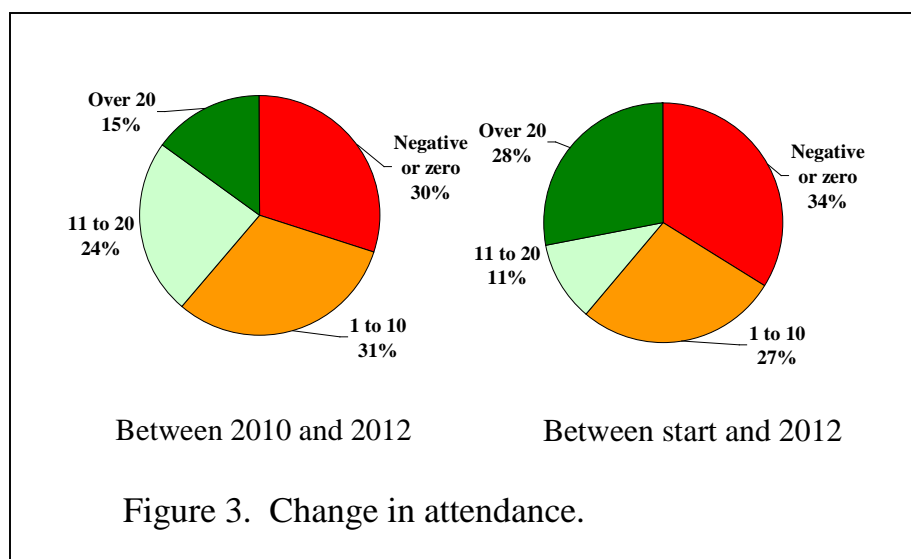


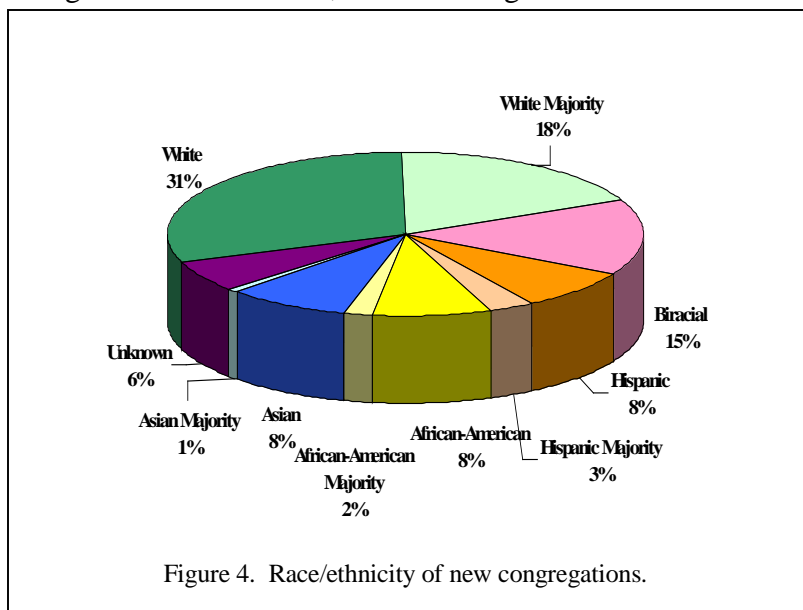
Figure 3. Change in attendance.

⁵ One problem with this analysis is that congregations that will close after a few years are included in early years but not later ones. This results in apparent growth as the congregations that survive are the larger ones and dropping the smallest congregations would increase the average size even if the larger congregations did not grow. However, when only those congregations with attendance data for four or more years were included, they continued to grow at a slow rate.

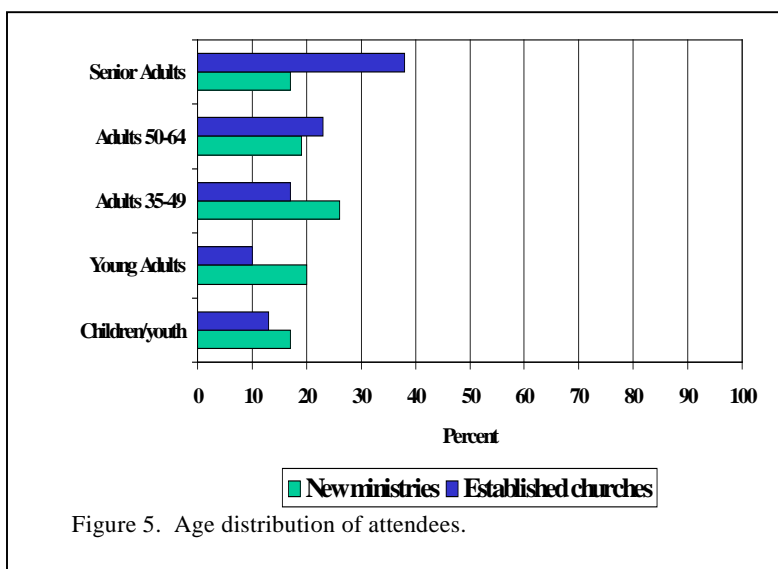
to 2012 (including congregations that had been organized six or more years previously as well as ones organized in 2011) was examined, a third had not grown, although more congregations, over a quarter, had grown by more than 20 members. Because congregations began at different times, some of the churches that had not grown had not been in existence for very long. In comparison, New congregations were much more likely to grow than existing ones. Among existing congregations in these denominations, 58% had zero growth or declined in attendance, 25% had grown from 1 to 10, 8% had grown from 11 to 20, and 9% had grown more than 20 in a two-year period.

Other Demographic Characteristics

New congregations differ in their racial/ethnic composition, as can be seen in Figure 4. Congregations with 95% or more of one ethnic group were labeled as that group. Those that had between 80 and 95% of their members from one group were labeled as “majority” of that group. Those with less than 80% of any one group were labeled as biracial or multiracial. Of all the new congregations reporting, about half were white with the other half representing many different racial and ethnic groups, with new immigrants from a variety of countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. This racial/ethnic diversity is much greater than that of the denominations as a whole, in which approximately 90% are white.⁶



New congregations also differ in the age of their members, as can be seen in Figure 5. Unlike established congregations, with a majority of older members, new congregations attract younger members. For example, new congregations have twice the



⁶ In the Faith Communities Today 2010 survey of US religious bodies (FACT2010), 90% of the congregations that participated from these denominations were white or majority white. All statistics for existing congregations cited in this report are taken from an analysis of FACT2010 responses from five of these six denominations (minus the UCCanada). Further information about the FACT2010 project can be found at <http://faithcommunitiestoday.org>.

percentage of young adults (20%) as do established churches. In particular, new immigrant congregations have a much smaller percentage of senior adults (7%) and larger proportion of children and youth (26%). Alternative congregations have the highest percentage of young adults ages 18 to 34 (26%), while traditional congregations have the highest percentage of senior adults (38%) and lowest of children and youth (9%).

New congregations also differ in other characteristics of their attendees, as can be seen in Figure 6. On average, 25% of their attendees are formerly unchurched, and close to 20% are former Roman Catholics. Latino/a congregations, for instance, reported that a large number of their attendees were Roman Catholic in background (39%) but currently unchurched, and were included in both these categories. They also have about half as many college graduates (19%) as other new congregations. Life-long members of the denomination are more often found in traditional congregations (41%). When compared to established congregations, new ones have about the same number of college graduates and lifelong members, but more people from the immediate community.

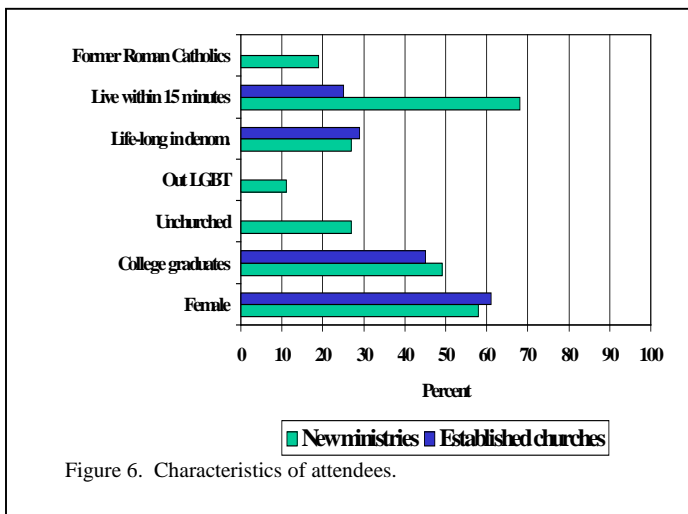


Figure 6. Characteristics of attendees.

Development of New Ministries in the 21st Century

Beginnings

Congregations begin in different ways. In this sample, about a third of the congregations were started by the denomination as part of a plan, a third were started by initiatives from a group of laity in the area, 22% were initiated by a pastor who felt called to that ministry, and 17% were begun by a sponsoring congregation.

Denominations differ significantly in how new congregations were started, as can be seen in Figure 7. In the DOC, all congregations in the sample were started either by the pastor or a group of laity. In the PCUSA, the RCA, and the United Church of Canada, the denomination or a judicatory were more likely to start new ministries, while in the UCC, pastor-initiated efforts were the most common method. The

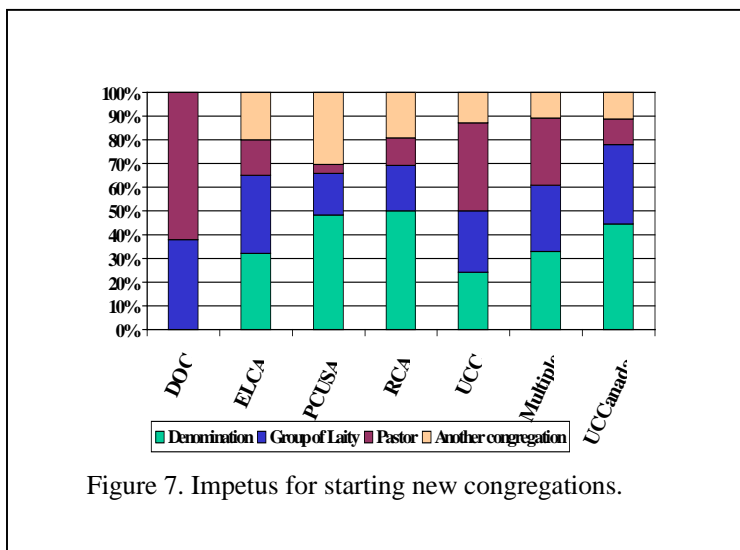


Figure 7. Impetus for starting new congregations.

PCUSA had the highest proportion of the denominations of congregations starting new congregations.

Different types of new congregations also had different beginnings, with about half of traditional congregations begun by laity, a pastor more likely to initiate an alternative congregation than other types, and new immigrant congregations less likely to be started by another congregation.

The most frequently selected way that the target area was chosen was that the church planter felt called to that area or ministry, chosen by 42% of respondents. Next most common was some study of demographics, whether extensive analysis by a regional body (26%), preliminary local data-gathering (36%), or a community canvas (10%).

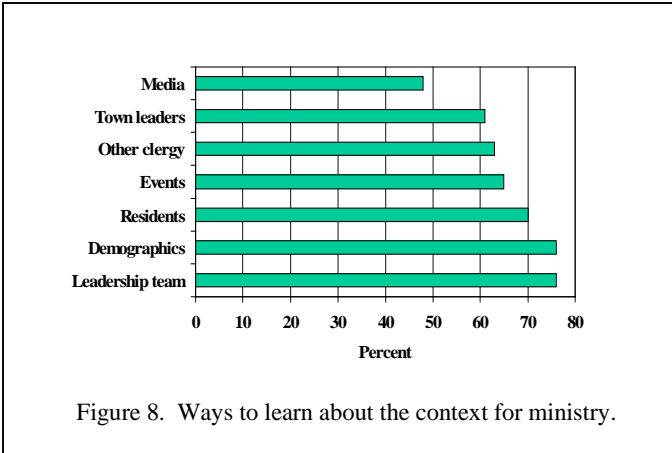


Figure 8. Ways to learn about the context for ministry.

Context

Once the target area was chosen, church planters used a variety of ways to learn about the context, with the average planter using five out of the seven suggested ways, as can be seen in Figure 8. When asked what was most useful, respondents mentioned most of these methods. By far the most useful method cited was discussions with community residents in informal settings. Among pastors starting alternative congregations, study of community media such as town websites, newspapers or bulletin boards was rated as highly as the others. Use of these ways to study the context varied by denomination, with PCUSA congregations using the most ways and DOC congregations using the least.

Models

About half the respondents said that they used one or more models to develop their congregation, with many choosing several models. These responses were used in developing the ministry types described earlier.

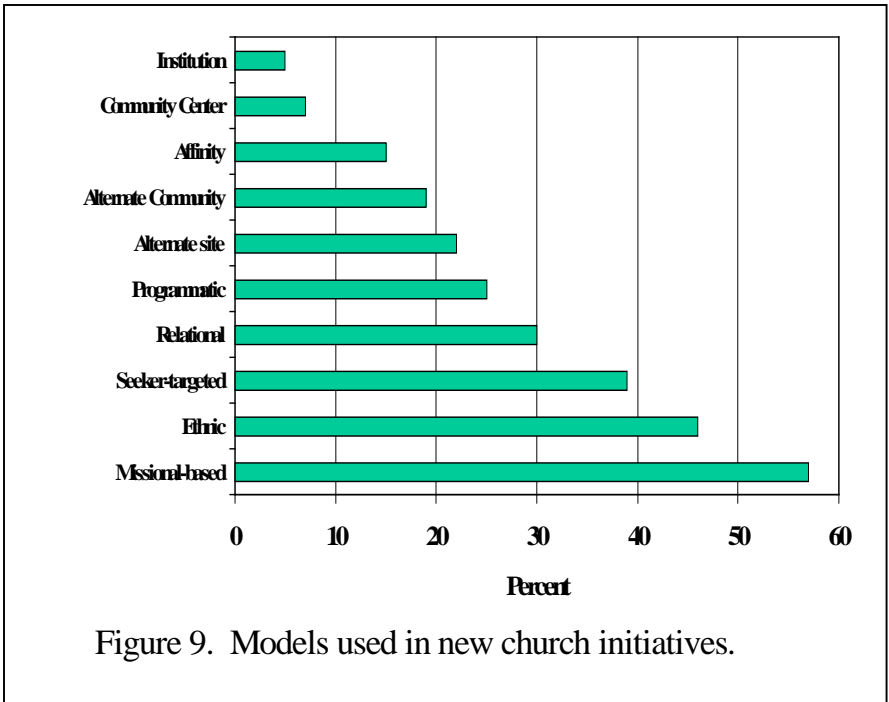


Figure 9. Models used in new church initiatives.

Strategic Initiatives

Worship.

Crafting worship that is meaningful to the people you want to attract is one of the chief tasks for a pastor of a new congregation. To do this, pastors use a variety of styles, shown in Figure 10. Because respondents' descriptions of their worship styles were used to help create ministry types, in general, worship styles differed significantly by ministry type. However, new congregations were equally likely to describe their worship as seeker-oriented, fellowship oriented (using small groups) and including weekly communion, regardless of ministry type.

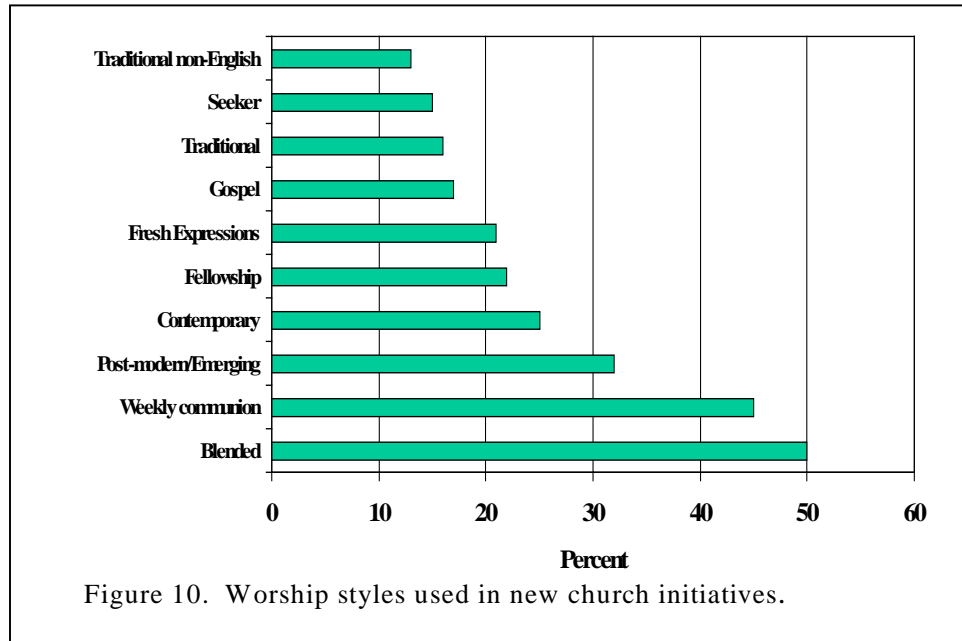


Figure 10. Worship styles used in new church initiatives.

Not surprisingly, worship style also differed by denomination. The ELCA was highest in worship that is traditional in a language and culture other than English, the RCA and PCUSA were highest in contemporary worship, the RCA, UCC and UCCanada were highest in seeker-oriented, the UCC, multi-denominational, and UCCanada were highest in Post-modern or Emerging Church, and the UCCanada was highest in Fresh Expressions. The ELCA was highest in weekly Eucharist or communion, with 62% celebrating it weekly, followed by the UCC at 56% and the DOC at 53%⁷. In the RCA, only 5% celebrate weekly communion, while no church that responded in the UCCanada celebrates communion each week.

The norm for worship in new congregations is one worship service held weekly (65%), somewhat less than for established congregations (72%).⁸ However, 3% of these new congregations hold worship less frequently, once or twice a month. The remaining 32% hold worship more frequently, including a weekday Bible study and prayer meeting, or an additional evening service, or additional worship services in homes or other locations to attract new people. Also, multiple worship services per week are more common in **new immigrant** congregations (36%) than in others.

⁷ Because weekly communion is a hallmark of worship in existing DOC congregations, this response rate is surprisingly low. This may be due to pastors of people new to the DOC gradually introducing them to weekly communion or it may be an artifact of the way the question was asked, coming at the end of a list of different worship styles, so some pastors may have selected one style and then continued to the next question. If that is the case, the percentages celebrating weekly communion may underestimate the actual percentages in all the denominations.

⁸ See *Facts on Worship* at <http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/report-facts-on-worship>

Worship in new congregations occurs at a variety of times and in a variety of places, as can be seen in Figures 11 and 12. Whereas almost all established churches in these denominations have services on Sunday morning, only 58% of new congregations do. Significant differences occur by type of ministry, with **traditional** much more likely to occur on Sunday morning (79%) and **alternative** at other times (43% on Sunday morning). **New immigrant** churches are about as likely to have worship on Sunday afternoon as Sunday morning, largely because they are also more likely to worship in a sanctuary of another congregation.

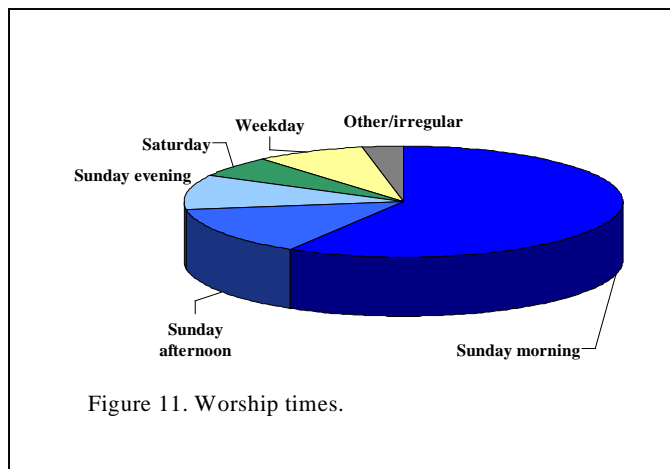


Figure 11. Worship times.

The situation is similar with the location of worship. While most established congregations hold worship in their sanctuary, with occasional services held in a chapel or informal services held in a fellowship hall, new congregations hold worship in many different venues. Less than half (46%) hold their major service in a sanctuary, their own or a rented or shared church building. About 10% each use another room in a church building, such as a fellowship hall, or a room in a community center or similar building, or in people's homes. While 52% of **traditional** new congregations worship in a sanctuary, only 21% of **alternative** congregations do, with equal numbers meeting in a community facility, and 16% meeting in homes. Two thirds of **new immigrant** congregations worship in a sanctuary and 13% meet in another room in a church.

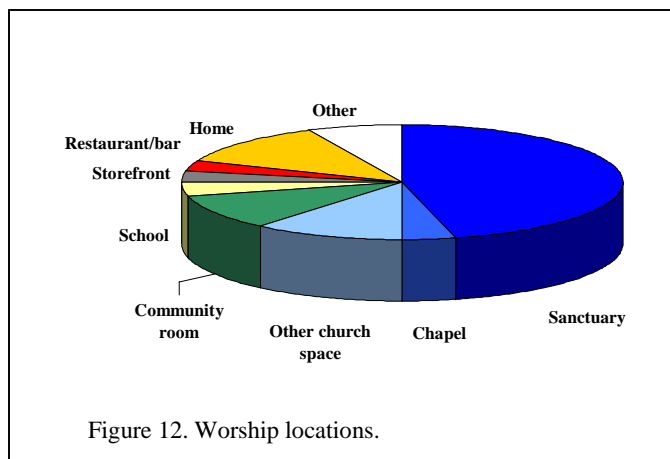
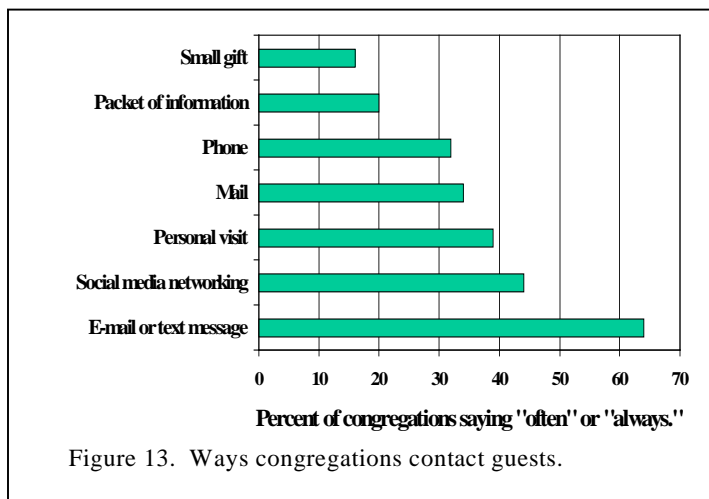


Figure 12. Worship locations.

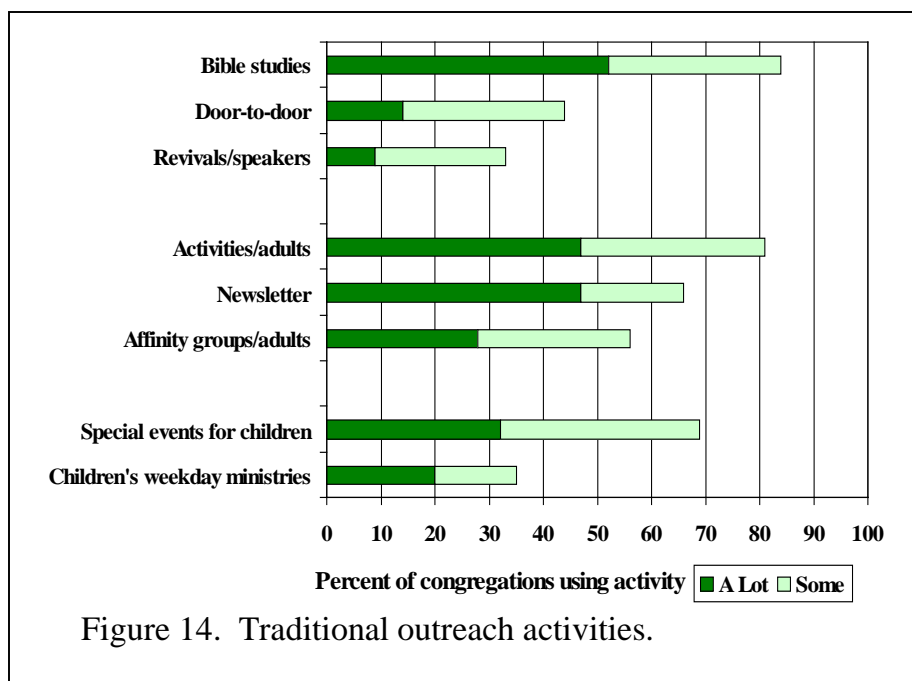
Evangelism and Outreach.

Respondents reported using a variety of ways to contact people who attend worship or other activities, including those displayed in Figure 13. Most common by far is email or text-messages, with social media networking next. Once again, **alternative** ministries are more likely to use these methods (74% and 61%), and **new immigrant** ministries less likely (54% and 20%), although differences are not statistically significant, and more than half of **new immigrant** ministries use email or text messaging. **New immigrant** ministries are more likely than others to follow-up by phone (67%) or a personal visit (52%), which may reflect less use of the internet by their parishioners. **Traditional** congregations continue to follow-up using mail (71%), although they, too, use email (69%).

These activities represent a shift from what existing congregations do. When existing congregations were asked whether they used these methods to follow-up on guests in a yes/no format, 68% reported using mail and 34% used email or text messages. In new congregations, 50% reported using mail and 85% reported using email or text messages at least “sometimes.” In addition, for all comparable items except mail, the percentage of new congregations using them to follow-up guests is much higher, e.g., 33% of existing churches made personal visits, 67% of new congregations did so at least “sometimes.”⁹



Programming.



The many types of evangelism activities were grouped into six areas – programs for children, programs for adults, traditional evangelism efforts, community awareness, community presence, and internet-based activities. Respondents reported using most of them as can be seen in Figures 14 through 16.

Programs for children and adults, and traditional efforts such as Bible studies in

homes or community settings are still components of evangelistic efforts in these new congregations, although door-to-door visitation and revivals or special speakers are not used very much (see Figure 14). **New immigrant** congregations are more likely to offer programs for children and traditional evangelism efforts than are other congregations, and **alternative** congregations are less likely to offer children’s programs.

⁹ Some of the differences between new and existing congregations in follow-up methods likely is due to the different ways the questions were asked. Also, existing congregations probably have increased their use of email and social media networking since 2010, which also would decrease the differences from new congregations.

New congregations also are active both in getting their name and story out in the community through a variety of means and, even more, in getting themselves out, by attending community events, talking with people in community settings, and participating in service projects (see Figure 15). Few use the radio or TV (1% broadcast worship), although some (3% regularly and 21% at times) take advantage of opportunities to be interviewed. Also, not very many (11%) regularly use the town website to promote their activities.

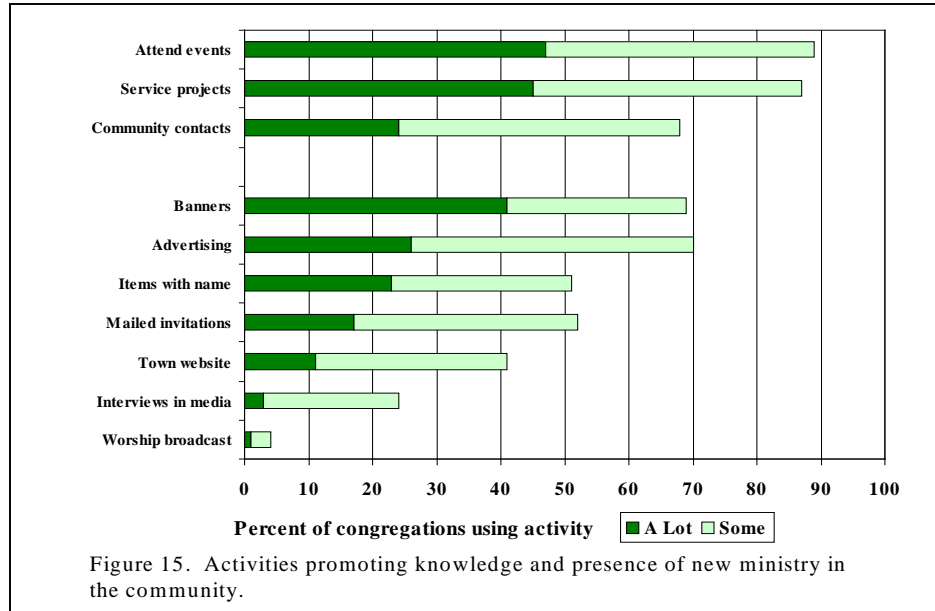


Figure 15. Activities promoting knowledge and presence of new ministry in the community.

Traditional congregations are most likely to use these vehicles to publicize themselves in the community, while **new immigrant** congregations are least likely. However, all types of new congregations are about equally likely to be involved in their communities.

Most new congregations have a significant on-line presence, as can be seen in Figure 16. Most congregations (85%) have a website and nearly as many (77%) use Facebook or other social media sites as well as social media advertising (73%), at least somewhat. Nearly half (48%) use blogs to some extent. Fewer,

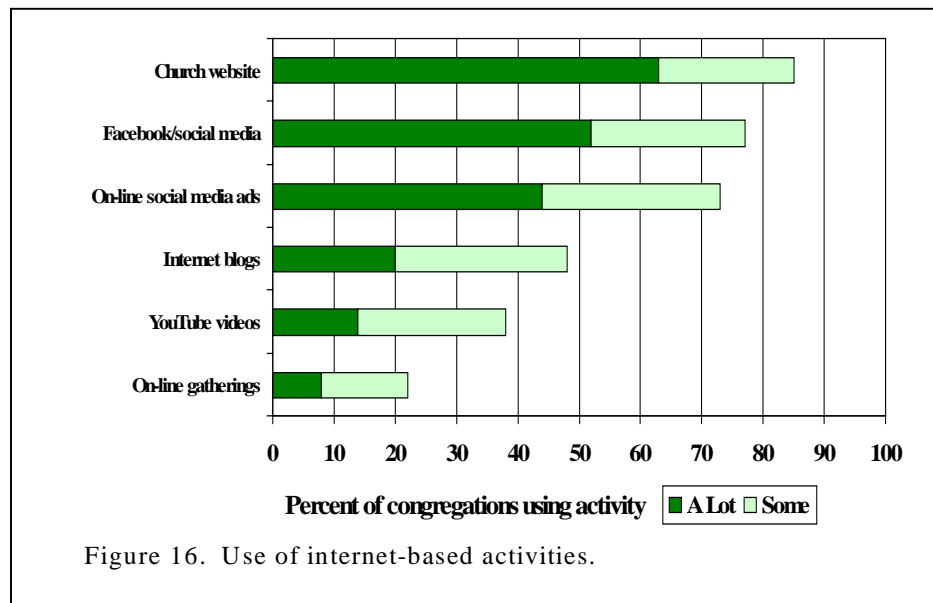


Figure 16. Use of internet-based activities.

although still a significant number, use YouTube videos (38%) or host on-line Bible studies, prayer groups, or provide worship on line (22%). This on-line presence is considerably larger than that for existing congregations. In 2010, 71% of existing congregations reported having a website, 12% had blogs, 38% used Facebook and 8% had podcasts.

As might be expected, use of the Internet also varies by type of ministry, with **alternative** congregations using them the most and **new immigrant** congregations the least. However, 59% of **new immigrant** congregations have a website, 33% use blogs, 56% Facebook, and 28% YouTube. Slightly more of these congregations (26%) host gatherings on-line. Just as the Internet has become a means of keeping in touch with family and friends in their home countries, it is also a vehicle for ministry here and now.

Use of Pastor’s Time.

Slightly more than half the pastors (52%) work full time in the new ministry (40 hours/week or more), while another third (32%) work from 20 to 39 hours, and only 16% work less than 20 hours per week. About half (51%) work in another job, spending an average of 28 hours/week in that position. Pastors of **new immigrant** congregations, and to a lesser extent, pastors of **alternative** congregations are more likely to work less than 40 hours per week in the new ministry and have an additional job.

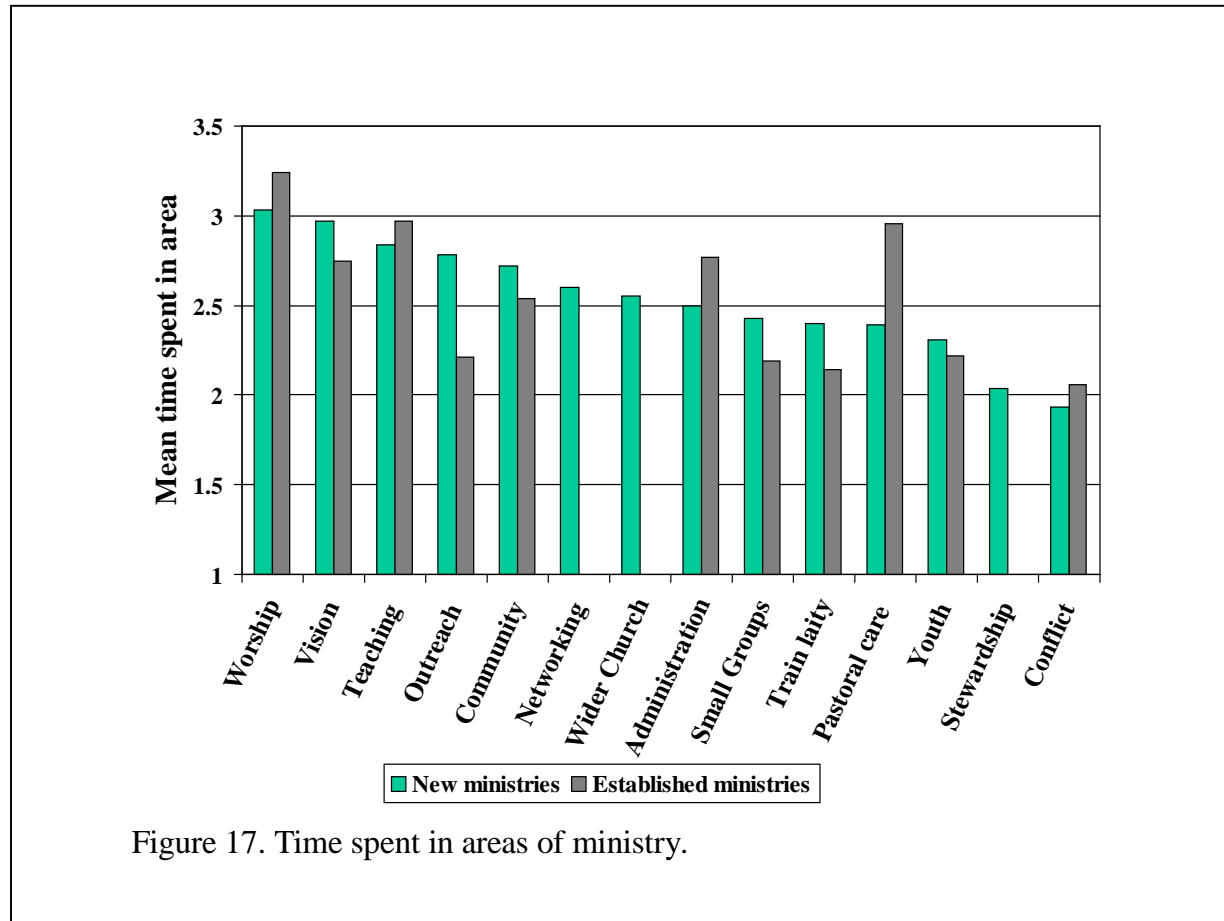


Figure 17. Time spent in areas of ministry.

New church pastors spend their time differently than pastors of established churches,¹⁰ as is illustrated in Figure 17. They spend more time in outreach and somewhat more developing and promoting a vision and purpose, working with small groups and training the laity. They spend somewhat less time in preparing and leading worship, teaching people about the faith and scripture, administration, and pastoral care. One reason that new church pastors spend less time in pastoral care may be because these congregations have fewer aged members who may need visits in their homes, hospitals, or nursing homes.

The amount of time spent in different areas varies with ministry type, as can be seen in Figure 18. Pastors of **new immigrant** congregations reported spending more time in every area, even though the number of hours per week they work is less¹¹. They reported even more time in teaching about the faith, working with small groups, and doing pastoral care, as well as dealing with conflict. Pastors of **traditional** congregations, who work more hours per week on average than those in alternative congregations, reported spending more time in most areas except working with youth and young adults, where pastors of **alternative** congregations spent more time.

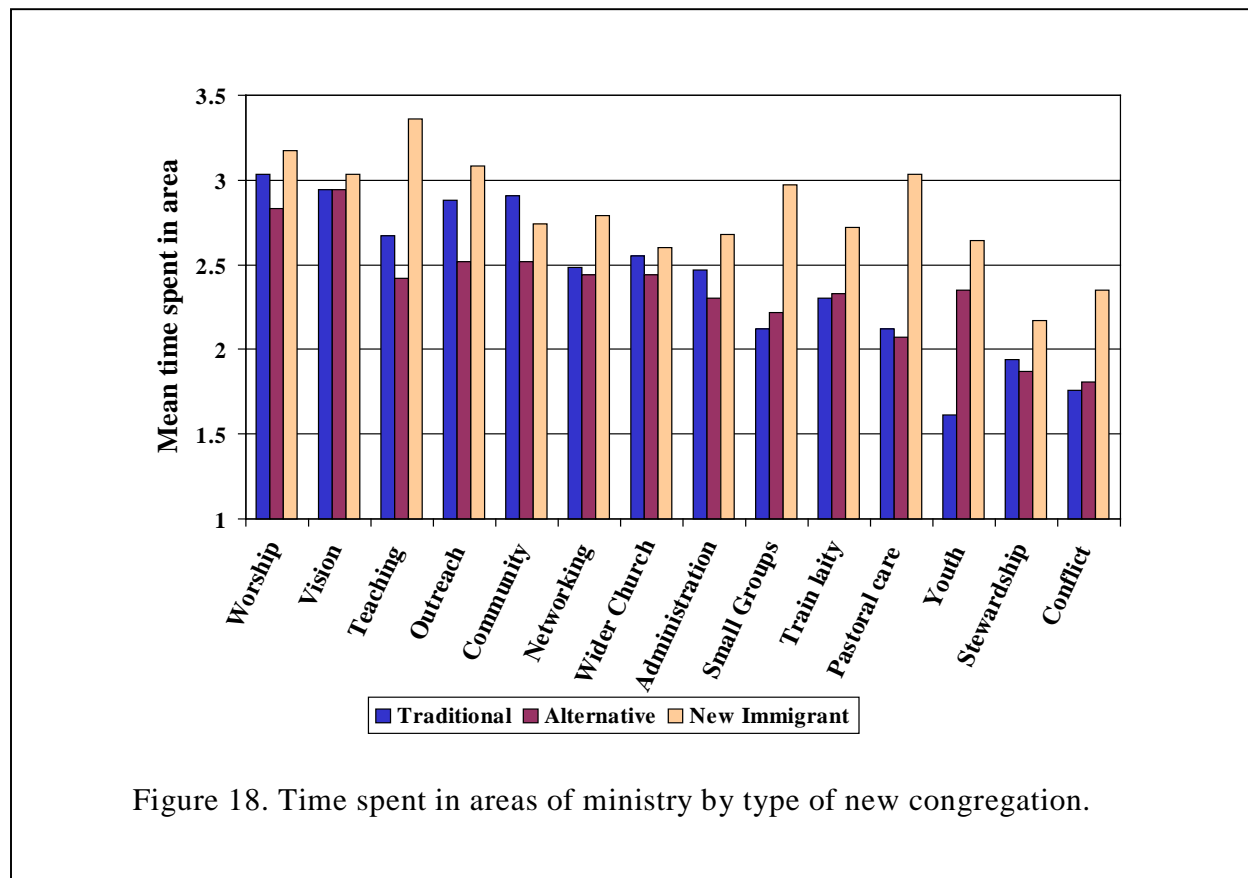


Figure 18. Time spent in areas of ministry by type of new congregation.

¹⁰ Comparison data is from the Faith Communities Today 2010 survey. For each item, pastors indicated whether they spend “very little,” “some,” “quite a bit” or “a great deal” of time in the area. The bars indicate means or averages.

¹¹ This is possible because the questions asked pastors to indicate the time they spend on a 4-point scale from “a little” to “a great deal,” rather than the hours spent in each area.

Pastoral Leadership

Demographics.

Clergy of all ages and ethnicities serve new congregations. The range of ages of new church start pastors is from 22 to 71, with the average age being 45. The biggest age range is in **alternative** churches, where one pastor is 22 and another 71. While the majority are men, 36% are women and one is transgender. None of these characteristics vary significantly by type of congregation, although women are somewhat less likely to be pastors of **new immigrant** congregations. Clergywomen are also more common in the UCC and less common in the DOC and RCA, but differences are not statistically significant.

The largest racial/ethnic group is White, with 67% of the clergy overall. The sample has 13% African-American or African clergy, 11% Asian or Pacific Islander clergy, 10% Latino/a clergy and less than 1% Native American or biracial clergy. Most clergy serve congregations of the same ethnic group or of multi-racial congregations, although five (2%) serve congregations of a different group.

Currently, 81% of pastors are married or remarried, 7% divorced, separated, or widowed, 7% never married and 5% partnered. This has changed little since starting the new ministry when 78% were married 5% divorced, separated, or widowed, 9% were never married, and 8% were partnered. Only 3% of those who were married or partnered are now divorced, and a slightly higher percentage who were single or partnered are now married. Although many have been pastoring new ministries for only a few years, there is no evidence that doing so has put strains on marriages that led to divorce. Most of those who are married or partnered report that their spouse is very supportive (68%) or supportive (24%) of their new ministry.

Experience.

Clergy of all experience levels serve new congregations, as can be seen in Figure 19. Pastoral experience ranges from 0 to 28 years, with a mean of 12 years. Overall, 84% were credentialed with their denomination at or near the time they began serving. Of those who were not credentialed, 13 had no formal theological education. Of these, five are **from new immigrant** congregations, most of whom had years of experience as pastors. Three are lay people serving as the leader in a **missional** congregation, and two are lay people responding to the survey instead of a pastor.

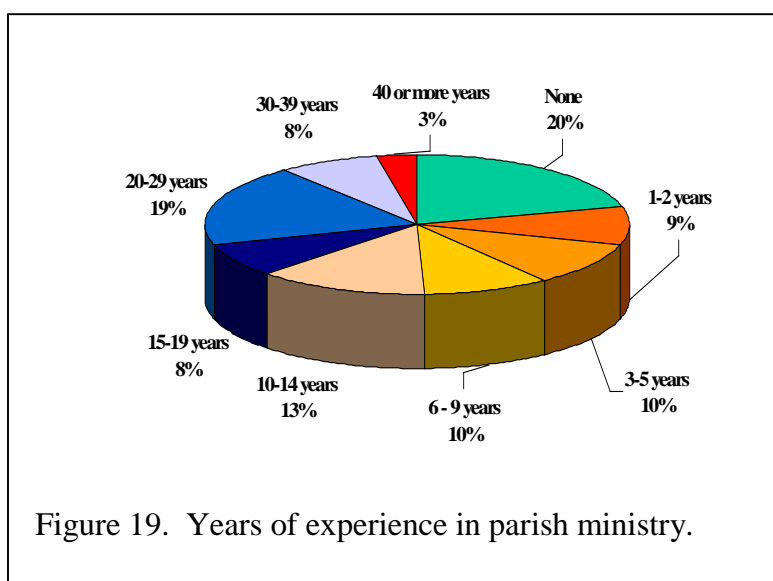


Figure 19. Years of experience in parish ministry.

New church pastors also had a variety of training and new church experience. In the group as a whole, 70% had a Master’s of Divinity degree or the equivalent, 14% had a D.Min. or Ph.D., 4% had a bachelor’s degree and 7% had a certificate from a Bible College or other clergy training program. Theological education varied significantly by type of ministry with **new immigrant** pastors less likely to have had formal theological education than others.

Pastors came to this new ministry by different routes. About half volunteered, about 70% in the DOC and UCC and 30% in the ELCA. Another clergy person recruited 22%, while a judicatory or denominational leader in the ELCA (40%) and PCUSA (24%) recruited them, with much lower percentages in other denominations.

Nearly half (44%) completed a new church planter assessment process, and this percentage rose to over half in the ELCA (53%) and RCA (68%). Only about 20% completed the regular clergy placement process, most commonly in the PCUSA (32%) and ELCA (29%). About 6% were selected by the organizing congregation, either from among themselves or as a clergy they knew from another congregation. Some of these were on staff at a sponsoring congregation and were designated to begin the alternative worship site.

Figure 20 illustrates the pastors’ previous experience relevant to starting new congregations. Most common were attending one or more conferences on starting new ministries, followed by being a lay leader or an associate pastor or other staff in an existing congregation. Pastors of **new immigrant** congregations had more experience as bi-vocational church leaders, as lay leaders or church planting team members in new congregations.

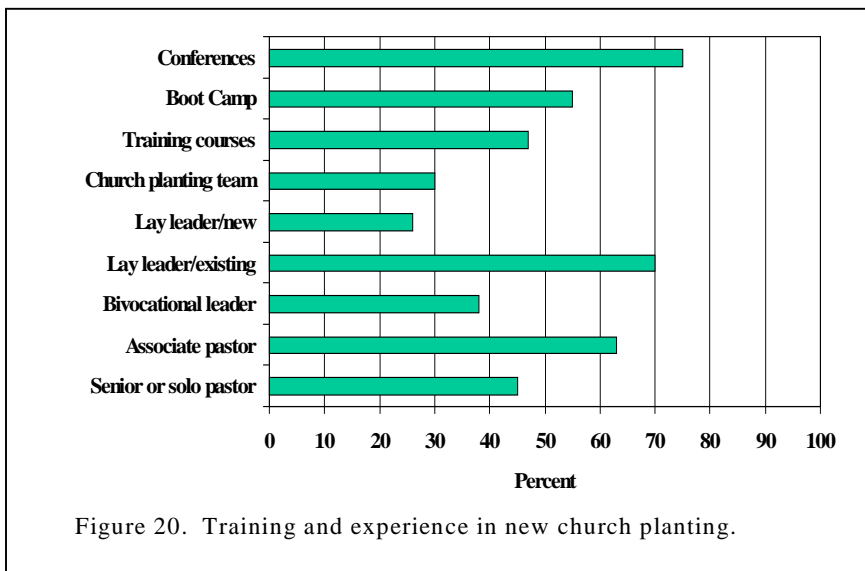


Figure 20. Training and experience in new church planting.

Of the specific new congregational training events (the top three bars), 20% had not received any specific training, 18% had only attended a conference or brief training event, while 26% had had at least two of these opportunities and another 35% had participated in all three. By denomination, clergy in the DOC, RCA and UCC are more likely than others to have attended courses and been to Boot Camp or Church Planting 101.

The majority of new church pastors have access to people who help support and guide them in their ministry. They report that they meet monthly in person, by phone, or email with a mentor (57%), a supervisor (50%) or a group of peers for support (51%). However, 24% did not have monthly contact with any one of these sources of support, while 23% had one of these, 26% had two and 28% had all three. Pastors of **new immigrant** groups were more likely to have

more of these supports and pastors of **traditional** congregations less, although differences were not statistically significant.

The majority of new church pastors have ties to the geographic area or cultural group in which they serve. For example, 56% say that they have “geographic roots that are relatively near the church plant setting,” while 80% say they have “a cultural background that matched the church plant setting,” and 78% say they have “a definite calling from God to this geographic location.” Although responses to similar questions from pastors of existing churches are not available, new church pastors appear to differ from pastors of existing churches in this way.

Temperaments and Skills.

Many new church pastors have many of the temperaments and skills thought to be needed for starting new congregations. Figure 21 is a profile of how new church pastors describe themselves on items measuring energy, introversion/extraversion, and tolerance for disorder.¹² Scores above the midpoint (3 on the scale) indicate that the average pastor agrees with the statement while scores below the midpoint indicate disagreement. In general, new pastors have energy for

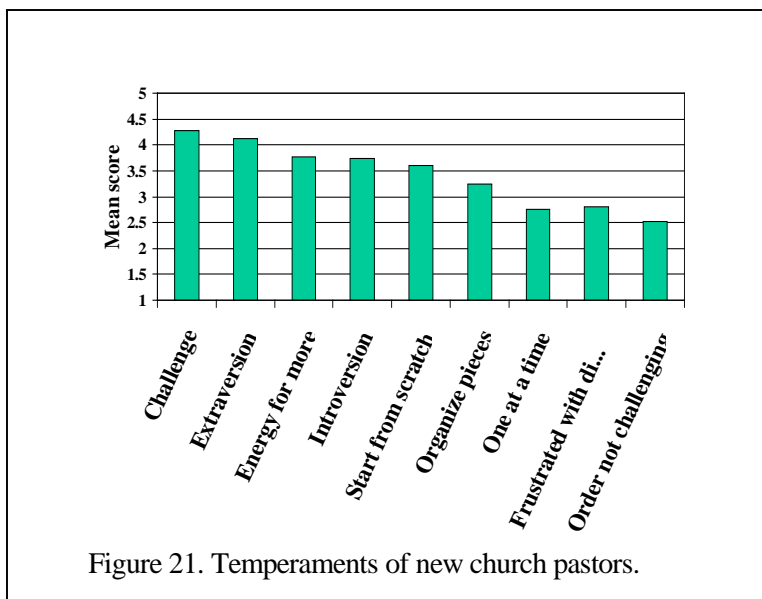


Figure 21. Temperaments of new church pastors.

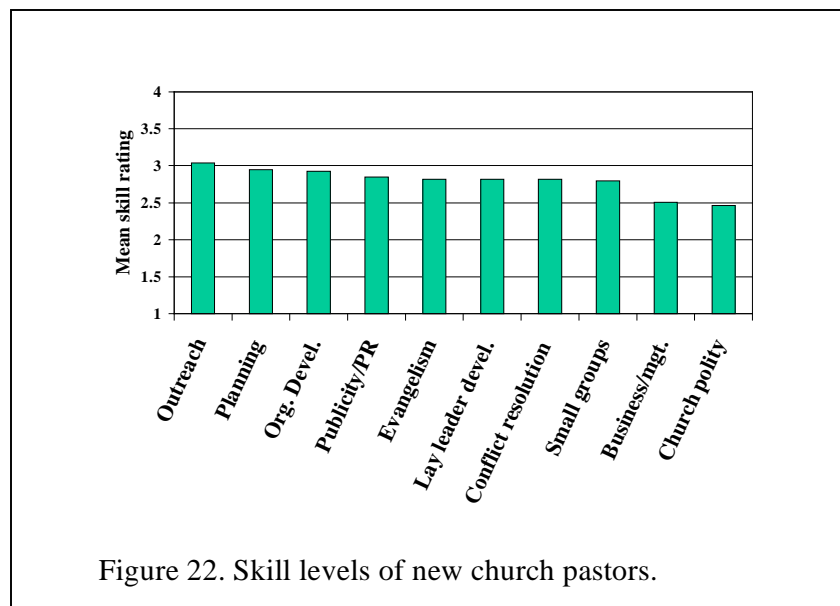


Figure 22. Skill levels of new church pastors.

new tasks and enjoy challenges. They tend to be extroverts, although their introversion scores also were slightly above the midpoint. Clergy, in general, are somewhat more likely to have a psychological type of introversion (55%) than extraversion,¹³ although new church pastors would be expected to have more of a preference for extraversion. They say they are best at starting things from scratch and organizing a ministry from a “jumble of pieces.”

¹² The specific wording of items is in Appendix B.

¹³ Francis, L.J, Wulff, K, & Robbins, M. The Relationship between Work-Related Psychological Health and Psychological Type among Clergy Serving in The Presbyterian Church (USA). *Journal of Empirical Theology* 21 (2008) 166-182.

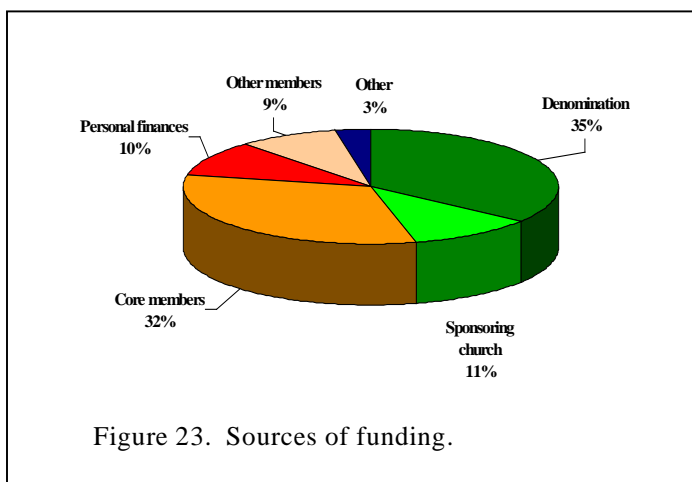
They do not prefer to do one thing at a time, are not frustrated with disorder, and do not find the challenge is gone when the original disorder of a new church start becomes orderly. Perhaps few of these new church pastors have reached that point, however.

Pastors believe they are skilled in many of the important areas of starting new congregations. When asked to rate their skills on a 4-point scale from 1= “not a strength” to 4 = “very good or excellent,” most pastors rated their skills on most items as “good.” They rated themselves most highly in outreach, congregational planning, and organizational development, and lowest in business/ management and church polity, where they rated themselves as OK to good (see Figure 22).

Resources

Funding.

Funding for new congregations comes from many sources. Figure 23 illustrates the average percentage of funds that came to new congregations from several sources in 2012, with the denomination and core members supplying most of the funds, especially in early years. Individual congregations varied considerably from this pattern, with some being funded largely from outside sources and others from the pastor’s and core members’ resources, as well as other variations. In general, **new immigrant** congregations received



a greater percentage of their budgets from the denomination (60%) and a smaller percentage from core members who may have had limited resources (18%), while **traditional** congregations received less from the denomination (22%) and more from core members (44%), and **alternative** congregations were in between (32% and 29%). Budgets for **new immigrant** congregations were smaller than for **traditional** congregations as well, with the pastor working fewer hours on average. The same amount of money given to two different congregations would become a larger proportion of the budget of a congregation with a smaller budget, such as a **new immigrant** congregation.

Although denominational resources are critical in starting many congregations, about 25% of all new ministries that reported on their sources of funding said that they received no denominational support in the first three years. **Alternative** congregations were most likely to report receiving no support (30%), **traditional** ones next (25%) and **new immigrant** ones least (14%) likely to be starting without denominational support.

In 2012, the average total dollars received for new congregations was \$77,316. This figure, however, is an average of congregations started in 2000 through those started in 2013. The total amount was much lower for **new immigrant** congregations, with a mean of \$33,500,

while **alternative** congregations received \$70,000 and **traditional** congregations received \$108,000. Some of this difference is due to **alternative** congregations having been started much more recently than others.

Sponsors.

About a third (32%) of the new ministries have a sponsoring church, and another 21% have two or more sponsors. **New immigrant** congregations are most likely to have sponsors (63%) while **traditional** ones are least likely (32%). These sponsors support the new congregations in a variety of ways, as can be seen in Figure 25. Active prayer support was the most common way that sponsors helped, while

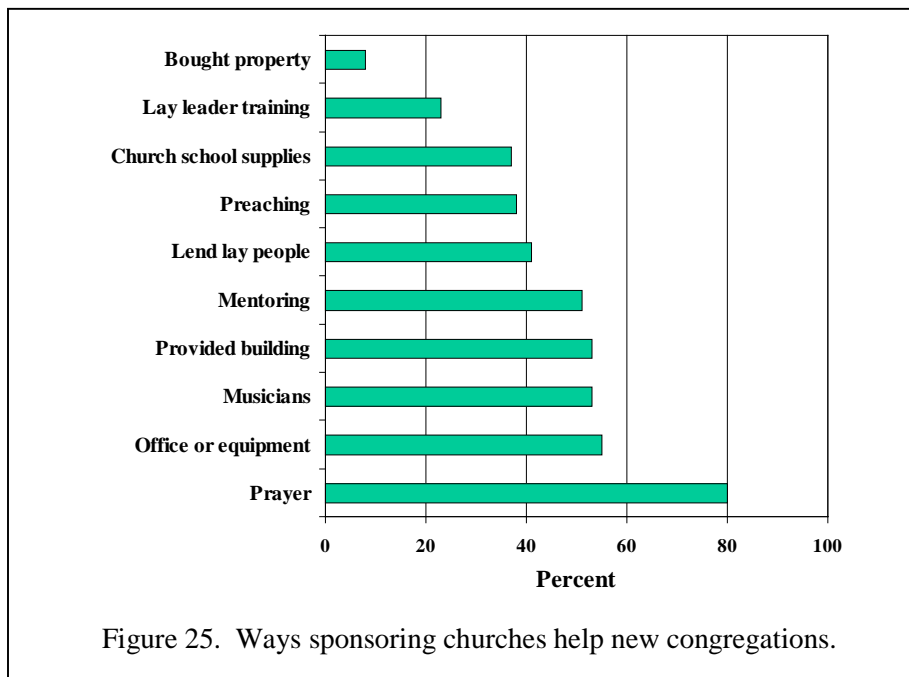


Figure 25. Ways sponsoring churches help new congregations.

lending equipment, musicians, or space to meet and mentoring were next most common, while few bought property for the new congregation. Sponsors were more likely to provide **new immigrant** congregations with worship space (78%). Other ways of support did not differ by type of ministry. In addition, about half the congregations received some financial support from sponsoring churches, assisting with about 10% of their budgets.

Facility.

As shown in Figure 12 above, new congregations meet for worship in a variety of spaces. They may also use the same or different spaces for programs and activities. Because they are new, they often need to relocate one or more times as they develop. In this sample, 41% of the new ministries never moved, 18% moved once, 12% twice, 12% 3 times, 9% four times, and 8% 5 times or more. Some congregations in this latter category meet in different locations as a strategic effort to involve more people or find the best location.

Overall, new congregations are satisfied with their facility. In size, 43% rate it as “very good” or “excellent” while only 14% rate it as “inadequate” or “marginal.” In functionality, the ratings are 38% and 16%, and in parking, the ratings are 48% and 13%. In visibility, however, the ratings are lower, with 43% still rating it as “very good” or “excellent,” but 25% rating it as “inadequate” or “marginal,” a problem for congregations that are trying to make themselves known in the community.

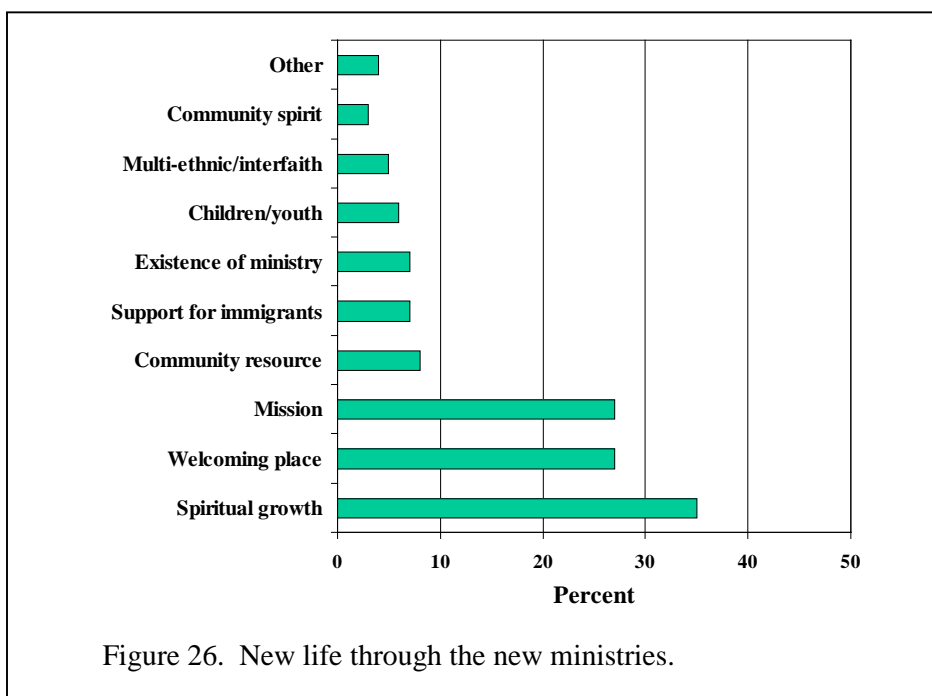
Moving from Describing New Ministries to Learning about What Matters

The second and perhaps more important question in studying new congregations and new ministries is “What matters?” Which, among all the processes and procedures, tools, programs, and activities, are most helpful in planting new congregations and establishing new ministries? What can leaders tell church planters to assist them in their work of growing congregations? What should denominational leaders look for in new ministry planters? And, of course, what is helpful in which type of congregation?

This question raises another, more basic question. What is the goal or vision of the new congregation, and how is it growing toward that vision? How is it having an impact on the people in the congregation and the community?

The final question on the survey, “What new life do you see breaking forth in your community as a result, at least in part, of your congregation’s presence?” was one attempt to measure impact, both on members and the community at large. This qualitative information demonstrated that almost all new ministries have already had significant impacts on their members and communities.

Only 3% said their ministry had little or no impact, and another 3% said that their ministry was too new to see much impact. Most respondents reported significant impacts, often in inspiring words, of ways that God was moving through them. The largest category was differences in the lives of people, either new people coming to faith or members deepening their faith, cited by 35% of those



who provided responses (see Figure 26). This is not to say, of course, that evangelism or disciple-building did NOT occur in the other 65% of new ministries, but that they did not specifically mention it in response to the question. In addition, 27% said that their congregation was a place where people who previously had felt excluded, unwelcome, or unloved now had a faith community. Another 27% pointed to specific missional activities, usually in their communities that now existed due to their efforts. In 7% of the congregations, usually new immigrant ones, pastors mentioned specific ways their congregations serve the immigrant communities. Others said their congregation had become a community resource (8%) or helped

build community spirit where there had been none before (3%), often in newly-developed communities. Another 7% said that the development of their congregation itself was a source of new light. Six percent cited their work with children and youth in their community. Six percent said that the multi-ethnic nature or interfaith activities of their congregation was a witness to the community or their congregation's non-white ethnicity brought new light to their denomination.¹⁴

New immigrant congregations were most likely to mention their impact on their immigrant communities, although a few other congregations mentioned it as well. Being a welcoming place where people who had felt excluded now found a home was mentioned about equally by pastors of most types of congregations except **new immigrant** and **African-American** congregations, who were less likely to mention it. DOC and UCCanada pastors were most likely to mention being a welcoming place, with UCC pastors nearly as likely (46%, 44%, and 39%, respectively). Missional activities were mentioned more often by congregations that did not report much growth, perhaps illustrating that their vision included community impact and mission as much or more than numerical growth. They were also mentioned most by new congregations that had been started earlier than most and those from the PCUSA (50%).

While this qualitative information provides a description of how these new ministries are making a difference, it is less helpful in answering questions about what works. To do this, quantitative measures are needed that can be related to specific programs and practices. For this study, three measures were developed, the first growth in attendance, the second the percent of the congregation who are young adults, and the third, the percent of the congregation who are previously unchurched. Although these measures are related to each other, they each approach the question of impact from a different perspective.

What Matters

Context

In the latter part of the last century, congregational development was all about location. New congregations grew in burgeoning new suburbs. In the 21st Century, that has changed. In the entire sample and among new immigrant congregations, attendance grew somewhat faster in areas with greater numerical population growth, but the relationship was quite weak¹⁵ and population growth was not related to growth in attendance in either **traditional** or **alternative** congregations. These and other relationships are summarized in Table 1, at the end of the section. In this and other tables, moderate relationships are indicated in bold type, while strong relationships are indicated in capital letters and bold. Negative relationships, that is, a high amount of one factor related to a low amount in another, are indicated in red.

The percentage of young adults in the congregation was somewhat higher in areas with greater numerical population growth, although not percentage growth, both in the **overall** sample

¹⁴ These percentages add to greater than 100% because some pastors mentioned several areas.

¹⁵ Relationships are described as "weak" or "somewhat higher" if the correlation is between .10 and .30, "moderate" if the correlation is between .30 and .50, and "strong" if the correlation is .50 and above.

and for alternative congregations. However, this is most likely an artifact of the concentration of young adults in urban areas with larger populations.

The key question about the population of the target area may be not whether it is growing but whether church planters understand who is there and what their needs are. In the **overall** sample, most different efforts to learn about the community were weakly related to growth in attendance, but only analysis of demographics and meeting with community leaders were statistically significant. Leaders of congregations with more young adults were slightly more likely to report having met with other local clergy. Perhaps those meetings helped them learn from other clergy more about the young adults in the community and how to reach them. The percentage of unchurched was slightly higher when leaders reported having engaged in informal conversations with community residents, perhaps because the conversations helped the residents see that their new congregation was interested in them and was different from their expectations of church.

For **traditional** congregations, having discussions about the community with the leadership team was moderately related to growth in attendance. For **alternative** congregations, talking with other clergy was positively related to having more young adults, but negatively related to having more unchurched. For **new immigrant** congregations, most correlations were positive and attending community events was moderately related to growth in attendance.

One possible reason for this lack of a strong relationship between learning about the context and growth may be that this learning is necessary but not sufficient. New church planters in this sample had engaged in an average of five of these helpful activities, so doing more of them may not have made much difference.

Some new church planters may not need to learn about the context because they come from the area. Although congregations that grew were not more likely to have been served by people from the area, for **alternative** congregations, having a pastor with roots in the area was moderately related to having more unchurched. For **new immigrant** congregations, having a pastor with geographic roots in the area was moderately negatively related to having a high percentage of young adults. No significant relationships were found for other ministry types or other measures.

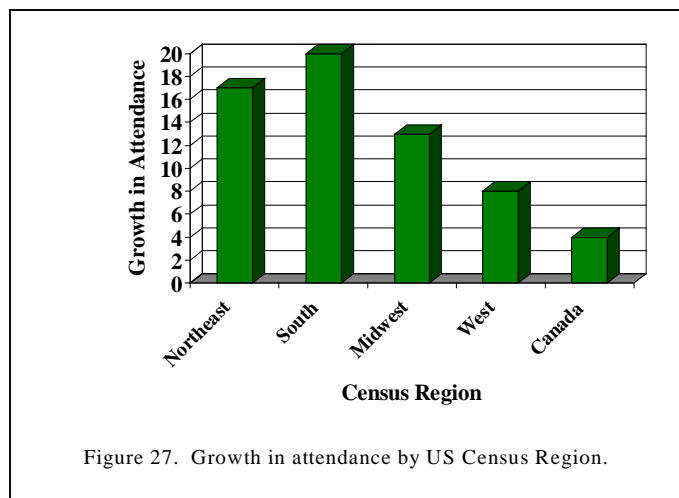


Figure 27. Growth in attendance by US Census Region.

Context did matter in one way, however. New congregations in the South were more likely to grow in attendance than those in other parts of the country, as can be seen in Figure 27. New congregations in other areas had higher percentages of young adults and the unchurched than those in the South, although the differences were not statistically significant. Some of the reason for this is due to a different mix of congregational types in different regions. Almost half

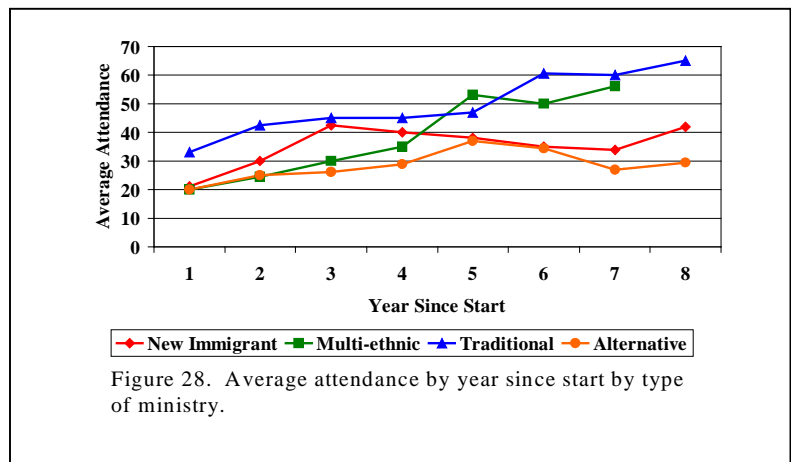
of the **traditional** congregations (46%), half of those that replicated themselves in a different site, and 59% of the **contemporary** congregations were found in the South, which contained only 32% of all new congregations. Over a third (35%) of the **alternative** congregations were in the Midwest region.

Table 1
 Relationships between Context and Learning About It and Impact Measures
 G = attendance growth, Y = percentage of young adults, U = percentage of unchurched

Contextual Factor	Overall	Traditional	Alternative	New Immigrant
Numerical population growth	Weak (G)			Weak (G)
Percentage population growth	Weak (Y)		Weak (Y)	
Region – the South	Weak (G)			
Analysis of demographics	Weak (G)			
Meeting with community leaders	Weak (G)			
Meeting with area clergy	Weak (Y)		Moderate (Y) Weak negative (U)	
Informal talk with residents	Weak (U)			
Discussions with leadership team about community		Moderate (G)		
Attend community events				Moderate(G)
Pastor with area roots			Moderate(U)	Moderate negative(Y)

Impetus for the Ministry and Type of Ministry

Attendance growth was not related to where the impetus came for starting the congregation. That is, denominational plants were no more or less able to pick a good location than groups of lay people, sponsoring churches, or pastors who felt a call to an area. Pastor-initiated congregations had somewhat higher attendance, more young adults and unchurched than others, although differences were not statistically significant. Also no one denomination had more new churches that were growing than others.



Congregations of different ministry types grew in attendance at different rates. As Figure 28 illustrates, **traditional** and **multi-ethnic** congregations grew in attendance more rapidly than others. **New immigrant** and **alternative** congregations seemed to plateau, although the later years are based on only a few congregations, particularly among alternative types, so they may yet grow in future years.

In other measures of impact, however, both **alternative** congregations and **new immigrant** congregations were better able to attract younger adults and the unchurched than were **traditional** ones, as can be seen in Figures 29 and 30. The high percentage of former Roman Catholics among **new immigrant** congregations is due largely to the Hispanic congregations, who reported on a number of attendees who, although they had been nominally Roman Catholic, were also unchurched in recent times.

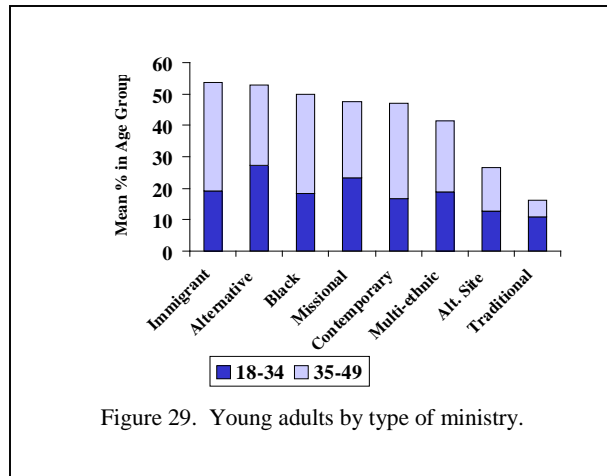


Figure 29. Young adults by type of ministry.

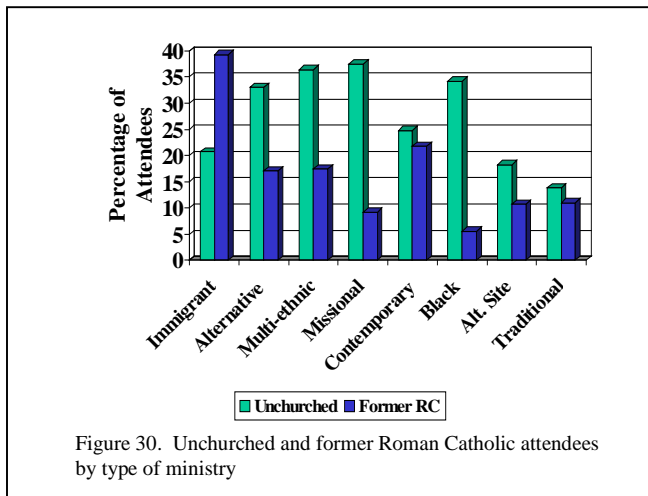


Figure 30. Unchurched and former Roman Catholic attendees by type of ministry

Evangelism Activities

Overall, most evangelism efforts were not highly related to growth in attendance or a high percentage of young adults or unchurched persons. Results of these analyses are summarized in Table 2 below.

Evangelism techniques that were used in the past, such as door-to-door calling, were unrelated to growth in any category of new ministries. In the **overall** sample, only a few activities were

significantly related to impact, but the relationships were quite small. Programs for children were related to growth in attendance. Uses of the Internet such as Facebook were related to both growth in attendance and the presence of young adults. Interestingly, the strongest relationships between use of Facebook and other social media sites were with growth in the most recent year, suggesting that use of these sites is becoming more important. Surprisingly, congregations that were active in their communities both through their presence in events and through various kinds of advertising were less likely to report attendance growth than others, though again, the differences were small.

Table 2
 Relationships between Evangelism Activities and Impact Measures
 G = attendance growth, Y = percentage of young adults, U = percentage of unchurched

Evangelism Activity	Overall	Traditional	Alternative	New Immigrant
Programs for children	Weak (G)	Moderate(G)		Weak(G)
Programs for adults		Moderate(G) Moderate(U)	Moderate(Y) Moderate(U)	
Use of internet, including Facebook	Weak (G) Weak (Y)	STRONG(U)	Weak(Y)	Moderate(G)
Presence at community events	Weak negative (G)	Weak(G)	Weak(U)	Weak(G)
Advertising in community	Weak negative (G)	Moderate(G)	Moderate negative (Y)	Moderate negative(G)
Revivals/special services with guest speakers			Moderate(U)	
Give-aways, such as pens		Moderate(U)		Moderate(G)
Follow-up by mail	Weak negative(Y)	STRONG(G)		Moderate negative(U)
Follow-up by telephone	Weak negative(Y)	Moderate negative(G)	Moderate negative(Y)	Moderate negative(U)
Follow-up by email		Moderate(U)		
Follow-up visits		Moderate(G)		
Follow-up by social media	Weak(Y)	Moderate negative(G) Moderate(U)		
Packet of information		Moderate(G)		Moderate(G)
Small gift		Moderate(U)		Moderate negative(U)

The picture was different in different types of new ministries. In new ministries using more **traditional** models, many more activities and programs were related to growth. Having children’s programs and activities was moderately related to growth, and having a presence at community events and service projects was also related, but more weakly. Congregations that make the community aware of themselves through advertising, banners, give-aways, and invitations to events were much more likely to report growth in attendance, while those that use the internet in a variety of ways are much more likely to have a higher percentage of formerly unchurched people. In fact, how much a **traditional** congregation used all these programs was one of the strongest predictors of attendance growth.

For new ministries using **alternative** models and targeting seekers, doing things such as advertising or give-aways to increase the congregation’s profile in the community were moderately **negatively** related to growth in attendance. That is, **alternative** congregations that did more of these things were less likely to grow. More young adults were present in congregations that had Facebook pages and adult programming, but somewhat fewer were

present in congregations that had or attended community events. More formerly unchurched people were present in congregations that had adult programming and special services with outside speakers or community events. Fewer formerly unchurched and young adults were present in congregations that advertised in the community. These somewhat conflicting and scattered results suggest that seekers, in particular, who may be church-shy, may need to meet the pastor and members outside of the church building in community settings or on a Facebook site and that having a large public presence may not be helpful. More traditional ways of advertising the church's presence such as give-aways or banners may signal to young adults and the unchurched that this is a traditional church rather than something different where they might feel comfortable.

In **new immigrant** congregations, few specific programs were related to growth in attendance, although making the community aware of the congregation through an on-line presence and give-aways such as pens with the church's name on them were moderately related to long-term growth in attendance. Advertising through the media appeared to be negatively related to growth in attendance. Programs for children were weakly related to growth in attendance. Because this group includes congregations of many different cultures, some of these activities may be effective in particular cultural settings, although they are not when the group as a whole is examined.

For **multi-ethnic** congregations, both community activities and internet-related activities were moderately positively related to growth, and activities for adults were moderately related to the percentage of unchurched.

Actions to follow-up on guests did not seem to increase attendance, in fact they may be counter-productive. **Overall**, the only significant, though weak, relationships were between follow-up activities and percent of young adults, and most were negative. Congregations that followed-up by mail or telephone had slightly fewer young adults while those who used social media had slightly more.

Among **traditional** congregations, however, some traditional ways of following up guests still had some effect, with moderate to strong effects on growth in attendance of follow-up by mail, visits, and a packet of information. Higher percentages of formerly unchurched were found in churches that followed up by a small gift, email or social media. However even in this group, guests seem not to want to be telephoned or contacted through social media. Efforts to follow-up visitors also were among the strongest predictors of growth in attendance.

In **new immigrant** congregations, follow-up by mail, telephone, and a small gift all were moderately related to having fewer unchurched, not more. Receiving a packet of information was moderately positively related to growth in attendance. Among **alternative** congregations, follow-up activities seemed totally unrelated to growth or the percentage of young adults or unchurched people. The only significant correlation was a negative one in which congregations that followed-up visitors by telephone had lower percentages of young adults – or that congregations with lower percentages of young adults were more likely to use the telephone for follow-up.

What sense can be made of this muddle of results? Clearly, the ministry type matters. Evangelism activities such as advertising and programming for children and adults work well in **traditional** new congregations. Some of them seem to work in **new immigrant** congregations, as well, especially if targeted to the particular community (e.g., pens) rather than the community at large (media advertising). In **alternative** churches, however, building relationships in groups for adults, via Facebook, or in community events and activities, seems the most effective way of attracting the unchurched. In all ministry types, use of the Internet in various ways is related to all three measures of impact.

Follow-up of guests by various means is still important in **traditional** new congregations. For **new immigrant** congregations, follow-up activities, if anything, are negative. And follow-up by telephone is not effective in any ministry type.

While these results suggest that specific activities or programs may be useful in growing a new ministry, an alternative explanation is possible. The specific activities may instead represent markers of the style or climate of the congregation or ministry. That is, the kind of congregation that follows-up by mail or telephone may be quite different in many ways from the kind of congregation that follows up by email, or the congregation that has a large community presence with advertisements and give-aways may be different in other ways from one that is active on social media. Those larger differences in congregational climate or style may be what attracts or discourages young adults or seekers, rather than the specifics that were measured.

Clergy Characteristics

Demographics.

In the **overall** sample, congregations with younger pastors were moderately more likely to have a higher percentage of young adults and somewhat more likely to be growing in attendance. Because age and experience are related, congregations with pastors with less pastoral experience were also slightly more likely to have young adults, although the relationship was much smaller.

The pastor's age was strongly related to the percentage of young adults in most ministry types. That is, new congregations with younger pastors had higher percentages of young adults, among **new immigrant, multi-ethnic, traditional, and alternative** ministry types. In other types of congregations, these differences were not statistically significant. In fact, the pastor's age was by far the strongest predictor of the percentage of young adults in the congregation in **alternative** congregations.

Differences in growth in attendance in churches pastored by men and women were not statistically significant, except among **new immigrant** congregations, where congregations with male pastors grew in attendance somewhat faster than those with female pastors. However, in the **overall** sample and all three major types, the percentage of formerly unchurched people was moderately higher in congregations pastored by women.

Clergy Selection.

Some methods of clergy selection seemed to be more helpful than others in growing a congregation in some ministry types. **Traditional** congregations had a moderately higher percentage of young adults when the pastor had been recommended by another clergy person but a moderately lower percentage of unchurched people when the pastor had been selected using the regular selection process.

Alternative congregations whose pastors had been recommended by denominational or judicatory executives, who had completed a new pastor assessment or used the regular placement process were moderately more likely to be growing in attendance.

Denominational executives were less successful in recommending **new immigrant** pastors. Churches of pastors they recommended had somewhat less growth in attendance than others. Pastors who volunteered and those recommended by denominational executives also had moderately lower percentages of the unchurched. In **new immigrant** congregations, those who were called up from the congregation itself were moderately less likely to have growing churches.

Temperament.

Some aspects of pastors' temperaments were significantly related to the congregation's make-up, although no relationships were significant in the **overall** sample. Table 3 shows three different patterns for the three ministry types. Pastors of growing **traditional** congregations have traits that are good for building and maintaining congregations, such as enjoyment of a challenge and intolerance for disorder. Those who are good at starting things from scratch are more able to try something new to attract the unchurched. Pastors of growing **alternative** congregations, on the other hand, are energetic extroverts who enjoy starting things from scratch and may get bored when things become too orderly. Pastors from growing **new immigrant** congregations rated themselves more highly in several of the questions related to energy and challenge. This higher energy level, rather than the specifics of temperament may be what is important in helping their churches grow in attendance.¹⁶ The different patterns of findings in the three ministry types and the lack of any significant relationships in the overall group suggest that different new ministry types call for different personality traits.

¹⁶ These temperament questions come from a larger set of questions used in an earlier study to identify important personality or temperament factors among new church pastors. They were developed as forced-choice questions, so that respondents had to choose one of two alternatives rather than rate themselves on each, and then modified for use in the new church development study. This method of studying personality and the specific questions were developed using a white sample and may not generalize well to those whose first language is not English and whose cultural background is different. The new immigrant pastors may have interpreted some questions differently from others. For example, although the two questions about where people get their energy from are meant to be opposites, many in this group responded positively to both of them.

Table 3

Relationships between Personality Characteristics and Impact Measures
 G = attendance growth, Y = percentage of young adults, U = percentage of unchurched

Personality Characteristic	Overall	Traditional	Alternative	New Immigrant
I like to be challenged		Moderate(G) Moderate(U)		Moderate negative(U)
I prefer to do one thing at a time		STRONG negative (G)		
I have the energy to take on additional tasks			Weak(G)	Moderate(G) Moderate negative(U)
I get energized by being with people			Weak(U)	Moderate(G)
I get energized spending time in personal reflection			Moderate negative(U)	Moderate(G)
I am best at starting groups from scratch		Moderate(G) Moderate(U)	Moderate(G)	Moderate(G) Moderate negative(U)
I am best at organizing a ministry from a “jumble of pieces”				Moderate(G)
It is no longer challenging for me when the original disorder of a new church start becomes orderly and functional		STRONG negative (G)	Moderate(Y)	Moderate(G)
I become frustrated with major disorder		Moderate(G)		

Experience, Training and Skills.

While one might think that previous experience in parish ministry would be an advantage to a new church pastor, in the **overall** sample and in the three ministry types, all relationships between previous pastoral experience and impact measures were **negative** (see Table 4). That is, pastors of growing congregations and those with higher percentages of young adults and the unchurched were somewhat less likely to report having previous pastoral experience.

Prior experience on a new church planting team was moderately related to growth in attendance, however. Other moderately helpful activities were having attended “boot camp” or New Church Development 101, (with percentage of unchurched), having a supervisor (with percentage of young adults and percentage of unchurched), and meeting with a peer group (with growth in attendance).

In **alternative** congregations, pastors who had previous experience starting a new congregation as a lay person or member of a launch team were more likely to report growth in attendance. Also, those with geographical roots in the area were moderately more likely to have more unchurched in the congregation. Having these roots was one of the highest predictors of having formerly unchurched members.

Table 4

Relationships between Training and Experience and Impact Measures
 G = attendance growth, Y = percentage of young adults, U = percentage of unchurched

Relevant Experience	Overall	Traditional	Alternative	New Immigrant
Years in ministry	Weak negative(Y)			
Experience as a senior pastor	Weak negative(G,Y,U)	Moderate negative (G)		
Experience as an associate pastor		Moderate negative (G)	Moderate negative (U)	
Experience as a bivocational pastor		Moderate negative (G)	Weak negative(G)	Moderate negative (U)
Experience on a planting team	Weak(G)		STRONG(G)	
Experience as a lay person in a new ministry			Weak(G)	
Boot camp/Planting 101	Weak(U)		Weak(G)	
Meet monthly with supervisor	Weak(Y,U)			
Meet monthly with peer group	Weak(G)			

Few clergy self-ratings of specific skills were related to the measures of impact in the **overall** sample, as can be seen in Table 5. Most of the significant relationships were negative, with skill in small group development correlating negatively with growth in attendance, skill in church polity correlating negatively with the percentage of unchurched, and skill in outreach programs correlating negatively with the percentage of young adults. Skill in publicity and public relations, however, was significantly related to at least one impact measure, both in the **overall** group and in every subgroup. Other training experiences, such as training courses in person or on-line or brief conferences, were not significantly related to any growth measures, either in the overall sample or any ministry type. This may be because the offerings varied in length, quality, or relevance to the type of new ministry, because access to on-line learning is just becoming widely available, or because brief events, rather than more comprehensive training, are not extensive enough to have a measurable impact on growth measures.

Table 5
 Relationships between Skills and Impact Measures
 G = attendance growth, Y = percentage of young adults, U = percentage of unchurched

Ministry skill	Overall	Traditional	Alternative	New Immigrant
Practical evangelism skills			Moderate negative (Y)	
Lay leader development		Moderate(U)	Moderate negative (G)	Moderate negative (U)
Small group development	Weak negative (U)		Moderate negative (G)	STRONG negative(U)
Congregational planning		Moderate(Y)		Moderate negative (Y) Moderate negative (U)
Outreach programs	Weak negative (Y)		Moderate(G)	
Church polity	Weak negative (U)			STRONG negative(U)
Organizational development		Moderate(G) Weak(Y)		STRONG negative(U)
Business/management				STRONG negative(U)
Publicity/public relations	Moderate(G)	Moderate(U)	Weak(U)	Moderate (G) Moderate (Y)

The importance of other skills varied by ministry type. Skills such as lay leadership development, congregational planning, and organizational development were important in **traditional** congregations. In **alternative** congregations, practical evangelism skills and outreach programs were more important in reaching young adults and the unchurched, while skills in lay leader and small group development were negatively related to growth. For **new immigrant** pastors, most self-ratings were negatively related to success in reaching the unchurched. These skills, while important for building and running a ministry, do not seem to be the ones needed to reach out to the unchurched in these congregations. Again, different skills may be required to develop different types of congregations, and especially to reach different target groups.

Resources

Finances.

Having resources, as measured in this survey, was not highly related to a congregation's growth and impact. Most correlations between measures and various impact measures were not statistically significant, and not always in a positive direction. **Overall**, the total income in all

three years was modestly related to overall longer-term growth, especially in **traditional** congregations. However, because the relationship grew stronger over the three years and the correlations were approximately zero with growth for one- and two-year intervals, increased attendance may have led to having more resources, rather than the reverse.

Denominational support, that is, having a greater percentage of resources from the denomination, did not seem to have a major impact on the congregation's growth or impact. It may have had an effect at key times, although sample sizes were small for these analyses so the results should be interpreted with caution. For **traditional** churches, denominational support in the third through fifth years of the congregation's life was strongly related to a greater percentage of young adults. For **new immigrant** congregations, denominational support in the fourth through seventh years was also strongly related to growth in attendance.

Alternative congregations with higher percentages of unchurched had received a significantly smaller percentage of their budgets from denominational support, but more support from core members, the pastor's personal resources, and other income such as grants. The percentage from sponsoring congregations and the percentage from members in some years also were moderately related to longer-term growth. Tent-making and raising funds locally seem to be beneficial for these **alternative** congregations that attract unchurched people.

In **new immigrant** churches, financial support from sponsoring churches was moderately related to growth in attendance and strongly related to their having greater percentages of unchurched. For **traditional** churches, funds from sponsoring churches helped the new congregations reach out to young adults. A higher percentage of funds from member giving was moderately related to a higher percentage of unchurched in the congregation.

Sponsoring Congregations.

Whether or not a new congregation had a sponsoring congregation or congregations, in itself, was not significantly related to growth in attendance. However, financial support from sponsoring congregations was helpful. Several non-financial activities of sponsoring congregations also were related to positive outcomes. In the **overall** sample, lending a facility or office space and occasional preaching were weakly related to the percentage of young adults, while the loan of lay members, mentoring, and occasional preaching were related to a higher percentage of unchurched. In **traditional** congregations, lending lay members and providing curriculum were strongly related to growth in attendance. **Alternative** congregations who were housed in an existing congregation grew more, and had higher proportions of young adults and unchurched attendees than did others. In **new immigrant** congregations, sponsors' provision of lay people had a negative impact on growth but a positive impact on attracting the unchurched. Sponsor mentoring, providing music, curriculum, or training of lay leaders all were related to having more unchurched people in these **new immigrant** congregations. However, in each of these ministry types, sample sizes of new congregations that had sponsors were small so results should be interpreted with caution.

Table 6
 Relationships between Assistance from Sponsoring Congregations and Impact Measures
 G = attendance growth, Y = percentage of young adults, U = percentage of unchurched

Type of Assistance	Overall	Traditional	Alternative	New Immigrant
Financial support	Weak(Y)	STRONG(Y)	Moderate(G)	Moderate(G) STRONG(U)
Loan of lay members	Weak(U)	STRONG(G)		STRONG negative(G) STRONG(U)
Use of facility or office space	Weak(Y)		Moderate(G,Y,U)	
Occasional preaching	Weak(G) Moderate(U)			
Mentoring	Weak(U)			STRONG(U)
Providing curriculum		STRONG(G)		STRONG(U)
Providing music				STRONG(U)
Training lay leaders				STRONG(U)

Facility.

Having to move the ministry’s location several times was not related to growth, maybe because moving can be a positive experience in providing better facilities or reaching more people, as well as a negative one in having to reestablish one’s identity. The one exception was that the number of facility moves was moderately negatively related to growth in **traditional** churches, but only for attendance growth in the most recent year.

For **traditional** churches, satisfaction with the visibility of the meeting space was moderately related to growth in attendance in the most recent year while for **multi-ethnic** churches, satisfaction with visibility was moderately related to long-term growth. Satisfaction with parking was moderately negatively related to growth for **new immigrant** congregations, probably because many of these are in urban areas with little parking and attendees who may not have cars, with the dense urban areas being a good location for these congregations.

Pastor’s Time.

In the **overall** sample, the amount of time the pastor spends in ministry and whether or not the pastor has another job were only weakly related to growth. Also, the amount of time and having another job were not significant for any of the ministry types. However, the way the pastors spent their time was related to impacts, although most relationships were not strong for the **overall** group, as can be seen in Table 7. Because time spent in one area is taken away from another, some relationships were positive while others were negative.

Table 7
 Relationships between Time Spent in Ministry Tasks and Impact Measures
 G = attendance growth, Y = percentage of young adults, U = percentage of unchurched

Ministry task	Overall	Traditional	Alternative	New Immigrant
Planning and leading worship	Weak negative(Y)	STRONG(G)	Moderate negative(Y)	STRONG(G)
Developing and promoting a vision and purpose	Weak(G)	Moderate(G)		Moderate(G)
Evangelism or outreach to new people	Weak(G)		Moderate(G)	Moderate(G)
Recruiting and training lay leaders		Moderate(U)		Moderate(G)
Providing pastoral care	Weak(U)	Moderate(G)	Weak(U)	Moderate(G)
Teaching people about the faith and scripture			Weak negative(U)	Moderate(G)
Leading small groups		Moderate(G)		Moderate(G) Moderate(Y)
Administration, supervision and committee meetings	Weak negative(Y)	Moderate(G)	Weak negative(Y)	Moderate(G)
Representing the congregation in the community		Moderate(G)		
Representing the congregation in the wider church	Weak negative(Y)			Moderate negative(U)
Teaching or leadership in stewardship and fund-raising	Weak negative(U)	STRONG(G)		Moderate(G) STRONG negative(U)
Engaging youth and young adults	Weak(Y)		Moderate(Y) Weak negative(U)	Moderate(G)
Dealing with conflict & disagreements		Moderate(G)		Moderate(G)

In both **traditional** and **new immigrant** congregations, time spent in planning and leading worship was strongly related to attendance growth and time providing pastoral care, and teaching people about stewardship were moderately related. Developing and promoting a vision, evangelism or outreach, recruiting and training lay leaders, teaching people about the faith and leading small groups had correlations that were nearly as high.

For pastors of **traditional** congregations, time spent in administration and in representing the church to the wider community also were related to growth, while for **new immigrant** pastors working with youth was positively related to growth. Teaching about stewardship was moderately positively related to growth but strongly negatively related to the percentage of unchurched. Dealing with conflicts was positively related to growth in both ministry types. Although one might expect that conflict itself would be negatively related to growth, conflict may be inevitable as congregations grow and change and spending time in dealing with it may help the congregation to grow through it.

Among pastors of **alternative** congregations, only time spent in evangelism or outreach was related to growth in attendance, while time spent in pastoral care was related to a higher percentage of unchurched people and time spent working with youth and young adults was related, not surprisingly, to a higher percentage of young adults among the attendees. These may reflect the emphasis in these congregations on bringing seekers into the congregation. Time spent in evangelism was the strongest predictor of growth in attendance of all the factors examined.

Most significant correlations between the percentage of young adults and unchurched people in the congregation and time spent on various tasks were **negative** in all three types of congregations. This suggests that spending time in planning worship, teaching about the scriptures or about stewardship, administration and representing the congregation in the community are done at the expense of other activities, such as one-on-one encounters, that may attract these individuals.

What No Longer Seems to Matter

This study has identified many situations, programs and practices that are related to attendance growth and the ability to attract young adults and the unchurched. One surprising finding that gets lost in the many factors that **were** related to a congregation's impact is the many factors that **were not** related. Common wisdom and previous experience suggests that congregations will grow faster with more resources, more money, better facilities, more advertising, more programs, more follow-up of guests and in communities with more new residents. Pastors who are full-time rather than part-time and who have more experience and more training in church planting would be expected to grow congregations faster or reach out to more unchurched.

This was not the case. In general, few activities, practices, or clergy characteristics were related to growth in new congregations, and even those that were statistically significant were not large and mostly were confined to **traditional** congregations. The tables show many significant relationships. They do not show many more measures that were not significantly related to the three impact measures. Practical evangelism skills, for example, would be expected to be positively related to growth in attendance for all types of new ministries with all three measures of impact. In fact, only one relationship was significant and that showed that those who are less skilled in evangelism are better at involving young adults in **alternative** congregations. Training and experience in ministry should have been related to the measures of impact. But particularly in **alternative** congregations, pastors with less experience were better able to reach young adults or the unchurched, and a few training courses did not seem to make much difference. In these congregations, something new is happening. One thing is clear, old understandings of how to develop new congregational development no longer apply in many new ministry situations.

The new understandings being uncovered are much more modest and nuanced. In many analyses, different factors were related to different impacts, and sometimes a program or practice that was positively related to one impact was negatively related to another. Examining the responses by ministry type uncovered some relationships that were not apparent when including all new churches.

Perhaps the reasons that one new ministry grows and another does not are complex and situational, and even using ministry types to try to tease out different factors in different situations is not enough to understand all the relevant, interacting factors. The development of new ministries at this time may be so individualized and tailored to particular situations and planters that overarching learnings are difficult to identify. Future research will analyze the qualitative responses to the survey question “What do you think was the biggest factor in the success or lack of success in this new ministry?” That analysis may provide some additional information about factors that may not have been included in this study and suggest some areas for future research.

New Ministries and Narrow-Casting Revisited

This study categorized new congregations into three major ministry types with five variations. The major types then were used both to describe the new ministries and to investigate what might be related to growth in attendance and outreach to young adults and the unchurched. Consistently throughout these analyses, significant differences were found between types, and analyses by type uncovered relationships that were masked in an overall analyses. For example, factors related to growth in previous research, such as population growth, were found not to be significant in the total sample, but still significant for traditional new congregations. Sending follow-up letters to life-long members helped boost attendance, sending them to young adults was counter-productive. Pastors who enjoy the organizational challenges of building and developing congregations helped traditional new congregations grow, but did not help alternative ministries prosper. Examining the impacts of new congregations using different measures -- growth in attendance, the percentage of young adults and the percentage of the unchurched in the congregation – also helped uncover relationships that varied according to the measure or group being studied.

This variety in both target groups (all attendees, young adults, and the unchurched) and types of ministries underscores the importance of narrow-casting in developing new ministries. Most studies of church growth have found that time spent by the pastor and congregation in developing and articulating a vision for the congregation was positively related to growth. While developing a mission statement may seem like a paper exercise, it can be the first essential step in narrow-casting. According to the management expert, Peter Drucker, the first thing a manager needs to do is figure out what it is that he or she is trying to do. Congregations who have thought about who their target group is will be able to develop their ministry to attract and involve that group. Rather than trying to be all things to all people, they will be more aware of the needs of the people they are trying to reach and how to present the Gospel in ways they can hear and understand and that will address those needs. A congregation needs to welcome and minister to all who come, whether or not they are in the target group. But without a target, they will have no focus and run the risk of not speaking effectively to anyone. The way clergy spend their time, the way they publicize their congregations in the community, the kinds of programs and activities they develop all need to be tailored to the type of ministry they are developing. To be effective in the Age of Narrow-Casting, denominations and new church developers will need to narrow-cast as well.

Summary and Conclusions

- New congregations differ from established ones. Their members are younger, their worship is a blend of traditional and alternative practices, their structure is more open. Their pastors spend more time in outreach activities and promoting a vision and less in pastoral care than do pastors of established congregations.
- The variety of new ministries is significant and any understanding must take this variety into account. Three major types (72% of the total) include new congregations that replicate established ones, alternative congregations that depart from this model in significant ways, such as seeker-oriented, emerging worship or post-modern, and small-group relational, and congregations of recent immigrants from around the world. Other variations include new traditional African-American, congregations started as alternate sites of existing congregations, congregations focused on a mission, such as prison congregations or a specific interest, such as the arts or yoga, those with contemporary worship, and multi-ethnic congregations.
- Overall, growth of new congregations is slow, with many taking 8 to 10 years to grow to a viable size.
- Most factors that predicted new congregational growth in the past no longer do so, do so only weakly, or do so only among more traditional congregations.
- Factors that are related to growth in attendance often are different from those that are related to higher percentages of young adults and the unchurched.
- Younger pastors are more likely to attract young adults. Previous pastoral experience generally is not related to growth in attendance and is negatively related to attracting the young or unchurched.
- Use of the internet is important in helping congregations grow and reach out to young adults and the unchurched, regardless of ministry type. Use of social media was particularly important in reaching young adults and the unchurched, and that importance seems to be increasing.
- Traditional congregations appeal to traditional churchgoers. They grow more quickly as members move to a new area and transfer to a new church. Members are older with churchgoing habits well established. Alternative and new immigrant congregations minister to people more of whom are without a history of church attendance and without church-going habits or skills. They may be more wary of the institution and slower to commit.
- Alternative and new immigrant congregations are more likely than traditional ones to attract young adults and unchurched persons.

- Traditional congregations grow better when they emphasize programs, activities to make themselves known in the community, and follow-up of guests.
- Alternative congregations grow better when they emphasize their differences from traditional and particularly conservative churches. They are better at reaching the unchurched when the impetus for the new ministry came from the pastor rather than another group and the pastor has geographic roots in the area.
- New immigrant congregations grow better when they are involved and well-known in the immigrant communities, and also when they receive support from sponsoring congregations.
- The relationship between pastors' skills and personalities and various aspects of growth in different types of new congregations is complex and needs further study. Different types of new ministries seem to require different skills and abilities, so that a new church planter who is successful in one type may be the wrong person for another type.
- Developing and promoting a vision was significantly related to growth in both traditional and new immigrant ministries. Because the correlates of growth differ for different ministry types, having a vision for the type of ministry and target group(s) may be important in helping the congregation use their efforts in the most important ways to attract and involve people, rather than trying to be everything to everyone.