

# FACTS ON GROWING CONGREGATIONS

*Findings from the United Church of Christ 2015 Faith Communities Today (FACT) Survey of Congregations*

Congregations that reported at least 2% growth in average weekly worship attendance from 2009 to 2014 (19% of surveyed churches) had the following characteristics or attributes when compared with congregations that did not experience this level of growth:

- Possessed greater percentages of people under age 50 in the congregation (including greater percentages of children and youth)
- Used organ less often and drums or other percussion more often in worship
- Incorporated reading/performing by children/youth more frequently in worship
- More frequently self-characterized worship as filled with a sense of God's presence, nurturing of people's faith, innovative, inspirational, joyful, and intergenerational
- Emphasized Bible, scripture or theological studies (other than Sunday School), fellowships or other social activities, community service activities, and youth (13-17) activities/programs
- Placed a greater emphasis on the following personal and family faith practices: Talking with friends or other members of the congregation about one's faith, parents talking with children about faith, and living out faith in all aspects of one's daily life
- Had a clearer sense of mission and purpose
- Were quite different from other congregations in their community
- Were better at incorporating newcomers into the congregation
- Were reported to be more spiritually vital and alive
- Placed greater emphasis on working for social justice
- Had greater percentages of LGBT participants in the congregation
- Expressed a willingness to change to meet new challenges (with many congregations having undergone change in recent years)
- Utilized internet and social tools more effectively
- Placed more importance on denominational identity and affiliation
- Were more racially and ethnically diverse
- Engaged in evangelism and outreach to new people
- Prioritized engaging young adults
- Utilized and emphasized the following electronic technologies more strongly: Website, texting, and online meetings (Skype, WebEx, etc.)
- Claimed to be in good financial health overall
- Had a positive sense of their future as a congregation



Nearly all of the characteristics named above were statistically significantly different than what was reported for congregations that grew by less than 2%, plateaued, or declined from 2009 to 2014.

*God is still speaking,*  
**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**

