

Interim Ministry Resources

Chapter 3 Worship

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Reflections and Resources

1) What happened?!

This file follows 3Worship2Reflections and continues to address this question.

2) Competition from televangelists

A choir member whose parents were lifelong pillars of the church came up to me after the Easter service to say that he had listened to a TV preacher earlier that morning claim that Jonah's 3 days in the belly of the whale determines the chronology for Jesus' death and resurrection. He still attended services of worship and sang in the choir, but my guess is many people choose to stay home and watch the increasing number of TV preachers.

JONAH AND CHRIST - Bibleline Ministries

Jesus Christ laid His credibility on the line when He said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40)." If, therefore, the story of Jonah is not true then the story of Christ is not true. If the story of Jonah is fiction, then the story of Christ is fiction.
<http://www.biblelineministries.org/articles/basearch.php?action=full&mainkey=JONAH+AND+CHRIST>
Images for JONAH AND CHRIST

Resources

Televangelism facts, information, pictures | Encyclopedia.com

Televangelism emerged after World War II as an outgrowth of evangelicalism, a type of Protestant religion based on the idea that people needed to open their hearts and redirect their wills toward Christ, not only to secure an eternal place in heaven, but also to better their lives on earth.

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/televangelism>

Images for Televangelism facts, information, pictures

Televangelism - Wikipedia

Televangelists are Christian ministers, whether official or self-proclaimed, who devote a large portion of their ministry to television broadcasting. The term is also used derisively by critics as an insinuation of aggrandizement by such ministers.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Televangelism>

Images for televangelism

<https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Televangelist>

Images for Televangelist

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_television_evangelists

Images for Television Evangelists

Urban Dictionary: televangelist

A religious preacher, almost always **Evangelical Christian**, who preaches on paid television programs. The term is a fusion of "Television" and "Evangelist", and with recent scandals involving sexual and/or financial wrong-doings among televangelists, the term has a negative influence.

<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=televangelist>

Images for Dictionary: televangelist

Images for Evangelical Christian

3) Electronic church

Why bother to get up and go to church to attend a service of worship when you can look at a computer for a spiritual experience?

Resources

Electronic Church : Christian Courier

For many people, sitting in front of a computer and accessing a religious web site, has become a spiritual exercise that fulfills their need for a worshipping experience. A new study by the Barna Research Group suggests that "by the end of the decade, we will have in excess of 10 percent of our population who rely upon the Internet for their *entire* spiritual experience" (emp. added).

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/364-electronic-church>

Images for electronic church

The Electronic Church in the Digital Age [2 volumes]: Cultural Impacts of Evangelical Mass Media by Mark Ward Sr. (Editor)

Evangelical broadcasting has greatly expanded its footprint in the digital age. This informative text acquaints readers with how the electronic church of today spreads its message through Internet podcasts, social networking, religious radio programs, and televised sermons; how mass media forms the institution's modern identity; and what the future of the industry holds as mobile church apps, Christian-based video games, and online worship become the norm.

<https://www.amazon.com/Electronic-Church-Digital-Age-volumes/dp/144082990X>

<https://www.abc-clio.com/ABC-CLIOCorporate/product.aspx?pc=A4124C>

<https://vimeo.com/148963100> 2015-12-14 20.00 The Electronic Church in the Digital Age: Cultural Impacts of Evangelical Mass Media, Dr. Mark Ward

<https://eewc.com/electronic-church-digital-age-cultural-impacts-evangelical-mass-media/>

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-electronic-church-in-the-digital-age-2-volumes-mark-lee-ward-sr/1121005287>

<https://corp.credoreference.com/component/booktracker/edition/12147.html>

<https://markwardphd.com/publications/>

[Images for The Electronic Church in the Digital Age: Cultural Impacts of Evangelical Mass Media by Mark Ward Sr. \(Editor\)](#)

4) Couches or pews?

During Wisconsin's Coronavirus 'Stay-At-Home' Order, a woman admitted, "I may choose to stay home and continue to watch it through live streaming. It is pretty nice to sit on the couch in my pjs, drinking hot coco with my dog laying on my lap during worship."

Churches understandably took to putting services of worship and other faith resources online during the lockdown and have been advised to continue this practice after the lockdown is lifted, but will people get so used to thinking of themselves as safer at home and distancing themselves from others that they will stay home from church and distance themselves from the gathered assembly?

Column: Jeff Long: Some dark days ahead for the post-COVID church

Some will never return to in-person worship.

Notice the qualifier "some" in the headline. Worship for many is an opportunity to gather with the family of faith, to reassure and strengthen one another in face-to-face fellowship. What the last two months have taught us is worship can happen without gathering in a building, an idea forced upon us by the unseen and deadly coronavirus.

Virtual worship for the admittedly unspecified "some" is just fine, thank you. I don't have to leave my house and don't have to get dressed. Convenience wins.

<https://www.semissourian.com/story/2813658.html>

Images for Column: Jeff Long: Some dark days ahead for the post-COVID church Some will never return to in-person worship.

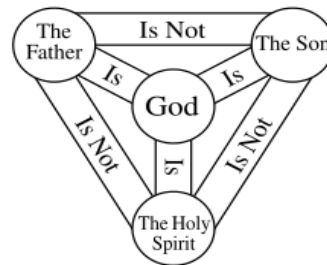
5) Google or God?



Google - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google#/media/File:Google_2015_logo.svg

Images for Google



God - Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God>

Images for God (Christian)

Solomon's prayer for understanding

At Gibeon, the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.

oremus Bible Browser: 1 Kings 3:5-12

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=174184462>

Images for Solomon's prayer for understanding

Who needs to turn to God when you've got Google? More people are relying on a search engine to provide answers for life, while less are turning to God for direction.

Resources

God's in Google: How the Rise of The Internet Has Led to The Decline of Religion

For the first time in the history of religion, we have answers. Since the birth of Google, we have the ability to assuage any doubts and alleviate any fears, whenever we want. Nothing is a mystery, nothing is "up to God," and everything has an answer... even if it's wrong.

<http://elitedaily.com/life/god-google-decline-religion-generation-internet/>

Images for God's in Google: How the Rise of The Internet Has Led to The Decline of Religion

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/christine-rosen-is-google-replacing-god-1402614743>

<https://www.thechurchofgoogle.org/>

http://churchofgoogle.org/Proof_Google_Is_God.html

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/unreasonablefaith/2009/02/9-proofs-google-is-god/>
<https://aleteia.org/2017/08/01/the-church-of-google-and-its-creed/>
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkoetsier/2017/05/10/galloway-google-is-god-apple-is-sex-facebook-is-love-and-amazon-is-death/#692635c4282b>
<https://www.recode.net/2017/6/12/15779424/scott-galloway-nyu-google-facebook-uber-apple-snapchat-netflix-new-york-times-kara-swisher-podcast>
<http://www.barrons.com/video/galloway-google-is-a-modern-man-god/6C1C4C1A-DBC2-4FFF-9D88-FD6818B4EE96.html>
<https://vimeo.com/140074459> John Durham Peters | "God and Google" on Vimeo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7L2_brO7tFs Proof that Google is God - YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSYkcACZxZc> GOD vs GOOGLE – YouTube
 Images for GOD vs GOOGLE – YouTube
<http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2017/12/06/former-google-and-uber-engineer-is-developing-ai-god.html>
<https://www.greenbiz.com/article/could-google-become-god>
<https://www.dezeen.com/2017/10/11/anthony-levandowski-engineer-religion-artificial-intelligence-ai-god-way-of-the-future/>
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/iyf/hottopics/faithvalues/dont-treat-god-like-google.html>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ulvOniW8xA> Tim Keller: "Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical" | Talks At Google - YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ulvOniW8xA> Images for Tim Keller: "Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical" | Talks At Google - YouTube

How the Internet Is Taking Away America's Religion - MIT Technology Review

Using the Internet can destroy your faith. That's the conclusion of a study showing that the dramatic drop in religious affiliation in the U.S. since 1990 is closely mirrored by the increase in Internet use.

<https://www.technologyreview.com/s/526111/how-the-internet-is-taking-away-americas-religion/>

Images for How the Internet Is Taking Away America's Religion - MIT Technology Review

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/08/internet-killing-religion-us>

Images for internet-killing-religion-us

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/christian-piatt/is-the-internet-killing-c_b_5921324.html

Images for Internet doing its part to contribute to the decline of Christianity

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2597891/Losing-religion-New-research-shows-religion-declined-Internet-use-increased.html>

Images for research-shows-religion-declined-Internet-use-increased

6) Pray to God or text on the phone?

In 1987, I traveled to Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, and Mali in West Africa on a travel seminar at my own expense with Lutheran World Relief. I wrote about what I learned in *Strengthening Our Rural Communities* in the Rural Ministry Resources part of this website. I remember seeing Muslims prostrating themselves 5X a day as they faced Mecca. According to [Islam - Wikipedia](#), Islam is "the fastest growing major religion in the world."

Why do Muslims pray five times daily? – CNN Belief Blog - CNN.com

ATLANTA, Georgia - It's 6:00 a.m. The sun isn't up yet, but Wahaaj Mohammed is.

He's performing a ritual washing in preparation for his first prayer of the day. He'll go on to pray four more times before the day is through, a practice called "salat" that many of the estimated 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide perform daily.

It's a practice that Mohammed, a 21-year old recent graduate from the Georgia Institute of Technology, can't imagine life without.

"It reminds you about God throughout your day," he says. "At fixed intervals, no matter how busy you are, all of a sudden you have to take out a few minutes and you're remembering, OK, why am I really here?"

<http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/03/21/why-do-muslims-pray-five-times-daily/>

Images for Muslims pray five times daily

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salah>

<http://musliminc.com/why-muslims-pray-five-times-a-day-4046>

<http://www.imranhosein.org/articles/understanding-islam/95-why-do-muslims-pray-five-times-a-day.html>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/islamic-prayer-timings-2003811>

Images for islamic-prayer-timings

Fast forward 30 years to 2017, I read an article about the amount of time spent on mobile devices in the U.S.

U.S. consumers now spend 5 hours per day on mobile devices

The time U.S. users are spending in mobile apps is continuing to grow; according to new data released this week by analytics firm Flurry, we're up to 5 hours per day on our mobile devices.

<https://techcrunch.com/2017/03/03/u-s-consumers-now-spend-5-hours-per-day-on-mobile-devices/>

Images for U.S. consumers now spend 5 hours per day on mobile devices

<https://247wallst.com/telecom-wireless/2017/04/18/americans-spend-5-hours-a-day-on-their-mobile-devices/>

<https://www.counterpointresearch.com/almost-half-of-smartphone-users-spend-more-than-5-hours-a-day-on-their-mobile-device/>

<https://hackernoon.com/how-much-time-do-people-spend-on-their-mobile-phones-in-2017-e5f90a0b10a6>

<http://flurrymobile.tumblr.com/post/157921590345/us-consumers-time-spent-on-mobile-crosses-5>

<https://www.emarketer.com/Article/US-Adults-Now-Spend-12-Hours-7-Minutes-Day-Consuming-Media/1015775>

and another article on the incline of Islam and the decline of Christianity.

Christians are leaving the faith in droves - Business Insider

Furthermore, **people are leaving Christianity in droves**. About 106 million Christians are expected to switch affiliation from 2010 to 2050 while only about 40 million people are expected to enter Christianity...

In North America, the **fastest growing religious groups are Muslims** and followers of "other religions" (an umbrella category that includes Baha'is, Jains, Sikhs, Taoists and many smaller faiths).

<http://www.businessinsider.com/christians-are-leaving-the-faith-in-droves-2015-4>

Images for Christians are leaving the faith in droves - Business Insider

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/04/30/ten-reasons-millennials-are-backing-away-from-god-and-christianity.html>

<https://answersingenesis.org/christianity/church/pew-research-why-young-people-leaving-christianity/>

<http://www.cracked.com/blog/4-specific-things-you-lose-when-you-leave-christianity/>

Prayer is one of the marks of the Christian faith.

Concluding Exhortation

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷**pray without ceasing**, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

oremus Bible Browser: 1 Thess. 5:16-18

<http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1%20Thess.%205:16-18&version=nrsv>

Images for pray without ceasing

THE SMALL CATECHISM

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, practice witchcraft, lie or deceive by His name, but call upon Him in every trouble, **pray**, praise and give thanks.

<https://www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/ELSCatechism.htm>

Images for pray, praise and give thanks

7) Hyper-individualism

A pastor told of a family who requested her to officiate at the memorial service for their father and grandfather. They did not belong to the church and did not attend services of worship. They only requested the funeral because they thought he would have wanted that, and he only attended services of worship sporadically. When she met with them to plan for the service, she observed that none of them talked much to each other but instead texted each other.

When I heard her story, I recalled **David L. Tiede - Faculty - Luther Seminary** while I was studying there (1975-79) warning about the advance of hyper-individualism and realized the future is now.

Resources

hyperindividualism - Wiktionary

1. (*sociology*) A tendency for people to act in a **highly individual way, without regard to society**.

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hyperindividualism>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individualism>

Images for hyperindividualism

Is America being torn apart by 'hyper-individualism'? | Patt Morrison

The author insists that before we blame sheer partisanship and polarization for political gridlock, we must first reach a consensus about the truth of our national history and the historical definition of core American values. Dionne contends that we must reconcile our **love of individualism** and our reverence for community in order to successfully move past our contemporary political differences.

<http://www.scp.org/programs/patt-morrison/2012/07/05/27269/is-america-being-torn-apart-by-hyper-individualism/>

Images for Is America being torn apart by 'hyper-individualism'? | Patt Morrison

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patt_Morrison

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/lanews-patt-morrison-20130507-staff.html>

Images for Patt Morrison (author)

The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract by Yuval Levin (Author)

Americans today are anxious--about the economy, about politics, about our government. The institutions that once dominated our culture have become smaller, more diverse, and personalized. **Individualism has come at the cost of dwindling solidarity**.

No wonder, then, that voters and politicians alike are nostalgic for a time of social cohesion and economic success.

But the policies of the past are inadequate to the America of today. Both parties are stuck presenting old solutions to new problems. In *The Fractured Republic*, Yuval Levin details his innovative answers to the dysfunctions of our fragmented national life. By embracing subsidiarity and diversity and rejecting extremism and nostalgia, he believes we can revive the

middle layers of society and enable an American revival. Updated with a new epilogue, Levin helps us navigate our fraught political waters.

<https://www.amazon.com/Fractured-Republic-Renewing-Americas-Individualism/dp/0465093248>
<https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/46232990-the-fractured-republic-renewing-america-s-social-contract-in-the-age-of>
<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-fractured-republic-yuval-levin/1123282710>
<https://www.basicbooks.com/titles/yuval-levin/the-fractured-republic/9780465061969/>
<https://www.questia.com/magazine/1P3-4032467141/our-hyper-individualistic-age>
<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/fractured-republic-0>
<https://www.npr.org/2016/06/07/481137357/the-fractured-republic-explores-how-nostalgia-led-to-polarized-politics>
<https://www.basicbooks.com/titles/yuval-levin/the-fractured-republic/9780465061969/>
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2016-10-17/fractured-republic-renewing-america-s-social-contract-age>
<https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/off-the-shelf/the-fractured-republic-renewing-america-s-social-contract-in-the-age-of-individualism>
<https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2016/06/27/yuval-levin-the-fractured-republic/>
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?409951-1/yuval-levin-discusses-the-fractured-republic>
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?316636-1/after-words-yuval-levin>
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?323167-2/yuval-levin-the-great-debate>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/books/review/the-fractured-republic-by-yuval-levin.html>
<http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2016/08/fractured-republic-john-horvat.html>
<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/book-review-fractured-republic-renewing-america%E2%80%99s-social-contract-in-an-age-of-individualis>
<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/meir-soloveichik-yuval-levins-fractured-republic/>
<https://thechristianrationalist.com/2016/09/03/the-fractured-republic-by-yuval-levin-summary-and-review/>
<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/fractured-republic-provides-intellectually-honest-conversation>
<https://andrewminion.com/2018/05/the-fractured-republic-renewing-americas-social-contract-in-the-age-of-individualism-by-yuval-levin/>
<https://www.economist.com/books-and-arts/2016/07/16/seeking-a-way-forward>
<https://www.newcriterion.com/issues/2016/6/in-praise-of-subsidiarity>
<http://www.marketsandmorality.com/index.php/mandm/article/view/1211> Review
<https://eppc.org/books/the-fractured-republic-renewing-americas-social-contract-in-the-age-of-individualism/>
<https://www.nationalaffairs.com/authors/detail/yuval-levin>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuval_Levin
<https://www.amazon.com/Yuval-Levin/e/B001H9W60K>
https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/2739781.Yuval_Levin

Images for yuval levin author

Images for The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract by Yuval Levin (Author)

The Poverty of Hyper-Individualism - Diamond-Cut Life

Rather, higher incomes lead us to depend on things and consumption *at the expense* of depending on each other. This is the opposite of how humans evolved. And overconsumption is driving global warming as well as making us socially isolated and less happy on the whole.

<http://www.diamondcutlife.org/the-poverty-of-hyper-individualism/>

Images for Poverty of Hyper-Individualism

<https://benjamindavidsteele.wordpress.com/2011/11/23/americas-hyper-individualism-a-tale-of-deception-immorality/>

Images for americas-hyper-individualism-a-tale-of-deception-immorality

<https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2018/04/16/lonely-america/> American Culture Promotes Individualism, Harming Community

<http://restitutio.org/2016/05/07/seeing-the-filter/> Identifying and Subverting Cultural Narratives

<http://restitutio.org/2016/05/17/hyper-individualism/>

<https://mcolaw.wordpress.com/2017/08/24/our-hyper-individualism-is-making-everyone-miserable/>

Images for hyper-individualism-is-making-everyone-miserable

<https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/religion/2015/06/06/hyper-individualism-drives-alienation-church/28500131/>

<https://www.news24.com/MyNews24/The-Mecca-of-Hyper-Individualism-20140117>

<https://legallysociable.com/2013/10/01/durkheim-modern-american-hyper-individualism-and-moral-consensus-today/>

The Problem of Hyperindividualism and its Impact on American Life

"Hyper" – from the Greek "huper," meaning over, beyond. "Individualism" – the stance or philosophy that values the moral worth of the individual as well as independence and self-reliance.

<https://www.wisdomwordspdf.org/2016/10/28/the-problem-of-hyperindividualism-and-its-impact-on-american-life/>

Images for The Problem of Hyperindividualism and its Impact on American Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMwWWjws99A> The problem with hyper-individualism - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RgnPfNoX5A> The Paradox of Hyper-Individualism - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yAMQoQbHk> Challenges of negotiating amid hyper-individualism: David Andrus at

TEDxCollegeoftheCanyons – YouTube

Images for Hyper-Individualism - YouTube

https://helenair.com/news/opinion/readers_alley/hyper-individualism-endangers-our-society/article_abfa5880-1ee4-11e0-aa54-001cc4c03286.html

Images for hyper-individualism endangers society

<http://socialapologetics.com/blogs/jordynn-m-nusz/how-has-hyper-individualism-shaped-the-way-society-views-morality/>

Images for hyper-individualism shapes society

The Real Reason Religion Is Declining In America | Psychology Today

Individualism -- a cultural system focusing more on the self and less on social rules -- has been on the increase in the U.S., with increased self-focus ([more positive self-views](#), [more use of "I" and "me" in books](#) and song lyrics), more tolerance and equality (around [race](#), [gender](#), and sexual orientation), less adherence to social rules (with acceptance of premarital [sex](#) at an all-time high), less social support (lower [empathy](#)), and less interest in large groups and social rules (declines in political and civic participation). Things are not all better, and they are not all worse. But American society is more focused on individual freedom, and less focused on social rules, than it used to be.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/our-changing-culture/201505/the-real-reason-religion-is-declining-in-america>

Images for Religion Declining | Psychology Today

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/future-trends/201808/losing-my-religion>

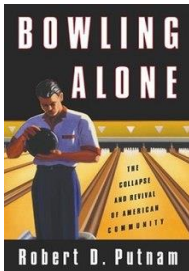
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/religion>

What does hyper-individualism do to community and what can be done to recapture a sense of community?

Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community by Robert D. Putnam (Author)

Once we bowled in leagues, usually after work—but no longer. This seemingly small phenomenon symbolizes a significant social change that Robert Putnam has identified in this brilliant volume, which *The Economist* hailed as “a prodigious achievement.”

Drawing on vast new data that reveal Americans’ changing behavior, Putnam shows how we have become increasingly disconnected from one another and how social structures—whether they be PTA, church, or political parties—have disintegrated. Until the publication of this groundbreaking work, no one had so deftly diagnosed the harm that these broken bonds have wreaked on our physical and civic health, nor had anyone exalted their fundamental power in creating a society that is happy, healthy, and safe. Like defining works from the past, such as *The Lonely Crowd* and *The Affluent Society*, and like the works of C. Wright Mills and Betty Friedan, Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* has identified a central crisis at the heart of our society and suggests what we can do.



<https://www.amazon.com/Bowling-Alone-Collapse-American-Community/dp/0743203046>

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/478.Bowling_Alone

<http://www.directory-online.com/Rotary/Accounts/6970/Downloads/4381/Bowling%20Alone%20Article.pdf>

https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/first/p/putnam-alone.html?_r=3

https://books.google.com/books/about/Bowling_Alone.html?id=rd2ibodep7UC

<http://bowlingalone.com/>

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?159499-1/bowling-alone>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZHZc-kcyQQ> Robert D. Putnam on Our Civic Life in Decline - YouTube

Images for Robert D. Putnam on Our Civic Life in Decline

<http://infed.org/mobi/robert-putnam-social-capital-and-civic-community/>

<http://civicreflection.org/resources/library/browse/bowling-alone-americas-declining-social-capital>

<https://www.enotes.com/topics/bowling-alone>

<https://www.faculty.rsu.edu/users/f/felwell/www/Theorists/Putnam/Community.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowling_Alone

<https://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/06/arts/lonely-bowlers-unite-mend-social-fabric-political-scientist-renews-his-alarm.html>

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/assoc/bowling.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_D._Putnam

<https://www.amazon.com/Robert-D.-Putnam/e/B000AP9K88>

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/260.Robert_D_Putnam

Images for Robert D. Putnam (Author)

Images for Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community by Robert D. Putnam (Author)

8) Do it yourself

In many ways, I am a DIYer, but in matters of faith I rely on God’s grace.

Not so with an increasing number of people, as they practice a DIY spirituality.

An American Brand Of DIY Spirituality | HuffPost

There are undoubtedly many factors driving this change in church attendance. One of those factors may be the rise of a new kind of spirituality in America, influenced by the spread of Eastern religions and New Age mysticism, and coupled with a robust American individualism. This rise in Eastern philosophies has coincided with a decrease in denominational identity and influence and has manifested itself in a particularly American brand of do-it-yourself spirituality.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shayne-looper/an-american-brand-of-diy-_b_13396504.html

Images for American Brand Of DIY Spirituality | HuffPost

<https://spiritualmusclehead.wordpress.com/2014/07/01/diy-spirituality/>

<https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/the-move-to-do-it-yourself-spirituality/>

<https://godinallthings.com/2012/08/16/not-quite-a-do-it-yourself-spirituality/>

<https://danfries.net/growth/> 8 Ways To Improve Yourself: A Quick Guide To Spiritual Growth

<https://charterforcompassion.org/discovering-self-compassion/your-primary-spiritual-relationship-love-for-yourself>

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/joeljmiller/2013/02/the-danger-of-do-it-yourself-spirituality/>

Images for danger-of-do-it-yourself-spirituality

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/churchformen/2016/03/why-is-church-attendance-declining-even-among-christians/#6>

<https://journal.burningman.org/2009/06/philosophical-center/spirituality/diy-spirituality/>

9) Eastern religions

A woman, who grew up in a devout Roman Catholic household and whose brother entered the priesthood, was convinced that she was an old soul. She imagined what she might be in the next life.

Resources

Why Are Eastern Religions So Attractive to So Many? by Winfried Corduan

Various Eastern religions today try to convince Westerners that they are not religions but methods of achieving deeper spirituality. Since people today have been brought up with the conventional falsehood that “all religions ultimately teach the same things,” they may not know any religious content; therefore, they cannot possibly see that this differentiation between the “spiritual” teachings of religions and their beliefs and practices is not tenable.

Hindu spirituality is embedded in the notion that a person is entrapped in the never-ending cycle of *samsara* (reincarnation). Redemption (*moksha*) is to escape from this cycle by one of various means—perhaps mystical oneness with Brahman, the disciplines of Yoga, or, most common today, devotion (*bhakti*) to a personal god or goddess. In Buddhism, spirituality plays a similar role, except that the escape consists of the realization of the impermanence or even emptiness of everything (*sunyata*), including the unreality of one’s self (*anatta*). In philosophical Taoism, spirituality is to assume the quietude of “action-less action” (*wu-wei*), from which the true Way (*Tao*) can then emerge.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/why-are-eastern-religions-so-attractive-to-so-many/>

Images for Why Are Eastern Religions So Attractive to So Many? by Winfried Corduan

Why are Eastern Religious Practices So Popular Today?

The appeal of Eastern religions is that it is up to the individual to determine how he or she wants to live their life in comparison to humanistic ideals. The eastern religion model is focused more on the horizontal relationship between people and extolled noble living and personal virtue as demonstrated in one’s relatives or holy men.

<https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/why-are-eastern-religious-practices-so-popular-today/>

Images for Eastern Religious Practices Popular

10) Where are the other nine?

In the gospel text for the Day of Thanksgiving in the Revised Common Lectionary A, Jesus asks the question of those who were healed but did not return to give thanks.

Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

10 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus^{*} was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers^{*} approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ ¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?’ ¹⁸Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ ¹⁹Then he said to him, ‘Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.’

oremus Bible Browser : luke 17:11-19

<http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=luke+17%3A11-19>

Images for Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

Images for Jesus asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?’

Today 2/3 of Mainline Protestants attend services of worship 2X or less a month. In other words, they spend 24 hours or less out of a possible 8,760 hours in a year.

Religious Landscape Study - Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

Beliefs and Practices

Attendance at Religious Services

Mainline Protestant – 33% At least once a week. 43% once or twice a month/a few times a year. 24% Seldom/never. Don't know.

<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/>
Images for religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services

Martin Luther employs a because/therefore argument to give thanks.

The Small Catechism - Book of Concord

The First Article
Of Creation

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean? – Answer

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them; in addition thereto, clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and homestead, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He provides me richly and daily with all that I need to support this body and life, protects me from all danger, and guards me and preserves me from all evil; and all this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I owe it to Him to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

<http://bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php>

Images for for all which I owe it to Him to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him

11) Don't have time...

Time, or the lack thereof, is increasingly given as an excuse for not attending services of worship.

New Survey Explores Why People Don't Attend Church - Michael Foust

The Aug. 1 Pew Research Center [survey](#) found that among adults who seldom or never attend services, 37 percent say the most important reason they skip services is because they practice their faith "in other ways."

The other reasons are varied:

- 28 percent – "I am not a believer."
- 23 percent – "I haven't found a church or other house of worship I like."
- 18 percent – "I don't like the sermons."
- 14 percent – "I don't feel welcome."
- 12 percent – "I don't have the time."
- 9 percent – "I'm in poor health or find it difficult to get around."
- 7 percent – "There isn't a church or other house of worship for my religion in my area."

The 2014 survey found that 30 percent of Americans seldom or never attend religious services.

<https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/new-survey-explores-why-people-don-t-attend-church.html>

Images for People Don't Have Time to Attend Church

But the one equalizer in life is that each person is given 24 hours with which to decide what to do.

Time is More Valuable than Money | Psychology Today

People often say, "I don't have the time to..." Fill in the blank with whatever you like: exercise, make dinner, write a book, start a company, run for political office. What makes these people think that they have less time than anyone else? Of course, they don't. We all have the same 24 hours in each day and make real decisions about how we spend them. If you really want to get in shape, then carve out time to exercise. If you want to write a book, then pick up a pen and do it. And, if you want to run for president, then get started. It isn't going to happen if you plan your day around your favorite TV shows or spend hours updating your [Facebook](#) page. These are entertaining distractions that eat up your irreplaceable time.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/creativityrulz/200909/time-is-more-valuable-money>

Images for Time is More Valuable than Money | Psychology Today

<https://www.success.com/why-time-is-more-important-than-money/>

<https://www.wisebread.com/8-reasons-time-is-worth-more-than-money>

<https://medium.com/@Innov8Coworking/top-4-reasons-why-time-is-more-valuable-than-money-d10cc2e9882c>

<http://www.psycholocrazy.com/5-reasons-why-time>

<https://www.frugalrules.com/more-important-than-money/> #2

The 5 Love Languages includes Quality Time.

Quality Time - The 5 Love Languages®

Quality Time

In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, "I love you," full undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there – with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby – makes your

significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful. Quality time also means sharing quality conversation and quality activities.

<http://www.5lovelanguages.com/languages/quality-time/>

<http://www.5lovelanguages.com/>

Images for 5 love languages

<https://www.amazon.com/Love-Languages-Secret-that-Lasts/dp/080241270X>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Five_Love_Languages

God has given the great commandment to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind,” and the 3rd of 10 commandments to “remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.” According to the Pew Research Center **Attendance at religious services - Religion in America: U.S. Religious Landscape Study**, 33% of Mainline Protestants attend at least once a week, 43% once or twice a month/a few times a year, and 24% seldom/never. In other words, 67% spend approximately 24 hours or less out of 8,760 in a year at religious services. If God regards Quality Time as one of the 5 Love Languages, could it be said that this practice “...grieves the Holy Spirit of God”? (Ephesians 4:30)

12) Too busy

She thought about attending services of worship, but most times it seemed like there were things going on, and, when there weren't, she felt like staying home and catching up.

I am too busy to go to church – WAJ

It's amazing how busy our lives are. What is even more amazing is how much we can miss because we are so busy.

<https://whataboutjesus.com/busy-go-to-church/>

Images for too busy to go to church

<https://www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog/too-busy-for-church/2121/>

<https://www.crosswalk.com/slideshows/10-excuses-christians-use-for-missing-church.html?p=7> 7. They are too busy.

<http://christianmediamagazine.com/7-excuses-people-use-going-church/> 7. I Don't Have the Time/I'm Too Busy

http://archive.churchsociety.org/crossway/documents/Cway_011_SamuelSunday.pdf [PDF]sunday – too lazy...or too busy? - Church Society

<http://www.summercreekbc.org/2017/03/too-busy-for-church/>

<https://www.harvest.org/devotions-and-blogs/daily-devotions/2012-07-31> "Too Busy for Church?" - Devotion for 7/31/2012 - Harvest: Greg Laurie

<https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/2018/02/14/church-ashes-go-helps-believers-observe-ash-wednesday/336382002/> Ashes To-Go offered for those too busy to attend church services

Images for Ashes To-Go offered for those too busy to attend church services

<https://hooverchurchofchrist.org/too-busy/>

http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/luke/too_busy.htm

13) Less than the Nominal of Hatch, Match, Dispatch

The expression “hatch-match-dispatch” has been used to describe nominal attendance at services of worship.

hatch, match and despatch - Wiktionary

Adjective[edit]

hatch, match and **despatch** (*not comparable*)

1. (*of church attendance, humorous*) **Very infrequent; attending only for baptism, marriage, and funeral.**

He is a hatch, match and despatch Catholic [or Baptist, etc.].

https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hatch,_match_and_despatch

Images for hatch match and dispatch

Just before I started one assignment, the granddaughter of the congregation patriarch and matriarch got married at a country club in a nearby city rather than at the open country church. The mother of the woman being married served as the president of the Congregation Council and treasurer of the Parish Council but did not attend services of worship.

If there ever was a day that people at least looked to the church for a baptism, wedding, and funeral, those days are dwindling. As for weddings, more couples are choosing country clubs, outdoor weddings, destination weddings, and other settings.

Fewer couples are marrying in churches. Does it matter? – Religion News

Religious congregations hosted 22 percent of weddings in 2017, down from 41 percent in 2009. **Churches are losing**

ground to banquet halls, hotels, country clubs, wineries, rooftops and museums.

<https://religionnews.com/2018/06/07/fewer-couples-are-marrying-in-churches-does-it-matter/>

Images for Fewer couples are marrying in churches. Does it matter? – Religion News

<https://factsand Trends.net/2018/05/31/why-no-one-may-be-getting-married-at-your-church-this-summer/>

<https://www.kansas.com/living/religion/article163414458.html> Most weddings no longer take place in a church

Images for Most weddings no longer take place in a church

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/parish-diary/church-has-lost-control-marriage>

<http://www.dispatch.com/news/20180714/fewer-couples-walk-down-church-aisle-to-say-i-do>

<https://blog.christianconnection.com/why-are-fewer-people-getting-married-in-church/>

<http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2017/august/growing-number-of-americans-ditching-church-weddings>

[Images for growing-number-of-americans-ditching-church-weddings](#)

As for funerals and memorial services, my experience is that more services are being conducted at funeral chapels, while others are choosing alternative ceremonies.

Alternative Funerals - NPR

Jon Biewen reports that many people are turning away from traditional rituals of death in favor of more personal expressions designed to reflect the individuality of the deceased.

<https://www.npr.org/programs/death/980310.death.html>

Images for alternative funerals

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/mar/11/doing-death-differently-todays-funerals-are-not-like-they-used-to-be>

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/25/home-funerals-death-mortician_n_2534934.html

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/8-alternatives-to-a-funeral/>

Images for alternatives to a funeral

<https://bottomlineinc.com/money/estate-planning/go-your-own-way-eight-alternatives-to-a-traditional-funeral>

<https://www.funerals.net/Alternatives-to-Funerals-information.php>

<https://beyond.life/blog/alternatives-traditional-funeral/>

<https://www.livescience.com/15980-death-8-burial-alternatives.html>

Images for death-8-burial-alternatives

<http://www.us-funerals.com/funeral-articles/alternative-funerals.html#.W9SJ-mhKiUk>

<http://www.facingbereavement.co.uk/nonreligiousfunerals.html>

Images for non religious funerals

More people are choosing not to forego a funeral service.

What's Your Question: is it wrong not to have a funeral?

If one is considering not having a funeral it is often for one of two reasons:

- 1) The person who died expressly stated they didn't want a funeral.
- 2) Someone (or multiple people) in the family does not want to have a funeral.

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/is-it-wrong-not-to-have-a-funeral/>

Images for What's Your Question: is it wrong not to have a funeral?

<https://www.agingcare.com/questions/okay-not-to-have-funeral-163330.htm>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35812014> Who chooses not to have a funeral? - BBC News

<https://decorative-urns.com/cremation-blog/estate-planning/what-to-do-when-there-is-no-funeral/>

<https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/ask-roger/is-is-okay-to-not-have-a-funeral.html>

<https://www.low-cost-funeral.co.uk/choosing-not-to-have-a-funeral/>

Images for choosing-not-to-have-a-funeral

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/jun/16/donate-body-to-medical-science>

Images for donate-body-to-medical-science

As for baptisms, my experience is that many parents request this sacrament as more pro forma than anything else. More people seem to be acting as if the photo op after the service of worship is more important than the water and the word.

How to Photograph a Baptism: 15 Steps (with Pictures) - wikiHow

A baptism is an important milestone in a person's life, and making sure you have quality photos to commemorate the event is important. Although baptism photography can be difficult due to the movement and water involved, with simple techniques, you can prepare for photos, take candid shots, and take staged photos to last a lifetime.

<https://www.wikihow.com/Photograph-a-Baptism>

Images for How to Photograph a Baptism

14) Attract or distract?

According to Martin Luther, God wants to attract us.

Small Catechism of Martin Luther

The Lord's Prayer

Introduction

Our Father in heaven.

What is this? OR What does this mean?

With these words God wants to attract us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Pew Edition - Augsburg Fortress

<https://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/7583/Evangelical-Lutheran-Worship-Pew-Edition> Page 1163

Images for with these words God wants to attract us

If in fact it is God's desire to attract us, then it can be said that there are an increasing number of things that distract us from God?

Resources

Andrew Sullivan: My Distraction Sickness — and Yours - NYMag

If the churches came to understand that the greatest threat to faith today is not hedonism but distraction, perhaps they might begin to appeal anew to a frazzled digital generation. Christian leaders seem to think that they need more distraction to counter the distraction. Their services have degenerated into emotional spasms, their spaces drowned with light and noise and locked shut throughout the day, when their darkness and silence might actually draw those whose minds and souls have grown web-weary. But the mysticism of Catholic meditation — of the Rosary, of Benediction, or simple contemplative prayer — is a tradition in search of rediscovery. The monasteries — opened up to more lay visitors — could try to answer to the same needs that the booming yoga movement has increasingly met.

<http://nymag.com/selectall/2016/09/andrew-sullivan-my-distraction-sickness-and-yours.html>

Images for Distraction Sickness

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/09/21/jesus-doesnt-care-how-many-twitter-followers-you-have/?utm_term=.f7c7132b8094

<https://www.getabstract.com/en/summary/career-and-self-development/i-used-to-be-a-human-being/28205?af=refind>

<https://www.realclearpolitics.com/2016/09/20/i-used-to-be-a-human-being-391735.html>

Images for i used to be a human being

<https://www.distractionpodcast.com/2016/10/25/i-used-to-be-a-human-being/>

<http://www.praytellig.com/index.php/2016/09/25/andrew-sullivan-i-used-to-be-a-human/>

<https://alhouse.blogspot.com/2016/09/i-used-to-be-human-being.html>

<http://rfrancosp.blogspot.com/2016/09/reading-andrew-sullivans-i-used-to-be.html>

<https://blog.12min.com/i-used-to-be-a-human-being-summary/>

<https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=12547817> I Used to Be a Human Being | Hacker News

Hear God: Eliminate the Distractions - Pastor Rick Warren

You can't hear God when your mind is crowded with thoughts, worries, fears, and plans, or if you always have the radio or TV on. And if you constantly have your phone against your ear, when God calls all he gets is a busy signal!

All of these distractions are what Jesus was referring to in Luke 8 when he talked about the seed falling in the weeds. Today's verse says those weeds grew with the seed and strangled it.

<http://pastorrick.com/devotional/english/hear-god-eliminate-the-distractions>

Images for Hear God: Eliminate the Distractions - Pastor Rick Warren

<https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/daily-hope/read/devotionals/daily-hope-with-rick-warren/dont-be-distracted-from-the-work-god-has-for-you-daily-hope-with-rick-warren-september-21-2016-11760937.html>

<https://www.idisciple.org/post/weed-out-distractions-so-you-can-hear-god>

Images for weed-out-distractions-so-you-can-hear-god

<https://pastorrick.com/devotional/english/if-you-want-to-hear-god-get-still-and-listen>

<https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/daily-hope/read/devotionals/daily-hope-with-rick-warren/three-things-that-keep-us-from-hearing-god-daily-hope-with-rick-warren-april-7-2018-11790039.html>

Lord, Deliver Me from Distraction | Desiring God

We're becoming conditioned to distraction, and it's harming our ability to listen and think carefully, to be still, to pray, and to meditate. Which means it is a spiritual danger, an evil from which we need God's deliverance (Matthew 6:13).

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lord-deliver-me-from-distraction>

Images for Deliver Me from Distraction | Desiring God

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/distraction-can-cost-you-everything>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/you-can-defeat-distraction>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/practice-defeating-your-distractions>

Images for practice-defeating-your-distractions

Preaching in an Age of Distraction [J. Ellsworth Kalas]

Preaching's 2014 Top Books on Preaching Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. — Proverbs 4:25-26 Preaching is difficult enough under the best of circumstances. But what are we to do when it seems that all of us—hearers and preachers alike—are constantly distracted? Veteran preacher and homiletics professor J. Ellsworth Kalas offers wise insights for effective preaching in an age of distraction. He examines how people have been distracted in every era and explores how God can meet people precisely at the point of their distraction. Regardless of whatever new technologies come our way, this call to pastoral attentiveness, creativity and excellence provides avenues for connecting with congregations with a countercultural clarity of focus.

Rediscover how the proclamation of the Word still speaks profoundly to distracted hearers. Invite your congregation to a renewed attention to the things of God.

<http://www.amazon.com/Preaching-Age-Distraction-Ellsworth-Kalas/dp/0830841105>

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18500014-preaching-in-an-age-of-distraction>

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0830841105>

<http://www.preaching.com/resources/articles/11710426/>

<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2014/12/preaching-in-an-age-of-distraction>

<http://www.christiancentury.org/reviews/2015-08/delight-preaching>

<https://abramkj.com/2014/05/21/preaching-in-an-age-of-distraction/>

<http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/2014/05/14/book-notes-preaching-in-an-age-of-distraction-taking-god-at-his-word-how-god-became-jesus/>
<http://secondnaturejournal.com/j-ellsworth-kalas-preaching-in-an-age-of-distraction-a-review/>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q3PGSC_vuE Preaching in the Age of Distraction by Kalas — Monday Minute
http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/author/mary_catherine_dean
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellsworth_Kalas
<http://asburyseminary.edu/news/ellsworth-kalas-passing/>
<https://goodnewsmag.org/2015/11/remembering-dr-j-ellsworth-kalas/>
<https://www.amazon.com/J.-Ellsworth-Kalas/e/B001H6SSY6>
https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/154927.J_Ellsworth_Kalas
Images for J. Ellsworth Kalas, author
Images for Preaching in an Age of Distraction [J. Ellsworth Kalas]

What Does the Bible Say About Distractions? - OpenBible.info

<https://www.openbible.info/topics/distractions>

<https://www.openbible.info/topics/distraction>

<http://biblereasons.com/distractions/>

Images for bible and distractions

<https://biblereasons.com/distractions/>

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/5-bible-verses-on-the-dangers-of-earthly-distractions/90422.htm>

Images for dangers of earthly distractions

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lord-deliver-me-from-distraction>

Images for deliver me from distractions

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/scripture-engagement/main/getting-started/dealing-with-distractions>

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Bible-Verses-About-Distractions/>

<https://odb.org/2014/11/21/dealing-with-distractions/>

Images for dealing with distractions

<https://www.theodysseyonline.com/11-bible-verses-distracted>

<https://www.faithgateway.com/danger-distraction/#.Wzz3rNJKiUk>

<https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/spiritual-distractions>

Images for spiritual distractions

<https://haroldherring.com/blogs/harolds-blogs/richthoughts/1084-avoid-these-7-distractions-to-your-focus>

<https://www.kelseymferguson.com/7-practical-bible-study-tips-easily-distracted/>

Images for easily distracted

15) Church sanctuary or county jail?

I served at a downtown church, which, in 1960, was considered one of the top 3 congregations among Norwegian Lutherans in the Upper Midwest together with Central Lutheran in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Bethel Lutheran in Madison, Wisconsin. Back in the day, the story is told, people lined up to get into the services of worship on Ash Wednesday. In 1990, over 900 attended services of worship each weekend. Unfortunately, the congregation split following the **2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly**, and a group formed a new congregation at a strip mall along a main highway. In 2015, the average worship attendance at the downtown church was 90. Directly across the street from the downtown church stands the county jail. It didn't seem to be much of a deterrent, though, as my office was broken into on one occasion, and my car was stolen out of the church parking lot on another occasion. In 1970, I was told, the jail housed approximately 20 inmates, and in 2000, it housed 200+ inmates. **Current Inmate Listing** 9/26/2016 AT 06:00AM TOTAL INMATES: 286. I ask myself, "What's wrong with this picture?"

To its credit, during my time there, the congregation housed a jail ministry chaplain who contended that the answer does not come in locking ever more people up but in introducing them to Jesus. In addition, various 12-step groups met at the church. The congregation took its turn with other congregations in the community in housing the homeless until a homeless shelter was established 6 blocks away together with other congregations. The congregation also involved itself in various other outreach ministries to the community.

Resources

County jail - Simple English Wikipedia

The term "county jail" is used in the United States for jails maintained to hold prisoners in each of the many county divisions of a U.S. state.

https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_jail

Images for County jail

Sanctuary - Wikipedia

Church sanctuary

Main article: Place of Refuge § Medieval England

A sacred place, such as a church, in which fugitives formerly were immune to arrest (recognized by English law from the fourth to the seventeenth century).^[2] While the practice of churches offering sanctuary is still observed in the modern era, it no longer has any legal effect and is respected solely for the sake of tradition.



The Church as a [Place of Refuge](#)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanctuary>

[Images for Church as a Place of Refuge](#)

Interestingly, when the American Lutheran Church merged to become a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the site of the former headquarters now serves as a county jail.

[American Lutheran Church - Wikipedia](#)



The site of The ALC's former headquarters on South Fifth Street in [Minneapolis, Minnesota](#), now serves as the [Hennepin County Jail](#).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Lutheran_Church

[Images for Hennepin County Jail](#)

16) If certain people don't want to show up for compensated work, will they ever want to engage in the work of worship?

The Request of James and John

⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to **serve**, and to give his life a ransom for many."

[oremus Bible Browser : Mark 10:45](#)

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=369990877>

[Images for Son of Man came not to be served but to serve](#)

The man sat in the front of the church on the pulpit side with his wife at the 10:15am worship service along with 20+ other mostly older attendees on my first Sunday at a village church. After the service of worship, I headed to the parade for the community fair in a city with a population of 1,831 nine miles away. As I was walking along the parade route, I ran into him, and he started talking. His family and relatives were gathered in the front lawn as had been the tradition for many years. After learning about his personal and family history, I inquired about his work setting. He replied that he had served in the military for 20 years and now worked as a supervisor at a factory. Then, unprompted, he explained, "We can't find workers. Many that apply can't pass the drug test. Many that are hired don't stay. It's not like the work is that hard. I think that many simply want to get paid but not have to work. They don't want to be employees. I don't know what's going to happen in the next generation." He elaborated that many factories are forced to seek labor from south of the border.

Seven months later, a member of the same congregation related that she sometimes worked as many as 80 hours a week as a supervisor at a nursing home. When I asked the reason, she stated, "We can't find enough certified nursing assistants. I don't know what's going to happen in the future."

[Liturgy - Wikipedia](#)

Etymology

The word *liturgy*, derived from the technical term in [ancient Greek](#) (Greek: λειτουργία), *leitourgia*, which literally means "**work of the people**" is a literal translation of the two words "litos ergos" or "**public service**".

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgy>

[Images for liturgy work of the people](#)

Resources

[How to Manage \(and Avoid\) Entitled Employees - NYTimes](#)

Ms. Haines said entitlement manifested itself in the following workplace traits: a resistance to feedback, an inclination to overestimate talents and accomplishments, a tendency to be demanding and overbearing and to blame others for mistakes, and **little sense of team loyalty**. Sound familiar?

People who exhibit this behavior have difficulty adapting to new situations and are not agreeable because they see themselves as being the benchmark against which the behavior of others should be judged. Some researchers have described entitled people as having arrested emotional development, functioning as if they are about 6 years old with needs that must be met first. This is especially hard for business owners — most of whom come from a discipline of delayed gratification — to grapple with.

<http://boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/managing-and-avoiding-entitled-employees/>
Images for Manage (and Avoid) Entitled Employees

Survive the 10 Toughest Conversations Every Supervisor Dreads

In today's workplace, many employees seem to be guided only by their own personal standards. With the variety of personalities and philosophies that are brought together in any organization, supervisors and managers have a tough job on their hands. It can be very challenging — even uncomfortable — to confront employees about certain issues.

<http://www.pryor.com/site/webinar-audio/survive-the-10-toughest-conversations-every-supervisor-dreads>
Images for Toughest Conversations Every Supervisor Dreads

17) How do you expect the new pastor to come on the scene and magically attract people to church?

This story comes under the rubric: "If you raised your sons and daughters in the faith, and they don't come to church anymore?"

I found out early on that the church secretary stated her opinions. At the second staff meeting eight days after I started, she volunteered, "I liked *(the previous pastor)*. She tried to help everybody get along with each other. But I liked *(the pastor before)* even more because he challenged people to come to church and inquired why they weren't coming."

I then asked her, "How about your children?" She was proud of one daughter who attended a large non-denominational church down south with a screen and praise band but admitted that the son wanted nothing to do with church, and the other daughter only came on special occasions. I asked about other parents active in the church. One by one, she admitted that their children no longer attended services of worship?

I then asked her, "Where do you think this congregation will be in 10 years." She replied,

"I hope that we will still have worship services and a pastor to conduct them, but I don't see people involved in activities beyond worship."

Why Dying Churches Die - ThomRainer.com

1. They are still waiting on the "magic bullet" pastor. They reason, if only we could find the right pastor, we would be fine. But they bring in pastor after pastor. Each leaves after a short-term stint, frustrated that the congregation was so entrenched in its ways. So, the church starts the search again for the magic bullet pastor.

<http://thomrainer.com/2017/08/dying-churches-die/>

Images for Why Dying Churches Die - ThomRainer.com 1. They are still waiting on the "magic bullet" pastor.

<http://thomrainer.com/2017/07/ten-roadblocks-church-revitalization/>

#5

<https://twitter.com/ThomRainer/status/887021503904178177> The magic bullet syndrome never works with church revitalization.

Images for magic bullet syndrome never works with church revitalization

<http://thomrainer.com/2017/09/10-reasons-church-revitalizations-often-fail-rainer-leadership-360/>

#5

<http://thomrainer.com/2017/06/six-stages-dying-church/>

#3

<https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/revitalize-replant-with-thom-r-570711/episodes/eight-reasons-some-pastors-are-22941314> Episode Highlights: Hiring a young pastor is not a magic bullet for church revitalization.

Images for Hiring a young pastor is not a magic bullet for church revitalization.

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1433668599>

Page 168

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=080544937X>

Page 62

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1433671794>

Page 210

<http://drgerrylewis.com/001/001> – There is no magic bullet [Podcast] | Dr. Gerry Lewis

Images for thom rainer (author)

18) Duty replaced by discretion in change of generations

I talked with a retired 97-year-old dairy farmer by telephone on the second day of my assignment at one setting. He lamented that without a driver's license he felt like a "calf confined to a pen." He told me that his wife had recently been admitted to the nursing home. I went to see her the next day. When I related what he had said, she replied, "He's threatened to drive his tractor to church, but the daughters told him, 'Dad, don't you dare do that!'" A month later, I went to see her again. I good-naturedly asked if her husband was still threatening to drive the tractor to church. She replied, "No, but *(name)* (who lived in the village and who likewise did not own a car, but got around in the village on his bike and out into the country on a tractor) offered to give him a ride (on the tractor) but we told him not." I got a good chuckle out of the story, and, afterwards, I gained an even greater appreciation for the faithful remnant who attend regularly and give generously. I realized that, once those born prior to 1945 pass from the scene, for the most part, duty will have been replaced by discretion, and attendance at services of worship for many will simply be one option among many from which to choose depending on whether they think it meets their needs and fits their schedules.

Resources for duty

4 Bible verses about Duty of Man to God - Knowing Jesus
<https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Duty-Of-Man-To-God>
[Images for Duty of Man to God](#)

The Habits of Highly Effective Churches: Being Strategic in Your God-Given Ministry by George Barna

Commitment to Worship

One challenge for churches is to simply get worship on the agenda of attenders. In many congregations, worship is just one more activity among a slate of dozens and dozens of options from which to choose. Among the highly effective churches, establishing worship as one of the non-negotiable endeavors of a Christian is a core habit.

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1441223592>

[Images for Commitment to Worship](#)

George Barna reveals nine critical habits proven to make a church an effective local body. *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches* dispels popular myths and wrong beliefs as to what constitutes a thriving church in today's society and is an excellent resource for ministry leaders who are seeking or willing to re-evaluate and restructure a church.

<https://www.amazon.com/Habits-Highly-Effective-Churches-Strategic/dp/0830718605>

<https://www.barna.com/about/george-barna/>

<http://www.georgebarna.com/>

<https://www.barna.org/churchless#.Vc6mqPIVhBc>

<https://www.amazon.com/George-Barna/e/B000APJB4G>

https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/32052.George_Barna

[Images for The Habits of Highly Effective Churches: Being Strategic in Your God-Given Ministry by George Barna](#)

The Worship of God is the Duty of a Christian – pseudepigraphus

Worship is Our Duty

One darling that we should really kill is this notion that worship is not a “duty” but a “joy” and a “privilege.” Put another way: worship is not something that we “have to do” but something that we “get to do.” The problem comes in with the conjunction “but,” which creates a false antithesis. “A lion is not a carnivore but a vertebrate.” “Bob is not a Christian but a husband.” (NB: a false antithesis may or may not coincide with a category error.) The suggestion that duty and joy are antithetical to one another is simply false. Worship is, in fact, our duty, and *as such* we take joy in it. Indeed, it is much more than a duty: it is our *raison d'être*, our reason for being. But it is not *less* than a duty.

This trope of worship not being a duty gets trotted out all over and in various forms. I don't have a verbatim example on hand, but it goes something like this: “Think of it this way: after all that God has done for you in Christ, why *wouldn't* you want to thank and praise Him? How could you *not*? You literally *cannot help it*.”

However well-intentioned, that right there is Lutheran psychobabble. No, thanks. I prefer to get my guilt-trips honestly, i.e., for failing to do my duty, not for failing to feel a certain way. The first I can amend; the second I cannot. Let me answer the rhetorical questions in order, showing why they are lame:

<http://www.pseudepigraph.us/2017/06/16/worship-as-christian-duty/>

[Images for Worship of God Duty of a Christian](#)

Resources for discretion

Six Statements That Can Kill a Church - ThomRainer.com

3. “This church is not meeting my **needs**.”

<http://thomrainer.com/2017/01/six-statements-can-kill-church/>

[Images for Six Statements That Can Kill a Church - ThomRainer.com 3. “This church is not meeting my needs.”](#)

<http://thomrainer.com/2017/05/eight-signs-church-may-closing-soon/> #5

<http://thomrainer.com/2017/05/five-reasons-stability-bad-church/> #5

<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Lets-Worship-Symptoms-of-a-Selfish-Church-Member> #6

<http://www.lifeway.com/pastors/2016/08/16/the-most-common-factor-in-declining-churches/>

[Images for thom rainer \(author\)](#)

The Best Ways to Get People to Attend Church More Often

Overall, we found that the **biggest motivators for weekly attendance are related to convenience and finding value in relationships** with leaders and other members of the church community.

Offer a Variety of Worship Options

Twenty-seven percent of survey respondents reported that more options for worship times would motivate them to attend more often. This makes sense, given that the number of hours Americans work in a week has been **ticking upward** since the 1970s.

And since household chores, schoolwork and **extracurricular activities** take up much of the remaining time families have together, offering a variety of service times or online options to accommodate members' busy schedules could help increase attendance.

<http://blog.softwareadvice.com/articles/church/survey-get-people-to-church-0514/>

[Images for The Best Ways to Get People to Attend Church More Often convenience and finding value in relationships](#)

Why the Search for a Church That Meets Your Needs is Futile – Carey Nieuwhof

Here are 5 reasons why I believe trying to find a church that meets your needs is futile.

<https://careynieuwhof.com/meets-my-needs/>

Images for Why the Search for a Church That Meets Your Needs is Futile – Carey Nieuwhof
 Images for Carey Nieuwhof - the church is not about meeting your needs
<https://www.sermoncentral.com/pastors-preaching-articles/carey-nieuwhof-10-reasons-even-committed-church-attenders-are-attending-church-less-often-2556>
<https://careynieuwhof.com/15-characteristics-of-todays-unchurched-person/>
<https://careynieuwhof.com/why-attending-church-no-longer-makes-sense/>
<https://www.amazon.com/Lasting-Impact-Powerful-Conversations-Church/dp/1941259464>
<https://www.amazon.com/Carey-Nieuwhof/e/B003GJCLCM>
https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/3396023.Carey_Nieuwhof
 Images for carey nieuwhof (author)

19) Duty replaced by discretion as evidenced in constitution language

Following the August 5-10, 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, I updated and edited constitutions from September through December. At mid-December, about 30 congregations still had not submitted constitutions during the 10 years I had been doing the synod review since being asked by Bishop Duane Pederson in 2009. I found out that one of the reasons was that some of the congregations were hanging on to constitutions that preceded the ELCA. When I asked the synod office to send PDF copies of any documents from their files, I received a constitution that had been adopted by a congregation of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America in 1904 and submitted to the synod office in 1985. See 10Constitution4ProgressionDevelopment, page 7 - Lyster Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Buffalo County, Wisconsin

AMENDMENTS

Section I

(Constitution, Article III)

1. Anyone who wishes to become a member of this congregation shall make application to the Pastor or one of the Deacons, who together with the Congregational Council shall investigate whether the applicant has the qualifications listed in Article III of the Constitution. If the Congregational Council favors the applicant’s admission, the matter shall be presented at the next congregational meeting for final decision.
2. The congregation desires that all of its members shall in all earnestness strive for their own salvation as well as that of the brethren, and that they shall assist the congregation in its struggle with the world and the devil and in its work for the extension of the kingdom of God.
3. All members shall see to it that the children of the congregation are brought up and instructed in the Christian faith.
4. All self-supporting members shall, according to their ability, contribute toward the financial support of the congregation.
5. All voting members shall be in **duty** bound to attend all legally held congregational meetings. Those who do not attend shall submit to the resolutions adopted.
6. No saloon- or tavern-keeper shall be admitted to membership.

Eligibility to Vote

1. All who for one year been in arrears with their **dues** without a legitimate reason acceptable to the congregation shall not be eligible to vote until such neglect has been rectified.
2. Members who are subjected to church discipline shall be deprived of the right to vote from the time their case is presented to the congregation until it has been dismissed.

Contrast that language to that of the

[DOC]Model Constitution for Congregations 2019 - ELCA Resource Repository

Chapter 8.

MEMBERSHIP

*C8.02. Members shall be classified as follows:

- c. **Voting members** are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation.

Members of this congregation who have satisfied these basic standards shall have the privilege of voice and vote at every regular and special meeting of this congregation as well as the other rights and privileges ascribed to voting members by the provisions of this constitution and its bylaws. They shall not have voted as a seasonal member of another congregation of this church in the previous two calendar months.

<https://www.elca.org/constitution> 2019 Model Constitution for Congregations

<https://download.elca.org> › ELCA Resource Repository › Model Constitution

<http://www.elca.org/Resources/Office-of-the-Secretary>

[Images for Model Constitution for Congregations 2019 Chapter 8. MEMBERSHIP Voting members during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation](#)

20) The older generation is passing away, and the younger generations are staying away

Prayer for Lifelong Protection and Help

So even to **old age** and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.
Your power and your righteousness, O God, reach the high heavens.
You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?

oremus Bible Browser : Psalm 71

<http://bible.oremus.org/?q=320860255>

Images for So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me

One way I have come to understand the decline in attendance at services of worship is to look at the changing of generations.

Resources

Aging Congregations May Be Churches' Biggest Concern | Insights into Religion

A look at the age groups is particularly sobering. In 60 percent of mainline denominations, one-quarter of the members are 65 or older. By comparison, in 24 percent of evangelical churches, one-quarter of members are 65 or older. And in 36 percent of Roman Catholic churches, one quarter of members are 65 or older...

The problem for congregations is particularly acute because social movements appear to be exacerbating the trend. Today's young adults marry later and are more likely to remain childless, two factors that are associated with lower rates of religious participation.

<http://www.religioninsights.org/aging-congregations-may-be-church%E2%80%99s-biggest-worry>

Images for Aging Congregations May Be Churches' Biggest Concern | Insights into Religion

<https://www.faithandleadership.com/new-future-aging-congregation>

<http://meettheneed.org/blog/2017/05/how-not-to-rejuvenate-an-aging-church/#sthash.J2o3z5tD.dpbs>

America's Changing Religious Landscape | Pew Research Center – Pew Forum

Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow
Factors Behind the Changes in Americans' Religious Identification

One of the most important factors in the declining share of Christians and the growth of the "nones" is **generational replacement**. As the Millennial generation enters adulthood, its members display much lower levels of religious affiliation, including less connection with Christian churches, than older generations.

<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>

Images for America's Changing Religious Landscape | Pew Research Center

<http://religionnews.com/2015/05/12/christians-lose-ground-nones-soar-new-portrait-u-s-religion/>

Images for Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2016/09/05/religion-is-in-decline-in-the-west-and-america-is-no-exception/>

<https://www.newsweek.com/are-americans-becoming-godless-europeans-497994>

Images for americans-becoming-godless-europeans

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/american-religion-trends_us_570c21cee4b0836057a235ad

Images for american-religion-trends

Churchgoing and Christian Ethics - Page 85 - Google Books Result

A cultural theory also predicts that Christian belief will be higher amongst an older generation whether or not individuals currently go to church. **Most people born before the Second World War will have been to church and/or Sunday school in their youth, whereas most of those currently at school will not.** In other words, the latter will have little experience of the culture that nurtures Christian beliefs and are, thus, less likely than an older generation to share them. Only those young people who do go to church are likely to hold high levels of Christian belief. Others will show increasing signs of skepticism. Precisely because the collapse in any form of church participation has been so swift amongst young people, it should be possible to find unambiguous evidence of correspondence falling levels of Christian belief.

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0521578280>

Images for Most people born before the Second World War will have been to church and/or Sunday school in their youth, whereas most of those currently at school will not.

<https://www.amazon.com/Churchgoing-Christian-Ethics-New-Studies/dp/0521578280>

Images for Churchgoing-Christian-Ethics-New-Studies

<https://www.amazon.com/Robin-Gill/e/B001IU4WMI>

http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/299406.Robin_Gill

Images for Robin Gill, author churchgoing and christian ethics

Five Reasons Why Churches Are Dying and Declining Faster Today – ThomRainer.com

2. **The exit of the Builder generation.**

<http://thomrainer.com/2016/09/five-reasons-churches-dying-declining-faster-today/>

Images for Five Reasons Why Churches Are Dying and Declining Faster Today – ThomRainer.com 2. The exit of the Builder generation.

<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Church-library-ministry-becoming-family-understanding-generations-in-the-church>

<https://www.amazon.com/Bridger-Generation-Thom-S-Rainer/dp/0805443819>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/102704.html>
https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Bridger_Generation.html?id=-Pu_rwGePSUC
<https://www.churchcentral.com/news/bridger-generation-and-the-church/>
<https://www.amazon.com/Essential-Church-Reclaiming-Generation-Dropouts/dp/0805443924>
Images for thom rainer (author)

Pub Ponderings: Emerging Missional Links

In the United States: 65% of the Builder Generation will be in church this Sunday -Boomer Generation: 35%; Gen X: 15%;
-Gen Y: 4% (from the *Bridger Generation* by Thomas Rainer)

<http://pubpastor.blogspot.com/p/emerging-missional-links.html>

[Images for 65% of the Builder Generation will be in church this Sunday in the United States](#)

Mainline decline - The Lutheran Magazine

Mainline denominations grew through the 1940s and 1950s, but about 1965 they began to lose members. The latest research suggests those losses have little to do with political orientations or internal disputes about doctrine or church policy.

Instead it's quite clear that the baby boom simply came to an end. And **as the boomers became teenagers and adults, they felt free to leave the church.** They didn't join conservative churches. They quit going to any church.

http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=5806&key=33709634

Images for Mainline decline - The Lutheran Magazine

[Images for as the boomers became teenagers and adults, they felt free to leave the church](#)

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/contact-us/>

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/issues/>

No shows | The Christian Century

Aging constituencies. **Mainline churches have a disproportionate number of members age 65 and older. This proportion will only grow more pronounced as the first of the baby boomers reach 65 in 2011.** While it does not appear that death rates are changing dramatically in the mainline churches from year to year, many older members may not be attending as often—for health or other reasons.

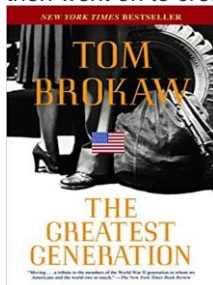
The other side of this dilemma is the failure of churches to reach younger persons. This is particularly true for the smaller churches that constitute a large part of mainline denominations.

<http://www.christiancentury.org/article/2010-09/no-shows>

Images for Aging constituencies. Mainline churches

The Greatest Generation [Tom Brokaw]

In this superb book, Tom Brokaw goes out into America, to tell through the stories of individual men and women the story of a generation, America's citizen heroes and heroines who came of age during the Great Depression and the Second World War and went on to build modern America. **This generation was united not only by a common purpose, but also by common values-duty, honor, economy, courage, service, love of family and country, and, above all, responsibility for oneself.** In this book, you will meet people whose everyday lives reveal how a generation persevered through war, and were trained by it, and then went on to create interesting and useful lives and the America we have today.



<http://www.amazon.com/The-Greatest-Generation-Tom-Brokaw/dp/0812975294>

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/32987.The_Greatest_Generation

https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/18495.Tom_Brokaw

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greatest_Generation

https://books.google.com/books?id=_uQfjglplokC

<https://www.nytimes.com/books/first/b/brokaw-generation.html>

<http://www.artofmanliness.com/2009/04/30/7-lessons-in-manliness-from-the-greatest-generation/>

<http://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/generation-gaps/greatest-generation1.htm>

<http://www.businessinsider.com/tom-brokaw-greatest-generation-book-2015-2>

<http://www.nbcnews.com/video/nightly-news/55330818#55330818>

<http://www.nbcnews.com/video/nightly-news/52009951#52009951>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yndphp3V1kA> Tom Brokaw on the Greatest Gift from The Greatest Generation | Master Class | Oprah Winfrey Network - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wSbQaPpJZI> Tom Brokaw: Lessons from the Greatest Generation. 4/12/09. - YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k-bRBKV_uo Tom Brokaw and Chronicling the Greatest Generation – YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k-bRBKV_uo Tom Brokaw and Chronicling the Greatest Generation - YouTube

Images for Tom Brokaw and the Greatest Generation - YouTube

<https://www.nbcnews.com/video/tom-brokaw-explains-the-origins-of-the-greatest-generation-273640003752>

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?400520-1/tom-brokaw-legacy-greatest-generation>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/video/remembering-the-greatest-generation-31412291646>

<http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-the-greatest-generation/#gsc.tab=0>

<https://tsopl.org/art/tom-brokaws-the-greatest-generation>

<https://www.facebook.com/tombrokawbooks/>

<http://www.randomhouse.com/rhpg/brokaw/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Brokaw

https://twitter.com/tombrokaw?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

<http://tombrokaw.com/>

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/tom-brokaw/>

<http://www.biography.com/people/tom-brokaw-9227130>

<https://www.amazon.com/Tom-Brokaw/e/B001HCRYRW>

http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/18495.Tom_Brokaw

[Images for tom brokaw](#)

[Images for Greatest Generation \[Tom Brokaw\]](#)

Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore | HuffPost

1. The demographic remapping of America.

Whites are the majority today at 64 percent. In 30 to 40 years, they will be the minority. One in every three people you meet on the street in three to four decades will be of Hispanic origin. In other words, if you are not reaching Hispanics today, your church's shelf life is already in question.

Furthermore, America is **aging**. Go into almost any traditional, mainline church in America, observe the attendees and you'll quickly see a disproportionate number of gray-headed folks in comparison to all the others. According to [Pew Research](#), every day for the next 16 years, 10,000 new baby boomers will enter retirement. If you cannot see where this is headed, my friend, there is not much you can see.

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-mcswain/why-nobody-wants-to-go-to_b_4086016.html

[Images for Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore | HuffPost](#)

<https://www.amazon.com/Why-Nobody-Wants-Church-Anymore/dp/0764488449>

[Images for Why-Nobody-Wants-Church-Anymore](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HemDf0Nv5kc> 'Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore' by Thom & Joani Schultz

[Images for 'Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore' by Thom & Joani Schultz - YouTube](#)

21) Changing migration patterns

The patriarch of an open country congregation asked if I could help him get the ladder down from the balcony on a Monday morning in order to change the floodlight above the altar. He also asked an Amish farmer who brought his two oldest sons. The patriarch could not talk any of the men in the congregation to help because they claimed to be too old for the job. The members told him he was too old to climb tall ladders. The Amish farmer climbed the ladder easily to change the light bulb. Afterwards, the Amish farmer asked me how many came to services of worship. I replied 15-20 a Sunday. Then I pointed to photos in the gathering area when the church hosted Bible camps in the summer as the mother church in the area. In that very interchange there was an unspoken understanding of the changing of the neighborhood. The oldest church in the synod had become depopulated, while the Amish drove their buggies to meeting places for services of worship.

Afterwards, the patriarch explained to me that 12-15 years earlier real estate agents bought up tracts of land. The neighbors did not know why until the Amish moved in. Then the Amish raised large families where 8-12 children were not unusual. One mother bore 22 children. The Amish sought to ingratiate themselves with the English in order to buy the land when the time came. The story is told of how a census worker interviewed one mother who could not remember the names of all her children and their birth dates.

150+ years earlier immigrants from Norway settled the land and built churches. 150+ years later the Amish gradually displaced the English and attended services of worship in the homes.

Wisconsin Amish - Amish America

Wisconsin is dotted with small Amish communities. Roughly 3/4 of Wisconsin's 40+ Amish settlements consist of just 1 or 2 church districts. **Wisconsin has experienced high levels of in-migration from Amish communities in other states.** Nearly 30 Amish settlements have been founded in Wisconsin over the past 2 decades

<http://amishamerica.com/wisconsin-amish/>

[Images for Wisconsin Amish - Amish America](#)

[Images for Amish migration to Wisconsin](#)

22) Faithful widows

Jesus denounces the scribes and points to a poor widow who puts in two small copper coins.

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

³⁸As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, ³⁹and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! ⁴⁰They devour **widows' houses** and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

The Widow's Offering

⁴¹He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this **poor widow** has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

oremus Bible Browser : Mark 12:38-44
<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=313048676>
Images for Widow's Offering

I visited a United Methodist Church on a vacation Sunday where the preacher spoke on Mark 12:38-44 in a sermon entitled "The Faith of the Widow." She even passed around a small zip-loc bag containing two small copper coins she purchased in Israel as well as a penny by way of comparison. Sitting in the front pew were 5 women who all looked to be 65+. One of them gave an announcement about Vacation Bible School. Six children had signed up so far. She urged the people to bring others. There were 2 teenage girls in attendance. One lit the candles. Other than the girls and their parents, most of the other people looked to be about the same age or older than the women in the front pew. I could not help but think of how many different preachers they had listened to down through the years and they kept coming back. On the way home, I saw people on each side of the street mowing lawns and doing other yard work.

23) So much for sermon notes

It was the middle of December, and I had received a total of 3 sermon notes from a class of 7, and these notes came from students who belonged to other congregations but came to the class because it worked out better than going to their home congregations. I stated an expectation of 12 for the year at the orientation for students and parents. When I began in the pastoral ministry, sermon notes were a given as a way of instilling the habit of participating in services of worship in order to hear the word and share in the supper. I encouraged students to acolyte, read lessons, come to youth group, and take part in service activities, but about the only thing I could count on is the kids getting off the bus after school to attend a class for an hour. There are a few high expectation congregations where the pastor gets buy-in from the parents and leadership, but from my experience, the days of requiring sermon notes for most congregations with which I am familiar is becoming a thing of the past.

Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist? | United Church of God

The National Study of Youth and Religion, conducted from 2001 to 2005, led sociologist Christian Smith to conclude that "the de facto religious faith of the majority of American teens is 'Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.'"

By this he means teens imagine a God who created the world and "wants me to be nice." **But this God "is not demanding.** He actually can't be, since his job is to solve our problems and make people feel good. In short, God is something like a combination Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist" (from *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*).

<http://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/blogs/this-is-the-way/divine-butler-and-cosmic-therapist>
<https://www.amazon.com/Soul-Searching-Religious-Spiritual-Teenagers/dp/0195384776>
https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/606115.Soul_Searching
https://books.google.com/books/about/Soul_Searching_The_Religious_and_Spiritu.html?id=AN85V20yRmQC
<http://youthandreligion.nd.edu/announcements/soul-searching-the-religious-and-spiritual-lives-of-american-teenagers/>
Images for Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist

24) Exhaustion

I met with a couple requesting to be married 6 weeks before the scheduled wedding. I had met the woman 1X at a service of worship but not the man. They brought their 2 young children with them. The younger child shrieked so loud on occasion that it pierced my eardrums. The older child came and asked her mother questions about homework. The man talked on the cell phone twice during the initial session to other farm hands about what to do with a machinery breakdown during the harvest season. I asked them to fill out an Information for Pre-marital Conversation sheet as a way to start the session. I included the question: "Keeping in mind the importance of involvement with the people of God for keeping a healthy marriage, what plans do you have for participating in the life of the church after your wedding?" The woman said she would try to bring the kids to Sunday School and church when she could. He said, "I put in long hours working on farms. If it's raining on a Sunday morning and I can't work outside, I'm so exhausted I don't want to do anything." I asked to meet the following Wednesday at 7pm after Confirmation class at one of the 3 open country congregations I was serving. She initially balked because she planned to take the kids trick or treating on Halloween, but then reluctantly agreed after thinking she could take them earlier.

25) Young parents not coming back

His mother made the first contact for her son to have his daughter baptized. From then on, the son's wife communicated with me by email. While waiting for the parents for the baptismal orientation in the church fellowship hall, I looked through the Confirmation photos and found his photo 16 years earlier. My guess is that he had not attended many services of worship since Confirmation. He said, "We like to go camping up north." Even if I stress "bring them to the word of God and the holy supper" from Holy Baptism, I do not expect to see them. Other than getting the kids baptized and maybe sending them to Sunday School when convenient, other things will take precedent. It used to be that it was understood young people would take a break from church but would return when becoming parents. Not anymore.

Does Having Children Make Parents More Active Churchgoers? – Barna Group

David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, directed the research and clarified a common assumption about families. "Many religious workers assume that parenthood motivates people to return to their spiritual traditions and to

church attendance. This perspective is especially common when it comes to justifying the frequent disengagement among young adults. Sometimes faith leaders go so far as to simply wait for parenthood to occur, when they figure the 'real work' of ministry can begin."

The survey calls that strategy into question. Children do, in fact, act as a catalyst for millions of parents. Yet, this is not the most common or normative experience for parents in the nation. While parenthood can reset people's priorities in life, **having children is not an automatic faith-starter for most adults.** It's more complicated than that. Family background and their personal faith history impact their behavior.

<https://www.barna.com/research/does-having-children-make-parents-more-active-churchgoers/>

Images for Does Having Children Make Parents More Active Churchgoers?

Images for having children is not an automatic faith-starter for most adults

<https://www.barna.com/research/>

<https://www.barna.com/category/family-kids/>

<https://www.barna.com/category/millennials-generations/>

<https://www.barna.com/research-type/articles/>

26) Blue and red

People of faith who still believe that the Sabbath was given for rest and worship can no longer rely on blue laws to restrict commerce

Resources

Blue law - Wikipedia

Blue laws—known also as Sunday laws—are laws designed to restrict or ban some or all Sunday activities for religious reasons, particularly to promote the observance of a day of worship or rest. Blue laws may also restrict shopping or ban sale of certain items on specific days, most often on Sundays in the western world.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_law

Images for Blue laws—known also as Sunday laws

Minnesota's Puritan side: We still have 'blue laws' — but for how long?

"Commerce is well enough established as seven days and nights a week now," Dayton said. "For us to say it doesn't apply to this or doesn't apply to that really doesn't make much sense. **There are an increasing number of Minnesotans for which Sunday isn't a religious holiday.**"

<https://www.minnpost.com/politics-policy/2014/01/minnesota-s-puritan-side-we-still-have-blue-laws-how-long>

Images for commerce seven days and nights a week

Images for sunday not a religious holiday

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/churchformen/2016/03/why-is-church-attendance-declining-even-among-christians/#4>

on Sundays but must exercise red stop signs in their own lives.



Stop Sign Clip Art Clipart - Free Clipart - ClipArtHut

<http://www.cliparthut.com/stop-sign-clip-art-clipart-RetFZM.html>

Images for stop sign

Resources

Take Back Your Sabbath | Christianity Today

Our churches and families need to return to a Sabbath consciousness that can provide a platform for countercultural witness.

Without being legalistic about it, **Christians have a duty to protest the oppressive tyranny of time and productivity and an economic order that tries to squeeze inordinate productivity out of people's energies.**

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/november/31.42.html>

Images for Take Back Your Sabbath | Christianity Today

The covenant to keep the law

³¹ and if the peoples of the land bring in merchandise or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, **we will not buy it from them on the sabbath or on a holy day;**

Nehemiah 10:31a NRSV

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+10%3A31&version=NRSV>

Images for we will not buy merchandise or grain from them on the sabbath

The Ten Commandments

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work. **But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your**

livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore, the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

oremus Bible Browser : Exodus 20:8-11

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=181716029>

Images for seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work

27) Activities that undermine the command to rest on the Sabbath

In my opinion, there are certain activities that undermine the command to rest on the Sabbath. One such instance is to schedule a Saturday-Sunday [Synod Assembly](#) May 30 - 31, 2015 at UW-Eau Claire where, "Assembly business will begin late in the day Saturday and continue throughout Sunday, May 31." [Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Events | Wisconsin ELCA](#)
While the motive is well-intended to make it possible for those who work in the workplace Monday through Friday to attend a synod assembly, it reinforces the notion that conducting business 7 days a week is acceptable. I think, in the interest of keeping the Sabbath as well as attending to the stewardship of time and money, a synod assembly could be on one Saturday, and a Walking Together event on another Saturday. Pastors, then, can be in the pulpit, and congregation leaders in the pew on Sunday. That change fortunately happened in 2016, and according to the conference dean, in an email to rostered leaders of the Heart of the North Conference of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, the cost of the synod assembly was reduced from \$86,000 to \$16,000.

[Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Events | Wisconsin ELCA](#)

[Walking Together](#)

March 12, 2016 at UW-Eau Claire.

[2016 Synod Assembly](#)

May 21, 2016 at Trinity Lutheran, Eau Claire

http://www.nwswi.org/news_and_events/events.phtml

[Images for Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Events | Wisconsin ELCA Walking Together](#)

Likewise, the "God's work. Our hands." [Sunday - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#) reinforces the ever-increasing notion for many that Sunday is a day to catch up on the projects that did not get done during the week. In 2014, the Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers in the community of the congregation at which I was serving set aside the last Saturday in October for a volunteer workday in the community. Saturday is preferable to Sunday, in my opinion, for such a work day.

Resources

[A Day Apart: How Jews, Christians, and Muslims Find Faith, Freedom, and Joy on the Sabbath \[Christopher D Ringwald\]](#)

The Sabbath is the original feast day, a day of joy and freedom from work, a holy day that allows us to reconnect with God, our fellows and nature. Now, in a compelling blend of journalism, scholarship and personal memoir, Christopher D. Ringwald examines the Sabbath from Creation to the present, weaving together the stories of three families, three religions and three thousand years of history.

A Day Apart is the first book to examine the Sabbath in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A marvelously readable book, it describes the three weekly holy days--the Muslim *Juma* on Friday, the Jewish *Shabbat* on Saturday and the Christian Lord's Day on Sunday--and introduces us to three families, including Ringwald's own, and shows how they observe the holy day and what it means to them. The heart of the book recounts the history of the Sabbath, ranging from the Creation story and Moses on Mount Sinai to the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, the impact of the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of the modern weekend. Ringwald shows that the Sabbath instinct, to observe a special day of withdrawal and repose, is universal. Indeed, all religions and philosophies teach that life is more than toil, that time should be set aside for contemplation, enjoyment and culture.

In today's frantic 24/7 world, the Sabbath--a day devoted to rest and contemplation--has never been more necessary. *A Day Apart* offers a portrait of a truly timeless way to escape the everyday world and add meaning to our lives.

<http://www.amazon.com/Day-Apart-Christians-Muslims-Freedom/dp/0195370198>

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/830908.A_Day_Apart

<http://www.muebooks.com/a-day-apart-how-jews-christians-and-muslims-find-faith-freedom-and-joy-on-the-sa-PDF-15846135/>

http://books.google.com/books/about/A_Day_Apart_How_Jews_Christians_and_Musl.html?id=47-1jy_jWxkC

<http://www.chron.com/life/houston-belief/article/To-each-his-own-Sabbath-1545120.php>

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0912/p09s01-coop.html>

<https://www.amazon.com/Christopher-D-Ringwald/e/B001JRTEO6>

http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/432398.Christopher_D_Ringwald

Images for Christopher D Ringwald, author a day apart

Images for A Day Apart: How Jews, Christians, and Muslims Find Faith, Freedom, and Joy on the Sabbath

[Best 25+ Sabbath rest ideas on Pinterest](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/sabbath-rest/>

Images for Sabbath rest on Pinterest

<https://www.pinterest.com/beauty4ashessa/rest-sabbath-rest/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/maryjanesolberg/sabbath-rest/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/jueljoseph/sabbath-rest/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/sabbath/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/sabbath-quotes/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/sabbath-day/>

Sabbath 2.0 - Adam J. Copeland

But why consider a **social media sabbath** at all? Two theological reasons come to mind.

<http://www.adamjcopeland.com/2011/02/08/sabbath-2-0/>

Images for social media sabbath

What Does the Bible Say About Sabbath? - OpenBible.info

<https://www.openbible.info/topics/sabbath>

https://www.openbible.info/topics/sabbath_day

https://www.openbible.info/topics/the_sabbath_day

https://www.openbible.info/topics/working_on_the_sabbath

Images for Bible and Sabbath

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/founders-ministries-blog/6-biblical-reasons-to-observe-the-sabbath.html>

Images for observe the sabbath

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-sabbath/>

<https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Sabbath,-In-Ot>

<https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/questions/christian-sabbath/>

Images for christian sabbath

<https://www.sabbathtruth.com/faq/advanced-topics/7-facts-about-the-seventh-day>

<https://biblereasons.com/sabbath/>

28) Left behind?

A woman 70+ lamented that so many in her family and others were so busy they didn't have time for church.

Resources

RightNow Media At Work :: No Time for God

Beth is a student trainer at her high school. It's a very demanding job and she barely has time for schoolwork. She doesn't have time to read the Word or cultivate a relationship with God.

<https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/114521>

Images for No Time for God

Teens Too Busy for Church Says Survey | Christianity Today

After an earlier survey showed that 1,000 young people were leaving British churches every week, Youth for Christ surveyed youth workers to find out why. Only 15 percent said teens are abandoning the church because they're bored, but 3 out of 4 said **youth have so many other activities in their lives that they're too busy for church.**

https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/octoberweb-only/22_0a.html

Images for Teens Too Busy for Church Says Survey | Christianity Today

I asked myself, "Are attendees of services of worship increasingly becoming those who don't otherwise have things going whether it be staying in or going out?"

Resources

How to Be a Great Christian Teenager: 13 Steps - wikiHow

5Go to Sunday morning church service, Sunday night church service, Wednesday night church service, and any other church service such as: live nativity, revival, Bible study, and/or baptisms.^[5]

<https://www.wikihow.com/Be-a-Great-Christian-Teenager>

Images for Go to Sunday morning church service

The New Life in Christ

12I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters,* by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual* worship. **"Do not be conformed to this world," but be transformed** by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

oremus Bible Browser : Romans 12:1–2

<http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Romans+12:1%E2%80%932>

Images for Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed

29) Increased mobility

A car manufacturer used to advertise, "See the USA in your Chevrolet."

See the USA in Your Chevrolet Dinah Shore, 1953 - YouTube

This is one in a series of classic Chevrolet television commercials that flooded the airways during the 1950s and 1960s.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYX1ewPJrFU>

Images for See the USA in Your Chevrolet - YouTube

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/See_the_USA_in_Your_Chevrolet

<https://www.weeklystandard.com/larry-miller/see-the-usa-in-your-chevrolet>

People are traveling more and gone more.

Church attendance is on the decline - Daily Republic

The **mobility** of society has changed dramatically in the last 20 years.

The rise of commuters for work has changed the way most view travel. It is not uncommon for people to take weekend trips to the lake, amusement parks and recreational spots regularly.

Their place at church is left empty and those who are there will be missing out in the blessing of others' presence.

<https://www.dailyrepublic.com/all-dr-news/solano-news/local-features/local-lifestyle-columns/church-attendance-is-on-the-decline/>

Images for church attendance on the decline mobility of society

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/churchformen/2016/03/why-is-church-attendance-declining-even-among-christians/> #3

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-dont-we-go-to-church-anymore_us_58b73de8e4b015675cf65b9d A third reason is our increased mobility

30) Indifference and persecution

While there is a growing indifference to and disdain for the Christian faith in this country,

Resources on indifference

Five Trends Among the Unchurched - Barna Group

"Our research suggests a growing **indifference** toward churches among the unchurched," says David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group and co-editor, with George Barna, of the new book *Churchless*, from which this data is taken. "The gap between the church and the churchless is growing, and it appears that Christian communities of faith will struggle more than ever to engage church outsiders in their neighborhood, town or city."

<https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/685-five-trends-among-the-unchurched#.V6XohSgrKUK>

<https://barna-resources.myshopify.com/products/churchless>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2012/march-online-only/ur-video-david-kinnaman-on-growing-indifference-toward.html>

Images for growing indifference toward churches among the unchurched

Luke 10:25-37 Commentary by Michael Rogness - Working Preacher

Jesus warned the seventy to expect resistance and rejection, and it's the same today. More Christians are being persecuted for their faith today than at any other time in human history, including the Roman persecutions of the first century. If not persecution, we might meet "sheilaism" or other various views. Or we might meet **indifference** of those in our increasingly secular society. I remember a friend who quit going to church because "I don't need all that anymore."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1721

Images for indifference of those in increasingly secular society

Narratives illustrating the authority claimed by Jesus

¹⁶ "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

¹⁷ "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn."

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+11%3A16-17&version=ESV>

Images for Narratives illustrating the authority claimed by Jesus

The Sin of Indifference: Taylors Church of Christ

One of the greatest hindrances to the cause of Christ today is the indifferent church member.

http://www.taylorschurch.com/the_sin_of_indifference.php

Images for Sin of Indifference

<https://www.catholic.com/index.php/ga/the-sin-of-indifference>

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-sin-of-indifference-howard-strickland-sermon-on-attitude-general-171332>

<http://www.harvestbiblechurch.net/blog/heinous-sin-of-indifference-one>

<http://ww1.antiochian.org/node/17217> Combating Secularism's Most Serious Sin: Indifference

Images for Combating Secularism's Most Serious Sin: Indifference

<http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume14/TMO14502.html> The Sin of Indifference - Truth Magazine

<https://www.worldslastchance.com/updates/the-sin-of-indifference.html>

<https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/michael-craven/the-sin-of-indifference-11629461.html>

<https://glenben10.wordpress.com/2012/07/17/warning-against-the-sin-of-indifference/>

Images for warning-against-the-sin-of-indifference

<http://truediscipleship.com/overcoming-sin-through-christ-apathy-complacency-or-indifference-3/>

Images for overcoming-sin-through-christ-apathy-complacency-or-indifference

What Does the Bible Say About Indifference? - OpenBible.info

<https://www.openbible.info/topics/indifference>

Images for Bible and Indifference

<https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Indifference>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lord-deliver-me-from-indifference>

Images for lord deliver me from indifference

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionary-of-bible-themes/5885-indifference>

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-sin-of-indifference-howard-strickland-sermon-on-attitude-general-171332>
<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Bible-Verses-About-Indifference/>
www.bethlehemampden.org/blog/SpiritualIndifference
<https://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.verses/ID/247/Indifference-Spiritual-verses.htm>
<https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/281/Spiritual-Indifference.htm>
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/the-dangerous-legacy-of-spiritual-indifference/>
Images for spiritual indifference

Christians in other countries are facing increasing persecution.

Hebrews 11:29-12:2 NRSV - The Faith of Other Israelite Heroes – Bible Gateway

²⁹ By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. ³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient,^[a] because she had received the spies in peace.

³² And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two,^[a] they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

³⁹ Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

The Example of Jesus

¹² Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,^[a] and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of^[a] the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+11%3A29-12%3A2&version=NRSV>

Second reading for 9PentecostC 2019

Images for Faith of Other Israelite Heroes in Hebrews

Resources on persecution

Best 25+ Persecution of christians ideas on Pinterest

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/persecution-of-christians/>

Images for persecution of christians today pinterest

<https://www.pinterest.com/sqgriffie70/persecuted-christians/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/BDelux/persecuted-christians/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/Selina1962/persecuted-christians/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/chrisd1210/persecution-of-christians/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/ProfYancey/christian-persecution/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/persecuted-church/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/persecution/>

Persecution of Christians - Wikipedia

In more recent times the persecution of Christians has increased in India according to International Christian Concern.^{[1][2]} The Christian missionary organization Open Doors (UK) estimates 100 million Christians face persecution, particularly in Middle Eastern countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.^{[3][4]}



A *Christian Dirce*, by [Henryk Siemiradzki](#). A Christian woman is martyred under [Nero](#) in this re-enactment of the myth of [Dirce](#) (painting by [Henryk Siemiradzki](#), 1897, [National Museum, Warsaw](#)).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Christians

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Siemiradzki_Christian_Dirce.jpg

Images for Persecution of Christians

Pope Francis: Christians are being persecuted in two ways

Christians around the world are being persecuted in two ways, Pope Francis said during his homily at Casa Santa Marta yesterday morning. There is the explicit kind, such as the martyrs killed at Easter in Pakistan, and the kind of persecution that is “polite, disguised as culture, modernity and progress”, and ends up taking away man’s freedom and even the right to conscientious objection. But through suffering persecution, Christians know that the Lord is always at their side, the Pope said.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=29832>

Images for Pope Francis: Christians are being persecuted

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytdMUddGe-U> The World's Most Persecuted Minority: Christians - YouTube

Images for World's Most Persecuted Minority: Christians

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/january/cts-25-most-read-stories-on-persecuted-church.html>

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/>

<https://savethepersecutedchristians.org/>

<https://www.persecution.com/>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iraq-christians-persecuted-by-isis-60-minutes/>

https://www.cufi.org/learn/issues/christian-persecution/?gclid=CjwKCAjwtlXbBRBhEiwAWV-5ntWMzr2V8HTI6mHR6ji0LE_MVzH5cEb9HLH0yRnKG0qeI9HEp5odPxoChHEQAvD_BwE

<http://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high/>

<http://www.iclrs.org/index.php?pagelD=8&linkId=206&contentId=1663&blurbId=28977>

<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/20/arab-spring-restrictions-on-religion-findings/>

Images for Religious Hostilities

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biv8Z2Fimr0> ISIL Persecuting Iraqi Christians - YouTube

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iraq-christians-persecuted-by-isis-60-minutes/>

Images for persecuted christians

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/26/magazine/is-this-the-end-of-christianity-in-the-middle-east.html>

<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/images-of-life-for-christian-refugees-living-in-northern-iraq>

Images for christian refugees

<https://www.onfaith.co/onfaith/2014/07/29/images-under-threat-of-isis-iraqi-christians-face-persecution/33330>

Images for iraqi christians face persecution

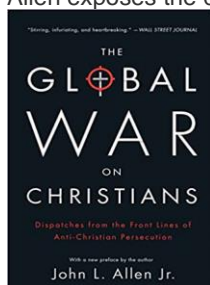
<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/iraq/>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/05/07/christian-persecution-world-egypt-iraq-mexico-column/101279550/>

<https://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/persecuted-iraqi-christians-offer-forgiveness-to-isis.html>

The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution by John L. Allen Jr. (Author)

One of the most respected journalists in the United States and the bestselling author of *The Future Church* uses his unparalleled knowledge of world affairs and religious insight to investigate the troubling worldwide persecution of Christians. From Iraq and Egypt to Sudan and Nigeria, from Indonesia to the Indian subcontinent, Christians in the early 21st century are the world's most persecuted religious group. According to the secular International Society for Human Rights, 80 percent of violations of religious freedom in the world today are directed against Christians. In effect, our era is witnessing the rise of a new generation of martyrs. Underlying the global war on Christians is the demographic reality that more than two-thirds of the world's 2.3 billion Christians now live outside the West, often as a beleaguered minority up against a hostile majority-- whether it's Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East and parts of Africa and Asia, Hindu radicalism in India, or state-imposed atheism in China and North Korea. In Europe and North America, Christians face political and legal challenges to religious freedom. Allen exposes the deadly threats and offers investigative insight into what is and can be done to stop these atrocities.



<https://www.amazon.com/Global-War-Christians-Anti-Christian-Persecution/dp/0770437370>

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/17262363-the-global-war-on-christians>

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/221008/the-global-war-on-christians-by-john-l-allen-jr/9780770437374/>

<https://www.christianbook.com/global-christians-dispatches-frontline-christian-persecution/john-allen/9780770437350/pd/437350>

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0770437370>

https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Global_War_on_Christians.html?id=iNY14c6keIC

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2013/10/the-war-on-christians/>

Images for war on Christians

<https://www.nationalreview.com/2013/10/exposing-global-war-against-christians-interview/>

http://www.cicdc.org/th_gallery/john-allen-jr-the-global-war-on-christians/

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/books/10/1327/the-global-war-on-christians-dispatches-from-the-front-lines-of-anti-christian-persecution>

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/apr/16/book-review-tracking-worldwide-christian-persecuti/>

Images for worldwide christian persecution

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/book-review-the-global-war-on-christians/>
<http://augustinecollective.org/review-of-the-global/>
<http://www1.cbn.com/video/global-war-on-christians-the-elephant-in-the-room>
<https://cruxnow.com/author/john-allen/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_L._Allen_Jr
<https://www.ncronline.org/authors/john-l-allen-jr>
<https://www.thenation.com/authors/john-l-allen-jr/>
<https://www.thriftbooks.com/a/john-l-allen-jr/267340/>
<https://www.cnn.com/profiles/john-allen-profile>
<https://www.amazon.com/John-L.-Allen/e/B0011ZR9CI>
https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1109223.John_L_Allen_Jr

Images for John L. Allen Jr. (Author)

Images for The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution by John L. Allen Jr.

31) Regular attendees attending less regularly

Observers note that one of the reasons for declining church attendance is that people are simply attending less often.

Resources

Attending Church Less Frequently: The Most Important Trend of Church Trends and What to Do About It - Will Mancini

What does this mean? Simply that people who once attended four times a month may only attend three times a month.

Members who once attended twice a month will only come once a month.

<https://www.willmancini.com/blog/the-most-important-trend-of-church-trends-in-2015-and-what-to-do-about-it>

Images for Attending Church Less Frequently: The Most Important Trend of Church Trends and What to Do About It - Will Mancini

<https://www.willmancini.com/blog/5-reasons-why-scheduling-a-leadership-retreat-in-2016-will-increase-attendance-in-2016>

<http://careynieuwhof.com/episode23/> Why People Are Attending Church Less Often and How to Respond – An Interview with Will Mancini

<http://catalystservices.org/church-attendance-and-missions-involvement/>

<https://www.amazon.com/Innovating-Discipleship-Results-Church-Intentional/dp/1491039671>

<http://www.unseminary.com/willmancini/>

How to Deal With Declining Church Attendance

Christians are attending church less frequently.

It's not by a significant factor, but church attendance is definitely trending downward. It doesn't mean Christians are skipping out on church entirely, but enough are attending only one or two Sundays a month instead of three to four.

<http://www.churchmarketingsucks.com/2016/04/how-to-deal-with-declining-church-attendance/>

Images for How to Deal With Declining Church Attendance Christians are attending church less frequently.

No shows | The Christian Century

No one knows the reason for the overall attendance drop, but three possible explanations are:

Worshippers attend less frequently. In addition to tracking weekly attendance numbers, some churches are tracking who actually worships during a month. Many pastors sense that the same individuals are worshipping throughout the year, but that they worship less often.

<http://www.christiancentury.org/article/2010-09/no-shows>

Images for No shows | The Christian Century Worshippers attend less frequently

RIP, average attendance | Faith and Leadership

The growing lack of dependability on attendance is a sign that the virtuous cycles that have sustained congregations since the end of World War II are collapsing. In order to sustain congregations over the long haul, new cycles need to be developed.

Once that begins to happen, new measures can be identified.

<https://www.faithandleadership.com/rip-average-attendance>

Images for growing lack of dependability on church attendance

10 Reasons Even Committed Church Attenders Are Attending Church Less Often - Carey Nieuwhof

It comes up in a surprising number of conversations these days. And no one's quite sure how to respond to it.

The issue? Even committed church attenders are attending church less often.

<http://careynieuwhof.com/10-reasons-even-committed-church-attenders-attending-less-often/>

Images for 10 Reasons Even Committed Church Attenders Are Attending Church Less Often - Carey Nieuwhof

10 Reasons Even Committed Church Attenders Are Attending Church Less Often - Pinterest

http://www.timeofgrace.org/blog/church_attendance

<http://careynieuwhof.com/7-ways-to-respond-as-people-attend-church-less-often/>

<http://careynieuwhof.com/10-predictions-about-the-future-church-and-shifting-attendance-patterns/>

<https://careynieuwhof.com/5-ways-to-embrace-infrequent-church-attenders/>

<http://ministrytodaymag.com/outreach/246-church-growth/21186-8-reasons-why-churches-never-break-down-attendance-barriers>

https://www.ngumc.org/files/fileslibrary/adox/unseminary_magazine_next.pdf

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Images for carey nieuwhof (author)

10 trends to watch: Churchgoers will want to note and keep up | The Lutheran

1. Declining church participation.

Who comes to church? According to the [General Social Survey](#), the flagship poll of the [National Opinion Research Center](#) of the [University of Chicago](#), fewer Americans are attending worship services. [Weekly or more frequent attendance declined from 35 percent of the population in 1972 to 26 percent in 2008](#). At the same time, the number of Americans reporting that they never attend worship increased from 9 percent to 21 percent.

This trend has Roberto worried. "If you look at it generationally, the most loyal, the most engaged people are those 60 and older," he said. As that generation passes, they are followed by generations with "very low brand loyalty. In this next decade, we're going to see it in declining participation," he added.

Average worship attendance in the [ELCA](#) is 125 people, said Kenneth Inskeep, [ELCA](#) executive for research and evaluation. "I'm predicting that by 2020, it will be down around 100 [in worship attendance] if the present trends continue," he said. At that size, he noted, most congregations can't afford a full-time pastor.

But Inskeep argues that we miss the bigger issue if we only look at numbers. "Lutherans have a particularly important tradition to represent, which is ... that God is a gracious God. It's not about attendance ... it's about having a voice ... with enough people to speak and be heard in the broader culture," he said.

http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=9970

[Images for 10 trends to watch: Churchgoers will want to note and keep up | The Lutheran](#)

[Images for declining church participation](#)

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/contact-us/>

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/issues/>

The Number One Reason for the Decline in Church Attendance and Five Ways to Address It - ThomRainer.com

Five Possible Approaches to the Problem

Of course, the heart of the problem is not declining numbers but [waning commitment](#). As I addressed in my book, [I Am a Church Member](#), church membership is becoming less and less meaningful in many churches. As membership becomes less meaningful, commitment naturally wanes.

While I don't want to suggest there is a magic bullet to this problem, I do want to offer some approaches to address it. These five have proven to be the most helpful in hundreds of churches:

<http://thomrainer.com/2013/08/19/the-number-one-reason-for-the-decline-in-church-attendance-and-five-ways-to-address-it/>

[Images for The Number One Reason for the Decline in Church Attendance and Five Ways to Address It - ThomRainer.com waning commitment](#)

<http://thomrainer.com/2015/07/seven-key-reasons-your-church-attendance-may-be-declining/>

<http://churchleaders.com/podcast/260062-episode-16-thom-rainer-church-attendance-trends-every-leader-know.html>

<http://thomrainer.com/2016/03/the-four-common-high-attendance-days-in-churches/>

<http://thomrainer.com/2016/10/five-ways-stop-decline-church/> #1

[Images for thom rainer \(author\)](#)

32) Where are the Chreasters?

Twenty-six people attended the 9pm Christmas Eve service at an open country congregation. Most sat in the back 4 pews. If it had not been for a matriarch of the congregation who persuaded some of her family to come, there would have been fewer. Even she apologized afterwards that she tried to coax others to come, but that they preferred to stay home.

Fewer in US celebrate Christmas as religious holiday, study says

The sea change that Paulin has seen in how his family and others celebrate Christmas and attendance of religious services, is a microcosm of an ongoing trend in America. According to [Pew Research Center studies](#), Christianity in the U.S. continues to rapidly decline, while the number of people who say they have no religious affiliation is growing, driven in large part by young people. The changing religious composition is also having an impact on whether people observe Christmas as a religious or secular cultural event.

<https://www.telegram.com/news/20191221/fewer-in-us-celebrate-christmas-as-religious-holiday-study-says>

[Images for Fewer in US celebrate Christmas as religious holiday, study says](#)

Maybe there is data out there somewhere showing the decline of the Chreasters,

What are Chreasters? - Got Questions?

Answer: *Chreasters* is a slang term used in some Christian circles to refer to people who only attend church twice a year, at Christmas and Easter. The word *Chreaster* is a portmanteau word (or a blend) that combines the words *Christmas* and *Easter*.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Chreasters.html>

[Images for What are Chreasters?](#)

<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=chreaster>

<http://onlineslangdictionary.com/meaning-definition-of/chreaster>

[Images for meaning-definition-of/chreaster](#)

<http://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/chreaster-chreastian-c-and-e-christian-ceo-christian-christmas-and-easter-christian/>

[Images for chreaster, Christmas and Easter Christian](#)

but I have not been able to locate any that specific. It seems, though, that people who may have attended at least on Christmas and Easter in the past are viewing the events, especially Christmas, more as occasions for social gatherings.

Resources

CEO (Christmas/Easter Only) Christians - ThomRainer.com

The need is for congregations across America to take seriously what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

http://thomrainer.com/2011/04/ceo_christmaseaster_only_christians/

Images for CEO (Christmas/Easter Only) Christians - ThomRainer.com

<http://thomrainer.com/2016/03/the-four-common-high-attendance-days-in-churches/>

<https://thomrainer.com/2016/03/nine-considerations-for-church-members-this-easter/>

<https://thomrainer.com/2016/02/7-church-communications-tips-to-boost-your-reach-this-easter/>

<https://religionnews.com/2013/05/31/rethinking-church-membership-an-interview-with-thom-rainer/>

<https://www.amazon.com/Am-Church-Member-Discovering-Difference/dp/1433679736>

45 best ChrEaster images on Pinterest

https://www.pinterest.co.uk/angie_johnson/chreaster/

Images for ChrEaster Pinterest

https://www.pinterest.de/angie_johnson/chreaster/

<https://www.pinterest.com/photosbytonya/chr-easter-2018/>

In Defense of Christmas-and-Easter Christians - The Atlantic

Dec 24, 2014 - Christmas-and-Easter Christians vary in how religious they consider ... lapsed Christians declined repeated invitations to come back to church.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/.../12/...christmas-and-easter-christians/384031/>

Images for In Defense of Christmas-and-Easter Christians - The Atlantic

<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2016/03/holy-week-and-easter-2016/475662/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/10/the-next-christianity/302591/>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/churchgoers-cut-the-chreasters-some-slack/2018/12/23/53822ca4-0645-11e9-b5df-5d3874f1ac36_story.html?utm_term=.e1e8f73c902d

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/godzooks/2018/12/faith-chreasters-nones/>

Images for faith-chreasters-nones

<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/local/columnists/andreatta/2016/12/22/andreatta-christmas-chreasters/95759380/>

Pastors try to connect with Chreasters | The Wichita Eagle

Pastors at several Wichita churches say it's their goal to turn the Chreasters into active churchgoers, but they won't go as far as to alienate the rest of their congregation while they do it.

<https://www.kansas.com/living/religion/article191286054.html>

Images for Pastors connect with Chreasters

<https://www.pastormentor.com/leading-chreasters-to-christ/>

Images for leading-chreasters-to-christ

<https://www.kystandard.com/content/opinion-merry-christmas-chreasters>

<http://www.mhmcintyre.us/how-to-keep-chreasters-coming-back/>

Images for how-to-keep-chreasters-coming-back

https://blogs.bible.org/engage/laura_singleton/dont_forget_your_chreaster_christians

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EswF46rlcVo> Chreaster! Preach to the chreasters this sunday! – YouTube

Images for preach to the chreasters

<https://ministrytodaymag.com/outreach/evangelism/20726-keeping-the-chreasters>

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/paperbacktheology/2016/03/good-news-for-christmas-and-easter-christians-and-a-little-good-friday-funny.html>

Images for good-news-for-christmas-and-easter-christians

33) Taking the long view on attendance at services of worship

A neighboring pastor seemed particularly self-assured in public, so I was surprised to hear him reflect in private on the rate of change by saying, "Sometimes I don't even think I know what I'm doing anymore. Fortunately, Medicare kicks in 6 years from now." I knew better than to suggest some such blog as "Ten Ways for a Boomer Pastor to Recover a Zest for Ministry."

22 Keys to Being a Minister Without Quitting or Wishing To Retire Early by Dr. Jan Linn (Author)

This is not a book about surviving ministry. It is a book about how to truly enjoy ministry. With keen insights, theological perspectives, and practical advice, Linn offers twenty-two essential keys to keeping your ministry spiritually grounded, focused on its purpose, and intrinsically rewarding. Linn draws on the successes and failures of his own ministry and the experiences of others to reflect on the most basic elements of a fulfilling ministry that are so often lost in the struggle to please the congregation and live up to the expectations placed on ministers by others and by themselves. His prescription of twenty-two essentials to remember, to know, to do, and to not do can be the key to a lifetime of fulfilling and pleasing ministry.

<http://www.amazon.com/22-Keys-Being-Minister-Retirement/dp/082723645X>

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0827236964>
http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/430301.Jan_Linn
<http://www.chalicepress.com/Author.aspx?AuthorID=23>

Images for Dr. Jan Linn (Author)

Images for 22 Keys to Being a Minister Without Quitting or Wishing to Retire Early

He went on to add, "I remember my church history professor at seminary saying that this country in its early days wasn't a 'Christian' country." He added, "The bubble of peak attendance following WWII was an anomaly."

Resources

A Christian America? What History Shows | MADE IN AMERICA

Over the wider American landscape, however, colonists were notably "unchurched" and "un-Christian." Scattered around in separate households (unlike the Puritans who concentrated in villages), most Americans had no church to go to and little connection to what we would call organized religion. Even where there were churches to attend, many went either irregularly or simply because the church was one of the rare places – along with the tavern – to see people in a sparsely-developed society.

<https://madeinamericathebook.wordpress.com/2010/03/26/a-christian-america-what-history-shows/>

Images for Christian America? What History Shows

Being the Church Today – Alban Institute

The numerical height of mainline Protestantism in the United States occurred in the year 1965.¹ That was the year that the largest percentages of American people affiliated with and attended church. More Americans were going to church than at any other time in U.S. history.

Alban at Duke Divinity School » Being the Church Today - Alban Institute

<https://alban.org/archive/being-the-church-today/>

<http://www.amazon.com/Healthy-Esteem-Ministry-Membership-Church/dp/0881773727>

Page 10

Mainline decline - The Lutheran Magazine

Mainline denominations grew through the 1940s and 1950s, but about 1965 they began to lose members.

http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=5806&key=33709634

Images for Mainline decline - The Lutheran Magazine

http://www.ewaldsynod.org/images/E_Apr_16_CC_HiRes.pdf • The peak year for ELCA (and predecessor church bodies) membership and financial support was 1965.

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/issues/>

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/contact-us/>

Later, I reflected, "With 40 kids in Confirmation and a growing Wednesday service of worship, you must be doing something right."

34) 1030 – 1536 – 2018

It just so happened that the commemoration of [Olaf, King of Norway, martyr, died 1030](#) happened on the Sunday I was preaching on identity as part of a sermon series on transition dynamics at a multi-point parish of congregations with a distinct Norwegian Lutheran background. I used the summation from Sundays and Seasons:

Sunday, July 29

Olaf, King of Norway, martyr, died 1030

Olaf is considered the patron saint of Norway. In his early career he engaged in war and piracy in the Baltic and in Normandy. In Rouen, though, he was baptized and became a Christian. He returned to Norway, succeed his father as king, and from then on Christianity was the dominant religion of the realm. He revised the laws of the nation and enforced them with strict impartiality, eliminating the possibility of bribes. He thereby alienated much of the aristocracy. The harshness that he sometimes resorted to in order to establish Christianity and his own law led to a rebellion. After being driven from the country and into exile, he enlisted support from Sweden to try to regain his kingdom, but he died in battle.

Sundays & Seasons

<https://sundaysandseasons.com/>

Images for Sunday, July 29 Olaf, King of Norway, martyr, died 1030



Olav den Helliges død
Peter Nicolai Arbo (1859)
[Olaf II of Norway - Wikipedia](#)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olaf_II_of_Norway
[Images for Olaf II of Norway](#)

The Protestant Reformation was initiated in 1517, and Lutheranism became official in Norway in 1536.

[Reformation in Denmark–Norway and Holstein - Wikipedia](#)

The [Protestant Reformation](#) was initiated by [Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses](#) in 1517, and reached Holstein and Denmark in the 1520s. Lutheran figures like [Hans Tausen](#) gained considerable support in the population and from [Christian II](#), and though the latter's successor [Frederick I](#) officially condemned the reformatory ideas, he tolerated their spread. His son [Christian III](#) officially introduced Lutheranism into his possessions in 1528, and on becoming king in 1536 after the [Count's War](#), Lutheranism became official in all of [Denmark–Norway](#). The Catholic bishops were removed and arrested, and the church was reorganized based on [Lutheran church orders](#) drawn under the aegis of Luther's friend [Johannes Bugenhagen](#) in 1537 (Denmark–Norway) and 1542 (Holstein).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformation_in_Denmark%E2%80%93Norway_and_Holstein

[Images for Reformation in Denmark–Norway and Holstein](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Norway

[Images for Religion in Norway](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Norway

[Images for Church_of_Norway](#)

On 7/31/2018, I ran across an article about the current state of unbelief/belief in God among people in Norway.

[Religion Declining, Secularism Surging | HuffPost](#)

* For the first time in Norwegian history, there are more atheists and agnostics than believers in God.

<https://www.huffingtonpost.com/phil-zuckerman/religion-declining-secularism-surging-b-9889398.html>

[Images for Religion Declining, Secularism Surging | HuffPost](#)

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/norwegians-believe-in-god-majority-do-not-for-first-time-ever-a6943706.html>

<https://www.thelocal.no/20160318/majority-of-norwegians-dont-believe-in-god>

[Images for majority of norwegians don't believe in god](#)

<http://www.atheistpublic.com/news/atheism-surpasses-religiosity-norway>

[Images for atheism-surpasses-religiosity-norway](#)

<https://sputniknews.com/europe/201504041020475993/> New Poll Finds Norway a Heaven for Atheists - Sputnik International

https://www.salon.com/2012/08/29/eight_of_the_best_countries_to_be_an_atheist/ #6

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/atheists-countries-list-six-world-most-convinced-a6946291.html>

<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/>

35) Secularism in Western Europe: Can this country be far behind?

Want to imagine where this country is heading in terms of religious affiliation and participation? I suggest looking to Western Europe.

[Attitudes of Christians in Western Europe | Pew Research Center – Religion and Public Life](#)

Western Europe, where Protestant Christianity originated and Catholicism has been based for most of its history, has become one of the world's most secular regions. Although the vast majority of adults say they were baptized, today many do not describe themselves as Christians. Some say they gradually drifted away from religion, stopped believing in religious teachings, or were alienated by scandals or church positions on social issues, according to a major new Pew Research Center survey of religious beliefs and practices in Western Europe.

<https://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/>

[Images for Attitudes of Christians in Western Europe | Pew Research Center – Religion and Public Life](#)

[Images for Western Europe one of the world's most secular regions](#)

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/29/10-key-findings-about-religion-in-western-europe/>

[Images for key-findings-about-religion-in-western-europe](#)

If anything, the pace of decline seems to be increasing in rapidity in this country to mirror that area of the world from which Catholicism and Protestant Christianity was based.

[In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace | Pew Research Center – Religion and Public Life](#)

The religious landscape of the United States continues to change at a rapid clip. In Pew Research Center telephone surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, 65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population, consisting of people who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular,” now stands at 26%, up from 17% in 2009.

<https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>

[Images for In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace | Pew Research Center](#)

Images for The religious landscape of the United States continues to change at a rapid clip.

36) Reasons people do not go to church

The previous posts represent my attempt to address the question, "What happened?!" Many other reasons can be given why people no longer/do not attend services of worship.

Resources

25 Reasons People Don't Go to Church | #AskPortia - Portia Chandler

When I was younger, I can't remember missing a Sunday from church, in fact I started to believe we vacationed there. If you do a [Google Search](#) for reasons why people don't go to church anymore, you will find hundreds of articles written by bloggers, research analysts, pastors, and church goers listing many of the same reasons I have compiled below.

<http://askportia.com/2016/03/25-reasons-people-dont-go-church/>

Images for Reasons People Don't Go to Church

<https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2018/08/01/a-survey-reveals-why-people-dont-go-to-church-atheism-doesnt-top-the-list/>

<https://churchplants.com/articles/9850-2-real-reasons-people-dont-go-to-church.html>

<https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/20864/reasons-people-dont-go-to-church>

<https://www.cfaiith.com/index.php/blog/38-articles/ministry/15951-four-common-reasons-people-dont-come-to-church>

<http://www.petebrookshaw.com/2012/08/10-reasons-why-people-dont-go-to-church.html#.XDZaAlxKiUk>

<https://baptistnews.com/article/top-10-reasons-people-cite-for-not-attending-church-services/#.XDZaY1xKiUk>

<https://www.modernghana.com/news/816788/major-reasons-why-people-dont-attend-church.html>

<http://www.justinstellman.com/12-reasons-i-stopped-going-to-church/>

<https://homeschoolon.com/8-reasons-not-going-to-church/>

<https://blackandmarriedwithkids.com/7-reasons-why-men-dont-attend-church/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUJpJyth3J4> Reasons (why people don't go to church) - YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XXgkskh_g8 5 Reasons Why People Don't Go To Church – YouTube

<http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=FE9BMJNU> Reasons (People Don't Go to Church) - Ministry Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjaCh9qSaXc> Reasons People Don't Go To Church – YouTube

Images for Reasons People Don't Go To Church - YouTube

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/09/us/pew-church-10-reasons/index.html>

<https://bibletalk.tv/top-10-reasons-for-missing-church>

<https://blog.givelify.com/reasons-people-hate-church-attendance/>

<http://www.jordanrimmer.com/5-reasons-young-people-dont-go-to-your-church/>

Images for reasons-young-people-dont-go-to-your-church

Why People Don't Go to Church - HopeChannel

Other reasons given include lack of motivation—which is not a rejection of churches—but many don't seriously consider church involvement or are more attracted to other activities. There's a lack of time for some who show no hostility to church, but have other priorities. And some have a lack of access to a church or one of their chosen denomination.

<https://www.hopechannel.com/au/read/why-people-dont-go-to-church>

Images for why-people-dont-go-to-church

<https://www.amazon.com/Why-Nobody-Wants-Church-Anymore/dp/0764488449>

<https://www.group.com/category/ministry-resources/pastor-leader/why-nobody-wants-to-go-to-church-anymore.do>

<https://www.quora.com/Why-dont-more-people-attend-church>

<https://www.quora.com/Why-dont-you-go-to-church-1>

<https://www.selmawilson.com/2014/03/10/why-dont-people-go-to-church/>

<https://factsand Trends.net/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-church-and-why-they-dont/>

<https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/new-survey-explores-why-people-dont-attend-church.html>

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-dont-we-go-to-church-anymore_us_58b73de8e4b015675cf65b9d

<https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/Story/TabId/2672/ArtMid/13567/ArticleID/26354/New-Pew-survey-looks-at-why-Americans-go-or-dont-go-to-church-services.aspx>

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/religious-participation-survey/496940/>

<https://churchplants.com/growth/8774-dear-church-heres-why-people-are-really-leaving-you-john-pavlovitz.html>

What reasons can be given for people to go to church?

Resources

99 Reasons You Should go to Church This Weekend. | Collected

Some of these reasons are serious and thought provoking, others are just fun... they're not in any particular order and perhaps a portion of them won't apply to you. Either way though, I hope you too will be encouraged by my sharing of this list.

<https://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2014/09/99-reasons-you-should-go-to-church-this-weekend/#.XDZbw1xKiUk>

Images for Reasons You Should go to Church

<https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/10-reasons-to-go-to-church-even-when-you-don-t-feel-like-it.html>

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/09/us/pew-church-10-reasons/index.html>

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/rick-mcdaniel/5-reasons-to-attend-church_b_3528383.html

Images for reasons-to-attend-church

<https://www.kshb.com/lifestyle/new-study-offers-reasons-why-people-do-or-dont-attend-church>

Why Do We Go to Church? | Intersect

We do not ultimately come together for Sunday worship service to experience an emotional response that brings joy to us as consumers, though many Westerners gather for this very reason. Rather, we gather because God has united us. We gather because we live life together in being effective witnesses to our local communities. We gather because the diversity of the local church should mirror heaven to a dying, lost and sinful world. Christians are made to gather.

<http://intersectproject.org/faith-and-culture/why-do-we-go-to-church/>

Images for Why Do We Go to Church?

<http://www.pewforum.org/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-services/>

<https://unlockingthebible.org/2016/09/why-go-to-church-50-things-you-miss-by-not-attending-church/>

37) From turning point to tipping point

If 1965 was the turning point from height to decline, could it be that 50+ years later the church in this country is reaching a tipping point?

Resources

American churches are at a tipping point - The Christian Post

Tipping Point (noun): the critical point in a situation, process, or system beyond which a significant and often unstoppable effect or change takes place.

If current trajectories continue, American churches will pass a tipping point. Our congregations will begin a likely unstoppable path toward decline that will rival many European churches of the past century. If there is not a significant movement of revitalization, there will be an accelerated rate of decline and death.

<https://www.christianpost.com/voice/american-churches-are-at-a-tipping-point.html>

<https://thomrainer.com/2018/12/american-churches-are-at-a-tipping-point/>

Images for American churches are at a tipping point

No shows: The decline in worship attendance | The Christian Century

But it's also possible that these denominations are approaching a **tipping point**: with fewer and increasingly older members, the shrinking attendance will make many congregations unsustainable.

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2010-09/no-shows>

Images for No shows: The decline in worship attendance approaching a tipping point

The Catholic Church has reached a tipping point | Newsday

The Roman Catholic Church is confronting the strongest challenge to its credibility in 500 years

In 1517, Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed a document outlining 95 theses to a door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. He openly questioned the pope's authority as well as corrupt practices of the church. Luther's actions paved the way for the Protestant Reformation; many Christians agreed with his arguments and left Catholicism behind. While the Catholic Church survived, it eventually found it necessary to embrace change.

Catholics are now pressuring the church to once again reform itself or face a substantial loss of members. The sexual abuse crisis that plagued the church for decades has resulted in scores of parishioners leaving. A recently issued report has pushed longtime devotees to lose confidence in this religious institution.

<https://www.newsday.com/opinion/commentary/catholic-church-tipping-point-change-1.20739081>

Images for Catholic Church has reached a tipping point

38) End of the alphabet

Many Baby Boomers could fall back to a faith perspective remembered from childhood. Connections to a faith perspective are rapidly disappearing for Generations X, Y, and Z.

Faith and Faithlessness by Generation: The Decline and Rise are Real

WE'RE REACHING THE END of the alphabet—and the end of a religious statistical oddity in the United States.

Generation Z, more so than the preceding Generation Y (the millennials), and even more so than Generation X, is demonstrating a telling and permanent downtrend in religious identity. This is reminiscent of changes that began decades ago in other wealthy nations of the world but that didn't happen here at the same time.

<https://thehumanist.com/magazine/september-october-2018/features/faith-and-faithlessness-by-generation-the-decline-and-rise-are-real>

Images for Faith and Faithlessness by Generation: The Decline and Rise are Real

Images for Generation Z, more so than the preceding Generation Y (the millennials), and even more so than Generation X, is demonstrating a telling and permanent downtrend in religious identity

39) Decline of religion

The decline in attendance at services of worship can be seen as part of the general **decline of religion** in the fate of empires.

[PDF] The Fate of Empires and Search for Survival by Sir John Bagot Glubb

Decadence is a moral and spiritual disease, resulting from too long a period of wealth and power, producing cynicism, **decline of religion**, pessimism and frivolity. The citizens of such a nation will no longer make an effort to save themselves, because they are not convinced that anything in life is worth saving.

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<http://people.uncw.edu/kozloffm/glubb.pdf>
<http://www.rexresearch.com/glubb/glubb-empire.pdf>
http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/Further_Research/e-books/TheFateofEmpiresbySirJohnGlubb.pdf
<https://samisdat.info/books/the-fate-of-empires-and-search-for-survival-1977>
<https://www.coursehero.com/file/33954038/Glubb-Fate-of-Empirespdf/>

In these inspiring essays Sir John Glubb examines the human race over a period of 4,000 years and finds the same patterns of rise and fall of national greatness and all in the same time scale.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Fate-Empires-Search-Survival/dp/B00P7WZIV2>
<https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/6177860-the-fate-of-empires-and-search-for-survival>
<https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/getting-to-the-future-with-honour>
https://military.wikia.org/wiki/John_Bagot_Glubb
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bagot_Glubb
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Bagot-Glubb>
[Images for Sir John Bagot Glubb](#)
[Images for The Fate of Empires and Search for Survival by Sir John Bagot Glubb](#)

40) Services of worship during COVID-19

I recall that the first guideline in 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19 recommended no gatherings over 250 people. I breathed a sigh of relief because none of the 3 congregations I was serving at the time involved that many people. The next guideline to come out recommended no gatherings over 50 people. I breathed a sigh of relief because none of the 3 congregations I was serving at the time involved that many people. The next guideline **15 Days to Slow the Spread | The White House** recommended no gatherings over 10 people. Because the congregations I served at the time averaged between 10 and 50, I could no longer breathe a sigh of relief. The president of 1 congregation informed me on St. Patrick's Day of the decision made by the presidents of the 3 congregations to forego gatherings for services of worship on Sundays and Lenten services the next 2 weeks, and I gave messages recorded on video and uploaded on Facebook. Then came **Wisconsin's Coronavirus 'Stay-At-Home' Order March 25 through April 24** with its provisions that **"crowds of 10 or larger are specifically banned at weddings, funerals and church services and people who violate the order could face up to 30 days in jail, or a fine of up to \$250."** I stated on my 3/29 video that gatherings for services of worship for the early Christians were banned by the Roman Empire so that Christians gathered in their houses. I urged them to do the same.

House church - Wikipedia

Origins

In the [early church](#), because of the [persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire](#), worship service took place mainly in private homes, as described in the book of [Acts of the Apostles](#).^[3] The New Testament shows that the [Early Christian](#) church exhibited a richness of fellowship and interactive practice that is typically not the case in conventional [denominations](#). They believe that Christians walked closely with each other and shared their lives in Christ together.^[1]

Several passages in the Bible specifically mention churches meeting in houses. The first house church is recorded in Acts 1:13, where the [disciples of Jesus](#) met together in the "Upper Room" of a house, traditionally believed to be where the [Cenacle](#) is today. "The churches of Asia greet you, especially Aquila and Prisca greet you much in the Lord, along with the church that is in their house." I Cor 16:19.^[4] The church meeting in the house of Priscilla and Aquila is again mentioned in Romans 16:3, 5. The church that meets in the house of Nymphas is also cited in the Bible: "Greet the brethren in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in her house." Col 4:15.

For the first 300 years of [Early Christianity](#), until Constantine legalized Christianity and churches moved into larger buildings, **Christians typically met in homes, if only because intermittent persecution (before the [Edict of Milan](#) in 313) did not allow the erection of public church buildings.** [Clement of Alexandria](#), an early church father, wrote of worshipping in a house. The [Dura-Europos church](#), a private house in [Dura-Europos](#) in [Syria](#), was excavated in the 1930s and was found to have been used as a Christian meeting place in AD 232, with one small room serving as a [baptistry](#).^{[4][5]} creating the current style church seen today.^[6]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_church

[Images for House church for the first 300 years of Early Christianity](#)

My interim assignment ended after Easter on 4/15, the assignment I was scheduled to start 4/16 fell through, and I began a period of time on leave from call. On 4/17, **Evers Extends Wisconsin Stay-at-Home Order Until May 26**. On 4/23, the Wisconsin Council of Churches released **Returning to Church – Wisconsin Council of Churches** which stated "that returning to church will have to happen in phases." The document also included [Recommended Reading/Viewing](#).

The staff at the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin sent out the following resources for Sunday, 5/10/2020, Mother's Day:

HEARTS @ HOME A Worship Service for Your Household

https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/0a/0a854394-3a19-4d9f-b1ae-f93021508921/documents/HH_Easter_5_RCL_Service_of_the_Word.pdf

https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/0a/0a854394-3a19-4d9f-b1ae-f93021508921/documents/HH_Easter_5_RCL_Mother_s_Day_Litany_Prayer.pdf

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/0a/0a854394-3a19-4d9f-b1ae-f93021508921/documents/mothers-day-questionnaire.pdf>

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/0a/0a854394-3a19-4d9f-b1ae-f93021508921/documents/grandma-questionnaire.pdf>

https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/0a/0a854394-3a19-4d9f-b1ae-f93021508921/documents/HH_Home_Holy_Communion_Resource.pdf

Spark Family Sunday School – free weekly resources for families
<https://www.wearsparkhouse.org/promos/family-sunday-school/>

Pandemic Hope: A family devotional for life during Covid-19
https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/cb/cb0cd516-be94-40af-99bd-f2f2860b752e/documents/Pandemic_Hope_Devotional.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3v9bRUMtLcsXkB101V0kTwdPd0XvsWJpkjdaOgZUHdHil_CV9ccr59S4E

Coronavirus Conversations: A Milestone Moment
<https://vfmmilestonesministry.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/coronavirus-conversations-milestone-moment.pdf>

Illustrated Ministries: Free Resources
https://www.illustratedministry.com/flattenthecurve?fbclid=IwAR01YcgYHjcaorsTKusuF_MlBhLOZDsFLFSzIo4g6aQECMgAMRZITdHy-4

Faith Finder Fun: Videos for family fun!
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXIPslx_Ov1u8Z-QOOCQDrw/videos

The synod staff hosted Zoom conversations during May.

5/1/2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are now more than six weeks into the COVID-19 Pandemic. I have a few important updates for you. Warning: This is longer than usual. Here is important information for you to consider. Please take five minutes and read through it.

1. Tuesday, May 5 at 10 a.m. "Returning to Church"

Zoom meeting with Rev. Kerri Parker, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches is for all Rostered Leaders and Synod Council members. A Zoom Link for this meeting has been sent out. Please make it a priority. Contact the synod office if you didn't receive the link. It is what everyone is thinking about. *When can we gather together again to worship?*

-Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Resources from our conversation with Rev. Kerri Parker, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches.

Video Recording of the Meeting

https://zoom.us/rec/play/tJYpdO79-Dg3Hd2S5QSDA6B6W46_K_qshiYd-vFfmkbqUHQBZISmMuNDN-p4AF8XOhr2lvToZO0q5qW0?continueMode=true&_x_zm_rtaid=XDdqddeNSFGwB_xkPw4wJA.1588720365493.fb56738e2abee7dd987f6b0d07ee2661&_x_zm_rtaid=322

Written Summary of the Meeting

<https://files.constantcontact.com/0deff306001/0ad4bc75-711b-4bdd-a925-7a60ededbc5f.pdf>

Full Resources: Recommendations for Returning to Church (WCC)

<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/> RETURNING TO CHURCH – Ministry during the COVID-19 outbreak

Church in These VUCA Times (Video)

COVID-19 has us in VUCA times (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous). A congregation can get oriented by asking three questions: What, So What, and Now What. This 4-minute video explores those questions, to help churches plan for what's up ahead.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uAKQXagwms&feature=youtu.be> Church in these VUCA Times - YouTube

Worship Practices for the Long Haul

I'm inviting you to join a ZOOM conversation about worship practices during a pandemic on Thursday, May 14 at 1 p.m. Ben Stewart, Associate Professor of Worship at LSTC, will join us as we talk about ways to deepen our sacramental understanding and new ways of being the church. How do we balance our theological understanding with pastoral needs and technology? How do we lead worship that historically is based entirely on the ability of the assembly to gather in this time of social distancing? What about funerals, weddings, confirmations, ordinations, baptisms and Holy Communion? Let's figure this out together.

The state supreme court made a ruling on 5/13.

Wisconsin stay home order ended by Supreme Court ruling

Are in-person religious services allowed?

Worship services can now be held in person as long as there are no local restrictions on holding them. It will be up to individual churches, synagogues and mosques to decide whether to allow them.

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2020/05/13/wisconsin-stay-home-order-ended-supreme-court-ruling-schools-closed-coronavirus-safer-at-home-evers/5187903002/>

Images for Wisconsin stay home order ended by Supreme Court ruling

The bishop sent out a letter the next day to clarify expectations for services of worship.

Dear Pastors, Deacons, and SAMS,

5/14/2020

The Milwaukee Brewers, the Green Bay Packers, and your churches are all struggling with similar questions! When can we go to the stadium to see a game again? When can we go to our church buildings to worship again? When can we return to worship?

Professional sports teams can't fill their stadiums and we can't fill the pews. It isn't safe. I wish I could see into the future and tell you exactly when we can safely gather in groups of more than 10, but I can't.

I am grateful that well over 100 of you were a part of the ZOOM conversation about Returning to Church with me and the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, Rev. Kerri Parker Tuesday, May 5. What we learned was this: *It's going to take a long time. We aren't going to rush back into our sanctuaries in June.*

To protect the most vulnerable members in our congregations, the elderly and those with underlying health conditions we will not be having normal in person face-to-face worship for a long while. Singing, Holy Communion, Sharing the Peace, offering plates, coffee fellowship, hymnals, bulletins, your friends that show no symptoms, bathroom door handles, can all pass on the coronavirus!

Church is a dangerous place. Whatever you can do to help your members accept this longer timeline to return worship will lower the anxiety. **Fulfilling the greatest commandment, Loving God and Loving our neighbor will be best done by staying home for some time.**

I encourage you to share as much information with your congregation as you can. This will help them have more realistic expectations about when they will be able to gather together again in worship. Below are the links I believe are most helpful.

I am hopeful that sometime in 2021, this will all be in the rearview mirror. As you know, it all depends on development and mass production of a vaccine and/or herd immunity; 60% of the population being infected.

Attached here is the link to the official [ELCA Recommendations on Returning to Worship](#). Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and the Churchwide staff has prepared a comprehensive resource that will help you make decisions as you consider when and how you will return to worship.

Share this letter, ELCA Recommendations and these links with your church council, worship committee, and entire membership if you like.

[Badger Bounce Back Plan](#)

[Video recording - Conversation with Rev. Kerri Parker \(WCC\)](#)

[Printed summary of conversation with Rev. Kerri Parker \(WCC\)](#)

[Returning to Worship Recommendations from the WCC](#)

[Minneapolis Area Synod Zoom conversation with Dr. Mike Osterholm](#)

There is a great deal of confusion about when we can return to church and what the Wisconsin Supreme Court decision on May 13 means for the church. Please see the attached [Pastoral Message](#) from the Six ELCA Bishops of Wisconsin and the other resources attached.

Dear friends, this is an opportunity to reflect on God's Word, the purpose of worship and connect in new ways. Dear friends, this is also a stressful time. Take care of yourselves; take care of your neighbor, lean on your family and friends, we are in this together. Don't hesitate to reach out to the synod ministers. We are here to help.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Psalm 100: 1-2 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

41) Services of worship after COVID-19

I began these reflections in the previous file by asking, "What happened?!" and then looked at many of the changes that have taken place since the time when I was growing up during "The numerical height of mainline Protestantism in the United States (which) occurred in the year 1965,"¹

Being the Church Today – Alban Institute

The numerical height of mainline Protestantism in the United States occurred in the year 1965.¹ That was the year that the largest percentages of American people affiliated with and attended church. More Americans were going to church than at any other time in U.S. history.

[Alban at Duke Divinity School » Being the Church Today - Alban Institute](#)

<https://alban.org/archive/being-the-church-today/>

<http://www.amazon.com/Healthy-Esteem-Ministry-Membership-Church/dp/0881773727> Page 10

Images for numerical height of mainline Protestantism in the United States occurred in the year 1965

[Mainline decline - The Lutheran Magazine](#)

Mainline denominations grew through the 1940s and 1950s, but about 1965 they began to lose members.

http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=5806&key=33709634

Images for mainline denominations decline - The Lutheran Magazine

http://www.ewaidsynod.org/images/E_Apr_16_CC_HiRes.pdf • The peak year for ELCA (and predecessor church bodies) membership and financial support was 1965.

Now on the 40th anniversary of my ordination (5/18/1980), the unthinkable has happened where the economy has been locked down and the congregants locked out. Whereas the economy is gradually being opened up, that is not the case for many congregations. Keeping the congregants locked out from their churches until “sometime in 2021” will keep them from contracting the virus at services of worship during that time, but one wonders how many congregations will survive to open their doors to their congregants then. I have served in 53 congregations in the NW Synod of WI or approximately 1 out of 4 in this synod (and 1 in the LaCrosse Synod) in the past 40 years, and most were living offering to offering. When a mid-size congregation in a city of 25,000+ posts the following on their website **We are closed with no services and no activities until further notice.**, how long will such a congregation and others remain viable?

Will the church financially survive the COVID-19 pandemic?

Bill Wilson predicts that up to one-third of U.S. churches could be out of business by 2025.

He points to LifeWay Research that says 5% of U.S. churches will close within the year because of the pandemic. That's five times the average closure rate for churches, according to The Christian Century magazine.

<https://faithandleadership.com/will-church-financially-survive-covid-19-pandemic>

Images for Will the church financially survive the COVID-19 pandemic?

The above prediction compounds an earlier prediction for the ELCA.

Will the ELCA Be Gone in 30 years? - Faith+Lead

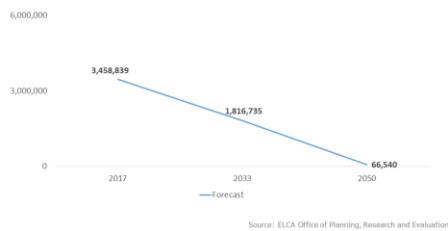
DWIGHT ZSCHEILE SEPTEMBER 5, 2019

New projections forecast just 16,000 in worship across the entire ELCA by 2041. Why is this happening and what can be done?

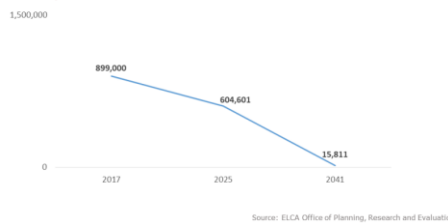
According to projections from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) Office of Research and Evaluation, the whole denomination will have fewer than 67,000 members in 2050, with fewer than 16,000 in worship on an average Sunday by 2041.

That's right: according to current trends, the church will basically cease to exist within the next generation.

Baptized Membership in the ELCA 2017-2050 Projections



Average Weekly Worship Attendance 2017-2041 Projections



In some ways, this is old news. Mainline decline has been a reality for over half a century, and the trends are well established. Yet consider how rapidly this future is arriving—well within most of our lifetimes. The ELCA had over five million members when it was launched in 1988. It has only declined since, and the decline has been accelerating.

For all the energy spent on trying to turn things around over the past 40 years, there is little to show. That is because the cultural shifts underpinning this decline are largely beyond our control. To the extent to which we've tried to fix the church, we've failed. I know a lot of really smart, faithful leaders who have poured their lives into this effort. It's not their fault. The forces dismantling the established congregational and denominational system are much bigger. Something deeper is at stake.

<https://faithlead.luthersem.edu/decline/>

Images for Will the ELCA Be Gone in 30 years? - Faith+Lead

Actually, the above projection is optimistic compared to the following article written in 2017 before COVID-19 about Mainline Protestantism. If the title were to be re-written for 2020, it could ask, “Will Mainline Protestantism Be Gone in 20 Years?”

If It Doesn't Stem Its Decline, Mainline Protestantism Has Just 23 Easters Left

The news of mainline Protestantism's decline is hardly new. Yet **the trend lines are showing a trajectory toward zero** in both those who attend a mainline church regularly and those who identify with a mainline denomination 23 years from now.

<https://layman.org/doesnt-stem-decline-mainline-protestantism-just-23-easters-left/>

[Images for If It Doesn't Stem Its Decline, Mainline Protestantism Has Just 23 Easters Left](#)

Even when churches open their doors again, how many congregants will return?

Resources

Five Early Findings from Churches That Are Regathering – Church Answers

1. Early attendance is significantly lower than the pre-quarantine era. At this point, one-half of the churches we have surveyed have an **attendance of 60 percent or less than the pre-quarantine numbers**. We rarely hear of a church that has an attendance of 80 percent or higher. For now, those churches are the outliers.

<https://churchanswers.com/blog/five-early-findings-from-churches-that-are-regathering/>

[Images for Five Early Findings from Churches That Are Regathering – Church Answers](#)

Funding Ministry in 2021 Will Be More Difficult Than Ever – Horizons Stewardship

32% of practicing Christians have stopped attending during COVID-19.

14% of practicing Christians have already switched churches.

Giving to the church is in decline.

Giving almost always falls in recessions.

Changes due to COVID-19 are impacting the reasons many donors give to the church.

Blog — Horizons Stewardship

https://www.horizons.net/blog/funding-ministry-in-2021-will-be-more-difficult-than-ever?mc_cid=d50f4f8686&mc_eid=f3389e1b88

[Images for Funding Ministry in 2021 Will Be More Difficult Than Ever – Horizons Stewardship](#)

How the coronavirus pandemic could change church attendance

Church participation has been declining for decades. Will the pandemic make it worse?

Pandemic-related defections could harm houses of worship already struggling with empty pews.

Recent research found that around half of U.S. adults who attended church before COVID-19 hit are unlikely to return to church right now even if public health officials deemed it safe.

<https://www.deseret.com/indepth/2020/6/5/21279399/coronavirus-church-attendance-religion-data-pandemic-covid-19-online-worship-reopening>

[Images for How the coronavirus pandemic could change church attendance](#)

Will coronavirus hasten the demise of religion – or herald its revival

Stephen Bullivant, whose book *Mass Exodus* studied Catholic attrition in Britain and America, offers three reasons why he believes **churches will shrink after the pandemic**. First, he says, churchgoers (both lay and clergy) tend to be elderly and therefore more likely to die of coronavirus. Second, many churches rely on a steady influx of immigrants. With the world in lockdown, that supply has, at least temporarily, dried up. Third, churchgoing is a habit, and once that habit is broken it is hard to take it up again.

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/will-coronavirus-cause-a-religious-resurgence-or-its-ruination>

[Images for churchgoing is a habit, and once that habit is broken it is hard to take it up again](#)

One congregation in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin that opened its doors to congregants listed an average worship attendance of 230 in its congregation trend report pre-COVID-19. The congregation averaged 40-45 when it opened its doors after the state lockdown was lifted. The congregation's motto is "**Opening hearts and doors** to the love of Jesus Christ." The congregation is served by a long-tenured, beloved pastor, and the members send in their offerings. According to **Wisconsin | Data USA** the county in which the congregation is situated "had a population of 87.1k people with a median age of 38.3 and a median household income of \$77,768. Between 2016 and 2017 the population of *(the county)* grew from 86,726 to 87,142, a 0.48% increase and its median income grew from \$73,743 to \$77,768, a 5.46% increase." Other congregations in the synod are not so fortunate.

Congregations in various other church bodies stand a better chance of remaining viable because they possess the latitude of reopening, but when congregants are locked out of their churches, such congregations face increasing odds against remaining viable.

For instance, where I am residing while on leave from call in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, **St. Joseph Catholic Church: Four Parishes, One Faith Catholic Church** and **Red Cedar Church** reopened 6/7 and 6/14 respectively. I listened to the service of worship from **Bethany Lutheran Church (ELCA)** on **WJMC Radio | Rice Lake, Wisconsin | The Best Country Station** on Sunday, 6/14 at 9am and attended the service of worship at Red Cedar Church that day at 11am. I also attended the mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church on Tuesday, 6/16, at 5:30pm. ELCA open country congregation **First Lutheran Church of Arland** 30 miles SW of Rice Lake reopened 6/7, but this congregation proved to be the exception rather than the rule in the NW Synod of Wisconsin. Their pastor also shared the leadership in outdoor services of worship at the Stardust Drive-In between Cameron and Chetek. I served Arland as well as West Akers 1980-90. As of 6/14, 3 months after **15 Days to Slow the Spread | The White House**, there were 20 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 0 deaths in Barron County, Wisconsin. Interestingly, while **Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., NIAID Director | NIH: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases** warned **Dr. Fauci: Protests are 'a perfect set-up' for spreading COVID-19**, a report stated that **Early test results show few protesters caught COVID-19 – TwinCities.com**.

On 7/5, I listened to the radio service mentioned above at 9am, attended the service of worship at **Maranatha Evangelical Free Church**

in Rice Lake at 10:30am, and the mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church at 5:30pm. Interestingly, the pastors at Maranatha were offering a series on the minor prophets. When I attended on 6/28, the lead pastor spoke without notes for 50 minutes on Obadiah, and on 7/5 the youth pastor spoke from a manuscript for 60 minutes on Jonah. The youth pastor referenced his Hebrew class in seminary during the course of the message. People around me followed along in their Bibles, and some took notes. It occurred to me that the evangelical congregations and the Roman Catholic Church congregations, while dissimilar in many ways, are similar in that they can be characterized as high expectation while many congregations in mainline Protestant denominations, such as those denominations being advised by the Wisconsin Conference of Churches to keep congregants locked out, can be characterized more closely as low expectation. It is my estimation that high expectation congregations of the evangelicals and of Roman Catholics will stand a better chance of persevering in the long run than the low expectation congregations of the mainline Protestant denominations.

Best practices for stewardship during a pandemic recommend online giving, but the reality according to [The National Study of Congregations' Economic Practices](#) is that "On average, congregations received 22% of their giving digitally and nearly a fourth (24%) of attendees gave at least once in a digital form over the last year," which means that 78% of their giving comes other than digitally. The 22% figure is actually considerably higher than most of the congregations I have served. For instance, in the last assignment I served which concluded on 4/15 before I ended up on leave from call on 4/16, there were 2 giving units online. A few more started giving digitally using the option provided on the parish website after the lockout went into effect, but the total number giving digitally would still have been a small minority.

Clergy in some other church bodies are more adaptable as far as compensation and livelihood goes, whereas most ELCA congregations have become dependent upon seminary trained clergy operating with synod compensation standards in place.

The Pew Forum [Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(ELCA\)](#)

Age distribution among members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

% of members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) who are ages...

graph shows 30% 50-64 and 31% 65+.

The ELCA is 95.3% white according to figures in the [Religious Landscape Survey](#), collected by Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life while [The United States is becoming more diverse](#). According to [The Context for Mission and Ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#), "The ELCA has a difficult time negotiating demographic change. Congregations may grow in Minnesota, but they struggle in states that are more diverse (in every way) like California and Florida. These states, however, are among the fastest growing states in the U.S."

While, on the one hand, there is a denouncing by church leaders of police brutality and white supremacy and a declaring silence to be a sin, it seems to me, on the other hand, to be a non sequitur for church leaders to lock congregants out of their churches rather than follow [Constitutions - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - ELCA](#)

Chapter 6.

CHURCH AFFILIATION

*C6.03. This congregation acknowledges its relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in which:

- a. [This congregation agrees to be responsible for its life as a Christian community.](#)

and allow congregations to be responsible for their life as a Christian community.

I do not claim to be a statistician or forecaster, but I am willing to consider that the above prediction by Bill Wilson could be adapted for the ELCA, "Up to one-half of ELCA churches could be out of business by 2025," and that the above question by Faith+Lead DWIGHT ZSCHEILE could be rephrased, "Will the ELCA Be Gone in 15 years?" I hope I'm wrong. Pray for the best, prepare for the worst.