Research Results
The “nones” are the fastest-growing religious group in America; mainline Protestants are the fastest-declining.
Most Americans believe in God. Half of those who don’t still believe in a higher power/spiritual force.
Episcopal Congregations

- ECUSA membership now under 1.7 million; down 19% over past 10 years
- ASA under 700,000, down 24% over 10 years
- 66% of church members are 50+ years old, compared to 34% of the US population
- Total giving in the church has declined since 2003 though giving has risen per attendee
- The number of congregations who identify financial problems has doubled since 2000

Sources: Faith Communities Today FACT, DFMS Research, Pew, US Census Bureau
There are many correlates of congregational vitality and financial health.

- Identification: “spiritually vital and alive”
- Possessing “clear sense of mission and purpose”
- Aware of context
- Hopeful climate and flexible attitudes
- Learning community/organization
- Intentional recruitment and evangelism
- Transformational worship and preaching
- Dealing directly with conflict and not being distracted by it
- Care and prayer
- Compassionate service
- Faithful stewardship
- Diversity
St. Paul’s Trends
Like the Episcopal Church, St. Paul’s membership is also shrinking.

St. Paul’s Membership and Giving Trends

- Total membership is down 33% in the past 10 years
- ASA has declined 28% in the past 10 years
- The number of pledging households has declined 28% in the past 10 years

- However, strong financial health has continued
  - Total giving has increased 13% in this same time; average giving has increased from $2,905 to $3,885
  - But our older members have been responsible for an increasing percentage of giving
60% of St. Paul’s parishioners are over 50; 46% are over 60.
In 2003, St. Paul’s parishioners aged 60 years and older accounted for 53% of total pledges. In 2018, they accounted for 83%.

![Percentage of Pledge Income by Age Group](image)
With consistent giving, inflation-adjusted expense increases, and no changes to our business model, there could be a ~$100k shortfall in 5 years.
With potential decreases in giving and no changes to our business model, there could be a ~$300k shortfall in 5 years.
What we heard from other church leaders
What can we learn from other thriving parishes? There were two standouts in our interviews.

One parish has doubled its ASA in 15 years; the rector is constantly experimenting:

- Introduced new service styles or times: Celtic service, a Saturday evening service, Compline.
  - Largest growth in attendance is at their Saturday evening services

- Speaker series
  - Well-known speakers
  - Programs on topics of interest to non-members

- Church as a safe “village green” -- all feel safe and welcome
  - Craving for community and connection

- Emmaus Groups -- Bible study and weekly meetings
  - 6-10 parishioners in each group
  - Meet for 10 weeks at a time
What can we learn from other thriving parishes? There were two standouts in our interviews.

**Another parish doubled its size, increased pledge income 50%**

- Parish was in sustained crisis before new rector arrived

- Entered period of discernment, identified the following goals:
  - A deeper life in Christ
  - More holy communion with one another
  - A greater love for the world

- Small group ministry in the form of “House Churches”
  - Bible study/discussion questions
  - Promoted spiritual practices and growth
  - 12-13 parishioners per group; met during Lent

- Worship schedule helps unify the congregation
  - Instituted “world’s greatest coffee hour”

- Eliminated programs with low attendance
What we heard from you
We come to St. Paul’s from a variety of spiritual backgrounds

- Of all survey respondents:
  - 34% were “cradle Episcopalians”
  - 34% were raised other Protestant faith
  - 25% were raised Catholic

- For those at St. Paul’s 20+ years
  - 54% were raised Episcopalian
  - 25% were raised other Protestant faith
  - 18% were raised Catholic

- For those at St. Paul’s fewer than 5 years
  - 11% were raised Episcopalian
  - 52% were raised other Protestant faith
  - 33% were raised Catholic
St. Paul’s members are introduced to the church by family, friends, or neighbors.
Why are we at St. Paul’s: What do we value?

We value:

• The inclusive nature of the Episcopal Church and St. Paul’s
  o “There is no ‘checklist’ to belong”
  o “Everyone is welcome in the sandbox and we get to love each other judgment-free.”

• Stimulating adult forums & a culture of inquiry
  o “St. Paul’s hits the right level of intellectual inquiry at the forums.”
  o “At St. Paul’s, you are surrounded by thinkers.”

• Vibrant children & youth ministries
  o “Where else do kids have the opportunity to talk about God?”
  o “Youth programming is the most important thing we do”

• High quality and variety of music
  o “The quality of the music is not found anywhere else. This is important history of St. Paul’s – what we are known for.”
Why are we at St. Paul’s: What keeps us coming?

We keep coming for:

• **The people and community of St. Paul’s**
  - “People are known here—known by name.” “I love that the church is multi-generational. I like meeting people I wouldn’t otherwise meet.” “St. Paul’s is home!”

• **Preaching that speaks to us and encourages us to think**
  - “The sermons make me think in a different way. They take you out of the day-to-day and remind you of what’s important.”

• **Meaningful liturgy and worship experience**
  - “Always fulfilled by worship, worship is most important thing.” “The service feels participatory.” “Love the outdoor service!”

• **Opportunities for outreach**
  - “It is so important to look beyond the walls of the church. Outreach keeps me engaged; it is a positive feedback loop.”

• **St. Paul’s brings us peace**
  - “Life can be stressful. I love coming to a peaceful place.”
  - “I get a message of peace that you don’t get elsewhere.”
How do we think about our pledges and gifts to St. Paul’s?

Giving to the church is different
- “You get something very different from your relationship with the church. It buries your mother, baptizes your child, marries your daughter. Your school doesn’t do that; the orchestra doesn’t do that. It’s there ALL the time and that’s important.”
- “The church only has its members. It is our money that enables us to do what we do.”
- “Giving to the church brings me a sense of belonging, being part of the community

Our gifts are well-stewardeded; there’s financial transparency
- “We know how are gifts are spent. We know the programs our gifts support.”

But there are challenges
- “There are so many needs out there and there seem to be more all the time. So many charities need money.”
- “There is a mindset in the parish that there are several families that support everything, so no one else needs to.”
What makes a difference? What can we do better?

- **Personal invitations to participate more deeply**
  - “The invitation makes a difference. That’s how people get drawn in.”
  - “We stayed involved because someone asked us to do specific things.”

- **St. Paul’s can do better at welcoming newcomers and reaching out to the community**
  - “All parishioners need to be the welcoming committee—not just one person or a committee.”
  - “We need to get people through the door—even if not for a service.
  - “There are lots of people who are lost and at sea; we need to let them know they are welcome here.”

- **Communications, external as well as internal, are critical**
  - “St Paul’s can do a better job of selling what we do here.”
  - “The website and church app need to be more user-friendly”
What makes a difference? What can we do better?

- **Be intentional about engaging members at times of transition**
  - “Seems like we have some young families that come for awhile, then leave when their children grow older.”
  - “Retirees spend more time away. Some have 2\textsuperscript{nd} homes—and 2\textsuperscript{nd} church communities. How do we keep them engaged?”
  - “As things change in our lives, every time we need a ‘new’ church, SPC becomes that church.”

- **There is a concern about pastoral care**
  - “Since Rich left, it’s not clear who is in charge of pastoral care.”
  - “Attention to the needs of our aging population is extremely important”
What we heard from our neighbors
Most of our neighbors have been inside our doors.
Neighbors have been inside St. Paul’s for more than worship.
30% of our neighbors never hear anything about our programs.

Q5 How do you hear about programs at St. Paul's that are open to the community (e.g. music, speakers, workshops)? (Check all that apply)
There are a variety of ways to engage our neighbors. Many are interested in arts programming.
What’s next?
The committee believes St. Paul’s can thrive by growing its apostolic core and its outer rings.
Near-Term Actions Led by Clergy/Staff

- Establish “House Churches” during Lent
  - Groups of 10-12 parishioners meet weekly for 8 sessions
  - Groups gather for prayer, Bible study, facilitated discussion and fellowship
  - Groups meet in parishioner homes or at St. Paul’s
- Start a yoga program open to parishioners and neighbors
  - Free or goodwill offering
- Welcome hymn requests and forum suggestions
- Boost the “EpiscoPals” program for new members
- Hold an interactive forum on parish communications
- Improve communications of outreach activities and volunteer opportunities
Establish task forces for Communications and Engagement

**Communications**
- Develop mission and brand statements
- Modernize and streamline our communications.
- Consider adopting “Invite, Welcome, Connect,” developed by Mary Parmer
- Update database to be more intuitive and interactive
- Develop neighborhood communication plan

**Engagement**
- Implement strategies for engaging parishioners more deeply
  - Contact parishioners at “non-traditional” transition points to encourage new ways to engage with parish life
- Develop metric aside from ASA to measure engagement
- Focus on some key groups, including: “nones”-- spiritual but not religious, former Catholics, people who live/work/go to school in University Circle. Develop offerings for these target markets.
- Expand engagement with the neighborhood.