

Faith Digest

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Does church attendance change lives? Almost half of churchgoing Americans say their life has not changed a bit due to their time in the pews, a new survey shows. [Barna Group](#), an evangelical research company based in California, found 46 percent reported no change. About a quarter of Americans said their life was greatly affected by church attendance and another quarter said it was somewhat influential. Two-thirds of respondents said they had felt "a real and personal connection" with God while attending church. Among weekly church attenders, 44 percent said they felt God's presence every week and 18 percent said they had that experience once a month. Three out of five church attenders said they could not recall an important new religious insight from their last church visit. Of those who attended in the previous week, 50 percent could not recall walking away with a significant new understanding. The survey results are based on a random sample of 1,022 adults and have a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Slow growth for Christians in Israel. Christians have the lowest growth rate among the Israeli population, according to a recent report from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics. The Christian growth rate of 0.9 percent lags behind the Jewish rate of 1.7 percent and the 2.7 percent growth rate among Muslims. Christian Arabs have a growth rate of 1 percent, while the rate among non-Arab Christians is 0.7 percent. About 154,000 Christians live in Israel, representing about 2 percent of the population. The estimated birthrate for Christian women also is the lowest among the religious groups. The average number of children expected to be born to a Christian woman is 2.1, compared to a Muslim woman (3.8), a Jewish woman (3.0) and a Druze woman (2.5).

Assemblies start more than one church in a day in 2011. [The](#)

[Assemblies of God](#) reported 368 churches started last year in the United States—the second-highest number of church starts since the denomination began keeping reliable statistics in 1965. Factoring in 230 church closures, there now are 12,595 Assemblies of God congregations in the country, the highest ever recorded. General Superintendent George O. Wood noted the denomination hopes to start more than 400 churches in 2012 and has a goal ultimately of starting at least 500 annually.

New conservative Presbyterian group formed. Conservative Presbyterians recently launched the [Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians](#), saying the Presbyterian Church (USA) is too consumed by internal conflicts and bureaucracy to nurture healthy congregations. More than 2,000 people attended the ECO's meeting in Orlando, Fla. Incoming congregations will be given the option of pursuing joint membership in both the PC(USA) and the ECO, or joining the ECO as full members, which would require dismissal from the PC(USA). Although still the largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States, the PC(USA) lost more than 500,000 members between 1998 and 2009, and it now has about 2 million members.

?-Compiled from Religion News Service