A View from the Pew: National Congregations Survey Data (To Date)

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Presentation Slides: Preliminary and incomplete findings
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Phase 1 Research – Interviews/Focus Groups

When you think of a flourishing congregation, what comes to mind?

- Divide on relationship between flourishing and numbers
- Several partially overlapping and conflicting pictures of what constitutes a flourishing congregation
- Supernatural discourse/accounts of flourishing

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Phase 2 Research – Survey to Date (N = 1988)

- 77 congregations
  - 42% < 100 weekly attenders
  - 10% > 500 weekly attenders

- Largest 3 denominations represented
  - Christian & Missionary Alliance (23.2%)
  - Reformed (19.9%)
  - United Church of Canada (13.4%)
  - *Catholic (7.9%) (6th)
Phase 2 Research – Survey to Date (N = 1988)

- Largest 3 provinces represented
  - Ontario (34.9%)
  - Alberta (27.9%)
  - Saskatchewan (15.2%)

- Other notable demographics
  - Older sample (67% > 50)
  - Smaller locations (62% < 250,000)
  - Established churches (81% - 30+ years)

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Flourishing Congregations Construct

[Diagram showing the organizational ethos model with sections for Leadership, Innovation, Structure & Process, External Partnerships, Evangelism, Neighbourhood Involvement, Diversity, Hospitable Community, Engaged Laity, and Discipleship.]

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Generally, your parish is flourishing
Outward: Neighbourhood Involvement
How close do you live to your church?

- Less than 1km
- 1-4.9km
- 5-9.9km
- 10-19.9km
- 20km+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Range</th>
<th>Less than 1km</th>
<th>1-4.9km</th>
<th>5-9.9km</th>
<th>10-19.9km</th>
<th>20km+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 50,000</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000-99,999</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>100,000-249,999</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250,000-499,999</td>
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<td>15.9%</td>
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<td>8.2%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>500,000-749,999</td>
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<td>34.2%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750,000-999,999</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000+</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Flourishing congregation involved in neighbor.

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Growing: 60.1%
Staying the Same: 52.6%
Declining: 47.6%

Unsure: 35.0%
Strongly Disagree: 41.3%
Disagree: 41.1%
Neutral: 7.2%
Agree: 2.4%
Strongly Agree: 0.7%
Our church has active presence in the neighbor.

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Personally involved in outreach activities

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Growing: 19.4% Strongly Disagree, 25.5% Disagree, 34.4% Neutral, 25.6% Agree, 15.2% Strongly Agree

Staying the Same: 3.9% Strongly Disagree, 25.1% Disagree, 34.1% Neutral, 1.4% Agree, 9.9% Strongly Agree

Declining: 7.1% Strongly Disagree, 30.8% Disagree, 31.5% Neutral, 21.4% Agree, 7.1% Strongly Agree
Neighborhood would notice if our church left

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Prominent groups congregations engage with

- Kids/Families: 54.0%
- Immigrants/Refugees: 39.8%
- Seniors: 39.8%
- Poor: 38.7%
- Students: 18.8%

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Outward: Neighborhood Involvement

• Positive perceptions (especially in growing contexts), though lower rates of personal involvement

• Ideas moving forward …
  • Study the neighborhood
  • Church leaders matter
  • Group narratives on importance of neighborhood involvement
  • Embed stories in liturgy
  • Think/act creatively
  • Explore partnerships
Outward: Evangelism
Flourishing congregation involved in evangel.

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Our congregation prioritizes evangelism
Verbally share your faith with others

Growing
- Never: 7.8%
- Annually: 18.2%
- Monthly: 29.5%
- Weekly: 33.4%
- Daily: 11.2%

Staying the Same
- Never: 15.0%
- Annually: 21.0%
- Monthly: 32.1%
- Weekly: 24.3%
- Daily: 7.6%

Declining
- Never: 10.4%
- Annually: 14.3%
- Monthly: 30.7%
- Weekly: 28.2%
- Daily: 10.4%

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Show your faith to others with actions
invite non-christians to your church

Growing: 28.1%

Staying the Same: 51.8%

Declining: 55.0%

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Effective strategies for evang. in your church

- Children/Families/Youth Ministries: 50.3%
- Small groups: 27.6%
- Women’s: 26.3%
- Special occasions (religious holidays, rites of passage): 21.3%
- Alpha: 20.2%
Challenges for you personally in evangelism

- Lack of confidence: 47.8%
- Fear of rejection: 31.5%
- Increasing antagonism/resistance to Christian values and the Christian Church: 30.8%
- Few nonbelievers as friends: 28.6%
- Lack of training: 19.0%
Source of attendance

- Used to attend a parish/congregation regularly, stopped attending regular services for a period of time, and have since returned to regular Mass/church attendance
- This is the first parish/congregation of any Christian tradition I have ever attended
- Came to this parish/congregation after relocating to this area (e.g., moved from Vancouver to Halifax)
- Came to this parish/congregation from another in the area (i.e., same city or town)
- Raised in this parish/congregation

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Outward: Evangelism

- Notable differences between growing and declining contexts in importance and behaviours associated with evangelism... still, few verbally sharing their faith or inviting friends to their church

- Questions to consider...
  - Centrality of evangelism in your congregation?
  - Teaching?
  - Equipping?
  - Opportunities?
  - Celebrations?
  - Measurements?
Outward: Partnerships
Flourishing congregation partners with others

39.3% Strongly Agree
46.8% Agree
9.7% Neutral
1.6% Disagree
0.6% Strongly Disagree
2.1% Unsure

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Important that other organiz. use your church

47.7% Strongly Agree
31.8% Agree
9.4% Neutral
4.4% Disagree
2.0% Strongly Disagree
4.7% Unsure

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Important to partner w/churches **within** denom.

- 42.7% **Strongly Agree**
- 38.4% **Agree**
- 9.4% **Neutral**
- 3.6% **Disagree**
- 4.2% **Strongly Disagree**
- 1.7% Unsure
Important to partner w/churches across denom.
Important to partner with other religious groups

- 29.1% Agree
- 22.6% Strongly Agree
- 17.2% Neutral
- 12.8% Disagree
- 6.2% Strongly Disagree
- 12.1% Unsure

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Important to partner with social service agencies

- Strongly Agree: 45.3%
- Agree: 30.8%
- Neutral: 6.5%
- Disagree: 4.4%
- Strongly Disagree: 1.2%
- Unsure: 11.8%
Important to partner with Christian schools

- Strongly Agree: 28.2%
- Agree: 19.4%
- Neutral: 12.8%
- Disagree: 4.5%
- Strongly Disagree: 12.2%
- Unsure: 22.9%
Outward: Partnerships

• General endorsement, particularly the “closer to home” another organization is to your congregation’s mission

• Question to consider …
  • Opportunities to partner and leverage strengths of other groups, to help you mutually achieve core vision/mission for existing?
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