

# VISIONING A HEALTHY & WHOLE CHURCH OF THE NOW

Rev. Darrell Goodwin  
Executive Conference Minister, SNEUCC



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Former Context

- Pastor
  - ALANA Campus Ministry
  - Liberation United Church of Christ
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational Church of Everett
- Chaplain
  - VA Hospital in Seattle
- Administrator
  - University Life
    - Dean of Students, Multicultural Affairs, Judicial Affairs
  - Middle Judicatory



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Context Now

- Executive Conference Minister, Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ
  - 1 of 35 Regional Bodies in the UCC
  - UCC is 4,700 Churches, 770,000 members
  - About 600 Churches
  - 1400 Authorized Ministers
  - 110,000 Members
  - MA, RI, CT



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

## Context Now

# Cathomethocostal- Congregationalist



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Theological Grounding

## **The Baptism of Jesus- Matthew 3:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

<sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

<sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*



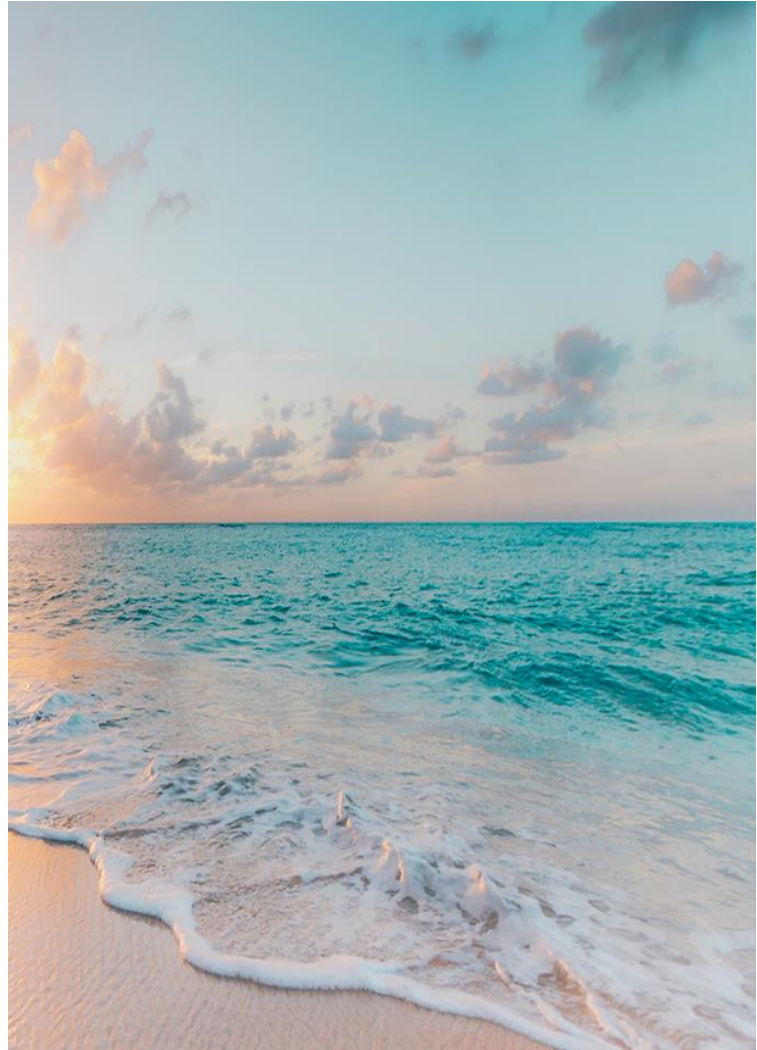
# Grounding Scripture: 3 John 1:2 AMP

- Beloved, I pray that in every way you may succeed and prosper and be in good health [physically], just as [I know] your soul prospers [spiritually].



“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

-Dr. Naomi Remen



**Southern New England Conference**  
United Church of Christ  
*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

The word *compassion* literally means to “suffer with”.

If you’re trying to serve someone who is hurting and it doesn’t hurt *you* in the process, you’re doing it wrong.

**The cost of compassion isn’t money. It’s *comfort*.**





# What is Compassion Fatigue?

- Is a condition characterized by a gradual lessening of compassion over time
- Those with the most empathy are the most at risk
- Decrease in experiences of pleasure
- Persistent stress and anxiety
- Sleeplessness or nightmares, and a pervasive negative attitude



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*



- Compassion Fatigue has been described as the “cost of caring” for others in emotional and physical pain.
- It is characterized by deep physical and emotional exhaustion and a pronounced change in the helper’s ability to feel empathy for others.



# Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- Ability to function is interfered with or altered
- Situation or incident does not seem “typical or ordinary”, it feels traumatic
- “Compassion stress” impinges upon or breaks through normal boundaries
- Regularly waking up tired in the morning and struggling to get to work
- Feeling as if you are working harder but accomplishing less
- Becoming frustrated/irritated easily
- Losing compassion for some people while becoming overly involved in others
- Routinely feeling bored or disgusted
- Experiencing illness, aches and pains

# Burn Out and Compassion Fatigue

- Emotional exhaustion
- Reduced sense of personal accomplishment or meaning
- Mental exhaustion
- Decreased interactions with others
- Depersonalization



# Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

- Result of bearing witness to a traumatic event (or series of events) which can lead to PTSD like symptoms
- Rapid onset and associated with a particular event
- May include feeling afraid, difficulty falling asleep, images of upsetting event, avoiding things that remind you of the event



Where are you experiencing some of these signs and symptoms in your ministry and life?



## How to Manage Compassion Fatigue

- Get Educated
- Practice Self-Care
- Set Emotional Boundaries
- Keep Balance in Your Life
- Find Your Passion
- Engage in Outside Hobbies
- Cultivate Healthy Friendships Outside of Work
- Keep a Journal
- Boost Your Resiliency
- Use Positive Coping Strategies



You cannot drink  
from an empty cup.

FILL YOURSELF UP. YOU'RE WORTH IT.

2022 and Beyond

# RELIGIOUS TRENDS



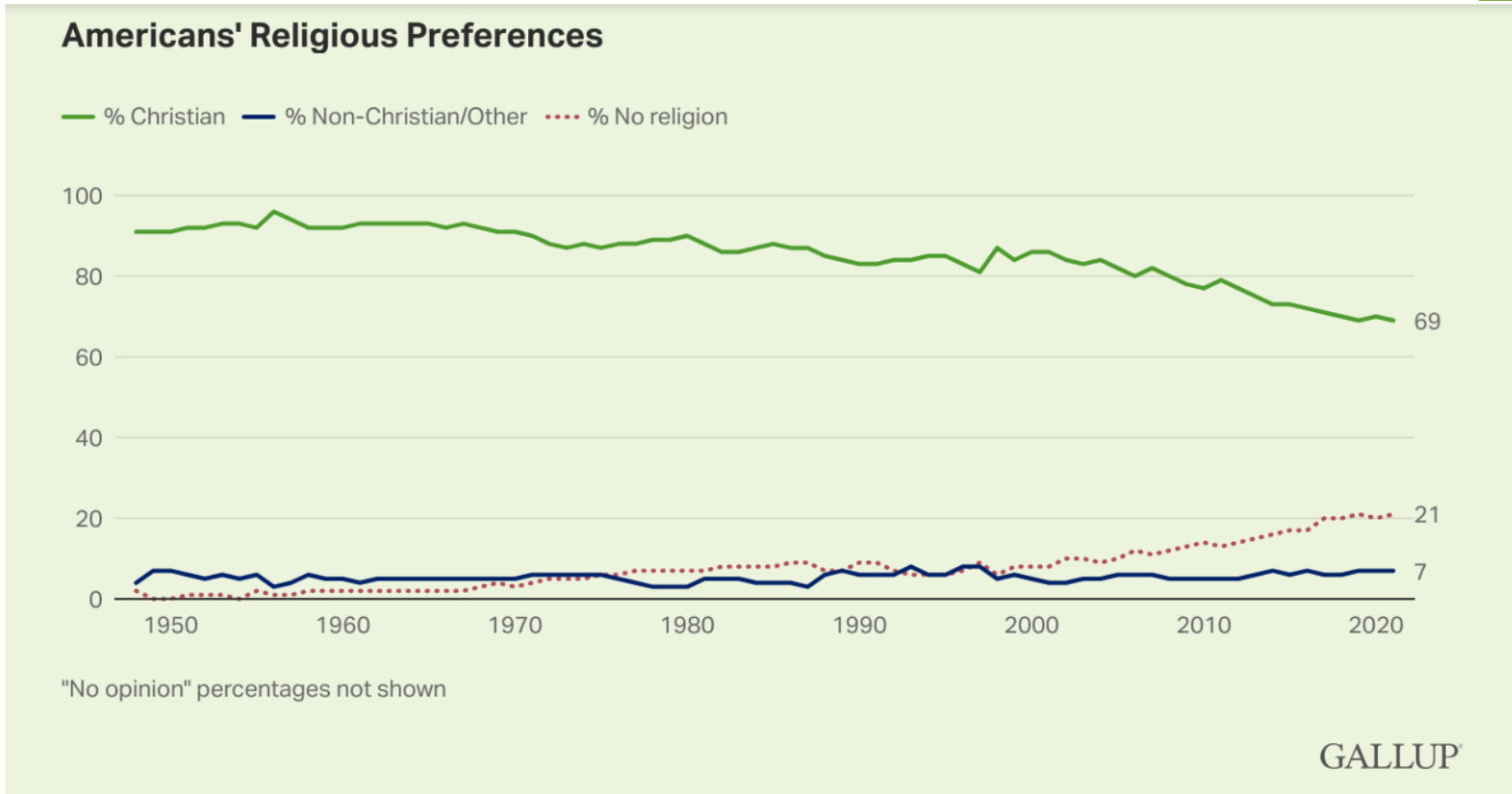
**Southern New England Conference**

**United Church of Christ**

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*



# Religious Affiliation: Fewer Christians



Implication: When we say Faith-Based we really mean not just other Christian Denominations but ALL FAITHS



**Southern New England Conference**

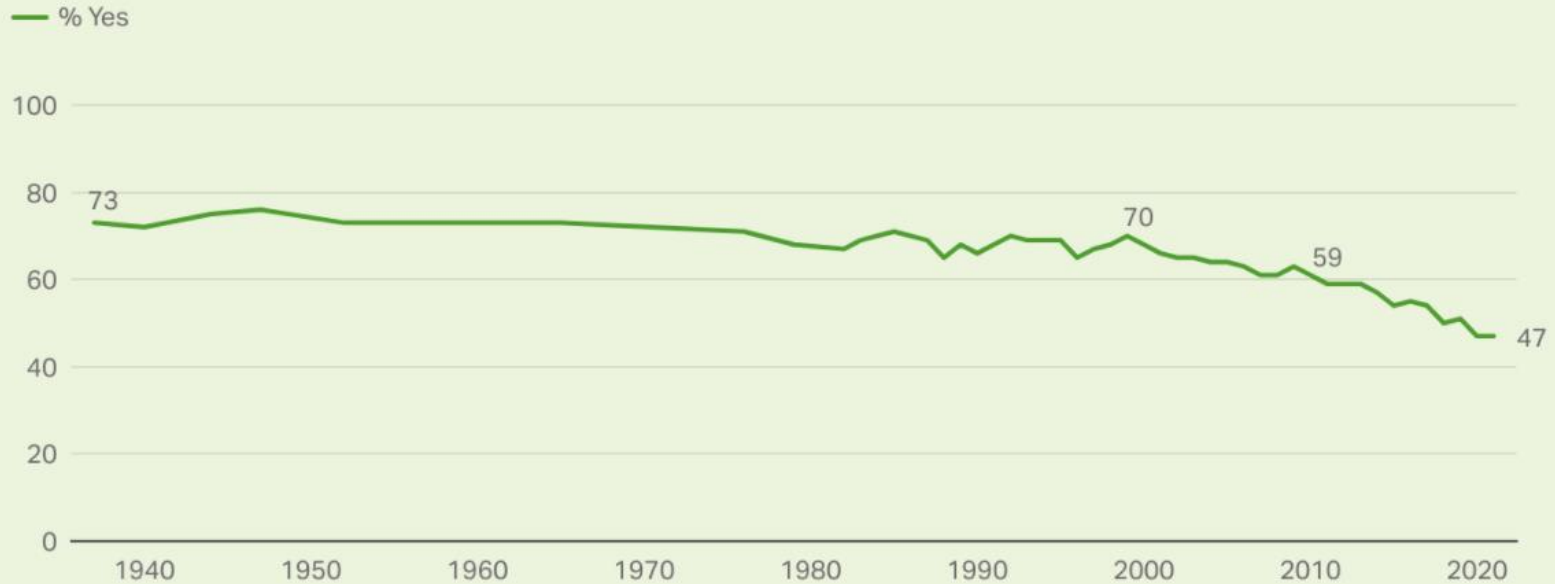
United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Membership: Rise of the “Nones”

## U.S. Church Membership, 1937-2021

Do you happen to be a member of a church, synagogue, mosque or temple?



GALLUP

Less than half of Americans, 47%, belong to a formal house of worship. When Gallup first asked the question in 1937, 73% were members of a church, and as recently as 1999, 70% were



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Other Important Religious Trends (and Predictions)

## Attendance:

- Trends suggest that attendance figures will not reach levels common prior to the pandemic
- Worship attendance will average 80% of pre-COVID numbers. Sources are predicting that attendance will not fully recover in 2022. As more COVID variants enter the world, there will continue to be a hesitation by many people to attend weekly worship gatherings.

## Giving:

- Financial Support: Church giving will decline 5%. Many churches experienced increased giving or at least level giving in 2020 and 2021. Government injected liquidity has gone away



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Church Economics are Challenging

## ECONOMIC REALITIES



Inflation



Rising Interest Rates



Aging Core Donors



Special Use Facility Loans



Share of Giving to Religion Declining



Endowment Drawdowns



Concentration Risk (Donors & Portfolios)



Shortage of Volunteers



Lower In-Person Worship



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Other Important Religious Trends

## Numbers and Form of Churches:

- **Closures/Downsizing:** Data suggests as many as 15,000 churches in this nation will close or will be forced to merge in 2022.
- More churches will **merge or be adopted** than any period in 30 years. There is a greater willingness of struggling churches to be adopted, and there are more churches willing to adopt other congregations than at any point in many years. This movement will prove to be pivotal to keep the doors open of churches that would otherwise close. It is also an indicator that the multisite movement will continue to grow.
- **Micro Church:** The “micro church” consists of a congregation of 30 or fewer attendees. While these churches were on an upward trend pre-COVID, what are we likely to see moving forward?
- **Neighborhood churches** will become a movement. We think this movement has already begun, but we will see clear indicators of it in 2022. We define a neighborhood church as a congregation that is laser-focused on ministering to a specific geographical area typically described as a neighborhood



Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Other Trends in Religion

- Rethinking Denominationalism: “Denominational structures will begin to look more like networks.”
- The Great Resignation: What is being called the “Great Resignation” is signaling that as many as 20% of church pastors will be resigning their pulpits.
- Part-Time Clergy: There are more than one million part-time pastors. This phenomenon is known as “co-vocational ministry”.



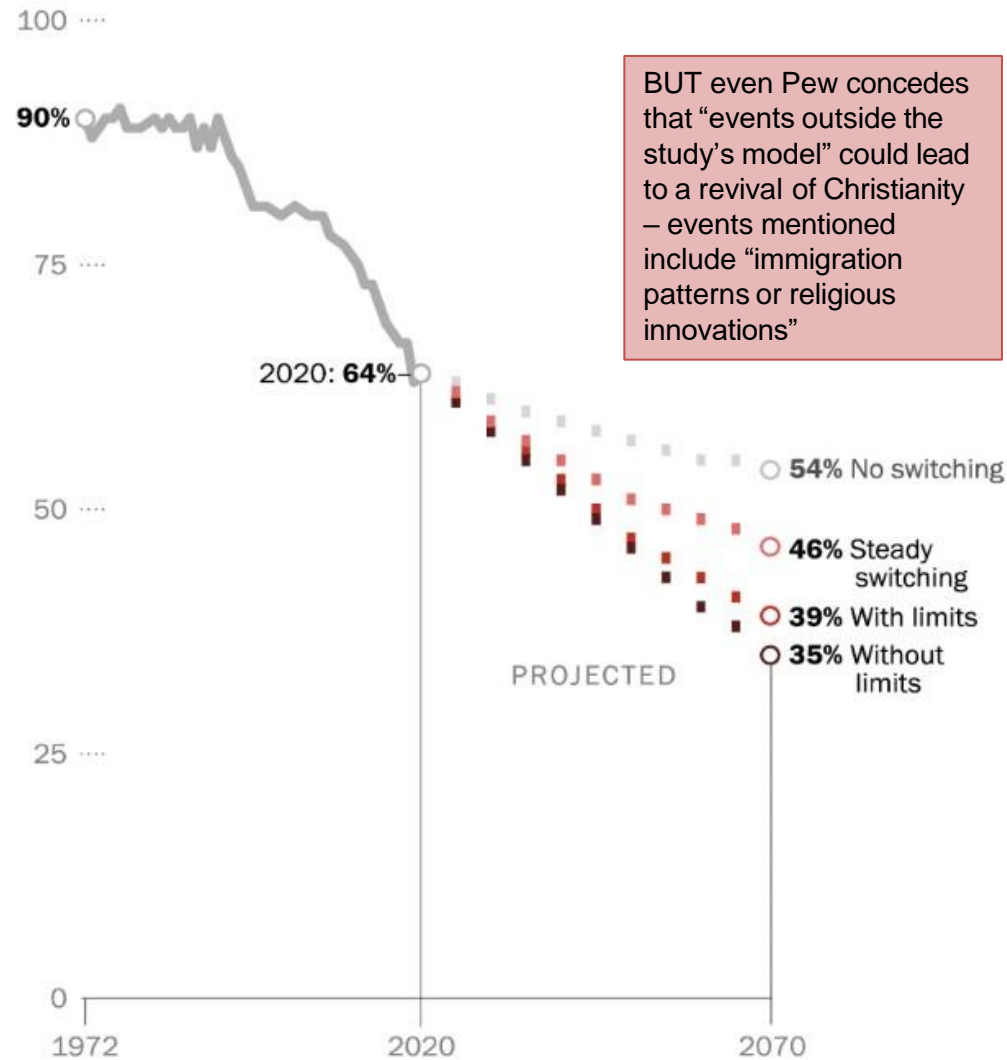
Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# U.S. Christians projected to fall below 50% of population if recent trends continue

% of Americans who are Christian



## Scenarios

- **No switching**  
This scenario imagines no person in America has changed or will change their religion after 2020.
- **Steady switching**  
Movement into and out of Christianity remains stable at recently observed rates. That is, in each new generation, 31% of Christians become religiously unaffiliated before they turn 30, and 21% of unaffiliated people become Christian.
- **Rising disaffiliation with limits**  
In each new generation, a growing share of Christians switch out before they turn 30, while a shrinking share of ‘nones’ switch in. But the switching rate is capped to prevent the share of Christians who leave the faith from rising above 50%.
- **Rising disaffiliation without limits**  
In each new generation, a growing share of Christians switch out before they turn 30, while a shrinking share of ‘nones’ switch in. No cap is imposed on switching rates.



**Southern New England Conference**

**United Church of Christ**

Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

# Other Trends in Religion continued

- Ministry training will begin to evolve into different models. Seminaries, Bible colleges, and Christian universities are not going away. But new models will begin to grow at a rapid pace. (CTS example)
- Quality vs. Quantity: Vital churches will focus on engagement and content over attendance. When YouTube measures engagement, it not only looks at the number of people viewing...but how long those viewers are watching.
- Building Video Messaging: Live video chats and messaging are proving successful, as are Instagram Reels, short-form videos.



Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*



2022 and Beyond

# IS THERE HOPE?



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

IDEAS

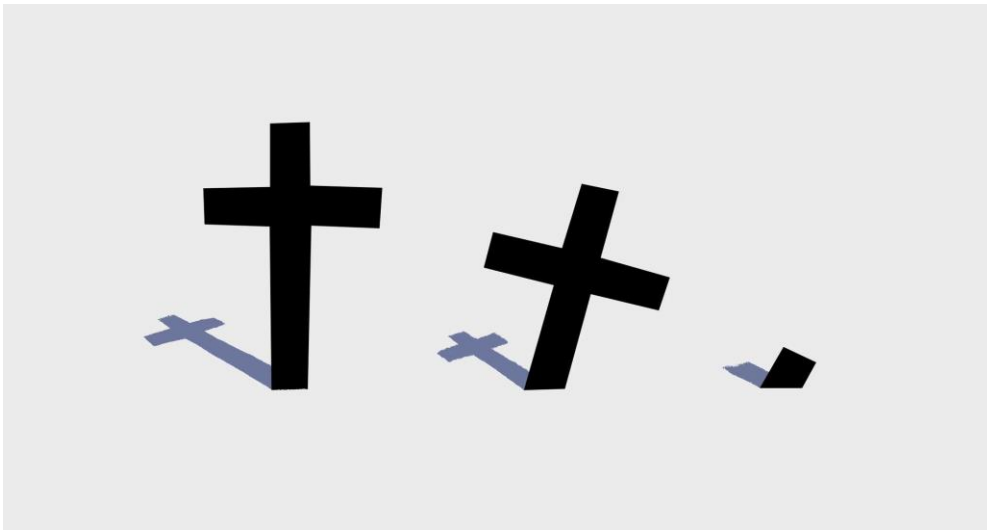
# AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY IS DUE FOR A REVIVAL

Our society is secularizing, and Christianity seems to be in long-term decline. But renewal is possible.

By Timothy Keller

FEBRUARY 5, 2023

SHARE ▼



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# What will it take for a Revival\*

1. The Church needs to learn how to speak compellingly to non-Christian people
2. The U.S. Church can grow again if it learns how to unite justice and righteousness
3. The Church in the U.S. can grow again if it embraces the global and multiethnic character of Christianity (by 2050 one in five Americans will be foreign-born; immigrants bring their faith with them)

\*In the view of the author, a Presbyterian minister, who has noted “repurposed” churches all over New York, that are now condominiums, gyms, art galleries, coffee shops, pubs and clubs



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Spiritual Openness on the Rise

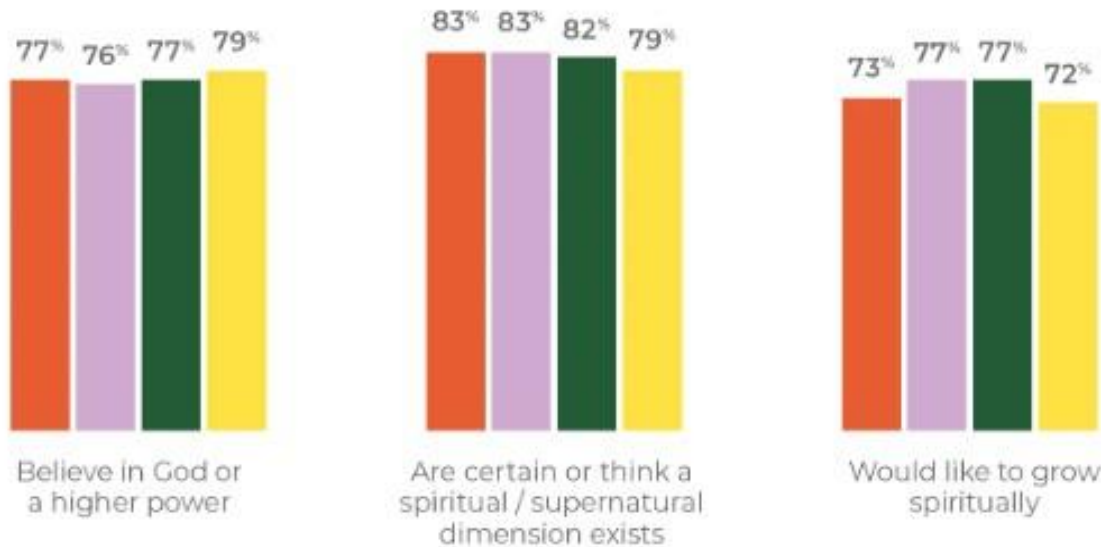
Across every generation, we see a desire to grow spiritually, a belief in a spiritual / supernatural dimension and a belief in God or a higher power.



## Rising Spiritual Hunger, by Generation

% U.S. adults who ...

● Gen Z ● Millennials ● Gen X ● Boomers



Source: Barna Group  
n=2,000 U.S. adults, October 21–31, 2022.

# Transformative Church in 2025

A survey of 4,000 constituents of the church commissioned by a denominational task force identified three fives issues that the church should focus upon in the next decade:

- LGBTQ justice
- Climate change
- Racial justice
- Income inequality
- Reproductive Rights/Sexism



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# How money from dying churches could breathe new life into communities



By Marisa Iati

April 15, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. EDT



Amy Butler is leading a project to redirect funds to entrepreneurs focused on social justice. (Marvin Jo)



Martin Parr / Magnum

## POLITICS

### AMERICAN RELIGION IS NOT DEAD YET

Participation in traditional houses of worship is in decline, but innovation and growth are happening elsewhere.

By Wendy Cagde and Elan Babchuck

JANUARY 16, 2023



Photo-illustration by Chantal Jabchan. Source: Vatican Pool / Getty.

## BOOKS

### THE REINVENTION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Scandals have taken a toll, and faith is flagging in Europe and the U.S. But Catholicism isn't on the wane—it's changing in influential ways.

By Paul Elie



Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

# What's Next

- Sustaining Innovation
- Disruptive Innovation



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# What's Next

- Be
- Be Relevant
- Be Transformed and Transformative
- Be Prophetic



Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*





**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

# Stay in Touch



**Southern New England Conference**

United Church of Christ

*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*



I hope THAT IN THIS  
year TO COME, YOU  
MAKE mistakes.

BECAUSE IF YOU ARE MAKING  
MISTAKES, THEN YOU ARE  
MAKING NEW THINGS, TRYING  
NEW THINGS, LEARNING, LIVING,  
PUSHING YOURSELF, CHANGING  
YOURSELF, CHANGING YOUR  
WORLD. YOU'RE DOING THINGS  
YOU'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE  
AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY,  
YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING.

NEIL GAIMAN

@POSITIVELYPRESENT



Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

Living the Love & Justice of Jesus