

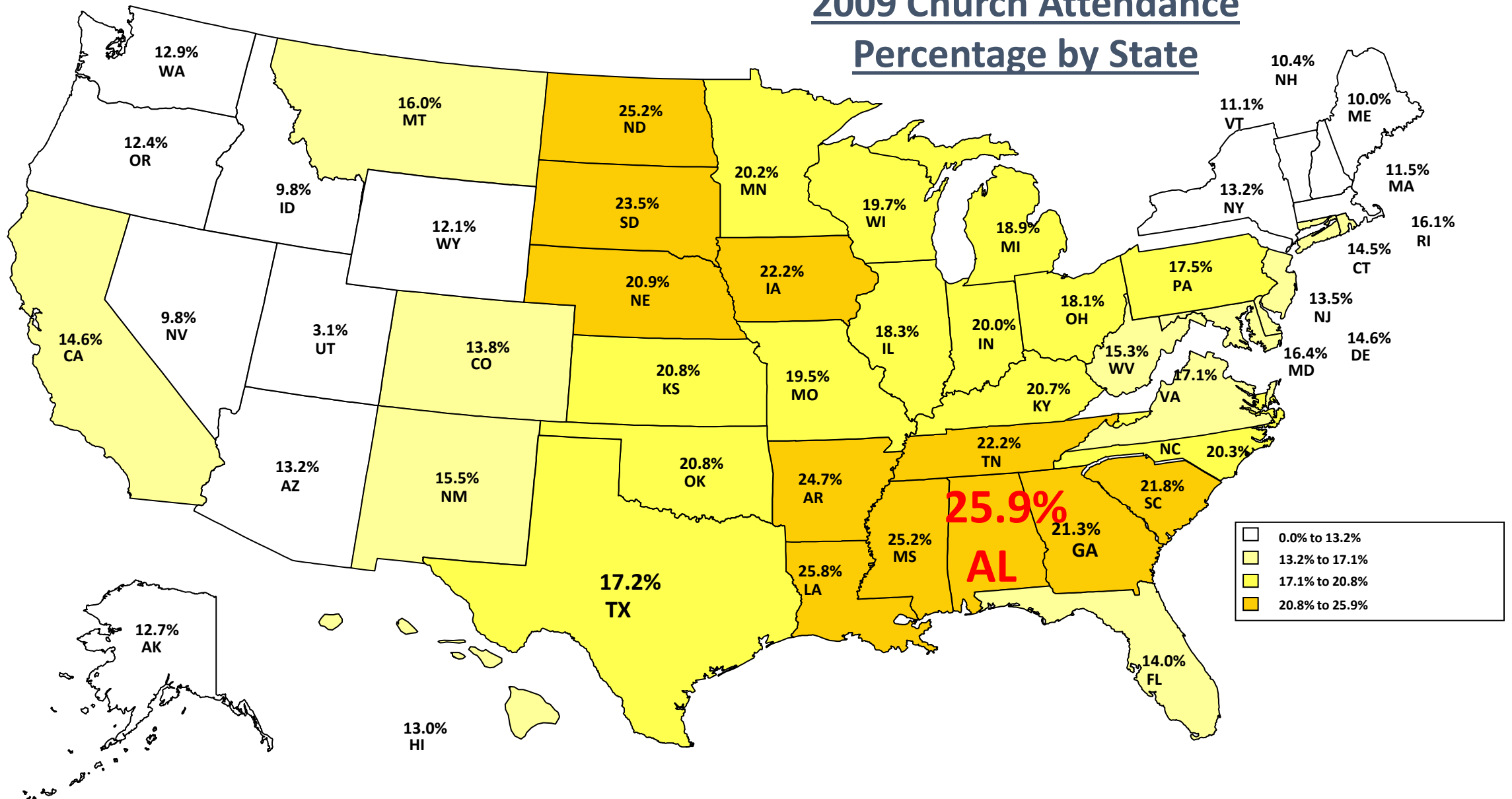


February 19, 2016

# Looking Back... Looking Ahead



## 2009 Church Attendance Percentage by State



Huntsville is probably significantly lower than the overall Alabama attendance number.

Furthermore, don't be lulled into a false sense of security! The downward trend will have the attendance figures even in Alabama going lower and lower.

**40 year+ churches are declining in attendance by 2 percent each year. Once churches reach 40+ years of age, on average they decline.**



# One reason for the decline in church attendance is the decreasing frequency of attendance.

*“For example, if 200 members attend every week the average attendance is, obviously, 200. But if one-half of those members miss only one out of four weeks, the attendance drops to 175. No members left the church. But attendance declined over 12 percent because half the members changed their attendance behavior slightly.”—Thom Rainer*



April, 2009



increase of **8%**

**NONES**

from 2007-2015

Now **23%** of the US Adult population

“Nones”  
--those  
who check  
“none” on  
religious  
preference

More than **1/3** of Millennials say  
they are not affiliated with any faith

Millennials:  
born c.  
1980-  
2000, so  
they are  
roughly  
18-37



# George Barna, June 20, 2015

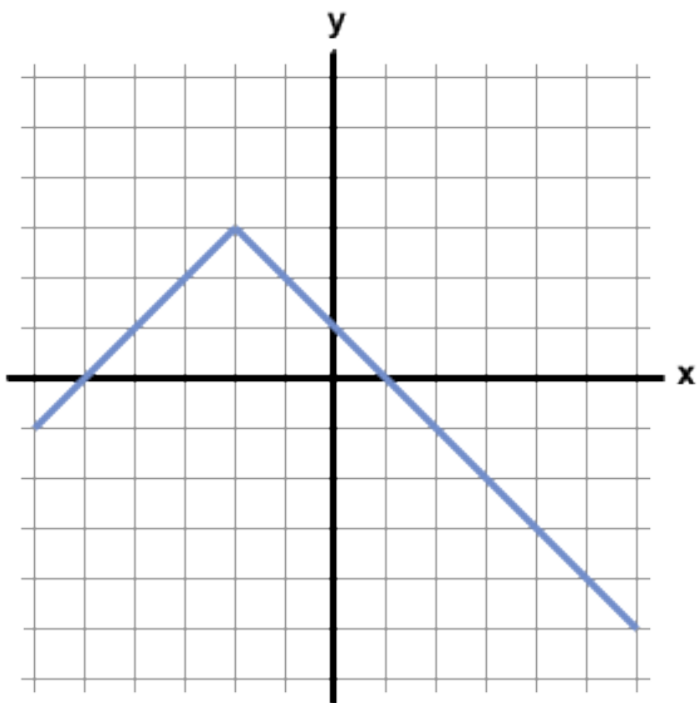
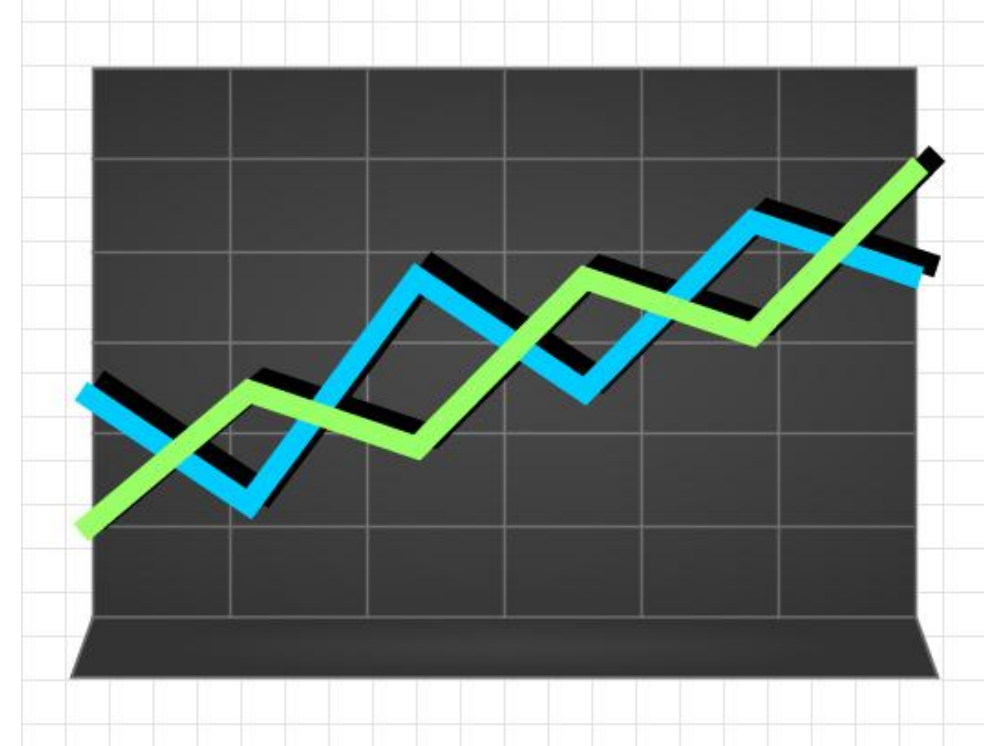
**According to this study (and many others like it) church attendance and impressions of the church are the lowest in recent history, and most drastic among millennials described as 22- to 35-year-olds.**

**Only 2 in 10 Americans under 30 believe attending a church is important or worthwhile (an all-time low).**

**59 percent of millennials raised in a church have dropped out.**

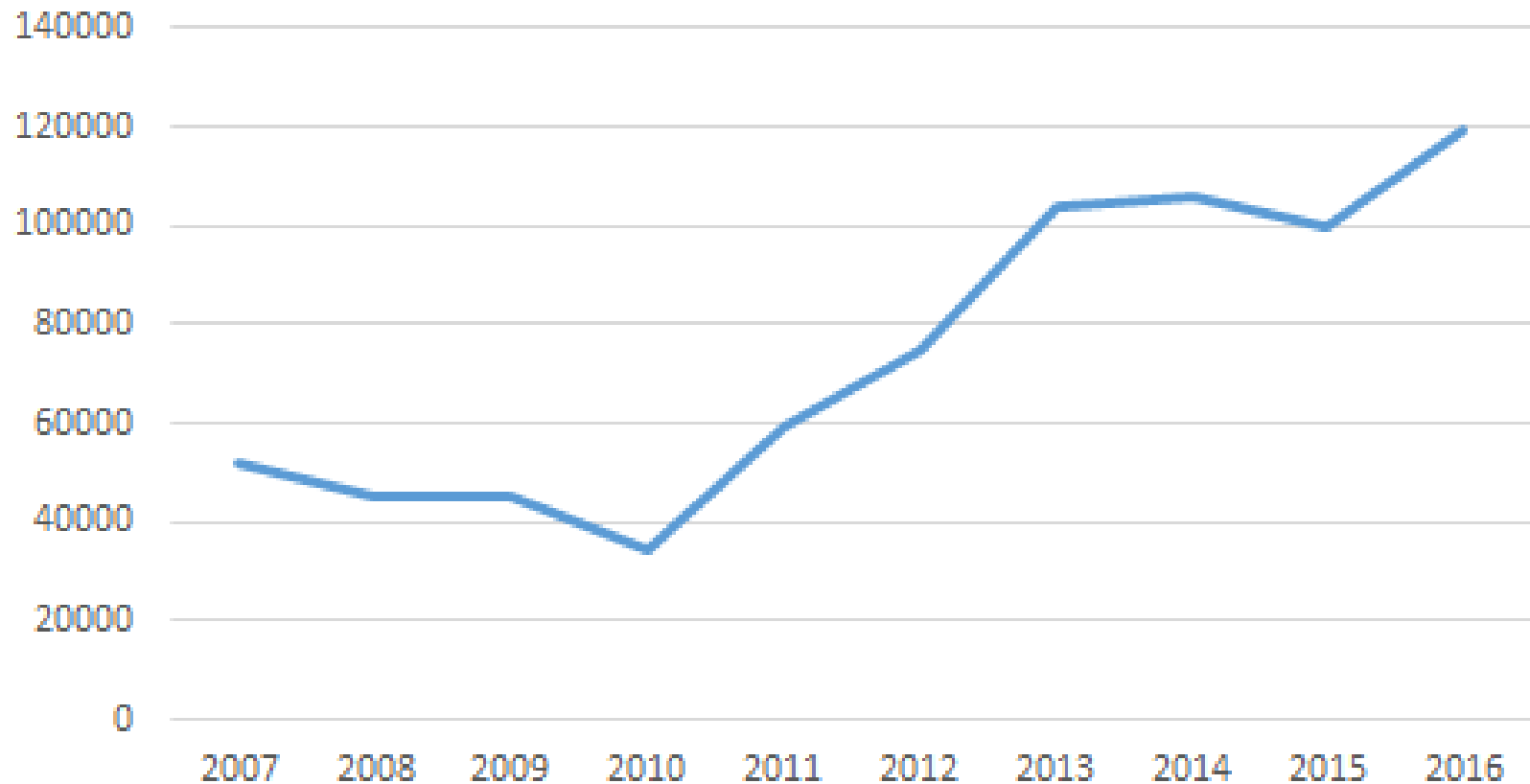
**35 percent of millennials have an *anti-church* stance, believing the church does more harm than good.**

**Millennials are the least likely age group of anyone to attend church (by far).**



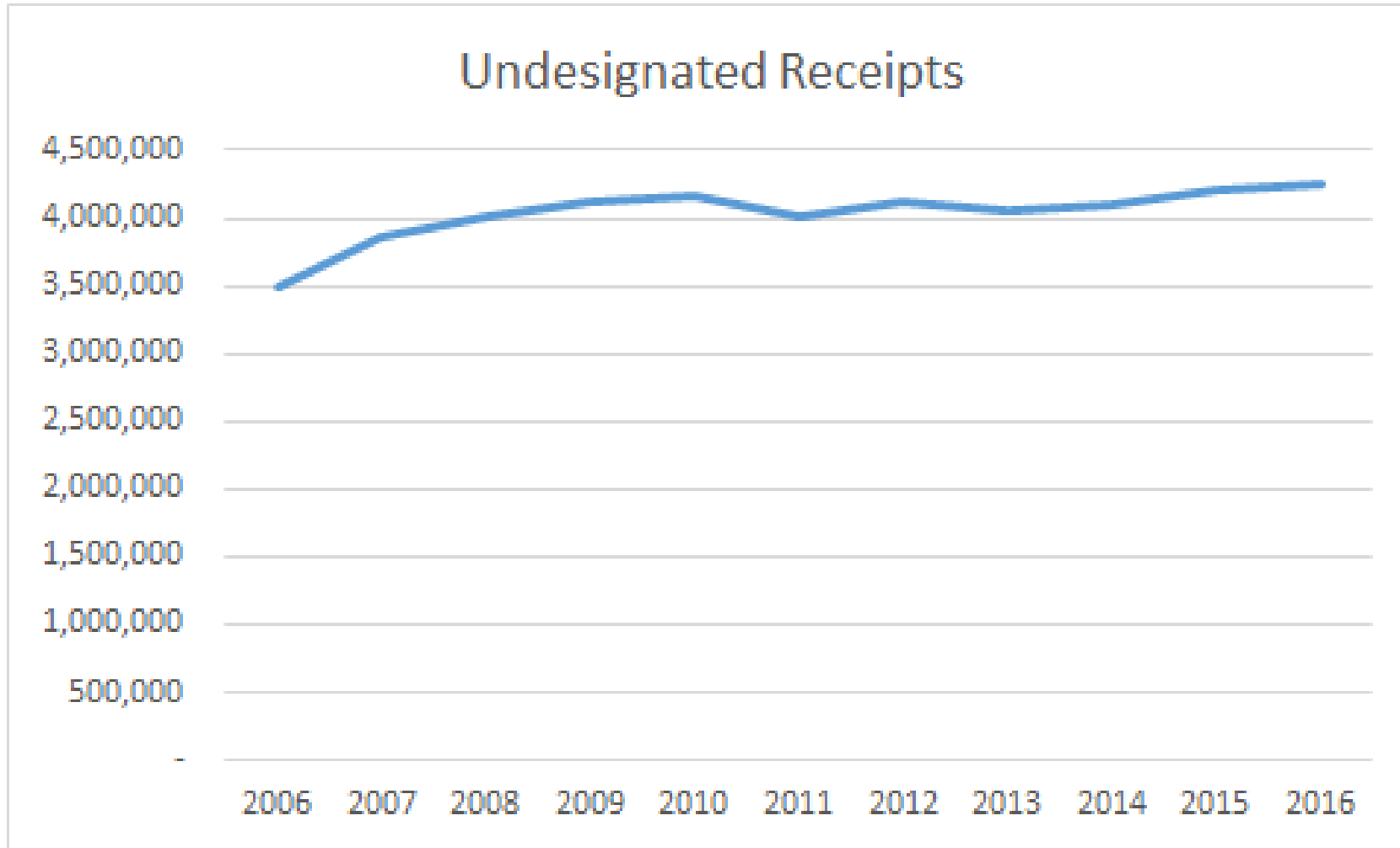
# FBC Trends

LM and GM Total Giving



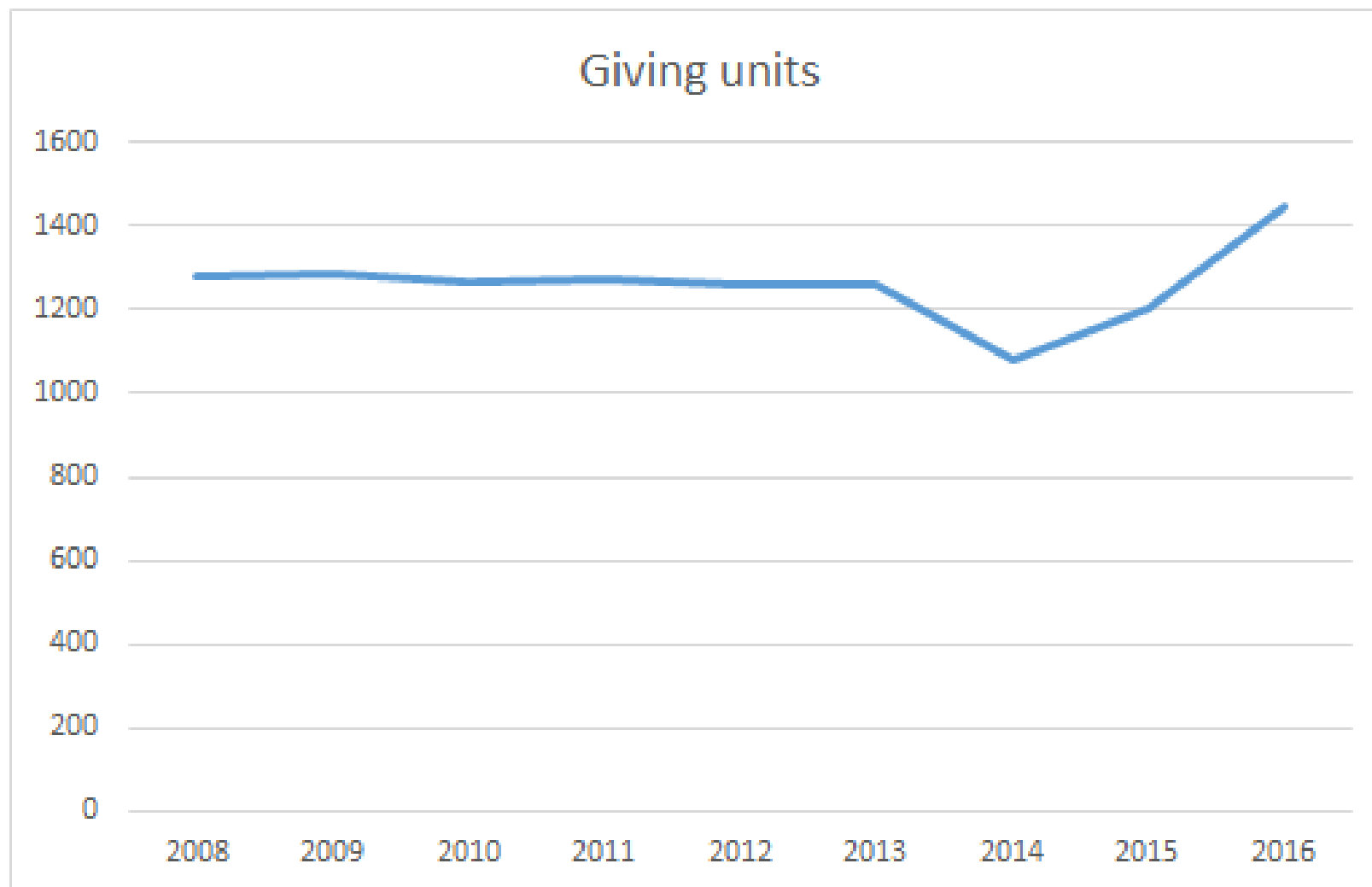
International  
Missions  
Offering

+214%



+22%

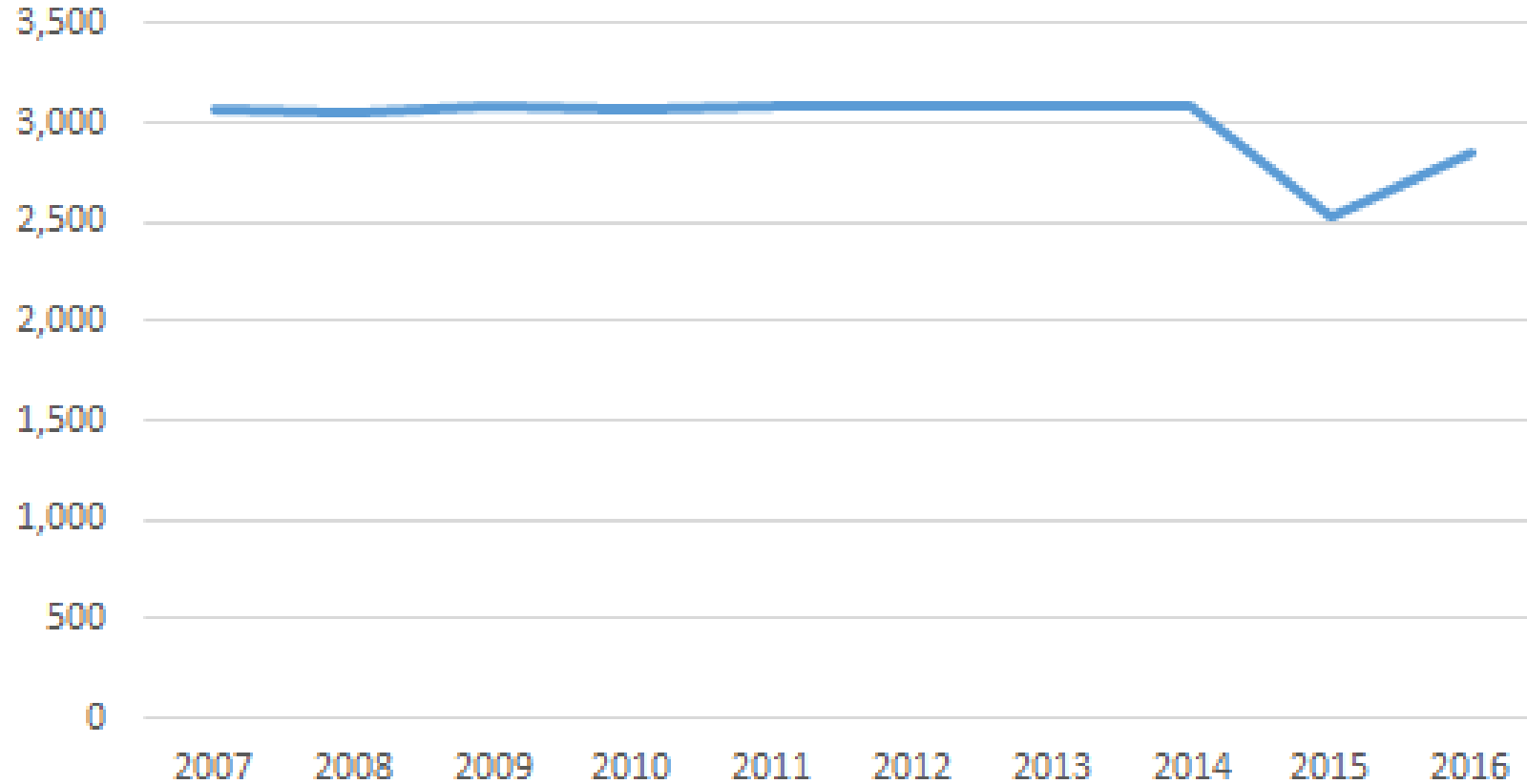
(slightly  
ahead of  
inflation)



+13%

(We didn't start tracking this until 2008.)

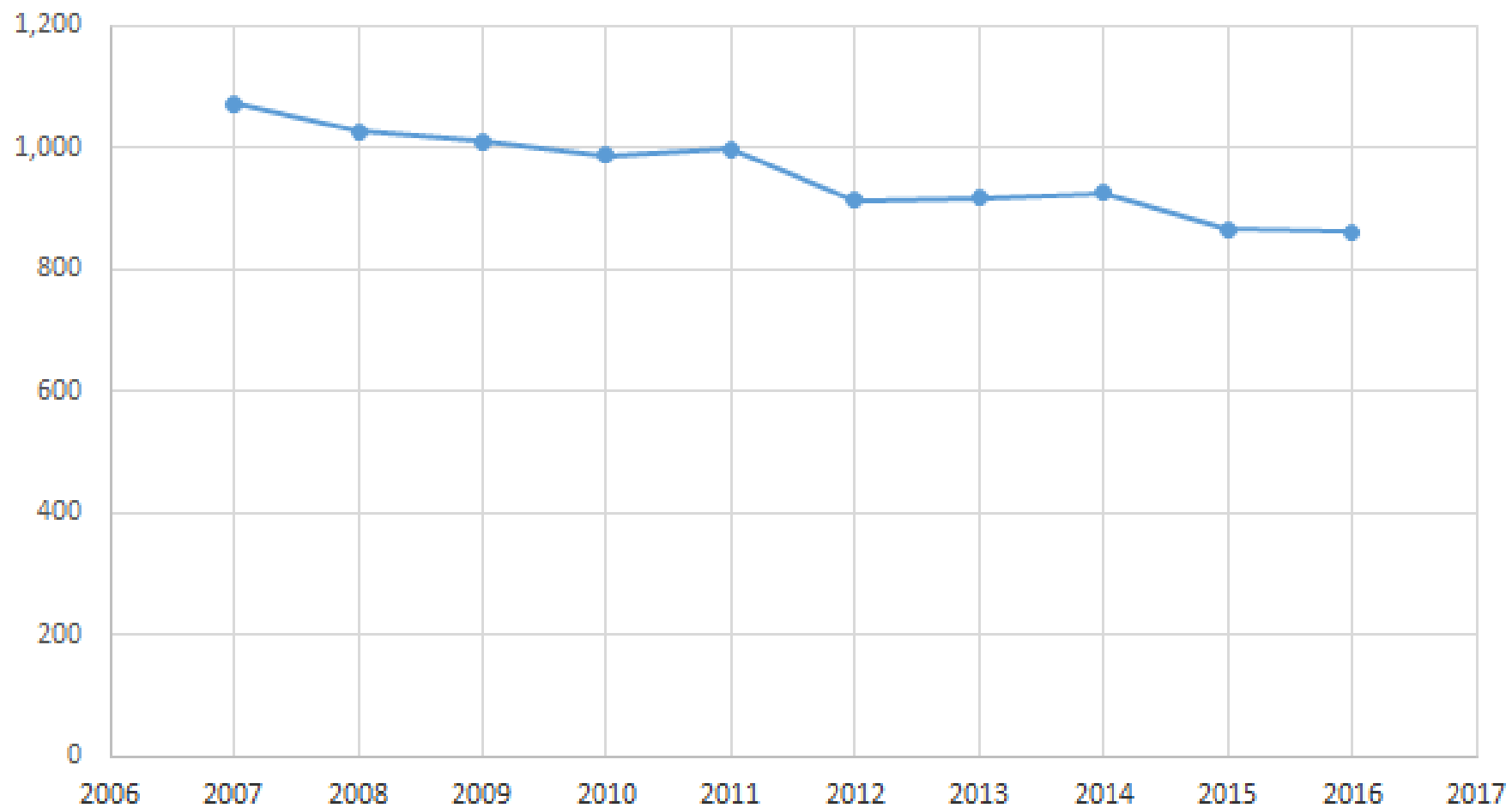
## Resident Members



-8%

(The big change in 2014 is due to “cleaning up” the records)

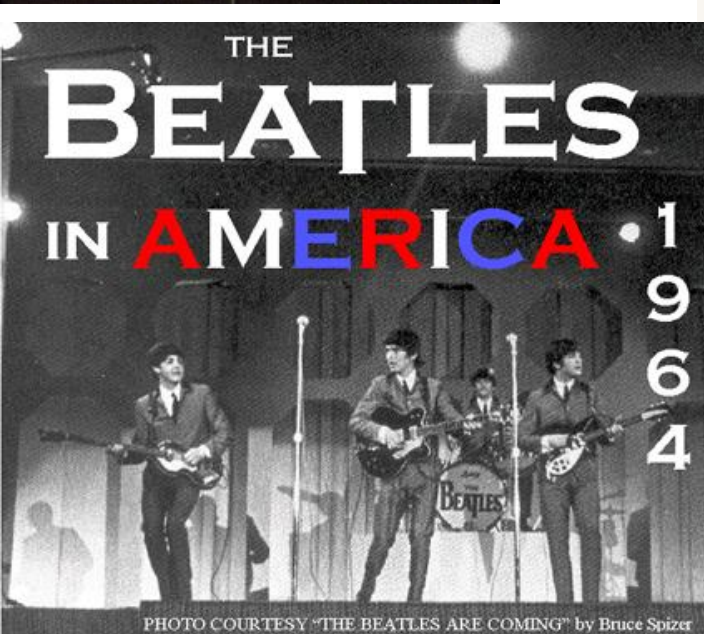
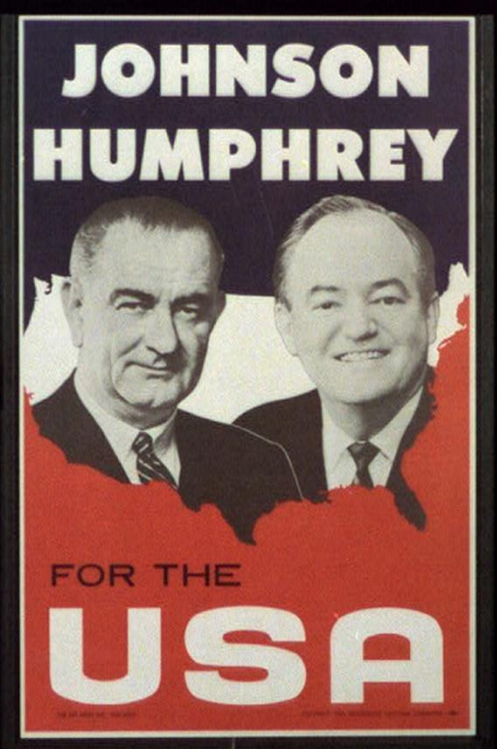
SS Avg Attendance



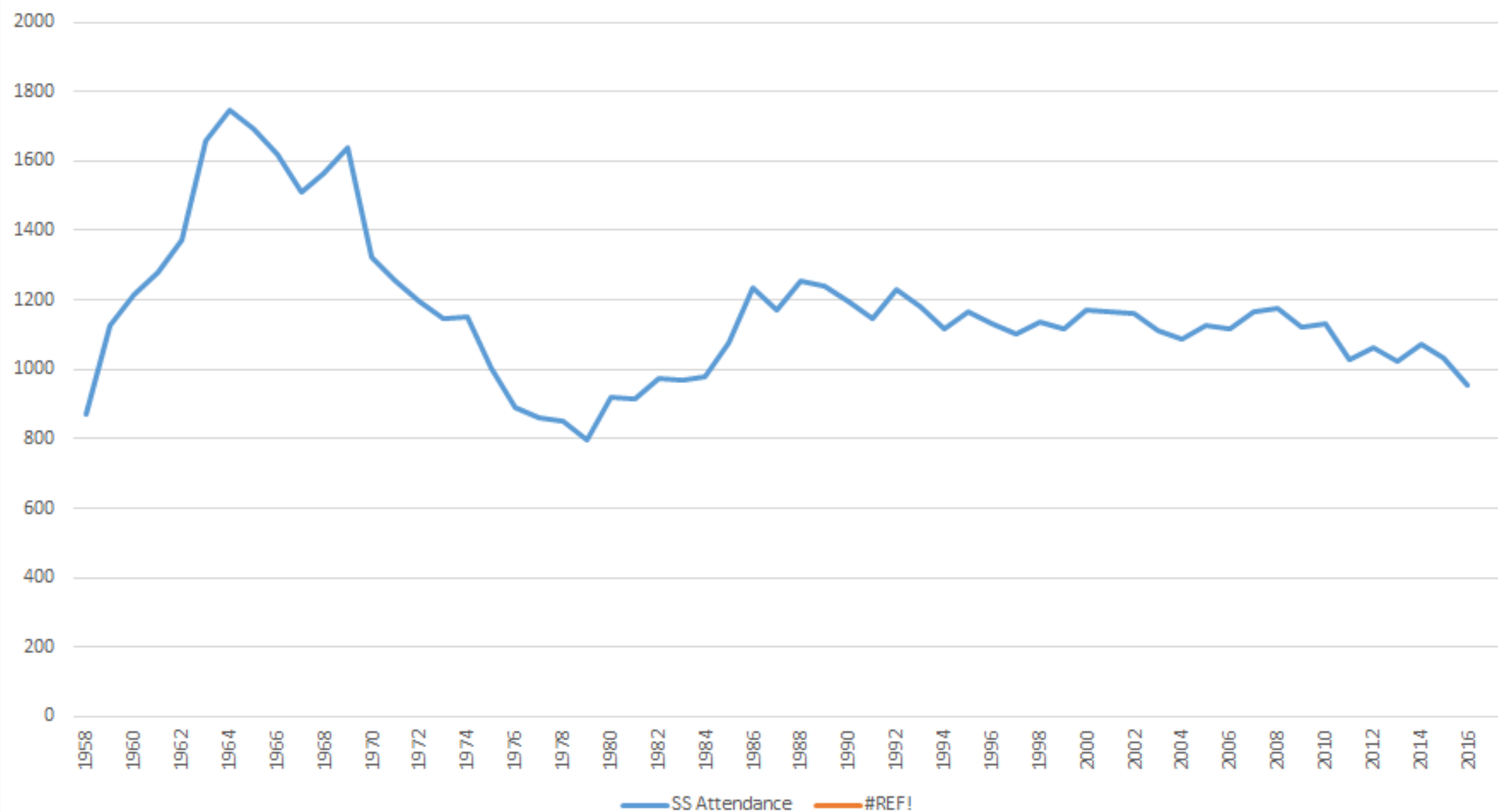
-20%



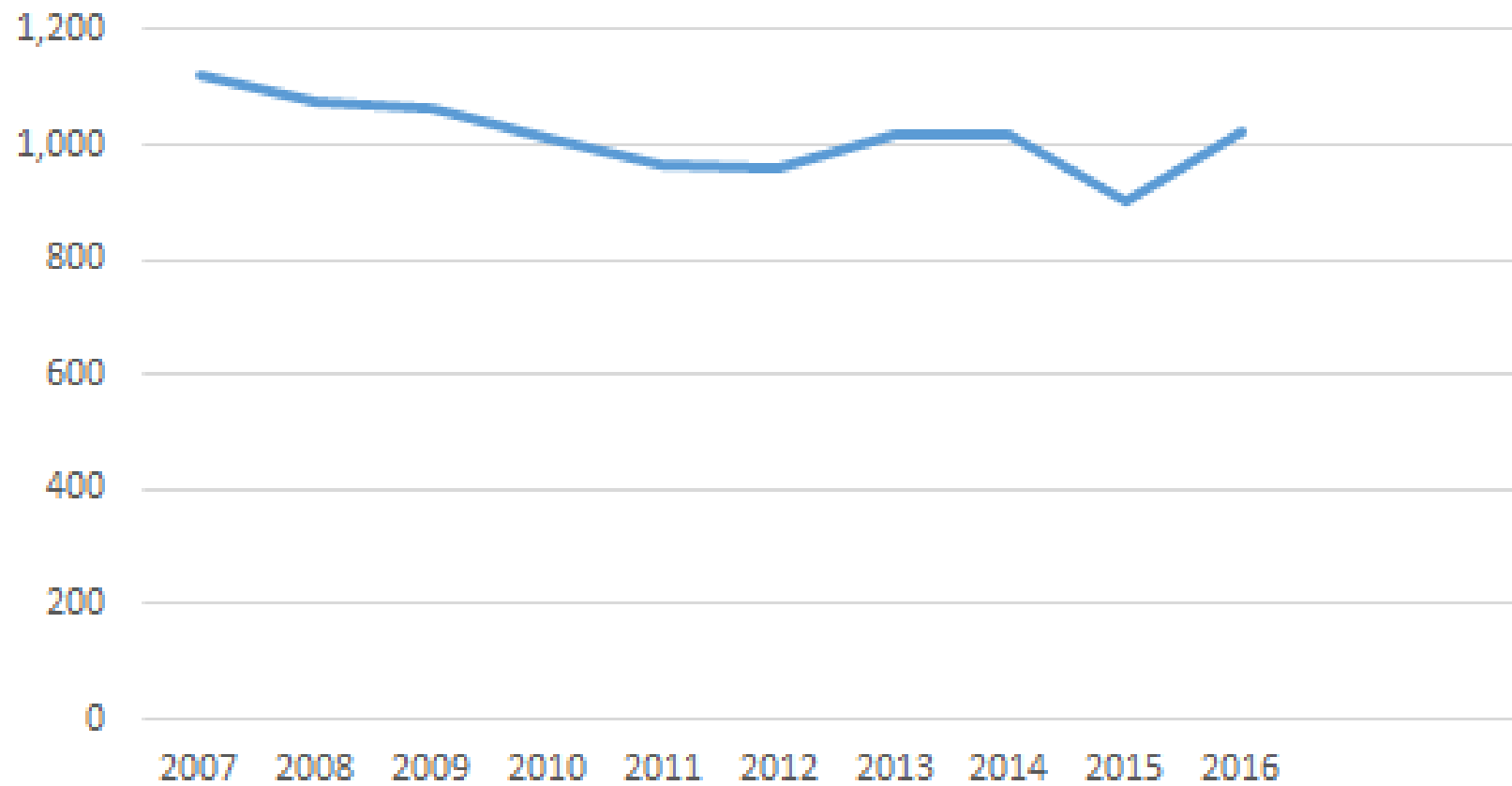
Wanna guess the  
year of our highest  
Sunday School  
attendance?



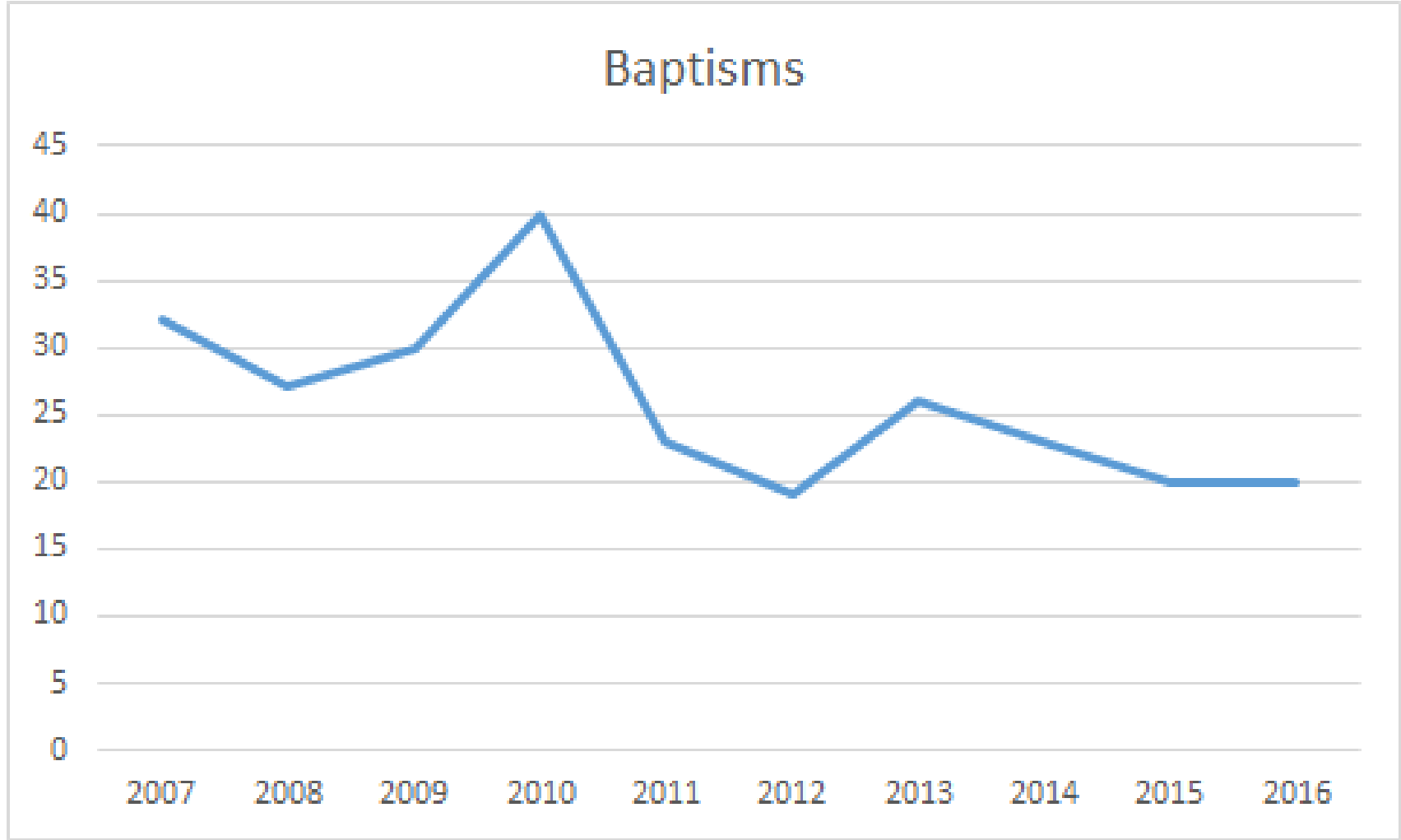
Sunday School Attendance  
(1958 - 2016)



Worship Attendance

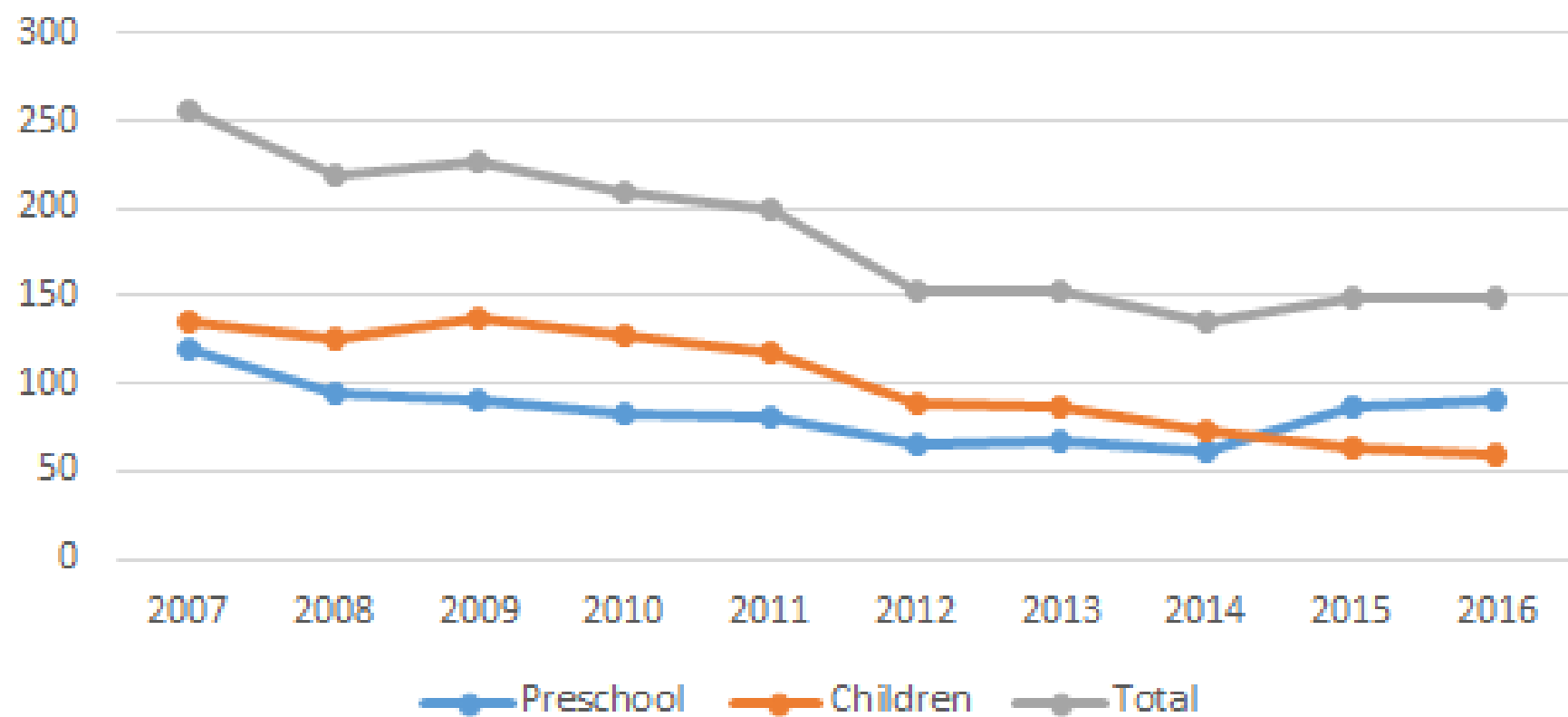


-9%



-36%

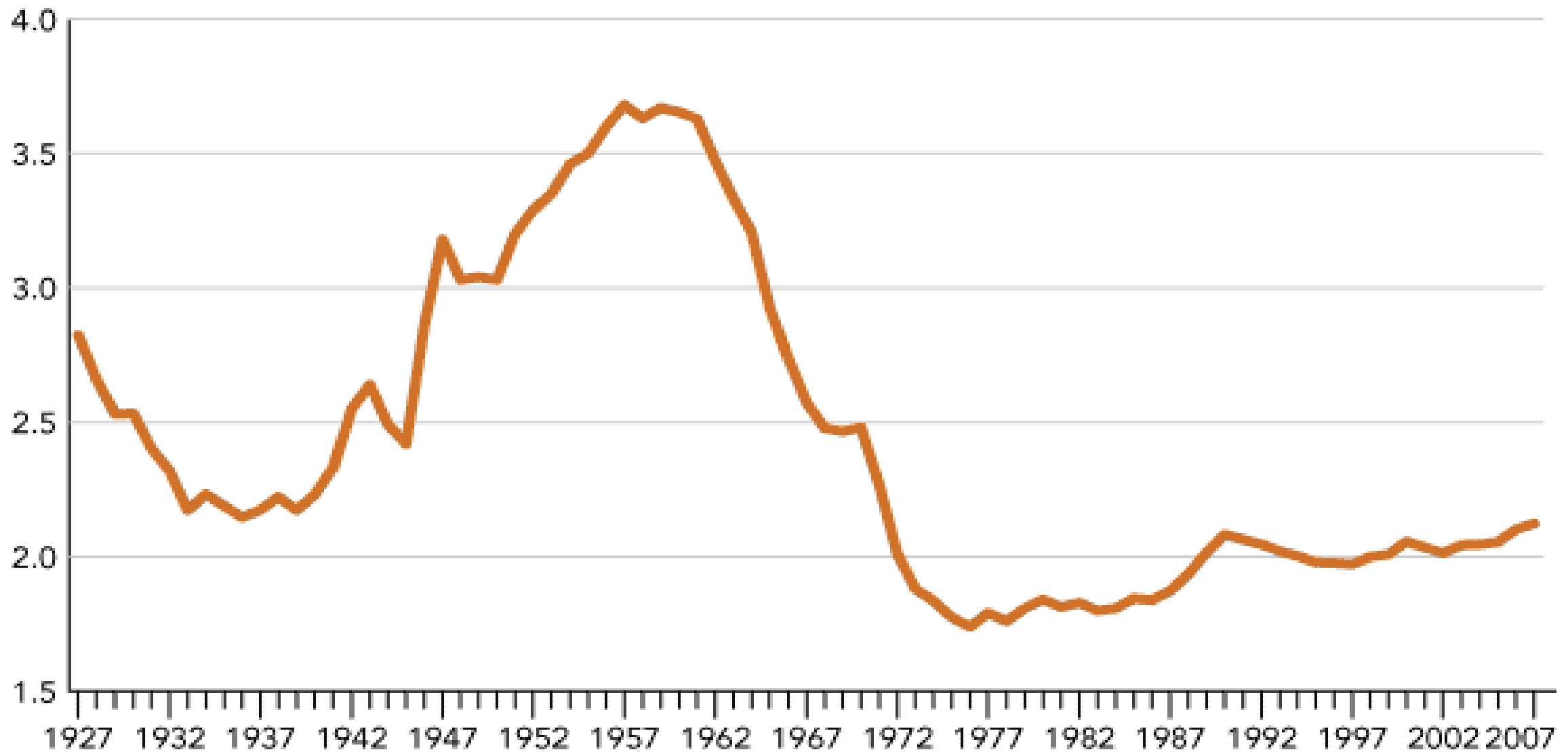
Preschool and Children Sunday School Averages  
(Month of February)



-42%  
(total)

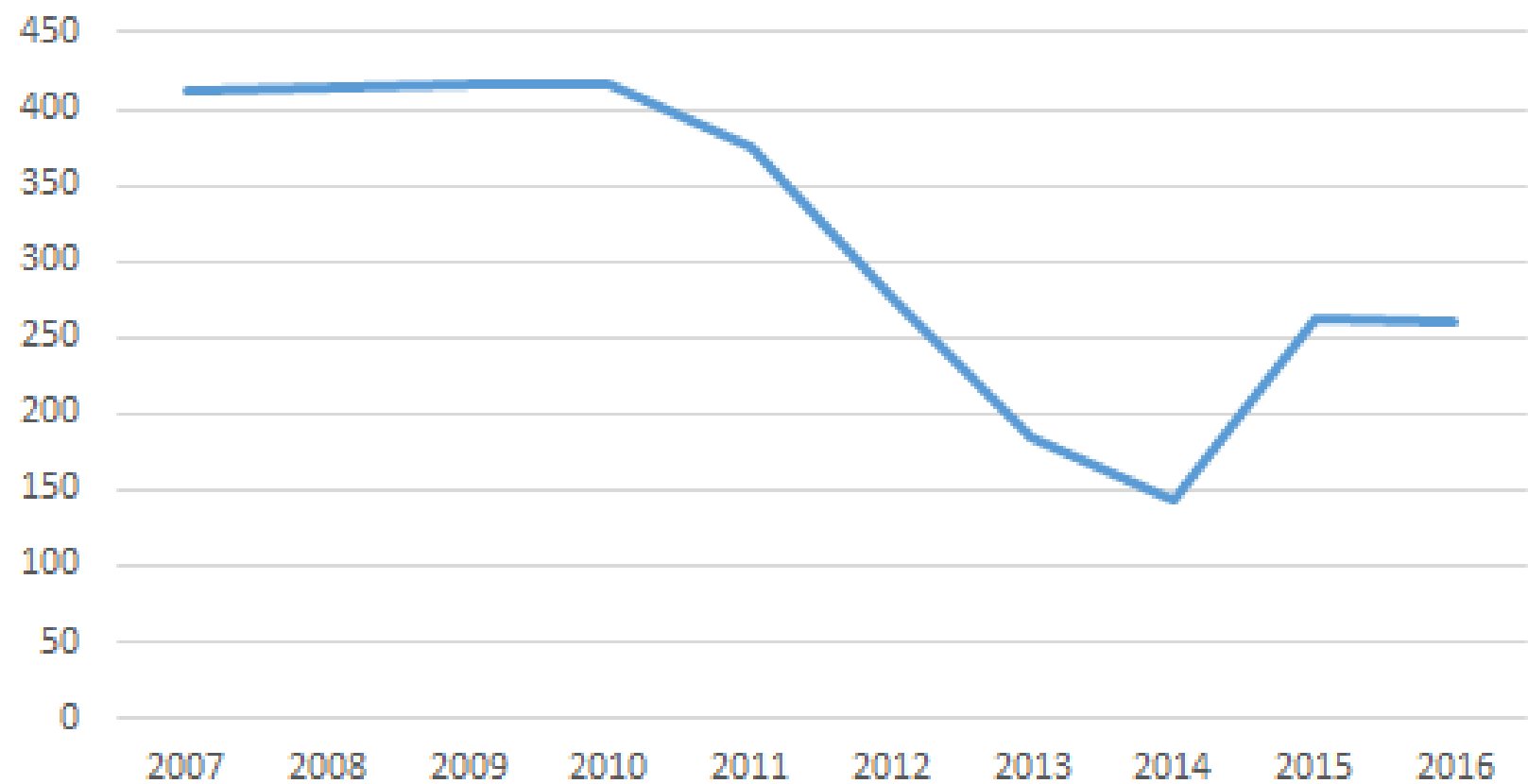
# But remember...!

Average children per woman



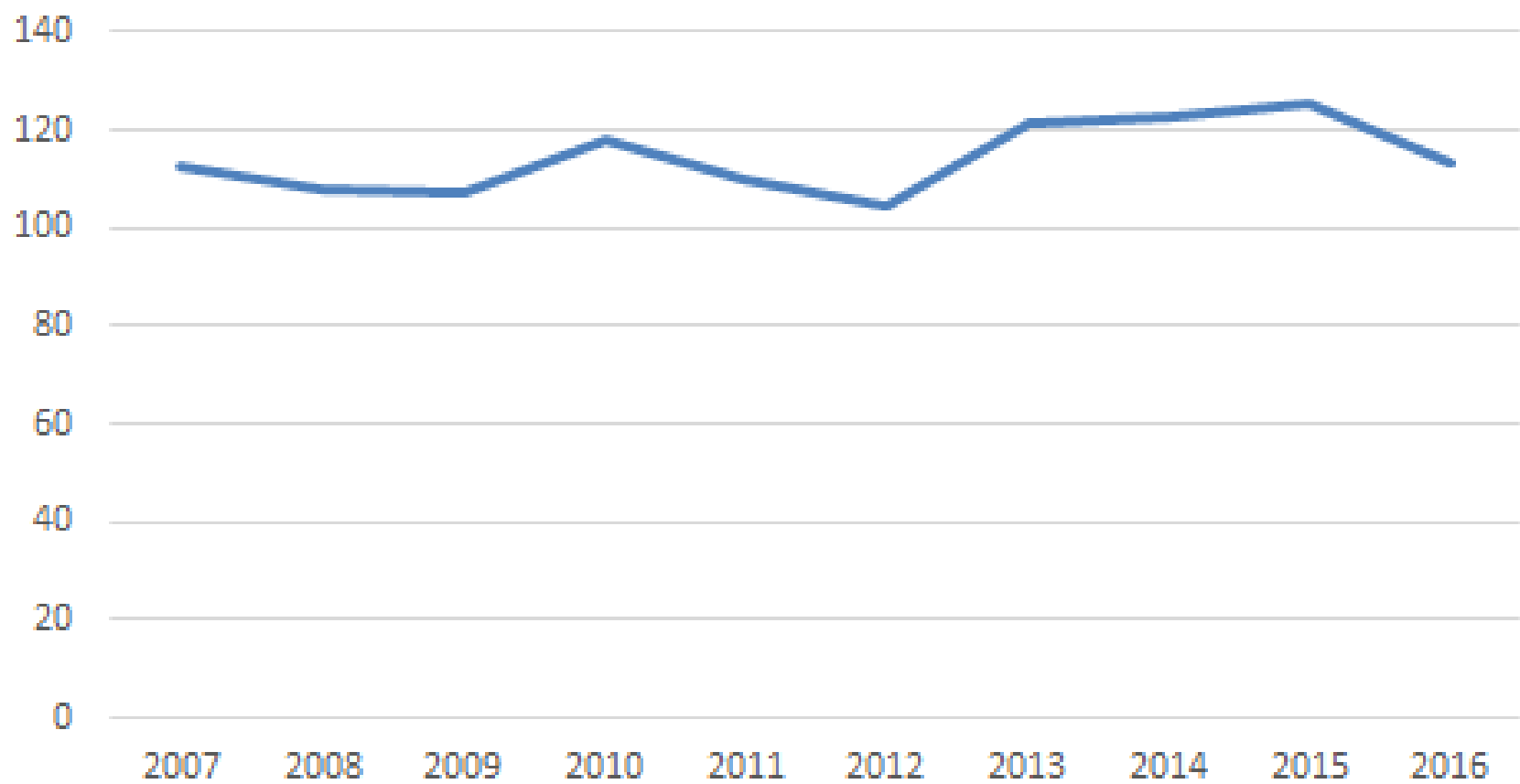


VBS Enrollment



-38%

Student Sunday Average Attendance



-0%

For the past three years FBC's average of young adults participating in Sunday School and small groups is in the 50s and 60s.

Meaning, acc. to Gil Rendle, for a church our size...

We are average. Not "highly vital." (55 is avg; 99 would be "highly vital.")



**In May we began to talk about reaching more young adults. Would you like to guess how many people age 22-39 have joined our church since May 1?**

31

**The Church needs  
young adults...and  
young adults need  
the Church.**

# Church Growth

Churched

## Biological Growth

Children of attending Christians

## Transfer Growth

Transfer of membership

Non-Christian

Christian

## Conversion Growth

New adult believers

## De-churched Renewal

People who have left church  
and return after an  
extended time

Un-churched



From which  
quadrant would you  
say our growth  
comes?

# Church Growth

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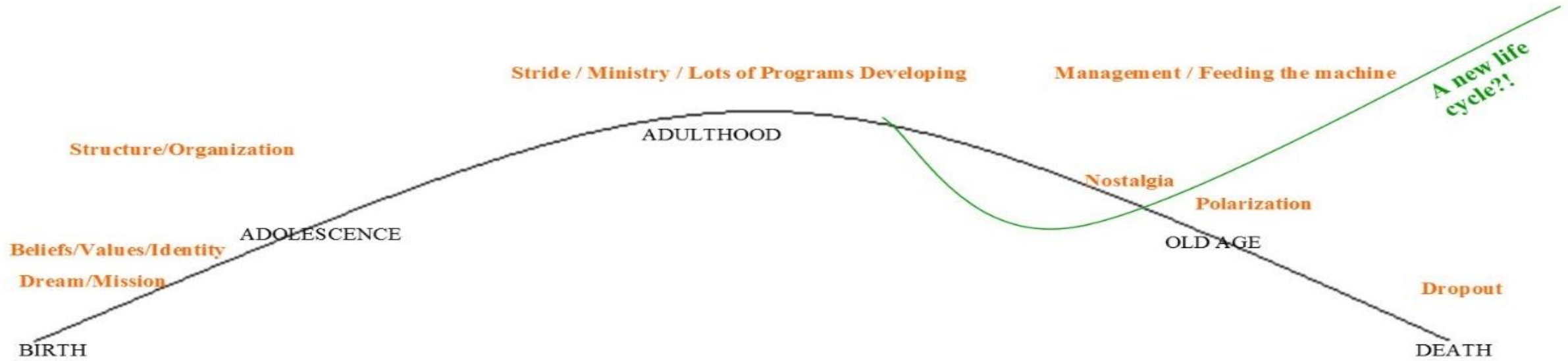
## De-churched Renewal

People who have left church and  
return after an extended time

Un-churched

# The Life Cycle of a Church

(utilizing the work of George Bullard, Leith Anderson, Charles Arn, Bob Dale and Charles Handy)



Or, another way to look at it...




**“You know what your problem is?” asked the shark.**

**“Yes I do,” answered the goldfish. “I’m starving and no one will feed me.”**

**“No, that’s not your problem,” said the shark. “Your problem is that you are a goldfish. That’s fine during the fat times when all sorts of folks are feeding you. But you’re in the ocean now. The free food has dried up. Times are a changin’. Things are a little tougher here. You have to work a little harder. You need to be a little smarter. You need to change your thinking. You need to become a shark. Goldfish wait to be fed. Sharks go out and find food.”**

AND THE ANSWER IS.....

(At least *an* answer)



*Churches that are willing to walk  
on the escalator...act like  
sharks...AND launch new forms of  
church alongside themselves...*

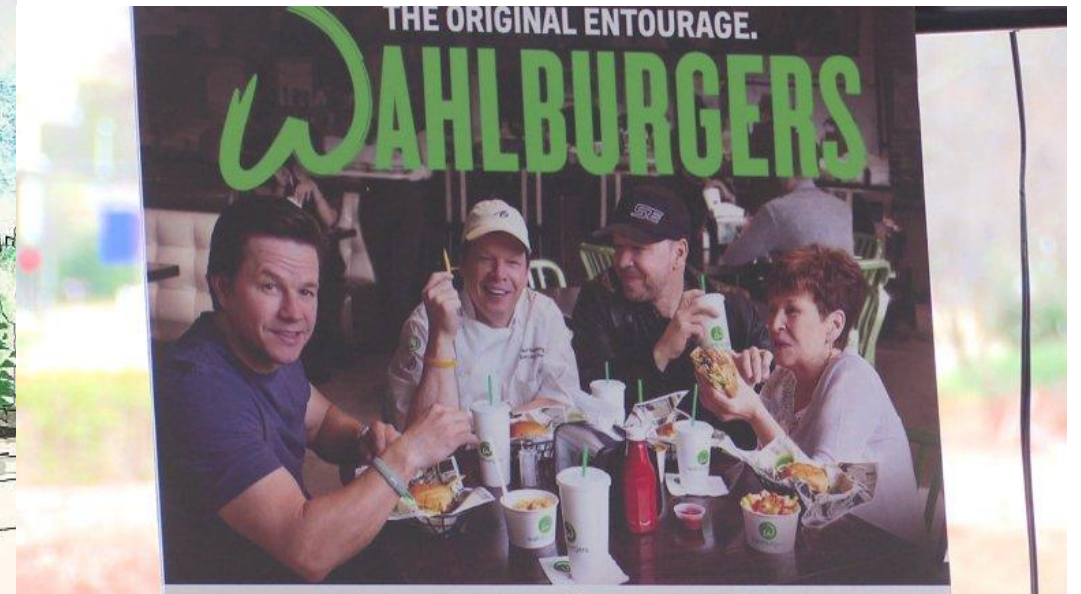
# The Opportunities



- Strong regional presence (TV, for example)
- Ability of a “Big Tent” church to keep the main thing the main thing, making difficult decisions and moving on
- Palpable desire for new energy, clear direction and mission
- Huntsville “popping” all around us

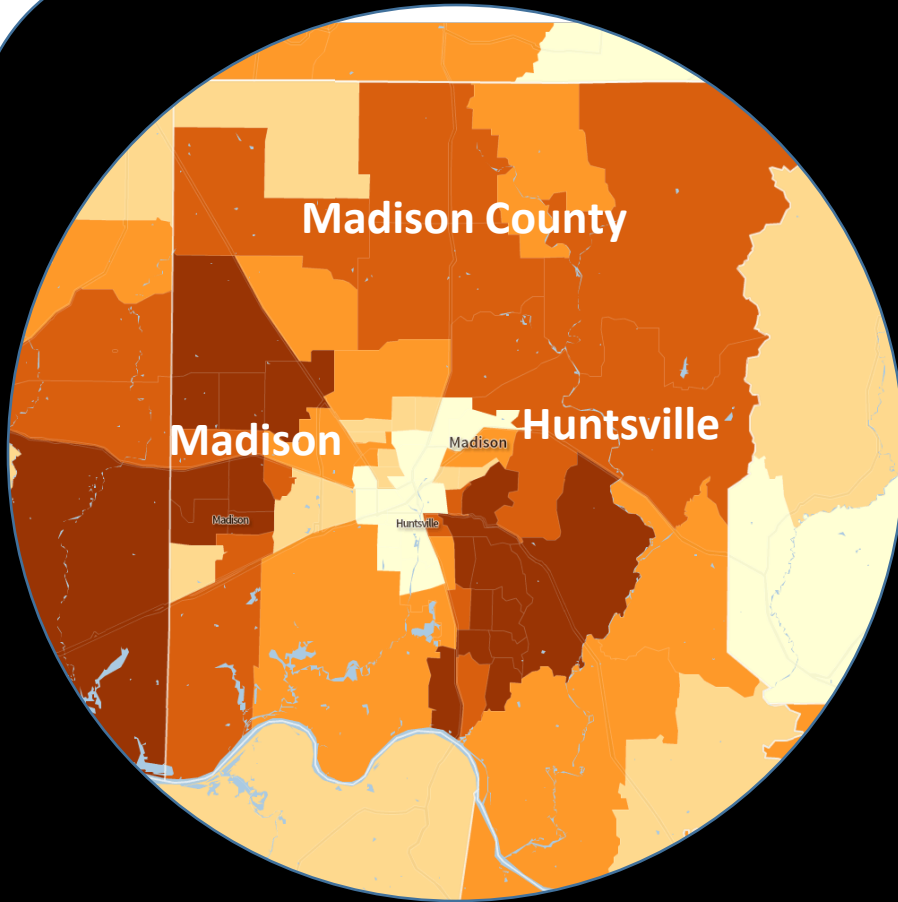


# New CityCentre Heading to Downtown Huntsville









***Huntsville***  
***is the fastest***  
***growing major***  
***metro area in the***  
***state of Alabama***  
***5-Year Projection***  
***7% growth***  
***32,000 new***  
***residents***

***Will grow to over 500,000 people in the next 10 years***



**First Baptist**  
**HUNTSVILLE**

By the way...



***“6 Best Places to Retire... In 10 Years***

**Pondering your retirement options? These up-and-comers haven't made any Top 10 lists yet—but they are poised for big things, and are already a boon to retirees.”**

**Who are they talking about?**

# Huntsville, Alabama



Here's what we're  
already doing...

“

---

**THE ONLY QUESTION  
THAT REMAINS IS:  
WHAT ARE WE GOING  
TO DO ABOUT IT?**

---

- **We have worked through a difficult topic, demonstrating again that our church can weather storms and emerge strong**
- **We are studying the opportunities on the east end of our property**
- **Our Vision Team is handing the baton to the Implementation Team.**
- **Minister to Young Adults**
- **Ministry Architects (Children & Preschool, Students, Young Adults)**



WHAT MORE CAN WE  
DO??

---

Here is a beginning...



- 1) Establish Metrics to Focus Us on the Fulfillment of our Vision**
- 2) Develop a Leadership Pipeline**
- 3) Fresh Expressions**
- 4) Consider a Sunday Night Service (with a 9-month trial)**

1)



**Budgets, Buildings, Bottoms and Baptisms?**  
**1 Corinthians 3:6 reminds us that it is God**  
**Who “brings the increase.” Yet you and I**  
**have a responsibility to water well.**

## 2) A Leadership Pipeline



**An “FBC Leadership” course for young adults with the expectation that “graduates” will be willing to step into leadership roles and that our church will provide those roles.**

3)



FRESH

EXPRESSIONS

4)



See Handout, “Why and How  
a Sunday Night Service?”

**The most important result from this conversation will probably not be the new initiatives we are considering. The most important result will, almost certainly, be how this conversation encourages new ways of thinking on the part of us all.**



Can we change our perception of  
FBC from  
This to This?



It's time to “experiment our way into what God is doing in our own contexts.” (Ed Stetzer, *Starting Missional Churches*)







We  
can't...but  
we can...



We can't do everything (so we'll have to prioritize), but we can do significant things.



We cannot be the Church of the Latest Happenin', but we can be an atypical First Baptist Church.



We cannot (and should not) *deny* our identity, but we can *expand* our identity (socioeconomically, ethnically).





We can't do this on our own; we'll have to get comfortable with the Holy Spirit showing up ("Most church folk are really uncomfortable when God shows up. We've decided we are gonna do His work without Him." --Bishop James Swanson, UMC, Mississippi)

Habakkuk 3:2,

LORD, I have heard of your fame;

I stand in awe of your  
deeds, LORD.

Repeat them in our day,

in our time make them known;  
in wrath remember mercy.

## **Email exchange, Monday, July 27, 2015**

**I do think the next decade is critical. I would suggest you (FBC) have one or two more "shots" at it before you lose a generation of faithful members. And if you don't reach new generations the church will begin to decline--maybe precipitously.**

**But...and I mean this...FBC can be great if the Holy Spirit blesses you...and if you want to make it.**

**The influx of people to the neighborhoods around you, and the revitalization of downtown, are certainly in your favor.**

**I am very optimistic. Honestly.**



If we want to survive, we can  
just coast for a long time. If  
we want to thrive, there is  
some urgency.