

# THE CHANGING RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF THE UNITED STATES

## *A BRIEF SUMMARY*



Christianity



Judaism



Hinduism



Islam



Unitarian Universalism



Buddhism



Sikhism



Bahá'í

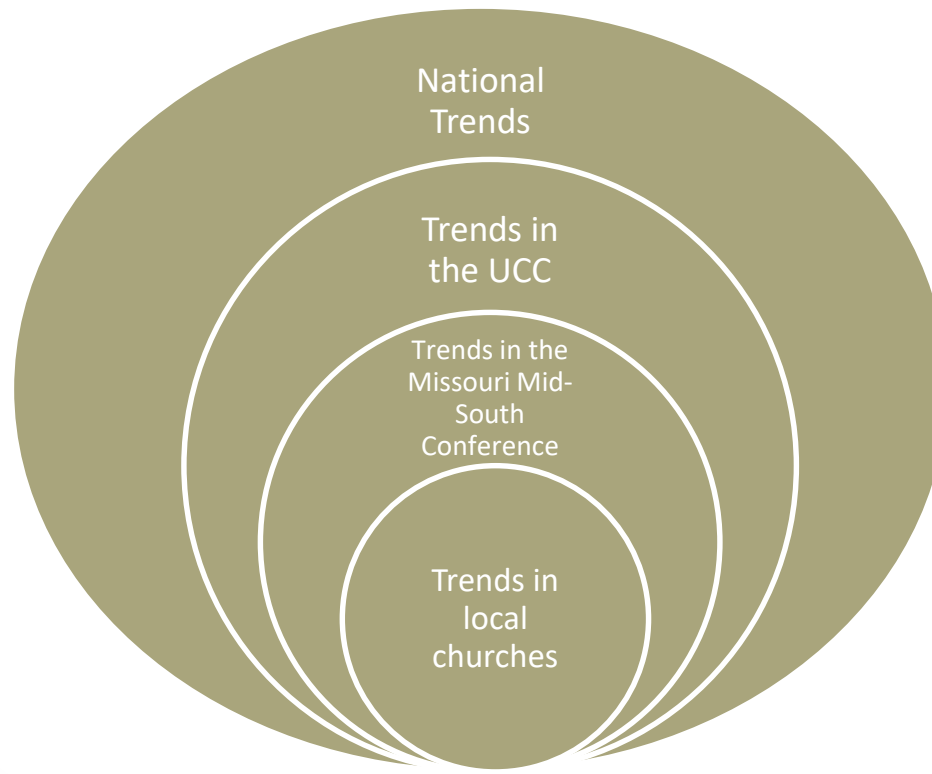


Jainism



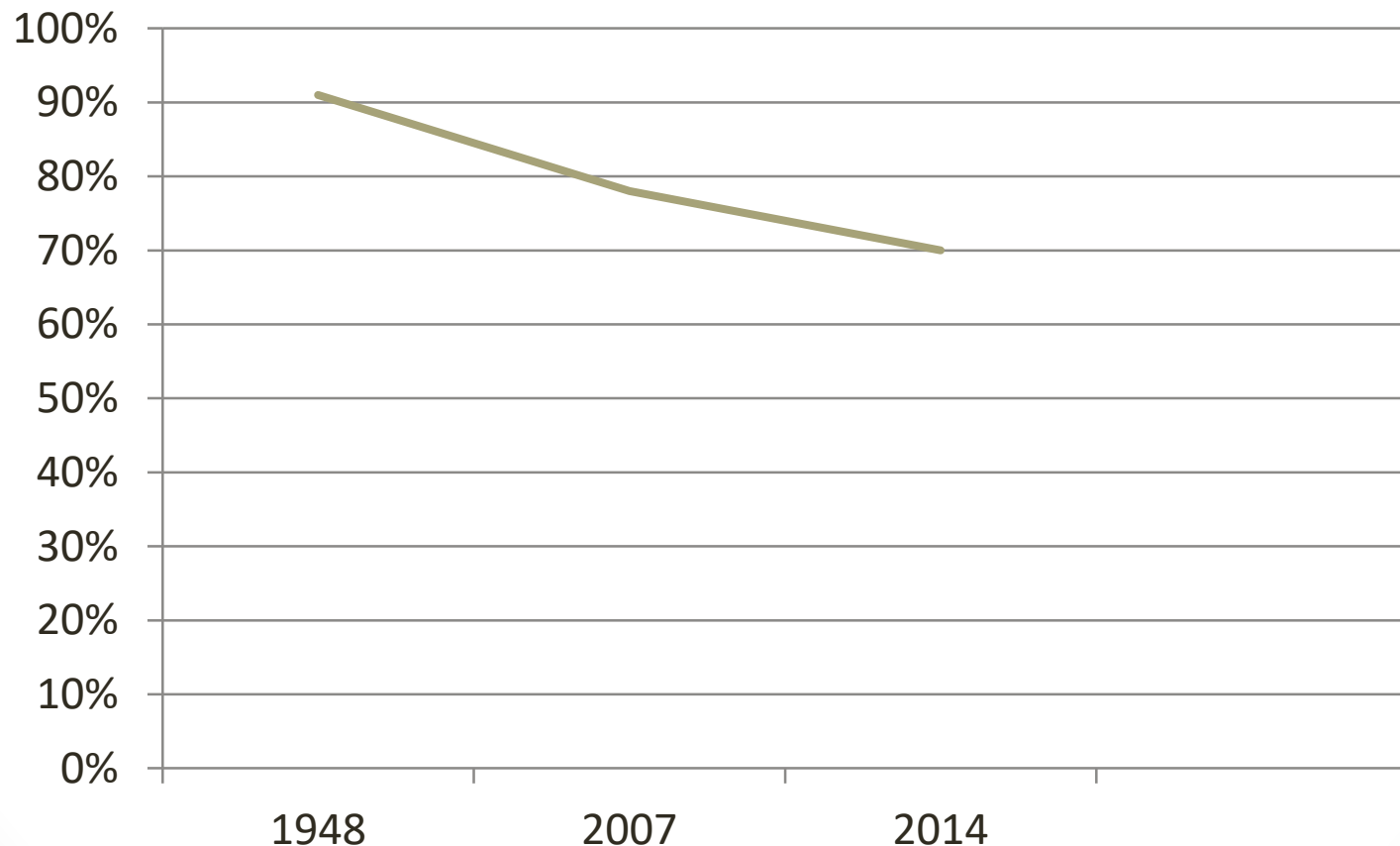
# CHANGES IN THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF THE UNITED STATES

- There are major changes in the religious landscape of the United States.
- What is happening in our local churches, in the Missouri Mid-South Conference, and in the UCC reflects changes in the religious landscape that are being experienced by churches across the United States.



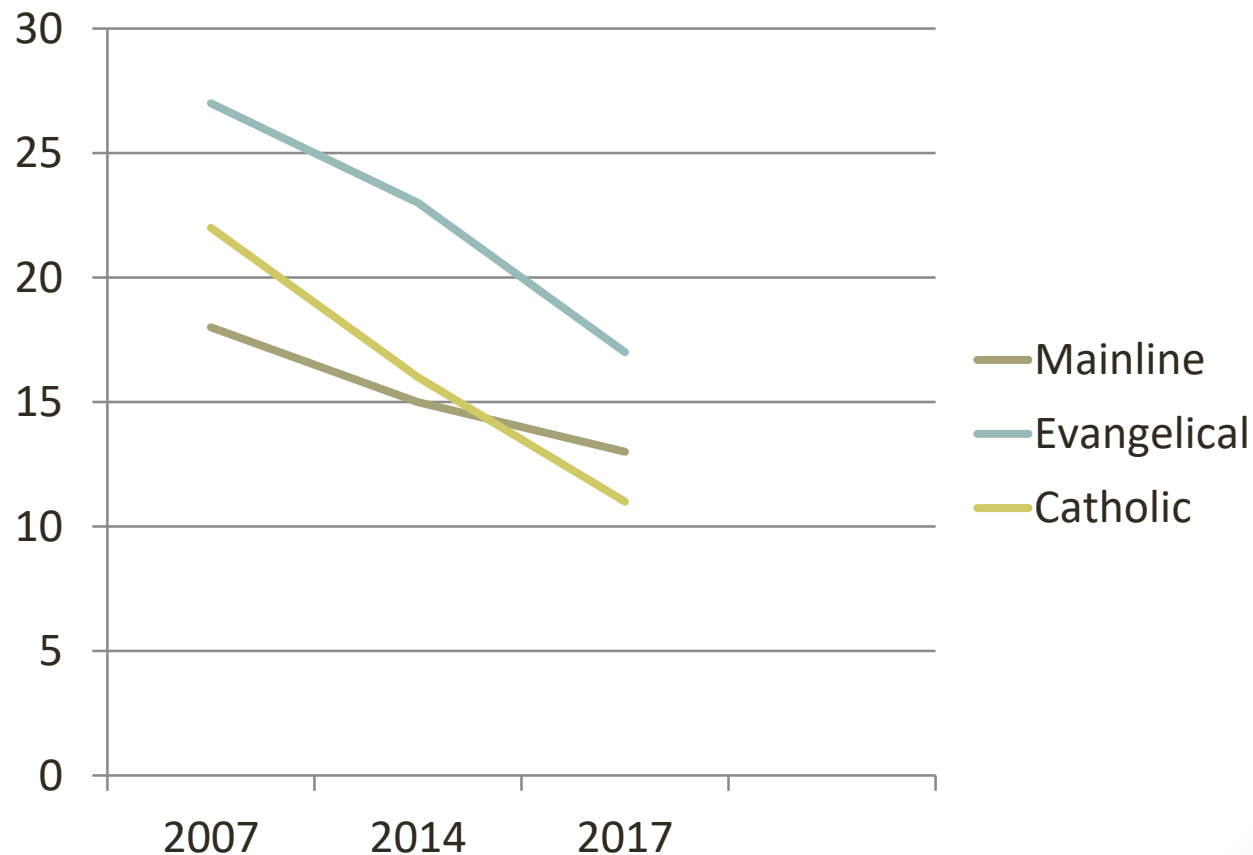
# FEWER PEOPLE IDENTIFY AS CHRISTIANS

- The number of people who identify as Christian in the United States has decreased from 91% in 1948 to 78% in 2007 to 70% in 2014.



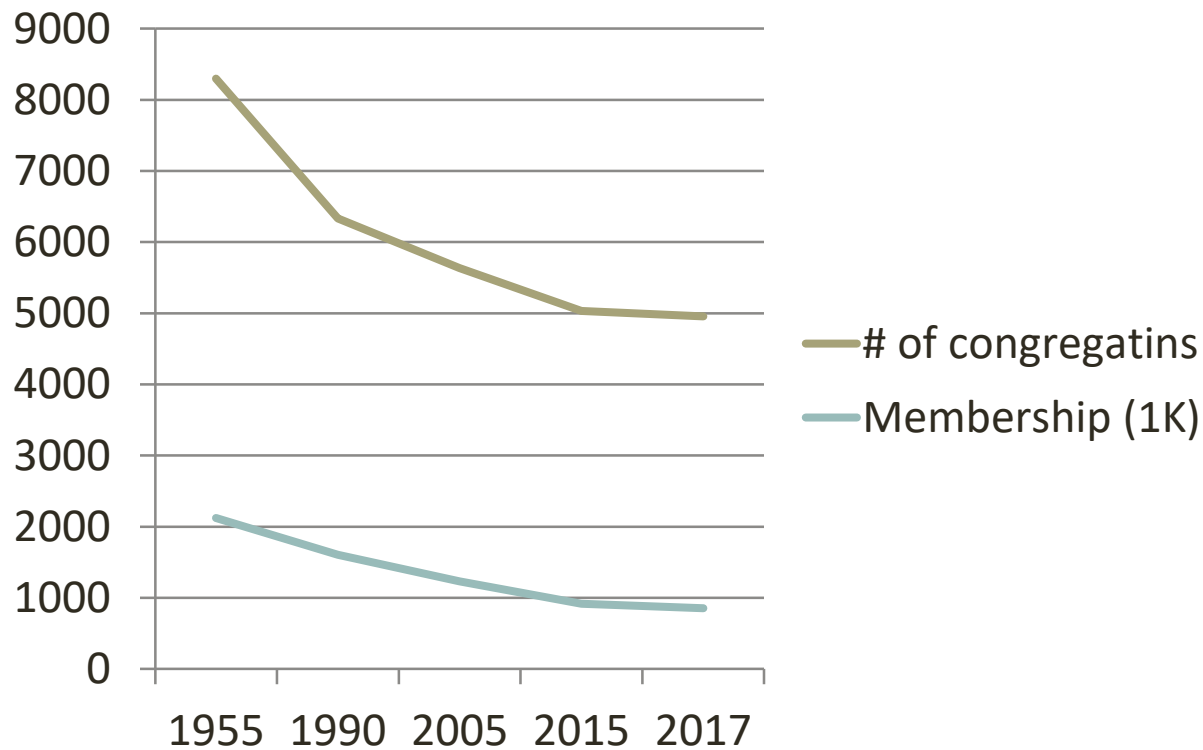
# CHURCHES OF ALL KINDS ARE IMPACTED

- Mainline, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic churches have all seen their membership decline significantly as a percentage of the US population in the last few years.



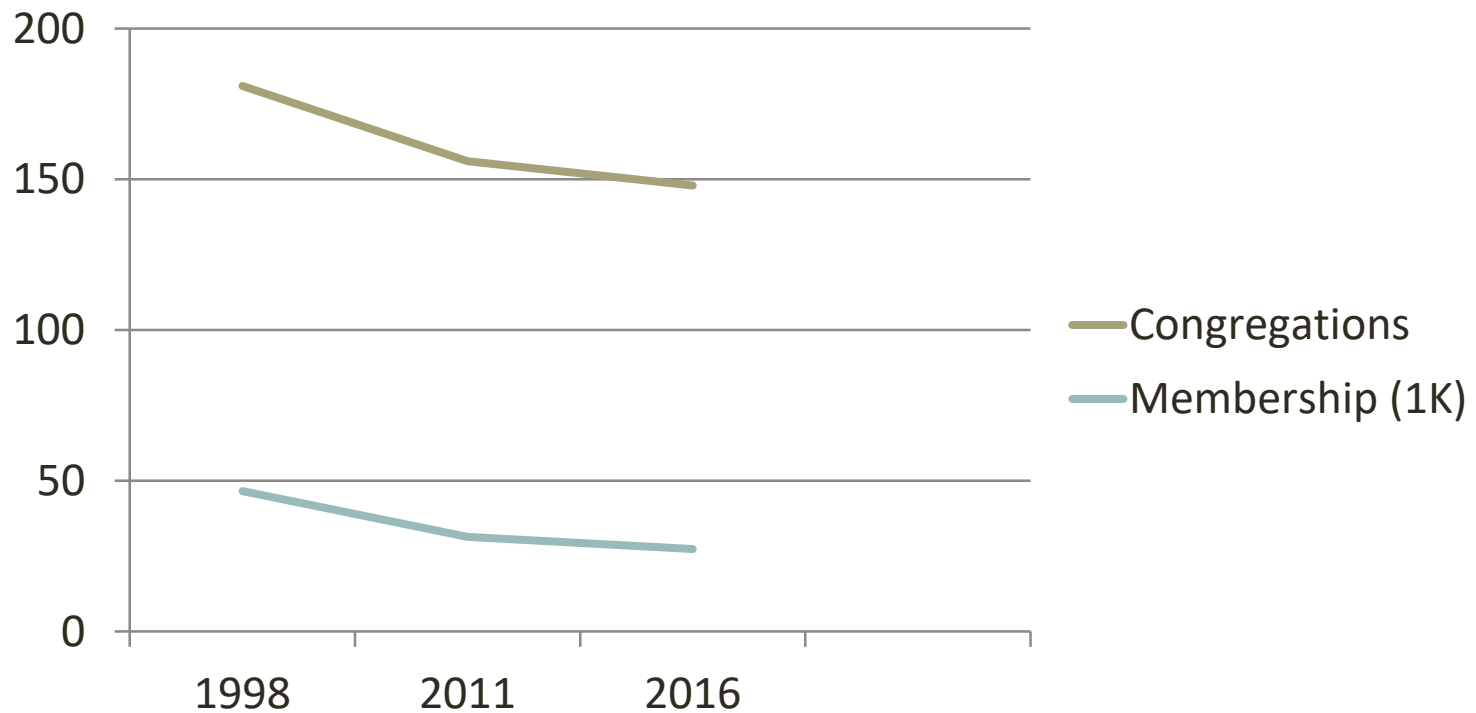
# LOSSES IN THE UCC

- The national trend of decreased church participation is evident in the UCC :
- Since 1955 the UCC has lost 3,341 congregations and 1,269,000 members.



# LOSSES IN THE MISSOURI MID-SOUTH CONFERENCE

- Since 1998, our Conference has lost 33 congregations and approximately 20,000 members.



# IMPACT ON LOCAL CHURCHES

- Since both the UCC as a whole and the Missouri Mid-South Conference have fewer members, local churches have felt the impact:
- **In the UCC as a whole:**
  - 
  - >46% of all local churches have 100 or fewer members.
  - >48% of all local churches have fewer than 50 in worship and 81% have fewer than 100 in worship.
  - >33% of all UCC members belong to a local church with 100 or fewer members but 38% of all UCC members belong to a church with 400 members.
  - >The average membership of a UCC congregation is 174 and average Sunday worship attendance is 78.
- **In the Missouri Mid-South Conference:**
  - >39% of local churches had less than 100 members;
  - >Only 7% of Conference local churches had a membership of 500 or more but these congregations accounted for almost 25% of the total conference membership;
  - >In 2016, the average Sunday worship attendance in Conference local churches was 64.

# THE RISE OF THE “NONES”

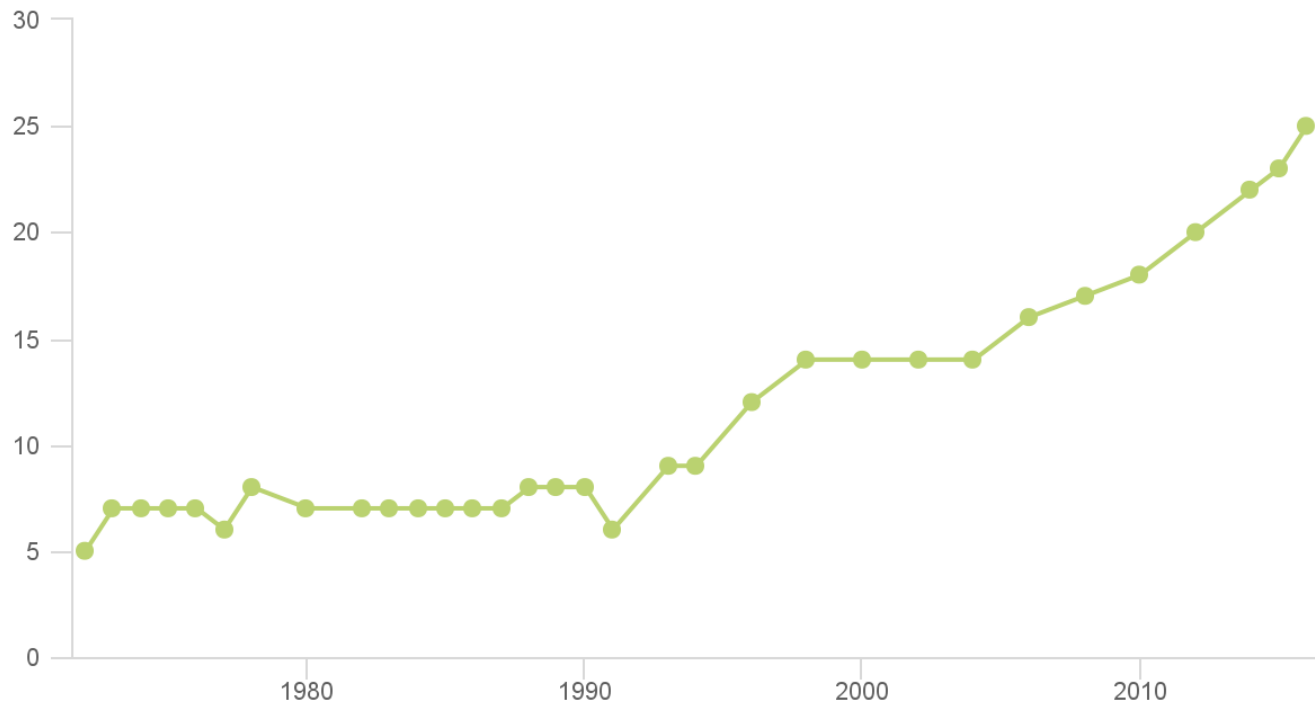
- In the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the early years of this century, church membership loss was most pronounced in mainline churches.
  - This loss was discussed as the “decline of the mainline.” A common assumption was that members of mainline churches were leaving progressive churches for more conservative churches to protest the social stances of mainline denominations.
  - However, it is now clear that churches of all kinds – mainline, evangelical, and Catholic – are all losing members and mainline churches were the “canary in the coalmine.”
- People who are leaving churches of all kinds -- mainline, evangelical, or Roman Catholic – are no longer affiliating with any church. Further, it seems that the vast majority of those leaving churches have no intention of ever returning.
- These persons are referred to as “**nones**” (having no church affiliation) and “**done**s” (once having been affiliated with a church but now done with church).
- “Nones” have been the fastest growing religious grouping in the United States for several years. Older age population cohorts have fewer “nones” but younger population age cohorts have a very significant percentage of “nones.”
- The two slides that follow provide details about the growing percentage of “nones” in the population as a whole and the number of “nones” in different age cohorts.



# THE GROWTH OF “NONES”

## Growth of the Religiously Unaffiliated, 1972-2016

Percent of population



Sources: General Social Survey, 1972-2012; PRRI Surveys, 2014-2016.

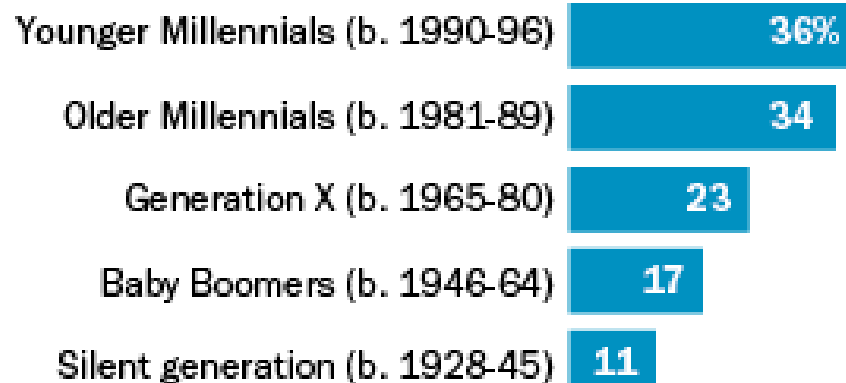
PRRI

# “NONES” BY AGE COHORT

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## Younger Americans More Likely to be Unaffiliated

*% of each generation who identify their religion as atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular*



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014.

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# LOSS OF YOUNGER MEMBERS IN THE UCC AND OUR CONFERENCE

- While there are not detailed demographic studies that break out the membership of the UCC or our Conference by age cohorts, there is circumstantial evidence that indicates our loss of younger members:
- ***In the UCC***, one clue about the loss of young people is the age of active UCC ordained clergy.
  - 80% of active UCC clergy are 50 years old or older while less than 10% of active UCC clergy are under 30 years of age.
- ***In the Missouri Mid-South Conference***,
  - In 1988 there were 14,051 persons enrolled in church schools of Conference local churches, but in 2016 , only 4,557.
  - In 1988 Conference churches reported 570 persons were confirmed. By 2002 that number had fallen to 202, by 2012 to 150, and in 2016, only 99 persons were confirmed in Conference churches (about .66 persons per congregation).

# IMPLICATIONS OF FEW YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LOCAL CHURCHES

- The loss of younger members impacts churches rather dramatically:
- >Younger people , who traditionally have married, had children, and provided the church the prospect of another generation of church members, are now in significant numbers not active in churches.
  - Close to 40% of 18-30 year olds claim no religious affiliation.
- >Many if not most churches have geared their ministries and programs to younger families – church schools, youth programs, vacation church schools, church camps, etc.
  - However, those for whom these programs are intended are increasingly not coming to church.
- >Without younger families, a lot of local churches are much smaller than they were just a few years ago and many are struggling to survive.
  - Younger families still active in churches tend to seek out larger congregations that have sufficient membership to sustain active church schools, youth programs, etc.
- >The membership of all churches now lacking significant numbers of younger population cohorts are growing older and older.
  - On average church members are 5 years older than the general population of the country.

# CHURCH FINANCES IN THE USA

- Nationally, the percentage of household income given to churches has declined from 3.21% in 1968 to 2.4% in 2014
- The average church budget in the United States 2008 was \$165,000.
  - Adjusted for inflation to 2019, this would be \$193,000 (though no data is available to indicate if budgets have kept pace with inflation or not).
- Nationally, churches on average spend 82% of their operating budgets on personnel, buildings and grounds, and other administrative expenses.
  - This leaves only 18% for direct program costs and outreach.
- Approximately 30% of all church giving occurs in December.

# FINANCES IN THE UCC AND OUR CONFERENCE

- ***In the UCC --***
- In 2006 the average budget of a UCC congregation was \$141,00; in 2015 it was \$168,400.
  - This increase is just below the rate of inflation.
- 75% of UCC local churches give something to OCWM.
  - In 2005 UCC churches gave 5.8% of total expenses to OCWM;
  - By 2015, UCC churches gave 4.3% of total expenses to OCWM.
- ***In the Missouri Mid-South Conference***
  - In 2011 the average operational expenses for a Conference church were \$133,500; in 2016, it was approximately \$138,000.
    - This is slightly below the rate of inflation.
  - In 2006, total OCWM receipts were \$1,553,091; in 2016 they were \$1,484,089, a decrease of \$177,000 excluding inflation.
  - In 2015, OCWM receipts in support of the Conference operating budget were \$633,064; in 2018 they were \$613,881.
    - To be the equivalent of 2015 when adjusted for inflation, 2018 OCWM receipts in support of the Conference budget should have been \$704,000.
- **Summary:** Loss of members and lower levels of giving have diminished the financial resources available to local churches, the UCC national setting, and the Missouri Mid-South Conference. While support of local church operations has mostly kept pace with inflation, OCWM receipts have steadily declined in actual dollars apart of adjustments for inflation.

# CONCERNS PARTICULAR TO OUR CONFERENCE

- In discussing the need for a strategic initiative in the Missouri Mid-South Conference, the Conference Council noted several issues particular to our Conference at this time:

The Conference does not have a clearly articulated mission.

Without a clearly articulated mission, the Conference is also not clear about the core ministries needed to support its mission.

Staffing is an issue – both financing staff and appropriate roles and expectations (this includes the Associate Conference Minister's position).

There is lack of clarity about the relationship between the Conference and the three Associations.

There are problems with current structure (organization) of the Conference through the bylaws. A number of omissions have been identified (no Personnel Committee; lack of provisions for succession if an officer cannot continue). However, there are also issues with the Covenanted Ministries that carry responsibility for significant ministries of the Conference but have an ad hoc character.