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The State of Church Giving through 2020: A Theology for an Age of Affluence (32nd Edition, March 2023)

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." — *Jesus addressing the disciples in John 14:12 (NIV)*

Chapters 1-5: Updates on Church Member Giving and Membership Trends through 2020

Chapters 1 through 5 update church member giving through 2020 from various perspectives, including for a composite set of denominations for the period 1968-2020 (chapter 1), for a larger set of denominations from 2019 to 2020 (chapter 2), for two subgroups of Mainline and Evangelical churches (chapter 3), and for 11 denominations for the period 1921-2020 (chapter 4). Trends past and future are also reviewed (chapter 5).

Giving as a percent of income takes into account changes in both membership and income. In the composite set of denominations, starting in 1968, church member giving to Total Contributions and the subcategories of Congregational Finances (the internal operations of the congregation) and Benevolences (causes beyond the local congregation) was in a long-term decline. This trend continued through 2020, the first year of the COVID pandemic (Table 1, p. 12). Per member giving in current dollars (Table 2, p. 14) and in inflation-adjusted dollars (Table 3, p. 16) show Congregational Finances received most of the increases.

Membership as a percent of U.S. population in 34 Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church, combined, declined from 45% of the U.S. population in 1968 to 32% in 2020 (Fig. 14, p. 55).

Chapter 6: Overseas Missions Support, 2003 through 2020

An analysis of church member giving data found that in 2020, a weighted average of about 2¢ of each dollar given to a congregation was spent for denominational international missions, although individual denominations varied from 1¢ to 11¢ (for 2020 data, see Table 25, page 76). This 2¢ compares to an annual average of 8¢ for 11 denominations for the period 1916-1927 (Table 27, page 79).

Chapter 6: Roman Catholic Potential Giving in Ten Archdioceses

Current and potential giving in ten archdioceses that were led by a cardinal as of the *Official Catholic Directory 2005*, or subsequently, are discussed (pp. 83-85, including Table 29).

Chapter 6: Putting Potential into Perspective

As of 2020, if church members gave 6% more to their churches for global needs, \$444 billion a year in addition to current outreach would result. Church members are not likely to increase giving, however, without a compelling reason to do so. Helping to close, in Jesus' name, the Promise Gap by achieving global target reduction goals for the Under-5 Mortality Rate is suggested as one good reason the church has to offer (pp. 85-88).

Chapter 7: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey 2020 Cash Contributions

An analysis of the U.S. BLS 2020 Consumer Expenditure Survey data by age, income, and region of residence, as well as 1987-2020 data in terms of region of residence, is presented. Americans indicated that 58% of their donations went to "church, religious organizations" in 2020 (pages 97-104, including Tables 31-37).

Chapter 8: A Theology for an Age of Affluence

Chapter 8 explores three aspects of a theology for an age of affluence:

- A historical look at selected church developments, some having to do with attitudes toward money. (pp. 129-138)

The first section includes Figure 21, which charts the Angus Maddison analysis of per capita Gross Domestic Product in inflation-adjusted dollars from the Year 0 through 1998 AD. Ten points along this timeline illustrate church and historical developments. A separate copy of Figure 21 is included with this packet for the reader's easy reference when reading these pages.

- What are possible consequences in the absence of a theology for an age of affluence at this point in history? (pp. 138-143)

The second section presents observations about social developments that have accompanied the decline in church giving as a percent of income and membership as a percent of U.S. population in recent decades.

- What might such a theology include? (pp. 143-163)

The third section explores verses and ideas of what a theology for an age of affluence might include.