

empty tomb[®], inc. Executive Summary

The State of Church Giving through 2021: Intentional Miracles (33rd Edition, May 2024)

“You can serve God or Money.” — Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:24

“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

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up ... ‘However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’ ” — Jesus addressing the disciples in Luke 18:1, 8

Chapters 1-5: Updates on Church Member Giving and Membership Trends through 2021

Chapters 1 through 5 update church member giving through 2021 from various perspectives, including for a composite set of denominations for the period 1968-2021 (chapter 1), for a larger set of denominations from 2020 to 2021 (chapter 2), for two subgroups of Mainline and Evangelical churches (chapter 3), and for 11 denominations for the period 1921-2021 (chapter 4). Trends past and future are also reviewed (chapter 5).

Per member giving as a percent of income takes into account changes in both membership and income. Between 1968 and 2021, giving as a percent of income to Total Contributions and the subcategories of Congregational Finances (the internal operations of the congregation) and Benevolences (expenses beyond the local congregation) was in a long-term decline. This overall trend continued through 2021, although Total Contributions and Benevolences increased in 2021 compared to 2020, while Congregational Finances declined (Table 1, p. 12). Per member giving in current dollars (Table 2, p. 14) and in inflation-adjusted dollars (Table 3, p. 16) show all categories increased from 1968 to 2021, and Congregational Finances received most of the increase.

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 31% in 2021 (Fig. 14, p. 55).

Chapter 6: Overseas Missions Support, 2003 through 2021

An analysis of church member giving data found that in 2021, 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 2021 data, see Table 26, p. 77). This 2¢ compares to an annual average of 8¢ for 11 denominations for the period 1916-1927 (Table 28, p. 81).

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. 84-87, including Table 30).

Chapter 6: Putting Potential into Perspective

As of 2021, if church members gave 6% more to their churches for global needs, \$474 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. 87-90).

Chapter 7: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey 2021 Cash Contributions

An analysis of the U.S. BLS 2021 Consumer Expenditure Survey data by age, income, and region of residence, as well as 1987-2021 data in terms of region of residence, is presented. Americans indicated that 56% of their donations went to “church, religious organizations” in 2021 (pp. 99-106, including Tables 32-38).

Chapter 8: Intentional Miracles

Church members can make this age of affluence an age of intentional miracles. Chapter 8 explores the following topics in light of the data analyses in the first seven chapters (pp. 133-177):

- What is an intentional miracle?
- How does pursuing intentional miracles prepare for the future? Various groups are considered: the present-day church; world neighbors; the general good; the youth; each individual church member.
- What makes this present time so special regarding intentional miracles?
- What would an intentional miracle look like?
- Are intentional miracles even possible?