

Executive Summary

The following analysis uses Annual Church Profile (ACP) data mostly from 2017 and 2022. The purpose of this work is to look at different church demographics and explore differences in growth. This analysis provides insight into areas with variations in church growth.

Percentage growth was calculated by dividing the 2017 total membership by 2022 total membership. Only churches which reported non-zero data in both years were included.

NOTES:

- The New England Division was the only one with positive church growth. Declines were lower in the Middle Atlantic, East South Central, and Mountain divisions. (*Figure 1*)
- There are differences across states, but this must be viewed cautiously due to low sample size. The ten largest states by total membership in 2022 all saw declines. (*Figure 2*)
- Churches organized since 2000 have experienced an overall church growth of 9.4%. Churches in the Northeast (-2.2%) and Rural (-10.1%) areas have seen the list amount of decline among regions and population zones, respectively. (*Table 1*)

Churches were placed into one of three categories based on percentage growth in total membership between 2017 and 2022. The growth categories are defined as follows.

- Declining: A decrease in total membership of 10% or more.
- Growing: An increase in total membership of 10% or more.
- Plateaued: A change in church membership between declining or growing.

NOTES:

- AM Attendance 2017: Churches with average attendance of 500+ (26%) are the most likely to have grown while those with 50-99 (17%) and 100-249 (16%) are the least likely. (*Figure 3*)
- Year Organized: Churches organized between 2000-Present (42%) are the most likely to have grown. Those organized between 1950-1999 (19%) are the next most likely. (*Figure 4*)
- Population Zone: Churches in Urban areas (22%) are the most likely to have grown followed by those in Suburban areas (18%) and Rural areas (16%). (*Figure 5*)
- Region: Churches in the Northeast (36%) are the most likely to have grown followed by those in the West (29%), Midwest (21%), and South (17%). (*Figure 6*)

Churches were placed into size categories based on their average worship attendance in 2017. For churches which reported non-zero attendance in 2017 and 2022, nearly two-thirds of churches (65%) remained within their same size category. (*Table 2*)

Churches started between 2017 and 2021 were placed into growth categories based on total church membership between their start year and 2022. At least two-thirds of these churches in any year are either growing or plateaued and the percentage of churches growing increases over time. (*Figure 7*) Regression analysis was used and the two significant demographics related to church growth are churches in the Midwest and churches organized from 2000 to the present. The model only explains a minimal amount of variation so should not be considered predictive.

Percent Growth between 2017 and 2022

Percentage growth was calculated by dividing the 2017 total membership by 2022 total membership. Only churches which reported non-zero data in both years were included.

DIVISIONS:

- New England (1%): Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
- Middle Atlantic (-5%): New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
- East North Central (-13%): Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
- West North Central (-14%): Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
- South Atlantic (-13%): Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia
- East South Central (-7%): Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
- West South Central (-13%): Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas
- Mountain (-10%): Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming
- Pacific (-22%): Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

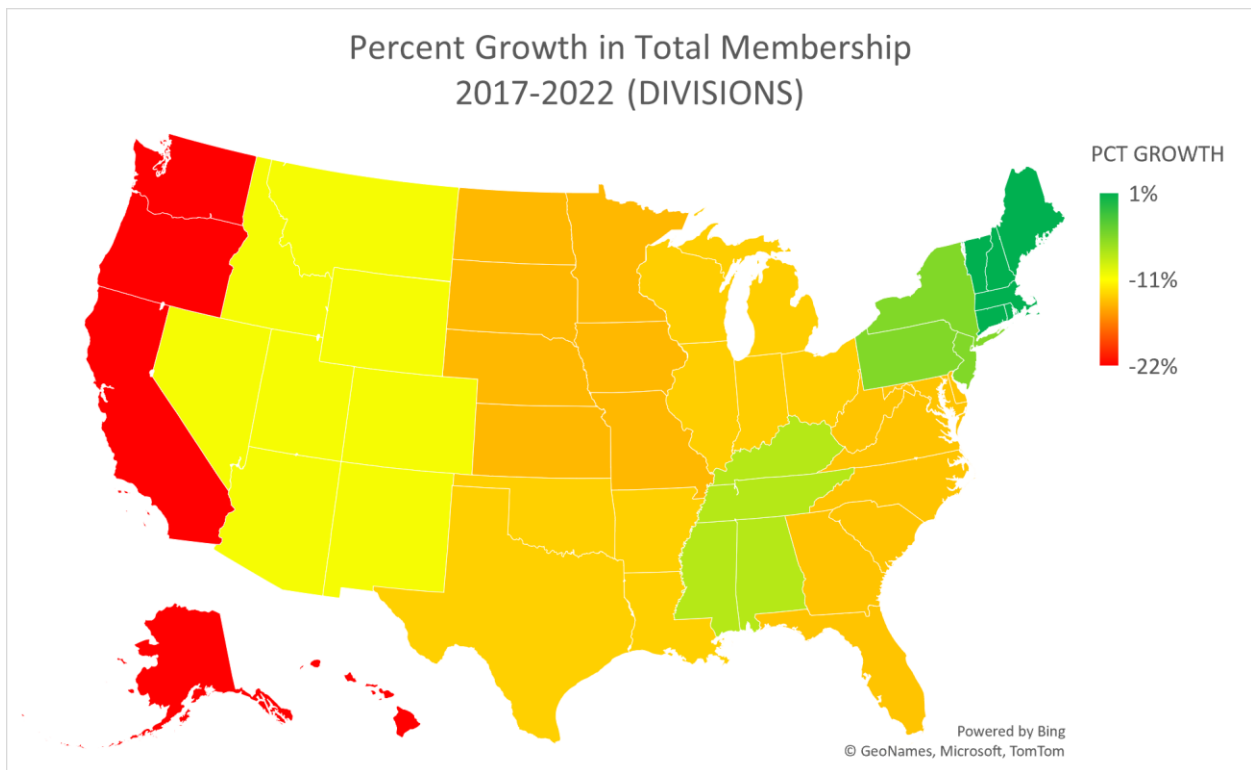


Figure 1: Percentage Church Growth by Census Divisions

2022 ACP Church Performance

States:

The following states have less than 30 churches in the calculation and need to be considered with caution. The number listed next to each state is the sample size.

- Delaware (3), Minnesota (3), Washington, D.C. (9), New Hampshire (11), North Dakota (12), Rhode Island (14), Utah (16), Hawaii (24), Idaho (26), Maine (26), South Dakota (26).

Ten states with the largest growth percentage (**highlight** indicates less than 30 churches).

- **Washington, D.C. (26%)**, **Maine (25%)**, Iowa (23%), **Minnesota (11%)**, **Rhode Island (11%)**, Vermont (9%), Montana (7%), New Jersey (2%), **Delaware (0%)**, **Hawaii (-2%)**.

Ten states with the lowest growth percentage (**highlight** indicates less than 30 churches).

- **Utah (-36%)**, **North Dakota (-35%)**, Kansas (-30%), Alaska (-30%), California (-25%), Oregon (-25%), Oklahoma (-24%), New Mexico (-22%), Florida (-20%), Ohio (-19%)

Growth percentage in the ten largest states.

- North Carolina (-12%), Florida (-20%), Alabama (-8%), Tennessee (-7%), Georgia (-11%), Kentucky (-8%), Missouri (-13%), South Carolina (-11%), Louisiana (-11%), Arkansas (-10%)

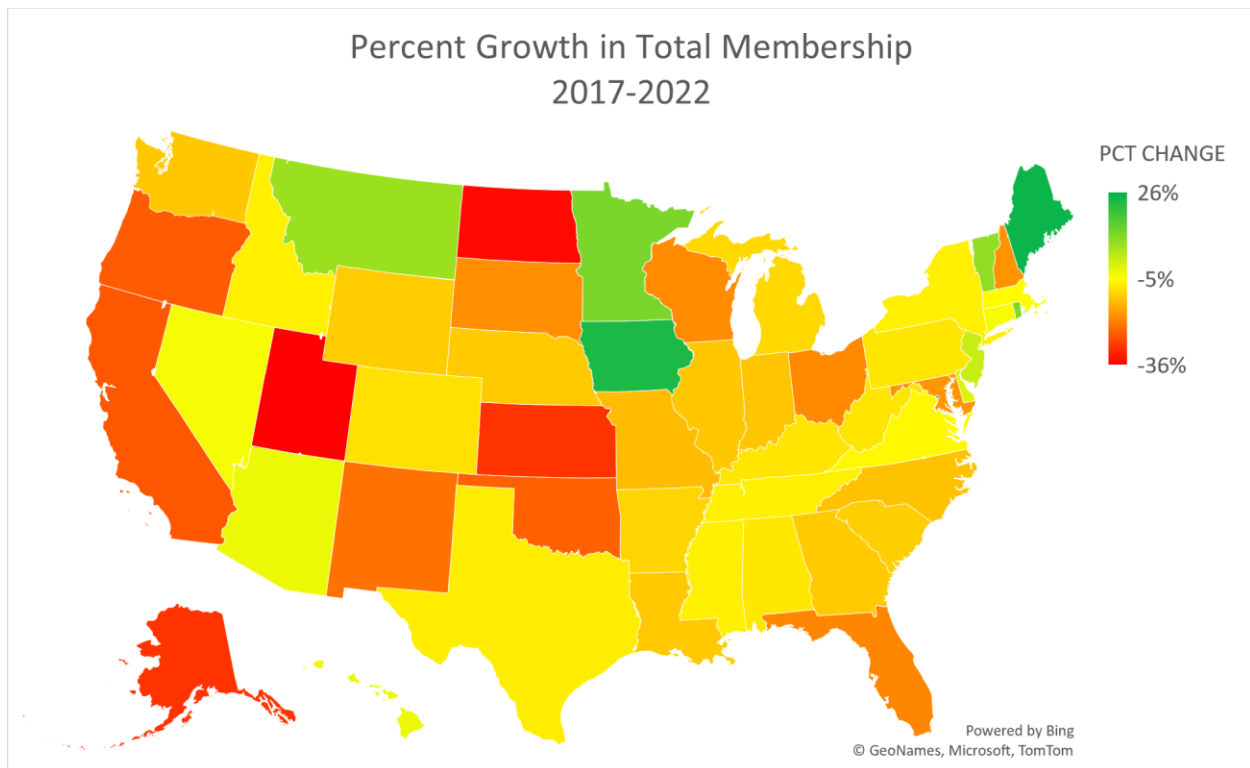


Figure 2: Percentage Church Growth by State

2022 ACP Church Performance

Three different measures of percentage growth were calculated for three church demographics. Churches were divided based on the year organized, population in their city, and region of the United States as defined by the Census Bureau.

Population Zone: Population size as of January 31, 2023, was used for assigning group. Street address defined the city when available and mail address supplemented the data when necessary.

- Rural: Population less than 2,500
- Suburban: Population greater than or equal to 2,500 and less than 50,000
- Urban: Population greater than or equal to 50,000

The following table shows the different measures for percentage growth: mean, median, overall. These measures as defined in the following manner.

- Mean: The average church percentage growth.
- Median: The median church percentage growth.
- Overall: The quotient of the sum of total membership in 2017 and total membership in 2022.

The difference between mean and median indicates there are churches with extreme population growth values. The overall value can be different due to changes in churches with larger total membership.

Table 1: Percentage Church Growth by Demographics

PERCENTAGE GROWTH CHANGE			
	Mean	Median	Overall
Year Organized			
Pre-1900	-7.1%	-3.4%	-12.7%
1900-1949	-10.6%	-4.5%	-13.6%
1950-1999	-6.4%	-6.3%	-13.9%
2000-Present	24.4%	0.0%	9.4%
Population Zone			
RURAL	-5.9%	-3.3%	-10.1%
SUBURBAN	-4.2%	-4.0%	-11.2%
URBAN	-3.1%	-7.0%	-12.5%
US Region			
NORTHEAST	21.2%	-4.8%	-2.2%
MIDWEST	0.9%	-3.7%	-13.3%
SOUTH	-6.0%	-3.9%	-11.1%
WEST	-0.7%	-5.2%	-14.4%

Growth Categories

Churches were placed into one of three categories based on percentage growth in total membership between 2017 and 2022. A church had to have reported a non-zero value in both years to be included in the analysis. The growth categories are defined as follows.

- Declining: A decrease in total membership of 10% or more.
- Growing: An increase in total membership of 10% or more.
- Plateaued: A change in church membership between declining or growing.

The frequency of churches within the growth categories were analyzed across a variety of church demographics.

Average AM Worship Attendance 2017: Churches were divided into categories based on their average AM worship attendance: 0-49, 50-99, 100-249, 250-499, 500+.

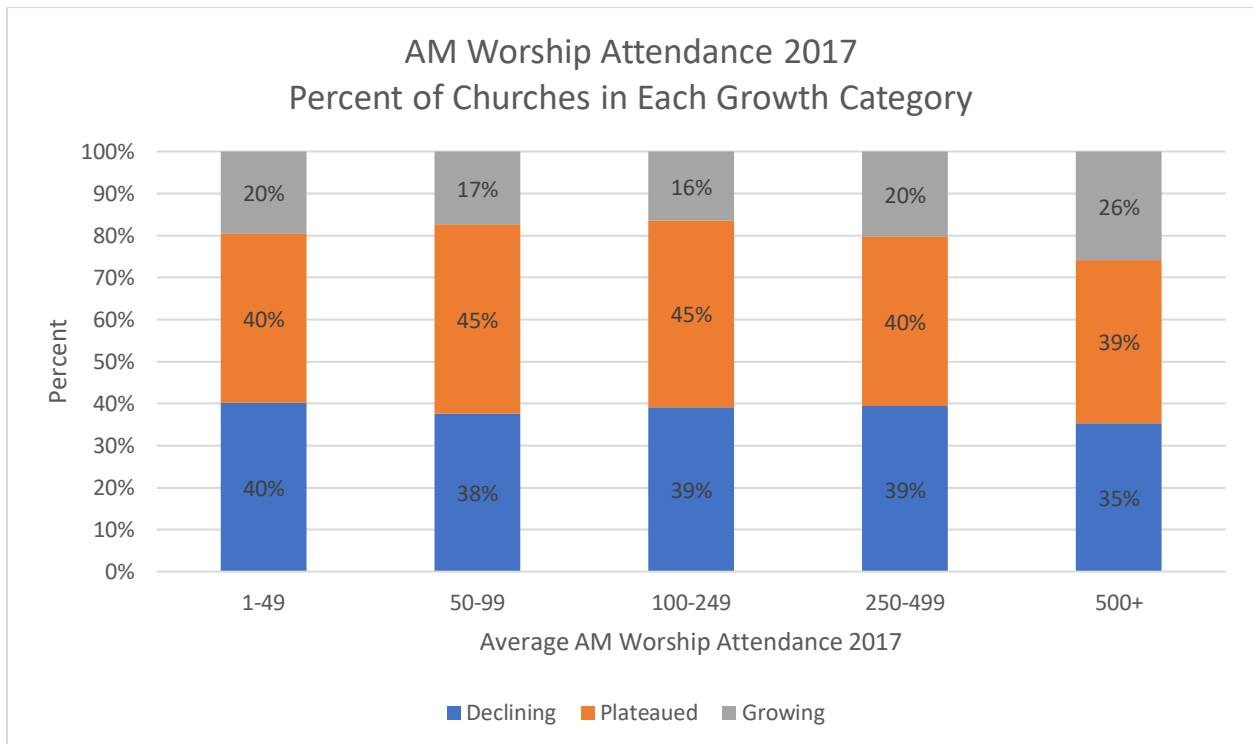


Figure 3: Percentage Church Growth by Average Attendance in 2017

NOTES:

- Growing: Churches with average attendance of 500+ (26%) are the most likely to have grown. Churches with 50-99 (17%) and 100-249 (16%) are the least likely to have grown.
- Plateaued: Churches with 50-99 (45%) and 100-249 (45%) are the most likely to have plateaued.
- Declining: Churches with average attendance of 500+ (35%) are less likely to have declined than churches with attendance of 1-49 (40%), 100-249 (39%), and 250-499 (39%).

Year Organized: Churches were placed into four categories based on the year the church was organized: Pre-1900, 1900-1949, 1950-1999, 2000-Present.

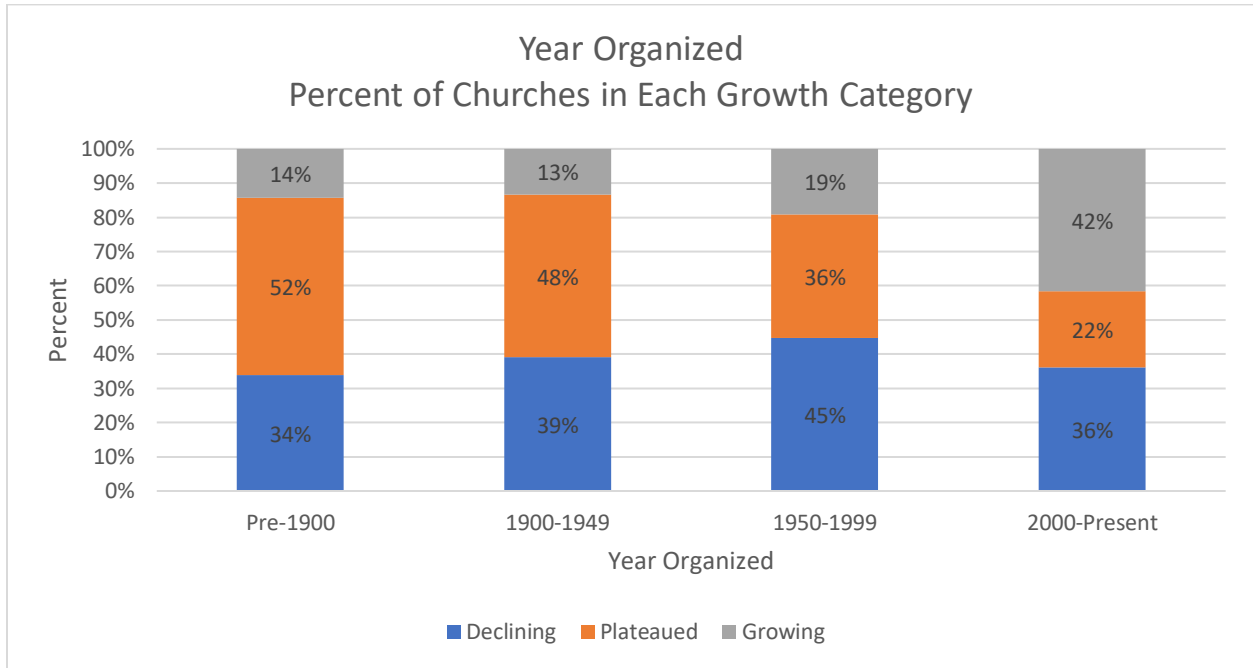


Figure 4: Percentage Church Growth by Year Organized

NOTES:

- **Growing:** Churches organized between 2000-Present (42%) are the most likely to have grown. Those organized between 1950-1999 (19%) are the next most likely.
- **Plateaued:** The frequency of churches that plateaued decreases from year the church was organized: Pre-1900 (52%), 1900-1949 (48%), 1950-1999 (36%), 2000-Present (22%).
- **Declining:** Churches organized between 1900-1949 (39%) and 1950-1999 (45%) are more likely to have declined than those organized between Pre-1900 (34%) and 2000-Present (36%).

Population Zone:

- Rural: Population less than 2,500
- Suburban: Population greater than or equal to 2,500 and less than 50,000
- Urban: Population greater than or equal to 50,000

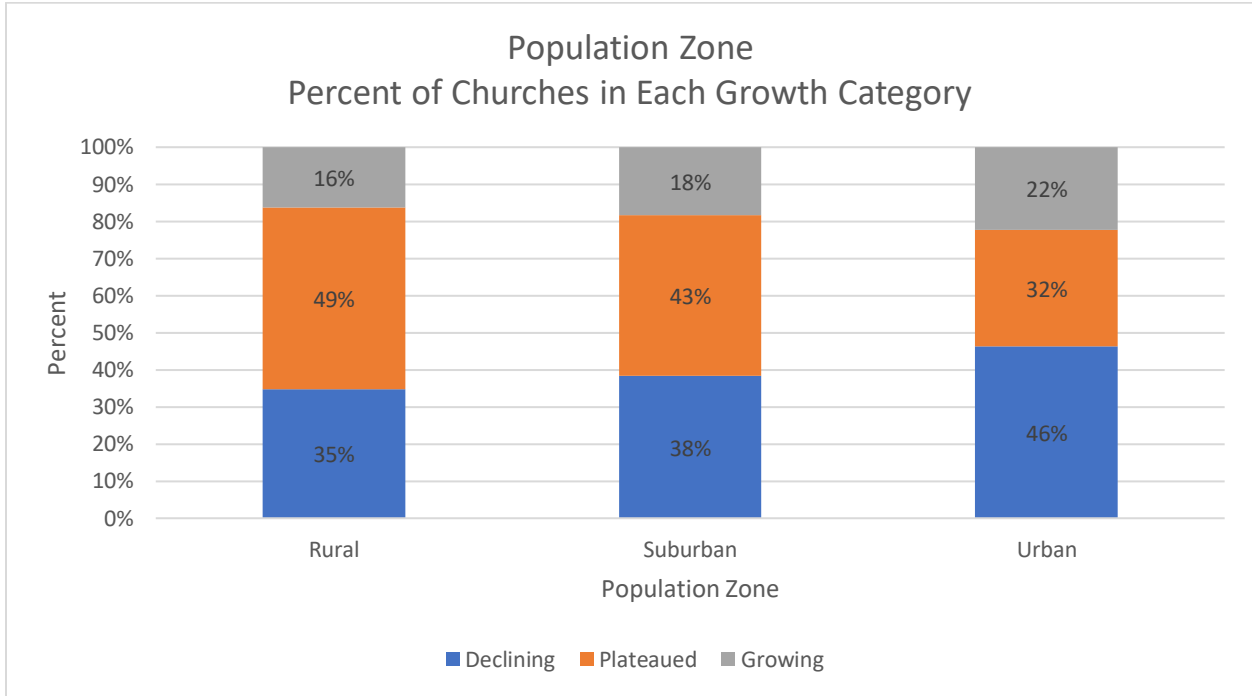


Figure 5: Percentage Church Growth by Population Zone

NOTES:

- Growing: Churches in Urban areas (22%) are the most likely to have grown followed by those in Suburban areas (18%) and Rural areas (16%).
- Plateaued: Churches in Rural areas (49%) are the most likely to have plateaued followed by those in Suburban areas (43%) and Urban areas (32%).
- Declining: Churches in Urban areas (46%) are the most likely to have declined followed by those in Suburban areas (38%) and rural areas (35%).

2022 ACP Church Performance

Regions: US Census Bureau regions are used to define Northeast, Midwest, South, and West.

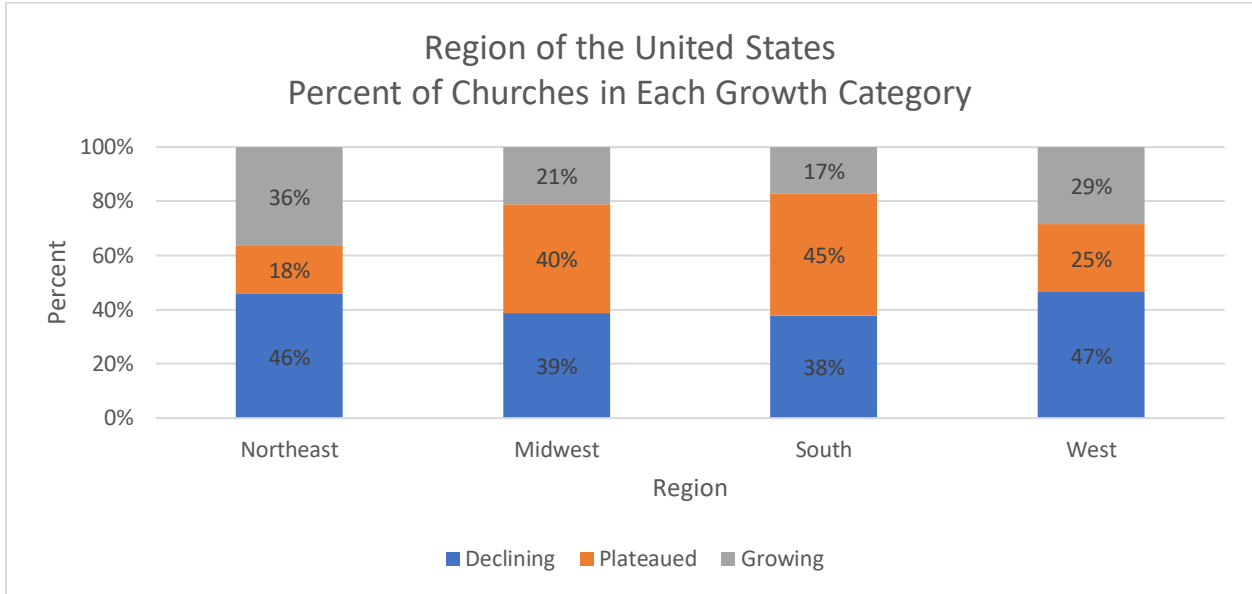


Figure 6: Church Growth Category by Region

NOTES:

- Growing: Churches in the Northeast (36%) are the most likely to have grown followed by those in the West (29%), Midwest (21%), and South (17%).
- Plateaued: Churches in the South (45%) are the most likely to have plateaued followed by those in the Midwest (40%), West (25%), and Northeast (18%).
- Declining: Churches in the West (47%) and Northeast (46%) are more to have declined than those in the Midwest (39%) and South (38%).

Average AM Attendance 2017 vs 2022

For churches which reported non-zero attendance in 2017 and 2022, nearly two-thirds of churches (65%) remained within their same size category. The table below shows churches by size category.

NOTES:

- Nearly all churches with 1-49 average attendance in 2017 remained in that category.
- 64% of the largest churches from 2017 are still in that category.
- For churches between 50-499 in 2017, 45% moved down in size category.

Table 2: Attendance Group 2017 versus 2022

AM Attendance 2017	AM Attendance 2022				
	1-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500+
1-49	93%	7%	1%	0%	0%
50-99	44%	51%	5%	0%	0%
100-249	4%	40%	53%	2%	0%
250-499	0%	2%	50%	43%	4%
500+	0%	0%	4%	31%	64%

Growth Categories for Churches Started between 2017 and 2021

Churches started between 2017 and 2021 were placed into growth categories based on total church membership between their start year and 2022. This chart provides a note of encouragement. At least two-thirds of these churches in any year are either growing or plateaued. The pattern of a larger percentage of churches growing based on organized year is promising. This change needs to be observed with caution as the older churches have had more time to attain the level of growth needed to be defined as growing.

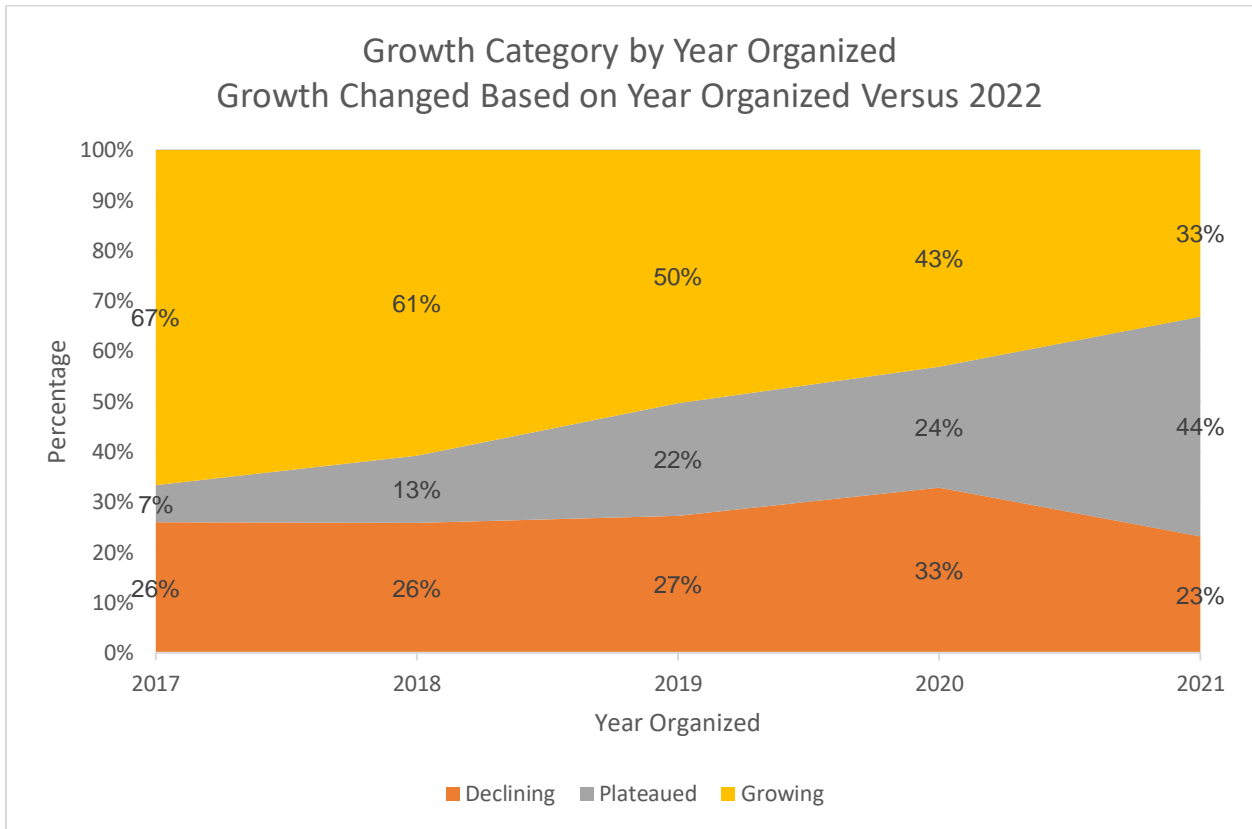


Figure 7: Church Growth Category by Year Organized

Regression Analysis

The following variables were considered for inclusion in the final model, but the ones listed are the only significant variables at the 10% level.

- Year Organized
- Population Zone
- Region of the United States

Analysis of Variance					
Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	2	192.74	96.37	71.43	<.0001
Error	18474	24925	1.35		
Corrected Total	18476	25118			

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	Type II SS	F Value	Pr > F
Intercept	-0.089	0.0096	115.70	85.75	<.0001
YR_ORG_GRP 2000-Present	0.318	0.027	181.98	134.88	<.0001
REGION MIDWEST	0.066	0.026	8.59	6.36	0.0117