

# A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine

**Religion, Charity,  
and American Life**

Center for American Institutions  
Arizona State University

Commissioners Leo Raymond Cardinal Burke,  
Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Rabbi Pinchas Allouche



# Table of Contents

Executive Introduction	2
Introduction	6
Preserving Faith-Based Involvement in Our Communities: A Call to Action	12
Immediate Physical Needs	16
Health and Wellness	24
Children and Youth Ministries	30
Adoption, Foster Care, and Crisis Pregnancy	36
Community Service	42
Other Programs	46
The American Tradition of Voluntarism	50
Secularization	58
Attacks on Religion	70
Conclusion	76
Appendix A	80
Appendix B	84
Organizations	88
Commissioner Members	94

# Faith-Based Charity is Absolutely **Essential** to Our **Communities**

This national commission report, *A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine*, makes a single point that we as Americans need to know: faith-based charities are essential to American communities.

Without faith-based charities in our communities, most of those who are hungry, homeless, alcohol and drug dependent, and/or in need of utility and rent assistance would suffer even more. Faith-based charities operate and sponsor multiple and extensive programs in our communities. These programs feed the poor through meal preparation and food distribution; help those dependent on alcohol and drugs to overcome their addictions; counsel pregnant women in need and prospective foster parents; and keep our children safe and away from criminal activities through sports leagues and after school programs. Many congregations run literacy programs to help people receive their general education degrees, which are necessary for advanced opportunities. Employment assistance programs for former convicts are found in our churches and synagogues. Many congregations undertake weekly and monthly neighborhood clean-up and beautification.

*A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine* shows the extent of these charity-based activities and programs in our communities.

This report is based on facts, not conjecture; objective research, not polemic.


The research began with a survey to over a thousand congregations and over two hundred clergy in four regionally representative cities: Detroit, Michigan; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Miami, Florida; and Phoenix, Arizona. Clergy surveyed included over eighteen denominations. Following this survey, the research team explored websites and reports of churches and synagogues in these cities, as well as city and county faith-based social welfare agencies.

The findings of this commission are astounding. Most of the activities of these congregations and social welfare services are not publicized or reported in our media. The good work of these congregations relies largely on volunteers who contribute to their community's health out of the goodness of their hearts. Their work reaches beyond their congregations and the faithful. These volunteers express a belief that through their efforts, the world can be a better place. They express through their work an optimism so often lacking in our world today.

The message of *A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine* is one of hope and optimism. We hear and read of so many bad things happening in our world today. *A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine* brings to our readers a story often not reported: Americans helping other Americans.

We live in a secular age. Religion itself has come under intellectual and cultural attack. In an increasingly polarized climate, we have witnessed an increase in hate crimes – individual assaults on Jews, mass shooting of Protestant and Jewish congregations, desecration of churches and synagogues.

While *A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine* offers an optimistic message about the good work faith-based charities are doing in our community, the report would be remiss if the escalation in religious hate crimes was ignored. The report surveys data on the rise of religious hate crimes in our nation today.



The irony is that while faith-based organizations are more active in our communities today than at any time in modern American history, **these good works coincide with a rise in hate crimes.**

For those who believe that the world might be a better place without organized religion, this report might dissuade them that the world today, our nation, and our communities are a better place because of faith-based organizations, and people of faith who believe they have a moral responsibility to care for their brothers and sisters, and through small steps, small acts of kindness, have larger consequences for those they help and for their communities.

I want to thank the Commissioners of this study, Leo Raymond Cardinal Burke, Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. and Rabbi Pinchas Allouche, who read and commented on the report. The research team, directed by Professor Paula Baker and Professor James Strickland, deserve our thanks for their excellent and time-consuming work.


My belief is that this report is enlightening and will serve to show the importance, indeed the necessity, of faith-based charities in our communities.



*Donald Critchlow*

**Donald T. Critchlow**

Director, Center for American Institutions



“Almost two centuries ago, Alexis de Tocqueville commented on the centrality of America’s churches and faith-based institutions to the building of American society and the health of communities. That is no less true today, and this truth underlines the need for honoring, respecting, and protecting those communities of faith and conviction. This report affirms that truth and makes a powerful argument for affirming the religious liberty and freedom necessary for this good work in communities to continue. This is a challenging report, powerful in content, and it is also a call to action.”

**R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President**  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

# Introduction





## Introduction

Hungry in America, homeless, your federal food assistance exhausted? The likelihood that you will be fed by a faith-based organization is enormous.

Religious organizations through churches and synagogues, and community and national non-profit charities, not only feed the poor and the hungry today but help rehabilitate those addicted to drugs and alcohol; support those needing rent and utility payments; conduct after school programs for kids and sports programs to keep them off the streets; transition former convicts into society.

This report, *A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine*, based on survey and research data, reveals just how deep religious charity involvement is in our communities. Most Americans know about religious-run schools and hospitals, but faith-based charitable programs do much more. The extent of these activities reveals just how vital, and indeed, essential, they are to maintaining the health of our communities, already in distress.

Most food pantries or organizations distributing food boxes are faith-based. In fact, if you are among the hungry, desperate to keep your family or yourself from starving, you rely on religious organizations to feed you. For example, 86 percent of food pantries in Detroit, Michigan found on [findhelp.org](http://findhelp.org) are faith-based. Many are housed on church property with volunteer staff.

Organizations rooted in Christian or Jewish teaching do more than feed people. Four of the seven “best” drug addiction treatment facilities in Detroit, Michigan, according to Addiction Resource, are faith-based.<sup>1</sup> A family in danger of becoming homeless in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, can turn to faith-based groups to help with back rent and utilities. Nearly half of the programs listed on [findhelp.org](http://findhelp.org) that welcome the most vulnerable homeless people – the young, migrants, and those with mental health and addiction issues – are faith-based. The work of volunteers reflects the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, a principle shared by other faiths. To promote human flourishing and the common good, large institutions, such as the state and federal government, should not overwhelm local institutions which enrich neighborhoods and communities. Volunteers bring the good news in ways that bureaucracies cannot.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.addictionresource.net/best-drug-rehab-centers/michigan/detroit/>

The National Commission, *A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine*, has good news to report:

Faith-based organizations are more involved in our communities in terms of numbers of programs, the extent of these programs, and funding than ever before in our history. **Religious organizations are essential to the health of American social life.**

The purpose of this research was to determine through empirical data the extent of faith-based organizations' involvement in our communities. Unlike much of the past and current research, the commission did not examine the differences among denominations, the prospects for government funding, or measure the effectiveness of faith-based social services. The commission's sole purpose was to answer a simple and important question: *To what extent are faith-based organizations involved in maintaining the health of our communities?*

The research began with a survey of individual religious congregations in four cities: Detroit, Michigan; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Miami, Florida; and Phoenix, Arizona. These four cities were selected to represent the Midwest, East, South, and West.

260 clergy were directly contacted, and another 1,310 congregations were contacted through email to complete the anonymous survey.

Respondents were asked if their congregations were directly involved in one or more social welfare programs including drug rehabilitation; housing for unsheltered persons; childcare services for below-market rates; non-religious education services for below-market rates; health care services (other than drug rehabilitation) for below-market rates; non-religious leagues or clubs, including sports teams; meal preparation for those in need; area beautification or clean-up efforts; or other programs not included in the survey.

All of those who responded reported at least one community service activity and many more reported more than one program. Many of the congregations reported more than one activity.

The congregations contacted included the following:

<b>African Methodist Episcopal Church</b>	<b>Latter-day Saints</b>
<b>Assembly of God</b>	<b>Lutheran</b>
<b>Baptist</b>	<b>Messianic Church</b>
<b>Catholic (Roman and Eastern)</b>	<b>Methodist</b>
<b>Disciples of Christ</b>	<b>Muslim*</b>
<b>Episcopalian</b>	<b>Pentecostal</b>
<b>General Evangelical</b>	<b>Presbyterian</b>
<b>Independent (no tradition noted)</b>	<b>Quaker</b>
<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Seventh Day Adventist</b>

(\*Only one Muslim congregation responded, so for statistical purposes Muslims were dropped from this study).

Following analysis of this survey (See Appendix A for methodology), the Center for American Institutions research team examined non-congregational based organizations and their involvement in social welfare programs in the four cities studied. These organizations included the Salvation Army; Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, and Jewish social services; and a wide array of other city and regional non-profit charitable organizations. Funding and programs were reviewed. A full list of these non-congregational organizations can be found in Appendix B. In addition, researchers surveyed national faith-based religious charity organizations, but the report focused on the four major cities to capture the vital role that faith-based organizations play in American civic and social life today.

*This commission report presents an inspiring story of generosity and care for neighbors in need.*

The good news documented in this report comes with one caveat: Religion, churches, and persons of faith are under attack, intellectually and culturally. Sometimes these attacks go beyond verbal to physical with Jewish synagogues, Catholic and Protestant churches desecrated, pregnancy crisis centers defaced or bombed, and at its worse, outright terrorism.

At a time when religious organizations are playing such an important and critical role in our communities, religion itself – the very foundational impulse for religious involvement in our communities – is under attack and participation in churches and synagogues is in decline. This report concludes that any discussion of the importance of religion in American society should begin with a basic understanding that without faith-based organizations' involvement in our communities, we would be worse off as a society and the poor, the hungry, the addicted, the abused, and many others who suffer, would be left in total darkness, without the light of hope.

The Center for American Institutions (CAI) at Arizona State University (ASU) sponsored research for this commission report. Following research for the report, the CAI invited religious leaders representing Catholic, Protestant, LDS, and Jewish traditions to join the commission. Commissioners played a leading role in drafting this report.

*A Thousand Points of Light Still Shine* can be read in two parts: survey results from congregations and clergy studied in each of the four cities; and increased hostility toward Christians and Jews in our society.

“Faith-based organizations are the lifeblood of America’s moral fabric, calling each of us to fulfill our God-given responsibility to heal the world. Through acts of goodness and kindness, we can restore faith in humanity and remind the world that light can dispel even the thickest darkness. This call to action can propel readers to reflect on how they, too, can contribute to making the world more divine through small yet powerful acts of goodness and kindness. It will also highlight the importance of treating each other with respect, as God’s children who are all part of God’s human family.”

**Rabbi Pinchas Allouche**

Founding Rabbi of Congregation Beth Tefillah

# **Preserving Faith-Based Involvement in Our Communities: A Call to Action**



## **Recommendations:**

This report shows categorically the importance of the role of faith-based organizations in our communities. In order for these vital programs to continue, the commission recommends the following:

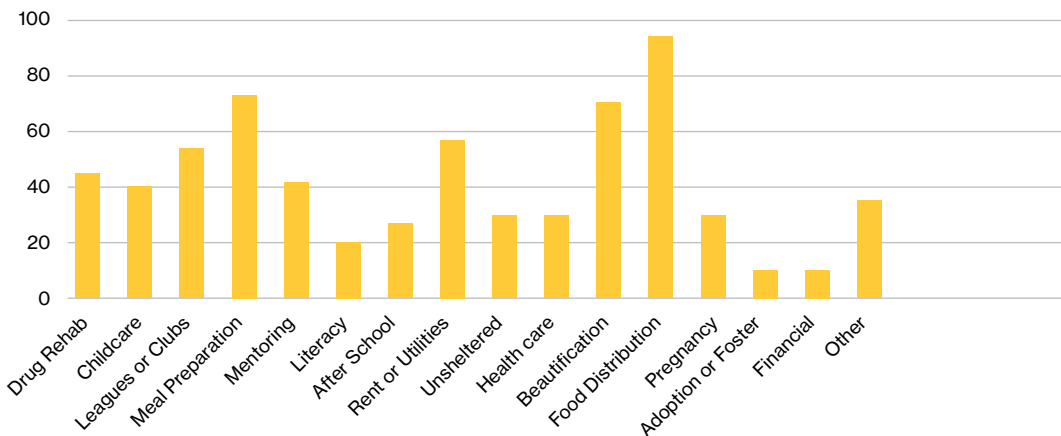
- Faith-based organizations need to do a better job of informing the general public as to these programs. On a community level, faith-based organizations should consider creating a collective website reporting on their activities.
- Greater media attention needs to be driven by individual churches, synagogues, temples, and faith-based charities to newspapers, the media, and social media about their stories of individuals who have benefited from their programs. Americans love success stories.
- Media itself should give more attention to the importance of faith-based charities and programs in their communities.
- Americans need a better understanding of religious liberty, as embodied in the First Amendment. This should begin in the classroom. State legislators and school boards should require that time be given in the classroom to the foundational concept of religious liberty in American life.



## Social Services in Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia, and Phoenix

Our survey understates the participation of congregations in providing aid to those in need in our cities. Even so, the big picture tells a story of impressive person-to-person involvement in neighborhood problems.

### Social Services by Type



Beyond spiritual needs, nearly all of the congregations engage in activities that address the immediate physical needs of their neighbors. They collect and distribute food. They help with rent and utilities and point people to additional organizations that can assist. They also offer even more ambitious programs addressing complex problems, such as addiction, literacy, homelessness, and programming for at-risk youth.

# **Immediate Physical Needs**



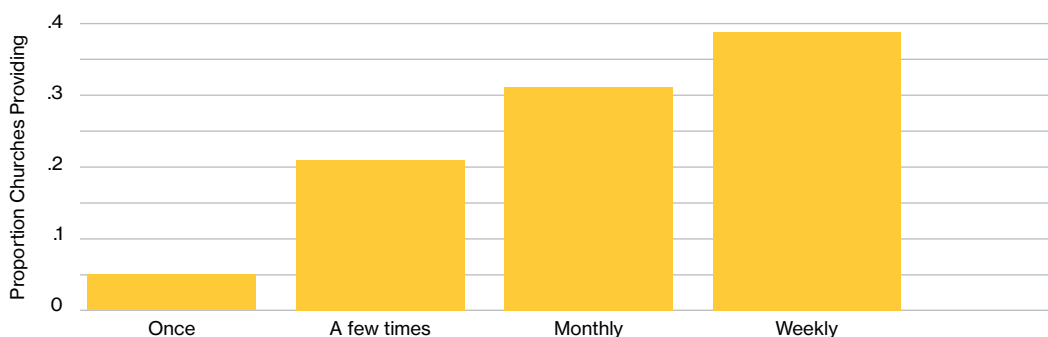
## Immediate Physical Needs: Food

Collecting and distributing food on a regular schedule is one of the most common activities of the congregations that responded to our survey. This is a vitally important service to their cities.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, a growing number of Americans are caught in a squeeze. As food prices skyrocketed, along with other basic needs like transportation, housing, and energy, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or food stamps) did not keep up. In a 2023 survey conducted by Feeding America, the largest American charity focused on food insecurity, 65 percent of food banks reported increasing demand.<sup>2</sup> Food pantries, meanwhile, found that food inflation meant their contributions did not go as far as they did pre-pandemic, even as lines at their doors grew longer.<sup>3</sup>

Congregations in our cities have persevered through these challenging times. Nearly all congregations who responded to the survey collect or distribute food to the poor.

### Food Distribution



Some congregations have daily distribution programs. A Disciples of Christ church in Phoenix runs a volunteer-staffed pantry that is open Monday through Friday. In central Phoenix, the Living Streams Church's food pantry is open Mondays through Thursdays, feeding 5,000 people per year. St. Vincent de Paul conferences – the small groups of volunteers within local parishes – deliver food to people within their parish boundaries.

A Jewish temple in Phoenix illustrates another way that congregations help their communities. They do not operate a pantry, but members contribute time and money to two nearby established food pantries. This was true of other congregations, such as a Disciples of Christ church in Phoenix which contributed to area food and shelter programs.

An Episcopal church in Philadelphia runs a food cupboard five days per week. Begun by a parishioner, it is now eligible for United Way support. The program also serves bread and soup on Saturdays.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/press-room/latest-food-bank-survey-finds-majority-food-banks-reporting-increased-demand>

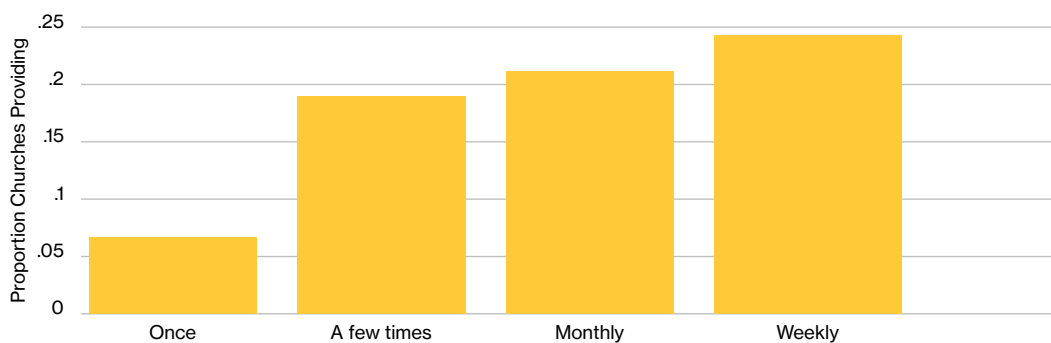
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/27/1145579295/food-banks-in-the-u-s-are-feeling-the-pinch-of-inflation>

A Methodist church in South Phoenix is small, reporting fewer than 100 members. But with the assistance of the Arizona Faith Network, an ecumenical social justice group, it operates a food pantry that also makes available clothing, showers, laundry, and assistance in navigating substance abuse programs and other assistance.

Some congregations support free-standing faith-based food pantries. One of these is Mom's House in north Phoenix, which is open on weekends. The Arizona Kosher Food Pantry is open to all and runs with volunteer labor. City of Hope, with two locations, is the project of a multi-congregational church. Visitors can shop, as they would in a store for food, clothing, and hygiene items.

Many of these same ministries that distribute food also provide cooked meals, offering a lifeline for families, elderly neighbors, and homeless people.

### Meal Preparation



Among the faith-based organizations that provide meals is Andre House in Phoenix. Founded by two Holy Cross priests in 1984, volunteers serve dinner Saturdays through Thursdays. They also have clothing, laundry services, and showers available. With a few other churches, they provide funeral services for those who died without friends or family to make arrangements.<sup>4</sup>

A Catholic church in Detroit provides meals six days a week, serving 200 people a day, for a total of 60,000 in the course of a year. The staff and volunteers at their Pope Francis Center prepare and serve breakfast and lunch for their guests in downtown Detroit. The Center and its volunteers do more than feed people. They provide services unavailable on the streets: showers, toiletry kits, haircuts, use of washers and dryers, and clean underwear and socks.

A Presbyterian church in Philadelphia has a weekly schedule for handing out bags of groceries to neighbors in need. Related ministries build community. The church offers a family-style meal on Saturdays, a monthly lunch for seniors, and an after school and tutoring program for young people.

St. Francis Inn Ministries, founded by Franciscan friars, is open to all who want a meal or clothing in a Philadelphia neighborhood suffering from crime, homelessness, and open drug use. The ministry supplies take-away breakfasts and sit-down dinners seven days a week, supplied by volunteers and the religious and lay people who have joined the community.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://andrehouse.org/what-we-do/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://stfrancisinn.org/about>

In Philadelphia, Cast Your Cares ministry, founded by a missionary family, offers regular meals as well as a food pantry and counselors to help people in need locate and navigate the variety of available resources.<sup>6</sup> In the same city, Chosen 300 Ministries, Inc. came out of a prayer service that brought together diverse Christian churches. It now involves 115 organizations, predominately Baptist, independent, and African Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal, along with a few non-faith-based groups, to bring food, both meals and boxes, to impoverished Philadelphians. They have expanded food distribution to projects abroad.<sup>7</sup>

Face to Face began as a St. Vincent de Paul meal project in the impoverished Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia. As it became clear that a good meal (available five days per week, delivered family-style to the tables) addressed only one need, the project expanded to include clothing, showers, health and wellness screenings, a preschool, and legal services.<sup>8</sup>

Old St. Joseph in Philadelphia also begins with meals but offers much more to the mostly homeless people who come. With a partner organization they have counseling available for those with mental illness or drug problems to get treatment and shelter. Help is also there for those who need it in applying for other services.<sup>9</sup>

Large faith-based charities, such as the Salvation Army and St. Vincent de Paul also provide meals. The Phoenix Salvation Army both delivers and serves meals in a social setting.

## **Immediate Physical Needs: Shelter**

The United States has a housing crisis that has intensified over the last decade. The housing crisis is a complex and varied problem. One aspect of the problem is chronic homelessness, often connected to drug and alcohol addiction, mental health issues, or both. Mass illegal migration has increased demand for scarce shelter space to the breaking point in some cities. Homeless camps, set up in parks, under overpasses, and vacant lots, contain long-term residents and appallingly unhealthy conditions.

Some people become homeless through unfortunate circumstances: a loss of a job, an uncovered medical emergency, a housemate who helped cover bills leaving, or being stranded in a new city where a promised prospect did not materialize. They might sleep in their cars while they seek help or work.

Others are on the edge of homelessness. With the rapid increases in rent, utilities, transportation, and food costs, even those with income and jobs can find themselves deciding which bills to pay.

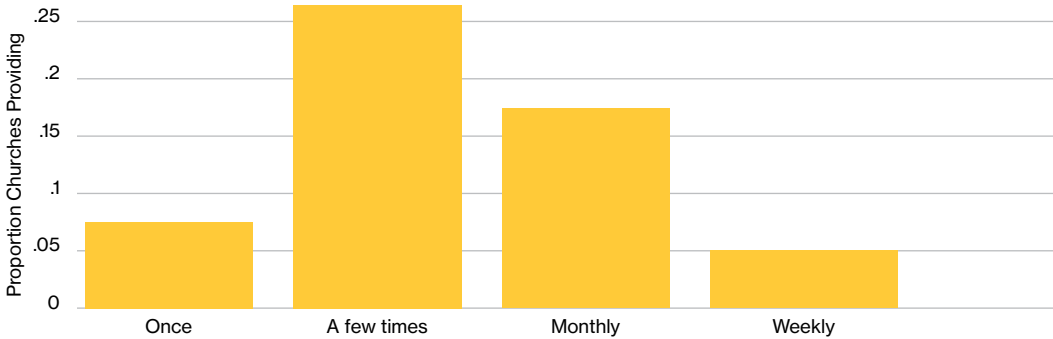
<sup>6</sup> <https://castyourcares.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.chosen300.org/history.html>

<sup>8</sup> [https://facetofacegermantown.org/what-we-do/#dining\\_room](https://facetofacegermantown.org/what-we-do/#dining_room)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.jesuitseast.org/press-release/outreach-at-old-st-joseph-church-in-philadelphia-provides-meals-and-so-much-more/>

## Rent or Utilities



Faith-based groups are an essential piece of the network of public and private organizations that homeless people or those in danger of losing their housing turn to for help. Large-scale solutions, such as operating shelters or covering back rent, are beyond the capabilities of most of the congregations we surveyed. Nonetheless, about half of the congregations made help available to people who needed assistance paying for rent or utilities, with more than one-quarter taking this on regularly.

Among them is a large Catholic Church in a suburban area of Philadelphia where volunteers help people who live within their parish boundaries with rent and utilities through its St. Vincent de Paul conference. How often they give depends on need in the area.

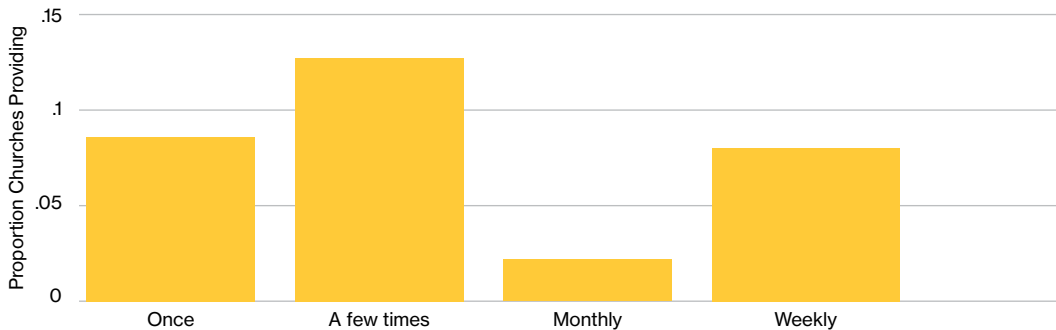
While this St. Vincent de Paul conference, like its counterparts in other parishes, can draw on funds from other conferences or the larger diocese if they run short, other congregations may not have the same wider institutional support. A small Society of Friends congregation in Philadelphia is among those that list their help in this area and others as a weekly undertaking. They estimate that they served “several hundred” people in their various endeavors over the course of a year. Baptist congregations with a housing ministry in Phoenix and Miami (Southern Baptist) do not indicate any outside support other than what comes from their parishioners and volunteers. In addition to operating a mobile food pantry, a Baptist church in Phoenix helps with rent payments.

Congregations provide direct aid, but also connect people facing bills they cannot pay with other organizations that in combination can relieve the burden of missed rent or mortgage payments or overdue utility bills. Some of those are foundations that have grants available for targeted populations – veterans and people struggling against diseases, such as specific cancers or HIV – to keep them in their homes.

Our cities and counties often have money available to prevent homelessness, although they commonly want assurances that the recipient is “sustainable” – that is, has a job or income that makes the check sent to the landlord a one-time boost. Utility companies have programs for people who cannot pay their bills, and congregations close the gap on what utilities offer.

The Salvation Army has a rental assistance program, as does St. Vincent de Paul. The Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance goes further. Focusing on a neighborhood on the east side of Detroit, it rehabs buildings and makes them available for low-cost rent. In addition, its educational program walks low-income people through the confusing world of credit and home buying, with bonus instruction on maintenance.<sup>10</sup> Faith Works, also based in Detroit, draws volunteers and support from fifteen congregations, repairs and rehabilitates houses, making it possible for those without the means to do the repairs themselves to live in safer and more functional homes.

## Unsheltered



The Foundation for Senior Living, established by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, is a multifaceted non-profit aimed at the elderly and caregivers. In addition to housing programs – weatherization to make aging in place more affordable, low-cost housing, and assisted group living – it includes food, transportation, and wellness programs.

Homeless ministries are numerous and varied. Congregations, with their limited resources, either make it a regular ministry – at least weekly activity – or a more occasional one.

A Catholic congregation in Detroit does not provide housing, but it serves meals to approximately 200 homeless, 6 days a week. It also “provides laundry, shower, and medical services to their homeless guests.” Both the neighborhood and congregation have supported the ministry. Also, in Detroit, volunteers from a Catholic parish set out every Wednesday to bring supplies and food to the homeless, while also serving breakfast twice a week.

Another Catholic church in Philadelphia mentioned a “very active and efficacious” homeless ministry. They prepare food and collect essentials for distribution. Volunteers pack the items and walk through areas where homeless people congregate, offering food, goods, and conversation.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dcpasite.com/home-ownership>



Summer in Phoenix can be deadly without access to water and cooling. Alongside public hydration and cooling stations, faith-based groups go to homeless camps and distribute water and necessities. For example, St. Vincent de Paul has trucks that make the rounds to places where homeless people congregate to hand out water, food, and supplies. On a smaller scale, Sunnyslope Ministries of Hope distributes water in central Phoenix most every summer evening, along with personal care items and shoes. Also, in Phoenix, Young Single Adult groups from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) congregations take part in distributing aid to the homeless.

Larger-scale projects account for the needs of homeless people, which often go well beyond the lack of a roof. Some specialize. Family Promise of Greater Phoenix partners with churches and synagogues to provide temporary housing to homeless families with children and their pets. In Philadelphia, Saint John's Hospice features housing for homeless people with HIV, along with a larger drug and alcohol-free shelter, an emergency shelter and counseling and referrals for additional assistance. Others are attentive to the extreme needs of victims of domestic abuse. Emmanuel House in Detroit includes mental health and addiction services along with job training for homeless veterans.

Among the multifaceted non-profits open to all, the Phoenix Rescue Mission, active since the 1950s, integrates housing, food, legal advice, childcare, and residential drug and alcohol recovery programs. Jane Addams Place (Lutheran Settlement House) in Philadelphia delivers housing, but also comprehensive educational and counseling services. Lutheran congregations in the city supply financial support. Detroit Rescue Mission does everything: food, housing, addiction treatment, job training, and recreation programs.

# Health and Wellness

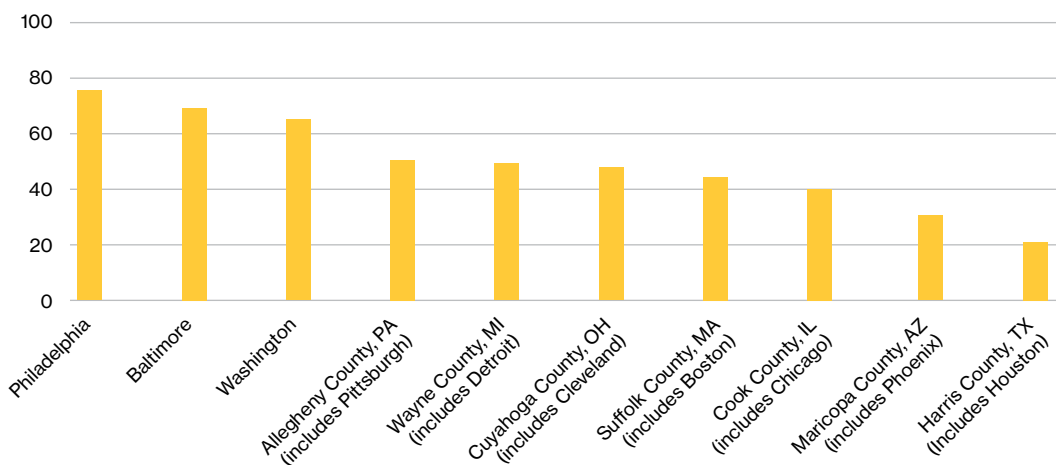


## Health and Wellness

Poverty intersects with poor health, mental health issues, and drug and alcohol abuse. These are growing social problems with tragic consequences. In the city of Phoenix, the best that can be said is that since the explosion of fatal overdoses in 2019, the number has stabilized. In 2021, 991 overdose deaths were reported, with a relatively small increase – 1,023 – in 2022.<sup>11</sup> In 2023, Philadelphia marked the seventh straight year of more than 1,100 overdose deaths.<sup>12</sup> That city leads the nation in drug overdose deaths per 100,000 residents, according to Pew Trust data. Detroit is fifth.

### Drug Overdose Deaths per 100,000 Residents, 2022

Philadelphia and comparable cities and counties



In 2022, Philadelphia reported 78.9 deaths per 100,000 residents from unintentional drug overdoses, the highest figure among the comparable cities and counties. In 2022, 75% of the people who died of an unintentional overdose in Philadelphia were ages 35-64, with the greatest number of deaths among those ages 55-64.

Note: Overdose data is collected at the county level. Data includes deaths considered unintentional or undetermined, and rates are age-adjusted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, allowing for fairer comparisons among populations in different jurisdictions.

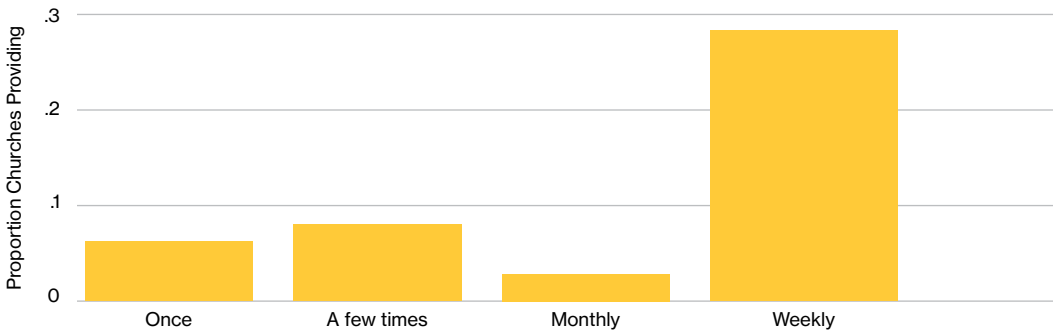
Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC WONDER Database, "Multiple Cause of Death Data: 2022, <https://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd.html>

© 2024 The Pew Charitable Trusts

<sup>11</sup> [https://stories.opengov.com/phoenixaz/21e6ea58-6264-4f16-a4f6-117b0e31372c/published/uKn62O\\_E?currentPageId=6631296d22d4666cd3f835c0](https://stories.opengov.com/phoenixaz/21e6ea58-6264-4f16-a4f6-117b0e31372c/published/uKn62O_E?currentPageId=6631296d22d4666cd3f835c0)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2024/04/philadelphia-2024>

## Drug Rehab



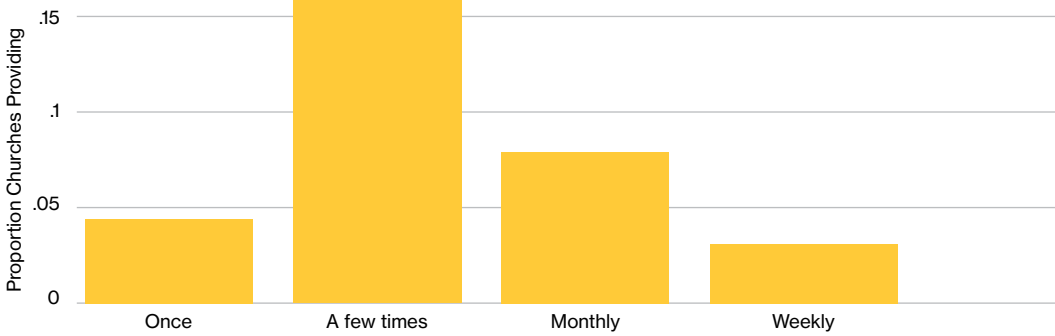
Mental illness is a growing problem in America, contributing significantly to the homeless crisis in our nation. Exacerbated by the isolation, stress, and loneliness that the pandemic and its shutdowns produced, the CDC reports that 1 in 5 Americans live with mental illness, with 1 in 25 struggling with severe illness.<sup>13</sup> Estimated rates of mental illness affecting homeless people are higher still.

Many of the congregations in our survey are active in mental health and drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs. While congregations are not set up to offer counseling or treatment, they provide space for Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and other recovery groups. For some congregations, this is a daily activity. One congregation in Phoenix opens space to a NA group that meets daily, an AA group that meets three days each week, and a Crystal Meth Anonymous group that hold weekly meetings.

Faith-based groups larger than congregations provide drug rehabilitation services, and their grounding in faith and the whole person is part of their effectiveness. Philadelphia's Whosoever Gospel Mission is a full-service program for homeless men, seeing them through to job placement. The first stop, aside from food and shelter, is often drug treatment. Friends Rehabilitation in Philadelphia takes a similar approach.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

## Health care



Health care is not the first thing that might come to mind in imagining social services congregations offer. Yet many extended their typical nutrition services by sponsoring health care programming.

Congregations regularly make space for Red Cross blood drives, but they do much more. A Philadelphia Lutheran congregation partners with medical and dental students to operate a medical and dental clinic in their space, which they do in conjunction with community meals. A small Lutheran church also in Philadelphia, offers a health screening clinic. A large Baptist church in Miami also sponsors health fairs with free screenings.

Congregations support faith-based organizations that do remarkable work in health care. Jewish Family and Children's Services is one example of an ambitious, integrated program. In four clinics across metro Phoenix it recognizes and treats the interlocking problems its clients present: illnesses, often chronic; mental health issues; substance abuse; and nutritional deficits. It helps those who come to them with everything from food to dental referrals.

Another Phoenix facility with expansive services is the main St. Vincent de Paul campus. In addition to meals and food, it also provides transitional housing for homeless veterans, elderly people and families. It operates a free health clinic as well as a dental clinic that provides a range of services for a flat \$25 fee.



# **Children and Youth Ministries**



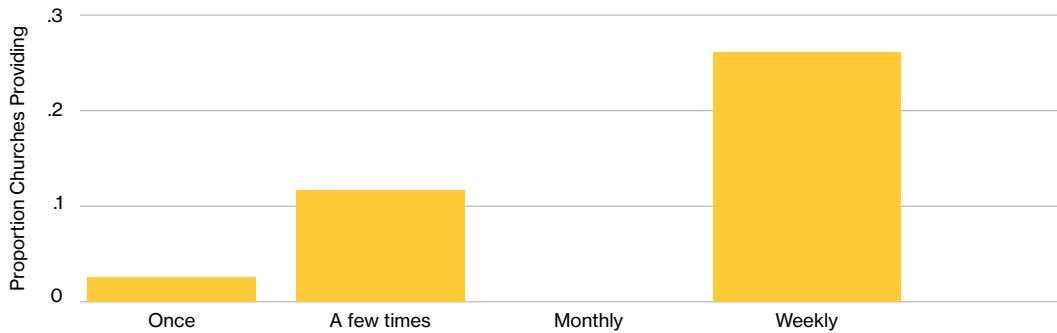


## Children and Youth Ministries

A focus on children and youth comes naturally to congregations. In addition to religious education, summer camps, clubs, and retreats for the children of members, some run schools open to all. These programs fill important needs for safe and enriching places where children can play and learn.

For the congregations that responded to our survey, childcare is not a common ministry. The regulatory environment alone makes it a difficult undertaking. Those that did committed resources, since this is not an undertaking that can persist on the basis of enthusiastic volunteers alone.

### Childcare



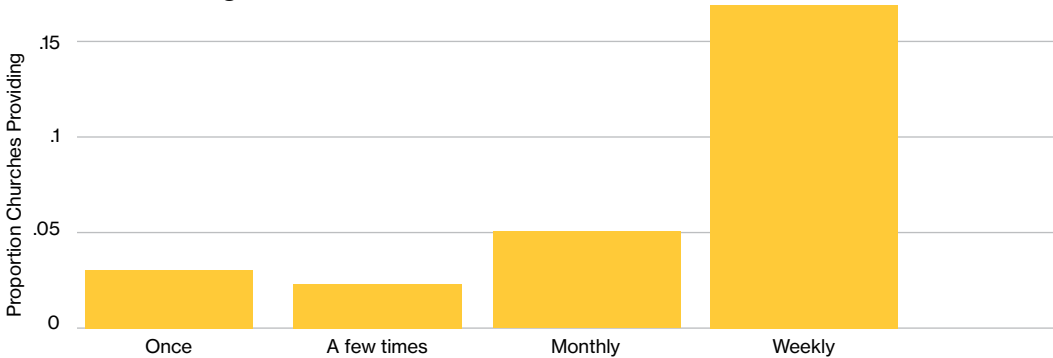
Our survey did not have a “daily” option for indicating how frequently congregations made services available. Those that provide childcare, daily operation is the norm. Two Philadelphia congregations are good examples. One operates a daycare for pre-kindergarten school, while the second runs a preschool and hosts an early childhood school for autistic kids.

A massive (nearly 6,000 parishioners) church in Detroit completed a new building that not only accommodates its parishioners but includes a Montessori day care center and low-cost housing for 100 people.

Aside from congregations, faith-based groups offer childcare at below market rates. Family Cares Kids in Phoenix is one example that offers scholarships to fill the gap between family or state aid, and makes available referrals for services families might need along with counseling that they might want. Catholic Social Services in Philadelphia operates a day care facility with a bilingual staff and provides support to parents, who can access emergency food and clothing, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and guidance in navigating social programs and the school system.

After school activities are more commonly found in congregations that run schools, although summer programs, including camps, are more typical.

### After School Programs



One congregation in Philadelphia runs a summer camp for autistic children and summer camps for children in the community.

Philadelphia's Germantown Life Enrichment Center includes among its services after school recreational programs for children in their neighborhood. Out of School Time delivers a rich menu of activities, educational and recreational, to low-income Philadelphia children. Children have the chance to play, but also to explore Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and art instruction or to be tutored in reading.

In Miami, the Youth for Christ chapter tries to reach the most at-risk youth. Its programs include working with young people in the juvenile justice system and those living in neighborhoods where the dangers and temptations of drugs and crime are the greatest. Another Christian non-profit active in Miami, the Family Christian Association of America, aims to give families the flexibility to get ahead by offering before as well as after school care, along with hours when schools are closed for holidays or teacher training.

Mentoring can mean many things – helping young people discover their talents or to stay away from drugs and alcohol, guiding formerly homeless people through job training and economic skills, or assisting pregnant women with encouragement, pre-natal care, and resources they will need, for example.

Many of the congregations we surveyed are involved in youth programs. A few respondents described their youth programs as mentoring.

## Mentoring

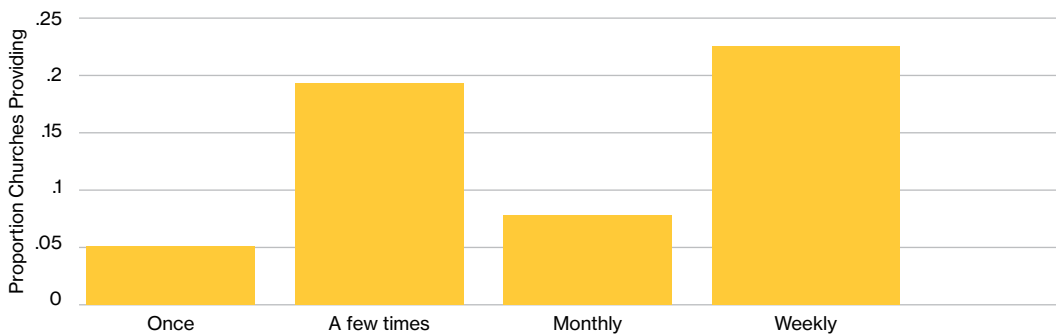


One Jewish Reform congregation in Philadelphia, for example, runs an imaginative project that we might think of as mentoring as well as an after school educational program. The congregation organized a group of volunteers, mostly retired teachers from the congregation and beyond, who tutor students who are struggling with math and reading in their public school district.

Almost all congregations sponsor clubs and groups that bring parishioners together who share interests or demographic characteristics (children, teens, seniors, men, and women). The groups typically combine fellowship with prayer and spiritual growth, with some also serving the congregation's needs.

Close to a quarter of the congregations we surveyed sponsored clubs or groups that were not explicitly religious in purpose as a weekly activity, although faith might be present in group activities.

### Leagues or Clubs



Among the groups and activities available at the congregations we surveyed are recreational sports (volleyball, basketball, and softball, for example), musical and theater groups, and groups for seniors and crafters. Some provide space and facilities for community groups.

Jewish Community Centers and Young Men's Christian Association's (YMCA's) are major sites of club and group activities, especially but not exclusively for young people.

# **Adoption, Foster Care, and Crisis Pregnancy**



## **Adoption, Foster Care, and Crisis Pregnancy**

Care for abandoned infants was a practice among Christians since late antiquity.<sup>14</sup> Poverty, the shame of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, or the loss of a spouse led parents to leave babies, sometimes newborns, to be found in time to survive. Or not. In medieval Europe, foundling hospitals and orphanages, some public and many religious, cared for such children until they reached working age.

In the United States, religious and secular orphanages cared for abandoned children. Through the nineteenth century, infants were the least adoptable – older children who could earn their keep by working at home or for wages more easily found new homes. The New York Foundling Hospital of the Sisters of Charity, established in 1869, systemized care for infants otherwise left at churches or convents.

Much changed over the course of the twentieth century. Foster care gradually replaced orphanages, infants became more adoptable than older children, and abortion became legal in every state.

What did not change was the role of faith-based groups in facilitating adoptions and foster care and supporting women in crisis pregnancies.

Larger organizations, not congregations, have the bureaucratic resources to expedite the complex issues involved in fostering and adopting. Both congregations and crisis pregnancy centers seek to help women who want to see their pregnancies to term rather than arrange for an abortion.

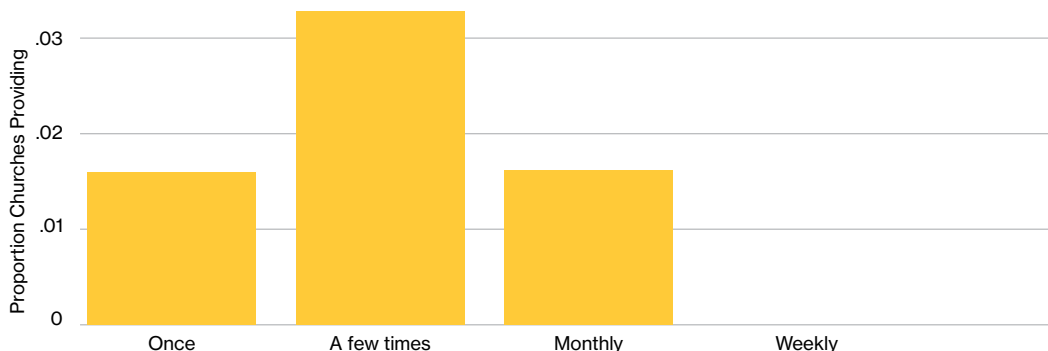
These activities of course were not a regular volunteer activity. Some congregations provided space to organizations that promote fostering or adoption. Others supply financial support for foster children.

While it was not among the categories of service our survey mentioned, some congregations indicated that they have ministries aimed at combating human trafficking and helping its victims recover.

<sup>14</sup> Yifat Monnickendam, "The Exposed Child: Transplanting Roman Law in Late Antique Jewish and Christian Legal Discourse," *American Journal of Legal History*, Vol 59, No. 1 (March, 2019), pp. 1-30.



## Adoption or Foster



Large faith-based non-profits are major players in foster care and adoption. Children become eligible for foster care when the city or state determines that their parent, parents, or caregiver cannot care for them safely or adequately. These children are usually the victims of abuse or neglect. While the goal is to reunite these children with responsible family members, placement in foster families replaced orphanages as the stopgap until (or if) that happens.

Cities or states contract with faith-based organizations to connect children with families willing to take often troubled children into their homes. Foster parents receive stipends from the state. Non-profits screen and prepare prospective foster parents for difficulties that might occur in the application process and placement. Foster children sometimes spend just a few days in their new home; most stay about one year.

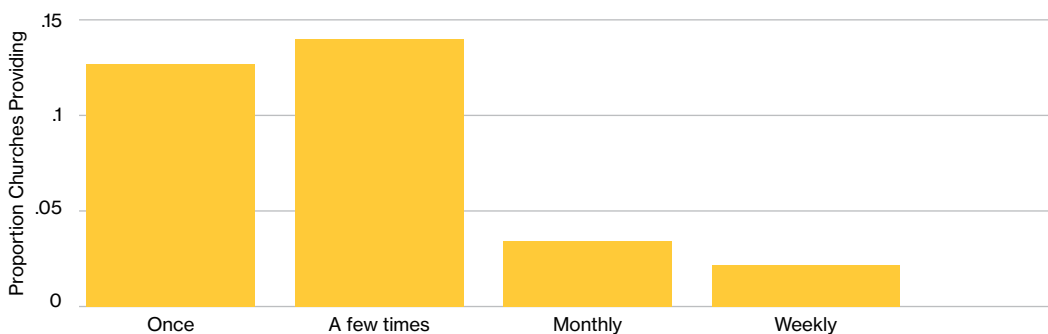
Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish social service agencies identify foster families. In each of our cities, faith groups engage with the foster care system. Their involvement has been long-standing, but recently, also controversial. In 2018, the City of Philadelphia determined that Catholic policies that excluded gay couples and unmarried heterosexual couples from their lists of potential foster parents, a rule in keeping with Catholic teaching, made Catholic Social Services (CSS) an unfit partner. CSS willingly put such couples in touch with any of the other 29 agencies that arranged foster care, but the city insisted that CSS change policies it deemed discriminatory. CSS charged that the city violated its religious freedom and won in a 2021 Supreme Court decision.<sup>15</sup>

The congregations that responded to our survey more commonly reported providing help to pregnant women in need. Once or a few times over the course of a year were the most typical frequency for those performing this service, which would be expected since the women in need have to reach out to or be identified by the congregations.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.becketlaw.org/case/sharonell-fulton-et-al-v-city-philadelphia/>; <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/249101/philadelphia-catholic-agency-can-once-again-help-make-foster-care-placements-after-settlement-with-city>

A larger proportion of congregations indicated that they provided services to pregnant women in need once or a few times in the course of one year.

## Pregnancy



No congregation responding to the survey reported direct sponsorship of a pregnancy program, but many told of helping individual women in their ministries by serving the homeless, victims of domestic abuse, or migrants. Fundraising to support pregnancy crisis centers and health care clinics for pregnant women is found in some congregations. One responding congregation, for example, reported its support of a local center that provides medical care and counseling to vulnerable pregnant women. Some congregations feature pro-life ministries and connections with faith-based organizations that support pregnant women in need. The survey, however, did not ask for information concerning fundraising or individual congregant involvement in pregnancy crisis centers.

Crisis pregnancy centers that provide women who plan to carry their pregnancies to term with medical and material help along with counseling and parenting classes. Some also provide housing. Most are not technically faith-based non-profits, although it is reasonable to assume that the motivation of many staff members and volunteers is grounded in faith.



# Community Service

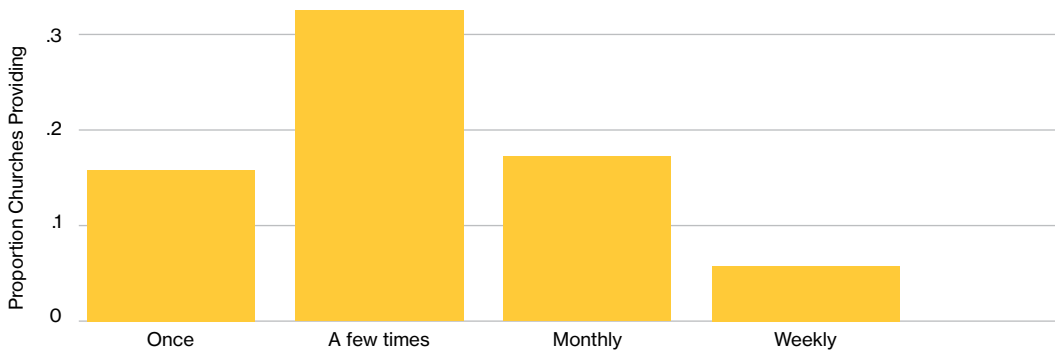


## Community Service

In addition to their work on pressing social problems, congregations serve the people of their communities in other ways. These activities include community fairs, annual dinners, cleaning up neighborhoods, and other projects. Community beautification and clean-up is a seasonal undertaking for many congregations in the Fall and Spring of each year. A number of the congregations that responded to our survey make neighborhood clean-up a weekly activity.

Other congregations improve their neighborhoods by hosting neighborhood association block clubs and establishing and helping to maintain community gardens. One congregation also maintains a garden at a local elementary school and built a playground for the school.

### Beautification

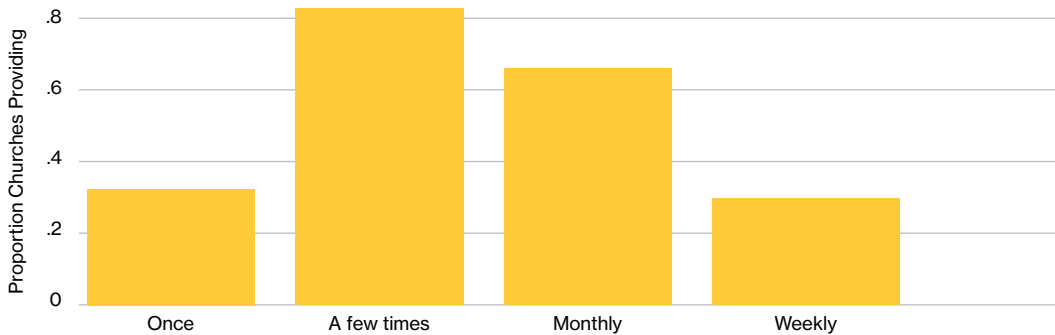


Some congregations and religious non-profit charities are far more ambitious than neighborhood clean-up efforts. Life Remodeled, for example, remakes abandoned buildings, of which Detroit has too many in some blighted neighborhoods, and turns them into everything from habitable housing to “opportunity hubs” that provide health care, after school programs, educational opportunities, and workforce development programs. It recently acquired a 7.55-acre site in the east side of Detroit, which formerly housed a Catholic high school, for a large-scale renovation that would replicate a similar completed project elsewhere in the city.

In addition to the well-known Habitat for Humanity, other groups are involved in renovating houses for low-income residents. Detroit’s Faith Works, supported by congregations, repairs houses for those unable to afford the work and renovates other structures for low-income residents.

Literacy programs, such as sponsoring ESL and preparation for passing a General Education Development (GED) exam are not a regular focus of most congregations, as reported in the survey. Nonetheless, a number of congregations have been involved at least occasionally in literacy programs.

## Literacy



Some congregations do have the resources alone or in connection with large non-profits to provide ambitious programs. A non-denominational Protestant church in Philadelphia offers literacy and ESL classes along with GED preparation, in person or online. The classes are free, as is the on-site childcare. An example of the latter model is a Catholic parish in Phoenix that partners with Catholic Charities to deliver literacy and other services to its neighborhood.

Faith-based organizations including Catholic Charities are a prominent part of the landscape of groups trying to improve opportunities for non-English speakers and those who want a second chance. In Detroit, the Dominican Learning Center offers ESL, basic literacy, and support for obtaining a GED. It is housed in the remarkable Samaritan Center, a repurposed hospital complex on the east side of Detroit. The product of a collaboration between two community organizations – one of them faith-adjacent – it houses not only educational programs but health and employment services and space for start-up businesses.

Examples from Philadelphia indicate the range of services that include literacy but are sometimes embedded in life-changing programs. ODAAT (One Day at a Time) is a faith-based substance abuse treatment center. The program also provides GED and ESL programs, along with life skills, parenting, and employment training.

Jobs, Education, and Vital Services (JEVS Human Services), a non-profit charity established in 1941 to help Jewish refugees, expanded its programs to support training in the trades and technical fields. JEVS also provides home care and residential services for the elderly and disabled living at home. JEVS plays an important role in the Philadelphia social welfare landscape.

St. Gabriel Hall is a residential program run by Catholic Social Services for young men (ages 10 to 18) referred to them by the juvenile justice system. Residents receive counseling along with the chance to earn a high school diploma or a GED certificate and job training. The diocese newspaper relates the story of one graduate, whose already chaotic childhood fell apart when his grandmother died when he was 9 years old, who was now on his way to college.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> <https://catholicphilly.com/2016/08/news/local-news/from-the-living-hell-of-youth-a-young-mans-future-looks-bright/>

# Other Programs



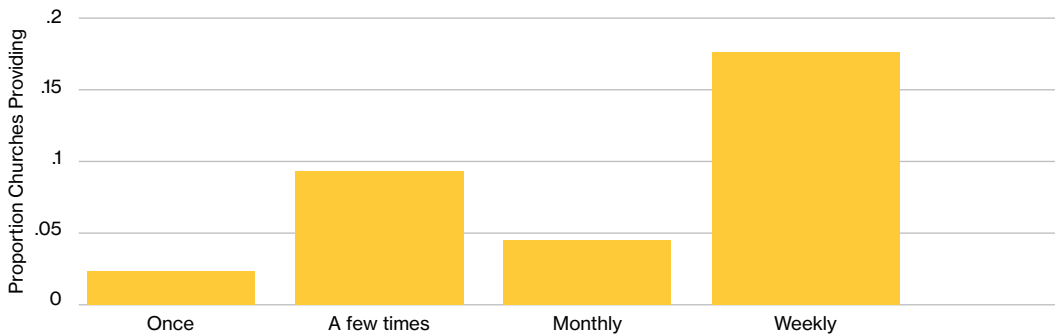


## Other Programs

Our survey categories drew on the most prominent ministries described in the sociological studies of faith-based social services among congregations, as well as on the experiences of some of the members of the research team. Anticipating that our categories would not capture the range and imagination of the ministries, we added an “Other” option.

A considerable proportion of the congregations that responded to our survey chose this option, often reporting regular activity.

### Other



These regular activities included:

- Racial reconciliation. Several congregations, notably Jewish and Protestant synagogues and churches, noted regular efforts to build racial understanding and healing in their urban neighborhoods.
- Aid to refugees and migrants. These activities included sponsoring Ukrainian war refugees and temporary shelter on congregation property for Latin American migrants.
- Space and support for performing arts groups. Donating rent-free space to theatre groups for rehearsals is a regular gift of some congregations.
- Prisoner ministries/re-entry support. Visiting and ministering to the incarcerated generally falls to priests and ministers, perhaps with the assistance of volunteers. A few congregations mentioned their work on re-entry programs. Congregations have been involved in creating re-entry programs. Miami's Riverside House began with a partnership between a Methodist church and the Dade Community Correction and Rehabilitation Department. In Phoenix, Along Side Ministries draws on volunteers from congregations to assist in its programs, with volunteers serving in roles both inside and outside prison programs.
- Seniors. While retired people are crucial to the operation of many, if not most ministries congregations offer, some congregations organize groups for seniors which gather for meals and conversation. Several of the congregations that responded to our survey mentioned groups open to the whole community. Some indicated that they host seniors groups; one has been trying to get a ministry for the elderly off the ground but found that the elderly fear having people come to their homes. In addition, faith-based groups operate retirement communities. Phoenix has a particularly large number.
- The LDS church operates a portal, JustServe, that connects volunteers with projects that need their help. While some of the volunteers are church members, most of the projects and volunteers are not.

Congregations plainly matter in providing social services today as they have in the past. As volunteers contributing time and caring citizens contributing funds, the members of congregations improve their communities. Ram A. Cnaan, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice, attempted to measure the economic value of Philadelphia congregations' activities across a series of policy areas. It is a complicated task to estimate the value of donated space and volunteer time in addition to monetary contributions, not only for their replacement cost but for their value to society. Using a set of conservative assumptions he found that an average Philadelphia congregation, with an operating budget of \$103,000, produced \$476,663 in value to the community through its services and contributions.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ram A. Cnaan, "Valuing the Contribution of Urban Religious Congregations," *Public Management Review* Vol 11, No 5 (2009), 641-662.

# **The American Tradition of Voluntarism**



## **The American Tradition of Voluntarism**

In his inaugural address on January 20, 1989, newly elected President George H. W. Bush affirmed that he would “keep America moving forward, always forward for a better America, for an enduring dream and a thousand points of light.”

He explained what he meant by a “thousand points of light” by declaring this:

“I have spoken of a thousand points of light, of all the community organizations that are spread like stars throughout the Nation, doing good. We will work hand in hand, encouraging, sometimes leading, sometimes being led, rewarding. We will work on this in the White House, in the cabinet agencies. I will go to the people and the programs that are the brighter points of light, and I will ask every member of my government to become involved. The old ideas are new again because they are not old, they are timeless: duty, sacrifice, commitment, and a patriotism that finds its expression in taking part and pitching in.”

President Bush’s call for a thousand points of light drew upon a unique American tradition of private voluntarism in America.

Before there was a public welfare state, the United States helped its sick, destitute, and abandoned through private charities and local institutions. Alongside county poorhouses, countless voluntary organizations sprung up to attend to the needs of widows, orphans, and children. The sick or injured who either had no suitable dwelling for the typical physician house call might go to a hospital, which at best offered rest and nutrition.

Into the late 1900s, those institutions, both public and private, were infused with faith. That faith was Protestant, fired with a mission to save souls. But the early United States republic was religiously diverse and became more so with waves of immigration that brought Catholics and Jews throughout the nineteenth century. Jews and Christians embodied long traditions of faith-driven service to the sick and those in need, and both groups wanted to avoid handing over the care of their co-religionists to those who did not share their faith or were even hostile to it.

Out of mission and defense, Catholics and Jews founded their own institutions – hospitals, schools, and orphanages – and aided the poor in their communities. This work began before the American Revolution. When in 1684 a group of Jewish refugees landed in New Amsterdam, director-general Peter Stuyvesant wanted to deny entry to such “very repugnant” and “deceitful” people. Reminded that some of the stockholders of the Dutch West India Company were Jewish, he relented, on the condition that they would guarantee that they would take care of their own poor so as to not “become a burden to the company or to the community.”<sup>18</sup>

Institutions grew along with the Jewish population. In addition to synagogues, schools, and aid to their community, hospitals served the needs of both patients and physicians excluded from other facilities. In response to a cholera epidemic, Jews in Cincinnati founded the first Jewish hospital in the United States in 1850. A group in New York City followed a few years later. The Jews’ Hospital was later renamed Mount Sinai to emphasize its openness to people of all faiths.<sup>19</sup>

Catholic missionaries and institutions followed French and Spanish explorers to the New World. Since caring for the sick was the mission of a number of religious orders, hospitals followed settlements. The first in what would become the United States was the Charity Hospital in New Orleans, established in 1627. Elizabeth Ann Seton, a convert, founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph in 1809. She moved her community from Baltimore to Emmitsburg, Maryland, where they provided “care for the sick, aged, and infirm.”<sup>20</sup> Seton became best known as an educator. Her order opened St. Joseph’s Academy and Free School for girls. Canonized as a saint in 1975, she is regarded as the founder of Catholic education in the United States. Catholics and Jews built orphanages and benefit societies in addition to hospitals to help their needy co-religionists.

The expansion of Catholic and Jewish institutions and charitable work traveled alongside – and sometimes in reaction to – the explosion of voluntary activities to address the social problems of an industrializing and urbanizing America.

This was a nation in which men and women touched by the sight of social problems in their midst joined together to try to solve them. Historians have described one manifestation of the impulse to join and to save as the Benevolent Empire.

<sup>18</sup> Edward C. Halperin, MD PhD., “The Rise and Fall of the American Jewish Hospital,” *Academic Medicine* (May, 2012), Vol. 87, No. 5, 611.

<sup>19</sup> Edward C. Halperin, MD PhD., “The Rise and Fall of the American Jewish Hospital,” *Academic Medicine* (May, 2012), Vol. 87, No. 5, 611.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher J. Kauffman, “Catholic Healthcare in the United States: American Pluralism and Religious Meanings,” *Christian Bioethics* (1999), Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 47-48.1.

This was a largely Protestant endeavor that included countless organizations taking on a staggering variety of problems. Women played a critical role, actively involved in benevolent societies. These societies sought to assist widows with small children. Others sought to ensure that newsboys – often as young as ten years old – had a safe place to go and to store their earnings. Many societies distributed Bibles. Others tried to steer single young women new to the cities to safe housing, while still others tried to reform prostitutes and otherwise battled prostitution. Faith-based orphanages were established; homes for unwed mothers were created. Other programs offered job training and placement. Groups of women visited and delivered aid to the poor. Many battled the scourge of heavy drinking, alcoholism, and gambling. The most radical fought the institution of slavery in the South.

Poverty, substance abuse, abandoned children, overcrowded housing, elderly people and young urban migrants struggling to make a decent life on their own, and prostitution remained despite their efforts. Their work, later generations of reformers claimed, was inadequate to the systemic problems faced in urban, industrial America and allowed moral righteousness to get in the way of solving problems.

As national social problems arose in the 19th century, problems such as cyclical unemployment, industrial accidents, and old age, individual states developed public social welfare programs. Voluntarism remained, however, a major force in American communities. President Herbert Hoover sought to make more efficient community charitable giving through the establishment of Community Chests on the local level.

The Great Depression – with massive unemployment and social dislocation – led to the creation of a federal welfare system providing old age benefit programs, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, and public assistance to single women. President Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s and President Nixon in the 1970s extended federal welfare programs.

Despite the growth of the public welfare system, faith-based voluntary work aimed at alleviating poverty, isolation, addiction, and other social and individual ills continued. Faith-based schools and hospitals expanded in number and size.

The result was the creation of a dual public-private welfare system, unique to America, based on public and private welfare.

Some private charities are massive enterprises. Among the top 100 largest charities according to Forbes – a list that includes hospital systems, United Way, UNICEF, and Planned Parenthood – were faith-based organizations such as the Salvation Army (\$6B in revenue), Samaritan's Purse, Lutheran Social Services (\$23.3B in revenue), Catholic Relief Services, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.<sup>21</sup> Catholic Charities USA, number 13 in 2022, dropped off the list in 2023.<sup>22</sup> Still, it reports \$4.7B in revenue, with \$1.4B of that coming from government

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/lists/top-charities/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/companies/catholic-charities-usa/>



grants and contracts. The money goes to a dizzying array of services: disaster relief, workforce development and job placement, housing assistance, homelessness prevention, assistance to migrants, behavioral health and wellness services, help for the disabled, and food assistance. The more than 200,000 volunteers, dwarfing the size of its staff, delivered aid.<sup>23</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is well-known for comprehensive social services that amount to a generous private welfare system that makes LDS church members on public assistance extremely rare. Beginning with activities directed by the Presiding Bishopric and the female-led Relief Society in response to the privations of the depression of the 1890s, the church's efforts grew into LDS Family Services. In addition to food, job training, employment, housing assistance, and other transitional services aimed at helping people, Family Services also provides direction. Both small groups and individual counselors help people devise and stay on a path to self-sufficiency. In addition, counseling is available to address substance abuse, addiction to pornography, and families in crisis. The LDS church is active in disaster relief, nationally and internationally.

What is less well known is that services are available to the larger community. LDS volunteers also participate in outreach and help to the homeless and others in need.

The rich diversity of services faith-based organizations provides sparked attention from the federal government and scholars, especially in the 1990s and 2000s. Because they were located in the neighborhoods of people in need, faith-based services were approachable and familiar. They could be less tied up with bureaucratic rules and could help people untangle government aid. Their grounding in faith might make them more effective, especially in conquering substance abuse. Charitable Choice, part of the welfare reform bill passed by the Clinton administration, and especially the Bush administration's faith-based initiatives, made faith-based organizations partners with government – federal, state, and local.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2022-annual-report.pdf>. Government contracts have created controversy and operational difficulties. Catholic Charities Chicago cut staff and discontinued contracts because inflationary pressures meant running the programs at a loss. [https://thenonprofitimes.com/npt\\_articles/catholic-charities-chicago-exiting-some-govt-contracts-trimming-workforce/](https://thenonprofitimes.com/npt_articles/catholic-charities-chicago-exiting-some-govt-contracts-trimming-workforce/). The Louisiana governor cut \$1M in funding for a Catholic Charities homeless shelter because of its work with illegal migrants. <https://news.yahoo.com/news/catholic-charities-immigrant-aid-compelled-001015457.html>

<sup>24</sup> Marvin N. Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, D.C., Regnery Gateway, 1992), argued that voluntary efforts were more effective than government programs, setting off scholarly debate and new public interest in voluntary welfare efforts.

Scholars highlighted the contributions of faith-based organizations and told the stories of especially outstanding ones. They parsed the differences among denominations in their social service activity. They produced richly detailed studies of cities. They shifted the focus from the philanthropic giants to the congregations: membership in and regular attendance at a church or synagogue produced the volunteers. They debated whether effective programs run out of them could or should be scaled up through government grants.<sup>25</sup>

This activity was exceptional. The level of religious social service ministries stood out even compared to Canada, America's neighbor closest to its denominational profile.<sup>26</sup>

“Two strands come together to explain American exceptionalism in voluntary giving and activity. The first is religious: the commitment to helping neighbors within Christian and Jewish traditions activated in a nation that remains remarkably religious in contrast to the rest of the industrial West. **The second is a history of banding together to solve problems** – the habit of voluntarism that so impressed the great French writer Alexis De Tocqueville in the 1820s.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Ram A. Cnaan, “The Other Philadelphia Story” How Local Congregations Support Quality of Life in Urban America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Robert Wuthnow, *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Ronald J. Sider, *Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007); and John J. Dilulio, Jr., *Godly Republic: A Centrist Blueprint for America's Faith-Based Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Ram A. Cnaan with Stephanie C. Boddie, Femida Handy, Gaynor Yancy, and Richard Schneider, *The Invisible Caring Hand: American Congregations and the Provision of Welfare* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), Chapter 7.

Into the early 2000s, scholars expected the status quo to continue or even to improve. “America,” wrote John Dilulio, Jr. in 2007, “is undoubtedly closer to another Great Awakening than it is to any full-scale retreat from traditional religious identities or...any European-style descent into purely secular civic isms. If anything, America will probably be more predominantly Christian, and more orthodox in its Christian and Jewish cast, by the mid-twenty-first century than it was in the mid-twentieth century.”<sup>27</sup>

Yet, even as orthodox Christianity and orthodox Judaism has increased, American society has become more secularized. Surveys show that those declaring no-religious participation or belief have grown. The “nones” – people who adhere to no particular religious tradition or identify as atheist or agnostic – have trended upward over the past decade.<sup>28</sup> The “nones” now appear to be about 30 percent of the population. The young are more likely to be unattached to any church or synagogue than older people.<sup>29</sup> Attendance at religious services, declining before the COVID-19 pandemic, has not recovered from the shutdowns, although members of the LDS church are an exception.<sup>30</sup> Fully 80 percent in a recent Pew Research survey believe religion is losing influence in public life.<sup>31</sup>

Secularization has shaded into hostility in some parts of our society. Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish congregants have come under physical assault. Attacks on Jews and synagogues, once roundly condemned, now sometimes go unpunished. Perpetrators of attacks on Catholic churches and crisis pregnancy centers also need not worry excessively about prosecution. Religious conservatives – theologically if not politically – risk being suspected of potential domestic terrorism.

<sup>27</sup> Dilulio, Jr., *Godly Republic*, p. 90.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.graphsaboutreligion.com/p/how-many-nones-are-there>; <https://www.graphsaboutreligion.com/p/the-nones-have-hit-a-ceiling>

<sup>30</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/642548/church-attendance-declined-religious-groups.aspx>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/03/15/8-in-10-americans-say-religion-is-losing-influence-in-public-life/>

# Secularization

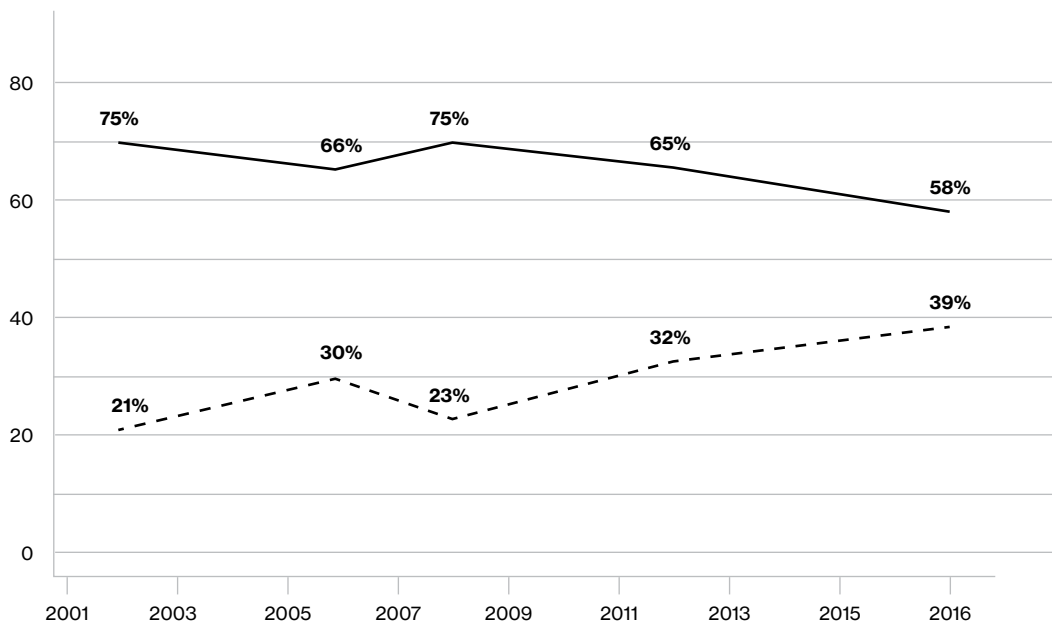


## Secularization

While scholars can identify and quantify the impact of congregations and faith-based organizations on society, Americans have grown more skeptical. According to a Pew Research survey, what had once been a solid 75-percent majority had dropped to under 60 percent by 2016.<sup>32</sup>

### Shrinking majority say churches, synagogues contribute to solving important social problems

% of U.S. adults who say churches, synagogues and other houses of worship contribute \_\_\_ to solving important social problems



Note: Don't know/refused responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted June 15-26, 2016, among U.S. adults.

"Evangelicals Rally to Trump, Religious 'Nones' Back Clinton"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

————— Great deal/some

- - - - - Not much/nothing

What is striking about the Pew data is not the expected connection that the drop in confidence was driven by non-believers. Even those who described themselves as being attached to a religious tradition showed a declining confidence in religious institutions in addressing social problems.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/07/18/are-churches-key-to-solving-social-problems-fewer-americans-now-think-so/>

## Fewer Protestants and 'nones' say houses of worship contribute to solving social problems

% who say churches, synagogues and other houses of worship contribute “a great deal” or “some” to solving important social problems

	Aug. 2008	July 2012	June 2016	Change '08-'16
	%	%	%	
Total	75	65	58	-17
Protestant	80	73	65	-15
<i>White evangelical</i>	86	77	70	-16
<i>White mainline</i>	77	70	62	-15
<i>Black Protestant</i>	75	72	61	-14
Catholic	79	62	61	-18
<i>White Catholic</i>	79	62	61	-18
<i>Hispanic Catholic</i>	81	63	69	-12
Unaffiliated	56	45	38	-18
<i>Attend religious services</i>				
Attend weekly or more	83	77	74	-9
Attend less often	70	58	49	-21
Ages 18-29	72	61	52	-20
30-49	78	65	56	-22
50-64	74	68	60	-14
65+	78	64	63	-15
Rep/lean Rep	80	72	63	-17
Dem/lean Dem	74	62	55	-19

Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted June 15-26, 2016, among U.S. adults.

“Evangelicals Rally to Trump, Religious ‘Nones’ Back Clinton”

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

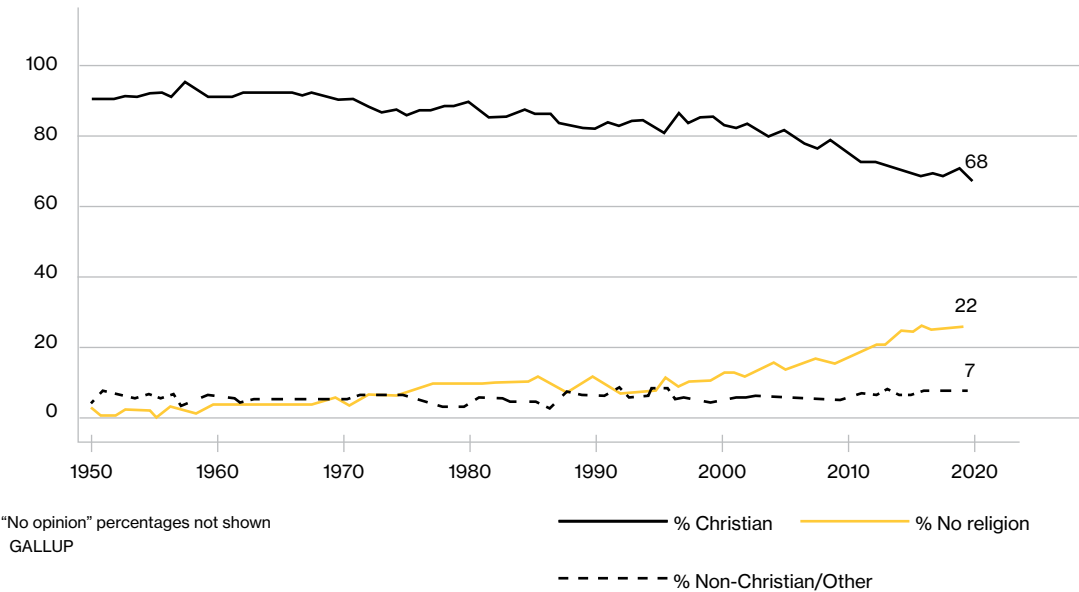
A majority of the unaffiliated – and those weakly tied to their religious tradition – and a near majority of the young – did not believe that religious institutions helped solve social problems. In other words, those who had the least connection to faith-based social services, other than those who received help, were the most likely to perceive little value in those services.

This demonstrably false perception is bad enough, although it might be reversed with the sort of publicity that faith-based social services received at the beginning of this century.

The underlying problem – declining attendance and the growth of the American population, especially those under 40, who are atheists, agnostics, or describe their beliefs as “nothing in particular” – is more dire. Social services, faith-based or not, that depend on volunteer labor and funds will suffer, and with it the people in need and the fabric of American society. A European-style secularized America cannot generate the volunteers to support the safety net many have come to take for granted.

Church membership and attendance in the United States has been on a persistent downward slide that accelerated with the COVID-19 shutdowns. Gallup provides one measure of the long-term decline of Christianity and rise of the unaffiliated.<sup>33</sup>

### Americans’ Religious Preferences



Identification is the loosest measure, including those who grew up in a religious tradition but have not been practicing for years. Continuing with Gallup, church membership captures a deeper level of commitment. As of 2020, those belonging to a Christian denomination of any sort fell below half of the American population for the first time.<sup>34</sup>

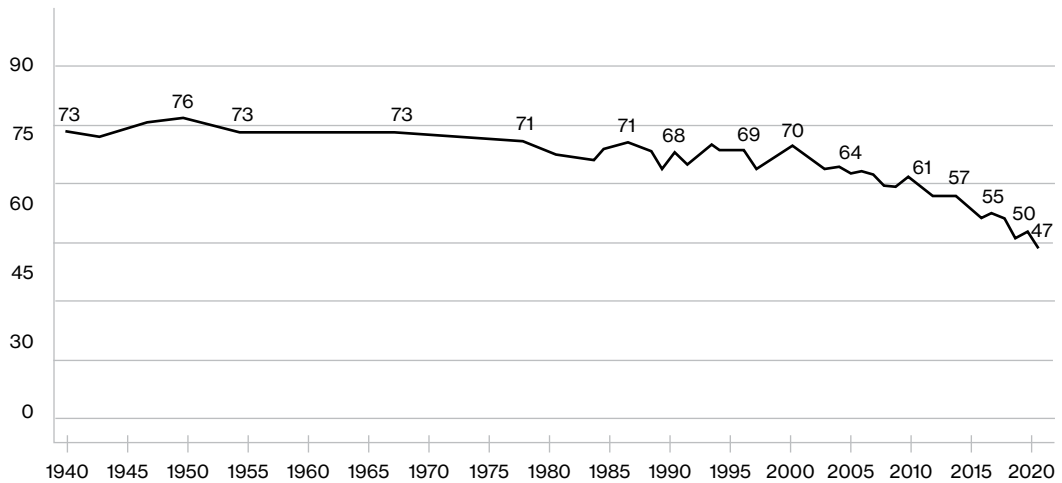
<sup>33</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/358364/religious-americans.aspx>. The 7 percent includes those who identify with a non-Christian religion, including 2% who are Jewish, 1% Muslim and 1% Buddhist.

<sup>34</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>



## Church Membership Among U.S. Adults Now Below 50%

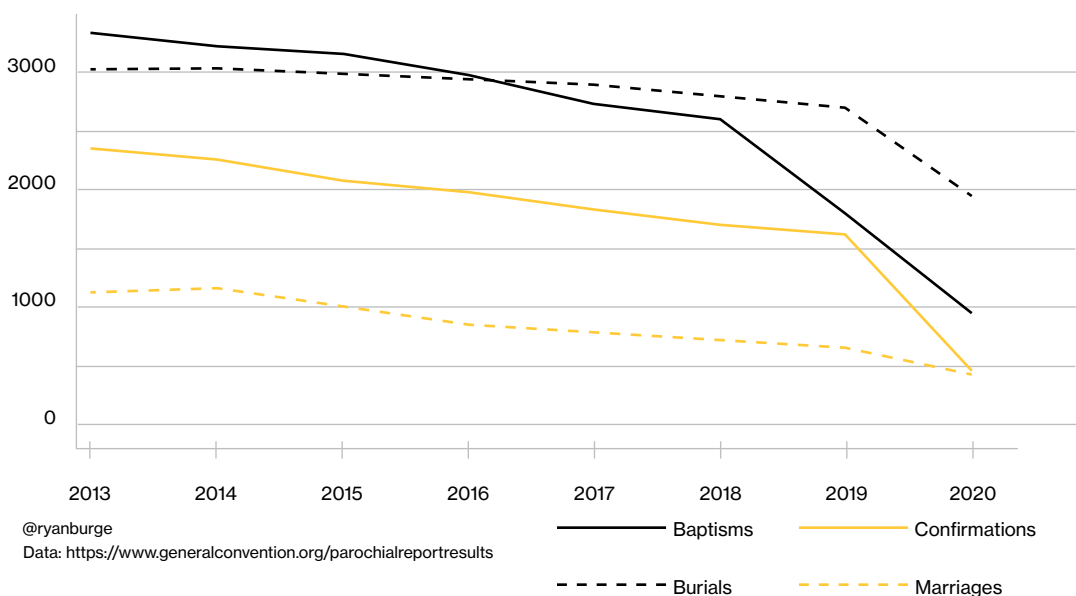
Do you happen to be a member of a church, synagogue or mosque?



Based on annual aggregated data, usually based on two surveys  
GALLUP

The membership story tracks a steady decline that has accelerated since 2010. Mainline Protestant congregations, which lost membership to evangelical churches in the 1970s and 1980s, have shown few signs of recovery.<sup>35</sup> One data analyst who focuses on religion suspects that the Episcopal Church in particular is in danger of extinction. The chart below tracks baptisms, marriages, confirmations, and burials, providing further evidence of secularization.<sup>36</sup>

### Baptisms, Burials, Confirmations, and Marriages in TEC (2013-2020)



@ryanburge  
Data: <https://www.generalconvention.org/parochialreportresults>

<sup>35</sup> <https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/decline-and-renewal-of-the-american-church-extended/>; <https://www.getreligion.org/getreligion/2023/9/27/this-is-still-news-mainline-protestantism-once-central-in-us-culture-keeps-collapsing>

<sup>36</sup> <https://religioninpublic.blog/2022/07/19/COVID-19-only-accelerated-the-decline-of-the-episcopal-church/>

Regular attendance, a measure more stringent than membership, has been declining for most congregations. There are methodological issues in how to measure it – surveys conducted by a person rather than online tend to produce higher numbers.<sup>37</sup> But the trend lines are clear. After a post-COVID-19-lockdown rebound, it has settled in below 2019 levels.<sup>38</sup> The LDS church has experienced the smallest decline, and the Catholics the largest, while regular observance at synagogues and mosques has improved.<sup>39</sup>

## Changes in Frequency of U.S. Religious Service Attendance Over Past Two Decades, by Religion

Figures are the percentage who attend religious services weekly or nearly every week

	2000-2003	2011-2013	2021-2023	Change, 2000-2003 to 2021-2023
	%	%	%	pct. pts.
U.S. adults	42	38	30	-12
Mormon/Latter-day Saints	68	75	67	0.1
Protestant/Christian	48	49	44	-4
Islam/Muslim	34	46	38	4
Catholic	45	40	33	-12
Judaism/Jewish	15	19	22	7
Orthodox	35	25	26	-9
Buddhism/Buddhist	16	11	14	-2
Hinduism/Hindu	21	17	13	-8
None/Atheist/Agnostic	6	5	3	0.3
Other	45	40	21	-24

GALLUP

While Pentecostal, charismatic, and non-denominational churches have shown modest growth in recent years, the fastest-growing group is the “nones,” or the catch-all for “nothing in particular.” This group includes atheists and agnostics and the far-larger “spiritual but not religious.”

After a rapid rise that pushed the group to over 30 percent of the population, the Pew survey now puts it at 28 percent. That is still larger than any single congregation.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/01/14/measuring-religion-in-pew-research-centers-american-trends-panel/>

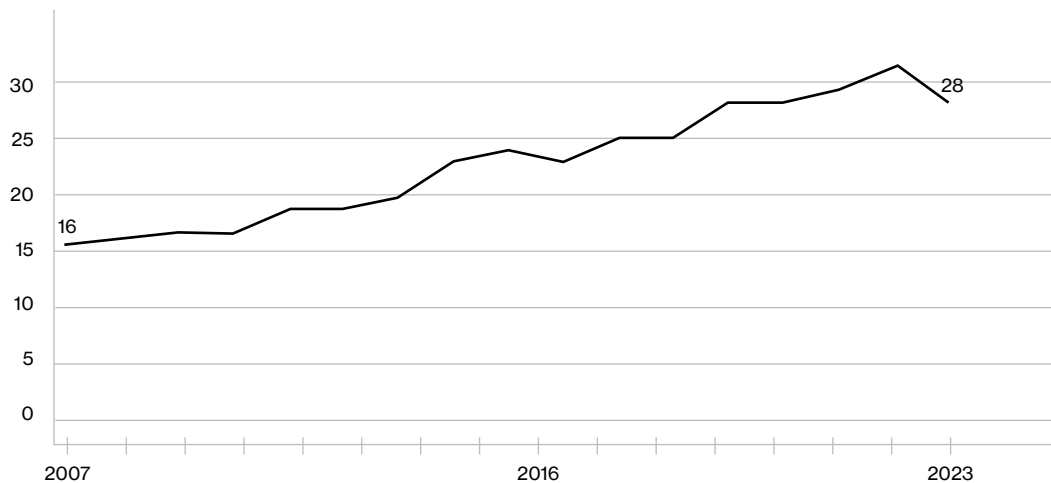
<sup>38</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/03/28/how-the-pandemic-has-affected-attendance-at-u-s-religious-services/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/642548/church-attendance-declined-religious-groups.aspx>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/01/24/has-the-rise-of-religious-nones-come-to-an-end-in-the-us/>

## 28% of U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated

% of U.S. adults who identify religiously as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular”



Source: 2020-23 data based on Pew Research Center's National Public Opinion Reference Surveys, nationally representative surveys conducted online and by mail; respondents recruited using address-based sampling. Data from 2019 and earlier comes from the Center's random-digit-dial phone surveys, including the 2007 and 2014 Religious Landscape Studies.

"Religious 'Nones' in America: Who They Are and What They Believe"

The atheist and agnostic groups are overwhelmingly white and college educated; the spiritual but the spiritual-but-not-religious contingent is more diverse.<sup>41</sup> The atheists and agnostics are far more likely to see religion as harmful or somewhat harmful to American society.<sup>42</sup> The “nones” as a whole are younger than religious adherents.

Whether the decline among the “nones” is a blip remains unclear. But the rapid expansion of the number of people determining that they want nothing to do with institutional religion and its theological strictures is significant.

On one level it is a product of an American society that has been becoming more secular since the post-World War II years. The confidence and faith in science and rationality bled into religion, especially mainline Protestantism.<sup>43</sup> This was not a straight-line shift. It was initially an intellectual movement. Part of its impact was to inspire its opposite. Mainline Protestants were drawn into more Bible-based fundamentalism, demonstrated by the wildly popular Billy Graham revivals and the rapid growth of fundamentalist and holiness churches in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/who-are-the-nones-how-are-they-defined/>

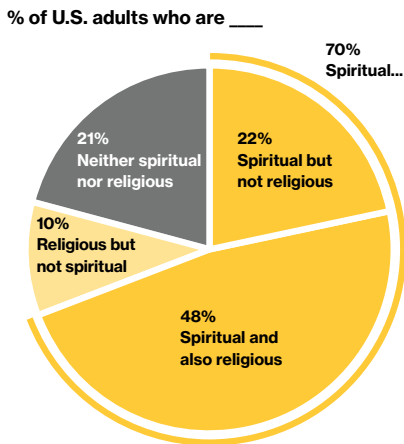
<sup>42</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/are-nones-hostile-toward-religion/>

<sup>43</sup> Madsen; Purcell

<sup>44</sup> David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Oral Roberts: An American Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Yet in hindsight the revivals look more like a reshuffling of believers than a Christian expansion. In the 1990s, the proportion of the unchurched leapt, and did not decline until the most recent polling.<sup>45</sup> The “spiritual but not religious” grouping includes everything from those who believe in God but find institutional churches too dogmatic to pantheists. It is not clear whether pagans describe themselves as spiritual.<sup>46</sup>

## 22% of Americans Are Spiritual but Not Religious



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. “Spiritual” are those who say they think of themselves as spiritual or that spirituality is very important in their lives. “Religious” are those who say they think of themselves as religious or that religion is very important in their lives. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. “Spirituality Among Americans”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Whatever their personal beliefs, the radical individualism of the current spiritual-but-not-religious population bears some resemblance to a long tradition in American history of religious do-it-yourself work among both the well-off and the humble. Magic and the occult have sat alongside Christianity and Judaism for centuries.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, in the American past they did so in the context in which Christianity, Protestantism especially, was an inescapable part of public life. It was knitted into public rituals; it shaped public holidays and far more widely applied Sunday blue laws. It blocked the path to the presidency for Catholic politicians until 1960, and it fired countless reform movements, from the abolition of slavery to 19th-century reform of prisons, cities, and child neglect to Prohibition to the civil rights movement.

Today the “nones” are part of – and are advancing – a culture that is increasingly secular. Something like the ability of Martin Luther King Jr. to appeal to natural law ideals with the confidence that they were widely shared is all but inconceivable today. The segment of the “nones” who are atheist or agnostic are far more likely than other “nones” to participate in politics, lending some support to the cliché that for some politics has become religion.<sup>48</sup> All of the “nones” are less likely than believers to volunteer or give to charitable causes.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/spirituality-among-americans/>

<sup>47</sup> Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, but Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>48</sup> <https://religioninpublic.blog/2020/04/13/atheists-are-the-most-politically-active-group-in-the-united-states/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/are-nones-less-involved-in-civic-life-than-people-who-identify-with-a-religion/>

## Religiously Affiliated Adults Who Regularly Attend Services Most Likely To Volunteer, Be Satisfied With Their Social Lives

	Among religious 'nones' in the U.S.	Among all religiously affiliated U.S. adults	Among religiously affiliated U.S. adults who attend religious services...	
			At least monthly	Few times a year or less (or never)
<b>Community involvement (% who say they...)</b>				
Volunteered in the last year	17	27	41	17
Are involved in a nonreligious volunteer/community service group	14	17	21	14
<b>Political engagement (% who say they...)</b>				
Voted in 2022 midterms (among citizens)	39	51	56	47
Follow govt./public affairs most of the time	36	43	45	41
Contacted official/attended govt. meeting in the past year	27	30	36	26
<b>Life satisfaction (% who say they are satisfied with...)</b>				
Their family life	78	85	87	84
Their local community	68	77	79	75
Their social life	65	71	77	67
The way things are going in their own life	65	68	73	64
<b>Loneliness/hopefulness (% who say they have felt __ at least occasionally in last seven days...)</b>				
Hopeful	41	47	52	43
Lonely	26	17	15	18
<b>Social trust (% who say...)</b>				
Most people can be trusted	34	32	34	30

Source: Data on volunteering, community involvement and following government/public affairs from survey of U.S. adults conducted July 31-Aug. 6, 2023. Data on voter turnout from survey conducted Nov. 16-27, 2022; turnout was verified using official state election records. Data on hopefulness and loneliness from survey conducted Sept. 13-18, 2022; data on overall satisfaction with the way things are going in life from survey conducted Aug. 1-14, 2022; data on contacting officials/attending meetings from survey conducted April 25-May 1, 2022; data on satisfaction with family life, social life and local community from survey conducted Oct. 18-24, 2021; and data on whether most people can be trusted from survey conducted June 14-27, 2021.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

Taken together, the declining number of believers and people in the pews, growing secularization, and rising numbers of “nones” suggests two threats to civil society.

The first is the decline in charitable giving and volunteer work. A *Philanthropy Magazine* article lays this out starkly. First, consider some of the contributions of faith-based charitable work:

- Religious Americans adopt children at two and a half times the overall national rate, and they play a particularly large role in fostering and adopting troubled and hard-to-place kids.
- Local church congregations, aided by umbrella groups like Catholic Charities, provide most of the day-to-day help that resettles refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the United States.
- Research shows that the bulk of volunteers mentoring prisoners and their families, both while they are incarcerated and after they are released, are Christians eager to welcome offenders back into society, help them succeed, and head off returns to crime.
- The educational alternative that draws most of the headlines today is charter schooling, which serves 3 million children. Much less often acknowledged is the fact that 3.8 million children are educated every year in religious schools in the United States. There is evidence these religious schools offer qualitative advantages: their students experience less violence and bullying and feel more secure, exhibit better citizenship skills, are more engaged with their community, and produce average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores more than 100 points higher than public school students.
- Religious hospitals care for one out of every five United States hospital patients. Catholic institutions account for 16 percent of all hospital beds, and additional large health care systems are run by Adventists, Baptists, Methodists, Jews, and other faith groups.
- Faith-based organizations are at the forefront of both care and recovery for the homeless. A 2017 study found that 58 percent of the emergency shelter beds in 11 surveyed cities are maintained by religious providers – who also delivered many of the addiction, health care, education, and job services needed to help the homeless regain their independence.
- Local congregations provide 130,000 alcohol-recovery programs.
- Local congregations provide 120,000 programs that assist the unemployed.
- Local congregations provide 26,000 programs to help people living with HIV/AIDS – one ministry for every 46 people infected with the virus.
- Churches recruit a large portion of the volunteers needed to operate organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Meals on Wheels, America’s thousands of food pantries and feeding programs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Red Cross, and other volunteer-dependent charities.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/magazine/less-god-less-giving/>

Meanwhile, as church attendance went down, so did charitable contributions and volunteer hours. The article notes a Lilly School of Philanthropy report that found a 12 percent drop (from 68 percent to 56 percent) in the number of households that gave to charity between 2003 and 2015 and a University of Maryland study that found a drop-in rate of volunteering between 2005 and 2015 that amounted to 10 million fewer volunteers than if the rate had been constant.

Charitable contributions bounced back during the COVID-19 years, but have declined since.

The second threat is outright hostility toward religion, especially represented not as a private activity but in the public square. In our polarized society, torn over such issues as abortion, immigration, transgenderism, and, currently, the war in Gaza, religion has been brought into the conflict whether a denomination wished to join it or not.

# Attacks on Religion





## Attacks on Religion

Religiously motivated attacks against individuals, buildings, and symbols are shocking in their details. They have become commonplace often enough that only the most extreme get much media attention. It takes a mass shooting, firebombing, a stabbing, or a large-scale disruption on a college campus to make the mainstream news.

The worst were attacks on Jews. The 2018 massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh killed 11 people, and brought the attention of the nation and the Department of Justice to antisemitic violence. In 2019, on the last day of Passover, a gunman killed one and wounded three others before fleeing a synagogue north of San Diego.

Both of these tragedies had clear antisemitic motives. So too a non-fatal stabbing outside of a synagogue in New York in 2024,<sup>51</sup> and a rabbi stabbed outside of a Jewish school in Boston in 2021.<sup>52</sup> In New Jersey, a man admitted his attacks on Orthodox Jews – driving into a group and stabbing one – were motivated by hate.<sup>53</sup>

These and other acts of violence received coverage. Others – vandalism and attacks on churches – draw less attention. Faith-based organizations provide consolidated reporting. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) began counting and characterizing antisemitic incidents since 1979. The ADL draws on media, police, and citizen reports. The audit of incidents in 2023 was the highest ever, breaking the previous high the year before.

An astonishingly large number took place after the October 7 massacre. The ADL reported:

Between Oct. 7 and Dec. 7, ADL recorded a total of **2,031 antisemitic incidents**, up from 465 incidents during the same period in 2022, representing a 337-percent increase year-over-year. This includes **40 incidents of physical assault**, 337 incidents of vandalism, 749 incidents of verbal or written harassment and 905 rallies including antisemitic rhetoric, expressions of support for terrorism against the state of Israel and/or anti-Zionism. On average, over the last 61 days, Jews in America experienced **nearly 34 antisemitic incidents per day**.<sup>54</sup>

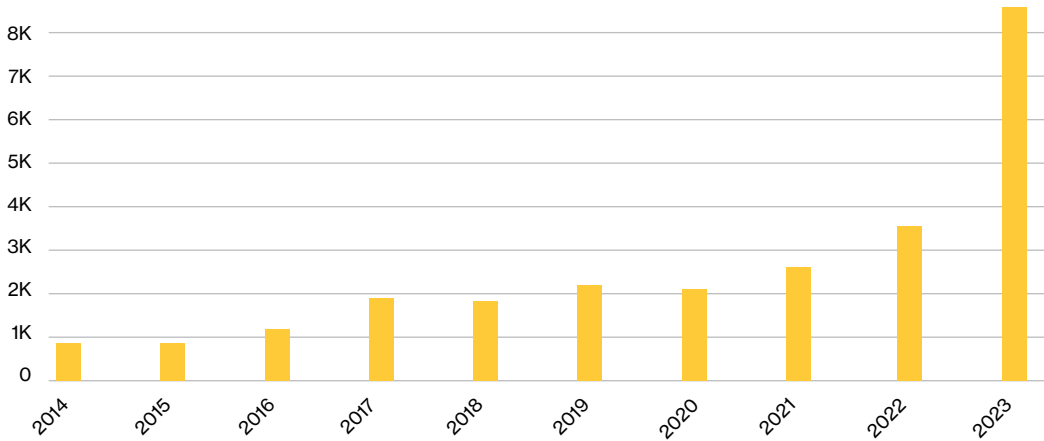
<sup>51</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/suspect-accused-stabbing-jewish-man-brooklyn-charged-hate-crimes-rcna166305>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/08/us/boston-rabbi-stabbing-charges.html>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/man-admits-violent-hate-crimes-orthodox-jews-new-jersey-rcna136908>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-reports-unprecedented-rise-antisemitic-incidents-post-oct-7>

## Antisemitic Incidents



Source: Anti-Defamation League

The incidents included:

- A woman being punched in the face at Grand Central Station in New York because the assailant believed she was Jewish.
- 1,162 incidents at K-12 schools, mostly hoax threats.
- Orthodox Jews, as visibly Jewish targets, suffered 59 attacks.<sup>55</sup>

Although the attacks and threats were more numerous, they were not new.

Antisemitism has a long history as well as immediate motivations. One of the organizations that tracks incidents has a “classic” category that captures thousands-of-years-old tropes about Jews.<sup>56</sup>

Anti-Catholicism also has a venerable history in the United States. In the 19th century, a political party that appeared that it might become one of the two major parties was at its core anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant.

While crisis pregnancy centers are not Catholic entities, church teaching condemning abortion as the taking of a life has made both the centers and church property the targets of a resurgent pro-abortion movement.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2023>

<sup>56</sup> <https://combatantisemitism.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-IHRA-Report-Last-Updated-02-18-2024.pdf>

The leak of a Supreme Court opinion and then the subsequent release of the Dobbs decision heightened the attacks. Indeed, an armed man was arrested outside of the home of Brett Kavanaugh for threatening to kill the United States Supreme Court Justice.

In 2022, CompassCare, a pro-life clinic near Buffalo, New York, was fire bombed, with the perpetrators leaving graffiti suggesting that pro-abortion groups were involved. No hate crime investigation was launched, and no statements condemning violence and hate came from the governor. With no movement on identifying and prosecuting those responsible from the FBI or local police, CompassCare filed suit to force the police to return video footage and also filed suit under the federal FACE Act (Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances).<sup>57</sup> The FACE Act has most often been used against pro-life activists.

The Heritage Foundation, among others, is pressing the Department of Justice on the lackluster effort to deal with attacks on pro-life organizations.<sup>58</sup>

Attacks against pro-life clinics in Wisconsin and Florida were prosecuted. Other states have explored how to limit the operation of these clinics. Vermont passed a law that would fine pro-life centers for making misleading statements.<sup>59</sup> Similar state laws are currently being challenged.<sup>60</sup> The Commonwealth of Massachusetts launched a “first in the nation” advertising campaign to urge women to avoid crisis pregnancy centers.<sup>61</sup> Pennsylvania has cut off financial support for such clinics.<sup>62</sup>

In a count last updated in March 2022, the Catholic News Agency reported a total of 116 incidents, including 65 on pregnancy centers and 38 on churches.<sup>63</sup> The United States Council of Catholic Bishops continues a count. So far in 2024, 29 acts of vandalism were confirmed, most recently the toppling and beheading of a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Kansas City.<sup>64</sup>

The rash of vandalism and attacks against churches, shrines, and statues speaks of a culture in which intolerance of religion, rather than religious tolerance, has begun to take hold. The United States is still behind European nations in this regard, but the trend is worrisome.

That the state of New Jersey has equipped 6,400 houses of worship with “bleeding control kits,” which include tourniquets, pressure bandages, gauze, and chest seals, is more worrisome still.<sup>65</sup>

Focus on the Family, which has updated a yearly report on attacks on churches since 2018, documents the rapid increase in vandalism and destruction.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/pro-life-clinic-sues-police-to-turn-over-firebombing-evidence.html>  
<https://www.ncregister.com/cna/firebombed-pro-life-pregnancy-center-files-face-act-lawsuit>. Attacks on pro-life centers in Florida and Wisconsin did result in prosecutions.

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.ncregister.com/cna/biden-doj-sued-for-allegedly-hiding-information-on-attacks-of-churches-and-pro-life-groups>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.ncregister.com/cna/pro-life-pregnancy-centers-sue-vermont-over-law-targeting-their-advertisements>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.ncregister.com/news/massachusetts-prolife-pregnancy-centers-targeted>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.ncregister.com/cna/massachusetts-launches-first-in-the-nation-effort-to-target-pregnancy-resource-centers>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.ncregister.com/cna/pennsylvania-ends-decadeslong-funding-for-pregnancy-centers>

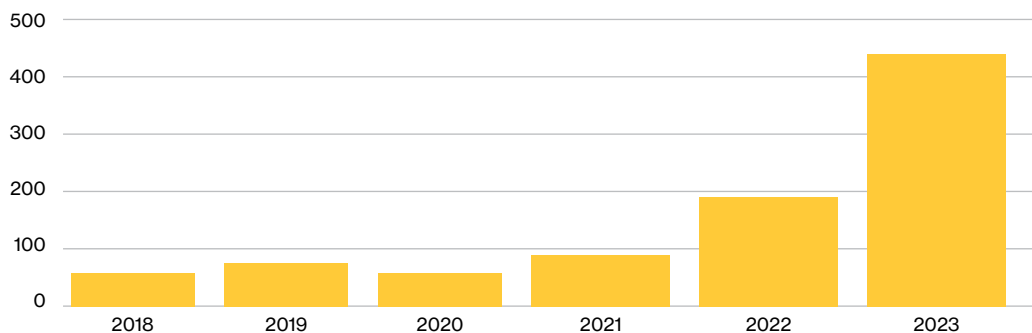
<sup>63</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/251553/map-vandalism-attacks-continue-at-pro-life-centers-across-us>

<sup>64</sup> [https://www.usccb.org/committees/religious-liberty/Backgrounder-Attacks-on-Catholic-Churches-in-US#tab--\\_020](https://www.usccb.org/committees/religious-liberty/Backgrounder-Attacks-on-Catholic-Churches-in-US#tab--_020)

<sup>65</sup> “N.J. to send ‘bleeding control kits’ to houses,” Philadelphia Inquirer, March 16, 2024, page B1.

<sup>66</sup> <http://frc.org/HostilityAgainstChurches>

### Incidents per Year, January 2018-November 2023



Most of the 436 incidents they cited, which they gather through public reports, were vandalism, such as a spree targeting Protestant churches in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In addition, Focus on the Family found 75 reports of arson or attempted arson and 10 gun-related incidents. In addition, they found cases of assault, threats, and the interruption of worship services.

# Conclusion



## Conclusion

Those who see a world without religion, a totally secularized American society, need to ask themselves some simple questions: Would our nation be better off without faith-based organizations in our communities? If so, who is to replace these organizations? Do you imagine federal soup kitchens run by civil servants? A California state-run after school program or kids athletic league run by political appointees? And, are those critics of the church involvement in our communities willing to pay exorbitant taxes to pay for these state-run programs?

The decline of community participation is further seen in the secularization of society. In 2023 the United States Bureau of Census and AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, reported a decline of 7 percent in Americans volunteering to work with a private organization from September, 2020 to September 2021. In September 2021 approximately 60.7 million people, a little more than 23 percent of Americans, formally volunteered with an organization. This was the lowest percentage of volunteering since it was tracked beginning in the early 2000s. The decline in volunteers has been most severe in suburban and some rural areas.<sup>67</sup>

This decline in voluntarism has meant that many voluntary organizations are experiencing a shortage of people to maintain their programs. This presents immediate problems to many community organizations relying on volunteers. Food kitchens, animal shelters, mentoring programs, senior assistance programs, and many other programs have been affected by the decline in voluntarism. This decline can be attributed to many specific causes with secularization presenting the historical context for this decline.

The decline in voluntarism, if it continues, means the reduction of paid staff and places great pressure on those who do volunteer. Most importantly, a decline in services hurts those in need.

In his first volume of “Democracy in America”, published in 1835, French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville applauded American voluntarism in charitable and benevolent societies. He viewed this sentiment to volunteer – “habits of the heart” as he called it – unique to American society. In his second volume of his study, published four years later in 1840, he warned that these “habits of the heart” were to be broken if Americans retreated to what he called “petty and vulgar” private pleasure (consumption), and a soft-despotism would emerge. Americans, he argued, are unwilling to not accept a hard despot, a Caesar or Napoleon. Yet, with the creation of a soft despotism, real power is wielded by a bureaucratic centralized administration. Under soft despotism, Americans have the illusion of democracy, but the real power is held by non-elected, distant, and faceless administrative bureaucrats. These bureaucrats set the rules for the way people live.

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/12/09/volunteer-decline-homeless-pandemic/>





Tocqueville's ominous warning issued nearly two centuries ago should caution those who demand a sharp division of state and church, never envisioned by our Founding Fathers. **America has a tradition of voluntary involvement by religious organizations that have preserved and bettered our community.**

The good news of this report is that faith-based charitable organizations continue to be heavily involved in our communities. The result has been the relief of those who need our help and envision a better place for themselves and their families in American society. These programs benefit tens of thousands of Americans. These voluntary efforts benefit those who volunteer by giving them a higher calling in life. And, most importantly, these voluntary faith-based programs and organizations continue a long American tradition that benefits our communities and our nation.

# Appendix A



## **Survey Sample Selection and Response Rate**

On February 8, 2024, a survey (found in Appendix B and generated using Google Forms) was sent to 1,459 email addresses associated with religious organizations or individual clergy persons. Among these, 157 addresses were inactive. Among active addresses, 1,086 addresses were associated with religious organizations and 216 addresses were associated with clergy persons. Eleven days later, a second email was sent to those who had not submitted a survey and who had an active email address. Additional emails were sent to organizations and clergy persons on February 29 and March 19. Ultimately, clergy or representatives for 63 organizations submitted survey responses, for a total response rate of 4.8 percent.<sup>68</sup>

Email addresses were gathered from religious organizations or clergy persons in four large cities: Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia, and Phoenix. These cities were selected so that a sample of urban churches from different regions could be constructed. Research assistants were tasked with compiling lists of all religious organizations in these cities that could be classified as one of the following national denominations or faith traditions:

**African Methodist Episcopal**

**Assemblies of God**

**Baptist**

**Catholic**

**Disciples of Christ**

**Episcopalian**

**Evangelical (generally)**

**Independent (no tradition noted)**

**Latter-day Saints**

**Lutheran**

**Methodist**

**Pentecostal (generally)**

**Presbyterian**

**Quaker**

**Seventh Day Adventist**

<sup>68</sup> The response rate is not atypical of surveys sent via email. Meng-Jia Wu, Kelly Zhao, Francisca Fils-Aime. 2022. "Response rates of online surveys in published research: A meta-analysis." *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2022.100206>.

Ultimately, 361 emails were sent to organizations or persons in Detroit, 224 emails to those in Miami, 650 emails to those in Philadelphia, and 224 emails to those in Phoenix (These totals include inactive addresses). Nine survey responses arrived from Detroit while seven came from Miami. Responses from Philadelphia and Phoenix totaled 27 and 20, respectively.

To generate estimates of the total number of times an organization provided a service, organizations were asked if they provided various services “Weekly,” “Monthly,” “A few times,” “Once” or “Never” within the past year (question six in survey). If an organization provided a service “weekly,” then they were presumed to have provided the service 52 times during the previous year. For “a few times,” organizations were presumed to have provided the service four times in the past year.

# Appendix B



## Survey Instrument

Email subject line: “Religion and Society Survey.”

### Organized Religion and American Civic Life

The Center for American Institutions at Arizona State University has launched a study titled “Religion in American Public Life,” which will catalogue the vital contributions that religious organizations make to public welfare and community life. At the Center, we seek to highlight how religious institutions make America a better place through their work with the disadvantaged.

The core of the study will be the data drawn from a survey of congregations in four metropolitan areas. We invite you to complete this short survey. Simply press “submit” when you have completed the form. Every question is voluntary: you do not have to answer every one. The survey is brief: requiring only a few minutes of your time.

While the survey is not strictly anonymous, our report will not include any identifying information regarding congregations or their leaders. This study has been classified by the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board as not involving human subjects.

We are excited to learn more about the vital contributions of religious organizations to American life. The study will highlight all the good that religious institutions, like yours, do for their communities. Your participation is essential for the success and impact of the study.

Paula Baker, Visiting Professor

1. Please provide the name of your congregation or religious organization.
2. In what metro area is your organization located? (Mark only one oval.)
  - Detroit
  - Miami
  - Philadelphia
  - Phoenix
3. How would you describe the area surrounding your organization’s meeting place? (Mark only one oval.)
  - Downtown
  - Suburban
  - Other:
4. What denomination or network is your organization affiliated with? (If unaffiliated or independent, then please write “N/A”)



5. In terms of regular attendees or donors, how large is your congregation? (Mark only one oval.)
  - Fewer than 100
  - Between 100 and 249
  - Between 250 and 499
  - More than 500

6. Including today, how many times did your organization provide each service within the past year? (Mark only one oval per row.)

Options per row:	Weekly	Monthly	A few times	Once	Never
Drug Rehabilitation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing for unsheltered persons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Childcare services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health care services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Non-religious leagues or clubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Area beautification or clean-up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meal preparation for those in need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food collection and distribution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mentoring programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance to pregnant women in need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Literacy or adult education (GED)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adoption and foster care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After school youth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utility assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. How many individuals would you estimate were served by ALL the charitable activities provided by your organization within the past year, combined? (Please provide a best-guess estimate as a number.)
8. While providing any of the charitable services, did your organization encounter opposition from any person, group, or organization? (Please list the services that attracted opposition, if any.)
9. Within the past year, including today, did your organization support any other organization's efforts to provide services? "Support" includes financial assistance, rent-free space, or labor. (Please list the activities your organization sponsored.)
10. Would you be willing to have a conversation with the researchers about your organization's charitable services? (Answering "yes" does not commit you to have a conversation.) (Mark only one oval.)
  - Yes
  - No
11. Optional: Using this space, you are welcome to describe the services your organization provided in more detail, any opposition encountered, and any other organizations that were sponsored in the past year.

# Organizations



## **Notable Faith-Based Organizations**

### **Detroit, Michigan**

Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance  
<https://www.dcpasite.com/>

Detroit Recuse Mission Ministries  
<https://drmm.org/>

Dominican Literacy Center  
<http://www.dlcliteracy.org/>

Emmanuel House  
<https://emmanuelhouseforvets.org/>

Faith Works Michigan  
<https://www.faithworksmichigan.org/>

Jewish Family Services of Metro Detroit  
<https://www.jfsdetroit.org/>

Life Remodeled  
<https://liferemodeled.org/>

Pope Francis Center  
<https://popefranciscenter.org/>

Samaritan Center Detroit  
<https://samaritancenterdetroit.org/>

## **Miami, Florida**

Camillus House

<https://www.camillus.org/>

Catholic Charities Miami

<https://www.ccadm.org/>

City Reach Ministries

<https://cityreachministries.com/index.html>

Faith in Action Deliverance Ministries and Education Center

<https://fiamiami.org/>

The Family Christian Association of America

<http://www.fcaafamily.org/fcaa/page-2.html>

JAFCO

<https://jafco.org/>

Jewish Community Services of South Florida

<https://jcsfl.org/>

Miami/Broward Youth for Christ

<https://yfc.net/chapter/greater-miami-youth-for-christ/>

Miami Rescue Mission

<https://www.caringplace.org/#>

Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa

[https://www.miamiarch.org/CatholicDiocese.php?op=Missionaries\\_of\\_Charity](https://www.miamiarch.org/CatholicDiocese.php?op=Missionaries_of_Charity)

Riverside House

<https://www.riversidehouse.org/>

Touching Miami With Love

<https://touchingmiamiwithlove.org/>

Victory for Youth

<https://www.victoryforyouth.org/>

## Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Bethesda Project

<https://www.bethesdaproject.org/>

Casa Del Carmen Preschool Academy

<https://casapreschool.org/>

Cast Your Cares

<https://castyourcares.org/>

Catholic Community Services

<https://ccs-cua.org/>

Catholic Social Services Out of School Time

<https://cssoutofschooltime.org/>

Chosen 300 Ministries

<http://www.chosen300.org/history.html>

Germantown Life Enrichment Center

<https://www.glifecenter.org/>

Good Samaritan Services

<https://goodsamservices.org/>

Jane Addams Place (Lutheran Social Settlement)

<https://www.lutheransettlement.org/>

JEVS Human Services

<https://www.jevshumanservices.org/>

Jewish Family and Children's Services of Philadelphia

<https://jfcshilly.org/>

One Day at a Time

<https://odaat-philly.org/>

Mothers' Home

<https://mothershome.org/>

Philly House

<https://www.phillyhouse.org/>

St. Francis Inn

<https://stfrancisinn.org/>

Saint John's Hospice

<https://saintjohnshospice.org/all-programs/>

Sarnelli House

<https://www.bscphilly.org/>

## Phoenix, Arizona

Along Side Ministries

<https://www.alongside-ministries.com/>

Andre House

<https://andrehouse.org/>

Arizona Faith Network

<https://www.arizonafaitnetwork.org/>

Christian Family Care

<https://cfcare.org/>

Family Care Kids

<https://familycarekids.com/>

Family Promise

<https://familypromise.org/>

Foundation for Senior Living

<https://www.fsl.org/>

Jewish Family and Children's Services

<https://www.jfcsaz.org/>

Neighborhood Christian Clinic

<https://thechristianclinic.org/>

Saint Gabriel's Hall

<https://saintgabes.org/residential-programs/saint-gabriels-hall/>

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

<https://stvincentdepaul.net/>

Sunnyslope Ministries of Hope

<https://sunnyslopemh.org/>

UMOM New Day Centers

<https://www.umom.org/>

United Methodist Social Ministries

<https://umsmdsc.org/>

# Commissioner Members







## **Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke**

Cardinal

Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke is an American prelate of the Catholic Church. He is a bishop and a cardinal, and was a patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta from 2014 to 2023. He led the Archdiocese of St. Louis from 2004 to 2008 and the Diocese of La Crosse from 1995 to 2004. From 2008 to 2014, he was the prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura. A canon lawyer, Cardinal Burke is a major proponent of the Tridentine Mass, having frequently offered it and conferred ordinations on traditionalist priests. He is the Founder of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in La Crosse, WI, where he continues to serve as President of the Board of Directors of the Shrine.



## **Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.**

President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Boyce College

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (AlbertMohler.com) has served as President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Boyce College for more than 30 years. A prominent theologian and public commentator, he is the host of “The Briefing”, a daily podcast analyzing news and events from a Christian worldview. Dr. Mohler is the author of several books, including *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matter*, *Tell Me the Stories of Jesus* and *The Gathering Storm*. He lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with his wife, Mary, and is a proud father and grandfather.



## **Rabbi Pinchas Allouche**

Founding Rabbi of Congregation Beth Tefillah

Rabbi Pinchas Allouche is founding Rabbi of Congregation Beth Tefillah; founding dean and spiritual leader of Nishmat Adin High School in Scottsdale, Arizona, where he resides with his wife, Esther, and their 10 children. Born in France, he also lived in South Africa and Israel and is fluent in English, Hebrew, French and Italian. A respected rabbinic figure, renowned lecturer, author of many essays on the Jewish faith, mysticism, and social-criticism; memberships include The American Israel Public Affairs Committee National Council; Vaad Harabanim – the Orthodox Rabbinic Council of Arizona.

Rabbi Allouche’s blogs have appeared in *Huffington Post* and *The Times of Israel*. He was listed in the *Jewish Daily Forward* as one of America’s 36 Most Inspiring Rabbis, who are “shaping 21st Century Judaism.”



