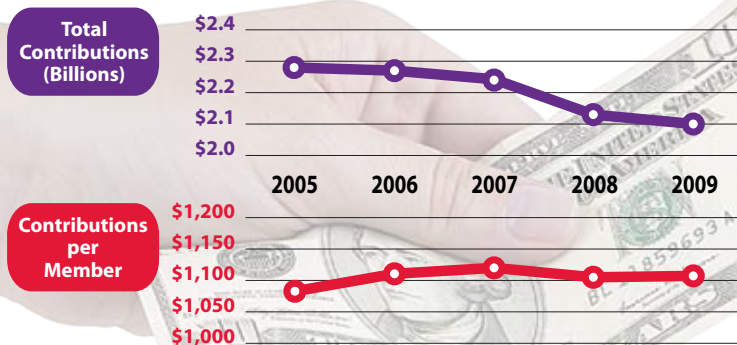


# Weathering the recession



Financial data from recent statistical reports indicate how the recession that began in late 2007 has affected giving by individuals and families to PC(USA) congregations.\*

- **Total contributions declined slightly over the last four years:** in 2005, they were \$2.28 billion; in 2006, \$2.27; in 2007, \$2.24; in 2008, \$2.13; and in 2009, \$2.10. (All amounts in this column are in 2009 dollars to adjust for inflation.)
- **On a per-member basis,** contributions rose from \$1,081 in 2005 to \$1,107 in 2006 and \$1,120 in 2007, before falling to \$1,050 in 2008; they stayed essentially the same in 2009, at \$1,108.
- **The median congregation received \$112,360 in contributions in 2005;** \$112,166 in 2006; \$112,459 in 2007; \$107,566 in 2008; and \$108,475 in 2009. (The median congregation is the one located squarely in the middle when congregations are ordered from lowest to highest based on contributions. Half of all congregations had fewer contributions than the median congregation, while half had more.)
- **From 2005 to 2006, 48 percent of congregations reported an increase in contributions;** from 2006 to 2007, 42 percent did so; from 2007 to 2008, 36 percent; and from 2008 to 2009, 48 percent.

\* The contributions under study are those from “living donors” and would include such things as pledge payments, loose offerings and special offerings, but not gifts to capital campaigns or bequests. The analysis is limited to congregations in existence from 2005 to 2009 that completed the annual statistical report in each of those five years.

» Other findings [www.pcusa.org/research](http://www.pcusa.org/research)

## What the research shows

The impact of the Great Recession on Presbyterian congregations doesn't seem so great. After adjusting for inflation, total contributions fell only slightly from 2005 to 2009 and even recovered a little when we look at contributions per member and contributions to the median congregation. The effect on congregational giving was relatively mild, and the worst has apparently passed.

That's not to say there haven't been negative consequences for many congregations. All indicators reveal fewer contributions in 2009 than 2007. The median congregation received about \$4,000 less in contributions in 2009 than it did in 2007.

Furthermore, I have focused here on only one type of congregational receipts, contributions from individuals and families, because that category is the largest and most important. But other types of income fell as well: the investment income of congregations dropped from \$217 million in 2007 to \$172 million in 2008 before recovering somewhat in 2009 (\$183 million).

Given economic prognostications, PC(USA) congregations are likely to face financial challenges for years to come. Yet I remain cautiously optimistic. In May 2009, I explained why income growth is a statistical bright spot for the PC(USA). I think the generosity noted then reveals itself in the relatively mild effects of the recent recession on congregational giving. Let's hope that I'm right and that such generosity continues. A lot of ministries and programs are depending on it.

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