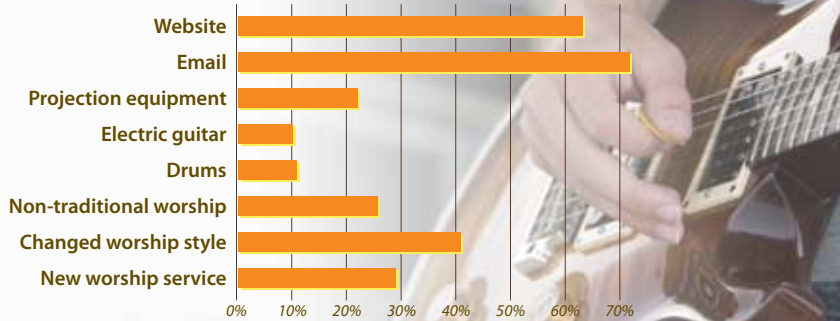


# Innovation and church growth

## Use of innovative strategies



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations are trying new things. The 2008 U.S. Congregational Life Survey\* revealed these innovations:

- **Seven in 10 PC(USA) congregations (72 percent) use email**, and six in 10 (63 percent) maintain a website to communicate with worshipers (up from 57 percent and 43 percent, respectively, in 2001).
- **Two in 10 (22 percent) use visual projection equipment in worship** (up from 9 percent).
- **One in 10 regularly includes drums (11 percent) or electric guitar (10 percent) in worship.**
- **Nontraditional styles of worship** turn up in the largest or only worship service of one-quarter of congregations (26 percent).
- **In the past five years, three in 10 (29 percent) started a new worship service**, and four in 10 (41 percent) changed the style of a worship service.

\* The U.S. Congregational Life Survey was conducted by Research Services, PC(USA). For more information, including how your congregation can participate: [www.uscongregations.org](http://www.uscongregations.org).

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

## What the research shows

Is there any link between these innovations and church growth? Yes and no. Using a projector in worship or a website to stay in touch is not related to growth. But congregations using even one of the other strategies are more likely to have increased average worship attendance by at least 2 percent between 2001 and 2008. Congregations that contact worshipers via email, use drums or electric guitar in worship, embrace nontraditional worship, or have started or changed a worship service are more likely to have grown.

And using multiple innovations pays off. Among congregations using none of these strategies, just one in five grew. Among those using one or two from the list, 26 percent grew, and 44 percent of those trying three or more strategies increased worship attendance by at least 2 percent.

A difficult question remains: Does innovation lead to growth or does growth lead to innovation? Probably some of both. Growing congregations are blessed with the energy, creative ideas and adaptability that new people bring. At the same time, new approaches can help congregations adjust to a changing world, making them more attractive to people in the community and better serving current worshipers' needs.

Yet change for the sake of change should not be the goal. New people don't come simply because a church uses drums. The same survey shows that three factors draw visitors back—friendly people, high-quality preaching and worship that meets their needs. Current members attend because the congregation meets their spiritual needs and provides help with everyday living. Change must support the church's mission.