



# A Snapshot of Presbyterians

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Board of Pensions

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Good afternoon and thank you Mister Moderator. I'm Deborah Bruce from the Research Services office of the General Assembly Mission Council in Louisville. With me today is Andrew Browne from the Board of Pensions. We've been invited to give you a quick snapshot of Presbyterians.

It might seem incongruent to follow the important moment of the installation of the stated clerk with a report on demographics. Ho hum, right?

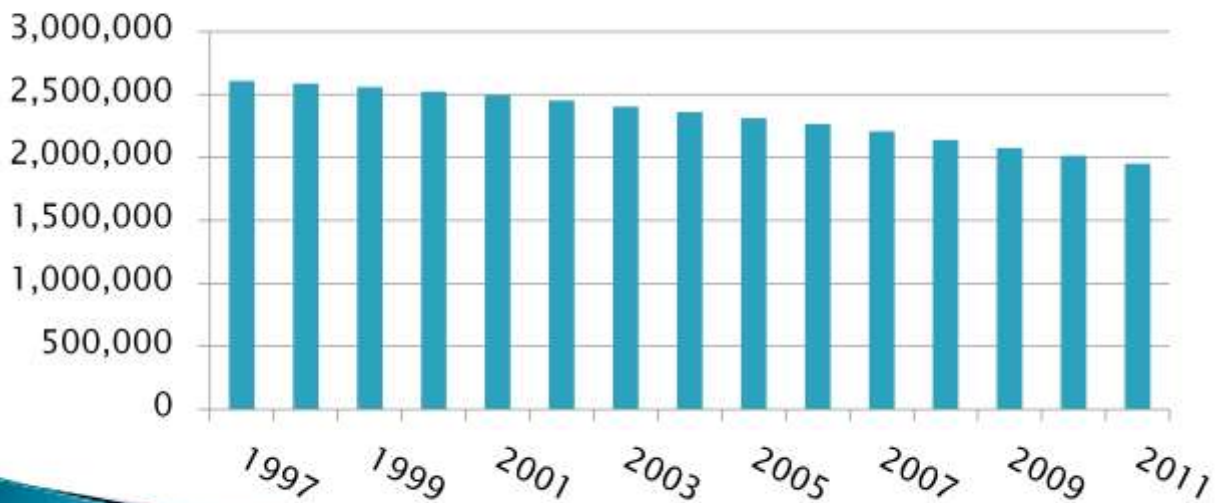
But part of the charge to Gradye was to help us keep our eyes on the horizon. To do that effectively it's important for us to be grounded in the reality of our life together as a church. And that's where demographics come in. We hope that having a handle on who Presbyterians are will help you understand the people whose lives will be influenced by the important work you do here in the next few days.

# How Many Presbyterians Are There?



First let's look at the membership of the denomination in recent years.

# PC(USA) Membership



Membership has shown a slow but steady decline—here shown from 1997 forward.

Statistics recently released by the Office of the General Assembly show that membership has dipped below the 2 million mark in 2011.

I, for one, am hopeful that the exciting 1001 Worshiping Communities initiative that you'll hear about this week will help address this trend.

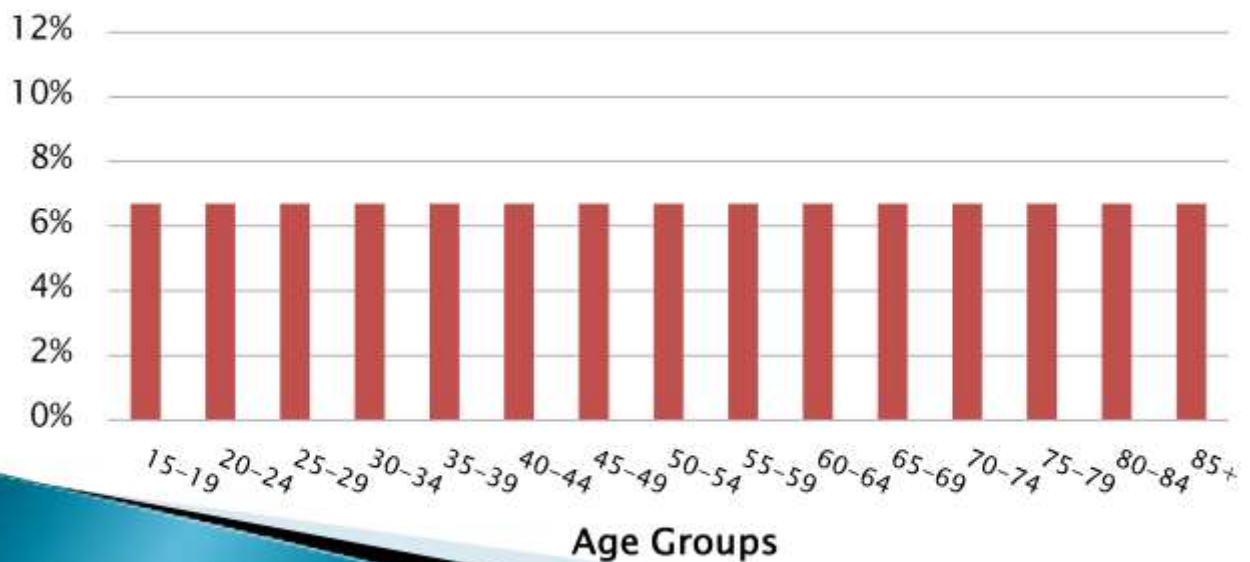
Next we'll look at the demographics of Presbyterians—worshippers, members, ruling elders, teaching elders, and others.



# How Old Are Presbyterians?

Let's start by looking at the age of worshipers in our congregations.

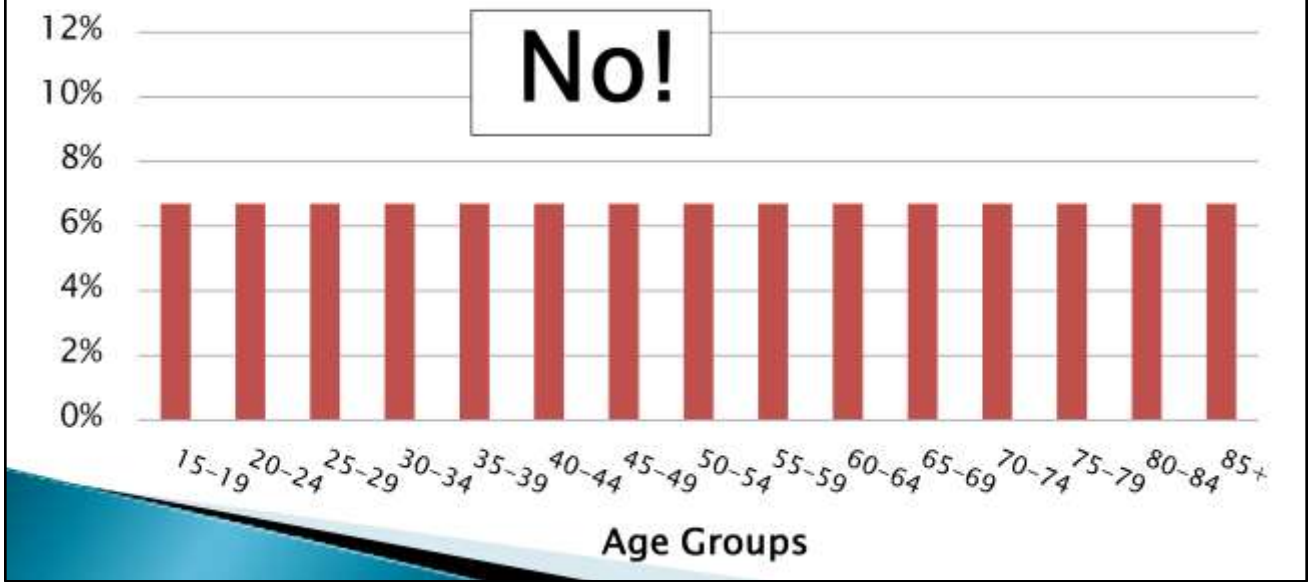
# Age of PC(USA) Worshipers?



Let's look first at the age of those who worship in Presbyterian pews— just those age 15 and up.

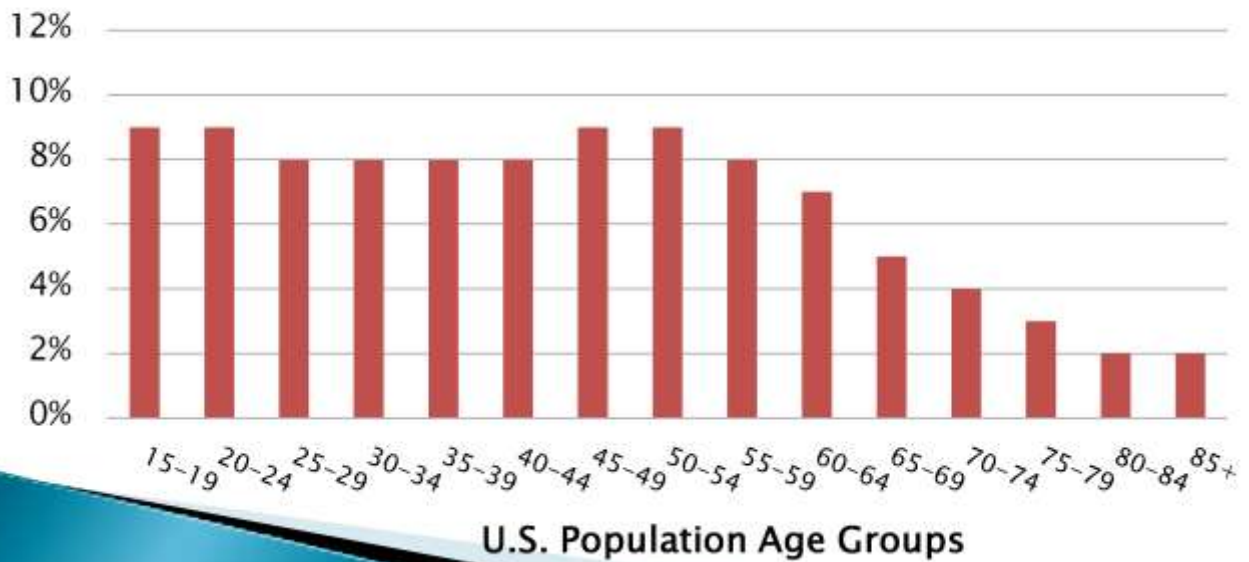
If we put all PC(USA) worshipers in these 15 age categories, would they be distributed evenly with the same number in each group?

# Age of PC(USA) Worshipers?



No. Presbyterian are well-educated and smart, so I'm sure you knew that. (In fact more than six in ten members have a college degree; only about 30% of the U.S. population does.)

# Age of PC(USA) Worshipers?

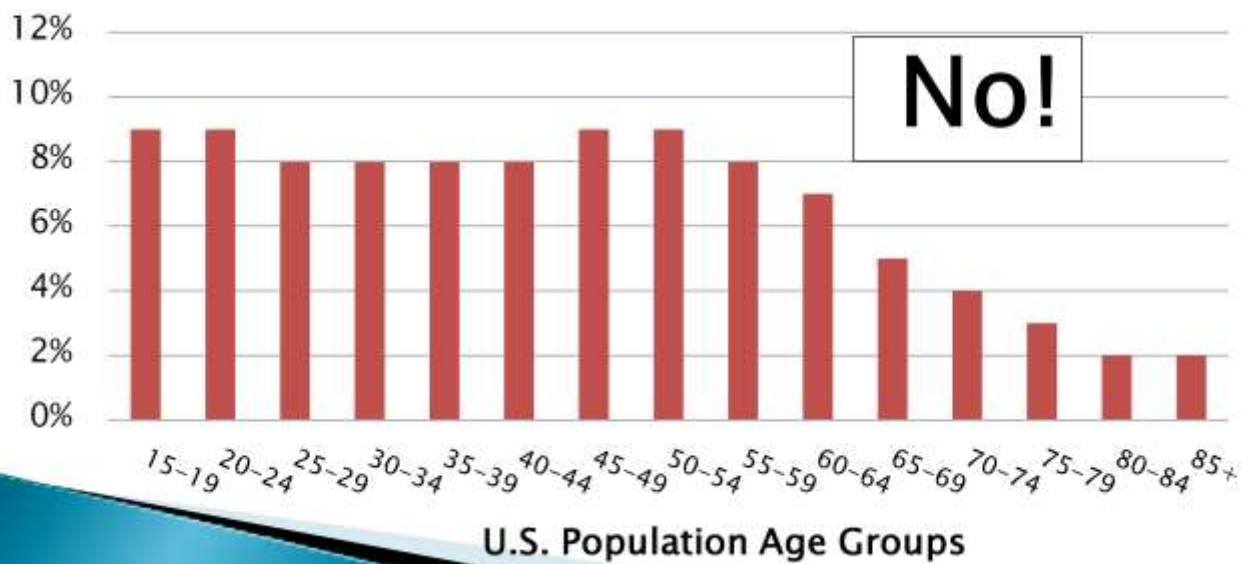


This is the distribution of the U.S. population across those same 15 age groups. Notice that the country has the most people in two large groups. First, the youngest categories (under age 25), and—second, reflecting all of the Baby Boomers—in the 45-54 age groups.

Mortality's impact is reflected in the decreasing numbers in the oldest age groups.

Do you think the distribution of Presbyterians matches this picture?

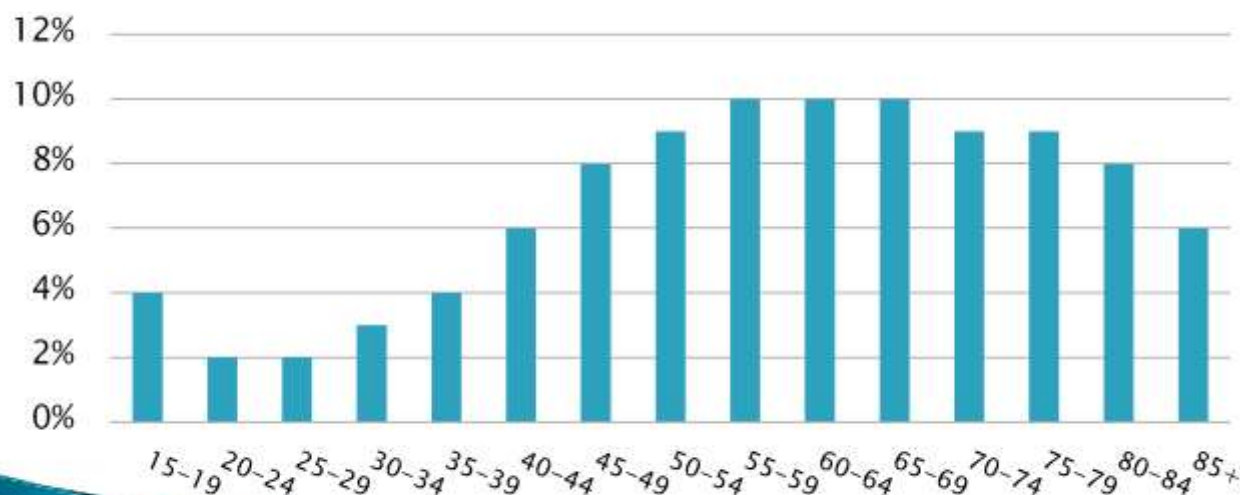
# Age of PC(USA) Worshipers?



Unfortunately, no. So what does the distribution look like for Presbyterians worshipers?



# Age of PC(USA) Worshipers



**PC(USA) Worshiper Age Groups**

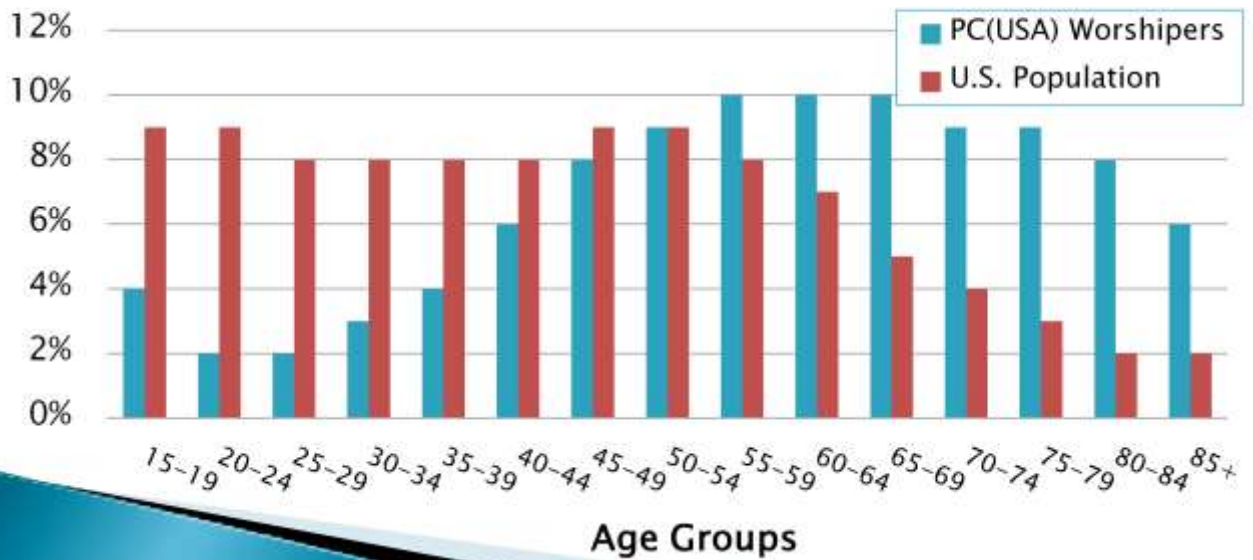
Source: U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2008/2009

This is how Presbyterians are distributed across those 15 categories.

Most of our worshipers are age 55 and over.

You'll see that we do have a fair number in the 15-19 age group, but not in the 20-35 ages. While young people are still at home, it looks like some are still attending with their parents.

# Age of PC(USA) Worshipers

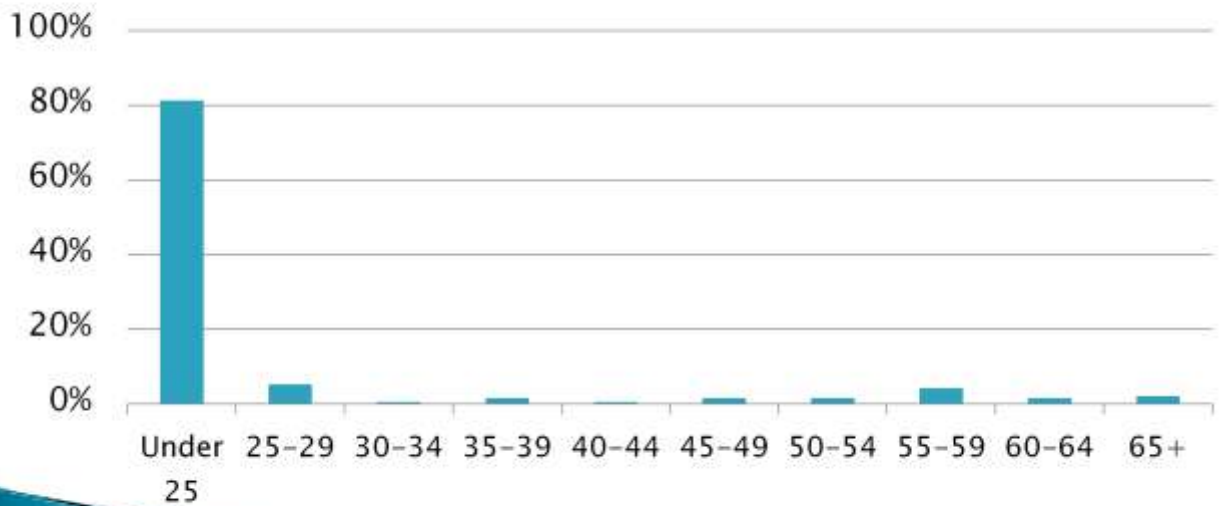


Now let's compare the distribution of Presbyterians to that of the population. They look pretty different, don't they?

Notice to the right: the blue bars for Presbyterians are so much taller than the red bars for the U.S. population. This shows that we have more than our fair share of older adults.

To the left the tall red bars show that there are lots and lots of younger Americans who are not in our pews.

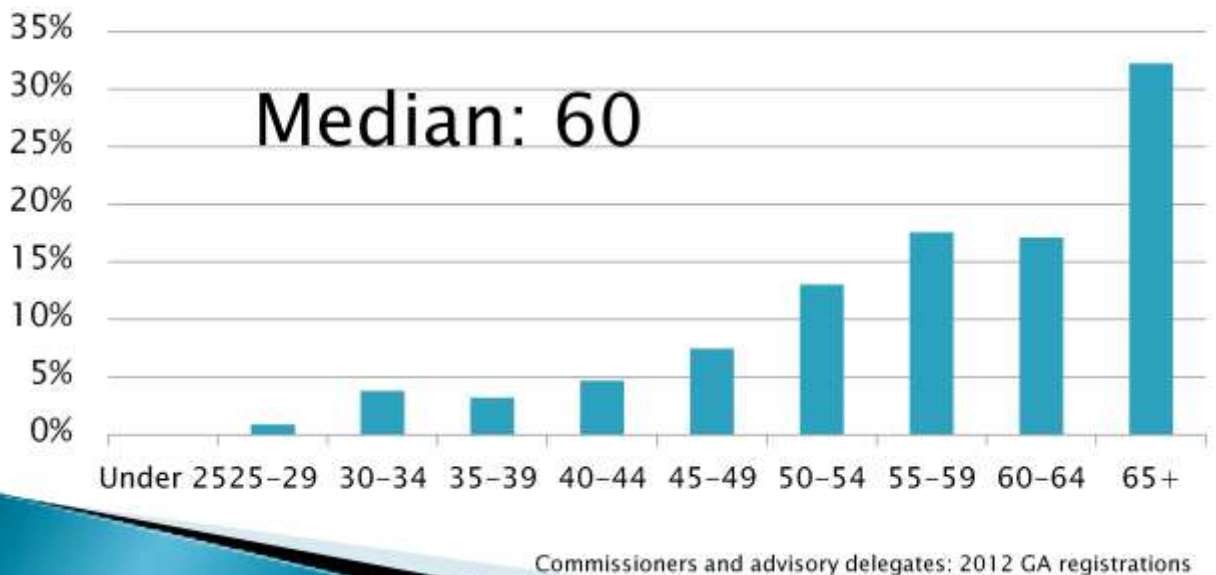
# Age of GA Advisory Delegates



Commissioners and advisory delegates: 2012 GA registrations

Now let's look at YOU! Here is the age distribution of Advisory Delegates who are here today. There are a few over age 25, but most are under 25. Hello YAADs!

# Age of GA Commissioners



The distribution of GA commissioners looks more like the distribution of all Presbyterians. Here we've combined all of those age 65 and older into one category.

The median age of commissioners—the median is simply the midpoint if we lined all commissioners up in order based on age; half are above the median and half are below. The median age of commissioners is 60. Half of commissioners are over the age of 60.

# Median Age of Presbyterians: 2001 and 2008

	2001	2008
Worshippers	58	61
Pastoral leaders	53	56

Source: U.S. Congregational Life Survey

Let's look at age another way. How have the ages of Presbyterians changed in recent years? You can see that the median has increased by three years for worshippers and for pastoral leaders in the last few years. Pastoral leaders include solo pastors, heads of staff, CLP, and others who lead congregations. How does this compare to what's going on in society at large?

# Median Age of Presbyterians: 2001 and 2008

	2001	2008
Worshippers	58	61
Pastoral leaders	53	56
U.S. population	44	44

Source: U.S. Congregational Life Survey; U.S. Census

The median age of the population is just 44 and that hasn't changed.

The sad truth is that Presbyterians as a group are relatively old. For every worshiper in our pews who is under age 25 there are more than six over the age of 65!! Let me say that again: For every worshiper in our pews who is under age 25 there are more than six over the age of 65!!



# PC(USA) Demographics

What Are Our Other Demographics?

Now we'll quickly look at some other characteristics of Presbyterians.

# Presbyterians: Men and Women

	Women	Men
Members	60%	40%
Ruling Elders	51%	49%
Teaching Elders	33%	67%
GA Commissioners	44%	56%
GA Advisory Delegates	56%	44%

Members, ruling elders, teaching elders: Presbyterian Panel, 2011  
Commissioners and advisory delegates: 2012 GA registrations

A majority of members and about half of ruling elders are women. One-third of teaching elders are women—and that percentage has been increasing steadily in recent years and we believe it will continue to increase.

Looking at you: There are a few more men than women among commissioners—not surprising since commissioners include teaching elders—two-thirds of whom are men. Among advisory delegates there are a few more women than men.



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GA Advisory Delegates	56%	44%
U.S. Population	51%	49%

Members, ruling elders, teaching elders: Presbyterian Panel, 2011  
Commissioners and advisory delegates: 2012 GA registrations

Comparing Presbyterians to the U. S. population we find that the U.S. population is split fairly evenly between men and women. A distribution that matches that of ruling elders.

# Race/Ethnicity of Presbyterians

	White	Other
Members	94%	6%
Ruling Elders	94%	6%
Teaching Elders	91%	9%
GA Commissioners	84%	16%
GA Advisory Delegates	77%	23%

Members, ruling elders, teaching elders: Presbyterian Panel, 2011  
Commissioners and advisory delegates: 2012 GA registrations

Despite efforts to increase the diversity in our congregations in recent years, we are still a majority white denomination. That goes for members, ruling elders, and teaching elders. Note that the percentages for these three groups probably overestimate the percentage who are white. That's because those numbers are based on survey data and considerable research shows that those who are not white are less likely to return surveys.

Commissioners and advisory delegates show a bit more diversity than the denomination as a whole. Only 8 in 10 commissioners and three-quarters of advisory delegates are white.

Recent research we've completed shows that fewer worshipers in newer congregations—those founded in the past 20 years—are white; about 80%. And that's good news.

## Race / Ethnicity of Presbyterians

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GA Commissioners	84%	16%
GA Advisory Delegates	77%	23%
U.S. Population	72%	29%

Members, ruling elders, teaching elders: Presbyterian Panel, 2011  
Commissioners and advisory delegates: 2012 GA registrations

The U.S. as a whole is more diverse than the denomination—only 72% are white; a figure that's steadily decreasing.

## Marital Status of Presbyterians (age 25 years and older)

	Married	Single
Members	76%	24%
Ruling Elders	82%	18%
Teaching Elders	85%	15%

Members, ruling elders, teaching elders: Presbyterian Panel, 2011

Three-quarters of Presbyterian members—and even more ruling and teaching elders—are married.

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U.S. Population	51%	49%

Members, ruling elders, teaching elders: Presbyterian Panel, 2011

Just one-half of people across the country are married.

The challenge for congregations is to ensure their services, ministries, and facilities are welcoming to single people—whether newer married, widowed, or divorced.

Also Presbyterian congregations have very few single parent families—less than 5% of members live in single parent households.

# Members and Non-Members in Presbyterian Pews

<i>Are you a member here?</i>	Presbyterian Worshipers
Yes	81%
In process of joining	2%
No, but regularly participate	10%
No	6%

U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2008/2009

Another phenomena that you may be finding in your congregation is the presence—perhaps an increasing presence—of people who regularly attend, but are not members.

On a recent survey we asked those who worship in Presbyterian pews: Are you a member here? About 16% of worshipers are not members. And surprisingly this hadn't changed much in recent years.

## Members and Non-Members by Age

<i>Are you a member here?</i>	Worshiper Age:		
	15-24	25-44	45+
Yes	65%	69%	85%
In process of joining	4%	4%	1%
No, but regularly participate	19%	16%	9%
No	13%	10%	5%

U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2008/2009

But attending non-members are less common among older worshipers. Among those age 45 and older, just 14% are non-members.

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U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2008/2009

But it's much higher among younger worshipers—one-third of those under 25 aren't members. This is a phenomena that is occurring in other types of organizations—it's not just churches. Lots of groups are finding that some young people participate, but don't take the steps to become formal members of the group.

The question, then, is will these non-members become joiners as they get older? Or in future years will we see an increasing proportion in all age groups who attend but don't belong? And what are the implications for congregations and for the denomination of more non-members?



# PC(USA) Demographics

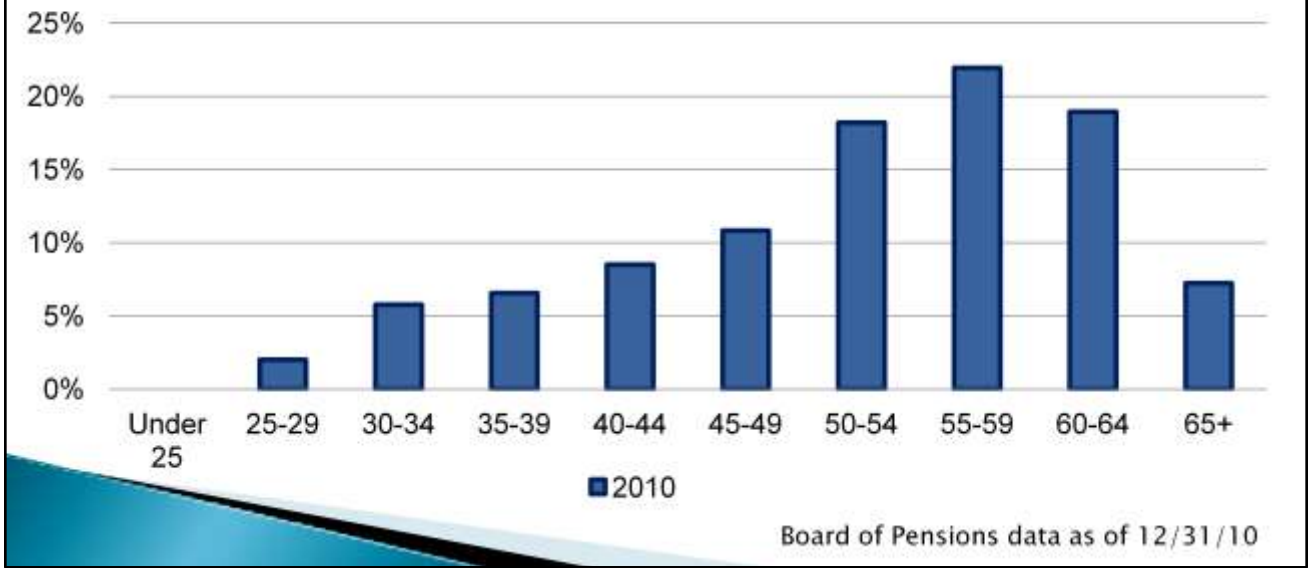
Are Those in the Benefits Plan the Same Age  
as Other Presbyterians?



Mister Moderator, my name is Andy Browne and it is my honor to serve on the staff of the Board of Pensions.

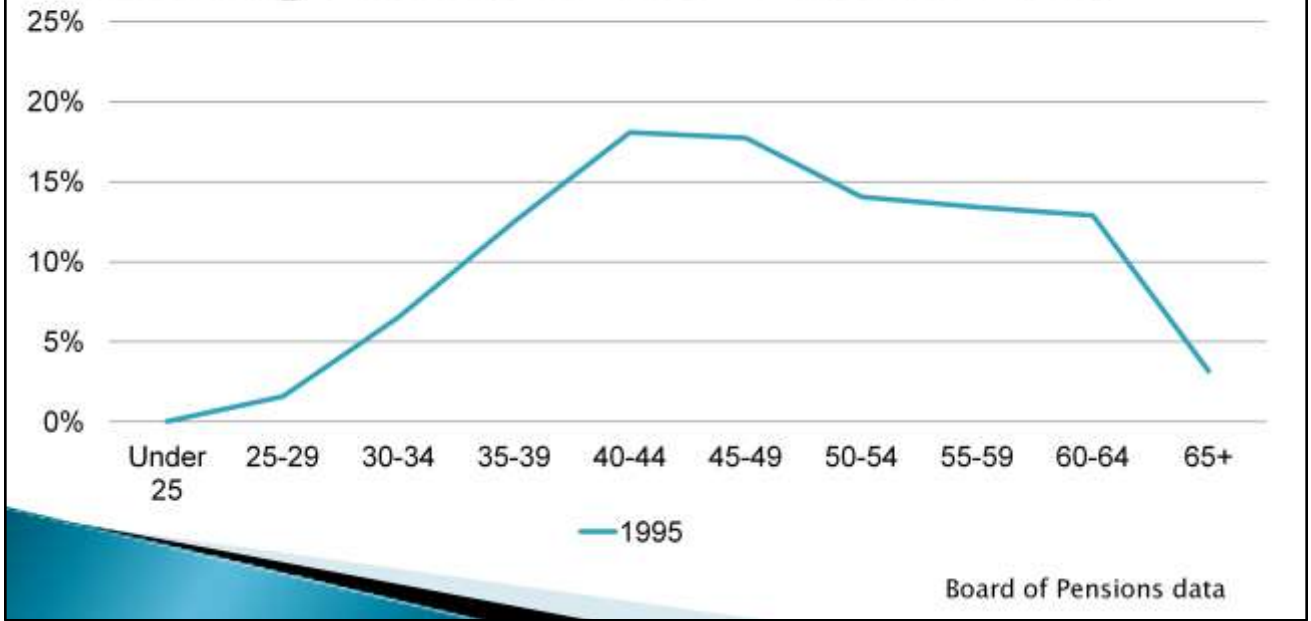
As one small part of a two-year demographic study, the Board examined the ages of those teaching elders in the benefits plan and found that...

# Teaching Elders in the Benefits Plan



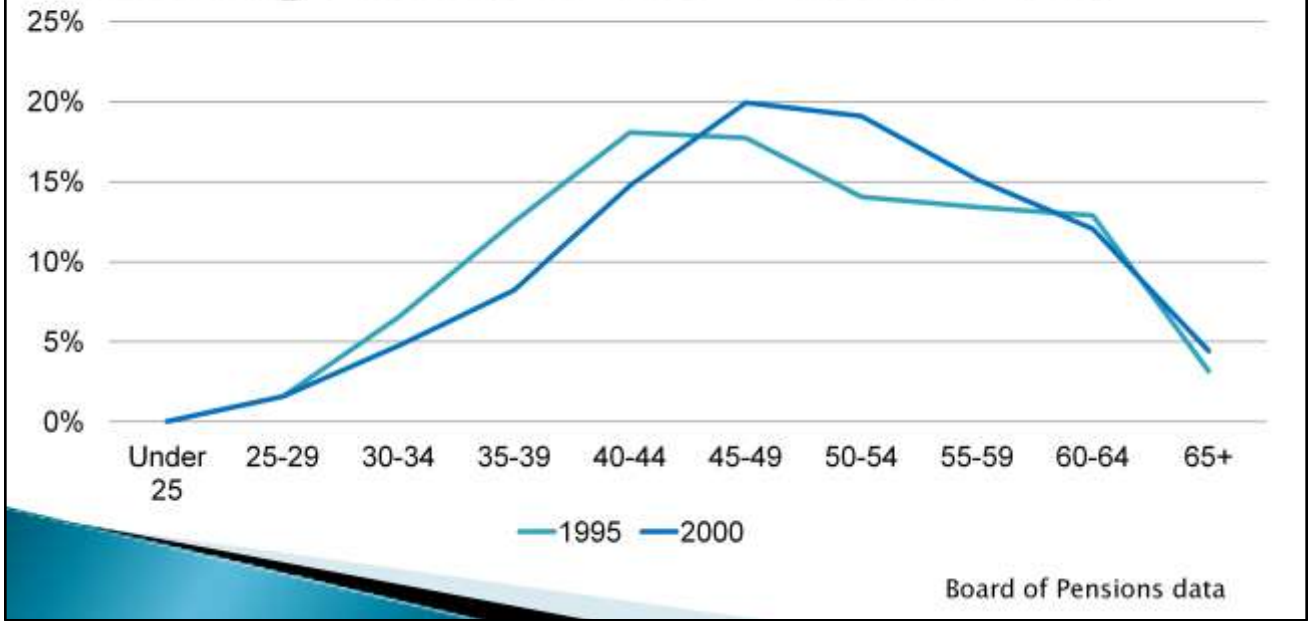
their ages – not surprisingly – closely resembled the age chart of Presbyterian members that Deborah showed a moment ago. We wanted to know how we got here, so we ran the clock back to 1995...

# Teaching Elders in the Benefits Plan



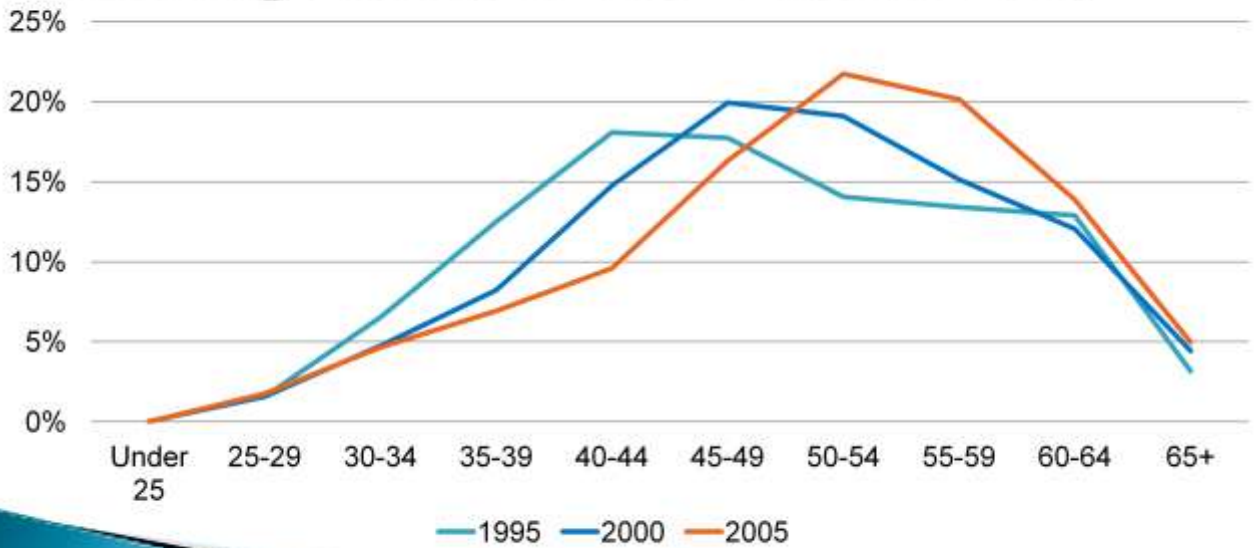
In 1995 (the pale blue line), we don't quite have a bell curve, but we have a fairly even distribution among age groups, with the largest in the 40-44 age group representing around 17% of Ministers.

# Teaching Elders in the Benefits Plan



Moving up five years, in 2000 (the darker line) those who were in the 40-44 year old bulge are now between 45 and 49 and make up right at 20% of the population.

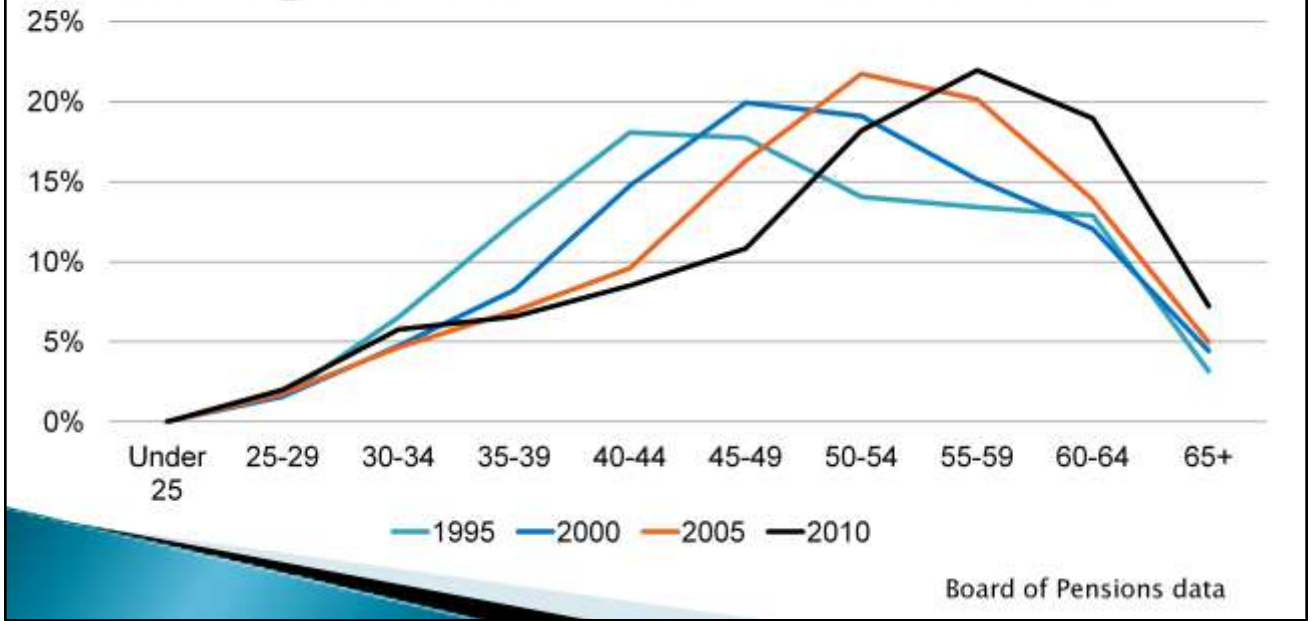
# Teaching Elders in the Benefits Plan



Board of Pensions data

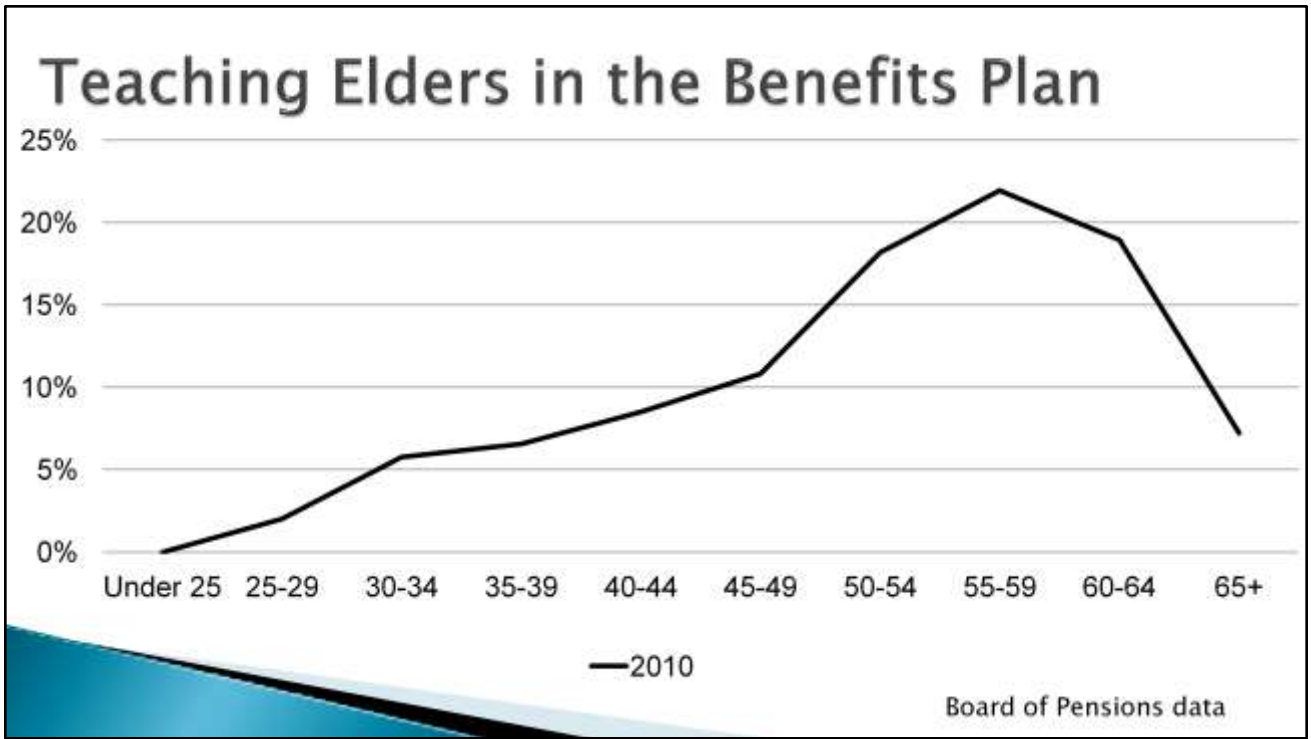
The graph becomes a little less bell curve-shaped and a little more distorted in 2005 (orange line), as the bulge is now between 50 and 54 and is close to 22% of the Ministers...

# Teaching Elders in the Benefits Plan



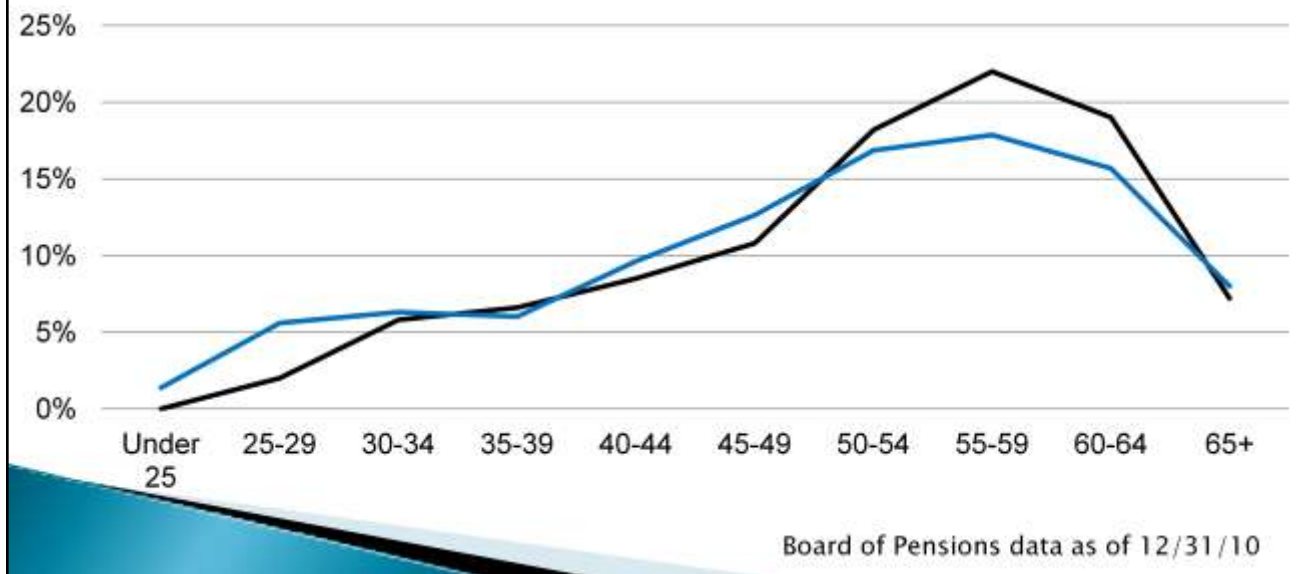
Finally, in 2010, this largest group is between 55 and 59 and two-thirds of ministers enrolled for Benefits are over the age of fifty.

In 1995, 39% of ministers were under the age of 45. By 2010, that number was down to 23%.



We also spent some time looking at these results from 2010 in comparison with...

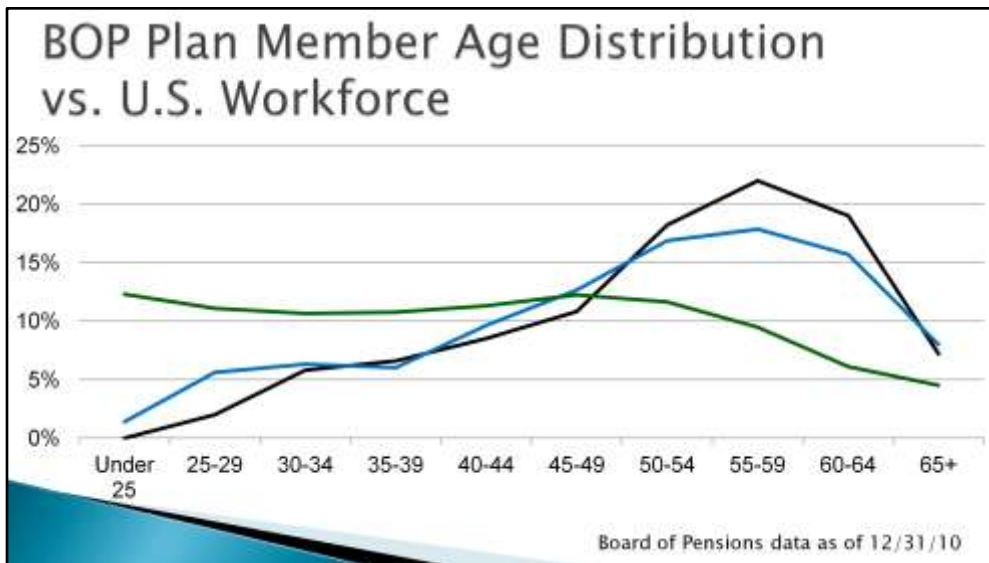
## Teaching Elders and Lay Employees in the Benefits Plan



...the lay employee population in the plan, which looks remarkably similar. Looking at these, we thought that perhaps these curves reflected the current makeup of the American Workforce. Maybe everyone's workforce had gotten older. Maybe, as the news media would seem to have us believe, **all** the under-30s really **were** sitting on their parent's couches. To get some sort of baseline, we sought out data on age distribution in the U.S. Workforce from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat3.pdf>).

And, while the U.S. population is aging, its curve...





does not look anything like ours. Only 44% of the employed U.S. population is over age of 45 – and more than 77% of our ministers are.

So what’s the potential implication for the Board of Pensions or for the church in this? There is a bubble – a “pig in the python” we’ve called it – moving through the system. And when those ministers start to retire en masse in just a few years there may be lots of vacant pulpits. But this may very well be balanced by one of the other findings from our study – one about the number of churches who may have their last called pastor.

In our survey of mid council executives, we asked how many churches in their presbytery could be seen as having their last called pastor - that is, when the current pastor moves to another call or retires, the replacement will almost certainly be another form of ministry such as a stated supply pastor, a commissioned lay pastor, or something else. The responses were all over the board, but the average was three and a half positions per presbytery. This works out to nearly six hundred positions where an installed position will, over time, be replaced by a different form of ministry.



# PC(USA) Demographics

What Do Our Churches Look Like?

We've spent most of our time talking about **who** questions – statistics about individuals and groups of individuals. We hope to spend the rest of our time grounding ourselves in an understanding of the different kinds of churches that make up the PC(USA).

# How Many Churches?

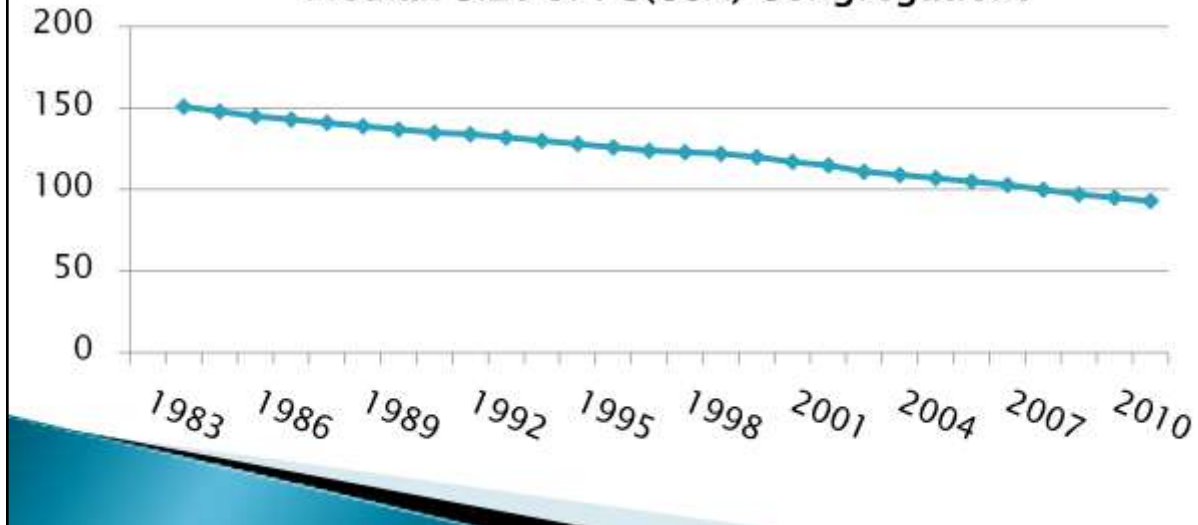
2011	Total	With Benefits Plan Participant(s)
# of churches	10,466	63%

Number of congregations in 2011  
Board of Pensions data as of 01/01/10

There are just over ten thousand churches in the PC(USA) and nearly two-thirds of those have at least one participant in the benefits plan.

# Decreasing Size

Median Size of PC(USA) Congregations



Remember that a median is the “middle congregation” – there are as many congregations smaller than the median as there are larger than the median.

With total church membership declining significantly, and the number of congregations relatively stable by comparison, it is not surprising that the median size of congregations has declined by 40% since reunion.

This number was 151 in 1984 and is down to 93 in 2012.

# What Sizes Are Our Churches?

Size (Members)	Number of Congregations	Percentage of Congregations
200 or fewer	7,807	75%
201–500	1,838	18%
501 or more	789	8%

2011 OGA data

Remembering that any categorization of churches is imprecise, in order to think about how different size churches work, we created three categories:

Those smaller than two hundred members, those between two hundred and five hundred, and those larger than five hundred.

And while there are many more churches in the first group than the other two combined...

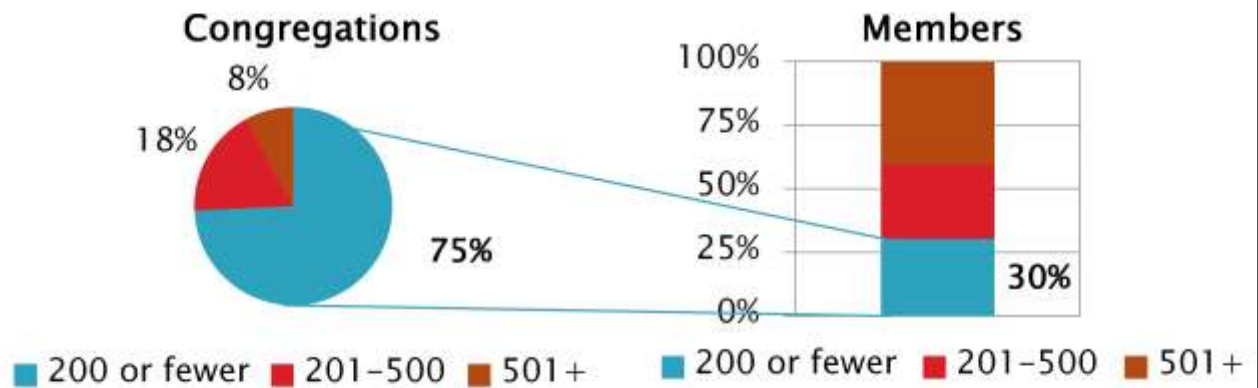
# Where Are Our Members?

Size (Members)	Number of Members	Percentage of Members
200 or fewer	595,119	30%
201–500	570,317	29%
501 or more	786,851	40%

... the aggregate membership of the denomination is nearly even divided among the three groups.

It is also of interest – at least to those of us at the Board of Pensions – that these three groups employ nearly equal numbers of benefits plan participants.

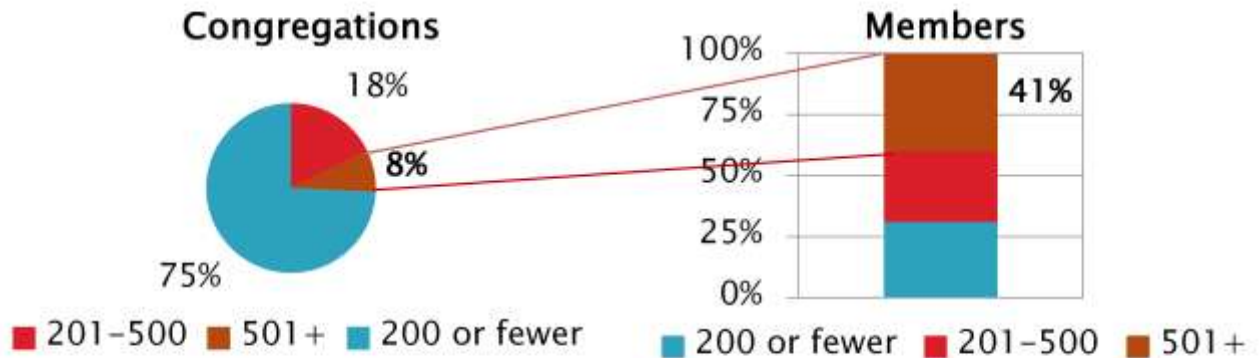
# Small Congregations: 200 or fewer members



**75% of congregations have 30% of members**

At the smaller end of the membership spectrum, thirty percent of our membership is in the seventy five percent of congregations with two hundred of fewer members...

# Large Congregations: 500 or more members



**8% of congregations have 41% of members**

...and, at the other end of the spectrum forty one percent of members belong to the eight percent of our churches with five hundred members or more.



## Where Are Our Members?

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It is our observation from the Board of Pensions – and maybe your experience working in mid-councils as well – that these different groups of churches function very differently and have differing, and sometimes competing, interests.

From the perspective of the Board of Pensions, the abilities of these different churches to manage complex administrative requirements vary wildly. Many large churches have professional administrative and financial staff for whom this work is routine. Most smaller churches, by contrast, have – at most – one full-time staff person and that one Plan member is their pastor.

From mid-councils, we certainly hear of places where ministry is vibrant and stable, but we also hear more and more about places where the face of ministry is changing rapidly and – indeed – many places where it has already changed.

In our survey of congregations, sixty one percent of those who did not have an installed pastor had no plans to call on in the next two years and twenty percent already had a commissioned ruling elder on staff full- or part-time.



# PC(USA) Demographics

With all of that in mind,  
Do we tread water?



So, having grounded ourselves in the realities of aging populations, a membership that looks less and less like the nation in which we live, and different churches living different types of existences – sometime just blocks apart – we must ask ourselves what we do with this information?

Do we persist – doing more of the same and hoping for a different result

...



# PC(USA) Demographics

With all of that in mind,  
Do we tread water?

or do we  
Build God's Church Deeper and Wider?

... or do we endeavor to listen as God calls us in new ways to new places...

... to get from where we are to the horizon we see...

... to build God's church deeper and wider

As you work in your committees these next two and a half days, I implore you to think beyond the status quo – past where we are – to that place where God is calling us.