



EXPLORING THE PANDEMIC IMPACT ON CONGREGATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Sarah Brown
Project Director
Hartford Institute for Religion Research
802-505-6395
sbrown@hartfordinternational.edu

New Report Offers First Glimpse of How U.S. Congregations Are Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic

HARTFORD, CT – This week the Hartford Institute for Religion Research [released a study](#) giving the first glimpse of how U.S. congregations are navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, and data shows that congregational life is far from being “back to normal.”

The study, [Navigating the Pandemic: A First Look at Congregational Responses](#), includes 2,074 survey responses from 38 Christian denominational groups from mid-June to the end of August 2021, and is part of a larger project entitled [Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations](#).

“These findings from the summer clearly show that the pandemic has had a profound impact across the religious spectrum, and that some churches are faring better than others,” said Principal Investigator Scott Thumma. “The fact that 83% of churches had at least one member test positive shows that almost no congregation was spared, but over two-thirds feel they will emerge stronger than before implies these faith communities are a resilient bunch.”

Research shows 80% of churches are now offering hybrid services with both in-person and remote options, while only 15% are solely worshipping in person. However, during the height of the pandemic when people around the country were experiencing severe isolation over half of the churches surveyed (54%) reported completely discontinuing fellowship events, rather than moving them online.

Community service activities, however, remained a thriving ministry for most churches and continued to be offered in person. Over 30% of congregations saw the need for food assistance, counseling and spiritual demands grow over the course of the pandemic. Fortunately, many congregations (41%) also saw their giving increase to help meet this growing demand.

Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations also found the majority of clergy (62%) encouraged parishioners to get vaccinated and 28% of congregations welcomed medical personnel to address their membership.

This is the first wave of a collaborative, five-year research project funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and led by the [Hartford Institute for Religion Research](#) at [Hartford International University for Religion and Peace](#) (formerly Hartford Seminary). We will continue to release targeted analyses of more specific findings from our topical surveys breaking down how Mainline/Evangelical, multiracial, Black congregations, Latinx congregations, and churches of differing sizes are navigating the pandemic.

Sign up to receive our newsletter at www.covidreligionresearch.org and like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to make sure you receive our reports as soon as they are released.

To request an interview about the study, contact sbrown@hartfordinternational.edu.