One page summary, “Sacred Places By the Numbers”

Tracking changes in faith communities and their buildings

“Congregations’ Buildings: Information from the National Congregations Study and National Survey of Religious Leaders,” prepared for the Convening by Anna Holleman, Joseph Roso and Mark Chaves (January, 2024)

“Twenty Years of Congregational Change: The 2020 Faith Communities Today Overview,” Faith Communities Today, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

Further reading to dig deeper into trends:

- “Studying Congregations’ Persistence, Repurpose, & Death: Preliminary Results from a 20 Year Analysis in Chicago,” Kraig Beyerlein, Ricardo Martinez-Schuldt, Madeline Johnson, Peter Ryan (March, 2024) Research supported by Partners for Sacred Places
- “Closed Congregations and Their Buildings in a Wealthy and Mature Suburban County: A Preliminary Analysis of DuPage County, Illinois,” Brian J. Miller (March, 2024) Research supported by Partners for Sacred Places
- “Closing Congregations: On the Hunt for Patterns,” Canopy Forum, Wendy Cadge, Muna Guvenc, Feigele Lechtchiner
- “Sacred Spaces in the Nation’s Capital, 2008-2023,” Sacred Spaces Conservancy (February, 2024)
- “FACTS on Finance: Trends in Congregational Economics from the Faith Communities Today 2020 Study”

What civic value do faith communities and their assets add to communities?


Further reading on the civic value of faith communities:

- “What a new plan to save the UK’s churches says about their purpose in society,” Alana Cant, The Conversation
- Building Faith: A Sociology of Religious Structures, Robert Brenneman and Brian Miller (Oxford University Press, 2020)
What happens when they leave?

“Envisioning a Future for Sacred Places in Transition,” Sacred Places (Fall/Winter 2023-24)

“Churches are closing in predominantly Black communities—why public health officials should be concerned,” Yusuf Ransome, Linh Pham, Camille Busette (Brookings Institution), 5/3/22

For further reading on the impact of loss of sacred places:

- “Removing Rome from the West: A Case Study of the Flip Side of the Halo Effect in St. Louis, Missouri,” Tricia C. Bruce, PhD (March, 2024) Research supported by Partners for Sacred Places
- “Some Black churches are leaving Boston, citing changing neighborhoods, higher costs,” Boston Globe, 1/17/24

How can government agencies work with congregations as “hidden assets” in communities?

- “Planning design, and religion: America’s changing urban landscape,” Sanjoy Mazumdar and Shampa Mazumdar, (Vol. 30, #3, Fall 2013), Journal of Architectural and Planning Research
- “Report and Recommendations on the Application and Interpretation of Federal Historic Preservation Standards,” Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Sara C. Bronin (March, 2024)
- “Church pews are sitting empty. Can they become affordable housing?” Danny Nguyen, The Washington Post (3/9/24)

How can philanthropy partner with religion to strengthen communities?

“What Philanthropy and Nonprofits Lose as Religion Fades,” Drew Lindsay, Chronicle of Philanthropy (12/12/23)

“Pretty Scary: 7 Things to Know About Religion’s Decline and Charitable Giving,” Drew Lindsay, Chronicle of Philanthropy (12/12/23)

Further reading on partnerships with philanthropy:

- “Dozens of Black Churches receive total of $4 million for historic preservation,” Adele M. Banks, Religious News Service (1/15/2024)
What new partnerships can be developed?

“Nonprofits Help the Nonreligious Search for Meaning in Their Lives,” Emily Haynes, Chronicle of Philanthropy (12/12/23)

“Faith and the Nonprofit: 3 Stories of Churches Reborn as Engines of Social Good,” Drew Lindsay, Chronicle of Philanthropy (12/12/23)

Further reading on new partnerships:

- “Struggling with what to do with your church building? Here’s how to find help,” Elizabeth Lynn, Faith and Leadership (3/7/23)
- Gone for Good: Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition, Mark Elsdon (ed), William B. Eerdmans Publishing (2024)
- “How Catholic Institutions are Building into Aging Infrastructure,” Earthbeat/National Catholic Reporter (1/23/24)
- “Church’s free music lessons transform the community,” Rev. Thomas E. Kim, United Methodist News (3/1/2024)