Forty Years of LCMS District Statistics
Based on Lutheran Annual data for years 1970-2011

Prepared By LCMS Research Services
March 25, 2013
Forty Years of LCMS Statistics
Preliminary Material
Overview of this Report

In order to produce the following report, data was gathered from 40 years of *The Lutheran Annual* (1970-2011). The data gathered included the number of congregations, baptized and confirmed members, parish pastors, and member giving totals every year for each district. Research Services has carefully analyzed this data and has compiled the data and their analysis into the following charts and notes.

Because there is so much data, it can seem a bit overwhelming. Therefore the report will start with overviews and large perspective findings, and slowly move toward data on individual districts. To facilitate this structure, the report has been developed with the following sections:

**Preliminary Material**

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**Overview of the Data**

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Top 10 Important Findings

1. Membership in the LCMS is declining overall (a trend in every major protestant denomination), and this decline has been felt in every LCMS district in recent years.

2. Since 2000 the decline in membership has accelerated (this is also true for most protestant denominations). The few LCMS districts that maintained membership levels or even saw growth from 1970-2000 have since started to decline.

3. Despite declining membership numbers, the LCMS has over 450 more congregations today than it did in 1970. As for districts, twelve have decreased and twenty-three have increased their number of congregations since 1970 (or their inception, if later).

4. Total giving by members is up in the LCMS and in most districts. This increase comes despite the decline in membership, and holds true even when adjusting for inflation. This means the average giving per member has gone up (even when adjusting for inflation).

5. Most (but not all) LCMS districts follow the national trend of declining membership, despite the fact that most districts now have more congregations and more pastors.

6. The controversy in the 1970s had a noticeable impact on the Synod and was especially hard on certain districts, but it was still a relatively small decline overall.

7. There are certain regional trends that can be observed such as an “arc shape” in trend lines for several southern districts, on-going decline for the heavily urban Northern Atlantic districts, and relatively flat lines for the more rural Midwestern districts which tend to be more stable.

8. In nearly every district, the ratio of baptized to confirmed members has also been shrinking over the years, meaning that there is a smaller group of members who are baptized but not confirmed. This usually is an indicator of an aging membership.

9. In the past decade, there have been major fluctuations in the giving levels reported by congregations from year to year, as well as district to district. While this may mean that actual giving by members has fluctuated, it is more likely that this indicates a change in congregations’ attitudes to reporting their finances.

10. There is still a great deal that could be learned from this data. Getting historical information from each district could provide a much insight into many lingering questions.
Top 5 *Explained* Aberrations in the Data – or “Blips”

1. In the Atlantic District in 1973 there was a dramatic drop in all statistics. *EXPLAINED:* in this year, the New England and New Jersey districts were formed out of the Atlantic District. So this loss did not affect the Synod as a whole.

2. In 1977 there is a noticeable dip in all statistics for the LCMS as a whole. *EXPLAINED:* the denomination split had a noticeable impact in all statistics in that year. Certain districts (especially Atlantic, New England, and English) seem to have been hit harder than others.

3. In 1988 Minnesota North experienced a noticeable drop in all statistics. *EXPLAINED:* there were several Canadian congregations that belonged to the Minnesota North District at that time. When the Lutheran Church Canada was formed, these congregations left the Minnesota North District and the LCMS to join the LCC. Since Canadian districts were excluded from this report, no other district appears to have been significantly affected by the formation of the LCC.

4. In 2008 there was a substantial decline in the total reported giving. *PARTIALLY EXPLAINED:* this year saw the start of a national recession. As with years of other recessions (1974, 1980, 1990, and 2001), there was a dip in giving overall.

5. Giving throughout the 2000s shows a high degree of fluctuation from year to year, and even from district to district. *PARTIALLY EXPLAINED:* there has been a noticeable change in reporting habits of congregations. Now more congregations than in previous years are reporting statistics without reporting their finances. These gaps in reporting are significant enough to create dramatic swings in giving totals from year to year. What is not known is why these habits have changed, or how actual giving has changed for those congregations.
Top 5 Unexplained Aberrations in the Data – or “Blips”

1. In 2005 there is a noticeable dip in reported giving on a national level that is also noticeable in certain districts. The districts, such as SELC, New England, Cal-Nevada, Southern Illinois and Florida-Georgia, do not seem to have much in common with each other. And unlike other aberrations in giving (see #4 in explained aberrations), this year was not part of a national recession.

2. In the Rocky Mountain District in 1982, there is a sudden increase in total congregations along with growth in all other statistics. The next year, the 1983 Convention chose to rename the Colorado District to the Rocky Mountain District. It is unclear if there is any connection between the name change and the growth (both in 1982 and after).

3. In Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma in 1998-2000 (and also Florida-Georgia in 2002) there is a dramatic surge in congregational giving. These surges do not appear to be directly related to growth in the district, and they are sustained in subsequent years (except in Oklahoma).

4. Pacific-Southwest, Cal-Nevada and English Districts each saw a suddenly up-tick in the number of congregations in 1990. This is also a period of noticeably higher giving in these districts (less so with English district). Was this possibly a period of deliberate church planting in the west?

5. New Jersey pastors from 2003-2006. In many districts a loss of ten pastors over a few years might go unnoticed, but in the New Jersey district this was a loss of 20% of its pastors at a time when the number of total congregations actually increased.
Top 10 Ways to Dig Deeper into This Data

1. Study years where Districts implemented Mission Ministry Facilitators
2. Study changes to District Presidents
3. Study changes in District Staffing
4. Study major changes within the District (emphases, convention rulings, strategic plans, etc.)
5. Study impact of major local events (natural disasters, economic factors, etc.)
6. Compare with other church bodies
7. Investigate Congregational attitudes toward reporting finances
8. Question districts about specific “blips” (Colorado 1982, New Jersey 2003, etc.)
9. Compare with US Census data (population and economy)
10. Study the impact of large/small and urban/rural congregations on individual district trends.

Next Steps

It may be helpful to ask the 35 districts to provide timelines that may provide further insights to local fluctuations in data

- Was there an economic factor in a major city that impacted congregation growth?
- Were there controversies or conflicts within the district that may have led to members, pastors or even whole congregations leaving the district?
- Were there major changes to the structure or focus of the district that may have had a long term impact on growth over subsequent years?

Gathering this kind of information may help to better explain individual fluctuations from year to year, and it may provide insight to help evaluate the long term impact that district decisions and changes may have had on congregations.
Forty Years of District Statistics

Based on Lutheran Annual data for years 1970-2011

LCMS Research Services
January 2013
Findings from the 1970-2011 Data

Overview of the Trends
* In the past 40 years the LCMS has increased by over 450 total congregations.
* Despite this increase in congregations, there has been a steady loss of membership, both baptized and confirmed, a trend seen in most protestant denominations.
* Most districts in the LCMS follow this pattern, increasing in congregations while decreasing in membership, though there are notable exceptions.
* Since around 2000-2001 there has been a dramatic increase in the rate at which membership is declining, which is also consistent with the pattern observed in other denominations.
* While membership has been declining, giving to congregations has been increasing for most of the past 40 years – and this holds true even when adjusting dollar amounts for inflation. What this means is that giving has increased by nearly 10% per communicant member (after adjusting for inflation).
* While giving peaked in the year 2000, it still maintained very high levels through the early 2000s, despite the rapid decrease in membership.

A High Degree of Similarity among Districts
* Most districts follow the same pattern as the LCMS as a whole, especially in terms of increasing in congregations while decreasing in membership.
* There are some noteworthy exceptions to this pattern, and it may be worthwhile to look into what happened to make these districts different.

Where Certain Districts Have Bucked the Trends
* Districts in the southern United States (Florida-Georgia, Texas, Mid-South and Southeastern) saw big gains in membership in the 70s, 80s and 90s. However, since 2000, they have followed the normal trend of losing members while still increasing in congregations.
* Several districts in the Mid-West, including Missouri, Southern Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma, Indiana and also North Wisconsin, have been remarkably stable over 40 years. Whereas most districts average near or above a 1% change (postive or negative) in members and congregations each year, these Districts average under 0.15% (gain or loss). These districts have also seen only nominal losses in members in recent years while others have seen more substantial declines.
* Texas and Florida-Georgia have seen the most growth in giving over the past 40 years, with donations actually doubling (when adjusted for inflation) since 1970, although Florida-Georgia’s donations have declined sharply since 2005.
* The Mid-South and Montana districts have actually increased in membership numbers in the past year, while every other district saw losses.
* Over the past 40 years, almost every district had fewer parish pastors than congregations. While that gap has been shrinking nationally, there are now a handful of districts that have more pastors in congregations than they have congregations.
**Major Events**
* In 1977 there is a noticeable loss in all statistics that is very likely related to the controversy and denomination split at that time. While this was a drop for the Synod nation-wide, certain districts (especially those in the northeast) seem to have been more affected than others.
* In 2008, when the US entered into a recession, there was a noticeable drop in giving.
* Individual districts have other events (most notably the Atlantic District splitting into three districts in 1973) which have impacted district trends over the years.

**What Does It All Mean?**
* While certain events, such as the recent recession and the controversy in the 1970s, may have impacted the LCMS statistically, even those major events are relatively minor compared to the overall trends.
* Membership is decreasing, and that decrease is accelerating. Despite this overall trend, there are districts that have managed to slow that loss and a couple that may have reversed it.
* While membership has declined, giving has not been dramatically affected. This may say a great deal about the types of members that are still committed to the LCMS.

**Next Steps**
It may be helpful to ask the 35 districts to provide timelines that may provide further insights to local fluctuations in data.
- Was there an economic factor in a major city that impacted congregation growth?
- Were there controversies or conflicts within the district that may have led to members, pastors or even whole congregations leaving the district?
- Were there major changes to the structure or focus of the district that may have had a long term impact on growth over subsequent years?

Gathering this kind of information may help to better explain individual fluctuations from year to year, and it may provide insight to help
Appendices with Charts

Appendix A - Synod Totals
A look at individual trends in the entire Synod in congregations, membership, parish pastors and giving
A broad at all 35 districts and their trends in congregations, membership and giving over time

Appendix B - Comparison Over Time of Districts Grouped by Their Current Sizes
Districts are grouped into seven groups of five to compare trends in congregations, members and giving

Appendix C - Individual District Data Over Time
Individual charts for each of the 35 districts, analyzing changes in congregations, membership, parish pastors and giving

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Chart A - Congregations and Total Membership

Chart B - Congregations and Number of Parish Pastors
* Chart A - Baptized and confirmed membership numbers in the Synod have been slowly declining since the 1970s. The rate has increased in the past decade, and the decline is more noticeable in baptized membership.

* Chart A - Despite losses in some years, the total number of LCMS congregations is up since 1970. While the number of total congregations is down since 2000, the changes from year to year have been very slight and included some increases as well as decreases.

* Chart A - There is a noticeable drop in all statistics around 1977, most likely due to the controversy and church split. However, this drop was not as extreme as the drop in membership visible since 2000.

* Chart B – Over the past 40 years the number of parish pastors has remained closely tied with the number of congregations. In recent years, and most notably in 2011, the number of parish pastors has been growing at a faster rate. While pastors have been increasing faster, the decrease in members has been accelerating as well.

* Chart C – Even when adjusting for inflation, giving was not decreasing from 1970-2000, despite the loss of members. However, in the past decade, giving has started to decline, roughly following the membership line. There is a chance this may say more about reporting habits of congregations, rather than real changes in congregational giving.
Analysis of the Charts

* All Charts - The purpose of these graphs is not to see information on individual districts, but to understand the level of diversity and uniformity between districts. There is a great deal of uniformity in membership and total congregations (Charts A and B) but not with congregational giving (Chart C).

* Chart A – In 1970 the Districts appear in clusters with noticeable gaps between each group (see 110-125, 130-150, 200-225). In 2011 the districts are much more evenly spread (smaller gaps or white space between groups). The spread has also increased, whereas in 1970, most were between 50 and 200, and in 2011, most are between 50 and 300.

* Chart A – The notable exceptions are the three districts that had over 200 congregations in 1970, and most noticeably is the Atlantic District (blue line). The major drop in 1973 was not a loss to Synod because the Atlantic District split and formed the New England and New Jersey districts. A similar drop is present in all three charts because of the new districts.

* Chart B – While it is difficult to see individual details for most districts, what this chart makes clear is that most districts are heading downward in terms of membership. The district that begins with over 250,000 (lime green line) is Michigan, and the next largest (orange line) is Northern Illinois.
* Chart C – While the other two charts showed a high degree of uniformity in districts from year to year in membership and total congregations, this chart shows that giving has been very different in every district. It also shows that in many districts, giving has become more erratic in the past decade. The District that has seen giving increase most rapidly (brown line) is Texas.
Forty Years of LCMS Statistics:
Appendix B - Comparison Over Time of Districts Grouped By Their Current Size

Data compiled from Lutheran Annuals from 1970-2011
* Chart A - Most of the five largest LCMS districts in 2011 have been steadily increasing in the number of total congregations over the past 40 years.

* Chart B - On the other hand, membership in most of these districts have followed the national trend of a gradual, steady decrease.

* Chart B - However, Texas has actually seen an increase in the total membership, and Missouri District has managed to hold steady.

* Chart C - Giving in these districts has also followed the national trend. While there has been much change in giving from year to year (reaching a peak in 2001), over 40 years giving remains largely unchanged when adjusted for inflation.

* Chart - C The exception to this, again, is the Texas District, which has beaten the trend with a dramatic and steady increase in giving since 1970.
Size Group 1 - Largest Districts

B - Total Baptized Members

C - Total Regular Giving (Adjusted for Inflation)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
**Size Group 1 - Largest Districts**

**CHARTS D - G: COMPARATIVE DATA**

D - Average Gift Per Confirmed Member

E - Number of Confirmed Members for every 10 Baptized Members

(a higher number typically indicates fewer children)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 1 - Largest Districts

F - Ten Year Rates of Change in Congregations

(rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change)

G - Ten Year Rates of Change in Baptized Members

(rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
* Chart A - While they have not decreased in the number of congregations, the group of the second largest districts show a much less dramatic increase in the number of congregations.

* Chart B - Likewise, there was less dramatic change in the number of baptized members in this group, with the exception of Northern Illinois and Minnesota South.

* Chart B - Northern Illinois, on the other hand, has shown a dramatic loss of members, though this has actually brought the number of members into alignment with the other districts in this group.

* Chart C - While North Wisconsin and Indiana had little change in giving, Minnesota South and Nebraska saw a gradual increase in recent years, and Northern Illinois, likely due to having lost so many members, has seen a noticeable decrease in giving.

**CHARTS A - C: TRENDLINE DATA**

**A - Total Congregations**

*District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.*
District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 2 - Large Districts

CHARTS D - G: COMPARATIVE DATA

D - Average Gift Per Confirmed Member

E - Number of Confirmed Members for every 10 Baptized Members
(a higher number typically indicates fewer children)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 2 - Large Districts

F - Ten Year Rates of Change in Congregations

(rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change)

G - Ten Year Rates of Change in Baptized Members

(rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 3 - Large-Mid-Sized Districts
Analysis of the Charts

* Chart A - In terms of the number of total congregations, this group contains districts with major decreases, like Minnesota North and California/Nevada/Hawaii, and it also includes those with big gains, like Florida-Georgia and Southeastern.

* Chart B - While most of these districts show a decline in total membership, Florida-Georgia has seen an increase in membership from 1970, though it too has been decreasing since 2000.

* Chart B - Cal-Nevada, which had a major decrease in the number of total congregations, also shows one of the most dramatic decreases in baptized membership (down nearly 50%).

* Chart B - South Wisconsin has approximately twice as many members as any of the other districts in this group, despite having roughly the same number of congregations over the years. This sets them apart both in total members as well as giving.

* Chart C - While most of these districts experienced sizeable losses in membership, this has not had an effect on giving. Cal-Nevada and South Wisconsin decreased slightly in giving, while Southeastern and Florida-Georgia have seen dramatic increases.

**CHARTS A - C: TRENDLINE DATA**

A - Total Congregations

- **California/Nevada/Hawaii District**
- **Florida-Georgia District**
- **Minnesota North District**
- **South Wisconsin District**
- **Southeastern District**

*District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.*
District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 3 - Large-Mid-Sized Districts

**CHARTS D - G: COMPARATIVE DATA**

- **D - Average Gift Per Confirmed Member**
- **E - Number of Confirmed Members for every 10 Baptized Members**
  (a higher number typically indicates fewer children)

*District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.*
Size Group 3 - Large-Mid-Sized Districts

F - Ten Year Rates of Change in Congregations
(rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change)

G - Ten Year Rates of Change in Baptized Members
(rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 4 - Mid-Sized Districts

Analysis of the Charts

* Chart A - This group of districts also shows a very gradual increase in the total number of congregations.

* Chart A - Rocky Mountain District shows the only dramatic change within this group. Growing since it was the Colorado District (name changed in 1983), this district has been one of the fastest growing in terms of total congregations.

* Chart B - Like most of the rest of the LCMS, even though they have been increasing in the number of total congregations, these districts have been decreasing in members. Only Kansas seems to have remained steady over the course of forty years.

* Chart C - Despite the loss of members, giving remains up for most of these Districts. Kansas, Ohio and Rocky Mountain districts each experienced a surge in giving in 2000 though declining since. The Southern District is also up in giving since 1970.

* Chart C - Iowa West and Ohio have both seen giving decrease (when adjusting for inflation), which is not the case for most districts nationally.

CHARTS A - C: TRENDLINE DATA

A - Total Congregations
Size Group 4 - Mid-Sized Districts

B - Total Baptized Members

C - Total Regular Giving (Adjusted for Inflation)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 4 - Mid-Sized Districts

CHARTS D - G: COMPARATIVE DATA

D - Average Gift Per Confirmed Member

E - Number of Confirmed Members for every 10 Baptized Members
(a higher number typically indicates fewer children)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 4 - Mid-Sized Districts

F - Ten Year Rates of Change in Congregations

G - Ten Year Rates of Change in Baptized Members

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 5 - Small-Mid-Sized Districts
Analysis of the Charts

* Chart A - Mid-South, Central Illinois and, to a lesser extent, Iowa East, have all increased in the number of congregations since 1970, whereas the Eastern and English Districts have decreased.

* Chart A - The English District shows a dramatic decrease in congregations from 1977-1985. However, since that time, they have increased in the total number of congregations. This same loss is visible in membership and giving as well.

* Chart B - Each of these districts have lost members with the exception of the Mid-South District, which has gained members over the years, as it has increased in the number of congregations.

* Chart C - Giving in these Districts roughly follows the trends for congregations. Central Illinois and Iowa East remained fairly stable, while Mid-South has shown an increase, and the Eastern and English Districts have shown decreases in giving.

CHARTS A - C: TRENDLINE DATA

A - Total Congregations

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 5 - Small-Mid-Sized Districts

B - Total Baptized Members

C - Total Regular Giving (Adjusted for Inflation)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 5 - Small-Mid-Sized Districts

CHARTS D - G: COMPARATIVE DATA

D - Average Gift Per Confirmed Member

E - Number of Confirmed Members for every 10 Baptized Members
(a higher number typically indicates fewer children)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 5 - Small-Mid-Sized Districts

F - Ten Year Rates of Change in Congregations
[rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change]

G - Ten Year Rates of Change in Baptized Members
[rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change]

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
**Group Size 6 - Smaller Districts**

*Analysis of the Charts*

* All Charts - In 1971 the New Jersey and New England Districts were formed from congregations in the Atlantic District. The dramatic change seen in the Atlantic District in all three charts is due to the formation of these new districts.

* All Charts - In addition to the splitting of the district, there is another noticeable dip in the Atlantic District around 1977. This dip is seen in several other districts (especially in the northeast). It is possibly due to the church controversy.

* All Charts - Other than the changes to the Atlantic District, these districts show a fair degree of stability, neither increasing nor decreasing much in the total number of congregations, membership and giving.

**CHARTS A - C: TRENDLINE DATA**

**A - Total Congregations**

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Group Size 6 - Smaller Districts

B - Total Baptized Members

C - Total Regular Giving (Adjusted for Inflation)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Group Size 6 - Smaller Districts

CHARTS D - G: COMPARATIVE DATA

D - Average Gift Per Confirmed Member

E - Number of Confirmed Members for every 10 Baptized Members
(a higher number typically indicates fewer children)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
* All Charts - In addition to being the smallest districts in 2011, some of these are also the youngest. The SELC District was not formed until 1971, and the New England, New Jersey Districts were formed in 1973 (out of the Atlantic District).

* All Charts - Much like their parent District, New England and New Jersey had a noticeable loss of members in 1977. However, whereas New England has managed to maintain its size since then, New Jersey has continued to decline in number of congregations.

* Chart B - All of these districts have lost members of the past few decades, though the losses in New England, New Jersey and SELC have been the most noticeable.

* Chart C - Giving in Wyoming and Montana has remained constant when adjusted for inflation. While the three younger districts have shown dramatic fluctuation over the years, each of them end lower than they began (when adjusted for inflation).

**CHARTS A - C: TRENDLINE DATA**

**A - Total Congregations**
Size Group 7 - Very Small Districts

B - Total Baptized Members

C - Total Regular Giving (Adjusted for Inflation)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 7 - Very Small Districts

CHARTS D - G: COMPARATIVE DATA

D - Average Gift Per Confirmed Member

E - Number of Confirmed Members for every 10 Baptized Members
(a higher number typically indicates fewer children)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Size Group 7 - Very Small Districts

F - Ten Year Rates of Change in Congregations
(rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change)

G - Ten Year Rates of Change in Baptized Members
(rates of growth come up from the axis, rates of decline go downward, and no bar indicates imperceptible change)

District Size Groupings determined by number of congregations in 2011.
Forty Years of LCMS Statistics:
Appendix C - Individual District Data over Time

Data compiled from Lutheran Annuals 1970-2011
Analysis of the Atlantic District Charts

* All Charts - In 1973, the New Jersey and New England Districts were formed out of Atlantic District congregations. This accounts for the obvious drop in all statistics for the Atlantic District.

* All Charts - The subsequent decline in 1977-1978 are seen in several districts, but are most noticeable in districts near the northern Atlantic coast. It is possible that this dip is due to the controversy in those years.

* Chart A - Since 1980, the total number of congregations has held steady, while the number of members has been gradually declining.
* Chart A - Cal-Nevada has been declining in members since the 1970s - the total loss in baptized members is nearing a decrease of almost 40,000 over forty years (the decrease in confirmed members has been more gradual, at around 20,000).

* Chart A - In 1977 the California-Nevada District became the California/Nevada/Hawaii District, though it continued experiencing a decline in the total number of congregations.

* Chart A - In the early 1990s there was a sudden increase in the total number of congregations as reported in the Lutheran Annual, but it quickly dropped back to previous levels in the following years.

* Chart C - While giving decreased along with the declining membership, it has not declined at as great a pace.

* Chart C - Several districts, like Cal-Nevada, show a pronounced drop in giving in 2008. While this may have been due to the recession, statistically the drop occurred because significantly fewer congregations reported their financials these years.
Central Illinois District

Chart A - Congregations and Total Membership

Chart B - Congregations and Number of Parish Pastors
* Chart A - Compared to most districts, the Central Illinois District has remained fairly steady over the past 40 years.

* Chart A - The total number of congregations is up since 1970, though it has not increased since the 1990s.

* Chart A - Membership numbers rose in the 70's-90's, but have been declining since.

* Chart B - The Central Illinois District is one of only seven districts to now have more parish pastors than total congregations.

* Chart C - Giving in the Central Illinois District has remained closely tied with membership.
**Eastern District**

**Chart C - Membership and Giving**

Analysis of the Eastern District Charts

* All Charts - The Eastern district shows noticeable declines in each of the major statistics - congregations, baptized, confirmed, pastors and giving. These declines are consistent and mostly in line with each other.

* All Charts - As with other northern Atlantic coast districts, there is a noticeably larger drop in all statistics from 1977-1979. This is more noticeable in giving and in parish pastors, but is also present in membership and total congregations.

* Chart C - Several districts, like Eastern, show a pronounced drop in giving in 2008. While this may have been due to the recession, statistically the drop occurred because significantly fewer congregations reported their financials these years.
English District
Chart C - Membership and Giving

Analysis of the English District Charts

* All Charts - The English District shows a sudden decline in 1976-1979. While the English District is non-geographic, it has a strong presence in the northeast, and other northeastern districts experienced declines in these years, though not as severe.

* All Charts - Since that decline, the English district has increased in the number of total congregations as well as pastors, but it has shown consistent declines in every other statistic.

* Chart B - The English District is one of only seven districts to now have more parish pastors than total congregations.

* Chart C - Several districts, like English, show a pronounced drop in giving in 2008. While this may have been due to the recession, statistically the drop occurred because significantly fewer congregations reported their financials these years.
Florida-Georgia District
Chart C - Membership and Giving

Analysis of the Florida-Georgia District Charts

* Chart A - The Florida-Georgia District was growing steadily until the mid-1990's.
* Chart A - While the number of congregations has continued to increase, since the mid-1990's membership has been gradually declining.
* Chart C - Giving in the Florida-Georgia District has roughly followed the membership trends, however, there is a noticeable surge in giving in the early 2000s while membership was declining.
Analysis of the Indiana District Charts

* All Charts - The Indiana District has held steady over the past 40 years, though recently there seems to be an overall decline in every statistic.

* Chart B - The exception to this is the noticeable jump in the number of parish pastors in 2011.

* Chart B - The Indiana District is one of only seven Districts to now have more parish pastors than total congregations.
Analysis of the Iowa East District Charts

* Chart A - Over the past 40 years, the Iowa East District has maintained its membership well, however, since around 2000 there has been a noticeable decline in membership.
Analysis of the Iowa West District Charts

* Chart A - Despite seeing a gradual increase in the number of congregations, the Iowa West District has seen a slow decline of membership over the past 40 years. This decline has accelerated in the past ten years.

* Chart C - Giving in the Iowa West District has roughly followed the trend in membership.

* Chart C - Several districts, like Iowa West, show a pronounced drop in giving in 2008. While this may have been due to the recession, statistically the drop occurred because significantly fewer congregations reported their financials these years.
* Chart A - The Kansas District has experienced various phases of growth and decline over the past 40 years resulting in little net change overall.

* Chart C - Giving in the Kansas District has also remained fairly consistent with the exception of a strong surge in giving in the late 90s and early 2000s. While giving has declined since that peak, it is still up from where it was in the mid-90s.

* Chart C - The surge in giving in the late 90s matches a similar trend in neighboring states Nebraska and Oklahoma.

* Chart C - Several districts, like Kansas, show a pronounced drop in giving in 2008. While this may have been due to the recession, statistically the drop occurred because significantly fewer congregations reported their financials these years.
Analysis of the Michigan District Charts

* Chart A - One of the largest LCMS districts, the Michigan District has seen an increase in total congregations, while experiencing gradual declines in overall membership over 40 years.

* Chart A - While baptized membership has been declining since 1970, confirmed membership in the Michigan District held fairly steady until the past few years.

* Chart B - The Michigan District is one of only seven districts to now have more parish pastors than total congregations.
Mid-South District

Chart A - Congregations and Total Membership

Chart B - Congregations and Number of Parish Pastors

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* Chart A - The Mid-South District is one of the few LCMS Districts that has seen consistent and steady growth in membership numbers over most of the past 40 years.

* Chart A - This growth in membership numbers is roughly in line with the increase in the number of congregations.

* Chart A - While there was a recent downturn in membership numbers, Mid-South was one of two districts to experience membership growth in 2011.
Analysis of the Minnesota North District Charts

* All Charts - The noticeable drop in all statistics in 1988 is because there were several Canadian churches in this district that joined the newly formed Lutheran Church Canada.

* Chart A - Until 1988, Minnesota North congregations had been growing in membership, but since that dip, there has been consistent decline.

* Chart C - Despite the declines in membership, Minnesota North has seen increases in giving, even when accounting for inflation.
Analysis of the Minnesota South District Charts

* Chart A - While confirmed membership in the Minnesota South District has not changed much in 40 years (only recently starting to have noticeable decline), baptized membership has been steadily declining in the district over the same time frame.

* Charts B & C - All other statistics remain fairly consistent or are growing slightly over the past 40 years.

* Chart C - Since 2000, giving in the district has varied greatly from year to year.
Missouri District

Chart A - Congregations and Total Membership

Chart B - Congregations and Number of Parish Pastors
Analysis of the Missouri District Charts

* Chart A - Statistically, the Missouri District has been remarkably unchanged over the past 40 years. Confirmed membership has hardly changed at all, while baptized membership has only dropped slightly.

* Chart B - The Missouri District is one of only seven districts to now have more parish pastors than total congregations.

* Chart C - Giving in the Missouri District has also remained consistent (when adjusting for inflation), though it has varied greatly from year to year in the most recent decade.

* Chart C - Several districts, like Missouri, show a pronounced drop in giving in 2008. While this may have been due to the recession, statistically the drop occurred because significantly fewer congregations reported their financials these years.
* Chart A - In the 1970s and early 80s the Montana District was growing. Since then, even though the number of congregations has still gone up, confirmed membership has more or less been maintained and baptized membership has been gradually declining.

* Chart B - While seeing significant gains in recent years, the Montana District has one of the lowest ratios of total pastors to total congregations in the LCMS.
Analysis of the Nebraska District Charts

* Chart A - Whereas several LCMS Districts have increased in congregations while declining in membership, Nebraska has experienced an increase in members (baptized and confirmed) while the total number of congregations remained fairly static.

* Chart C - Giving in the Nebraska District has mostly followed the trendline for membership, though there is a noticeable decline in giving during the late 80s, which was followed by strong surge in the late 90s.

* Chart C - The surge in giving in the late 90s matches a similar trend in neighboring states Kansas and Oklahoma.
New England District
Chart A - Congregations and Total Membership

Chart B - Congregations and Number of Parish Pastors
Analysis of the New England District Charts

* All Charts - The New England District was created out of the Atlantic District in 1973.

* All Charts - As with other east-coast districts, there was a major loss in all statistics in 1977.

* Chart A - From 1977 until the early 2000s, the New England District remained fairly steady.

* Chart A - Since about 2002, however, they have experienced a gradual decline in membership, while also increasing in total congregations.

* Chart C - There was an unusually large drop in giving in 2004-2006 that may require further explanation.
New Jersey District
Chart A - Congregations and Total Membership

Chart B - Congregations and Number of Parish Pastors
Analysis of the New Jersey District Charts

* All Charts - The New Jersey District was created in 1973, out of the Atlantic District.

* Chart A - Unlike its neighboring districts who also experienced losses in the late 70s, the New Jersey district did not do as well at maintaining its membership afterwards, as the steady decline has continued.

* Chart B - From 2004 - 2006 there was a sudden and rapid loss of parish pastors (nearly 20%) in the New Jersey district. It may be helpful to get more information about what happened.

* Chart C - The New Jersey district is also one of the only LCMS districts that has experienced a steady decline in giving (when adjusted for inflation) over the past 40 years. This decline is in line with the declining membership numbers.
North Dakota District
Chart A - Congregations and Total Membership

Chart B - Congregations and Number of Parish Pastors
Analysis of the North Dakota District Charts

* All Charts - The North Dakota District has experienced a gradual decline in all statistics since the mid-80s.

* Chart B - While the number of parish pastors has decreased overall since 1970, the ratio of congregations to pastors is much better in North Dakota, although this is mostly due to the decline in total congregations.

* Chart C - While many Districts have still experienced an increase in giving despite membership losses, the North Dakota District has seen a decrease in giving when adjusted for inflation.
* Chart A - Up until recently, the North Wisconsin District had done well at maintaining its membership, and even increasing some since 1970.

* Chart A - Even though it has seen declines in membership numbers recently, those declines are very slight.

* Chart C - Giving has also stayed fairly consistent in North Wisconsin, however, there was a noticeable sudden drop in the reported gifts for 2011.
Analysis of the Northern Illinois District Charts

* Chart A - While it has mostly maintained the same amount of total congregations (only recently declining), the Northern Illinois District has experienced steady decline in its baptized and confirmed membership over 40 years.

* Chart B - The Northern Illinois District is one of only seven districts to now have more parish pastors than total congregations.

* Chart C - Giving (when adjusted for inflation) in the Northern Illinois district has also followed the decline in membership, with an even larger drop in the year 2011.
Analysis of the Northwest District Charts

* Chart A - The Northwest District had done well at maintaining its membership until the mid-1980s. From there it has gradually declined in members, and this decline has accelerated in recent years.

* Chart A - Despite the declining membership numbers, the total number of congregations in the Northwest District has increased.

* Chart C - Giving in the Northwest District is also up, having seen a noticeable surge during the early 2000s.

* Chart C - Several districts, like Northwest, show a pronounced drop in giving in 2008. While this may have been due to the recession, statistically the drop occurred because significantly fewer congregations reported their financials these years.
Analysis of the Ohio District Charts

* Chart A - Like many LCMS districts, the Ohio District has experienced a gradual decline in baptized and confirmed membership, while increasing in total congregations.
Analysis of the Oklahoma District Charts

* Chart A - Over the past 40 years, the Oklahoma District has been through periods of growth and decline, resulting in slightly fewer baptized members than it had in 1970, but slightly more confirmed members.

* Chart B - From 1974-1978, there was a dramatic drop in the total number of parish pastors, this was followed in 1979 by a major drop in every other measure, but it cannot be shown that these are related.

* All Charts - A similar but less severe drop in all statistics can be observed in 2001.

* Chart C - In 1998 and again in 2000 there were major boosts in giving in the district.

* Chart C - The surge in giving in the late 90s matches a similar trend in neighboring states Nebraska and Kansas.
* Chart A - Having declined in baptized members in the 1970s, the Pacific Southwest District was able to stop and even reverse the decline through the 1990s. Since 1999, however, there has been a gradual decline in both baptized and confirmed membership.

* Chart A - There is a noticeable jump in the total number of congregations in 1990, this was the year after the California, Southern District became Pacific Southwest.

* Chart B - While the boost in congregations in 1990 can also be seen slightly in membership numbers, there is, surprisingly, a noticeable drop in the total number of parish pastors that year.

* Chart B - The Pacific Southwest District is one of only seven districts that now have more parish pastors than total congregations.
Rocky Mountain District
Chart C - Membership and Giving

Analysis of the Rocky Mountain District Charts

* All Charts - In 1983, the Colorado District was renamed the Rocky Mountain District.

* Chart A - While increasing significantly in total congregations, the Rocky Mountain District has been declining in both baptized and confirmed members in recent years.

* Chart C - Overall, giving in the Rocky Mountain District has increased over the years, even when adjusting for inflation, however, there was a noticeable surge in 2000 with a subsequent drop in 2002.
Analysis of the SELC District Charts

* Chart A - Since its inception in 1971, the SELC District has been gradually declining in membership and total congregations.

* Chart C - Giving in the SELC District has been more inconsistent from year to year than almost any other district, and these fluctuations have been quite dramatic recently, even when adjusting for inflation.

* Chart C - There was a dramatic drop in SELC giving in 2005, preceding the recession of 2008. Giving in the SELC was actually back up during the years of the recession.
* Chart A - Though it has experienced a slight decline in membership and total congregations, the South Dakota District has done better than many districts at maintaining its numbers overall.

* Chart B - Like the Montana District, South Dakota has one of the lowest ratios of parish pastors to total congregations.

* Chart C - While membership is down, even if only slightly, giving in the South Dakota District has been steadily increasing in recent years.
Analysis of the South Wisconsin District Charts

* Chart A - While increasing in the total number of congregations, the South Wisconsin district has been steadily losing members over the past 40 years.

* Chart B - Unlike most districts, the number of parish pastors in South Wisconsin has remained close to the number of congregations, and has even been greater than the number of congregations at several points (though it is currently lower).

* Chart C - Giving in South Wisconsin has also closely followed the membership numbers, though it was boosted by a surge in 2000.
Southeastern District
Chart A - Congregations and Total Membership

Chart B - Congregations and Number of Parish Pastors
Southeastern District
Chart C - Membership and Giving

Analysis of the Southeastern District Charts

* Chart A - The Southeastern District experienced growth up through the early 1990s. It maintained those numbers for a while, but since around 2002, there has been a gradual decline in membership while the number of congregations has increased.

* Chart C - In most districts, giving usually increased even if membership decreased. In the Southeastern District, however, despite steady growth, there was relatively little change in giving until the mid 1980s (when adjusting for inflation).

* Chart C - From then on, giving has increased even as membership numbers leveled out and started to decline.
Analysis of the Southern District Charts

* Chart A - The Southern District has gradually increased in total congregations over the past 40 years, but the trend for membership has been a gradual decline. This decline in membership has accelerated noticeably since 1998.

* Chart C - Even though membership has been decreasing, total giving in the Southern district has steadily increased since 1970.
Analysis of the Southern Illinois District Charts

* Chart A - Over 40 years, the Southern Illinois District has done well at maintaining its numbers, overall.

* Chart A - In 2011, however, there was a noticeably large dip in baptized and confirmed membership.

* Chart C - Whereas many districts even in decline have seen giving increase, the Southern Illinois District has seen an overall decline in total giving.

* Chart C - While giving in the early 2000s temporarily exceeded the giving in the early 1970s (adjusted for inflation), this was offset by a major drop in giving in 2005 and subsequent years.

* Chart C - The major drop in giving in 2005 came despite increases in both baptized and confirmed membership.
Analysis of the Texas District Charts

* Chart A - For most of the past 40 years, Texas has seen a steady increase in congregations and members.

* Chart A - While congregations have continued to grow, membership numbers peaked in 1998, and they have been gradually declining since.

* Chart C - Giving in the Texas District steadily increased until it peaked in 2000. Though it fell some in subsequent years, it has recovered and has been fairly well maintained (adjusted for inflation) despite the decline in membership.
* Chart A - The Wyoming District saw a fair degree of growth through the 1970s and early 80s, but has seen a steadily increasing decline ever since.

* Chart A - In 1991, the statistics reported in the Lutheran Annual show a momentary jump in the number of congregations with a corresponding one-year drop in membership numbers. This may require further explanation.

* Chart C - Giving in the Wyoming District has closely followed the membership trendline, although there was a noticeable spike in giving in 2000. Despite this trending, giving is up when adjusted for inflation.