

THE COMING BABY BOOMER CLIFF

*WHAT HAPPENS IN CHURCHES
WHEN THEY ARE GONE?*



CHURCH ANSWERS



Church attendance is being propped up by one unusually large generation: **Baby Boomers.**





Church attendance is being propped up by one unusually large generation: **Baby Boomers.**

- **Source: Ryan Burge, graphsaboutreligion.com, “When Are Half Your Members Going to be Dead?”**





Church attendance is being propped up by one unusually large generation: **Baby Boomers.**

- Source: Ryan Burge, graphsaboutreligion.com, “When Are Half Your Members Going to be Dead?”
- **Facts are our friends. But what are the *implications?***



FIRST, THE FACTS:

BOOMERS IN CHURCH



BOOMERS IN AMERICA



FIRST, THE FACTS:

BOOMERS IN CHURCH



BOOMERS IN AMERICA



**~20% of the U.S.
adult population**



FIRST, THE FACTS:

BOOMERS IN CHURCH



BOOMERS IN AMERICA



40–50% of many denominations



~20% of the U.S. adult population





The illusion of stability: “Gradually, then suddenly.”





The illusion of stability: “Gradually, then suddenly.”

- **Membership decline in the future will not be linear.**





The illusion of stability: “Gradually, then suddenly.”

- Membership decline in the future will not be linear.
- **Current stability is largely demographic inertia, not revitalization.**





The illusion of stability: “Gradually, then suddenly.”

- **The Baby Boomer demographic tipping point is everywhere in society: housing, entitlement programs, healthcare, charitable giving, and church attendance.**



**MOST MAJOR DENOMINATIONS ARE REACHING A POINT
WHERE AGE IS AN ISSUE.**



MOST MAJOR DENOMINATIONS ARE REACHING A POINT WHERE AGE IS AN ISSUE.

- In several mainline groups, two-thirds are over 60.



MOST MAJOR DENOMINATIONS ARE REACHING A POINT WHERE AGE IS AN ISSUE.

- In several mainline groups, two-thirds are over 60.
- **Many evangelical groups are not meaningfully younger.**



MOST MAJOR DENOMINATIONS ARE REACHING A POINT WHERE AGE IS AN ISSUE.

- In several mainline groups, two-thirds are over 60.
- Many evangelical groups are not meaningfully younger.
- **Southern Baptists: only 6% under 30.**



MOST MAJOR DENOMINATIONS ARE REACHING A POINT WHERE AGE IS AN ISSUE.

- In several mainline groups, two-thirds are over 60.
- Many evangelical groups are not meaningfully younger.
- Southern Baptists: only 6% under 30.
- **In 16 of 20 denominations, Boomers make up at least 40% of the adult membership.**

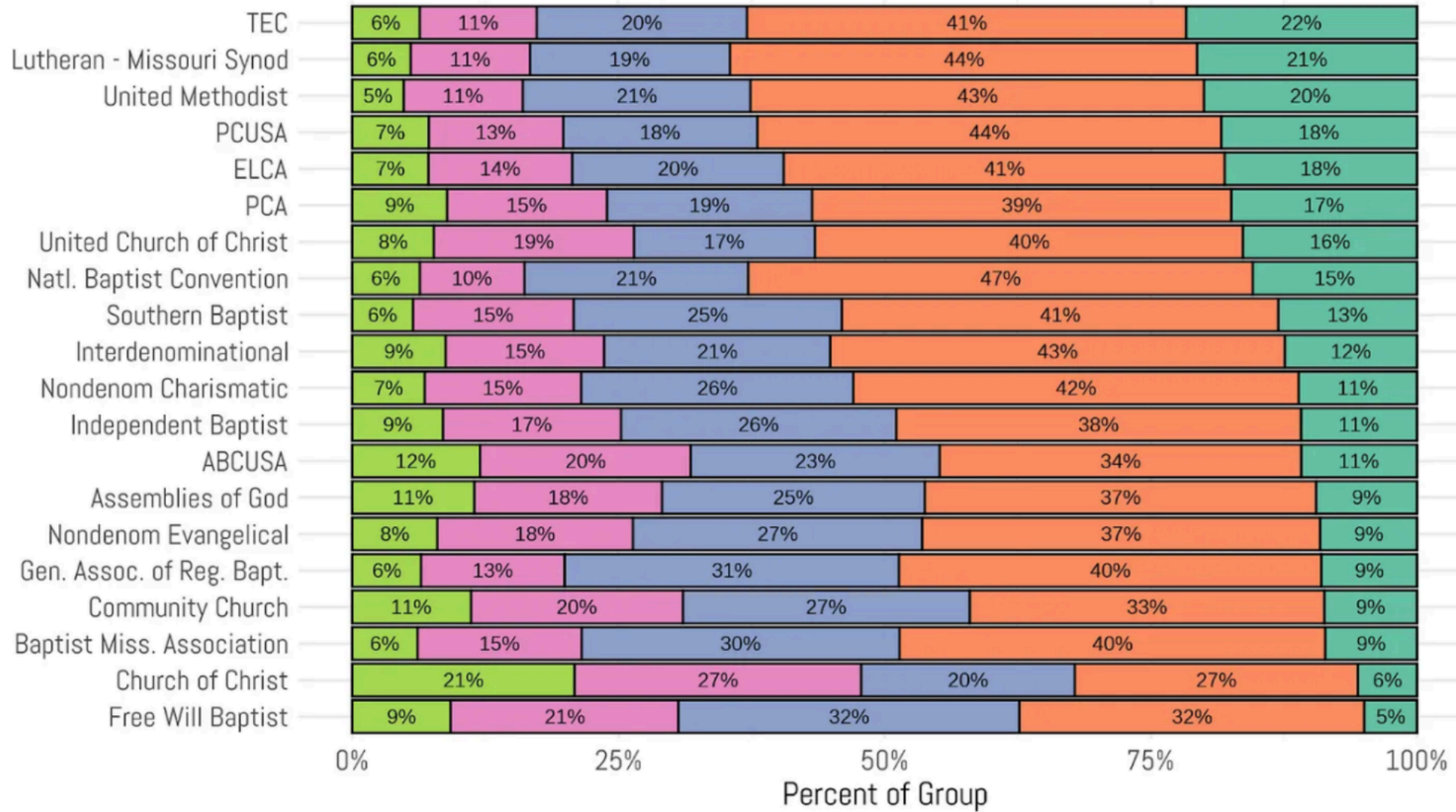


MOST MAJOR DENOMINATIONS ARE REACHING A POINT WHERE AGE IS AN ISSUE.

- In several mainline groups, two-thirds are over 60.
- Many evangelical groups are not meaningfully younger.
- Southern Baptists: only 6% under 30.
- In 16 of 20 denominations, Boomers make up at least 40% of the adult membership.
- **Two charts: bar graph vs beeswarm plot**



Age Distribution of the Top 20 Denominations

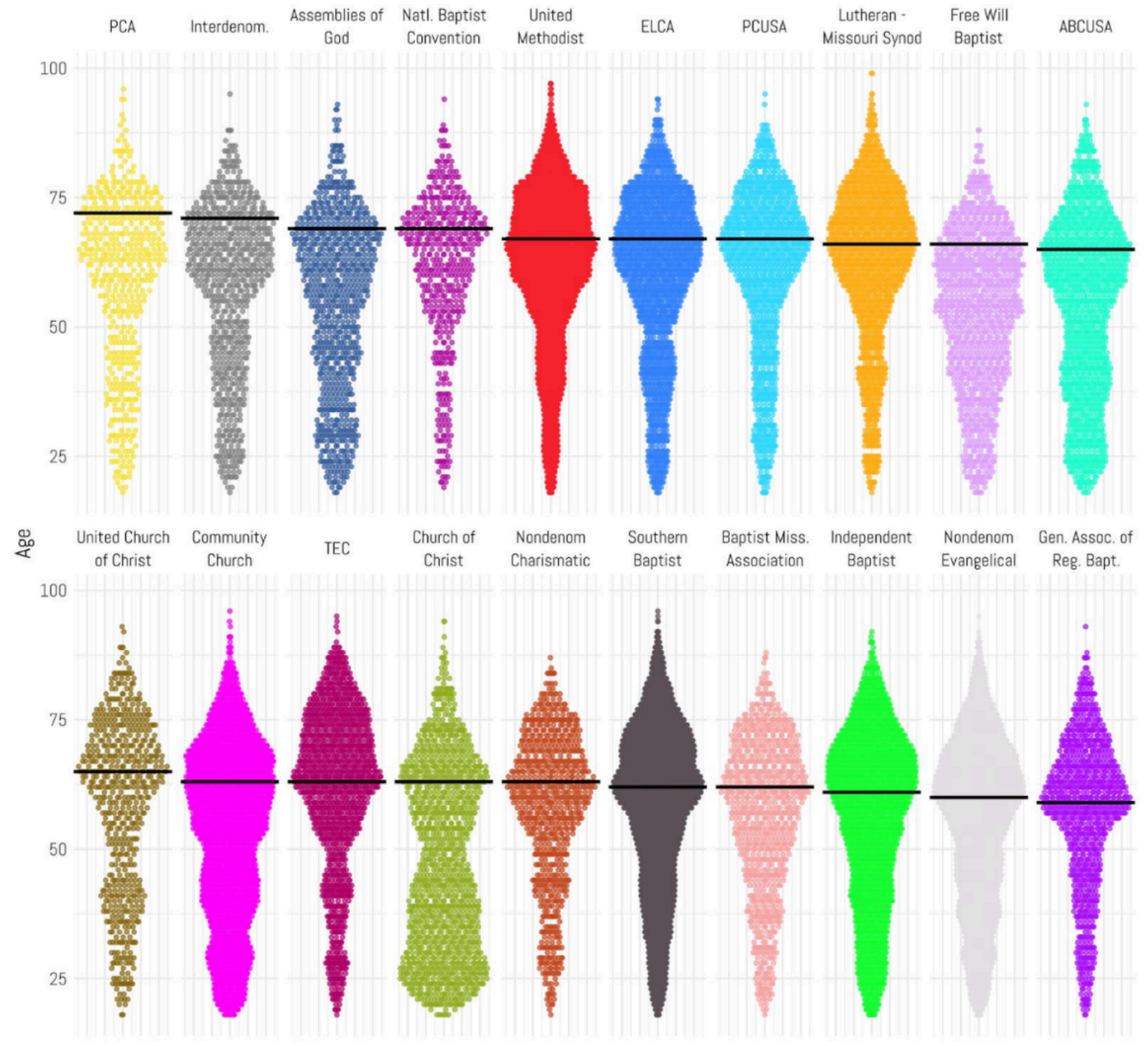


■ 18-29
 ■ 30-44
 ■ 45-59
 ■ 60-74
 ■ 75+

@ryanburge | Data: Cooperative Election Study 2022-2024



Age Distribution by Denomination



@ryanburge | Data: Cooperative Election Study 2022-2024



MEAN AGE VS. MODAL AGE (WHY THE MODE MATTERS MORE)





MEAN AGE VS. MODAL AGE (WHY THE MODE MATTERS MORE)

- **Mean Age (Average): late 50s and early 60s**





MEAN AGE VS. MODAL AGE (WHY THE MODE MATTERS MORE)

- Mean Age (Average): late 50s and early 60s
- **Modal Age (Most Common): frequently 67 to 69 years old**





MEAN AGE VS. MODAL AGE (WHY THE MODE MATTERS MORE)

- Mean Age (Average): late 50s and early 60s
- Modal Age (Most Common): frequently 67 to 69 years old
- **The modal age represents the demographic bulge**





MEAN AGE VS. MODAL AGE (WHY THE MODE MATTERS MORE)

- Why this matters:





MEAN AGE VS. MODAL AGE (WHY THE MODE MATTERS MORE)

- Why this matters:
 - The mode signals the “wave” that will pass through death within 15–20 years.





MEAN AGE VS. MODAL AGE (WHY THE MODE MATTERS MORE)

- Why this matters:
 - The mode signals the “wave” that will pass through death within 15–20 years.
 - **Once that wave crests, losses accelerate rapidly.**





FERTILITY-AGE ADULTS (18–40)





FERTILITY-AGE ADULTS (18–40)

- **Sharp decline across denominations.**





FERTILITY-AGE ADULTS (18–40)

- Sharp decline across denominations.
- **Southern Baptists: from 28% (2008–10) → 19% (2022–24).**





FERTILITY-AGE ADULTS (18–40)

- Sharp decline across denominations.
- Southern Baptists: from 28% (2008–10) → 19% (2022–24).
- **Non-denominational evangelicals: 39% → 27%.**



BOTTOM LINE:



BOTTOM LINE:

#1: Birth rates are currently too low to stop the trend.



BOTTOM LINE:

#1: Birth rates are currently too low to stop the trend.

#2: There is no longer enough transfer growth potential in the United States to outpace the demographic reality of aging Baby Boomers.



BOTTOM LINE:

#1: Birth rates are currently too low to stop the trend.

#2: There is no longer enough transfer growth potential in the United States to outpace the demographic reality of aging Baby Boomers.

#3: Most denominations are set to decline by 30% in about 15 years and 50% in about 20 years.





THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:





THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

#1

Church attendance will drop sharply in the next 10-25 years, but it's a story of the haves and the have-nots: Younger generations will "group" together in individual churches.





#2

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

The leadership pipeline is largely empty: fewer pastors to shepherd declining churches.





#2

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

The leadership pipeline is largely empty: fewer pastors to shepherd declining churches.

- **We need more interim pastors.**





#2

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

The leadership pipeline is largely empty: fewer pastors to shepherd declining churches.

- We need more interim pastors.
- **We need more bi-vo and co-vo pastors.**





#3

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

Fewer closures than some might think, but more adoptions (mergers).





THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

#3

Fewer closures than some might think, but more adoptions (mergers).

- We need more interim pastors.





#3

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

Fewer closures than some might think, but more adoptions (mergers).

- We need more interim pastors.
- **We need more bi-vo and co-vo pastors.**



**LIMITED
OFFER**



**\$1,000 SCHOLARSHIP
FOR TWO TOP-TIER
CERTIFICATIONS (67% OFF)**



**LIMITED
OFFER**



- **Interim Pastor Certification (was \$1,500, now \$500)**



**LIMITED
OFFER**



- **Interim Pastor Certification** (was \$1,500, now \$500)
- **Bi-Vocational Co-Vocational Certification** (was \$1,500, now \$500)





**LIMITED
OFFER**

- **Interim Pastor Certification** (was \$1,500, now \$500)
- **Bi-Vocational Co-Vocational Certification** (was \$1,500, now \$500)
- **Payment plan for each certification: \$97 for 8 months**





- **Lifetime license for all certifications**





**LIMITED
OFFER**

- Lifetime license for all certifications
- **30-day, money-back guarantee, no questions asked**





**LIMITED
OFFER**

- Lifetime license for all certifications
- 30-day, money-back guarantee, no questions asked
- **Buy-it-now bonus: FREE Church Health Scorecard (a \$229 value)**





#4

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

A massive real estate opportunity will form (example of Bradenton church and building a new school).





#5

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

The end of the charitable giving boom? Many churches will discover that 30% fewer members can mean 40–50% less revenue if the major givers are concentrated in older age brackets.





#6

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

Program simplification and institutional downsizing will become unavoidable: As the modal age (often late 60s) moves into end-of-life years, churches will lose not only attendees but volunteers and institutional memory. Expect fewer committees, fewer events, and fewer “legacy programs” simply because the labor force disappears.





#7

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

Increased competition for young families and fertility-age adults (18–40): With a shrinking share of young adults across denominations, churches will increasingly compete for the same limited pool. The churches that win will not merely have better branding, but stronger discipleship systems and clearer theological identity.





#8

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FEWER BABY BOOMERS IN CHURCHES:

Immigration will become a decisive variable for congregational survival: As native-born fertility declines and Boomers age out, immigration will increasingly shape the religious landscape of the United States.





QUESTIONS:





QUESTIONS:

- **If Boomers disappeared tomorrow, what percentage of giving remains?**





QUESTIONS:

- If Boomers disappeared tomorrow, what percentage of giving remains?
- **Is your church structured for growth or for the maintenance of aging members?**





QUESTIONS:

- If Boomers disappeared tomorrow, what percentage of giving remains?
- Is your church structured for growth or for the maintenance of aging members?
- **How will generational replacement look in your church?**



**LIMITED
OFFER**



**\$1,000 SCHOLARSHIP
FOR TWO TOP-TIER
CERTIFICATIONS (67% OFF)**



**LIMITED
OFFER**



- **Interim Pastor Certification (was \$1,500, now \$500)**



**LIMITED
OFFER**



- **Interim Pastor Certification** (was \$1,500, now \$500)
- **Bi-Vocational Co-Vocational Certification** (was \$1,500, now \$500)





**LIMITED
OFFER**

- **Interim Pastor Certification** (was \$1,500, now \$500)
- **Bi-Vocational Co-Vocational Certification** (was \$1,500, now \$500)
- **Payment plan for each certification: \$97 for 8 months**





- **Lifetime license for all certifications**



**LIMITED
OFFER**



- Lifetime license for all certifications
- **30-day, money-back guarantee, no questions asked**





**LIMITED
OFFER**

- Lifetime license for all certifications
- 30-day, money-back guarantee, no questions asked
- **Buy-it-now bonus: FREE Church Health Scorecard (a \$229 value)**



QUESTIONS?



CHURCH ANSWERS

THANK YOU!



CHURCH ANSWERS