



Clergy Race Trends Across Christian Traditions

By Amy Kubichek, Ph.D.

Religious Workforce Project

Lewis Center for Church Leadership

Wesley Theological Seminary



**Religious
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About the Religious Workforce Project

Building on previous research, the Religious Workforce Project is an effort to understand the nation's religious workforce in a comprehensive way. The Project includes a national meta-analysis and a qualitative study in the Washington, DC, metro area. Funding for the project is generously provided by The Lilly Endowment, Inc. This project seeks to answer the following questions: Given today's changing religious landscape, how are leaders of U.S. congregations adapting? How do these changes shape the staffing, financial models, priorities, and the work of U.S. congregations? And what is the state of the religious workforce today?

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Clergy Race Trends Across Christian Traditions

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Introduction

Racial and ethnic inequality is well documented in many aspects of daily life in the United States. People of color face barriers in educational and employment opportunities, home ownership, and access to credit.¹ People of color are underrepresented in jobs where they hold positions of authority,² and their earnings are lower than those of whites.³ Despite all the evidence of racial inequality in a variety of arenas of public life, little research has been done on the racial and ethnic composition of clergy, nor on whether racial and ethnic disparities exist within religious traditions or denominations in terms of clergy salaries, size of congregations they serve, or economic resources of the congregations they serve.

In this report, we undertake the task of filling in some of the gaps in what we know and don't know about racial and ethnic composition of Christian clergy, and whether there are racial disparities in terms of the size and economic resources of congregations that clergy serve. In Section 1 of this report, we provide a brief historical overview of leadership roles of racial/ethnic minority pastors in each of three broad Christian traditions: evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic.⁴ We also discuss how overall social and cultural trends have impacted Asian, Black, and Hispanic

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- 1 Matthew A. Painter, II and Zhenchao Qian, "Wealth Inequality Among Immigrants: Consistent Racial/Ethnic Inequality in the United States," *Population Research and Policy Review* 35, no. 2 (April 2016): 149-151; Chenoa A. Flippen, "Racial and Ethnic Inequality in Homeownership and Housing Equity," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 42, no. 2 (Spring 2001):128.
 - 2 Ryan A. Smith, "Race, Gender, and Authority in the Workplace: Theory and Research," *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (2002): 524-525; Victoria C. Plaut, "Diversity Science: Why and How Difference Makes a Difference," *Psychological Inquiry* 21, no. 2 (April-June 2010): 79.
 - 3 Victoria C. Plaut, "Diversity Science," 79; William M. Rodgers III, "Race in the Labor Market: The Role of Equal Employment Opportunity and Other Policies," *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 5, no. 5 (December 2019): 205; Ted A. Smith, *The End of Theological Education*, (Chicago: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023), 107-108.
 - 4 While a case can be made for using the term "white evangelical Protestant," we retain the term "evangelical Protestant." This is for the sake of consistency with the National Congregations Study classification of Black Protestant, evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic, as well as for the sake of consistency with our other Religious Workforce Project reports. We acknowledge that leaving out the term "white" does not differentiate between the majority of white evangelical denominations in the evangelical Protestant category from the historically Black Protestant denominations in the Black Protestant category that also consider themselves evangelical.



ministerial opportunities, and how barriers within denominations and religious traditions have prevented the full inclusion of people of color in historically white congregations, especially in leadership roles. Next, we analyze National Congregations Study (NCS) data to look at racial and ethnic diversity of lead pastors across evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic religious traditions.⁵ The National Congregations Study is a multi-year, nationally representative survey of congregations across the United States. It covers a wide range of topics, including religious tradition of congregations, congregational size, staffing configurations and demographic characteristics of pastors and other ministerial staff.⁶ We draw upon all four waves of NCS from 1998, 2006, 2012, and 2018 regarding changes in the proportion of pastors who belong to various races and ethnicities. Finally, we examine the racial and ethnic composition of Master of Divinity graduates from evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic institutions. This is because seminaries have traditionally served as a pipeline of candidates to fill pastoral positions in congregations, and the Master of Divinity degree is often seen as the necessary credential to fill these positions. We draw on Association of Theological Schools (ATS) data⁷ from 1998, 2006, 2012, and 2018 so that we can compare these trends to each of the waves of the NCS.

Section 2 provides an overview of the racial and ethnic composition of clergy in several denominations. We compare percentage of lead pastors who belong to various races and ethnicities for the denominations in our study that provided this information, as well as for denominations that provide publicly available data on the race and ethnicity of their pastoral leaders. We also note/discuss which denominations provide/collect this information, and which ones do not. We finish with a case study of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the one denomination that provided in-depth information on racial and ethnic diversity of both pastors and members of congregations. We conclude with a discussion of how the lack of knowledge/information on racial and ethnic composition of clergy reflects a color-blind approach to doing ministry, and the implications that this has for clergy of color serving in majority-white denominations.

5 It's important to note that in the National Congregations Study Cumulative Dataset (1998, 2006-2007, 2012, 2018-2019), congregations in which at least 80 percent of regular participants are Black are classified as Black Protestant, even if they belong to mainline or evangelical denominations. We have re-coded religious tradition of Protestant congregations so that majority Black congregations belonging to evangelical or mainline Protestant denominations are classified as belonging to either the evangelical or mainline Protestant religious traditions.

6 Mark Chaves, Joseph Roso, Anna Holleman, and Mary Hawkins, *Congregations in 21st Century America* (Durham, NC: Duke University, Department of Sociology, 2021).

7 <https://www.ats.edu/Data-Visualization>



Section 1.

Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

Evangelical Protestant and Mainline Protestant

The story of African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, and other racial and ethnic minorities in the evangelical and mainline Protestant traditions is a story of racism, segregation, marginalization, and differential opportunities. In this section, we give a brief history of these three racial and ethnic groups and their relation to the dominant white culture of the evangelical and mainline Protestant traditions.⁸ We then examine the racial and ethnic composition of pastoral leaders in these two religious traditions. We also look at trends in the racial and ethnic composition of Master of Divinity graduates in evangelical Protestant and mainline Protestant traditions, and how these trends compare to the racial and ethnic composition of clergy in these traditions.

African Americans

Today, Christianity in the United States is highly segregated by race. Throughout most of the 20th century, over 80 percent of African Americans who identify as Christian belong to one of seven historically Black denominations.⁹ The remaining 20 percent of Black Christians belong to the Catholic Church, smaller Black Christian sects, or predominantly white mainline denominations. As a result, the share of historically white evangelical and mainline Protestant denominations composed of African Americans remains low. In order to understand why this racial separation exists, it is important to review African American church history from its very beginnings.

⁸ For the most part we do not differentiate between mainline and evangelical Protestant denominations in the discussion of the history of clergy of color. This is because some of the denominations considered mainline today (such as Methodists) were evangelical denominations in earlier eras of U.S. history.

⁹ Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Juan Floyd-Thomas, Carol B. Duncan, Stephen G. Ray, Jr., and Nancy Lynne Westfield, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 18; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), xii (preface).



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Christianity among African Americans has its roots in the colonial period and in the First Great Awakening, a spiritual revival that took place from the mid to late 1700s.¹⁰ “Fire and brimstone” preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield emphasized that people of all races and economic classes were spiritual equals, and as a result, many African slaves converted to Christianity.¹¹ At the same time, both Edwards and Whitefield owned slaves and did not equate spiritual equality with equal rights and dignity for slaves or other Blacks.¹² There was opposition to slavery among Methodist leaders, as well as among Baptists, although this opposition waned over time. When Methodism was first organized in the United States in 1784, the denomination prohibited the ownership of slaves for its members.¹³ This principled stand could not sustain itself against the powerful interests benefiting from slavery. Within six months accommodations were made to be followed by generations of such compromises seen across a broad range of U.S. religious movements.¹⁴ The Anglicans, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians also tried to evangelize African slaves.¹⁵ However, many slaveowners in the South were Episcopalian and pushed their church in the direction of upholding the institution of slavery. Leaders in the Episcopal Church launched a defense of slavery to justify their way of life.¹⁶ After the Civil War and emancipation, many African Americans who were forced to be members of the Episcopal church by their white slave masters left the denomination. Those newly freed slaves who remained in the Episcopal Church faced discrimination from the white congregants.

Baptists and Methodists were especially instrumental in converting African slaves to Christianity during the colonial period and the Revolutionary era.¹⁷ By the beginning of the 19th century, there were over 25,000 Black Baptists,¹⁸ and by 1820, more than 20 percent of American Methodists were Black.¹⁹ But Black participation did not mean racial equality. Increasingly shaped by the racist cultural influences in the United

¹⁰ Stacey Floyd-Thomas, et al., *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, 6.

¹¹ Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, 7.

¹² Mark A. Knoll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 83, 98.

¹³ Methodist Episcopal Church, *Minutes of the Annual Conference (1784)*, 20.

¹⁴ Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 58-60.

¹⁵ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 104-105.

¹⁶ David Hein and Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *The Episcopalians*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 77-80, 101.

¹⁷ Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, 8-9.

¹⁸ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, 24.

¹⁹ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 157.



States, denominations placed greater restrictions on African Americans who worshipped in white congregations, both in the North and in the South.²⁰ Black Baptist churches in the south could not establish their own associations apart from the white-led Baptist associations.²¹ Likewise, the Black Methodist congregations and their leaders were still under the authority of white elders. Beginning in the early 19th century, the Methodist Episcopal Church allowed Black men to be exhorters, local preachers, class teachers, and to be trustees, but they did not have full clergy rights that white men enjoyed.²²

As a result of the indignities that Black people experienced in white congregations, they left white congregations in greater numbers and formed their own separate Black Methodist and Baptist congregations.²³ In 1816, African American congregations in the white-controlled Methodist Episcopal Church united to establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) as a separate denomination.²⁴ Another Black Methodist denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ), was established around the turn of the 19th century.²⁵ Even after the formation of the AME and AMEZ denominations, many African Americans remained in the Methodist Episcopal Church, working within the denomination to become more fully included.²⁶ Black Methodists in the south continued to be treated as subhuman after the end of the Civil War.²⁷ As a result, many Black members of the denomination petitioned to establish a separate Methodist denomination, and in 1870 the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was born (later to be called the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1954). In 1886, against the wishes of the Northern white Baptists, Black Baptists established the American National Baptist

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20 Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, 25; Stacey Floyd-Thomas, et al., *Black Church Studies*, 18.

21 Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, 60-63.

22 Russell E. Richey, et al., *The Methodist Experience in America*, 87; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, 25.

23 Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, 25; David Hein and Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *The Episcopalians*, 328.

24 David Hein and Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *The Episcopalians*, 328.

25 Stacey Floyd-Thomas, et al., *Black Church Studies*, 10.

26 Russell E. Richey, et al., *The Methodist Experience in America*, 145, 217-218.

27 Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, 60-63.



Convention as an independent Black Baptist denomination.²⁸ This new denomination had over one million members across 9,000 congregations in seventeen states. In 1895, it consolidated with two other Black Baptist organizations to become the National Baptist Convention, USA. A schism in 1915 within this convention led to the formation of the National Baptist Convention of America. Another schism within the National Baptist Convention, USA in 1961 led to yet another Black Baptist denomination, the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

The seventh main historically Black denomination is the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), which is the largest Black Pentecostal denomination today. It was founded by the Rev. Charles Harrison Mason and has its roots in the Pentecostal and Holiness movements that began in the late 1860s.²⁹ Mason was an African American who started out as a Baptist minister in Arkansas.³⁰ He began teaching the Holiness doctrine of entire sanctification, which is the belief that Christians can become free of all known sin by a second blessing of the Holy Spirit. As a result, he was dismissed from the Baptist church that he pastored in 1895. He joined the Rev. Charles P. Jones in preaching the doctrine of sanctification at revival meetings in Mississippi, and they were subsequently barred from preaching at any of the state's Baptist congregations. The two men began holding revival meetings and later established a Holiness congregation in Lexington, Mississippi. In 1897, Mason and Jones incorporated the Church of God in Christ as a new denomination.

In 1907, Charles Mason spent several weeks attending the Azusa Street Revival, a Pentecostal revival meeting in Los Angeles led by the African American Holiness preacher William Seymour.³¹ When Mason returned to Mississippi, he began preaching the Pentecostal doctrine of glossolalia (“baptism of the Holy Ghost” as evidenced by speaking in other tongues). Charles P. Jones and many others

Even today, the Women's Department plays an influential role in COGIC congregations. While women can take on a wide variety of leadership roles in COGIC congregations, the denomination still has formal restrictions against women taking on the roles of elder, pastor, or bishop.

²⁸ Ibid., 26-30.

²⁹ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, 78-81.

³⁰ Ibid., 80-81.

³¹ Ibid., 77, 81-82.



in the COGIC rejected this doctrine and left to form a separate denomination. Mason reorganized COGIC as a Pentecostal denomination and held the first Pentecostal General Assembly of COGIC that same year. As African Americans migrated to cities in the north, he sent evangelists to these urban regions to establish new COGIC congregations.

The Pentecostal and Holiness movements began as interracial movements to which both African Americans and Caucasians belonged. COGIC was the only incorporated Pentecostal denomination from 1907 to 1914, and therefore the only Pentecostal ecclesial body that held authority for Pentecostal ministers. As a result, there were many white men who were ordained by Bishop Mason and became COGIC ministers. However, both movements reacted against more liberal Christian teachings, and as time went on the larger Pentecostal movement began to reflect segregation by race. In 1914, the white men whom Mason had ordained withdrew from the COGIC denomination and moved toward other Pentecostal denominations, especially the Assemblies of God.³²

Asian Americans

The first waves of immigrants from Asian countries came to the West Coast of the United States and to Hawai'i (annexed in 1898) beginning in the mid to late 1800s after the United States started to allow migrant workers from Asian countries to come to the United States.³³ Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist missionaries viewed the Chinese and Japanese immigrants as a harvest field that was not only ripe for the gospel, but also needing assimilation into the dominant white American culture.³⁴ By the 1880s, there were around 100,000 Chinese Americans in California.³⁵ Baptists and Episcopalians started Chinese missions in California

Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist missionaries viewed the Chinese and Japanese immigrants as a harvest field that was not only ripe for the gospel, but also needing assimilation into the dominant white American culture.

³² Ibid., 79, 81.

³³ Stacy D. Kitahata and Laura Mariko Cheifetz, "Forming Asian Leaders for North American Churches," Chapter 92 in *Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook*, Vol. 2, Ed. by Sharon Henderson Callahan, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), 709-710.

³⁴ Timothy Tseng, "The Changing Face of Evangelicalism," Chap. 5 in *The Future of Evangelicalism in America*, ed. by Candy Gunther Brown and Mark Silk, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 176.

³⁵ Russell E. Richey, et al., *The Methodist Experience in America*, 293-295.



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beginning in the 1850s.³⁶ In 1852, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions began a Chinese mission to care for Chinese immigrants when they first arrived in California. As Chinese and Japanese Americans started migrating to the East Coast and other areas of the United States, Methodist mission churches were started there as well.³⁷ Koreans began to immigrate to the United States in large numbers starting in 1903, first arriving in Hawai'i to work on plantations there, and by 1916 there were 31 Korean churches with around 2,000 members in Hawai'i.³⁸ Large numbers of Koreans also left Hawai'i and migrated to California during the beginning of the 20th century, and Methodist mission work continued among Korean Americans on the West Coast and in the other states they migrated to throughout the first two decades of the 20th century.

After World War II, Mainline Protestant denominations focused on the racial and ethnic integration of their member congregations.³⁹ In 1946, the Federal Council of Churches adopted color blind ideology in order to counter the racial segregation that was so prevalent in U.S. society and urged member denominations to work toward integrating their congregations. According to color blind ideology, differences between racial and ethnic groups should be downplayed or ignored so that individuals or organizations will not consider racial or ethnic identity when they make decisions or carry out actions. The purpose is to avoid behavior or decisions that discriminate against individuals based on their race.⁴⁰ According to this ideology, organizations should instead focus on uniting all members of the organization to a common identity, mission, or goal.⁴¹ Leaders of mainline denominations enacted color blind policies and expected racial and ethnic minorities in their congregations to assimilate to the dominant white culture of the United States. Mainline denominations started to dissolve their ethnic based judicatories, and in some cases encouraged existing racial and ethnic congregations to merge with more established white congregations. This proved to be detrimental for those Asian American congregations that did merge with white congregations. Many Asian congregations refused to integrate with white congregations. If denominations continued to pressure them to integrate, many Asian congregations chose to leave

36 Fumitaka Matsuoka, *Out of Silence: Emerging Themes in Asian American Churches*, (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1995), 19-20.

37 Russell E. Richey, et al., *The Methodist Experience in America*, 294-295.

38 Ibid.

39 Timothy Tseng, "The Changing Face of Evangelicalism," 179-180.

40 Evan P. Apfelbaum, Michael I. Norton and Samuel R. Sommers, "Racial Color Blindness: Emergence, Practice, and Implications," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 21, no. 3 (June 2012): 205.

41 Victoria C. Plaut, "Diversity Science," 85.



their mainline denominations and joined Pentecostal and evangelical Protestant denominations instead.

While seminaries welcomed Asian students to study for ordained ministry, they did not consider how culture and identity shaped these students' experiences, or how their needs might be different than those of the majority white student bodies.⁴² In response, from the 1970s onward Asian American pastoral leaders and seminarians created their own programs and networks to fill this gap. According to Stacy D. Kitahata and Laura Mariko Cheifetz, the purpose of these organizations and networks was to “develop leadership among Asian American Christians, explore culturally influenced identity and faith development, address the racialized experience, build capacity for social analysis and engagement, and respect the multifaith context of Asian America”.⁴³ By the end of the first decade in the 21st century, there were at least four seminary-based programs for Asian Americans.

Hispanics

Protestant ministry among Hispanics began during the second half of the 19th century after the Mexican American War ended and Texas, California, and the Southwestern territories (formerly belonging to Mexico) were annexed to the United States.⁴⁴ The vast majority of Mexicans living in these territories became U.S. citizens, and white Protestants sent missionaries to convert the Mexican Americans to Protestant Christianity as well as to help them assimilate to white American culture. Most Hispanic churches established in the 1800s were Presbyterian or Methodist, although there were also some Congregationalist and Baptist churches. By the beginning of the 1900s, there were about 150 Hispanic Protestant congregations in the Southwest.

During the first half of the 20th century, whites were in leadership positions in most Protestant denominations, and any Hispanic congregations were financially dependent on the white-led

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42 Stacy D. Kitahata and Laura Mariko Cheifetz, “Forming Asian Leaders for North American Churches,” 710-712.

43 Ibid., 710-712.

44 Timothy Tseng, “The Changing Face of Evangelicalism,” 176.



denominations of which they were a part.⁴⁵ For the most part, whites in the mainline and some evangelical denominations took a paternalistic attitude toward Hispanics and their congregations, and whites had decision-making power over them. Hispanic churches tended to be small and dependent on white missionaries to lead them. Latinos were not allowed to lead Hispanic churches because whites believed that Hispanics were incapable of managing their own congregations well. Most Protestant denominations imposed the church structures of the dominant white group on the Hispanic congregations that belonged to them. The majority white denominations often invested substantial amounts of money to start and maintain Hispanic mission congregations, yet this model was not sustainable for many Hispanic congregations that were less financially well-off.

The United Methodist Church (and its predecessor denominations) has been actively involved in ministry to Hispanic communities. These predecessor denominations vacillated between assimilation and identity in their policies regarding Hispanic ministry.⁴⁶ During some periods, the Methodist leaders believed that Hispanic Methodists should have their own church structures within the denomination, while at other times they believed that Hispanic congregations should be absorbed into the majority white conferences. In most cases, Hispanics did not have a voice in the decision-making process regarding this issue. In each instance where Hispanic conferences were integrated into majority white conferences, church growth in Hispanic congregations decreased, and the number of pastoral leaders shrank as a result.

In most Protestant denominations, there was much growth in numbers of Hispanic members after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was passed, ending national quotas that favored immigrants from northern European countries.⁴⁷ This growth in Hispanic members was especially great among evangelical and Pentecostal denominations.⁴⁸ During the 1980s, many people in Central America left their countries due to civil wars and violence and sought asylum in the United States. Increasingly, immigrants from Central America were already Protestant when they fled their countries, and they joined Protestant churches (or started new ones) when they arrived in the United States. The Assemblies of God especially saw much growth in their Hispanic

45 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 72-76, 95, 168.

46 Justo L. Gonzalez, "Overview," Chapter 1 in *Each in Our Own Tongue: A History of Hispanic United Methodism*, Ed. by Justo L. Gonzalez, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 33.

47 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 110-111, 116-117, 126-131.

48 *Ibid.*, 116-117.



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members in the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st century. By 1977, there were 481 Hispanic congregations in the Assemblies of God, and around 36,000 Hispanic members. By 2014, 700,000 Hispanics attended Assemblies of God congregations in the United States,⁴⁹ and composed a quarter of the denomination's membership.⁵⁰ In the same year, there were 2,665 Latino Assemblies of God churches and missions and 14 Latin districts across the United States and Puerto Rico. While many Latino congregations were members of the Latin districts, some existed within the historically Euro-American districts.⁵¹ The Southern Baptist Convention also saw much growth in the number of Hispanic members and congregations and has the second-largest number of Hispanic members among Protestant denominations in the United States.⁵² The Baptist General Convention of Texas provided a lot of funding for new Hispanic ministries and planting new Hispanic churches. Unlike some other denominations, the Southern Baptists gave the Hispanic congregations and ministries a lot of autonomy to manage their own affairs. However, because the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, Hispanics made up only 3 percent of its membership in 2014.⁵³

There are several Latino denominations that have been established in the United States, and all of these are Pentecostal denominations.⁵⁴ Juan Martinez, scholar of Latino Protestantism, compares them to the historically Black denominations. The Latin American Council of Christian Churches (CLADIC) left the Mexican district of the Assemblies of God in 1923 and was established as a separate denomination.⁵⁵ It was the first Latino Protestant denomination to be established by Hispanics in the United States. The Latin American Council of the Pentecostal Church of God of New York, Inc. (CLANY) is a small Hispanic denomination that started in New York as a splinter group from the Assemblies of God in 1954, and now has congregations in 24 states and several other countries.⁵⁶ The Pentecostal Church of God is a third Latino denomination that split from the Assemblies of God to become a separate denomination in 1957.⁵⁷ In addition to these

49 Gaston Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 187-188.

50 Michael, Lipka, "[The Most and Least Racially Diverse U.S. Religious Groups](#)," (Pew Research Center, July 27, 2015).

51 Gaston Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 187-188.

52 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 146, 174.

53 Michael, Lipka, "The Most and Least Racially Diverse U.S. Religious Groups."

54 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 182.

55 Gaston Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 126, 249, 269.

56 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 89, 180.

57 Gaston Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 248-249.



offshoots from the Assemblies of God, Latino Protestants have founded other Hispanic denominations in the United States. These include the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus (a Oneness Pentecostal denomination founded by Mexican Americans in 1930), the Assembly of Christian Churches (AIC), which is a denomination that separated from CLADIC in 1939,⁵⁸ and the Church of Christ Last Call Ministries, which was founded in 1988.⁵⁹

National Congregations Study – Racial and Ethnic diversity of Evangelical and Mainline Protestant congregations

We now turn to analyzing National Congregations Study (NCS) data to look at racial and ethnic diversity of lead pastors of evangelical and mainline Protestant congregations.⁶⁰ We begin by looking at evangelical congregations. We first examined a “snapshot” of racial and ethnic diversity of pastors; that is all four years of data were combined when we ran the analyses. We found that the majority of evangelical Protestant congregations are led by white clergy.⁶¹ Almost three-quarters of evangelical Protestant congregations are led by white pastors, while almost a fifth of congregations are led by Black clergy (figure 1).

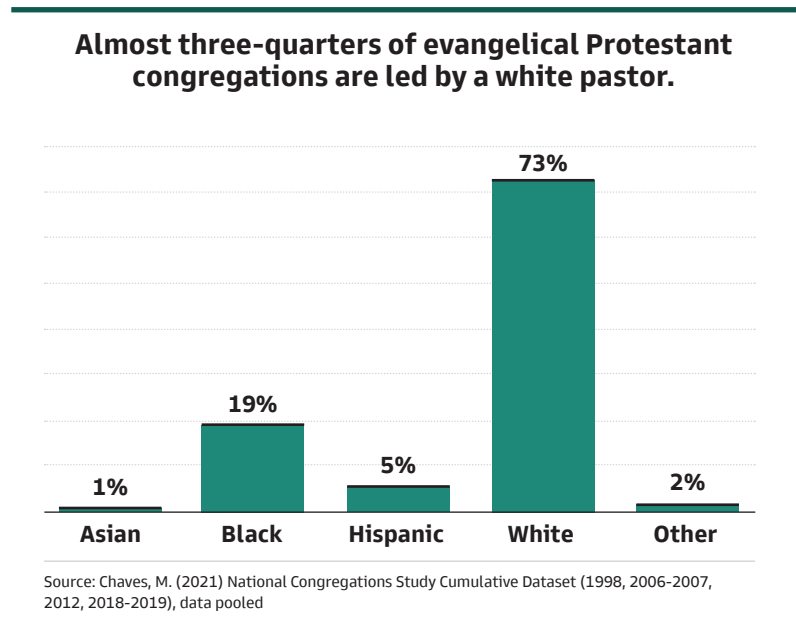


Figure 1. Share of evangelical Protestant congregations led by clergy of various races and ethnicities.

58 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 67, 70, 177.

59 Tony Solorzano, “Last Call Ministries,” Chap. 6 in *Los Evangelicos: Portraits of Latino Protestantism in the United States*, ed. by Juan F. Martinez and Lindy Scott, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 94-104.

60 While a case can be made for using the term “white evangelical Protestant,” we retain the term “evangelical Protestant.” This is for the sake of consistency with the National Congregations Study classification of Black Protestant, evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic, as well as for the sake of consistency with our other Religious Workforce Project reports. We acknowledge that leaving out the term “white” does not differentiate between the majority of white evangelical denominations in the evangelical Protestant category from the historically Black Protestant denominations in the Black Protestant category that also consider themselves evangelical.

61 We found that among evangelical Protestant congregations, there were too few cases that had lead pastors who were Asian, Hispanic, or Other in each year of the study to report on share of congregations with a pastor of each race or ethnicity by year. Therefore, we have pooled the data from all years to obtain percent of congregations led by pastors of each race or ethnicity.

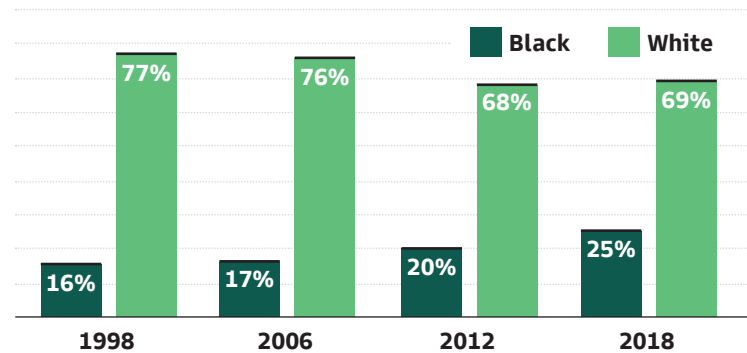


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While there are too few cases to look at percentage of Asian, Hispanic, or pastors of Other races for each year separately, we can examine how the share of Black and white lead pastors has changed over time.⁶² We found that while the majority of evangelical Protestant congregations were led by white pastors in all four years of the National Congregations Study, the share of white pastors leading congregations has been decreasing (figure 2). The percentage of congregations led by white pastors was slightly over 75 percent in 1998, and this had decreased to 69 percent by 2018. In contrast, the share of Black pastors leading evangelical Protestant congregations has been increasing over the twenty-year timespan of the study. Black-led congregations comprised only 16 percent of all evangelical Protestant congregations in 1998. Two decades later, congregations led by a Black pastor comprised a quarter of all evangelical Protestant congregations.

However, a closer examination of the data shows that a large number of Black clergy lead majority-Black congregations that belong to denominations that could be considered Black Protestant, such as “other Baptist” or “other Pentecostal.”⁶³ When these congregations are omitted, the share of Black pastors leading evangelical congregations drops, and remains almost the same between 1998 and 2018 (figure 3).⁶⁴

The share of Black pastors leading evangelical Protestant congregations has been gradually increasing.



Source: Chaves, M. (2021) National Congregations Study Cumulative Dataset (1998, 2006-2007, 2012, 2018-2019).

Figure 2. Change in share of evangelical Protestant congregations led by Black and white clergy from 1998 to 2018

⁶² The number of evangelical Protestant congregations with a Black pastor were as follows: 1998 – 62 congregations, 2006 – 74 congregations, 2012 – 79 congregations, and 2018 – 92 congregations.

⁶³ For these analyses, we included majority-Black congregations that were members of historically white evangelical denominations, such as Southern Baptist Convention, Assemblies of God, Church of the Nazarene, Church or Churches of God, Seventh-Day Adventist, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Church or Churches of Christ, and that other Methodist. We omitted majority-Black congregations that were other Baptist, or other Pentecostal, or no denominational affiliation.

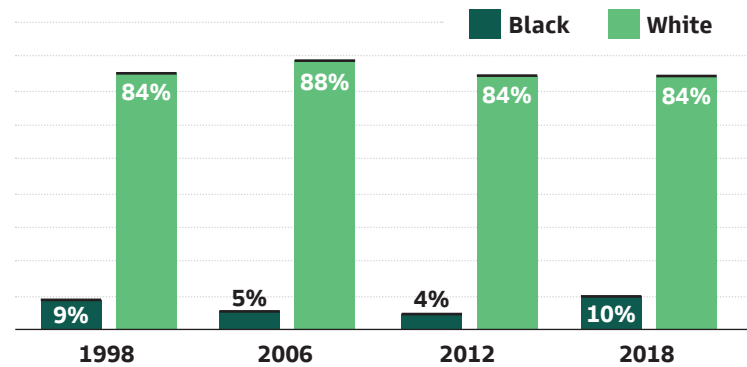
⁶⁴ When Black evangelical Protestant congregations were omitted from the analyses, the number of white evangelical Protestant congregations with a Black pastor were as follows: 1998 – 47 congregations, 2006 – 31, 2012 – 23, 2018 – 54.



Section 1. Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

The share of congregations led by a white pastor is somewhat overrepresented compared to the general population of adherents in evangelical Protestant congregations (figure 3). While 76 percent of adherents of evangelical denominations identified as white in 2014,⁶⁵ 84 percent of evangelical congregations had a white pastor in 2018. Interestingly, Black pastors leading white evangelical Protestant congregations are somewhat over-represented compared to the general population of Black adherents of white evangelical Protestant denominations. Only 6 percent of evangelical Protestants identified as Black in 2014,⁶⁶ while a tenth of white evangelical congregations were served by a Black pastor in 2018.

The share of Black and white pastors leading congregations affiliated with white evangelical denominations remained the same between 1998 and 2018.



Source: Chaves, M. (2021) National Congregations Study Cumulative Dataset (1998, 2006-2007, 2012, 2018-2019).

Figure 3. Share of Black and white pastors leading congregations affiliated with white evangelical denominations

65 Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (May 12, 2015), 52.

66 Ibid.

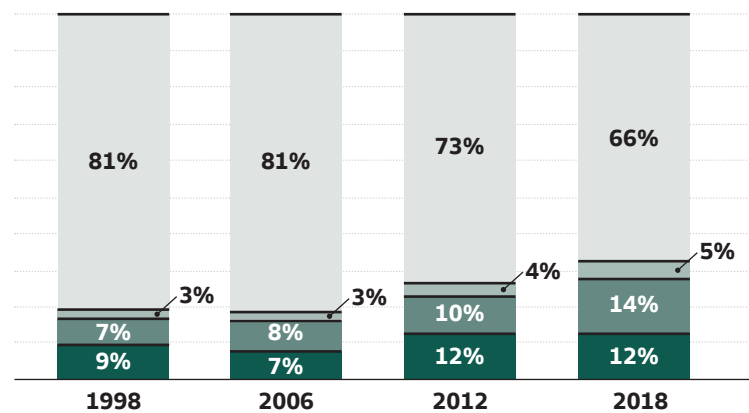


Master of Divinity graduates from evangelical Protestant seminaries

How does the racial and ethnic makeup of Master of Divinity graduates from evangelical Protestant seminaries compare to the racial and ethnic composition of lead pastors of evangelical Protestant congregations? To discover this, we analyzed data from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).⁶⁷ We found that from 1998 to 2018, the pool of M.Div. graduates has gradually become more racially diverse (figure 4). The share of M.Div. graduates who are white decreased by 15 percentage points during this twenty-year period, declining from just over 80 percent in 1998 to two-thirds of all M.Div. graduates in 2018. The share of Black M.Div. graduates doubled during this same period. Hispanics made up the smallest share of M.Div. graduates in all four years, comprising no more than 5 percent. This is the same percentage as the share of evangelical congregations that are led by a Hispanic pastor.

If one only includes congregations that belong to white evangelical Protestant denominations, then overall the share of evangelical Protestant congregations led by Black pastors is slightly lower than the share of M.Div. graduates from evangelical Protestant seminaries who are Black. For example, Black clergy made up 10 percent of lead pastors in 2018, while Black M.Div. students made up 14 percent of all graduates from evangelical Protestant seminaries. This can be partly explained by the fact that ATS includes not only majority white seminaries in their count of evangelical Protestant seminaries, but majority Black, majority Asian, and majority Hispanic seminaries as well. Even among Black M.Div. graduates from white evangelical seminaries, sizeable proportions come from denominations other than white evangelical denominations. For instance, among those who responded to the

The share of Asian and Black M.Div. graduates from evangelical Protestant seminaries has been increasing.



Source: Association of Theological Schools

Asian Black Hispanic White

Figure 4. Change in share of M.Div. graduates from evangelical Protestant seminaries by race and ethnicity, 1998-2018

67 The Association of Theological Schools' data visualization tool allows one to sort data by ecclesial family, such as evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic/Orthodox. Data on M.Div. completions from evangelical Protestant seminaries include all evangelical seminaries, regardless of majority race of student body.



Section 1. Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

ATS's Graduating Student Questionnaires, almost a third (32 percent) were from Black Protestant denominations, while a little more than a quarter (27 percent) came from Baptist (unspecified) or nondenominational backgrounds.⁶⁸

We also looked at changes in number of M.Div. graduates by race and ethnicity. While the number of M.Div. graduates from evangelical Protestant seminaries increased between 1998 and 2018, the number of Black M.Div. graduates increased the most, both in terms of absolute numbers and in percent change (table 1). There were 258 more Black graduates in 2018 than in 1998, which is an increase of 165 percent. While white seminarians composed the most M.Div. graduates in both 1998 and 2018, there were only 97 more white graduates in 2018 than in 1998. This is an increase of only 5 percent.

Table 1. The number of Black and Hispanic M.Div. graduates from evangelical Protestant seminaries more than doubled between 1998 and 2018.

Race and ethnicity	1998	2018	Absolute change	Percent change
Asian	201	349	148	74%
Black	156	414	258	165%
Hispanic	60	142	82	137%
White	1,782	1,879	97	5%
All	2,199	2,784	585	27%

Source: [Association of Theological Schools](#)

Formation of Hispanic leaders

During the early to mid-1900s, historically white Protestant denominations often required individuals who sensed a call to ministry to complete a seminary education in order to be ordained. However, most Hispanics during this time were unable to fulfill this requirement due to lack of financial resources or even the educational background needed to enter seminary.⁶⁹ Even if they did meet the enrollment requirements and had the economic resources, Latino/a seminarians often found that the seminaries

68 Dr. Christopher The, Director of Student Research and Initiative Management at the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) generously provided data on Black M.Div. graduates, including denominational affiliation of graduates, the majority race of the seminary they attended, and the religious tradition of the seminary they attended. Data comes from the Graduating Student Questionnaires for 2005-06, 2011-12, and 2017-18.

69 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 204-205.



Section 1. Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

were quite different than the Hispanic communities from which they came and did not prepare them well to return to serve churches in the Hispanic communities. Bible institutes and lay ministry programs started in the early to mid-20th century and proliferated during the second half of the century. The goal of these institutes and programs was focused on preparing individuals to serve in congregations and to engage in evangelism, rather than to “think theologically.” Assemblies of God started the Latin American Bible Institutes (LABIs) in Texas, California, New York, and Puerto Rico.⁷⁰ Both the LABI in La Puente, California, and the LABI in San Antonio, Texas, were first established in 1926. The Texas Baptists founded the Mexican Bible Institute, and Seventh-Day Adventists started their own Hispanic Bible schools.⁷¹ Independent Hispanic Bible Institutes were founded as well, such as the Rio Grande Bible Institute and the Colegio Biblico in Texas, and Instituto Evangelico in California.

Even today there are still barriers to Hispanics’ entry into formal seminaries. Some of these barriers are the prerequisite of a bachelor’s degree, the cost of a seminary education, and linguistic challenges.⁷² Among Hispanics who are 25 to 29 years of age, a little less than a quarter have a bachelor’s degree, in contrast to 45% of non-Latino whites and 72% of Asians.⁷³ Of those who do not have a four-year degree and are not enrolled in college, almost 70 percent say that they cannot afford to pay for college.

Hispanic Bible Institutes provide a more accessible way for Latino/as who sense a call to ministerial leadership to get the training they need to fulfill this call, which may be why the majority of Hispanic Protestant pastors are spiritually formed through Bible institutes.⁷⁴ They tend to be smaller, less formal, and less costly than traditional seminaries. Since many programs are not accredited, they have few educational prerequisites in order to enroll. Additionally, the Bible institutes are led by Hispanics, and provide instruction in Spanish or in a dual-language form. Some of these Bible Institutes, such as the Rio Grande Bible Institute in Texas, the Latin American Bible Institute in La Puente, California, and the Baptist University of the Americas (formerly called the Mexican Baptist Bible Institute) in Texas have attained accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).

70 Gaston Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 346.

71 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 205.

72 Ibid., 206.

73 Lauren Mora, “[Hispanic Enrollment Reaches New High at Four-Year Colleges in the U.S., but Affordability Remains an Obstacle](#),” (Pew Research Center, Oct. 7, 2022, online article).

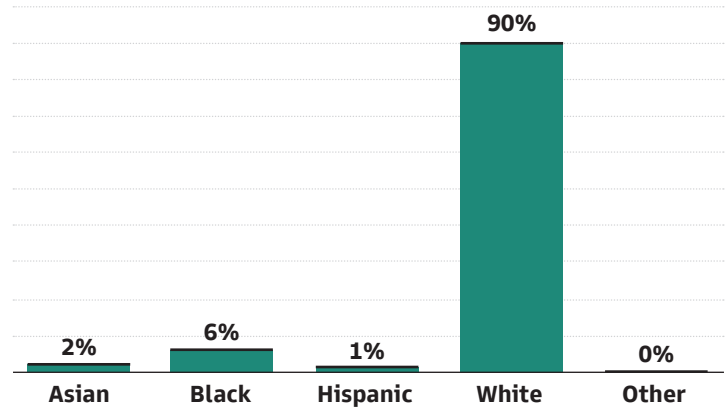
74 Juan Francisco Martinez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 205.



Mainline Protestant

We next examined the share of mainline Protestant congregations led by pastors of different races and ethnicities. The overwhelming majority of mainline Protestant congregations are led by white clergy (figure 5). When data are combined for all four years of the study, 90 percent of mainline congregations had a lead pastor who was white.⁷⁵ A study in 2023 by the Public Religion Research Institute found that 87 percent of lead pastors of mainline congregations are white.⁷⁶ This is fairly representative of attenders of mainline Protestant congregations (figure 6). For instance, in 2007 91 percent of mainline Protestant worshippers were white, and by 2014 this decreased slightly to 86 percent.⁷⁷

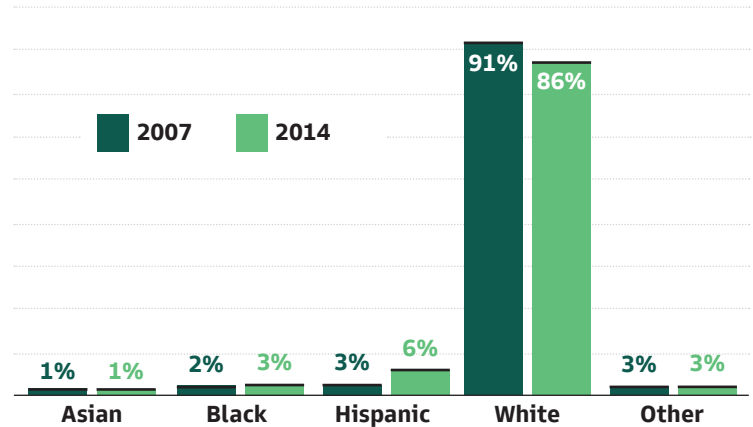
The vast majority of mainline Protestant congregations are led by white clergy.



Source: Chaves, M. (2021) National Congregations Study Cumulative Dataset (1998, 2006-2007, 2012, 2018-2019), data pooled.

Figure 5. Share of mainline Protestant congregations led by clergy of various races and ethnicities

Over 85 percent of all mainline Protestant worship attenders are white.



Source: Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (May 12, 2015), 124

Figure 6. Share of mainline Protestant worship attenders by race and ethnicity, 2007 and 2014

75 We found that among mainline Protestant congregations, there were too few cases that had lead pastors who were Asian, Black, Hispanic, or Other in each year of the study to report on share of congregations with a pastor of each race or ethnicity by year. Therefore, we have pooled the data from all years to obtain percent of congregations led by pastors of each race or ethnicity.

76 PRRI, "Clergy and Congregations in a Time of Transformation: Findings from the 2022-2023 Mainline Protestant Clergy Survey," (Sept. 13, 2023), 4.

77 Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (May 12, 2015), 124.



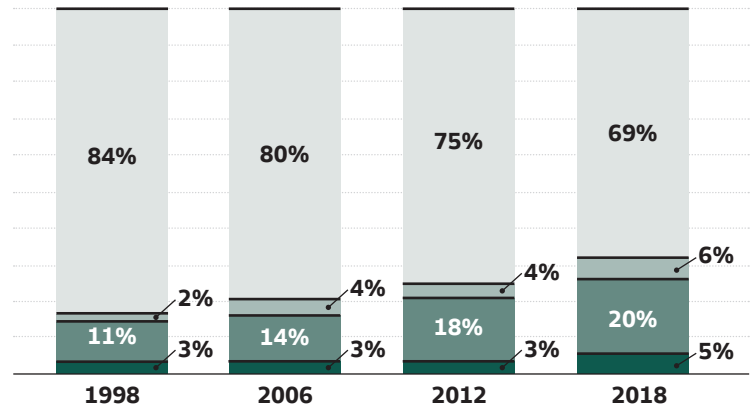
Master of Divinity graduates from mainline Protestant seminaries

The pool of M.Div. graduates from ATS mainline Protestant seminaries are more racially diverse than the population of clergy leading mainline Protestant congregations (figure 7).

Among M.Div. graduates from mainline seminaries, this change in racial composition is driven mainly by an increase in percentage of Black graduates. The share of M.Div. graduates who are Black increased by 9 percentage points from 1998 to 2018, while the share of white M.Div. graduates from mainline seminaries decreased by 16 percentage points.

One explanation for this increase in Black M.Div. graduates from seminaries affiliated with white mainline denominations is that a sizable number of these graduates come from historically Black denominations rather than the denomination of the seminary they are attending. An analysis of data from the ATS Graduating Student Questionnaires reveals that an increasing share of Black M.Div. graduates from white mainline seminaries are not affiliated with white mainline denominations (figure 8).⁷⁸

The share of Black M.Div. graduates from mainline Protestant seminaries has been increasing.

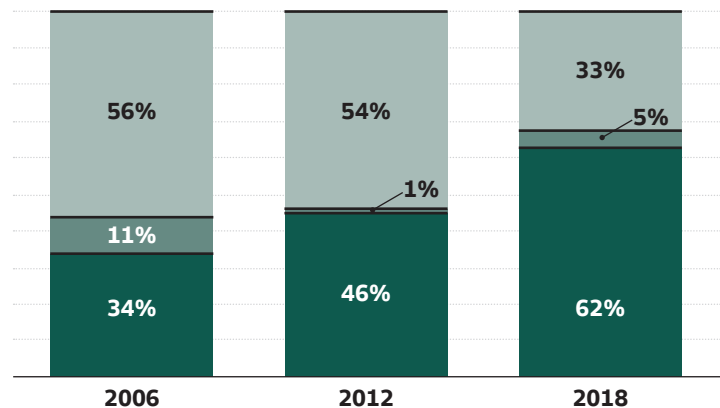


Source: Association of Theological Schools

Asian Black Hispanic White

Figure 7. Change in share of M.Div. graduates from mainline Protestant seminaries by race and ethnicity, 1998-2018.

A decreasing share of Black M.Div. graduates from mainline seminaries are from mainline Protestant denominations.



Source: Association of Theological Schools

Black Protestant White evangelical Protestant Mainline Protestant

Figure 8. Change in share of Black M.Div. graduates from mainline seminaries that are from Black Protestant, white evangelical Protestant, and mainline Protestant denominations, 2006 to 2018.

78 See endnote 67. Data comes from the ATS Graduating Student Questionnaires for 2005-06, 2011-12, and 2017-18.



Section 1. Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

Over half of Black graduates from white mainline seminaries were affiliated with white mainline denominations in 2006, and by 2018 this had dropped to a third.⁷⁹ In contrast, the share of M.Div. graduates who came from Black Protestant denominations or who were non-denominational almost doubled during this period.

Table 2. The number of Asian, Black, and Hispanic M.Div. graduates from mainline Protestant seminaries increased while the number of white M.Div. graduates decreased between 1998 and 2018.

Race and ethnicity	1998	2018	Absolute change	Percent change
Asian	65	82	17	26%
Black	261	338	77	30%
Hispanic	53	97	44	83%
White	1,940	1,135	-805	-41%
All	2,319	1,652	-667	-29%

Source: [Association of Theological Schools](#)

We also looked at the rate of change in number of M.Div. graduates by race and ethnicity. We found that while the total number of M.Div. graduates from mainline seminaries decreased between 1998 and 2018, the number of Asian, Black, and Hispanic graduates increased during this period (table 2). There were 805 fewer white graduates in 2018 than in 1998, or a decrease of 41 percent. In 2018, there were 77 more Black M.Div. graduates than in 1998, which is an increase of 30 percent. Hispanic graduates experienced the greatest rate of change in numbers of M.Div. graduating students, rising from 53 graduates in 1998 to 97 graduates twenty years later, which is an increase of 83 percent.

⁷⁹ It is important to note that in the 2017-18 Graduating Student Questionnaire, Black M.Div. graduates from white mainline seminaries are over-represented compared to the share of all Black M.Div. graduates from white mainline seminaries, while Black M.Div. graduates from white evangelical seminaries are under-represented.



Roman Catholic

African Americans

The first Black Catholics in North America were mostly from Spain. Catholics first arrived in North America in the 1500s and came to what is now Florida.⁸⁰ During the Colonial period, the French brought African slaves to their settlements in the Gulf Coast. Right before the beginning of the Civil War, there were 360,000 white French colonists, 330,000 African slaves, and about 18,000 free Blacks in the Southwest and Louisiana Territories. France's Code Noir required slaveholders to baptize slaves into the Catholic faith and to provide for their religious instruction. The Catholic Church in the United States enslaved Africans to do the work of the church. Even some of the orders of monks and nuns owned slaves to carry out their work.

While other racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Catholic Church had their own ordained clergy leaders, this was not true for Black Catholics. In general, the American Catholic church discouraged African Americans from becoming priests.⁸¹ After the end of the Civil War, some Catholic leaders in the United States had an ardent desire to evangelize the newly freed slaves. Instead of recruiting individuals in the United States to do ministry among African Americans, the American bishops recruited missionaries from Europe to do this outreach work. From 1891 to 1930, only eight Black men were ordained to the priesthood. However, the Holy See put pressure on the U.S. Catholic Church to ordain more Black Catholics as priests. As a result, the numbers of Black men ordained to the priesthood gradually increased. In 1934, four Black men were ordained as priests at St. Augustine Seminary in Mississippi, the first all-Black Catholic seminary in the United States. During the following ten years, 23 Black men were ordained to the priesthood.

African Americans first started to become ordained priests around the middle of the 19th century. The first to become priests were three sons of an African slave woman and an Irish slaveholder: James Augustine Healy, Patrick Francis Healy, and Alexander Sherwood Healy.⁸² While these men are considered to be the first African Americans to become priests in the United States, they did not identify with or interact with the Black Catholic population of their communities. Because they were biracial and had light skin, others in society identified them as white. They therefore had access to

80 The Catholic University of America, "African American Catholics in the United States (History of)," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., Vol. A-Azt, (Washington, DC: Gale, 2003), 155-157.

81 Ibid., 155-159.

82 Ibid.



positions that were closed to other Blacks. Augustus Tolton was officially the fourth African American priest in the United States, although he was the first African American priest who self-identified as Black and who others in society identified as Black. Because Catholic seminaries in the United States did not allow African Americans to attend them,⁸³ Tolton studied for the priesthood in Rome and was ordained in 1886. He became a priest in Chicago and organized the first Black parish there called St. Monica. He was a priest for eleven years.

It was not until the late 1960s that Black Catholic priests met as a caucus, initially to address the violence that ensued after Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.⁸⁴ Around 60 or so Black priests met together for the first time to address the racism that existed in the Catholic Church. They discussed the racial discrimination they faced in seminaries, in their parishes, and from white priests. The National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus was established to support Black priests, and the National Black Sisters' Conference formed soon after. Seminarians later established the National Black Catholic Seminarians' Association.

Despite all the advocacy work carried out by Black Catholics, the number of Black leaders in the U.S. Catholic church has been rather limited. By 2000, there have been a total of thirteen Black Catholic bishops.⁸⁵ Around the turn of this century there were around 2.5 million Black Catholics in the United States, but only 300 African American priests. An increase of Catholics from Africa, including priests, has increased the number of Black priests in the United States.

It was not until the late 1960s that Black Catholic priests met as a caucus, initially to address the violence that ensued after Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.

83 The Catholic University of America, "African American Catholics in the United States," 158.

84 Ibid., 161.

85 Ibid., 161.



Hispanics

Hispanic Catholics have lived in what is now the United States since the period of Spanish colonialism in North America.⁸⁶ In the 16th century, Spaniards settled in North America from Florida on the east coast all the way to California on the west coast, bringing Catholicism with them. They established Catholic missions at these settlements, in part to Christianize and “Hispanicize” the native peoples who lived there. Beginning in the early 1800s, diocesan priests started taking the place of Franciscan missionaries at the Spanish settlements in what is now New Mexico.⁸⁷

By the time the Mexican American War ended and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848, there were about 80,000 Hispanic Catholics living in the newly ceded territories of Texas, Nevada, Utah, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Wyoming.⁸⁸ By the beginning of the 1850s, 17 or so local Hispanic priests were recruited to serve parishes in New Mexico. Several new dioceses were established in the new U.S. territories by white Americans, who tried to “Americanize” the new U.S. citizens from Mexico. Instead of appointing Hispanic priests to serve the parishes of these new dioceses, priests and bishops from Europe were appointed to serve there. French clergy served primarily in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, while Irish priests served parishes in northern California.

As migration flows from Latin America increased from the turn of the 20th century and onward, Hispanic ministries also abounded.⁸⁹ Immigrant clergy, lay leaders, and women religious served immigrants from their own countries. Although Mexican Americans comprised about two-thirds of the Hispanic population as late as 2011, Latino/as from other Latin American countries made up a large share of U.S. Catholics as well. After World War II, waves of Puerto Rican migrants settled in New York City. The Institute of Intercultural Communication, which was established in Puerto Rico in 1957, trained many seminarians, priests, and other pastoral workers to serve the Puerto Rican community

As migration flows from Latin America increased from the turn of the 20th century and onward,

Hispanic ministries also abounded. Immigrant clergy, lay leaders, and women religious served immigrants from their own countries.

⁸⁶ Timothy Matovina, *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 7-11.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 13-17.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 28-33.



in the New York archdiocese. After Fidel Castro took over Cuba in 1959, hundreds of thousands of people fled from Cuba to the United States, including many Cuban priests whom Castro forced to leave the country. Many middle and upper-class Cubans settled in Miami and re-established some of the Catholic academies they had founded in Cuba. By 1962, there were Spanish-speaking priests in 16 Miami parishes, and by 1975, there were almost 100 Cuban priests working in the Miami archdiocese.

International priests

During most of the history of Catholicism in the United States there has been a shortage of priests to serve Catholic parishes.⁹⁰ During the 18th and 19th centuries, most of the priests in the United States were foreign-born and came from Europe. Between 1830 to 1860, the Catholic population in the United States increased exponentially, increasing from more than 300,000 to more than 3.1 million.⁹¹ Part of this population increase was due to the annexation of Mexican territory and the Louisiana Purchase, but the most crucial factor was immigration from Ireland and Germany. Large waves of Irish immigrants came to the United States starting in the 1840s during the Irish Potato Famine, and two decades later almost 900,000 Irish immigrants had come to the United States, most of whom were Catholic.⁹² During this same period, over one million Germans also came to the United States, and many German immigrants were also Catholic.

Large waves of Irish immigrants came to the United States starting in the 1840s during the Irish Potato Famine, and two decades later almost 900,000 Irish immigrants had come to the United States, most of whom were Catholic.

⁹⁰ Dean R. Hoge and Aniedi Okure, O.P., *International Priests in America: Challenges and Opportunities*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 1, 5.

⁹¹ Mark A. Knoll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*, 188.

⁹² *Ibid.*



Section 1. Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

At the same time that large numbers of Catholics from Ireland and Germany immigrated to the United States, many priests from Ireland also came to serve parishes in the United States.⁹³ By the turn of the 20th century, there were more foreign-born priests from Ireland than from any other country, and most served as diocesan priests. A large share of pastor priests in some dioceses were from Ireland even as late as the mid-1900s. For instance, in the 1940s and 1950s 4 out of 5 priests in the Los Angeles Archdiocese were foreign-born Irish. Beginning in the 1980s, there was another strong push to fill priest vacancies in U.S. parishes by recruiting foreign-born priests.⁹⁴ While many of these immigrant priests had been from Ireland in past decades, in the 1980s and thereafter the pool of international priests in the United States has become increasingly diverse. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University estimated that in 1999 there were about 7,600 international priests (composing 16 percent of all priests) serving in the United States,⁹⁵ and this percentage remained about the same by 2012.⁹⁶ At the turn of the 21st century, about a fifth (19 percent) of international priests were from Latin America and the Caribbean, 40 percent were from Asia (including Vietnam, India, and the Philippines), 14 percent were from Africa, and over a quarter (28 percent) were from Europe.⁹⁷ **Over 80 percent of foreign-born priests completed their seminary training in a country other than the United States.**

93 Dean R. Hoge and Aniedi Okure, O.P., *International Priests in America*, 3.

94 Dean R. Hoge and Aniedi Okure, O.P., *International Priests in America*, 5.

95 Bryan T. Froehle, Mary E. Bendyna, and Mary L. Gautier, *Priest Personnel Profile and Diocesan Pastoral Strategies*, (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University), cited in Dean R. Hoge and Aniedi Okure, O.P., *International Priests in America*, 11.

96 Mary Gautier, Melissa A. Cidade, Paul M. Perl, and Mark M. Gray, *Bridging the Gap: The Opportunities and Challenges of International Priests Ministering in the United States*, (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University, 2014), cited in Maria Benevento, "[Filling Vital U.S. Ministry Roles, Foreign-born Priests Need Deliberate Support to Thrive](#)," (The National Catholic Reporter, August 27, 2020).

97 Dean R. Hoge and Aniedi Okure, O.P., *International Priests in America*, 13, 153-155.



National Congregations Study – Racial and Ethnic diversity of Roman Catholic parishes

Over the past two decades, the population of Roman Catholic diocesan priests has become increasingly diverse (figure 9). An analysis of National Congregations Study data shows that between 1998 and 2018, the share of priests who are white decreased by 44 percentage points, going from over 95 percent in 1998 to a little over half by 2018.⁹⁸

While the share of clergy in all other racial and ethnic groups increased during this period, the share of clergy composed of Hispanics rose the most. The share of Hispanic clergy experienced a 15-fold increase, expanding from only 2 percent in 1998 to almost one-third of all Roman Catholic priests leading congregations in 2018.

While the increase in racial and ethnic diversity of diocesan priests seems impressive, especially compared to some Protestant denominations, this diversity has not kept pace with that of the membership of Roman Catholic parishes in the United States. **Latino/as make up a much larger percentage of U.S. Catholic adherents than they do the share of Catholic priests.** For instance, in 2007 Latino/as made up almost 30 percent of Roman Catholic attenders (figure 10),⁹⁹ which was almost eight times the share of Latino priests leading parishes in 2006 (figure 9). In 2011, 35 percent of all Catholics in the U.S. were Hispanic, and the ratio of Hispanic laity to Hispanic priests was 10,000 to one.¹⁰⁰ The share of adult

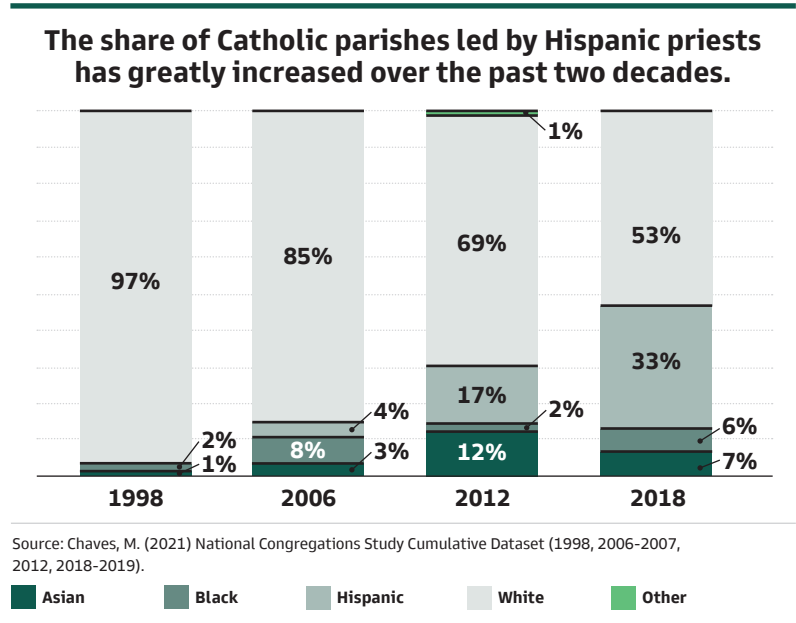


Figure 9. Change in share of Catholic parishes led by clergy of various races and ethnicities.

98 Mark Chaves, [National Congregations Study Cumulative Dataset](#) (1998, 2006-2007, 2012, 2018-2019) (Jan. 25, 2021).

99 Pew Research Center, ["America's Changing Religious Landscape,"](#) (May 12, 2015), 52.

100 Timothy Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 136.



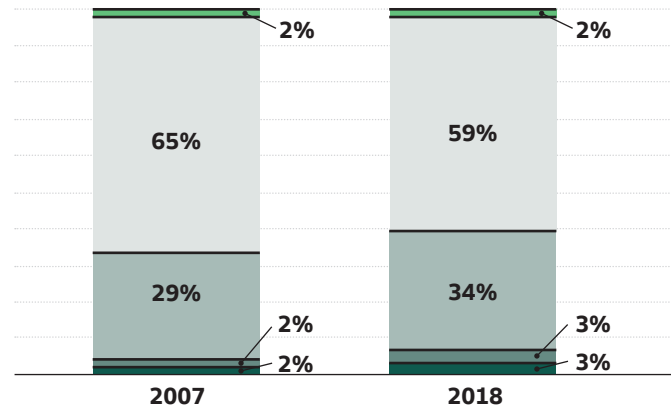
Section 1. Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

Hispanic Catholics in 2014 (figure 10) was twice as high as the share of Latino priests who were leading parishes in 2012 (figure 9). In 2018, Hispanics made up a third of all Catholic priests leading parishes, while in 2020 Hispanics composed 40 percent of all U.S. Catholics.¹⁰¹

There are several reasons for this shortage of Hispanic priests. These include the requirement of celibacy, close kinship ties that prevent men from entering the priesthood, and a lack of educational opportunities, which in turn means that they are not prepared to take on the required graduate studies in order to become a priest.¹⁰² Hispanic men who do desire to enter the priesthood deal with other challenges as well. For instance, those who enter seminary must deal with the institutional culture of seminaries that is different than their own cultural values of personal relationships and trust. Some men do not have legal immigration status, which is required by many dioceses in order to attend seminaries.

The Catholic church in the United States has taken several steps to enhance Hispanic ministry, and more specifically ministry to Hispanic candidates to the priesthood.¹⁰³ Both the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD) and the National Religious Vocation conference (NRVC) have made efforts to recruit/encourage Latino/as to enter the ministry, such as by publishing Spanish-language vocation discernment booklets (NCDVD) and online vocation discernment tools such as Encuentro Vocacional (NRVC). Many dioceses have programs to help foster the idea of vocation in young people, including Hispanics. One such example is the Pilgrimage of Vocations in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which began in 1973. There have also been national and regional initiatives to help make the seminary environment more conducive to the success of Hispanic seminarians. The Conference for Seminarians in Hispanic

Hispanics have made up a growing share of Roman Catholic attenders between 2007 and 2014.



Source: Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (May 12, 2015), 124.

Legend: Asian (dark green), Black (medium green), Hispanic (light green), White (grey), Other (dark green)

Figure 10. Share of Roman Catholic worship attenders by race and ethnicity, 2007 and 2014

101 David Crary, "U.S. Hispanics are Future, but Priest Numbers Dismal," Associated Press, (March 14, 2020).

102 Timothy Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 136-137.

103 *Ibid.*, 137-139.



Section 1. Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

Ministry is a national event that takes place almost every year and is organized by seminarians and seminary leaders. Several seminaries try to foster greater intercultural understanding. For example, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, located in the archdiocese of Miami, has a Spanish/English dual language program. Other seminaries located in Texas and California have Hispanic outreach programs.

Based on the trend in increasing proportion of priests who are Latino, it appears that the national and regional Hispanic-focused programs and ministries have paid off, at least to a certain extent. Latino priesthood candidates in seminary have comprised about 15 percent of all priesthood candidates from at least 2002 to 2018,¹⁰⁴ while the share of newly ordained priests comprised of Latino men has hovered around 12 to 15 percent for most years from 2001 to 2019.¹⁰⁵

In contrast to Hispanic priests, the share of diocesan priests who are Black is slightly higher than the share of all U.S. Catholics who are Black. In 2005, Black parishioners made up 3 percent of all Catholic parishioners nationwide,¹⁰⁶ while 8 percent of Catholic parishes were led by Black priests in 2006–2007 (figure 9). By 2018, 6 percent of Catholic parishes were led by a Black priest, while Black Catholics made up just 4 percent of all adult Catholics in the United States in 2019–2020.¹⁰⁷

A greater share of priests leading parishes are Asian compared to the population of all U.S. Catholics who are Asian. For instance, Asians composed only 2 percent of the U.S. Catholic population in 2007, and only 3 percent of all U.S. Catholics by 2014 (figure 10).¹⁰⁸ Three percent of Catholic parishes were led by Asian priests in 2006, while 12 percent of Catholic parishes were led by Asian priests in 2012 (figure 9).

104 Statistics on seminary enrollments come from the following issues of The CARA Report: Vol. 7, No. 4 (Spring 2002); Vol. 8, No. 4 (Spring 2003); Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring 2004); Vol. 10, No. 4 (Spring 2005); Vol. 11, No. 4 (Spring 2006); Vol. 15, No. 4 (Spring 2010); Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 2011); Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 2012); and Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 2018).

105 Statistics on race and ethnicity of newly ordained priests come from the following issues of The CARA Report: Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer 2001); Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 2003); Vol. 12, No. 1 (Summer 2006); Vol. 14, No. 4 (Spring 2009); Vol. 15, No. 4 (Spring 2010); Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring 2011); Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 2012). Statistics for 2018 come from Mary L. Gautier and Thu T. Do, "[The Class of 2018: Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood](#)," (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, April 2018), 12.

106 Beverly Carroll and James Cavendish, "Who Are Black Catholics Today," *In All Things* (Winter 2004), cited in "Black Catholic Ministry Today," The CARA Report (Vol. 11, No. 1, Summer 2005), 3.

107 Jeff Diamant, Besheer Mohamed, and Joshua Alvarado, "[Black Catholics in America](#)," (Pew Research Center, March 15, 2022).

108 Pew Research Center, "[America's Changing Religious Landscape](#)," (May 12, 2015), 52.



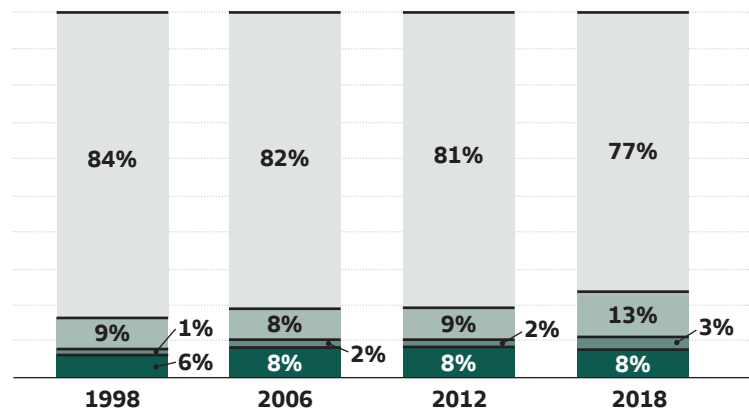
In both the cases of Black and Asian priests leading Catholic parishes, the higher percentages of Black and Asian priests compared to the share of Black and Asian parishioners may be accounted for by the increasing numbers of foreign-born priests who are from African or Asian nations. For instance, one survey of international priests found that 16 percent of foreign-born diocesan priests who responded had completed their seminary training and were ordained in an African country, while 37 percent of international diocesan priests were trained and ordained in India or other Asia and Pacific nations.¹⁰⁹

Master of Divinity graduates from Roman Catholic seminaries

We next looked at trends in the racial and ethnic composition of M.Div. graduates from Roman Catholic seminaries in the United States. We found that the majority of M.Div. graduates were white, and that white seminarians' share of M.Div. graduates decreased modestly between 1998 and 2018 (figure 11). The share of graduates who are Asian, Black, or Hispanic increased by less than 5 percentage points from 1998 to 2018.

Perhaps surprisingly, there was a much greater increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of priests leading Roman Catholic parishes as a whole than the change in racial and ethnic diversity of M.Div. graduates from Catholic seminaries in the United States. For instance, the share of Catholic parishes led by white priests decreased by 44 percentage points between 1998 and 2018 (figure 8), while the share of white M.Div. graduates decreased by only 7 percentage points during this same period. And while the share of Catholic parishes led by Hispanic priests increased by 31 percentage points from 1998 to 2018, the share of Hispanic M.Div. graduates from Catholic

The share of white M.Div. graduates from Catholic seminaries has gradually been decreasing over the past 20 years.



Source: Association of Theological Schools

Asian Black Hispanic White

Figure 11. Change in share of M.Div. graduates from Catholic seminaries by students' race and ethnicity, 1998-2018

109 Dean R. Hoge and Aniedi Okure, O.P., *International Priests in America*, 153, 155.



Section 1. Racial and ethnic diversity of religious leaders and congregants across Christian religious traditions

seminaries increased by only 4 percentage points during this period. The most probable explanation for this discrepancy is the increase in racial and ethnic diversity of foreign-born priests serving in the United States. As mentioned earlier, a large share of these priests is from Asia (40 percent), and almost a fifth are from Latin America and the Caribbean. Since the majority of international priests today (81 percent) studied at a seminary outside the United States, the full range of racial and ethnic diversity of these priests is not reflected in the racial and ethnic composition of seminarians who have graduated with an M.Div. degree from U.S. Catholic seminaries.

We next examine the trends in the raw number of M.Div. graduates from Catholic seminaries in the United States. The total number of Catholic seminary graduates has decreased between 1998 and 2018 (table 3), and most of this decrease is due to a decline in the number of white men who graduated with an M.Div. In 2018, there were 169 fewer white M.Div. graduates than in 1998. There was little change in the total number of Asian and Black graduates, and the number of Hispanic graduates in 2018 remained the same as in 1998.

Table 3. Change in number of M.Div. graduates from Catholic seminaries by students' race and ethnicity

Race and ethnicity	1998	2018	Absolute change	Percent change
Asian	33	28	-5	-15%
Black	7	11	4	57%
Hispanic	47	47	0	0%
White	452	283	-169	-37%
Visa holders	63	94	31	49%
All	602	435	-139	-23%

Source: [Association of Theological Schools](#)



Section 2:

Clergy race across denominations

There have been numerous studies on racial and ethnic diversity in congregations and denominations,¹¹⁰ and even on pastors of multiracial congregations,¹¹¹ but much less is known about the racial and ethnic composition of clergy serving congregations across denominations, or whether there are differences between congregations served by clergy of color and those served by white clergy in terms of congregations' size, financial resources, or amount they pay for pastors' salaries. In this section, we review what we do know about these topics, and identify where there are gaps in our knowledge. We briefly discuss the racial and ethnic diversity of clergy for the following denominations: Assemblies of God, Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church. While some denominations (such as ELCA) have been tracking the level of racial and ethnic diversity of their clergy for many years, other denominations do not track this data on a regular basis. After the overview of denominations, we end the section with a case study of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the only denomination in our study for which we have data on the race and ethnicity of pastors and detailed data on characteristics of the congregations they serve.

110 There are studies on changes in racial and ethnic diversity of congregations and denominations: Brandon C. Martinez and Kevin D. Dougherty, "Race, Belonging, and Participation in Religious Congregations," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 52, no. 4 (2013): 713-732; Kevin Dougherty, Gerardo Marti, and Brandon C. Martinez, "Congregational Diversity and Attendance in a Mainline Protestant Denomination," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 54, no.4 (2015): 668-683; Ryan J. Cobb, Samuel L. Perry, and Kevin D. Dougherty, "United by Faith? Race/Ethnicity, Congregational Diversity, and Explanations of Racial Inequality," *Sociology of Religion*, 76, no. 2 (2015): 177-198; Kevin D. Dougherty, Gerardo Marti, and Todd W. Ferguson, "Racial Dynamics of Congregations and Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis of United Methodist Congregations: 1990-2010," *Social Forces*, 100, no. 1 (2021): 345-374; Michael, Lipka, "[The Most and Least Racially Diverse U.S. Religious Groups](#)," (Pew Research Center, July 27, 2015).

111 Studies of multiracial congregations and of clergy serving multiracial congregations include: Korie L. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Michael O. Emerson (with Rodney Woo), *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Korie L. Edwards and Rebecca Kim, "Estranged Pioneers: The Case of African American and Asian American Multiracial Church Pastors," *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 80, no. 4 (2019): 456-477; Christopher W. Munn, "Finding a Seat at the Table: How Race Shapes Access to Social Capital," *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 80, no. 4 (2019): 435-455.



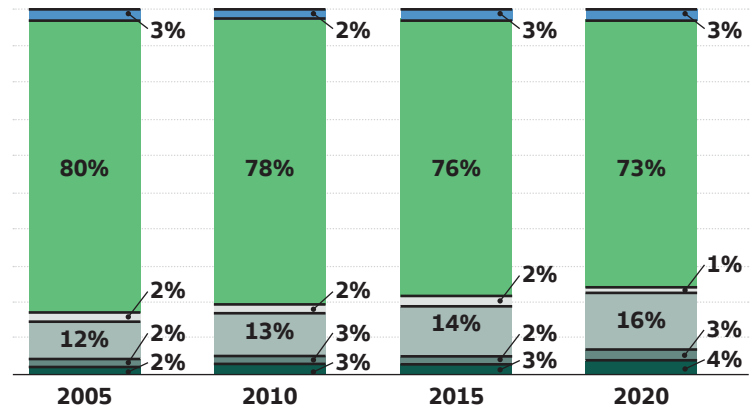
Evangelical denomination: Assemblies of God

Assemblies of God is the only evangelical Protestant denomination for which we have data on the racial and ethnic composition of clergy. Data compiled from Assemblies of God Statistical Yearbooks show the racial and ethnic background of all clergy, regardless of whether they are actively serving a congregation.¹¹² These data include clergy who are ordained, licensed, and certified.

In 2005, there was a total of around 28,900 pastors, and by 2020 this number had increased to over 35,000. Throughout the period of 2005 to 2020, the majority of Assemblies of God clergy were white, although by 2020 this percentage had declined to a little less than three-quarters of all pastors (figure 12). White clergy are over-represented compared to the share Assemblies of God attenders who are white (figure 13). In 2007, 72 percent of attenders were white,¹¹³ while in 2005, 80 percent of lead pastors were white. By 2014, whites composed 66 percent of attenders, while by 2015, over three-quarters of clergy were white.

Although the share of Hispanic pastors leading congregations has been increasing, they are still under-represented compared to the share of Hispanics that make up those who attend Assemblies of God congregations (figure 13). For instance, Hispanics composed 19 percent of all

While Hispanics make up a larger share of all Assemblies of God clergy in 2020 than in 2005, the majority of clergy are white.

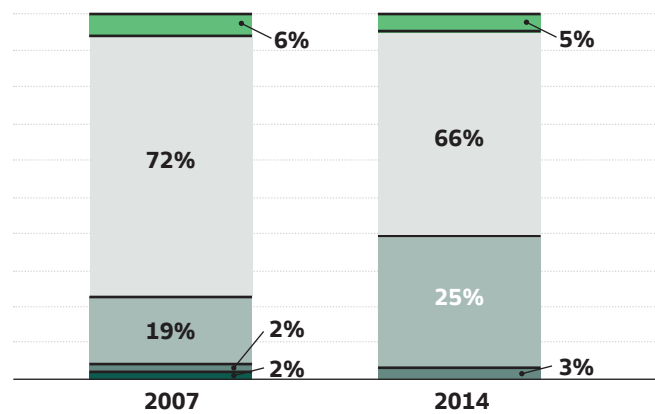


Source: AG USA Ministers by Race, 2001-2020

Legend: Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, White, Other/Multiracial

Figure 12. Change in racial and ethnic composition of all Assemblies of God clergy, 2005 to 2020.

The share of Hispanic attenders in the Assemblies of God increased between 2007 and 2014, while the share of white attenders decreased.



Source: Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (May 12, 2015), 124.

Legend: Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, Other/Multiracial

Figure 13. Share of Assemblies of God worship attenders by race and ethnicity, 2007 and 2014.

112 AG USA Ministers by Race, 2001-2020."

113 Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (May 12, 2015), 124.



Assemblies of God attenders in 2007.¹¹⁴ By 2015, Hispanics composed only 14 percent of clergy (figure 12), even though in 2014, 25 percent of Assemblies of God attenders were Hispanic (figure 13).

The Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church has been reporting on clergy compensation for over two decades.¹¹⁵ In 2018, the 79th General Convention passed two resolutions mandating that the Church Pension Group devise a strategy to collect clergy data by race and ethnicity, and report on clergy deployment and compensation by 2020.¹¹⁶ Data on clergy are for active priests, deacons, and bishops, and includes those who serve congregations and those who serve in non-parish ministry.¹¹⁷ Compensation includes base salary, housing allowance or employer-provided housing, and employer benefits contributions, among other things.¹¹⁸ We use data from 2021 because there is a larger number of clergy for which information on race and ethnicity of clergy is available in this year, and therefore should give a more accurate picture of racial and ethnic composition of clergy and clergy compensation.

In 2021, the vast majority of Episcopal clergy (88 percent) were white (figure 14).¹¹⁹ While this figure includes all active clergy, including those serving outside of congregations, it still fits the pattern of clergy leading the “typical” mainline

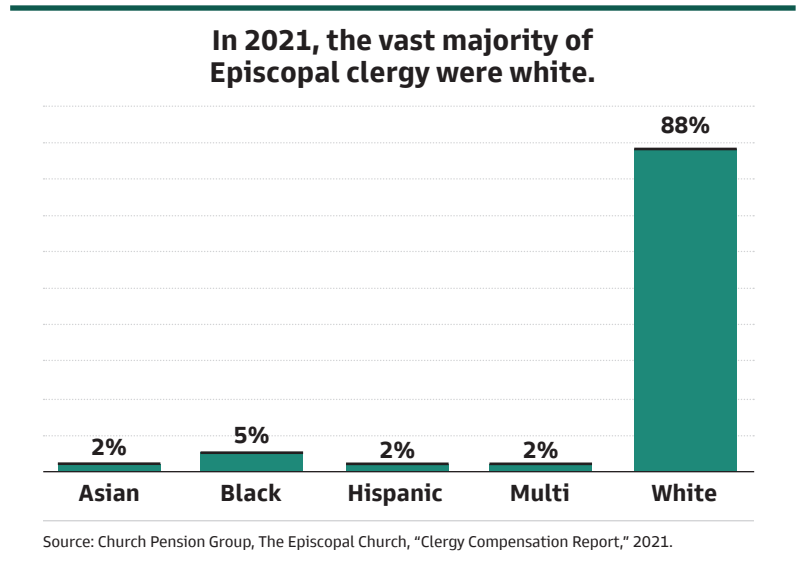


Figure 14. Racial and ethnic composition of Episcopal clergy in 2021

114 Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” (May 12, 2015), 124.

115 Matthew Price and Rev. Alistair So-Schoos, “Trends in Ministry Webinar: Insights into Episcopal Clergy”, (The Episcopal Church, Church Pension Group, July 2022).

116 General Convention, Journal of the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018 (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 675. The Church Pension Group web page of The Episcopal Church provides an interactive data visualization tool from which one can view national data, or data by region, as well as demographic characteristics of clergy; see <https://www.cpg.org/global/research/clergy-compensation-report/#/domestic>

117 As of 2020, 41 percent of all active clergy have provided information on their race and ethnic identity. See “Trends in Ministry Webinar: Insights into Episcopal Clergy.”

118 Church Pension Group Research Department, “The 2020 Episcopal Clergy Compensation Report,” (Oct. 2021).

119 Church Pension Group, The Episcopal Church, “Clergy Compensation Report,” (2021), online data visualization at <https://www.cpg.org/global/research/clergy-compensation-report/#/domestic>



Protestant congregation. The National Congregations Study found that in 2018, 90 percent of clergy leading mainline congregations were white (see figure 5 on page 21).

Although clergy of color make up little more than a tenth of all Episcopal clergy, the salaries and benefits of clergy of color is slightly higher than the compensation of white clergy (see figure 15). Black clergy had earnings and benefits that were almost 5 percent higher than the compensation of white clergy, while Asian clergy and clergy of other racial and ethnic backgrounds made about 2 percent more than white clergy. The compensation of Hispanics was about the same as that of whites.

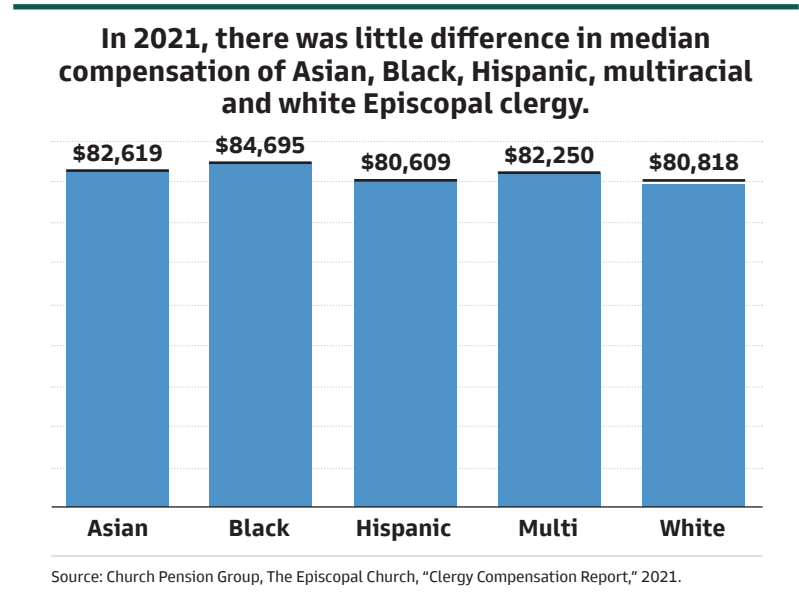


Figure 15. Median compensation of Episcopal clergy by race and ethnicity in 2021



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

We draw on publicly available data to explore the racial and ethnic composition of clergy in the PC (U.S.A.). Data on ministers are for those who are Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. These ministers are fully ordained with a graduate seminary degree and are also known as Teaching Elders. While these clergy are typically pastors, they may work in a variety of positions, such as chaplains, professors, or synod staff. For 1998, these data come from the 2000-2002 Presbyterian (U.S.A.) Panel Survey.¹²⁰ Data from 2019 are from “The PC(USA) Minister Survey Demographic Report (October 2020).”¹²¹

The vast majority of Ministers of Word and Sacrament are white. In 1999, over 90 percent of clergy were white, and this was still true twenty years later (figure 16). The share of Asian, Black, and Hispanic clergy remained almost the same in 2019 as in 1999. The racial and ethnic composition of PC(USA) clergy is representative of the racial and ethnic composition of mainline Protestant clergy as a whole, since 90 percent of mainline Protestant clergy are white.¹²²

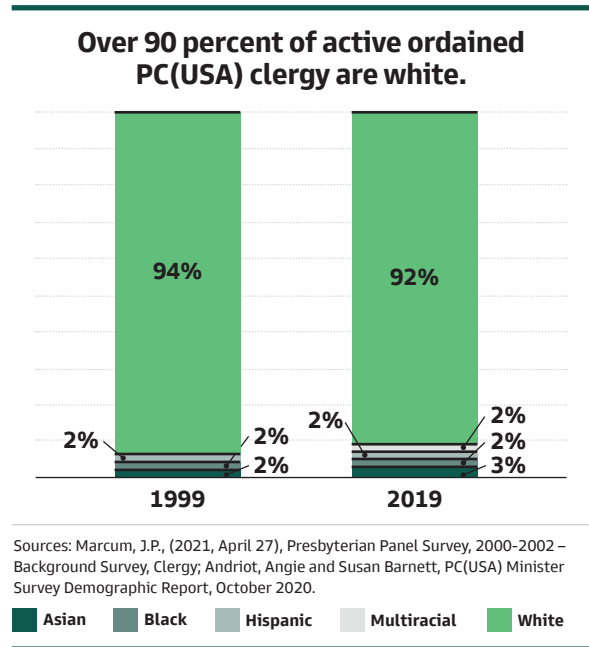


Figure 16. Racial and ethnic composition of active ordained PC(USA) clergy, 1999 and 2019

120 J.P. Marcum, Presbyterian Panel Survey, 2000-2002 – Background Survey, Clergy, (April 27, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.thearda.com/data-archive?fid=PP0002CB&tab=1> Data is from 1999. Retired clergy are excluded from the survey.

121 Angie Andriot and Susan Barnett, “PC(USA) Minister Survey Demographic Report (Presbyterian Church (USA) Research Services, October 2020), 4, 6. Survey was administered from September-November 2019.

122 Chaves, M. (2021) *National Congregations Study Cumulative Dataset (1998, 2006-2007, 2012, 2018-2019)*

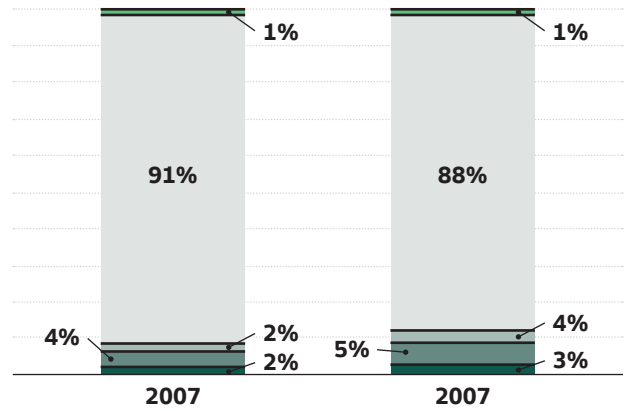


Just as the racial and ethnic composition of PC(USA) clergy reflects that of mainline Protestant clergy, it also reflects the composition of regular participants in the denomination, although not as closely (figure 17). For instance, in 2014 88 percent of regular participants were white, 5 percent were Black, 3 percent were Asian, and 4 percent were Hispanic.¹²³

United Church of Christ (UCC)

The United Church of Christ is one of two mainline Protestant denominations for which we have data on lead pastors' race and ethnicity. Because we have clergy data only for five years (2015 to 2019), we have pooled the data to give a snapshot view of racial and ethnic composition of clergy (figure 18). The majority of UCC clergy (88 percent) are white, which is only a slightly smaller percentage than the share of lead pastors of all mainline Protestant congregations (90 percent) in the National Congregations Study who are white.¹²⁴ Black clergy make up 7 percent of UCC clergy, and Blacks made up 6 percent of mainline Protestant pastors as a whole in 2018.

The vast majority of attenders at PC(USA) congregations are white, and this changed little between 2007 and 2014.



Source: Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (May 12, 2015), 124.

Asian Black Hispanic White Other/Multiracial

Figure 17. Share of PC(USA) worship attenders by race and ethnicity, 2007 and 2014

Over 85 percent of clergy leading United Church of Christ congregations are white.

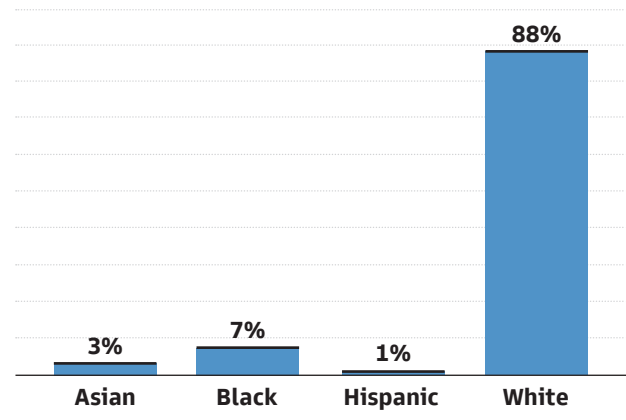


Figure 18. Racial and ethnic composition of clergy leading UCC congregations, (2015-2019 pooled results).

123 Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow," (May 12, 2015), 124.

124 Ibid.



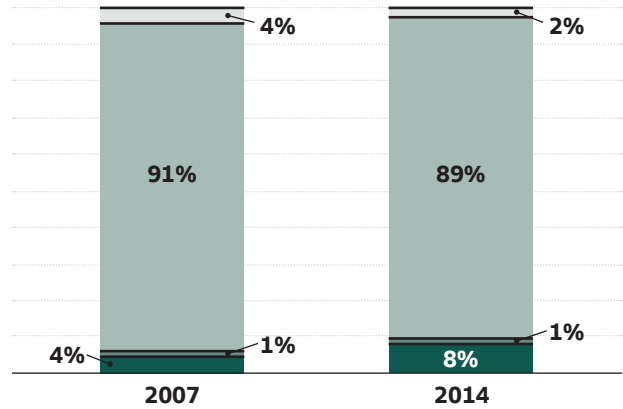
The racial and ethnic composition of lead clergy in the UCC is similar to the racial and ethnic composition of regular participants in UCC congregations (figure 19).¹²⁵ In 2014, 89 percent of UCC attenders were white and 8 percent of attenders were Black.

United Methodist Church (UMC)

While we have data on lead pastors in the United Methodist Church such as age, gender, and level of training for ministry, we do not have data on race and ethnicity of pastors. We use data provided to us by the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) of The United Methodist Church to examine the racial and ethnic diversity of UMC members. To look at racial and ethnic diversity of clergy, we turn to other reports published by the UMC. The most recent study on racial and ethnic diversity of UMC clergy was conducted in 2011 by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, an organization within the United Methodist Church.¹²⁶ The researchers of this study found that the vast majority of UMC clergy were white, and we found that this was also true of lay members (figure 20). About 6 percent of both clergy and lay members were Black, while only 1 percent of clergy and lay members were Hispanic.

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women also found that some UMC conferences had higher proportions of clergy belonging to

The vast majority of attenders of United Church of Christ congregations were white in 2007 and in 2014.

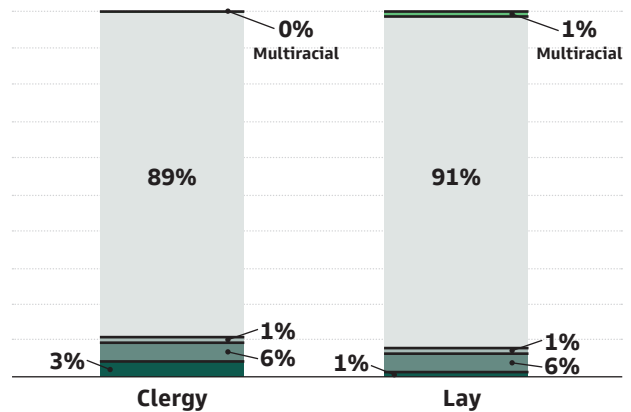


Source: Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," (May 12, 2015), 124.

Black Hispanic White Other/Multiracial

Figure 19. Racial and ethnic composition of UCC worship attenders, 2007 and 2014.

In 2011, racial and ethnic diversity among UMC clergy was proportional to the diversity of all UMC lay members.



Source: GCSRW, "Clergy Diversity Proportional to Membership," 2011; GCFA Membership & Participation, 2011.

Asian/Pacific Islander Black Hispanic White Multiracial

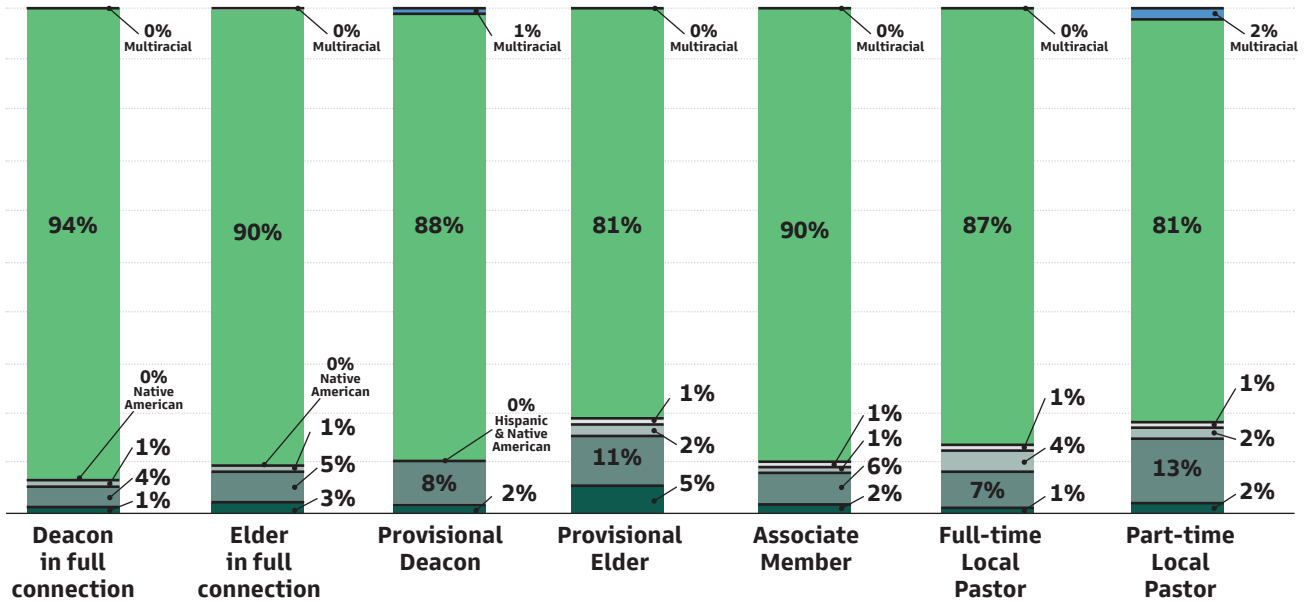
Figure 20. Racial and ethnic composition of UMC clergy and lay members in 2011

125 In 2007, 0 percent of UCC attenders were Asian, and in 2014 there was no information on Asian attenders.

126 General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, "Clergy Diversity Proportional to Membership," (United Methodist Church, 2011).



In 2011, the vast majority of UMC clergy in each clergy category were white.



Source: GCSRW, "Clergy Diversity Proportional to Membership," 2011.

Figure 21. Racial and ethnic composition of UMC clergy by clergy status in 2011.

some racial and ethnic groups than their share of all UMC clergy across the United States.¹²⁷ For instance, in 2011 Asians made up 24 percent of clergy membership in the California-Pacific Conference, while Blacks made up 24 percent of clergy in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. The Desert Southwest Conference had the largest share of Hispanic clergy in any one conference at 5 percent, while Native Americans comprised 91 percent of clergy in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women also examined the racial and ethnic composition of UMC clergy in each clergy status category in 2011.¹²⁸ While the vast majority of clergy in each clergy category were white, provisional elders and part-time local pastors had the greatest racial and ethnic diversity (figure 21). Black clergy comprised 13 percent of part-time local pastors and 11 percent of provisional elders. Asians made up 5 percent of provisional elders.

127 Ibid.

128 Erin Kane, "Part-Time Local Pastors Most Diverse Clergy Group," (General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, United Methodist Church online publication, February 2011).



Case study: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is the one denomination in our study for which we have detailed information on the race and ethnicity of senior and solo pastors as well as data on the congregations they serve. Because these data are detailed enough to examine levels of parity/disparity in size and financial resources of congregations led by clergy of color and those led by white clergy, we present this information as a case study rather than a short description. Because there is so little data collected by other denominations on both pastors' race and ethnicity in conjunction with information about the congregations they serve, we cannot say whether the ELCA is representative of all white mainline Protestant denominations.

Although the ELCA had goals and policies in its churchwide office and synods since the late 1980s to increase racial and ethnic diversity, it remains one of the least racially diverse denominations in the United States.¹²⁹ When the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches merged to form the ELCA in 1988, the leaders of the new denomination set a Constitutional goal of having 10 percent of the denomination's membership comprised of racial/ethnic minorities or people who spoke a language other than English as their first language.¹³⁰ The Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolution also set in place a quota system in which 10 percent of all national and synodical positions were to be reserved for racial/ethnic minorities. By 2016, people of non-European descent comprised 7 percent of the ELCA's membership.¹³¹

Even though the ELCA has had quotas for minority leadership in churchwide and synodical positions, historically there have been no quotas reserved for minority lead pastors. So how are lead pastors who belong to racial/ethnic minority groups faring in terms of their percentage of all lead pastors? To discover this, we first explored the racial/ethnic composition of all lead pastors from 2000 to 2019.¹³² The ELCA uses the following categories to identify race/ethnicity of pastors: African American/Black,

129 Michael Lipka, "[The Most and Least Racially Diverse U.S. Religious Groups](#)," (Pew Research Center, July 27, 2015).

130 Mark Granquist, "North American Lutheranism and the New Ethnics," in *Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the 21st Century*, ed. by Richard Cimino (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 180- 184; "How Strategic and Authentic Is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection, and Healing Action." As adopted by more than a two-thirds vote (855-13) by the 15th triennial Churchwide Assembly on August 9, 2019, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, p. 7.

131 "Statistical Review of the Ethnic Specific Ministry Participation," Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Feb. 2016, cited in "How Strategic and Authentic Is Our Diversity," 4.

132 Data on congregations and clergy were provided to us by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.



Section 2: Clergy race across denominations

African National, American Indian/Alaska Native, Arab/Middle Eastern, Asian/Pacific Islander, Caucasian, Latino/Hispanic, Other, and Multiracial. (Multiracial was added as a category in 2007.) In our analyses, we include African National as part of African American/Black.

The overwhelming majority of lead pastors throughout the period of 2000 to 2019 were white (table 4). In 2000, 98 percent of all lead pastors were white, and this had dropped by only three percentage points twenty years later. Blacks comprised only one percent (or 80 individuals) of all lead pastors in 2000, and by 2019 they made up only two percent (or less than 120) of lead pastors. Hispanics comprised less than one percent of pastors in 2000, and two decades later they made up little more than one percent of lead pastors. Less than one percent of lead pastors were made up of Asian/Pacific Islanders throughout the period covered by our study.¹³³ Altogether, racial/ethnic minority pastors made up only 5 percent of all lead pastors by 2019.

Table 4. White clergy made up over 90 percent of ELCA lead pastors in 2000 and 2019.

Pastors' race/ethnicity	2000		2019	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Black	80	1.1%	111	2.1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	7	0.1%	10	0.2%
Arab/Middle Eastern	4	0.1%	4	0.1%
Asian	33	0.4%	43	0.8%
White	7,153	97.5%	4,951	94.5%
Hispanic	59	0.8%	80	1.5%
Multiracial	----		17	0.3%
Other	3	0.0%	22	0.4%
Total	7,339	100.0%	5,238	100.0%

¹³³ Because there are so few pastors who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Arab/Middle Eastern, Multiracial, or Other throughout the study period, we drop these groups from subsequent analyses.



Comparisons between clergy race and ethnicity, gender, and age

Pastors' race and gender

Key findings:

- Historically there was greater gender parity among Black pastors than among white pastors in terms of proportion of lead pastors who were women. In 2000, about 35 percent of Black lead pastors and only 16 percent of white pastors were women. The gender gap among white pastors narrowed throughout 2000 to 2019, while the gender gap among Black pastors remained the same. The percentage of white pastors who were women more than doubled between 2000 and 2019, reaching 37 percent at the end of this period.
- Among all other racial and ethnic groups, the share of pastors comprised of women changed by only a few percentage points during this period.

Do the percentages of women and men serving as pastors vary by pastors' race and ethnicity?¹³⁴ We found that in 2000, this was the case. About one-third of Black pastors and a little more than a quarter of Hispanic pastors were women (figure 22). Women composed only 16 percent of white pastors.¹³⁵

The percentage of white lead pastors who were women more than doubled between 2000 and 2019.

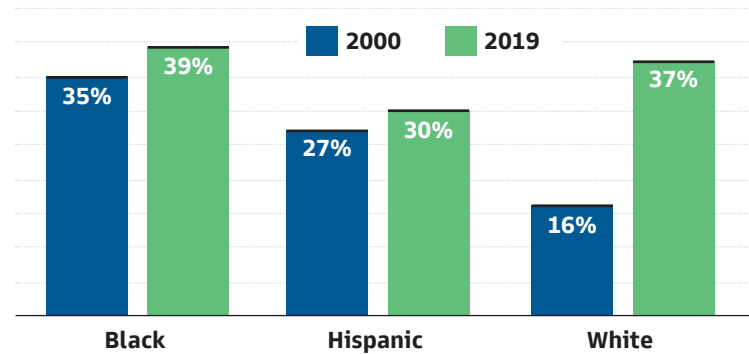


Figure 22. Change in share of women among Black, Hispanic, and white lead pastors of ELCA congregations, 2000 and 2019.

From 2000 to 2019, the percentage of white pastors made up of women more than doubled, reaching 37 percent in 2019. For pastors of most racial groups, however, there was little change in the percentage of pastors comprised of women between 2000 to

134 We include Arab/Middle Eastern in the category Caucasian, and African National in the category of African American/Black. Because there are so few pastors who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native, Other, or Multiracial, we exclude these categories from our analyses.

135 We ran crosstabulations of lead pastors' race/ethnicity by gender. In 2000, the results of crosstabulations showed that there were statistically significant differences in the percentage of women and men pastors across pastors' race/ethnicity (Pearson chi-square = 34.49, p < .001).



2019. The proportion of Black and Hispanic pastors comprised of women increased by only 2 to 4 percentage points over these two decades. Moreover, by 2019 there was almost no difference in the proportion of Black, Hispanic, and white lead pastors who were women. Thirty-nine percent of Black pastors and 37 percent of white pastors were women. Women composed 30 percent of Hispanic pastors.¹³⁶

Pastors' race and ethnicity and age

Key findings:

- In 2000, pastors between the ages of 35 and 54 comprised the largest share of all lead pastors of all racial and ethnic groups. Over 60 percent of all Black and white pastors were in this age range. Among Hispanic pastors, about 54 percent were 35 to 54 years old.

- By 2019, the largest share of pastors in any one age range shifted to those who were 55 to 72 years old. The greatest shift occurred among Black pastors. The proportion of Black pastors in this age range increased from 33 percent in 2000 to almost 70 percent by 2019, an increase of almost 38 percentage points.

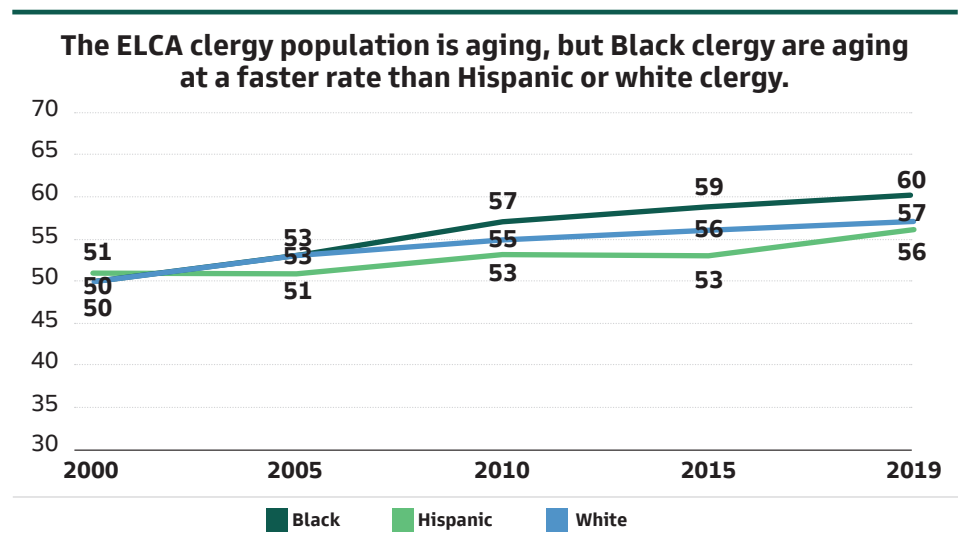


Figure 23. Change in median age of Black, Hispanic, and white clergy leading ELCA congregations, 2000-2019.

The population of ELCA clergy is aging. Yet are clergy of some races or ethnic groups aging at a faster rate than others? We found that the answer is yes. While the Black, Hispanic, and white clergy populations are all aging, the population of Black clergy is aging at a faster rate than the other groups (figure 23).¹³⁷ The median age of Black pastors increased by 20 percent

136 Results of crosstabulations of pastors' race by gender in 2019 showed that there is no statistically significant differences in percentages of female or male pastors who compose pastors of each racial group (Pearson chi-square = 9.12, p = .426).

137 Independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis tests were run to test if there were statistically significant differences in median ages of Black, Hispanic, and white pastors for all years of the study. There were no statistically significant differences in median ages between any of these groups from 2000 (Kruskal-Wallis = 7.037, p = .218) through 2008. There were statistically significant differences in median ages between some racial or ethnic groups from 2010 through 2019.



Section 2: Clergy race across denominations

over the past two decades. The age of white clergy increased by 12 percent, while rate of change among Hispanic clergy was an increase of 10 percent. While in 2000, there were almost no differences in the ages of Black, Hispanic, and white pastors, by 2019 the median age of Black pastors was 3 or 4 years higher than the median age of Hispanic or white pastors.

One reason the population of Black ELCA clergy are aging faster than Hispanic or white clergy is because pastors from the baby boom generation (those who were born between 1946 and 1964) make up a larger share of Black pastors in 2019 compared to the share of Hispanic and white pastors who were baby boomers. In 2000, people in this generation were 36 to 54 years old. Pastors from the baby boom generation (those who were 36 to 54 years old) made up almost two-thirds of all Black and white lead pastors in this year (figure 24). In 2019, the ages of baby boomers spanned from 55 to 73 years. While in 2000 an equal share of Black and white pastors was comprised of baby boomers, by 2019 baby boomers accounted for a larger share of Black pastors than for

Baby Boomers made up a larger share of Black pastors than of Hispanic or white pastors in 2019.

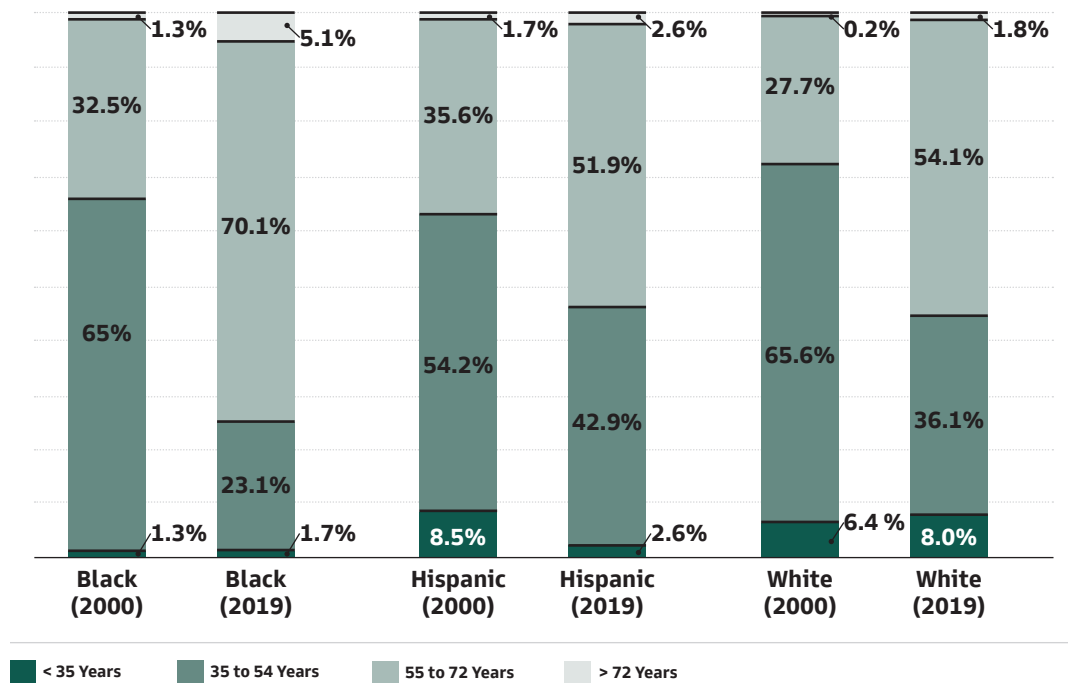


Figure 24. Age composition of Black, Hispanic, and white clergy leading ELCA congregations in 2019.



Hispanic or white pastors. In 2019, 70 percent of all Black lead pastors were between 55-72 years (baby boom generation), while a little over half of all Hispanic and white lead pastors were from this generation. In fact, a larger percentage of Black pastors were comprised of baby boomers in 2019 (70 percent) than in 2000 (65 percent). **This seems to suggest that more Black clergy than Hispanic or white clergy continue to pastor congregations past retirement age, and fewer Black clergy are entering pastoral ministry than among Hispanics and whites.**

Clergy race and ethnicity and characteristics of the congregations they serve

Pastors' race and ethnicity and median worship attendance of congregations they serve

Key finding:

- White pastors served larger congregations (in terms of median worship attendance) than congregations served by Black or Hispanic pastors throughout the period of 2000 to 2019. However, this gap narrowed during this period, primarily because the white pastors lead the majority of congregations, and the decline in worship attendance of white-led congregations reflects the rate of decline of all ELCA congregations.

We now examine whether there are disparities in worship attendance between congregations led by Black, Hispanic, and white pastors. This is because larger congregations (in terms of worship attendance) tend to also have greater financial resources. This in turn can impact pastors' salaries. We found that over the past twenty years, white pastors served congregations with higher median worship attendance than congregations served by Black or Hispanic pastors (figure 25).

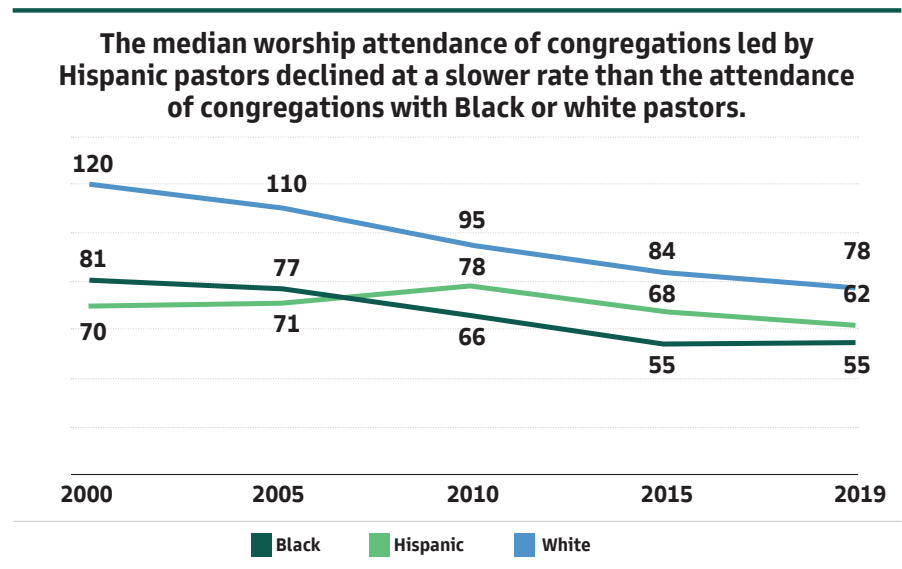


Figure 25. Change in median worship attendance of ELCA congregations served by Black, Hispanic, and white pastors, 2000-2019.



However, this gap narrowed during this period, primarily because the median worship attendance of all congregations declined at a faster rate than the decline in worship attendance of congregations with Black or Hispanic pastors. Since the majority of ELCA congregations are served by white pastors, the rate of decline of white-led congregations reflects the rate of decline in the entire denomination. The median worship attendance of all congregations decreased by 40 percent, and the attendance of those with white pastors decreased by 35 percent during this period. Congregations led by Black pastors experienced a 32 percent decline in attendance, while congregations led by Hispanic pastors experienced a net decline in worship attendance of only 11 percent.

We next analyzed the relationship between the race and ethnicity of lead pastors and the average worship attendance (in ranges this time instead of median worship attendance) of the congregations they serve, both in 2000 and in 2019 (table 5). We found that among pastors of all racial and ethnic groups, a greater share of pastors led congregations in the lowest worship attendance ranges in 2019 than in 2000. However, these shifts were more dramatic among Black-led and white-led congregations than among congregations led by Hispanic pastors. For instance, the percentage of Black pastors who led churches with 26 to 50 worshippers more than tripled between 2000

Table 5. Share of congregations led by Black, Hispanic, and white clergy in various worship attendance ranges, 2000 and 2019

Average worship attendance	Black		Hispanic		White	
	2000	2019	2000	2019	2000	2019
1,000 or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.3%
501-999	1.3%	0.9%	1.7%	0.0%	3.5%	1.4%
251 or more	3.9%	3.5%	6.8%	2.5%	18.1%	8.2%
101-250	29.5%	13.0%	25.4%	18.8%	40.1%	28.2%
51 to 100	52.6%	38.3%	37.3%	37.5%	27.6%	33.6%
26 to 50	9.0%	32.2%	22.0%	32.5%	10.7%	21.8%
25 or fewer	5.1%	13.0%	8.5%	8.8%	3.5%	8.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



and 2019, and the proportion who led churches with 25 or fewer worshippers more than doubled. By 2019, the share of Black pastors leading congregations with 101 to 250 people had decreased to less than half of what it was in 2000, going from almost 30 percent of pastors in 2000 to 13 percent in 2019. The proportion of white pastors serving congregations with 26 to 50 in average worship attendance doubled during this time period, going from 11 percent of white pastors in 2000 to 22 percent in 2019, while the percentage who served congregations with 101 to 250 attenders decreased from 40 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2019. While the proportion of Hispanic pastors who led smaller congregations increased between 2000 and 2019, this shift was not as dramatic. The greatest shift occurred in the share of Hispanic pastors serving congregations with 26 to 50 attenders. By 2019, almost 33 percent of Hispanic pastors served congregations of this size, which is an increase of about 10 percentage points compared to 2000.

Pastors' race and ethnicity and median total expenditures of congregations they serve

Key finding:

- White pastors led congregations with the greatest financial resources and Hispanic pastors led congregations with the least financial resources throughout most of the study period. By 2019, the median total expenditures of congregations led by white pastors was about \$150,800. The median total expenditures of congregations led by Hispanic pastors was about \$88,000 or 60 percent of expenditures of congregations led by white pastors.

Are there disparities in terms of financial resources of congregations led by pastors of different racial and ethnic groups? To discover the answer, we analyzed the median total expenditures of congregations led by Black, Hispanic, and white pastors, and how these expenditures changed over time. We report the results in 2000 constant dollars.¹³⁸ We found that white pastors served congregations with the highest median total expenditures throughout the period of 2000 to 2019 (figure 26). The greatest disparity in financial resources was between congregations led by Hispanic pastors compared to those led by white pastors. In 2000, the median total expenditures of congregations pastored by Hispanics were less than half the total expenditures of churches led by whites, while the expenditures of Black-led congregations were

¹³⁸ Median total expenditures were converted to 2000 constant dollars using the following converter: https://stats.areppim.com/calc/calc_usdlrxdeflator.php



about 79 percent of total expenditures of white-led congregations. Twenty years later, the total expenditures of congregations led by Hispanic pastors were still less than 60 percent of the expenditures of congregations led by white pastors, while median expenditures of Black-led congregations were 85 percent of those of white-led congregations.

The gap in median expenditures led by Black and Hispanic pastors compared to expenditures of congregations led by white pastors had narrowed somewhat over the past twenty years. This is mainly because the total expenditures of Hispanic-led congregations and Black-led congregations increased during this twenty-year time period, while the expenditures of white-led congregations remained the same. Overall, the congregations led by Hispanic pastors experienced a 28 percent net increase in total expenditures from 2000 to 2019. From 2000 to 2019, congregations served by Black pastors experienced a net increase in expenditures of 3 percent, while those served by whites experienced a net decline of less than 1 percent.

Congregations led by white pastors had higher median total expenditures than congregations led by Black or Hispanic pastors over the past twenty years.

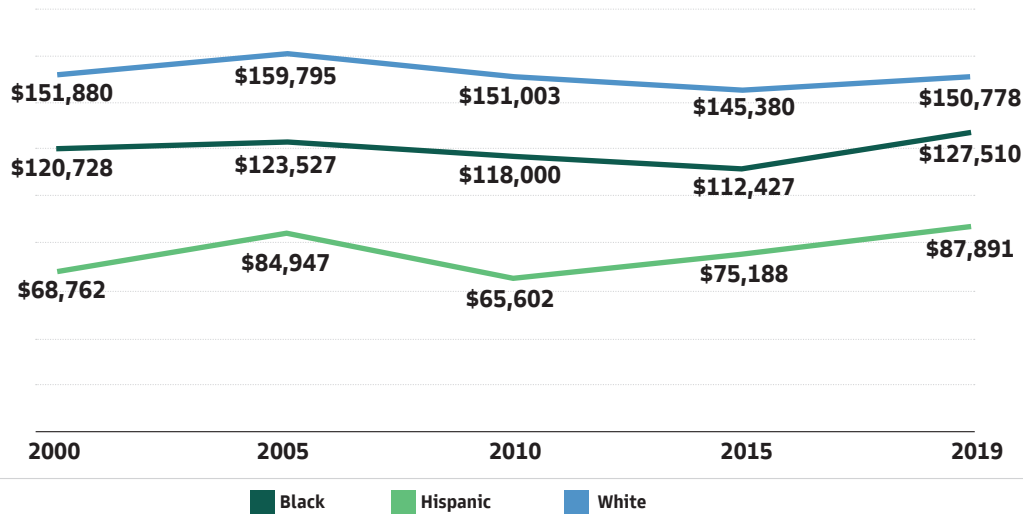


Figure 26. Change in median total expenditures of ELCA congregations led by Black, Hispanic, and white clergy, 2000-2019 (in 2000 U.S. constant dollars).



Discussion and conclusion

In this report, we have attempted to fill in the gaps in our knowledge regarding the racial and ethnic composition of clergy in broad Christian traditions, as well as in various denominations where data is available. We started in Section 1 by describing the historical context of Asian, Black, and Hispanic clergy and their relationship to the majority-white Christian traditions, both Protestant and Catholic. We explained how the history of slavery and racism led to the withdrawal of the majority of Black clergy from white-controlled denominations to form their own Black-led denominations, and how this accounts for the low percentage of Blacks (and specifically Black clergy) among historically-white Roman Catholic, evangelical Protestant, and mainline Protestant denominations today. We described the changing contours of the Roman Catholic church, and how immigration from Latin American countries as well as other parts of the world has fueled the growing diversity of both adherents and priests in U.S. Catholicism today.

We then examined the racial and ethnic composition of senior and solo clergy in evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic traditions using National Congregations Study data. We also looked at the racial and ethnic composition of M.Div. graduates from ATS seminaries in these same religious traditions. The greatest growth in racial and ethnic diversity occurred in the Roman Catholic tradition, driven primarily by the increase in share of Hispanic diocesan priests. Within the evangelical Protestant tradition, at first it appeared that the share of Black pastors increased while the share of white pastors decreased from 1998 to 2018. However, once the number of pastors serving majority-Black Baptist and Pentecostal congregations were accounted for, there was little change in the share of Black clergy leading congregations from historically white evangelical denominations. In the mainline Protestant tradition, the share of clergy of color increased slightly over the past two decades, rising from a little less than 10 percent in 1998 to 15 percent in 2018. When we compared the share of M.Div. graduates who were people of color to the share of clergy of color leading congregations, we found that a slightly smaller share of evangelical Protestant congregations is led by Black pastors compared to the share of M.Div. graduates from



evangelical Protestant seminaries who are Black. In the mainline Protestant tradition, the opposite was true: a smaller share of mainline congregations was led by Black pastors than the share of M.Div. graduates from ATS mainline Protestant seminaries who were Black. In the Roman Catholic tradition, there was a much greater increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of priests leading parishes as a whole than the change in racial and ethnic diversity of M.Div. graduates from Catholic seminaries in the United States.

The reasons for the discrepancy between racial and ethnic composition of clergy leading congregations and the racial and ethnic composition of M.Div. graduates are difficult to tease out. There are several factors that are at play. For instance, many M.Div. students attend a seminary that is affiliated with a denomination or religious tradition other than the denomination that they are from. There are also different ways of classifying denominations or congregations as Black Protestant, evangelical Protestant, or mainline Protestant. Some researchers include all majority-Black congregations as part of the Black Protestant tradition, even if the congregations belong to historically white mainline or evangelical Protestant denominations.¹³⁹ Other researchers include about seven or so denominations as historically Black Protestant.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, seminaries can also be classified in different ways. There are six ATS seminaries that historically have been considered Black Protestant, but there are an additional five or six seminaries that have a majority Black student body.¹⁴¹ Likewise, there are ATS seminaries whose students are primarily Asian, Hispanic, or visa-holders, all of which are included in either the mainline or evangelical Protestant traditions.

139 The National Congregations Study Cumulative Dataset (1998, 2006-2007, 2012, 2018-2019), congregations in which at least 80 percent of regular participants are Black are classified as Black Protestant, even if they belong to mainline or evangelical denominations.

140 See, for example, Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Juan Floyd-Thomas, Carol B. Duncan, Stephen G. Ray, Jr., and Nancy Lynne Westfield, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 18; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), xii (preface).

141 Those seminaries that are often considered as historically Black seminaries are Hood Theological Seminary, Howard University School of Divinity, Interdenominational Theological Center, Payne Theological Seminary, Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia University, and Shaw University Divinity School. Statistics on majority race of seminary students can be found at <https://www.ats.edu/Annual-Data-Tables>.



While we can learn about the racial and ethnic composition of pastoral leaders from looking at NCS data, we cannot examine whether there are disparities in congregational size, congregations' financial resources, or clergy salaries based on race and ethnicity of clergy leading congregations. And while we can examine how the racial and ethnic composition of M.Div. graduates from evangelical, mainline, and Roman Catholic seminaries has changed over time, we still do not know what percentage of these M.Div. graduates go on to become pastoral leaders, and whether this varies by race and ethnicity of seminarians.

In Section 2, we reviewed the available data for several denominations, including Assemblies of God, The Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We summarize the general findings for each denomination below.

Assemblies of God

Over the past fifteen years, clergy in the Assemblies of God have become somewhat more racially diverse. Whites comprised 80 percent of clergy in 2005, and this decreased to a little less than three-quarters of clergy by 2020. The share of Hispanic clergy increased slightly from 12 percent in 2005 to 16 percent in 2020. Asians, American Indians/Native Americans, and people of other racial and ethnic groups together comprised the remaining 8 percent of clergy.

While we know how the overall racial and ethnic composition of Assemblies of God clergy has changed, we do not know what types of positions these clergy hold. For instance, what percentage of clergy are senior or solo pastors, associate pastors, or in other ministerial positions in congregations? Are clergy of color under or over-represented in certain types of ministerial positions? How many clergy, if any, serve outside of congregations? Are clergy of particular races and ethnicities more likely to serve outside of congregations than other clergy?



Episcopal Church

In 2018 The Episcopal Church required their Church Pension Group to devise a way to track the racial and ethnic composition of their clergy and the extent to which there are racial inequities (if any) in clergy compensation. The most recent year for which there is publicly available demographic information on Episcopal clergy is 2021. The vast majority of Episcopal clergy (88 percent) are white, and 5 percent are Black, and thus are not as racially diverse as clergy in Assemblies of God. The remaining 6 percent of clergy is comprised of Asians, Hispanics, and people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The Episcopal Church has taken this transparency one step further by making public the median compensation of Asian, Black, and Hispanic clergy, as well as for clergy of multiple races or other racial and ethnic identities. The compensation for Hispanic clergy was comparable to that of white clergy, while clergy of other racial and ethnic groups received salary and benefits that were slightly higher than that received by white clergy.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

We examine publicly available data for the PC (USA). For 1998, these data come from the 2000-2002 Presbyterian (U.S.A.) Panel Survey. Data from 2019 are from “The PC(USA) Minister Survey Demographic Report (October 2020)”. The clergy of the PC(USA) are almost entirely white. In 1999, whites made up 94 percent of all active, ordained clergy, and this had dropped by only 2 percentage points twenty years later. While the panel surveys ask questions related to pastors’ demographic information, they do not include questions about number of people attending worship services, nor about congregational finances. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether or not racial inequities exist in terms of where clergy of color receive calls to be pastors, (such as size of congregation or finances the congregation has).



United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ started collecting demographic data on clergy and what congregations they serve in 2015. Since we had such a short time span to work with, we pooled the data to give a “snapshot” of the racial and ethnic composition of senior and solo pastors. The UCC followed a similar pattern as the Episcopal Church. We found that 88 percent of lead pastors in the UCC are white, and 7 percent are Black. Asian and Hispanic pastors together comprise 4 percent of lead pastors. While we have data on some characteristics of UCC congregations, we do not have data on average weekly worship attendance, racial and ethnic composition of church members, nor on congregational finances. Therefore, we do not know whether disparities exist between congregations led by clergy of color and those led by white clergy in terms of average worship attendances or financial resources that congregations have.

United Methodist Church

While the UMC collects data on pastors’ age and gender, and also collects data on the racial and ethnic composition of church members, the denomination does not collect data on the race and ethnicity of the pastors who serve those churches. The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, an organization within the United Methodist Church, conducted a study on the race and ethnicity of UMC clergy in 2011,¹⁴² but a comparable study has not been done since then. At that time, 89 percent of clergy were white, and 6 percent were Black. They found that Blacks were overrepresented among Provisional Elders (11 percent) and part-time local pastors (13 percent).

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The ELCA is the one denomination for which we have detailed data on both race and ethnicity of senior and solo pastors as well as data on the size and financial resources of the congregations they serve. Even though the ELCA has reserved 10 percent of certain national and synodical positions for racial and ethnic minorities, the share of pastoral leaders comprised of people of color was below this benchmark throughout the period of 2000 to 2019. Even by 2019, altogether they comprised only 5 percent of all ELCA lead pastors. In 2000, the combined percentage of lead pastors who were Black, Asian, or Hispanic was only 2.3 percent. By 2019, the percentage of Black, Asian, and Hispanic pastors more than doubled.

142 General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, “Clergy Diversity Proportional to Membership.”




Large disparities persist in terms of the median worship attendance and financial resources of congregations led by pastors of different racial and ethnic groups. Congregations led by white pastors had the highest median worship attendance and the greatest median total expenditures from 2000 to 2019. In 2000, Black pastors served congregations whose median worship attendance was two-thirds of that of congregations served by white pastors, (around 80 worshipers). Hispanic pastors served churches with a median worship attendance that was less than 60 percent of the worship attendance of congregations served by white pastors.

The gap in worship attendance of congregations led by whites and those led by clergy of other races and ethnic groups had narrowed somewhat by 2019, but this is mainly because the median worship attendance of congregations with white pastors decreased at a faster rate than the attendance of congregations with Hispanic pastors. The median worship attendance of congregations led by whites fell 35 percent, while congregations with Black pastors experienced a 32 percent decline in attendance. Congregations led by Hispanic clergy made the greatest gains in reaching parity with white-led congregations. By 2019, congregations served by Hispanic clergy had a median worship attendance that was a little less than 90 percent of the worship attendance of congregations with white pastors. The worship attendance of Black-led congregations was a little more than 70 percent of white-led congregations' attendance.

Disparities also persist in terms of financial resources between ELCA congregations led by clergy of different races. For most years, expenditures of congregations led by white pastors were greater than the expenditures of congregations led by pastors of other races and ethnicities. The greatest disparity in total expenditures was between congregations led by Hispanic pastors and those led by white pastors. In 2000, expenditures of churches served by Hispanic clergy were less than half (45 percent) of expenditures of churches with white clergy. **By 2019, expenditures of Hispanic-led congregations were only 58 percent of expenditures of congregations led by white pastors, despite the fact that the worship attendance of Hispanic-led congregations was 90 percent of the worship attendance of white-led congregations.** Throughout the past decade, total expenditures of congregations led by Black clergy fluctuated between about 75 and almost 80 percent of expenditures of white-led congregations.

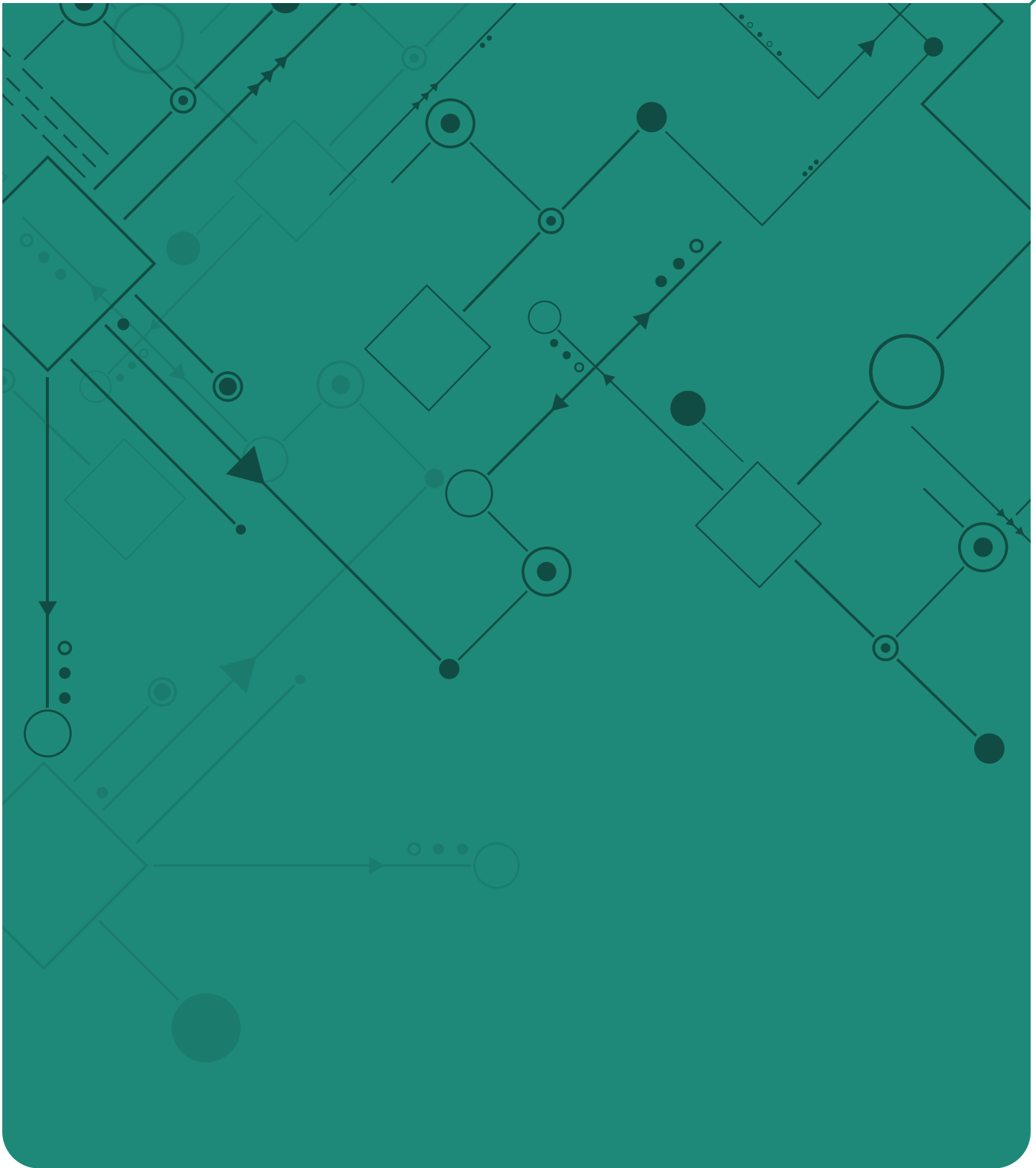


More than anything, this research review of clergy race and ethnicity reveals how little we know about clergy of color serving congregations in historically white mainline and evangelical denominations, even among “connectional” denominations that require congregations to provide data to their national offices on an annual basis. The challenge for many mainline denominations is walking the fine line between recognizing that racial and ethnic differences among clergy do exist, while at the same time ensuring that decisions related to hiring, salaries, or promotions are not based on clergy’s race. If denominations collect data on pastors’ race and ethnicity, they run the risk that this information will be used by others to give preferential treatment to individuals of a particular racial or ethnic group. Yet past studies have shown that ignoring the racial and ethnic identities of individuals only perpetuates these racial disparities and racist practices.¹⁴³ A review of the history of Asian, Black, and Hispanic pastors and congregations in this report has shown that people of color have been marginalized in Christian congregations and the denominations to which they belong. Given the fact that there are well-documented racial and ethnic disparities in a wide range of areas related to well-being, such as employment, income, education, and wealth,¹⁴⁴ it makes sense that there could very well be racial and ethnic disparities in employment opportunities and income for pastors of color serving congregations, too. The Episcopal Church has found one solution to this dilemma by requesting that clergy voluntarily share this information but not requiring them to do so. Another option would be to remove other personal identifiers from any files that include pastors’ race and ethnicity, such as their names and the names of the congregations they serve. This would allow denominational leaders to determine whether or not there are racial disparities in terms of clergy’s employment opportunities, salaries, and benefits while ensuring that this information is not used to give preferential treatment to clergy of a particular race. Denominations face a tricky dilemma in how to ensure that all clergy thrive, including clergy of color, but this issue cannot be ignored if they are to follow the biblical mandate to “Maintain justice and do what is right...”¹⁴⁵ 

143 Evan P. Apfelbaum, Michael I. Norton, and Samuel R. Sommers, “Racial Color Blindness: Emergence, Practice, and Implications,” in *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 21, no. 3 (June 2012): 205-209; Ashley (“Woody”) Doane, “Beyond Color-Blindness,” in *Sociological Perspectives* 60, no. 5 (Oct. 2017): 975-991; Victoria C. Plaut, “Diversity Science,” 77-99.

144 Victoria C. Plaut, “Diversity Science,” 78-79.

145 Isaiah 56:1, New International Version



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