

Working Paper – United Church of Canada Statistics

Brian Clarke & Stuart Macdonald

Introduction

Denominational statistics are an important source of data that keeps track of various forms of religious behavior and expression, but in Canada this data has not been extensively studied. Since we began working together in 2003, we recognized the value of this data and have attempted to compile and analyze that data for various religious bodies. In compiling this information, we have used the data generated by churches themselves as recorded in their archives or denominational publications, and we have not relied upon data in the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches.

We appreciate that some of these statistics may offer a more “realistic” picture than other sets of statistics. For example, we recognize that the number of “members” in a denomination often offers an optimistic picture. If a denomination’s membership is in decline, membership is often a lagging indicator as members remain on the books long after they have ceased participating in a congregation. However, this optimism is usually consistent, and thus comparisons over time do allow us to see real trends. We also recognize that statistics on other aspects of religious behaviour are more likely to offer an accurate picture. Churches are, for example, unlikely to record baptisms that didn’t happen. In sum, we believe that when we compare statistics on multiple aspects of religious involvement - such as membership, baptism, marriage and so on - a picture emerges that indicates how a denomination is doing and we need to take that picture seriously.

The purpose of these working papers is to make our findings available quickly and conveniently, and we welcome comments and feedback. Our main concern is how religious behavior has changed in Canada since World War II. We believe that the data from religious denominations will help us to understand the nature of this change, how it affected particular denominations, and, when looked at comparatively, this data will help us to understand the broader changes relating to religion itself and its place in Canadian society. The papers are intended to be primarily descriptive. Electronic dissemination allows us to share much more of the data that we have uncovered than would be possible in an academic journal article or book published in hard copy.

For the United Church of Canada we have obtained data starting in 1945 and running through to 2006, the last year for which we have published data.

Our discussion on what the Canadian Census reveals about long-term trends in the Anglican Church can be found in an article in *Studies in Religion* which is scheduled for publication in early 2011.

Denominational Numbers

Membership

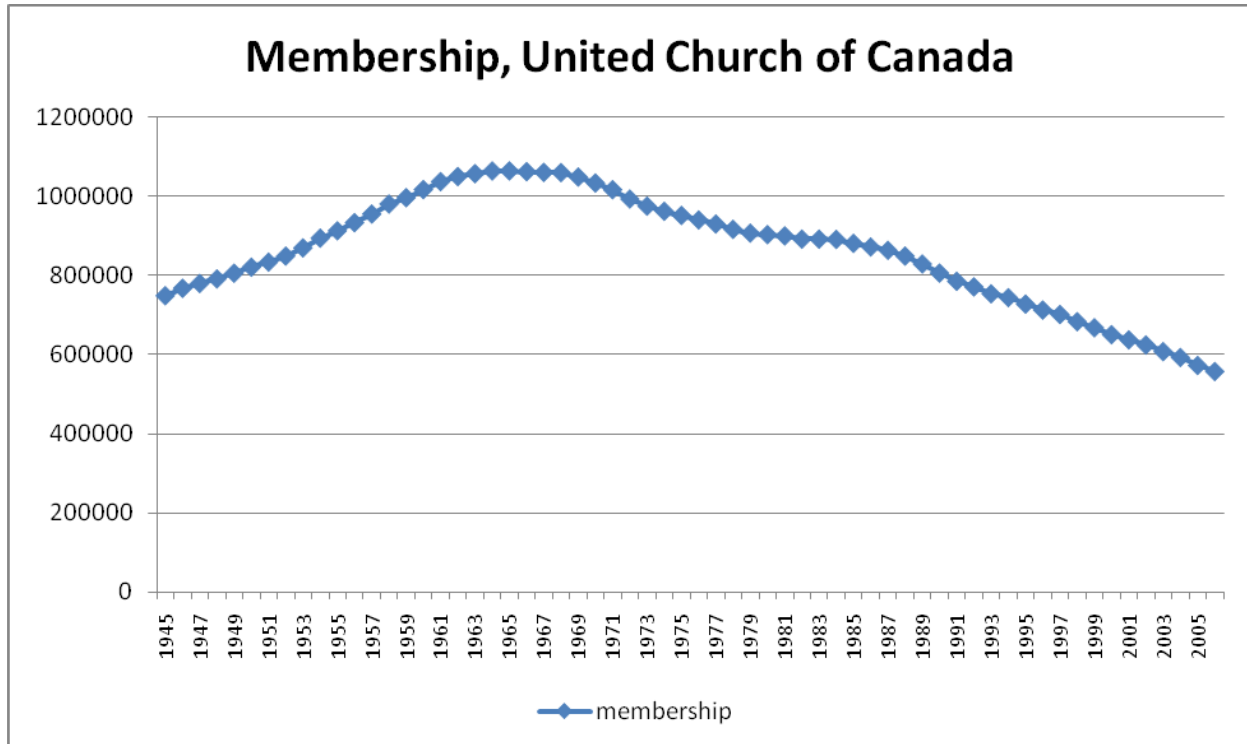
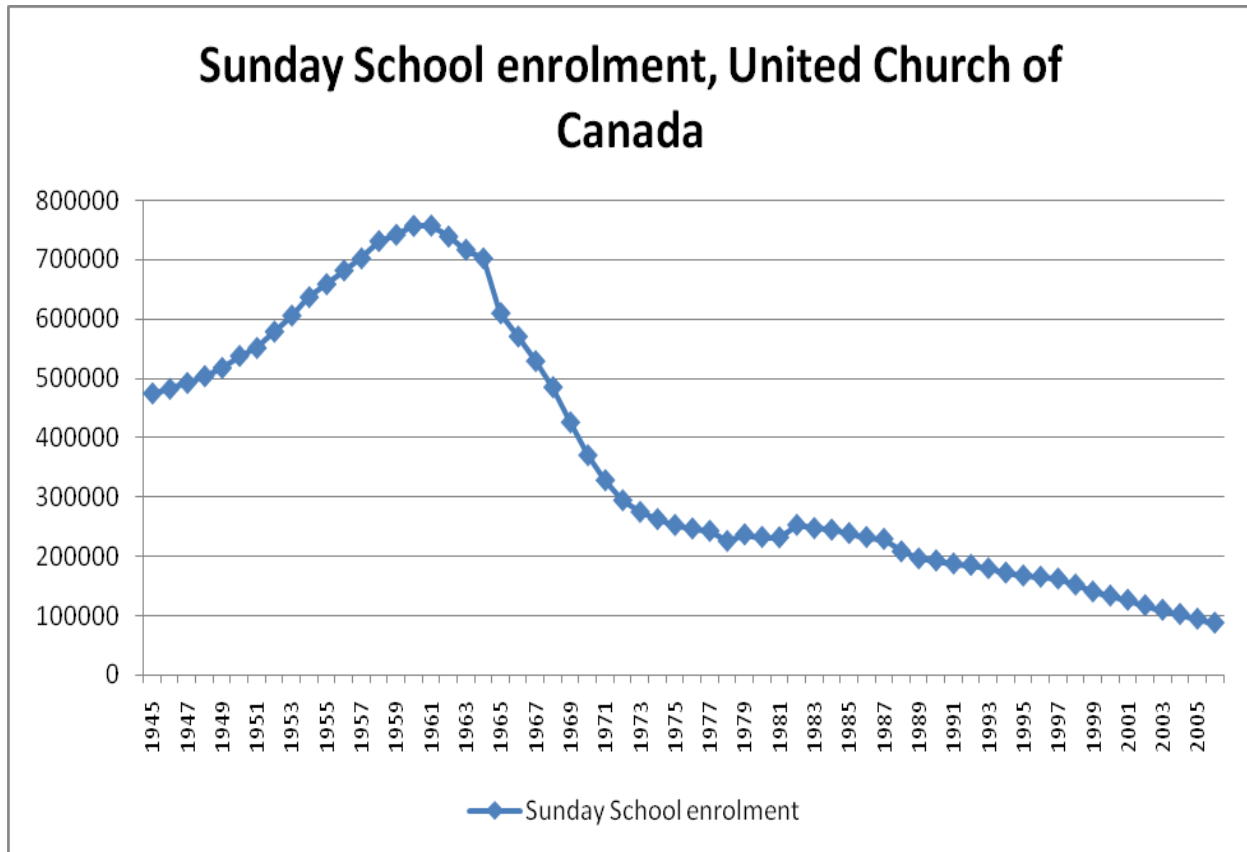


Figure 1 – Membership, the United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

The United Church of Canada saw consistent growth in its membership from the days of Church Union (1925) up to the end of World War II (Figure 1). In 1945 membership stood at 749,374. After the war, membership continued to grow at a fairly steady rate, surpassing 1 million members in 1961 (1,016,879) and reaching its highest point ever in 1965 at 1,064,033 members. In just two decades, total membership had grown by over 40%. Over the next few years, however, membership declined slowly (1966: 1,062,002; 1967: 1,060,335; 1968: 1,059,853) and fell below the one million mark in 1972 (993,190). From the peak in 1965 through to 1972 the UCC had lost some 70,800 members from its rolls. That number represents about 6.6% of its peak membership. The rest of the 1970s saw continued decline in the UCC, but this decline seems to have slowed down in the mid-1980s when numbers stabilized (1983: 891,852), before moving again into a more rapid decline (1986: 872,290) and falling below 800,000 in 1991 (785,726). That decline has continued over the last years, falling to 558,129 in 2006 (the last year for which we have data). In all, from 1965 through to 2006, UCC membership had fallen by almost a half.

Sunday School Enrolment**Figure 2 – Sunday School enrolment, United Church of Canada, 1945–2006**

The decline in Sunday School enrolment has been more dramatic than the decline in general membership (Figure 2). In 1945 Sunday School membership stood at 474,248. This number grew dramatically in the 1950s, reaching a peak of 757,338 in 1961, before dipping the next year (1962) to 738,899. To say the fall over the next year was dramatic is something of an understatement, as one year (1964 to 1965) saw the loss of almost 100,000 children. We might think this was a statistical anomaly if the trend hadn't continued for a whole a decade, by which time in 1971 Sunday school enrolment stood at 327,801. The rate of decline slowed in the 1970s. We also see a brief recovery in the early 1980s, when numbers increased somewhat again, reaching 252,537 in 1982 from a low in 1978 of 225,388, making for a 12% increase over 4 years. After 1982 we see Sunday School enrolment slowly falling and then falling more rapidly as we enter the late 1980s. In 1989 enrolment fell below 200,000 (195,902) for the first time. After this, decline has remained persistent. In 2006 (the last year for which we have statistics) the number stood at 87,407. Thus, from peak enrolment in 1961 to 2006, enrolment had dropped by almost 670,000 or very nearly 90% of peak enrolment.

Baptisms and Professions of faith

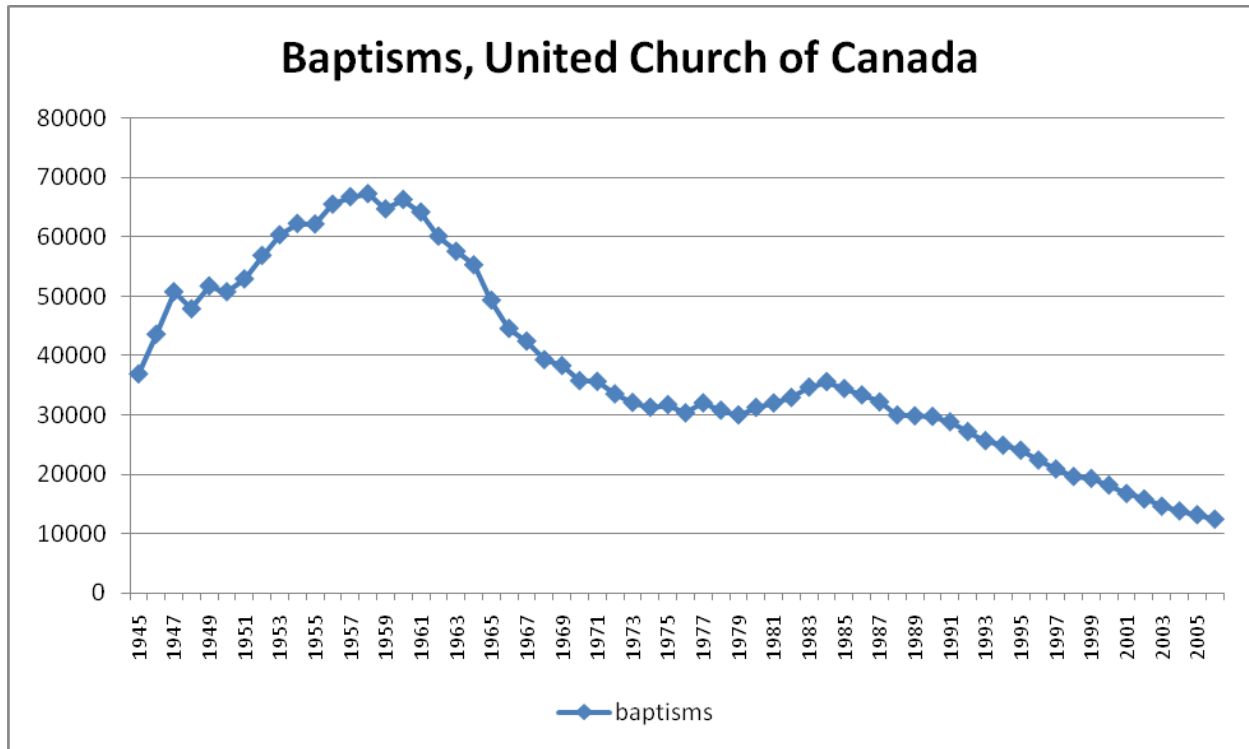


Figure 3 – Baptisms, United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

Baptisms in the UCC grew fairly consistently in the post World War period, from 36,902 in 1945 to a peak of 67,217 in 1958, for an increase of 1.8 times (Figure 3). The next year (1959) saw a small decline to 64,650 followed by a recovery the next year (1960) to 66,226. After that date the number of baptisms went into decline. The fall over the 1960s was dramatic, with the UCC recording only 35,765 baptisms in 1970, 45% off from a decade earlier. The situation settled down somewhat in the 1970s as baptisms fell slowly to 30,001 in 1979. By contrast, the early 1980s saw a recovery in terms of the number of baptisms, which grew to 35,596 in 1984, up by 15% in the 5 year period from 1979 on. Since that year we see a pattern of consistently fewer baptisms each year. In 1998 baptisms fell below 20,000 and in 2006 stood at 12,468. To put this in perspective, this would represent approximately one-third of the baptisms performed in the UCC s in 1945, and less than one-fifth of baptisms that occurred in the peak years in the late 1950s.

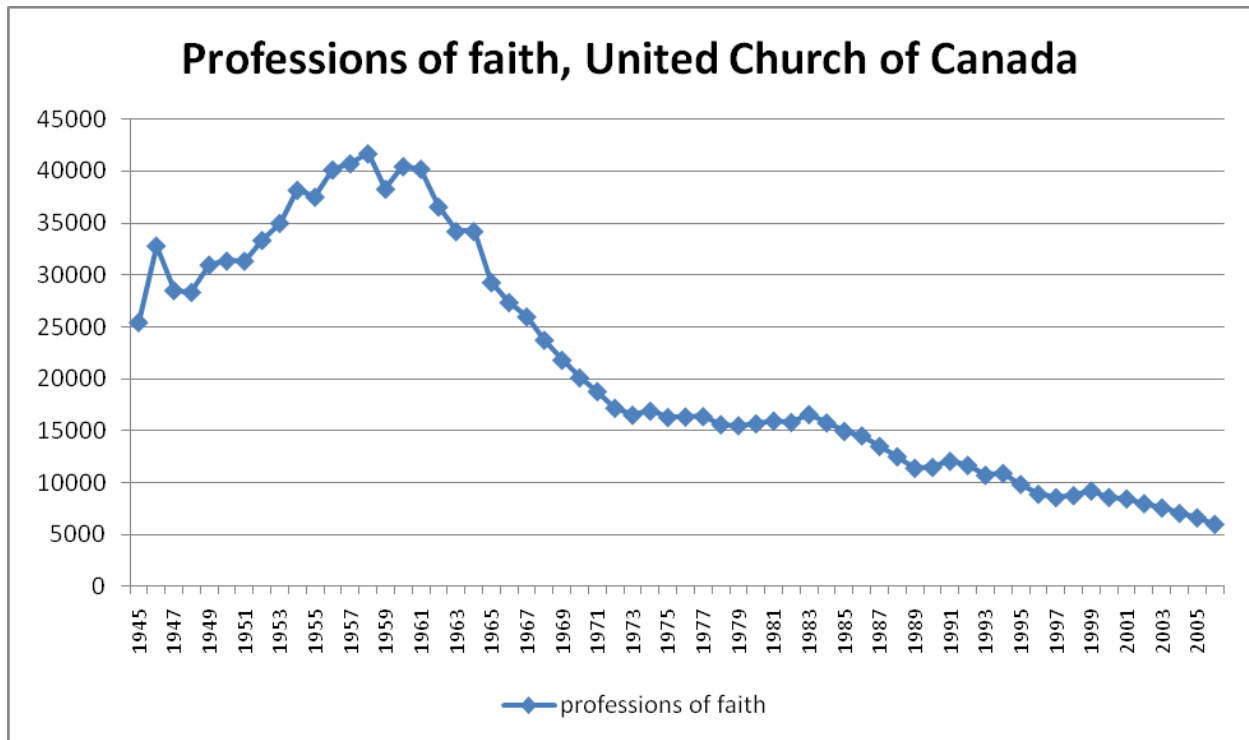


Figure 4 – Professions of faith, United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

We turn next to professions of faith (Figure 4), whereby one becomes a member of the United Church. Historically this would have occurred as one enters the mid-teen. Readers of this working paper could be forgiven if, at first glance, they were to look at the figure on professions of faith and assume we had made a mistake and simply copied the previous figure on baptisms. The similarities between the two are indeed striking. Again we see growth from 1945 (25,457) which leads to a peak in 1958 figures (41,713), followed by a decline in 1959 (only more dramatically in terms of professions of faith) and a recovery in 1960 (40,482). A dramatic decline in the 1960s is also evident in the case of professions of faith. In one year, 1964 to 1965, professions declined by almost 50,000. This decline continued until 1973, after which we see a decade where the decline stabilizes, followed by a mild recovery between 1979 (15,525) and 1983 (16,595) for an increase of 6.9% over 4 years. After 1983, the trend line became more severe. Professions of faith have declined since then to stand at 6,019 in 2006, for an overall percentage decline of 63.7% over 23 years. From its peak in 1958, professions of faith had dropped by nearly 32,000 or about 85% of the professions of faith made in that year.

United Church Baptisms and Canadian Births: Some Comparisons

When we consider the number of baptisms, the obvious question we ask is how does this relate to the overall number of births? Put simply, denominations which practice infant baptism are highly responsive to changes in the actual incidences of births as this will affect the number of children who can presented for baptism in any given year. We see this relationship in the United Church of Canada. Unfortunately, we cannot derive the number of births specific to members of the United Church from the census returns. Fortunately, the overall picture is clear enough.

The peak year for births in Canada was 1959 (479,275), while the peak year for baptisms in the UCC was 1958. However, the best way to consider the relationship between the number of baptisms in the UCC and the number of babies being born across Canada is to consider the former as percentage of the number of births. We can then determine to what extent the decline has been related to the decline in the number of babies being born and to what extent other factors are at play.

United Church baptisms as percentage of Canadian births

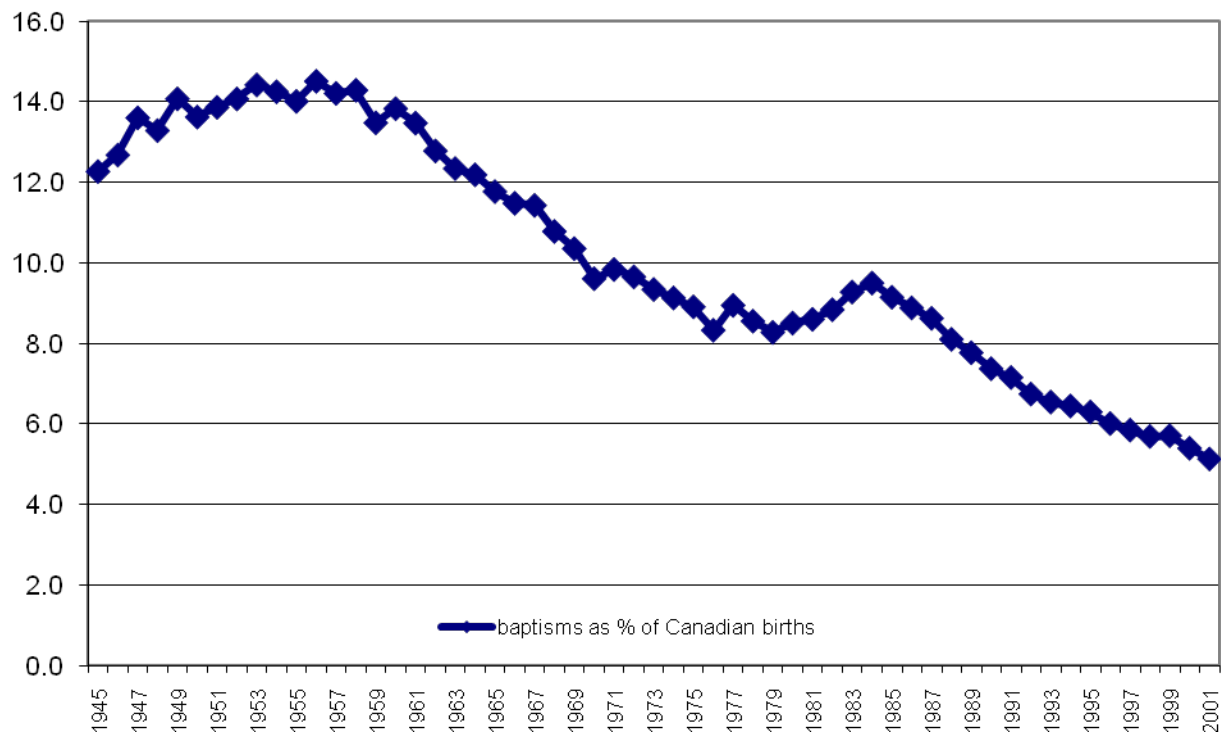


Figure 5 – United Church Baptisms as a percentage of Canadian births

What is clear from this comparison (Figure 5) is that the decline in the number of baptisms in the UCC is not related directly to the number of births. Even as a percentage, this has changed dramatically over time. We would suggest we see a few different trends here. First, we see an

increase in the percentage of UCC baptisms to Canadian births in the immediate post-war period. In the period from 1945 through to 1964 the UCC consistently baptized over 12% of Canadian babies. Indeed, between 1952 and 1958 this was closer to a consistent 14%. In 1959 the percentage fell to 13.5, but recovered somewhat in 1960 (13.8). The appearance of the early and middle baby boomers had a big impact on the UCC, and we see this rate of baptisms, but the rate of baptisms fell dramatically right after with the arrival of the late boomers. The parents of the later boomers, born during the depression or during World War II, did not bring these children to the church to be baptized. Thus we see not only a decline in the absolute number of baptisms but also a significant decline in the percentage of baptisms to births. The percentage of baptisms performed in the UCC compared to Canadian births peaked in 1956 (14.8%) and continued to drop until it reached a new low in 1976 (8.3%). In just twenty years the rate of baptisms had dropped by two-fifths, a pattern in keeping with other trends that we have looked at. Between 1970 to 1980 baptisms in the the UCC fell within the range of 8% to 10% of Canadian births. One can even see a recovery in the mid 1980s not only in terms of overall numbers, as we have already discussed, but also as a percentage of births. By 1989, however, the percentage had moved below 8% to stand at 7.8%, and in the decades since has continued a downward slide to stand at only 3.6% in 2006.

The decline from 1956 through to 1976 in both overall number of baptisms and the percent of baptisms to births is likely related to a number of factors. In his analysis of the United Church of Canada, H.G MacLeod has suggested that baptism lost its social significance (MacLeod, 1980:82). Perhaps, then, many no longer came to see baptism as a major family event. It may be that the big move to the suburbs disrupted old kin networks. We may also be seeing the impact of neo-orthodoxy upon the clergy. With their high view of the church, they didn't want to baptize the children of families who were approaching them for social as opposed to religious reasons. What is clear is that the number of rates of baptisms fell in conjunction with Sunday School enrolment and, to lesser extent, membership. If so, the decline that we are looking is directly related to people who had pulled back from their involvement in the UCC.

The uptick in the percentage of baptisms could be explained by a baby boom echo as early to middle baby boomers started raising families. The subsequent would confirm a trend we have seen before of late baby boomer leaving church or never joining a church. Certainly, the growing number of dechurched (those who left) and unchurched (those who didn't join in the first place) explains the sharp and continuous decline since the late 1980's.

Professions of faith: Expected and Actual

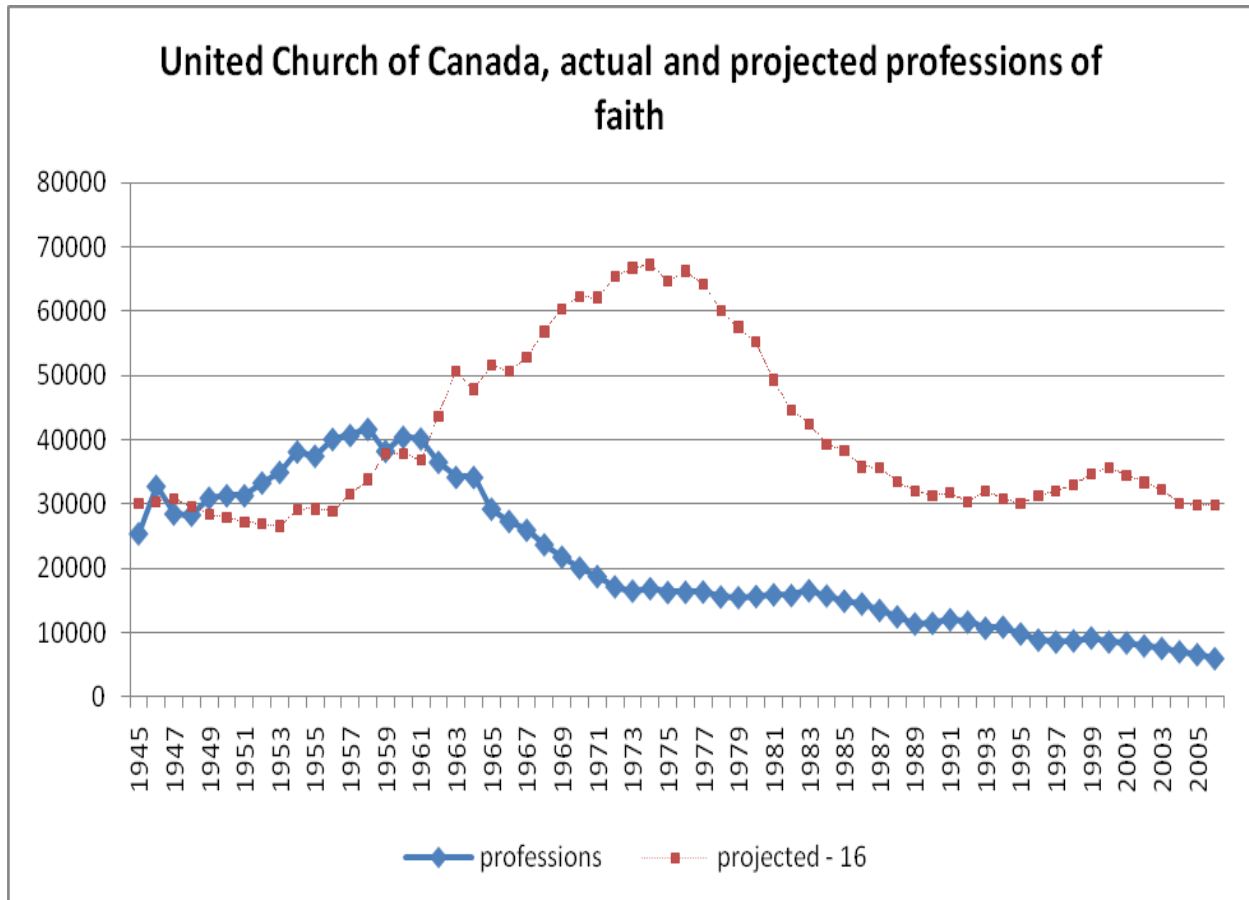


Figure 6 – Comparison projected professions of faith to actual professions which

In this section, we develop a scenario that estimated the number of professions of faith that one could expect to occur based on the previous number of baptisms and compares that with the number of professions of faith that actually occurred (Figure 6). We offer a few preliminary remarks before we see how this scenario unfolds.

Historically in the United Church those who were baptized as infants make a profession of faith later in life, thereby “joining” the church as members. (Those who would have already made this profession in a United Church or other congregation would generally transfer their membership to a different congregation were they to move. Those who had not been baptized as infants would join the church by being baptized as adults.)

While certainly there are many variants on when and why people join the church, it is fair to say the largest group has traditionally been those who were baptized as infants, who then joined the church as adolescents, after attending membership classes. We have made the assumption

that this would normally happen at the age of 16. To be sure, this is a rough and ready estimate, but it is close enough to establish general trend lines.

To be sure, in the immediate post-war period there might have been a higher than usual incidence of adult professions of faith as men and women joined the church as they settled down, got married, and raised children. This trend, however, may explain in part why actual professions exceeded expected professions through the late 1940's and 1950s. Successful revivals may also have contributed to this trend. Either way, what this trend suggests is that the UCC was successful in recruiting among its natural constituency those who been baptized in the church — and, very likely beyond that, in the general Protestant population.

What follows in the 1960s represents a fundamentally different situation from what preceded it. At a time when professions of faith should have grown dramatically, they actually fell sharply. Put another way, the United Church of Canada should have seen an explosion of professions of faith in the 1960s and through to the mid 1970s. Instead, it witnessed massive decline. Indeed, with just exception of a single year, the gap between expected and actual professions of faith kept expanding from 1961 right through to 1974. In 1974, the expected number of professions of faith on the model we are proposing here was about 67,200; the actual number of professions made was 16,900. The ratio of expected professions of faith to what actually occurred was 4 to 1. In 1979, when the last of the boomers would normally be expected to make a profession of faith expected professions stood at some 57,500 compared to the 15,525 that were actually made. By then the gap between expected and actual professions was beginning to diminish somewhat, but the ratio of expected to actual professions still stood at 3.1 to 1, an astonishing high gap. It would be no exaggeration to say that what this comparison underscores is that much of the boomer generation had left the church en masse. And it would appear that their parents respected their decision and did not pressure them to reconsider it.

Various Statistics Relating to Pastoral Care

The United Church of Canada provides a wide range of pastoral services, some of which are tracked in its published statistics. Most of this data only serves to confirm the broad trends already seen.

Marriages and Funerals

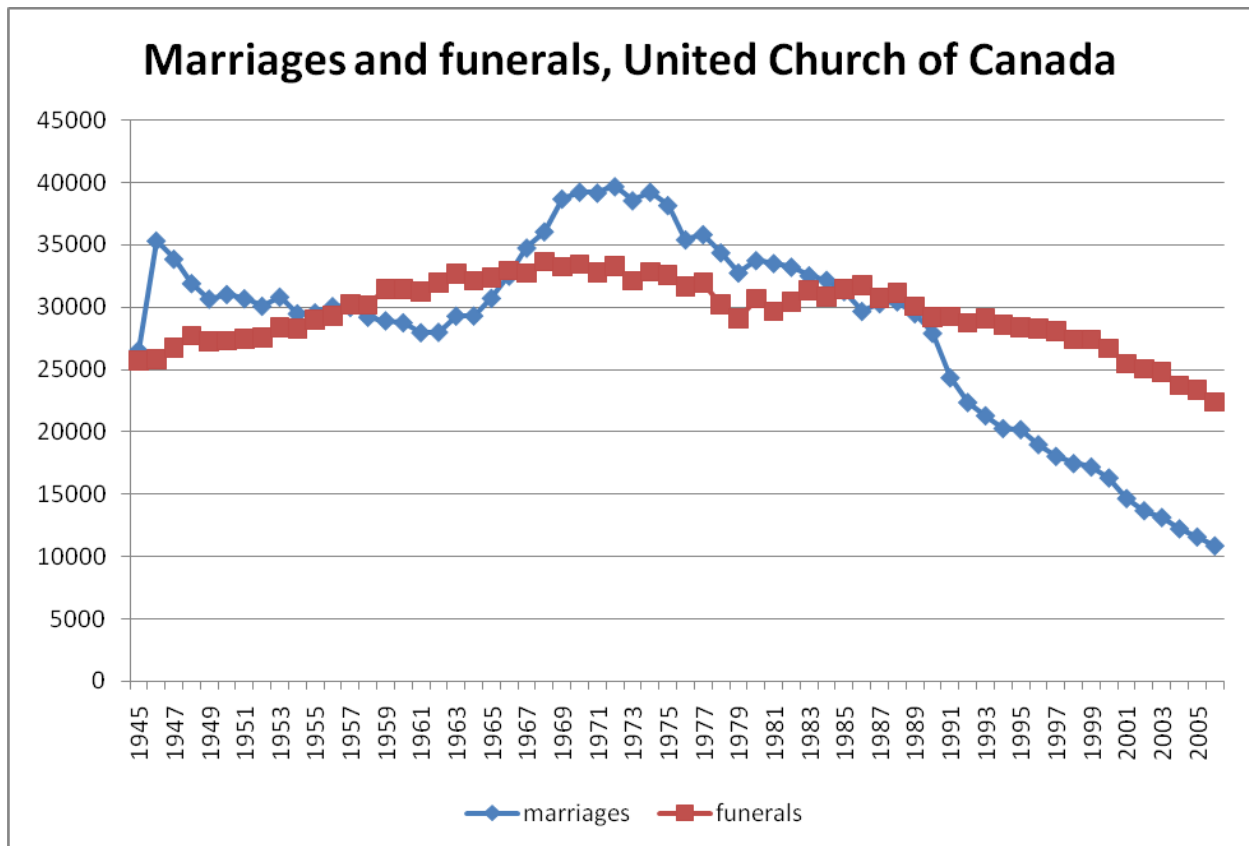


Figure 7 – Marriages and Funerals, United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

We look first at marriages and funerals (Figure 7). As one would expect, the number of marriages performed in the UCC increased immediately after World War II and remained relatively steady through the 1960s, before growing dramatically in the late 1960s and into the mid 1970, something we would expect as the leading edge of the boomer generation hit their twenties. From 1960 to a peak in 1974, marriages the number of marriages grew from 28,781 to a high of 39,263, which represented a 36% rate of growth for that 15 year period. . From the high point of 1974 the number of marriages entered into significant decline. Between 1974 and 1989, the number of marriages eased off from 39,263 to 29,509, dropping nearly a quarter in that fifteen year period. After 1989, however, the number of marriages performed in the United

Church fell precipitously, numbering only 10,868 in 2006. Between 1989 and 2006, the number of have marriages had plummeted by three fifths. When viewed from a generational perspective this adds up to major social change. While early baby boomers got married in the church, middle and later boomers were not nearly so eager. Post baby boomers were even more definitive about whether to get married in the church or not: they stayed away in droves.

Interestingly, the number of funerals marks out a very different pattern. From the 1960's right through to the end of the 1980's, funerals remained (with just a few blips in the 1970's) remarkably stable. After 1988 they too started to decline. Form 1988 to 2006 funerals performed by the UCC fell from 31,114 to 22,383, a drop of nearly 28%. This is a significant drop, to be sure, but not nearly as dramatic as the other trends we have been looking at. Church funerals are something of a lagging indicator. They're usually done for older people. Pre-boomers are more likely to have maintained a connection to the church, and for long time they or their families arranged to have a church funeral. What the trend line tell us, however, is that even among this generation church funerals are now in decline. And this trend is verly likely to become more acute as baby boomer age and die.

Families and Persons Under Pastoral Care

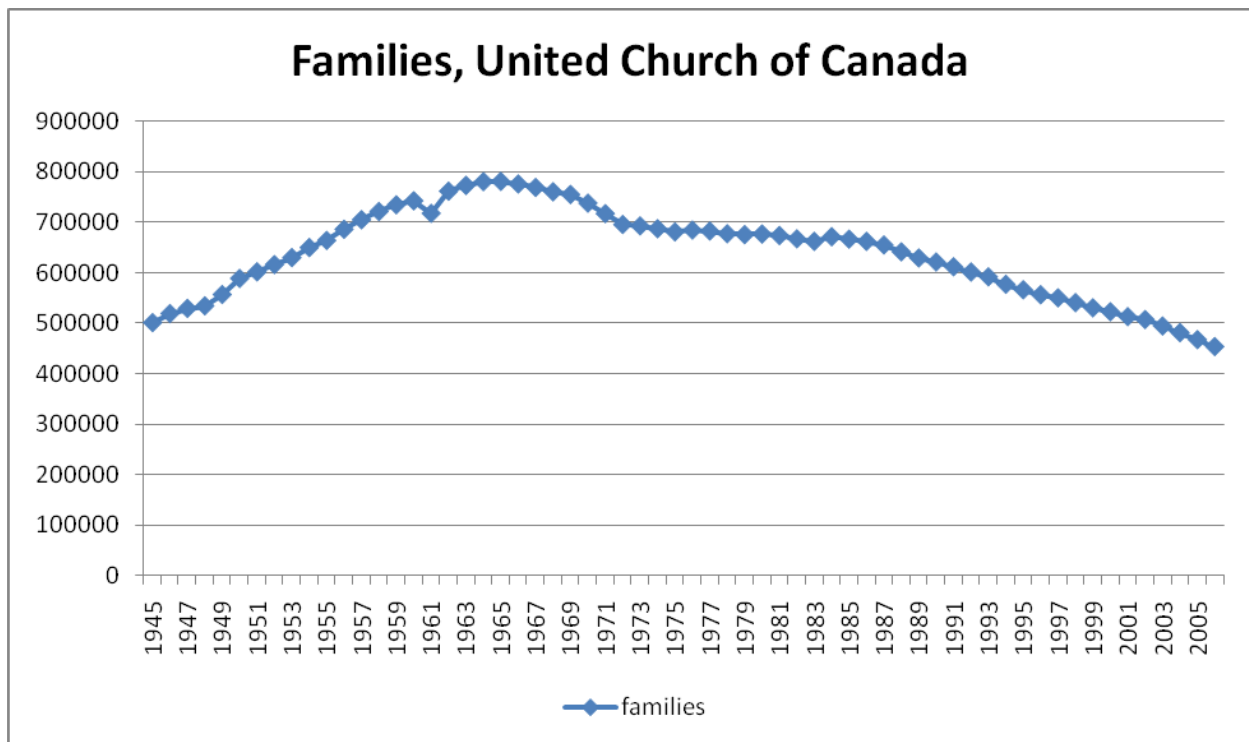


Figure 8 – Families, United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

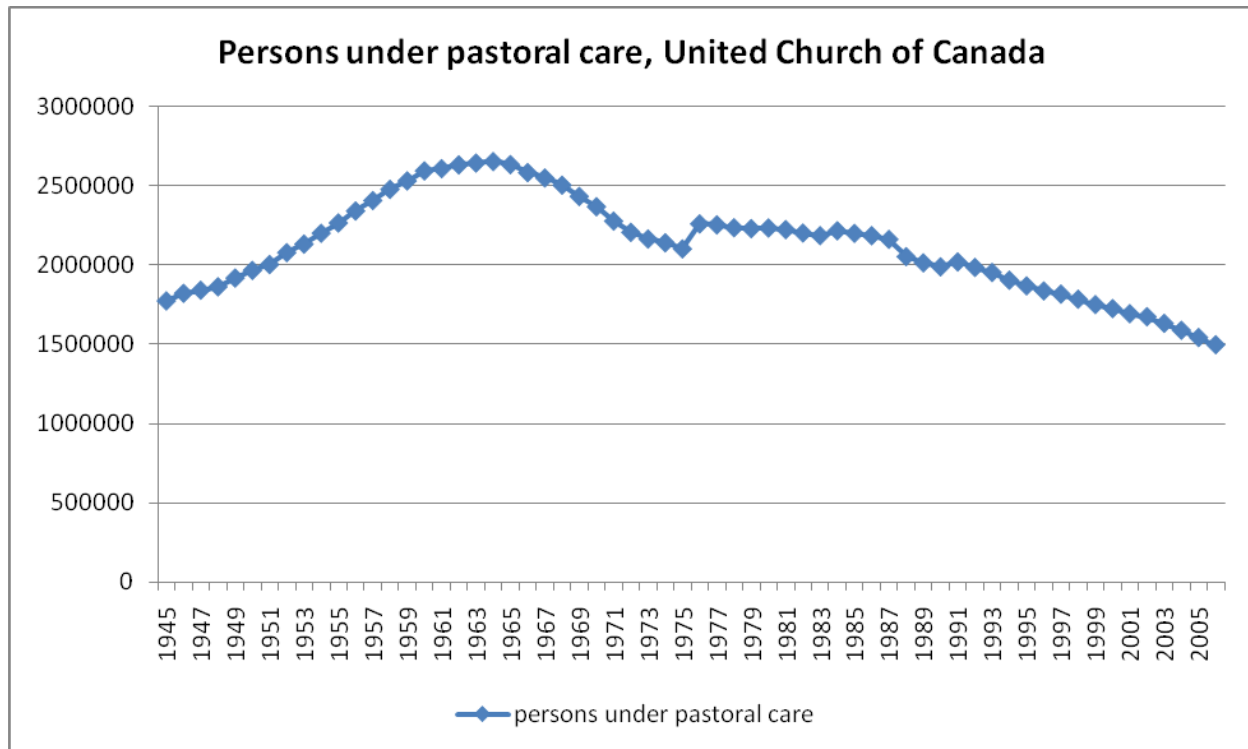


Figure 9 – Persons under pastoral care, United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

The UCC also provides data on the number of families (Figure 8) and the number of “persons under pastoral care” (Figure 9). The number of families shows a trend very similar to that of membership, in that there was consistent growth through the 1950s, a short decline in 1961, and then continued growth in the 1960s. The highest year for number of families was 1965 (781,587). The decline has been steady, although gradual (in particular in comparison to indicators such as Sunday School membership, baptism and confirmation.) Between and the peak and 1965 (781,587) and 1974 (687,479) decline was comparatively mild at minus 12%. Over the next decade, decline was more pronounced, hitting 671,547, for a drop of just under a quarter. The number of families under pastoral care fell under 600,000 for the first time in 1993. In 2006 the UCC recorded 452,863 families, just two-fifths of the church’s 1965 peak number of families under pastoral care.

Persons under pastoral care is the largest category that the UCC records. It includes not only members but also those who might look to the UCC for provision of pastoral services (children, attenders who are not members, those who in other ways identify with the UCC). We see in this case a similar pattern to other trend lines that we have examined, although we note some slight modifications.. Growth occurred throughout the 1950s reaching a peak in 1964, when the UCC felt it had 2,654,375 persons under its pastoral care. The number has fallen since this height, reaching a new low in 1975 of 2,101,452, for a 20% drop over 11 years. The very next year, however, saw a dramatic recovery in 1976 when the number under pastoral care bounced up to 2,259,734, a jump of 7.5% in just one year. We have seen recoveries in a few categories – Sunday school membership, baptisms, and professions of faith – but they occurred several

years, in the 1980s, and were spread over several years. What we see here is one off jump, that established a new base point, albeit one that establishes a new base point for gradual decline. The number of persons under pastoral care fell below 2 million for the first time since the immediate post-war period in 1992 (1,984,307). In the last year for which we have data (2006) the number stood at 1,494,448. In the two decades since 1976, persons under pastoral care had fallen by nearly a third. From its peak year in 1964, the fall off was over two-fifths (43.7%).

Average Weekly Attendance

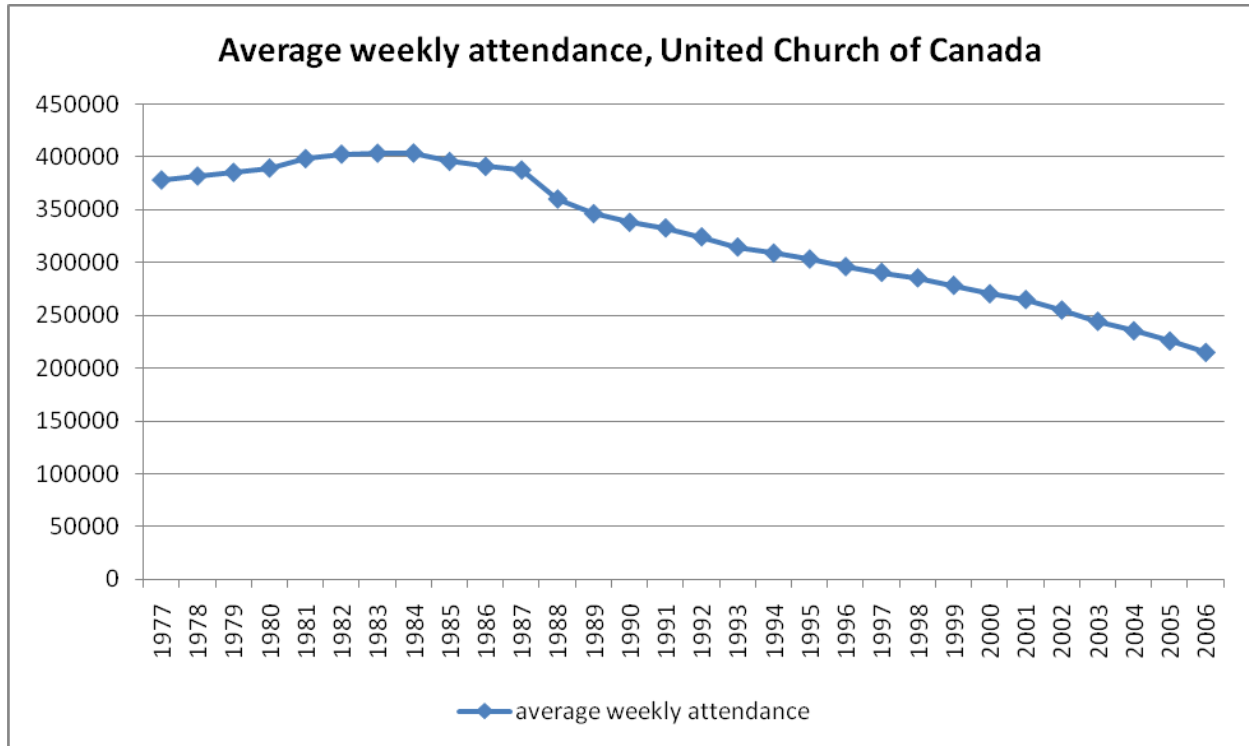


Figure 10 – Average weekly attendance, United Church of Canada, 1977–2006

Finally, the UCC has since 1977 recorded average weekly attendance (Figure 10). As can be seen in the graph, the number attending stood at close to 400,000 when this category was first introduced and rose gradually to reach a peak of 403,707 in 1984. Since then we see persistent decline. In the decade that followed attendance had fallen by some 94,900, for a decline of almost a quarter (23.5%) of Currently the UCC noted (2006) an average weekly attendance of 214,667 (2006), approximately half of what it had been 30 years ago when the UCC began publishing this statistic.

Rates of Change

Membership

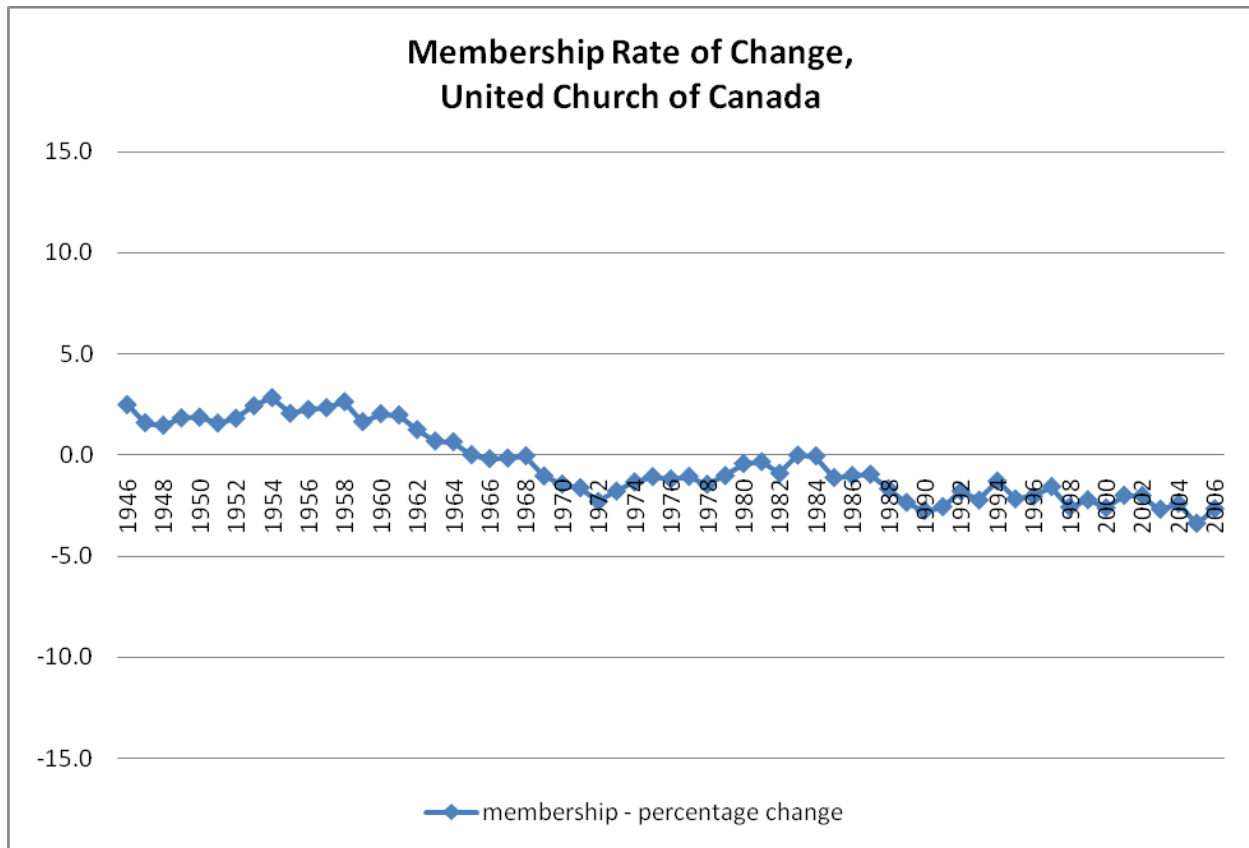


Figure 11 – Membership rate of change, United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

We now look at rates of change, as changes in rates can convey to us the scope of change and just how embedded some trends have become. We begin with rates of change in membership (Figure 11). Simply put, since 1966, and continuously thereafter for 38 years, the rate of growth has been negative. Prior to this, membership in the United Church of Canada saw consistent growth, often over 1% per annum. The rate of decline was low relative to some other denominations, never exceeding -3% (except for once in 2005). Nevertheless, the negative rate of growth has been persistent, and the effect of compounding negative rates manifests itself in the large decline we have seen in the over all membership.

Sunday School Enrolment

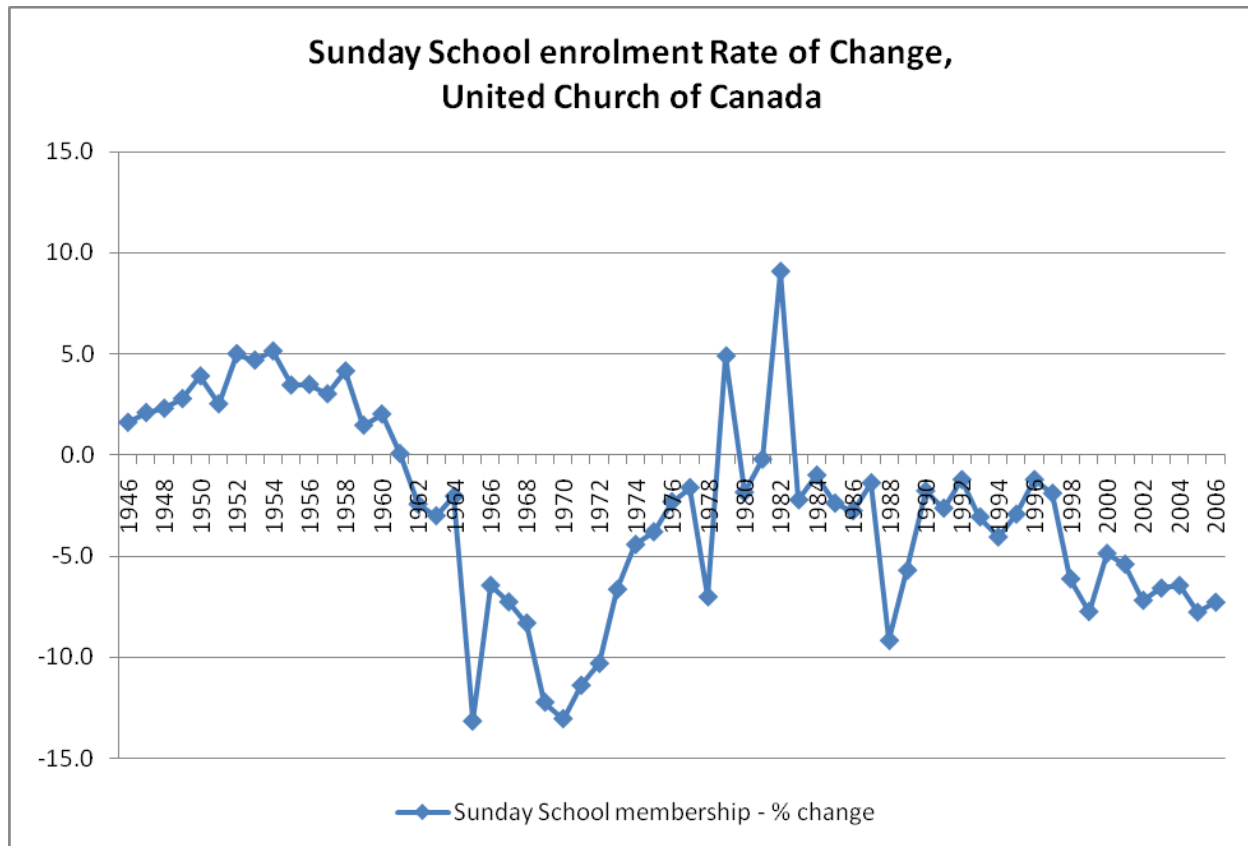


Figure 12 – Sunday School enrolment rate of change United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

The rate of change in Sunday School enrolment (Figure 12) was both much more severe and much volatile than that for membership. Again we see consistent growth in the 1950s. Throughout this period growth was generally between 2% and 5%, consistent with and often better than growth in membership in this period. Enrolment first entered into decline in 1962. In the 44 years since then, decline occurred 42 times. The two increases that do occur (1979 and 1982) are very strong at around 5% or better. The general rate of decline, however, has been marked and persistent. Thirty of the 42 decline clocked in -5% or more. Another 5 (all from the 1960s and early 1970s) came in at -10% or more. In short, enrolment fell through the roof during the “long 1960s.” What these rates of change also underscore in the short recover (1977-83) that we saw in Figure 12 stumbled in the later 1980s and 1990s, when enrolment slowly but surely ground its way downwards. After 2000, enrolment quite simply plummeted, with every year that reported recording a decline of over 5%.

Baptisms

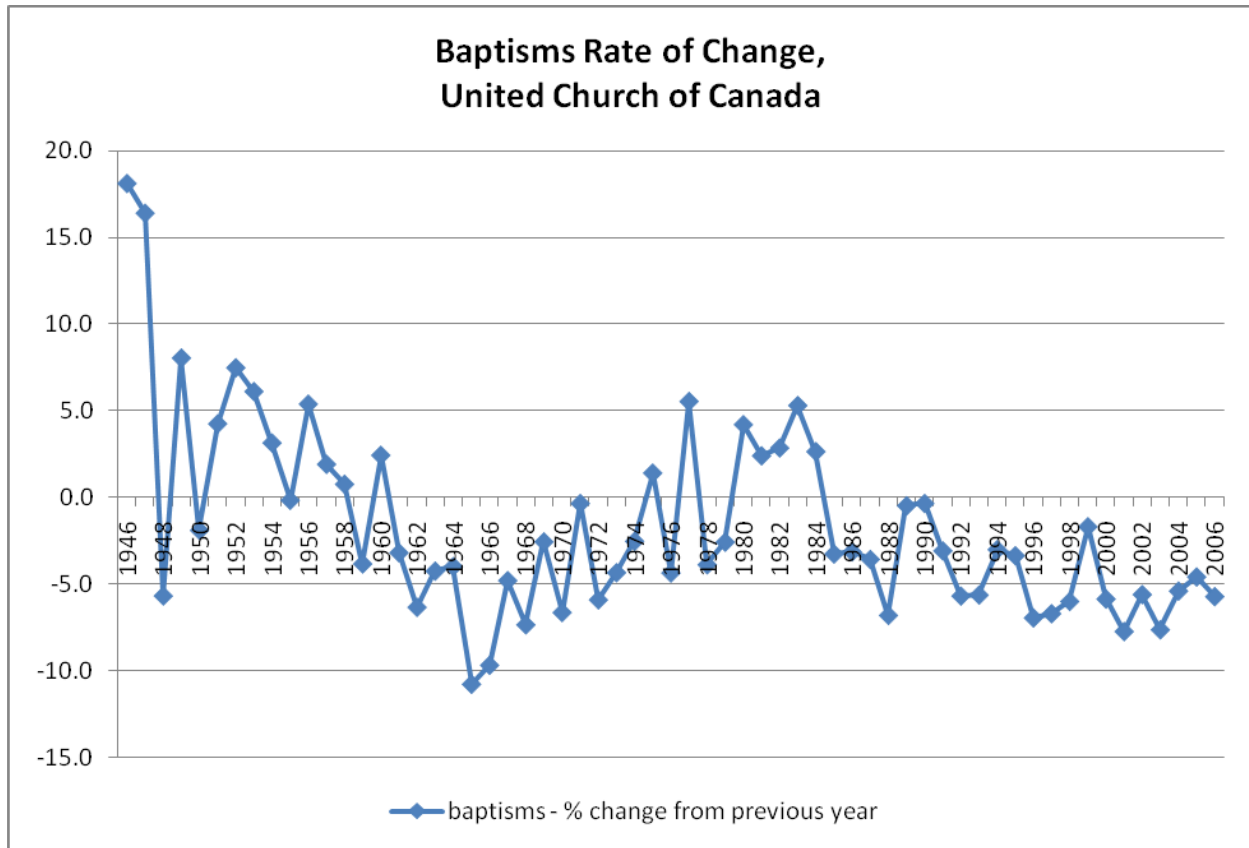


Figure 13 – Baptism rate of change, United Church of Canada, 1945–2006

In the rate of change for baptism (Figure 13) we again see a familiar picture. On the whole we see strong increases in the 1950s and a steady and significant decline after 1960. Some fifteen years later we see positive growth for 7 of the 9 years between 1975 through to 1984. The baby boom had a very real, and at times pronounced impact upon the UCC’s rates of baptism, with rates of increase hovering at the 5% for most of the 1950’s. The echo proved to be short lived. Rates of change have been consistently negative since 1985, and in the new century declines typically exceeded 5%.

Rate of Change over decade Intervals

Another way to track change is to look at change over a decade. To do this we have used certain key years – the years in which the Canadian census is also taken (1951, 1961, etc.). We have then compared the data in ten year blocks, comparing 1961 to 1951, 1971 to 1961, and so on. These particular intervals will allow us to compare census figures and denominational data in a larger study that we are currently engaged in. We believe, moreover, that this approach gives us a helpful lens to look at change over time. The results are summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1 Change Over Decade

| | 1951 | 1951 – 1961 | | 1961-1971 | | 1971- 1981 | | 1981- 1991 | | 1991- 2001 | |
|--------------------------|--------|-------------|------|-----------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | | Change | % | Change | % | Change | % | Change | % | Change | % |
| Membership | 834118 | 202818 | 24.3 | -20230 | -2.0 | -116486 | -11.5 | -114494 | -12.7 | -147785 | -18.8 |
| Sunday School membership | 550922 | 206416 | 37.5 | -429537 | -56.7 | -96266 | -29.4 | -44205 | -19.1 | -61247 | -32.7 |
| baptisms | 52871 | 11250 | 21.3 | -28479 | -44.4 | -3627 | -10.2 | -3179 | -9.9 | -12048 | -41.8 |
| Confirmations | 31372 | 8853 | 28.2 | -21415 | -53.2 | -2847 | -15.1 | -3871 | -24.2 | -3616 | -29.9 |
| Marriages | 30710 | -2721 | -8.9 | 11202 | 40.0 | -5651 | -14.4 | -9179 | -27.4 | -9687 | -39.8 |
| Funerals | 27482 | 3771 | 13.7 | 1559 | 5.0 | -3148 | -9.6 | -406 | -1.4 | -3803 | -13.0 |

Between 1951 and 1961, the United Church of Canada saw growth in all of its vital statistics, apart from a slight decline in terms of the number of marriages. The dramatic growth of the Sunday School enrolment in this decade is worth noting. By contrast, the magnitude in the subsequent collapse of the United Church's Sunday school enrolment between 1961 and 1971, down nearly 57% is startling, as is the decline of the number of baptisms (-44%) and confirmations (-53%). This was clearly a crucial decade for the UCC. While we see some decline in the decade between 1971 and 1981 and in the decade between 1981 and 1991, the declines were not nearly so dramatic. Since 1991 the pace of change has again increased. It is worth noting that the number of funerals and the memberships declined least in this last decade.

We also have also looked at rates of change by using 1951 as the baseline for comparison.

Table 2. Change from Base Line Year (1951)

| | 1951 | 1951 to 1961 | 1951 to 1971 | 1951 to 1981 | 1951 to 1991 | 1951 to 2001 | 1951 to 1961 | 1951 to 1971 | 1951 to 1981 | 1951 to 1991 | 1951 to 2001 |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Membership | 834118 | 202818 | 182588 | 66102 | -48392 | -196177 | 24.3 | 21.9 | 7.9 | -5.8 | -23.5 |
| Sunday school membership | 550922 | 206416 | -223121 | -319387 | -363592 | -424839 | 37.5 | -40.5 | -58.0 | -66.0 | -77.1 |
| Baptisms | 52871 | 11250 | -17229 | -20856 | -24035 | -36083 | 21.3 | -32.6 | -39.4 | -45.5 | -68.2 |
| Confirmations | 31372 | 8853 | -12562 | -15409 | -19280 | -22896 | 28.2 | -40.0 | -49.1 | -61.5 | -73.0 |
| Marriages | 30710 | -2721 | 8481 | 2830 | -6349 | -16036 | -8.9 | 27.6 | 9.2 | -20.7 | -52.2 |
| Funerals | 27482 | 3771 | 5330 | 2182 | 1776 | -2027 | 13.7 | 19.4 | 7.9 | 6.5 | -7.4 |

What this table illustrates is not so much which decades saw the greatest change, but rather how significantly the vital statistics of the United Church of Canada have changed over a half century. The 77% decline in Sunday school membership, 68% decline in baptisms and 73% decline in confirmations are all realities that have huge implications for church strategy and mission. The other thing this table captures is how decline accelerates as one come closer to the present.

It is worth noting that by 1971 total Sunday school enrolment, baptisms and confirmations were already significantly below what they had been in 1951. These are all indicators of youth involvement, and so track the church's potential for internal growth.

In contrast, we see a much different pattern in the case of funerals. While funerals declined decade by decade, they declined much more slowly than all the other categories in table 2, and their absolute number only fell below their 1951 total by 2001. Once again, it would appear that funerals are a lagging indicator.

Membership has also declined less in relation to the 1951 base than have the other indicators (with the already noted exception of funerals).

Analysis

Our analysis at this point is not meant to be extensive, but it does seem helpful to draw a few conclusions from the data we have presented. We think several things are perfectly clear:

1. The United Church of Canada witnessed significant growth in the immediate post-war period and into the mid 1950s.
2. This period of growth came to a dramatic end, and the denomination moved into decline. We see this confirmed in a variety of statistics – membership, Sunday School enrollment, number of baptisms, number of confirmations, and so on. Baptisms and Sunday School enrolment both entered into decline beginning in the

- same year, 1962. Membership started to fall off 6 years, in 1968. Membership decline, it would appear, was not a lead indicator. We would suggest that any explanation as to why this is the case will help to understand the dynamics of the changes in other aspects of religious participation that we have observed.
3. Decline in the United Church's vital statistics has continued, and there has been no sign of a reversal. We suspect what we are seeing in the United Church's vital statistics is the working out of the momentous changes that occurred in the wider culture during the 1960s. We note that this is a hypothesis to pursue not as an established theory. This hypothesis does raise the question as to why the United Church was tremendously affected by the 1960s and its aftermath.
 4. Given our research on other denominational statistics, we would make the initial observation that the United Church of Canada's experience fits a pattern we have seen in several other denominations – the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Maritime Baptists. This convergence in trends would argue against any explanation that would see the fundamental cause of numerical decline in the United church as primarily a result of some decision(s) taken internally by the United Church of Canada.
 5. It is worth noting that Sunday School enrolment began to decline before the introduction of the New Curriculum in 1962. The most severe decline (a drop of 13%) occurred in 1965, the same year Pierre Berton's *Comfortable Pew* appeared. Much of the commentary in *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot*, the United Church response to Berton's book, urged the church to get with it and speak out on the pressing issues of the day and make the Christian faith relevant to the times. Not one author commented on the troubling trends in the church's vital statistics.
 6. Finally, the United Church's declaration on sexual inclusiveness in 1988 appears not to have had a major impact on the UCC's vital statistics. With the exception of a large one time drop in baptisms in that year, all the other entries for 1988 and subsequent years are part of a longer trend. To put the case another way, if you didn't know what year the UCC made its declaration, you would be hard pressed to spot when it did based on the UCC's published statistics.

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Credits and Thanks

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Feedback:

Brian Clarke - b.clarke@utoronto.ca

Stuart Macdonald - s.macdonald@utoronto.ca