

2024 SYNOD ASSEMBLY



Building
Learning
Growing



South-Central Synod
of Wisconsin



TRYTANK
Research Institute



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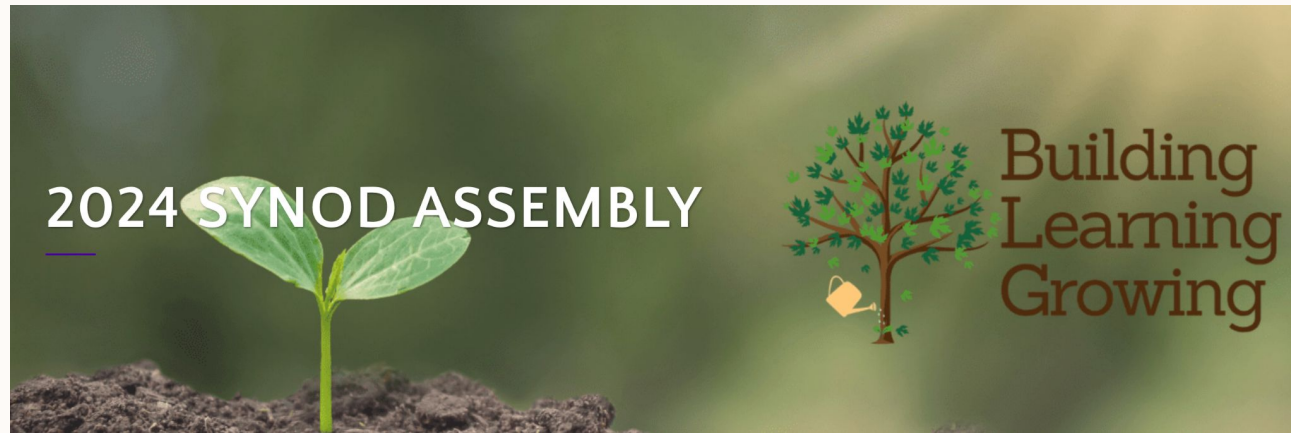
AGENDA

Part 1: Where are we?

Part 2: The (possible) future of the church

Part 3: Abundance!

Part 4: Design Thinking 101



You can access these slides and more!

www.TryTank.org/Janesville



Part 1: Where are we?

The United States has witnessed a **significant decline in church membership and attendance in recent years**, with a growing number of Americans moving away from organized religion. This shift in the religious landscape has profound implications for the country's social and cultural fabric.

Good morning!

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

ACTS OF FAITH

If it doesn't stem its decline, mainline Protestantism has just 23 Easters left

Perspective by Ed Stetzer

April 28, 2017 at 10:22 a.m. EDT



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Church Membership Falls Below Majority

Dramatic Decline

In **2020**, only **47% of U.S. adults** belonged to a church, synagogue, or mosque, down from 70% in 1999 [Gallup].

Growing secularism

The share of Americans who say they **never attend religious services** has risen from 11% a decade ago to 17% today [Pew].

Generational Shift

Forty million Americans have stopped attending church in the past **25 years**, representing the largest concentrated change in church attendance in American history [The Atlantic].

Potential Minority Status

Pew Research Center estimates that **Christians could make up a minority of Americans by 2070** due to religious switching [Christianity Today].

Declining Church Attendance

Nationwide Trend

Church attendance among U.S. adults has dropped from **42% attending weekly or nearly every week 20 years ago to just 21% now** [Statista].

Local Impact

Church attendance averaged 34% in 2019, declining to 30% last year, and **ticking up to 31% in May 2023** [Dayton Daily News].

Alarming Statistics

Only 21% of Americans report attending religious services every week, with the majority saying they **seldom (26%) or never (31%) attend** [Gallup].

Declining Church Attendance

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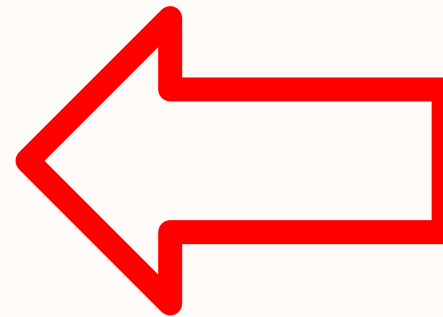
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Alarming Statistics

Only **21% of Americans report attending** religious services every week, with the majority saying they seldom (26%) or never (31%) attend [Gallup].

Declining Church Attendance

While a whopping 73% of folks made it through church doors at least once that year, **only about 5% were in the pews every Sunday**—much less than the 22% who say they attend weekly! [NBER]



Alarming Statistics

Only 22% of Americans report attending religious services every week, with the majority saying they seldom (26%) or never (31%) attend [Gallup].



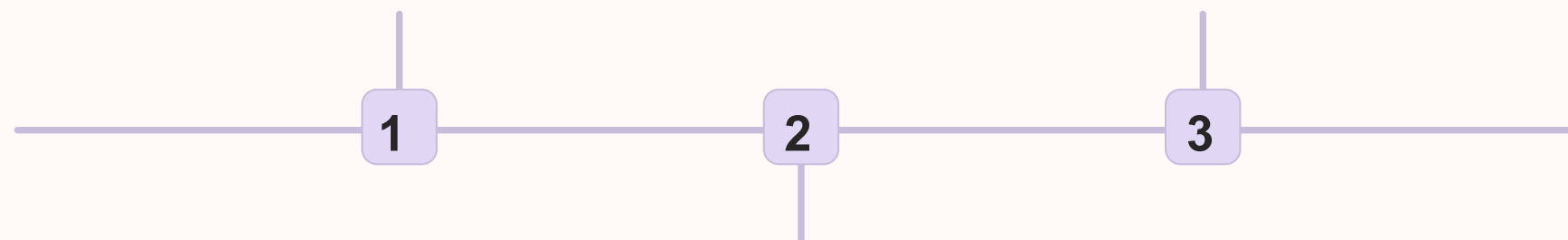
Closing of Churches

Milestone Reached

About **4,500 Protestant churches** closed in **2019**, marking the first time the number of churches in the country had not grown [The Guardian].

Uncertain Future

The closure of churches across the country raises questions about the future of organized religion and **its role in American society**.



Shifting Landscape

The decline of Christianity in the U.S. has led to thousands of churches closing, as the religious landscape continues to evolve.

Looking at YAPs and faith transmission



Nones reject organized religion

Nones are clearly rejecting institutional forms of faith and planning on engaging them little if at all in the course of their parenting. [TRI]



Religion/Faith don't matter to parents.

Parents rate issues of faith and spirituality ranked last in something parents consider important to teach their children.



Life is hard

Life is generally harder than I expected it to be at this point.



Increasing childless adults

The number of U.S. adults who plan to have children appears to be headed for a steep decline. Our results show that 41% of 25-39 year-olds are not planning to have children.

The Broader Implications

Dramatic Decline

The decline will stop and we will be left with smaller churches. BUT the church will not die.

Shifting Priorities

The decline will mean that we need to re-think what church is and our structures.

Generational Shift

There is no “back bench” ready to take over. BUT parents *have* told us what does matter and how the church can be in their lives.

The “Youthquake” is coming

Let’s watch a short film.

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Part 2: The (possible) future of the church

<https://vimeo.com/user131172348/trytankfuture?share=copy>