



Stephen C. Rasor\*  
Christine D. Chapman\*

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN CATHOLIC CONGREGATIONAL LIFE SURVEY

### Introduction

Congregational profile surveys were completed by one person in each of thirty predominantly African-American Catholic parishes participating in MVP. Results are compared here to those of the random sample of congregations that participated in the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Survey<sup>1</sup> to help MVP leaders readily identify the unique strengths of Catholic African-American congregations. (Responses from MVP Protestant churches and mosques are not included.)

### Facilities

- Most MVP Catholic parishes hold their primary services in a church (MVP, 97 percent; US CLS, 90 percent). Over 90 percent own their own buildings.
- Four in ten MVP Catholic parishes report their facilities are used or rented by community groups at least once a week; such use occurs weekly in 39 percent of US CLS congregations as well.
- MVP facilities have larger seating capacities (MVP Catholic median, 410; US CLS median, 258).

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\*Stephen C. Rasor, MVP Director, is professor of Sociology of Religion and director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

\*Christine D. Chapman is full-time visiting professor, Department of Sociology, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia and Research Director, Institute for Black Religious Life, Interdenominational Theological Center, also in Atlanta.

<sup>1</sup>A total of 417 congregations in the random sample completed the US CLS profile survey in April 2001. These congregations include Protestant churches, Catholic parishes, and non-Christian congregations.

### Size and Finances

- In the year before participating in the survey, average weekly worship attendance (median) was 275 in MVP Catholic churches and ninety in US CLS congregations.
- The total number of adults (people eighteen years or older) regularly participating in the life of the congregation averaged 220 in MVP Catholic churches and eighty in US CLS congregations.
- Almost all congregations (over 90 percent in both samples) report that the largest source of income for the congregation is offerings, pledges, and donations.
- Few MVP Catholic churches (13 percent) describe their financial situation as an "increasing financial base." A stable financial situation exists in 53 percent of MVP Catholic and US CLS congregations. One-third of MVP Catholic parishes report a declining financial base.

### Worship

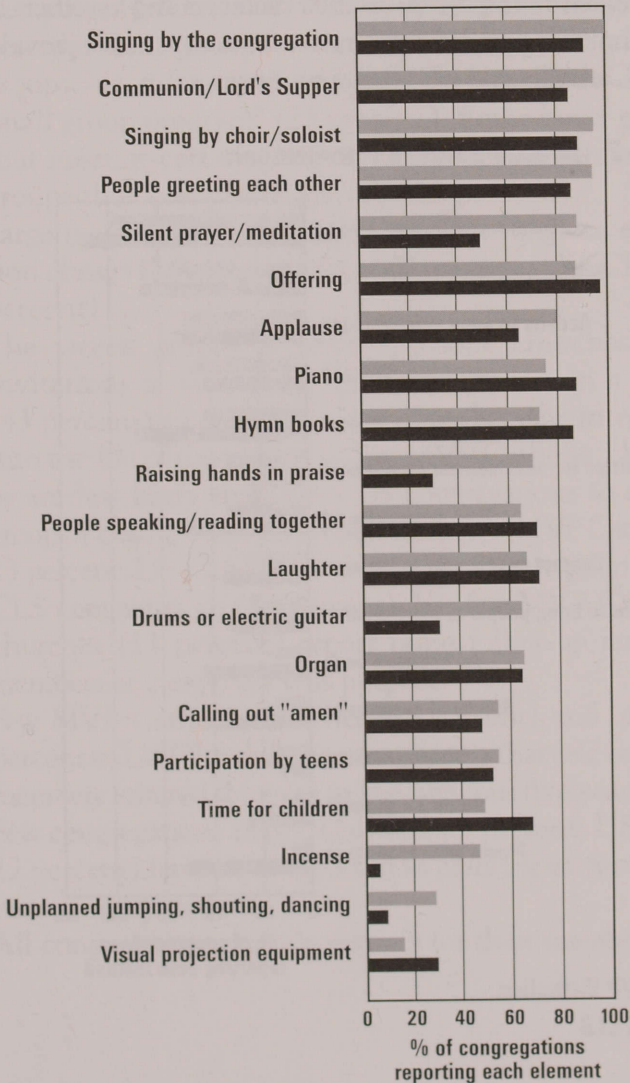
- Few MVP Catholic churches hold one or two worship services in a typical week (32 percent). (Among US CLS congregations, 56 percent hold one or two weekly services.) One-half of MVP Catholic churches hold five or more weekly services.
- Six in ten MVP Catholic parishes (63 percent) have primary worship services that are less than 1.5 hours long. Three in ten (36 percent) report that their primary service lasts at least 1.5 hours; only 15 percent of US CLS congregations have services that long.
- Most MVP Catholic services (72 percent) include homilies that are between eleven and twenty minutes long. One-half of US CLS congregations have sermons of the same length.
- Seventy-seven percent of MVP Catholic churches (but only 57 percent of US CLS congregations) use a written outline or bulletin in worship.

■ MVP Catholics  
 ■ US CLS



- Figure 1 shows elements included in worship services. While several elements are more common in MVP Catholic churches, e.g., silent prayer, raising hands in praise, drums/electric guitar, incense, a few are more common in US CLS congregations, e.g., time for children.

**Figure 1: Elements Included in the Primary Worship Service**

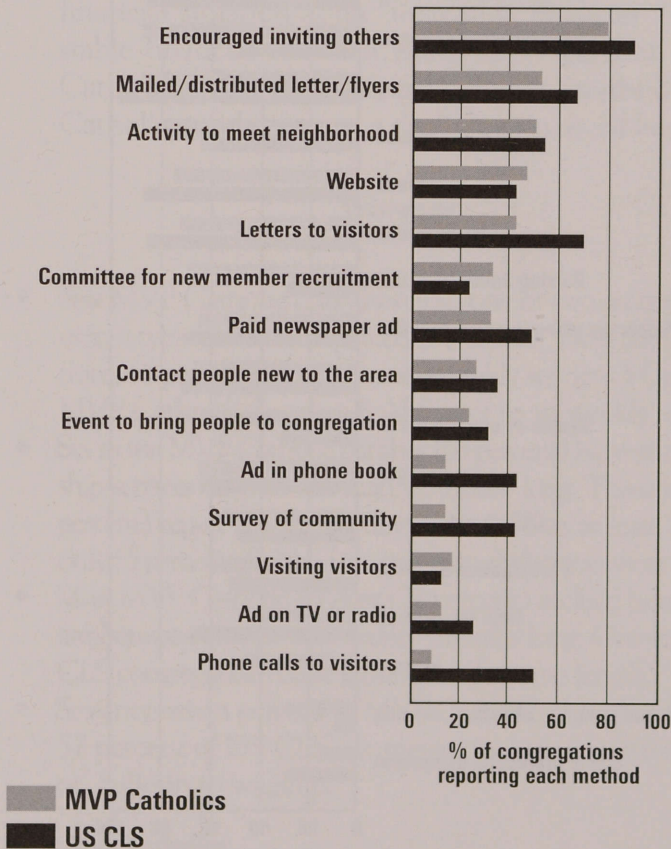


- Reorganizing or starting new worship services for distinct age, racial or ethnic, or interest groups is rare (MVP Catholics, 10 percent; US CLS, 7 percent), as is starting services for people who don't usually attend (MVP Catholics, 0 percent; US CLS, 9 percent).

### Outreach and Community Involvement

All congregations provide for their members and for others in the community. Figure 2 shows services for nonmembers provided by MVP Catholics and US CLS congregations.

**Figure 2: Reaching Out to Nonmembers**





### Other Services and Programs

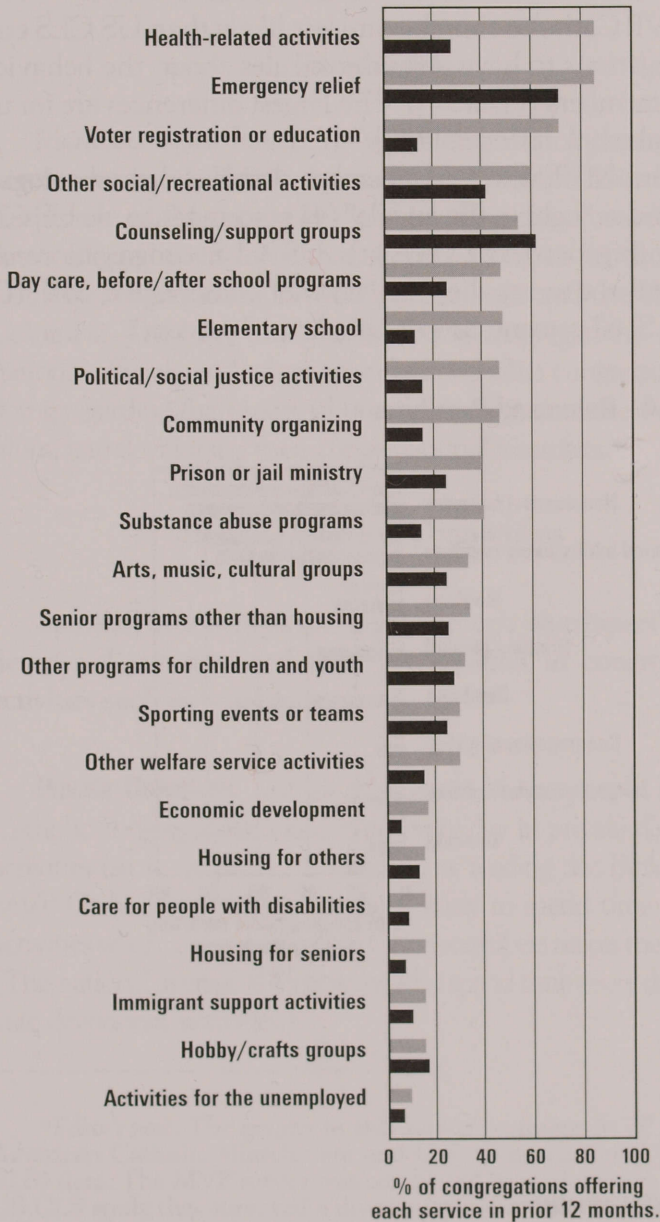
- Somewhat more than half of congregations (MVP Catholics, 62 percent; US CLS 58 percent) use small groups for sharing or spiritual growth.
- Nine in ten MVP Catholic churches (90 percent) and 68 percent of US CLS congregations have organized prayer groups. MVP Catholic churches most often describe these groups as “attached to specific classes, groups, or ministries” (43 percent) or “part of our small group program” (23 percent). Some have groups that meet at certain times of the year (20 percent) or groups that meet infrequently (10 percent).
- Large majorities of congregations offer religious education classes (MVP Catholics, 100 percent; US CLS, 98 percent).
- The largest groups of MVP Catholic churches issue invitations to service (43 percent) or to join a group (43 percent) to ensure new members become integrated into the life of the congregation. MVP Catholic churches are less likely than US CLS congregations to offer a group or class specifically for new members (MVP Catholics, 23 percent; US CLS, 42 percent). The largest group of US CLS congregations (57 percent), but few MVP Catholic churches (13 percent) report using follow-up visits by members or clergy for this purpose.
- Few MVP Catholic churches (14 percent) and only 28 percent of US CLS congregations report that one or more members entered ministry in the previous five years.
- Few congregations (MVP Catholics, 3 percent; US CLS, 12 percent) have been involved in planting or growing a new congregation.
- All congregations provide services for their members and

for others in the community. Figure 3 shows the services provided by MVP Catholics and US CLS congregations in the previous twelve months. An average MVP Catholic parish provided services in nine of the areas shown. MVP Catholic churches are much more likely than US CLS congregations to have provided health-related services, voter registration or education, an elementary school, political or social justice activities, and community organizing.

■ MVP Catholics  
■ US CLS



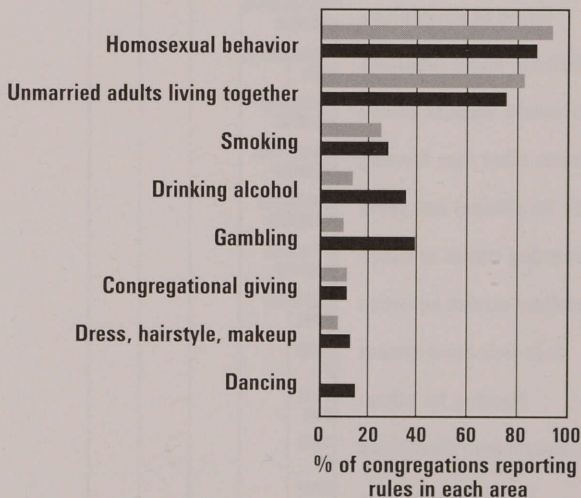
**Figure 3: Services for Members and Others**



### Congregational Politics

- MVP Catholic churches are less likely than US CLS congregations to have a variety of rules about the behaviors of members (Figure 4). The largest differences are for use of alcohol and gambling.
- More MVP Catholic churches describe their theological stand as “right in the middle” (41 percent) than do US CLS congregations (29 percent). US CLS congregations are more apt to say they are “on the conservative side” (US CLS, 60 percent; MVP Catholics, 17 percent).

**Figure 4: Rules and Prohibitions**



■ MVP Catholics  
 ■ US CLS



## MVP CATHOLIC CHURCH SUMMARY

### Introduction

Members Voice Project (MVP) is the nation's most comprehensive survey of African-American congregational life from the perspective of the people in the pews. This resource reflects the data collected from more than 6,438 worshipers in thirty-eight Catholic congregations in twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia. The MVP study enables local congregations, denominational officials, and others to understand what congregations are doing regarding their spiritual lives, reaching out to their communities, and developing their congregational identities.\*

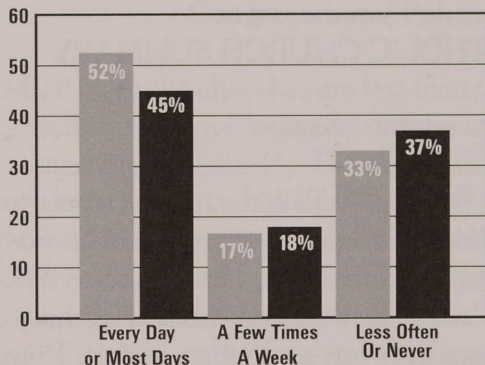
### Building Spiritual Connections

Spiritual connections are made through worshipers' private devotional activities and their participation in congregational activities such as worship services.

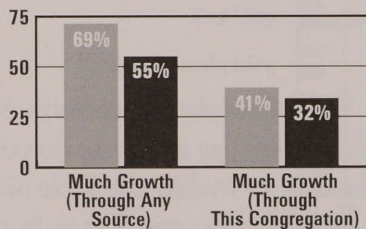
**Private Devotions.** About 52 percent of the people in MVP Catholic congregations spend time every day in private devotional activities (such as prayer, meditation, or reading the Bible alone). MVP Catholic worshipers are more likely to spend time in these activities when compared to US CLS worshipers across the country (The national average is 45 percent who spend time every day in private devotional activities.)

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\**Editor's note:* The graphs in this survey represent MVP African-American Catholic church data and U.S. Congregational Life (US CLS) data. The MVP survey was conducted in conjunction with the US CLS study that surveyed a diverse sample of 2,000 predominantly Euro-American U.S. congregations. Go to [www.uscongregations.org](http://www.uscongregations.org) for information regarding US CLS.



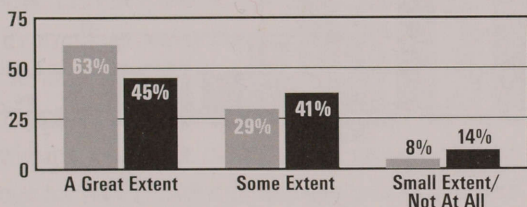
**Growing in Faith.** About half of the people in America's congregations (55 percent) and 69 percent in MVP Catholic churches report they have experienced much growth in their faith over the last year, through any source. Worshipers in MVP Catholic congregations (41 percent) are more likely to say their spiritual growth comes from involvement in their congregations. Some MVP Catholic worshipers reported growing in their faith through other groups (10 percent) or through their own activities (11 percent).



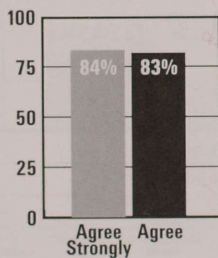
■ MVP Catholics  
 ■ US CLS



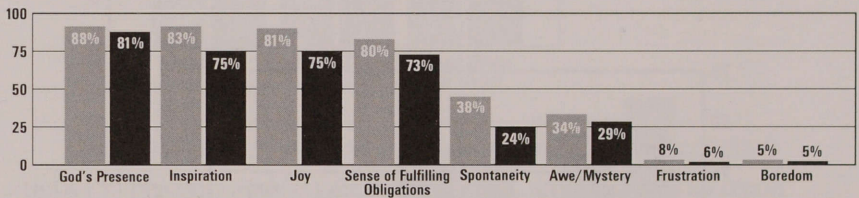
**Help with Everyday Living.** To what extent do the worship services or activities of their congregations help worshipers with everyday living? Seventy percent of MVP Catholic worshipers reported that they are helped "to a great extent" by worship or congregational activities. This compares to the US CLS national average of 45 percent who report finding worship services or activities helpful with everyday living.



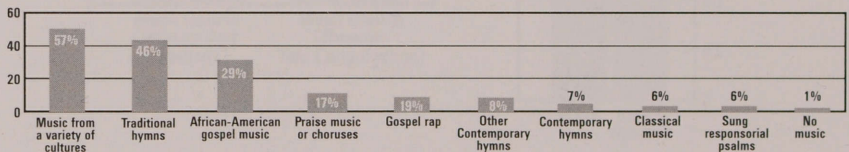
**Meeting Spiritual Needs.** Like the majority of worshipers in the U.S., 84 percent of MVP Catholic worshipers feel that their congregation meets their spiritual needs. Across the U.S., 83 percent of worshipers feel this way.



**Worship Experiences.** Meaningful worship experiences are central for most congregations and their members. In MVP Catholic congregations, the largest number of worshipers "usually" or "always" experience God's Presence during worship. The smallest percentage of worshipers "usually" or "always" experience frustration.



**Making Music.** MVP Catholics prefer the following styles of music in congregational worship: music from a variety of cultures (57 percent), traditional hymns (46 percent), and African-American gospel music (29 percent). Across the country, worshipers reported the following preferences most often: traditional hymns (61 percent), praise music (33 percent), and contemporary hymns (25 percent).



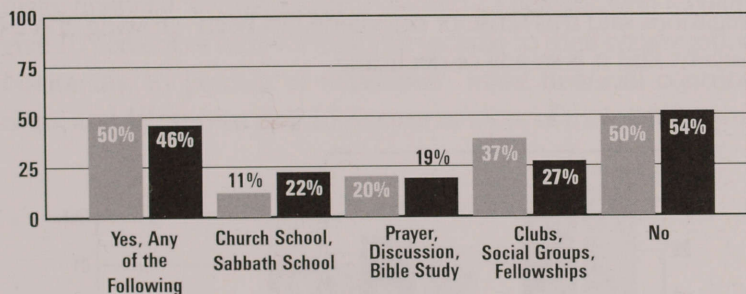
■ MVP Catholics

■ US CLS

### Building Inside Connections

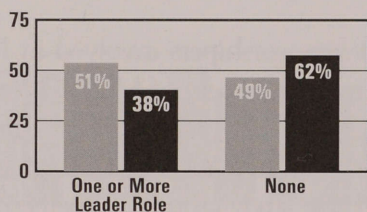
Worshippers connect with others in congregations through group activities (such as church school, prayer and study groups, and fellowships or clubs), serving in leadership roles, and financial support.

**Involving Worshipers.** How are worshippers involved in MVP Catholic congregations? Overall, 50 percent of MVP worshippers join in small group activities. Some take part in group activities like Sunday school, church school, or Sabbath school (11 percent); prayer, discussion, or Bible study groups (20 percent); or fellowships, clubs, or other social groups (37 percent). The percentage for MVP Catholic congregations is about the same as the US CLS national average where 46 percent engage in some small group activity.

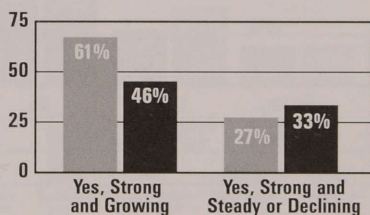




**Involving Leaders.** How many worshipers serve in leadership roles in MVP Catholic congregations? Fifty-one percent hold at least one leadership position in their congregation (such as governing board, committee, choir or usher, church school teacher, etc.). About 38 percent of worshipers across the U.S. serve as leaders.

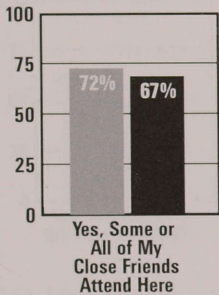


**Belonging Here.** Do worshipers in MVP Catholic congregations feel like they belong? Eighty-nine percent report a strong sense of belonging to their congregation, which is similar to the typical congregation. Sixty-five percent in MVP Catholic congregations said this sense of belonging has been growing and 24 percent said it is steady or declining.

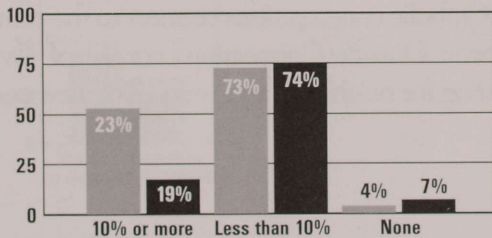


■ MVP Catholics  
 ■ US CLS

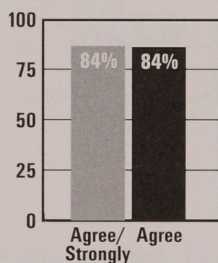
**Making Friends.** Are worshipers developing friendships with others in their congregations? About 72 percent of MVP Catholic worshipers say some or all of their close friends attend the same congregation. This is similar to the US CLS national picture where 67 percent of worshipers say they have some close friends in their congregation.



**Giving.** Financial support connects people to a congregation and its mission. In MVP Catholic congregations, 96 percent make financial contributions including 23 percent who regularly give 10 percent or more of their net income to their congregation. Nationally, 93 percent of worshipers make financial contributions, and 19 percent give 10 percent or more of their net income.

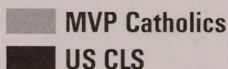


**Being a Team.** Do worshipers feel there is a connection between leaders and worshipers in their congregation? Most worshipers in MVP Catholic congregations (84 percent) agree with the statement: "In general, there is a good match between our congregation and our minister, pastor, or priest." Across all worshipers in the U.S., about 84 percent agree with this statement.



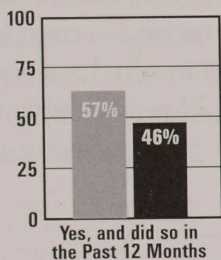
### Building Outside Connections

How do MVP Catholic congregations connect to the community and nonmembers? Outside Connections consist of inviting others to attend, caring for neighbors, and welcoming new people.

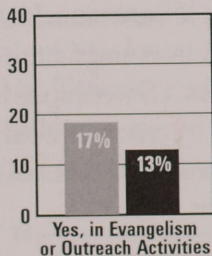




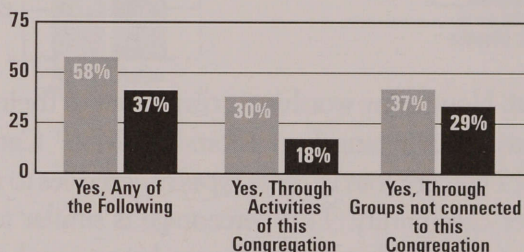
**Inviting Others.** Do MVP Catholic worshipers invite others to attend worship services? In the past twelve months, 57 percent invited a friend or relative who does not attend a congregation to their worship services. This is greater than the average US CLS congregation where 46 percent asked someone to attend worship services.



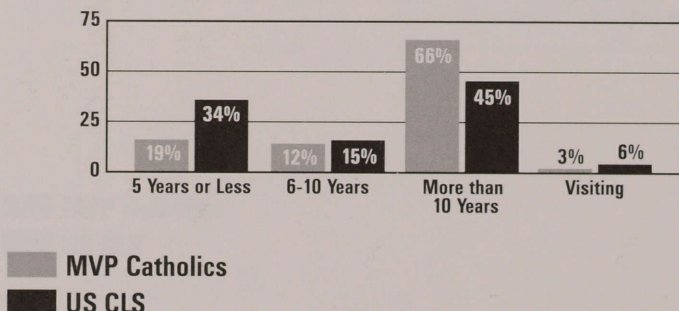
**Reaching Out.** How many worshipers contribute to their congregation's outreach or evangelism efforts? In MVP Catholic congregations, 17 percent join in these types of activities to reach out to the wider community. This percentage is similar to the national picture where 13 percent report being involved in evangelism or outreach activities.



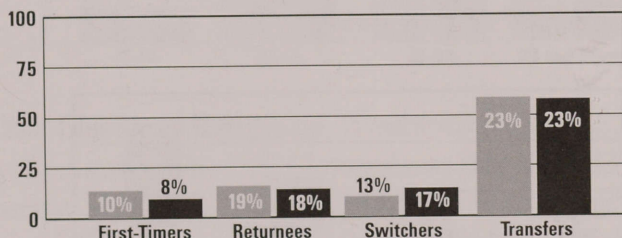
**Serving the Community.** Are MVP Catholic worshipers involved in any community service, social justice, or advocacy activities? Fifty-six percent of MVP Catholic worshipers take part in service or advocacy activities. Some join in community service activities organized through their congregation (30 percent of MVP Catholics take part in such groups). Some of MVP Catholic worshipers (37 percent) participate in social service or advocacy groups not connected to their congregation. This is greater than the national average for all U.S. worshipers where 18 percent overall get involved in service or advocacy through their congregation, and 29 percent serve their communities through groups not connected to their congregation.



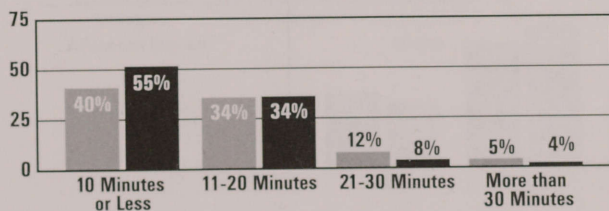
**Welcoming New People.** How many new people attend MVP Catholic worship services? About 19 percent of those attending worship services in MVP congregations have been coming for five years or less. Nationally, about 34 percent of all US CLS worshipers report attending five years or less. Visitors make up 3 percent of worshipers in MVP Catholic congregations. This compares to a national average of 6 percent of worshipers who are visitors.



**Knowing New People.** What type of faith background is typical of the new people in MVP Catholic congregations? New people (those attending five years or less) come from four different faith backgrounds: first-timers (10 percent among MVP Catholics), those who have never regularly attended anywhere; returnees (19 percent), those who are coming back after not attending anywhere for several years; switchers (13 percent), those who participated in another congregation with a different faith tradition; and transfers (58 percent), those who were participating in another congregation of the same denomination immediately prior to attending their current congregation.



**Getting Here.** Do worshipers come from the immediate community or do they travel some time in order to attend? The largest percentage of people in participating congregations take ten minutes or less to get to the services. Nearly all of the people in MVP Catholic congregations (83 percent) travel twenty minutes or less to attend services. Across all American congregations, 88 percent arrive in twenty minutes or less.

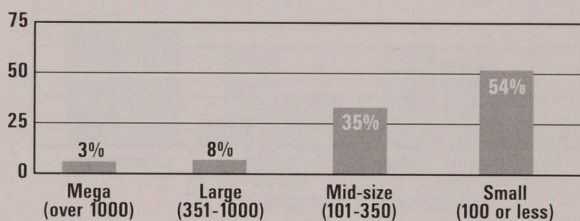




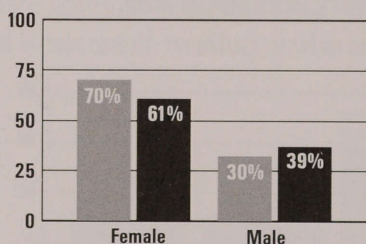
### Building Identity Connections

Worshippers have an individual identity based on their age, education, and other factors. Worshipers also have a congregational identity that includes what they value and their dreams for the congregation's future.

**Your Size.** Small congregations dot the landscape, but most worshipers find themselves in large congregations. The average MVP Catholic congregation is mid-size with a median of 275 attendees. The chart below shows where MVP Catholic congregations fit in the size picture of all congregations.

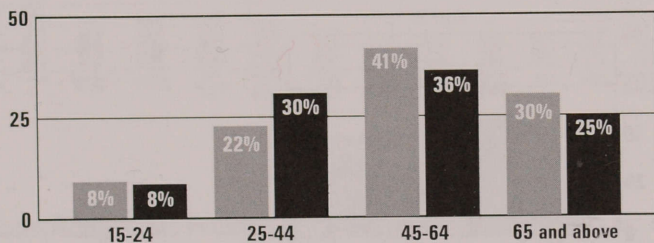


**Your Gender Profile.** Who makes up MVP Catholic congregations? There are fewer men (39 percent) than women (61 percent) in most US CLS congregations. Women outnumber men in MVP Catholic congregations (70 percent are women).

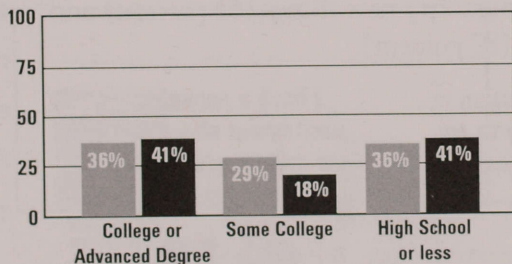


MVP Catholics  
 US CLS

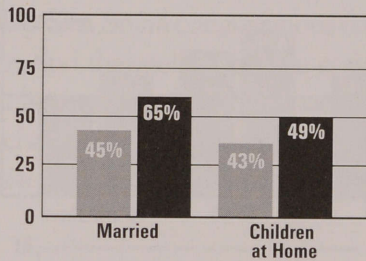
**Your Age Profile.** In most congregations across the country, those aged forty-five - sixty-four make up the largest group (36 percent). The average age of worshipers in MVP Catholic congregations is fifty-four. This is older than than the national average of fifty-one. People in the age range of forty-five - sixty-four comprise the largest age group in MVP Protestant congregations.



**Your Educational Background.** Worshipers in the U.S. tend to be well-educated. The U.S. Census shows that about 23 percent of people across the country hold at least a college degree. Among US CLS worshipers, the figure is 41 percent. In MVP Catholic congregations, 36 percent report a college or graduate degree.

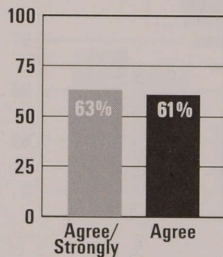


**Your Household Type.** Most worshipers in America are married; this is not true in MVP congregations. Overall, 49 percent of worshipers have children living at home, more than the results for MVP Catholic congregations (43 percent). Again, worshipers differ from typical Americans. The U.S. Census indicates that only 52 percent of the population in this country are currently married, and about 33 percent have children living at home.

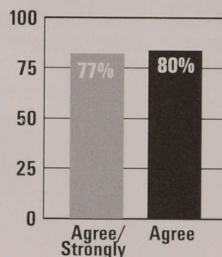


**Seeing Possibilities.** How open are worshipers in MVP congregations to change and new directions? Many worshipers in MVP Catholic congregations (63 percent) feel the congregation is always ready to try something new. Most (77 percent) also express a sense of excitement about the congregation's future. Many worshipers in US CLS congregations describe their congregation as willing to try new things (61 percent) and excited about the future (80 percent).

**This congregation is always ready to try something new.**



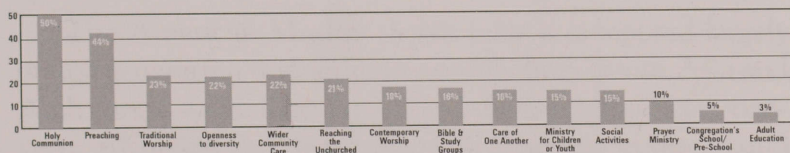
**I have a sense of excitement about our congregation's future.**



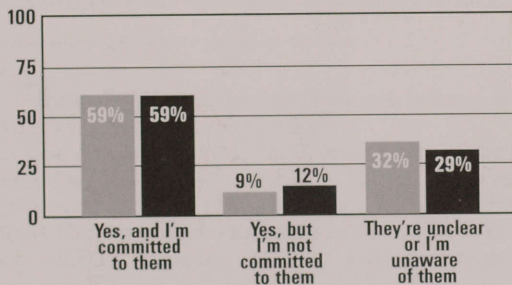
■ MVP Catholics  
 ■ US CLS



**What You Value.** What do worshipers in MVP Catholic congregations value? MVP worshipers most value Holy Communion, preaching, traditional worship, openness to diversity, wider community care, and reaching the unchurched.



**Committing to the Future.** Do worshipers in MVP Catholic congregations claim a clear vision, goals, or direction for their congregation's ministry and mission? Most worshipers in MVP congregations believe there is a clear vision or direction for the future (68 percent say yes). However, some are not sure that the vision is clear or that it exists (32 percent). The national average shows that most US CLS worshipers believe their congregation has a clear vision for the future (71 percent).



The following table shows the results of the study conducted in the year 1950. The data were obtained from a survey of 1000 patients who had been treated in the hospital during the year. The results are shown in the following table:

Year	Number of Patients	Percentage of Patients
1950	1000	100%
1951	1000	100%
1952	1000	100%
1953	1000	100%
1954	1000	100%
1955	1000	100%
1956	1000	100%
1957	1000	100%
1958	1000	100%
1959	1000	100%
1960	1000	100%

The results of the study show that the number of patients treated in the hospital during the year 1950 was 1000. This number is the same as the number of patients treated in the hospital during the years 1951 through 1960. The percentage of patients treated in the hospital during the year 1950 is 100%. This percentage is the same as the percentage of patients treated in the hospital during the years 1951 through 1960.

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Year	Number of Patients	Percentage of Patients
1950	1000	100%
1951	1000	100%
1952	1000	100%
1953	1000	100%
1954	1000	100%
1955	1000	100%
1956	1000	100%
1957	1000	100%
1958	1000	100%
1959	1000	100%
1960	1000	100%

The following table shows the results of the study conducted in the year 1950. The data were obtained from a survey of 1000 patients who had been treated in the hospital during the year. The results are shown in the following table:

80