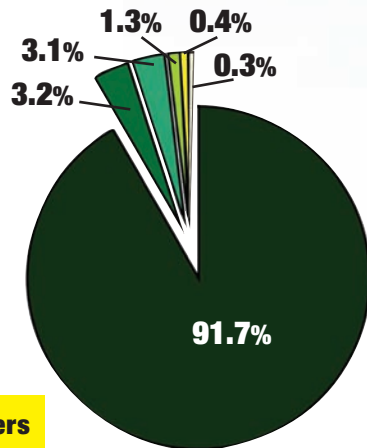
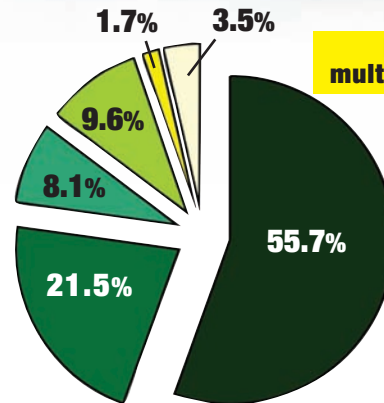


# GO FIGURE

JACK MARCUM



All members



Members of PCUSA multicultural congregations

■ White ■ Black ■ Asian ■ Hispanic ■ Native American ■ Other

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## Multicultural congregations

To qualify as multicultural, a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation must have members from two or more racial-ethnic groups, with no more than 80 percent in any one racial-ethnic group. In 2006 we find that:

- **291 congregations are multicultural** (less than 3 percent of the total, but up from 120–125 in 1996).
- **Most are relatively small**, with a median membership of 84, compared to a median of 105 for all congregations.
- **Two-thirds have a white majority** (187 or 64 percent). In 29 (10 percent) the majority is African American; in 14 (5 percent), Hispanic; in 13 (4 percent), Asian; in 9 (3 percent), Native American; and in 3 (1 percent), other.
- **No one racial-ethnic group has a majority** of the membership in 36 congregations; of these, 15 are located in the New York City area.
- **Overall, 37 states and Washington, D.C.**, have one or more multicultural congregations, with concentrations in New York (44), California (39) and New Jersey (22).
- **The largest percentages of congregations** that are multicultural are in Massachusetts (8 of 36; 22 percent), Arizona (6 of 37; 14 percent) and Hawaii (1 of 7; 14 percent).

## What the research shows

As a predominantly white, non-Hispanic church for all of its history—and still 91 percent white today—the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has not been well positioned for the growing racial and ethnic diversity of the country. So while the paucity of multicultural congregations is not much of a surprise, their growing numbers are a bright spot in an era of overall membership losses.

Research indicates further potential for growth.

In a survey done in 2000, almost one-third of pastors reported that their congregation “has made it a priority to become more racially and ethnically diverse.” And around one in four members and elders indicated their preference for a “mixed” racial-ethnic congregation.

These results suggest that encouraging more multicultural growth would resonate with many individuals and congregations. Learning more about how congregations increase membership diversity would provide insights that could help the church foster more such growth.

I know of no such study of PCUSA churches, but a well-researched book on a variety of multicultural congregations, *People of the Dream* by sociologist Michael Emerson, would be an excellent place to start for those wanting to know more. □

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