

Looking Towards Our Future

March 24, 2024

Role of the Governing Board

The role of the Governing Board is NOT to present a solution. It is to provide the congregation with information and to facilitate discussions.

It will be up to the congregation, guided by our **Vision and Values**, to choose the desired path forward.

Selected Slides from the February 24
workshop by Carol Steinbrecher



Churches Growing TOGETHER



Southern New England Conference

United Church of Christ

Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

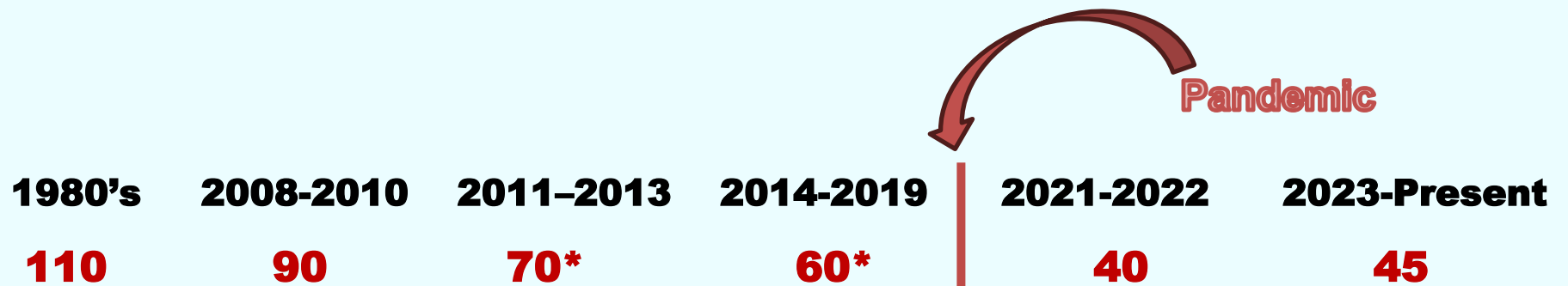
The Changing Landscape

We know the statistics, we are living the changes:

- Fewer Families, fewer children and youth
- Less people attending worship, less people overall
- Less energy
- Less money
- Getting hard to afford and maintain our buildings

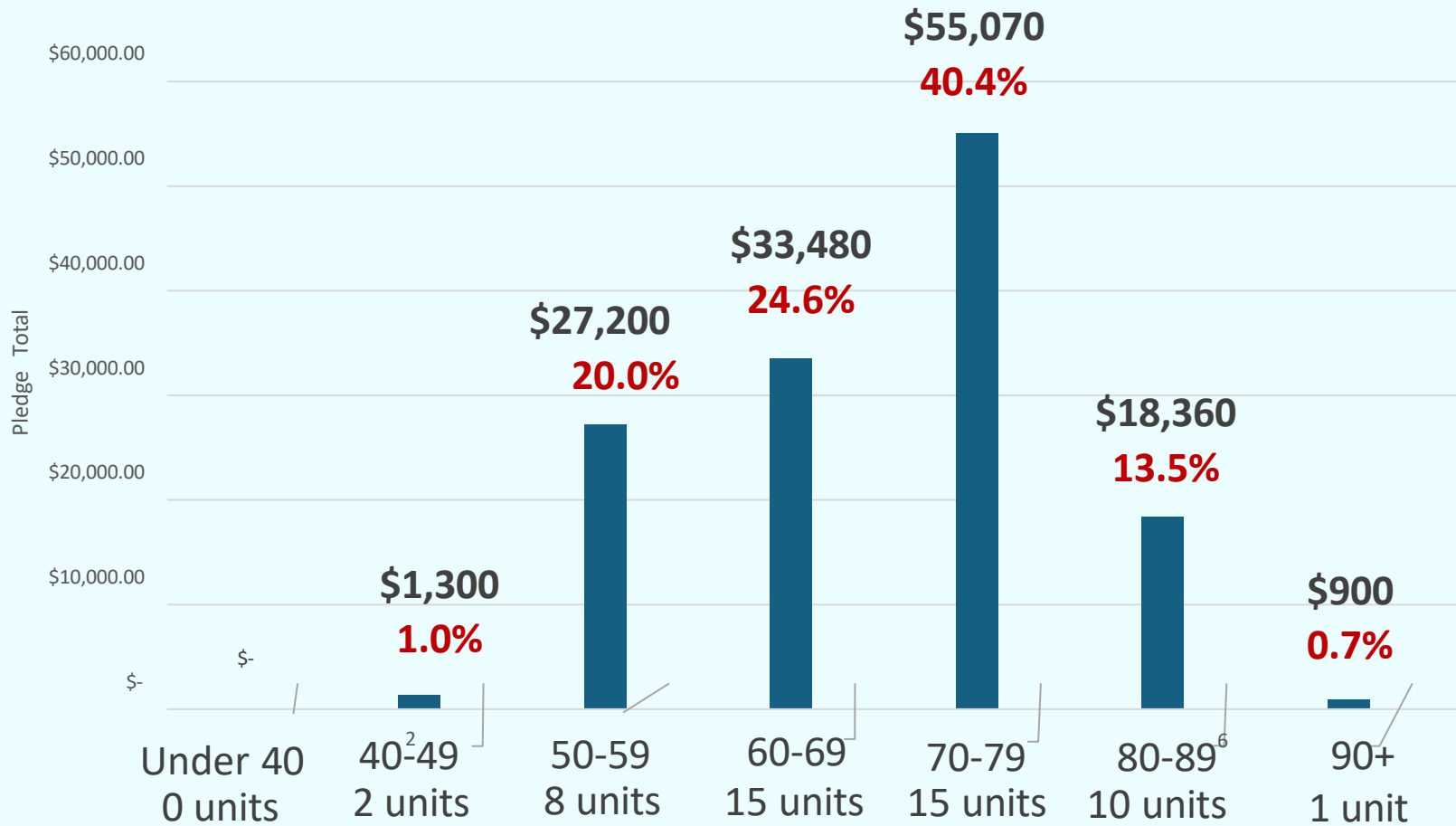
FCCW

Weekly Sunday Attendance



* Rounded UP to the nearest 10 for clarity

FCCW Pledging for 2024 by Approximate Age (51 Total Pledging Units = \$136,310)



Approximate Age by Decade

Prepared by R. Kirk 3/13/2024,
edited by B Staehle 3/22/2024

The Changing Landscape

Our culture and our world is changing:

- Both parents are working, sometimes on weekends
- It's not new that children are involved in sports, music and school programs on weekends.
- We have heard that less people in our country identify with any particular religion, or describe themselves as “religious.”

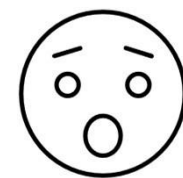
The Changing Landscape

More people and especially youth report that they feel:

- Isolated
- Lonely
- Anxious
- Depressed
- And many people are feeling overwhelmed with grief and uncertainty about the future



On top of
everything
else, change
is scary!



Charlie Kuchenbrod's "Lanes"

Revitalization and Growth: Continue to “do church” the same way but grow attendance and financial support

Transformation: Finding new ways to “do church”

Legacy Building: Winding down the congregations' mission

Denial & Indecision: Doing nothing differently

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Where is the Hope?



- Many people describe themselves as “Spiritual!”
- Many people are yearning for connection and belonging.
- People are looking for ways to make a positive difference in the world and in their community.
- People are also looking for ways to stand up and stand with others on community concerns and justice issues.
- Some people want to show that the loud “Christian” voices speaking hate and division, don’t speak for all Christians.



Where is the Hope?

Some new Barna Group stats:

- 44% of Americans are more open to God today than they were before the pandemic
- 60% of Gen Zers are more interested in God today than before the pandemic
- 84% of Americans say they are spiritually open in some way!

What are some churches doing?

Sharing Ministries, Worship, Events, and Programs:

- **Sharing staff**: Administrators, Sextons, Musicians
- **Sharing worship**: summers, evening services, Christmas, Easter
- **Sharing fellowship**: picnics, game and movie nights, potluck suppers, and trivia nights
- **Sharing mission**: community food pantries, meal programs, coat/clothing drives, VBS/Music camps, mission trips



What are some churches doing?

Re-thinking Building Use: what are the needs in your community?

- **Rentals**: small businesses, flexible hourly working spaces, dance studios, music lessons/schools, catering/home bakers, events/wedding venues
- **Community resource**: internet cafes, thrift shops, pre-schools/day care, indoor play places, performance spaces, after-school programs, pickleball courts!
- **Selling the building**: Filling a community need, finding affordable space to gather as a congregation, renting back worship space, re-investing in a fresh start in a new location



What are some churches doing?

Finding Partners:

- Yoking: Sharing a Pastor
- Nesting: Sharing a building
- Merging: Joining as one church
- Federating: Churches with different denominations, merging
- Small Church Collaboratives



Why re-invent the wheel?

Resourcing and sharing with neighbors:

- **Sharing best practices** – by-law revisions, safe church procedures, organizational re-structuring, selling a parsonage.
- **Updating/sharing/planning** - CE and Confirmation curriculum, Bible Studies, worship resources and ideas.
- **Visioning, workshops, retreats** – there are consultants that will work with combined groups to help with visioning, or assessment, or a variety of areas that may be of shared interest.