

**PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE
2006 INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES OF CHRIST SURVEY
OCTOBER 19, 2007**

Key Findings

1. 2006 membership estimated to be 88,597, down 3.6% from 2005.
2. The 2006 decline is the lowest since 2002.
3. 2005-2006 is the first two-year period since 1996 showing a better rate of growth/decline than the previous two years.
4. Reversing a trend in place since 1997, for the past two consecutive years more churches reported growing than did in the previous year.
5. Almost two-thirds of membership is now outside the U.S., as are almost three of four churches.
6. There are approximately 550 congregations¹ of the International Churches of Christ.
7. Fifteen churches grew by over 200 members in the past 10 years.
8. Despite recent turmoil, a number of churches have grown steadily since 2002.

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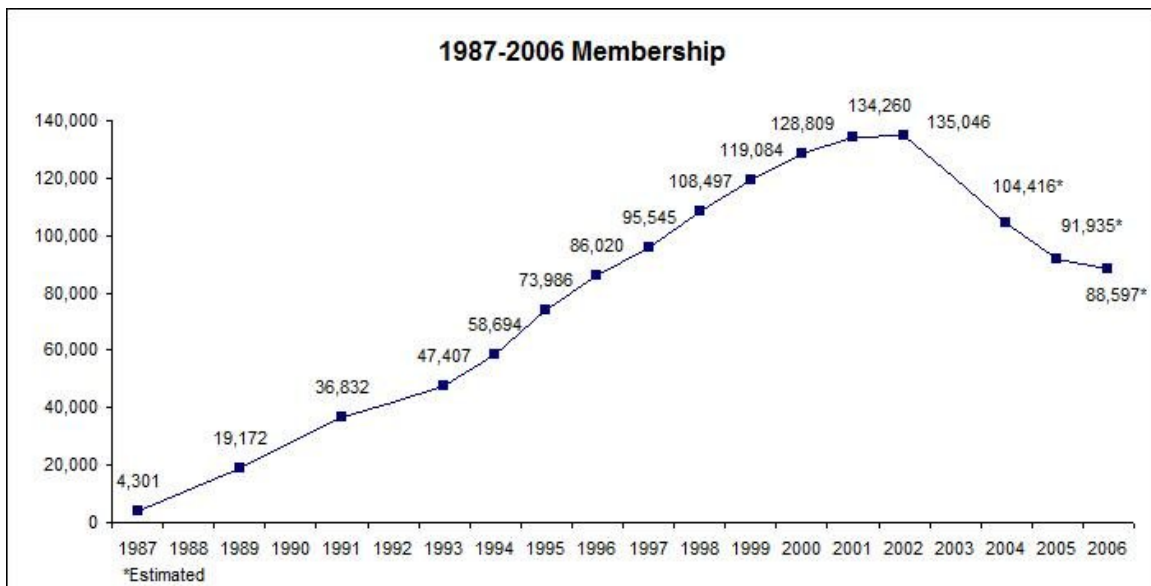
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Total Membership

In the late 1980's churches affiliated with the Boston Church of Christ grew rapidly in number and total membership. Much of the gains in the early period of the below chart came from entire congregations affiliating themselves with other churches planted by the Boston Church of Christ. This revival movement, which came to be known as the International Churches of Christ, then carried out an ambitious, worldwide program of church planting focused mostly on the world's major urban areas.

In the late 1990s growth slowed and eventually leveled off in 2002. Since 2003, most of the churches have begun to rebuild, stem losses and in some cases, begin growing again.

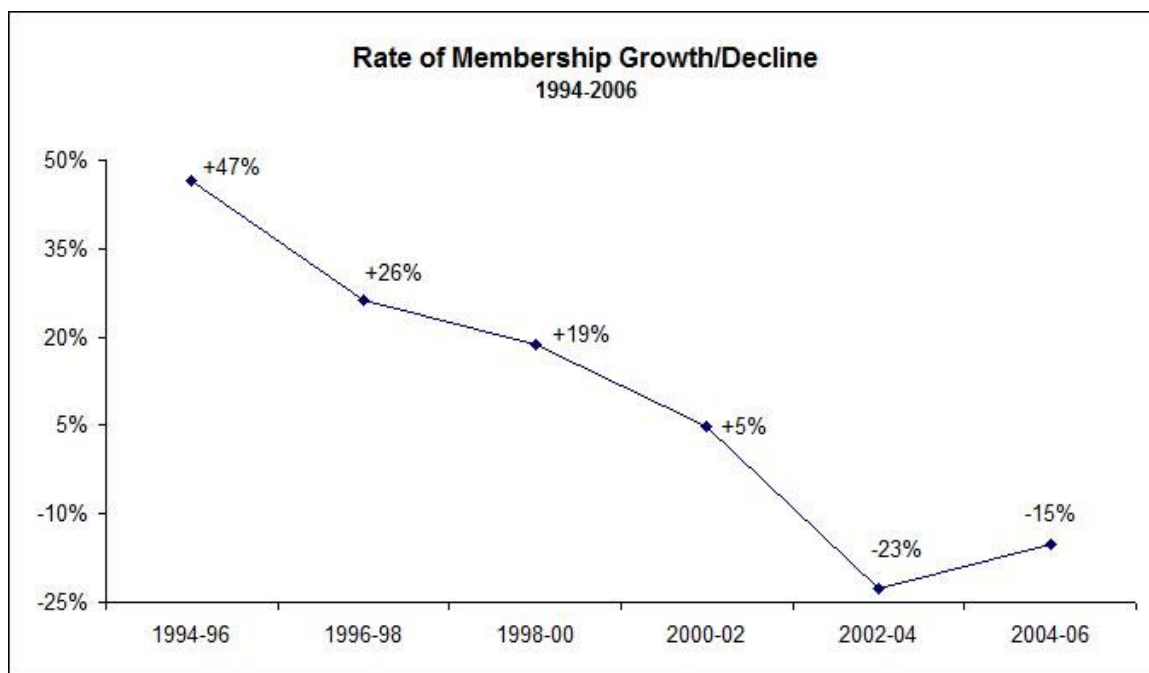
We estimate membership at the end of 2006 was 88,597.ⁱⁱ This represents a 3.6% decline from 2005, and a 34% decline from peak membership in 2002.



Rate of Membership Growth/Decline

Although membership losses after 2002 were unprecedented, the following chart shows how they were the continuation of a trend that had been in effect for almost a decade.

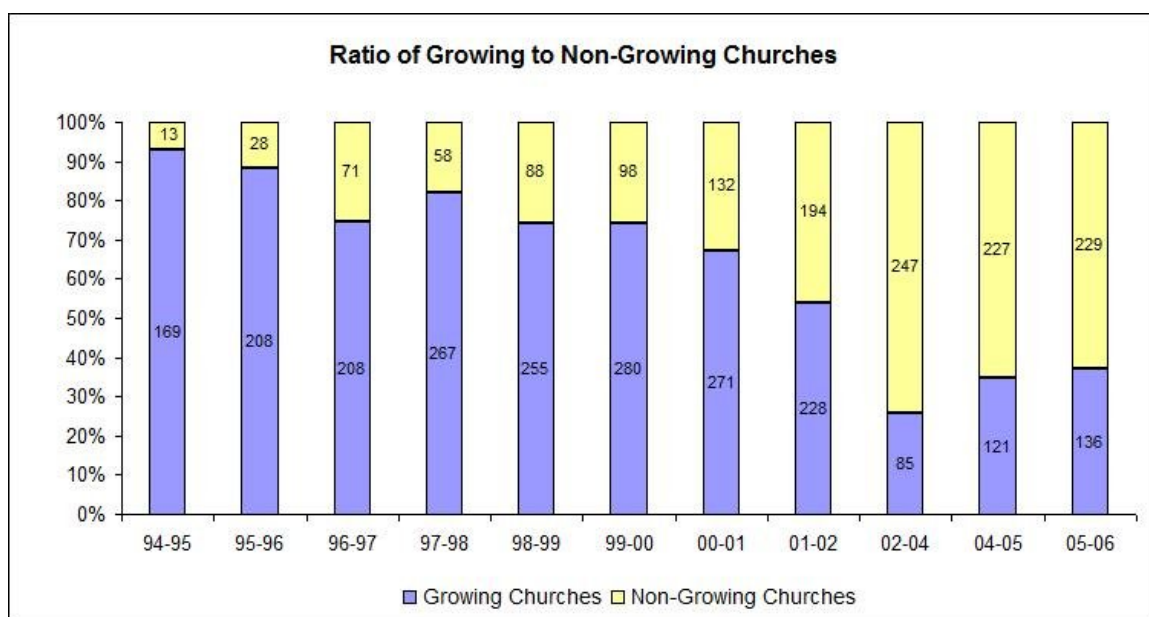
Although membership continued to decline in 2005 and 2006, the change in the rate of growth/declineⁱⁱⁱ reversed direction for the first two-year period since 1996.



Ratio of Growing to Non-Growing Churches

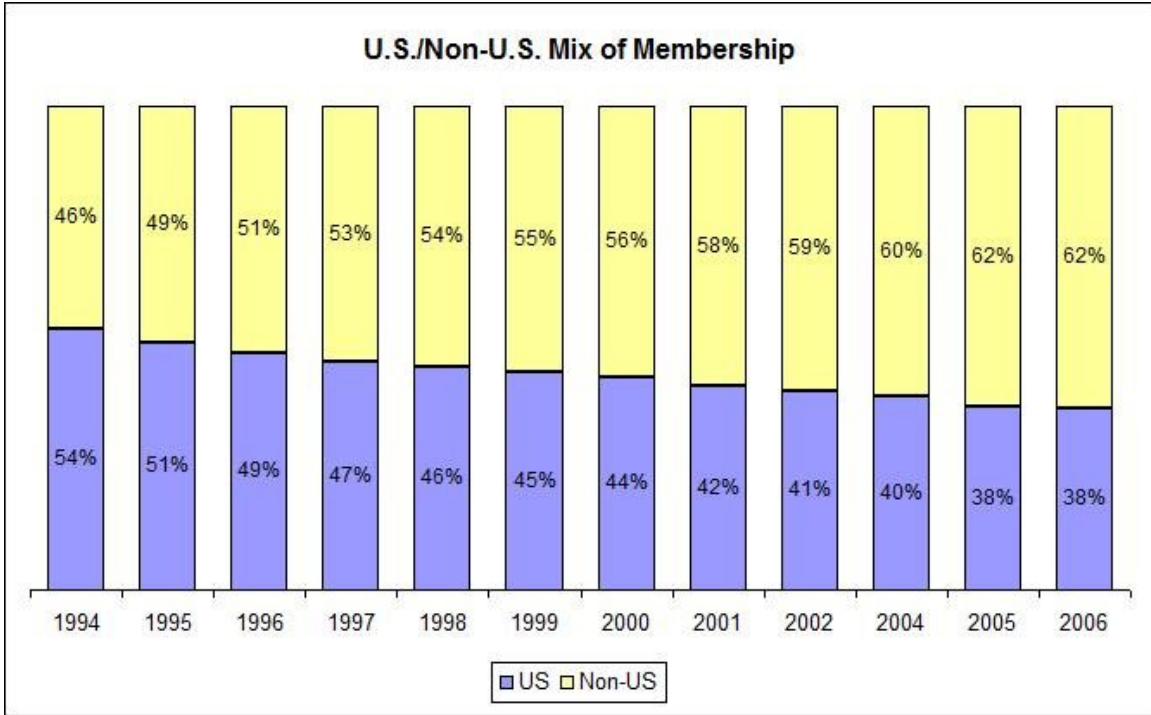
The following chart shows, from 1994-2004, a steady decline in the ratio of growing to non-growing churches. This analysis is consistent with the rate of change in overall membership, which saw a decade-long decline beginning at about the same time. Taken together, these two charts indicate that, while post-2002 membership losses were unprecedented, the trend leading up to these losses had been in place at least since 1994.

A modest reversal of this trend is becomes apparent 2005, the first year since 1998 that more churches reported growing^{iv} than did in the previous year.^v There was a slight increase in churches reporting growth in 2006.

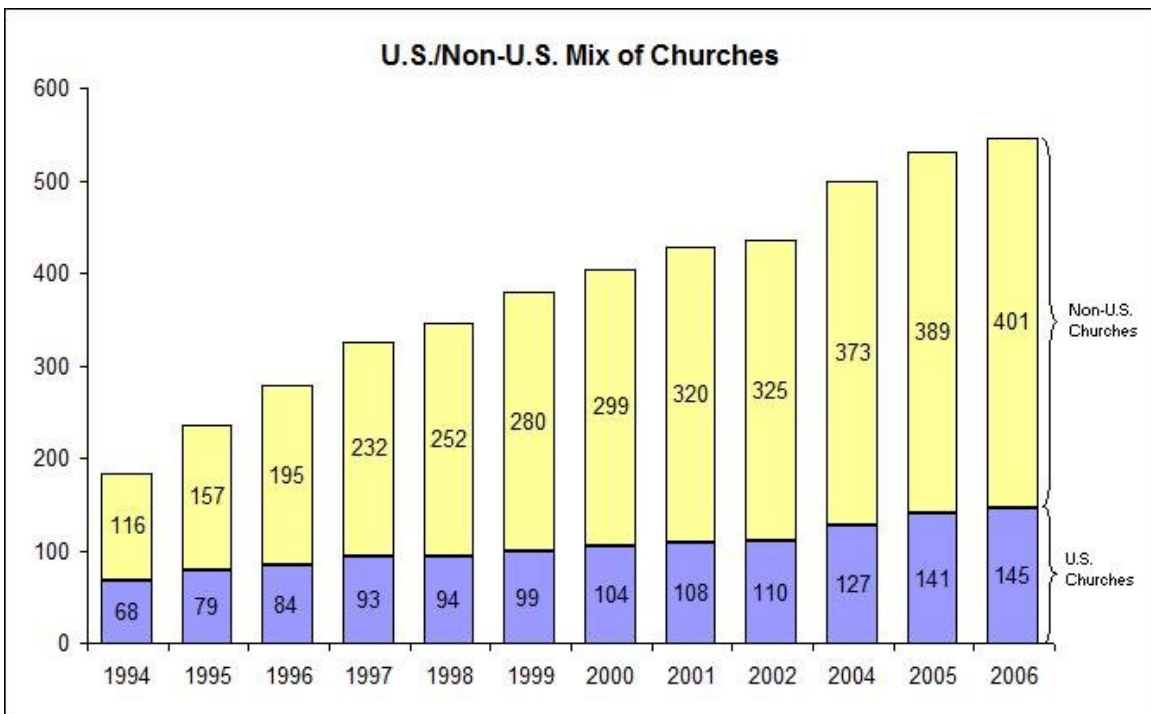


U.S./Non-U.S. Mix of Membership and Churches

The following charts show how over the past several years, the composition of the ICOC shifted from a majority of members in the U.S. to almost two-thirds outside of the U.S.



The ratio of churches shows an even more pronounced shift. By 2006, almost three out of four congregations were located outside of the U.S.



Since 2002, most new U.S. churches are the result of several large congregations either reorganizing into smaller, regional churches (Washington, D.C. and Atlanta) or former regions of large churches which have become separate congregations (Seattle/Tacoma, for example). Most new non-U.S. churches are the result of new church planting efforts.

Largest Membership Gains, 1996-2006

Of the 213 churches^{vi} reporting membership in both 1996 and 2006, 125 experienced net growth in the ten-year period.

These 15 churches^{vii} gained the most members in this ten-year time period.

Church/City	1996	2006	Gain
Mexico City	2,420	3,851	1,431
Abidjan	1,160	2,218	1,058
Jakarta	838	1,423	585
Nairobi	800	1,381	581
Kinshasa/Tshikapa	131	621	490
Guatemala City	246	668	422
Hampton Roads	200	542	342
Taiwan	267	606	339
Bangalore	701	1,030	329
San Pedro Sula	134	422	288
Seattle/Tacoma	350	632	282
Kiev	1,633	1,912	279
Monterrey	365	629	264
Medan	154	377	223
Gainesville	-	220	220

Post-2002 Growing Churches

Given the turmoil our churches have experienced since 2002, the 19 churches below stand out as exceptions to the general trend.

Fastest growing churches with 25 or more members in 2002

Church/City	2002	2006	Gain
Spokane, Washington	27	89	230%
Yogyakarta, Indonesia	29	55	90%
Underground, Asia	29	55	90%
Pachuca, Mexico	31	58	87%
Santa Cruz, Bolivia	38	71	87%
Taegu, Korea	32	55	72%
Fayetteville, Arkansas	27	46	70%
Dubai, UAE	50	85	70%
Freetown, Sierra Leone	81	132	63%
Underground, Asia	47	76	62%

Fastest growing churches with 100 or more members in 2002

Church/City	2002	2006	Gain
Richmond, Virginia	114	160	40%
Cuernavaca, Mexico	157	189	20%
Underground, Asia	185	220	19%
Gainesville, Florida	191	220	15%
Abidjan, Ivory Coast	1,975	2,218	12%
Taiwan	541	606	12%

Churches with most membership gains since 2002

Church/City	2002	2006	Gain
Abidjan, Ivory Coast	1,975	2,218	243
Taiwan	541	606	65
Spokane, Washington	27	89	62
Queretaro, Mexico	16	70	54
Freetown, Sierra Leone	81	132	51
Douala, Cameroon	84	134	50
Richmond, Virginia	114	160	46
Hampton Roads, VA	504	542	38
Underground, Asia	185	220	35
Dubai, UAE	50	85	35

20 Largest Churches^{viii} (ranked by end-2006 membership)

Church/City	2006
Los Angeles	4,830
Mexico City	3,851
New York City	2,500
Manila	2,226
Abidjan	2,218
Boston	2,061
Chicago	1,982
Kiev	1,912
Hong Kong	1,883
Moscow	1,675
Lagos	1,607
Jakarta	1,423
Johannesburg	1,411
Nairobi	1,381
Miami	1,135
San Diego	1,128
Sao Paulo	1,100
Bangalore	1,030
Singapore	867
Toronto	850

Clarifications and Caveats

Collecting data from churches is always an interesting project. Besides the normal challenges, there's a spiritual dimension as well. We recognize the dangers of publishing this kind of information—dangers related more than anything to unintended consequences.

Here are seven dangers to avoid when considering the data in this report:

Equating growth with good. What churches do to grow is not always good. Growth that is the result of gimmicks, pressure, or worldly ambition is superficially indistinguishable from healthy growth. Use discernment.

Failing to appreciate planting churches. One of the most selfless things a church can do is start another church. In so doing, the planting church may actually suffer a membership loss.

Failing to appreciate leaders who let go. Several churches in our survey reported membership losses because one or more satellite groups (or regions, or sectors, depending on the church's terminology) reached a point of maturity that allowed it to become a separate congregation.

Using numbers to validate suspect methodology or false doctrine.

Using numbers competitively. Anyone who has lived in a number of different places understands that some fields simply yield a slower harvest than others. Comparing two churches without taking context into consideration is folly.

Thinking faster is always better. Fast growth by God's blessing is always a cause for joy, but all fast growth is, eventually, unsustainable. Sometimes it's even unhealthy. Steady, healthy growth gets less attention, but if it's sustainable, will produce a greater harvest over time.

Failing to give God credit for growth. *So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.*

ⁱ There are nineteen churches that existed in 2002 which have not voluntarily reported membership in any year since; most of them are probably still in existence, but it is likely some have disbanded. We try to determine which churches have actually disbanded and remove them from the directory of congregations. We have removed 22 congregations which reported membership in 2002 are known to have disbanded.

ⁱⁱ The survey on which the 2006 estimate is based is the result of a collaboration between *Mission Memo* and *Disciples Today*. Participation by churches is voluntary. Most churches submit an actual end-of-year membership number compiled from church administrative records. Some churches estimate membership, or are only able to provide membership as of the survey response date. As of October 8, 2007, data for 454 churches was available. These 454 churches reported a combined membership of 82,301. In addition to these 454 churches, we set membership to zero for another 15 churches which either merged with another church, disbanded, or disassociated themselves from the participating churches. Of these 469, we received membership data for 2005 from 365 churches. A year-to-year comparison of these 365 churches, including the 31 churches which reported membership for the first time in 2006, indicated a decline of 3.6% from 2005-2006. Using this rate of decline to estimate the membership of churches for which we did not receive a 2006 response yielded an estimated total membership of 88,597.

ⁱⁱⁱ Membership for 2004, 2005 and 2006 are estimates based on results of annual surveys, using the methodology described above, by *Mission Memo* and *Disciples Today*.

^{iv} Data for 2004, 2005 and 2006 are from annual surveys conducted by *Mission Memo* and *Disciples Today*. Participation by churches is voluntary, so after 2002, there are a number of churches for which data is not available. A church is not counted as having grown or not unless it reported membership for two consecutive years.

^v New church plantings or newly formed congregations are not counted among growing churches in the first year of existence. A church has to have reported end-of-year membership for two consecutive years to be included as either a growing or non-growing church. Churches that report no change in membership are included as non-growing. Churches that are disbanded, merge with another church, or disassociate themselves from the other churches are counted, in that year, as non-growing.

^{vi} Of 280 churches in existence by 1996, 213 reported membership in 2006. Seventeen of them disbanded, merged or otherwise disassociated themselves between 1996 and 2006. Fifty of them did had reported 2006 membership at the time of this report.

^{vii} We've excluded from this chart nine churches which were formed as a part of the reorganization of existing churches: North River, Athens (GA), DC Regional, Faith Fellowship, Northern Virginia, Baltimore, Central New Jersey, Atlanta Cobb, Central Gwinnett. Strictly speaking, these churches all had zero membership in 2002 and have present memberships in the hundreds, since they did not exist as congregations in 2002. In reality, they already existed as part of a larger church, and therefore have not really grown *from zero to their present membership* since 2002. For those that have grown, we don't have data on their 2002 membership since it would have been included in the now disbanded church.

^{viii} The Bay Area Christian Church was the only church that we think would have otherwise been on this list but was not because at the time of this report it had not yet provided a 2006 membership figure. Except for the BACC, the other churches that did not report membership in 2006 very likely had fewer members than the churches on this list.