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# MISSION USA: AMERICA'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE<sup>1</sup>

by Larry Vogel

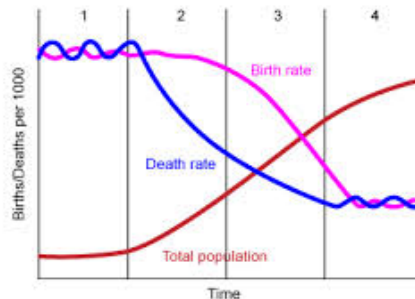
## Introduction: Definitions and Scope

**D**EMOGRAPHICS IS THE STUDY of a population in order (1) to describe it accurately, (2) to identify patterns and developments, and (3) to predict new social realities. It is the study of groups of people — populations that may be designated in various ways, from worldwide or national populations, to “sub-populations” or identifiable groups within groups. Certain basic demographic factors are central to demographic analysis: age and sex distribution, birth rate, major sub-groups, and migration patterns.<sup>2</sup> This article will briefly describe such core factors, especially regarding the US population, then compare them to the demographics of the LCMS, and close with a few suggestions for LCMS mission priorities.

## 1. Core Demographic Change — The Demographic Transition

In 1968, Paul Ehrlich warned that human population growth was leading to imminent catastrophe, that within the decade of the 1970s hundreds of millions would starve (including a third of the US population).<sup>3</sup> Ehrlich's predictions were widely circulated and believed and, charitably, woefully inaccurate. Nevertheless, many still worry about surging human population and may be surprised to hear that, “All told, some fifty-nine countries, comprising roughly 44% of the world's total population, are currently not producing enough children to avoid population

decline, and the phenomenon continues to spread.”<sup>4</sup> The term “demographic transition” (DT) describes this phenomenon. It is one of the most helpful observations from the study of demographics. The DT unfolds over time in stages. A visual may help.<sup>5</sup> Pre-transition (stage 1), a society must have lots of children because lives are short for most and many die in infancy. Mortality and birth rates are both high. Note how the DT changes this:



- *Declining mortality:* The population experiences an increasing average life span as a result of declining infant mortality and greater longevity as nutrition, sanitation, and medicine all improve (note the steeply declining death rate in stages two and three).
- *Population growth:* As a direct result, the population increases as it experiences natural, biological growth (note the increasing trajectory of total population in stages two and three).
- *Declining fertility:* As the transition continues, the population experiences declining birth rates because women have fewer babies on average (see the declining birth rate in stage three especially).
- *Population aging:* The fourth stage of the transition is marked by a decrease in the natural population growth rate and the average age of the population rises.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based, in part, on a presentation given at the LCMS Mission Summit on November 20, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Donald T. Rowland, *Demographic Methods and Concepts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 2008), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Paul R. Ehrlich, *Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968).

<sup>4</sup> Phillip Longman, *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity and What to Do About It* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 26.

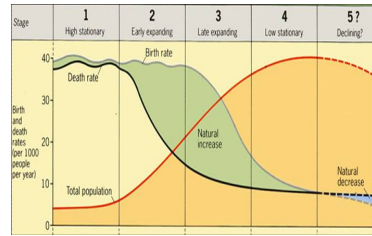
<sup>5</sup> Visuals that were not created by the author contain the source either within the visual or as a footnote.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Dyson argues that another fundamental change involved in the DT is the urbanization of the population in question; *Population and Development: The Demographic Transition* (London, New York: Zed Books, 2010).

These four stages are complete in the “developed world.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, virtually every human population is at some stage of the DT as infant mortality declines and longevity increases even in the poorest nations. Of course, that means some populations are growing rapidly, since they are in the early stages of the DT. However, the long-term effect of the DT is population decline, not population growth.

A second graph<sup>8</sup> shows the same phenomenon, but has a stage five, labeled with a question mark. It shows what has happened wherever the previous four stages are completed. *In this stage the birth rate stays below replacement levels and eventually total population declines.* Despite many questions about it, this stage of the transition is occurring throughout the developed world.<sup>9</sup>

The DT develops slowly, often unnoticed. Rates of declining mortality and childbirth are not uniform. Nevertheless, the DT is one of the most helpful frameworks for understanding population conditions globally.<sup>10</sup> There is also



strong economic correlation with this transition. Aging nations tend toward prosperity while youthful nations earlier in the DT are poor.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Demographic Patterns and Details

For affluent populations, the transition to aging has already occurred. Three specific demographic details are important: age and sex, birth rate, and migration.

### a. Age-Sex Distribution Over Time

Note the series of age-sex pyramids<sup>12</sup> for the United States based on census data for 1960 (top), 1985 (middle), and 2014 (bottom). At the end of the baby boom in 1960, 38% of the United States was under twenty and 13% over sixty. By 1985, less than 30% of the population was under twenty, a drop of almost 25%. The boomers ballooned the 20–40 cohort and 16% of America was over sixty, with a few over

‘We’ll have almost as many Americans over age 85 as under age 5. This is the result of longer life spans and lower birthrates. It’s uncharted territory, not just for us, but for all of humanity.’

is a significant move back to a more sustainable population. See Britta Sandstroem “Russia’s Baby Boom: Fertility Rate Far Higher than in EU, Rising Quickly,” *Russia-Insider.com*, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://russia-insider.com/en/politics/russias-baby-boom-fertility-rate-far-higher-eu-rising-quickly/ri385>.

<sup>11</sup> On the one side, Europe has gone through the four stages and is now struggling to maintain its native populations. On the other, Africa has experienced certain elements of the DT without others — overall mortality is declining slowly (due to less infant mortality), but, while birth rates have declined about 20% in recent decades, they continue among the highest worldwide (Clint Laurent, *Tomorrow’s*

*World: A Look at the Demographic and Socio-economic Structure of the World in 2032* [Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2013], 19). Dyson notes that the correlation between economics and DT is not iron-clad: “There is no reason to believe that a major rise in per capital income is required for the constituent processes of the transition to unfold,” (Dyson, *Population and Development*, 5). See also Longman, *Empty Cradle*, 30. Longevity in Africa is also facing headwinds like AIDS, malaria, and significant deaths from violence and warfare. See also Longman, *Empty Cradle*, 8–11. Longman theorizes that declining TFRs in the Mid-East have fueled fundamentalism because it is a byproduct of greater freedom for Muslim women, which is viewed as a Western evil imported to Islam. World TFR maps are available from many sources. See “Total Fertility Rate of the World,” *Maps of World*, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.mapsofworld.com/thematic-maps/world-total-fertility-rate-map.html#>. See also Ronald Lee, “The Demographic Transition: Three Centuries of Fundamental Change,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 167. He calculates that aging will be ten times more important than births.

<sup>12</sup> Based on visualizations and data by Martin De Wulf, “Population Pyramids of the World from 1950-2050,” *populationpyramid.net*, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://populationpyramid.net> and <http://populationpyramid.net/united-states-of-america/2016/>.

<sup>7</sup> Developed world refers to economically developed areas, most notably Europe, North America, Latin America, Russia, East Asia, Australia, and most of Southeast Asia.

<sup>8</sup> See “Demographic Transition Model,” *Geography Department of Lord Wandsworth College*, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://geographylwc.org.uk/A/AS/ASpopulation/DTM.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> For a couple of decades there was a theory among demographers that populations would naturally maintain replacement levels of population as the transition was completed. Recent facts don’t corroborate that theory. Rather, in a number of countries, including almost all of the former Soviet-bloc countries, Cuba, Japan, Germany, and much of the EU, the DT is at a stage in which all have very low, sub-replacement total fertility rates (TFRs). So stage 5 can happen, but whether it is a “natural” result of the basic model itself remains a topic of debate. A helpful website showing declining TFR is “Fertility rate, total (births per woman),” *The World Bank*, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>.

<sup>10</sup> One can easily, for example, divide world regions into two categories: those who have completed the transition to low mortality and low birth rates and those who are at various stages within the process. Russia is an outlier. It experienced a decline in infant mortality to sub-replacement levels, but longevity is not increasing because of high levels of substance abuse, smoking, chronic illnesses, AIDS, suicide, and other problems. See Murray Feshbach, “Population and Health Constraints on the Russian Military,” Susan Yoshihara and Douglas A. Silva, eds., *Population Decline and the Remaking of Great Power Politics* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2012), Kindle location 1445–1710. It is noteworthy, however, that a recent trend in Russia toward more births

eighty-five. In 2014 the distribution is generally uniform in age-sex from infancy to about sixty years. About a fourth is 0–19 years, another quarter is 20–39, a third quarter is 40–59, and a final fourth of the population is now aged sixty and up — a 150% increase for that increasingly female group. Notice the significant number of people over age 85, especially compared to 1985. *Less than a tenth of 1% of the population was over 85 years of age in 1985. Today almost 2% of the population is — a twenty-fold increase.*

Paul Taylor from the Pew Research Council explains:

We'll have almost as many Americans over age 85 as under age 5. This is the result of longer life spans and lower birthrates. It's uncharted territory, not just for us, but for all of humanity. And while it's certainly good news over the long haul for the sustainability of the earth's resources, it will create political and economic stress in the shorter term, as smaller cohorts of working age adults will be hard-pressed to finance the retirements of larger cohorts of older ones.<sup>13</sup>

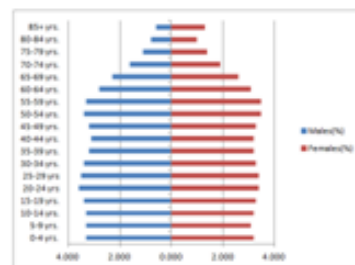
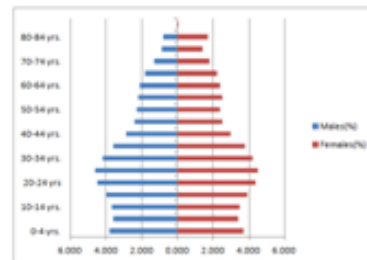
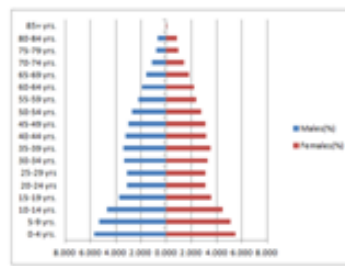
#### b. Birth Rate

One of the most significant demographic measures is “total fertility rate” or TFR. TFR is the average number of children women will bear.

A replacement TFR for a population requires more than 2,100 births each year per thousand women in a society.<sup>14</sup> Low birthrates and a completed DT in Europe, affluent Asia, and elsewhere have resulted in TFRs below the level needed to replace populations. High birthrates because populations are in a (much) earlier stage of the

<sup>13</sup> Paul Taylor, “The Next America,” *Pew Research Center*, April 10, 2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/next-america/#Two-Dramas-in-Slow-Motion>.

<sup>14</sup> In individual terms, that means that the average individual woman must have two or more children for a population to remain constant. For fertility in individual countries see “Fertility rate, total (births per woman),” *The World Bank*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>.



DT predominate in Africa, parts of the Middle East, India, and Muslim Asia. As for the United States, we are in the two to three children per woman category. But that is deceptive since US TFRs have been hovering only slightly above and often below 2.0 for some time. In 2012, the last year for which we have firm statistics on births in the United States from the CDC, the general fertility rate hit a 25-year low.

(Note: The 2012 total fertility rate (TFR) for the United States was 1,880.5 births per 1,000 women, 1% below the 2011 rate (1,894.5) (Tables 4, 8, 13, and 14). After generally increasing from 1998 through 2007, the TFR has declined for each of the last 5 years. The TFR estimates the number of births that a hypothetical group of 1,000 women would have over their lifetimes,

based on age-specific birth rates in a given year. Because it is computed from age-specific birth rates, the TFR is age-adjusted, and can be compared for populations across time, population groups, and geographic areas. The TFRs declined for nearly all race and Hispanic origin groups in 2012, down 1–2% for non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic and AIAN women. The rate for API women rose 4% from 2011 to 2012, however. The 2012 US TFR remained below “replacement” — the level at which a given generation can exactly

The flight from marriage creates diverse social problems.

replace itself (generally considered to be 2,100 births per 1,000 women). The TFR has been generally below replacement since 1971. With the exception of Hispanic women (reflecting mainly rates for Mexican and other Hispanic women), the TFRs for all other groups were below replacement (Tables 8 and 14). Read more from Joyce A. Martin, et al., “Births: Final Data for 2012,” *National Vital Statistics Reports* (vol. 62, no. 9), *Center for Disease Control, US Department of Health and Human Services*, 2, abbreviated as CDC 2012, accessed September 13, 2016, [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62\\_09.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62_09.pdf).)

The most recent CDC report on births says, “Since 1971, our TFR has exceeded 2.1 only two times (1971,

White Population: 2000 – 2010						
Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin	2010 Number in millions	2000 Percent of total pop.	2010 Number in millions	2010 Percent of total pop.	Change 2000-2010 in millions.	Change 2000-2010 by percent
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>281.4</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>308.7</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>9.7</b>
White alone or in combination	216.9	77.1	231.0	74.8	14.1	6.5
White alone	211.5	75.1	223.6	72.4	12.1	5.7
Hispanic/Latino	16.9	6.0	26.7	8.7	9.8	58.1
Not Hispanic/Latino	194.6	69.1	196.8	63.7	2.3	1.2
White in combination	5.5	1.9	7.5	2.4	2.0	36.9
White: Black/African American	0.8	0.3	1.8	0.6	1.0	133.7
White: Some Other Race	2.2	0.8	1.7	0.6	(0.5)	(21.1)
White: Asian	0.9	0.3	1.6	0.5	0.8	86.9
White: Am. Indian (Eskimo)	1.1	0.4	1.4	0.5	0.3	32.3
White: Black, Am. Indian	0.1	-	0.2	0.1	0.1	105.7
All other combinations	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.2	50.4
Not White alone or in comb.	64.5	22.9	77.7	25.2	13.2	20.5

– Percentage rounds to 0.0

Note: In Census 2000, an error in data processing resulted in an overstatement of the Two or More Races population by about 1 million people (about 15 percent) nationally, which almost entirely affected race combinations involving Some Other Race. Therefore, data users should assess observed changes in the Two or More Races population and race combinations involving Some Other Race between Census 2000 and the 2010 Census with caution. Changes in specific race combinations not involving Some Other Race, such as White **and** Black or African American or White Not White alone or in comb. Asian, generally should be more comparable.

Sources: U S Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File*, Tables PL1 and PL2; and *2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File*, Tables P1 and P2.

2007). It was 1.9 in 2012. With the exception of Hispanic women, all ethnic or racial groups in the United States have below replacement fertility.”<sup>15</sup>

The preceding table from the 2010 US Census compares the 2000 and 2010 census results, especially with respect to the growth of the white population over against other races and people of Hispanic or Latino origin.<sup>16</sup> It indicates an overall growth in the US population of just under 10% for the decade. However, while the United States did more than replace its population in the decade, *growth is not coming because of overall births, but largely because of increasing longevity and the growth of the Hispanic population.* Non-Latino whites increased their population by only 1.2% for the decade (due to modest immigration from Europe). Non-Hispanic white *deaths*

*exceeded births beginning in 2012.*<sup>17</sup> Compare the 1.2% white population growth to Hispanic population growth of 58.1%. Latino growth is based first on immigration, second birthrate, and third on increasing longevity. Moreover, 37.1% of Latino Americans are under twenty, compared to 22.4% for whites.<sup>18</sup> In comparison to non-Latino whites, Hispanics will have a much larger proportion of their population of child-bearing age for the foreseeable future.<sup>19</sup>

### c. Migration

<sup>17</sup> See Sam Roberts, “Census Benchmark for White Americans: More Deaths Than Births,” *New York Times* (June 13, 2013), accessed September 13, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/13/us/census-benchmark-for-white-americans-more-deaths-than-births.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/13/us/census-benchmark-for-white-americans-more-deaths-than-births.html?_r=0). I can find no reliable data comparison of births to deaths for 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Based on 2012 numbers — latest available — “The Hispanic Population in the US: 2012,” *United States Census Bureau, Hispanic Origin*, accessed September 13, 2016, <https://www.census.gov/population/hispanic/data/2012.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Even if the Latino birth rate drops to that of whites, the Latino population will grow about twice as fast as non-Hispanic whites. From 2000-2009, nine US Latinos were born for every Latino who died, while white births barely exceeded deaths (Rogelio Saenz, “Population Bulletin Update: Latinos in the United States 2010,” *Population Reference Bureau*, December 2010, 1-2, <http://www.prb.org/pdf10/latinos-update2010.pdf>). The link is no longer active — last access on November 10, 2014. As of July 2015, non-Hispanic white births were exceeded by total minority births. See D’Vera Cohn, “It’s official: Minority babies are the majority among the nation’s infants, but only just,” *Pew Research Center*, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/23/its-official-minority-babies-are-the-majority-among-the-nations-infants-but-only-just/>.

<sup>15</sup> Data published on December 30, 2013. For as long as the CDC has tracked TFR for Hispanic women, they have exceeded the overall US TFR, but in 2012 the Hispanic TFR had diminished to 2.2, only slightly above replacement level (CDC 2012, 7). The CIA, which uses slightly different measures than the CDC, estimated the TFR for the United States at 2.0 for 2014. See “The World Factbook,” *Central Intelligence Agency*, <https://www.cia.gov>; from “Country Comparison: Total Fertility Rate,” *Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed September 13, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Because the census identifies both by race and ethnicity, there is some overlap — as when an individual is identified as both white and Hispanic — which the chart takes into account. Lindsay Hixson, Bradford B. Hepler, Myoung Ouk Kim, “The White Population: 2010,” *2010 Census Briefs* (September 2011): 3, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>.

The final core demographic component is migration, which includes two elements: *international immigration and internal migration*.<sup>20</sup> Historically, a significant rate of immigration is not exceptional for the United States. The sources of immigration, however, shift over time — Germans at one point, Irish at another, Italian, yet another. The result is always dynamic change in the US population. Today, immigration, in addition to TFR, is shifting the complexion of the country. The Census Bureau predicts that the white population will peak in ten years and then begin to fall in totality and as a percentage. The black population will grow slightly; Asians and Hispanics will grow dramatically.<sup>21</sup>

Current *percentages* of immigrants to the United States are similar to those from the 1850s to the 1920s, but *source countries for US immigrants have changed markedly*. Today's immigrants are largely Latino, Asian, and African, rather than European.<sup>22</sup> Overall, immigrant growth is most evident in cities in the coastal United States and along the southern border and is less evident in

With a declining importance of extended family and community, fewer traditions, values, and religious perspectives are inherited.

the suburbs and rural America (although there are noteworthy exceptions).

Americans have always been mobile, seeking opportunity by moving to a different US location. Such internal migration continues.<sup>23</sup> Almost 3% of the US population moves to a different state each year and about a third of the US population has moved from the state where they were born.<sup>24</sup> With few exceptions, the Midwest and Northeast struggle to retain population while the South and West continue to draw.

The most important aspect of internal migration is urbanization. To be sure some urban centers (like Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, or St. Louis) are static or are in population decline, (although with increasing percentages of immigrants and other minority populations). Broader urban areas — cities plus suburbs/exurbs — continue to grow, however. Small to mid-sized cities are also growing.<sup>25</sup> Rural and small town

America's population loss<sup>26</sup> is typically offset only in areas where immigrants have located.<sup>27</sup> Although many immigrants settle near entry points — thus the heavy Latino populations along the southern border and Asian populations on the West Coast — not all remain in these states. The next visual shows that the number of states in which Hispanic kids comprise more than 20% of kindergartners has doubled in twelve years. These now include states in the aging Northeast, the Great Plains, and the

<sup>20</sup> Emigration from the United States is too low to be considered. Immigrant and foreign-born are synonymous terms; the immigrant population includes all the foreign-born in the United States as nearly as they can be counted, including documented and undocumented immigrants, as well as those immigrants who are now naturalized citizens.

<sup>21</sup> “The non-Hispanic white population is projected to peak in 2024 at 199.6 million, up from 197.8 million in 2012. Unlike other race or ethnic groups, however, its population is projected to slowly decrease, falling by nearly 20.6 million from 2024 to 2060. Meanwhile, the Hispanic population would more than double, from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million in 2060. Consequently, by the end of the period, nearly one in three US residents would be Hispanic, up from about one in six today. The black population is expected to increase from 41.2 million to 61.8 million over the same period. Its share of the total population would rise slightly, from 13.1% in 2012 to 14.7% in 2060. The Asian population is projected to more than double, from 15.9 million in 2012 to 34.4 million in 2060, with its share of nation's total population climbing from 5.1% to 8.2% in the same period” (“U.S. Census Bureau Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation Half a Century from Now,” December 12, 2012, *United States Census Bureau*, accessed September 13, 2016, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html>).

<sup>22</sup> Pew reports that the Latino percentage of immigrants has been declining while Asian immigration has increased. The drop in Hispanic immigration as a percentage of immigrants coincides with recent economic decline and increasing focus on border security (Renee Stepler and Mark Hugo Lopez, “U.S. Latino Population Growth and Dispersion Has Slowed Since Onset of the Great Recession,” *Pew Research Center*, September 8, 2016, accessed September 13, 2016, at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/09/08/latino-population-growth-and-dispersion-has-slowed-since-the-onset-of-the-great-recession/>).

<sup>23</sup> Internal migration hit a 30-year low since the recession of 2008 (Raven Molloy, Christopher L. Smith, and Abigail Wozniak, “Internal Migration in the United States,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 25, no. 3 [2011]: 173-96, accessed September 13, 2016, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles.php?doi=10.1257/jep.25.3.173>).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Johnson, *Demographic Trends in Rural and Small Town America* (University of New Hampshire: Carsey Institute, 2006), accessed September 13, 2016, <http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=carsey>. See also Hope Yen, “Rural America Is Steadily Shrinking, Census Data Says,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (July 28, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, *Demographic Trends*, adds: “The share of people in rural areas over the past decade fell to 16%, passing the previous low of 20% in 2000. The rural share is expected to drop further as the US population balloons from 309 million to 400 million by mid-century, leading people to crowd cities and suburbs and fill in the open spaces around them.”

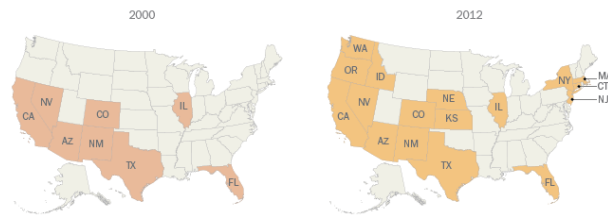
<sup>27</sup> Mark Mather and Kevin Pollard, “Hispanic Gains Minimize Population Losses in Rural America,” *Population Reference Bureau*, August 2007, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2007/HispanicGains.aspx>.

Northwest.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the many concerns about immigration that are part of the current national debate, from the standpoint of demographics, *immigration is a significant plus*, providing not only a population of workers, but also hope for programs like Social Security that depend on young people to fund benefits for older ones. Paul Taylor reminds us that immigration is “akin to raising the birthrate, but its impact is more immediate, because the newcomers arrive ready to work.”<sup>29</sup>

**Hispanic Children Are a Growing Share of Public Kindergarten Classes**

States where 20% or more of kindergartners are Hispanic



Source: Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project tabulations of the 2012 American Community Survey and 2000 decennial census (1% IPUMS)  
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**3. Current and Future Realities: Sociocultural Consequences of Demographic Change**

Demographic Transition affects culture both directly and indirectly. Direct effects include those obvious, measurable realities mentioned above. But other resultant changes in *culture*, that is, customs and assumptions, also flow from the DT.

*First, attitudes about children change.* As the population increases earlier in the DT there are more dependent children. While children can be an economic benefit in an agrarian culture, bigger families become liabilities, not assets, in urban environments. Children are increasingly viewed as burdens rather than blessings and adults seek ways to limit family size (contraception). *Smaller families become the ideal* — a profound reassessment of the family itself.

Since declining mortality precedes birth rate declines, the DT first produces an increasingly youthful population with high childhood dependency. Africa illustrates this today internationally. Poverty is a frequent corollary to high economic dependency. And, with poverty, violence is another indirect effect of early stage population increase because of a high percentage of young men. A high percentage of poor young men without many economic opportunities is a prescription for violence.<sup>30</sup>

and careers rather than childbearing. Many will postpone both marriage and children, some will marry but choose not to bear children, and others will neither marry nor bear children. The nexus between women and marriage is severed when women no longer find primary identity as mothers. *Distinctive roles for men and women are largely blurred.*

As women's lives change, so do households. The accompanying table<sup>31</sup> shows concrete examples for the United States: in 1940, 90% of American households consisted of a family: husband-wife, with or without kids, or mother or father alone with kids. Today over one-third of American households are non-family households of single individuals or unrelated persons living together.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, marriage is in decline when only 48% of households are married. Even more significantly, families of any sort are also in decline, with over one-third of households being non-familial.

Household by Type	1940	1960	1980	2000	2010
Family households	90.0	85.1	73.7	68.1	66.4
Married couples with kids	42.9	44.3	30.7	23.5	20.2
Married couples w/o kids	33.4	30.5	30.2	28.1	28.2
Single parents with kids	4.3	4.1	7.2	9.2	9.6
Other family type	9.4	6.2	5.6	7.1	8.5
Non-family households	10.0	15.1	26.4	31.9	33.6
One person	7.8	13.4	22.6	25.8	26.7
Other nonfamily	2.2	1.7	3.8	6.1	6.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial censuses

<sup>28</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad, “A View of the Future Through Kindergarten Demographics,” *Pew Research Center FactTank*, July 8, 2014, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/07/08/a-view-of-the-future-through-kindergarten-demographics/>.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor, “Next America,” 86.

<sup>30</sup> George Magnus, *The Age of Aging: How Demographics are Changing the Global Economy and Our World*, (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 205–209.

<sup>31</sup> Based on data from “Families and Living Arrangements,” Table HH-1 “Households by Type, 1940 to Present,” *US Census Bureau*, downloaded October 27, 2014, <https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/households.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Table of “Selected Social Characteristics in the United States,” *US Census Bureau American Fact Finder*, accessed on September 13, 2016, [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_13\\_3YR\\_DP02&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_3YR_DP02&prodType=table). Abbreviated as CenFact.

Nicholas Eberstadt warns of a “flight from marriage” (a “global tidal wave away from early stable lifelong conjugal unions”).<sup>33</sup> The flight from marriage creates diverse social problems, further indirect effects of the DT. To mention just one, consider the societal costs of children in a single parent household. Demographer Sara McLanahan argues that as the DT moves to sub-replacement birthrates, it widens “social class disparities.”

Children who were born to mothers from the most-advantaged backgrounds are making substantial gains in resources. Relative to their counterparts 40 years ago, their mothers are more mature and more likely to be working at well-paying jobs. These children were born into stable unions and are spending more time with their fathers. In contrast, children born to mothers from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are making smaller gains and, in some instances, even losing parental resources. Their mothers are working at low-paying jobs. Their parents’ relationships are unstable, and for many, support from their biological fathers is minimal.<sup>34</sup>

Third, extended family and communities have less influence over attitudes and values. Migration and, in particular, urbanization results in a declining importance for the extended family as many individuals, couples, and nuclear families relocate. This changes lifestyle and not merely location. With a declining importance of extended family and community, fewer traditions, values, and religious perspectives are inherited. Migration demands more of the individual and the nuclear family — the individual and the nuclear family

Pew’s LCMS data, for example, shows that on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and same-sex marriage, individual members of LCMS churches tend to reflect the attitudes of the rest of the country.

must determine their own identity, attitudes, and values.<sup>35</sup>

*Fourth, the DT makes long life a social problem.* Early in the DT, large numbers of children mean increasing dependency strains for their parents. At the end of the transition, instead of large numbers of dependent children, aging societies are supporting an increasing number of older people with limited ability to provide all their needs.<sup>36</sup> *The aged are increasingly viewed as liabilities and burdens, rather than blessings.*

Other effects of the DT are more subtle. Demographer Tim Dyson argues that the social effects of demographic change are centered in a new attitude about life based on increasing longevity: “A key point here is that mortality decline generates higher levels of confidence in society *as regards the worldly future.*”<sup>37</sup> As life expectancy extends and fewer die “young,” people gain a greater sense of confidence about the here and now. Attitudes change about everything from how many children they should have, to sexual and marriage habits, to gender roles, and so forth. More important for our purposes is a theological implication: Less attention is given to thoughts about what comes after death. In biblical language, demographic change results in people taking far more “thought for the morrow” (MATT 6:34, KJV), for the coming days and years rather than for a life that is

everlasting.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt writes: “Perhaps more important than any of the other portents for future childbearing is what has been termed by demographic specialists ‘the flight from marriage’: the modern global tidal wave away from early stable lifelong conjugal unions” (Yoshihara, *Population Decline*, Kindle edition, Locations 131-133).

<sup>34</sup> Sara McLanahan, “Diverging Destinies: How Children Are Faring Under the Second Demographic Transition,” *Demography* 41, no. 4 (November 2004): 608. See also E. Bradford Wilcox, ed., *When Marriage Disappears: The New Middle America, The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America* (Charlottesville, Virginia: The National Marriage Project, December 2010 [NMP]), accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.stateofourunions.org/2010/index.php>.

<sup>35</sup> Families also become more child-centered (social supply and demand). Having fewer children means greater emotional investment in children since rarity makes for value. Consider what can be called the “4-2-1 effect” in China where every four parents now have only two children and every two children produce only one grandchild, or, on a more mundane level, the constant whirl of social, school, and sporting events focused on American kids. In its extreme, children are feted and catered to and parents become hyper-vigilant, fearing the injury or loss of the only child. Children experience increasing influence over against parents and others. *The Wall Street Journal* and other outlets recently noted the phenomenon of children calling parents by their first name. In Britain some child advocates recommend such things as having children participate in the interview process for hiring new teachers. See “Children Put ‘Mom’ and ‘Dad’ on a First Name Basis: For Attention, Power, or a Test,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 2013, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/children-put-mom-and-dad-on-a-first-name-basis-1414609230> and “Pupils ‘interviewing teachers for jobs’” *BBC News*, April 3, 2010, accessed September 13, 2016, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/8599485.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/8599485.stm).

<sup>36</sup> Longman, *Empty Cradle*, 52-57.

<sup>37</sup> Dyson, *Population and Development*, 159, emphasis added.



Another indirect effect as population makeup changes as a result of differences in TFR is the potential for intragroup friction. Contemporary debates about immigration are, at least in part, a result of ethnocentric fears as individuals encounter a different language, customs, and values. Nativism to one degree or another seems a constant corollary to the whole of US immigration history.<sup>38</sup> Urbanization multiplies the potential for friction by increasing the size of conflicting groups. The difficulty of learning a new language, compounded by poverty among immigrants, only furthers the potential for anti-immigrant resentment. With immigrants come challenges to long-held customs and practices. Religious practices also change as new religions grow in adherents and are increasingly manifested institutionally. Those of a more secular mentality find the multiplicity of religious expressions to be proof that all religions are of equal — or perhaps no — value.<sup>39</sup> What was once sacred is now questioned increasingly.

#### a. Will There Be Exceptions to This Demographic Trend?

Other societies have faced demographic decline and sought to address it.<sup>40</sup> Demographers note that countries as diverse as Sweden and Singapore are sponsoring programs to encourage increased family size, offering services and financial incentives to women to have more children. Such countries realize there will not be enough “human capital” (that is, young working people) to support the aging.<sup>41</sup> *However, with the*

LCMS adults have fewer children living at home with them than the national average or the average for all Protestants.

*exception of Russia,<sup>42</sup> none of these contemporary, government-sponsored efforts have successfully reversed the second demographic transition and produced TFRs high enough to sustain a population.* As Phillip Longman puts it, “when cultural and economic conditions discourage parenthood, not even a dictator can force people to go forth and multiply.”<sup>43</sup>

Historically, the one major recent change in the almost inexorable trajectory of the DT has been the result of the horror of the Second World War. Only after that slaughter was there a significant change in TFR, a change that involved most of the countries affected by the war. It was called the “baby boom” and it reversed the TFR slide toward smaller families that had started in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It lasted a generation.

There is another exception to the general rule of declining fertility. The title of a recent book by Eric Kaufmann summarizes the point by way of a question: *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth?*<sup>44</sup> The short answer is yes. He says: “Simply put, this book argues that religious fundamentalists are on course to take over the world through demography.”<sup>45</sup> This is not quite as new

as Kaufmann thinks. Rodney Stark cogently argues in his *The Rise of Christianity* that the higher fertility of Christian women in comparison to pagans and Romans was a significant factor in the early church’s growth.<sup>46</sup> That fits Kaufmann’s thesis: “Those embracing the here and now [the most secularized individuals and societies] are spearheading population decline, but individuals who shun this world are relatively immune to it.”<sup>47</sup> He is not talking about the ordinarily religious, but those with religious commitments strong enough to pit them against their surrounding culture, those Niebuhr almost certainly would have categorized as “Christ against culture” religious types, although you don’t have to be Christian to qualify.

<sup>38</sup> See Michael Barone, *Shaping Our Nation: How Surges of Migration Transformed America and Its Politics* (New York: Crown Forum, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> In 2008, 8.1 % of America claimed a religion other than Christianity, including Mormon (1.7%) and Jehovah’s Witnesses (0.7%) as well as all the completely non-Christian religious traditions (4.7%). As new religions are introduced, some individuals find them appealing and switch. Others find enough similarity to think that religious distinctions no longer matter and reject religion altogether. They become agnostics, atheists, and “spiritual but not religious” (16.1% of the United States) (Pew, *Religious Landscape*, 10).

<sup>40</sup> It was a significant problem in the Roman Empire. See Phillip Longman, “The Return of Patriarchy,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 153 (March/April 2006): 56. Rodney Stark comments on this extensively; *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 115–128.

<sup>41</sup> E.g., Longman, *Empty Cradle*, 52–67 and Yoshihara, *Population Decline*.

<sup>42</sup> Sandstroem, “Russia’s Baby Boom.”

<sup>43</sup> Longman, “Return of Patriarchy,” 58.

<sup>44</sup> Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth? Demography and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Profile Books, 2010), Kindle edition.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>46</sup> Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 115–128.

<sup>47</sup> Kaufmann, *Religious*, Kindle location 63.

So Kaufmann notes the population growth of the Old Order Amish and the Quiverfull movement among Christian groups, but also adds Mormons to the mix before turning to Salafist Muslims (fundamentalists), and finally to the mushrooming population of ultra-Orthodox Jews.<sup>48</sup> With Michael Blume he grudgingly admits that “when it comes to Creationism vs. Intelligent Design, ‘evolutionary theorists brought up far more scientific arguments but committed believers in supernatural agents brought up far more children.’”<sup>49</sup> He also concedes that “[r]eligious zealots are no more violent than socialists or anarchists.” His fear is elsewhere. “The greater threat is cultural: that fundamentalism will replace reason and freedom with moral puritanism.”<sup>50</sup> Or, as Longman predicts: “If no alternative solution [to declining birthrates] can be found, the future will belong to those who reject markets, reject learning, reject modernity, and reject freedom. This will be the fundamentalist moment.”<sup>51</sup>

Trends do not always continue, and Longman’s thesis must stand the test of time. Moreover, no one expects rising religiosity to be an overnight change. They accept that secularization of attitudes will continue to dominate for some time;<sup>52</sup> that overall decline in religiosity will not soon change; and that an aging society is inevitable. Their point, rather, is that the highly religious will be important long-term exceptions to demographic decline and that the highly religious will increasingly exercise the power of growing numbers. This growth of religious influence will occur primarily through child birth, not conversion.

#### 4. The LCMS and Demographic Change — Implications for Theology and Mission

<sup>48</sup> Kaufmann’s comparison of Muslim vs. Christian growth is noteworthy: “The natural increase of Muslims was nearly double that of Christianity, allowing it to outpace Christianity despite the fact that Christianity trumped Islam 3:1 in the market for converts” (Kaufman, *Religious*, 120, Kindle location 2494). With regard to Israel, he notes that the ultra-Orthodox population has gone from a 20% share of the total population in 1960 to nearly 50% today (Kaufman, *Religious*, 210, Kindle location, 4113).

<sup>49</sup> Kaufmann, *Religious*, Kindle location 274.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>51</sup> Longman, *Empty Cradle*, 168–69.

<sup>52</sup> Kaufman, *Religious*, 9–11, Kindle locations 450–503.

#### a. LCMS and US Age-Sex Demographics

What, if anything, does such demographic change mean for the LCMS and its mission? My answers are based on extrapolations from LCMS statistical reports and from other data that is available about the LCMS from Pew Research’s “Religious Landscape Survey.”<sup>53</sup>

To get a helpful picture of the LCMS demographically, we must start with race. As members of a church body that is 95% non-Latino white (the highest percentage of any Christian tradition except the ELCA), the LCMS must simply realize that we are representative of a shrinking demographic group.<sup>54</sup> Not only are whites declining as

Five percent of LCMS members live with an unmarried partner ... higher than the ELCA, which has only 3% of its members cohabitating.

a percentage of the population, non-Latino whites are also the group that is declining most rapidly in terms of *church involvement*, as another Pew study has shown. Pew’s 2000 study “Nones’ on the Rise” is blunt about disaffiliation in the United States, noting that the increasing number of people, especially young people, leaving the church is not a universal phenomenon across American races and ethnicities. Rather, “[w]hen

it comes to race ... the recent change has been concentrated in one group: whites.”<sup>55</sup> The shrinkage does cross denominational lines. Such decline is not only true of the mainline, but also in Evangelicalism as a whole.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> A disclaimer is necessary. The LCMS baptized membership is only 1.4% of the total US population, and one cannot make too many assumptions about how well our population reflects the national population given that we are a small sample. “Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic,” February 2008, 15, *Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life*, <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>. Later studies have fully confirmed the trends identified by Pew’s landmark work. See 2014 data, “Members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod,” *Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life*, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/lutheran-church-missouri-synod/>.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>55</sup> “Nones’ on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation,” October 9, 2012, 21, *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>. Cp. Michael Lipka, “Why America’s Nones Left Religion Behind,” *Pew Research Center*, August 24, 2016, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind/>.

<sup>56</sup> See John S. Dickerson, *The Great Evangelical Recession: 6 Factors That Will Crash the American Church ... and How to Prepare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), e-book, who concurs with Christian Smith’s estimates of the Evangelical population of the United States as only about 7–9% of the US population (25). Pew assumes a figure of about 26% (see “Religious Landscape,” 10), but the difference is definitional

Adult Populations by Age	18–29	30–49	50–64	85+
US non-Latino whites	20	35	26	19
Roman Catholic	18	41	24	16
All Protestants	17	38	26	20
Evangelicals	17	39	26	19
Mormon	24	42	19	15
Unaffiliated	31	40	20	8
LCMS	11	32	31	26

Data from Pew, "Religious Landscape Survey" (2008), pages 78 and 79, and US Census 2010.

Pew's data indicates that the LCMS is 47% male and 53% female overall as compared to a 48% male to 52% female ratio. The entire Christian population shows a similar pattern of greater female than male participation.<sup>57</sup>

As for age, Pew's "Religious Landscape" stats show the LCMS as one of the oldest religious groups in the United States.<sup>58</sup> Note the accompanying compilation of data from Pew and the US census to see how the LCMS compares to the white population and to select other groups in terms of age group proportions. Our level of aging is well above the average for whites, other Protestants, and Roman Catholics. We reflect the mainline churches in this area.

### b. Birth Rate

That comparative dearth of young adults has an obvious implication for overall LCMS birth rate. *A low number of births going forward is unavoidable given the lower than average number of potential mothers.* However, we have no statistical basis to determine the average birth rate for individual women in the LCMS, so we can only assume that young LCMS women will not have markedly different birth rates than the general white population. Another

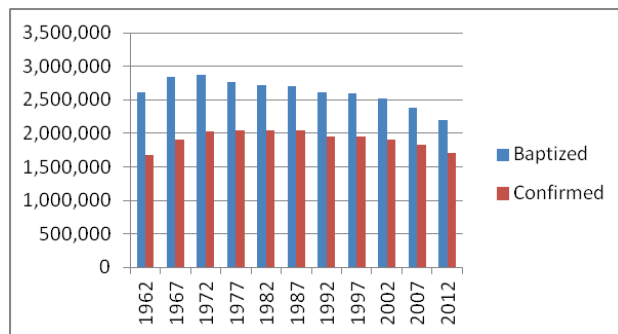
rather than data-driven. Dickerson defines Evangelicals as those who believe in "salvation by faith," that the Bible is God's Word and without error, and that Jesus is the Savior (23). See also his op-ed piece "The Decline of Evangelical America," *The New York Times*, December 16, 2012, accessed November 5, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/opinion/sunday/the-decline-of-evangelical-america.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/opinion/sunday/the-decline-of-evangelical-america.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>57</sup> The 2007 and 2014 male-female ratios from Pew are identical. Protestants overall and Roman Catholics are at 46% male and 54% female (Pew, "Religious Landscape," 95). That pattern reverses toward a male majority in all other religions that Pew surveyed and in those who are unaffiliated with any religion.

<sup>58</sup> Pew, "Religious Landscape," 83.

way to try to get at our birth rate is more round-about, but at least it is specific to the LCMS. Note the following graph of LCMS membership over fifty years. It is in five year increments from 1962 to 2012.

The graph goes back far enough to enable us to see the end of the baby boom generation (those born from 1945–1964). US TFRs peaked around 1960 at 3.6, dropped to 2.9 in 1965, and to 2.5 in 1970. From about 1975 on they have fluctuated to a low of 1.8, but never exceeding 2.1 significantly. The graph of baptized membership suggests that the LCMS seemingly followed this trend, peaking in 1972 at just under 2.9 million, and gradually declining thereafter. Two facts indicate a declining LCMS birth rate.



First, significant loss of baptized membership begins in 1977 while significant confirmed membership loss does not begin until 1992 and even then trends downward more slowly than baptized membership, a time spread that matches with typical confirmation ages. In addition, you can see that the percentage of baptized to confirmed membership shrinks consistently over time. In the early 1960s, confirmed members were 72% of the total LCMS membership. According to the best stats now, 78% of all LCMS baptized members are also confirmed. Looking from the perspective of the end of the baby boom, between 1972 and 2012 baptized LCMS membership declined by 23.7% while confirmed membership declined by 15.8% — meaning we were losing baptized membership at about 150% of the rate of confirmed membership loss. In noting such realities, LCMS Research Services says this "usually" indicates an aging population.<sup>59</sup>

Pew corroborates these extrapolations, showing that LCMS adults have fewer children living at home with

<sup>59</sup> LCMS Research Services, *Forty Years of LCMS District Statistics* (March 25, 2013), ii.

them than the national average or the average for all Protestants.<sup>60</sup> As of 2007, 72% of LCMS members had no child at home; 11% had one child, 10% had two, and only 7% had three or more. Nationally the numbers for the total population were 65% with none, 13% with 1, 13% with two, and 9% with three or more.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, as of 2014, 10% of the LCMS population was under the age of thirty, which does not bode well for future childbirths.<sup>62</sup>

### c. Migration

The LCMS is clearly dissimilar to the United States in terms of reflecting immigration, since the United States is less than 64% non-Latino white, while the LCMS is 95% non-Latino white.<sup>63</sup> That 5% includes African, Asian, Hispanic, and various other immigrant Americans, so there has been some immigration effect, but it is minimal. One reason for this is that the LCMS has little presence in the areas of the United States where minority groups live.

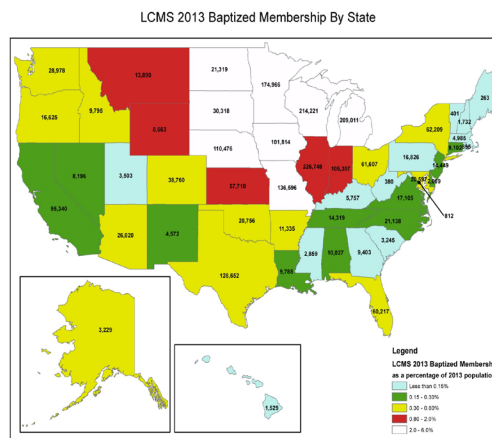
In terms of location, to a large extent, our present LCMS geography correlates with our history as a German immigrant church. The map nearby corroborates this.<sup>64</sup> In white areas the LCMS is strongest (between 2 and 6% of the population). In the red areas, we are between 0.8 and 2.0%. Yellow is three-tenths to eight-tenths of 1% and green and blue are less than three-tenths of a percent. We are strongest in states that are not fast growing and weakest in the largest and most populous states. Pew gives percentages for LCMS membership: 64% is the Midwest vs. 7% in the Northeast, 13% in the West, and 16% in the South.<sup>65</sup>

*The LCMS is similar to the general population, however, in more recent migration patterns.* Over the past few decades, the Synod has experienced some shifting of its population to the southern United States, especially to the Southeast and to Texas. Texas experienced growth in

baptized membership over thirty of the past forty years,<sup>66</sup> as did Florida-Georgia and the Mid-South and Oklahoma Districts, while the Southeastern District experienced growth in twenty of the past forty years. In the districts where we are numerically strongest, we've experienced modest growth in several. The Nebraska District grew modestly for thirty of the past forty years (B-8), while there was modest growth for twenty of the forty years in the Missouri (B-4), Kansas (B-16), Rocky Mountain (B-16), and Central Illinois Districts (B-20).<sup>67</sup> The mention of Midwestern districts in this mix hints that the population shifts that have occurred in the LCMS seem to have followed US trends in which most southern movement is due to whites leaving upper Midwest cities and the Northeast's urban areas. Statistics from our districts in such areas tend to bear that out as well.<sup>68</sup> *Unfortunately, despite some growth in previous decades, no district has experienced overall numerical growth in the past ten years.*

Not only are we not strongly present in heavily minority locales, we are also not strongly present in the areas of the country where population is growing fastest overall, which includes many of those minority locales, but other areas as well. The map of projected population growth indicates the fastest growing areas of the country in dark blue.<sup>69</sup> The dots show where our congregations are. You see a strong cluster of LCMS congregations in zones that are pink or the lightest blue, where growth is negative or minimal.

However, while these hard demographic factors must account for a significant part of the LCMS's decline, they are by no means able to account for all of it. We must remember that despite declining TFRs, the white population of the United States continued to grow through the last forty years. Only two years ago, in 2012, did the



<sup>60</sup> Pew, "Religious Landscape," 87.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>62</sup> Pew, "Members of the LCMS."

<sup>63</sup> According to the 2010 Census. See <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Prepared by Ryan Curnutt, LCMS Office of Research and Statistics.

<sup>65</sup> Pew, "Religious Landscape," 92.

<sup>66</sup> LCMS Research Services, *Forty Years*, B-4, B-20, B-12.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., B-8, B-4, B-16, B-20 respectively.

<sup>68</sup> For examples from *Forty Years*, see Atlantic (about -40%, C-2), New England (about -35%, C-36), New Jersey (about -40%, C-38), Eastern (about -40%, C-8), Michigan (about -20%, C-22), Ohio (about -25%, C-48), NID (about -40%, C-44), SWD (about -30%, C-60), and English (about -30%, C-10). Atlantic, New England, and English experienced significant losses during the synod controversy in the 1970s, but the loss estimates here are based on decline since 1977.

<sup>69</sup> Prepared by Ryan Curnutt, LCMS Office of Research and Statistics.

continuing spiral of low birthrates cause the death rate to exceed the number of births for non-Latino whites.<sup>70</sup> But the LCMS decline goes back about forty years, not two. Obviously, the problem is bigger than the lack of babies.

#### d. Indirect Demographic Effects

What about the areas I referred to as indirect demographic effects, those other socio-cultural changes that correlate and are associated with core demographic change? The LCMS exhibits both similarities and dissimilarities in this area, too.

Take marriage and income, as examples. Pew's statistics on marriage, which are LCMS-specific, are again relevant. They are helpful in terms of household and family information. Sixty percent of LCMS people are married, higher than both the total population or than other Protestants. Five percent of LCMS members live with an unmarried partner, slightly lower than the national average of 6%, equal to Evangelicals as a group who are also at 5%, but *higher* than the ELCA, which has only 3% of its members cohabitating.<sup>71</sup> Our divorce rate is slightly below the national average and the Protestant average. We have about 35% more widowed members than the national average and one point more than the Protestant average. We have far fewer never-married adults — 11% for the LCMS vs. 19% for the national population and 17% for all Protestants.<sup>72</sup>

#### e. Will the LCMS Be an Exception?

All of this indicates that when one compares the LCMS to the US population overall, we are probably more culturally similar than dissimilar to the rest of the white population. Pew's LCMS data, for example, shows that on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and same-sex marriage, individual members of LCMS churches tend to reflect the attitudes of the rest of the country.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, we have low fertility and are aging quickly just like the rest of white America, or, indeed, more quickly than non-Hispanic whites as a whole. As for migration, we are gaining very few of the new Americans overall, far

less than Roman Catholics or Pentecostals, but less also than Evangelicals. And our present geography makes us congregation-heavy where population is light.

All this makes it extremely unlikely, on the basis of the data, that the LCMS would be an exception to the rule of demographic decline among whites. There seems to be little evidence of a willingness or eagerness on the part of the LCMS membership as a whole to be counter-cultural. It is hard to be anything but skeptical about a resurgence of the LCMS based on its present trends. It may be that our pastors are more purposefully countercultural than many other Christians, but that does not seem to have translated to the laity overall.

### 5. LCMS Missions: Practice and Assumptions

The numbers are discouraging. But we live by the gospel, not numbers. Our church has one strength that amounts to more than any of her weaknesses: our evangelical and catholic faith. Consider that here. As

In the midst of inter-ethnic conflict, the unity of the Spirit crossed human divides.

the Augustana reminds us, we know that the *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church* will not fail. Such confidence comes only on the basis of the power of the word and the word's visible signs, baptism and Eucharist (AC VII). The church is still evident in Missouri. The church stands under Christ and his mission to all nations.

The LCMS exhibited ongoing growth throughout most of its history, up to the 1970s. Since then, we have known only persistent decline. Various factors might be cited — theological controversy and social change, for example — but LCMS decline basically mirrors the decline of the US non-Hispanic white population. Our mission efforts since the 1970s continued the base pattern of *planting churches in the places where our people and people like us were moving*. Some of our districts did well for a while and many strong churches were planted and continue to be planted, praise God. We should continue to reach out, planting churches where LCMS members are moving and where there are young couples and families.

But that is not enough. Indeed, *in light of the changing demographics of the United States, a "cross-cultural" focus must become our highest priority*. Outreach to those least like us deserves the best of our thinking, our profound commitment, and financial sacrifices. Far more important than preserving our institutions is the call of our Lord to make disciples *of the nations*. In the new America, if our

<sup>70</sup> There were 12,000 more deaths than births for non-Hispanic whites in 2012. White population grew overall only because of European immigration (+188,000). See Roberts, "Census Benchmark."

<sup>71</sup> Pew, "Religious Landscape," 72–74.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>73</sup> Pew, "Members of the LCMS."

church does not turn its attention outward, to those who are least like us, to our “Gentiles,” even those who count themselves as our enemies, we will not be faithful.

This means that we must ask the Lord to prepare workers for the following segments of America today.

1. “Minorities” and especially Latinos and other immigrants. Many, if not most, live in poor neighborhoods that we have forgotten. Some are highly educated and prosperous. They are all different from most of Missouri — red, yellow, black, brown, and every color. It will not be easy to earn their trust. Yes, many are firmly committed to Rome or Pentecostalism. Yet many others are unchurched and non-Christian.

2. The unmarried — those who have postponed marriage, or scorned it, or were never blessed with it; the divorced, the single moms (and dads), the lonely, and the many widows. We will need to value, teach, and model holy marriage for them, but we must not make marriage a requirement for discipleship in Christ’s holy family.

3. And, of course, those generations in their 30s and under, including those who stand opposed to faith and those who claim a faith that has dispensed with the church. Many will view us with hostility. And many are our kids and grandkids. We cannot abandon them to Satan’s empty secularism.

Rodney Stark reminds us that Christianity in its first centuries had that very same challenge — a challenge that was met not only because of its message, but also its manner of life. It brought “charity and hope” to the poor, an “expanded sense of family,” and new attachments to cities full of strangers, orphans, and widows. In the midst of inter-ethnic conflict, the unity of the Spirit crossed human divides.<sup>74</sup> These are salutary and hopeful reminders of the church’s strength when she proclaims and shares the mercies of God.

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<sup>74</sup> Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 161.