

# MAINLINE PROTESTANTS

MODERN CHURCH HISTORY –SPRING 2024

Mainline Protestant churches are the traditional and historically dominant Protestant denominations in the United States.

## UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

- Peak membership: 11 million in the 1960s
- Founded in the 18th century by John Wesley and his brother Charles within the Church of England.
- Emphasized methodical spiritual practices, personal holiness, and social outreach to the poor and marginalized.
- The UMC is still the largest mainline church but is currently facing division over issues related to LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Current membership: 5 million and rapidly declining

## EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

- Peak membership: 9 million in the 1960s
- Formed from a merger of smaller Lutheran groups in 1988, the ELC has only a faint connection to historic Lutheranism.
- Split in 2010 over issues related to LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Current membership: 2.9 million

## PRESBYTERIAN (U.S.A)

- Peak membership: 4 million in 1965
- The PCUSA is still the largest Presbyterian denomination in America, but it bears little resemblance to its historical roots.
- The most recent split occurred in 2015 over issues related to LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Current membership: 1.1 million

## EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- Peak membership: 3 million in the 1960s
- A branch of the worldwide Anglican Communion, it retains many Catholic traditions.
- Split in 2017 over issues related to LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Current membership: 1.4 million

## AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES

- Peak membership: 2 million in the late 1950s
- The mainline Baptist denomination is dwarfed in comparison to the SBC and the NBC.
- LGBTQ+ issues have been a point of contention for decades, but the congregational model allows individual churches to decide.
- Current membership: 1.2 million

## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

- Peak membership: 2 million in the late 1950s
- Historically Reformed, but not theologically conservative in over a hundred years.
- Split in 2015 over issues related to LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Current membership: 700,000

## CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

- Peak membership: 2 million in the late 1950s
- Formed during the Second Great Awakening, each congregation is self-governing. There are wide range of theological beliefs, most churches being quite liberal.
- LGBTQ+ issues have been a point of contention for decades, but the congregational model allows individual churches to decide.
- Current membership: 270,000

**As of 2020, there are now 660 million Evangelical Protestants around the world, growing at 7% annually (primarily in the global south). All other Christian denominations are stagnant or in decline. Islam is growing at a rate of 1.5% annually.**

***“The gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” – Matthew 24:14***