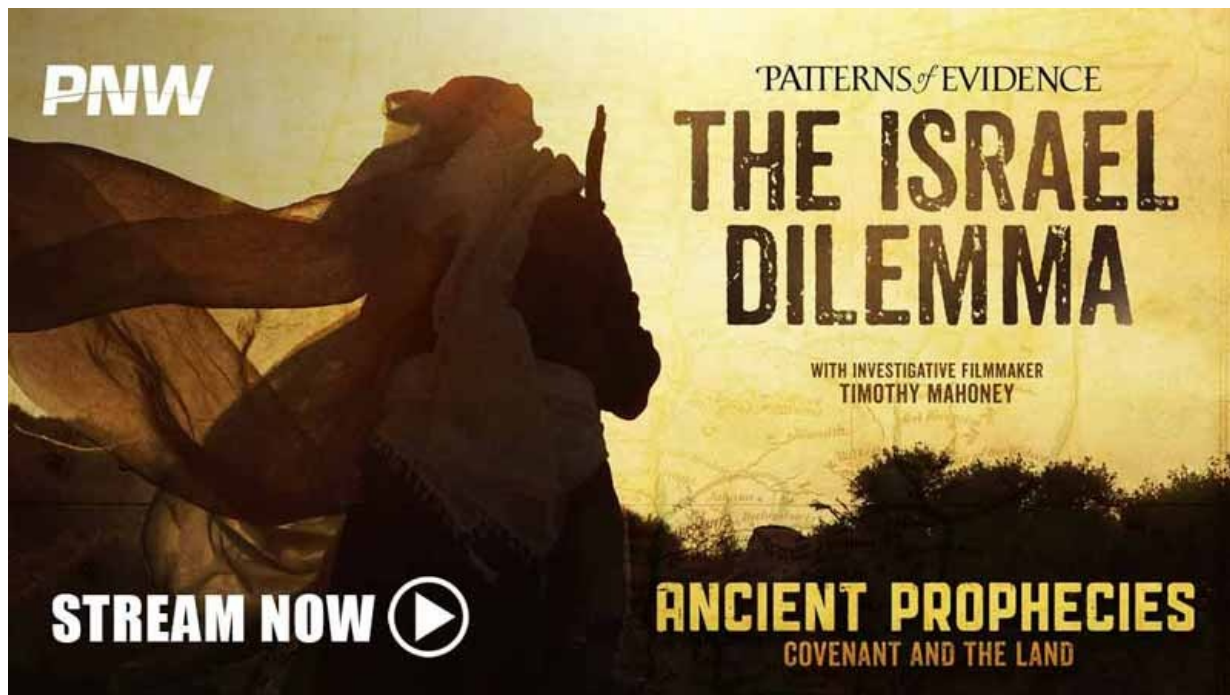




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ARTICLE

Generational Shift In The Church As More Young People Attending Than Seniors



By Mark Tapscott/The Washington Stand January 03, 2026

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America experienced major changes in the spiritual life of its people in 2025, and the most important of them -- the surge in church attendance being led by Gen Zers and Millennials -- was also the least expected, according to the Texas-based Barna survey research firm.

Not only are young people leading the growing congregations on Sunday morning, but 2025 is the first time ever since Barna first began tracking such activities that older people are not the most frequently seen people sitting in the church pews, the group found.

"Millennials and Gen Z Christians are attending church more frequently than before and much more often than are older generations. The typical Gen Z churchgoer now attends 1.9 weekend per month, while Millennial churchgoers average 1.8 times, a steady upward shift since the lows seen during the pandemic," Barna reported in a September 2025 analysis.

"These are easily the highest rates of church attendance among young Christians since they first hit Barna's tracking," the study said. The Barna firm was established in 1984, but 1991 was the first year that it began tracking church attendance across the U.S.

"This shift signals a new opportunity for ministry. Younger adults are showing spiritual curiosity and a desire for

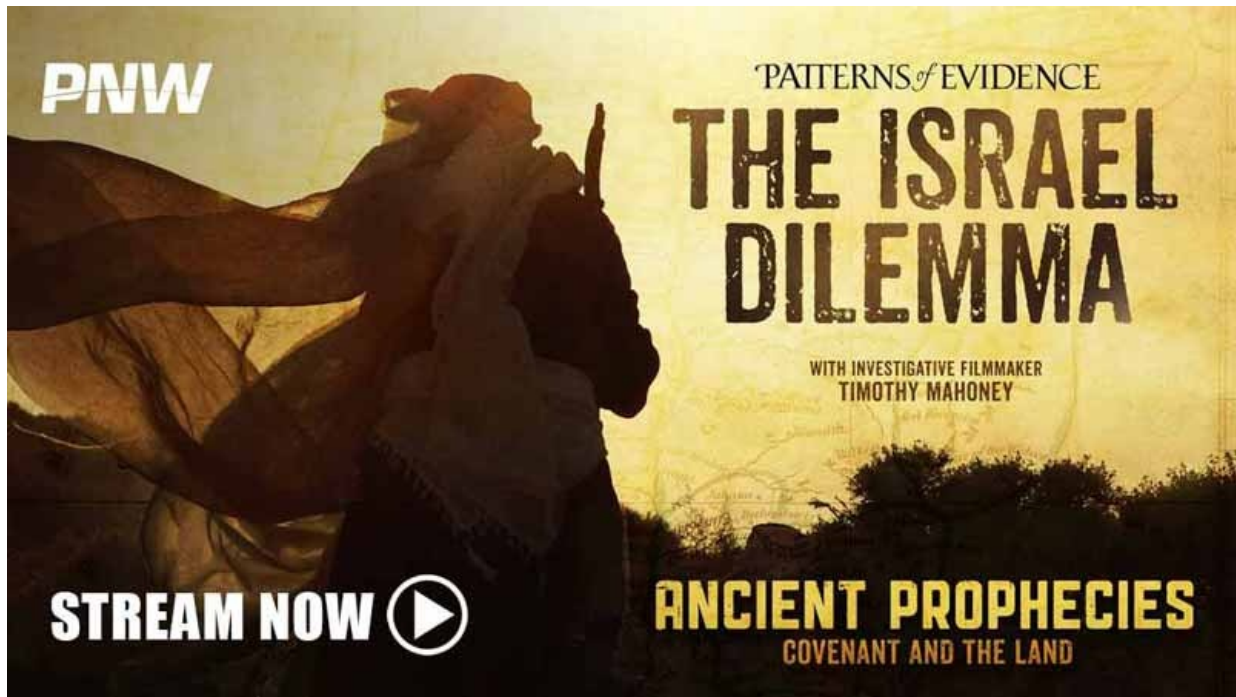
belonging, but even as they attend more often than older adults, they still attend less than half the time, so every touchpoint matters," Barna observed.

The least frequent church attenders, according to Barna, are members of the Boomer generation and those in the older Elder generation. The overall average for all attenders was 1.6 weekend per month.

Another of the most important spiritual trends in America during the past 12 months was the growth in interest among young people in Jesus Christ, especially among Gen Z men. In an April 7, 2025, analysis, Barna pointed to a steady trend upward since the COVID pandemic that began in 2020.

"According to Barna's latest data, 66 percent of all U.S. adults say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus that is still important in their life today. That marks a 12-percent point increase since 2021, when commitment levels reached their lowest in more than three decades of Barna tracking," the April analysis said.

"This shift is not only statistically significant, it may be the clearest indication of meaningful spiritual renewal in the United States. Commitment to Jesus was lowest in 2021 and 2022 when it bottomed out at 54 percent. Since then, the research shows a steady year-over-year increase in this key indicator," Barna explained.



Americans were shaken by the September 10 assassination of Turning Point USA Founder and Executive Director Charlie Kirk during an outdoor rally at Utah Valley University. A September 21 memorial service in State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, was attended by President Donald Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance, and numerous other prominent political, media and entertainment figures. The service was broadcast on Fox News, generated more than 100 million viewers, and many of the speakers during the event shared their personal testimony about following Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Barna's survey research demonstrated in a December 2 analysis that the impact of the Kirk assassination was no temporary phenomenon.

"His assassination ... shocked the nation and sparked immediate questions about the intersection of politics, free speech, political violence and faith in American public life. Now a new Barna survey shows that Kirk's death has prompted nearly three in ten Americans to take some form of action, with spiritual responses far outpacing political ones," the analysis explained.

"Barna surveyed 5,003 U.S. adults roughly two months after Kirk's death. While most Americans were familiar with Kirk before his passing, the data reveals his killing has sparked a wave of reflection and action, particularly among the younger generations he had worked to reach and among practicing Christians," the analysis continued.

Seventy-one percent of the respondents said they had taken no action since Kirk's death, but among those who did, the vast majority of actions they took were spiritual in nature rather than political, according to Barna.

"These responses were most pronounced among younger Americans and practicing Christians. Among Gen Z, 28 percent reported taking a spiritual action and 13 percent indicated taking a political action -- proportions matched by Millennials. Among practicing Christians, 40 percent took spiritual action, and 13 percent chose political action since Kirk's passing," Barna noted.

A fourth major spiritual trend documented by Barna in 2025 focused on the status of marriage and family in American life. The results on this topic were not nearly as encouraging as other aspects of the nation's spiritual condition in the past year.

Barna found in a November analysis that less than half, 46%, of all American adults are married, compared to two-thirds who were married in 1950. "This drop is largely driven by a rise in never-married adults. Younger generations are postponing marriage longer than before.

Since 1950, the average age at which adults are first getting married has increased by about eight years -- from 22.8 to 30.2 years old for men and from 20.3 to 28.6 years old for women," Barna said.

The divorce rate among Americans, Barna found, remained steady at 10%. But remarriage rates remain strong, with 55% of divorced adults remarrying, according to Barna.

Unfortunately, the divorce rate among professing Christians is hardly any different than among non-Christians.

Believers who claim to attend church regularly and say their faith is a priority in their lives are just as likely as non-Christians to have experienced divorce. The percentages are 20% among non-practicing Christians and 16% for practicing Christians and non-Christians alike.

"However, Christians are not likely to stay divorced; overall, 58 percent of Christians who have been divorced say they have remarried. The effect is that Christians remain more likely than their peers of other faith groups to be married, whether once or multiple times," Barna said.

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