

State of the Union: Attendance

Bucks Church Attendance Analysis | August 2021 - July 2025

Executive Summary

Bottom Line

Bucks Church has experienced **sustained growth of 39.1%** in Sunday morning attendance over the past 4 years, rising from an average of 327 attendees (2021) to 456 attendees (2025 YTD). This growth trajectory accelerated significantly in 2024 (+24.9% YoY) and continues into 2025 (+6.4% YoY through July), though summer seasonal patterns are evident.

Current Health Status: **GROWING**

- **Momentum:** Positive growth trajectory with increasing baseline attendance
- **Service Times:** New 9am/11am schedule (as of 1/5/25) successfully reversed historical pattern of 2nd service dominance
- **Consistency:** Reduced attendance volatility from 35.2% (2023) to 15.5% (2024), though summer 2025 showing expected seasonal variation
- **Engagement:** Successfully integrated new digital platforms reaching 12% additional audience
- **Capacity:** Better balanced services reducing peak hour stress

Key Opportunities & Concerns

Opportunities:

1. **Service Time Success:** New 9am service time proving highly attractive
 2. **Digital Growth:** Online platform showing strong adoption with room for expansion
 3. **Fall Recovery Planning:** Historical patterns suggest September-October recovery from summer lows
 4. **Balanced Services:** New times created better 58/42 distribution vs historical 40/60 split for 1st/2nd service schedule
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Attendance Overview

Master Trend Analysis

Sunday morning attendance demonstrates a robust growth pattern. The trajectory shows four distinct phases:

1. **Recovery Phase** (Aug 2021 - Dec 2022): Post-COVID stabilization around 329 average
2. **Growth Phase** (Jan 2023 - Dec 2023): Modest growth to 346 average (+5.3%)
3. **Acceleration Phase** (Jan 2024 - Apr 2025): Rapid growth to 500+ average
4. **Summer Correction** (May 2025 - Jul 2025): Seasonal decline to 374-458 range

Statistical Confidence: Indicates 8-10 additional attendees per month (excluding summer months)

Current Momentum Assessment

- **4-week average:** 374 (July 2025)
- **13-week average:** 445 (trending downward due to summer)
- **YTD 2025 average:** 456 (still positive vs 2024)
- **Projected year-end 2025:** 470-490 average attendance (assuming typical fall recovery)

Service & Location Dynamics

Service Balance Trends

The church experienced a significant shift in service attendance patterns following the **January 5, 2025 service time change** from 8:45am/10:30am to 9am/11am:

Historical Pattern (2021-2024):

- 2nd service (10:30am) consistently drew 57-62% of attendance
- 1st service (8:45am) maintained 38-43% share

Post-Time Change (2025):

- **Dramatic reversal:** 1st service (9am) now draws 58% of attendance
- 2nd service (11am) dropped to 42% share
- The 15-minute later start for 1st service appears more attractive to families
- The 30-minute later start for 2nd service may be too late for some

Capacity Constraints and Opportunities

- **Current capacity utilization:** Estimated 75-80% on average Sundays
 - **Peak stress points:** Easter (726), Christmas season (648)
 - **Recommended actions:**
 - Short-term: Optimize overflow areas
 - Long-term: Consider sanctuary expansion or third service
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Seasonality & Consistency

Predictable Patterns by Season/Month

Monthly attendance shows clear seasonal patterns:

(*'index' = monthly attendance relative to annual avg*)

T1 (Jan-Apr) - Strongest Period:

- January (97.8 index) - Post-holiday recovery
- February (102.8 index) - New Year momentum
- March (108.3 index) - Pre-Easter buildup
- April (118.9 index) - Easter effect

T2 (May-Aug) - Summer Decline:

- May (97.0 index) - Transition month
- June (93.8 index) - Early summer softening
- July (80.2 index) - Summer vacation trough
- August (91.4 index) - Late summer recovery begins

T3 (Sep-Dec) - Mixed Performance:

- September (96.4 index) - Back-to-school transition
- October (103.3 index) - Fall peak engagement
- November (99.4 index) - Pre-holiday stability
- December (86.4 index) - Holiday travel impact

Volatility Trends

Attendance consistency varies by trimester:

- **T1:** Generally most stable with Easter providing boost
- **T2:** Highest volatility due to vacation patterns
- **T3:** Moderate volatility with December decline

2025 YTD: 28.9% variation (influenced by Easter spike and summer decline)

1. **Easter Sunday:** +59.3% average variance
2. **Christmas Sunday:** +68.3% when on Sunday, -56.3% when travel conflicts
3. **Mother's Day:** +44.5% variance
4. **Labor Day Weekend:** -36.8% variance

Strategic Implication: Plan for 50%+ capacity swings on major holidays

Digital Integration Analysis

Online Engagement Growth Story

Upgraded digital platforms launched in 2024 have shown strong adoption through the service time transition:

- **Previous** (pre-Aug 2024): 10.7% digital reach
- **Current** (July 2025): 12.5% average digital reach
- **Service time change impact:** Digital attendance remained stable during Jan 2025 transition

Hybrid Church Metrics and Strategy

- **Average weekly reach:** 550-600 total touches
 - **Digital consistency:** More stable than in-person (less weather/holiday impact)
 - **ROI:** Low-cost expansion of ministry reach by 12%
 - **Demographics:** Likely reaching shut-ins, travelers, and prospects
 - **Next steps:** Develop digital-first content and engagement strategies
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Forward Outlook

2025 Projection with Scenarios

Case	Probability	Year-end Average	Full-year Growth Rate	
Base	70%	475	8-10%	Fall recovery: Sept-Oct
Optimistic	20%	510	15-18%	550+ weekly attendance

Conservative	10%	455	5-6%	Extended summer pattern, slower recovery
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Risk Factors and Mitigations

Risks:

1. **Extended summer pattern** of lower attendance carried into fall
2. **Volunteer fatigue** from sustained growth
3. **Capacity constraints** on high-attendance Sundays

Mitigations:

1. Launch targeted "Back to Church" campaign for September
2. Develop holiday-specific programming strategies
3. Implement volunteer appreciation and recruitment initiatives
4. Fast-track overflow capacity planning

Recommendations

Service Time/Capacity Optimization

Monitoring and Fine-tuning Considerations:

- Track satisfaction with new 9am/11am schedule
 - Survey whether 11am is optimal or if 10:45am would better serve families
- Plan for eventual 3rd service or expansion as growth continues
- Monitor parking patterns with new service distribution

Seasonal Programming Adjustments

1. **Summer Mitigation Strategy:**
 - July average (374) shows need for targeted summer programming
 - Develop "Summer Series" to maintain 400+ attendance minimum
 - Leverage digital platform for traveling members
2. **Fall Recovery Campaign:**
 - Launch "Back to Church" initiative starting Labor Day weekend
 - Target: Return to 450+ weekly average by October
 - Focus on re-engaging families after summer break

Digital Engagement Strategies

1. Content and Platform Development:

- Create digital-first teaching content
- Develop midweek digital touchpoints
- Bolster Church Center digital community groups
- Advertise interactive features for online attendees (Church Center livestream and group chat, socials, etc)



Appendix

Detailed Methodology

- **Data Source:** Master Attendance Tracker Excel file (5 sheets: 2021-2025)
- **Date Range:** August 8, 2021 through July 31, 2025 (full 4-year period)
- **Analysis Tools:** Statistical analysis using D3.js, lodash, and Chart.js
- **Exclusions:** Non-Sunday services analyzed separately (7 special services identified)

Raw Data Summary by Period

Period	Sundays	Avg Attendance	Median	Min	Max
2021*	21	324	329	184	469
2022	52	329	322	154	502
2023	53	343	354	216	575
2024	52	429	420	341	648
2025**	29	456	478	289	726

*From August 8, 2021 **Through July 31, 2025

Report prepared by: Digital Operations Team

For questions or clarifications, contact: scottk@buckschurch.org.