Uneven Development:
Regional Trends that are Reshaping Community and Religious Life in Metropolitan Philadelphia

Research for Democracy
A collaboration between the
Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project
and Temple University
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Research for Democracy is a partnership between Temple University under the leadership of Professor Anne Shlay and the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project. Our mission is to increase the ability of faith-based and neighborhood leaders to understand and use research so that they can influence the public policy decisions that shape their lives and communities.

The Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP) is a faith-based community organization working to improve the quality of life in the Philadelphia region. With a broad-based constituency of 40,000 families in 25 member congregations, schools and other neighborhood institutions, the organization develops the skills and knowledge of community leaders to participate in shaping public policy. EPOP is an affiliate of PICO, A National Network of Faith-Based Community Organizations.

The Temple University Department of Sociology The mission of the Department of Sociology is to build a department that educates and empowers people and encourages activities that reflect an aspiration for a more humane and just society. It aims to promote vigorous research and debate on social issues, to train research scholars and teachers, and to analyze society in a critical manner. Faculty promote a commitment to solving social problems.
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An essential question facing faith institutions in the Delaware Valley is whether they can help shape the future of the region, rather than simply being carried along in the ebb and flow of decisions that lie outside their control. The Philadelphia metropolitan region is expanding in a way that is creating tremendous instability in many suburban areas. Many of the changes taking place within religious congregations have their origins in regional patterns of growth and decline. While religious leaders express an understanding of the link between regional development and their institutions, they generally lack vehicles to respond more proactively to the effects of community change. The purpose of this report is to bring new voices to the discussion of regional development in Philadelphia by utilizing the perspectives of the clergy and their congregations.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Research for Democracy, a collaboration between the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project and Temple University under the leadership of Professor Anne Shlay, views this report as an opportunity for those currently engaged in the regional debate to consider the consequences that current development strategies could have on communities in general, and congregations in specific. Our hope is that this study will encourage and support congregations’ efforts to take an active role in addressing development issues in their communities and in the region.

The needs expressed by pastors in their efforts to address quality of life issues and build a stronger sense of community are similar to the needs that have drawn many urban congregations to faith-based community organizing. While community organizing may need to operate differently as it moves out of a historically urban tradition, it could provide a valuable new tool for suburban congregations searching for ways to bolster faith in their communities in the face of great change and uncertainty.

“Uneven Development: Regional Trends that are Reshaping Community and Religious Life in Metropolitan Philadelphia” has three parts that rely on separate data sources. The first part looks at regional development trends. The second part looks at trends in religious congregations. The third part examines the views of religious leaders on their congregations within the context of changes in these institutions as well as the region.

Why are we looking at regional change and development within the context of religion? Why religion, instead of discussing the traditional policy domains of government and the multiplicity of roles and functions of local governmental structures? We link religion to regional development to meet the region and its communities where people outside of the policy
Sphere are engaged. For many people in the Philadelphia region, religion is a fundamental activity in which they regularly participate and one they care deeply about. We want to open up a discourse on regional change that involves a set of institutions with authentic and diverse investment and interest in the shaping of the region but who are typically left out of the policy conversation. Therefore, this report studies regional development within the context and perspective of religious organizations that are part of these shifting tides of population growth and decline.

Methods

To capture the multiple dimensions of regional change and its effect on congregations, this project was designed to answer three research questions:

- What regional development trends are significant to the livelihood of suburban congregations?
- How do religious trends reflect regional development patterns?
- What challenges are religious leaders and their congregations facing as the region develops, and what steps can be taken to meet those challenges?

This project employed a two-tiered research approach:

1. Quantitative analysis of secondary data on the Philadelphia metropolitan region and its faith institutions
2. Interviews with religious leaders of suburban houses of worship and congregations in the Philadelphia region (including Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties)

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We relied on 1990 and 2000 housing and population data from the U.S. Census, land-use data from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, and property records from county tax databases. To analyze changes in congregations, we relied on data shown in Table 1. These included data on parochial school attendance, church membership and attendance, and religious congregations.
Ten Regional Development Trends

To identify which development trends occurring at the regional scale are significant to the livelihood of suburban congregations, we combined feedback from religious leaders in the informal interviews with a summary of pertinent demographic, social and economic changes occurring throughout the region. This analysis produced a list of 10 regional development trends.

The Philadelphia region experienced very slow population growth

- Population in the Delaware Valley grew more slowly between 1990 and 2000 than in any of the 15 largest metropolitan regions in the United States.
- Population continued to decline sharply in Philadelphia, Camden and older suburban communities that border both cities. Population also declined sharply in older townships such as Norristown in Montgomery County, Coatesville in Chester County and Clementon in Camden County.
- Many suburban areas in Bucks, Chester and parts of Montgomery County saw their population increase by more than one-third.

The Philadelphia region experienced rapid and large increases in new housing units and developed land

- From 1990-2000, developers built almost two new housing units for each new household in the region.
- Construction of new housing units without a corresponding increase in households in the region led to large numbers of vacant houses, primarily in cities and older suburban areas of the region.
- Because larger houses were built on larger parcels of land, the developed land area of the region expanded even faster than the number of housing units.

Older suburban communities in the Philadelphia region have been under increasing stress

- Slow population growth combined with rapid new construction has effectively reduced demand for housing and contributed to lower property values in many suburban areas.
- Property values fell in many of the communities that border Philadelphia and Camden, and in older townships and boroughs.
- Since most public services are paid for out of property taxes, falling property values undermined the capacity of older suburban municipalities to raise revenue to support schools and other services.
- Despite economic expansion, a greater number of communities in older suburbs and in the inner-ring suburbs ended the decade under greater economic stress characterized by:
  - increasing shifts in housing from owner occupation to rental units.
  - growing poverty rates.
  - an increase in long-term vacant property.
  - an increase in crime.

Areas at the edges of the Philadelphia region experienced rapid growth

- The movement of money from older to newer suburban areas characterized investment trends for the region.
- For 1990-2000, high population growth rates existed on the periphery, including over a 100% increase for some municipalities in Bucks, Chester, and Montgomery counties.
- The conversion of large tracts of farmland and undeveloped property into new communities progressed at a rapid pace.
- Increases in traffic, property values and new families created a change in lifestyle for many long-time residents in once exurban (areas in transition from rural to urban) and rural areas.

People in the Philadelphia region were working farther from home and spending more time commuting

- Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of people working outside the municipality or county in which they live increased.
- Philadelphia continued to be the largest job center, but it is no longer dominant.
- An increasing number of people, including many Philadelphians, commuted to jobs in other counties.
There was a 4% increase in the percent of the population who spends 45 minutes or more commuting to and from work.

The Philadelphia region experienced increased racial diversity
- Delaware County had a 3.3% increase in the percent of their African-American population.
- Montgomery County had a substantial increase in African-American (2.4%) and Asian (2.0%) populations.
- Camden County had a 2.4% increase in the percent of their Latino population.

Although more racially diverse, the suburbs continued to remain racially segregated
- The vast majority of suburban census tracts continued to be more than 75% white in 2000.
- A number of communities adjacent to Philadelphia, Chester and Camden and in several older townships such as Coatesville, Norristown and Willingboro experienced large increases in their non-white populations.
- The number of predominantly non-white suburban tracts increased more than three-fold between 1990 and 2000.

The Philadelphia region experienced more immigration with increased dispersion across the region
- New foreign-born immigrants accounted for almost all (82%) of the net increase in population in the region.
- An increasing number of immigrants bypassed Philadelphia and moved directly to suburban areas.
- Immigration settlement patterns exceedingly varied across the region as compared to previous trends of concentrated settlement in gateway communities.

Families in the Philadelphia region experienced increased economic and work pressures
- In 2000, almost one-third of all children under 18 in the region lived in single-parent households.
- More two-parent families depended on income from both parents.

Children in the region were substantially less likely to grow up in homes with a stay-at-home parent.
- Half of all municipalities in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) experienced an increase in households who pay more than 35% of their annual income on mortgage payments.
- Six out of nine counties in the region saw slight increases in their poverty rates.
- Despite a strong national economy, poverty increased in the Philadelphia region, highlighting that the economy of the Philadelphia region has lagged behind other regions in the United States.

The future of the Philadelphia metropolitan region is uncertain
- Slow population growth, rapid development and weak planning at a regional level means that congregations in these suburban areas are likely to continue to face a high degree of community instability.
- The most recent regional analysis by Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) identifies the most likely pattern of development for the region in the future as accelerating sprawl.
- Accelerated sprawl will likely have a “strongly negative” impact on older communities, land conservation, disadvantaged populations, transit usage, traffic and air quality.

Congregational Trends
To identify religious trends occurring at the regional scale concurrent with broader development trends, we analyzed the changing patterns of urban and suburban religious membership.

Changing Patterns of Urban and Suburban Religious Membership
- With at least 3,000 religious congregations representing more than 60 denominations, the Delaware Valley is home to a rich array of faith institutions.
Between 1971 and 2000, the number of Catholics in the region increased, while the number of Mainline Protestants decreased. There was also a large increase in Evangelical Protestant membership.

Much of the increase in the Catholic population in the region occurred just in the last ten years, paralleling increasing levels of immigration, which were up by 70% in the region during the 1990s compared to the 1980s. Many of the 146,000 new foreign-born immigrants who arrived between 1990 and 2000 came from predominantly Catholic countries in Latin America, and this clearly boosted the number of parishioners in Catholic parishes across the region.

The long-term decline in membership in Mainline Protestant churches in the Delaware Valley follows a national pattern. However, the erosion of membership has not resulted in fewer churches.

With the average size of Protestant congregations less than 1/10 that of Catholic parishes (and falling), there were actually three times as many Mainline Protestant congregations as Catholic parishes in the region in 2000.

Mainline Protestant churches are more likely to be found in suburban areas than those of any other denomination.

Mainline Protestant churches face difficult challenges when there is change in the racial and economic composition of the communities in which they are located. This means that the institutional viability of many Protestant congregations is particularly shaped by regional and community level change.

In many ways, regional change over the past fifty years appears to have had the most profound impact on the Catholic Church. Historically, Catholics have been highly concentrated in cities, and this has clearly been the pattern in Philadelphia. In 1952, most Catholics in the region resided in Philadelphia. By 1990, Catholics were distributed between Philadelphia and the suburbs to the same degree as the general population. By 2000, for the first time in at least a century, Catholics in the region were less concentrated in the city than the general population. By 2000, more Catholics lived in the suburbs than the city.

The suburbanization of the Catholic Church is particularly significant given the longstanding role that Catholic parishes have played in sustaining urban neighborhoods.

One dynamic that is relatively unique to the Delaware Valley, especially compared to the Boston area, has been the extent to which the Jewish population of the region has maintained a relatively high level of concentration in Philadelphia.

Changes in Specific Denominations: Catholics and Lutherans

To identify how congregational change reflects regional religious trends as well as regional patterns of growth and decline, we analyzed membership and participation trends in two specific religious denominations, the Catholic Church and the Lutheran or Mainline Protestant Church.

- The total number of registered Catholics in the five-county Philadelphia archdiocese increased, as did the number of registered households. In contrast, mass attendance and parochial school enrollment declined. There was also an increase in the number of non-Catholic children attending parochial school.
- Catholics are moving out from inner-ring suburban areas that have historically been heavily Catholic into areas that have had a more limited Catholic presence.
- Regional change appears to be having a particularly strong impact on enrollment in the Catholic education system. The movement of Catholics to fast-growing suburban areas in Chester and Bucks counties means that Catholic families are moving out of areas where high percentages of children are enrolled in parochial school and into areas where children are much more likely to attend public school.

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1 The term “Mainline Protestant,” refers to the United Church of Christ (historically known as the Congregationalists), the American Baptist Church (northern Baptists), the Presbyterian Church, the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Disciples of Christ.
Maintaining the “Catholicity” of parochial education is a major challenge for the Catholic Church.

Rates of mass attendance are declining in areas that have experienced large increases in population.

The number of registered Catholics in inner-ring suburbs, particularly in Delaware County, is falling steadily.

Over the last 15 years the consequences of population movement within the Archdiocese and the broader region have been wrenching for many communities.

The trends suggest that the difficult process of declining membership, shifting mission and potential closure may well play out in many suburban communities unless the broader patterns of regional development are reversed.

A growing scarcity of resources and dispersion of congregants over the past decade led the Archdiocese to consolidate numerous parishes throughout the region.

The total number of baptized members in the Lutheran Church in the five counties fell by 15% from 1990 to 2000. However, this decline in membership was not reflected in attendance, which remained constant during the decade.

The trend in Delaware County was the clearest, with most Lutheran congregations losing membership, and in Chester County, with most gaining membership; but in all counties there was a combination of gain and loss that did not appear to be directly tied to overall population change.

Delaware County experienced the most racial change. Despite this trend, there was virtually no change in the non-white membership of Lutheran churches in Delaware County.

How Suburban Religious Leaders See Regional Trends Influencing their Congregations

We spoke with religious leaders throughout the Delaware Valley to better understand the effects of regional and religious trends on congregations, local communities and religious institutions. The focus of our inquiry was to identify the challenges that leaders and their congregations face as the region develops, and what steps can be taken to meet those challenges.

Religious leaders are concerned about the institutional viability of their congregations in communities undergoing rapid change.

Religious leaders expressed concern about the financial stability of their congregations.

Catholic clergy are concerned about the future of their parochial schools.

Religious leaders in older suburban areas identify poor quality public schools, safety, gang activity and deteriorating housing as factors undermining their institutions.

Religious leaders are searching for effective strategies to stabilize older suburban areas.

Religious leaders in different parts of the region are searching for ways to respond to increasing diversity within their communities and congregations.

Religious leaders describe their congregations as unprepared to deal with increased racial and ethnic diversity.

Religious leaders are looking to new immigrants as a way to build their congregations.

Religious leaders are concerned about the consequences of rapid community growth on their congregations.

Religious leaders in rapidly growing areas highlighted growing class divisions within their congregations as an important concern.

Religious leaders said their congregants were especially concerned about property taxes.

Religious leaders describe mixed experiences with zoning and land-use issues.

Religious leaders describe their congregants as having mixed views about sprawl, but are deeply concerned about the consequences of rapid development.

Religious leaders note an increasing number of commuter worshipers.

Religious leaders describe families as being under difficult economic pressures, and they connect these pressures to the health of their congregations.
Policy Recommendations

In response to our findings on the challenges faced by religious institutions and communities in the region, we offer a list of preliminary suggestions for religious leaders and congregations.

Reduce the Role of Property Taxes in Public Education Funding
One of the most effective ways to strengthen community stability and address the quality-of-life issues facing suburban communities would be to make school funding less dependent on property tax wealth.

Increase Quality Uniformity Among Suburban Public Schools
While faith institutions clearly have a stake in these issues of just and equal access to public education, they are also affected by how a different school funding system could help minimize the amount of regional movement and community change taking place in the region.

Efforts to improve public schools can play an important role in stabilizing older suburban communities because the perceptions of school quality have a direct effect on suburban property values. Unlike urban areas, Catholic churches in particular have a greater stake in the public school system because suburban rates of parochial school enrollment are generally lower than in the city.

Increase Public Investment into Existing and Older Suburban Communities
A state policy that promotes revitalization of older communities would likely help minimize the amount of regional movement and community instability influencing many parts of the Delaware Valley.

Develop a Regional Blight Strategy
Housing abandonment and neighborhood deterioration are clearly regional problems that cross municipal boundaries. City neighborhoods and older suburban areas share an acute need for dedicated resources to support housing renovation, infill construction and commercial redevelopment. A state-supported fund for housing and commercial rehabilitation would help meet these needs in both areas.

Use Transportation Planning to Promote Community Development
The DVRPC emphasizes the need for investment in older areas, limitations on suburban sprawl and greater regional collaboration in its many publications and reports. Nonetheless, its decisions are the product of negotiations between counties in the region.

Transportation is one of the only policy areas undergoing meaningful regional planning. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is designated by the federal government to develop plans for spending federal transportation dollars. This makes it the de facto regional political entity in the Delaware Valley.

Develop and Support New Faith Based Community Efforts
The political coalition that would support an approach to state policy that emphasized investment in existing communities would bring together urban, older suburban and environmental interests. Faith institutions could play an important role in helping support this kind of coalition.
PART I: Introduction

One of the most profound changes in modern life has been the separation between where we live, work and worship. The distance between places that are important to our lives can be quantified in the increasing amount of time we spend commuting, not just to work, but also to where we shop, socialize and pray. It is reflected in the erosion of ties that historically connected people living together in the same communities. The dispersion of people, resources and institutions across metropolitan areas has also exacerbated segregation within regions and deepened the influence of where people live on their quality of life.

This study analyzes how life is changing in the suburbs of Philadelphia, how economic and demographic changes are influencing suburban faith institutions, and how local communities and congregations might, in turn, influence the future development of the region.

Suburban Change

Life in the Philadelphia region has changed in important ways over the past half-century. Yet while the impact of economic and demographic trends and public policy decisions on Philadelphia and the smaller cities of Camden, Chester and Norristown is painfully clear, the consequences of regional development for suburban communities are less well understood. The line between city and suburbs still shapes politics and media coverage of the region, but it no longer accurately describes the complex reality of the region.

Many older suburban areas in the Delaware Valley are struggling to stabilize property values, improve public schools, keep young people safe from violence and revitalize commercial areas. The issues they face share much in common with working and lower-middle-class city neighborhoods. At the same time, outlying communities that have succeeded in capturing new development face difficult challenges in protecting open space, dealing with traffic and preserving the community character that attracted people in the first place.
While cycles of blight and suburban sprawl often appear to result from natural processes over which people have little control, the patterns of development that have transformed the region are the product of very specific decisions and institutional arrangements. These are decisions made by elected officials at a local, county, state and federal level, by administrative agencies and by developers, banks and investors. They touch on how revenue is raised to support education and other services, how subsidies are allocated for roads, sewers and other public infrastructure, the rules that govern planning for the use of land and federal housing and transportation policy. Although these are issues that most people may not dwell on, they have a profound affect on our communities.

Reversing these trends will not occur without a political alliance based on mutual self-interest between cities and suburban communities. Nor is it likely that this will happen without new interests and voices participating in shaping regional policy. Despite good intentions and powerful research, environmental organizations and their allies have lacked the political power to influence more than just the margins of how the region is developing (Brookings Report, 2003).

The Role of Faith Institutions in the Regional Development Debate

This study focuses on suburban faith institutions. We believe that faith institutions may be a crucial piece of the puzzle in bringing about a different vision for the region. To be sure, some opponents of sprawl have looked to religion as a moral voice against environmental degradation and urban blight. While this role in calling for stewardship and justice is essential, this study takes on a different perspective. It focuses on the institutional interests that religious congregations have in how the region develops. Congregations live or die based in part on the fate of the communities in which they are located. Because most religious denominations are themselves organized on a regional basis, they potentially bring a unique set of interests to policy questions that have been dominated by struggles between developers and environmentalists.

Urban religious leaders and congregations have long been active in revitalizing urban communities in Philadelphia and other cities in the United States. One of the most significant examples of this involvement has been the emergence over the past 30 years of powerful faith-based community organizing groups working in almost every major city in the nation. A 1999 study found 133 of these organizations containing almost 4,000 member congregations. (Warren and Wood, 2001).

Through faith-based community organizing, urban congregations have been able to exercise...
more influence over the decisions shaping their communities. Working together, they have rehabilitated housing, created jobs, made neighborhoods safer and improved public schools.

At the same time, community organizing has helped congregations recuperate their role in building community. Congregations have long functioned as mediating institutions, connecting people to each other and to the broader society, helping people resolve problems and make sense of the world around them. As the connections between people in neighborhoods have become more distant, many congregations have turned to faith-based organizing as a way to bring people together around common interests and reweave the social fabric of the communities that they serve. (Warren and Wood, 2001)

While the challenges facing suburban congregations are in some ways distinctly different from urban ones, the need for effective strategies to build community may actually be greater. Larger distances, longer commutes and heavy work and family pressures can make it even harder for suburban residents to connect with each other than people living in cities.

This report, like faith-based community organizing, is premised on an understanding that a congregation’s interests as an institution are intertwined with the well being of its members and the health of the community in which it is located. When congregations see a direct institutional self-interest in how their community and the region develop, they are much more likely to take on a sustained leadership role in the community.

Research for Democracy

This study is a product of Research for Democracy, a partnership between the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project [EPOP] and Temple University, under the leadership of Professor Anne Shlay, Sociology. EPOP is a faith-based organizing group that has worked for 10 years to improve the life of communities in Philadelphia. EPOP joined with Dr. Shlay at Temple University to create Research for Democracy in order to conduct research and influence policies designed to reverse the flow of people and resources out of Philadelphia neighborhoods (Shlay and Whitman, 2003).

EPOP is one of 50 faith-based community organizations that belong to PICO, a national Network of Faith-Based Community Organizations. EPOP was founded in 1993 by a group of Catholic and Episcopal congregations and public school parents in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia. Over the course of the 1990’s, it grew into a citywide organization, comprising 25 dues-paying congregations and neighborhood institutions representing more than 40,000 families.

Among EPOP’s successes have been a $337 million reinvestment agreement with First Union Bank that prevented the closure of 11 inner-city bank branches, partnerships with the police that reduced crime and improved safety in targeted neighborhoods, and significant increases in student achievement in five public schools serving low-income students. In 2000, Philadelphia adopted the organization’s plan to create an Office of Abandoned Vehicles that has removed almost 200,000 abandoned vehicles from the city’s streets. Since 2000 Research for Democracy has worked on research and organizing efforts to influence Philadelphia’s approach to fighting blight. This work led to a shift of $45 million to support neighborhood stabilization strategies and pointed to the need for a regional strategy to effectively revitalize Philadelphia neighborhoods and improve quality of life in the Delaware Valley.

Other successes include the construction of the Cardinal Bevilacqua Community Center and Visitation Homes in partnership with the Archdiocese Office for Community Development. EPOP’s most recent partnership with Greater St. Mathew Baptist Church and M. Night Shyamalan, the movie director, is dedicated to creating affordable housing and after-school pro-
grams. Based on its approach to organizing, EPOP concluded that a regional strategy could not be based on the good will and altruism of suburban communities. Instead, EPOP believed that suburban congregations would need to see their involvement in a county-level or regional effort as directly useful to addressing specific problems facing their communities. In other words, a regional agenda needed to meet the interests of cities, inner-ring suburbs and faster growing exurban communities. A regional strategy could not be imposed by policy experts or academics, but instead had to come out of the concerns of both suburban and urban residents.

Research for Democracy designed this study to begin a discussion among clergy and congregants at a local level and throughout the region about how the region is developing and what can be done about it.

Research Methods

To understand the multiple dimensions of regional change and its effect on congregations, this project employed a two tiered research approach:

1. Quantitative analysis of secondary data on the Philadelphia metropolitan region and its faith institutions
2. Interviews with pastors and ministers of suburban churches and congregations in the Philadelphia region (including Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery, counties)

This research posed several questions:

- What regional development trends are significant to the livelihood of suburban congregations?
- How do religious trends reflect regional development patterns?
- What challenges are religious leaders and their congregations facing as the region develops, and what steps can be taken to meet those challenges?

Development Trends in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Region

Our analysis of development trends in the region relied on data on housing, population, property, and land-use. These data sources are shown in Table 2.

Housing and population data at the census tract, municipal and county levels came from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Censuses.2

We obtained data on land-use from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Table 2: Data used in Regional Development Analysis

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<td>Land-use Data</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2 To standardize the 1990 and 2000 Census tracts (make comparable spatial units), we followed these procedures. The US Census provides a Census Tract Relationship File, which shows changes in the geographic boundary of tracts from 1990 to 2000. The Relationship File shows changes in population of 2.5% or more in each tract. There are 4 types of census tract relationships (i.e. 4 types of changes that may occur from 1990 to 2000): 1. No Change: Census tracts that had less than a 2.5% change in 2000 keep the same geographic boundaries as in 1990. 2. Merge: Two or more census tracts combined to form one census tract. 3. Revision: Some census tracts absorbed portions of other census tracts. 4. Split: Census tracts that have rapidly grown in population are split to form two separate and independent census tracts. Using this information, we created a set of standardized census tracts for the Philadelphia PMSA, which consists of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem counties. We created a UNIQUE ID for each new standardized tract by combining - in some cases - the county number, the 1990 tract number and/or the 2000 tract numbers. We created this number for the purpose of aggregating the split, merge or revised tracts using SPSS. Even though the US Census Bureau used tracts that had a 2.5% or more change in population from 1990 to 2000 as its benchmark, we selected only tracts that had a population change of 100 or more. We did this with the realization that we could not practically deal with the thousands of split, merged, or revised tracts that exist. For the most part, population changes below 100 did not radically alter the boundaries.
(DVRPC). We used these data to look at the change in residential land-use, measured in acres, in the PMSA from 1990-2000. We then compared the change in residential land development by acre to the number of new housing units built, as well as to the number of new families living in the region. This permitted an examination of trends in residential over-building and over-development of green space in the suburban counties surrounding Philadelphia from 1990 to 2000.

We obtained data on sales prices for properties in Bucks and Delaware counties from each county’s real estate tax database. These county databases provided information about properties, including the sales prices by address. We geo-coded the addresses for each property in Bucks and Delaware counties and added the census tract to generate census level data. We then created a median sales price for properties in each census tract and compared the change in median sales price for 1990 to 2000. This comparison allowed us to see the change in property values over the course of the past decade and estimate a level of economic pressure for homeowners and communities in census tracts where property values were declining.

### Religious Trends in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Region

The data for assessing religious regional trends are shown in Table 3.

The most complete information on religious membership in the region comes from the Religious Congregations Membership Survey (RCMS) sponsored by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB). Every ten years the ASARB collects membership data from religious bodies that have congregations in the United States. The data includes membership, attendance and number of congregations aggregated at a county level. Comparable data is available for 1950, 1971, 1980, 1990 and 2000, allowing for historical comparison. While not all denominations contributed data in each year, the majority did, and the data provides a relatively complete picture of denominations and congregations in the Philadelphia region. As the data is self-reported, it is particularly useful and reliable for analyzing changes within denominations across time and place, which is the primary purpose for which the data was used in this study.

The RCMS does not provide data below the county level. County-level data paints a broad overview of trends in membership as they affect congregations, but misses the changes taking place within suburban communities. Nor does the RCMS provide detailed data on the internal life of congregations, such as changing patterns of attendance and participation in religious edu-

### Table 3: Data used in Religious Trend Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Data</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parochial School Attendance Records</td>
<td>Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia</td>
<td>1990-2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey of Church Membership, Attendance, and Demographic Change</td>
<td>Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia</td>
<td>1990-2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey of Church Membership, Attendance, and Demographic Change</td>
<td>Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the</td>
<td>1990-2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church of America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Religious Congregations Membership Survey</td>
<td>Delaware Valley Faith Institutions</td>
<td>1950-2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3 The residential land-use category had three sub categories including, single family detached (free standing house), single family attached (duplex or condo) and multi family (apartment complex). We combined all residential sub groups into a total residential land-use figure for each of the nine counties to look at how many acres were used for residences in 1990 as compared to 1995. In this way we could estimate the change in the level of land development or development of green space in the suburbs over the past decade. The DVRPC had not released data for 1995–2000 so we used the figure for 1990-1995 as an estimate. We knew that the rate of residential land development in the suburbs continued to increase during the past 3 decades consequently the figure for 1995-2000 was
Data collected by the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia are available at the congregational level, making more detailed comparisons possible. Data from the archdiocese covered membership, attendance, parochial school enrollment, religious education participation, baptisms, and funerals. The data were aggregated at the level of the 41 clusters that the diocese uses to organize parishes. While clusters cross municipal and—in some limited cases—county lines, they generally bring together parishes serving similar types of communities. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties. The New Jersey counties in the Delaware Valley are part of the Diocese of Camden (Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem) and the Diocese of Trenton (Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean counties). The Archdiocese also provided computerized maps (shape files) for its clusters and parishes. Data at the cluster level, specifically reports for the Pennsylvania counties from 1990 to 2001, were analyzed statistically and also mapped. The Catholic Church was selected for more detailed analysis for two reasons: (1) it is the largest denomination by membership and number of congregations in the region; (2) it has historically been concentrated in the cities until the year 2000 when, for the first time, more members lived in the suburbs than in the city.

To understand some of the dynamics within Mainline Protestant congregations in the region, we examined data provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. This is the largest Lutheran denomination in the country, and with 120,000 members in the Delaware Valley in 2000, overall the fourth largest denomination in the region. Data was obtained from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod and, as a result, covers just the five counties on the Pennsylvania side of the region.

The Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America provided data on all of its 173 congregations in the five-county Delaware Valley region. This data, which encompassed the years 1990 to 2000, was supplemented by reports available for downloading on the Synod’s website: http://www.ministrylink.org/churches.asp. This data was then compiled into a historical database to track changes in membership and attendance by congregation over time between 1990 and 2000.

The Lutheran Church was selected for more detailed analysis for three reasons: (1) it is the fourth largest denomination by membership and number of congregations in the region; (2) the quality and availability of its congregational data was excellent; and (3) Mainline Protestant denominations have been concentrated in the suburbs since at least 1950 and, therefore, provided a contrast to the Catholic data analyzed in the study.

Interviews with Religious Leaders in Suburban Philadelphia

Religious leaders who were interviewed for this study were not randomly selected. Rather, their inclusion was based on contacts and relationships EPOP had with existing religious leaders and snowballing from these contacts. Given the exploratory nature of this investigation and the desire to generate a range of issues, not generalize to a particular population, this subject selection method was deemed appropriate.

The interviews of religious leaders in suburban Philadelphia began in August 2002. Twelve interviews were conducted throughout that month, and four were completed in September. The interviews resumed in January 2003 and were completed on March 3, 2003. The study included 30 congregations in Pennsylvania’s four subur-
ban counties of the Philadelphia metropolitan region (i.e., the counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery). Table 4 indicates the number of interviews conducted for each of the major denominational traditions included in the study: Twelve of these religious institutions were located in Montgomery County, seven in Bucks, Chester County, four in Delaware County, and five in Chester County. The study also included two churches with congregations whose homes span both Philadelphia and its adjoining suburban communities.

The congregations included in the study were selected by a two-step process. First, the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP) identified a number of Catholic and Episcopalian churches with which they have a connection. Second, an additional list of congregations was developed by searching Internet directories of religious institutions in southeastern Pennsylvania. These congregations were selected on the basis of denominational and geographic diversity.

The interview sessions were informal, one-on-one conversations. (See Appendix A for an outline of questions used in the interviewing process). The conversations lasted from between 40 minutes to 2 hours, and were generally held in the offices of the religious leaders, with one session held in an interim pastor’s place of employment. Several interviews included tours of religious facilities. While all the interviewees were heads of their religious institutions, one interviewee was the president of an Islamic Center that does not have a full-time Imam on its staff.

### Data Limitations

This study looks at the trends in the region as explained by census data for all nine counties in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Not all data, however, were available for all nine Pennsylvania and New Jersey counties.

### Organization of the Report

This report is intended to be a resource for suburban congregations … It also seeks to promote reflection on the interdependence of different communities in the region and the opportunities that exist to reduce racial and economic disparities that contradict faith-based values of equity and solidarity.

This report has several parts. The first part analyzes those economic and demographic trends in the region over the last ten years that are most significant for religious congregations. The second part looks at trends in membership, attendance, and parochial school attendance in faith institutions in the region. The third section discusses the views of religious leaders in the region on how regional trends and community level changes may be influencing the internal life of their congregations. The fourth section discusses the key policy decisions that are likely to shape how the region grows in the future.

We have also conducted analyses on trends at the municipal level for each municipality in the region. We created these analyses so that they could be accessed by congregations in the Delaware Valley who are interested in researching development trends occurring in their communities. Because the tables are too large to include in this report, we have made them available online at www.temple.edu/rfd.
The report defines the region as the nine-county area designated by the federal government as the Philadelphia Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA). The federal definition is based primarily on commuting patterns. As Table 5 shows, almost everyone who lives in the nine-county region also works in the region. The Philadelphia region is a sprawling area encompassing more than five million people, two states and 354 municipalities.

Philadelphia continues to be the largest job center, but it is no longer dominant. As Table 6 shows, an increasing number of people, including many Philadelphians, commute to jobs in other counties. The region is now organized around a series of employment and commercial centers. Yet despite the dispersion of people and

| Table 5: Percent of employed persons living in the Philadelphia PMSA who also worked in the PMSA |
|-----------------|------|------|-----|
|                 | 1990 | 2000 | Change |
| Burlington      | 84.3%| 83.6%| -0.8%  |
| Camden          | 93.1%| 93.1%| 0.0%   |
| Gloucester      | 87.7%| 89.9%| 2.2%   |
| Salem           | 70.5%| 75.1%| 4.7%   |
| Bucks           | 84.4%| 85.9%| 1.5%   |
| Chester         | 90.5%| 89.1%| -1.3%  |
| Delaware        | 95.2%| 94.4%| -0.8%  |
| Montgomery      | 96.5%| 95.9%| -0.6%  |
| Philadelphia    | 98.0%| 97.6%| -0.5%  |
| TOTAL           | 92.6%| 92.2%| -0.4%  |

Source: U.S. Census Data, 1990 and 2000

PART II: TEN REGIONAL TRENDS

The suburbs of Philadelphia have changed in ways that have important consequences for local communities and for their faith institutions. Understanding these trends is important for communities to be able to influence their destiny, rather than being shaped by outside forces beyond their control.

For a variety of reasons, Philadelphia suburbs have experienced a tremendous amount of community instability. In many older townships and boroughs, this instability has involved loss of population; shifting racial, ethnic and economic makeup; and rising social needs. Meanwhile, at the edges of the region, life in many once rural and exurban areas has been transformed by the rapid conversion of farmland and open space into new development.

Blight and sprawl are actually two sides of the same coin. They are tied together not just by the movement of people from one place to another, but also by the movement of money and investment from older to newer suburban areas (Bradford and Rabinowitz, 1975). Besides migration and racial change in communities, there have also been more subtle changes in work, family, housing, and other areas that have profound implications for communities and congregations. This section analyzes regional changes that took place between 1990 and 2000 that have significance for suburban religious congregations.
jobs, the different parts of the region continue to have a high degree of economic and social interdependence, sharing not only a regional economy but also common cultural, medical and educational institutions, as well as media outlets and transportation systems.

Table 6: Percent of employed persons living in the Philadelphia PMSA who worked in the city of Philadelphia 1990 to 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>-4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>-4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>-5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>-5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>-5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Data, 1990 and 2000

Slow Population Growth

Population in the Delaware Valley grew more slowly between 1990 and 2000 than in any of the 15 largest metropolitan regions in the United States (Table 7). The comparative failure of the region to attract new residents reflected the weakness of the region's economy (Brookings Report, 2003). It also meant that most of the changes in population at a community level were the result of existing residents relocating as opposed to an in-migration of new residents from outside of the PMSA (Brookings Report, 2003).

As Map 1 shows, population continued to decline sharply in Philadelphia, Camden and older suburban communities that border both cities, as well as older townships, such as Norristown in Montgomery County, Coatesville in Chester County and Clementon in Camden County. In contrast many suburban areas in Chester, Bucks and parts of Montgomery County saw their population increase by more than one-third. Table 8 shows the aggregated population change from 1990-2000 for each of the nine counties in the PMSA.

Table 7: Population Change 1990-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15 Largest Metropolitan Areas in the United States</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
<td>2,959,500</td>
<td>4,112,198</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>2,676,248</td>
<td>3,519,176</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>3,321,911</td>
<td>4,177,646</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside-San Bernardino, CA</td>
<td>2,588,793</td>
<td>3,254,821</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI</td>
<td>2,538,776</td>
<td>2,968,806</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC-MD-VA-WV</td>
<td>4,222,830</td>
<td>4,923,153</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td>2,498,016</td>
<td>2,813,833</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>7,410,858</td>
<td>8,272,768</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>8,546,846</td>
<td>9,314,235</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA</td>
<td>8,863,052</td>
<td>9,519,338</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston-Worcester-Lawrence-Lowell-Brockton, MA-NH</td>
<td>5,685,769</td>
<td>6,057,826</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau-Suffolk, NY</td>
<td>2,609,212</td>
<td>2,753,913</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, MO-IL</td>
<td>2,492,348</td>
<td>2,603,607</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit, MI</td>
<td>4,266,654</td>
<td>4,441,551</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA-NJ</td>
<td>4,922,175</td>
<td>5,088,688</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Data, 1990 and 2000
Despite slow population growth, the region continued to expand outward and add new housing units at a rapid pace. The construction of new housing units without a corresponding increase in households in the region inevitably led to vacant houses. When the PMSA experiences new housing growth on its periphery, a population shift from older and poorer neighborhoods towards the outer rings of the region occurs. Newly constructed houses are bought by households moving up the socio-economic ladder; the units they leave are bought by other households, and this pattern continues through the varying levels of income. The result is a housing surplus at the bottom of the market where the least preferred housing units are left vacant (Bier and Post, 2003). In the PMSA, the least preferred housing units are concentrated in poorer and older neighborhoods in the city and the inner ring suburbs.

From 1990 to 2000, the PMSA gained only 113,087 households and yet granted 138,274 new building permits (Chart 1). This means that there was a 22% difference in new building permits as compared to new households. Philadelphia was ranked 25th in the nation for metropolitan areas with a disproportionate increase in new building as compared to new households (Bier and Post, 2003). A 22% disparity indicates a considerable loss of population for the city area and the inner-ring suburbs as well as an increase in abandoned houses in those areas.

At the same time that houses were being vacated in the cities and older suburban areas of the region, communities at the periphery experienced a housing development explosion. And because larger houses were built on larger parcels of land in these once exurban and rural areas, the developed land area of the region expanded even faster than the number of housing units (Chart 2).

### Rapid Increase in New Housing Units and Developed Land

Despite slow population growth, the region continued to expand outward and add new housing units at a rapid pace. The construction of new housing units without a corresponding increase in households in the region inevitably led to vacant houses. When the PMSA experiences new housing growth on its periphery, a population shift from older and poorer neighborhoods towards the outer rings of the region occurs. Newly constructed houses are bought by households moving up the socio-economic ladder; the units they leave are bought by other households, and this pattern continues through the varying levels of income. The result is a housing surplus at the bottom of the market where the least preferred housing units are left vacant (Bier and Post, 2003). In the PMSA, the least preferred housing units are concentrated in poorer and older neighborhoods in the city and the inner ring suburbs.

From 1990 to 2000, the PMSA gained only 113,087 households and yet granted 138,274 new building permits (Chart 1). This means that there was a 22% difference in new building permits as compared to new households. Philadelphia was ranked 25th in the nation for...
Older Suburban Communities Under Increasing Stress

Slow population growth combined with rapid new construction has effectively reduced demand for housing and contributed to lower property values in many suburban areas.

As Table 9 shows, in Delaware County alone, 21 municipalities saw their inflation adjusted property values fall by more than one-quarter during the decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Median Sales Price 1990*</th>
<th>Median Sales Price 2000</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Millbourne</td>
<td>$93,720</td>
<td>$47,000</td>
<td>-$46,720</td>
<td>-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upland</td>
<td>$89,760</td>
<td>$48,200</td>
<td>-$41,560</td>
<td>-46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colwyn</td>
<td>$79,200</td>
<td>$47,700</td>
<td>-$31,500</td>
<td>-40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldan</td>
<td>$147,840</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>-$57,840</td>
<td>-39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifton Heights</td>
<td>$112,200</td>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>-$42,200</td>
<td>-38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morton</td>
<td>$131,340</td>
<td>$82,000</td>
<td>-$49,340</td>
<td>-38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddystone</td>
<td>$98,340</td>
<td>$63,450</td>
<td>-$34,890</td>
<td>-35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Darby</td>
<td>$116,160</td>
<td>$77,066</td>
<td>-$39,095</td>
<td>-34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Lansdowne</td>
<td>$108,801</td>
<td>$72,750</td>
<td>-$36,051</td>
<td>-33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folcroft</td>
<td>$102,960</td>
<td>$68,950</td>
<td>-$34,010</td>
<td>-33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansdowne</td>
<td>$138,600</td>
<td>$93,900</td>
<td>-$44,700</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkside</td>
<td>$116,160</td>
<td>$79,450</td>
<td>-$36,710</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>$42,240</td>
<td>$29,500</td>
<td>-$12,740</td>
<td>-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenolden</td>
<td>$117,480</td>
<td>$82,900</td>
<td>-$34,580</td>
<td>-29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingdale</td>
<td>$93,720</td>
<td>$66,900</td>
<td>-$26,820</td>
<td>-29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeardon</td>
<td>$99,000</td>
<td>$71,223</td>
<td>-$27,777</td>
<td>-28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridley</td>
<td>$142,560</td>
<td>$103,813</td>
<td>-$38,748</td>
<td>-27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutledge</td>
<td>$165,000</td>
<td>$121,540</td>
<td>-$43,460</td>
<td>-26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Hill</td>
<td>$92,268</td>
<td>$68,000</td>
<td>-$24,268</td>
<td>-26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester Heights</td>
<td>$167,782</td>
<td>$124,000</td>
<td>-$43,782</td>
<td>-26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Chichester</td>
<td>$84,348</td>
<td>$63,000</td>
<td>-$21,348</td>
<td>-25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwood</td>
<td>$114,510</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
<td>-$24,510</td>
<td>-21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookhaven</td>
<td>$134,640</td>
<td>$108,500</td>
<td>-$26,140</td>
<td>-19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aston</td>
<td>$165,660</td>
<td>$134,000</td>
<td>-$31,660</td>
<td>-19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridley Park</td>
<td>$151,734</td>
<td>$124,950</td>
<td>-$26,784</td>
<td>-18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Chichester</td>
<td>$147,906</td>
<td>$122,000</td>
<td>-$25,906</td>
<td>-18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td>$195,822</td>
<td>$161,700</td>
<td>-$34,122</td>
<td>-17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middletown</td>
<td>$220,440</td>
<td>$183,000</td>
<td>-$37,440</td>
<td>-17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinicum</td>
<td>$109,560</td>
<td>$93,000</td>
<td>-$16,560</td>
<td>-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haverford</td>
<td>$187,440</td>
<td>$160,000</td>
<td>-$27,440</td>
<td>-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marple</td>
<td>$214,500</td>
<td>$185,000</td>
<td>-$29,500</td>
<td>-14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethel</td>
<td>$289,654</td>
<td>$254,945</td>
<td>-$34,709</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect Park</td>
<td>$111,877</td>
<td>$98,900</td>
<td>-$12,977</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radnor</td>
<td>$287,265</td>
<td>$260,000</td>
<td>-$27,265</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgemont</td>
<td>$203,841</td>
<td>$185,000</td>
<td>-$18,841</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord</td>
<td>$273,900</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>-$23,900</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtown</td>
<td>$193,710</td>
<td>$180,000</td>
<td>-$13,710</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darby</td>
<td>$52,800</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>-$2,800</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>$118,800</td>
<td>$113,750</td>
<td>-$5,050</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nether Providence</td>
<td>$171,468</td>
<td>$165,000</td>
<td>-$6,468</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Providence</td>
<td>$211,200</td>
<td>$208,500</td>
<td>-$2,700</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swarthmore</td>
<td>$225,060</td>
<td>$223,250</td>
<td>-$1,810</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornbury</td>
<td>$297,000</td>
<td>$295,000</td>
<td>-$2,000</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose Valley</td>
<td>$257,400</td>
<td>$284,000</td>
<td>$26,600</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainer</td>
<td>$38,610</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$16,390</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Hook</td>
<td>$32,753</td>
<td>$57,500</td>
<td>$24,748</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Falling property values were also evident in many other communities that border Philadelphia and Camden and in older townships and boroughs (Map 2).

What do these regional trends mean for suburban communities? Outward regional movement from the city center to the newer suburbs increases while older suburbs lose population. In these slow growth areas, property values decrease; driven down by over-development of new homes. Since most public services are paid for out of property taxes, falling property values undermine the capacity of older suburban municipalities to raise revenue to support schools and other services. Consequently, what we see developing in the region is a checkered map of municipal health; increasing levels of disparity in fiscal capacity between older and newer suburban areas.  

Many of the same suburban areas that experienced increasing fiscal stress and falling property values also saw deterioration in economic and housing conditions. At a county level, median family income remained stagnant in Camden and Delaware counties and poverty increased slightly in all counties but Salem and Gloucester, despite robust economic growth at a national level (Table 10). While only a small percent of municipal districts (5% of all districts), saw inflation adjusted median household income fall by more than $5,000 between 1989 and 1999, Map 3 shows that at the census tract level (a smaller grouping than municipality) numerous census tracts within municipalities in Montgomery County saw a fall in median household income by more than $5,000. For some municipalities in Chester and Delaware counties the decrease

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What do these regional trends mean for suburban communities? Outward regional movement from the city center to the newer suburbs increases while older suburbs lose population. In these slow growth areas, property values decrease; driven down by over-development of new homes. Since most public services are paid for out of property taxes, falling property values undermine the capacity of older suburban municipalities to raise revenue to support schools and other services. Consequently, what we see developing in the region is a checkered map of municipal health; increasing levels of disparity in fiscal capacity between older and newer suburban areas.  

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Table 10: Median Household Income (2000 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) 
Philadelphia PMSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>$55,932</td>
<td>$58,608</td>
<td>$2,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>$47,771</td>
<td>$48,097</td>
<td>$326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>$51,991</td>
<td>$54,273</td>
<td>$2,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>$43,765</td>
<td>$45,573</td>
<td>$1,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>$57,218</td>
<td>$59,727</td>
<td>$2,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>$60,247</td>
<td>$65,295</td>
<td>$5,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>$49,285</td>
<td>$50,092</td>
<td>$807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>$57,710</td>
<td>$60,829</td>
<td>$3,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>$32,476</td>
<td>$30,746</td>
<td>-$1,730</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Data 1990 and 2000

---

4 The disparity between suburban communities in their ability to fund public education and other services appears to have increased during the 1990’s. In his 2002 book American Metropolitics Myron Orfield presents an analysis of fiscal inequities in tax capacity among the 25 largest metropolitan regions in 1998. The analysis found that the Philadelphia region had the third highest level of inequality between municipalities in their capacity to raise revenue from local taxes. Comparison of data from 1993 to 1998 showed that the inequities between municipalities in the Delaware Valley increased by 20 percent during this time, one of the largest increases among the regions in the sample (Orfield, 2002, 55-61).
in income represented a significant loss. In Chester County, West Chester Borough and Thornbury Township both experienced a $14,000 decrease in median household income and Easttown Township saw the largest decrease in the region with a drop of $28,226. At the same time, neighboring municipalities in Chester County saw significant increases in median household income such as Uwchlan and West Whiteland Townships with a $42,000 increase and Pocopson Township with a $92,000 increase.

The physical deterioration of housing stock coupled with increasing financial stress for homeowners, was reflected in two housing trends. First, there was a marked increase in long-term vacant property between 1990 and 2000 (Shlay and Whitman, 2001). Second, almost half of the municipal districts in the PMSA experienced a decrease in owner-occupied housing units as a percentage of all housing units (Map 4). For some municipalities, the shift in housing stock from ownership to rental reflected a significant change. In Langhorne Borough, Bucks County, the decrease in owner-occupied housing from 1990-2000 was 12%, and in Thornbury Borough, Chester County, it dropped by 24%.

MAP 3
Change in Median Household Income 1989-1999
- Decrease of $5,000 or more
- Decrease of $2,500 to $4,999
- Decrease of $0 to $2,499
- Increase of $0 to $2,499
- Increase of $2,500 to $4,999
- Increase of $5,000 or more

MAP 4
Change in Percentage of Owner-Occupied Units 1990-2000
- Decrease of more than 10%
- Decrease of 3-10%
- Decrease of 0-3%
- Increase of 0-3%
- Increase of 3-10%
- Increase of more than 10%
The trend from 1990 to 2000 suggests that many older suburban communities are facing a cycle of population loss, declining incomes and falling property values that appear to be expanding well beyond areas that directly border Philadelphia. Slow population growth, rapid development and weak planning at a regional level means that congregations in these suburban areas are likely to continue to face a high degree of community instability.

Areas at the Edges Experience Rapid Growth

At the other end of the regional dynamic, a set of communities, primarily at the fringes of the region, saw extraordinarily high rates of population growth. This growth was driven by the conversion of large tracts of farmland and undeveloped property into sprawling new communities. In Table 11 we list the ten most rapidly growing townships in the Philadelphia five-county region. While municipalities in these areas effectively won out in the competition for new development, the resulting traffic, increased property values and influx of new families changed life for many long-time residents in these once exurban and rural areas. The most fundamental change took place in Chester County, but outward expansion affected many different types of communities in the region.

Working Farther from Home and Spending More Time Commuting

One consequence of growth patterns in the region is that people are traveling further to get to work. Between 1990 and 2000 the percentage of people working outside the municipality in which they live increased, as did the percentage of people working in a different county from which they live. In Table 12 we show the percentage of workers spending 45 minutes or more in their daily commute. These trends reflect a growing distance between where people live and where they work and also illustrate the increasing horizontal connections that tie suburban municipalities and counties together.

Table 12: Percent of workers spending 45 or more minutes commuting – Philadelphia PMSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Data, 1990 and 2000

Table 11: Change in land-use and Population: Ten Rapidly Growing Townships and Boroughs in the Five County-Pennsylvania Area 1990-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elverson Township</td>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richlandtow Borough</td>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>-10%</td>
<td>1,195</td>
<td>2,153</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trappe Borough</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>-10%</td>
<td>2,115</td>
<td>3,210</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalfont Township</td>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
<td>3,069</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perkiomen Township</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>7,093</td>
<td>122%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegeville Borough</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-8%</td>
<td>4,227</td>
<td>8,032</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery Township</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>-8%</td>
<td>12,162</td>
<td>22,025</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethel Township</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
<td>3,330</td>
<td>6,421</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Providence Twp.</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
<td>9,682</td>
<td>15,398</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornbury Township</td>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td>2,731</td>
<td>141%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The greater distances that people are covering to get to work and increased traffic has meant that the last decade saw a substantial increase in the amount of time residents in the Delaware Valley spent commuting to work. Increases in commuting time occurred in all nine counties, with Montgomery and Delaware Counties experiencing the greatest change. More time spent commuting can influence both family and community life. As Tom Hirschl (2003) has noted, “time spent commuting to work is an important dimension of community organization. It influences time spent in voluntary activity and indicates the degree that place of work is separate from place of residence.”

**Increased Racial Diversity in the Region**

Racial change has affected a wide array of suburban communities, with many becoming more racially diverse and some becoming increasingly segregated during the 1990’s. While movement of people into and out of a community impacts its local institutions, it is often change in the racial and class composition of a community that has the greatest influence on the internal life of congregations. Most faith institutions draw from a homogenous population. A shift in the racial composition of the community can mean a change in the religious affiliation of the community. Tables 13 and 14 illustrate the racial changes in population over the past decade for the Philadelphia PMSA.

### Table 13: PMSA Population by Race ALL HISPANIC GROUPS Change 1990-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Persons in County</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian Race</th>
<th>Some Other</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Some Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>541,174</td>
<td>597,635</td>
<td>1,847</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1,783</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>376,396</td>
<td>433,501</td>
<td>3,637</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2,714</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>547,651</td>
<td>550,864</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>678,111</td>
<td>750,097</td>
<td>3,271</td>
<td>-262</td>
<td>-48</td>
<td>2,903</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>1,585,577</td>
<td>1,517,550</td>
<td>17,439</td>
<td>3,307</td>
<td>-287</td>
<td>14,054</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>395,066</td>
<td>423,394</td>
<td>1,678</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-126</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>502,824</td>
<td>508,932</td>
<td>8,067</td>
<td>1,073</td>
<td>-158</td>
<td>2,906</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>230,082</td>
<td>254,673</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>-55</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>65,294</td>
<td>52,042</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Data, 1990 and 2000

### Table 14: PMSA Population by Race ALL NON-HISPANIC GROUPS Change 1990-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Persons in County</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Some Other Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Some Other Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>541,174</td>
<td>597,635</td>
<td>36,428</td>
<td>2,973</td>
<td>6,081</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>376,396</td>
<td>433,501</td>
<td>38,015</td>
<td>2,107</td>
<td>4,779</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>547,651</td>
<td>550,864</td>
<td>-31,904</td>
<td>18,237</td>
<td>8,173</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>-5.83</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>678,111</td>
<td>750,097</td>
<td>25,450</td>
<td>16,519</td>
<td>14,017</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>1,585,577</td>
<td>1,517,550</td>
<td>-181,730</td>
<td>17,627</td>
<td>22,982</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>-11.46</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>395,066</td>
<td>423,394</td>
<td>5,276</td>
<td>6,068</td>
<td>3,856</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>502,824</td>
<td>508,932</td>
<td>-32,459</td>
<td>7,442</td>
<td>8,448</td>
<td>-65</td>
<td>-6.46</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>230,082</td>
<td>254,673</td>
<td>14,888</td>
<td>2,137</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>65,294</td>
<td>52,042</td>
<td>-2,849</td>
<td>-191</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-4.36</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Data, 1990 and 2000
While the Philadelphia region remains overwhelmingly white, the suburbs became more racially diverse during the 1990’s. To at least some extent racial change touched every part of the region. The vast majority of census tracts (85%) in the suburban areas of the region (excluding Philadelphia, Camden and Chester cities) saw an increase in the percentage of their population that was non-white between 1990 and 2000. Camden and Delaware counties saw the greatest change in their racial makeup. Camden County had a 2.4% increase in Latino residents. Delaware County had a 3.3% increase in African-American residents. Montgomery County had a substantial increase in African-American (2.4%), Asian (2.0%) and Latino populations (0.9%).

Continuation of Racially Segregated Suburbs

At the same time that most suburban areas became more diverse, the decade also saw the continuation of a number of racially segregated suburban communities. The vast majority of suburban census tracts continued to be more than 75% white in 2000. However, the number of census tracts that were more than 75% white decreased by 6% since 1990, reflecting a very small increase in racial integration in some parts of the region (Chart 3).

In contrast, there were a number of communities, adjacent to Philadelphia, Chester and Camden cities and in several older townships such as Coatesville, Norristown and Willingboro that saw large increases in the percent of their populations that were non-White. The number of predominantly non-White suburban tracts increased more than three-fold between 1990 and 2000.

Between 1990 and 2000, large numbers of African-American and Latino families moved out of Philadelphia, Chester and Camden cities in search of better schools and safer neighborhoods. Many moved to the suburbs following the regional migration trends for attaining a better life. For some suburbs, at the time that African-American and Latino Philadelphians were moving in, the quality of life was deteriorating as measured by increasing vacancy rates, conversion of property from ownership to rental and declining property values. Some suburbanites attributed the cause of deterioration to the in-migration of Philadelphians. As Smith et al show in The Camden Syndrome and the Menace of Suburban Decline, the movement of new people into a community is often mistaken as the cause rather than the consequence of disinvestments from a community (Smith, Caris and Wyly, 2001).
Increased and Increasingly Dispersed Immigration

Changing patterns of immigration also help explain the increasingly complex racial and ethnic dynamics in the Philadelphia region. New foreign-born immigrants accounted for almost all (82%) of the net increase in population in the region. Without foreign immigration the region would have gained just 32,785 new residents.

Table 15 shows that seven out of nine counties in the PMSA saw a large increase in foreign-born immigrants during the 1990s. Moreover, new foreign immigrants to the region were less likely to be in Philadelphia but to be dispersed throughout the region. An increasing number of immigrants are bypassing Philadelphia and moving directly to suburban areas. This trend not only explains the increasing diversity of suburban areas, but also represents a counter-balance to the movement of existing residents from one part of the region to another.

Table 15: New Foreign Born Immigrants – Philadelphia PMSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>4,877</td>
<td>8,538</td>
<td>3,661</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>7,549</td>
<td>13,957</td>
<td>6,408</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>2,044</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>5,149</td>
<td>13,576</td>
<td>8,427</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>4,521</td>
<td>10,991</td>
<td>6,470</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>8,069</td>
<td>13,986</td>
<td>5,917</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>9,682</td>
<td>18,623</td>
<td>8,941</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>44,628</td>
<td>63,624</td>
<td>18,996</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>-8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>85,934</td>
<td>145,971</td>
<td>60,037</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


An increasing number of immigrants are bypassing Philadelphia and moving directly to suburban areas.

In order to understand where immigrants have been settling in the region, an immigration capture rate was calculated by determining the percentage of all foreign born immigrants to the region between 1990 and 2000 who were living in each census tract in 2000. Those tracts with the highest capture rate had the highest level of immigration. This measure shows a great degree of variation across the region in where immigrants settled. There are a number of suburban municipalities, such as Kennett Square, Tredyffrin, Hatfield, Pottstown, Bensalem and Voorhees that appear to be functioning as suburban gateway communities for new immigrants (Map 5).
The impact of immigration on life in the region can also be seen in the large increase (from 10% to 15%) in persons living in non-English speaking households. As with new immigrants, these increases in non-English speaking households were spread out across the nine counties in the region, but also concentrated in specific suburban communities.

**Increasing Economic and Work Pressures on Families**

Another area where economic stress on families increased was housing costs. As Table 16 shows, the percentage of income that homeowners spent on their mortgages increased in every county in the region.

The trend of housing costs consuming a larger share of income is significant because it suggests that financial pressures on families are increasing in fast growing areas as well as older and poorer parts of the region.

Despite economic expansion, a greater number of communities in the region ended the decade under greater economic stress. While poverty remained concentrated in Philadelphia and Camden counties, a total of six out of nine counties saw an increase in their poverty rates (Table 17). A number of suburban communities saw increases in the percent of families living below 200% of the poverty line (Map 6).

Increased poverty in the Philadelphia region—despite a strong national economy—reflected the fact that the economy of the Philadelphia region has lagged behind other regions in the United States. Although the region has a number of areas of specialization that put it in a
Uneven Development: Regional Trends that are Reshaping Community and Religious Life in Metropolitan Philadelphia

Ten Regional Trends

Increasing gaps in income and class can be seen in the different trajectories of older and inner-ring suburbs compared to faster growing areas on the fringe. They can also be seen in greater economic disparities within suburban communities, including those that experienced rapid growth during the 1990’s.

The Future of the Philadelphia Metropolitan Region is Uncertain

Predictions of the future of the region, based on past trends, appear bleak. Nonetheless, planning for the future is essential. As part of its responsibility to plan transportation for the region, planners at the DVRPC regularly analyze potential scenarios for the Delaware Valley. These possible directions for the region are based on predictions about patterns of physical development, economic change, demographics and other factors. The most recent regional analysis by DVRPC identifies the most likely pattern of development for the region in the future as accelerating sprawl. This scenario is not only “very likely to occur,” but its consequences are almost universally negative, with a “strongly negative” impact on older communities, land conservation, dis advantaged populations, transit usage, traffic and air quality (DVRPC, 2003a).

Table 17: Percent of Families with Incomes Below 200% of the Poverty Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>-0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U.S. Census Data 1990 and 2000

The DVRPC also points to a growing “polarization of the workforce between highly skilled information and technology workers and lower skilled service industry positions.” (DVRPC, 2002) There are fewer manufacturing jobs in the middle, meaning greater disparities in income and class among residents in the region.
PART III. RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION TRENDS

No faith institution stands apart from the community in which it is located. Some congregations define their ministry as regional, drawing worshipers from many miles away. Others set out to transform the immediate area in which they are located. Some denominations and faith traditions preach the active engagement of clergy and congregations in public life. Others draw a sharp line between prayer and politics, and some believe we are only here to prepare for heaven. The internal life of all is influenced by social change. All have a stake in the public and private sector decisions that shape life in communities and regions.

Sometimes community change is so slow it is imperceptible; other times it is so evident it provokes panic. Perhaps the most acute crisis for a congregation is when the community from which it draws its membership no longer exists. Congregations in communities undergoing rapid economic or racial change face the choice of moving, integrating new members, transforming their mission, or closing.

Even where the institutional viability of a congregation is secure, change in a community inevitably reverberates through the institution. When people work longer hours or spend more time commuting, they may have less time to dedicate to their congregations. Changes in employment and income may influence collections. Demographic shifts influence worship styles. If two wage earners are needed to support high mortgage payments in a community, more children need safe places to spend time before and after school, and people inevitably turn to their church, synagogue or mosque for solutions.

Religious institutions are also places where people bring questions and seek answers to the challenges they face in their lives. They help people make sense of the world in which they live and, so, are unavoidably interconnected to the social conditions in which people live. The economic and social pressures on families become the pressure on congregations. Of course the nature of those pressures and what congregations decide to do about them varies enormously.

This section looks at the trends in membership and participation among different types of congregations in the region. Prior research suggests that the different internal structures of congregations and denominations, as well as their racial and class composition, plays a crucial role in how they are influenced by community change. One theory is that faith institutions that are more congregational in organization and, therefore, based more on relationships between members, such as some Mainline Protestant churches, are less able to survive community change. “The morale of such organizations requires stable relations between members...[they] suffer much more radically from high residential mobility [and] also have a greater difficulty in dealing with changes in the composition of local populations” (Winter, 1961, 89).
In contrast, other research has emphasized the ways in which the institutional structures of the Catholic Church, which connect religious obligation to a territorial location and assign pastors centrally, have made it possible for parishes to persist despite neighborhood change (Gamm, 2001). These dynamics are crucial because faith institutions are not only influenced by community change, but the way in which they respond to that change can play a decisive role in the future of a neighborhood. There is perhaps nothing more devastating to a community than to see its faith institutions close.

**Changing Patterns of Urban and Suburban Religious Membership**

With at least 3,000 religious congregations representing more than 60 denominations, the Delaware Valley is home to a rich array of faith institutions. The most complete information on religious membership in the region comes from the Religious Congregations Membership Survey (RCMS), sponsored by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB). The RCMS is a census of participating denominations, which represent the vast majority of religious institutions in the Philadelphia region. Based on data supplied by the denominations, the RCMS provides summary information on the number of congregations and their membership at a county level. Because data has been collected regularly since 1952, the RCMS offers a useful overview of broad shifts in religious membership in the region over time (Jones et al., 2002). Together, the denominations that participated in the 2000 RCMS claimed 2.9 million adherents in the Philadelphia metropolitan area (Table 18). Catholics are by far the largest denomination. The large number of Catholics reflects that the Delaware Valley is at the southern end of a contiguous line of counties on the East Coast stretching south from Aroostook County, Maine to New Castle County, Delaware and west to Erie County New York in which Catholics make up more than 50 percent of all religious adherents. The Philadelphia region also has a substantial number of Mainline Protestant, Jewish and Evangelical Protestant congregations and members.

**Table 18: Ten Largest Religious Denominations in the Philadelphia PMSA in 2000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Adherents</th>
<th>Congregations</th>
<th>Percent Adherents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1,841,107</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>255,920</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Methodist</td>
<td>124,537</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church of America</td>
<td>120,700</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church (USA)</td>
<td>89,190</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Baptist (USA)</td>
<td>86,716</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>73,416</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Church of Christ</td>
<td>33,985</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Baptist Convention</td>
<td>30,166</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
<td>25,877</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>254,009</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ADHERENTS</strong></td>
<td>2,935,623</td>
<td>3,037</td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between 1971 and 2000, the number of Catholics in the region increased, while the number of Mainline Protestants decreased (Table 19). There was also a large increase in Evangelical Protestant membership, although varied participation of Evangelical congregations

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5 Every ten years the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB) collects membership data from religious bodies that have congregations in the United States. The data includes membership, attendance and number of congregations aggregated at a county level. Comparable data are available for 1950, 1971, 1980, 1990 and 2000, allowing for historical comparison. While not all denominations participated in each year, almost all did and the data provides a relatively complete picture of denominations and congregations in the Philadelphia region. As the data is self-reported, it is most reliable for analyzing changes within denominations across time and place, which is the primary purpose for which the data was used in this study. A database was created that included each denomination by county for the nine counties that make up the Philadelphia metropolitan area (both Pennsylvania and New Jersey counties). The database included the results of each of the historical surveys, making it possible to analyze changes in most of the major denominations in the region from 1950 to 2000. This data was also aggregated at the level of Religious Denominational Groups (Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, Jews and Mainline Protestants).

6 Comparable data are not available for this time period for Evangelical Protestants and Jews due to the incomplete participation of denominations and religious bodies from these faith traditions in the 1971, 1980, 1990 and 2000 RCMS.
and denominations in the survey makes it difficult to determine the exact membership numbers for each decade.

Much of the increase in the Catholic population in the region occurred just in the last ten years, paralleling increasing levels of immigration, which were up by 70% in the region during the 1990s compared to the 1980s. Many of the 146,000 new foreign-born immigrants who arrived between 1990 and 2000 came from predominantly Catholic countries in Latin America, and this clearly boosted the number of parishioners in Catholic parishes across the region.

The long-term decline in membership in Mainline Protestant churches in the Delaware Valley follows a national pattern. Interestingly, however, the erosion of membership has not resulted in fewer churches. Although Mainline Protestant denominations claimed 20% fewer members in 2000 than 1971, they actually had 12 more congregations. With the average size of Protestant congregations less than 1/10 that of Catholic parishes (and falling), there were actually three times as many Mainline Protestant congregations as Catholic parishes in the region in 2000.

Mainline Protestant churches are also much more likely to be found in suburban areas than those of any other denomination. While this has been the case since at least 1952, there has been a fundamental shift in the Catholic population in the region, as well as significant changes among other denominations.

By 1952 the Mainline Protestant denominations in the Philadelphia region were already highly concentrated outside Philadelphia. Yet, despite this suburban focus, on the whole, Mainline Protestant congregations did not grow significantly as a result of the massive exodus of families out of Philadelphia between 1950 and 2000.

This analysis, as well as other research, suggests that Mainline Protestant churches face difficult challenges when there is change in the racial and economic composition of the communities in which they are located. This means that the institutional viability of many Protestant congregations is particularly shaped by regional and community level change.

In many ways, regional change over the past 50 years appears to have had the most profound impact on the Catholic Church. Historically, Catholics have been highly concentrated in cities, and this has clearly been the pattern in Philadelphia. In 1952, most Catholics in the region resided in Philadelphia. By 1990, Catholics were distributed between Philadelphia and the suburbs to the same degree as the general population. By 2000, for the first time in at least a century, Catholics in the region were less concentrated in the city than the general population (Chart 4).

One dynamic that is relatively unique to the Delaware Valley, especially compared to the Boston area, has been the extent to which the Jewish population of the region has maintained a relatively high level of concentration in

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Table 19: Change in Religious Denominational Groups in the Delaware Valley 1971 to 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>1,657,748</td>
<td>1,668,305</td>
<td>1,674,892</td>
<td>1,841,107</td>
<td>183,359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestants</td>
<td>708,585</td>
<td>681,415</td>
<td>595,995</td>
<td>573,923</td>
<td>-134,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Population</td>
<td>4,878,260</td>
<td>4,781,494</td>
<td>4,922,175</td>
<td>5,100,931</td>
<td>222,671</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

7 Protestant denominations have historically had a strong rural presence and undoubtedly in 1952 many of the congregations located outside of Philadelphia were in rural communities that have since been incorporated into suburban areas (Wuthnow, 1988).
Philadelphia. For a variety of reasons, Jews in the region have historically been extraordinarily concentrated in Philadelphia. In 1952, 94% of all the Jewish membership accounted for in the RCMS was located in Philadelphia. As more than half a million people left the city from 1950 to 2000, many Jewish families and institutions (immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe) left as well. By 2000, one-third of the Jewish community was still located in Philadelphia. Of course, as in the story Gamm (1999) tells of Boston, the Jewish community and its institutions have long left inner-city areas and are predominately located in Northeast Philadelphia, which, in some ways, has functioned as an internal suburban area within the city limits.

In 1961 in a book titled *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*, Gibson Winter argued that the concentration of Protestant churches in suburbs as compared to cities had its roots in patterns of metropolitan development and changes in the culture of congregations that trace back to the late 19th century. According to Winter, “the major denominations of White Protestantism were moving outward from central city areas to the suburbs during most of th[e] period” between 1870 and 1950 (Winter, 1961, 40).

This suburban exodus was tied to the ability of White Protestants to access new non-manual work and the increasing identification of the Protestant denominations with new white-collar workers. Protestant churches were losing membership in the city, both because urban areas were becoming more working class and because the congregations were increasingly based on social homogeneity. Pointing to the fact that many congregations moved “every decade or two after 1850,” Winter argued that “the expansion of major cities can be traced by mapping the location and relocation of Protestant congregations” (Winter, 1961, 42). The questions he raised in 1961 about the ability of congregations to adapt to the dispersion of people in regions, growing class divisions and the declining significance of neighborhoods proved prescient and is clearly relevant for understanding the challenges faced by congregations today in the Delaware Valley.
The suburbanization of the Catholic Church is particularly significant given the longstanding role that Catholic parishes have played in sustaining urban neighborhoods. In many parts of Philadelphia and other cities, Catholic parishes and public elementary schools are the last remaining territorial institutions that bring people together who live in the same neighborhood. Of course, while parish continues to be important to urban life, the other ties—such as working in the same factory—a once-common element of parish life in neighborhoods such as Kensington that bound people together in neighborhoods have largely dissipated (Livezey, 2000).

In his book *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*, Gerald Gamm argues that the institutional structures and rules of the Catholic Church led Catholic institutions to remain in urban neighborhoods when other institutions left. This, in turn, helped explain why so many Catholic families remained in the city. In *Parish Boundaries* John McGreevey analyzed how territorial-rooted Catholic parishes confronted racially changing neighborhoods in the urban north. He tells of the extraordinary lengths that Catholic pastors went to in order to stabilize their parishes and prevent flight. Yet, as the center of gravity of the Catholic Church shifts to the suburbs, do these understandings of parish continue to explain how Catholic churches relate to communities, either in urban or suburban areas? This question is addressed in more detail in the next section.

The Religious Congregations Membership Survey does not provide data below the level of counties. County-level data paints a broad overview of trends in membership as they affect congregations, but misses the variation in the changes within the suburban counties. Nor does the RCMS provide detailed data on the internal life of congregations, such as changing patterns of attendance and participation in religious education. Moving from one part of a region to another has an impact on individuals, placing them in a new community, with a new set of institutions, neighbors, challenges and opportunities (Stump, 1984; Newman and Halvorson, 1984).

More detailed internal congregational data are necessary to shed light on how moving from the city to the suburbs may influence people’s faith experience and congregational involvement. For this reason, data were collected from the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Southeastern Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. While information from these two denominations is still relatively limited, it helps clarify the congregational trends in the region.

### Changes in Specific Denominations: Catholics and Lutherans

To analyze changes in congregations that reflect regional patterns of growth and decline, we looked at membership and participation trends in specific religious denominations to see how they corresponded to demographic, social and economic changes occurring throughout the region.

#### Changes in Catholic Membership, Attendance and Parochial School Enrollment

Data from the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia were available on membership, attendance, parochial school enrollment, religious education participation as well as baptisms and funerals. The data were aggregated at the level of the 41 clusters that the diocese uses to organize parishes. While clusters cross municipal and, in some limited cases, county lines, they generally bring together parishes serving similar types of communities.

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8 The Archdiocese of Philadelphia includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties. The New Jersey counties in the Delaware Valley are part of the Diocese of Camden (Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem) and the Diocese of Trenton (Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean counties).

9 The Archdiocese also provided computerized maps (shape files) for its clusters and parishes. Data in the cluster level reports for the Pennsylvania counties from 1990 to 2001 were analyzed statistically and also mapped.
As Table 20 shows, the total number of registered Catholics in the five-county Philadelphia Archdiocese increased, as did the number of registered households. In contrast, mass attendance and parochial school enrollment declined. There was also an increase in the number of non-Catholic children attending parochial school.

- The number of registered Catholics in inner-ring suburbs, particularly in Delaware County is falling steadily.

Catholics are moving out from inner-ring suburban areas that have historically been heavily Catholic into areas that have had a more limited Catholic presence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 20: Statistical Information: Archdiocese of Philadelphia 1990-2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Catholic Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population in the Five-County Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Population Registered Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Weekend Mass Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Attending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Baptisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism-to-Funeral Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parochial School Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Catholic Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of School Enrollment that is Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students PK-8th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of PK-8th students in Parochial School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Office of Research and Planning.

For a variety of reasons, these trends in overall Catholic membership and participation appear to be tied closely to migration and other regional changes. Catholic data at a cluster level show a number of clear trends and patterns:

- Catholics are moving out from inner-ring suburban areas that have historically been heavily Catholic into areas that have had a more limited Catholic presence.
- Regional change appears to be having a particularly strong impact on enrollment in the Catholic education system.
- Rates of Mass attendance are declining in areas that have experienced large increases in population.

The overall Catholic population in the suburban counties grew between 1990 and 2001 as a result of both regional movement (new people registering with parishes) and demographic change. The difference between infant baptisms and deaths of registered parishioners. Regional movement (53%) and demographic change (47%) were responsible for almost an equal share of the increase in population in the four suburban counties together; however, the relative contribution of each varied significantly across counties and clusters.

Almost all of the increase in the Catholic population of Delaware County and most of the...
increase in Montgomery County resulted from the higher number of births than deaths. In contrast, the largest part of the increase in Chester and Bucks counties was due to regional movement. These two counties also saw the largest increases in their Catholic population. While Philadelphia lost some Catholic population as the number of deaths of elderly parishioners exceeded infant baptisms, almost all the decline in population (93%) was the result of out-migration (Chart 5).

While it is not possible to track where individual families are moving to and from, there are two likely explanations for the differences between counties in movement rates. One is that Catholic families leaving Philadelphia are skipping over traditionally Catholic areas close to the city and instead moving to new housing developments in Bucks and Chester counties. A second explanation is that the movement of Catholic families into inner-ring suburban areas is being offset by other families leaving these areas.

Only one suburban cluster saw a net loss in households between 1990 and 2001. In cluster 63, which encompasses six parishes located in Darby, Yeadon, Lansdowne and parts of Upper Darby and Collingdale in Delaware County, the number of registered households fell by one-quarter (almost 3,000 people). There were six other clusters located in Delaware and Montgomery counties that saw a substantial decline in their registered population. Mass attendance and school enrollment. In all of these cases, declining membership was the result of out-migration of registered persons rather than demographic change. For example, Cluster 70 in Montgomery County had a net loss of almost 1,200 members between 1990 and 2001. Of these, just four were accounted for by a higher number of deaths than infant baptisms during the time period, while the rest of the decline in population was a result of people moving out of parishes.

It appears that while demographic changes, such as an aging population, are a factor in changing membership patterns, the primary driving force behind declining membership in urban and inner-ring suburban parishes is the movement of people out of these parishes. In contrast, growth in more distant suburban and less historically Catholic areas is being driven by a combination of in-migration of new families and the birth of new children.

Regional change appears to be having a particularly strong impact on enrollment in the Catholic education system. The movement of Catholics to fast-growing suburban areas in Chester and Bucks counties means that Catholic families are moving out of areas where high percentages of children are enrolled in parochial school, into areas where children are much more likely to attend public school. This may explain in part why the total number of children enrolled in parochial school in the Archdiocese fell by more than 5,000 between 1990 and 2001 and the percent of Pre-Kindergarten to 8th Grade Catholic children (defined as children who either attend religious education programs or parochial school) who were enrolled in parochial school declined substantially (Table 21).

Comparison of parochial school attendance rates at a cluster level suggests that they remained stable in different parts of the region over the time period studied. This leads to the conclusion
that the decline in parochial school attendance rates is a product of the migration of Catholics into areas with stronger public schools and a weaker tradition of parochial school attendance, rather than a matter of Catholic parents changing their preferences for the education of their children.

Nearly all children in parochial schools are Catholic, yet enrollment trends are beginning to shift. The proportion of parochial school enrollment that was Catholic fell by 4% between 1990 and 2001. This represents a significant decline, given a 42% increase in the number of non-Catholic students attending parochial schools between 1990 and 2001. While the total number of non-Catholics attending parochial schools was a fraction of total attendance, a 42% increase in non-Catholic students suggests that a trend is growing. In Philadelphia there is a set of inner-city parishes where fewer than one out of four children are Catholic. Two clusters in particular, in West and Northwest Philadelphia, saw a marked decline in Catholic enrollment of their parochial schools.

While there are no suburban clusters where less than 75% of parochial school enrollment is Catholic, at least two clusters had large shifts in who attends their parochial schools. Cluster 63, described above as experiencing a large decline in households, saw the percentage of its parochial school enrollment that was Catholic fall from 91% in 1990 to 80% in 2001.

Similarly, Cluster 67, also in Delaware County, saw a decline from 96% to 86%. These inner-ring suburban parishes followed a pattern similar to city parishes in which declining parochial school enrollment is accompanied by a shift in the make up of parochial school.

Maintaining the Catholicity of parochial education is a major challenge for the Catholic Church, given the trends discussed above. In some suburban communities, parochial schools are increasingly being asked to provide an alternative to public schools that have lost the confidence of their communities.

Rates of Mass attendance are declining in areas that have experienced large increases in population. Between 1990 and 2001 average weekend Mass attendance in the Philadelphia Archdiocese decreased by 8%, despite a 2% increase in the total number of registered Catholics. The percent of registered Catholics attending Mass each weekend also dropped.
While there are many possible explanations for this change, there appears to be a negative correlation between change in registered households and Mass attendance. Clusters that saw increases in registered households saw declining rates of Mass attendance, whereas clusters that saw decreases in registered households saw increases in Mass attendance. If Catholics moving into growing communities were similar to those already living in those communities and if the experience of moving from one part of the region to another did not influence how people relate to their churches, we would expect to find little or no correlation between attendance rates and increasing membership (Those interested in viewing the correlation matrix can contact the author).

Research that has looked at the impact of movement on religious affiliation has focused on movement between different parts of the country. One study based on national data concluded that families that move tend to adapt to the levels of church attendance in their new communities (Stump, 1984). Studies also suggest that while Americans move quite often, the relative concentration of different religious denominations in different parts of the country has remained quite steady (Newman and Halvorson, 1984).

Analysis of Catholic cluster data on attendance and school enrollment suggests a mixture of dislocation and adaptation. Moving within regions may in fact influence religious participation, even as people adapt to different norms in their new parishes. This may be true in part because Catholic churches in fast-growing suburbs are organized in different ways than in urban parishes. People moving from Philadelphia to Chester or Bucks counties are changing from parishes that have deep historical ties to very specific neighborhood turf to sprawling parishes that cover great distances and may include as many as eight or nine different municipalities. Thus, it may not be surprising that people’s relationships to these parishes would change.

The number of registered Catholics in inner-ring suburbs, particularly in Delaware County, is falling steadily. Across the Philadelphia Archdiocese, the ratio of infant baptisms to funerals fell between 1990 and 2001. While there continued to be many more births than deaths in Montgomery, Bucks and Chester counties, by 2001 the baptism-to-Funeral ratio in Delaware County had fallen from 1.7 to just over 1.1 births for each death. In several Delaware and Montgomery county clusters, the ratio has fallen to one or lower, suggesting that demographic shifts in the Catholic community may increasingly combine with residential migration to reduce membership in parishes in older suburban areas.

While these demographic changes, such as the ageing of the population in the region, may be inevitable, it is the movement of people driven in part by development patterns that seems to be having the greatest impact on the Catholic Church. Important changes in the Church, such as declining participation in religious education and falling rates of Mass attendance, are being driven as much or more by the movement of people in the region, than simply by changing values or practices.

Over the last 15 years the consequences of population movement within the Archdiocese and the broader region have been wrenching for many communities. Between 1993 and 2001, the Archdiocese consolidated 26 parishes; 12 parishes were closed and then consolidated into existing parishes; 14 other parishes were closed.
and consolidated into four new parishes. Two new parishes were created out of parts of existing parishes in fast-growing suburban areas. The Archdiocese also twinned 34 parishes, meaning that they were reorganized to share resources, such as a single pastor. In 2003 the Archdiocese had to close a suburban parochial school for the first time. The trends suggest that the difficult process of declining membership, shifting mission and potential closure may well play out in many suburban communities unless the broader patterns of regional development are reversed.

**Changes in Lutheran Membership and Attendance**

To understand some of the dynamics within Mainline Protestant congregations in the region, we examined data provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. This is the largest Lutheran denomination in the country, and with 120,000 members in the Delaware Valley in 2000, overall the fourth largest denomination in the region. Data were obtained from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, and therefore cover just the five counties on the Pennsylvania side of the region.

The total number of baptized members in the Lutheran Church in the five counties fell by 15% from 1990 to 2000 (Chart 6). However, this decline in membership was not reflected in attendance, which remained constant during the decade. For unknown reasons, the rate at which people attended church increased as overall membership declined. The Synod closed 15 congregations, 13 of which were in Philadelphia, and opened five new congregations, two of which were in Philadelphia and three of which were in Chester County, during the time period studied.

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**Chart 6: Lutheran Church Membership 1990 to 2000**

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10 The Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America provided data on all of its 173 congregations in the five-county Delaware Valley region. These data, which encompassed the years 1990 to 2000, were supplemented by reports available for downloading on the Synod’s website: http://www.ministrylink.org/churches.asp. These data were then compiled into a historical database to track changes over time in membership and attendance by congregation between 1990 and 2000. The addresses of each of the Lutheran congregations were also geo-coded using GIS software. Data on the racial composition of congregations in Delaware County were also compiled from the Synod’s. The Lutheran Church was selected for more detailed analysis for three reasons: (1) it is the fourth largest denomination by membership and number of congregations in the region; (2) the quality and availability of congregational data; and (3) the Mainline Protestant denomination has been concentrated in the suburbs since at least 1950, and therefore provided a contrast to the Catholic data analyzed in the study.
When membership trends within Lutheran congregations are mapped against overall population change, a complex pattern emerges. Because Lutheran churches do not have fixed geographic boundaries, Map 7 represents each congregation as a dot, with shades of green reflecting membership growth and shades of red representing decline.

The map shows many red dots signifying membership decline in areas that have seen population loss. This pattern is somewhat stronger when change in white population is used as the background. Large areas of Delaware County and parts of Montgomery County that experienced population loss and racial change during the decade saw most of their Lutheran congregations lose membership.

At the same time, however, there are some points of congregational growth in areas that have seen large declines in population, and there are many congregations in rapidly growing areas that have also lost membership, and seen declines in attendance. The data on membership change suggest great variation (Table 21) on pg. 27.

The trend in Delaware County was the clearest, with most congregations losing membership, and in Chester County, with most gaining membership; but in all counties there was a combination of gain and loss that did not appear to be directly tied to overall population change.

Delaware County experienced the most racial change; therefore, we conducted a more detailed analysis of racial dynamics within the Lutheran churches in this county. Data on the racial composition of congregations were available for the period between 1995 and 2002, a time of rapid racial change in Delaware County. During the 1990’s the African American population in Delaware County increased by more than 18,000 and the Latino population by 1,800, while the white population declined by almost 32,000. Despite these trends, there was virtually no change in the non-white membership of Lutheran churches in Delaware County. Lutheran churches remained more than 99% white, with the number of non-white members ranging from 51 in 1995 to 43 in 2002. While these trends are not unique to the Lutheran Church or to Delaware County, they reflect the stark reality of how racial change can influence homogeneous congregations.

ecology of congregations in an exurban area outside Atlanta that experienced extraordinarily rapid growth. She found that some existing congregations in these areas were able to adapt to population change and thrive as a result of the influx of new residents. Others were not able to capture new residents.

Similarly, Ammerman (2001) argues that some congregations in areas undergoing out-migration may be able to successfully remain in the community if they restructure their mission and open themselves up to new ethnic and class groups. One interpretation of the uneven pattern of Lutheran population change is that community change intersects with congregational decisions and culture to shape how changes influence congregational life. It may also be that by 1990 many of the Lutheran churches in the region drew members from a wide area and, therefore, were less directly impacted by change in the immediate neighborhood in which they were located.

The research in this section suggests that regional change, especially the migration of families from older suburban communities to fast growing areas is closely related to change taking place inside congregations and denominations. The clearest example is the finding that regional movement appears to be a major factor in declining parochial school enrollment as well as Mass attendance in the Catholic Archdiocese. In this case, trends that are often associated with evolving values or habits may at least in part be attributed to the movement of people from one type of community to another and the consequences of that move for how they relate to religious institutions.

Regional movement and changing patterns of religious participation also clearly cut across congregations in many different parts of the Delaware Valley. To be sure, congregations in Coatesville, Upper Darby, Norristown, Philadelphia and other older communities are bearing the brunt of regional change. Just as patterns of sprawl and blight impose enormous economic and social costs on communities, the opening and closing of faith institutions impose costs that are both financial and spiritual. Yet, the congregational trends discussed in this section are clearly regional and, therefore, support the conclusion that the entire region has a stake in how the region is growing.

Just as patterns of sprawl and blight impose enormous economic and social costs on communities, the opening and closing of faith institutions impose costs that are both financial and spiritual.
PART IV. HOW SUBURBAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS SEE REGIONAL TRENDS INFLUENCING THEIR CONGREGATIONS

In order to understand how community and regional changes might be influencing the internal life of congregations, a total of 30 interviews were conducted with religious leaders in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties. The interviews provided an opportunity for them to talk about the history and current state of their congregations, changes taking place in the communities in which they operate, and the relationship they see between community change and their congregations.

Table 22: Distribution of Interview Subjects by Religious Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Bucks</th>
<th>Chester</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>Montgomery</th>
<th>Philadelphia</th>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.M.E.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

The interviews of religious leaders in suburban Philadelphia began in August 2002. Twelve interviews were conducted throughout that month and four were completed in September. The interviews resumed in January 2003 and were completed on March 3, 2003. The study included 30 churches and other houses of worship in Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties (Table 22). Two were located in Philadelphia but drew their congregants in part from adjoining suburban communities.
The goal in selecting participants was not to obtain a random or representative sample of congregations, but to explore in depth the ways in which religious leaders in different types of congregations and different parts of the region understand the impact of economic and demographic changes on their faith communities. There are more than 3,000 congregations representing at least 60 different denominations in the Delaware Valley. The tremendous number and diversity of faith institutions in the region makes it impossible to capture the full range of congregations through detailed interviews. Nonetheless, those who did participate represented a good cross section of the region, including those with very different internal organizational structures and those in inner-ring, built-out and fast-growing exurban communities.

The interview sessions were designed as semi-structured one-on-one conversations that followed a set of topics rather than a formal survey instrument (Appendix A). The conversations lasted from between 40 minutes to two hours, and were generally held in the offices of the religious leaders; one session was held in an interim pastor’s place of employment. Several interviews included tours of church facilities.

The leader of each congregation was interviewed because the study was primarily concerned with how congregations are impacted institutionally by change and how they might respond to that change as institutions. While all the interviewees are heads of their religious institutions, one interviewee is the president of his Islamic Center; it did not have a full-time imam on its staff.

The interviews began by asking the leaders to describe their congregations, including where members come from and their social class, racial and religious background, the financial health of the congregation and its relationships with other congregations. They were asked to talk about the history of their congregation and what changes they observed taking place in their institutions. They were also asked what they saw as the most significant changes taking place in the community and how these trends might be influencing the congregation and its members. As part of this discussion, they were asked to talk about the greatest pressures they observed their congregants to be under and, in turn, how these pressures might be influencing the congregation.

Institutional Viability of Congregations in Changing Communities

Religious leaders are concerned about the institutional viability of their congregations in communities undergoing rapid change. Those in suburban areas experiencing population loss, racial change and increasing social problems expressed concern about the future of their congregations. A number spoke about their congregations having reached a decision-point, wherein they were either going to close their houses of worship or re-commit themselves to their institutional survival and growth. One minister said that he expects his denomination’s governing office to permanently close his church. Others said that their churches were likely to be twinned with other parishes if demographic trends continued.

Financial Stability of Congregations

Religious leaders are concerned about the financial stability of their congregations. They connected the financial health of their congregations to changes in the community. While most religious institutions in the study were either in a stable, or even strong, financial condition, some were experiencing significant financial hardship, or had recently emerged from a period of financial difficulty. Leaders said that they either faced ongoing operating deficits and/or were drawing down the principal of their trust funds. A num-
ber of current leaders were hired during periods of deep institutional uncertainty, with mandates to ensure the survival of their churches and to guide them through periods of growth.

One pastor explained how newer residents had lower incomes, were less able to afford to buy a house rather than to rent one, and said that this was contributing to the conversion of property from ownership to rental. Some observed that many of the departing residents tended to be active members of the congregation, long-term, middle-class homeowners. These departing families tended to be some of the most significant financial contributors. A pastor of an older suburban parish noted that within a two-year period, contributions decreased by $500 each week. The precipitous decline was attributed to a loss of members who had either died or moved out of the community.

The Future of Parochial Schools

Catholic clergy are concerned about the future of their parochial schools. Some pastors in older suburban areas observed that young people were choosing to move out to newer areas rather than buying homes in the neighborhoods in which they grew up. In “built out” communities in which there is little or no new housing development, this has meant the replacement of longer-term, established residents by new homeowners or renters, typically individuals and families from neighboring communities in Philadelphia who achieve a level of upward mobility.

Sharp declines in contributions to churches were reported to have particularly adverse consequences for parochial schools, which are substantially subsidized by local church funds. In one parish, the church subsidized as much as two-thirds of the tuition of parochial students. One parish priest indicated that some families with children in parochial school feel that because they pay tuition they are thereby making substantial financial contributions to the church – consequently, their donations on Sundays tend to be relatively small.

The consequence of regional movement for parochial schools has been compounded by the fact that many of those who are leaving are families with young children. A number of pastors felt that families were leaving primarily for larger homes in developing suburbs, and better public schools. The loss of Catholic families in suburban communities directly affects the viability of parochial schools, and ultimately parishes. A number of parishes have parochial schools in which the enrollment is either below or slightly above 200 students, whereas their capacity is significantly higher. Parochial schools whose enrollments have dipped below 200 have in the past been considered for closing, or pairing with another parish’s school.

Deteriorating Neighborhoods Undermine Religious Institutions

Religious leaders in older suburban areas identify poor quality public schools, safety, gang activity and deteriorating housing as factors undermining their institutions. While it was common for leaders in areas close to Philadelphia to point to population loss and demographic change as the forces influencing their institutions, many also connected families moving out of the area to poor quality schools, lack of safety, drug trade, gangs and deteriorating neighborhood conditions. Leaders of congregations in older towns—such as Coatesville—reported that their congregants were worried that conditions of blight, normally associated with Philadelphia, were becoming increasingly pervasive in their communities. Lack of confidence in the public education system in particular came up repeatedly as a trigger leading to high levels of out migration.

11 A Catholic parish in an older suburban community undergoing significant demographic change in its parochial school had approximately 400 students less than the capacity of its school buildings.
In two older suburban communities, pastors described a dynamic in which families were disappointed with the quality of the schools but were paying high property taxes because of the limited amount of commercial development.

**Effective Strategies to Stabilize Older Suburban Areas**

Religious leaders are searching for effective strategies to stabilize older suburban areas. One Methodist church in an older suburban area was explicit about developing community improvement efforts as a strategy to stem white flight. The congregation’s community work has included developing mixed-income housing and leading an initiative to improve public education in the community. Another congregation became involved in an effort to build elderly housing and a variety of new social service efforts to reach out to the community. Yet both involved in improvement efforts noted the absence of strong religious leadership around community issues. They said that there were few vehicles for their churches or individual parishioners to address problems like crime and gang activity that were undermining quality of life in the community.

**Response to Increasing Diversity in Communities and Congregations**

Religious leaders in different parts of the region are searching for ways to respond to increasing diversity within their communities and congregations. They described the difficulty of recruiting new residents to stave off declines in their memberships. In the case of Catholic Churches, this typically included stabilizing parochial school enrollment. They also described a second, and at times more difficult challenge, of fully incorporating new congregants into the institutional structure of local houses of worship. This included involving new residents in leadership roles in governing or advisory councils and lay ministries and adapting practices within congregations in ways that respond to the different cultural and demographic characteristics of new congregants.

The unease in some suburban congregations about the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in their communities was not manifested expressly as racial animus. Rather, as some religious leaders indicated, concern about racial change has been reflected in a sense that a community’s identity is being lost; comments that demographic changes are having an adverse impact on housing values; or, as a resentment that newcomers are being subsidized by established residents (i.e., homeowners paying property taxes that support the public education of children from recently-arrived families).

**Dealing with Increased Racial and Ethnic Diversity**

Religious leaders describe their congregations as unprepared to deal with increased racial and ethnic diversity. A number were concerned that their congregations are not adequately prepared—or even willing—to welcome the demographic changes underway in their immediate or surrounding communities. The concern was especially pronounced among racially and ethnically homogeneous congregations in suburban houses of worship with declining memberships. Religious leaders said that they felt that their congregations were reticent about altering their religious character, worship styles, or social ministries in order to attract new adherents. One
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How Suburban Religious Leaders See Regional Trends Influencing Their Congregations

A pastor observed that her congregants are largely “oblivious” to the racial and ethnic transformation occurring in the community within which their church is located. Another described his congregation as “either ignoring, or deluded by” the demographic changes occurring in surrounding communities. Both described their role as “preparing” their congregation for change.

Several religious leaders in the study described things they were doing to get their congregations ready for racial and ethnic changes. The responses include: 1) addressing demographic changes in sermons or homilies; 2) incorporating diverse worship traditions and styles into religious services; 3) developing lay leadership that is more racially and ethnically diverse; 4) establishing interfaith relationships with more diverse congregations; 5) contemplating the adoption of diversity workshops; and 6) altering, or starting, social ministry programs that are reflective of demographic shifts.

Some said that they are purposefully, yet carefully, infusing new and diverse modes of worship into their religious services as part of their vision of improving the long-term viability of their religious institutions. They argued that the survival of their religious institutions is directly tied to their congregations’ willingness to welcome and embrace the demographic changes that are reshaping the communities where their congregants live and work. Diversity is also an issue for congregations in stable and rapidly growing communities. While diversity is more of an issue for congregations in areas undergoing rapid demographic change, the challenge of attracting new residents and dealing with diversity was a common denominator among religious leaders in many different types of communities in the region. Even in suburban communities that are not deteriorating and that remain relatively homogenous, several pastors expressed concern about the aging of their congregations. One pastor described his church membership as having stagnated and noted that the average age of congregants was in the 50’s. In this case, the pastor viewed the age of the congregation as an obstacle to changing practice in the institution.

Religious leaders in areas of Chester and Bucks counties undergoing rapid development also described diversity as a critical issue facing their congregations. In this case, they tended to be referring to the confluence of new immigrants, particularly Mexicans, who have been attracted to blue-collar jobs in fast-growing areas and the arrival of large numbers of upper-middle-class white professionals. One Catholic pastor expressed concern that his church was ill equipped to handle what he characterized as “the population explosion” in Chester County among both Latinos and the new, middle-class suburbanites arriving in outlying communities.

New Immigrants as a Way to Build Congregations

Religious leaders are looking to new immigrants as a way to build their congregations. Those in some inner-ring suburban areas said that their congregations were growing as a result of attracting new immigrants. They described how their...
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How Suburban Religious Leaders See Regional Trends Influencing Their Congregations

Congregations had shifted their social ministries toward serving immigrant communities, even if they do not expect to recruit new members from the families they serve. Several suburban ministers indicated that their communities now include small, but growing, immigrant populations from Africa, Mexico, Central America, East Asia, and South Asia. Some historically homogeneous congregations are attracting new members from recent immigrant populations. These new adherents often come from countries in which their new churches had an institutional and religious presence, either as missions, “planted” churches, church-sponsored schools, or relief and charity programs.

A Delaware County minister noted that many new immigrant members of his church were not adherents in their home countries; they mostly had tangential or cultural ties to the denomination. About 40% of this minister’s congregation is comprised of immigrants who joined their new church with relatively nominal connections to its liturgical and theological traditions. An important challenge for that church is to provide new immigrant members, as well as the broader immigrant communities, services that address their immediate needs, like language classes, and providing very basic healthcare (the church employs a nurse who administers healthcare services to local residents), and general assistance in acculturating to their new communities. An additional challenge is to provide new immigrant members a foundation in the liturgical and worship traditions of their newly adopted faith communities.

The social ministry of one suburban church appears to have influenced the immigration patterns in its community. The congregation established a refugee camp and church in a West African country. When immigrants and refugees from that country settled in the United States, they chose to live in a community that straddles Philadelphia’s municipal boundary. These initial arrivals were later joined by family members, as well as by immigrants from other West African countries and the Caribbean. Now, approximately one-third of the congregation is African or Caribbean; another third is African-American.

In the past 15 years, the church has been transformed from a majority white to a majority non-white congregation, a change reflected in the church’s social ministry and worship style.

The Consequences of Rapid Community Growth on Congregations

Religious leaders are concerned about the consequences of rapid community growth on their congregations. Those in areas experiencing rapid population growth identified an array of challenges, both internal to their congregations and for families in the community. They described the institutional capacity of their houses of worship as lagging behind the spiritual, educational, and pastoral needs of their rapidly expanding communities.

A number of parishes in Chester County are currently engaged in capital campaigns to build...
or expand their religious and educational facilities. One Catholic parish in Chester County is involved in a $16 million capital campaign to build a new church building and school campus. According to the pastor, when the parish was established in 2000, the assumption was that it would have about 1,200 families. Within two months of its founding it had 1,400 families, and by 2003 it had 1,700. The pastor anticipates another 1,000 families will be added by 2010.

Religious leaders in these fast-growing areas in Bucks, Chester, and parts of Montgomery counties said that their congregations were attracting new congregants from the influx of recent arrivals into their communities. In some instances, as much as one-half of a congregation’s membership consisted of individuals and families who had moved into their community within the past five years. They described the level of change inside congregations as being intensified by high membership turnover; attributed to employment transfers or professional opportunities in other states or regions.

Growing Class Divisions within Congregations

Religious leaders in rapidly growing areas highlighted growing class divisions within their congregations as an important concern. Those in rapidly suburbanizing communities said that new arrivals were changing the socio-economic profile of their congregations, which were previously comprised primarily of blue collar, working-class worshippers. Many new congregants, in contrast, tended to be highly educated, white-collar professionals. Consequently, the socio-economic profile of these congregations has become increasingly heterogeneous.

Congregations Missing Out on Benefits of Community Growth

Some described their congregations as missing out on the benefits of community growth. It is important to note that not all congregations in areas that are growing rapidly are actually capturing that growth in their congregations. One Montgomery County pastor said that his most committed members are elderly, and that, in part as a result of this, the membership of his congregation was declining despite the prosperous nature of the community in which it is located.

Nor do all faiths see rapid population growth as an opportunity to substantially enlarge their congregations. An alternative strategy for some has been to differentiate themselves by not pursuing rapid growth in their congregations. This is the strategy of a small evangelical church in suburban Philadelphia that deliberately eschews the “mega church” model that many non-denominational, evangelical churches have adopted. Although the congregation is socio-economically diverse, its minister observed that a commonality among his congregants is that they have all been mostly “chewed up” by life. The church is creating a “niche” market for evangelical Christians who are seeking intense spiritual guidance in a small worshipping community.

Concern Among Congregants about Property Taxes

Religious leaders said their congregants were especially concerned about property taxes. Several describe a dynamic of rising property taxes influencing life in the communities in which they are located. While new residents in growing suburban communities provide a vital source of membership growth, or stability, for suburban churches, the homes they purchase—often higher-end homes in new housing developments—are contributing to increased property valuations in their communities. One pastor
Uneven Development: Regional Trends that are Reshaping Community and Religious Life in Metropolitan Philadelphia
How Suburban Religious Leaders See Regional Trends Influencing Their Congregations

observed that some established residents who were over-burdened by increased property taxes chose to sell their homes, and relocate to other communities or regions of the country.

For established residents who remain, higher property taxes were reported to be imposing a substantial financial burden, particularly for older residents on fixed sources of income. A minister in a sprawling suburban community noted that a subtle class division is emerging between established and recent congregants. The former feel especially burdened by property taxes; some have even appealed their property assessments and have been successful in a few cases. The latter, however, move into the area fully expecting to pay relatively high property taxes, an observation echoed by other church pastors. The minister was not aware whether newer, more affluent congregants were also having problems paying their property taxes. She deliberately avoids addressing the adverse consequences of suburban sprawl in her sermons. Doing so would aggravate whatever class-based tensions already exist among her congregants.

A pastor in an area undergoing rapid suburbanization noted that a few neighbors objected to the parochial school’s expansion; they ultimately sold their homes, and the issue was resolved. Another church also experienced opposition to their building plans, but not from zoning officials—a local conservancy group opposed the church's construction permits. An Islamic center in suburban Philadelphia also experienced no opposition from its local zoning board, but encountered resistance from apprehensive neighbors. Members of the proposed center met with local residents and allayed their fears about having an Islamic institution in their neighborhood.

Nonetheless, several pastors said that they were aware of other institutions that have had serious and ongoing problems with their zoning officials. One pastor described a Catholic parish that was denied permission to build a school in Coatesville, based on concerns about traffic congestion. In its refusal, the zoning board noted that the Archdiocese owned substantial portions of land outside Coatesville that could be used for a new school. The only direct experience of a serious disagreement between a religious institution and municipal officials over zoning requirements involved a pastor from an older

Mixed Experiences with Zoning and Land-use Issues

Religious leaders describe mixed experiences with zoning and land-use issues. They said that zoning and land-use policies had not been a major obstacle for their congregations in establishing or expanding their religious facilities. Religious institutions anticipating future construction also did not foresee serious problems with local zoning boards. In areas undergoing rapid growth, leaders indicated that they worked closely and strategically with zoning board officials throughout the planning stages of their proposed projects. Their experience suggests to them that involving local zoning officials early in the planning process can avoid unnecessary and costly delays in the construction process.

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suburban community. His congregation had sought a permit to build a senior housing complex. Municipal officials predicated approval of the permit on the church’s willingness to build commercial establishments on the first floor of the housing complex — in accordance with local zoning ordinances. The church opposed the restriction because it did not believe the community needed more commercial outlets.

Some religious leaders in suburbanizing communities also observed that zoning ordinances requiring a certain acreage per lot ensure that only affluent families are able to purchase homes in new suburban developments—which minimizes the stock of affordable housing. In one case, these restrictions constrained the capacity of suburban institutions to profitably subdivide their landholdings.

**Sprawl and the Consequences of Rapid Development**

Religious leaders describe their congregants as having mixed views about sprawl, but deeply concerned about the consequences of rapid development. The leaders of religious institutions in suburban Philadelphia identified a range of issues that were of particular concern for their congregants. While few pastors identified suburban sprawl as a major issue, many identified problems generally associated with rapid suburbanization. The most common issue was high property taxes. Interviewees also often mentioned traffic and loss of open space as concerns. One pastor in an outlying area spoke of “uncontrolled suburban growth” and another complained that the township in which the congregation was located did little planning. Similarly, leaders in inner-ring suburbs were very focused on blight and out-migration, but did not necessarily draw a direct connection between the changes in their communities and broader patterns of development in the region.

**Increasing Numbers of Commuter Worshipers**

Religious leaders note an increasing number of commuter worshipers. They said that their churches and other houses of worship contained substantial numbers of commuter worshipers, and that this phenomenon was increasing. Some congregations draw their entire membership from communities other than the ones in which they are located. Even Catholic churches, which are territorially defined, have worshipers from other parishes. Pastors report that many Latino families register at their parishes but worship in different parishes.

Some described having commuter worshipers who are former congregants but who have moved away from the communities in which their houses of worship are located. Even in rapidly expanding areas, leaders note a significant number of commuter worshipers who are new residents and who travel a significant distance to worship. They said that the presence of significant numbers of commuter worshipers limits the activities that their churches can offer during the week.

**Families Under Economic Pressure and the Health of Congregations**

Religious leaders describe families as being under difficult economic pressures, and they connect these pressures to the health of their congregations. A number expressed deep concern about the impact of suburbanization on the quality of family life. The two-worker family was a common issue raised as a negative force in their communities and congregations. White-collar families in suburban congregations often are, as one pastor described it, “mortgage poor,” i.e., middle-to-upper-middle class families purchase higher-end homes with mortgage payments that consume significant amounts of net income. In turn, large mortgage liabilities require that both

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14 Since Vatican II, the Catholic Church has eased its requirement that Catholics only attend churches in the parish within which they reside (Gamm, 1999).
parents work in order to maintain their suburban homes and lifestyle. In some families one or both parents take on additional employment to make ends meet.

A suburban pastor also noted that many suburban professionals are required to increase their workload and work longer hours because downsizing often means that previous levels of productivity have to be maintained by smaller staffs.

Religious leaders argued that the financial and professional stress on many suburban families means that they spend less time together, volunteer less frequently for charitable work, and have less time for worship-related activities. They connected rising divorce rates and strained relationships in families to economic pressures on families in their communities. A pastor from a rapidly suburbanizing community said that beneath the surface of seemingly thriving suburbs is a real absence of community identity and an array of social problems like alcoholism, abortion, financial insecurity, drugs, a high number of suburban youth in the custody or supervision of the juvenile system, and the strain on families in which both parents are either employed or divorced. Another pastor said that, "many of the youth he works with are lacking supervision because more families have multiple jobs."

One minister indicated that the consequences of suburbanization and the current economic slowdown have produced two important consequences inside his congregation. First, because congregants are feeling more pressure to work longer hours, they are spending less time with their families and have even less time for volunteering and attending religious activities. Second, instead of distancing themselves from their religious institutions, some congregants are seeking a deeper, more meaningful spiritual experience from them. This minister directly linked the need for more spirituality and involvement by congregants to the adverse consequences of suburban sprawl, such as being subjected to increased demands on time, energy and family finances. This, in turn, has been an important factor in the minister's efforts to transition the church from a more traditional Mainline Protestant institution to a more evangelical style of worship, with what he describes as a more intense spirituality.

Religious leaders in older suburban communities were well aware of the impact of neighborhood deterioration on the survival of their congregations. Yet it is also clear that congregations in areas that are often perceived to be growing and prosperous are also facing serious challenges as a result of suburban sprawl. An interesting finding is the class divide that rapid suburban development is provoking within congregations and communities in exurban areas. Comments by leaders dealing with growth confirm findings in Nancy Eiesland's study of an exurban area of Atlanta that "homefolks who once seemed to know their places—in church, in the schools, and in the business district—increasingly found themselves at odds with their familiar territory" (Eisland, 2000).

The idea that people are increasingly separated from one another was a common denominator among religious leaders. Regional movement, economic pressures on families, and time spent commuting all contribute to a breakdown in a sense of community. To at least some degree, these changes limit the number of activities religious institutions can sponsor for their congregants and the general community, the amount of volunteerism worshipers can contribute, and the centrality of places of worship in the everyday lives of suburban dwellers. 
Uneven Development: Regional Trends that are Reshaping Community and Religious Life in Metropolitan Philadelphia
The Opportunity to Shape the Future of the Region

This part of the report looks at some of the policy decisions that influence quality of life in the region. Based on what was learned from analyzing congregational trends and interviewing religious leaders, these appear to be decisions in which suburban congregations and regional denominational structures have an important stake. This is a first step toward involving congregations in different parts of the region in creating a faith-institution agenda for the region.

Before considering the public sector decisions that shape the region, it should be noted that the institutional decisions by faith institutions might themselves influence development patterns. Choices about whether and where to build new houses of worship and schools or to close old ones are almost always shaped by changes taking place in the community. But these institutional decisions can also accelerate change. The interconnectedness of different parts of the region suggests a need for both public agencies and religious institutions to plan at a local and regional level in ways that minimize instability and dislocation associated with patterns of sprawl and blight.

PART V. THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE REGION

“If the church abdicates its role in the shaping of 21st century metropolitan America, developers, politicians and individual consumers will make these decisions by themselves. But the shape of the [region] should not be determined solely by political and economic concerns, since the nature of metropolitan life, our responsibility to the earth, and the physical and social conditions necessary for human flourishing are deeply theological issues.” (Lewis, 2001)

Several religious leaders who were interviewed spoke about their congregations influencing—rather than simply being influenced by—changes taking place in the region. More common was a sense of powerlessness in the face of change, a lack of vehicles for building a greater sense of community, and few ways of acting in the public arena to influence decisions.

Reduce the Role of Property Taxes in Public Education Funding

One of the most effective ways to create greater community stability and address quality of life issues facing suburban communities would be to make school funding less dependent on property tax wealth. Much of the debate over school funding has focused on which communities will gain or lose as a result of legislative changes. While faith institutions clearly have a stake in these issues of justice and equity in access to public education, they also have a stake in how a different school funding system would help minimize the amount of regional movement and community change taking place in the region.

The increasing dependence on property taxes to fund education and other public services (Table 23) results in extreme fiscal disparities within suburban areas.

- Communities that are able to capture a lot of commercial development and high-income housing can finance high quality schools on very low taxes.
Communities that are built-out and have little room for new development and little commercial property wealth are forced to choose between extraordinarily high property taxes and under-funding their public schools.

Those municipalities that are unable to raise enough revenue from local taxes get additional aid from the state but, in the end, have far less resources available to fund their schools and provide for services ranging from police protection to code enforcement (The Fiscal Impacts of Different Land Uses, 2002).

This system of property tax winners and losers creates perverse incentives for both municipalities and families. A municipality may not necessarily want to see open space converted to new housing or stores, but the possibility of new tax revenue represents a powerful inducement to support new development (School Finance and Sprawl, 2002). Disparities in the resources available to local communities also encourage families to move to areas with greater tax capacity. Reducing reliance on property taxes as the primary source of revenue for public education would, therefore, both discourage overbuilding in newer suburban areas and remove some of the incentives for families to leave older areas.

**Improve Suburban Public Education**

Efforts to improve public schools can play an important role in stabilizing older suburban communities because of the importance of perceptions of school quality to suburban property values. And unlike urban areas, Catholic churches in particular have a greater stake in the public school system because suburban rates of parochial school enrollment are generally lower than in the city.

In many ways public schools are the hinge on which quality of life in a community rests. If people lack confidence in the public schools, they do not move into a community; and if they already live there and can move out, they do.

In contrast, strong public schools can provide an important anchor to revitalize older communities.

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**Table 23: Percent of Public Education Spending in Pennsylvania Supported by Local Taxes 1990-2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2000-01</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IssuesPA, 2003a. State Spending on Basic Education as % of General Fund
Channel Public Investment into Existing Communities

There are many state policies in Pennsylvania that effectively subsidize new suburban development at the expense of existing communities. These include state subsidies for new school construction, highway construction and repair, police services and economic development. A recent report by the Brookings Institute identified examples of state-funded development projects that undermined older communities, while accelerating sprawl. (Brookings Report, 2003)

One strategy that states such as Maryland have adopted has been to prioritize public investment in older communities. These “fix-it first” strategies are designed to stabilize older communities and minimize the costs associated with suburban sprawl.

In Pennsylvania, Governor Ed Rendell has a program called Growing Greener II. It responds directly to the Brookings Report by providing significantly more direction and funding for revitalization of older communities and regional cooperation in planning implementation. The program has several elements: 1) funding for property redevelopment and demolition, 2) a matching grant program for joint municipal planning, 3) tax credits for historic preservation, and 4) funds for older and smaller communities to use for downtown retail and economic development. A state policy that promotes revitalization of older communities would likely help minimize the amount of migration and community instability influencing many parts of the Delaware Valley.

Develop a Regional Blight Strategy

Philadelphia has embarked on an ambitious effort to attack blight at the core of the region. Yet housing abandonment and neighborhood deterioration are clearly regional problems that cross municipal boundaries. City neighborhoods and older suburban areas share an acute need for dedicated resources to support housing renovation, infill construction and commercial redevlopment. A state supported fund for housing and commercial rehabilitation would help meet these needs in both areas.

Use Transportation Planning to Promote Community Development

One of the only policy areas where there is meaningful regional planning is around transportation. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is designated by the federal government to develop plans for spending federal transportation dollars. This makes it the de facto regional political entity in the Delaware Valley. The DVRPC emphasizes the need for investment in older areas, limitations on suburban sprawl and greater regional collaboration in its many publications and reports. Nonetheless, its decisions are the product of negotiations between counties in the region.

The Need for New Political Coalitions

While there are many good policy ideas for improving life in the region, the key challenge is to build political alliances that support a new direction for the region. The political coalition that would support an approach to state policy that emphasized investment in existing communities would bring together urban, older suburban and environmental interests. Faith institutions could play an important role in helping support this kind of coalition.

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PART VI. CONCLUSION

The needs expressed by religious leaders, both to address quality-of-life issues and build a stronger sense of community, are similar to the needs that have drawn many urban congregations to faith-based community organizing. While community organizing may need to operate differently as it moves out of its historically urban tradition, it could provide a valuable new tool for suburban congregations searching for ways to build faith community under conditions of great change and uncertainty.

An essential question facing faith institutions in the Delaware Valley is whether they can help shape the future of the region, rather than simply being carried along in the ebb and flow of decisions that lie outside their control. For a variety of reasons, the Philadelphia metropolitan area is expanding in a way that creates tremendous community instability in many suburban areas. This instability affects communities and congregations in different ways, but in one way or another, touches every part of the region. Indeed, many of the changes taking place within religious congregations have their origins in how the region is developing. Religious leaders express an understanding of the link between regional change and their institutions, but generally lack vehicles to respond more proactively to community change. Given the stake that faith institutions have in regional development and the current attention on smart growth and issues of regional equity, this is a unique opportunity for congregations to take a more active role in addressing issues at a local and regional level.
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1. Interviews with religious leaders typically begin by asking them to describe the demographic and socio-economic changes, over the past 10 years, in the communities in which their houses of worship are located, as well as changes within their own congregations.

2. More specific follow-up questions seek to identify the ways in which these changes affect the congregation in terms of its liturgical styles, community outreach, and social ministry.

3. A series of questions is posed in regard to how demographic changes are reflected in the local housing market; for instance, in sprawling suburban communities the rapid increase in the housing stock is attracting many new homeowners to communities that were, until rather recently, sparsely populated and had a great deal of open space.

4. In older, inner-ring suburbs real estate transactions occur mostly within the existing housing stock, questions seek to identify which types of residents are making their home available for sale (e.g., the elderly and/or upwardly mobile families who move into newer and larger housing as they achieve economic mobility).

5. Questions also seek to establish whether new homeowners in the older, inner-ring suburbs are primarily Philadelphians (and the section of the city in which they previously resided) or if they come from other parts of the state, or even from other states. Follow-up questions also focus on the racial/ethnic characteristics of new homeowners in inner-ring suburbs, and whether these new residents are being welcomed and absorbed into the established and mainstream religious communities, or if they maintain ties to their former congregations in Philadelphia, or elsewhere.

6. Several questions focus on the impact of demographic changes on parochial schools – namely, whether changes are strengthening or challenging the long-term viability of Catholic schools.

7. In congregations that are experiencing growth, and the need to add more institutional capacity to meet the pastoral needs of a burgeoning population, several questions address the relationship between religious institutions and zoning boards—an aspect of the church-state discourse that is receiving increasing attention by the press.

8. Questions are also directed to identifying community issues that are particularly relevant to congregants, like increasing property taxes, and the quality of public school education.

9. Some questions are designed to learn more about the relationship suburban communities and congregations have with the city of Philadelphia; for instance, whether religious communities partner with urban congregations and whether congregants are tied economically to the city (commuters), or if there is minimal contact with Philadelphia, say only for tourism and leisure activities.

10. Questions are also posed to learn about the issues facing youth in the local communities and congregations—particularly in areas with high rates of divorce, two-income parents, and/or lack of extended familial or communal networks of relationships.

11. At the end of the conversations, questions typically focus on identifying trends or issues that the pastors/ministers anticipate will impact on their congregations in the near future, for example, shifting residential patterns which are currently only beginning to alter the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the community.
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Rev. Frank Depman, Mission Santa Maria Church, Avondale, PA
Rev. Lisa Farrell, Penn Wynne Presbyterian Church, Wynnewood, PA
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Rev. Msgr. Thomas Flanagan, Corpus Christi Church, Lansdale, PA
Rev. Stephen P. Gutridge, Kennett Square Presbyterian Church, Kennett Square, PA
Rev. William S. Harrison, Presentation B.V.M., Cheltenham, PA
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