

# Missouri Synod Lutherans see falling numbers: Like ecumenical Protestants

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In a statistical report that likened its declining numbers to those of ecumenical Protestant denominations, the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod said that its baptized membership fell in 2008 by 45,735 members to a total of 2.33 million.

The number of LCMS congregations declined by 54 in 2008 but was offset by 102 new church starts and stands at 6,123 churches. But the average attendance at weekly worship services was 155, compared with 165 the year before.

One positive note in the Missouri Synod report was a rise in specialized ministries in areas such as education, human care and media efforts, according to John O'Hara, the LCMS's senior research analyst.

The economic recession was reflected in a \$57 million decrease in contributions to \$1.34 billion in 2008. Sunday school enrollment dropped nearly 44,000 to a total of 371,204 enrolled in that year.