

Appendix E: Mailing Address Lists

Companies wishing to market to religious congregations often purchase mailing lists. Such address lists are a possible source for locating religious congregations. In addition to mailing addresses, these lists often indicate congregational size, membership, and attendance. The Operations Committee first explored the possibility of using mailing address lists for the 2010 U.S. Religion Census.

Two of the first denominations to report data in 2010 were the Churches of Christ and the Church of the Nazarene. In comparing their 2010 denominational reports to those obtained through the mailing lists, it appeared that most of each group's churches were included in the address listing. For the Churches of Christ, the mailing lists included 54 percent of congregations, 80 percent of reported membership, and 65 percent of reported attendance. For the Church of the Nazarene, the mailing lists included 77 percent of congregations, 93 percent of reported membership, and 87 percent of reported attendance.

Part of the difficulty for third-party data collectors is determining to which denomination a church belongs. Denominations with similar names, such as Churches of Christ, United Church of Christ, Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, and Churches of Christ in Christian Union, are especially difficult to categorize. This may help to explain why the address list count for Churches of Christ is less complete than that for the Church of the Nazarene, which has a relatively unique name.

The Church of the Nazarene was among the first to report data to the 2020 Religion Census. After it reported, we compared 2020 address lists with the Church of the Nazarene's report to the Religion Census and noted significant omissions.

The Operations Committee determined that the address lists would not be used when denominational sources were available. However, those lists were able to provide sufficient information to estimate adherents for twenty-two religious bodies that were not able to provide their own data from which adherence could be derived. Eighteen of these bodies are historically African American; we explain use of address lists for them in Appendix D.

The address lists provided a basis for estimating adherents for two additional groups which had only provided congregational locations. These were the American Baptist Association and General Association of General Baptists. By use of the address list estimates, adherents for each of these groups could be included in the study.

The two remaining bodies, Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ World Wide, Inc., and Full Gospel Christian Assemblies International, had enough representation on the lists to justify their inclusion in the counts. Relying solely upon address list information, however, means that the denominations are underrepresented in the 2020 U.S. Religion Census.

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