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RESEARCH

Whither Thou Goest:

*Assessing the Current State
of Seminaries and Seminarians
in The Episcopal Church*

Church Pension Group
Office of Research

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Summary of Key Findings

- The average age of seminarians has risen considerably in the past six decades, from a low of 27 in 1955 to the recent high of 45, in 2009.
- The rate of Episcopal seminary attendance has declined in recent years, but:
 - Postulants under 35 attend Episcopal Church-affiliated seminaries at the same rate as 1980.
 - Postulants 35 and older are less likely to attend Episcopal (TEC) seminaries, and this tendency has grown with time.
 - Some dioceses exhibit a trend toward lower rates of Episcopal seminary attendance in the last decade, whereas others have maintained similar enrollment patterns over time
- Proximity to an official Episcopal Church-affiliated seminary is an important factor driving school selection, but is not the primary consideration among recent postulants.
- Many students remain near their seminary following graduation, even when sponsored for ordination by a geographically distant diocese.
- Recent seminary graduates are significantly less likely to have attended a “prestigious” undergraduate school than ordinands in the 1950s and 1960s.
- Younger priests (in terms of age at ordination) are more likely to:
 - earn higher salaries
 - be currently employed
 - be fully employed over the course of their career
- Graduates of Episcopal seminaries are more likely to be currently employed, and generally earn higher salaries.

- Female priests attended Episcopal seminaries at about the same rate as men, but they:
 - earn lower salaries after seminary, and five to 10 years into their career
 - have a higher probability of current unemployment
 - have lower rates of employment over the course of their career

- Tuition for Episcopal seminaries is slightly more expensive than the average tuition charged by accredited U.S. seminaries, but:
 - Episcopal postulants who attend a non-TEC seminary tend to enroll in schools that are as expensive (or more) than most TEC M.Div. programs.

I. Introduction

In light of The Episcopal Church’s well-documented membership declines over the past decade, many Episcopalians have asked how reduced Sunday attendance will impact seminary education and the formation of future clergy. It is reasonable to expect, for example, that a shrinking Church will require fewer new ministers and, therefore, fewer sites of theological education. Indeed, the closure of Seabury-Western’s residential education program in 2009, together with the financial troubles currently affecting a number of Episcopal seminaries, might suggest that the Church possesses a “capacity” for seminary education that exceeds its present and future needs.

Unfortunately, declining church membership is not the only challenge facing Episcopal seminaries. Along with broader (perhaps less well-understood) patterns of “secularization” that influence the prestige of ministry, it is widely believed that fewer newly ordained priests are attending official seminaries of The Episcopal Church (TEC). At the same time, the age of Episcopal ordinands has risen steadily in recent decades, meaning that newer priests serve fewer years, on average, than their counterparts in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Viewed in tandem, these parallel trends might seem to counteract each other, at least regarding seminary attendance. That is, even if fewer priests are attending Episcopal seminaries, it is possible that the shift toward shorter service tenures could lead to steady levels of Episcopal seminary attendance over time.

In this report, the Church Pension Group research team examines trends in Episcopal seminary attendance using data collected in the Church Pension Fund’s canonical role as the Recorder of Ordinations and for the *Episcopal Clerical Directory*. Our records, though incomplete for some clergy, are nonetheless the most exhaustive data source available regarding the education of Episcopal priests. Using these data we examine trends in clergy education during the years 1950–2010, with particular focus on:

- rates of enrollment in Episcopal seminaries over time
- the demographic and diocesan factors that influence Episcopal versus non-Episcopal seminary attendance
- geographic patterns of seminary attendance and job placement
- the undergraduate training of Episcopal priests
- salary and employment outcomes following seminary
- the influence of demographic factors, such as gender and age, on the distance postulants travel to attend seminary and when accepting their first cure

II. Episcopal seminary attendance over time

Overall, our seminary education data confirm the prevailing impression that a decreasing percentage of priests attend official seminaries of The Episcopal Church. Whereas in the 1950s about 83 percent of newly ordained priests in possession of a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) or Bachelor of Divinity (B.D.) degree attended a seminary affiliated with The Episcopal Church, by 2010 only about 64 percent had done so—a 19 percent drop. Declines in the rate of Episcopal seminary attendance in any given year, however, have been modest, at best.

Examining the past six decades of ordinands, the 1950s saw the highest rates of Episcopal seminary attendance, ranging from a low of 83 percent in 1950 to a high of 93 percent in 1959. In the 1960s, a general pattern of decline commenced, and has continued— if slowly—to the present day. The declines, which started in the 1960s, probably developed in response to the complex social transformations during this period that created more fluid expressions of denominational identity. In more recent years, a host of individual and social/structural changes contributed as well, such as the rising age of seminarians, the declining “prestige” of the ministry as a profession, and increasingly open diocesan standards regarding seminary education.

While the data tend to support the proposition that Episcopal seminary attendance is declining, there is little evidence to support a related educational hypothesis—namely, that large numbers of students are now attending Episcopal seminaries to “finish” their training after completing terminal degrees from non-Episcopal institutions. Although the number of priests combining a non-Episcopal M.Div. with a Certificate or Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) from an Episcopal seminary has risen during the past decade, the number pursuing this path continues to be relatively small (about 9 percent in 2010). Further time is needed, however, to assess if the upward trend that began in 2005 portends a new and increasingly common path to ordination in the coming years.

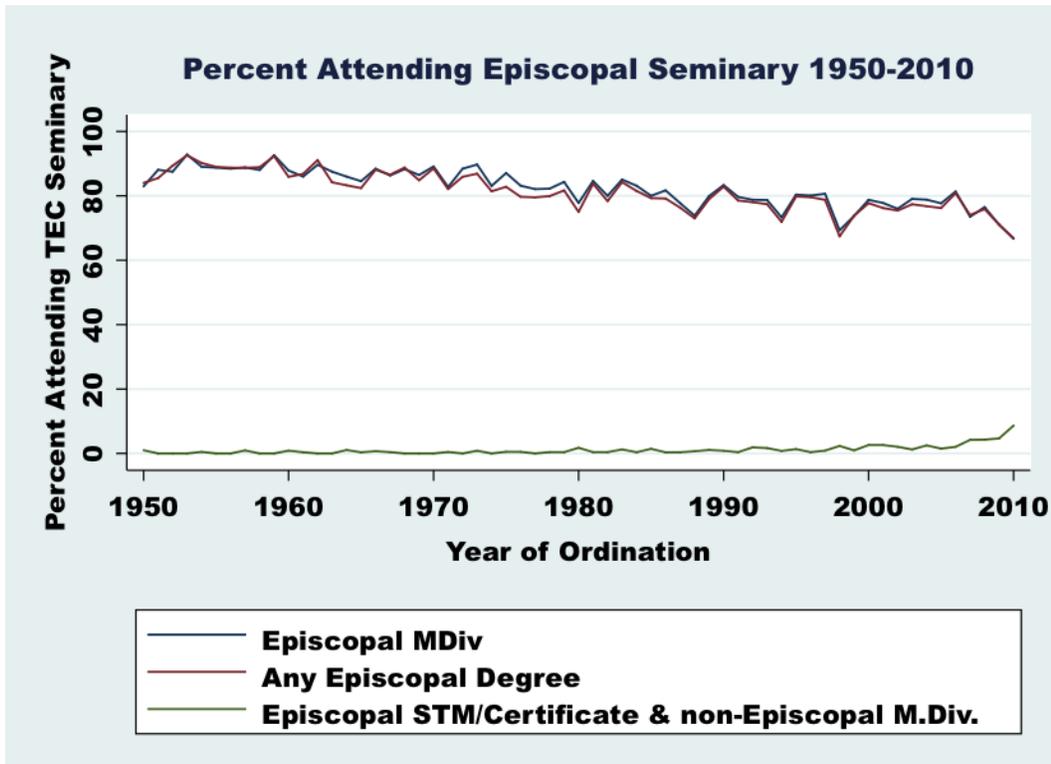


Figure 1. Percent of clergy attending Episcopal seminaries, 1950–2010.

III. Age, gender, and Episcopal seminary attendance

It is increasingly common for people in the United States to experience life-changing events—such as marriage, advanced schooling, and the birth of children—at later ages. At the same time, growth in the average age of seminarians has exceeded the nominal changes observed in other fields, such as medicine and law.¹ Consistent with seminary reporting and the anecdotal impressions of many, our data show that the mean age of seminarians in The Episcopal Church has risen dramatically in recent decades. Recent college graduates in their early twenties—once the “normative” Episcopal seminarian—are now something of an anomaly in many Episcopal M.Div. programs.

Opinions about the importance of this trend are multiple, contradictory, and often strongly held. Supporters often point to the pastoral benefits associated with the growing diversity of Episcopal priests, as well as the significant life experience that second-career clergy bring to their ministry endeavors. Those who are less supportive, conversely, tend to highlight the cost to the Church associated with training priests who serve fewer years, on average, before retiring. Others, focusing on academic achievement, argue that older seminarians, on average, tend to be less academically successful prior to entering seminary, and that these academic differences may have some impact on a cleric’s theological acuity or potential for parish leadership.² Although it is beyond the scope of this study to

examine the validity of these different claims, it is reasonable to assume that older and younger clergy bring somewhat different gifts and liabilities to their ministries.

At the same time, it is indisputable that the increasing age of seminarians—regardless of its positive or negative impact on the broader Church—has affected Episcopal seminaries. Mostly, this is because older seminarians are less likely to attend Episcopal schools than younger students. The reasons for this are many, but it is probably true that older seminarians tend to be more settled in particular regions. As social scientists have long noted, factors such as home ownership, children’s schooling, and the employment situation of one’s spouse frequently combine to make people less “mobile” with each passing year.³ For the Episcopal postulant who lives in close proximity to one of the Church’s (now) ten residential seminary programs, these geographic considerations may be less consequential. And yet this scenario describes less than one-third of recent ordinands. Most individuals who plan to earn an M.Div. must quit a job and relocate or travel large distances if they hope to attend an Episcopal seminary.⁴ These factors create higher “opportunity costs” for education and provide a plausible explanation for at least part of the declining rate of Episcopal seminary attendance that began during the 1960s. Put simply, the prospect of attending a regional, non-Episcopal seminary is likely more palatable for the average second-career seminarian than selling his or her home or travelling large distances in order to attend a denominationally affiliated school.

The rising age of newly ordained Episcopal priests is portrayed graphically in figure 2. The difference, decade-over-decade, is quite clear. Whereas in 1950 the average age of newly ordained priests was 29, by 2010 the average age rose to 44. The youngest cohort of priests in the past six decades occurred in 1955, with an average age of 27, whereas the oldest cohort was in 2009, with an average age of 47. Furthermore, the bimodal nature of the seminary age distribution (see figure 3, below) further suggests that many incoming students are actually quite a bit older—and younger—than 45.

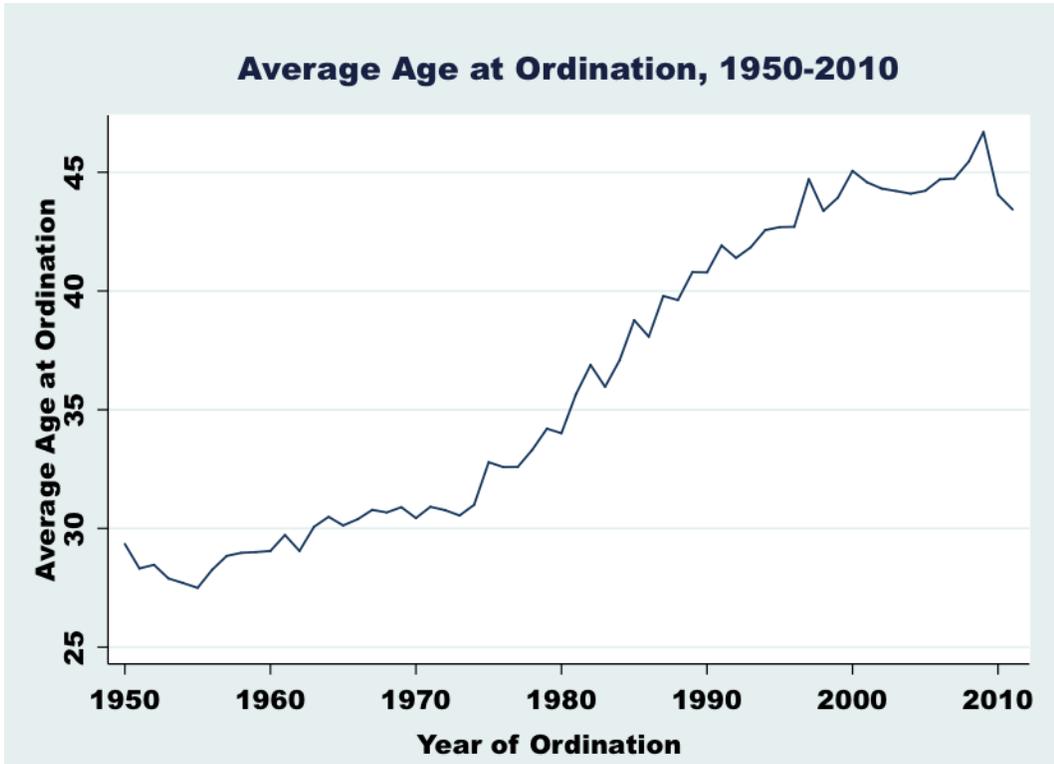


Figure 2. Average age at ordination, 1950–2010.

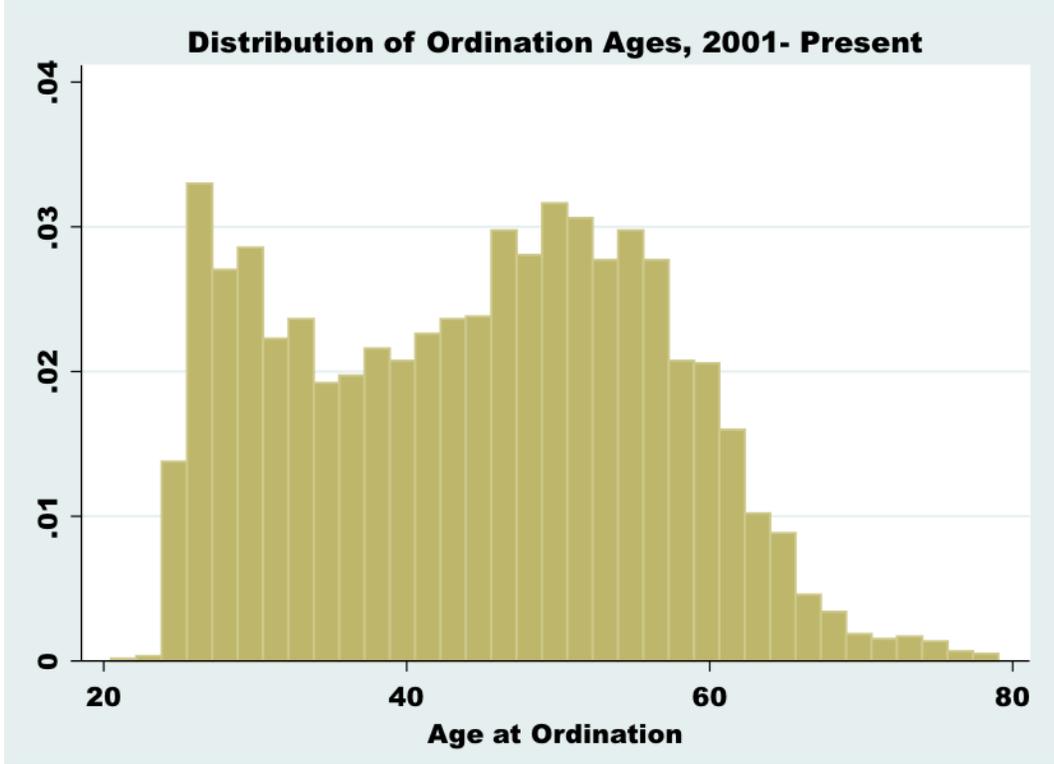


Figure 3. Distribution of ordination ages, 2001–present.

Figure 4, which compares seminary attendance by age, provides empirical support for the argument advanced earlier that older seminarians are less likely to attend Episcopal seminaries en route to ordination. Examining the years 1980–present (the period when older postulants begin to attend seminary in larger numbers), there is a 9.5 percent gap in Episcopal seminary attendance, on average, between priests ordained at the age of 35 or younger and those ordained at 36 years of age or older. With few exceptions (e.g., 1980), this gap has remained somewhat constant over the past three decades. Specifically, whereas an average of 84 percent of newly ordained priests age 35 and younger earned an M.Div. from an Episcopal seminary during this period, the corresponding figure for priests over 35 was about 75 percent. Examining this difference over time reveals that decline in the attendance rate among priests over 35 actually increased. That is, while the 35-and-under cohort begin and end the period with comparable rates of Episcopal seminary attendance (76 percent), the corresponding figure for seminarians over 35 dropped from 80 percent to 61 percent. This change—at least from the perspective of Episcopal seminaries seeking to maintain enrollment rates—takes on more significance in light of the rising age at ordination.

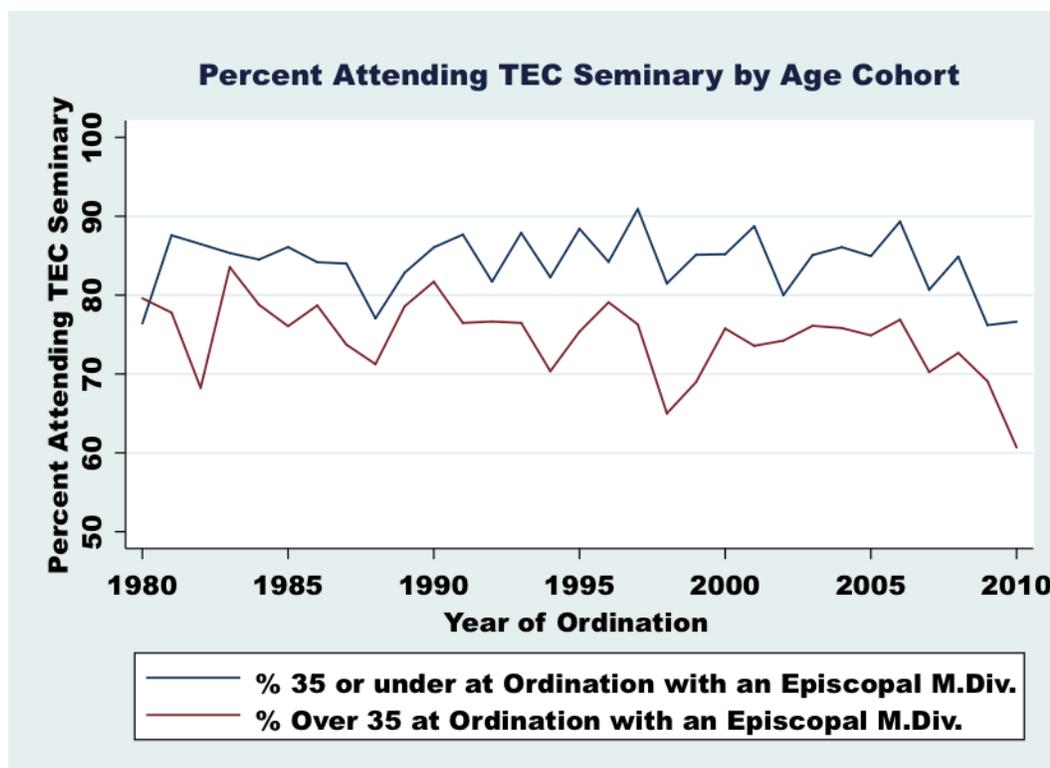


Figure 4. Percent attending Episcopal seminary by age cohort.

Our data also suggest that gender may subtly influence the chances that a postulant will attend an Episcopal seminary, although the differences between men and women are less striking when contrasted with age. For the years 1980–2010, about 79 percent and 76 percent of male and female priests, respectively, attended an Episcopal school. Examining the data year-over-year (figure 5)

suggests a trend toward equilibration. Whereas women were generally less likely than men to attend an Episcopal seminary over the years 1980–1995, this differential narrows with time. By 2010, in fact, both genders exhibit similar participation rates.

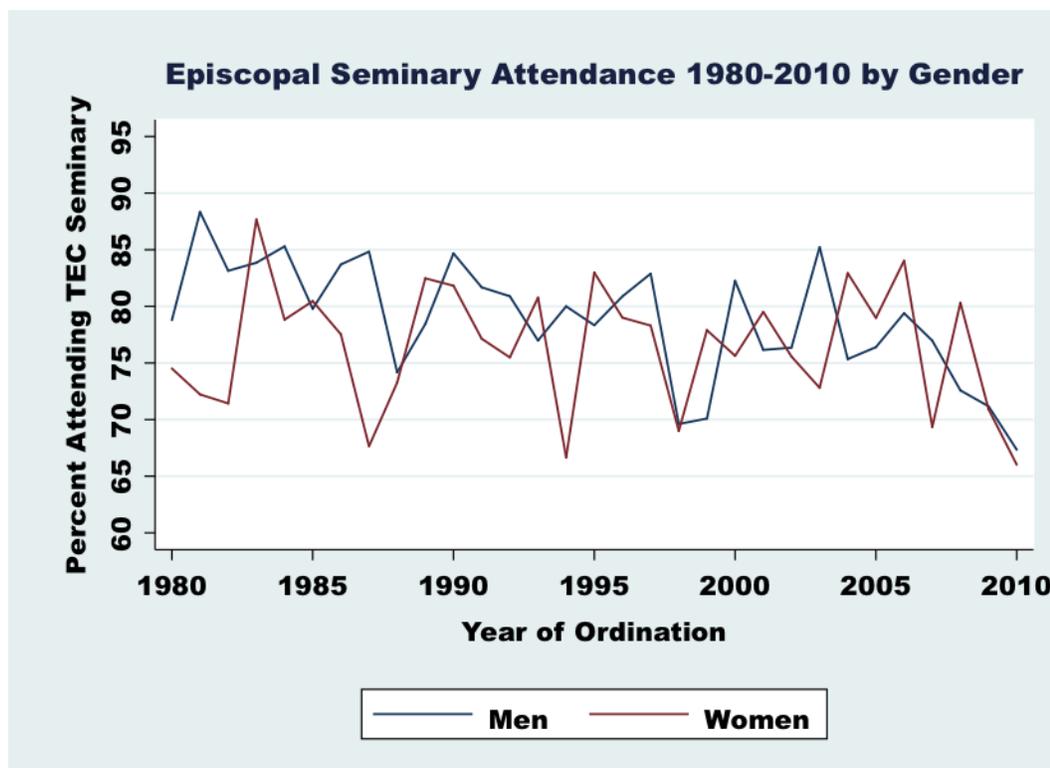


Figure 5. Episcopal seminary attendance by gender, 1980–2010.

IV. Diocesan influence on Episcopal seminary attendance

In Section III our analysis centered on demographic factors—such as age and gender—that appear to correlate with the likelihood that a postulant will attend an official Episcopal seminary. While these factors do appear to be consequential, it is also true that bishops, sponsoring parishes, and diocesan Commissions on Ministry influence a postulant’s choice about which seminary to attend. Figures 6 and 7 graphically portray aggregate patterns in Episcopal seminary attendance within U.S. dioceses for the years 1971–1981, and 2001–2011. Comparison of these figures suggests that variance in Episcopal seminary attendance at the diocesan level is a somewhat recent phenomenon. For example, during the years 1971–1981 only two dioceses had rates of 50 percent or less, whereas 38 domestic dioceses had rates in excess of 90 percent, and 62 were above 80 percent.⁵ By comparison, and for the years 2001–2011, five dioceses had rates below 50 percent, only 19 had rates above 90 percent, and 52 were above 80 percent.⁶ Examining the 2001–2011 period diocese by diocese, the different rates of Episcopal seminary attendance—ranging from less than 50 percent in some to nearly 100 percent in others—suggest that school selection is not solely an individual choice. Moreover, and surprisingly, the

geographic proximity of an official Episcopal seminary to one's sponsoring diocese does not appear to be the most significant factor influencing school selection. If this were the case, we might expect to see lower rates of Episcopal seminary attendance in the West and Midwest (where there are fewer Episcopal seminaries), and significantly higher rates in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast (where there are five Episcopal schools). In point of fact, however, no such pattern emerges. In the western United States, where there is only one TEC-affiliated seminary and large distances separate many cities, eight dioceses have Episcopal seminary participation rates over 81 percent. Conversely, in the northeastern U.S., six dioceses have rates below 51 percent. Given the known decline in Episcopal seminary attendance that occurred in the last five decades, it is reasonable to expect some decline when comparing these two periods. At the same time, the very comparison itself makes clear that some dioceses account for a larger proportion of the changing rate of Episcopal seminary attendance than others.

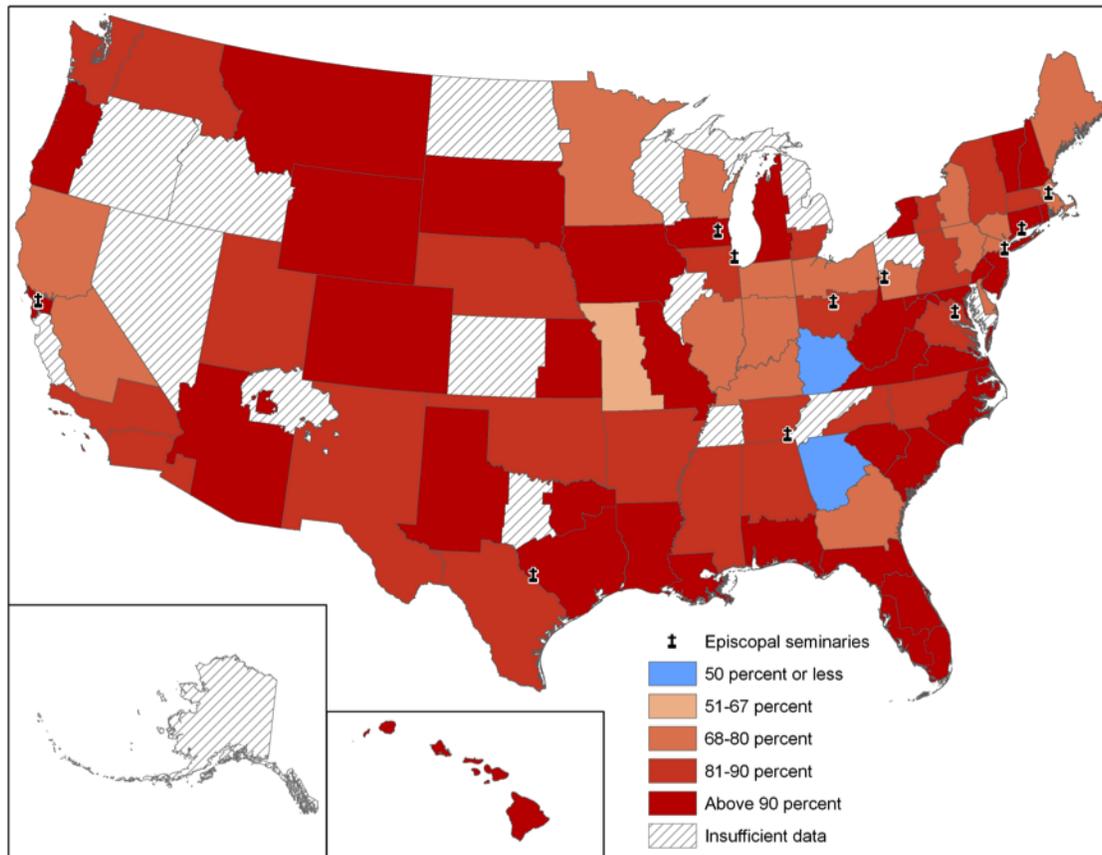
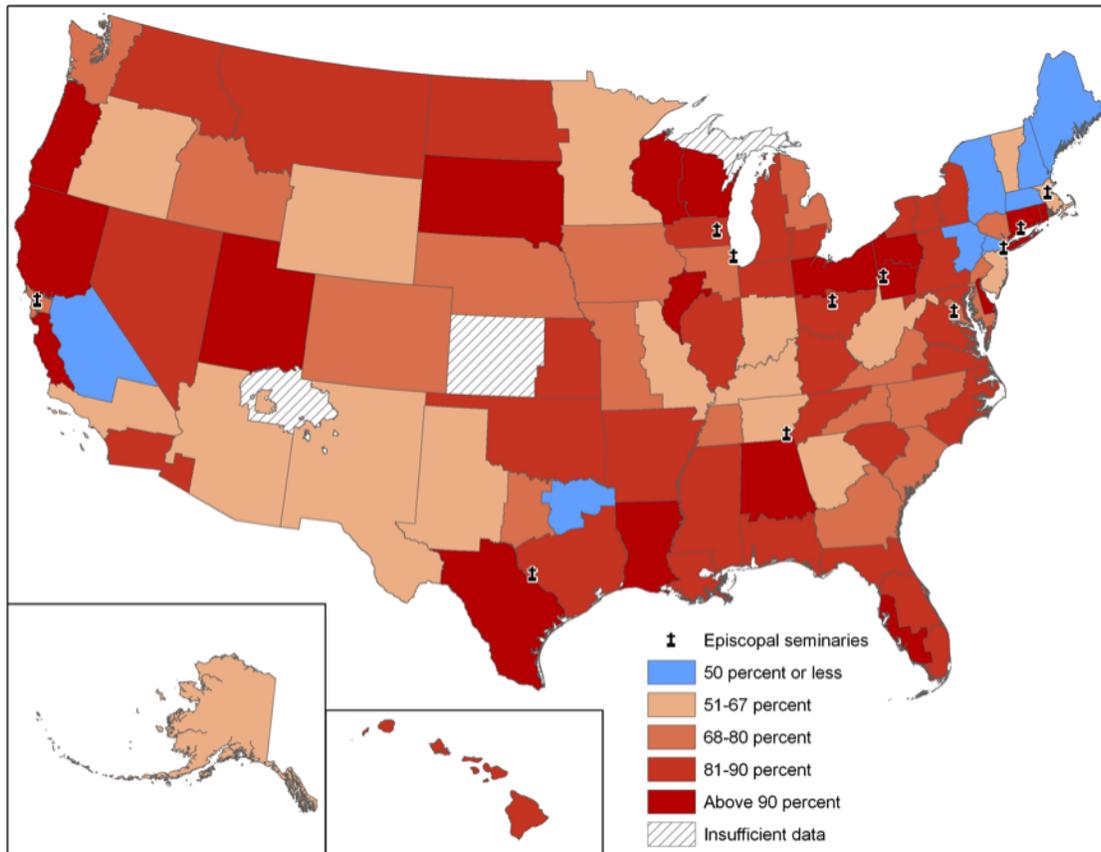


Figure 6. Episcopal seminary attendance by diocese, 1971–1981.

Figure 7. Episcopal seminary attendance by diocese, 2001–2011.



When viewed as a whole, these findings suggest that a host of demographic and diocesan factors influence a postulant’s school selection. The impact of age on this decision process, together with the rising age of newly ordained clergy, supports the hypothesis that current rates of Episcopal seminary attendance will probably continue (or further decline) for the foreseeable future. At the same time, the greater “openness” of some dioceses to non-Episcopal seminaries—revealed in the differing attendance patterns presented above—tends to suggest that diocesan-level initiatives to promote Episcopal seminary attendance may impact this trend should the Church wish to slow or reverse it.

V. Where do recently ordained Episcopal priests attend seminary?

Table 1 presents the seminary backgrounds of two cohorts of actively working clergy: those ordained during the years 1990–2000, and those ordained 2001–2011. For both cohorts, Virginia Theological Seminary and General Theological Seminary are the most-attended Episcopal seminaries, followed by Sewanee, Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, and Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Among non-Episcopal seminaries, 15 schools account for about half of the 687 divinity degrees awarded to Episcopal priests by institutions of another denomination or faith tradition.

Overall, priests in both cohorts exhibit similar educational patterns. While some Episcopal seminaries moved up or down several spots in terms of overall attendance, the percentage of priests educated by each institution within the two cohorts is comparable. With respect to non-Episcopal seminaries, Union Theological Seminary, Harvard, Candler, and Duke collectively awarded 137 of the 549 non-Episcopal divinity degrees earned by Episcopal clergy during this period. In addition, and consistent with the general decline in Episcopal seminary attendance described earlier, the number of graduates from official TEC seminaries was only 8 percent higher in the 2001–2011 cohort, whereas the total number of non-Episcopal seminary graduates in this group increased by 25 percent.

	1990–2000		2001–2011	
Episcopal Seminaries	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Virginia Theological Seminary	387	20%	439	21%
General Theological Seminary	254	13%	316	15%
Sewanee	216	11%	242	12%
Berkeley Divinity School at Yale	188	10%	205	10%
Church Divinity School of the Pacific	216	11%	189	9%
Seminary of the Southwest	149	8%	165	8%
Seabury-Western*	195	10%	144	7%
Trinity School for Ministry	129	7%	134	6%
Nashotah House	66	3%	103	5%
Episcopal Divinity School	100	5%	99	5%
Bexley Hall	43	2%	61	3%
Total	1,943	100%	2,097	100%
Top Fifteen Most Attended Non-Episcopal Seminaries	Frequency	Percent of non-TEC MDivs	Frequency	Percent of non-TEC MDivs
Candler School of Theology	31	6%	42	12%
Princeton Theological Seminary	19	3%	38	11%
Union Theological Seminary	42	8%	33	10%
Duke Divinity School	24	4%	30	9%
Harvard Divinity School	40	7%	28	8%
Claremont/Episcopal Theological School	25	5%	24	4%
Drew University	13	2%	24	7%
Southern Methodist, Perkins	Not in top 15 1990-2000		19	6%
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	20	4%	17	5%
Fuller Theological Seminary	15	3%	14	4%
Iliff School of Theology	11	2%	14	4%
Vanderbilt Divinity School	12	2%	14	4%
Andover Newton Theological School	8	1%	12	3%
Gordon-Conwell Theological School	13	2%	12	3%
Lutheran Theological Seminary	Not in top 15 1990-2000		11	3%
Total	273 (549 Overall)	50%	343 (687 Overall)	50%

*Residential M.Div. program closed as of 2009

Table 1. Episcopal and non-Episcopal seminary attendance of active priests

VI. Distance travelled from diocese to seminary

Table 2 examines the relationship between distance and Episcopal seminary attendance. Within the first three distance categories, there is a modest drop in Episcopal seminary attendance: 78 percent among those who live within 100 miles of an Episcopal seminary, 76 percent for those 100 to 149 miles, and 71 percent for those 150 to 300 miles. Conversely, there is a slight increase in attendance among those who live more than 300 miles, a finding which stems from the fact that when postulants do travel large distances for seminary, they are more likely to do so if they are attending an Episcopal seminary (see also table 3).

Predictably, analyzing the geographic distribution of those who do not attend an Episcopal seminary reveals the opposite pattern. That is, within each distance category the percentage of postulants who attend non-Episcopal seminaries tends to increase with distance (though less so in the greater than 300 miles category, for reasons noted above).

Interestingly, examining the totals within each distance category reveals that nearly two-thirds of all priests ordained in this period lived within 300 miles of an Episcopal seminary, and nearly half lived within 150 miles. When contrasted with existing rates of Episcopal seminary attendance, the fairly large number of proximate institutions suggests that geographic factors exert a modest impact, at most, on seminary selection. That is, the similarity of attendance patterns within each distance category suggests that geographic considerations, for many priests, are not the primary factor involved in seminary selection.

Distance from Sponsoring Diocese to Seminary				
Attended an Episcopal Seminary	< 100 Miles	100-149 Miles	150-300 Miles	> 300 Miles
Yes	715	266	371	812
(Column %)	78%	76%	71%	73%
(Row %)	33%	12%	17%	38%
No	205	85	150	295
(Column %)	22%	24%	29%	27%
(Row %)	28%	12%	20%	40%
Total	920	351	521	1,107
(Column %)	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Row %)	32%	12%	18%	38%

* Based on distance between the population-weighted geographic center of a postulant's diocese and the nearest Episcopal seminary.

Table 2. Distance to an Episcopal seminary, 2001–2011 ordinands.

Table 3 further examines the relationship between geographic factors and seminary selection. Using a statistical technique known as robust regression,⁷ we assess the impact of eight different predictor variables on the distance⁸ a postulant travels in order to attend seminary. Similar to other forms of multiple-regression, predictor variables that are “significant” in this model are correlated with the outcome (distance travelled to seminary) even when controlling for the effect of all other predictors. Specifically, a significant “positive” predictor is one whose value tends to increase as the value of the outcome increases, whereas significant negative predictors inversely correlate with the outcome. For example, and more concretely, we find in table 3 that the variable measuring whether a postulant is from the Northeast is significant and negatively correlated with the number of miles traveled to seminary.⁹ Substantively, this finding suggests that—on average and controlling for the impact of other factors in the model, such as gender—postulants from the Northeast tend to travel shorter distances to attend seminary than students from other parts of the country. With the caveat that some northeastern dioceses exhibit lower rates of overall Episcopal seminary attendance, this finding is understandable given both the population density of this region and the number of Episcopal seminaries which serve it.

Interestingly, the only statistically significant, positive variable in this model is Episcopal seminary attendance. This finding, in essence, suggests that postulants who travel larger distances to attend seminary are more likely to do so if it is an Episcopal institution. Given the generally modest correlation between school selection and proximate institutions (see table 2), this further suggests that postulants who travel large distances to an Episcopal seminary frequently “pass” several other Episcopal schools along the way. Similarly, younger seminarians (in terms of age at ordination) are more likely to travel large distances for seminary than older ones. Consistent with the discussion above, this finding reflects the manner in which geographic mobility tends to decrease with age.

Similar to the variable measuring age at ordination, female gender is statistically significant and negatively related to seminary distance. Because it is known that recent male and female ordinands attend Episcopal seminaries at comparable rates (see figure 4), the significance of this variable suggests that female postulants, on average, tend to attend seminaries closer to their sponsoring diocese. For example, between two hypothetical postulants in the state of California, the male postulant is more likely to travel large distances to attend seminary (e.g., to VTS), whereas the female postulant is more likely to attend CDSP. Substantively, this finding comports with the results of CPG’s previous study, “Called to Serve,” where 31 percent of married female clergy who were unable to find a parish position (vs. 6 percent of married male clergy) reported that they were “not geographically mobile.”¹⁰

Predictor Variable	Effect	Effect Size	Significant
Attended TEC seminary	Positive	8.04	Yes
Female gender	Negative	-3.19	Yes
Age at ordination	Negative	-3.71	Yes
Northeast region	Negative	-5.01	Yes
Southern region	--	1.44	No
Midwest region	--	-0.81	No
Works in sponsoring diocese	--	-1.80	No
Top undergraduate school	--	-1.59	No

Table 3. Predictors of diocese-to-seminary distance, ordinands 2001–present.¹¹

Table 4 summarizes the top three sponsoring dioceses of seminary graduates for each of the 11 official Episcopal seminaries that operated in the last decade. Additionally, the table reports the average distance postulants traveled to seminary from their sponsoring dioceses. As the table demonstrates, most seminaries attract a significant number of their students from the diocese in which they are located. Among the 11 schools listed in table 4, the diocesan location of the seminary itself sends more students than any other Episcopal diocese (Nashotah House and Sewanee being the exceptions). The second- and third-ranking dioceses, however, tend to reveal connections between dioceses and seminaries that transcend simple regional convenience. For example, postulants from the Diocese of Atlanta constituted the second-largest group of General Theological Seminary graduates in our sample, while postulants from the Diocese of West Texas tended to enroll at Sewanee rather than the geographically closer Seminary of the Southwest. Conversely, Seminary of the Southwest attracts postulants from the Diocese of Central Gulf Coast who could have perhaps more easily attended Province IV’s Sewanee, were distance the primary consideration.

Dioceses Sending Most Postulants to Seminary				Average Distance to Traveled to Seminary
Episcopal Seminaries	Diocese 1	Diocese 2	Diocese 3	Distance (miles)
Berkeley Divinity School at Yale	Connecticut	Virginia	New York	638
Bexley Hall	Southern Ohio	Western New York	Rochester	200
Church Divinity School of the Pacific	California	El Camino Real	Los Angeles	667
Episcopal Divinity School	Massachusetts	New Hampshire	Pennsylvania	481
General Theological Seminary	New York	Atlanta	New Jersey	632
Nashotah House	Quincy	Fort Worth	South Carolina	620
Seabury-Western *	Chicago	Michigan	Colorado	447
Seminary of the Southwest	Texas	Central Gulf Coast	Colorado	675
Sewanee	Alabama	West Texas	Central Florida	493
Trinity School for Ministry	Pittsburgh	Central Florida	South Carolina	592
Virginia Theological Seminary	Virginia	Washington	Texas	577

* Residential M.Div. program closed as of 2009

Table 4. Top sending dioceses and average distances traveled to Episcopal seminaries, ordinands 2001–present.

Moving to the right of table 4, the estimates for “average distance traveled” function as a proxy for the relative regional or national “reach” of each Episcopal seminary. At an average distance of 200 miles, Bexley Hall postulants make the shortest journeys from their home dioceses to seminary; conversely, Seminary of the Southwest and CDSP postulants travel the longest distances at around 670 miles. Such distances are perhaps expected given the large distances between the population hubs of Provinces VII and VIII; however, the average distances of the northeastern seminaries (Berkeley at Yale and General) are not significantly shorter (at around 630 miles). These figures suggest that Berkeley and General have a much more national reach than many of the other seminaries. Figures 8 and 9, which provide visual representations of the provenance of seminarians for both General and CDSP, further illustrate this point.

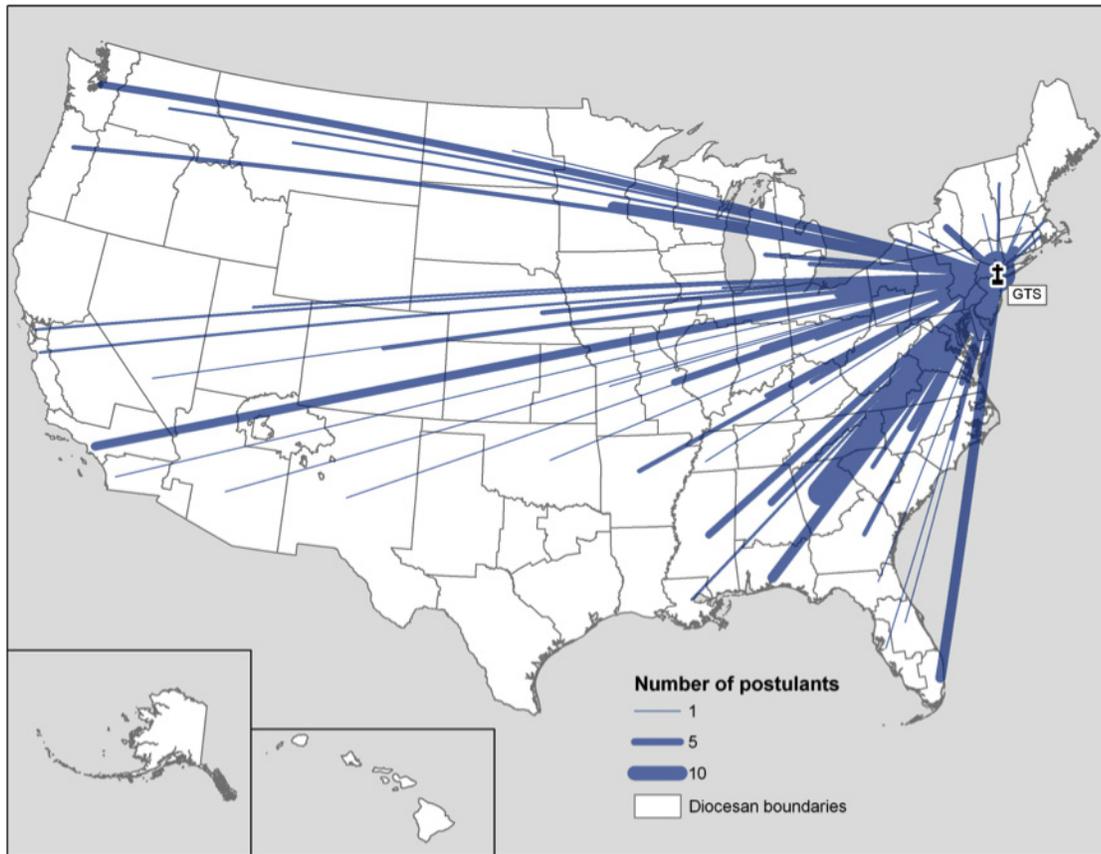


Figure 8. Sponsoring dioceses of General Theological Seminary graduates.

The map of General graduates (figure 8) points to some of the pipelines identified in table 4, such as General’s prominence in the New York region and the linkages between the seminary and the Diocese of Atlanta. However, the map also reveals General’s ability to attract postulants from geographically distant dioceses, as our sample includes multiple General graduates from dioceses such as Southeast Florida, Central Gulf Coast, Los Angeles, Olympia, and Minnesota. This map stands in contrast to the map of CDSP graduates (figure 9), which reflects CDSP’s identity as the principal Episcopal seminary of the western United States. CDSP has educated large numbers of postulants from the California dioceses, and other western dioceses like Oregon, Olympia, and Alaska. However, its reach generally does not extend beyond Province VIII, aside from a few postulants from large dioceses like Long Island, New York, and Chicago. For example, our data identify very few links between CDSP and the southeastern US.

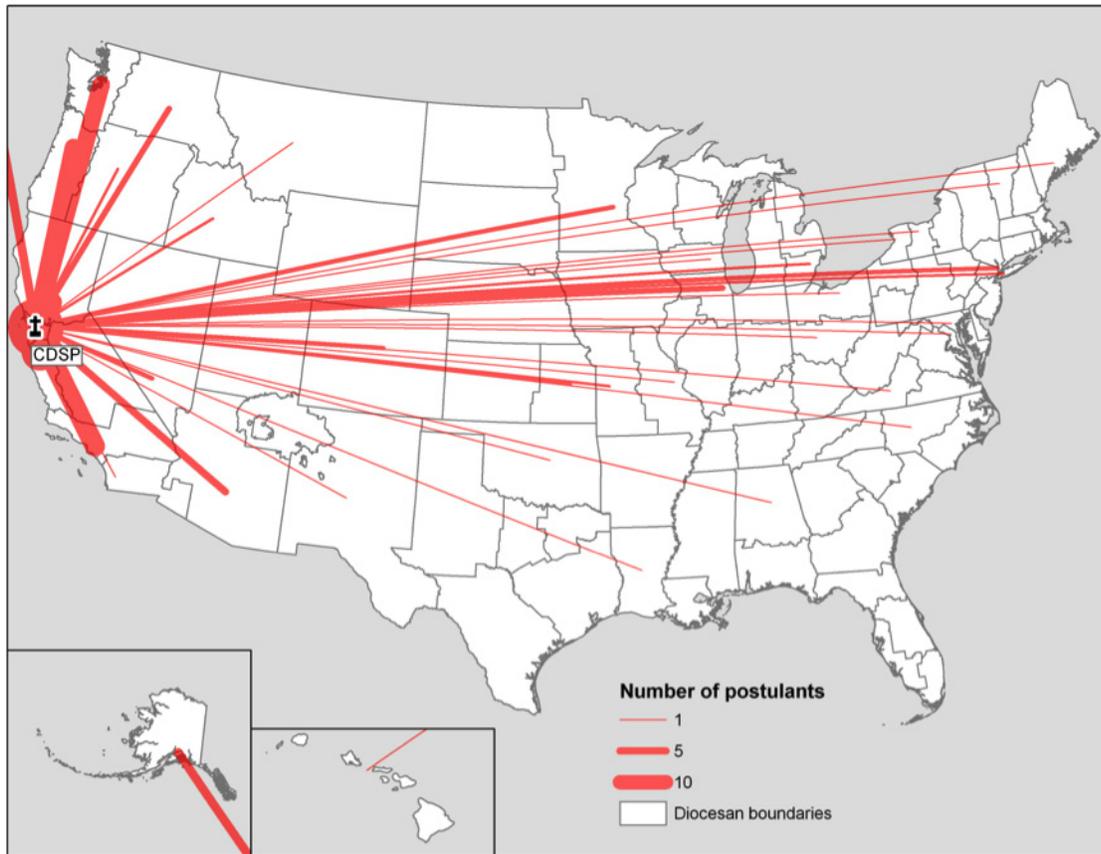


Figure 9. Sponsoring dioceses of Church Divinity School of the Pacific graduates.

VII. Predicting Episcopal seminary attendance

Whereas many of the figures presented above depict aggregate trends in, for example, age at ordination and the gender composition of Episcopal seminarians, it is also informative to model the combined impact of these factors on the odds that a given priest will attend an Episcopal seminary. Toward this end, “logistic regression”—a widely utilized statistical procedure—allows us to assess the impact of a specific variable, such as gender, on the probability that a postulant will choose an Episcopal seminary. In addition, and similar to the regression models above, this procedure allows us to assess the impact of one factor while simultaneously controlling for the effect of all other variables in the model.

We present the results of such an analysis in table 5, where Episcopal seminary attendance is regressed on seven predictors. In this model, four variables predicting the odds of attending an Episcopal school are statistically significant (two positively, two negatively). The variable measuring the distance a postulant travelled in order to attend seminary has the largest (standardized) effect, which suggests that students are more willing to move or travel long distances if their chosen school is one of the affiliated seminaries of TEC. In addition, the importance of this variable likely reflects the manner

in which “opportunity costs” influence school selection. That it is statistically significant even when controlling for the effect of age further suggests that geographic factors influence the school selection for all postulants, regardless of age.

Sponsorship by a diocese in the southern U.S. also has a statistically significant, positive effect on the odds of Episcopal seminary attendance.¹² This finding is consistent with the generally darker red hues for this region found in figure 6, and again suggests that some dioceses may issue a stronger preference (or requirement) for Episcopal seminary attendance than others.

Similar to our discussion in Section III, female postulants are not less likely to attend an Episcopal seminary than their male colleagues, at least during the period 2001–2011. Conversely, age at ordination is significant and negatively related to attendance. For example, a 10-year increase in a postulant’s age is associated with a 16 percent decrease in the odds of attending an Episcopal seminary.¹³ Similarly, the odds of Episcopal seminary attendance for clergy who work within their sponsoring diocese following ordination are, on average, 37 percent lower than the odds for those who do not.

Variable	Effect	Effect Size	Significant
Female gender	-	0.79	No
Age at ordination	Negative	-2.69	Yes
Northeast region	-	-0.22	No
Southern region	Positive	2.2	Yes
Midwest region	-	0.76	No
Works in sponsoring diocese	Negative	-3.36	Yes
Distance to seminary	Positive	5.43	Yes
Top undergraduate school	-	-1.35	No

Table 5. Predictors of Episcopal seminary attendance, 2001–2011.

VIII. Geographic trends among recent ordinands following seminary

In this section our focus shifts from seminary attendance to vocational trends among recent graduates. Much like table 4, above, the data in table 6 detail the principal diocesan destinations of seminary graduates currently employed in parochial ministry. Similar to our analysis of sending dioceses, the results suggest that Episcopal seminaries commonly place graduates in ministry positions within the school’s home diocese. For example, only the top receiving dioceses of Sewanee and Trinity graduates are located outside the schools’ diocesan locations.

Dioceses Employing Most Graduates in Parochial Ministry				Average Distance to First Job
Episcopal Seminaries	Diocese 1	Diocese 2	Diocese 3	Distance (miles)
Berkeley Divinity School at Yale	Connecticut	New York	Massachusetts	496
Bexley Hall	Southern Ohio	Ohio	Western New York	293
Church Divinity School of the Pacific	California	Oregon	Olympia	998
Episcopal Divinity School	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania	Connecticut	372
General Theological Seminary	New York	Long Island	Pennsylvania	414
Nashotah House	Milwaukee	Central Florida	South Carolina	699
Seabury-Western *	Chicago	Michigan	Western Michigan	433
Seminary of the Southwest	Texas	Central Gulf Coast	West Texas	463
Sewanee	Alabama	West Texas	Florida	455
Trinity School for Ministry	South Carolina	Albany	Central Florida	659
Virginia Theological Seminary	Virginia	Washington	Texas	511

* Residential M.Div. program closed as of 2009

Table 6. Destinations of seminary graduates in parochial ministry, 2007–2011 ordinands.

In several instances, there is a correspondence between postulants’ dioceses of origin and the dioceses where they later find employment. For example, the Seminary of the Southwest–Central Gulf Coast and Sewanee–West Texas connections remain evident in table 6. Additionally, just as dioceses like Central Florida and South Carolina often send their postulants to Nashotah House and Trinity School for Ministry, those dioceses are also providing parochial employment opportunities for the graduates of those seminaries.

Despite these similarities, however, some notable differences emerge as well. On average, graduates of nearly all of the seminaries travel shorter distances to find parochial employment than they did to attend seminary. For example, graduates of General travel 218 fewer miles to their first job. This difference suggests an increased tendency for graduates to find employment in the area around their seminary—possibly due to professional networks cultivated during their studies—regardless of the dioceses from which they were sponsored. CDSP stands out as a notable exception to this rule, however, as its graduates travel an average of 331 miles further to serve in parochial ministry than they did to attend seminary. These trends are evident in figures 10 and 11, which display “hot spots” of General and CDSP graduates serving in parochial ministry in the United States.

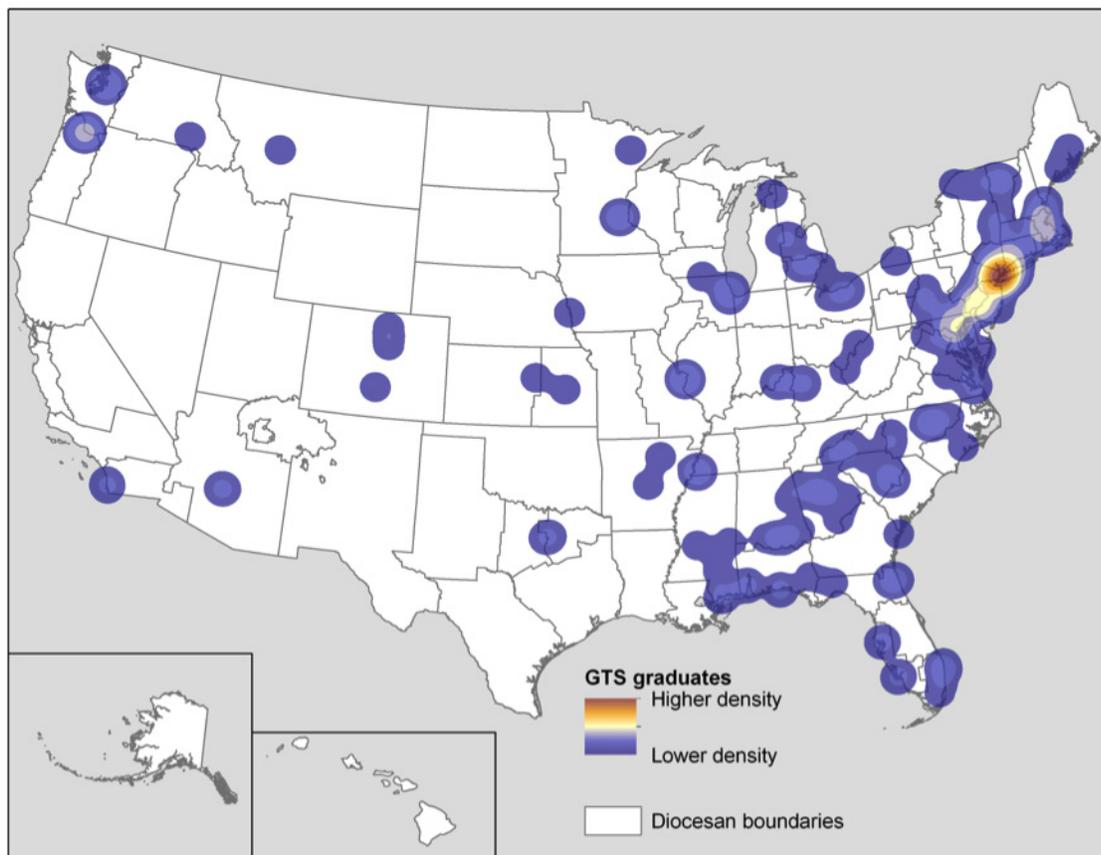


Figure 10. General Theological Seminary graduates in parochial ministry.

While General graduates are found serving parishes in many parts of the country, the highest concentration is found in and around New York City, extending southward to Philadelphia and Maryland. Additionally, excepting a small concentration of clergy serving parishes in Portland, Oregon, graduates of General infrequently accept positions on the West Coast of the United States, even in large dioceses like California and Los Angeles. Conversely, while expected concentrations of CDSP graduates are found in the large population centers of the West Coast, figure 11 also reveals moderate hot spots of CDSP graduates working in the New York City and Boston areas.

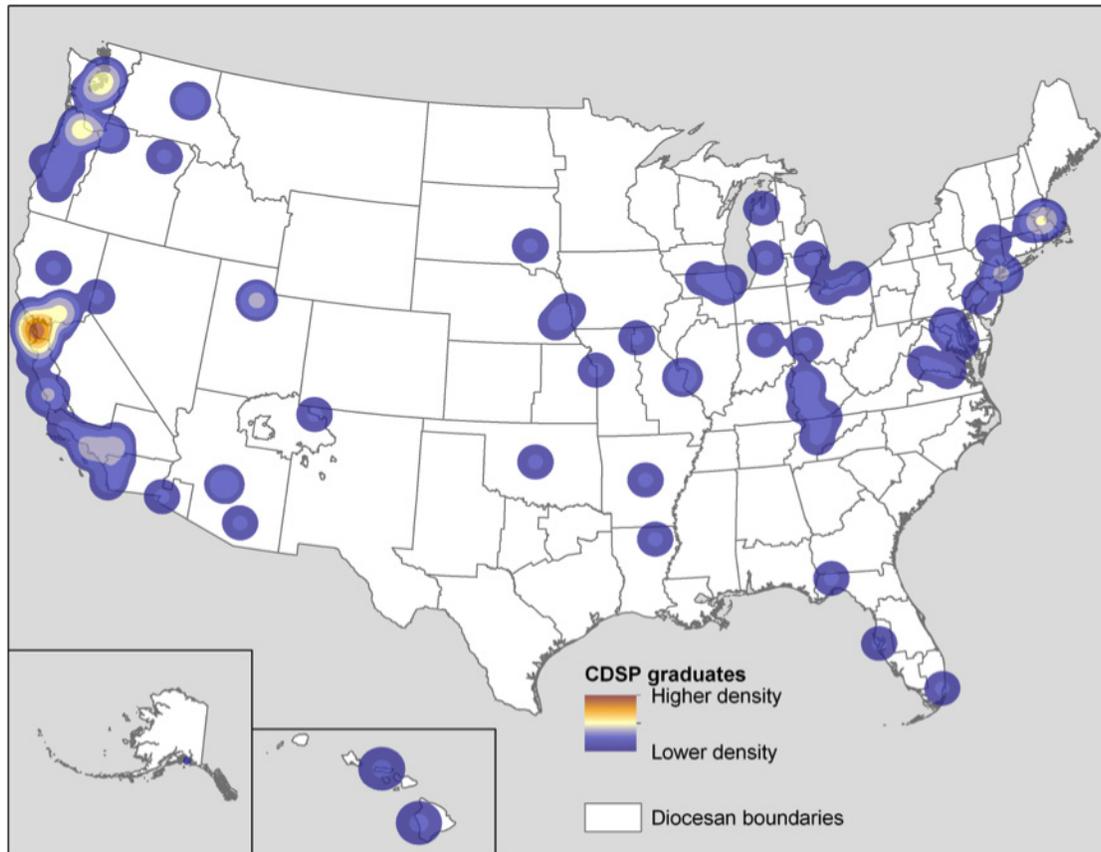


Figure 11. Church Divinity School of the Pacific graduates in parochial ministry.

IX. Predicting professional outcomes for recent ordinands

Using a statistical technique similar to Section VII,¹⁴ we now examine the factors that influence four post-seminary outcomes: compensation, career employment rate, current employment, and the size of the first parish served by ordinands. Given that compensation tends to change as individuals progress in their career (e.g., through raises or job changes that return a higher salary), we split the population of recent ordinands into two cohorts for this portion of our analysis: those ordained 2001–2006, and those ordained 2007–present. Table 7 contrasts the 12 predictors of clergy compensation for both groups. Here, because we are modeling something with a specific monetary value (compensation), “coefficients” refer to specific changes in compensation associated with different levels of a given predictor variable (and in that predictor’s scale). For example, a coefficient of 32.41 for the variable “Parish ASA” means, specifically, that each additional parishioner is associated with an approximately \$32 increase in salary for those ordained in 2001–2006. Crucially, it is important to note that this effect is present even when controlling for all other variables in the model, such as age, number of years ordained, etc.

Overall, most of the statistically significant predictors in table 7 are correlated with compensation in the expected directions. For example, in both cohort models we find that priests who serve larger parishes (in terms of ASA), priests who work in the Northeast (with its higher average cost of living), and priests who have been ordained longer (and thus have more experience) all tend to earn higher salaries. In addition, the results also suggest that 2001–2006 ordinands who attended an Episcopal seminary earn \$4,134 more per year, on average, than those who did not. Interestingly, this effect is absent within the 2007–present cohort. This difference could suggest, alternately, that the impact of Episcopal seminary attendance on compensation has declined in recent years, or that its “effect” does not materialize until several years after one’s ordination. As more recent ordinands progress in their ministry we will be able to assess better if this is a lasting change or, conversely, a typical pattern in clergy compensation.

Among negative predictors of clergy compensation, female gender, unfortunately, is consistently associated with lower salary levels, even when controlling for other factors. For the more recent cohort of ordinands, female priests earn, on average, about \$6,053 less than their male colleagues. For the 2001–2006 cohort, the gap increases by 19 percent to \$7,218. Furthermore, this increase—19 percent—exceeds the 12 percent difference which separates the average salary for each cohort.¹⁵ Taken together, these findings suggest that the negative relationship between gender and compensation tends to increase as the average female cleric advances in her career. While a variety of factors probably account for this finding, previous research suggests that some portion of the difference between male and female compensation is accounted for by geographic factors.¹⁶ That is, to the extent that female clergy are more likely to seek local employment than men, they may accept positions with a lower compensation level than could be obtained following a national search.¹⁷

Variable	Ordained 2001–2006			Ordained 2007–Present		
	Effect	Coefficient	Significant	Effect	Coefficient	Significant
Attended TEC seminary	Positive	4133.87	Yes	--	445.60	No
Parish ASA	Positive	32.41	Yes	Positive	24.10	Yes
Seminary to first parish distance	--	-0.95	No	--	0.86	No
Years ordained	Positive	1492.06	Yes	Positive	3957.37	Yes
Female gender	Negative	-7216.94	Yes	Negative	-6052.60	Yes
Age at ordination	Negative	-157.37	Yes	Negative	-157.50	Yes
Northeast region	Positive	5328.63	Yes	Positive	6469.03	Yes
Southern region	--	787.96	No	--	1449.30	No
Midwest region	--	-3732.13	No	--	2308.32	No
Works in sponsoring diocese	Negative	-4215.57	Yes	Negative	-4693.31	Yes
Top undergraduate school	--	-494.17	No	--	756.36	No
Married	--	-531.57	No	--	1002.54	No

Table 7. Predictors of current compensation, ordinands 2001–2006 and 2007–present.

Though less markedly than gender, the data also reveal that one’s age at ordination tends to have a negative impact on compensation. Specifically, each additional year of age before one’s ordination is associated with a \$157 decrease in average salary. Thus, priests who are ordained at age 50 will earn, on average, about \$3,140 less than newly ordained 30-year-old clergy. From a purely market-based standpoint this finding is perhaps to be expected: if the “supply” of younger priests is decreasing, their “market value” will tend to increase—a basic tenet of micro-economic theory. At the same time, the processes underlying this difference are probably more complex. For example, and as we noted earlier, older/second-career priests tend to be less geographically mobile, which, in turn, may limit earning potential (inasmuch as national job searches may result in additional, potentially higher paying offers). Moreover, and to the extent that some second-career clergy finish seminary with residual savings amassed through previous employment, factors such as overall quality of life, proximity to family, etc., may be more important considerations than maximal compensation. While it is not possible to tease out the relative impact of these factors, it is likely that both market factors and the age-dependent needs of newly ordained clergy contribute to the differences revealed in our models.

Table 7 presents the results of a model predicting the employment rate of Episcopal priests ordained during the years 2001–present. Here, “employment rate” refers to the number of years a cleric has worked¹⁸ since her or his ordination. For example, a hypothetical cleric who has worked

continuously since her ordination in 2006 would score a “1” (that is, 6/6). Conversely, clergy who have experienced periods of unemployment (or under-employment) since their ordination will score lower on this measure.

Analyzing the results in table 7, we find, similar to the compensation models above, that clergy ordained 2001–2006 whose first position was within larger churches tend to experience higher employment levels throughout their careers. Substantively, this finding suggests that ordinands who go on to work for larger churches following seminary tend to experience fewer periods of unemployment than those who initially work for smaller churches. A similar trend is evident among the more recent cohort of ordinands, although the effect size of this parameter falls just below the standard threshold for statistical significance. Similarly, the model suggests that priests who have been ordained longer (“years ordained”) experience higher employment levels, overall, during their career. This is to be expected in that a person’s employment quotient will tend to increase over time if s/he maintains a steady, full-time ministry position.

Regrettably, but similar to the findings on compensation, female priests in both cohorts tend to experience lower rates of employment than their male colleagues. This suggests that, even when controlling for factors such as age at ordination and parish size, female clergy experience less continuous employment throughout their career than men. In light of this finding, however, it is important to note that our data do not allow us to assess if differing employment levels among male and female priests are sometimes volitional in nature (i.e., whether female clergy “demand” lower employment rates than male priests).

Variable	Ordained 2001–2006			Ordained 2007–present		
	Effect	Effect Size	Significant	Effect	Effect Size	Significant
Attended TEC seminary	--	1.33	No	--	1.2	No
First parish ASA	Positive	3.31	Yes	--	1.95	No
Seminary to first parish distance	--	-0.52	No	--	-0.12	No
Years ordained	Positive	6.64	Yes	Positive	4.8	Yes
Female gender	Negative	-3.12	Yes	Negative	-2.09	Yes
Age at ordination	--	0.36	No	Negative	-2.63	Yes
Northeast region	--	-1.26	No	--	-0.71	No
Southern region	--	-0.16	No	--	1.56	No
Midwest region	Negative	-2.93	Yes	--	-0.24	No
Works in sponsoring diocese	Positive	2.3	Yes	--	0.1	No
Top undergraduate school	--	-1.96	No	--	0.99	No
Married	--	0.02	No	--	-0.4	No

Table 8. Predictors of employment rate, ordinands 2001–2006 and 2007–present.

Table 9 presents a logistic regression modeling a cleric’s current employment status.¹⁹ Here, because we are modeling current employment—as opposed to the rate describing the continuity of career employment—the results will tend to differ from those presented in table 8. For example, whereas female gender has a significant, negative impact on employment rate (see table 8), no such pattern emerges when examining current employment status.

For the 2001–2006 cohort, the variables measuring southern region, Episcopal seminary attendance, and whether a cleric is married, are significant and positively correlated with employment. These findings, in effect, suggest that married priests, graduates of Episcopal seminaries, and those working in the South are all more likely to be currently employed.

Conversely, and consistent with the compensation and employment rate patterns presented earlier, priests who are ordained at an older age are less likely to be employed. Interestingly, the proxy for whether a cleric is working/canonically resident in his or her sponsoring diocese is also negative and statistically significant—a finding that comports with compensation levels but differs from career employment rate. This finding suggests that priests in this category may have had a higher risk of losing their position amidst the recent period of recession and economic stagnation, although further research is needed to understand this trend.

Variable	Ordained 2001–2006			Ordained 2007–Present		
	Effect	Effect Size	Significant	Effect	Effect Size	Significant
Attended TEC seminary	Positive	2.48	Yes	Positive	3.32	Yes
Years ordained	--	0.94	No	Positive	6.18	Yes
Female gender	--	1.23	No	--	0.63	No
Age at ordination	Negative	-3.32	Yes	Negative	-4.05	Yes
Northeast region	--	1.82	No	--	-0.23	No
Southern region	Positive	2.24	Yes	--	1.15	No
Midwest region	--	1.91	No	--	-0.22	No
Works in sponsoring diocese	Negative	-2.71	Yes	Negative	-2.6	Yes
Top undergraduate school	--	-0.13	No	--	1.16	No
Married	Positive	2.69	Yes	--	1.51	No

Table 9. Predictors of 2011–2012 employment, ordinands 2001–2006 and 2007–present.

Table 10 presents two models predicting the average Sunday attendance (ASA) of the first parish served by recent ordinands. As with the compensation models, we divide the population into

two cohorts: those ordained 2001–2006, and those ordained 2007–present. In these models, however, the outcome to be explained is the parish size at the ordinand’s first parish position. While many factors contribute to the “fit” of a parish for a given ordinand, employment in large congregations—which offer higher salaries (see table 7) and diverse opportunities for ministry and professional development—can also be viewed as a proxy for “successful” placement in a ministry setting following seminary. Certainly, placement within a large congregation does not constitute “success” in every case, but it is nonetheless instructive to examine how these (increasingly rare) positions are distributed among recent ordinands.

Among the eight variables regressed on parish size in table 5, age at ordination has the largest standardized effect within both cohorts. Similar to clergy compensation, this finding suggests that younger clergy (in terms of age at ordination) are more likely to find employment in large congregations following their graduation from seminary. While this might suggest that larger parishes prefer to hire younger assistants or curates, it should not be interpreted as an unconditional preference for younger priests but, in many cases, a desire to balance the (typically) older age of their senior clerical staff.

Much like the employment models (table 9), priests in the 2001–2006 cohort who serve in the South tend to work for larger parishes—a finding consistent with the generally higher rates of Episcopal Church participation throughout this region.²⁰ Interestingly, within the same cohort female gender is also correlated with larger church size. While this finding may appear counterintuitive vis-à-vis the compensation and employment rate data presented earlier, it is in fact consistent with known patterns of job placement among ordinands during this era.²¹ That is, younger female priests were more likely than men to work as curates or associates within multi-staff parishes (which are typically larger than solo-rector parishes). At the same time, it should also be noted that these same priests, over the course of their career, earn smaller salaries and work less continuously, on average, than their male colleagues. Moreover, the same correlation between gender and parish size is not found among the 2007–present ordinands, suggesting that the pattern may have changed in more recent years.

Variable	Ordained 2001–2006			Ordained 2007–Present		
	Effect	Effect Size	Significant	Effect	Effect Size	Significant
Attended TEC seminary	--	1.54	No	--	-0.06	No
Seminary to first parish distance	--	-0.54	No	--	-0.78	No
Female gender	Positive	2.53	Yes	--	0.59	No
Age at ordination	Negative	-5.33	Yes	Negative	-6.6	Yes
Northeast region	--	-1.06	No	--	-1.65	No
Southern region	Positive	3.21	Yes	--	1.95	No
Midwest region	--	-0.94	No	--	-0.1	No
Works in sponsoring diocese	Negative	-2.41	Yes	--	0.29	No
Top undergraduate school	--	1.11	No	--	0.89	No
Married	Positive	2.29	Yes	--	-0.88	No

Table 10. Predicting the size of first church assignment, 2001–2006 and 2007–present.

X. Undergraduate training of Episcopal priests

Although the principle aim of this study is to examine trends in seminary education and the professional trajectories of recent ordinands, it is also instructive to analyze the different kinds of educational backgrounds characteristic of Episcopal priests. In particular, while our clergy database has less information about a priest prior to his or her seminary training and ordination, it does contain undergraduate information for many clergy. Thus, combining these data with published rankings of U.S. colleges, we were able to create a new variable measuring the proportion of new ordinands, 1950–present, who attended a “top-ranked”²² U.S. college.

Substantively, our interest in this question traces to the work of scholars, such as Barbara Wheeler,²³ who argue that the declining prestige of ministry makes it more difficult for mainline denominations to attract the “best and brightest” college graduates into seminary and ordained ministry. From this perspective, it is thought that the most talented students increasingly choose secular fields, such as law and medicine, to develop their professional skills and potential for leadership. With the caveat that attributes such as intelligence and professional potential are notoriously difficult to measure (and potentially reproduce social biases around race, class, and gender), our data do support Wheeler’s hypothesis that fewer mainline ordinands are attending top-ranked undergraduate schools. Figure 12 portrays this trend graphically for the years 1950–2010. Overall, the data suggest that the number of priests who attended an Ivy League or top-ranked undergraduate school declined

significantly during this period, particularly between 1950 and 1970. Whereas 16 percent and 50 percent of Episcopal ordinands attended an Ivy League or top-ranked undergraduate school in 1950, respectively, the corresponding figures for 2010 ordinands were 6 percent and 30 percent. While the importance of this finding for the broader Church is quite open to debate, there can be little doubt that the academic backgrounds of incoming Episcopal seminarians has changed a great deal over the past six decades (along with other factors, such as age and gender). At this time we do not find evidence that these trends have a statistically significant impact on congregational growth, but a future study, currently in process, will examine this question more deeply.

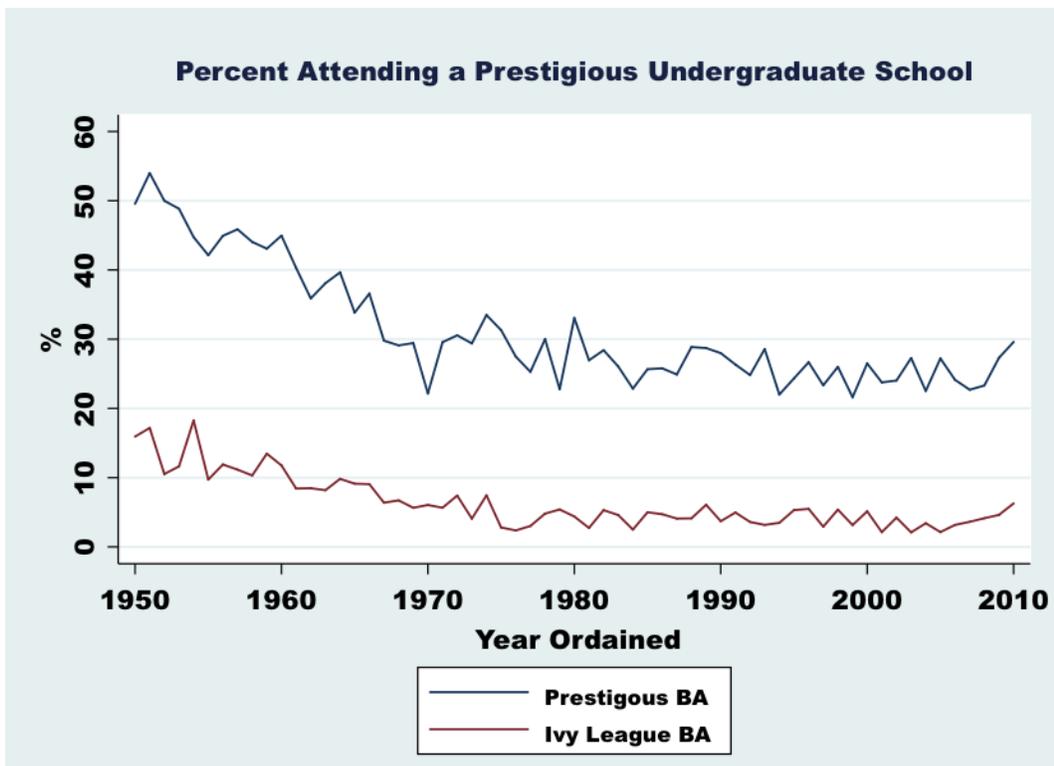


Figure 12. Percent of Episcopal ordinands attending a prestigious undergraduate school, 1950–2010.

XI. The cost of a seminary education

Similar to most colleges in the United States,²⁴ the tuition charged by Episcopal seminaries has risen considerably in recent years, even when controlling for inflation. At the same time, and when compared to other U.S. seminaries, this growth is not particularly exceptional. That is, the cost of Episcopal seminaries has generally mirrored changes in the population of institutions accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Although theological education remains less expensive on average than, for example, law or medical school, the rate of compensation seminarians can expect to earn following ordination imbues these tuition increases with additional significance. Moreover, the absence of large-scale subsidization of seminary education by the denomination—something found in other mainline denominations, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—has meant that

most of this expanded financial burden is placed on students, dioceses, sponsoring parishes, and the seminaries themselves.

Rising seminary costs are especially significant in light of the generally older population of Episcopal students now entering M.Div. programs. In particular, the shorter period of time older students spend in compensated ministry creates less time to amortize educational debts. For the postulants who enter seminary in their late fifties and take out student loans—something not uncommon—these debts may continue into retirement without careful financial planning. While a precise estimate of the number of students who take out loans is not yet available for the 2011–2012 academic year, ongoing research by CPG in cooperation with the Society for the Increase of the Ministry (SIM) suggests that approximately one-third of all seminarians take out student loans to finance their education. Among those who rely on loans to complete their training, over half borrow in excess of \$20,000, and some borrow as much as \$50,000 or more. Similarly, a majority of students liquidate a portion of their existing assets, most commonly IRAs, pension funds, CDs, and/or a house or other real estate. The average amount of liquidated assets varies considerably, from less than \$1,000 for some individuals to over \$50,000 for others. To the extent that Episcopal seminarians resemble the broader population, however, this strategy will be less viable in the coming years given the rapidly declining net worth of U.S. households.²⁵

Table 11 presents tuition data for the 10 Episcopal seminaries during five academic calendar years: 1980-1981, 1990-1991, 2000-2001, 2010-2011, and 2012-2013. The general pattern of rising costs—even in constant dollars—is unmistakable. Similar to many U.S. higher education institutions, the largest increase (60 percent) occurs during the 1980s, following by 12 percent to 16 percent growth in the 1990s and 2000s. With the exception of the 2012–2013 cycle, when average TEC tuition decreases by 2 percent (mostly on account of a tuition reduction by Sewanee), tuition has increased faster than the U.S. inflation rate for all Episcopal seminaries. In most cases, growth in the real cost of seminary training has mirrored the financial conditions of the school itself. For example, VTS—noted for its financial stability—had the smallest growth in tuition 1980–2010, whereas the tuition at CDSP nearly tripled during this same period.

In addition to TEC data, Table 11 reports the average tuition for all ATS member schools, as well as tuition for a regionally balanced selection of non-TEC seminaries commonly attended by Episcopal postulants. Although ATS tuition estimates are not available for the 1980–1981 cycle,²⁶ the data for the 1990–1991, 2000–2001, and 2010–2011 academic years reveal that Episcopal schools are generally more expensive than the average ATS school. Specifically, the inflation-adjusted premium for TEC schools ranges from \$3,139 in 1990 to \$2,082 in 2010. While this gap is significant it also appears to be declining, in part because tuition growth for the population of ATS schools has

outstripped that of TEC seminaries in recent years. Moreover, tuition rates for the most “comparable” non-TEC schools (e.g., Claremont) are similar to TEC seminaries. In fact, some schools attended by many Episcopal postulants (e.g., Union Theological Seminary) currently charge tuition rates that are substantially more than any Episcopal seminary.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the growing cost of seminary—though significant for many priests’ future financial well-being—has little impact on the choice between an Episcopal or non-Episcopal seminary. On this point, the tuition rates for the top 15 most-attended non-Episcopal seminaries (see table 1) compare favorably with (and in several cases greatly exceed) the rates charged by most TEC seminaries. The seeming absence of a monetary advantage among the top non-TEC schools suggests that a postulant’s choice of seminary (assuming that his or her diocese permits this) is more directly related to issues of academic fit, theological resonance, or impressions of prestige. Regarding the latter factor, while income potential in many fields is generally improved by attending a prestigious school such Harvard or Duke, we find no evidence to suggest that graduating from the seminaries of these institutions is correlated with more favorable employment outcomes.²⁷

Episcopal Seminaries (All figures reported as 2012 dollars)	1980–81	1990–91	2000–01	2010–11	2012–13
Berkeley-Yale	\$10,742	\$18,005	\$18,620	\$21,210	20,800
Bexley Hall	\$5,022	\$8,765	\$10,885	\$12,827	16,200
CDSP	\$5,859	\$9,856	\$12,725	\$17,136	16,320
EDS	\$7,533	\$14,080	\$17,955	\$13,781	13,776
ETSS	\$5,859	\$10,912	\$12,329	\$13,810	13,150
GTS	\$6,975	\$14,080	\$12,236	\$15,015	15,000
Nashotah	\$8,370	\$10,164	\$11,970	\$12,600	12,000
Sewanee	\$8,258	\$13,904	\$12,914	\$18,463	14,724
Trinity	\$4,743	\$5,280	\$8,618	\$10,238	10,200
VTS	\$6,975	\$7,700	\$8,446	\$11,550	12,500
Average TEC tuition	\$6,898	\$11,275	\$12,670	\$14,663	14,467
Percent change TEC tuition	--	60%	12%	16%	-1%
Select Non-Episcopal Seminaries					
Bangor Theological Seminary	--	\$9,346	\$11,372	\$14,018	14,700
Candler School of Theology	--	\$13,200	\$15,042	\$17,955	18,800
Claremont School of Theology	--	\$10,560	\$10,374	\$20,874	15,240
Southern Methodist, Perkins	--	\$9,673	\$11,619	\$12,986	18,912
Seattle Univ. School of Theology	--	\$14,066	\$13,574	\$10,546	10,764
Union Theological Seminary	--	\$17,512	\$17,290	\$22,985	22,980
ATS average tuition (all accredited schools)	--	\$8,135	\$9,839	\$12,580	--
Percent change ATS tuition	--	--	21%	28%	--
ATC minus TEC average tuition	--	-\$3,139.67	-\$2,831.15	-\$2,082.90	--

Table 11. Seminary tuition costs, select schools and academic years.

XII. Summary and conclusion

Broadly speaking, the models and analysis in this study provide support—and some challenge—to a number of prevailing assumptions about recent Episcopal ordinands. Without a doubt, the average age of seminarians and, consequently, Episcopal priests, is increasing. Moreover, a proportionally larger number of the older and second-career clergy who make up this trend do not attend Episcopal seminaries en route to ordination. Conversely, priests ordained at an earlier age tend to exhibit greater geographic mobility when choosing a seminary and, to some extent, when seeking their first cure. These same age-dependent patterns—regardless of their causal genesis—appear to play out in the “market” for Episcopal clergy, where those ordained at a younger age generally earn higher salaries, find more continuous employment, and work for larger congregations.

In addition to age, the results strongly suggest that gender influences employment outcomes much more than seminary selection. While female priests, in recent years, attended Episcopal seminaries at about the same rate as men, they tend to earn lower pay and work less frequently than their male colleagues. While it is beyond the scope of this study to assess the different factors that contribute to this finding, the fact that the Church’s employment patterns tend to mirror broader trends in the U.S. labor market will likely be of concern to many.

To the extent that the Church wishes to change the general trend toward non-Episcopal seminary attendance, our results suggest that diocesan initiatives may have significant impact given the large differences identified among domestic dioceses. In addition, and in terms of the individual factors that influence seminary attendance, dioceses may do well to improve (or create new) programs that support, in particular, older postulants who are weighing the relative costs and merits associated with different theological education programs. Toward this end, “partial residency” programs, such as the distributive learning option currently offered by Episcopal Divinity School, may present a viable alternative for seminarians unable to move long distances.

We also expect that the intersection of four trends— rising age at ordination, growing seminary tuition/fees, decreasing average net-worth of U.S. families, and the diminishing number of full-time, well-compensated TEC parish positions—creates a number of dilemmas for both the TEC seminaries and their students. As our results demonstrate, many priests ordained in late middle age experience less favorable employment outcomes. This fact, together with the shorter amount of time they are able to work in compensated ministry positions, means that educational financing through large student loans or asset liquidation creates an unstable financial position for the future cleric. It is doubtful, for example, that many of these priests will be able to replace significant IRA withdrawals made in order to finance the costs (and lost income) associated with seminary training. These issues are no

less problematic for the seminaries, in that future students, on average, will have fewer such assets to liquidate if recent economic trends continue. Viewed as a whole, these various patterns underscore how important it is for many individuals and groups—dioceses, seminary alumni/ae, the laity, and the denomination itself—to contribute funds in support of Episcopal educational institutions. This subsidization is important not only for the stability of TEC seminaries, but also for the financial health of future clergy.

Methodological Appendix

A1. Statistical Models

	Dependent Variables (Table)	Notes
Logistic regression	TEC seminary attendance (5) TEC employment (X)	“Effect size” estimates are standardized Z-scores of the coefficient parameters. In-text “percent change” estimates are computed as: ²⁸ $(\exp(\beta) - 1) \times 100$
Robust regression	Compensation Employment rate ASA of first parish	Parameter estimates calculated with a combination of Huber ²⁹ weights and bi-weight iterations per the “rreg” procedure within Stata 12. ³⁰

A2. Variable Construction

Variable	Source/Notes
Diocese-to-seminary distance	Diocesan location (as X-Y coordinates) are calculated as the population centroid within the diocese’s spatial borders, per the “weighted mean center” procedure in ARCGIS. ³¹ Seminary X-Y coordinate estimates based on the institution’s published address. Distance is estimated as the geodetic length separating the input coordinates via the “geodist” add-on function within Stata 12.
Seminary-to-parish distance	Parish X-Y coordinates estimated using its published address within CPG records. Distance calculated using Stata’s geodist function per the description above.
Works in sponsoring Diocese	Dummy indicator (i.e., taking on values of 0 or 1) for whether a cleric now works in the diocese from which s/he was initially sponsored for ordination.
Top undergraduate school	Dummy indicator (i.e., taking on values of 0 or 1) for whether a cleric attended (1) an Ivy League member school; (2) a liberal arts school ranked within the top 50 of this class by <i>U.S. News & World Report</i> ; or (3) a state school ranked within the top 50 of this class by <i>U.S. News & World Report</i> .
Gender, age, ordination age, marital status	Data drawn from an April 17, 2012 extract of the Episcopal Clerical Directory (cite) database.
Compensation, employment status/rate	Estimates drawn from the 2011 Clergy Compensation report. 2012 estimates are also utilized where available.
First/current parish ASA	Estimates drawn from the Episcopal Church’s annual Parochial Report, 2001–2010. ³²

Notes

- ¹ Barbara Wheeler, “Is There a Problem? Theological Students and Religious Leadership for the Future” (2001), 1-2, <http://www.auburnseminary.org/students-and-graduates?par=838>
- ² Ibid, 1-2.
- ³ See, for example, James P. Markey and William Parks II, “Occupational change: pursuing a different kind of work,” *Monthly Labor Review*, September 1989, <http://bls.gov/mlr/1989/09/art1full.pdf>. For a more recent online panel discussion, see *The New York Times*, January 10, 2010, <http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/a-nation-of-hunkered-down-homebodies/>
- ⁴ Specifically, for the years 2001–2011, postulants travelled an average of 576 miles to attend an Episcopal seminary.
- ⁵ These figures exclude dioceses that sent fewer than four postulants to seminary during this period.
- ⁶ These figures exclude dioceses that sent fewer than four postulants to seminary during this period.
- ⁷ See Methodological Appendix for additional information on model specification.
- ⁸ Here, “distance” is an estimate of the number of miles between the seminary a cleric attended and the population-weighted center of his/her sponsoring diocese. Because we rely on population density, variance in this estimate will tend to be larger for postulants sponsored by geographically larger dioceses.
- ⁹ Mathematically, regression requires a “reference” group for all categorical variables. Thus, in this and subsequent multivariate models the western region operates as the reference category.
- ¹⁰ “Called to Serve: A Study of Clergy Careers, Clergy Wellness, and Clergy Women,” (Church Pension Group, 2009), 26-27, <http://www.cpg.org/research>
- ¹¹ See Methodological Appendix for additional information on variable construction and model specification.
- ¹² Mathematically, regression requires a “reference” group for all categorical variables. Thus, in this and subsequent multivariate models, the western region operates as the reference category.
- ¹³ See Methodological Appendix for additional information on the calculation of percent-change estimates with logistic regression coefficients.
- ¹⁴ See Methodological Appendix for additional information on model specification.
- ¹⁵ Specifically, average compensation for the 2001–2006 cohort was \$62,606, whereas the comparable figure for 2007–present ordinands was \$55,854 – a 12 percent difference.
- ¹⁶ “Called to Serve,” 26-27.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Specifically, we model the number of years of credited service a cleric has earned within the Church Pension Fund relative to her or his year of ordination. To be included in this model, a cleric must have reported compensation for the year 2011. Therefore, those who are not currently working in a ministry position, or who are working for a non-Episcopal institution and opt out of the Clergy Pension Plan, are not included this model. Although a number of priests, following their ordination, do not work for Episcopal institutions, this constraint is appropriate within the current study given our primary focus on Episcopal ordinands and their service within The Episcopal Church.
- ¹⁹ More specifically, employment is measured here as the presence of current 2011–2012 compensation data.
- ²⁰ Regional estimates for average parish size were compiled from the 2010 Parochial Report. For further information about the Parochial Report, contact The Episcopal Church’s research office, pr@episcopalchurch.org, or phone (800) 334-7626.
- ²¹ Matthew Price, “2006 State of the Clergy Report” (Church Pension Group, 2006), 10-14, <http://download.cpg.org/home/publications/pdf/stateofclergy2006.pdf>
- ²² Specifically, “top-ranked” schools, in this analysis, are defined as any Ivy League institution or any school ranked in the top 50 of their respective class by *U.S. News & World Report* (i.e., liberal arts or state schools).

²³ Wheeler, “Is There a Problem?”, 1-2.

²⁴ Daniel de Vise and Nick Anderson, “College Costs, Student Aid, Continue to Rise,” *Washington Post*, October 21, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/20/AR2009102001415.html>.

²⁵ Jesse Bricker et al, “Changes in U.S. Family Finances from 2007 to 2010: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances,” *Federal Reserve Bulletin* 98, no. 2 (2012): 16ff.

²⁶ Because ATS did not collect tuition data for member schools in the early 1980s, the first reported figure for average tuition among all ATS schools is 1990. In addition, ATS tuition data for the 2012–2013 cycle were not available prior to this report’s publication.

²⁷ Specifically, graduating from the seminaries or divinity schools at Duke, Princeton, Yale, Harvard, or University of Chicago is not statistically correlated with a higher income or employment rate following ordination. As noted earlier, the statistically significant school attribute that is predictive of employment outcomes is whether the institution is considered an official Episcopal seminary.

²⁸ J.S. Long, *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997).

²⁹ P.J. Huber, “Robust estimation of a location parameter,” *Annals of Mathematical Statistics* 35 (1964): 73–101.

³⁰ Stata Statistical Software, Release 12 (2011), College Station, TX: StataCorp LP.

³¹ ARCGis Desktop, Release 10.0 (2011), Redlands, CA: Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).

³² For further information about the Parochial Report, contact the Episcopal Church’s research office, pr@episcopalchurch.org, or phone (800) 334-7626.

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