

The Pentecostal Church That's Bucking the National Trend—And Taking Over the Globe?

New reports indicate Hillsong's multiple campuses in Australia continue to grow, despite a national trend that shows a gross decline of Christianity across the nation.

"Modern Pentecostal churches are actually very appealing to a wide demographic of young people—they have a very strong social element and very dynamic and engaging services," Ann Evans tells *The Guardian*. Evans is the associate professor of the Australian National University's school of demography. "They're like going to a concert for young people."

Membership increased from nearly 220,000 in 2006 and 238,000 in 2011 to 260,500 last year, according to the 2016 census results released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Hillsong's effects can be felt all around the globe through music, conferences and international campuses.

"There were a large group of churches that actually grew up in the 1980s in Australia, so Hillsong, C3 and some other churches of its type that are Pentecostal, are charismatic churches that really cater to what we call 'seekers,'" Laura Beth Bugg, an assistant professor for the study of Religion at the University of Toronto, tells *Global News*. "So Millennials who may have been affiliated with churches when they were in their teens but left the church and now are drawn back into this sort of experience."

Hillsong released their 2016 annual report earlier this year and commented on the growth.

“Hillsong Church is committed to playing its role: serving our local and global communities as we seek to provide answers and hope that only Christ-centered care and the message of Jesus can bring,” founders and Global Senior Pastors Brian and Bobbie Houston say in the report. “Close to 30,000 people made a decision to place their faith in Jesus Christ through the programs and services of Hillsong Church this year. Countless stories of lives being uplifted, relationships restored and personal transformation have followed. Weekly church attendance grew by 5 percent to 37,384 people in 2016.”

Youth and children’s programs also grew to 7,968 from 7,439 the previous year, the report states.

“We continue to look forward to the opportunities before us to provide answers and hope through the gospel. As we serve in communities across Australia, from as far south in Hobart to as far north as Darwin, it is our prayer that we can see countless people’s lives lift as they encounter Jesus in a real and personal way,” the Houstons say.

Hillsong has churches in 19 countries on five continents:

- Australia: 78 services per weekend across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, Northern Territory and Bali, Indonesia
- Argentina: Buenos Aires
- Brazil: São Paulo
- Denmark: Copenhagen
- France: Four locations across Paris, Lyon and Marseille
- Germany: Three locations in Konstanz, Düsseldorf and Munich
- Israel: Tel Aviv
- Netherlands: Two locations in Amsterdam and Rotterdam
- Norway: Five Locations in Oslo, Stavanger, Sandnes, Drammen, Tønsberg, Egersund, Karmøy, Kristiansand and Trondheim
- Portugal: Two main locations in Lisbon and Porto, with 5

other locations across the country

- Russia: Moscow
- South Africa: Seven locations across Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg
- Spain: Two locations in Barcelona and Madrid
- Sweden: Four locations in and around Stockholm and Malmö
- Switzerland: Two locations in Zurich and Geneva
- Ukraine: Two locations in Kiev
- United Kingdom: Seven locations.
- United States: Two locations in and around New York City and New Jersey, one location in Los Angeles, three locations in and around Phoenix, and one location in San Francisco

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