**Summary Report of Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB) 85th Annual Meeting**

**Hilton Cincinnati Airport**

**October 22-23, 2019**

At this year’s meeting, thirty-three representatives out of a membership of fifty-eight were present.

The two very large current projects for the group are the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches to be published in 2021 and the Religious Census for 2020. Within a few months data collection will begin on both projects. The number one problem for both projects is to get participation from churches and groups. If you receive requests from ASARB please give it some attention. The data collected helps to inform researchers as to trends and factual status of American religious bodies.

The last yearbook published in 2010 listed 227 denominations in America and Canada. According to Dr. J. Gordon Melton of Baylor University’s Institute for Religious Studies this is woeful inaccurate. Dr. Melton has now published the ninth edition of Melton’s Encyclopedia of American Religions. I purchased the eighth addition (used) in order to see his point of view. He lists all religions in America and his number is closer to 1100. His encyclopedia does offer detail descriptions on all and is very informative, all 1386 pages. So, we now have two reference points to compare in order to arrive at a clearer picture of the status of the church in America.

**A point for future discussion of GWA is should we contact many of the groups listed with Wesleyan roots and invite them to the GWA conversation. Dr. Melton asserts there are hundreds.**

The Religious Census is a county by county count of the number of churches. Obviously, counting church buildings will not provide an accurate account because of the many house churches and locations being used for churches but not identified. ASARB has taken the data provided and created maps showing the greatest concentrations in every county. In addition, on ASARB’s web site you can research your own group by county and state in order to see concentration patterns.

The group also explored with Melissa Krasnodar, attorney at law, EU’s General Data Protection Regulation. This issue revolves around how data about the person is used or abused. The European Union General Data Protection Regulation went into effect May 25, 2018. For denominations or groups who have churches in the EU and collect data about them to use in American reports there are a new set of rules. You probably will need an attorney to understand and keep up with what you can and cannot do. Enforcement of the rules is through the issue of fines.

The group also received a presentation on the history of ASARB. The archives for ASARB are at the Presbyterian Headquarters in Louisville, KY.

The final session was around the theme of System Support-the technology related challenges of data collection, storage and usage. One of the common complaints was having a system that was user friendly and up to date. Some had custom systems which required a high level of IT support for it to function or make changes. Others had off the shelve systems which they had to modify or change to their own parameters. All these options are costly and sometimes you get data which is not exactly accurate depending on who is doing the search and the parameters. Some were still relying on paper submissions while others had gone to electronic submissions. Analysis of the data is becoming a new job category for many groups with the advancement of Data Analytics and AI.

I would encourage you to go to the ASARB web site([www.ASARB.org](http://www.ASARB.org)) and look around at what is available for you free of charge.

Respectfully submitted,

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Global Wesleyan Alliance