



Per Capita and the “joy” of statistics

In just 2 months, “annual statistical reporting season” begins for session clerks. It’s typically not one of a clerk’s greatest joys! But it is important for a number of reasons, and here’s the most practical of those.

Whenever the presbytery sends a letter or an invoice for per capita, we usually get some questions from congregations about why their per capita is not based on their current membership numbers. The explanation has everything to do with the annual statistical reports submitted by your clerks of session.

Using this year as an example:

- 2021 congregational statistics (including membership as of Dec. 31, 2021) are due by mid-February 2022.
- These are entered online through a “portal” provided by the Office of the General Assembly (OGA).
- After this portal closes (usually end of February) the numbers which are entered can no longer be adjusted.
- The OGA generates an annual statistical report for each congregation, each presbytery, and for the entire church.
- Presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly Office use this report of 2021 statistics to prepare their 2023 budget (*because -- 2022 statistics are not yet available*)
- Therefore, each congregation’s per capita for any given year is based on the statistics from *the year before last*.
- If a congregation does not enter any statistics by the time the portal closes, the system automatically uses the numbers on file from the previous year.