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Pew: Islam to Pass Christianity as Largest Faith by 2035

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2020-2070"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Muslims will outnumber Christians worldwide by 2035 - 2.57 Billion to 2.52 Billion - according to new projections from the Pew Research Center, ending centuries in which Christianity was the largest religion on earth. The projections were released on 18 November 2026 in Pew's report "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2020-2070".

Nine years. That is how close the crossover is. For two thousand years, Christianity has been the world's largest faith, through empires and reformations, through missions and martyrdoms. Now a demography report says the lead changes hands within a decade - not because Christians are disappearing, but because Muslim families are growing faster.

Pew's senior demographer Conrad Hackett, who led the study, is careful about what the numbers mean. These are projections, not predictions. They assume recent rates of births, deaths, religious switching and migration continue, and they do not model wars, epidemics, revivals or economic shocks. Still, the direction is hard to ignore: the 2015 edition of the same study had the two faiths reaching near parity around 2050. This time, the crossover comes fifteen years sooner.

Pew's 2035 Projection: The Numbers Behind The Crossover

In 2020, Pew estimates, there were about 2.27 Billion Christians and just over 2 billion Muslims in the world. By 2035, the report says, Muslims "will exceed Christians both in absolute number and as a percentage of the global population." By 2070, if recent trends continue, there will be more than 3.6 Billion Muslims and just under 3 billion Christians. Muslims would rise from 26% of humanity to 36%; Christians would hold fairly steady at 29%.

The study covers 201 countries and teritories and was produced with the Centre for Advanced Studies of Population and Religion (CASPAR) in Poland. It is built on national censuses and surveys and looks at seven religious groups across half a century.

But the quieter story inside the report may matter more for the Church: Christianity is not collapsing. Pew expects the number of Christians to grow by about 30% by 2070, to just under 3 billion. Muslims are growing faster, by about 80%, to more than 3.6 Billion. The Church is getting bigger. It is just getting bigger more slowly than its neighbour. US Bishops: 64% of Young Catholic Adults Say Faith Matters More Now Than 5 Years Ago found the same kind of surprise closer to home - young Catholics turning toward faith faster than anyone expected.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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