



Presbytery Minister's Report

Prayer Points

I would invite you to prayer with me for:

- Susan, Stephen and their family as Susan finishes up her position as office administrator. We pray in the new journey that Susan know God walking with her always.
- Chinchilla Congregation
- Bottle Tree Remote Area Ministry – Bush Chaplain
- Rev Rob Floyd, volunteers, the Board, Bush Chaplains and staff of Frontier Services.
- The planning and direction of the Presbytery of the Downs as we enter 2023.
- Highfields Community Church as they prepare to host the next Presbytery meeting
- Naomi Bell and Annie Baker, our new and continuing candidates for ministry.
- Our neighbouring Presbytery of Mary Burnett as they meet next weekend may their meeting be life-giving and peaceful.
- For our Moderator Andrew, General Secretary Heather and the Synod Office Staff.

Report

I prepare and write this report in the daze of pain medication. Thank you all for your support, patience, and prayers as I manage with the frustrating limitation that come with having knee pain. Despite the knee pain I did have a reasonable enjoyable holiday visiting family in Adelaide and finally getting to Kangaroo Island (roaming or hobbling in nature) discovering God in the regeneration of the land after 90% of the island was effected by bushfires in 2019. We saw sealions lazing on the beach, koalas, kangaroos, echidnas, and lots of bird life and we (my sister and I) discovered KI is where all blue and brown fairy wrens come to play. It is such a blessing to have so many places in this country to be able to see God at work in creation.

Despite the pain of my knee I am still passionate and driven to be faithful to my call to minister in this Presbytery and am constantly blessed as I meet people and hear stories of hope and passion for sharing a gospel message to the world – it is Good News. I thank God for the wise leadership of Adam and the Standing Committee; Ansie and the team on the Pastoral Relations Committee; and Rob and the team of the Presbytery Property Committee and I look forward to what God will show us emerging in 2023 for this Presbytery.

Office Administration – as reported in the Standing Committee report Susan has tended her resignation and finishes up on 9th November. It has been lovely to have her cheery, bubbly personality

to support the work of the Presbytery over the last 14 months and we send her out with a blessing of peace and gratitude for all her willingness to share her life with us for this time.

As we ponder who might replace Susan to support the administrative work of the Presbytery it is an opportunity to think creatively and imagine a position that could resource rural and remote ministry (ie the development of the Saltbush relationship) as well as offer administrative support.

The office renovations are nearly finished and it will be lovely to invite you all to come and visit in the new year. Thanks to those who have helped keep this project on track.

Saltbush – We are blessed to have Annie exploring and participating in the conversation with the team at Saltbush to imagine how we might resource ministry in the small scattered communities within our presbytery. We look forward to hearing how this is progressing in her presentation during the meeting.

It was wonderful to see Annie's participation in ['Word around the Bush'](#) a couple of weeks ago.

Wednesday evening Worship Café's are on 9th and 16th November and then their Advent series again on 30th November, 7th and 14th December. To accommodate the Queenslanders the team have made the Zoom time 7pm Qld time (8pm ADST). If you would like to join into those cafés see the [Latest Events](#) page of their website. The team will email you the Zoom link.

Please see attached the correspondence that was received while I was on holidays suggesting that Annie spend more time developing this relationship. The question for us is 'do we need to reinvent the wheel or can we breakdown Synod/Presbytery boundaries and join in to what is already happening?' I have met with Mark Faulkner and the feeling is that we don't rush. We also discussed the possibilities of having a Saltbush gathering the weekend of 11th - 12th March in Goondiwindi this is still to be confirmed.

Birdsville Races – I hope to have Anna Laske join me at the Presbytery meeting to give her reflection on traveling with me to Birdsville to support Frontier Services at the races. I met Anna at the Young Adult's Retreat in Cooby Dam and she was keen to join me on the trip to expand her view of ministry and mission in rural and remote Australia. It was a muddy, wet, windy, hot and dusty adventure and ministry was in many forms from conversations with distressed people whose camp was under water or caravan bogged, or people just wet with time to talk and share stories. Despite the weather dramas and my knee injury it was full of blessings being with other volunteers and staff from Frontier Services and sharing the vision and mission of standing alongside people in the bush. My vision for 2023 is for the Downs Presbytery to encourage and support people to join the Frontier Services volunteer team and travel out and meet the people (I might fly out next year and meet you there).

Frontier Services News – Ms Jannine Jackson has resigned as National Director of Frontier Services and the Frontier Services Board has appointed as Acting National Director Rev Rob Floyd to give ongoing support to staff, the team of Bush Chaplains, the Presbyteries, and the volunteers. Rob has reached

out to me and we have had valuable discussions on the relationship between the Presbytery and Frontier Service and look forward to developing this further in 2023.

Bottle Tree Remote Area Ministry – the JNC is presenting a name to the Presbytery. There is continuing conversation and development of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) so that this role can be sustainable and effective in the communities it serves. One consideration that has emerged is the provision of a caravan to support the Bush Chaplain to stay in communities for longer times to build positive effective connection. Please see also the recommendation below for other essential inclusion into the MOU for your discernment and noting.

Chinchilla Uniting Church – after the last meeting I attended Chinchilla Uniting Church to deliver the Presbytery recommendations of a way forward to the congregation. Being that, the Presbytery will look after the matters of the Church Council until the November meeting and the congregation were encouraged to focus its life intentionally on rediscovering God through worship, prayer, healing any broken relationships and fellowship. By way of support I have travelled out to Chinchilla on a regular basis to offer worship and have been available via phone, email and offered Zoom gatherings for anyone to contact me for support and prayer. They were encouraged to connect with the Saltbush community and to link in with a Toowoomba congregation offering online worship. This news, while generally agreed to, did cause some confusion about who are the leadership in the local context. They were encouraged to pray for direction and to be open to encourage and support each other through this time. There has been minimal response to the offer of support and still confusion as to how they will move forward. In discussion with the Standing Committee, after looking at the resources over years that have been directed to the local community of Chinchilla, it is felt that the Presbytery does not have the capacity to provide any more support and that the decision to move forward as a Uniting Church congregation must be driven by the people in the local congregation. It was also acknowledged that moving in the direction of a Faith Community (Reg 3.9.2) was not a viable plan for future development of mission in the Chinchilla community. The model of Faith Community was not designed for declining congregations, and if used this way become a pathway to closure; rather Faith Communities were opportunities for congregations to plant new expressions of church out of health and vitality. So future decisions for the Chinchilla Congregation over the next three months are:

1. That Chinchilla Uniting Church congregation re-establish a functioning and healthy Church Council as per Reg 3.3;
2. That Chinchilla Uniting Church congregation ask the Presbytery for permission to establish a Church Council in Small Congregations as per Reg 3.9.3;
3. That the congregation formalise ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches in the local area and work together for the mission of God in Chinchilla;
4. That the congregation have a decision and advise the Presbytery by 10th February, 2023.

There are good, faithful people in this congregation who are passionate about being the people of God in the community, this has been a painful journey for all involved. My encouragement and thoughts for the future are that:

1. the Presbytery step back from physical support and move towards deeply and intentionally praying for this community to allow space for the people in the local context to decide a way forward;
2. set a timeline of February meeting for the Chinchilla congregation to prayerfully decision about what next.
3. To communicate a clear pathway for people to access pastoral support.

Presbytery Synod Interface (PSI)

- **National Church Life Survey (NCLS)** Data update was given (some information attached to this report). It is not too late for your congregation to connect into the data. If you need any support for that contact Paul Wetzig at the Synod Office.
- **Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and Sickness and Accident Assistance Prevention Program (SAAAP)** information about keeping everyone safe and healthy. In development for storm season preparation and long distant driving checklist.
- **Continuing Education for Ministers (CEM)** – how to grow ministry agents as healthy Christian leaders. A position paper is in draft including an audit of what is on offer, how it is offered and is it consistent with the outcomes. Drawing on the expertise in UnitingCare and Wesley Mission Qld (WMQ) for training in community health and Domestic Violence.
- **Combined Presbytery Mission Pool (CPMP)** – this is not part of the full PSI - the resourcing of Presbyteries and congregations is a focus of the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and has moved into a wider focus on resourcing effective ministry in congregations.
- **37th Synod in Session** dates will be Friday 20th - 24th October
- **Property/Insurance workshop** – after the success of bringing together all the Presbytery Treasurers we are offering an opportunity for Property Officers/Committee to gather with the relevant Synod staff to hear, listen and build (pun intended) a fruitful and effective relationship.

Pastoral Oversight Committee – we have moved closer to appointing a 0.5 Pastoral Care Coordinator for the Base Hospital. This has been an amazing ecumenical and government venture that we thank God for. We continue to train and seek people who would join the team of volunteers at the hospital and pray and give thanks for Marg and the team who offer their skills to those seeking pastoral care.

Toowoomba Interfaith Working Group – we continue to meet bi-monthly and work intentionally with the local community on events that foster peace and harmony with all people in the community. Our yearly highlight is the Toowoomba National Interfaith Conference being held again this year on Friday 25th November at St Patrick's Cathedral Function Centre.

Some highlights from my diary since the last meeting:

6th August – Young Adults Retreat Cooby Dam

7th August – Worship and Congregational meeting at Chinchilla Uniting Church

10th August - PRC meeting

11th August - Ministerial Advisory Committee

14th August – Baptism at Chinchilla Uniting Church
16th – 18th August – Presbytery Synod Interface Retreat - Warwick
20th August – Memorial Service for Venerable Master Chin Kung
22nd August – Chinchilla Zoom Check In
26th August – Code of Ethic/SMC training
30th August – 5th September – Birdsville Races (Frontier Services)
6th September – Toowoomba ‘Multicultural Meeting at Dusk’ community event
7th – 8th September – Moderator’s Convocation VAD
11th September – St Stephen’s Toowoomba worship
13th – 16th September – Ministry Agents Retreat
21st September – Saltbush National Conversation
22nd September – Ministerial Advisory Committee
25th September – Baptism at Goondiwindi Uniting Church
28th September – Presbytery Standing Committee meeting
29th – 30th September – visit to Wandoan/Roma
1st October – Toowoomba Peace Day community event
2nd October – Jandowae Uniting Church 100th year celebration
6th – 18th October – ANNUAL LEAVE
19th October – Presbytery Synod Interface and Bottle Tree JNC meeting
20th October – Ministerial Advisory Committee
22nd October – Pastoral Relations Committee Strategic Planning Day
23rd October – attended Highfields Community Church
24th October – Chinchilla Check In
29th October – Synod Selection Panel
1st November – Pastoral Care Oversight Committee meeting
4th November – Heads of Churches Breakfast

Some events coming up:

13th November – preaching at Wilsonton UC
20th November – attending St Stephen’s Toowoomba for the presentation of the Moderator’s Medal to Mrs Margaret Green
25th November – National Interfaith Conference – Toowoomba
27th November – Service to Mark the conclusion of Placement for Ps Jenny Noble in Roma

4th December – leading worship in Taroom and Wandoan

24th – 25th December – leading worship St Stephen's Toowoomba

1st January – leading worship St Stephen's Toowoomba

22nd January – Induction of Rev Dylan Miegel St Stephen's Toowoomba

12th – 15th February – Presbytery Synod Interface Retreat

Self Care

Supervision – I have had two sessions with my supervisor since the last meeting we continue to work through my Healthy Ministry Review.

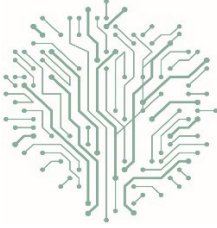
Health and Spiritual Wellbeing - Bells ring on and Christmas Bells are especially life-giving. I am looking forward to sharing with the Middle Ridge congregation, who host us, some Christmas Bells; aqua walking and regular exercise. I have been reflecting and listening to some helpful podcasts based on the books Emotionally Healthy Discipleship; Emotionally Healthy Spirituality; Emotionally Healthy Leaders by Peter Scazzero would love to have conversation with anyone who is keen about the principles presented in their books.

Continuing Education – Moderator's Convocation; Code of Ethics Refresher and Safe Ministry with Children refresher.

Recommendations:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the Bottle Tree MOU include:
 - a) The provision of a Sunday worship service at least once a month to Roma and Wallumbilla congregations.
 - b) The Bush Chaplain develop a yearly plan for the provision of regular worship services for established Christian communities of Wandoan, Glenmorgan, Taroom (Anglican), Injune Church Together and Arcadia Valley.
 - c) Within the first year the Bush Chaplain will visit and network within their remote area and plan to attend significant community events.
 - d) The Bush Chaplain plan to have the weekend of the 5th Sunday (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) for rest and rejuvenation.
3. The Presbytery investigate the cost and provision of a caravan for use in Remote Area Ministries.

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Saltbush – Uniting the Scattered Community

Rev. Mark Faulkner

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Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW & ACT



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saltbushcommunity



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18th. October 2022

Greetings to the Downs Presbytery as part of the wider Uniting Church!

I'm writing because I understand that your Presbytery is considering the place of Saltbush and Annie Baker's work and ministry within the Saltbush team. Annie has been working alongside the Saltbush team over the past two months and as a group of Ministers we have valued her place and the comment, theology and leadership that she has provided.

As we are all aware the work and place of the church is very much in changing times. It is part of the Saltbush movement to believe that we have to understand the way we go about Ministry and the way we place Ministers within the rural context as wholly different to ways of the past. As such the Saltbush team all live in distant and diverse locations, however we work closely together, meet online ever week and face to face multiple times in a year and have valued Annie's willingness to participate and demonstrate this collegiate Ministry model as part of Saltbush.

The ethos of Saltbush is to encourage and connect willing rural and coastal Uniting Christian communities, irrespective of size or location, and through our work support others to explore life and faith together. As a team we have already put significant work into building a foundation that supports the work of congregations while trying to shape some new ways for people to connect over vast distance. Of course, we welcome others who can sit within this work, vision it further, rather than believe we all have to do our own thing independently.

I feel that the current two-month period has been too short to fully support Annie and introduce Saltbush to your Presbytery so that it is my hope that a further extension can be undertaken. I think if this was enabled Annie would be able to lead fully an online café as part of what we offer and we would also be able to lead a Saltbush Gathering in your part of the country in 2023.

I commend this to your consideration and prayer and of course I'm happy to discuss this further at any stage and build upon the relationship we have already begun.

Peace to you all.

Rev. Mark Faulkner.



NCLS 2022

4110 Forms
178 child forms
126 churches

ABOUT US

64 is average age for those over 15

50% are 70+

64% female

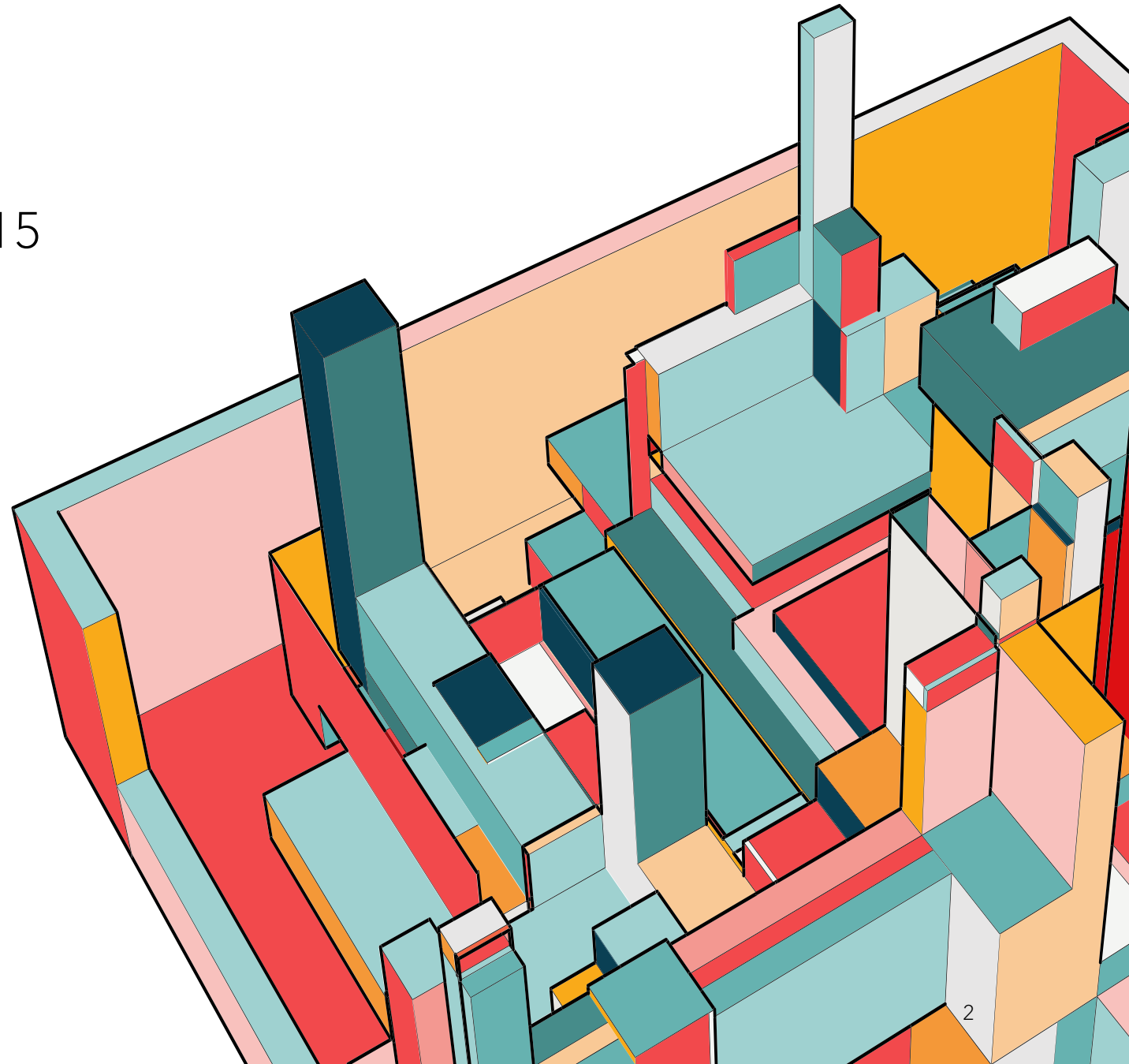
78% born in Australia

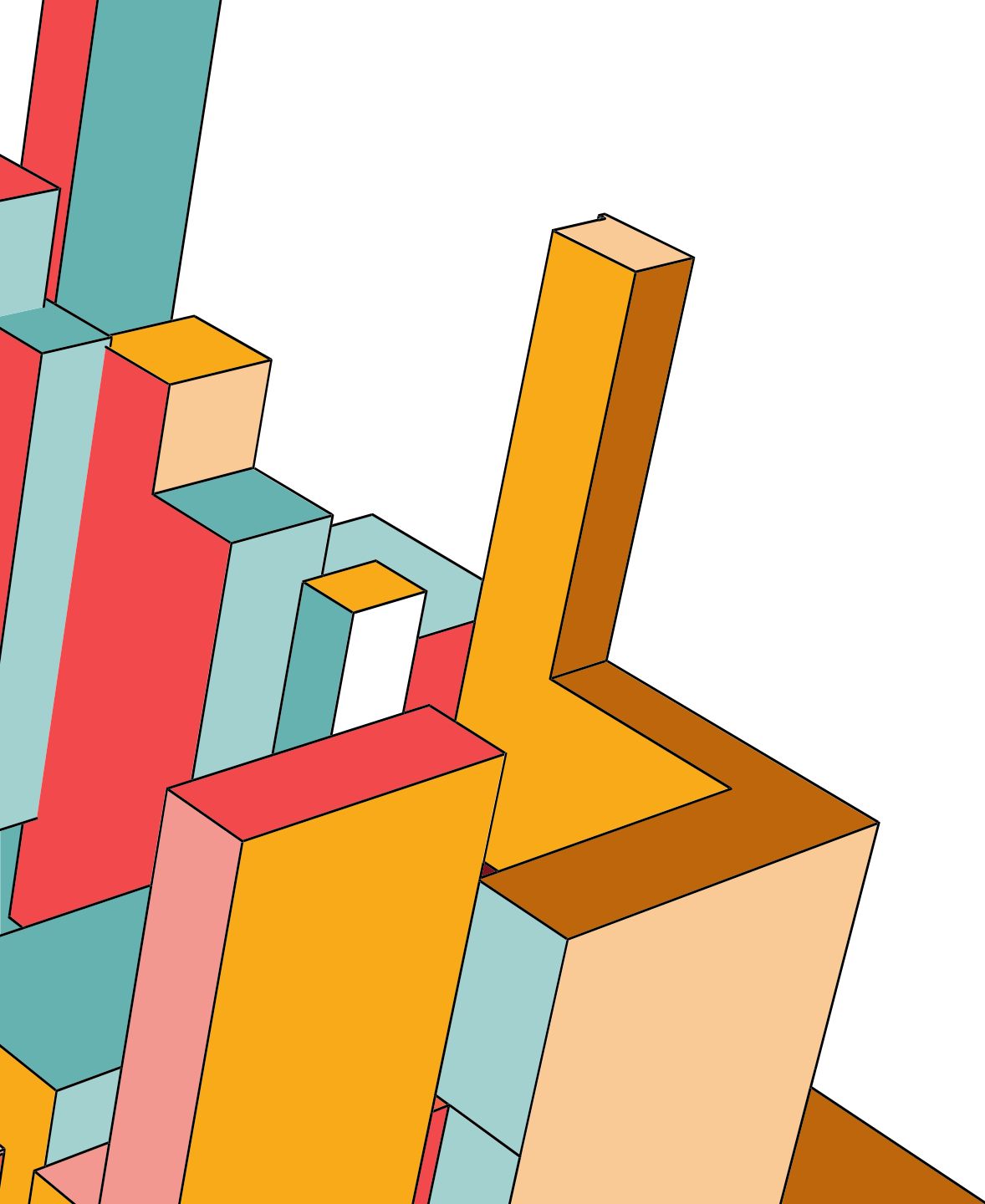
54% retired

41% have a university degree

81% attend weekly or more

68% have been at their church
more than 5 years





MOST VALUED

SUNDAY WORSHIP GATHERING

Most Value

43% sermons, preaching & teaching
32% sharing in Communion
28% traditional worship style

Priority within the next 12 months

34% worship services that are nurturing
34% building sense of community (internally)
31% spiritual growth
28% encouraging people to discover and use gifts (internally)

MONEY & EFFORT

CHURCH FINANCIAL GIVING

77% give 10% or less to their local church

CHURCH SMALL GROUP INVOLVEMENT

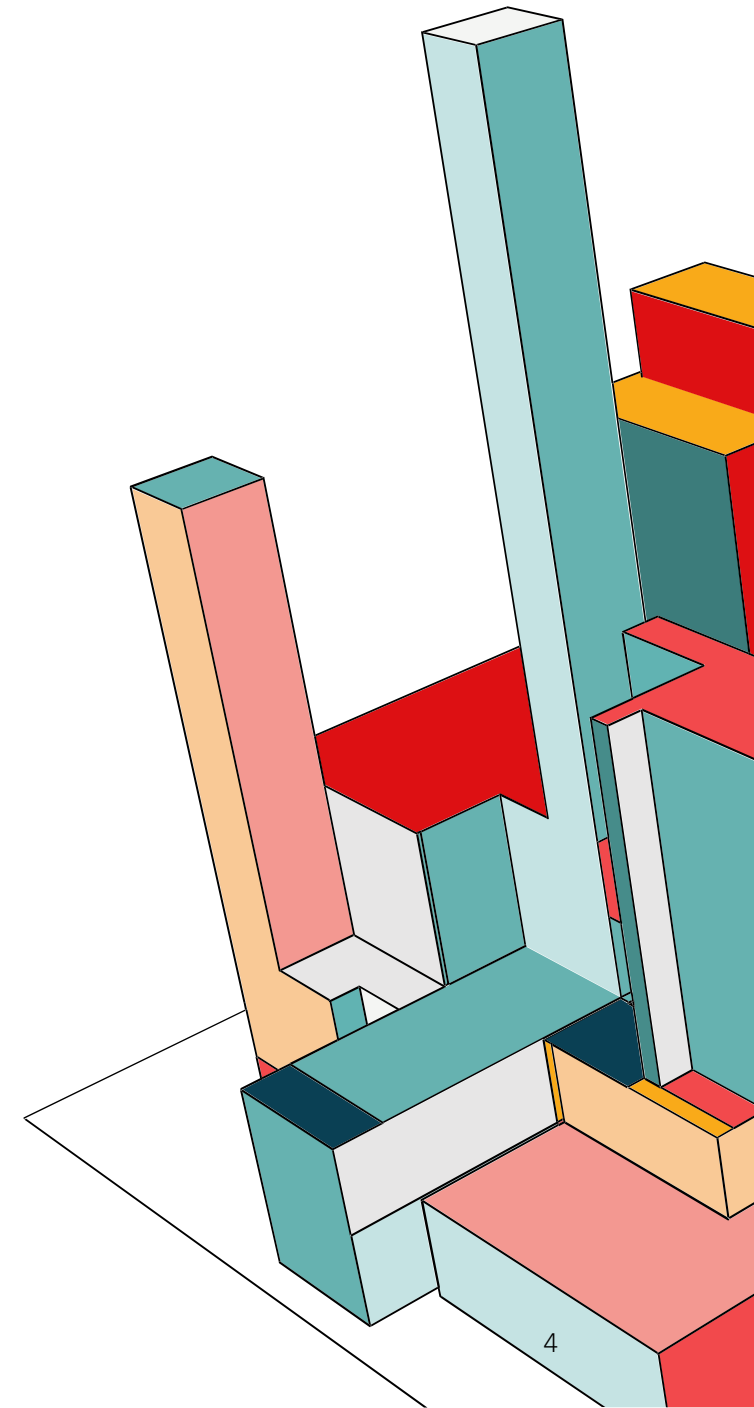
40% in small prayer/discussion/bible study groups
42% fellowships, clubs, social or other groups

EXTERNAL CHARITABLE GIVING

76% donated to charity
46% lent/gave money outside family
39% gave some of their possessions to those in need

COMMUNITY GROUP INVOLVEMENT

56% participate in wider community groups
8% are very actively involved in online groups (e.g. social media)



INNOVATION & VISION

INNOVATION

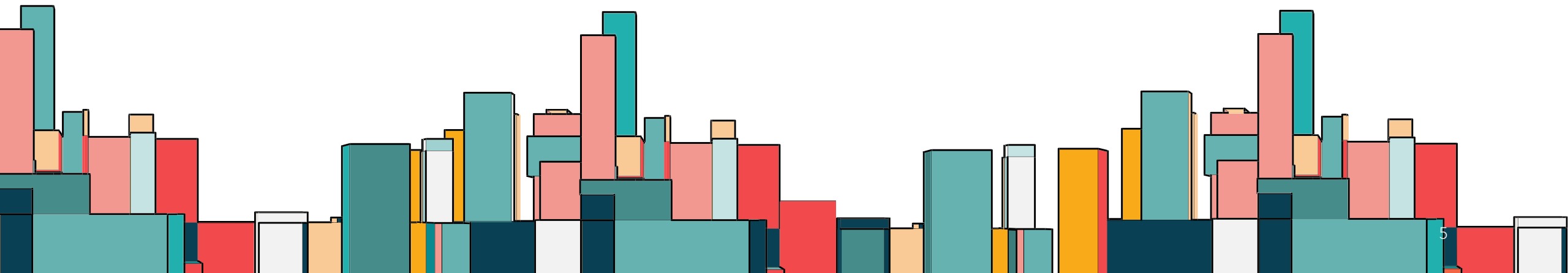
71% agree that their congregation is always ready to try something new
82% agree that they would support the development of new initiatives

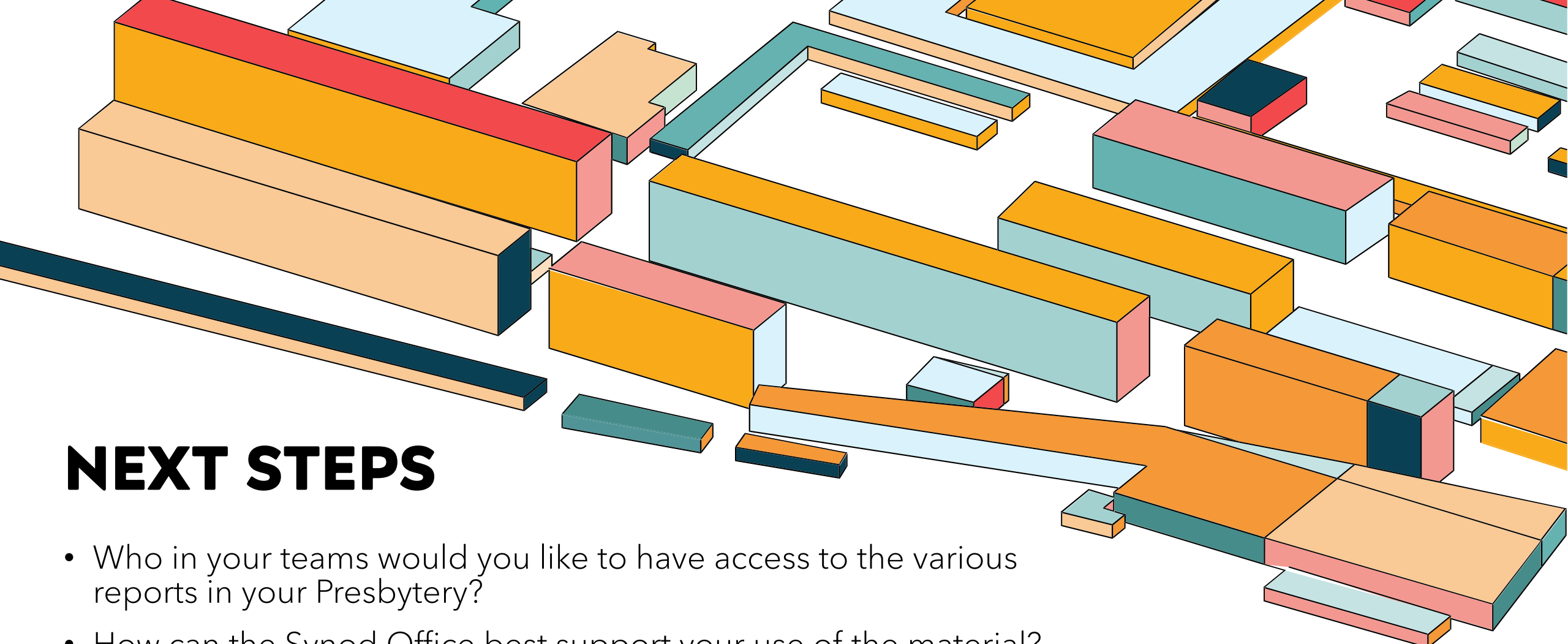
VISION

38% are aware of & strongly committed to vision & goals of their local church
39% fully confident in achieving that vision & goals

FUTURE PRIORITIES

3% starting a new church or mission venture
15% encouraging new approaches
17% encouragement to share faith & invite
23% ministry to children & youth





NEXT STEPS

- Who in your teams would you like to have access to the various reports in your Presbytery?
- How can the Synod Office best support your use of the material?
- Email you a copy of the report and forms for NCLS Access for completion

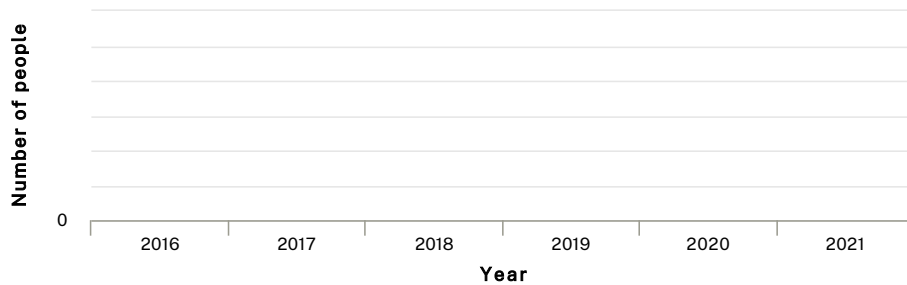


Church Attendance and Background



Attendance patterns

Estimated attendance



No data was provided for this chart.

Please consider estimates of attendance for your church over time.

Attendance at their local church (including online)

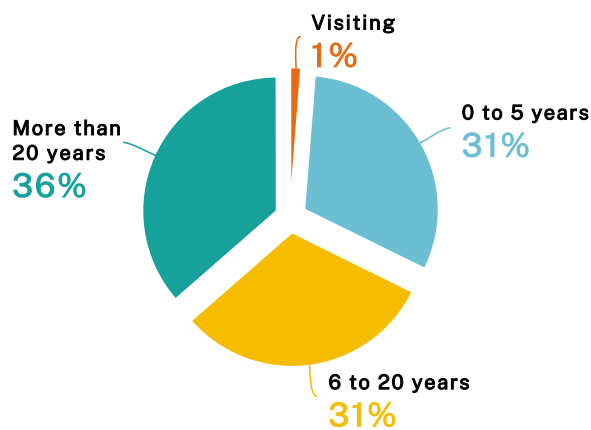
- 97%** are frequent attenders (monthly or more)
- 81%** attend weekly or more
- 68%** have attended their local church for more than five years

Attendance elsewhere (in person or online)*

- 72%** do not attend any other church
- 16%** attend elsewhere, in person
- 15%** attend elsewhere, via online services

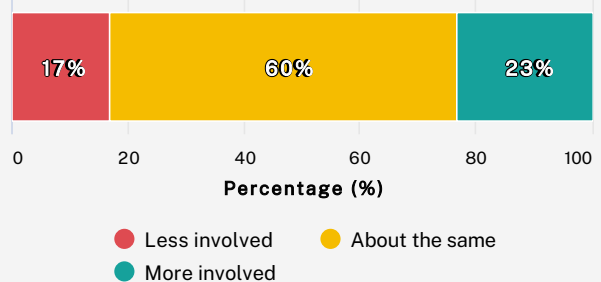
*Note: Attenders could choose more than one option

Length of time attending their local church



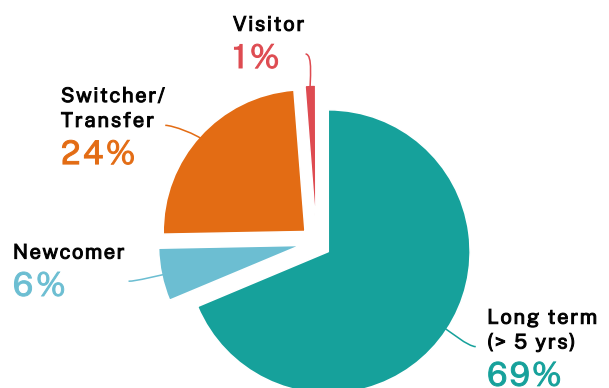
Impact of COVID-19

Current involvement compared to 2019 (before COVID-19)



Church background

31% of attenders are new arrivals to their local church in the past 5 years

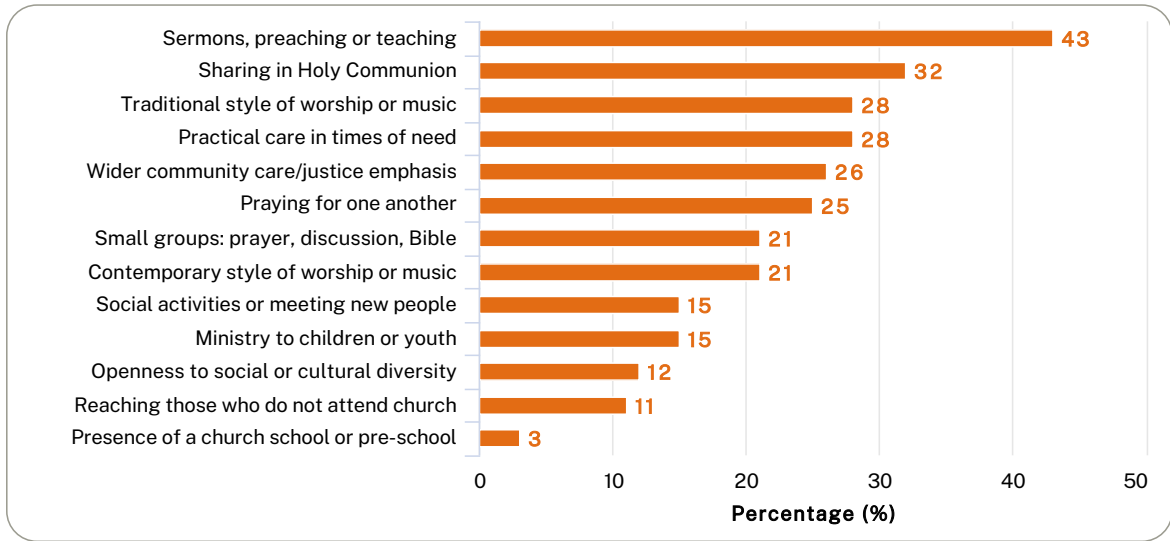


What People Value and Prioritise



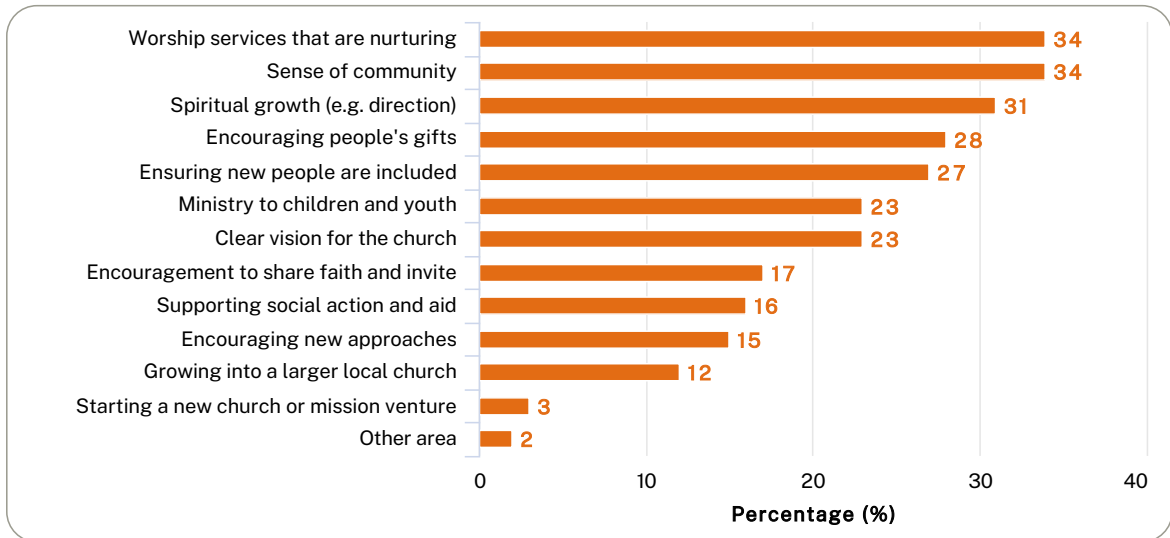
What people value about their church

Attendees of their local church most value 'Sermons, preaching or Bible teaching' and 'Sharing in Holy Communion/the Eucharist/Lord's Supper'.



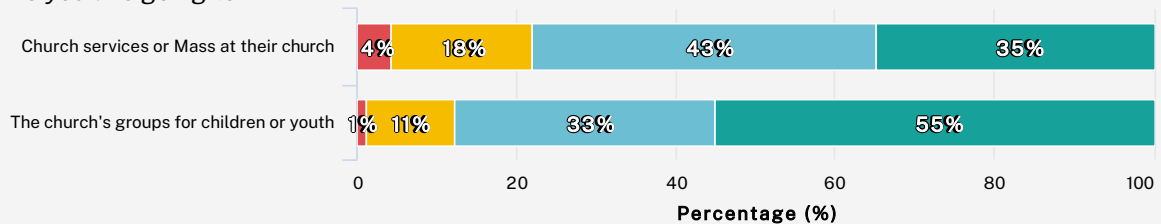
Future priorities

Over the next 12 months most attendees would like priority given to: 'Worship services that are nurturing' and 'Building a sense of community'.



Children's views about church activities

Do you like going to...



● Don't like it ● Sometimes ● Most of the time ● Always

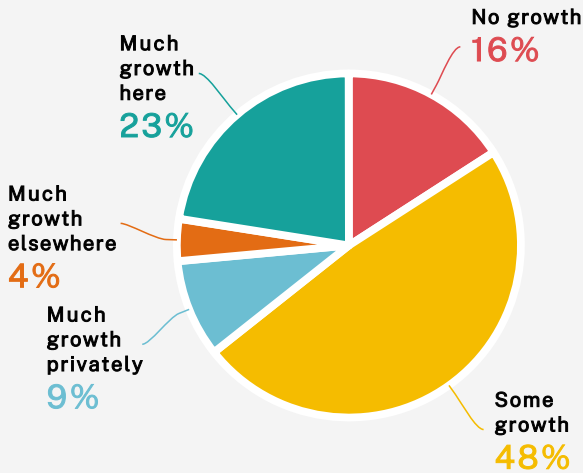


How People Relate to God

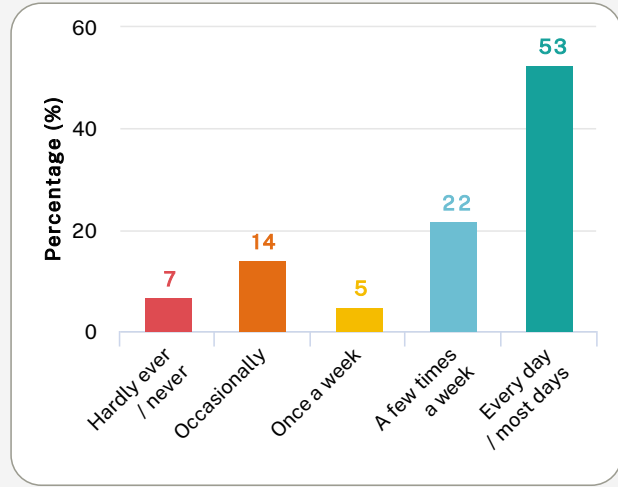


Personal faith

36% of attenders said that they had experienced much growth in faith in the previous 12 months



53% spend time in prayer, Bible reading, meditation everyday or most days



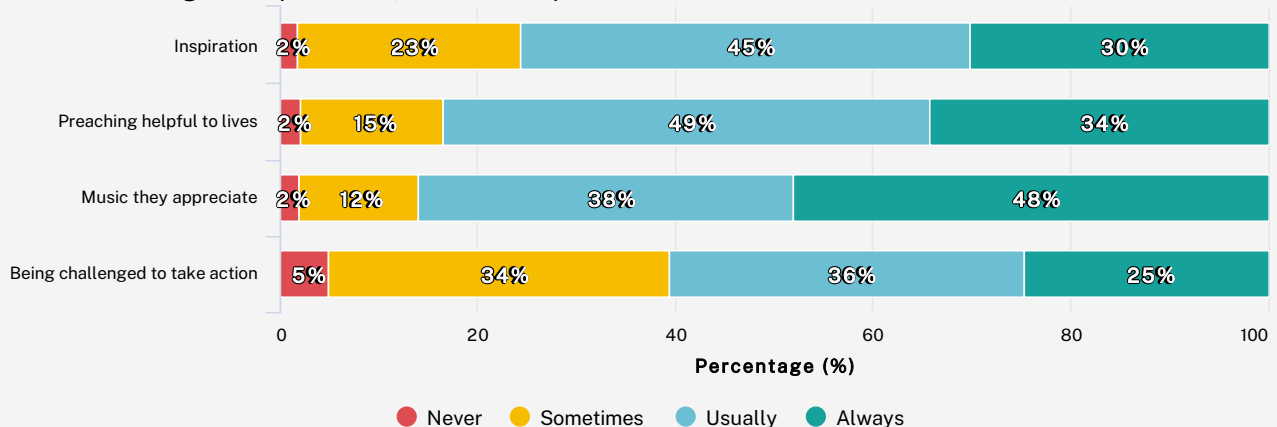
94% agree their faith influences decisions and actions in daily life

96% agree that 'my faith in God is an important part of who I am'



Church worship services

During worship services, attenders experience:



Children's views of God

83% agree 'God helps me lead a better life'

69% agree 'I know that Jesus is very close to me'

How People Relate to the Wider Community



Involvement in groups

- 56%** of people participate in wider community groups
- 8%** are very actively involved in online groups (e.g. social media, community groups)

Church-based activities

- 42%** reach out to the wider community through activities of their local church
- 35%** are part of community service activities
- 11%** are part of evangelistic activities



Words and actions

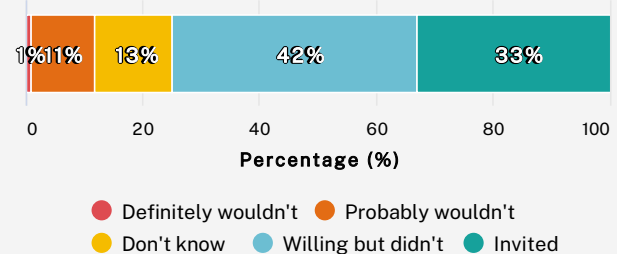
- 81%** talk about matters of faith with other members of their household (14% live alone)
- 15%** feel at ease talking about faith with others and look for opportunities to do so

Attendees have offered to help others in the past 12 months

Donated money to a charitable organisation	76%
Lent or gave money to someone outside your family	46%
Helped someone through a personal crisis (not sickness)	42%
Visited someone in hospital	42%
Given some of your possessions to someone in need	39%
Cared for someone who was very sick	31%
Supported a campaign (online or other)	25%
Contacted a parliamentarian/councillor on a public issue	17%
Tried to stop someone abusing alcohol or drugs	9%
Attended a public meeting/march	9%

Inviting others to church

- 33%** invited friends and relatives to a church service in this last year



Acting for the environment

- 95%** agree that Christians have a responsibility to actively care for the environment
- 21%** are very active
- 47%** are a little active
- 26%** are currently not active



Children's acts of service & justice

Children at their local church often do the following:

- 8%** talk to their school friends about God
- 6%** help raise money for poor people
- 34%** do things to help the environment

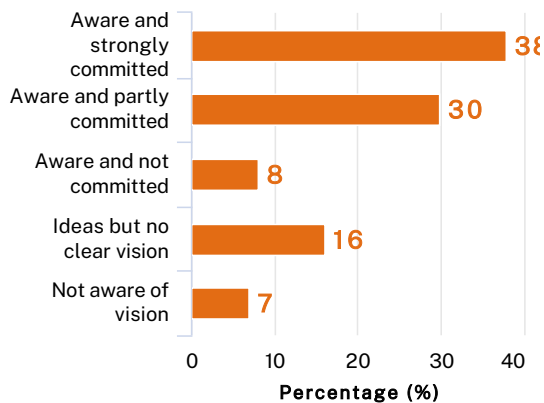


Vision and innovation

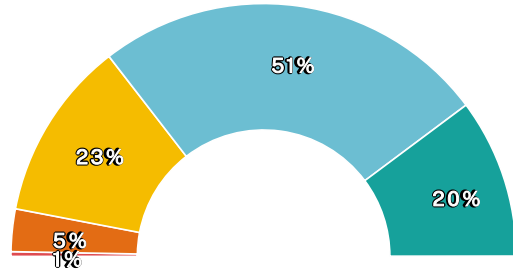
38% of people are both aware of and strongly committed to the vision and goals or directions for their local church

39% are fully confident that their local church can achieve the vision, goals or directions set

Vision

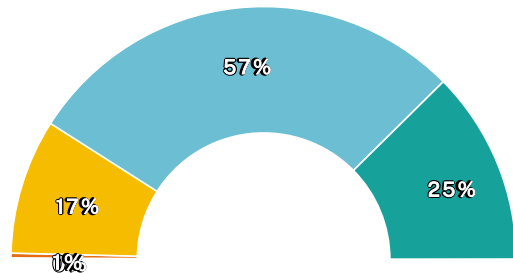


71% agree that their local church is always ready to try something new



● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral
● Agree ● Strongly agree

82% agree that they would support the development of new initiatives in the ministry and mission of their local church



● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral
● Agree ● Strongly agree



Leadership culture

83% agree that their local church has good and clear systems for how it operates

83% agree it is easy to get involved in ministry at their local church (e.g. join a roster, take on a role)

54% of attenders perform a leadership or ministry role

59% agree 'leaders encourage me to find and use my gifts and skills to great or some extent'

70% agree 'leaders here inspire me to action'



Role models for children

96% agree adults at church (including leaders) are good examples of people who follow Jesus

87% agree family members are good examples of people who follow Jesus