

SAMMAMISH PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
MINISTRY ASSESSMENT  
FINAL REPORT



Church Address  
22522 NE Inglewood Hill Rd  
Sammamish, WA 98074  
<https://spconline.org/>

Report Written By:  
Rev. Gregg Caruso, M.A., *VitalChurch* Director, Diagnostic Division  
Dr. Chet Ainsworth, *VitalChurch* Diagnostic Team Lead Analyst



At *VitalChurch Ministry* it is our mission to revitalize churches in crisis or transition and see them reconciled and restored to unity, with gifted leadership in place, gospel values embedded, effective governance, an exciting mission agreed on, and discipleship pathways engaged. We are distinctive because we are pastors with pastors' hearts who've banded to do something together.

*VitalChurch* accomplishes strategic and effective ministry mainly through two divisions:

1. *Church Diagnostics* (Gregg Caruso, *VitalChurch* Managing Partner and Director, Diagnostic Division)
2. *Intentional Interim Pastorates* (Dave Miles, *VitalChurch* Founding Partner and Director, Intentional Interim Pastor Division)

Tom Wilkens, Executive Director  
Mike Merwin, Chief Financial Officer  
Laurel Schumacher, Chief Operating Officer  
[admin@vitalchurchministry.org](mailto:admin@vitalchurchministry.org)  
vitalchurchministry.org  
(203) 895-5991

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## Table of Contents

### I. Introduction

How to Make the Most of This Report.....	5
A Biblical Basis for Ministry Assessment.....	5
Critical Questions .....	6

### II. SPC Executive Summary

Definition of Terms.....	8
Strengths to Build On .....	9
Introduction to Executive Summary .....	10
Root Issues.....	11
Statistical Rationale (The Mirror).....	12
Recommendations (The Map).....	19
Next Steps.....	34
One Page Overview .....	36

### III. Appendices

<b>Section 1: Who are We? (Demographic Data).....</b>	<b>37</b>
Membership.....	37
Age Groups.....	38
Gender .....	38
Relational Status.....	39
Ethnicity .....	39
Occupational Status.....	40
Educational Level .....	40
Yearly Household Income.....	41
Area Stability .....	41
Demographic Summary.....	41
<b>Section 2: Shared Pilgrimage .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Years Christian.....	42
Tenure Analysis .....	43
Attendance Patterns.....	46
Tenure Observations .....	49
Status Upon Attending.....	50
Church Background .....	51
Activity First Attended.....	51
What Keeps You Coming .....	52

What You Value Most.....	53
Are Family Needs Being Met? .....	54
Distance to Church Building .....	54
Influenced to Attend.....	55
Came as Christians? .....	56
Rate of Adult Evangelism.....	56
Church Involvement .....	57
<b>Section 3: Ministry Potential.....</b>	<b>59</b>
Commitment to Mission/Evangelism .....	59
Discipleship in the Church.....	63
Ministry Mobilization.....	65
Evangelism/Assimilation Strategy and Setting.....	67
Financial Factors.....	71
<b>Section 4: Quality of Fellowship.....</b>	<b>72</b>
Introduction to Acceptance and Belonging .....	72
Quality of Fellowship Measurements .....	74
Other Factors .....	78
Emotional Health.....	80
<b>Section 5: Church Leadership.....</b>	<b>86</b>
Confidence in Leadership .....	89
Leadership Training.....	90
Conflict .....	91
Leadership Communication.....	92
Openness to Change .....	93
<b>Section 6: Biblical Beliefs .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Section 7: Ministries Assessments .....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Section 8: SPC Verbatim Catalog .....</b>	<b>105</b>
Preserve Verbatim Responses .....	106
Avoid Verbatim Responses .....	111
Achieve Verbatim Responses .....	117
<b>Section 9: Desired Pastoral Profile .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Section 10: Full SWOT Analysis.....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Section 11: Diagnostic Team Bios .....</b>	<b>155</b>

## I. Introduction

### How to Make the Most of This Report

By God's grace, this ministry assessment report will be a **mirror** back to your church reflecting what the people of **Sammamish Presbyterian Church, WA** have said and a **map** forward on a biblical pathway of church revitalization. The report has three sections:

1. **Begin in this Introduction** by reading the biblical basis for ministry assessment and the critical questions. These are for both personal and all-church consideration.
2. **Next, read the Executive Summary**, which is the "heart" of the report. It identifies strengths to build on and highlights issues and recommendations made in response to the issues discerned through the online survey data analysis.
3. **Then, peruse the Survey Data** section. Charts and graphs tell the story of your church. As mentioned above, they mirror the responses you gave in the initial data collection. This database and analysis section, including verbatim responses, will help you better understand the core issues and recommendations.

### A Biblical Basis for Ministry Assessment

If Jesus visited SPC and walked discreetly around during your worship services, community groups, or Bible studies, how would He evaluate your church? If Jesus took a few minutes after your worship services to speak to you, what might He say? These are sobering questions for any church. They are questions you would do well to consider. When Jesus addressed the seven churches in the book of Revelation, He spoke both affirmation and admonition. The objective of this report is similar.

1 Timothy 4:15-16 (NASB) is one passage of Scripture that provides a biblical reference point for this assessment. The Apostle Paul, as a father in the faith, is instructing young Pastor Timothy in pastoral responsibilities by saying:

*"Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you"* (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

These two verses offer a context for ministry evaluation. Note that the stated goal is not perfection, but progress (v.15); and, that a consistent and thorough evaluation of yourselves and your message leads to the furtherance of the gospel (v.16). This process requires courage because you must be willing to consider and confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.

In addition to being a biblical principle, confronting the most brutal facts of your current reality is also a key concept from the best-selling business book titled, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins.<sup>1</sup> He, with his team, conducted a 5-year research project comparing teams that helped organizations move from good to great. Collins suggests there are three primary components to confronting the brutal facts: 1) Create a climate where truth is heard, 2) Get the data, and 3) Embrace the Stockdale Paradox: “Never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever that might be.” –Vice Admiral James Stockdale

## Critical Questions

This diagnostic assessment began with the admission that apart from outside input and intervention, SPC would be less likely to understand the core issues that are hindering the life of your church at this time. The *VitalChurch* Team asks your church to respond to three critical questions during this transition season:

1. Will you face the real issues? (The presenting “issue” is rarely the real issue.)
2. Will you own up to your part of the issues or problems?
3. Will you, by God’s grace, do whatever is necessary to change and grow?

In short, we are asking you, “Do you want to get better?” Jesus asked that very question to a man who lay beside the pool of Siloam (John 5:6). That man, who had been at the pool for many years, would be faced with an entirely new reality and way of living. While being paralyzed was difficult and challenging, it was at least familiar. Was he willing to face and embrace a totally new kind of life? It would take humility and faith, and most of all it would take the intervention of Jesus. A small seed of faith was revealed in his statement: “Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool.” Jesus’ response was powerful and authoritative. “Get up. Pick up your mat and walk.” Rising

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<sup>1</sup> HarperBusiness, 2001

up, the former invalid walked for the first time in 38 years. The same can be true for a local church if we don't become complacent in our woundedness.

Jesus is the Head of the Church and is (ultimately) the healer of all people and every church. Organizational reengineering may help a congregation to run more efficiently, but what is really needed is a fresh encounter with Jesus! The inner life transformation that flows from receiving the effects of the cross and resurrection of Christ must begin on the personal level, and then move into the corporate life of your congregation.

## II. SPC Executive Summary

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

Vital and Recurring Terms in this report include:

#### Tenure Groups (how long people have attended SPC)

- **New Attenders:** those who have attended your church for five years or less
- **Intermediate Attenders:** those who have attended this church for six to 19 years.
- **Pioneers:** those who have attended your church for 20 years or more.

#### Generation Groups

- **Gen Z:** people 24 years of age and less
- **Millennials:** people who are currently 25-41 years of age
- **Gen X:** people who are currently 42-56 years of age
- **Boomers:** people who are currently 57-75 years of age
- **Silents:** people who are currently 76-96 years of age
- **G I Generation:** People who are currently over 96 years of age

### Prologue

This ministry assessment is a team effort<sup>2</sup> and is intended to act as both a *mirror* and a *map*. The *mirror* will reflect back to you what 228 of you said in the online survey, (which produced 133 pages of data). The criterion for a satisfactory survey sample is to have at least half the YTD's Sunday adult attendance take the survey. So, with a reported current average worship attendance of 256 (including in person and online),<sup>3</sup> the participation rate of 89% is excellent. Additionally, the *VitalChurch* Discernment Team was able to meet with 91 adults in Input Sessions (including founding pastor Tyler, along with Kendy and former pastor Jeff, along with Kristi) as well as 6 students in a Youth Forum. Thus, the survey results coupled with the input sessions will accurately reflect the current reality at SPC with the primary objective being to develop a *map* forward for God's preferred future here at SPC.

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<sup>2</sup> Fifteen people worked on this assessment—five were involved in the data analysis, one of those five also participated in and 10 others conducted Input Sessions.

<sup>3</sup> The Church Attendance History graph below Recommendation #3 shows a 2022 YTD attendance of 256. This number was confirmed by Pastor Gephart.



## Strengths to Build On

- You are a friendly church! You said it, and we've experienced it!
- You welcome diversity and you want to welcome everyone! You want to be a place where all find a place in your church community.
- The ESL program is strong. It attracts people from outside the area.
- Pastor Tom D. is a current strength! He is called to this type of ministry and is experienced to help you navigate this season. People love him, we love him!
- You're a church where lifelong relationships have been built!
- SPC has a good community reputation, which you desire to strengthen.
- There are service and ministry opportunities for adults/children/youth of all ages.
- You want to be a Bible-based, faith-based, spirit-led church that reflects God.
- Your Leadership invited our team in. You, as a church, engaged in the process. This takes humility to ask for help. Your leaders asked for help and are open to hearing it, and so are you!
- Great facility!

From the Survey responses, here are the highest rated ministries (all over 70%).

- VBS, 83%
- ESL, 82%
- Glory Days Preschool, 82%
- Worship services (music-78%, AV-82%, and an overall, positive sense)
- Care ministry, 77%
- Internet and technology (website, giving platform), 76% (Websites and an online presence are important to younger generations in particular.)
- Your family ministries are highly rated from your littlest littles to your high school and jr high school ministries, 71%-74%.
  - We spoke to some of your young people, and they are engaged and invested in SPC.

## Introduction to Executive Summary

The inaugural sentence in Pastor David Lomas' book, *The Truest Thing about You: Identity, Desire, and Why It All Matters*, reads, "There are many true things about you. You may be a student. You may be a mom. You may love someone of the opposite sex or the same sex. You may make music or lattes. Life may be incredibly difficult, or you may feel like you're living the dream. These things may be true—but are they the truest?"<sup>4</sup>

As active intentional followers of Jesus Christ, it is essential we ask and answer the question, "What is the truest thing about me?" Our passions, longings, successes, failures, secret dreams or hidden shames may all help to explain us, yet they don't define us. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are born again and adopted into God's family (Jn 1:12-13). A succinct overview of the truest thing about us can be found in Eph 1:7-8a:

*"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace<sup>8</sup> which He lavished on us."*

When all is said and done, the truest thing about us is that we are found and rooted "*in Him*," or "*in Christ*."<sup>5</sup> Jesus Christ binds us so completely to Himself that we come to share in all that He is as Savior. This gift of adoption into the family of God is perhaps the most extravagant gift of all. When we are joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, we come to share in the love between the Father and the Son—the very same eternal love the Father has for the Son (Jn 17:23). As such, God the Father loves us no less than He does His own Son. This love is the love of all loves; it is binding and permanent and no opposition can withstand it. It is endless, life giving, and utterly joyful. In Christ, we belong to God and become the family of God forever.

A famous sermon by C.S. Lewis that was subsequently printed as a book entitled *The Weight of Glory* summarizes our current cultural predicament this way: "If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> David C Cook: 2014: 19.

<sup>5</sup> The terms "*In Him*" and "*In Christ*" (or the equivalent) are found 180 times in the NT and Paul uses them 143 times in his letters. The doctrine associated with these terms is Union with Christ. Our union with the living Christ is the essential truth of our new and eternal existence and deserves careful study and praxis.

<sup>6</sup> HarperOne, 2001: 26.

## Taproot and Branch Root Issues



With this biblical perspective of finding our true identity *in Christ* and having identified many of your *Strengths* to build on, we will now consider what is hindering your vitality at this time. We often employ the language of a **taproot issue** and **branch root issues**. The idea is to reach as far below the surface as possible. Having synthesized the survey data with the input sessions, the *VitalChurch* Discernment Team sees that you are currently at a significant crossroads, and we would urge you to relinquish your *status quo*. As we synthesized the data with the input sessions, we identified the following taproot issue:

**SPC has drifted from a growing and fruitful understanding of your true identity as active and unified followers of Jesus Christ.**

While we affirm your mission statement of being a Christ-centered and Mission-minded Family, SPC is in need of a refreshed focus on who you are in Christ and who you are as a community of Christ-followers. Simply stated, a growing grasp of our true identify in Christ will cultivate in us a holy passion to grow in our understanding of the Bible and theology, our commitment to welcome new people into biblical fellowship (*koinonia*), as well as a holy passion to share the good news of the gospel in culturally appropriate ways.

### *Verbatim Responses*

- “We have been doing church instead of being the church and learning about God instead of truly knowing God.”
- “[We] want to be a Bible based, faith based, Spirit led church.”
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to SPC?
  - “Focus 1<sup>st</sup> on Jesus. Everything else flows and grows from that.”
  - “Remember Jesus is the vine. Be the branches”

In addition to the Taproot issue, the Discernment Team sees that a significant Branch Root issue is the need for SPC to navigate what one of our Discernment Team described as a “lingering fog of grief.”

Additional data-driven and input session-affirmed branch root issues include:

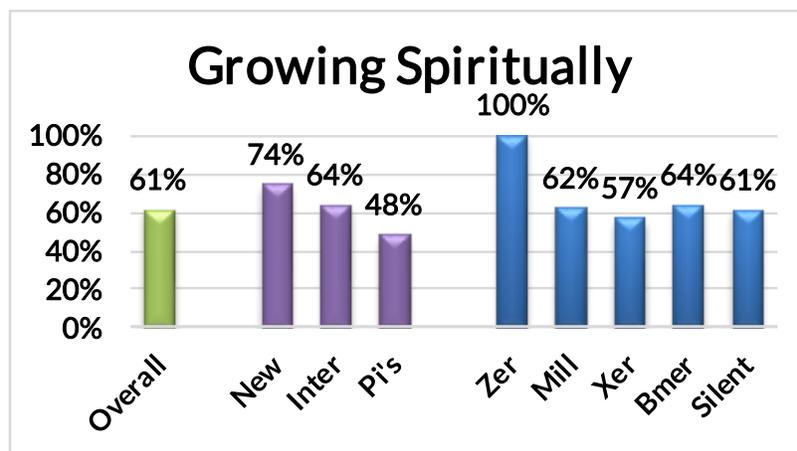
- The current lack of a clear and compelling vision
- The need for a refresher course in biblical conflict resolution skills
- The lack of trust in leadership that includes the need to right-size the Ruling Elders with updated role clarity, a governance model, and communication strategies (and bylaws)
- The need to intentionally increase accessibility to SPC and your fellowship groups
- The need to update outreach and evangelism strategies

The remainder of this oral report will provide statistical *rationale* related to the taproot and branch root issues and then move toward 8 specific *recommendations*. Finally, we will offer you a series of very practical *Next Steps*.

### Statistical Rationale (The Mirror)

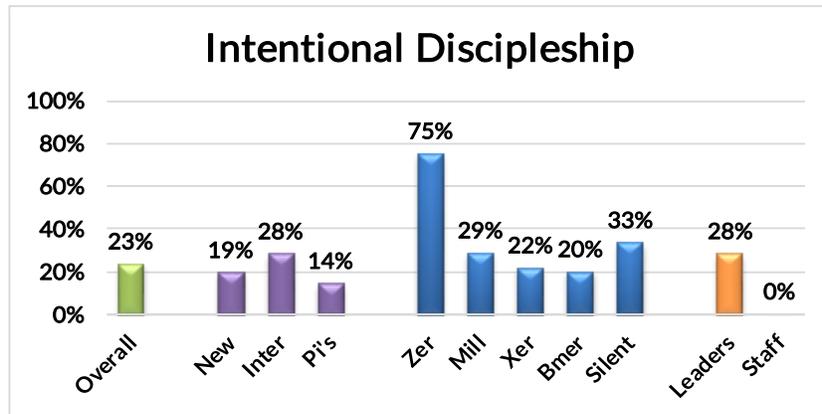
#### 1. Statistical evidence of your drift from finding your true identity in Christ

- a. Overall, only 61% of the survey respondents said they felt they were growing spiritually. Any score under 70% is cause for concern. (The *VitalChurch* database average on this question is 74%.)

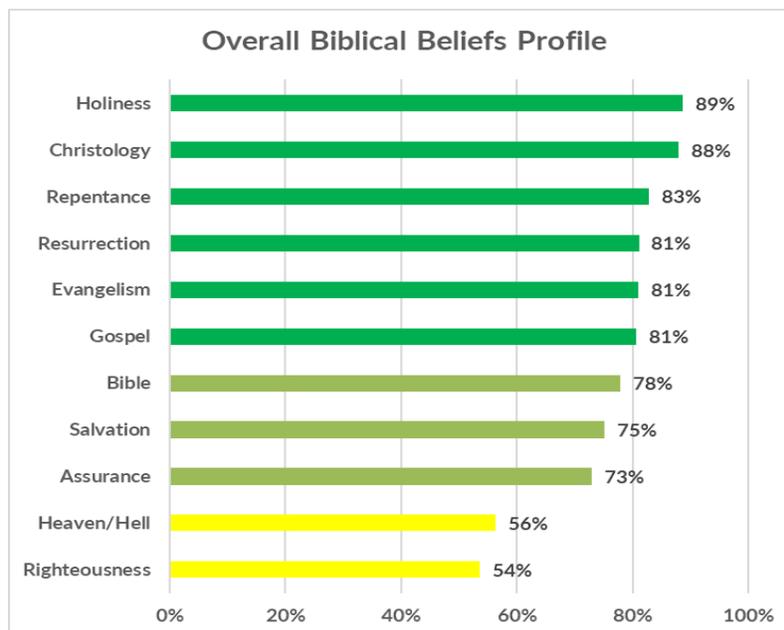


While the Gen Zers appear to be excited about growing spiritually and discipleship (see below), it should be noted that only three Gen Zers participated in the online survey.

- b. Only 23% of survey respondents seem to be aware of any intentional discipleship or (spiritual formation) pathway. Notice that none of the Staff is aware of any intentional discipleship.



- c. SPC is weak in orthodox Biblical Beliefs. In fact, these are the lowest scores *VitalChurch* has seen in several years.



The Biblical Beliefs scores indicate some form/s of moralism are likely present at SPC. The basic structure of moralism comes down to the belief that spiritual growth can be reduced to willful self-improvements in our behavior. From the 1<sup>st</sup> century until now, one of the most seductive false gospels is moralism, which can take many forms. Both liberal and conservative churchgoers can find themselves caught-up in moralistic tendencies.

d. SPC is extremely weak in evangelism.

	All	New	Inter	Pi's	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent
Number who were not Christians when they came	4	2	0	2	0	0	1	3	0
Still Seeking	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	0
Number currently attending who came with their parents and have since become Christians	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net conversions from the world	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Rate of Evangelism	0%	3%	0%	0%					

By combining the data from several questions, we are able to identify how many adults came to SPC prior to making their faith commitment and have since put their faith in Christ as the result of the SPC ministries. The chart above shows four survey respondents were not believers and three are still “Seeking.” Therefore, the overall net conversions from SPC’s ministries is one individual, giving an overall adult evangelism rate of less than 0.5%. The Rate of Evangelism at SPC is far less than the *VitalChurch* database average of 4.9%. A vital church would have a Rate of Evangelism of 15% or more.

*VitalChurch* acknowledges that due to the current culture wars and political climate here in the USA, proclamation evangelism may not be the most effective means of evangelism, and alternative methods are needed. We will address the practice of evangelism in the recommendations.

*Verbatim Response:* “I think osmosis may be how we are expected to know how to share with people.”

2. SPC seems to be enveloped in a fog of corporate grief. While the data indicates SPC is a place where congregants are encouraged to grieve losses (see below), what we encountered in the Input Sessions was that many of you told us about lack of energy and vision in your church, which are indicators of grief—and certainly understandable in the light of the past 2-3 years. The word “passive” also surfaced often, which can also be an indicator of grief.



*Verbatim Response:* “There’s some grieving that needs to happen in this church. In regards to the losses of the last few years.”

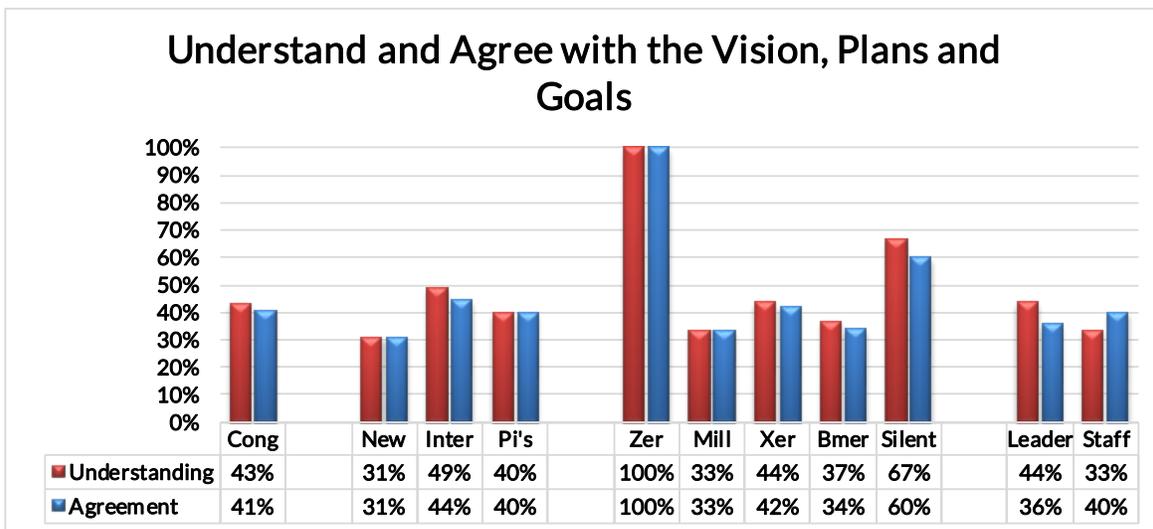
In his classic book, *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis wrote about grappling with the pangs of grief after the death of his wife: “Grief still feels like fear. Perhaps, more strictly, like suspense. Or like waiting; just hanging about waiting for something to happen. It gives life a permanently provisional feeling. It doesn’t seem worth starting anything.” SPC seems to be in a “waiting” mode.

Here is, at least, a partial list of some of the corporate losses you have experienced:

- COVID, (including over 1m deaths in the USA) and the many associated disruptions of church life and ministry
- The untimely passing of Rob Wallace
- Significant staff turnover—and some are grieving Jeff and Kristi leaving
- Scattering of former members and attenders—good friends and (possibly) family members—who moved away or began attending other churches
- The capital campaign failing (“perpetual loss”)
- Multiyear downward trend of attendance and giving
- There has also been the fracturing of some relationships that may need relational reconciliation

There will, no doubt, also be a plethora of additional personal and household losses, which include the lack of socialization and learning for your children/grandchildren, general isolation, and for some, the loss of jobs and the associated income. And, for many of the staff the housing market has created considerable stress and anxiety.

3. The current lack of a clear and compelling vision. At present, the survey respondents have a very limited sense of vision, plans, and goals for your church.



*70% is minimum acceptable score*

4. The consensus of the survey respondents is that your church and current leadership are not good at conflict resolution. Any score below 70% is cause for concern (31%). Church leaders rate themselves in the same range as the congregation. The Staff rate the situation lower than most other groups. Conflict resolution is an emotional health issue and is ultimately a leadership issue. There is a distinct need for a refresher course in biblical conflict resolution skills.

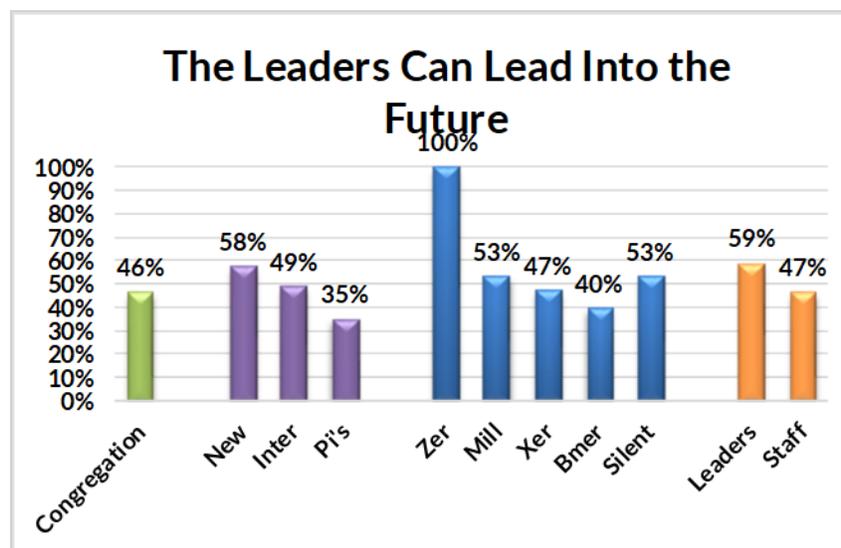


*Verbatim (Avoid) Responses*

- “Vague, or not enough communication to the church members about changes or conflict.”
- “We need to be able to have a hard conversation with ourselves.”
- “Conflict seems to be kept separate - so the church cannot work through it together. I think this leads to an undercurrent of tension.”

The primary areas of conflict include Communication (42%); assets, expenditures, and use of space (21%); program changes and starting something new (14%). Twenty percent (20%) of the survey respondents indicate a belief that conflict exists between specific people or groups.

5. There is a low approval rating for the current leaders (46%).



*Verbatim (Avoid) Responses*

- “Decision making Silos; Lack of critical & open discussion with congregation, lack of sharing problems; Isolated decision making.”
- “Avoiding hard decisions.”
- “Lack of communication and transparency. We need to rebuild trust.”
- “Chasing every shiny object. We come up a lot of new ideas, but often a lack of planning and consistent follow through causes them to die on the vine. Then it’s on to the next thing.”

Your Leadership needs to show that they are listening to the biblical concerns of members and attenders and take steps to share what they are doing to address issues at your church. To fail to provide leadership will deepen discouragement tendencies as well as keeping leadership approval ratings low.

6. There is a need to intentionally increase accessibility to SPC and your fellowship groups. Below are the acknowledged weakest ministries at SPC.

Low Rated Ministries	Rating
Small Groups	60%
Adult Classes	57%
Connecting (incorporating newcomers into the life of the church)	52%
Outreach (evangelism, inviting friends to church, community events)	48%
Men's Ministry	47%
Leadership Development	47%
<b>Average</b>	<b>58%</b>

*Verbatim (Avoid) Responses*

- “Tendency to be cliquish;” “The ‘human tendency’ to congregate with the people/person you know during/after worship and events.”
- “Close, tight-knit community of believers who are focused on Scripture and welcoming of newcomers.”
- “I would like to see sense of community preserved in the community. Even with all the change happening in the church, a strong sense of community is important at all age levels.”

## Recommendations (The Map)

God often guides with *direction* over *destination*.

### **Recommendation #1: Re/Discover and Re/Build Your Identity in Christ and the Identity of SPC Around Jesus Christ.**

#### *Verbatim Responses*

- “Preaching the gospel. I love it when we are encouraged to open our bibles during the sermon and reading scriptures.”
- “I want to preserve our focus on Biblical teaching, expository style; teaching the Bible maintaining context.”

Our Discernment Team believes that this is THE key area that needs to become the primary focus of SPC at this time. This flows out of the datapoints (Statistical Rationale) listed above as well as their implications.

To experience why the gospel is such good news and answer life’s most foundational questions about identity, destiny, and purpose, it is essential to seek understanding of what it means to be united to Christ.

The expressions “*in Christ*,” “*in the Lord*,” and “*in Him*” occur 164 times in the letters of Paul alone and are indispensable to an understanding of the NT doctrine of Union with Christ, which is one of the key doctrines of the Christian faith. If you are “*in Christ*” all that is true of what Jesus Christ accomplished is now true of you. (What if we lived our lives like we really believed that?)

The late pastor, theologian, and missiologist John Stott wrote, “To be ‘*in Christ*’ is to find personal fulfillment, to enjoy brotherly unity, and to experience a radical transformation. Only then can we become the world’s salt and light, sharing the good news with others, making an impact on society, and above everything else seeking to bring honor and glory to His wonderful Name.”<sup>7</sup>

The Westminster Larger Catechism (Q. #66) asks, “What is that union which the elect have with Christ? The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God’s grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as

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<sup>7</sup> John R.W. Stott. *In Christ: The Meaning and Implications of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. Address given in 1983 at the Leadership Luncheon following the National Prayer Breakfast, Washington, D.C.

their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling.” In other words, our union with Christ is spiritual, mystical, unbreakable, full, and free.

### *Resources*

We recommend that congregants read *The Truest Thing about You: Identity, Desire, and Why It All Matters* by David Lomas (David C Cook 2014).

And related to the need to respond to the low theology scores, consider studying the difference between *imputed righteousness* and *imparted righteousness* (or *infused righteousness*). They are distinct and can be illustrated in two sentences:

- Imparted: By faith I am righteous.
- Imputed: By faith I am counted righteous.

The Greek verb *logizoma* is used more than 40 times in the New Testament and 10 times in Romans chapter 4, which is sometimes referred to as the “imputation chapter.” With this in mind, read *Union with Christ* by Rankin Wilbourne (David C Cook 2018) and consider other resources for a thorough study. Ask God to reveal what it is that you build both your personal and corporate identities around. Wait, listen, and reflect—and be open to what He says.

### **Recommendation #2: Embrace your corporate and personal grief and view it as a pathway to personal and church-wide hope and growth.**

Corporate trauma involves loss and loss must be grieved. SPC must guard itself against denial and inaction to humbly acknowledge and embrace your grief, viewing it as an opportunity to know God and one another better.

The “stages” of grief are not neat and tidy sequential steps<sup>8</sup> but a messy relational process of moving through disappointment and hurt to holy hope in Christ. A biblical response to grief involves a biblical theology of suffering and loss that will move through grief to growth and passionately point us to Christ. In God's economy, if grief follows loss, then comfort follows grief (e.g., Mat 5:4). God's comforting grace is the answer to grief. Furthermore, God comforts us “so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor 1:4b).

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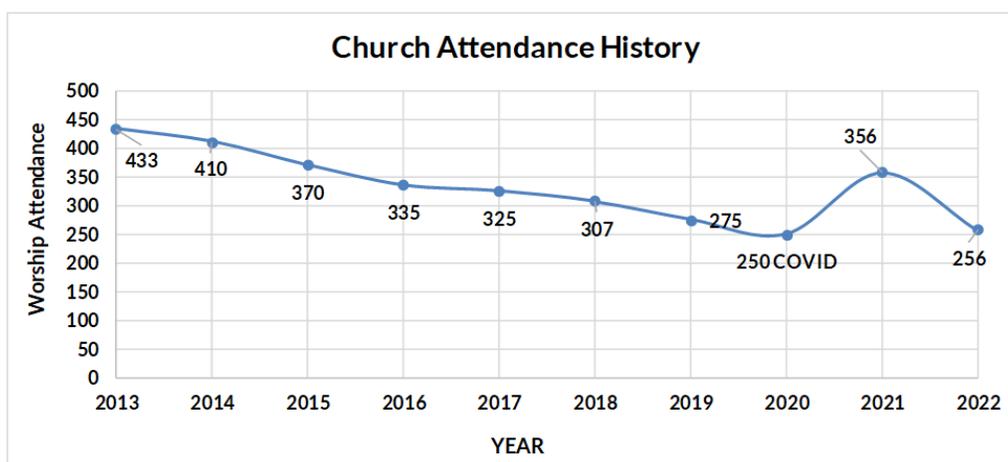
<sup>8</sup> *VitalChurch* finds the secular model of grief, which consists of moving from denial to anger, to bargaining, through depression, and, finally, to acceptance to be fundamentally flawed and shallow.

Seek to incorporate your current grief process into your re/building of intentional discipleship structures. King David is famous for being a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam.13:14; Acts 13:22), yet we sometimes fail to recognize how he repeatedly paid attention to loss, grief, and disappointment. As King, David led Israel to God through his own experiences of grief and loss. Seek to grasp the rich, biblical theology of loss, both for your personal lives, the church as a whole, and those who are yet to be enfolded into this fellowship.

We recommend the book *God’s Healing for Life’s Losses* by Robert Kellemen (BMH Books 2010). The book includes two application/discussion guides for individual or group study. Also, consider launching GriefShare<sup>9</sup> at SPC, which could provide ongoing support for those who are grieving as well as an outreach opportunity.

**Recommendation #3: Appoint a “Transition Team” made up of godly men and women who possess a heart and desire for SPC to be “Re/Focused” by reaffirming SPC’s values, mission, and vision to fulfill your missionary calling to Sammamish and the surrounding area.**

SPC has taken on the traits of an Institutionalized Church, which occurs when a church moves away from an outward focus (of enthusiastic mission and evangelism) to an inward focus of taking care of itself. As is typical in an institutionalized church, SPC has seemingly been unwilling to address the difficult issues represented by a long-term pattern of decline in attendance and finances.



<sup>9</sup> [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org)

### *Verbatim Responses*

- [SPC has] “lost sight of who you were trying to reach and there has also been a lack strategy and a lack of holding anybody accountable [and] COVID made what was an already existing problem worse, in that people were coming out of habit and now the habit is broken, and people have forgotten why they should be involved. SPC is suffering from the lack of vision and focus.”
- Achieve Responses
  - “A clear vision and plan for the future.”
  - “Seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit and a desire to act on it.”
  - “A strong vision for how we want to be ‘essential’ to this community.”

One of the compelling strengths of growing and vital churches is a clear and compelling vision that is worthy of sacrifice, which both motivates and guides the church to move forward by sincerely seeking God, waiting for God’s direction, and then setting prayer-filled faith goals and objectives. A clear and compelling vision clarifies and unifies a congregation to sacrifice their time, energy, and resources. Discovering a fresh God-centered vision can be described as:

“A faithful restatement of the gospel with rich implications for life, ministry, and mission in a type of culture at a moment in history.”<sup>10</sup>

The underlying criterion for discerning God’s vision is the presuppositions that Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and Vision Caster (Mat 16:18), and that He has a preferred future for SPC.

Vision is the culmination of an imagination that has been creatively shaped and ordered by the God of grace, holy Scripture, and the community of believers, both now and through the ages.

With this in mind appoint a Transition Team with administrative capacities and leadership potential who meet the stated qualifications of deacons and deaconesses in Scripture. This team will be formed in order to plan and implement a Re/Focusing Process. One of the main functions of this team is to take the pressure off the existing staff to plan 3-4 all church events. This team can also be viewed as a training cohort of emerging leaders.

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<sup>10</sup> Keller, Timothy. *Center Church*, Zondervan, 2012: 19.

Take the next 4-6 months, with as many people from SPC who are willing, and work through the following Re/Focusing questions:

- a. Who has God shaped us to be?
- b. Why do we exist as a church?
- c. Where is God leading us in the future?
- d. Whom has God called us to reach?
- e. Which ministry model best fits with our doctrinal statement AND facilitates our vision?
- f. How will we accomplish our vision?
- g. What is our plan for ministry for the next 2-4 years?

It would be the strong encouragement of *VitalChurch* to not wait for a permanent pastor to engage in this Re/Focusing Process. The more you accomplish during this transition season the higher caliber of pastor you will attract.

**Recommendation #4: Choose to love one another well by developing healthier relational skills starting today.**

Conflict is inevitable and is an instrument God uses to develop qualities in our lives that aren't developed any other way. All conflict is an opportunity to listen, learn, and love one another well. When faced with conflicts we must ask, "What is God trying to tell me?" In Acts 6:1-7 conflict was used by God to release a greater number of leaders into the fledgling church and bring to light a grievous sin (in their case, it was the age-old problem of racism). Conflict becomes redemptive when it highlights these areas of needed growth and clarifies God's sanctifying plan for our lives.

Begin to practice straightforward biblical conflict resolution steps like:

- a. Focus your efforts on identifying and owning the *log/s* in your own eye before you attempt to remove the *speck* in another's (Matt 7:5).
- b. Commit to making things right when you've been offended by someone or offended someone—proactively seek to be reconciled (Matt 5:23-24).
- c. Learn how to *speak the truth in love* to one another (Eph 4:15).
- d. Restore your brother or sister with *gentleness* (Gal 6:2).

Be aware that conflict avoidant (i.e., peacekeeping) tactics are often systemic and can be related to our own family of origin issues; that is, they are more than surface or situational issues. We must be willing to look below the surface to identify and own the

deeper issues at work below our conflicts. It is a somber reality that conflict can exacerbate our family of origin issues.

There may also be a need for some relational reconciliation—both within SPC and with some who have left.

*Verbatim Response:* “I would like to see the leadership/paid staff reach back out to old church members to heal wounds.”

With this in mind, carefully read and apply *Making Peace: Growing Redemptive Community* by Jim Van Yperen (Moody 2002) and *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande (Baker Books 2003) to understand and to resolve inevitable conflict in systemic ways (i.e., seek to deal with the root issues not just the presenting issues).

Additionally, check out...

- a. The resources at [emotionallyhealthy.org](http://emotionallyhealthy.org), including the Discipleship Course along with the *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course Participant's Pack Expanded Edition: Discipleship that Deeply Changes Your Relationship with God* by Peter and Geri Scazzero (HarperChristian Resources 2022).
- b. *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life (Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series)* by Ron Johnson.

**Recommendation #5: Right size the Session with updated role clarity and responsibilities.**

Update and overhaul your Session (Ruling Elders, Deacons) by developing a mid-sized church organizational structure that retains the authority to oversee all the ministries by a group of biblically qualified laymen and laywomen.

The Ruling Elders will oversee general church policy, doctrine, biblical discipline, budget, and the legal responsibilities of your church. Together with the Teaching Elder, your Ruling Elders form a plurality of leaders sharing as overseers of your congregation.

- a. All are charged with the responsibility to defend correct doctrine and refute those who contradict it (however, special honor is given to him who excels in preaching and teaching).
- b. Delegate the management of all ministries to the Teaching Elder and the staff (volunteer and vocational) who are accountable to the board of overseers.
- c. Repurpose or replace standing committees that govern areas of ministry.

- d. Organize ministries by ministry teams that are empowered to make most of the decisions related to the implementation of their respective ministries within the general policies made by the board of overseers.
- e. Through the Teaching Elder hold volunteer and vocational staff accountable for the health and fruitfulness of each area of ministry. No staff person should have more than one supervisor s/he is accountable to.
- f. All staff should lead their own ministry committees.

Therefore, consider reducing the size of the Ruling Elders from 15 to 8, and create a policy-based model of church governance.<sup>11</sup> Stated simply, a policy-based model of governance occurs when the Ruling Elders make decisions through the use of clear, consistent policies that promote clarity and focus, which results in unity. A policy-based governance model separates issues of organizational purpose (i.e., ENDS) from all other organizational issues (i.e., MEANS), placing primary importance on the ENDS, and delegating all Staff and Operations to the Teaching Elder to carry out the MEANS, holding him or her accountable through monthly Ministry Objective Reports (MOs). The goal is to achieve a biblical balance between high freedom AND appropriate accountability. A policy-based governance model will also help distinguish and clarify the interactive roles of the Session, the Staff (vocational and volunteer), and the Teaching Elder as well as how everyone relates responsibly to one other.

Additionally, *VitalChurch* would admonish the Session to “up their game” through...

- a. Increased transparency
- b. Increased communication
- c. Increased accountability
- d. Increased visibility (through regular town halls and forums)
- e. Seeking out appropriate leadership training
- f. Continuing to become men and women of prayer and committed to the authority of the Scriptures.

To accomplish the above, prayerfully read, study, interact, and implement the principles found in *Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence* by Aubrey Malphurs (Baker Books 2005).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *VitalChurch* typically recommends the Carver Model of Policy Governance.

<sup>12</sup> While *LLs* is an excellent intro to the concepts of Policy Governance, *VitalChurch* would recommend the Carver Policy Governance approach.

**Recommendation #6: Train and mobilize for effective and culturally sensitive evangelism.**

There is a famous quote by the late C.T. Niles, a Ceylonese pastor and evangelist: “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” Therefore, develop a theological vision to have a missionary encounter with Sammamish and the surrounding area. Research, develop, preach, teach, plan, and pray for God to motivate and move you to become a whole-hearted missional community. Re/Cultivate SPC’s prayer ministry asking God for a revived passion for the lost, poor, sick, trafficked, abused, oppressed, marginalized, and brokenhearted (see Luke 4:18-19; Matthew 9:37-38; and, John 4:35).

Currently, there are 515,496 people residing within the 10-mile radius of SPC’s campus, which represents an increase of 45% since 2000.<sup>13</sup> The largest age group in terms of numbers is Millennials (age 21 to 40), who comprise 29% of the total population. Their household concerns include Social Injustice, Time for Recreation/Leisure, Achieving a Fulfilling Marriage, Achieving Educational Objectives, Satisfying Job/Career and Long-term Financial Stability.

Additionally, a comparison of ethnicities at SPC reveals a disparity that should be considered in ongoing plans for effective outreach.

- a. Anglo-European SPC 92%; area 56%
- b. Hispanic SPC 2%; area 7%
- c. African American SPC 1%; area 2%
- d. Asian SPC 2%; area 31%
- e. First Nation SPC 0%; area 0.3%
- f. Other Races & Multiple Races (Non-Hisp) SPC 3%; area 4.5%

*Verbatim (Achieve) Responses*

- “New opportunities to connect and reach community”
- “I wish SPC would grow to reflect the changes in demographics of our community. The Plateau and Sammamish have really transformed in recent years in becoming more brown. I don't see that same translation in terms of the ethnic make-up at church, having taken place in our church and am not sure why. This concerns me.”
- “Purposefully engage communities not represented in our church family. We are too white!”

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<sup>13</sup> Percept Report: 1.

We serve a missionary God. The Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit sends us. In this sense, we are all missionaries. How will SPC make room for the ethnically diverse population that is increasingly moving into Sammamish?

*VitalChurch* would encourage a means of evangelism in this moment of history called the “*oikos principle*.” The Greek word *oikos* (not a yogurt!) literally means *household* and has come to define the ongoing and overlapping social circles that God has sovereignly placed in our lives. *Oikos evangelism* encourages believers to identify, pray for, and serve the (usually) 8-15 people in our *oikos*. In this form of evangelism, it may be better to think of ourselves as priests of our *oikos* instead of evangelists.

Michael Green, in his classic 1970 book, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, observes that the NT Church vigorously adhered to the *oikos principle* as its primary strategy for the advance of God’s kingdom. Early Christians knew when the message of faith was heard and demonstrated by friends and family who were known, and trusted that barriers to the gospel were removed and receptivity to the gospel message increased dramatically. Green describes how Pantaenus led Clement of Alexandria to Christ, Justin led Tatian, Octavius led Minucius Felix to Christ—all through *oikos evangelism*.<sup>14</sup>

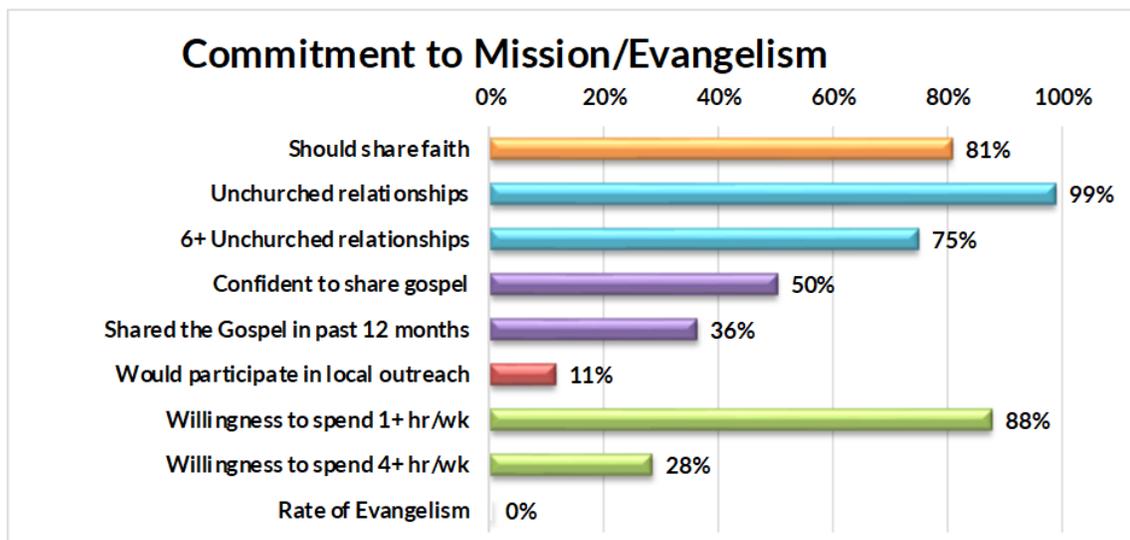
The essence of *oikos evangelism* is to specifically record the 8-15 people that God has sovereignly placed within our sphere of influence, pray for them regularly, serve them consistently through acts of kindness including fully present listening, and when the time is right, share the beauty and majesty of the gospel with them.

*Verbatim Response:* “I would like to avoid full-on ‘evangelical’ [probably meant to say ‘evangelistic’] pressuring people in a certain way versus inviting. I would like to avoid shaming.”

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<sup>14</sup> *Evangelism in the Early Church* (2nd ed), Eerdmans 2003: 243-244, 322ff.

There will need to be some training at SPC in how to share the gospel and pray with someone to receive Christ. While nearly everyone at SPC has friendships/relationships with unchurched people, only 50% of your survey respondents indicated they are confident to share the gospel.



Therefore, read *How to Reach the West Again: Six Essential Elements of a Missionary Encounter* by Tim Keller (available as a free download at [redeemercitycity.com/reachthewest](http://redeemercitycity.com/reachthewest)). Also, read, adapt, and apply *8-15: The World Is Smaller Than You Think* by Tom Mercer (Oikos Books 2013) and incorporate the “*oikos* principle” into the life and ministry of SPC.

**Recommendation #7: Re-Tool Welcome/Assimilation, Discipleship, and Small Group Ministries.**

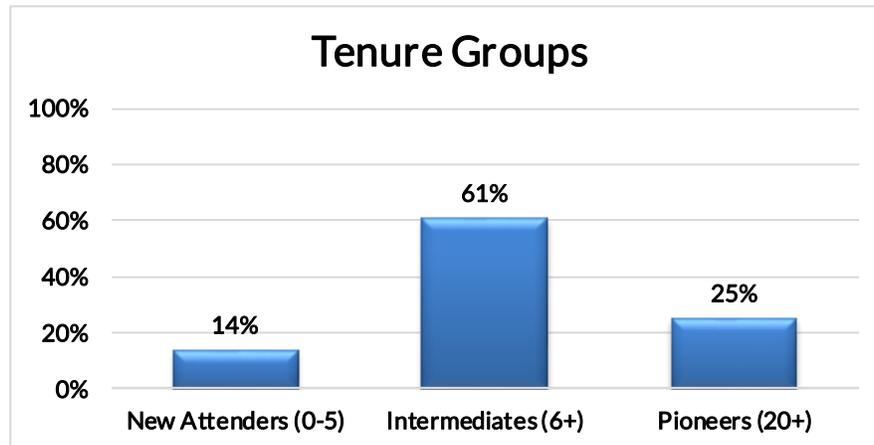
Rekindle authentic biblical fellowship (*koinonia*) through retooling your Welcome/Assimilation Strategy, Discipleship Pathway, and Small Group Ministry.

*Verbatim Responses*

- “Insulated focus on ‘us’ and a loss of what we are doing ‘out there’ in the community.”
- (Achieve) “Welcoming, this church is not that right now.”

First and foremost, SPC needs to repent of your lack of evangelism and inaccessibility to people who are in need of authentic fellowship and evangelism.

Notice on the chart below that only 14% of the 228 survey respondents have attended SPC for five years or less. This fits the pattern of a declining church.

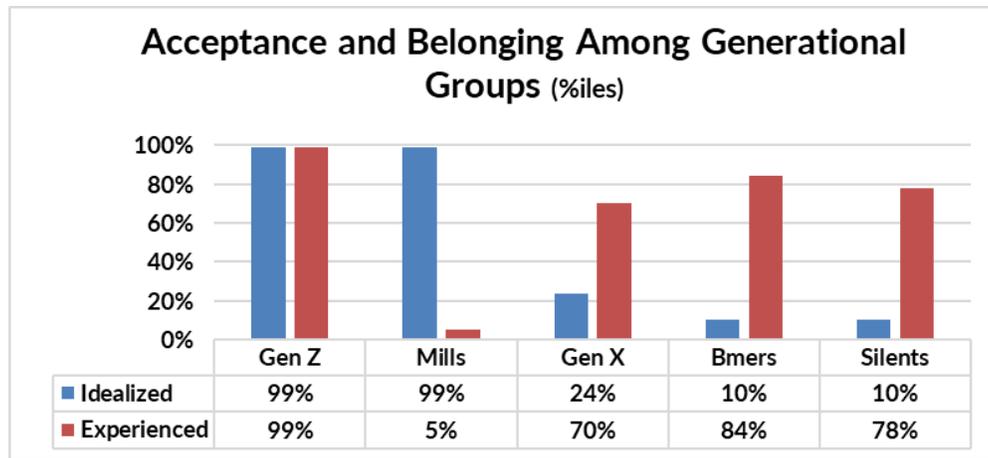


See below for the guidelines to interpret how Tenure Groups provide insight into the vitality of a church...

<b>Interpretative Guidelines</b>	
<b>New Attenders</b>	
•	40% plus indicates a growing church
•	Should be largest of three groups
•	30-40% usually indicates a plateaued church
•	Less than 30% usually indicates a declining church
<b>Intermediate Attenders</b>	
•	Ideal—smaller than New Members, but larger than Pioneer Group
•	A low figure usually indicates a pattern of poor historic assimilation or history of strife especially if this is the smallest of the three groups.
<b>Pioneer Group</b>	
•	Ideal—less than 25% and smallest of three groups
•	Probable serious pathology if 40% or more

As stated above, SPC fits into the pattern of a declining church. It is time to open your hearts and your fellowship circles to those who seek connection, and invite people in.

The graph below identifies that the Millennials (9% of survey respondents) are not experiencing what they have idealized for acceptance and belonging at SPC. The disparity between what they have idealized (99%) and what they have experienced (5%) at SPC is significant and ranks in the 5th%ile in *VitalChurch's* Database. Notice the Millennials are by far the most disappointed generational group at SPC; and, as noted above, Millennials are the largest generational group within the 10-mile radius of the SPC campus (29%). Addressing this issue is crucial to SPC's future.



Therefore, *VitalChurch* recommends that SPC Re/Tool the following...

- a. **The Connecting Ministry**, which was rated as the fourth lowest (52%). The Connecting Ministry should be designed to creatively connect people to SPC through relationships. A church that is proactive about connecting and assimilating newcomers will also be well on their way to growing strong disciples. A robust connections ministry begins with a person's (or family's) first visit to SPC and ends when that person (or family) becomes deeply connected to and engaged within the church.

*Verbatim (Achieve) Responses*

- "Making newcomers feel welcome, attracting more young people, empowering the congregation to be responsible for welcoming new folks"
- "We don't have an environment that encourages real connection."

Assimilation includes four basic processes:

- 1) Gracious, non-judgmental, but not overbearing hospitality. There is both passive and active hospitality. Passive hospitality includes things like excellent street and campus signage, while active hospitality involves warmhearted greeters. Boomers and Silents are used to exuberant and

- animated greeters, while Gen Xers, Millennials, and Gen Zers generally appreciate a more subdued greeting.
- 2) Patient and gentle information gathering. How to harvest appropriate information in order to follow-up can be tricky. Boomers and Silents are used to filling out cards, but younger people are much more comfortable texting. Some churches provide iPads to Greeters to process follow-up information right on the spot. Information from visiting families who sign their kids into CM must be merged into a database of other weekend guest attenders.
  - 3) Non-obtrusive follow-up and follow through is an intentional ongoing process that shows a church genuinely cares. More and more people would rather receive a text or email instead of a phone call or a letter. Having said that, all avenues of follow-up should be explored.
  - 4) Deep and meaningful connection opportunities are essential. Churches can confuse attendance with connection. People who feel intrinsically connected to their church—that they are valued and that they matter—are people ready to delve deeper into their relationship with Christ.

A church that is proactive about connecting and assimilating newcomers will also be well on their way to growing strong disciples.

- b. Re/Tool your **Small Group Ministry**, which was rated as the sixth lowest (60%), and seek to disciple and continue to build authentic community at SPC.<sup>15</sup> One author states, “A real church aims toward spiritual community where souls connect, where shame weakens, where sin surfaces, where failure meets grace, where irritations soften, where holy desire grows.”<sup>16</sup> In the book of Acts, we see that the church grew both in large groups and in small groups (Acts 2:41-45).

A growing and effective Small Groups Ministry assist congregants and seekers to allow participants to practice the many *one another* commands in the New Testament (which might be a great sermon series!). Now is the time to focus on making adjustments to your small group ministry to incorporate more relational aspects to develop a deeper sense of acceptance and belonging and a high quality of biblical *koinonia*. Discipleship is best carried out in the context of close intimate relationships that foster an organic mutual

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<sup>15</sup> Currently 91 survey respondents report belonging to a Small Group.

<sup>16</sup> Larry Crabb. *Real Church*, Thomas Nelson 2009: 152.

accountability. Begin afresh to continue to develop and multiply this kind of authentic and transparent biblical community where people can share their lives together—at whatever stage people are at in following Christ. Create a climate where sinners are safe, but sin is not.

- c. Along the way, begin to dream and articulate an effective Spiritual Formation/Discipleship Pathway.

*Verbatim Response:* “A discipleship program for new attendees and/or current believers who would like to grow in their faith.”

Church is not only to be the place for Christians to be “fed,” but church is also a sanctuary to find rest. Church is also to be a hospital where broken people can be healed. Finally, the church becomes a training center where people can be equipped with a theological undergirding (2 Tim 3:16) as well as to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12).

Therefore, read, adapt, and apply:

- *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian in Community* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (HarperOne 1978).
- *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's Guide to Making Disciples Through Scripture* by Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Lexham Press 2019), which is a doctrinal approach to discipleship that returns to the heart of the Great Commission, helping believers integrate objective truth with relational actions.
- *Building a Discipleship Culture* by Mike Breen (3dm International 2017).
- An additional consideration is *Sticky Church* by Larry Osborne (Zondervan 2008), which is the story of one church’s use of small groups to grow their outreach and evangelism.
- And, consider a sermon series and all-church study of the “*one another*” passages in the New Testament.

Meaningful connections to a church begin with building meaningful relationships. Proactively helping people connect at progressively deeper levels of biblical *koinonia* creates opportunities for responsibility as well as ownership. When people feel that their church is intimately invested in them, they are more likely to sacrificially invest in their church, becoming members, givers, and volunteers. Every church—of every size—must have processes in place to ensure that no one gets lost, left out, or overlooked.

**Recommendation #8: Keep the Intentional Interim Teaching Elder focused on preaching, training, leadership, and facilitating the recommendations in this report.**

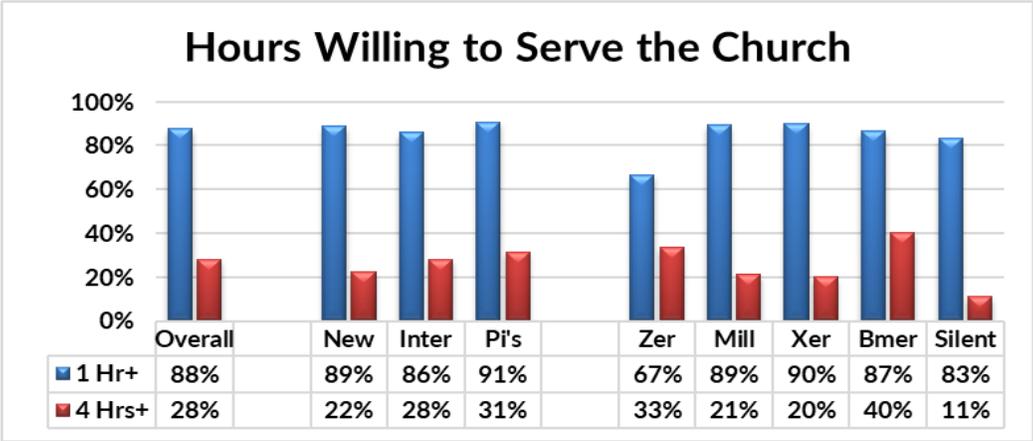
Do not expect your Intentional Interim Teaching Elder to carry out all the functions of a normal teaching elder. Instead have him work on executing the recommendations of this report which will include, but not be limited to:

- a. Resolving any unresolved conflicts.
- b. Updating and developing systems, policies, and procedures.
- c. Making polity and governance changes with the input from the Presbytery, Session, Staff, Transition Team, Ministry Leaders, and the congregation (through a study of the Scriptures).
- d. Equipping lay leaders for the work of ministry.
- e. Preparing sermons and sermon series that explore Scripture in ways that speak directly to the current revealed, Holy Spirit breathed needs of SPC and the un-churched population of Sammamish.

The result: SPC's Session, staff, ministry leaders, members, and attendees will be released to minister to one another in ways the Intentional Interim Teaching Elder cannot. Then at the appropriate time, the Intentional Interim Teaching Elder will work with your Ruling Elders to develop and coach a Search Team to identify the next permanent Teaching Elder of SPC.

**Practical Next Steps**

1. Nehemiah 1 provides us with an abbreviated model of how to initiate and lead change. When his brothers tell him about the desperate condition of God’s people in broken down Jerusalem it broke his heart. Nehemiah then spent four months in active repentance, prayer, fasting—and planning.
2. *Verbatim Response:* “We’re at a crossroads. Press in and be involved!”
3. This report is loaded with data that will help SPC with its efforts to improve its ministry. The most pressing needs are finding your identity in Christ and regaining a unifying, compelling vision for what SPC is called to be and to do.
4. Eighty-eight (88%) of the survey respondents are willing to serve at least one hour a week at, or on behalf of SPC IF they are well trained.<sup>17</sup> Build on this! Begin with the 29% of the survey respondents who are retired. (There is no such thing as retirement, only reassignment!)



5. Engage in humble dialogue with one another regarding this report.
6. Choose to accept the taproot and branch root issues and begin to move into a new season of delighting in Jesus and celebrating the gospel of grace.

<sup>17</sup> Recruitment is both a science and an art. Think of a missionary raising support to go overseas; there’s a lot of personal engagement and specific asks. Protentional volunteers want role clarity, parameters, and a time frame. When all is said and done, it begins with focused and intentional prayer (Mat 9:38).

7. Celebrate the strengths that need to be reinforced and built upon and honor those whom God has used to make special contributions to your heritage.
8. Acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Senior Pastor of SPC and ask Him to lead, guide, protect, and unleash His presence on you, the neighborhood, the town of Sammamish, and the surrounding area.
9. Finally, the wisest decisions concerning your future will include respect for and the preservation of the strength of your heritage rooted in the authority of the Scriptures and the PCUSA.

Taproot Issue: SPC has drifted from a growing and fruitful understanding of your true identity as active and unified followers of Jesus Christ.

Branch Root Issues:

- The current lack of a clear and compelling vision
- The need for a refresher course in biblical conflict resolution skills
- The lack of trust in leadership that includes the need to right-size the Ruling Elders with updated role clarity, a governance model, and communication strategies (and bylaws)
- The need to update outreach and evangelism strategies
- The need to intentionally increase accessibility to SPC and your fellowship groups

Recommendations:

1. Re/Discover and Re/Build Your Identity in Christ and the Identity of SPC Around Jesus Christ.
2. Embrace your corporate and personal grief and view it as a pathway to personal and church-wide hope and growth.
3. Appoint a “Transition Team” made up of godly men and women who possess a heart and desire for SPC to be “Re/Focused” by reaffirming SPC’s values, mission, and vision to fulfill your missionary calling to Sammamish and the surrounding area.
4. Choose to love one another well by developing healthier relational skills starting today.
5. Right size the Session with updated role clarity and responsibilities.
6. Train and mobilize for effective and culturally sensitive evangelism.
7. Re-Tool Welcome/Assimilation, Discipleship, and Small Group Ministries.
8. Keep the Intentional Interim Teaching Elder focused on preaching, training, leadership, and facilitating the recommendations in this report.

### III. Appendices

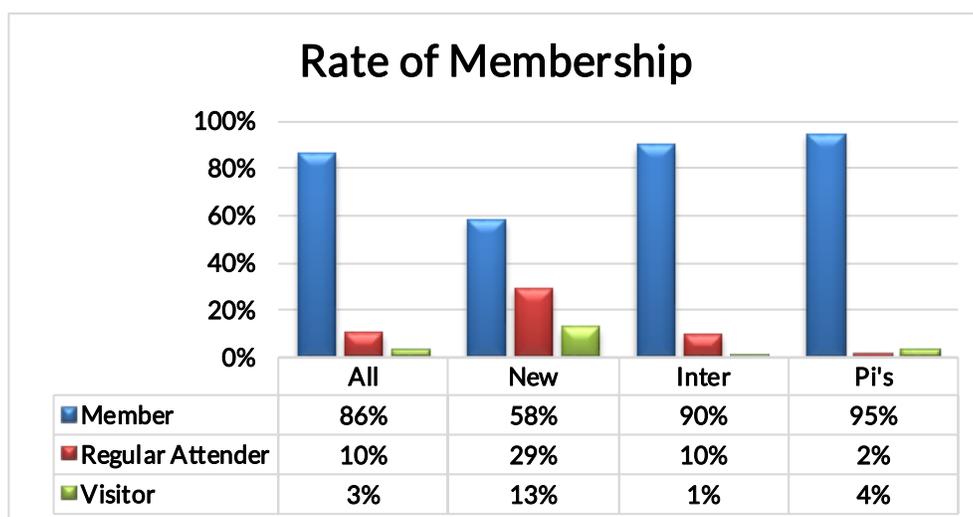
#### Section 1: Who Are We? (Demographic Data)<sup>18</sup>

This section looks at the demographic characteristics of your church and its community. Church data is based on survey responses. Community data is based on the *Ministry Area Profile 2022* which was included in arranging for the diagnostic to be done by *VitalChurch*. The ministry area is defined as a 10-mile radius around your church. Three terms describing church members are used in this section and throughout the report. New Attenders are those who have attended your church for five years or less. Intermediates are those who have attended 6-19 years and Pioneers are those who have attended your church 20 or more years.

#### How many years have you been attending this church?

The average survey participant has attended SPC for 14.0 years. We will discuss this statistic in the next section under “Tenure Analysis” (Section 2: Shared Pilgrimage).

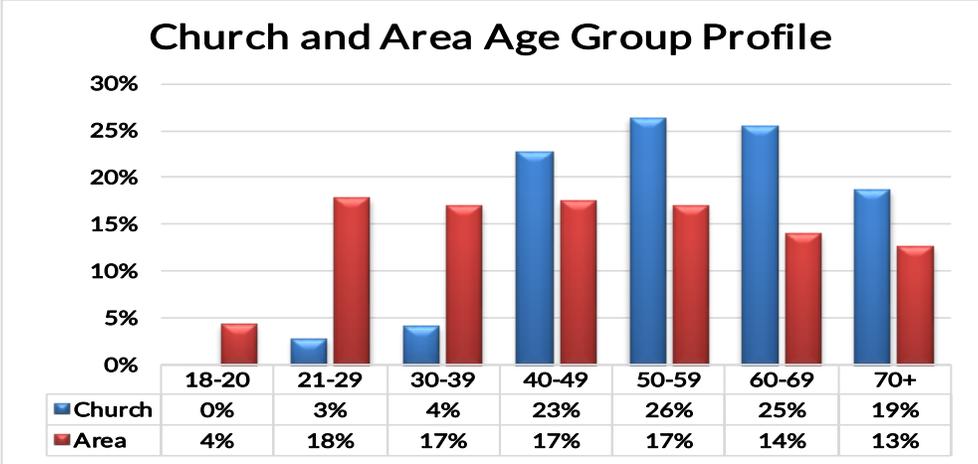
Are you a member of this church (done what is necessary to become a member), a regular attender (this is the church you attend) or a visitor (attended here once or a few times)?



Among survey participants, 86% have done what is necessary to become members. In a traditional church, church membership is considered to be a measure of commitment.

<sup>18</sup> The *Ministry Area Profile 2022* produced by Percept report is the primary source of demographic data used in this section.

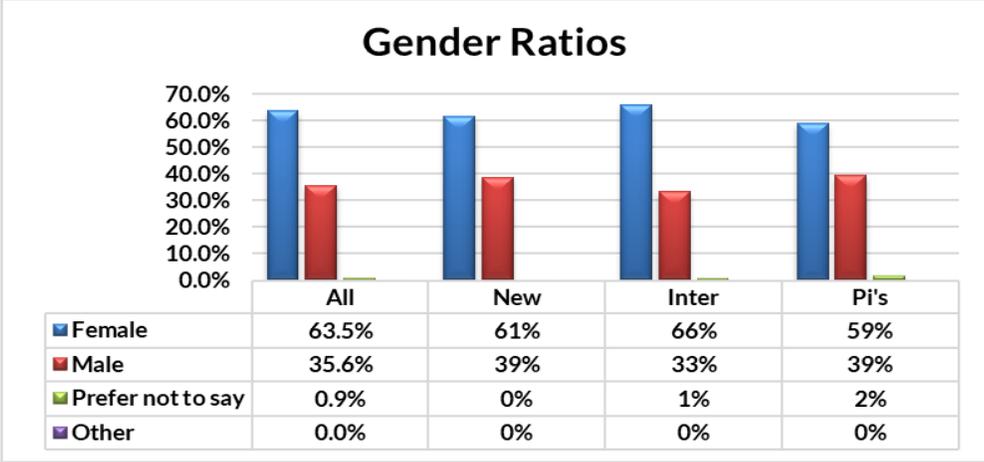
What is the year of your birth?



All data is for people 18 years of age or older

The purpose of this question is to develop an age profile of your church and then compare that profile to the community in which your church is located. The average age of adult participants at SPC is 57.3 years old. The average age of those adults<sup>19</sup> who live in the area is 49.8 years old.

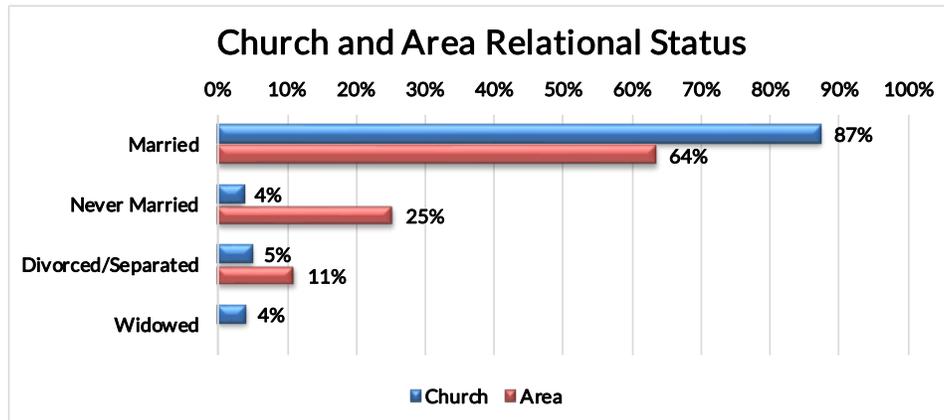
What is your gender?



The gender makeup of your congregation is 64% female and 36% male. It is typical of American churches to have a few more women than men. A 55% women/45% men ratio is normal/typical. When the ratio is more extreme than 60%/40%, it is important to determine why there is an imbalance. The female/male ratio of the area is 50%/50%.

<sup>19</sup>The average age of those in the area (10-mile radius of your church) is 39.0 years with 21.7% being less than 18 years of age. Thus, the average age of adults (18+) in the analysis area is 49.8 years (39.0/(100%-21.7%)= 49.8 years old).

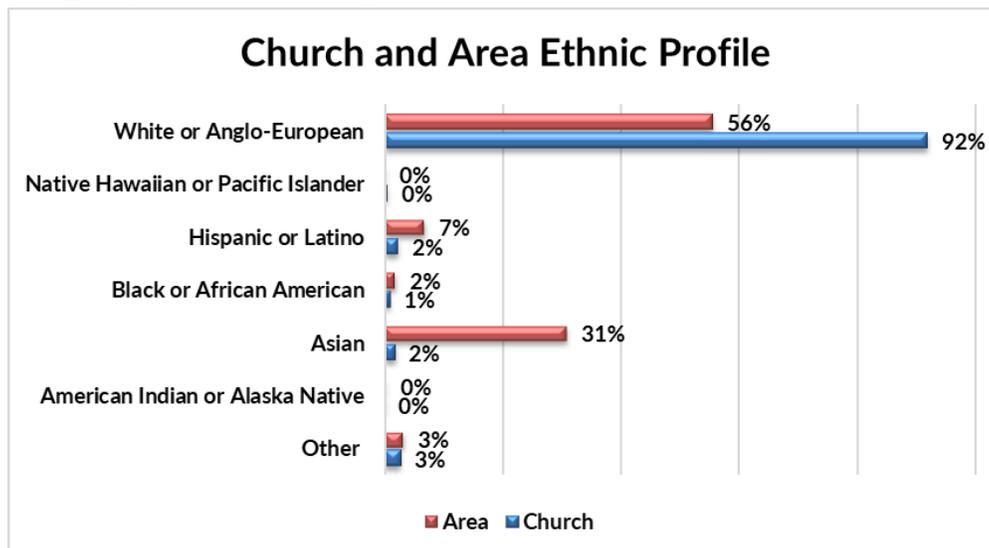
### What is your current relational status?



The rate of “Married” is 87% compared to the *VitalChurch* database average of 75%. The rate of “Married” in the area is 64%, considerably higher than the national average of 48.4%.

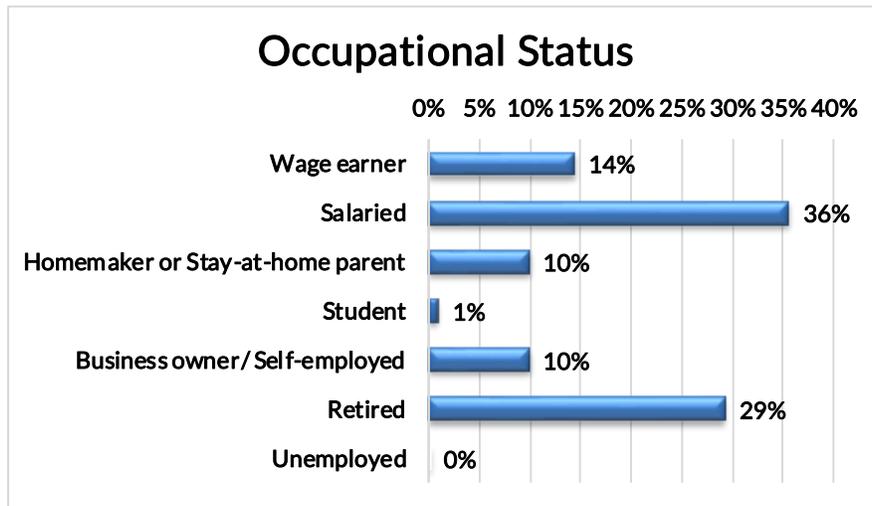
Like most churches, SPC ministers to those who are primarily married (87%). Relatively few churches are effective at reaching “Never Marrieds” even though there are many in the community. SPC has fewer “Never Married” and “Divorced/Separated” than the community.

### What ethnic group best describes you?



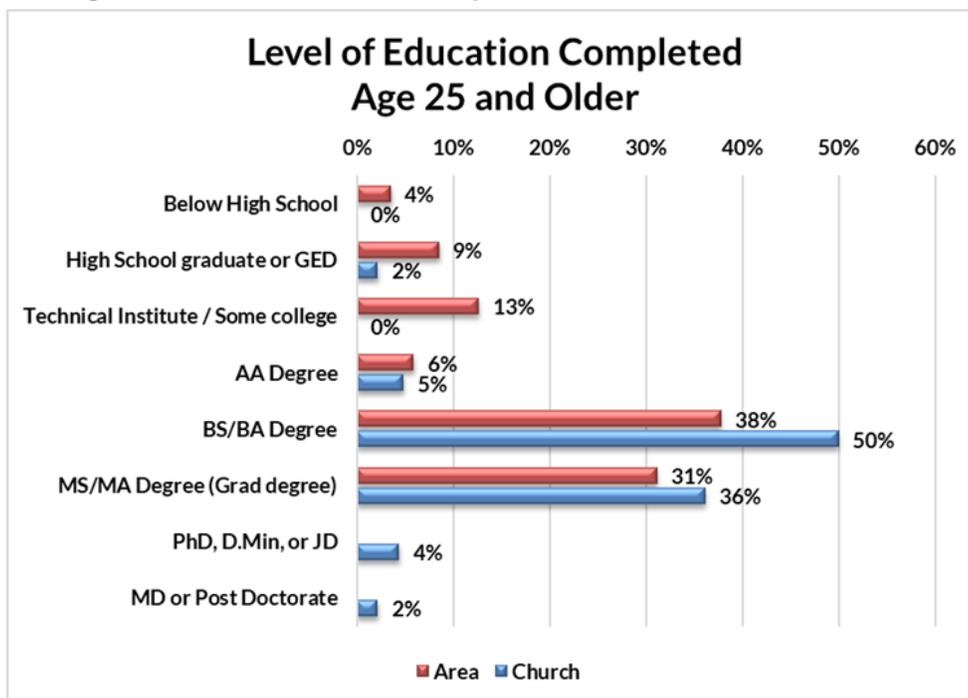
The majority (92%) of survey participants are “White or Anglo-European.” The “White/Anglo” population in the area is 56%. SPC is primarily reaching White or Anglo Europeans and very few (2%) of the large Asian community in the area (31%).

**What is your current occupational status?**



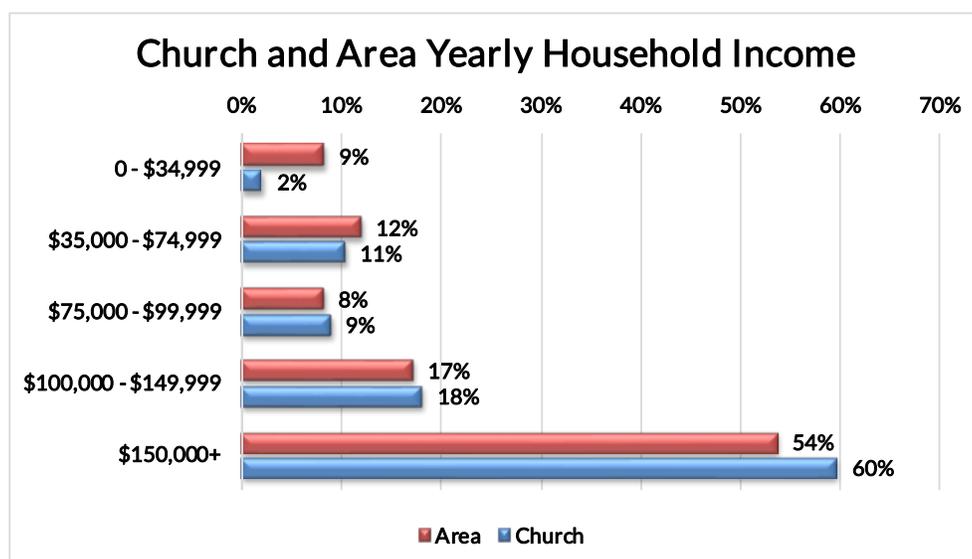
The largest occupational status of SPC survey participants is “Salaried” at 36% followed by “Retired” at 29%. According to Percept, 82.6% of jobs in Sammamish are “white collar” and 17.4% are “blue collar.”

**What is your highest educational level completed?**



College graduates or more make up 92% of your congregation, whereas there are 69% college graduates or more in the area. SPC seems to appeal to those of higher educational backgrounds.

Yearly household income:



The approximate average family income in your church is \$161,084.<sup>20</sup> The average family income in the area is \$222,781.

Other Factors<sup>21</sup>

*Area Stability*

Currently, there are 515,496 persons residing in the defined study area. This represents an increase of 160,615 or 45.3% since 2000. Between 2022 and 2027, the population is projected to increase by 6.8% or 35,111 additional persons. The area can be described as extremely traditional due to the above average presence of married persons and two-parent families.

*Demographic Summary*

Among individual groups in the area, Anglos represent 55.5% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up 44.5% which is slightly above the national average of 41%. The largest of these groups, Asians, accounts for 31.1% of the total population. Asians are also projected to be the fastest growing group increasing by 22.3% between 2022 and 2027. Currently, SPC seems to attract mostly White or Anglo-Europeans who are highly educated, married, and are either salaried, white-collar workers or retired.

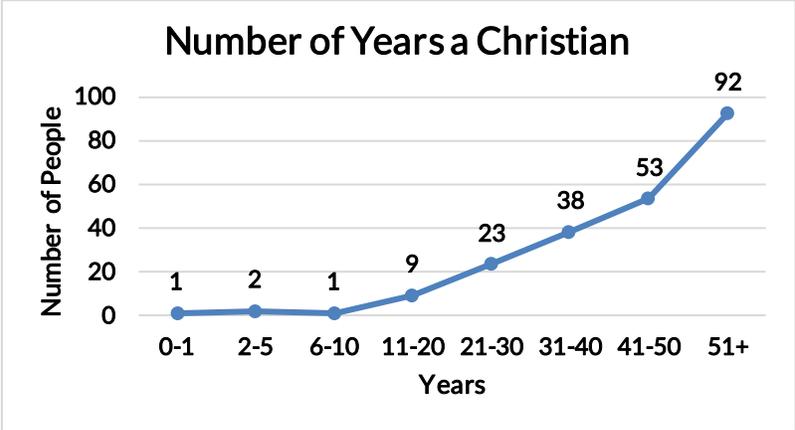
<sup>20</sup> This estimate is likely to be low since the top income option was \$200,000+ with 38% of survey participants making that choice (not shown on graph).

<sup>21</sup> SPC *Ministry Area Profile 2022*

## Section 2: Shared Pilgrimage

The shared pilgrimage section focuses upon the patterns of shared life of those who attend SPC. In many ways, this section is the most diagnostic and is one of the places where we learn what your church is like.

How many years have you been a Christian?



This graph shows how long people who attend your church have been Christians. Many (97%) have been Christians for more than 10 years with the average being 42.8 years. There are 92 participants who have been Christians for 50 or more years.

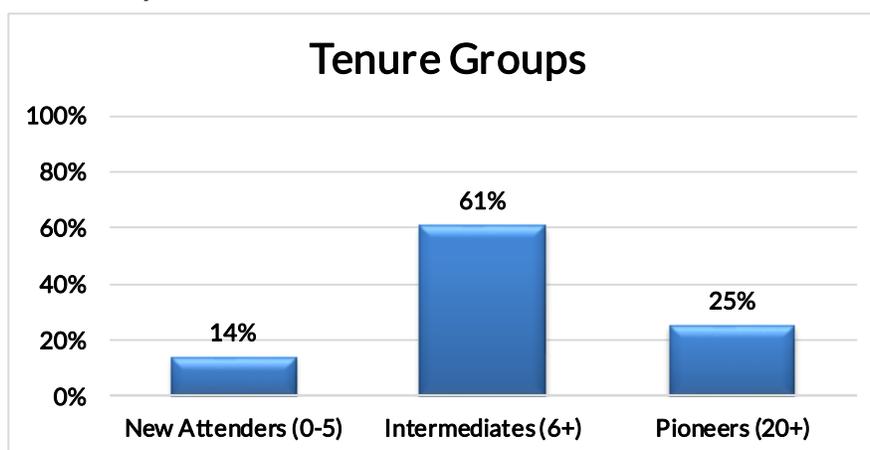
Years a Christian	Generation Groups							Total %
	Teen	Zers	Mills	Xers	Bmers	Silents	GIs	
Seeking	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1%
0-1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0%
2-5	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1%
6-10	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0%
11-20	0	3	3	3	0	0	0	4%
21-30	0	1	4	15	3	0	0	10%
31-40	0	0	12	19	7	0	0	17%
41-50	0	0	2	32	19	0	0	24%
51+	0	0	0	17	57	18	0	41%

What both this chart and the previous graph show is that there are three new Christians (5 years or less) at SPC. There are also three who are still “Seekers” which is a wonderful opportunity to add to the Kingdom.

## Tenure Analysis

Tenure analysis looks at the percentage of the congregation that has attended your church in terms of three different groups. The first group, called the Pioneers, are those who have attended your church 20 years or more. The second group has attended six to 19 years and is called the Intermediate Attenders. The third group are the New Attenders who have attended your church for five years or less. The next graph shows the proportion of each of these three groups.

How many years have you attended this church?



The average time a survey participant has attended your church is 14.0 years. The **Average Tenure** measure focuses on the pattern of how long people have attended your church. This approach is most helpful for churches over 20 years old. For an established church, *10 to 12 years is the healthy average tenure range* because it means a significant number of new people are being added as well as people staying.

In the case of SPC, the average tenure is high because of the large percentage of Intermediates who have raised the average. However, this effect is also a result of relatively few people remaining from 20+ years ago, combined with a low number of New Attenders. If there were more New Attenders, the average tenure would decrease.

### *Normal Tenure Development*

Churches tend to take on certain characteristics as they get older. By the time a church reaches 20 years old, certain identifiable groups emerge. By the 20-year point, a group of people emerge who have a long-term commitment to your church and who are proud of its heritage. This heritage group usually sets the standards for the church and often makes up much of your church's leadership. We call this group the **Pioneers**. In most

churches, the Pioneers have a very high level of influence and control over what happens in the church.

Another identifiable group is the **New Attenders** who have attended your church five years or less. Research has shown that those who begin to attend a church often take up to five years to become fully involved in church. They have new people to meet and relationships to form as well as finding appropriate involvements and places of service. This group is considerably the most fragile in the church. Studies have shown that one-half to two-thirds (50-66%) of those who begin attending a church will be gone by the end of five years. The most common issue cited is failure to find acceptance and belonging in the church they were attending. The acceptance process can be accelerated if those New Attenders are either well-churched (knowing what to expect) or if they have relatives who already attend the church.

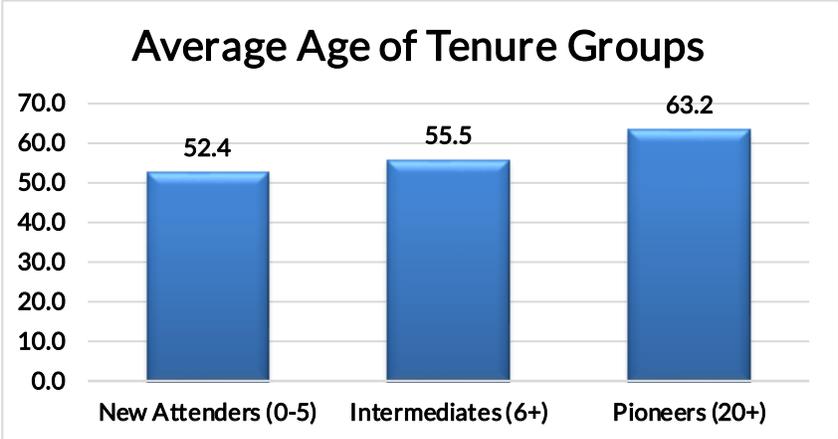
The third group is the **Intermediate Attenders** who have attended your church 6 to 19 years. They have had time to find their place in the church. They have developed relationships and found the activities they like as well as places of service. A large group of Intermediates generally is an indicator that people who start attending your church are tending to stay.

The normal guide for interpreting this data is as follows:

<b>Interpretative Guidelines</b>
<b>New Attenders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40% plus indicates a growing church</li> <li>• Should be largest of three groups</li> <li>• 30-40% usually indicates a plateaued church</li> <li>• Less than 30% usually indicates a declining church</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate Attenders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideal—smaller than New Members, but larger than Pioneer Group</li> <li>• A low figure usually indicates a pattern of poor historic assimilation or history of strife especially if this is the smallest of the three groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Pioneer Group</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideal—less than 25% and smallest of three groups</li> <li>• Probable serious pathology if 40% or more</li> </ul>

Virtually all churches have been hurt by the pandemic. SPC, in addition to the pandemic, had lost its long-time pastor. Both losses tend to affect attendance. However, the pattern of your losses is important to note. Those who remain tend to be your Intermediate attenders who make up well over half (61%) of your current congregation. Pioneers (25%) are the second largest group, with New Attenders being the smallest (14%).

For a church to hold even in attendance, it usually requires 30 to 39% New Attenders. For a church to grow, 40% or more New Attenders are usually needed. *For whatever reasons, over the past five years SPC has either not attracted or managed to keep new people well.*



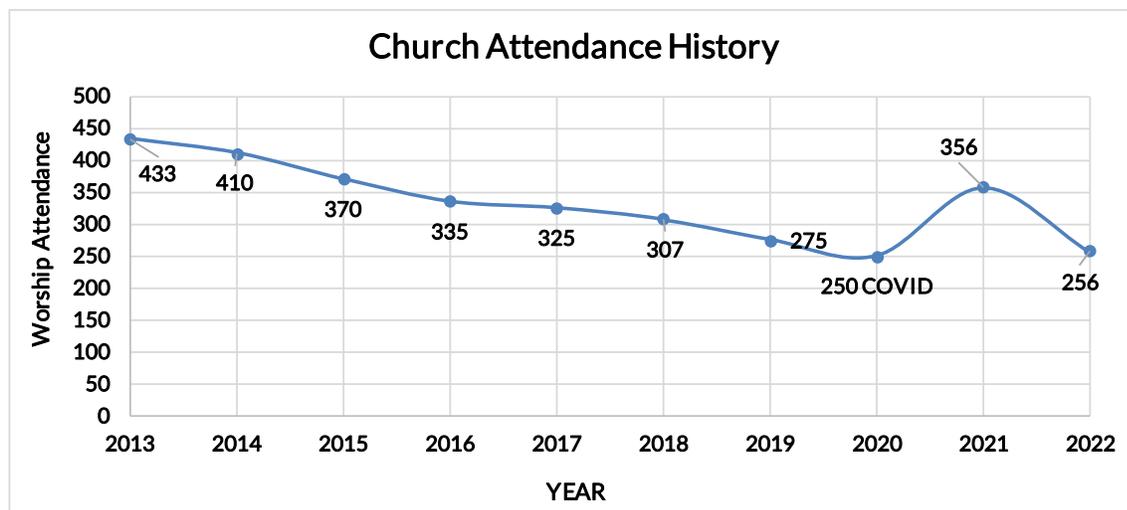
The average age of adult attenders (18+) at SPC is 57 years. This graph shows the average age for each of your tenure groups. Here we see that the average Pioneer is about 8 or more years older than the average New or Intermediate Attender.

Tenure analysis uncovers two issues. The first is the general failure to reach and keep enough new people to maintain attendance. The second is the tendency for the church to be approaching older age.

In America 4,000 churches a year are closed because of a condition called "aging out." The first warning sign of aging out is when the average age of adults in the church passes 55 years of age. SPC has passed this first warning sign at an average age of 57 years.

### *Attendance Patterns*

While obvious and sometimes overrated, church attendance is one of the basic measures of church health.



The attendance history graph above shows that SPC has been in a slow decline over the past 10 years. Additionally, SPC’s pastor of thirteen years left within the past year. Both COVID and the loss of your lead pastor have taken an additional toll on SPC’s recent attendance.

Mark the group in which your birth year appears.

- 1904-1924 (G.I. Generation)
- 1925-1945 (Silent Generation)
- 1946-1964 (Boomer Generation)
- 1965-1979 (Gen X Generation)
- 1980-1996 (Millennial Generation)
- 1997-2003 (Gen Z Generation Adults)
- 2004 to present (Gen Z Teenagers)

Typically, in a diagnostic like we are conducting, it is common to divide people into different age groups based on some criteria. Sociologists prefer to divide people into generations and identify the events that shaped each group of people, focusing on the values that shaped their response to the world they grew up in. Doing this does help to understand the characteristics of the various groups at your church.

Even though we will usually move from younger to older in our analysis, it is easier to understand the generations in order of their development. Below is a paragraph describing each generation represented in this survey.

### **G I Generation 1904-1924 (Seniors over age 96)**

Tom Brokaw wrote his famous book, *The Greatest Generation*, about this group of people. Others have called it the WWII Generation. They grew up in the Great Depression and came of age around the beginning of World War II. Brokaw emphasized their sacrifice for what they saw as right. Preservation of values was a theme for this generation.

### **Silents 1925-1945 (age 76 to 96—Seniors)**

The Silents grew up experiencing directly or experiencing the aftereffects of WWII. As a group, they are conservative and big on family values. A fitting motto for this group is “waste not, want not.” They tend to work within institutions often having worked at a single job for their whole careers. They are survivors and they value their independence and privacy. Most of this group is now retired.

### **Boomers 1946-1964 (age 57 to 75—Empty-nesters)**

The Boomers are made up of that flood of children that parents put off having until after World War II. They grew up with television. They are known for being hard workers. They are optimistic and believe they can change things. Historically, they believed that they were “right” about many things and were as *anti-establishment* as the Silents had been *pro-establishment*. They have mellowed somewhat in their old age. This generation was known for protests and sit-ins in their earlier days. Boomers are the “can-do” generation. The term “workaholics” was created to describe them. They are beginning to retire.

### **Gen X 1965-1979 (age 42 to 56—Middle Adults)**

The high wave of births that created the Boomers ended in 1965 leading to the smallest of modern generations. This generation is less optimistic than the Boomers. While there was a period of stability following World War II that benefited the Boomers, the world had changed in several ways by the time Gen Xers became adults. Their divorce rate is the highest among recent generations and “latch key kids” became common as both parents tended and needed to work to support their families. Jobs for them were far less secure than they had been for earlier generations with job changes coming often. Many institutions such as the government (Watergate) and even the church (moral failure in both the Catholic and Protestant churches) failed to live up to their expectations. Corporate scandals were common. This generation does not approach life with the same confidence as the Boomers. This generation has been described as cynical, yet self-sufficient.

### **Millennials 1980-1996 (age 25 to 41—Young Adults)**

Millennials were America's young adults but are now up to 41 years of age. This generation (as defined by birth rate) is slightly larger than the Boomers. They have grown up with technology—computers, smartphones, tablets, and the internet. They are the most “connected” generation in history. Many cannot imagine life without social media. This generation wants open, constant communication (social media, text, email, etc.). They share the intimate details of what is going on in their lives to a degree that amazes/shocks people of earlier generations. This is also the generation the church has the hardest time reaching. Reaching Millennials or even keeping the ones raised in the church requires significant effort.

### **Gen Z 1997-2003 (age 18 to 24—Emerging Young Adults)**

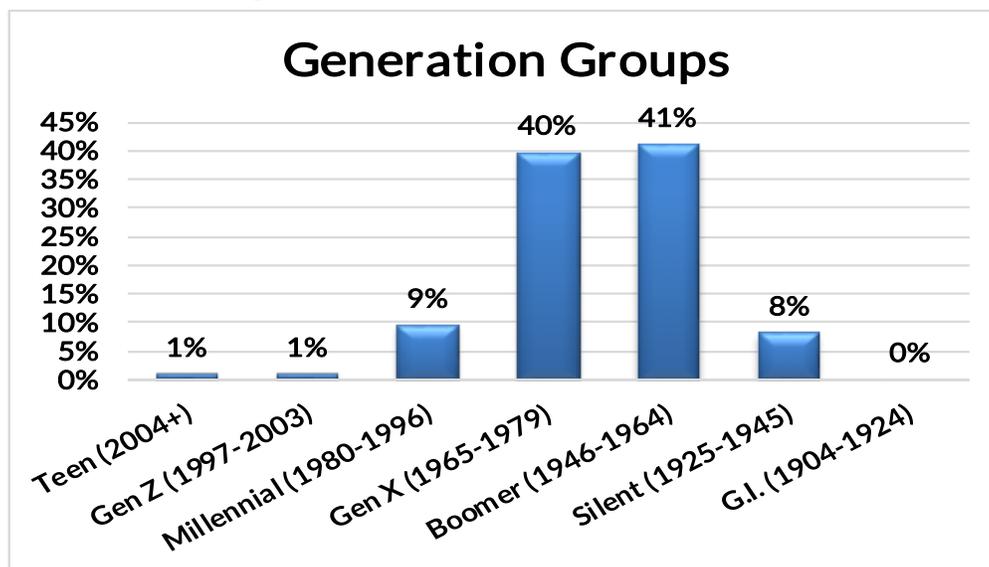
This generation is the emerging young adult generation. This year the oldest of this generation will turn 24 years of age. For most churches, many Gen Zers will still be teens and younger, but some have entered young adulthood. What they will be like is yet to be fully determined. They clearly have the same media tendencies and relational priority as the Millennials. There seems to be some evidence that some characteristics tend to skip generations. Millennials share the idealism of the Boomers that they can change things. Gen Zers tend to have pragmatism/practicality along with some of the cynicism of the Gen Xers. Only time will tell how this generational group will emerge.

### **Teens Since 2004 (age 17 and less)**

For the purposes of our surveys, we break the Gen Z group into those who have reached adulthood (18+) and those who are teenagers (<18). The younger group is labeled as **Teens**. While they share many of the same characteristics as their adult Gen Z counterparts, adulthood tends to change a person's perspective. Therefore, we seek to give voice to the teen perspective.

A person's generation definitely affects how they see life and what they perceive as their options. **Silents** will want to work within structures and feel strongly about traditional family values they tend to see as being largely lost. **Boomers** are comfortable creating new structures and work from the perspective that they can successfully change things. **Gen Xers** have far less confidence in their ability to change things and many have not found jobs, marriage, or institutions to be reliable. **Millennials** are even more unique with their focus on technology and communication. However, the workplace has not been kind to them. Many are off to a rough start as young adults. Finding good jobs has been hard for them.

Here is the distribution of generations at your church.



The average age of adult (18+) survey respondents is 57.3 years old.

The next two tables show the Generation/Tenure groups<sup>22</sup> represented in the survey.

Tenure	Zers	Mill	Xers	Bmer	Silent	Totals
New Attenders (0-5)	0	5	16	9	1	31
Intermediates (6-19)	3	16	59	45	12	135
Pioneers (20+)	1	0	13	37	5	56
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>222</b>

Tenure	Zers	Mill	Xers	Bmer	Silent	Totals
New Attenders (0-5)	0%	2%	7%	4%	0%	14%
Intermediates (6-19)	1%	7%	27%	20%	5%	61%
Pioneers (20+)	0%	0%	6%	17%	2%	25%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The first table shows the actual number of people in each tenure/generational group who took the survey. The second table shows the proportional size percentage of each generational/tenure subgroup.

### Tenure Observations

- The largest tenure group is the Intermediate (61%). They are predominately Boomers (45) and Gen Xers (59).
- The Pioneers (25%) are the second largest tenure group. They are also mostly Boomers (37) and Gen Xers (13).

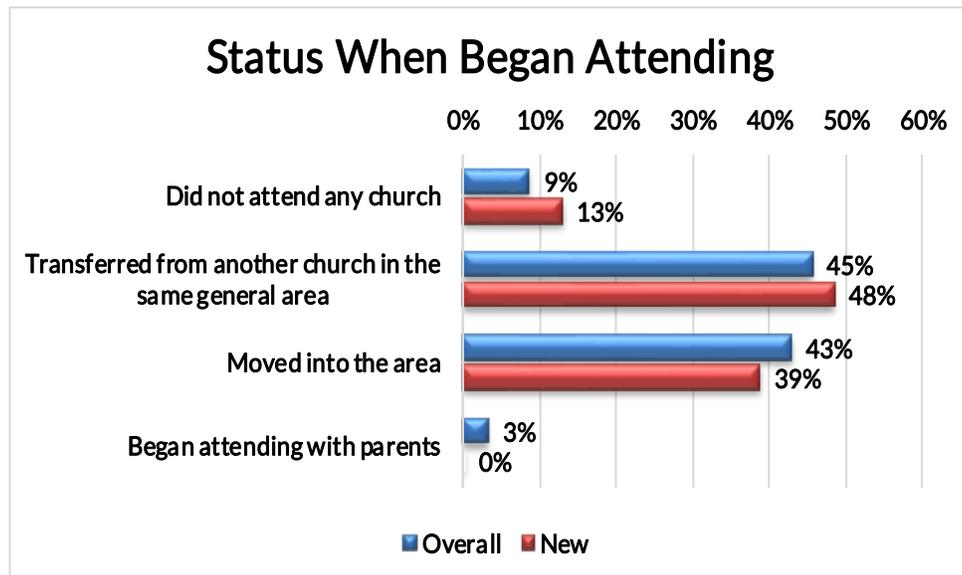
<sup>22</sup> Among survey participants, there were two Gen Zers 18+ and two Teens. For privacy reasons, we have combined the four individuals into the Gen Zer group.

- The New Attenders (14%) is the smallest tenure group. They are primarily Boomers (9) and Gen Xers (16) as well. It is clear SPC is primarily attracting those from the Boomer and Gen X generations.

Here is the pattern of New Attenders by generation group.

Percentage of New Attenders						
Teens	Zers	Mill	Xers	Bmer	Silent	Gis
0%	0%	16%	52%	29%	3%	0%

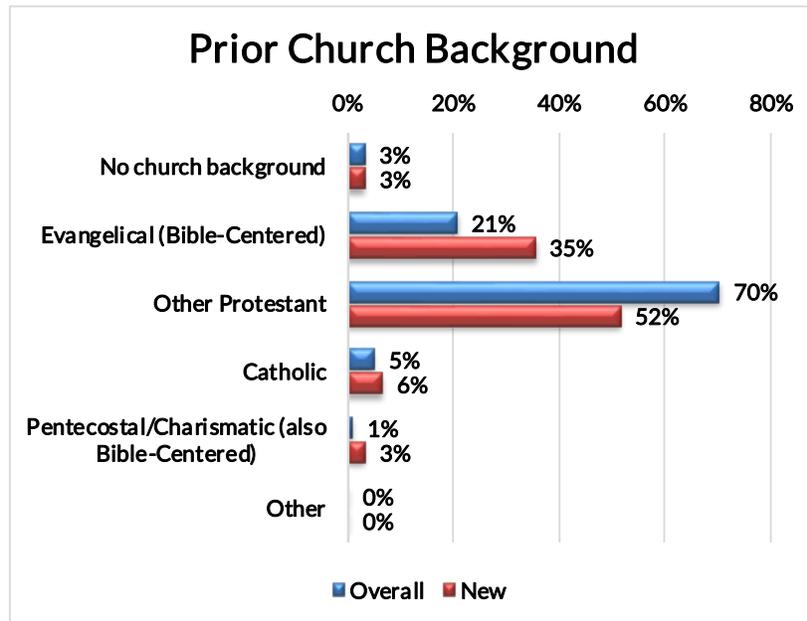
What was your status when you began attending this church?



All four categories from the graph above define the status of a respondent when they began attending your church. The red bars identify what has been happening in the past five years. Forty-eight percent (48%) of New Attenders “Transferred from another church in the same general area.” Another 39% started attending after they “Moved into the area.” Thirteen percent (13%) “Did not attend any church” prior to attending SPC.

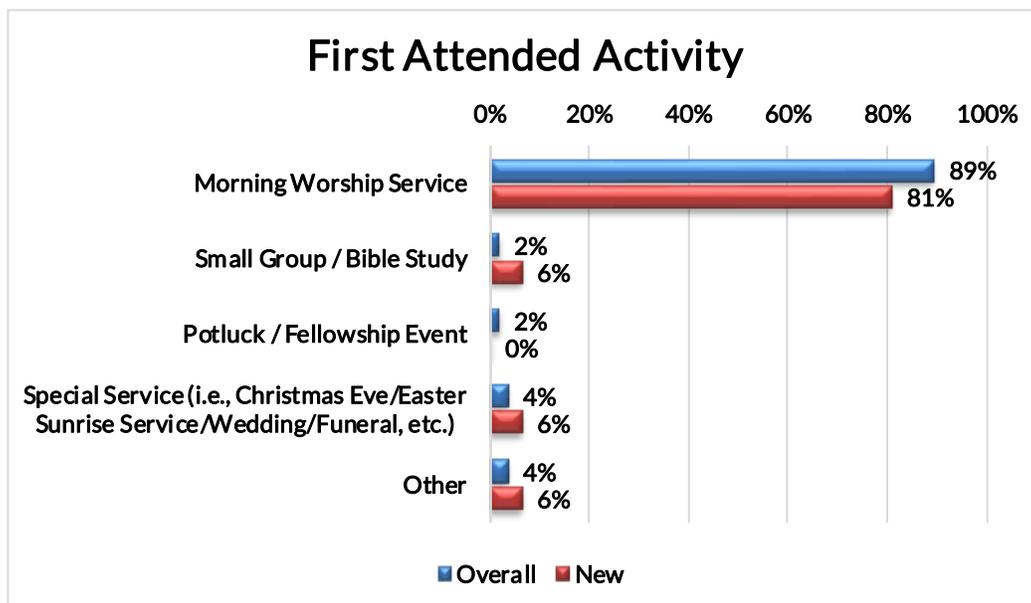
Overall (blue bars), the largest group (45%) of survey participants “Transferred from another church in the same general area,” and another 43% started attending SPC after they “Moved into the area.” Nine percent (9%) “Did not attend any church” prior to attending SPC, and 3% “Began attending with parents.”

What was your church background prior to coming to this church?



From this graph, we can see that *SPC is primarily attracting newcomers from “churched” backgrounds (97%), and more specifically, Protestant churches (91%).* Thirty-eight percent (38%) have come from Evangelical or Bible-Centered churches.

What activity did you first attend?



In many churches, over 90% of people go to a worship service first. The significance of the question lies in how a church is expecting new people to find their church. Are

people coming because they were invited or because they looked up your church on the internet, or happened to drive by?

Well-churched people generally seek out a new church on their own. The graph above shows both what has been historically important as well as what has been true the past five years. New Attenders (81%) and Overall (89%) attended a worship gathering first. Of the New Attenders, 6 of 31 (19%) indicated they first came to activities other than the morning worship service. Two said they came to a Small group or Bible study. Two said they came to a Special service, and another two came to some other event (“Golf”, “Youth Events”).

If you are hoping to attract someone by the quality of fellowship at your church, one of the smaller, fellowship-oriented groups is clearly the better starting point. *People who attend growing churches often report 30% or more of the time that they attended a Bible study, small group, luncheon, women’s group, or other fellowship-oriented activity first and their attendance at the event was most often because they were invited.*

**What generally keeps you coming to this church?**

- Bible study and/or Sermons
- Relationships
- Music
- It is the right thing to do
- Specific in-church ministries
- Supporting outreach church ministries

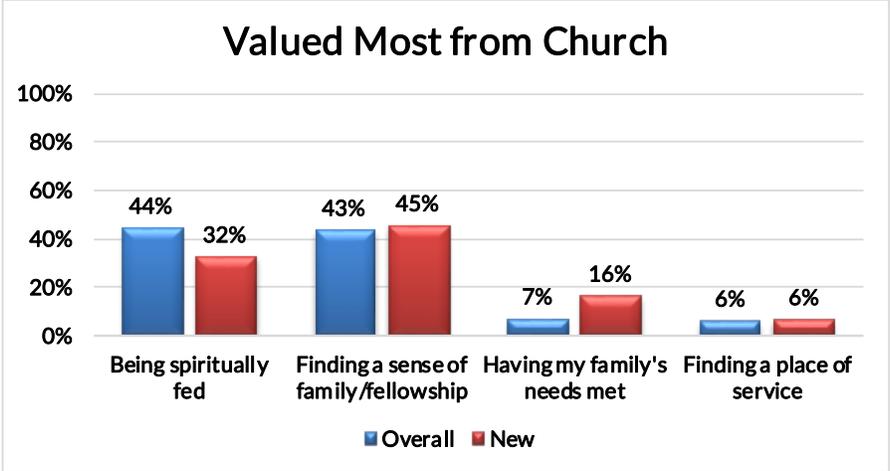
Keeps you coming	Overall	New	Inter	Pi’s	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent
Bible Study and/or Sermons	24%	29%	25%	20%	0%	5%	19%	29%	56%
Relationships	39%	23%	32%	64%	50%	24%	39%	44%	28%
Music	5%	0%	5%	5%	0%	10%	3%	4%	6%
Right thing to do	9%	6%	10%	7%	0%	5%	10%	9%	11%
In-church ministries	20%	39%	23%	4%	50%	57%	23%	12%	0%
Support outreach ministries	3%	3%	4%	0%	0%	0%	6%	2%	0%



Typically, “Relationships” and “Bible Study and/or Sermons” are either the first or second choice in these surveys with similar ratings. At your church, “Relationships” are rated at 39%, and “Bible Study and/or Sermons” at 24%. What is unique about SPC is that 20% say they keep coming to your church for “In-church ministries.” Church involvement is an important part of SPC’s program. New Attenders (39%) selected “in-church ministries” as their first choice. Gen Zers (50%) and Millennials (57%) were the most likely to choose

this option. Twenty-eight survey participants specified that in-church programs like Worship service, MOPS, Children’s ministries, VBS, Youth ministry, outreach ministries, ESL, Stephen ministry, and Adult Formation are the reasons they keep coming to SPC.

**What do you value most from this church?**

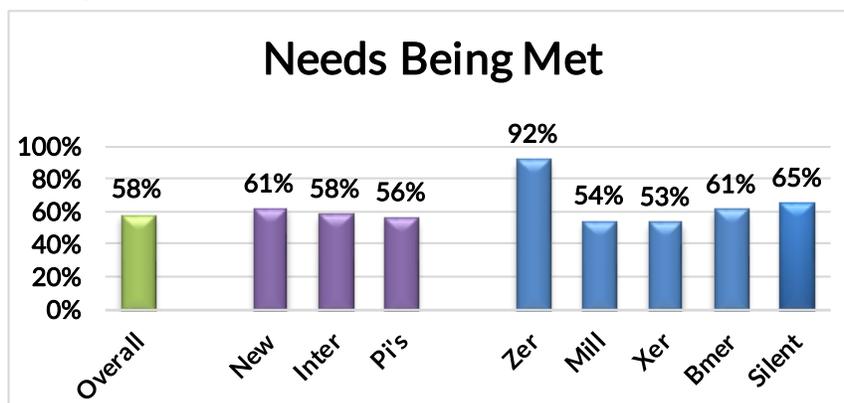


At most churches, “Being spiritually fed” and “Finding a sense of family/fellowship” are the first and second choices. At your church, “Being spiritually fed including worship services” was selected first Overall by 44% of the survey participants, and “Finding a sense of family/fellowship” was the first choice for 43%. New Attenders (45%) chose “Finding a sense of family/fellowship” most often with “Being spiritually fed” (32%) a close second.

Of course, everyone wants their own needs met, but a rare few thrive on ministering to others. Overall, 13 individuals are those rare few who value most “Finding a place of service.”

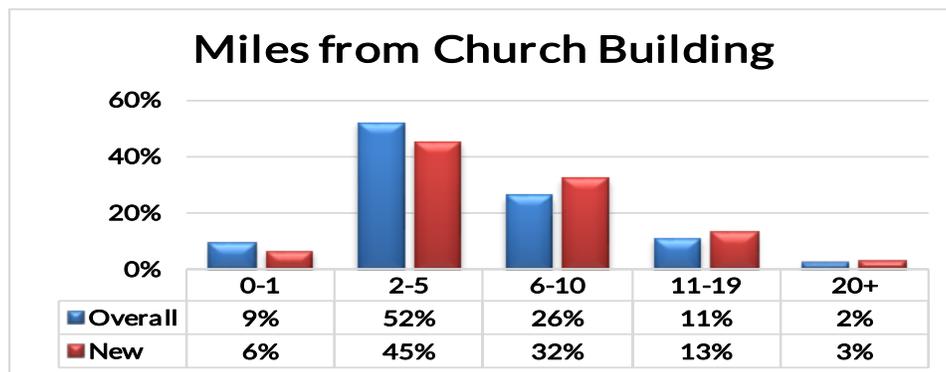
Are you and your family's needs being adequately met at this church?

- Definitely (76-100%) 43 19%
- Satisfactorily (51-75%) 91 41%
- Somewhat (26-50%) 75 34%
- Not Really (0-25%) 13 6%



The purpose of this question is to see if there are any groups that are not feeling supported by your church. The graph above shows how each group rated how they feel their needs are being met. All of the tenure and generational groups rated their needs being met experience in the “Satisfactory (51-75%)” range or higher. Clearly, the Gen Zers feel the most satisfied, rating their experience in the “Definitely” range.

Approximately how many miles away do you live from the church building?



*Average Attenders travel 6.2 miles to church*  
*Average New Attenders travel 7.0 miles to church*

Overall, 87% of respondents live within 10 miles of your church while 84% of New Attenders live within 10 miles of your church. The *VitalChurch* database average is about 7 miles. When the distance traveled to attend church exceeds 10 miles, it tends to inhibit attenders from participating in multiple events in a week. As such, distance to your church does not seem to be an issue.

Which of the following most influenced you to initially attend this church?

Influenced to Attend	Overall	New
<b>Relationships</b>		
Friend	18%	15%
Family Member	15%	19%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Pastor or Staff</b>		
	<b>12%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Walk-in's</b>		
Location/Lived Nearby	22%	0%
Ads/Website	2%	12%
Word of Mouth	3%	27%
Transfer	21%	8%
Other	7%	0%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>46%</b>

This question looks at the most important reason why people decided to give your church a try as their new church. The first general category is “**Relational**”—the role of a “friend or family member.” The second category is the role of your **Pastor or staff**. The last category is “**Walk-in's**,” which identifies people who found your church on their own.

Lyle Schaller, a well-known church consultant, offers insight into the significance of these results. He states that in a **healthy church** “*two-thirds to nine-tenths of people are attracted to a church by friendship or kinship ties, 15 to 20% by the pastor, and 5 to 10% are walk-ins.*”

	Schaller's Ideal	Overall this church	New Attender
<b>Invited/Relational</b>	66-90%	33%	35%
<b>Pastor/Staff</b>	15-20%	12%	19%
<b>Walk-in's</b>	5-10%	55%	46%

Among all current attenders, 33% came for relational reasons. Among New Attenders, 35% came because of relational reasons. These numbers are lower than ideal. The database average on this question is about 45%. While falling short of Schaller’s “invited/relational” Overall criterion, part of the reason may be due to COVID.

***If church attenders focus on personally inviting people to a church activity/service, the results will be better.*** Coming for relational reasons does two things:

1. It gives a person a significant immediate connection to your congregation—they already know someone at church who can more or less sponsor the new person into the life of your church.
2. The stronger a person’s personal connections to your church, the more likely they are to remain through difficult times.

**Were you a Christian when you first attended this church or its activities?**

- **Yes**                      **215**      **97%**
- **No**                         **4**        **2%**
- **New**                        **1**        **0%**
- **Not Sure**                **2**        **1%**

The goal of this question is to measure the evangelistic effectiveness of your church as measured by new adult converts<sup>23</sup> in the fellowship of your church. How many of the adults currently attending came to faith through the ministry of your church? Overall, 97% of survey respondents began attending SPC after they became Christians. Four individuals reported they were not Christians prior to attending, and two were unsure.

**Rate of Evangelism**

	All	New	Inter	Pi's	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent
Number who were not Christians when they came	4	2	0	2	0	0	1	3	0
Still Seeking	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	0
Number currently attending who came with their parents and have since become Christians	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net conversions from the world	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Rate of Evangelism	0%	3%	0%	0%					

By combining the data from several questions, we are able to identify how many adults came to your church prior to making their faith commitment and have since put their faith in Christ as the result of the ministries of your church. The chart above shows that four respondents were not Christians and three are still “Seeking.” Therefore, the overall net conversions from SPC’s ministries is one individual, giving an overall adult evangelism rate of less than 0.5%. *The Rate of Evangelism at SPC is far less than the VitalChurch database average of 4.9%.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The survey was taken by adults and teens. The survey is best equipped to measure evangelism among adults. Thus, evangelism among some Teens and children is likely to be missed.  
<sup>24</sup> The *VitalChurch* Database average of Adult Evangelism for churches 400+ is 4.9%.

**In what church activities do you regularly participate or serve in? (Check all that are appropriate.)**

Activities Participation	Overall	New	Inter	Pi's	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent
Sunday worship service (in person or online)	204	28	126	50	4	19	81	83	17
Small group	91	4	50	37	0	1	27	52	11
Prayer Ministry	24	4	14	6	0	0	7	15	2
Women's Ministry	32	5	20	7	0	2	14	16	0
Children's or Youth ministry	62	9	45	8	3	13	37	9	0
Adult Classes	25	3	16	6	0	2	6	16	1
Special ministry i.e. elderly, MOPS, ESL, Stephen Ministries	44	7	25	12	0	6	11	22	5
Elder or Deacon Leadership	39	0	33	6	0	4	20	14	1
Local Outreach Activities	19	5	12	2	0	2	10	7	0
Local Missions	40	5	24	11	2	2	16	20	0
Global Missions	32	4	18	10	0	2	14	14	2
Paid Staff (Both Administrative and Ministry)	15	6	7	2	0	2	10	3	0

Activities Participation	Overall	New	Inter	Pi's	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent
Sunday worship service (in person or online)	92%	90%	93%	89%	100%	90%	92%	91%	94%
Small group	41%	13%	37%	66%	0%	5%	31%	57%	61%
Prayer Ministry	11%	13%	10%	11%	0%	0%	8%	16%	11%
Women's Ministry	23%	26%	22%	21%	0%	13%	25%	29%	0%
Children's or Youth ministry	28%	29%	33%	14%	75%	62%	42%	10%	0%
Adult Classes	11%	10%	12%	11%	0%	10%	7%	18%	6%
Special ministry i.e. elderly, MOPS, ESL, Stephen Ministries	20%	23%	19%	21%	0%	29%	13%	24%	28%
Elder or Deacon Leadership	18%	0%	24%	11%	0%	19%	23%	15%	6%
Local Outreach Activities	9%	16%	9%	4%	0%	10%	11%	8%	0%
Local Missions	18%	16%	18%	20%	50%	10%	18%	22%	0%
Global Missions	14%	13%	13%	18%	0%	10%	16%	15%	11%
Paid Staff (Both Administrative and Ministry)	7%	19%	5%	4%	0%	10%	11%	3%	0%

*Among tenure groups, the blue shading identifies the highest level of participation.  
 Among generational groups, the green shading identifies the highest level of participation.  
 (Women's Ministry participants are divided by the total in that gender group.)*

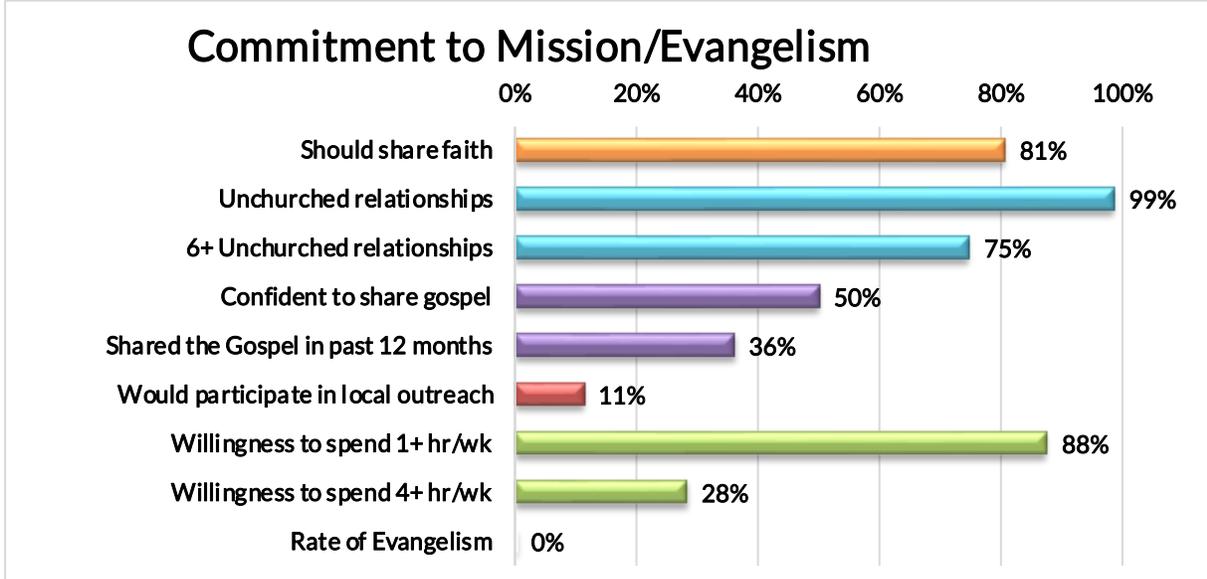
The two tables above show what groups tend to be active in the various activities and programs at SPC. The first table shows the actual numbers of participants for each activity. The second shows the percentage of the tenure and generational groups participating in those activities. Here are the general observations:

1. All tenure and generational groups have a high participation rate (89%+) in Sunday worship services. This is the only ministry listed in this section that involves all tenure and generational groups.

2. Your Intermediate and Pioneer tenure groups and your Gen Xer and Boomer generational groups are involved in every ministry listed here.
3. Overall, 41% of survey participants are involved in Small groups. Pioneers and Silents have the highest rate of involvement.
4. Children's and Youth ministries have 28% of respondents involved. Intermediates and Gen Zers have the highest rate of participation.
5. Women's ministry involves 23% of your female survey respondents, with New Attenders and Boomers involved the most.
6. Special Ministries rounds out the top five at 20%. New Attenders and Millennials are the most involved.
7. It appears SPC has a pool of 39 individuals or 18% of survey participants involved in Elder or Deacon Leadership. We will discuss this further in **Section 5: Leadership**.

### Section 3: Ministry Potential

#### Commitment to Mission/Evangelism



*Willingness to spend 1+ and 4+ hours is discussed later in the Membership Mobilization part of this section.*

This graphic combines the answers to six different questions to provide a picture of the views and actions that influence your potential for mission and evangelism. Of survey participants, 81% believe every Christian should share the gospel with others. There seems to be ample opportunity for attendees to share their faith because many respondents (99%) have close unchurched friends, with 75% having six or more unchurched friends. Overall, 50% said they felt confident in their ability to share the gospel with others, and 36% reported having shared the gospel within the last 12 months.

Additionally, there seems to be interest (11%) in participating in local evangelism and willingness (88%) to invest time in ministry. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of survey participants said they would be willing to invest four or more hours per week in ministry.

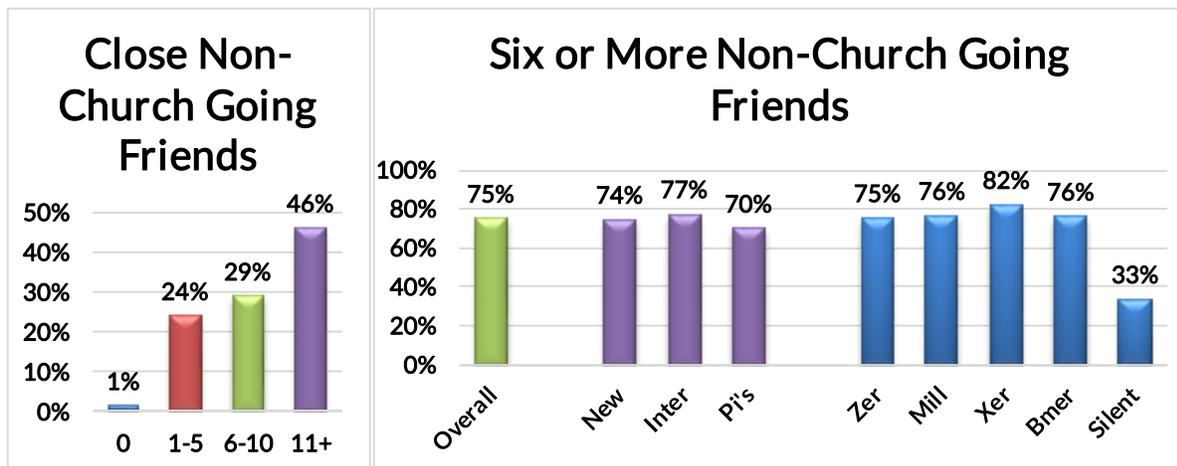
The rate of evangelism was discussed in **Section 2: Shared Pilgrimage**. The current rate of adult evangelism is 0%.

I believe that the Bible instructs every Christian to find ways to share his/her faith with non-Christians.

- Agree                    179      81%
- Disagree                9        4%
- Not sure                34      15%

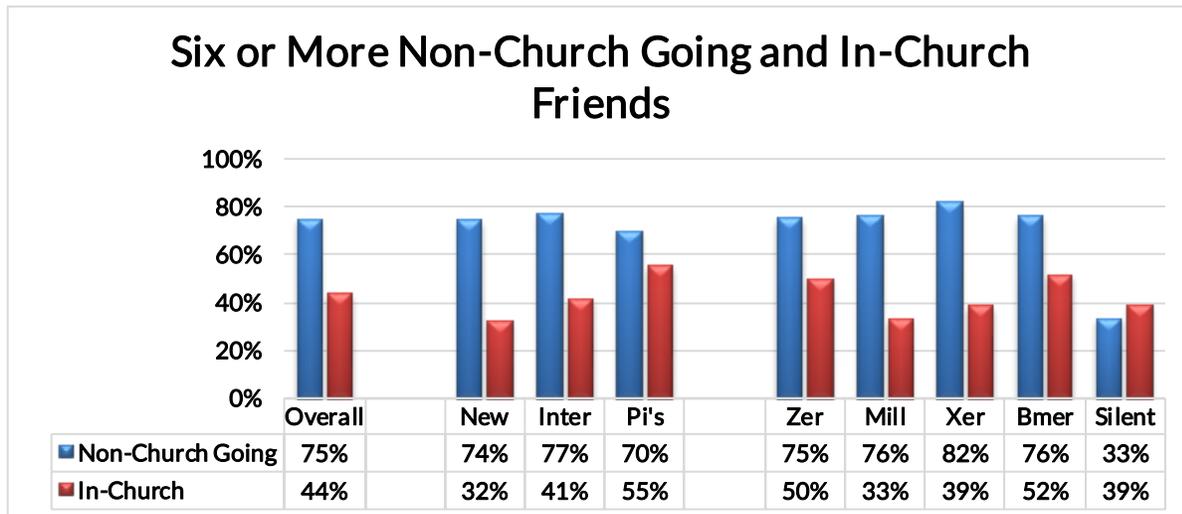
Of those who participated in the survey, **81%** agreed that the Bible instructs Christians to find ways to share to gospel message with non-Christians. The *VitalChurch* average for this question is 97%.

Approximately how many persons comprise your network of close friends, co-workers, and/or local family who do not attend any church?



This question provides a measure of evangelistic potential. A total of 99% (graph on left) survey participants reported having non-church-going friends. Overall, 75% (on right) have six or more such friends. Attenders seem to have many friends who might be encouraged to attend your church.

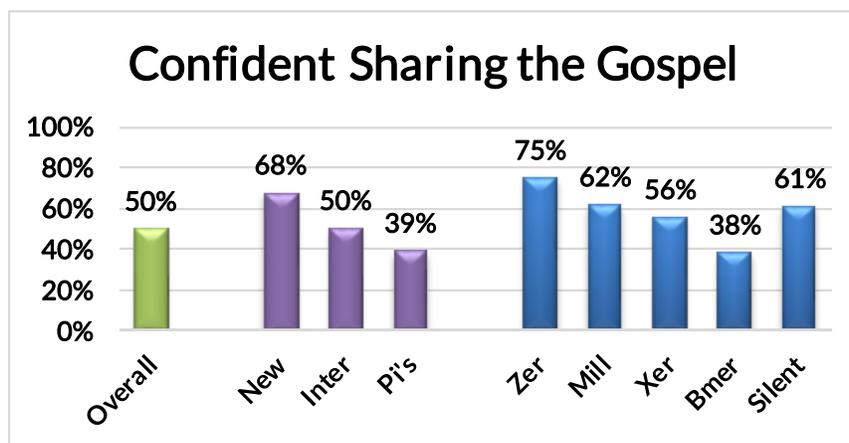
How many people at this church do you consider to be close friends?



This question focuses on good friends in your church. We see that 32% of New Attenders have 6 or more close friends at church. While not shown on this graph, 26% have no church friends. *Finding close friends at church is important and is a major contributing factor in encouraging people to make SPC their long-term church home.*

I feel confident to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

- Agree                      111      50%
- Disagree                    41      18%
- Not sure                    70      32%

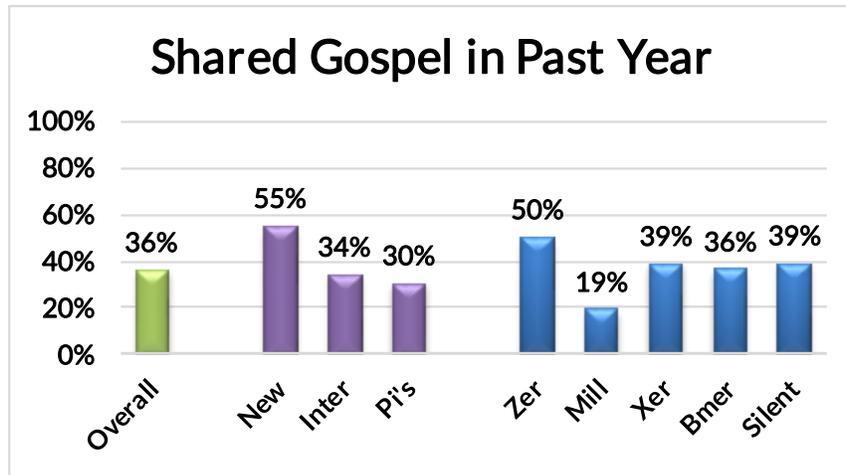


*Database average is 68%*

Overall, 50% of survey participants report feeling confident to share the gospel with others. The data seems to support that the younger a person is, the more confident they are in sharing the gospel. The Boomers seem to struggle the most in this area.

Have you shared the gospel message with a non-Christian in the last twelve months?

- Yes 80 36%
- No 142 64%

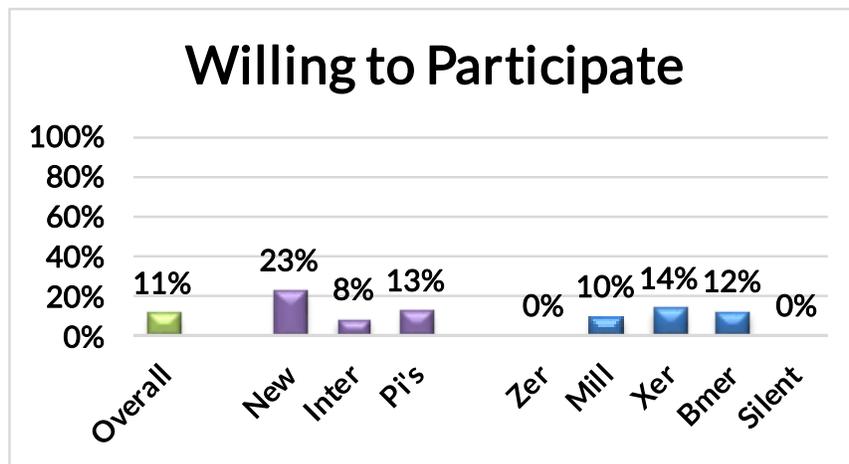


Database average is 62%

This follow-up question shows how many survey participants were actively engaged in sharing the gospel of Christ with non-Christians. Overall, **36%** said they shared the gospel message in the last 12 months.

I would like to participate in local evangelistic efforts.

- Yes 25 11%
- No 92 41%
- Unsure 105 47%



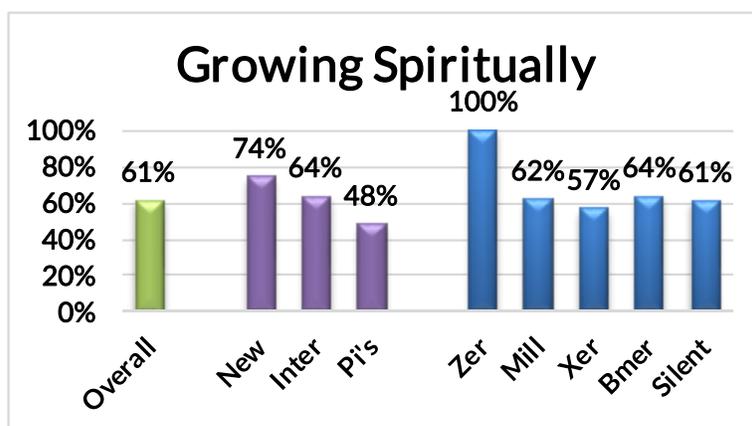
Of those who participated in the survey, **11%** said they were interested in being involved in local evangelistic efforts. The average score on this question in the *VitalChurch* database is **34%**.

## Discipleship in the Church

Churches that, for the most part, only attract well-churched people sometimes have absolutely no organized plan of discipleship. Discipleship is the traditional word for purposefully training Christians in their faith. The modern term is “Spiritual Formation.” Churches who have effective evangelism are very organized with several programs designed to encourage growth in the faith. A church with no intentional discipleship process in place typically does little discipling, with the result being Christian maturity is not facilitated. Even people raised in the church benefit from intentional training in Christian basics.

I am growing spiritually at this church.

- Agree                    136      61%
- Disagree                30      14%
- Not sure                56      25%

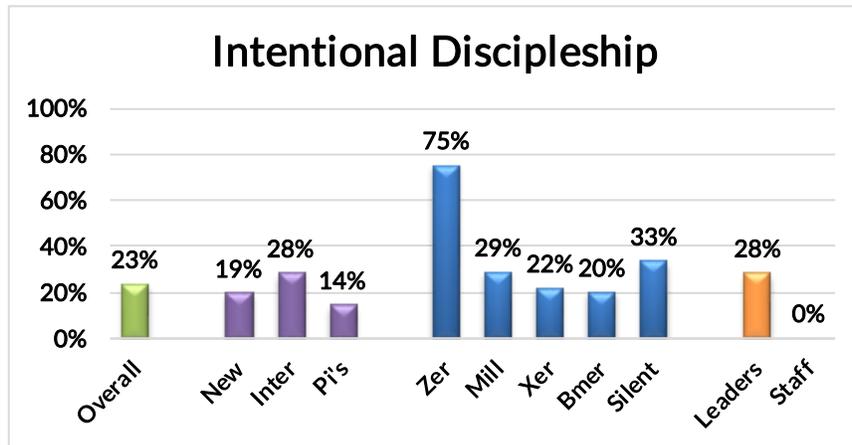


Overall, **61%** of survey participants say they feel they are growing spiritually. The *VitalChurch* database average on this question is **74%**.

While this question conveys the feelings, it does not give the reasons for that perceived sense of spiritual growth. There are two possible focuses to this question. The first is a personal focus—“Are you growing spiritually?” Secondly, “Is this church providing an environment that fosters spiritual growth?” Taking the two themes together, we have a measure of spiritual movement, though we cannot really separate the two themes. A high score indicates that people are feeling good about their spiritual growth. A low score indicates discouragement.

The next question looks at the church side of this question.

**Our church has an intentional discipleship process/spiritual formation path in place for new believers that helps them develop into mature Christians.**



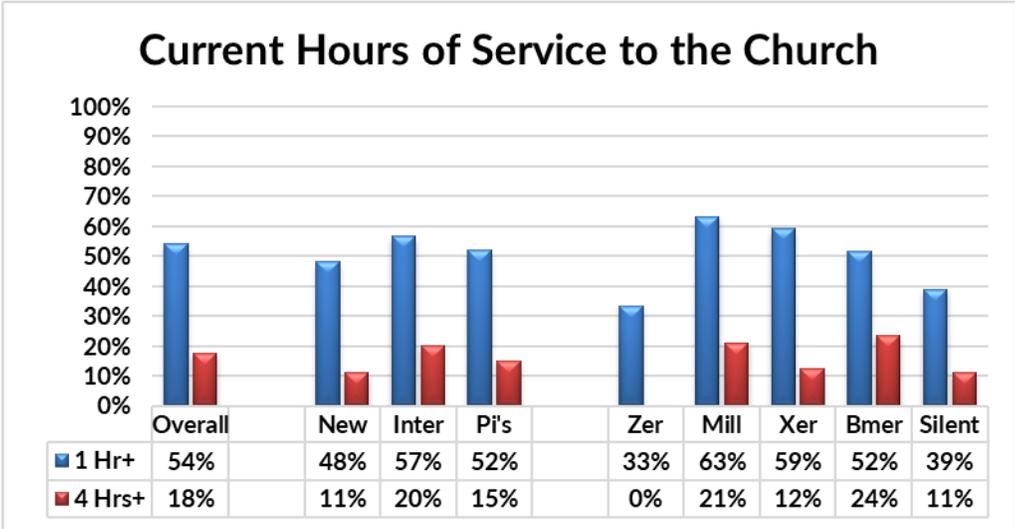
At your church, **23%** seem to be aware of an intentional discipleship process. What has been traditionally called “discipleship training” would seem to be largely missing from SPC programs. Only 23% of respondents are aware of any training. Of particular concern is that no staff are aware of any intentional discipleship occurring.

### Ministry Mobilization

The next section consists of three questions. Essentially, three ideas are compared. First, the current deployment of volunteers is determined; how many survey participants are involved in service to your church. Second, the number of hours volunteers are willing to work for the mission of your church is measured. Two levels are measured, one or more hours per week and four or more hours per week. The third question is, “Do you feel adequately trained for the ministry you do?”

The next two graphs show the overall degree of the voluntary involvement of people serving at your church.

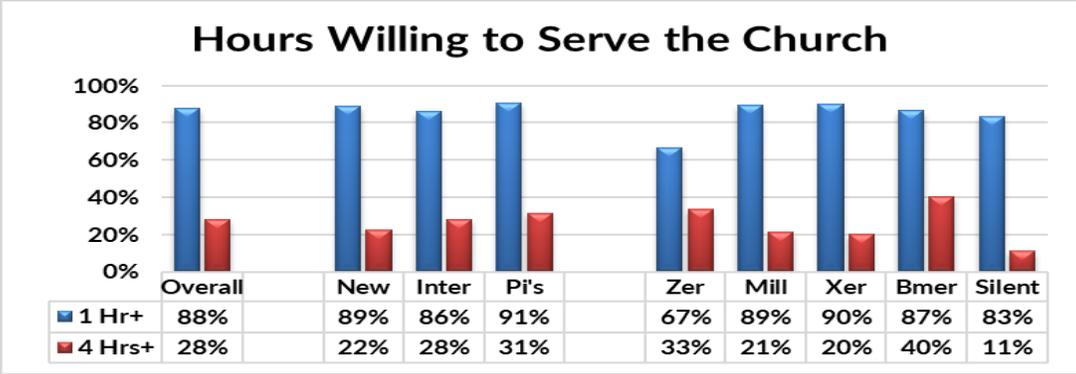
**How many hours do you currently spend each week in your volunteer ministry callings on behalf of this church?**



The percentage of those who spend *no time* serving at church versus those who spend at least one hour per week determines the level of “*consumerism*.” Overall, 54% of survey respondents are workers and 46% would seem to be “*consumers*.” A healthy norm for good deployment is around 60% spending an hour or more per week in the service of their church.

It should be noted that Millennials and Gen Xers seem to be serving at a higher rate than other generational groups. New Attenders are a little slow in getting involved in supporting the ministries of your church.

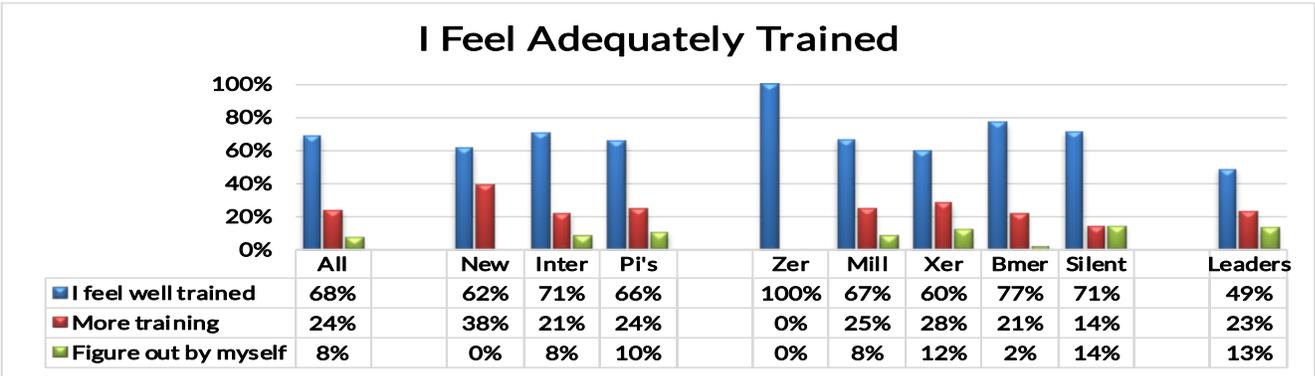
How many hours a week are you WILLING to spend in volunteer ministry serving the mission of this church?



Very few churches do a good job recruiting and training/mentoring new ministry leaders and volunteers. The two graphs above illustrate that the potential of volunteers in your church is higher than what is being currently realized. At your church, 88% say they are willing to serve one or more hours per week, and 28% are willing to serve four or more hours to support the ministries of your church. This means there is a potential for an increase of 34% in the current workforce, and an increase of 10% who are willing to serve four or more hours per week. This is a potential strength SPC must mobilize!

Do you feel adequately trained for the ministry you do?

- I am not currently involved in any ministry 94 42%
- I feel well trained 80 36%
- More training would be nice 28 13%
- I have had to figure everything out by myself 9 4%
- Paid Staff 11 5%

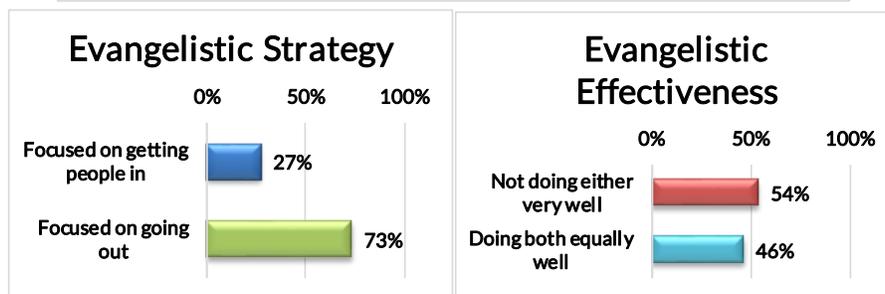
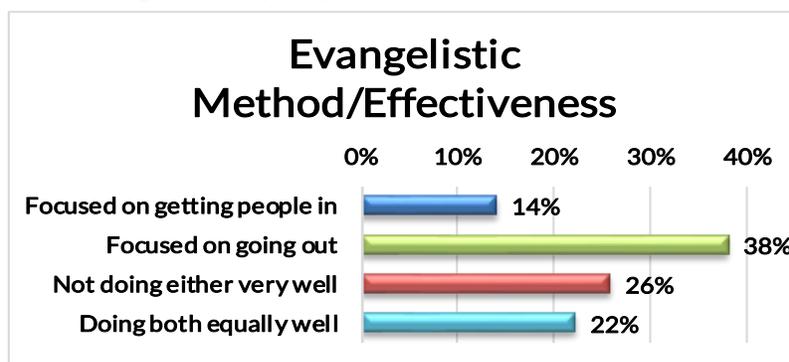


Of those currently involved, 68% indicated they feel adequately trained, 24% said they would like more training, and 8% reported they felt that they have had to figure everything out on their own. These statistics point to the possibility that 32% of your current ministry workforce needs more support.

## Evangelism/Assimilation Strategy and Setting

Which statement is most true?

- As a church we are more focused on trying to get people to come to church to hear the gospel.
- As a church we are more focused on going out and serving the community so we can share the gospel.
- I don't think we do either very well.
- I think we are doing both equally well.



This question measures both evangelistic strategy (first two options) and evangelistic effectiveness (second two options). As set up, the question asks the survey participant to choose the option they feel most strongly about. Thus, we know both what each participant feels most strongly about as well as getting a reading on your church's evangelistic strategy and effectiveness. The top graph lists all 4 options. In that graph, the most chosen option was "focused on going out" (evangelistic strategy).

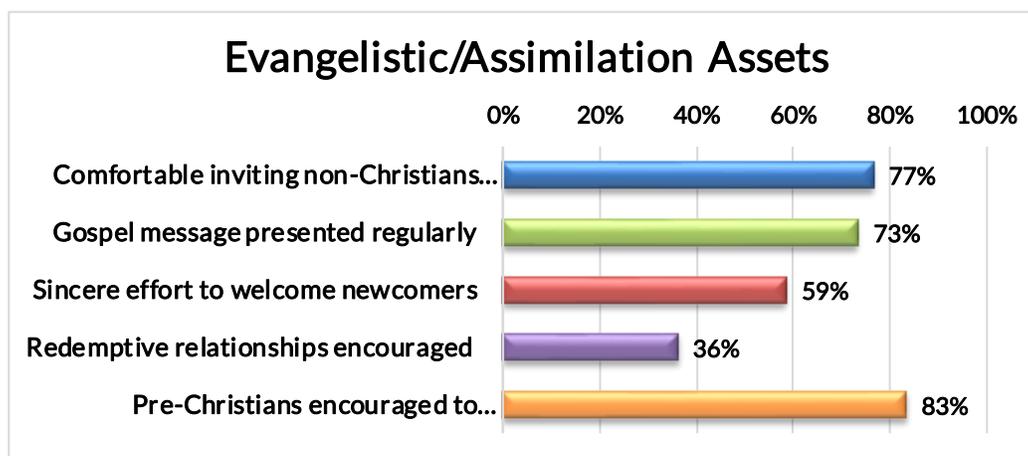
When we look at the Evangelistic Effectiveness graph (bottom right), we see that 54% of survey participants rated SPC as not doing either approach to evangelism well while 46% considered that your church is doing both approaches equally well. If evangelism is defined as people making personal faith commitments to the saving work of Christ, those who say SPC is "not doing either approach to evangelism very well" are correct. Earlier in Section 2: Shared Pilgrimage, we saw the rate of adult evangelism was less than .5% (.005).

### *SPC's evangelistic/assimilation assets*

Certain assets need to be present to effectively include new people into the life of your church whether your church is reaching new converts, recovering former churchgoers, or incorporating people moving into the area or transferring from other congregations. Attendees need to feel comfortable bringing people to church services and/or activities. They need to have confidence people will hear the gospel message if they come. Not that an evangelistic service will take place every week, but one should be learning about the gospel on a weekly basis.

People need to be encouraged to build “*redemptive relationships*” with non-Christians. How else will people ever be reached except through Christians building relationships with them and speaking to them when the opportunity presents itself?

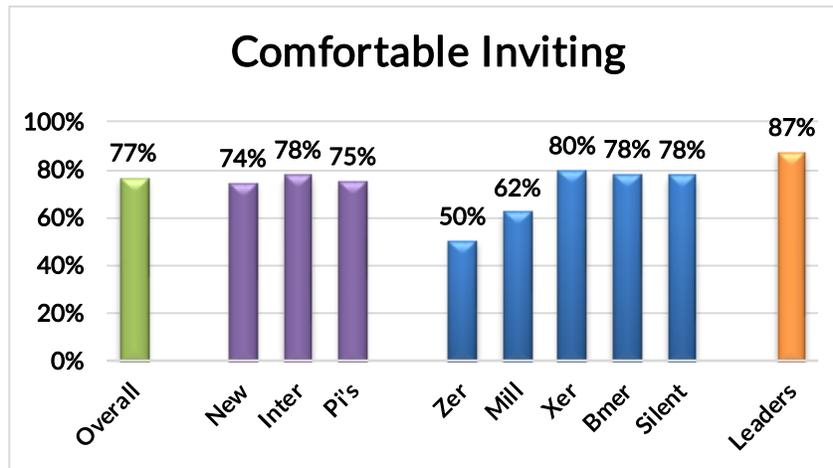
If there are people who come to church who have not yet made a faith commitment, they need to be encouraged and supported. For too many church attendees, the church is perceived as more like a Christians-Only Club. Churches need to set up effective strategies to be supportive of those who are moving towards faith.



Please note: all of the items on this Asset List should be at 80% or above.

Next are the questions on which the graph above is based.

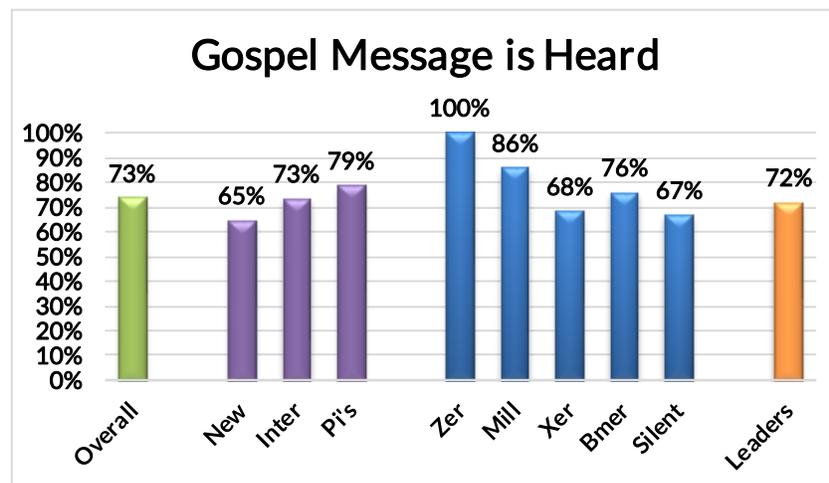
### Would you feel comfortable bringing a non-Christian to a church service?



Database average on this question is 83%.

Overall, **77%** survey participants said they would be comfortable bringing a non-Christian to your church service.

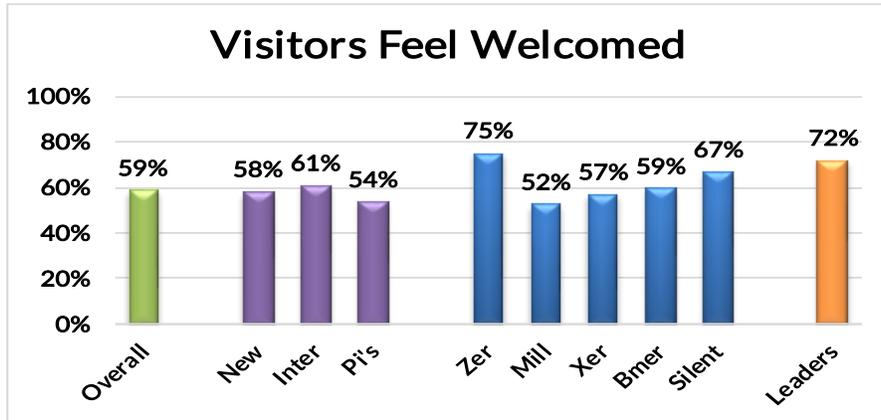
**Non-Christians are likely to hear the gospel message during worship services at this church.**



Database average on this question is 80%.

While it may be true that a salvation message and/or altar call may not be present in every Sunday service, **73%** survey respondents said they felt non-Christians would hear the gospel during worship services at your church.

Church members and attendees make a sincere effort to help visitors and newcomers feel welcomed into the life of the church.

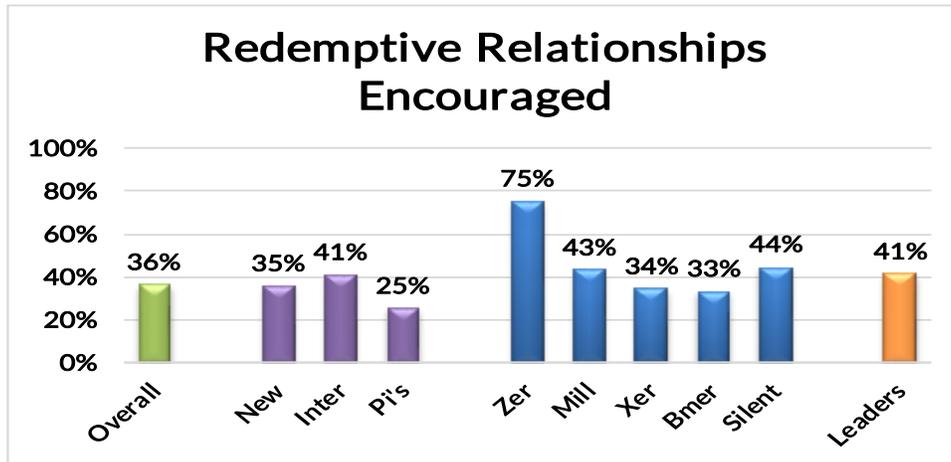


Database average on this question is 69%. A healthy response is 80% or more.

The degree to which your church welcomes and includes new people is clearly one of the most important questions in this section. Overall, **59%** of participants agreed your church made a sincere effort to help visitors and newcomers feel welcomed.

One of the common failings of a church the size of SPC is that people count on your greeters/ushers to do all the welcoming. As important as greeters are, visitors and new people need the active support from your congregation as well to feel included.

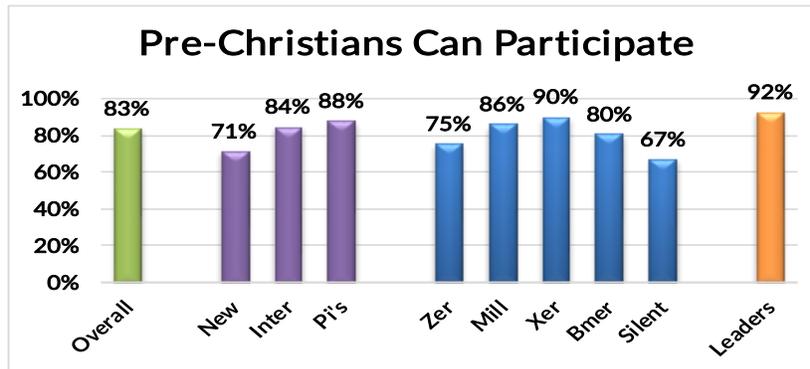
Those who attend this church are encouraged to build redemptive relationships with non-Christians with the hope of influencing them with the gospel.



Database average on this question is 75%.

The unchurched will not be effectively reached if your church attendees do not intentionally build relationships with them. Overall, **36%** agreed they are being encouraged to build these relationships. This is a very low score if evangelism is the goal.

At this church people are accepted and allowed to participate in the life of the church before they are actually followers of Jesus.



Database average on this question is 68%.

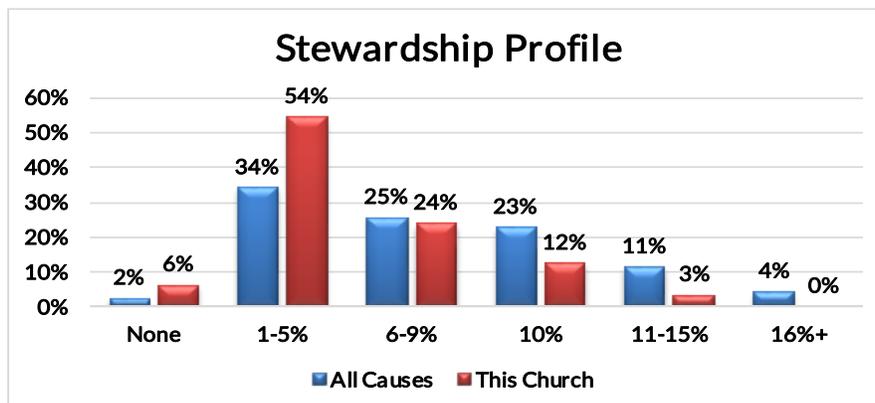
Churches that are effective in reaching unbelievers know that people need to first feel like they belong. Working along-side pre-Christians in the church environment can be an effective means of leading them to believe. At this church, **83%** of respondents agree with this statement; the *VitalChurch* database average is **68%** on this question.

### Financial Factors

This section combines the information from the following two questions:

What percentage of your gross annual (household) income do you give to the work of Christ (this church and other ministries)?

What percentage of your gross annual (household) income do you give to this church?



The graph above compares the practice of giving among survey participants. Overall, 38% of respondents give 10% or more of their gross annual income to support one or more Christian ministries, and 15% give 10% or more to support the ministries of your church.

## Section 4: Quality of Fellowship

Koinonia (the close fellowship of believers in the New Testament) is the focus of this section. Research has shown that 90% of those looking for a new church home are seeking a church that will offer the level of acceptance and belonging they desire. It is this factor, quality of fellowship, that often defines a church that is reaching people for Christ as well as attracting new church members. The failure of people to find acceptance and belonging in their church is the number one reason why people drop out of a church.

### Introduction to Acceptance and Belonging—Quality of Fellowship

Here are the two survey questions that are the basis for this part of the report.

**To what degree is finding acceptance and belonging important in your church relationships?**

**To what degree do you personally feel like you belong or are accepted as part of this church?**

Both questions offer the same four alternative answers:

- A great deal
- Quite a bit
- Some
- Little/not at all

The question on the minds of almost everyone who begins attending a church is “Will my family and I find the acceptance and belonging that we want here?” Related to this question is often a second, “Will my family’s needs be met here?” Research shows that one-half to two-thirds of people who begin attending a church will drop out before five years are up. The most common reason for them leaving is that they did not find the acceptance and belonging they were seeking. **Quality of Fellowship is a very big issue.**

**Scoring Note:** This section looks at two things:

1. **Idealized** acceptance and belonging is based on the first question. This is *the quality of fellowship people say they want in their church relationships compared to the churches in the VitalChurch database.*<sup>25</sup> The important thing

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<sup>25</sup> More than 13,000 people in more than 88 churches have taken the *VitalChurch* Survey that included these two questions on acceptance and belonging. SPC is only being compared to other churches in the 400+ average worship attendance range.

this first question measures is the degree to which finding family-like relationships is a priority to those who attend your church. Collectively, this question shows the degree your congregants intentionally/consciously focus on finding acceptance and belonging in their church relationships and then seek to provide “*koinonia*” to all who attend their church.

If those who attend your church do not personally place a high priority on finding a high quality of fellowship, it is very unlikely your church has the goal of providing opportunities to build relationships with New Attenders. ***This lack of intentional focus on building relationships is often the major reason a church fails to attract new people. Small groups are one of best places to build relationships with new people, but almost all activities have that same potential if building relationships is a priority. What rarely works is the worship service where people tend to greet their friends before they hurry home (possibly to watch the Sea Hawks?).***

2. **Experienced** acceptance and belonging is based on the second question. It is ***the quality of fellowship people report that they are actually experiencing at your church compared to all the churches of similar size in the VitalChurch database.***

It is important to realize the Idealized and Experienced scores are determined separately and a wide range of scores and relationships between the two scores are possible.

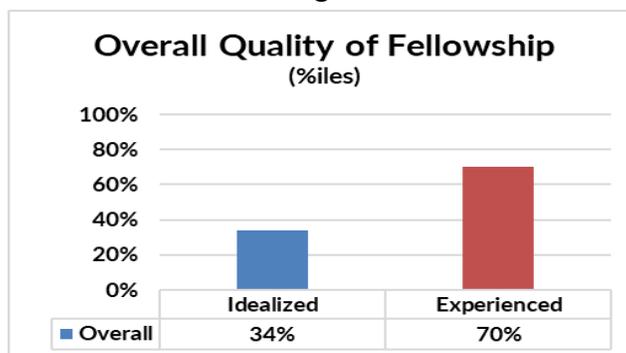
Before we look at SPC’s results, it is helpful to know some of the variables that impact quality of fellowship. **Churches vary greatly on the level of quality of fellowship they want/idealize.** Let’s consider some of the options. Some churches are all about a great preacher—people come for great sermons. A few churches are all about supporting missions. A few churches may have a special ministry appropriate to their area such as meeting the needs of people in the inner city or working with refugees. A few churches are primarily about fulfilling religious duty. Some are almost cliques based on a few extended families or an ethnic identity. Many have a high commitment to a particular theological position or denominational family. However, ***churches that are attracting new people, especially if they are reaching new people for Christ, usually major on providing acceptance and belonging both to its members and consciously extending that quality of fellowship to New Attenders.***

## Quality of Fellowship Measurements

The average for both measures of quality of fellowship is 50%ile because SPC's results are being compared to the *VitalChurch* database.<sup>26</sup> The following scale is helpful in evaluating the specific scores.

Extremely High	99%ile +
High	85-98%
High Normal	61-84%
Normal	40-60%ile
Low normal	16-39%ile
Low	2-15%ile
Extremely low	1%ile

Here is the overall data for SPC in both categories:

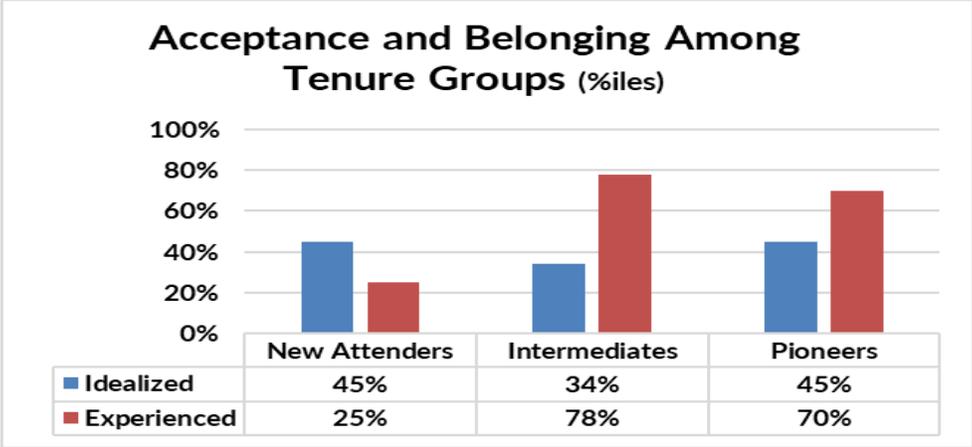


As we shall see, SPC has a somewhat unusual pattern in quality of fellowship. Overall, people are indicating that finding acceptance and belonging in their church is *not* a high priority (“low normal” range). However, these same people report they are indeed “experiencing” a “high normal” quality of fellowship.

The good news, as we shall see, is people are “experiencing” a better than average quality of fellowship. The bad news that accompanies this pattern is that there is often a minimal commitment to be sure that all who attend your church and especially new attenders also experience a similar quality of fellowship.

<sup>26</sup> When a SPC score is compared to the *VitalChurch* database, the result is a percentile. Most scores in this section are **percentiles**.

Here are the results from the tenure groups at SPC compared to similar-sized churches.



50%ile is average for both "Idealized" and "Experienced" scores.

The blue bars in the graph above show the quality fellowship people in the various tenure groups say they want. Both New Attenders and Pioneers reported wanting quality of fellowship in the "normal range" (40-60%). Intermediates are in the "low normal" range. The Intermediates are by far the largest tenure group which, therefore, tends to lower the overall "idealized" quality of fellowship rating of the congregation. However, SPC is a multi-staff church with specialized programs that attract people as well as providing opportunities for fellowship. Smaller churches often have little else than fellowship to offer its people.

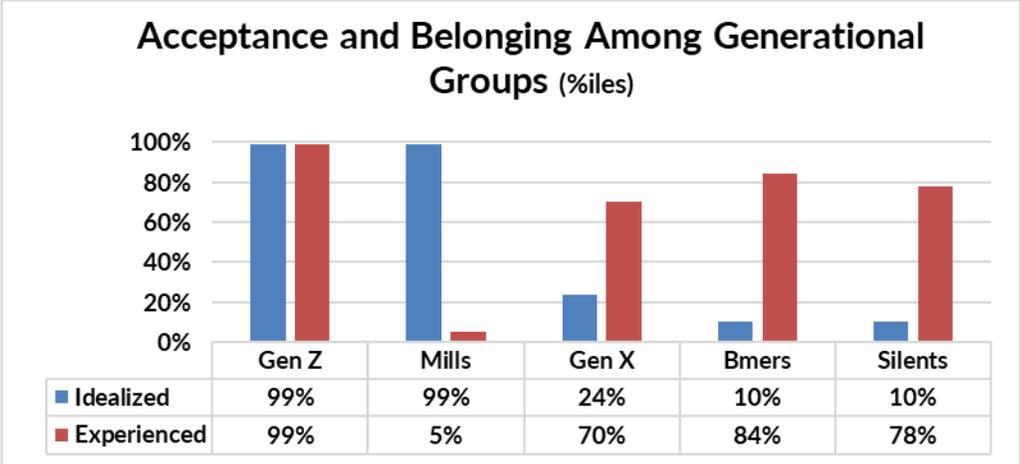
What is exciting is to notice that while the focus on "finding" quality of fellowship may be low, *the overall "experienced" acceptance and belonging in your church is well above normal among the Intermediates (78%ile) and Pioneers (70%ile).*

What is disappointing in the graph is that **New Attenders** who report they want to experience a "normal" quality of fellowship at 45%ile, report that they are not. **Their "experienced" score of 25%ile is in "low normal" range.** New Attenders are not being fully included in their new church family.

There is a common pattern associated with a lower "idealized" yet with a higher "experienced" score. When people report there is a weak focus on "finding" a high quality of fellowship, the usual result is that your church tends to lack an intentional focus on including New Attenders in a meaningful way and New Attenders do not feel included. SPC fits that pattern. It has a low idealized score (34%ile overall) with an "experienced" score of 70%ile while the New Attenders who wanted a "normal" level of quality of fellowship are experiencing considerably less than they said they wanted. *SPC is weak on intentionally including new people as shown by the New Attenders' low*

*“experienced” score.* The New Attender’s failure to find the quality of fellowship they hoped to find may be a contributing factor to why there are so few of them.

Here’s how the different generational groups, in order of their size, at your church.



The biggest generational group at SPC is the **Boomers** with 91 survey participants (41% of current attenders). They, as a group, are experiencing exceptional quality of fellowship, one point short of the “high” range at 84%ile. They are tied with the Silents for the lowest “idealized” score at 10%ile. Only 9 of the 31 (29%) New Attenders are Boomers. Boomers tend to be weak in attracting and including their peers.

Only slightly smaller than the Boomers are the Gen Xers of whom 88 (40% of current attenders) took the survey. The **Gen Xers** report a low priority in finding quality of fellowship but report that they “experience” acceptance and belonging in the “high normal” range at 70%ile. Over half (16 or 52%) of New Attenders are Gen Xers. Gen Xers have done the best at attracting and including New Attenders.

**Millennials** are the next group in line with 21 participants (9% of current attenders). Millennials are famous for wanting relationships—think social media. SPC’s Millennials are no exception in terms of the level of relationships that they are hoping to find in your church (99%ile). However, they reported that **they are *not* experiencing what they said they wanted at 5%ile.** As we shall see, as a group, *they are the most disappointed with the quality of fellowship they are experiencing.*

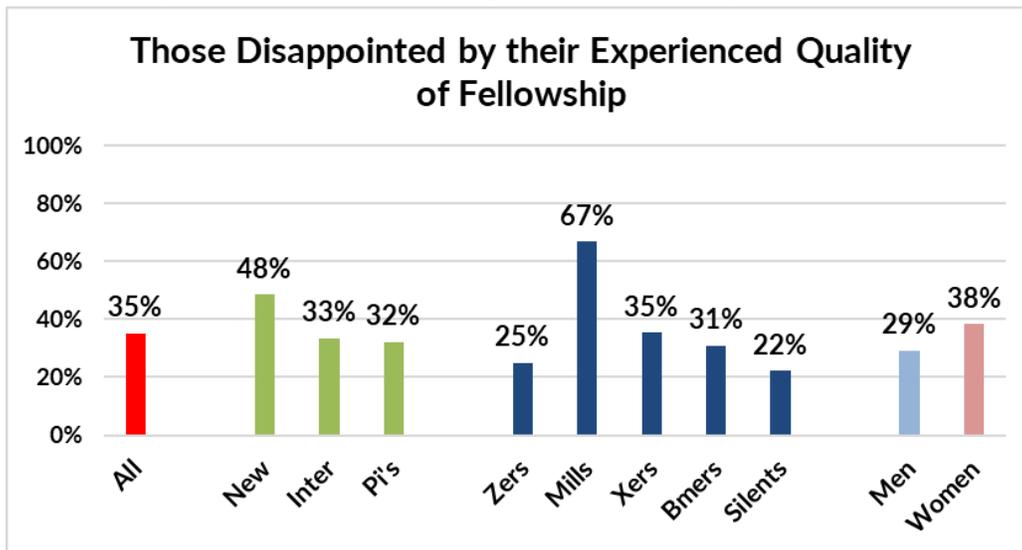
**Silents** at SPC follow the common pattern: low “idealized” quality of fellowship while reporting a “high normal” quality of fellowship. Only 1 of the New Attenders is a Silent. The Silents grew up in a time when survival was more of a theme of life than finding relationships. It is common for Silents to “idealize” a lower quality of fellowship but

actually report experiencing exceptional relationships. This is largely true among the Silents at SPC. They report experiencing a “high normal” quality of fellowship at 78%ile.

At SPC, Gen Zers are a very small group made up of two Teens and two individuals over 18 years of age. Like most younger adults, they “idealize” a high quality of fellowship. Fortunately, they report “experiencing” the quality of fellowship they said they wanted. From a quality of fellowship perspective, they are doing well.

*Those Disappointed<sup>27</sup>*

There is another way to measure how people are experiencing *koinonia* at SPC. The measure of disappointment answers the question, “*Are you experiencing the quality of fellowship that you said you wanted?*” The next graph shows the percentage of adults in each tenure and generational group, as well as men and women, who reported that the quality of fellowship they are “experiencing” is less than they wanted/“idealized.”



Consistent with the results we saw earlier in this section, almost half of New Attenders are at least somewhat disappointed in the quality of fellowship they are experiencing. Among Millennials, two-thirds reported disappointment.

As we shall see in **Other Factors: Gender**, women at SPC want close relationships in the church and are experiencing them. Men are much less concerned about quality of fellowship but are doing just fine anyway.

<sup>27</sup> A factor that needs to be considered in measuring “disappointment” is that it is relative to what a person “idealized.”

**Other Factors**

*Interrelatedness*

A factor that often effects how people experience fellowship in the church is interrelatedness. SPC has a 15% rate of interrelatedness which is actually lower than the database average of 30%. The question that is used to measure interrelatedness is **“Do you have relatives living outside your home who attend this church?”** Among the 222 people who took the survey, 34 reported having relatives in your church who live outside their homes.

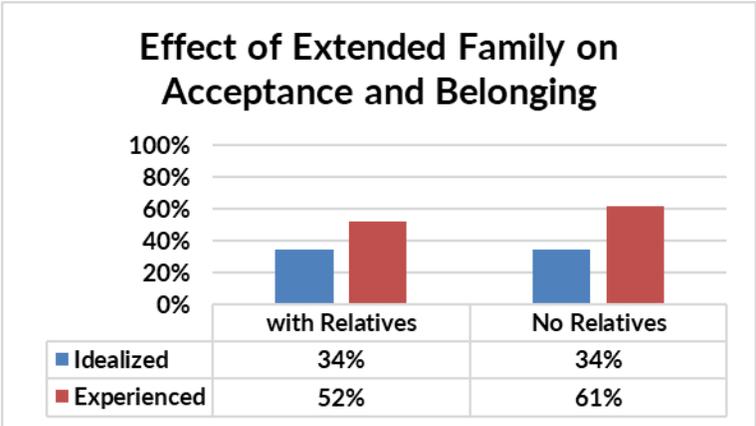
Relatedness	Zers	Mills	Xers	Bmers	Silents	Totals
New Attenders	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	13%
Intermediates	0%	19%	8%	9%	25%	11%
Pioneers	100%	0%	23%	30%	0%	27%
Totals	25%	14%	14%	16%	17%	15%

The blue-shaded squares show the percent of relatedness in that column or row. For example, the Pioneers are 27% interrelated and the Boomers 16% interrelated.

Research shows when interrelatedness is 20% or more, a church’s or a group’s ability to effectively include new people begins to be compromised. At 40% interrelatedness, family interactions become so apparent that those without family in your church tend to feel left out—often because they are.

Among tenure groups, only the Pioneers exceed the 20% criterion. All Gen Zers<sup>28</sup> report both having attended SPC more than 20 years and having extended family in your church.

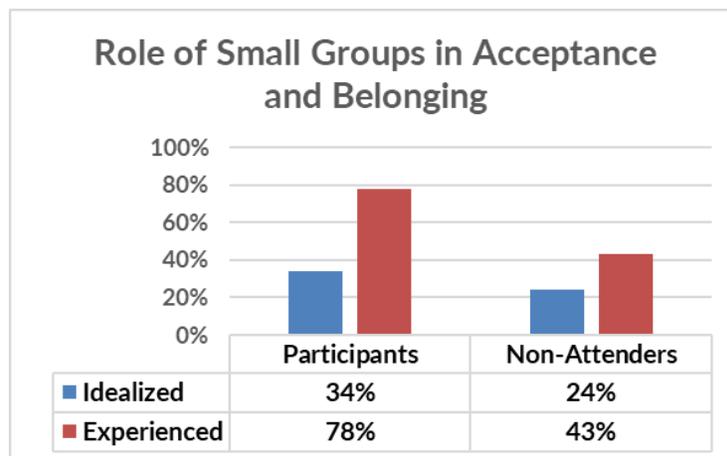
At SPC, those without family have a slight edge in “experienced” quality of fellowship over those with family in your church.



<sup>28</sup> Gen Zers also include 2 teens who took the survey.

### *Small Groups*

SPC has an average level of participation in small groups at 41%. The database participation average for a church SPC's size is 46%. Sixty percent (60%) or more is considered ideal. Small groups tend to attract those who want to experience close relationships in their church.



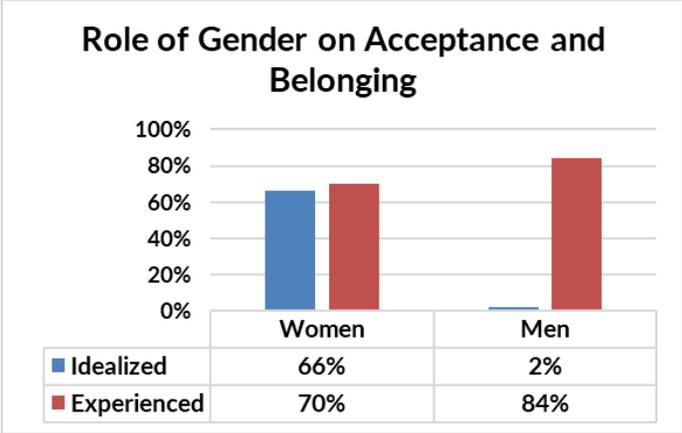
This graph shows that those who participated in small groups clearly experienced a higher quality of fellowship. This is also the normal result. Small groups are especially helpful in fully including new people.

In the modern world where people commonly move from place to place often because of jobs, small groups play an especially important role in the church. Small groups are the most common places where new people get to know church people and church people get to know the new people, especially if the small groups are intentionally designed to include new people.

Two groups are noticeably low in their participation in small groups—New Attenders and Millennials—both of whom have lower a quality of fellowships scores. The question is whether they are not being invited or are not feeling included.

*Gender*

Both men and women at SPC reported “experiencing” a “high normal” quality of fellowship. The big difference is that women at SPC are willing to say that they want at least a normal quality of fellowship. Men minimize wanting quality of fellowship but actually do very well at SPC.



**Emotional Health**

The second part of the Quality of Fellowship section is a series of questions that focus on specific aspects of relationships within the fellowship of your church. These questions show the degree to which people tend to get involved in each other’s lives within the SPC fellowship. Low scores on the first three questions suggest superficial relationships. Higher scores generally indicate a higher level of interpersonal involvement.



*The old-fashioned grading system sets a reasonable standard on these questions. An “A” is 90% or higher. A “B” is in the 80s. A “C” is in the 70s. Below 70 is getting down in the “D” and failing range.*

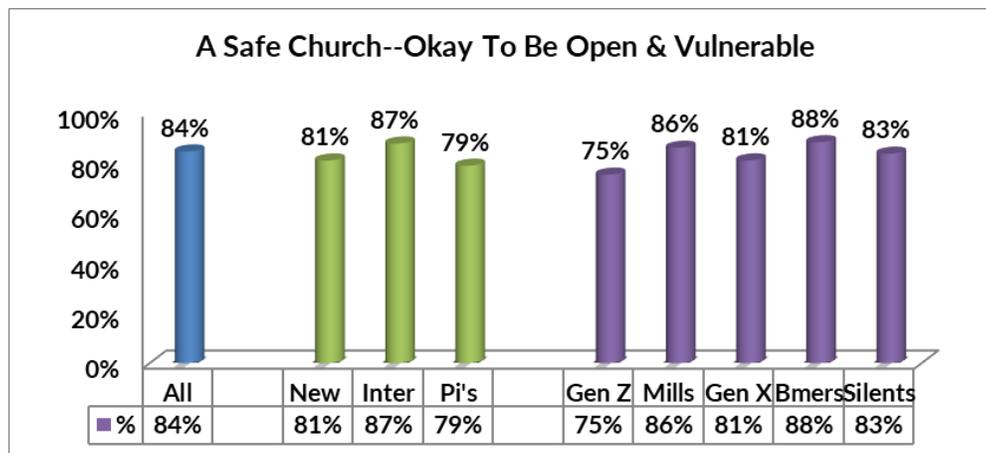
Here are the questions that are the basis for the graph above.

**At this church we are encouraged to grieve our disappointments and life losses—and it is okay to be sad when times are difficult.**



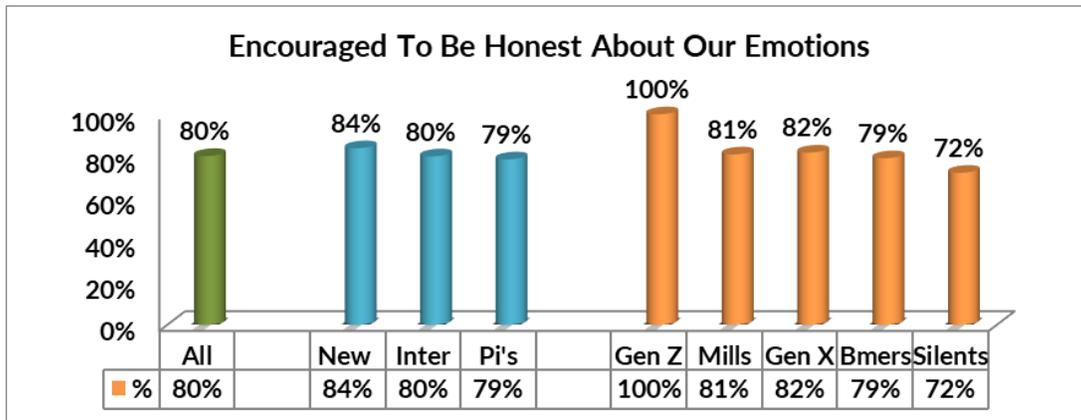
Ninety-four percent (94%) is an “A” rating. Only the New Attenders are somewhat unsure that grieving is acceptable at SPC.

**This is a safe church where people can be open and vulnerable with what is going on in their lives.**



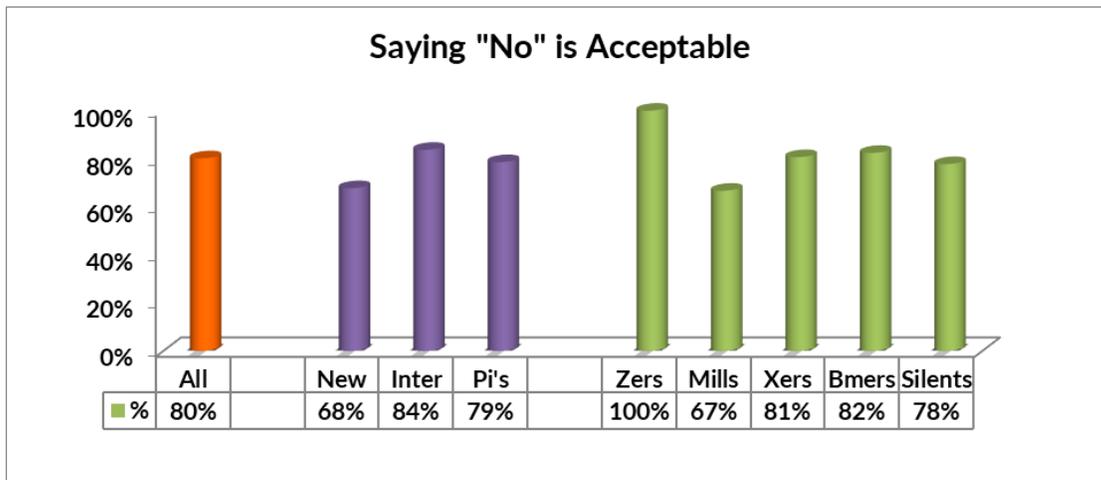
The desire for acceptance and belonging brings with it the hope/expectation that a person will be accepted even if they are less than perfect and/or even if their frailties are apparent. The question could be: “Will people still accept and value me even if I am divorced or my children are making a mess of their lives?” A person needs to feel that they can share their hurts and struggles in your church and still be accepted. We are not talking about tolerating sin. We are talking about being able to be honest and seeking the support of church members with our struggles as Christians. The overall average of 84% is a “B” level. The good news is that all groups agree it is true. SPC is a place where people can share what is happening in their lives.

Are there places in this church where a person can be honest about his/her feelings without fear of criticism?



The scores on this question are usually similar to the previous question. Sharing what is going on in your life and expressing one's feeling have much in common. At SPC, the overall scores are similar, and all groups are in agreement that it is true.

At this church, saying "no" to ministry invitations or participation is okay and respected.



Relationships in a church can be manipulative. Churches can put people under pressure to participate in some activities or conform to a variety of behaviors, opinions, or points of view. People may feel afraid to disagree or fail to conform to the expected perspective for fear of rejection. They may feel their acceptance in your church is at risk. In today's world, such churches rarely are growing. If churches are manipulative, people don't stay. Such churches also tend to be weak in attracting new people. Most people who attend SPC feel like they can say "No" without repercussions. New Attenders and Millennials are less sure that saying "No" will be accepted.

Our church and its leaders are good at resolving conflict.

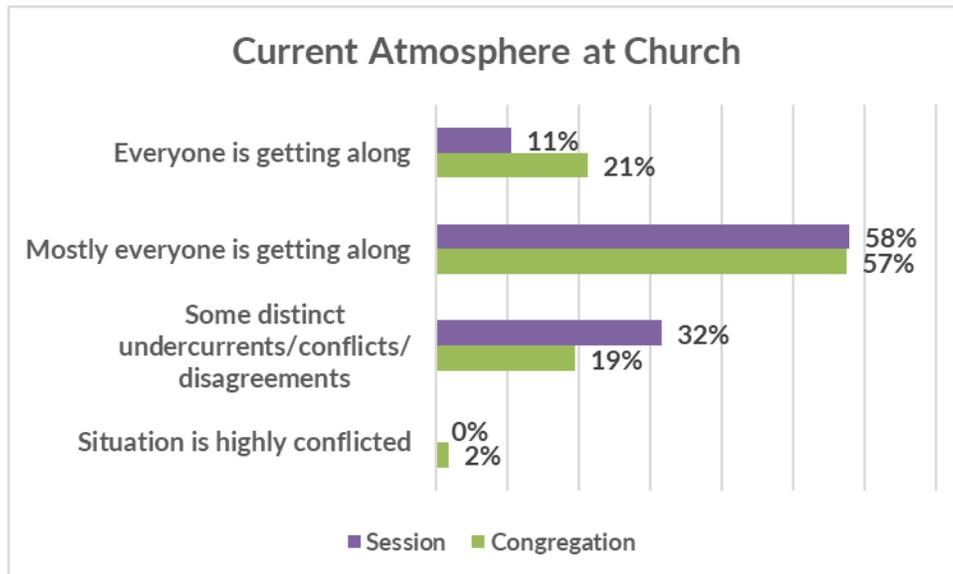


*The consensus of your congregation is that your church and current leadership are not good at conflict resolution.* Church leaders rate themselves the same as your congregation. Staff rate the situation lower than the other groups. Conflict resolution is an emotional health issue and is ultimately a leadership issue. If the leaders model good conflict resolution, the congregation will follow. This question is also discussed in [Section 5: Church Leadership](#). Few churches are good at conflict resolution.

*Corporate and Personal Feelings*

Describe the current atmosphere of your church.

- Everyone is getting along
- Mostly everyone is getting along
- Some distinct undercurrents/disagreements
- Situation is highly conflicted



This question provides a measure of conflict at your church. There are slight differences between the perception of Session members and your congregation, but they are basically in agreement. About a third of your Session reported that there are “some distinct undercurrents/disagreements.” A total of 21% (19% +2%) of your congregation agreed.

The church is in transition both from COVID and having a relatively long-term pastor leave. *While the current atmosphere is not severely conflicted, there would seem to be issues that need to be resolved and, hopefully, resolved before a new pastor is called.*

The next question gets down to the personal level—how people currently feel about their relationship with your church.

How do you currently feel about your relationship to this church?

My Feelings Toward This Church	All	New	Inter	Pioneers	Gen Z	Mills	Gen X	Bmers	Silents
I am very involved and excited about my church (high enthusiasm)	30	7	19	4	1	4	13	11	1
I am currently involved in supporting my church (moderate enthusiasm)	77	8	54	15	2	9	31	30	5
I am attending and participating in church life (neutral enthusiasm)	67	13	36	18	1	4	21	33	8
I am beginning to get discouraged with my church	29	3	15	11	0	1	13	12	3
I am barely hanging on	19	0	11	8	0	3	10	5	1
<b>"red" total</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22%</b>

*The numbers in each column show the actual number of survey respondents in that category who made that choice. The numbers in red identify increasing levels of discouragement. The bottom row (shaded black with white numerals) shows the percentage of that group in the "discouraged" categories.*

Overall, 22% of current attenders are either "beginning to get discouraged with my church" or "barely hanging on." The two most discouraged groups are the Pioneers at 34% and the Gen Xers at 26%.

## Section 5: Church Leadership

The goal of this section is to look at the current leadership of your church. First, we will identify and describe your church leadership. Your church currently has two identified leadership groups—the Leadership Board and the Staff Team. We will look at each group separately.

Leaders Team	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent	Totals
New Attender	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intermediate Attender	0	4	17	11	1	33
Pioneer Attender	0	0	3	3	0	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>39</b>

The **Lay Leadership** at SPC are those who identified as being part of the “*Elder or Deacon Leadership*” on the survey. It consists of a pool of 39 participants. According to the data received from SPC, the active Session consists of 15 members which includes Pastors. There are three Staff members who also identified as “Leadership” but we have broken them out and will describe them with the rest of your SPC Staff.

The average age of this group is 55.7 years old. The average tenure is 12.7 years attending your church. The Leaders are from the Gen Xer (20), Boomer (14), Millennial (4), and Silent (1) generations. Most of your Leaders are Intermediates (33), with six Pioneers.

There are 23 female and 16 male Board members; 36 are married. Most (20) have an occupation status of salaried or wage-earning employees, 5 are Homemakers, 6 are Business Owners, and 8 are Retired. There were 36 who have earned college degrees. All 39 Board members reported coming to your church as Christians; 13 came from Evangelical church backgrounds. Of the 39 Board members, 15 said that they keep coming for “Relationships,” and 8 come for the “Bible Study and/or Sermons.” There were 18 who said they valued most “Being spiritually fed,” and 18 who valued “Finding a sense of family/fellowship.” There are 19 Board members who said they feel adequately trained for ministry. Of the Board members, 69% report they are “growing spiritually.”

Staff Team	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent	Totals
New Attender	0	1	4	1	0	6
Intermediate Attender	0	1	5	1	0	7
Pioneer Attender	0	0	1	1	0	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>

There were 15 participants who identified as being part of your **Staff Team**. The average age of a Staff Team member is 49.5 years old. The average tenure is 9.3 years attending your church, and the average number of years they have been Christians is 39.7 years. Your Staff are from the Gen Xer (10), Boomer (3), and Millennial (2) generations. Seven Staff members are Intermediates, 6 are New Attenders, and 2 are Pioneers. The Staff Team has 11 female and 4 male members; 14 are married.

An important question for staff is the degree to which they are purposefully mentoring and training people in their area of specialty. Here is how the current staff is perceived. **Our staff members are good at mentoring and training people to participate in their area of ministry.**

Staff Mentoring	Congregation	Leaders	Staff
Excellent	18%	6%	8%
Good	46%	49%	31%
Hit and Miss	31%	40%	54%
Tendency to do their area of ministry on their own	5%	6%	8%
<b>Red Total</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>62%</b>
Don't know	40%	10%	13%

Forty percent (40%) of your congregation did not offer an opinion, but of those who gave their opinion, 36% rated staff mentoring in either the “Hit and miss” or “Tendency to do their area of ministry on their own.” Church leaders with a red total of 46% offered a lower rating. The staff actually see themselves as mostly “hit and miss” (54%) or “tending to do their area of ministry on their own” (8%).

The importance of this question is how staff are seen and how they see themselves as well as how staff are utilized. How your staff approaches their jobs is one of the hurdles that must be crossed if this church is to recover from the recent losses. Especially as your church reaches an average attendance of close to 400, it is important that ministry staff (in particular) become equippers of people in their area of specialty rather than just

working in their area of ministry. The jobs will become too big if others are not trained in those specialties.

For the purposes of this section, the responses from your Session (**Leaders**) and the Staff Team (**Staff**) will often be broken out from your **Congregation** numbers to display their perspectives.

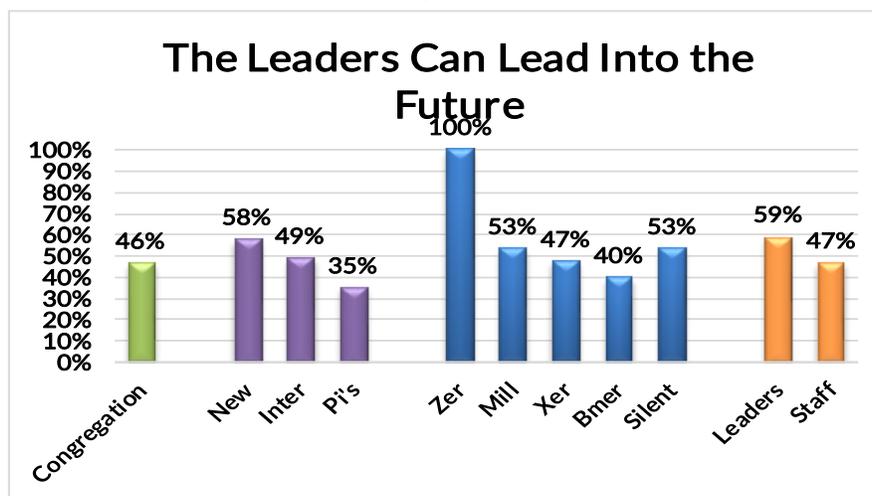
The rest of the **Leadership Section** consists of several parts. The first part measures confidence in your current leaders and consists of four questions. There is also a question on conflict issues. The next part of this section measures awareness and level of agreement with the vision, plans, and goals of your church. The third part deals with openness to change.

## Confidence in Leadership



The graph above summarizes the following four questions about your church Leadership.

I believe the current leaders have the ability to lead this church into the future.



This question can be seen as a vote of confidence for your current Board members. This question does not say what people are satisfied or unsatisfied about; it is only an indication of how satisfied people currently are with your current leadership. Like any other polling question, it is subject to change based on ongoing events in the life of your church. The traditional minimum criterion for a positive assessment on this question is **70%**. Anything less than 70% should be considered a low approval rating.

The Congregational rating of the current Leaders at your church is 46%. Pioneers (35%) and Boomers (40%) seem to be the most critical of your leaders. Your Staff's confidence

rating is 47%. For whatever reasons, confidence in your current leadership is lower than ideal. It is important to note that your Leaders rated themselves at 59%.

### Leadership Training

There is quality leadership training available at this church.



While there is already a large pool of leaders, the general perception is that SPC is weak in providing leadership training.

I would welcome some leadership training.



While in the previous question people felt there was a limited effort to train new leaders, this question shows a lower-than-average number of people are wanting leadership training. Often, 50% of especially younger people want to get leadership training and to be involved in church leadership. However, 32% of your Congregation would like to be trained.

## Conflict

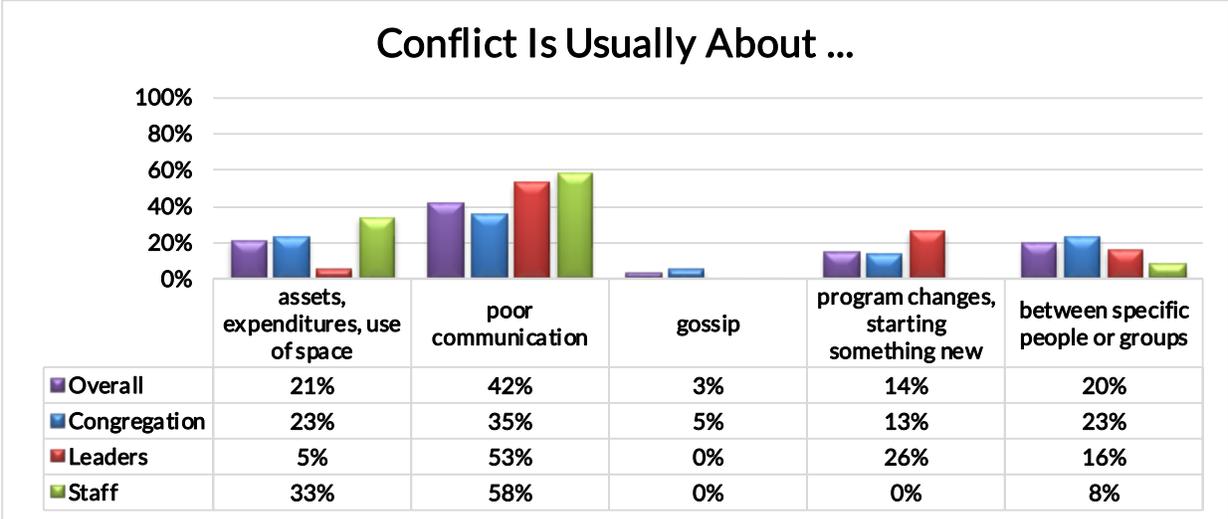
Our church and its leaders are good at resolving conflict.



Conflict resolution is critically important in the church and is ultimately a leadership issue. Church expectations in the area of conflict resolution are set by your church leaders, in this case the Church Board. If church leaders do not model good conflict resolution skills, creating an expectation that issues will be addressed in reasonable time frames and with fairness, your congregation is unlikely to rise above the level of resolution set by your church leaders. If your church leaders do not resolve issues, your church has low expectations in the area. Issues tend to smolder indefinitely with the result that your church no longer knows where it is trying to go, and the church generally becomes unattractive to new people.

The point of this question is *not* if there is conflict. The next question shows that there are some areas of conflict and the nature of that conflict. ***A 31% rating on handling conflict is low but close to the database average of 29%.*** Churches are rarely good at conflict resolution.

At our church, when conflict occurs, it is usually about . . .



131 survey participants chose “not sure”(59%). Only those who offered a specific opinion (91 participants) are included in the graph above; 12 Leaders and Staff members also offered their opinions.

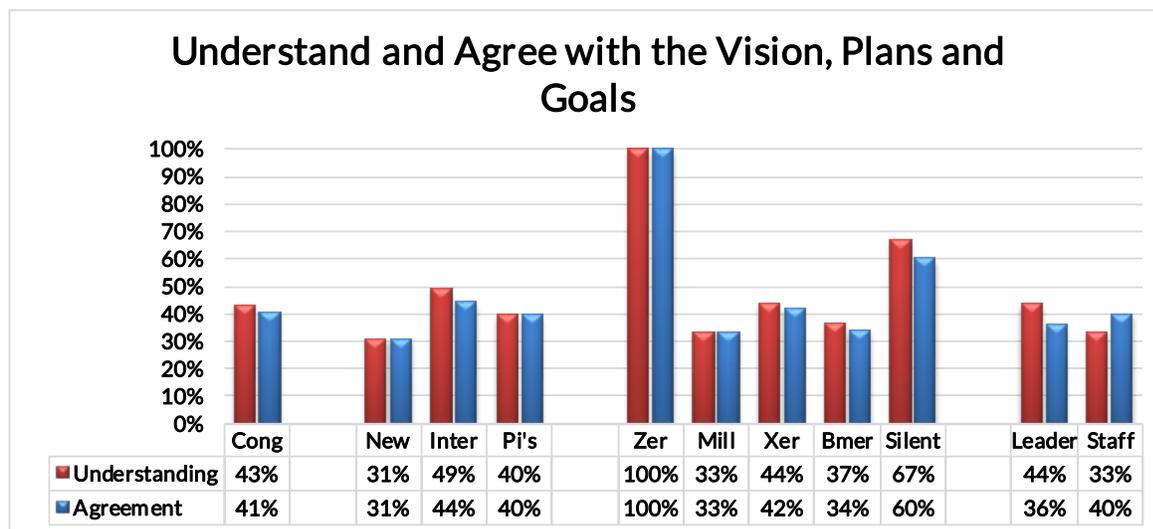
Here we can compare your Congregation’s, Leaders’, and Staff’s answers as to why they believe conflict usually occurs. There seems to be agreement that conflict might come from several sources. The most common source cited across all three groups is “Poor Communication,” however, there are some who believe conflicts can come from other sources as well.

**Leadership Communication**

This set of questions has two primary applications. The first question focuses on the degree to which people Understand what their church is about and/or what is going on in their church. In most healthy churches, the congregation will be able to explain their church’s vision, plans, and goals to others. They are able to do this because they have heard it regularly and consistently from their leaders. If people do not know and/or understand what is going on in their church, it is either a leadership communication issue or the church is just weak on its vision, plans, and goals. A church without a clear vision, plans, and goals tends to have difficulty keeping its members focused on a unified direction for the church.

I understand the vision, plans, and goals of this church.

I am in agreement with the vision, plans, and goals of this church.



Of your Congregation, **43%** said they *“Understand”* the vision, plans, and goals of your church. Church leaders are almost equally uncertain of what your church is trying to accomplish at 44% understanding. Staff are even less certain at 33%. The minimum acceptable for a healthy church is 70% or greater.

The second question focuses on whether people Agree with the established vision, plans, and goals of your church. When the “agreement” score is significantly different than the “understand” score, it indicates people disagree with what your church is trying to accomplish. At SPC there is very little disagreement, but people are not really sure what your church is trying to accomplish.

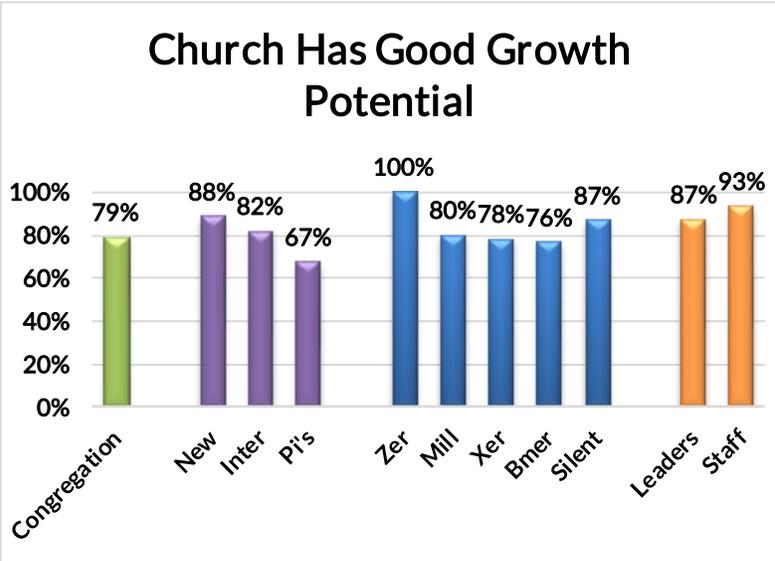
*What these scores indicate is that SPC needs to reach consensus on re/affirming your vision and a set of clearly aligned plans and goals which will unify your church around its mission.*

### Openness to Change

It is generally expected as a church reaches the end of its second decade, that its ability to make changes will have shifted from spontaneous adjustment to new situations into an institutional maintenance mode in which maintaining the status quo becomes a priority and resistance to change becomes the norm.

In this segment, there is one question on growth potential and three questions on resistance to change.

I believe that this church has good potential for healthy growth in the future.



This question is generally the ultimate bellwether for your church as it measures the level of enthusiasm for the future of your church. Churches in this SPC's size range, even if they are going through difficult times, rate this question at about 84%.<sup>29</sup> Churches who take the *VitalChurch* survey tend to be very reluctant to say their church has a low potential for growth. **Your Congregation gave the church a score of 79%.** Your Staff and Leaders show a bit more hope in the future.

The next questions about change are evaluated according to the following continuum:  
**Radicals:** These individuals are very pro-change. They are willing to try all kinds of things with minimal concern about how things already in place may be affected. **They have a very low commitment to the status quo, including programs already in place and may even favor change to relieve boredom.**

**Progressives:** These individuals are very open to change. Their concern is not to miss opportunities. They have a limited commitment to maintaining the status quo. They are willing to try new things, but they want to be sure the proposed changes represent

<sup>29</sup> The database average on this question for churches of 400+ is 83.8% with a standard deviation of 7.3% placing SPC at the 25%ile level compared to similar-sized churches. Now seems to be a time of uncertainty for your church.

progress toward important goals. If they believe they do, then they go for it. *They are willing to make changes in their church to accommodate new opportunities.*

**Conservatives:** These individuals tend to value stability and are not generally seeking change. They need a compelling reason to consider change. The criterion by which they will consider change is *“Will this change bring benefit while not sacrificing the good things we already have in place?”*

**Traditionalists:** These individuals tend to resist change. Traditionalists find it hard to even discuss change. *Their first question is “Why is change needed?”* They tend to specialize in explanations of why “something new will not work at our church.” Change threatens them. Their working assumption is “a change must fit the church,” rather than “make adjustments to the church” to accommodate change. If change comes, they may reluctantly adjust but will continue to resist any further change.

There are three sets of questions from which survey participants chose to identify the one description that is most true of your church. The first two options represent **openness** to change. The last two options represent **resistance** to change. For this set of questions, we have separated the Elders and Deacons (Leaders), and Staff from the Congregation to better compare the responses of these groups.

At our church the following is most true.

		Congregation	Leaders	Staff
<b>Progressive Total</b>		<b>80%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>80%</b>
Radicals	We anticipate and value change	10%	3%	13%
Progressives	We are open to change	70%	64%	67%
Conservatives	We do not navigate change well	16%	21%	20%
Traditionalists	We tend to resist change	4%	13%	0%
<b>Conservative Total</b>		<b>20%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>20%</b>

*For the three questions, the percentage of each column is color-shaded from white for low to orange for high.*

*The Progressive total is the combined scores for Radicals and Progressives.*

*The Conservative total the combined scores for Conservatives and Traditionalists.*

This question looks at the overall openness of your **church** towards change. The first choice of each of the groups was “We are open to change” (a progressive response). The only difference in the groups is that the Leaders see your church as slightly less progressive than your Congregation or Staff.

		New	Inter	Pi's
<b>Progressive Total</b>		<b>87%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>73%</b>
Radicals	We anticipate and value change	26%	6%	2%
Progressives	We are open to change	61%	71%	71%
Conservatives	We do not navigate change well	13%	16%	23%
Traditionalists	We tend to resist change	0%	7%	4%
<b>Conservative Total</b>		<b>13%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>27%</b>

If we divide your Congregation into tenure groups, we see all groups agree that your church is progressive and open to change. New Attenders are more likely to agree with this perspective.

		<56	>55
<b>Progressive Total</b>		<b>75%</b>	<b>80%</b>
Radicals	We anticipate and value change	9%	6%
Progressives	We are open to change	65%	74%
Conservatives	We do not navigate change well	17%	17%
Traditionalists	We tend to resist change	8%	3%
<b>Conservative Total</b>		<b>25%</b>	<b>20%</b>

This chart shows that adults aged 55 and under (107 individuals) and those over the age of 55 (115 individuals) both agree your church is open to change, with the older adults more likely to agree with this statement.

When considering possible change, our leaders are:

		Congregation	Leaders	Staff
<b>Progressive Total</b>		<b>54%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>60%</b>
Radicals	Eager to try a variety of new things	20%	23%	20%
Progressives	Likely to ask if the change will bring new ministry opportunities that should not be missed	34%	33%	40%
Conservatives	Likely to be concerned how the change will affect the good things the church currently enjoys	29%	28%	13%
Traditionalists	Likely to ask, "Is this change necessary?"	17%	15%	27%
<b>Conservative Total</b>		<b>46%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>40%</b>

This question looks at the overall tendency of your current **church leaders** regarding change. Once again, all groups are in general agreement that your church leaders are

more “Likely to ask if the change will bring new ministry opportunities that should not be missed” (*a progressive choice*) when considering change. However, it appears that leaders would also be careful and “Likely to be concerned how the change will affect the good things the church currently enjoys.” The ratings on these two options are similar for both your congregation and church leaders. ***A church that is more than 20 years old often has trouble getting past what it has enjoyed to be open to new opportunities.***

If you personally brought a new idea to the church leaders, their first response is likely to be:

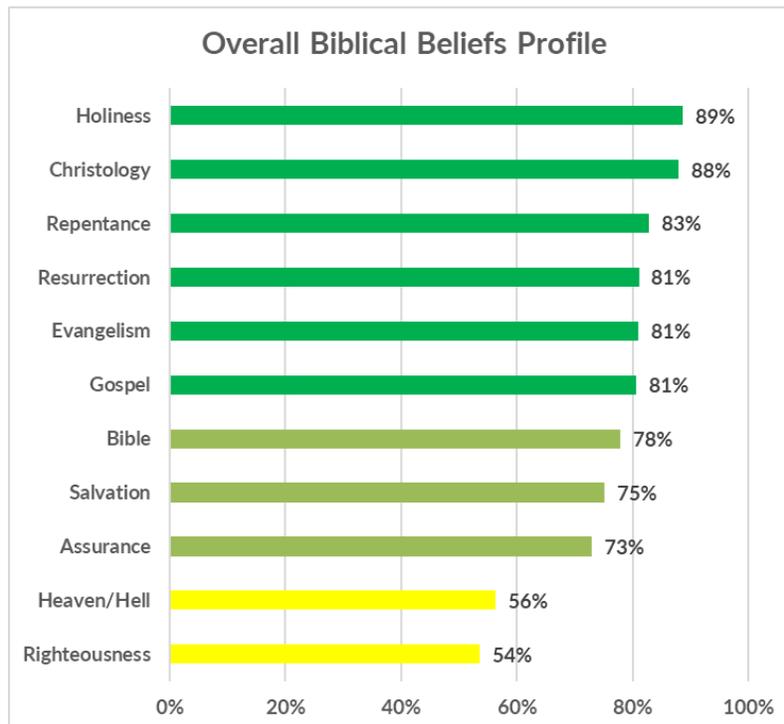
		New	Inter	Pi's
<b>Progressive Total</b>		<b>74%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>54%</b>
Radicals	to plan how the idea could be implemented even if it affects existing programs	26%	13%	14%
Progressives	to ask if the idea is better than what the church has traditionally done	48%	50%	39%
Conservatives	to ask if the idea is worth changing things	26%	33%	39%
Traditionalists	to find reasons why the idea would not work in our church	0%	4%	7%
<b>Conservative Total</b>		<b>26%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>46%</b>

All groups agree the highest criterion would be “to ask if the idea is better than what the church has traditionally done” (*a progressive response*). Among both New Attenders and Intermediates this option received half or very close to half of the votes.

***The conclusion that comes from these three questions is that your congregation, church leaders, and staff are open to making changes. The question would seem to be what changes might be appropriate.***

## Section 6: Biblical Beliefs

The purpose of this section is to measure the degree to which your church understands the basic orthodox doctrines of the Evangelical Christian faith. Among survey participants, 97% have been Christians for more than ten years and 93% have been Christians for more than 20 years. Additionally, 22% came from “Bible-centered” churches prior to attending your church. What is taught and reinforced from the pulpit will tend to set the standard by which the doctrines are clarified, taught, and followed. The Overall orthodoxy rating for your church is 72%.



This graph summarizes the biblical beliefs questions. The following are the questions form the basis for this graph in the order of their appearance on this graph.

*Please Note: Totals for each question may be +/-1% due to rounding.*

**Holiness:** Meeting the standards of God’s holiness is based on ...

	<u>Overall</u>
• how good of a life I live	7%
• my good deeds outweighing my bad deeds	1%
• <b>God’s grace alone, is total and complete, and does not require work or merit on my part</b>	<b>89%</b>
• if God grades on a curve, I hope I make it	3%

**Christology:** I believe that Jesus . . .

	<u>Overall</u>
• was a true historical man who added greatly to the philosophical thinking of the world	4%
• <b>was God who became man, lived among us, and died on the cross for our sins</b>	<b>88%</b>
• was a normal man who God greatly empowered for a special ministry	3%
• not sure	5%

**Repentance:** The Holy Spirit identifies areas in my life that I need to repent of and seek His help to change.

	<u>Overall</u>
• <b>Agree</b>	<b>83%</b>
• Disagree	4%
• I am not sure	14%

**Resurrection:** I believe Jesus actually came back to life in a physical body after his crucifixion and death.

	<u>Overall</u>
• <b>Agree</b>	<b>81%</b>
• Disagree	5%
• Not sure	14%

**Evangelism:** I believe the Bible instructs every Christian to find ways to share his/her faith with non-Christians.

	<u>Overall</u>
• <b>Agree</b>	<b>81%</b>
• Disagree	4%
• I am not sure	15%

**Gospel:** What is your understanding of the basic message of the Gospel?

	<u>Overall</u>
• The Golden Rule: “do unto others . . .”	8%
• Try hard to be a good person—or at least become a better person	7%
• <b>Our relationship with God is a gift from God when one accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior</b>	<b>81%</b>
• I am not sure	4%

**Bible:** I believe that the Bible is . . .

	<u>Overall</u>
• one of several holy books that lead people to God	13%
• <b>the inspired Word of God</b>	<b>78%</b>
• a story about God, but is not scientifically accurate	9%

**Salvation:** The only way to obtain salvation is to ....

	<u>Overall</u>
• simply believe in God	12%
• go to church regularly, love others, and be generous with what God has given you	4%
• <b>believe what Jesus said, commit your life to Him as Lord, and trust in what He did on the cross for you</b>	<b>75%</b>
• I am not sure	9%

**Assurance:** Regarding my salvation ...

	<u>Overall</u>
• I hope that I am saved	20%
• <b>I am confident that I have eternal life and would go to heaven if I died today</b>	<b>73%</b>
• if a person doesn’t make it the first time, I think God will give them a second chance	5%
• the Bible is not clear on this matter	3%

**Heaven and hell** are . . .

	<u>Overall</u>
• <b>real places created by God</b>	<b>56%</b>
• heaven is real, hell is not	11%
• neither heaven or hell are real	2%
• not sure	31%

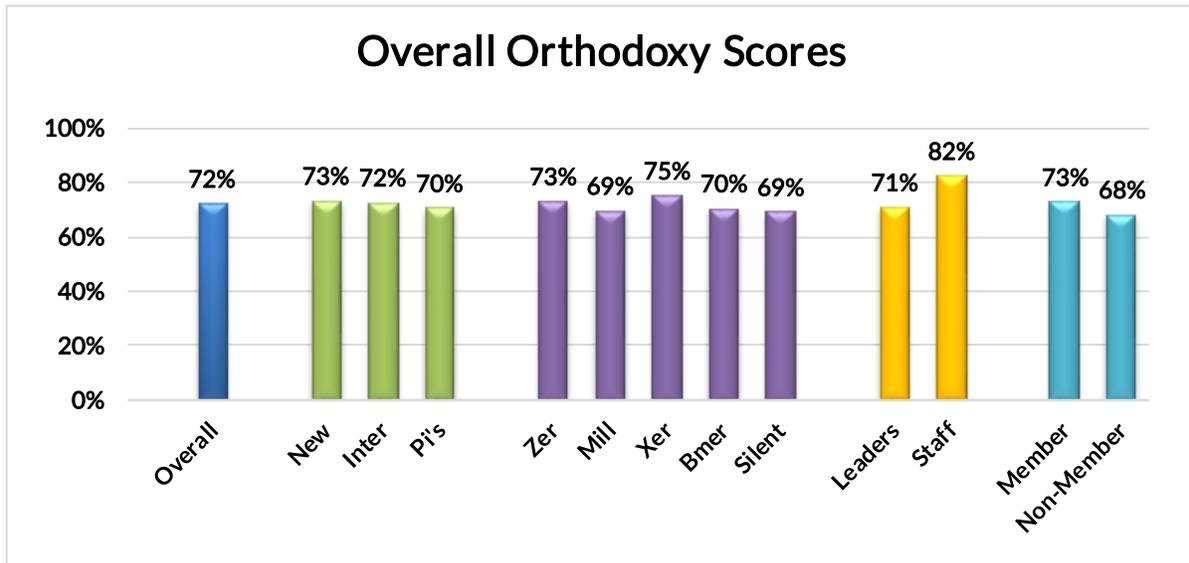
**Righteousness: How do we become acceptable to God?**

	<u><b>Overall</b></u>
• continually trying to be like Jesus throughout one’s life	41%
• not being like the rest of the world in word and deed	0%
• disciplined effort on one’s part	5%
• <b>God declaring one righteous when he/she trusts in Jesus as Lord and Savior</b>	<b>54%</b>

*Note: It is important to remind people of the "Great Exchange"—that our righteousness is a free gift (Rom. 5:17) that became available to us when Jesus, who knew no sin, paid the penalty of our sin so that we might have his righteousness before God (2 Cor. 5:21).*

*Interpretive Notes*

What is amazing is the degree that scores are consistent across all tenure and generational groups as well as church leaders and staff. Even between members and non-members the differences are minor.



## Section 7: Ministries Assessment

Church leaders provided a list of programs and ministries to be evaluated. These ratings are something like the approval rating the President of the United States receives. The ratings reveal how positively the survey participants perceive these programs/ministries to be. It does not tell you specifically what they like or dislike. Survey participants are asked to rate each of the listed programs as:

- Excellent (3)
- Good (2)
- Fair (1)
- Poor (0)

Each rating is given the value for that rating shown in the parenthesis. The total for each ministry is divided by maximum available score resulting in an Approval Rating expressed as a percentage.

### Example

If 100 people participated in the survey and

25 rated the program as Excellent	$25 \times 3 =$	75
50 rated the program as Good	$50 \times 2 =$	100
20 rated the program as Fair	$20 \times 1 =$	20
5 rated the program as Poor	$5 \times 0 =$	<u>0</u>
	Total	195

$$\text{Maximum} = 100 \times 3 = 300$$

$$\text{Approval Rating} = 195/300 = 65\%$$

The value of the Ministries Assessments section is that it shows how people collectively feel about the various ministries of your church. It is helpful to know objectively how the congregation perceives the activities and their effectiveness in church life. From a diagnostic perspective, Ministries Assessment tells *VitalChurch* as well as your church what ministries congregants feel good about and identifies the ones that are not as good as they could or should be.

Ministries	Rating
Vacation Bible School	83%
ESL	82%
Glory Days Preschool	82%
Audio/Visual (Worship Services)	82%
Music Ministry (Worship Services)	78%
Care Ministry	77%
Internet & Technology (Website, e-News, Giving Platform, etc.)	76%
Nursery/Toddlers/Preschool (Worship Services)	74%
High School Ministry	72%
Jam City (Grades K-5, worship services)	71%
Middle School Ministry	71%
Sermons	70%
Missions (Trips and Mission Partners)	70%
Sunday Worship Services (overall experience)	70%
Sunday Hospitality	69%
Spark (midweek Children's program)	65%
Women's Ministry	64%
Facilities	64%
Small Groups	60%
Adult Classes	57%
Connecting (incorporating newcomers into the life of the church)	52%
Outreach (evangelism, inviting friends to church, community events)	48%
Men's Ministry	47%
Leadership Development	47%
<b>Average</b>	<b>68%</b>

The above list of ministries was selected by the Sammamish Presbyterian Church leadership, although a few are standard for this section. The fact that a ministry was chosen to be listed generally says that it is something SPC members care about or should care about. The approval rating shows the degree to which people believe a ministry is being accomplished in an ideal manner.

The value of this section is that the process gives church leaders a clear picture of how the various ministries of the church are perceived by your congregation. While it does

not identify the factors behind the opinions, these evaluations provide a good starting point for future efforts to improve the outcomes of each ministry.

A typical average score of the Ministry Assessment is 70%. SPC's overall rating is slightly lower at 68%.

**Highest Rated Ministries (71% and above approval rating)**

There are four ministries that have an 80%+ approval rating. They are Vacation Bible School (83), ESL (82), Glory Days Preschool (82), and Audio/Visual (82).

The next ministries are Music Ministry (78), Care Ministry (77), and Internet & Technology (76).

The last ministries in this section are Nursery/Toddlers/Preschool (74), High School Ministry (72), Jam City (71), Middle School Ministry (71).

**Medium Rated Ministries (61% to 70% approval rating)**

The first three ministries in this section have the same approval rating. They are Sermons (70), Missions (70), and Sunday Worship Service (70).

The other ministries in this section include Sunday Hospitality (69), Spark (65), Women's Ministry (64), and Facilities (64).

**Lowest Rated Ministries (60% and below approval rating)**

The first three ministries are Small Groups (60), Adult Classes (57), and Connecting (52).

The last three ministries are Outreach (48), Men's Ministry (47), and Leadership Development (47).

## Section 8: SPC Verbatim Catalog

There are three open-ended questions in the survey where respondents can say anything they want to the *VitalChurch* Team. While not all the individual details can be shared in this report, the *VitalChurch* Team learns more about what is important to your survey participants. The goal of the Verbatim Catalog is to summarize what people say.

The first question is *“What would you like to see preserved of your church’s ministry?”* The focus of this question is to identify the things that survey participants believe your church is currently doing well that need to be maintained.

The second question is *“What would you like to see avoided in your church’s ministry?”* This question collects what people fear, what they hope will not happen, and it often collects complaints about things that have happened that people do not like. It is important to know what people do not want for whatever reason.

The third question is *“What would you like to see achieved in your church’s ministry?”* This is the future-oriented question. What new goals does this local church body want to accomplish? This question seeks to uncover areas perceived as needing improvement at your church. Responses may be a reaction to apparent current shortcomings.

Like the majority of churches, most of the comments across the three questions focus on subjects occurring within your church.

It is worth noting that themes will appear in multiple verbatim response sections depending on how the respondents feel about the subject. These themes are typically ones that will need special attention. For example, the theme of ***Church Culture*** is a major theme in all three questions. The difference in responses depends on the participant’s perspective on the subject. If a congregant is well connected with your church, he/she will likely have knowledge of the cultural dynamics of your church. However, if an attendee is not well connected, he/she may be unaware of subtle undercurrents of your church culture, resulting in a very different opinion.

**Note:** The verbatim responses of survey participants in this Section 8 and throughout the Ministry Assessment Final Report are all firsthand comments written in the online survey or spoken in the input session. No spelling or punctuation changes have been made.

## What do you want to PRESERVE?

One hundred sixty-six (166) out of 222 survey respondents wrote about what they would most like to see *Preserved*. Some (56) did not respond to this question. One respondent said they wanted to preserve “everything.” Overall, participants made 407 comments, generating 54 comment subcategories from which we cataloged the six major Preserve themes that were on the minds of survey respondents. The major themes are as follows:

- Programs (133)
- Church Culture (84)
- Outreach (82)
- Worship (53)
- Preaching/Teaching (35)
- Leadership (20)

1. The first major Preserve theme of **Programs** or ministries had 133 comments. Thirteen different ministries were mentioned that respondents wanted to Preserve with Youth Ministries (35) cited the most. Other ministries included: Children’s ministries (28), Small groups (15), care ministry (11), fellowship events (8), Adult education (6), Preschool (6), Women’s ministry (6), Support groups (6), Prayer ministry (5), Stephen ministry (5), Bible studies (1), and Hospitality (1).

### Sample Quotes

“All children and youth programs, adult education”

“Making engagement fun for kids”

“Strong children's and youth ministries.”

“Sunday school”

“small group Stephens ministry”

“The mid high and high school youth programs.”

“small groups, ministries (Stephens, ESL, women's bible study, etc.)”

“Glory Days Preschool”

“The youth programs, specifically the high school group. This should be a valued part of the church. The youth leaders should reach BACK out to youth who have "dropped out". Find a way.”

“Strength (or restoration) of ministries such as children, youth, and care.”

“Senior Luncheon, Women's Bible Study, Mops, Small Groups, Church picnics, Adult classes”

“I love the small groups format, and the robust learning platforms of things like anchors or enneagram workshops. I love the depth of study offered and the

fact that the materials and topics covered are relevant to today, and feel like I'm challenging my assumptions and growing.”

2. **Church Culture** was the second major Preserve theme with 84 comments. The responses reflected the need to preserve the Relational (74), and Spiritual (10) characteristics of your church body. The **Relational** (74) characteristics included close family-like relationships (30), welcoming and accepting one another (21), lifestyle-affirming (19), valuing different opinions (2), generosity (1), and being multi-generational (1). The **Spiritual** (10) characteristics included spiritual growth (4), unity (3), serving together (2), and pursuing God's will (1).

### Sample Quotes

“Sense of family.”

“I want SPC to continue to be a church that welcomes ALL people regardless of gender, sexuality, race, background...etc”

““Focus on personal relationships with Jesus”

Being known as a church who cares for both the people of our congregation, the community and the world.”

“The spirit of building together that is this transition time.”

“Community and a sense of unity and support, a value in different opinions without judgement”

“Welcoming to all. Inclusiveness. Acceptance. Opportunities to get to know each other beyond Sunday morning.”

“Close, tight-knit community of believers who are focused on Scripture and welcoming of newcomers.”

“Accepting of diversity, love to all who enter”

“preserve the current statement of inclusivity, the tight-knit community feel”

“The ability to agree to disagree and resist the tendency to get polarized as a congregation.”

“Women' ministry is dear to my heart. There is so much that going so well right now.”

“Desire to be a place that welcomes all. Focus on Christ and a walk of discipleship.”

“Continued generosity. The strong sense of pride in what this church has done in mission in the past. The openness to people from all walks of life.”

“I would like to look around the congregation and see the loving faces that I've interacted with over the last 25+ years.”

“I would like to see sense of community preserved in the community. Even with all the change happening in the church, a strong sense of community is important at all age levels.”

“focus on acceptance of all people (regardless of race, sexual orientation, etc)”

“Acceptance of LGBTQ community as worshipers as well as leaders.”

3. The third Preserve theme on participants’ minds was **Outreach** (82). These remarks included local outreach to the community (31), overseas mission support (30), community service to the needy (8), and ESL classes (13).

#### Sample Quotes

“missions, local community focused ESL”

“Outreach on both local and global level.”

“A place for youth to get involved and experience community and mission. Mission focus both locally and globally.”

“Local outreach (IFCB), mission trips (TJ, Swaziland)”

“Local Community support e.g. Issaquah Food Bank & ESL, Global Community support”

“Cooking for homeless in Issaquah, Local service oriented missions. ESL”

“mission work especially TJ, Campbell Farms, etc.”

“Saturday breakfast to homeless, ESL”

“community outreach - ESL, Thursday night meals, LifeWire support, etc.

Sponsoring community support events.”

4. **Worship** was the next theme with 53 comments. Participants wanted to “Preserve” the worship music (23), the worship service (20), worship components (6), worship creativity (1), blended service (1), instrumentalists (1) and use of technologies (1).

#### Sample Quotes

“I like the Sunday services currently”

“high-quality music programs, technology usage (I.E. online worship)”

“Excellent variety in music ministry.”

“Much has been lost due to covid shutdown. Preserve good Sunday services, prayer ministry”

“Pew bibles, connect cards and attendance notebooks, nametags”

“Worship. Good blend of liturgical, traditional and contemporary in worship.”

“I would like to be filled and uplifted by the old and the new music that is brought to us by the worship team.”

“Keep the great music!”  
“excellence in music, liturgical elements in service”  
“A good pianist, like Nathan.”  
“The order and style of Sunday worship.”  
“Bulletins, offering, doxology”  
“Let's preserve the music ministry and creativity that Kurt brings to our services; it reaches a wide variety of preferences.”

5. The next major theme of **Preaching and Teaching** emerged from 35 comments. Half (50%) of the comments talked about preserving Gospel or Bible-centered teaching and preaching (18). Other remarks dealt with excellent preaching (10), being practical and relevant (3), lack of politics (1), doctrine (1), expository preaching (1), and family-oriented sermons (1).

#### Sample Quotes

“I would like to see preserved in our ministry the challenges issued in the sermon each Sunday, that bring into my life a path to walk closer with Jesus.”  
“scripture based preaching”  
“Family oriented sermon”  
“Strong gospel and biblical messaging in sermons.”  
“Excellent sermons”  
“thoughtful sermons that inspire/teach”  
“Reformed theology; open/affirming stance;”  
“Separation of church and politics.”  
“Preaching the gospel. I love it when we are encouraged to open our bibles during the sermon and reading scriptures.”  
“I want to preserve our focus on Biblical teaching, expository style; teaching the Bible maintaining context.”

6. **Leadership** was the final Preserve theme with 20 comments. Participants talked about preserving the current staff (3), approachable leaders (3), Deacons (3), the current vision (2), the large pool of leaders (2), leadership training (2), women in leadership (2), the Elders (1), mentoring (1), and the facilities (1).

#### Sample Quotes

“The focus on being better and advancing the mission of the church.”  
“Large Deacon and Elder staff that provides counsel, care, and direction.”  
“Thoughtful, caring plans”  
“female pastors/women included in leadership”

“where leaders are approachable and relatable.”

“We were big fans of Jeff and are really big fans of Kelly. I would like to see Kelly remain in leadership if not assume overall leadership herself.”

“Pastor Kelly. Our family has been blessed by her outpouring of care.”

“well-ground pastor and staff”

“The Deacons and Prayer team have seemed to really developed over the past several years (Care Ministry)”

“Continued care for our church attendees when needed. Attendees knowing where and how to reach out for help in times of need.”

“One on one with Pastors”

## What do you want to AVOID?

Of 222 survey respondents, 138 wrote about what they would most like to see *Avoided* at SPC. Eighty-four (38%) survey participants did not respond to this question. There were 194 separate participant comments, generating 69 remark subcategories from which we cataloged six major Avoid themes. The major themes are as follows:

- Leadership (61)
- Church Culture (58)
- Preaching/Teaching (30)
- Worship (23)
- Outreach (17)
- Programs (5)

1. **Leadership** was the first major Avoid theme with 61 responses. Participants cited the following issues that would impact *Leadership Effectiveness* (49): focus on numbers or growth (13), avoiding change (10), lack of unifying vision (6), poor communication (4), staff-centeredness (3), leaders who don't understand the congregation (3), unilateral decision-making (2), trying to do too much (2), staff turn-over (2), unresolved conflict (2), closed group of leaders (1), and being reactionary (1). Some respondents wanted to avoid *Leadership Character* issues (7): unqualified pastors (3), people-pleasing (2), disconnected pastors (1), and leaders who were controlling (1). Five comments were made addressing *Leadership structures*: too much focus on properties (2), being overly staffed (1), too much debt (1), and focus on money (1).

### Sample Quotes

“Decision making Silos; Lack of critical & open discussion with congregation, lack of sharing problems; Isolated decision making; “Not Invented Here”. Lack of consistency in pursuit of goals.”

“Avoiding hard decisions.”

“executive pastor / leader model”

“Hyper focus on growth at all costs”

“Lack of communication and transparency. We need to rebuild trust.”

“Domineering leadership”

“I hope that this church avoids the resisting change-- but rather can be willing and excited to re-examine our goals & vision and jump into positive change.”

“Chasing every shiny object. We come up a lot of new ideas, but often a lack of planning and consistent follow through causes them to die on the vine.

Then it's on to the next thing.”

“Until the youth and children are strengthened, the pastor/director to adults should be eliminated and those funds put into youth and children. Young families are the life of a church. If you don't get to the children and youth you will not get to young families.”

“Training of our assistant pastors and directors so they can leave to other jobs.”

“Settling for a second choice at senior pastor level”

“A church that is all about the lead pastor.”

“Reluctance to change when it affects someone who doesn't want that change.”

“Focusing only on one age demographic to the detriment of others.”

“a "growth at all costs" mindset”

“Anxious striving to do more than the congregation is able”

“Loss of membership due to sub-par pastoral selection. Avoid loss of music team.”

“stagnation, fearful leadership”

“Fragmentation resulting from too many competing mission efforts”

“Not including other new mission possibilities, just sticking with the same because it is what we know”

“Avoid too much debt”

“Conflict, not able to accept differences”

“Consistently asking the same people to be involved. Open asks to the entire church family should be the norm”

“Vague, or not enough communication to the church members about changes or conflict”

“Stopping with the excuses that staff is so exhausted and can't do anything new and innovative when we have a very large staff for the size of church we have.”

2. **Church Culture** was the second major Avoid theme with 58 survey responses. Two subthemes emerged from this major theme: Relational (44), and Spiritual (14). The **Relational** body issues included being exclusive (12), being judgmental or prideful (10), cliques (8), people leaving (4), shallow relationships (3), being unwelcoming (2), lack of in-person gatherings (1), consumerism (1), complacency (1), plateau culture (1), and narrow generational focus (1). **Spiritual** issues included disunity (6), lack of volunteerism (5), lack of spiritual growth (1), lack of focus on God (1), and talk without action (1).

### Sample Quotes

“Tendency to be cliqueish.”

“The 'human tendency' to congregate with the people/person you know during/after worship and events.”

“Having Plateau culture being dominant as opposed to Christian culture being dominate; it is all about how others are treated and what they are respected for.”

“Excluding others on the basis of their sexual orientation”

“Closed mindedness, Exclusion of others for various reasons, Losing sight of Jesus & God”

“Decline of participation. I want to be a part of a congregation where my kids can find friends and community”

“Exclusion. We need to include all.”

“Discrimination against people of color or people with different sexual orientations.”

“Focusing more on virtual/online than local community connection”

“Cliques. I do not feel that they exist now, but they have in the past among church leaders.”

“Would hate to see division come through this change.”

“talk without action”

“I want to see our church unite everyone and not choose a side. Over the past two years I have felt alienated from church by some of the leaderships clear political leanings. I believe that we are all children of God and that regardless of our political beliefs we need to be untied in our faith and not divided.”

“Development of factions based on stage of life/income level”

“Division over secondary issues of preference, continued decline in membership, self centered consumerism”

3. The third major theme of **Preaching and Teaching** had 30 comments. Respondents spoke of wanting to Avoid politics in the pulpit (11), conservative theology (8), drifting from biblical values (3), poor quality sermons (3), legalism (2), fear of God (1), racial reconciliation (1), and same-sex marriage (1).

### Sample Quotes

“Compromising scripture to make people feel that living a sinful life is okay.”

“Dictatorial sermons”

“Theology that is very conservative”

“Political statements/issues”

“Compromising our Christ centered and biblical beliefs to adapt to modern cultural norms”

“Being closed off to other views of christianity”

“Was crushed by conversations that brought extreme right wing politics, BLM and anti-gay ideas as they are absolutely NOT what I believe is the message of Christ. Judge not, lest ye be judged.”

“The past politically influenced divide that came across in the sermons (and communications). Over the past two years I have not felt welcome based on the words that were being preached by some. It has been so sad for me. When I needed my church the most I felt like I was being pushed away. It feels like I no longer have a church family and that is very sad. I also wanted to say that it was very difficult when our church decided to allow same sex marriages. I still struggle with how that aligns with what Jesus teaches us. It is hard enough to live in a fallen world that is always trying to tell us to accept everything because times have changed. It seems to me that God's words do not change despite what the world tells us.”

“Preaching with little depth or scriptural/exegetical content.”

“Getting tangled with social issues and political issues-keep church and state separate and just preach God's word- that goes for music too”

4. The next major Avoid theme was **Worship** (23). Eleven comments centered on the Atmosphere of worship: lack of authenticity, focus on lament, unprofessional appearance of leaders, and worship as a production. Seven talked about worship Style: current music, lack of hymns, music as performance, and liturgy. Four wanted to avoid some worship Components: altar calls, communion every week, and too many announcements. One person said they wanted to avoid multiple services.

### Sample Quotes

“I think the tendency to wring hands and especially encouraging the tears in church...is not very helpful. Some of us work to keep the community functioning. The lamentations don't help. Sorry.”

“Music team not showing respect for where they are by wearing hats/caps and jeans with holes”

“Too much depression in worship service. We are all going through very tough times. We need the message of hope. People avoid coming if the message and prayers are really sad. Outside of the music, our services can tend to be really downers. For a while I tried to encourage people to come back to worship, but

now I waiting - hoping things will become more celebration and encouragement.”

“Over investment/emphasis on the production value of Sunday morning worship service”

“My wife hates attending because the music is too loud. I have heard some say they come late to avoid the music. Perhaps the volume could be turned down but not low enough for others to hear me sing!”

“Two services, the absence of traditional hymns, communion every Sunday”

“less liturgy in service, more upbeat worship.”

“Too many announcements”

“Not professional behavior on stage”

“Change the music”

“Music as performance with minimal congregational participation.”

5. **Outreach** was the next major theme with 17 comments. People spoke about avoiding a conservative style evangelism (8), becoming inwardly focused (7), having too many outreach efforts (1), and ineffective community dinners (1).

### Sample Quotes

“A self-serving focus: the idea the church serves the individual of the congregation and forgets its responsibility to Mission. Also I'd like to see the church avoid designing its ministries to serve its current members and thus neglecting those who God would call us to serve.”

“Heavy conservative evangelism.”

“Evangelism is more than preaching the gospel. It's building relationships & being the hands/feet of Jesus.”

“emphasis only on spreading faith to non-believers rather than supporting non-believers in their faith journey”

“insulated focus on "us" and a loss of what we are doing "out there" in the community”

“Becoming too much of a community club. In the past, the pastors have been too focused on mission trips in other countries, ignoring the needs of their own church body.”

“Cooking and serving dinners to local people at the church. It was a bust. Not many participants.”

“I would like to avoid full-on "evangelical" - pressuring people in a certain way versus inviting. I would like to avoid shaming.”

“Spreading ourselves too thin in our outreach ministry.”

6. **Programs** was the last major Avoid theme with five comments. The remarks addressed cutting programs (2), lack of men's ministry (1), parties (1), and a large VBS program (1).

**Sample Quotes**

"Huge VBS, big focus on parties/gatherings for our own church, church property as center of investment, low parent involvement, high Xmas/Easter attendance, no mens ministry"

"Cutbacks to the above programs"

## What do you want to ACHIEVE?

One hundred sixty-three (163) of 222 survey respondents wrote about what they would most like to see *Achieved* at SPC. There were more participants for this question because it involves their hopes and dreams of the future of SPC. Fifty-nine survey respondents did not answer this question. Participants generated 334 different comments creating 72 comment subcategories from which we cataloged the six major Achieve themes that were on the minds of survey respondents. The major themes are as follows:

- Church Culture (102)
- Programs (77)
- Outreach (63)
- Leadership (53)
- Teaching/Preaching (27)
- Worship (12)

1. **Church Culture** was the first major Achieve theme with 102 comments. Three subthemes emerged in what respondents would like to see achieved: Relational growth (42), Spiritual growth (34), and Numerical growth (26). People wanted to see growth in their **Relationships** by being more welcoming and accepting (16), more like family (9), more racially and culturally diverse (5), more lifestyle-affirming (5), more open and honest (4), more generationally connected (2), and more positive and upbeat (1). They wanted to see **Spiritual** health and growth in better participation in serving (21), in their daily walk (10), and in stewardship (3). They also desired the **Numerical** growth of your church focused on increasing attendance (19), especially among young adults (7).

### Sample Quotes

“Welcoming, this church is not that right now.”

“At times our church seems to be very clicky, especially with some of the the women's programs. It seems that they do not do a good job of making everyone feel welcomed. Kind of felt like high school. I have also been surprised by how few church members get involved. The church that I grew up in felt like a family and it was a big church. Everyone participated and we all looked forward to attending all of the activities. I miss that. Because of the reasons noted above my participation has dropped off dramatically.”

“Focus on all age groups, from children to seniors. Welcoming acceptance of all who attend.”

“Suggesting to the congregation at least once a month to make an attempt after services to talk to someone they do not know, instead of clumping in

their own little well-known groups. Call it "Five Minutes to greet someone new." Often times unless you are known to someone from some other situation in the church, no one speaks to each other."

"I wish SPD would grow to reflect the changes in demographics of our community. The Plateau and Sammamish have really transformed in recent years in becoming more brown. I don't see that same translation in terms of the ethnic make-up at church, having taken place in our church and am not sure why. This concerns me."

"A robust and growing congregation."

"Growing back to the size, ministries and feelings of connection between members/attenders"

"I would love to see SPC continue to offer a variety of programs, classes and services over online platforms. I think it's an integral part of us moving forward and re-building."

"a truly safe space for everyone and support increased diversity"

"Making newcomers feel welcome, attracting more young people, empowering the congregation to be responsible for welcoming new folks"

"That it be seen as a beacon of inclusiveness and service within the community."

"Actual engagement! People connecting, sharing, and excited. Signs of life on Sunday mornings."

2. The second major theme on survey participants' minds was achieving stronger **Programs** or ministries (77). Fifteen ministries were mentioned: youth ministry, children's ministry, support groups, LGBTQ ministry, ministry to young families, discipleship, men's ministry, women's ministry, adult education, young adult ministry, small groups, fellowship events, Stephen ministry, online classes, and senior adult ministry. A few talked about returning programs to pre-COVID functioning.

### Sample Quotes

"Return to pre-pandemic levels of programming, focus on ministries to families/kids."

"A discipleship program for new attendees and/or current believers who would like to grow in their faith."

"I would like to see a FUN, Christ centered children's program. Tables set up with colorful, fun activities and fresh, new toy stations that revolve each week, to welcome them."

"A robust and growing youth program."

"I would also like to see support groups for recently divorced people and people with mental illnesses in the church. I also would like to see a LGBTQ ministry in place. It would preferable if the Women's Ministry stopped adopting study books from Christian writers who don't accept people regardless of their gender or sexual orientation."

"More men and women ministries"

"improved young adult ministry (college and post-college age)"

"more organized and planned small groups, focus on mens+adult ministries. more events to grow interest in checking out SPC. stronger call for members to get involved."

"Focus on childrens ministry, improved classrooms and nursery."

"Increased suicide prevention for local teens, revive the support group for people with invisible illnesses"

"revive congregational connections thru classes & social opportunities."

"Restoration of vibrant youth and teen programs (esp. middle school and high school evenings)."

"Vibrant small group ministry. More adult discipleship formation."

"more focus on community/meet up events for target groups like hobbies (game night, hiking, skiing, dinner meetups) not necessarily connected to adult/womens/mens ministry"

"An actual seniors' ministry that includes all of our seniors."

"Return of Sunday gatherings for high schoolers"

"More students to come to youth ministry possibly having it on Sunday night - something that's maybe not in the middle of the week because it's hard for people with sports"

3. **Outreach** was the third major achieve theme with 63 responses. Participants spoke about their desire have a greater outreach to the community (26), be willing to serve the needs of the community (15), improving world missions support (8), partnership with other organizations (3), leading others to the love of Christ (3), being well trained for outreach efforts (3), expanding ESL (3), creating an immigrant ministry (1), and outreach with less gospel sharing.

### Sample Quotes

"New opportunities to connect and reach community"

"Increased ministry for new immigrants and refugees"

"More volunteer and mission opportunities for adults"

"Additional local opportunities to participate in a day/weekend mission (i.e. Habitat for Humanity, Marionwood, etc.)."

“Being more intentional in reaching out to populations outside the plateau. Purposefully engage communities not represented in our church family. We are too white!”

“More adult training for outreach programs, local mission involvement from a majority of the body”

“Promoting Christ as savior in community and elsewhere. Sammamish has lots of unchurched.”

“More local community outreach, partnership with a local community church that is a different nationality”

“I would like to see us become more visibly Christlike in our community - more visibly serving and proactively engaged”

“That we reflect the light and hope of the Gospel. We serve the poor.

Additionally we acknowledge that God has called many members to participate in and/or manage projects that effect the globe. How can we let the light of God shine in these environments? It is difficult to be poor but it is also difficult to create environments and tools that allow the poor and below average performers to succeed. Currently, I don't think it is politically acceptable in this church to consider the challenges and the will of God for leaders in business/government. Can the church do more for these people than just ask them for money?”

4. Achievements in **Leadership** was the next major theme with 53 comments. Most of the remarks centered around the subtheme of *Leadership Effectiveness* (39); these included: unifying vision (10), effective communication (8), strong leaders (7), openness to change (3), leadership unity (2), leaders who listen (2), leadership training (2), resolving past conflicts (1), building on strengths (1), seeking God's will (1), connection to homebound (1), and leadership trust (1). Some talked about the *New Pastor* (10), who would be approachable, available, and a person of color. Others spoke of the building plan (3), and financial integrity (1).

### Sample Quotes

“A clear vision and plan for the future.”

“Replacing or demolishing building C.”

“I would like to see the leadership/paid staff reach back out to old church members to heal wounds caused by past leadership. These people need to be re-invited back to church now that leadership has changed. Many of us served well at SPC and then were disappointed when our children grew to feel that they were not a part of the program. We cannot worship in a place that

doesn't value our kids. All of our kids - not just the inner circle of kids that get all of the attention.”

“a head pastor that shows up to welcome people especially at events and a leader that understands that to grow we need more families with children- therefore we need a pastor who will focus on our preschool, childrens ministry, updated classrooms and playground (not just new bark)”

“Unification and support for all ministries by all leaders.”

“Maybe we should prayer for a new head pastor who is a Person of Color”

“Seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit and a desire to act on it.”

“The tools, facilities, and resources that attract and maintain new attendees”

“Vastly improved communication about leadership discussions and decisions.”

“Tyler, Dick, Jerry and Jeff were all very good preachers. It would great to find that again.”

“strong leadership, building on strengths”

“Better alignment between our vision/mission and ministry and mission efforts”

“It would be great to have stability in the next leader to allow the church to recover from the change and really grow from here.”

“Ability of governing body to make decisions with unity”

“A strong vision for how we want to be "essential" to this community; a strong sense of our primary target communities, tied to really concrete objectives and strategies for the next couple years; growth in our giving, especially to fund facilities updates; a strong leadership and volunteer culture.”

“A strong leader who knows how to engage staff, work to create a vision for the church and have the ability to see it through. Awareness of the changing dynamics of the church - demographically, politically and culturally - and creating ministry/programs to reach people where they are.”

“Better realistic long-range planning. We have experienced too many starts, stops and failures in relation to major goals that were presented.”

“Development/training for those leading in service, ushers, bible study facilitators, prayer ministries etc.”

5. Twenty-seven comments addressed the next major theme of **Teaching and Preaching**. Participants reflected the desire to see strong teaching and preaching (9) that was Bible/Gospel-centered (8), practical, and relevant (2), addressed various topics (2), delivered with warmth and humor (2), and uniting the body (1). Some talked about wanting to see a racial reconciliation dialogue (1), all pastors officiate gay weddings (1), and more sermons from Tina (1).

### Sample Quotes

“Scriptural teaching in sermons with warmth and humor”

“That God’s Grace is sufficient for everyone.”

“Deeper, more meaningful sermons”

A continued focus on Christ centered sermons and messaging.”

“Sermons that unite us and not divide us. Bible based sermons that grow our faith so that we continue to be equipped to navigate the world regardless of the circumstances we face. I want to be equipped to respond and to love as Jesus does especially when faced with what the world tries to tell us. I want to be able to truly love everyone as God loves us as our father.”

“I would like to have all pastors marry gay couples.”

“People coming to our church because we are preaching from the bible creating a community they are proud to be a part of and invite others.”

“A deeper investment in dialogue around racial reconciliation”

6. Twelve comments spoke to the final major theme of **Worship**. Participants talked about improving the worship experience as being more authentic (4) and uplifting (1), with more youth participation (1). Others spoke of having a new music style (3), and more opportunities for others to be involved in music (1). One talked about having more prayer and one about a choir.

### Sample Quotes

“More powerful Sunday worship experience”

“Balanced musical program on Sunday services”

“i wish there were a little more time of silence in the services to reflect, particularly during communion.”

“Focus on the basics: Good worship services that uplift, build-up and re-energize people to go out and make world better place.”

“new music style (we loved Harry and his wife)”

“Student lead changes (such as youth worship band)”

“Music is great (although often feels like I’m attending a concert, not worship – move them back to the side rather than center?)”

## Section 9: Desired Pastoral Profile

This section of the report helps to define a pastoral profile/leadership style that will be appropriate for your church. Sometimes there is a difference between what people think they want and what actually would be best for your church. There are places in this section of the report where that distinction will be made.

The task of identifying a person who is spiritually mature and qualified to be the senior pastor must be discerned by your pastoral search committee. The survey cannot measure moral and spiritual character. However, this part of the report identifies some of the characteristics that will help identify a pastor who will be a good fit for your church.

Sometimes two factors may inappropriately influence what people think they want in a pastor. If a person really liked the last pastor, they will tend to pick the elements of a profile that were like your former pastor including his faults. If the person was more critical of your former pastor, they may throw “the baby out with the bath water” by choosing characteristics not like your former pastor, even if they are actually needed.

The other complicating fallacy is that sometimes people believe that if they can only find someone who is like or not like your former pastor all will be well. “Clones” or “anti-clones” are not generally available. Even if a clone or anti-clone could be found, a choice made based on that criterion would probably not be good. The transition to new leadership is much more complicated.

This analysis is primarily based on two diagnostic tools that come together in a package called the Grip-Birkman. The “Grip” is based on the publication *Your Leadership Grip*.<sup>30</sup> The “Grip” focuses on spiritual gifts, team styles, and body-building roles. The second tool is a personality assessment tool commonly used in industry called the Birkman Method.<sup>31</sup> The Birkman Method is an extensive profiling instrument. We will utilize what are called “Interests,” “Behavioral Components,” and the “Lifestyle Grid” from the Birkman Method. The results of these two tools are designed to develop a pastoral profile that can be compared to the actual results of a pastoral candidate who takes the Grip-Birkman—a service that is available through *VitalChurch*. Even if actual candidates

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<sup>30</sup> Ford, Paul R., *Your Leadership Grip*, Saint Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> The Birkman Method comes from Birkman International, Inc, 3040 Post Oak Blvd, Suite 1425, Houston, TX 77056. This tool is used primarily in business and industry around the world to match executives to appropriate positions, coaching, and Human Resource purposes and is translated into multiple languages.

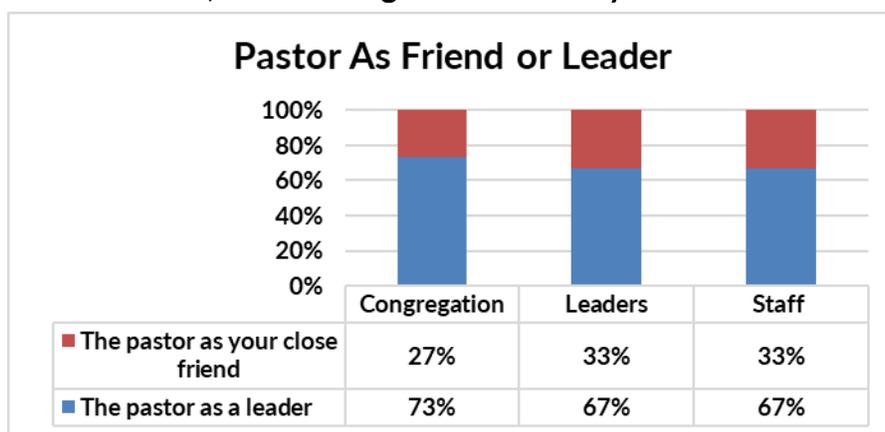
do not take the Grip-Birkman, this analysis will provide vocabulary and useful criteria for evaluating specific candidates.

Finally, the opinions of primarily three groups<sup>32</sup> within SPC will be considered. First, we will look at what your congregation says they want in a new pastor. The congregation's scores will not include your church leaders or staff. Secondly, we will look at what your church leaders have to say. Finally, we will look at the opinions of your church staff.<sup>33</sup> If there are any significant differences between the three groups, they will be noted.

Before we look at the Grip-Birkman data, we have two preliminary questions. One is about the ideal relationship of your pastor to your people. The second is concerning the most appropriate preaching style.

If you had to choose between the following two pastoral options, which would you choose?

- The pastor as your close friend, the church remains intimate and close
- The pastor as leader, the church grows to where you don't know everyone



This question looks at the kind of relationship people hope to have with their next pastor. A church the size SPC has been (worship attendance once was in the 400's) needs a pastor who is a leader if the goal is to again reach this level of attendance. The "pastor as friend" model ceases to work well after 150 people in morning worship attendance and generally fails completely after 200 in worship attendance. One of the major reasons why the "pastor as friend" leader fails is that few pastors can maintain close relationships with more than 200 people and get anything else done.

<sup>32</sup> Teens tend to have their own distinct perspectives usually based on their youth group experience. In this case, we need to know the perspective of those 18 years of age and older.

<sup>33</sup> The two parttime staff are included with the Congregation.

This is an important question. For many church people, the ideal of having a personal relationship with their pastor seems very attractive. Having this relationship with the pastor is one of the major attractions of smaller churches. It is also a consistent factor in keeping them small.

What the graph shows is that all three groups agree they want the “pastor as leader” model. While not shown in the graph, all tenure and generational groups agree with this preference.

**What style of preaching would be most appropriate in your church?**

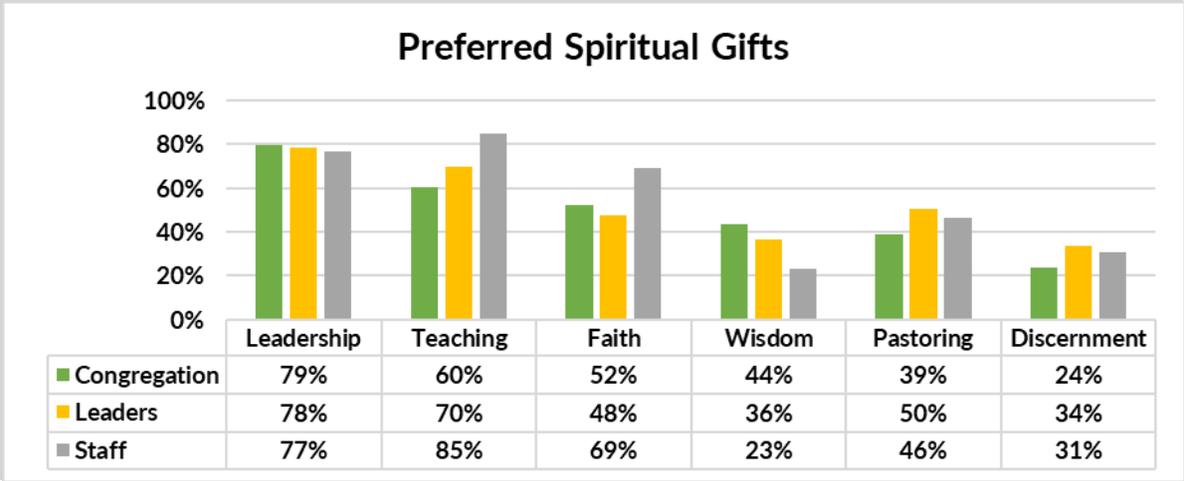
Desired Preaching Style	All	<56	55+	Leaders	Staff
A practical approach that focuses on what people need to grow in the Christian faith	42%	47%	36%	37%	64%
A motivational approach that gets people enthused about their faith	27%	23%	30%	29%	14%
An approach that focuses on new insights into the Christian faith	17%	16%	18%	21%	14%
An approach that systematically teaches the truths of scripture	15%	13%	17%	13%	7%

As in the previous question, all groups are unanimous in their choices. At a significant preference level, most SPC attenders including leaders and staff want preaching to be “A practical approach that focuses on what people need to grow in the Christian faith.” The agreed to second choice is “A motivational approach that gets people enthused about their faith.”

Most theologically conservative churches choose “An approach that systematically teaches the truths of scripture.” This approach tends to reinforce what people already believe. *SPC seems to want to encourage discussion as to what is true and to express its faith through action.*

**Leadership Grip Data**

Choose the four Spiritual gifts that you consider most important for the pastor of SPC to have.



*Each participant was allowed to make four choices.*

There are 17 Spiritual Gifts to choose from in the survey. The overall top 5 choices in order are Leadership, Teaching, Faith, Wisdom, Pastoring, and Discernment. There is general agreement among the three groups on: Leadership and Teaching though the staff reverses the order. After that, your congregation opts for Faith and Wisdom.

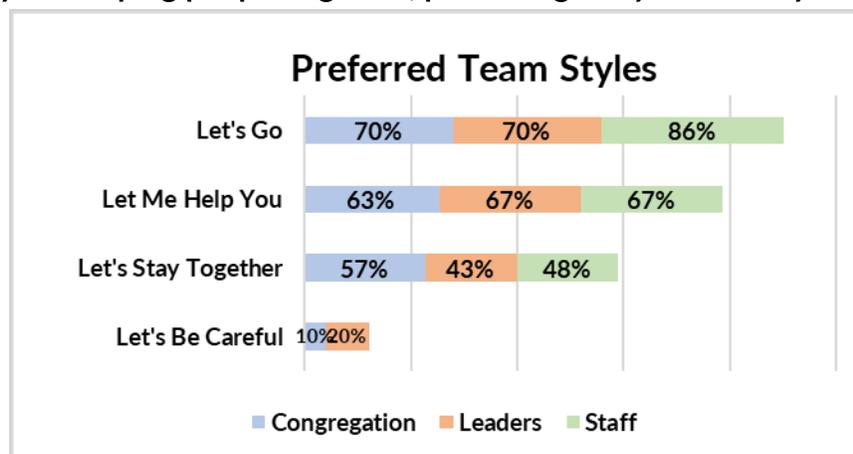
Church leaders chose Pastoring and Faith. Your Staff agreed with your congregation on Faith, followed by Pastoring and Discernment.

While there are differences, all three groups made the same choices but in varying order. No group made a choice of 20% or more that is not represented on this list.

***All groups want a pastor who is a teaching leader who demonstrates faith by his life while pastoring your church with wisdom and discernment.***

Pick the two most important ways that the pastor of your church should relate to the congregation (Team styles).

- A people helper, including mentoring (training people for ministry)—Let Me Help You
- Focus on careful planning and risk assessment—Let's Be Careful
- Focus on accomplishing the goals of the church—Let's Go
- Priority on keeping people together, promoting unity—Let's Stay Together



*Survey participants made two choices.*

What all three groups agree on is that most do ***not*** want a pastor whose focus is “on careful planning and risk assessment— (Let’s Be Careful).” SPC is ***not*** paralyzed by a sense of being overly cautious.

All three groups make the same choices in the same order. SPC idealizes itself as a going church with high activity and goals to be accomplished. The first choice of all three groups is to “Focus on accomplishing the goals of the church—Let’s Go!”

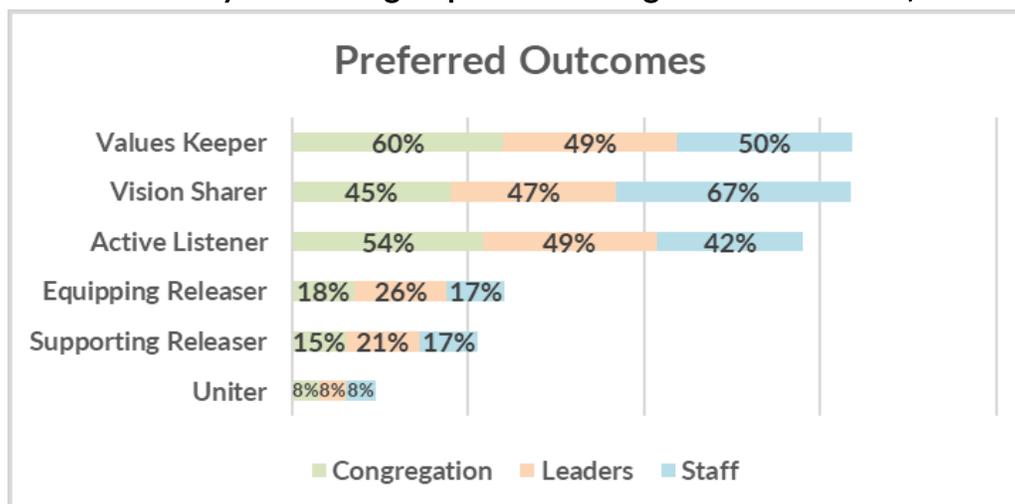
Secondly, people want a pastor who will be “A people helper, including mentoring (training people for ministry)—Let Me Help You.” Later in this section, we will see that one of the things people want, especially church leaders, is a pastor who will take time with people.

Thirdly, people, especially the congregation, want their pastor to have a “Priority on keeping people together, promoting unity—Let’s Stay Together.”

Presumably, the order is significant but all three of these options are desired.

Pick the two most important outcomes you would like to see in your pastor’s ministry.

- One who hears what people have to say and promotes understanding (active listener)
- One who mentors and trains people for ministry (equipping releaser)
- One who works behind the scenes to facilitate the ministry of others (supporting releaser)
- One who focuses on keeping the group united (unity builder)
- One who helps the group remain focused on their values and guiding principles (values keeper)
- One who actively holds the group’s vision and goals before them (vision sharer)



Survey participants made two choices.

Few churches are as obvious about what they value as SPC. Section 8: SPC Verbatim Catalog has many references to how open and non-judgmental your church is. All three groups want a pastor who supports that value: **“One who helps the group remain focused on their values and guiding principles (values keeper).”** It is considerably your congregation’s first choice as well as tied for the first choice of church leaders. It is your staff’s second choice.

Overall, slightly behind “Values Keeper” is “Vision Sharer”: “One who actively holds the group’s vision and goals before them (vision sharer).” It is the first choice of staff and third choice of church leaders and your congregation. It is possible that the vision and the value are two sides of the same coin: the value is being “open” which is the vision of who SPC wants to be.

On a slightly different track is the third overall choice: “One who hears what people have to say and promotes understanding (active listener).” This could be the means by which the value and the vision are accomplished.

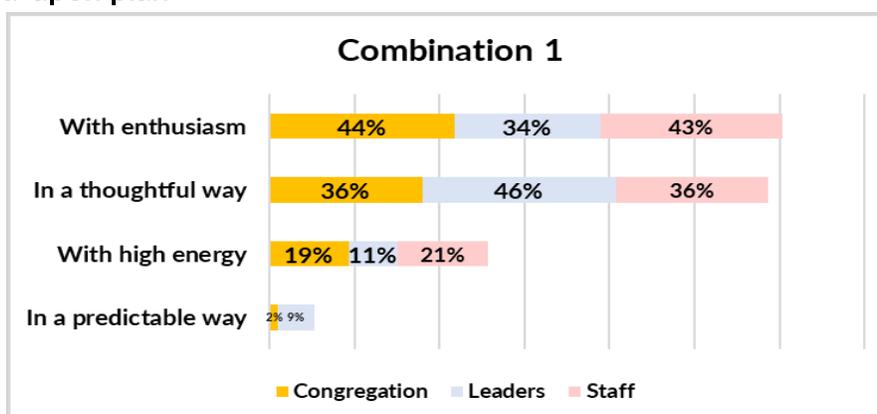
The three top characteristics are rated almost even overall. All three groups give each a high rating. These three traits are wanted by all three groups. What is surprising is the low rating on “One who mentors and trains people for ministry (equipping releaser).” SPC does not seem to expect your pastor to take a mentoring/training role.

## The Combination Questions

We are now moving into combination questions based on the Birkman Method of the *Birkman Lifestyle Grid*. The next four questions reflect the reality that certain personality characteristics tend to cluster together. In each question alternative, groups of several characteristics that commonly occur together are presented. You were asked to pick the set of traits that best describes what you believe the next pastor should be like. A survey participant may only like one of the traits that are grouped together, but also sees other traits that commonly go with that trait. It is important people recognize that certain traits generally occur together.

**Our church needs a pastor who approaches ministry . . . (pick one)**

- with high energy, challenging the congregation to accomplish its goals
- with enthusiasm, inspiring people to follow his leadership into the future
- in a thoughtful way, change is innovative and well planned
- in a predictable, organized way, being attentive to details and sticking to the agreed-upon plan



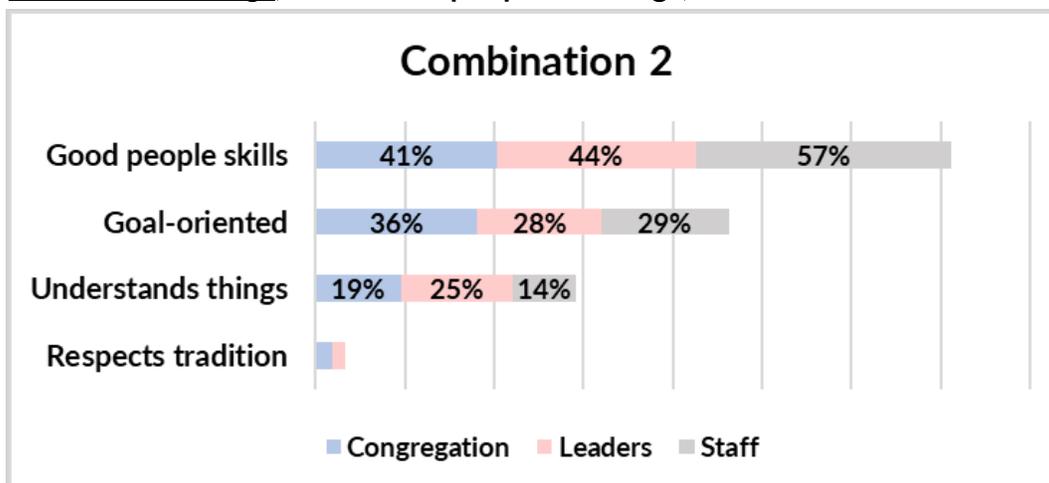
*Survey participants made a single choice.*

Effectively two traits tied as overall on this question. The combination being “with enthusiasm, inspiring people to follow his leadership into the future” and “in a thoughtful way, (makes) changes that are innovative and well planned.” The leaders reverse the order, but there is significant agreement these are the two most important characteristics among these options.

*What seems to be the message is that people want an enthusiastic pastor who is a thoughtful, careful planner who inspires his people to follow.*

Our church needs a pastor who . . . (pick one)

- respects tradition, is good at risk-management, develops effective policies
- is focused on where the church needs to go, is decisive and a problem solver (goal oriented)
- has good people skills, is persuasive, holds people’s interest
- understands things, is aware of people’s feelings, tends to be unhurried

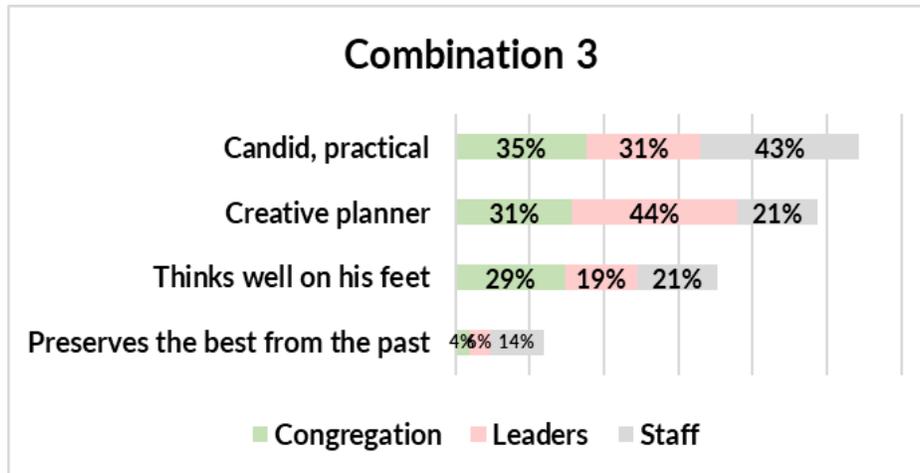


*Survey participants made a single choice.*

The first choice of all three groups on this question is “has good people skills, is persuasive, holds people’s interest.” The second choice of all three groups is “focused on where the church needs to go, is decisive and a problem solver (goal oriented).” These two options are chosen by 70% or more of all three groups. A relatively distant third choice is “understands things, is aware of people’s feelings, tends to be unhurried.”

Our church needs a pastor who . . . (pick one)

- thinks well on his feet, is fun, and adjusts to changing circumstances
- thinks things out carefully, is tactful, is creative
- preserves what is best from the past, maintains a stable environment
- says what he means (candid), is practical, knows where he is leading

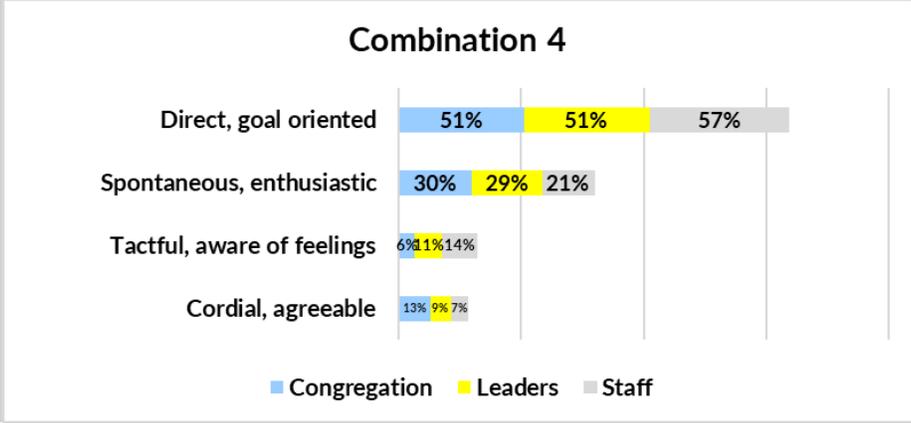


Again, there is a high level of agreement on the top two options on this question. All three groups want “says what he means (candid), is practical, knows where he is leading” and “thinks things out carefully, is tactful, is creative.” Leaders reverse the order but are in agreement with these two options.

Both congregation and staff want “thinks well on his feet, is fun, and adjusts to changing circumstances” as close to their second choices. Very few go for the Fiddler on the Roof song involving “Tradition.”

Our church needs a pastor who relates to people by being . . . (pick one)

- tactful, aware of feelings, generally low key
- spontaneous, enthusiastic, inspirational
- direct, friendly, goal oriented
- cordial, methodical, creating a predictable, peaceful atmosphere



In this last combination question, a strong preference is made by all three groups, “direct, friendly, goal oriented.” At a significantly lower level all three groups opt for “spontaneous, enthusiastic, inspirational.”

*Summary of the Combination Questions*

Most Chosen Combination Options			
	Congregation	Leaders	Staff
Direct, friendly, goal-oriented	51%	51%	57%
has <u>good people skills</u> , is persuasive, holds people’s interest	41%	44%	57%
With enthusiasm, inspiring people to follow his leadership into the future	44%	34%	43%
in a thoughtful way, change is innovative and well planned	36%	46%	36%
says what he means (candid), is <u>practical</u> , knows where he is leading	35%	31%	43%
Is focused on where the church needs to go, is decisive, is a problem solver ( <u>goal oriented</u> )	36%	28%	29%

The graph above identifies the 6 overall highest choices of your congregation, leaders and staff combined. The top three choices of all three groups are identified with white

print. Since each option was a cluster of related traits, we cannot be sure of the role of each individual element, but we do get a general picture of what people are hoping your new pastor will be like.

The top two options—“Direct, friendly, goal oriented” and “has good people skills, is persuasive, holds people’s interest,”—are among the top three choices of all three groups.

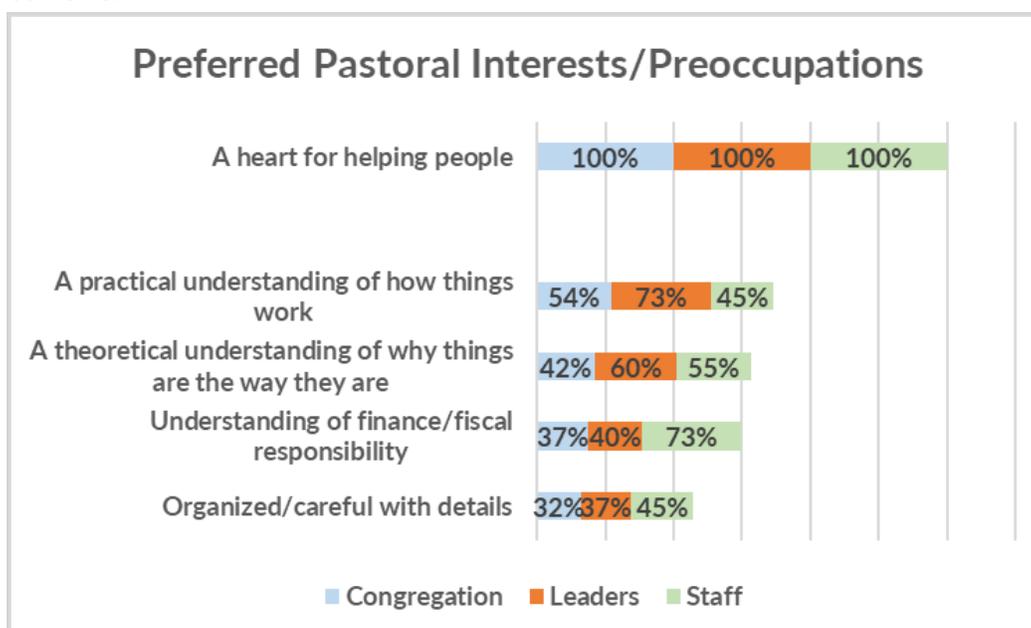
Your congregation and staff continue with their people-friendly theme, making their third choice of “with enthusiasm, inspiring people to follow his leadership into the future.” Tied for the staff’s third choice is “says what he means (candid), is practical, knows where he is leading.”

Church leaders have a special concern that “in a thoughtful way, change is innovative and well-planned.”

## Birkman Interests/Preoccupations

This section will focus on what you hope your new pastor’s interests/preoccupations will be. “Interests” reflect what a person likes to do and/or think about. Almost all jobs have aspects to them that a person does, not because they enjoy them, but because they have to be done. Interests is a measure of the parts of the job that people like to do. It measures the areas you hope a new pastor will naturally specialize in doing because they are important to him.

**Pick three traits from the following list that are most important to the pastor of your church to have.**



For all but very large churches, most church attenders predictably want a pastor who has “a heart for helping people.” All survey participants made this choice.

Even though this conclusion seems obvious, it is quite commonly not the case. Pastors can be preoccupied by numerous other things such as theology, sermon preparation, community involvement, providing counseling, or even denominational involvement. The list could be much longer and could include building the church without bringing the congregation along with him. This is an area that needs to be carefully investigated before making a choice of a new pastor. At SPC it is clear that all church attenders want a pastor with “a heart for helping people.”

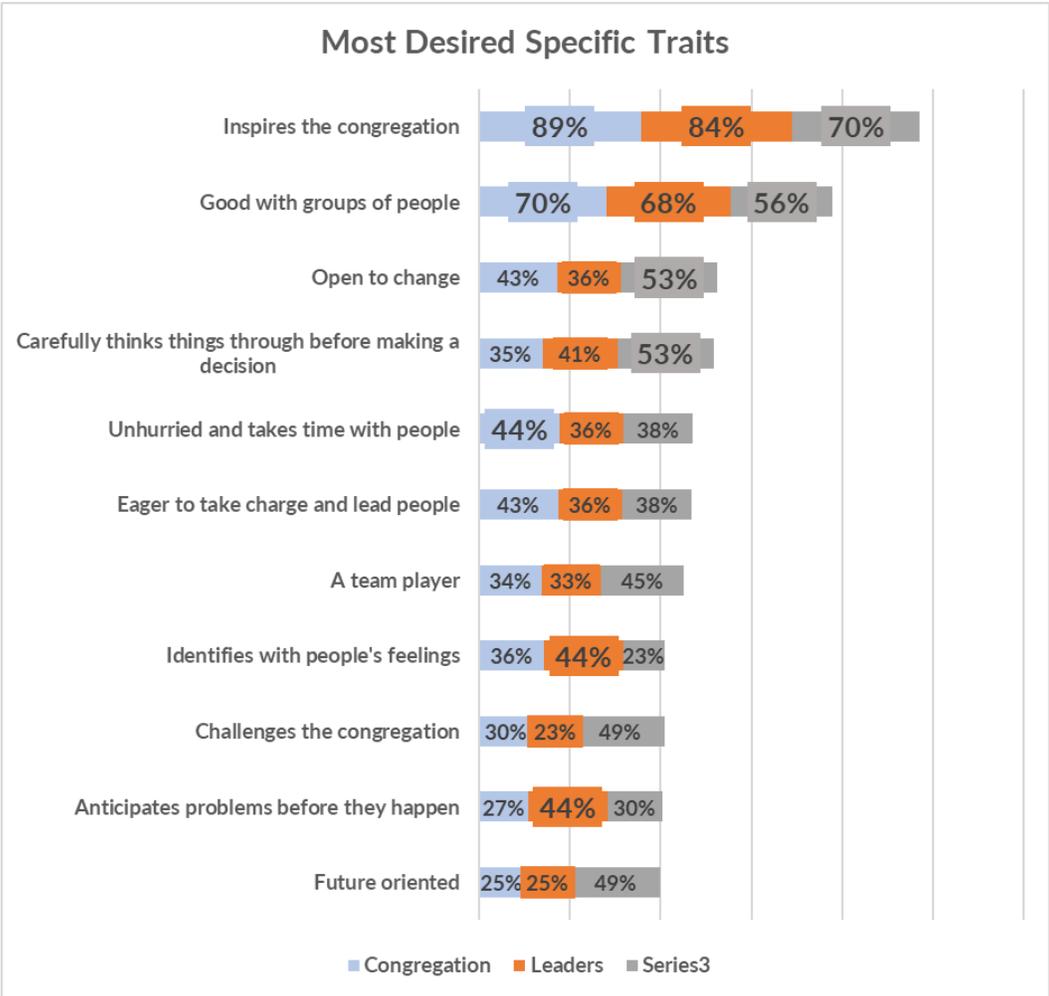
Beyond agreement on wanting a new pastor “with a heart for helping people,” your congregation and church leaders want a pastor with “a practical understanding of how things work.” Both your congregation and church leaders have the same order of priority in the graph. Your staff make their second priority to be “understanding of finance/fiscal responsibility.”

*Beyond having a “heart for helping people,” people seem to want your pastor to have the practical sense of knowing how to make things work along with an understanding of why things are the way they are.*

### Specific Leadership Traits

The combination questions grouped several traits that commonly occur together. In this section we will look at specific individual traits and how they define the characteristics you hope your pastor at SPC will have.

Pick up to four traits from the following list that are most important for the pastor of your church to have.



The top 3 traits of your Congregation, Leaders, and Staff have enlarged numbers. The percentages are the proportion of that group who made that choice. For example, 89% of your congregation made the choice “inspires the congregation.”

A total of 32 options divided between two identical questions appear on the survey. The goal was to determine the specific traits that are important to your congregation, church leaders, and staff. The graph above shows the top 13 combined results from both questions. The top choices of each group are identified by the numbers in larger print.

All three groups agree in the same order that they want a pastor who “inspires the congregation” and who is “good with groups of people.” Over half of all three groups made these choices.

Over a third of each group made the next four choices: “open to change,” “carefully thinks things through before making a decision,” “unhurried and takes time with people,” “eager to take charge and lead people,” and “a team player.” All of these are important, desired characteristics.

Only church leaders made their tied third choices outside these top 7 overall choices. They made “identifying with people’s feelings” and “anticipates problems before they happen” to be priorities.

One other pair of choices is interesting—“inspiring the congregation” and “challenging the congregation.” “Inspiring” has to do with making people feel good about something but may or may not lead to action. “Challenging” is almost always directed toward an active response. The order of these two traits suggests the proportion of these two elements in the life of SPC.

### *Age Considerations*

The rule of thumb is that a pastor is best able to reach people two to ten years younger than himself. There are exceptions to this rule, but the rule is also largely true. To a degree, other factors can add balance. If there are younger people on the platform (often musicians) as well as a “not-younger” pastor, younger people in attendance may respond positively. SPC is struggling to reach Millennials and younger adults. This is not to suggest your pastor should be a Millennial, but he needs to be a good fit for them. Older people also clearly prefer someone their own age, but if other programs meet their needs a younger pastor may not be an issue.

The average age of adults attending SPC is 57 years. New Attenders average 52 years of age. The church is currently reaching Gen Xers best (16 of the 31 New Attenders are Gen Xers). While there are many other factors to be considered, it would be good for your new pastor to be a Gen Xer.

### Section 10: Full SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis is a specialized summary of the survey report that organizes the data into four categories: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. A SWOT is a useful tool to organize related pieces of data that are often separated in the report itself. The SWOT is not an alternative to reading the actual report since many important explanations are found only in the larger report. **If an entry is made in “red,” it is either very important or in contradiction to the rest of the data in that entry.**

#### Strengths

1. Highest-rated ministries from Ministries Assessments—70%+ rating (how survey participants rated SPC ministries)

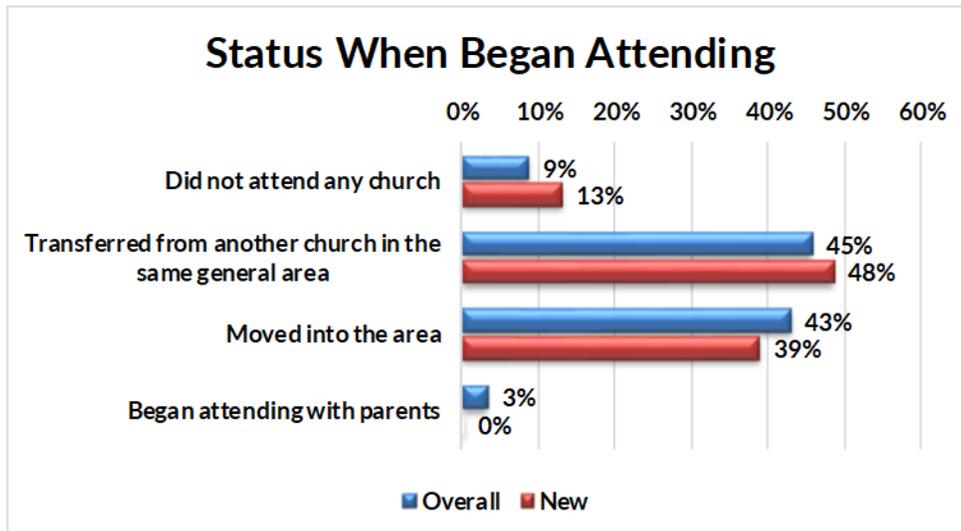
Ministries	Rating
Vacation Bible School	83%
ESL	82%
Glory Days Preschool	82%
Audio/Visual (Worship Services)	82%
Music Ministry (Worship Services)	78%
Care Ministry	77%
Internet & Technology (Website, e-News, Giving Platform, etc.)	76%
Nursery/Toddlers/Preschool (Worship Services)	74%
High School Ministry	72%
Jam City (Grades K-5, worship services)	71%
Middle School Ministry	71%
Sermons	70%
Missions (Trips and Mission Partners)	70%
Sunday Worship Services (overall experience)	70%

2. SPC is strongest in (actual numbers of survey participants in parenthesis):
  - a. 41% Boomers (91) 9 New Attenders
  - b. 40% Gen Xers (88) 16 New Attenders
  - c. 9% Millennials (21) 5 New Attenders
  - d. 8% Silents (18) 1 New Attender
  - e. 2% Gen Zers (4) including 2 Teens 0 New Attenders

3. New Attenders—those being added to SPC in last 5 years (total of 31—14% New Attenders)—(very low)

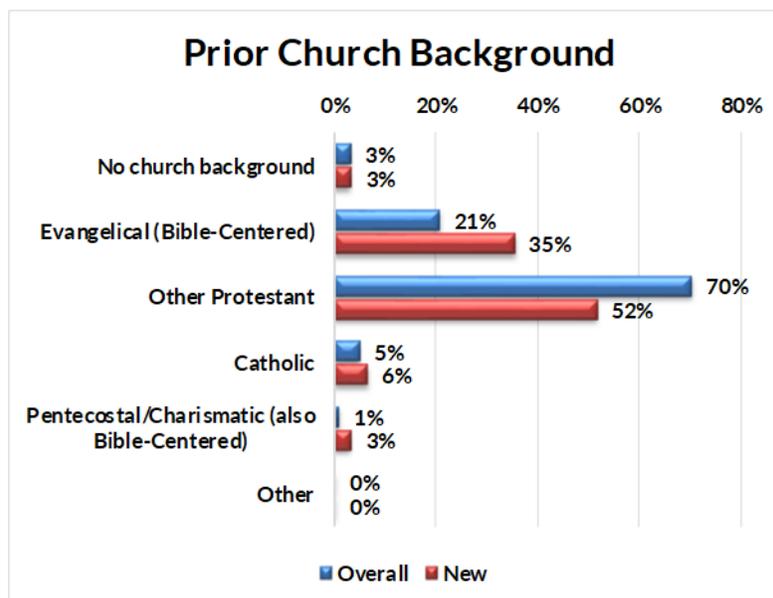
Percentage of New Attenders						
Teens	Zers	Mill	Xers	Bmer	Silent	Gis
0%	0%	16%	52%	29%	3%	0%

4. Recent Sources of New People (last five years)



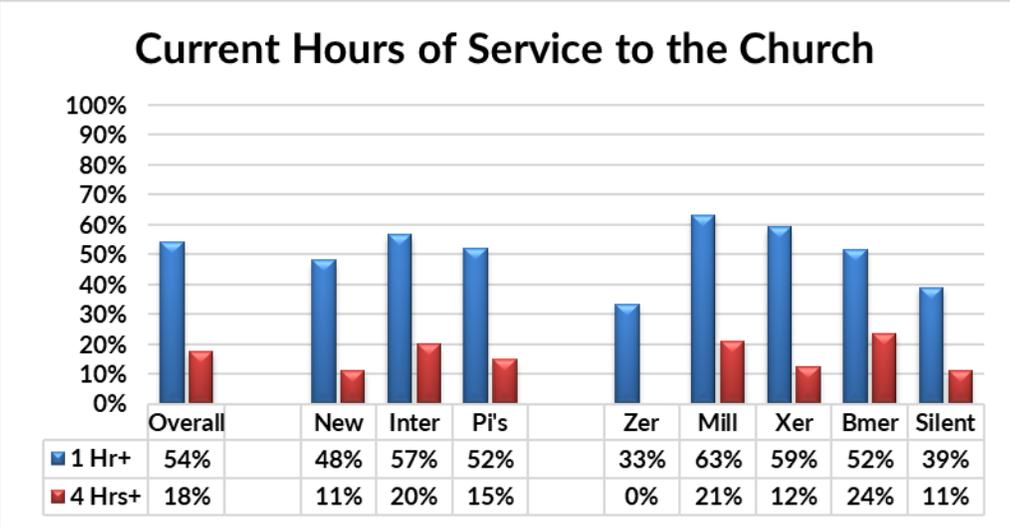
- a. 48% Churches in the area
- b. 39% Moved into the area
- c. 13% Not attending any church

5. Prior Church Backgrounds of those who attend SPC—97% from church backgrounds



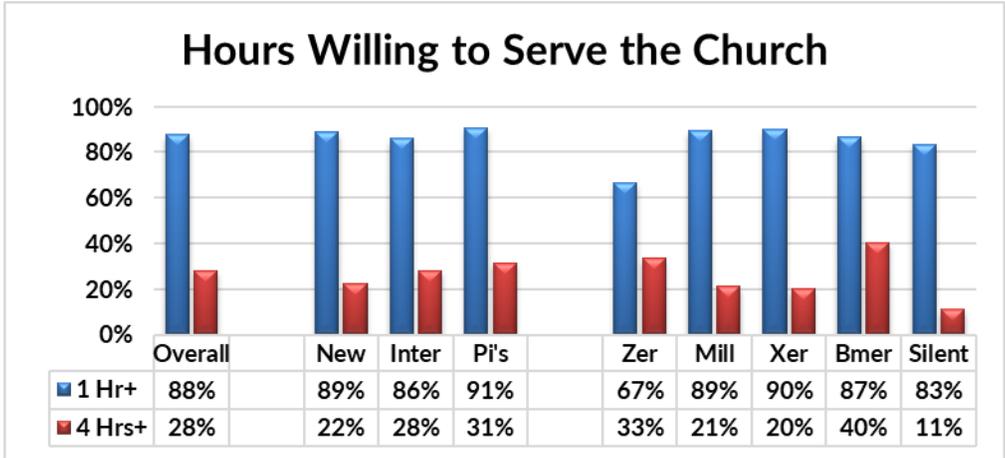
6. Mobilization (currently a little low but good potential)

a. Current Mobilization (60% or more is ideal standard)



- i. 54% of current attenders spend an hour or more per week supporting the ministries of your church
- ii. 18% of current attenders 4 hours or more per week

b. Good Potential Mobilization



- i. 88% of current attenders willing to spend an hour or more per week supporting the ministries of your church
- ii. 28% of current attenders 4 hours or more per week

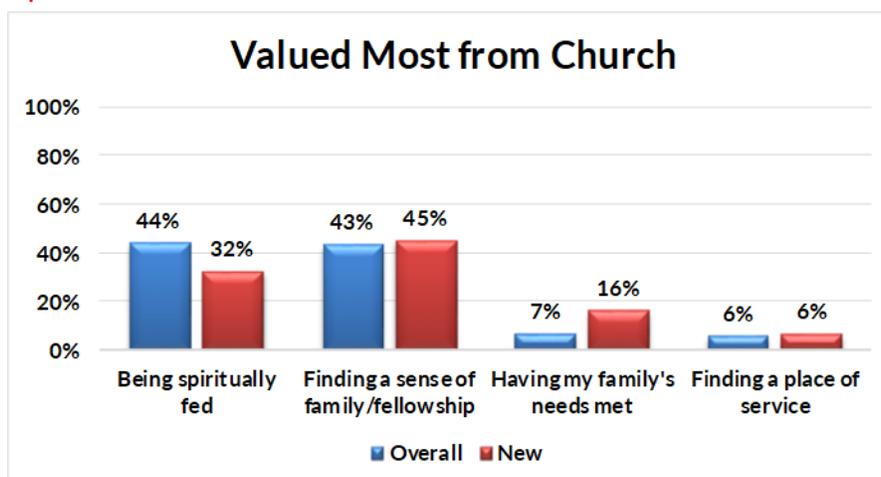
7. What Keeps People Coming—overall Relationships, Bible Study and/or Sermons, and In-church ministries

Keeps you coming	Overall	New	Inter	Pi's	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent
Bible Study and/or Sermons	24%	29%	25%	20%	0%	5%	19%	29%	56%
Relationships	39%	23%	32%	64%	50%	24%	39%	44%	28%
Music	5%	0%	5%	5%	0%	10%	3%	4%	6%
Right thing to do	9%	6%	10%	7%	0%	5%	10%	9%	11%
In-church ministries	20%	39%	23%	4%	50%	57%	23%	12%	0%
Support outreach ministries	3%	3%	4%	0%	0%	0%	6%	2%	0%

30-50%

Over 50%

8. Most Valued at SPC: “Being spiritually fed” and “Finding a sense of family/fellowship” is almost equal” overall. New Attenders are valuing/seeking fellowship the most.



9. Mature Christians

- a. The average number of years a Christian is 42.8 years plus with 92 individuals reporting 50 years or more.
- b. 97% were Christians when they came to SPC (4 individuals "No"—they were not Christians when they came, 1 individual was a "new Christian," 2 individuals were "unsure" if they were Christians when they came.
- c. **61% say they are growing spiritually at your church (low, 74% is the database average).**
- d. 98% have been Christians more than 10 years.

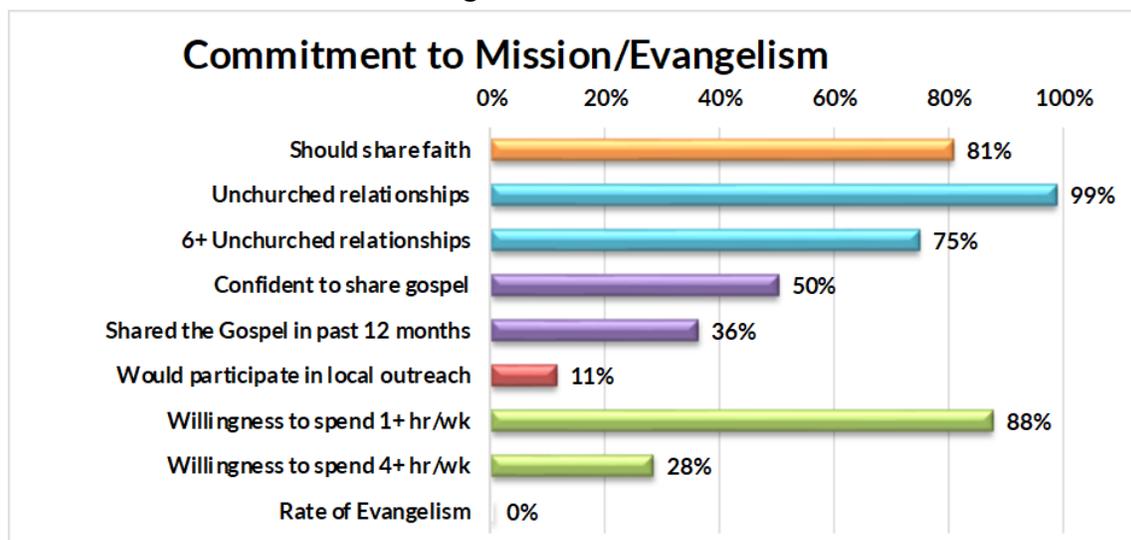
10. SPC compared to community

- a. Age: The average age of an adult (18+) survey participant at SPC is 57.3 years. The average age of an adult (18+) in the area around your church is 49.8 years.
- b. Gender ratios
  - i. SPC 64% female/36% male
  - ii. Area 50% female/50% male
- c. Different relational statuses
  - i. Currently married SPC 87%; area 64%
  - ii. Never married SPC 4%; area 25%
  - iii. Divorced/Separated SPC 5%; area 11% (area includes widowed)
  - iv. Widowed SPC 4%
- d. Ethnic Backgrounds
  - i. Anglo-European SPC 92%; area 56%
  - ii. Hispanic SPC 2%; area 7%
  - iii. African American SPC 1%; area 2%
  - iv. **Asian SPC 2%; area 31%**
  - v. American Indian SPC 0%; area 0%
  - vi. Other SPC 3%; area 3%
- e. Education (over 25 years of age)—**both highly educated**
  - i. SPC 92% college graduates or more
  - ii. Community 69% college graduates or more
- f. Family Income
  - i. SPC \$161,084<sup>34</sup> per year
  - ii. Community \$222,781 per year

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<sup>34</sup> This estimate is low because the highest option in the survey was \$200,000+ which 38% of survey participants checked.

11. Commitment to Mission/Evangelism



12. Distance to Church (database average 7.0 miles for this size of a church)

- a. Average attender travels 6.2 miles to church
- b. New Attenders average 7.0 miles
- c. Overall 84% travel 10 miles or less

13. Church Giving

- a. 38% give 10% or more of their income to all causes for the work of Christ
- b. 15% give 10% or more of their income to SPC

14. Pattern of participation

Activities Participation	Overall	New	Inter	Pi's	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent
Sunday worship service (in person or online)	92%	90%	93%	89%	100%	90%	92%	91%	94%
Small group	41%	13%	37%	66%	0%	5%	31%	57%	61%
Prayer Ministry	11%	13%	10%	11%	0%	0%	8%	16%	11%
Women's Ministry	23%	26%	22%	21%	0%	13%	25%	29%	0%
Children's or Youth ministry	28%	29%	33%	14%	75%	62%	42%	10%	0%
Adult Classes	11%	10%	12%	11%	0%	10%	7%	18%	6%
Special ministry i.e. elderly, MOPS, ESL, Stephen Ministries	20%	23%	19%	21%	0%	29%	13%	24%	28%
Elder or Deacon Leadership	18%	0%	24%	11%	0%	19%	23%	15%	6%
Local Outreach Activities	9%	16%	9%	4%	0%	10%	11%	8%	0%
Local Missions	18%	16%	18%	20%	50%	10%	18%	22%	0%
Global Missions	14%	13%	13%	18%	0%	10%	16%	15%	11%
Paid Staff (Both Administrative and Ministry)	7%	19%	5%	4%	0%	10%	11%	3%	0%

15. Leadership training welcomed—Overall 32% (unusually low rate of people wanting leadership training)



16. Church and Leaders seen as open to change

		Congregation	Leaders	Staff
<b>Progressive Total</b>		<b>80%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>80%</b>
Radicals	We anticipate and value change	10%	3%	13%
Progressives	We are open to change	70%	64%	67%
Conservatives	We do not navigate change well	16%	21%	20%
Traditionalists	We tend to resist change	4%	13%	0%
<b>Conservative Total</b>		<b>20%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>20%</b>

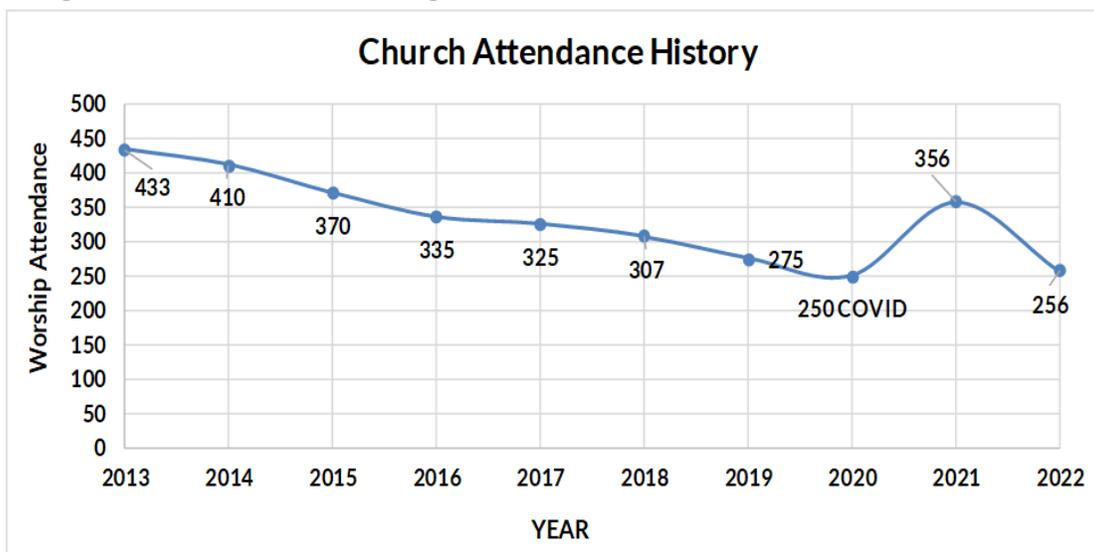
## Weaknesses

The distinction between “weaknesses” and “threats” is that weaknesses are less serious. Weaknesses can be identified and directly addressed. Threats are more serious and can be fatal if not addressed. Unaddressed weaknesses can become threats.

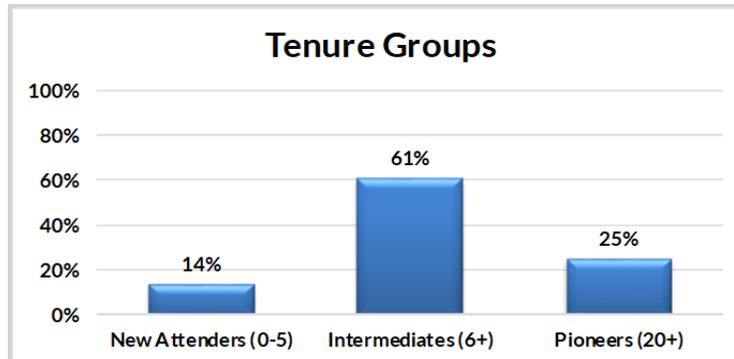
### 1. Acknowledged Weaker Ministries (approval Rating 60% or less)

Low Rated Ministries	Rating
Small Groups	60%
Adult Classes	57%
Connecting (incorporating newcomers into the life of the church)	52%
Outreach (evangelism, inviting friends to church, community events)	48%
Men's Ministry	47%
Leadership Development	47%
<b>Average</b>	<b>58%</b>

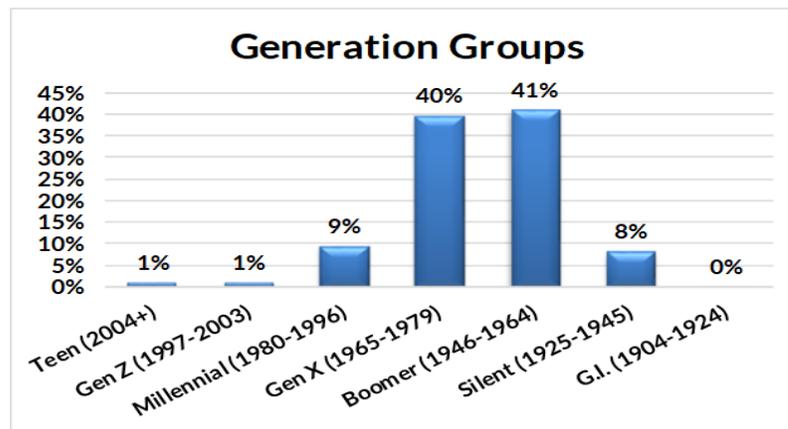
### 2. Long-term Pattern of Declining Attendance



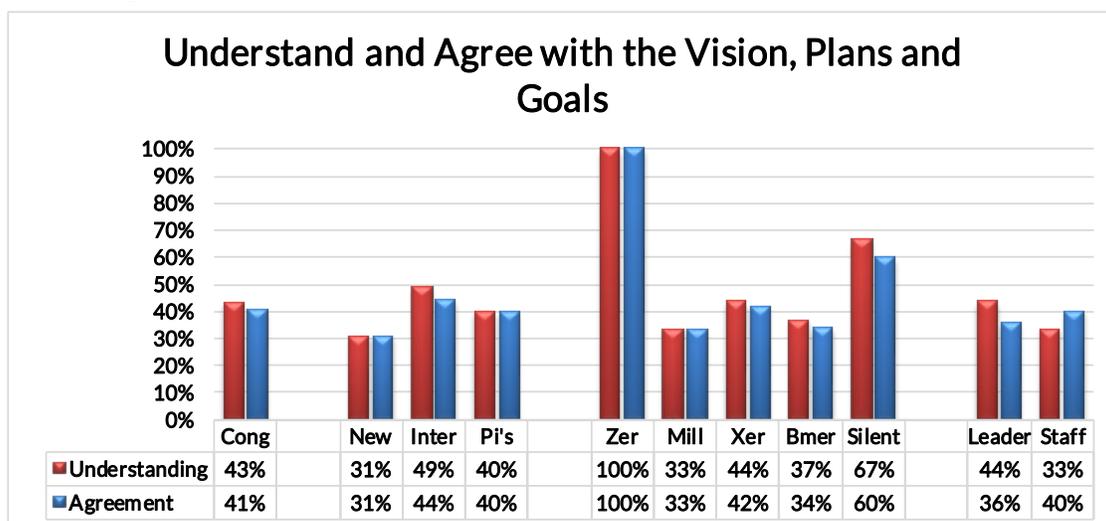
- Weak Tenure Analysis: Combined with the growth history, tenure analysis tends to indicate that SPC has failed to both attract new people and has probably lost a good number of long-term attenders (Pioneers).



- Generational Pattern: heavily middle to older adults with very few Millennials



- Little Agreement on Vision, Plans, and Goals (*very low*)



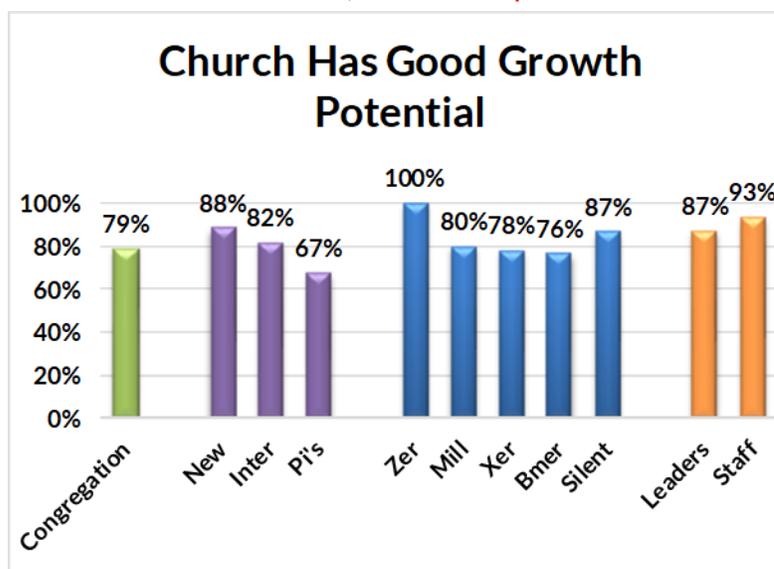
*70% is minimum acceptable score*

6. Widespread Discouragement: 52% in “neutral enthusiasm” category or less

My Feelings Toward This Church	All	New	Inter	Pioneers	Gen Z	Mills	Gen X	Bmers	Silents
I am very involved and excited about my church (high enthusiasm)	30	7	19	4	1	4	13	11	1
I am currently involved in supporting my church (moderate enthusiasm)	77	8	54	15	2	9	31	30	5
I am attending and participating in church life (neutral enthusiasm)	67	13	36	18	1	4	21	33	8
I am beginning to get discouraged with my church	29	3	15	11	0	1	13	12	3
I am barely hanging on	19	0	11	8	0	3	10	5	1
<b>"red" total</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22%</b>

The numbers in each column show the actual number of survey participants in that category who made that choice. The numbers in red identify increasing levels of discouragement. The bottom row (black with percentages in white numerals) shows the percentage of that group in the “discouraged” categories.

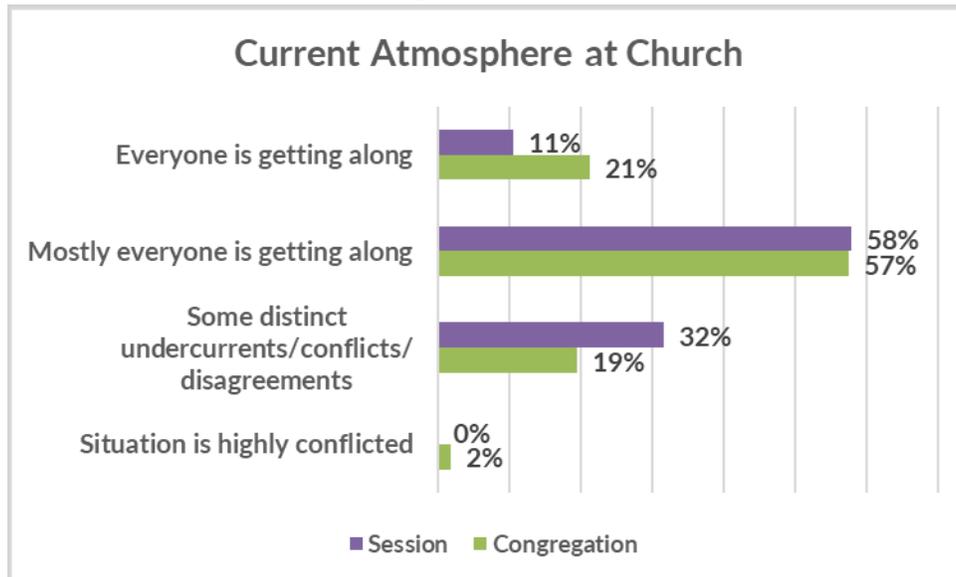
7. SPC not Optimistic about the Future (25%ile compared to other churches)<sup>35</sup>



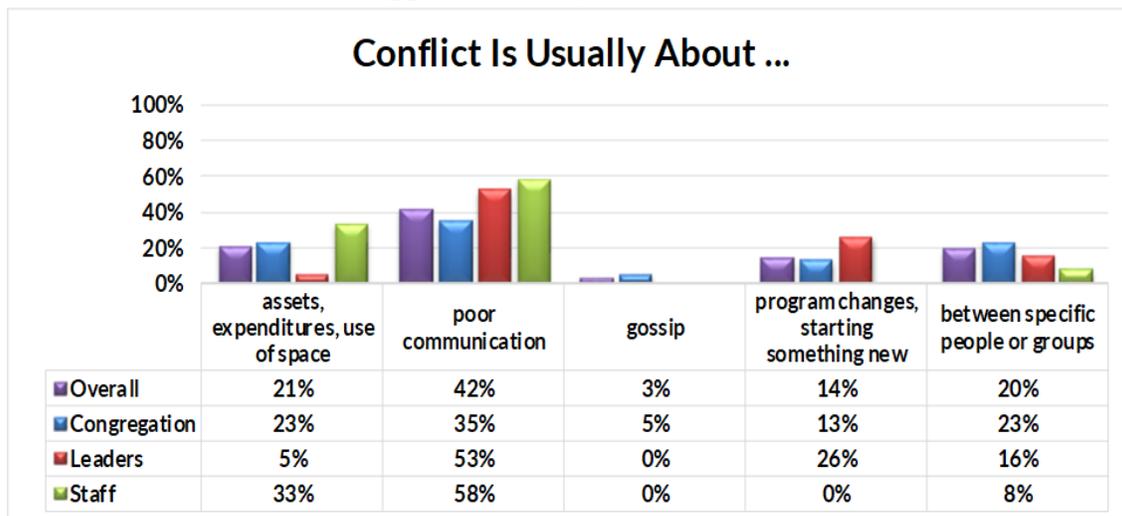
Database average is 83.8%

<sup>35</sup> The database average is 83.8% with a 7.26% standard deviation, making SPC's score of 79% equal to 25%ile compared to similar-sized churches.

8. Some conflict: While people are mostly getting along, there are some distinct undercurrents, conflicts, and disagreements

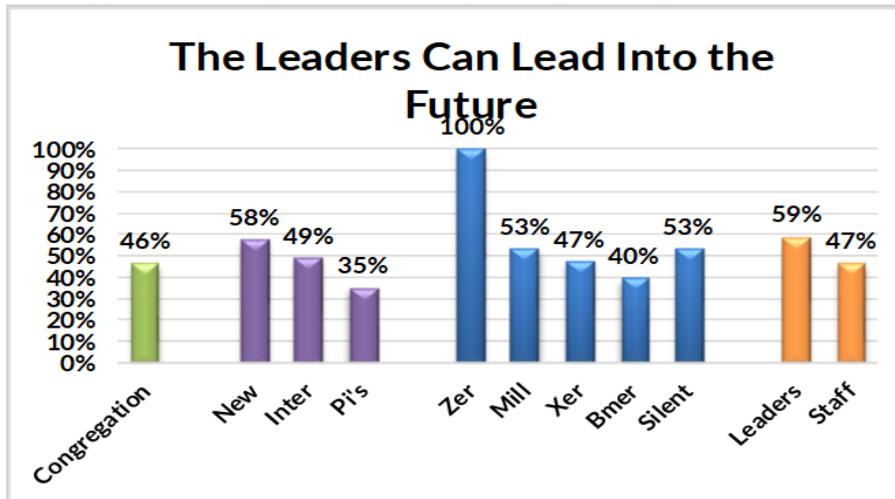


9. Normal Conflict Issues: biggest issue is poor communication

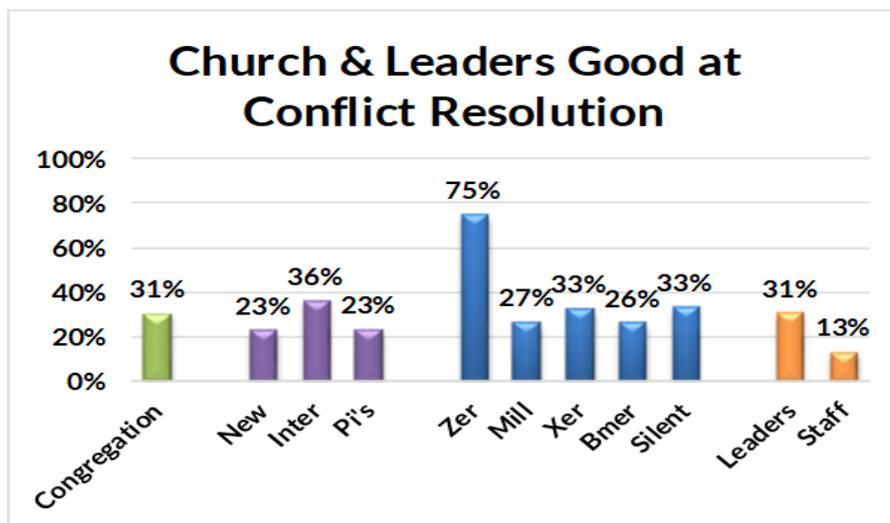


10. Leadership Issues

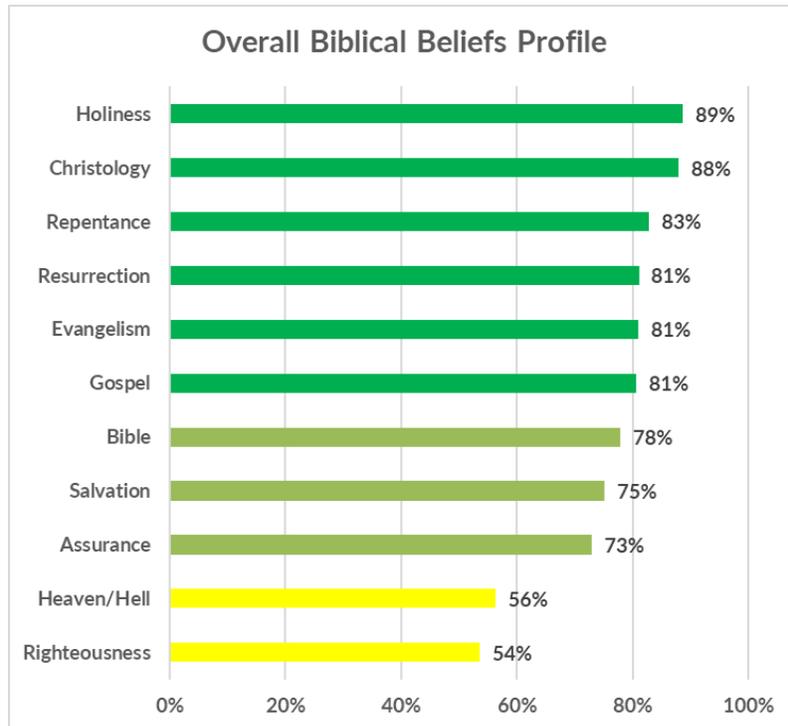
- a. Low approval rating of leaders especially among Pioneers and Boomers



- b. Low conflict resolution

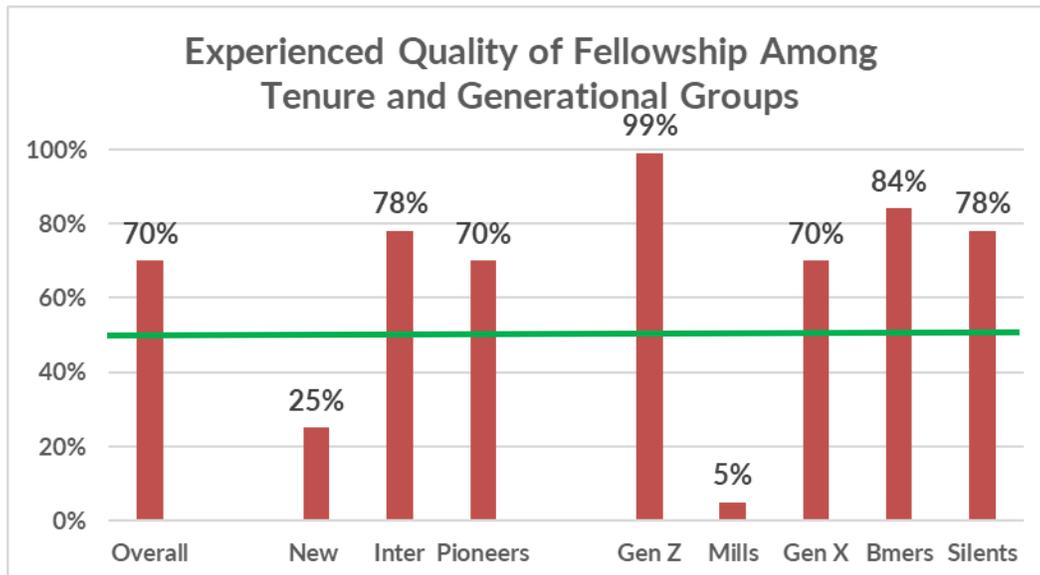


11. Weak on orthodox Biblical Beliefs (See Section 6: Biblical Beliefs for more detail)



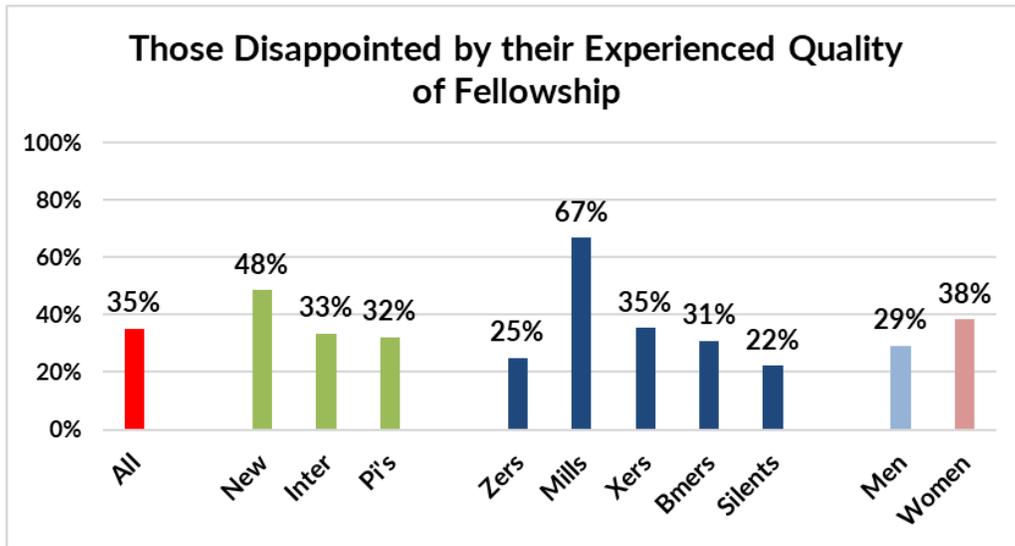
12. Excellent Experienced Quality of Fellowship, except for New Attenders and Millennials

a. Experienced Quality of Fellowship



All scores are percentiles. Green horizontal line is average (50%ile).

b. Those disappointed by Quality of Fellowship

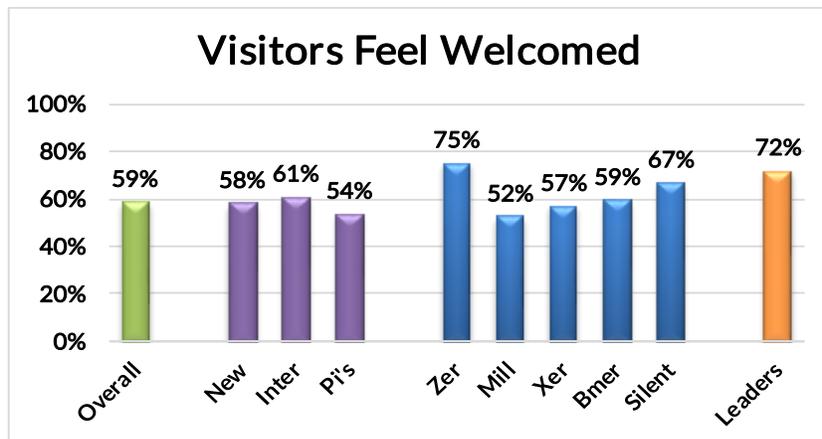


13. Weak Inviting and Welcoming

a. Inviting/Relational

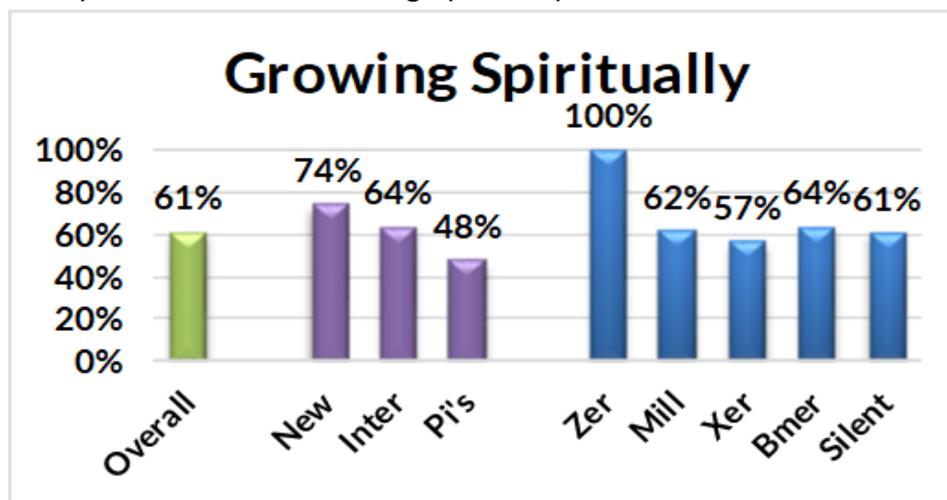
	Schaller's Ideal	Overall this church	New Attender
Invited/Relational	66-90%	33%	35%
Pastor/Staff	15-20%	12%	19%
Walk-in's	5-10%	55%	46%

b. Welcoming



Database average on this question is 69%. 80% minimum good score.

14. Low Reported Rate of “Growing Spiritually”



15. Extremely Weak Adult Evangelism

	All	New	Inter	Pi's	Zer	Mill	Xer	Bmer	Silent
Number who were not Christians when they came	4	2	0	2	0	0	1	3	0
Still Seeking	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	0
Number currently attending who came with their parents and have since become Christians	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net conversions from the world	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Rate of Evangelism	0%	3%	0%	0%					

*Overall, the rate of adult evangelism is just less than .5%.*

## Opportunities

1. Important and essential opportunity to define a new unifying, compelling set of vision, plans, and goals to guide SPC into the future. This will include identifying issues that have caused your church to decline and developing strategies to address them. This may also involve looking at programs that are not working and discarding them. Clearly, there is a need for well-defined priorities.
2. Opportunity for church leaders to improve communication with the congregation and provide clear leadership to your church. This should include intentional efforts to hear the concerns of your congregation. Your congregation has not been feeling that church leadership has been listening to them.
3. Taking responsibility for inviting and including new people, with a special focus on reaching Millennials and meeting their needs.
4. Opportunity to develop attraction, inclusion, and assimilation strategies
5. Opportunity to intentionally provide “*koinonia* for all,” especially New Attenders and Millennials
6. Opportunity to make evangelism an intentional goal

## Threats

Threats tend toward fatal outcomes if appropriate interventions do not take place.

1. Failure to develop a clear and compelling set of visions, plans, and goals will lead to continuing decline causing further discouragement among those who attend SPC.
2. The approval rating of church leaders is already low. Leadership needs to show they are listening to member concerns and take steps to share what they are doing to address issues at your church. To fail to provide leadership will deepen discouragement tendencies as well as keeping leadership approval ratings low.
3. Failure to develop attraction, inclusion, and assimilation strategies will result in ongoing failure to attract new people to SPC.

4. Failure to address quality of fellowship issues especially affecting New Attenders and Millennials will result in continuing failure to attract new people to SPC.
5. Failure of church leaders to develop better conflict resolution skills could result in failing to deal with issues in a timely manner and having issues continue indefinitely or until a crisis is reached.
6. Failure to increase the focus on evangelism will perpetuate the history of only attracting and meeting the needs of those who are already Christians.

## Section 11: Diagnostic Team Bios

### *Report Writers*

**Gregg Caruso** (M.A. Leadership), *VitalChurch* diagnostic team leader, has been married to Linda (M.A.), since 1978. They have four adult children and seven grandsons. Gregg earned his M.A. at Fuller Theological Seminary and served as a “permanent pastor” for 16 years. Since 1998, Gregg has served as an intentional interim pastor in such varied places as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Iowa, Hawaii, the San Francisco Bay area, New Hampshire, Southern California, and Massachusetts. Gregg has also participated in or led more than 70 diagnostics in Europe and the US. Gregg is a Trustee of *VitalChurch* UK and enjoys gospel-centered theology, trying to keep up with technology, road biking, paddle boarding, and really good coffee.

**Chet Ainsworth** (D.Min.), *VitalChurch* diagnostic lead analyst, is married to **Rochelle**, (M.A. Ed) who serves as editor/collaborator for Chet’s projects. Chet earned his doctorate in Church Growth and is also a graduate of Diagnosis with Impact (Church Consultant Training) from the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth. He is a Master Certified Birkman Professional coaching ministry teams and individuals as well as helping pastoral search teams make good choices. Rochelle is a retired educator and has Advanced Birkman Certification. Rochelle’s hobbies are photography and keeping up with the “great” and “grand” kids around the country.

### *Diagnostic Team*

#### **Linda Caruso**

Linda is married to Gregg and served in a variety of children’s and women’s ministries as their children were growing up. She had a 28-year career teaching English/Language Acquisition and Spanish. She has recently retired and joined the *VitalChurch* Diagnostic Division, editing diagnostic reports. Linda has a passion for intimacy with God and spiritual growth. Some of her favorite things are reading, long walks with friends, and enjoying daily life with their children and grandchildren.

**Rachel Correia** is a New England native who likes to create community around delicious craft beverages. She has a B.A. in Business Management and Theology and has worked in ministry both locally and overseas. Currently, Rachel is the owner of Taunton's first coffee roasting company in the hopes to connect neighbors with each other, and with great coffee.

**Tom Cox** is a native of Roanoke, Virginia. Tom holds a B.A. in Speech from the University of South Carolina. He received his Master of Divinity in Biblical Studies at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, where he later did doctoral work. After seminary, he

ministered as an associate pastor in Alabama prior to serving as lead pastor for congregations in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Before his ordination as a PCA Teaching Elder, Tom spent 14 years in campus ministry with Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ). It was during those years that he met and married Kelli, who is originally from Michigan. Tom and Kelli enjoy walking, hiking, and exploring new local restaurants. In his free time Tom enjoys playing word games, rooting for the Red Sox and Gamecocks, building his collection of Bible commentaries, and fancying himself as a music aficionado. The Coxes have two grown children, Jacob and Jenna, and a beagle named Maizey Grace.

**Rich Fickle** recently retired as CEO of a company in the media/telecommunications industry. The *VitalChurch* Ministry mission resonates with him based on his experience in serving various churches and the need to support leadership growth. He is honored to play a small role in helping this ministry. He, and his wife Robin, currently live in Colorado Springs and attend Life Church.

**Robert Flores** (D. Min.) has a wide and varied ministry history. Robert and his wife, DeeDee, have planted churches in Oregon, Texas, and California. In addition, Robert served as the President of Life Pacific College from 2008 until 2012. Robert graduated from LIFE Bible College in 1979 and received a Masters of Divinity degree from Asbury Seminary in 1985. In Spring of 2002, he received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary. His greatest claim to fame is being the husband of DeeDee and the father of two great kids, Kristin and Bo. And, his greatest, greatest claim to fame – his five grandkids. For fun, Robert loves to ride his motorcycle, golf, learn from leaders young and old, and of course, read.

**John Gee** (Ph.D., D.B.S., M.Div., L.M.F.T.A.), associate director of the diagnostic division, and his wife, Jamie, have 5 children. John is a recently retired Senior Chief Submariner in the US Navy and a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt for Process Improvement. During his Navy career, John developed strategies for data and statistical interpretation for use in the submarine force. John brings 21 years of data gathering and interpretation experience to *VitalChurch*. John holds a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies, an M.Div., Mth, and an M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy.

**Alyssa Hilburn** was born in America but has had a lifetime love for Scotland. Before joining *VitalChurch* UK in 2021, Alyssa served as the Case Manager and Grant Writer at a teen maternity home for over 7 years. She has led small groups and been involved in student ministry at her home church for over 10 years. Alyssa is passionate about connecting people with resources so they can thrive. This includes the Church.

**Janet Miles** coaches pastors, lay, and ministry leaders to identify their passion, calling, and priorities and work through change and transition. She also coaches people with the Enneagram personality assessment understanding how the Gospel impacts their personality. She also serves on the volunteer diagnostic division for the *VitalChurch* team. She volunteers as a life group leader and coach in her current church, CenterPoint. She has a passion to see people grow spiritually, challenging them to grow into their destiny as a child of God. She retired from her career as a physical education teacher in an ethnically diverse public high school but continues to serve as a Commissioner for the Public Schools Athletic League (city of New York). She is married to Dave Miles. They have three children and seven grandchildren. When taking time off, Janet loves to camp, hike, kayak, and read around the campfire morning or evening.

**Laurel Schumacher** (M.A.), *VitalChurch* chief operating officer, can be found curled up with a book or drinking coffee with a friend when she is not volunteering on the PTA board at her daughters' school, stepping on Legos, or cleaning up glitter. Laurel holds two master's degrees; one in education from Adelphi University and one in literature from Long Island University-Brooklyn. Laurel and her husband, Noah, are growing roots in Huntington, New York, where they are partnering with their church of 17 years to plant a new church campus in their neighborhood. Laurel has the privilege of leading a mom's small group at her church! Together, Laurel and Noah strive to teach their girls how to live authentic, grace-filled, and Christ-centered lives.

**John Stoekle** is a pastor with 40+ years of experience in pastoral ministry and ministerial education; he has a BA in Religion from Nyack College, an M.A. in New Testament from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is ABD (all but dissertation) on a Ph.D. in Missional Leadership from Asbury Theological Seminary. John's ministry focus recently has been in Multiethnic Ministry and Discipleship in Community.

**Tom Wilkens** (Ph.D.), executive director of *VitalChurch*, resides in Colorado and has been married to his best friend, Jan, since 1982. They have two married daughters. Tom earned a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Denver. His passion is how marriages, teams, churches, and organizations develop and grow well—with special interest in leadership. Tom formerly directed the CRM Staff Care & Development Team, and now serves that team and the organization in a consulting capacity. He has experience as a pastor, medical/counseling clinic director, and university professor.