

Congregational Vitality Survey



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Advent

Charlotte

NC

Congregation ID 07224

Synod: North Carolina Synod, ELCA

What is the Congregational Vitality Survey?

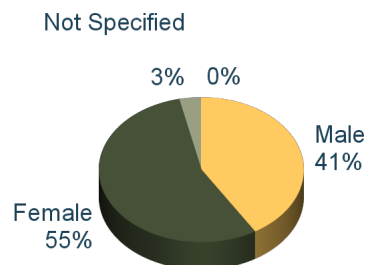
The Congregational Vitality Index measures the strengths and challenges of a congregation according to three dimensions: **the congregation's connections with God, each other and the world**. Items from the survey relating to this area are grouped into scales. The average of those items is presented as a scale score. All scale items range from 1 (poor) to 5 (great). The target is to score higher than 4. Although items below 3 are considered a struggle for the congregation, it is better to focus on patterns across items rather than one low score.

This report is divided into four sections. There is one section for each of the scales (God, Each Other and World) and one concerning some of the factors that contribute to vitality. Finally there is a comparison of this congregation to aggregated congregations using a composite scale of key indicators.

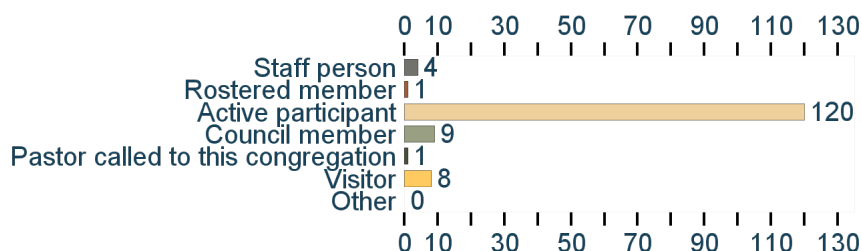
Who took the survey?

Total responses 146

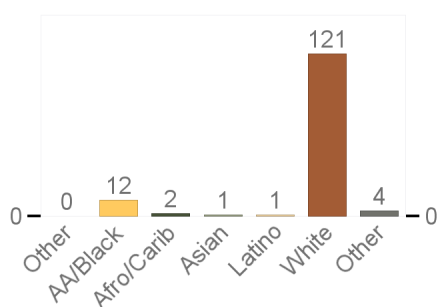
Gender



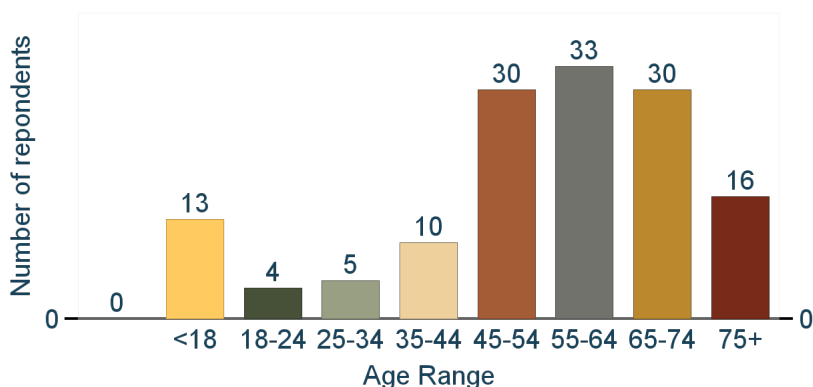
Type of Respondent



Ethnicity



Age of Respondents



instanceID 07224_10/10/2019

reportID 2270

10/10/2019

Congregational Vitality Survey



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

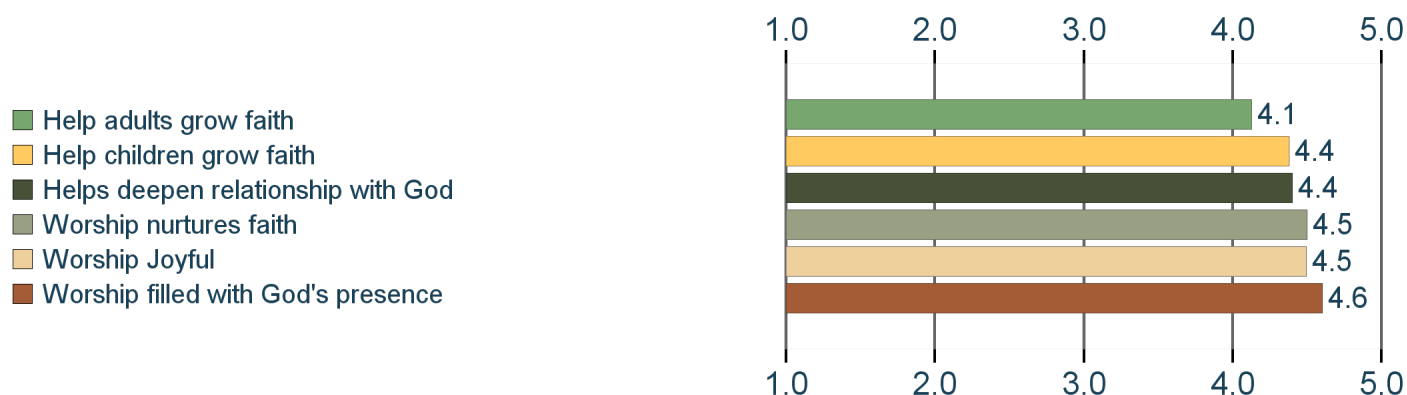
God's work. Our hands.

Connecting with God scale

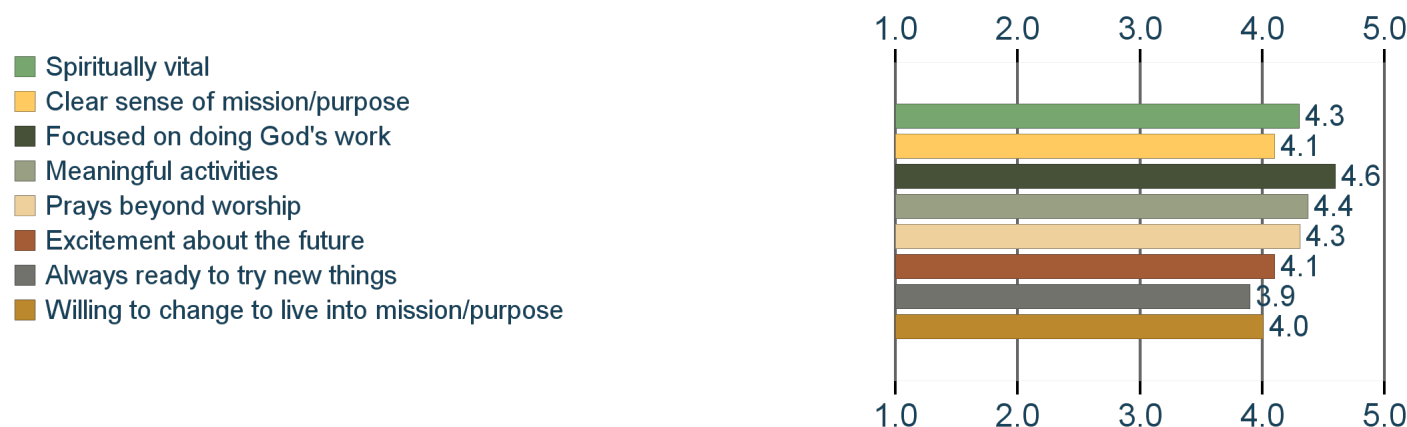
The following chart shows the average response to each question. These questions show how well respondents believe the congregation helps individuals grow in faith and how connected the congregation is to God's mission. Scores at or above 4 indicate that the congregation feels they are doing well in connecting with God.

God Scale Score 4.3

Connecting people with God



Connecting the congregation with God



Things to notice:

- ♦ Note the high and low marks in the above chart. Talk about the congregation's strengths and challenges. What patterns emerge? Are people's impressions of the congregation consistent with their self reporting (next pages).
- ♦ Compare these items to the pace of spiritual growth. Most people should feel they are growing. If there is a high percentage of people who feel stalled (over 10%), addition conversation is warranted.



From Congregation to Respondent - Faith in Action?

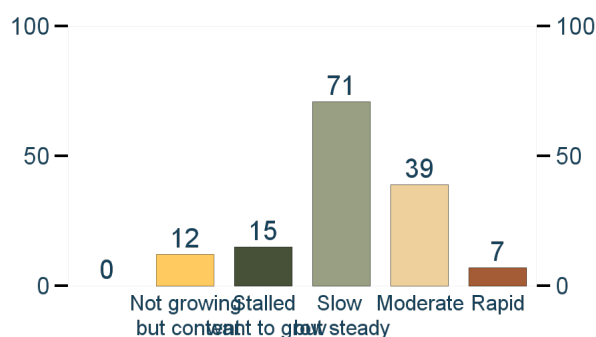
Compare how respondents described the congregation with how they described themselves. Below are descriptions of their own experience in the congregation and how often they participate in activities associated with this scale. The graphs show the number of people who gave each response.

Look for consistency. For example, a congregation that rates itself high on helping adults grow in faith should see that most people report growing faith, that their spiritual needs are met, that they participate in regular prayer, devotions and study and that they have meaningful spiritual conversations on a regular basis.

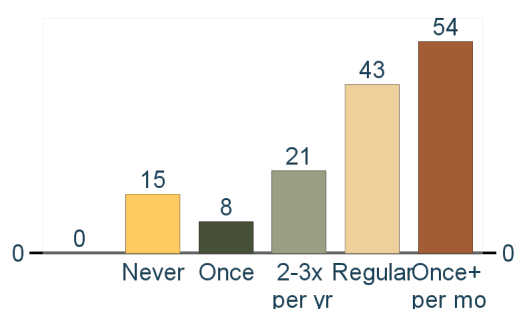
Are your congregation's activities leading to action in its participants?

Spirituality

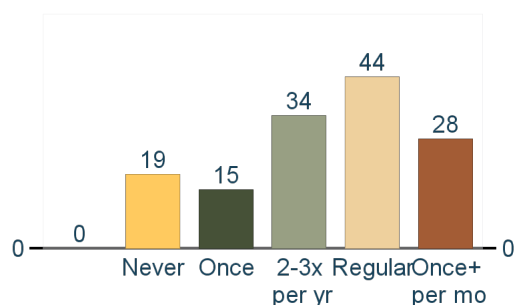
Pace of Spiritual Growth



Prayer, Devotions, Study

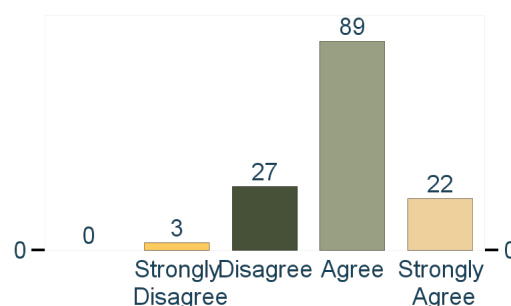


Meaningful spiritual conversations in cong.

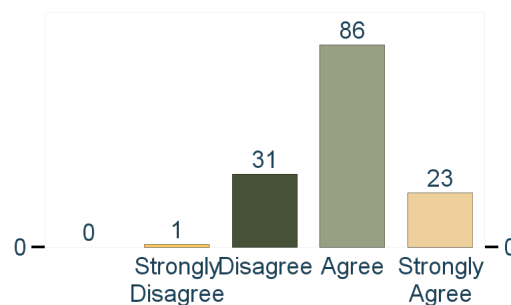


Congregational

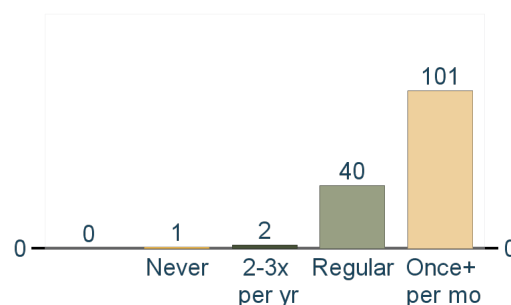
I'm excited about this cong. future



I feel connected to the wider Christian church



I Attend worship



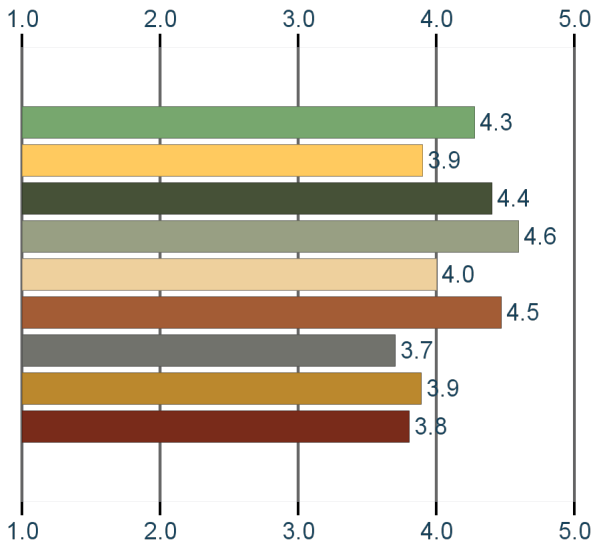
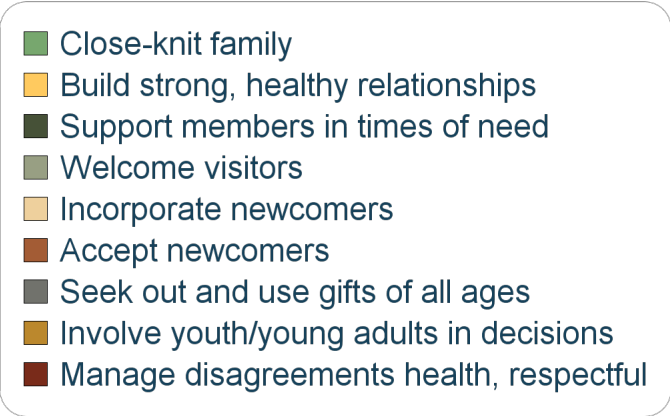


Connecting with Each Other Scale

The responses to these questions show to what extent members are connecting with each other. This goes beyond how well people like each other. Questions focus on how the community of faith supports each other and uses their gifts for mission. It refers to both newer and long time members. Scores at or above 4 indicate that the congregation feels they are doing well in connecting with each other.

Each Other Scale Score 4.1

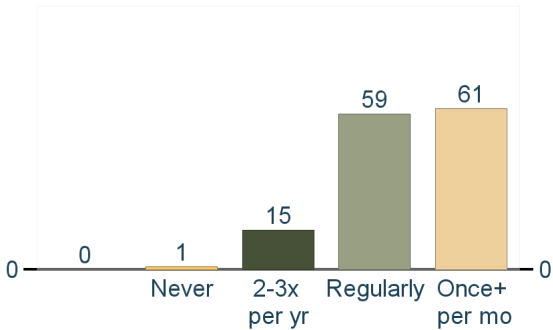
Connecting with Each Other



Things to notice:

- ◆ Note the high and low marks in the chart above. Talk about the congregation's strengths and challenges.
- ◆ Compare this chart to the next page. Consider the ratings on social climate. Ideally you will see, a social climate of harmony and open but respectful disagreements. When there are no disagreements it often means the congregation is comfortable and not pushing itself. When disagreements are perceived as tension or harmful conflict, it suggests that these people are being harmed by the conflict. Research shows that congregations with high tension often experience harm that distracts from health. Thriving congregations nearly always have open respectful conflict. Congregations with only harmony are usually not as vital.
- ◆ Consider the number of actual visitors and newcomers the congregation has when you review ratings on how well the congregation welcomes, accepts and incorporates newcomers.

How often does this congregation have visitors?





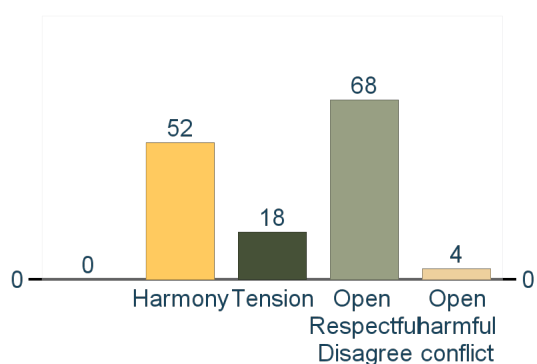
From Congregation to Respondent - Faith in Action?

Compare how respondents described the congregation with how they described themselves. Below are the descriptions of their own experience in the congregation and how often they participate in activities associated with this scale. The graphs show the number of people who gave each response.

A congregation that builds strong community and encourages people to use their gifts should see a lot of people feeling supported and using their gifts on a regular basis. Are your congregation's activities leading to action in its participants?

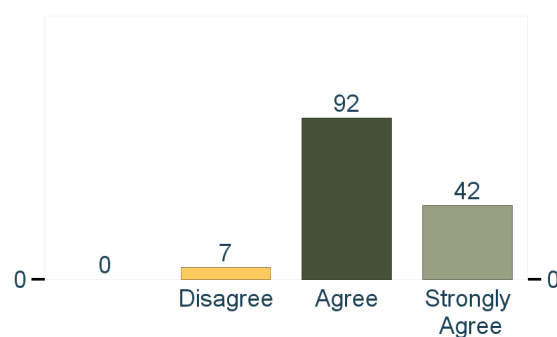
Christian Community

Social Climate

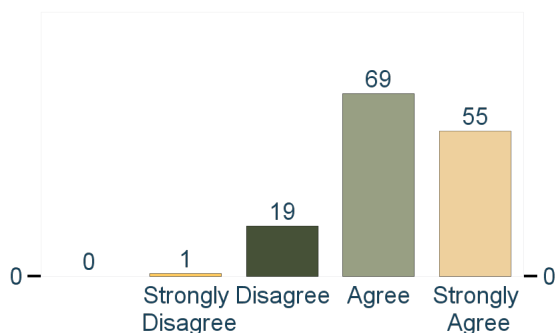


Time, Talent, Treasure

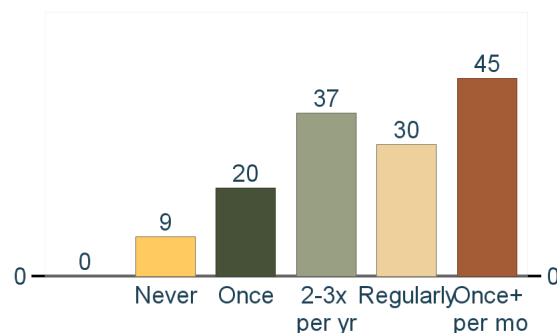
I'm supported using my gifts in cong



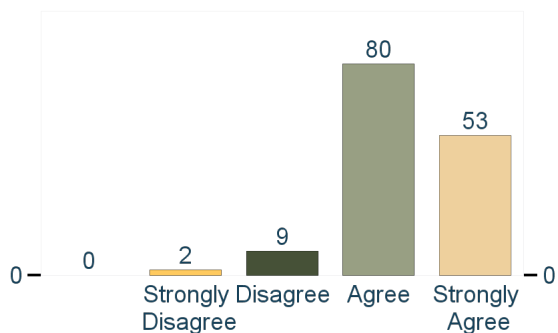
I have a strong sense of belonging



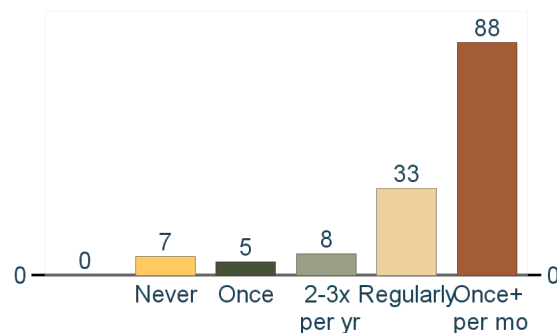
I volunteer in cong.



I have a strong sense of commitment



I donate to cong.





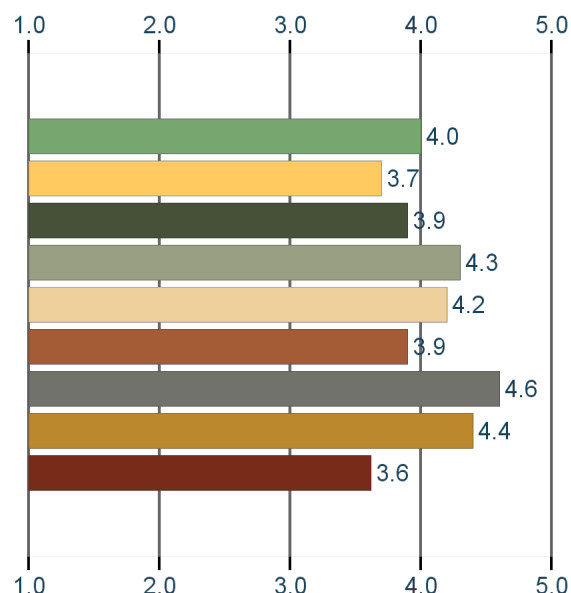
Connecting with the World Scale

The responses to these questions show how members are living out their faith in the world through word and deed. It also shows how they are connected with their communities and with other Christians. Scores at or above 4 indicate that the congregation feels they are doing well in connecting with the world.

World Scale Score 4.1

Connecting with the World

- Helps people live out faith in daily lives
- Equip people to share faith with others
- Build mutual relationships with neighbors
- Positive force in community
- Interact with local community
- Partner with other cong.
- Addressing social concerns
- Social justice /advocacy
- Share info. about denomination



Things to notice:

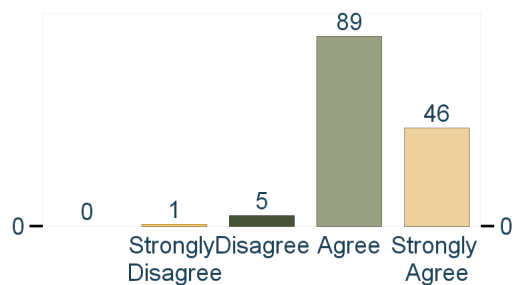
- ◆ Note the high and low marks in the chart. Talk about the congregation's strengths and struggles.
- ◆ Compare "equipping members to share their faith with others" from the scale graph with the next page's graphs showing those who agree or strongly agree that they are equipped to share their faith or are comfortable inviting others to church. These should align.
- ◆ Compare the percentage of those who agree or strongly agree that they are encouraged to use their gifts in the world with how many people advocate for social justice and volunteering in the community. These should align.
- ◆ Compare how well the congregation shares information about the ELCA with how people feel connected with it. Compare these to how connected people feel to the wider Christian community (pg. 3). Talk about how the Holy Spirit connects the congregation with the rest of the ELCA and the wider Christian community as part of one body. How does the Spirit use this congregation to contribute to the wider body? How does it benefit from the rest of the body?



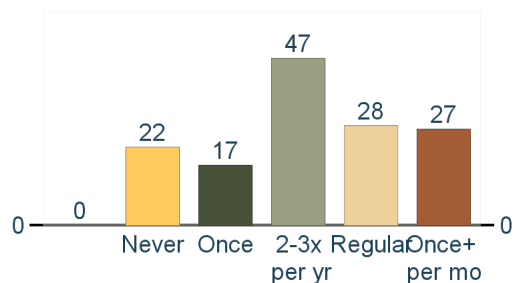
From Congregation to Respondent - Faith in Action?

Serving

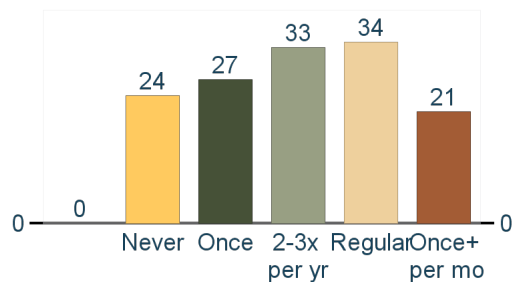
I'm encouraged to use my gifts in the world



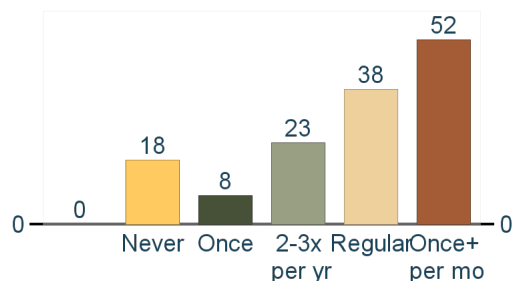
I volunteer in community



I advocate for justice

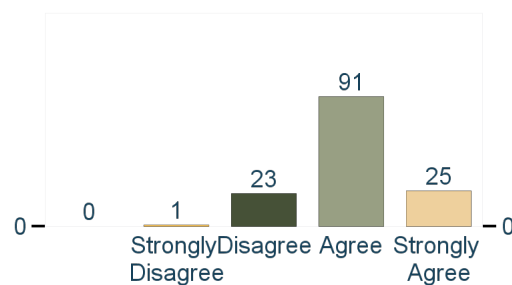


I donate beyond pledge

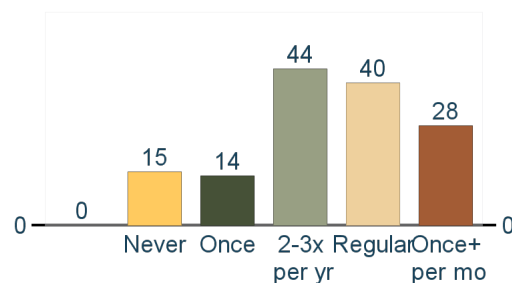


Sharing Faith

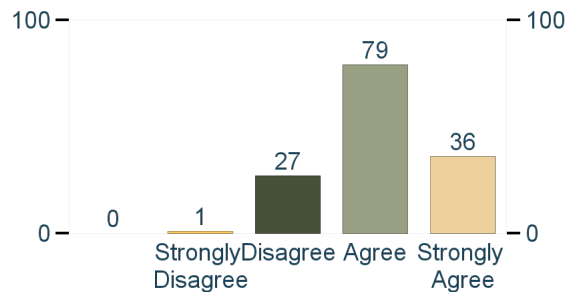
I feel equipped to share my faith with others



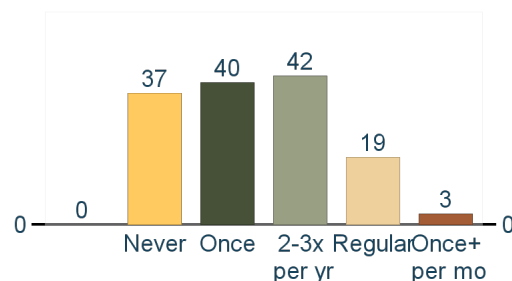
Meaningful spiritual conversations outside



I am comfortable inviting others to church



Invite others to church





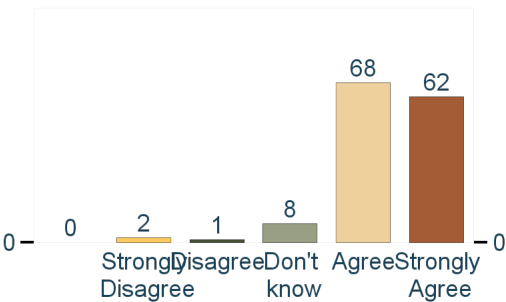
God's active presence

This question asked people to describe the way they experience God's concern and involvement in their lives and the lives of the congregation. The answers reveal the degree and nature of people's connections with God.

Research suggests that when people experience God as more concerned and involved in daily life, they are more likely to take risks for the sake of ministry, and to more frequently engage in ministry within their congregation and in the world.

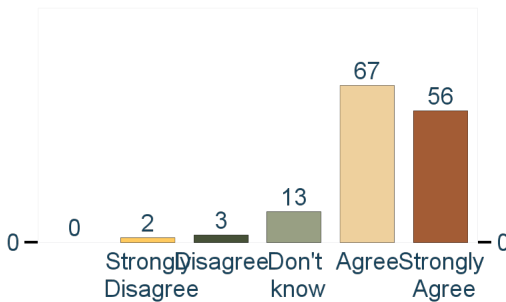
God in my personal life

God is concerned with my personal well-being

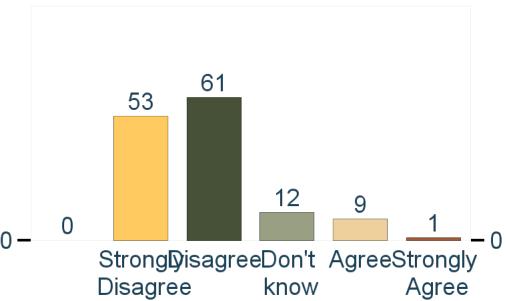


God in the life of the congregation

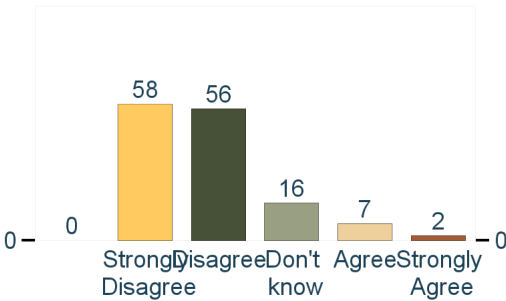
God is concerned with my congregation's well-being



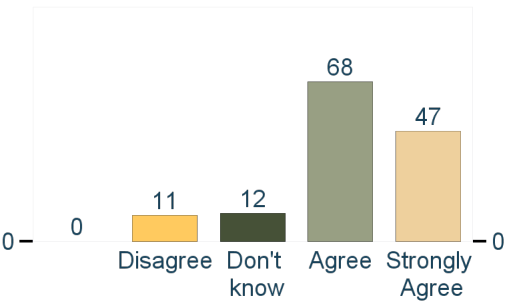
God is removed from my daily life



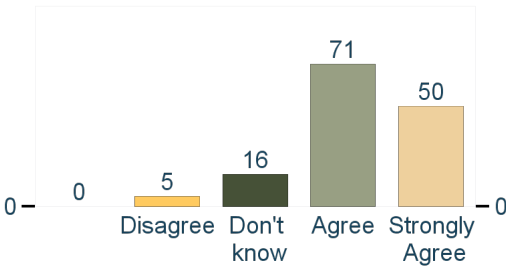
God is removed from my congregation's daily life



God is directly involved in my daily life

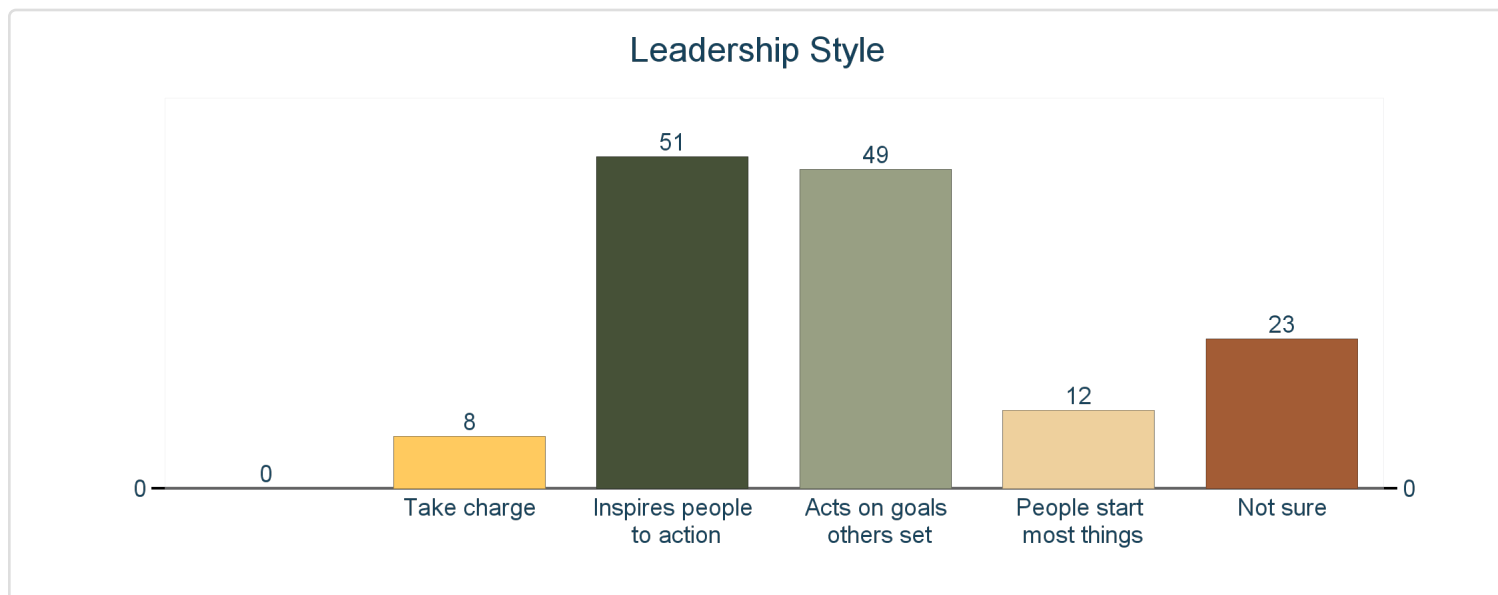


God is directly involved in my congregation's daily life



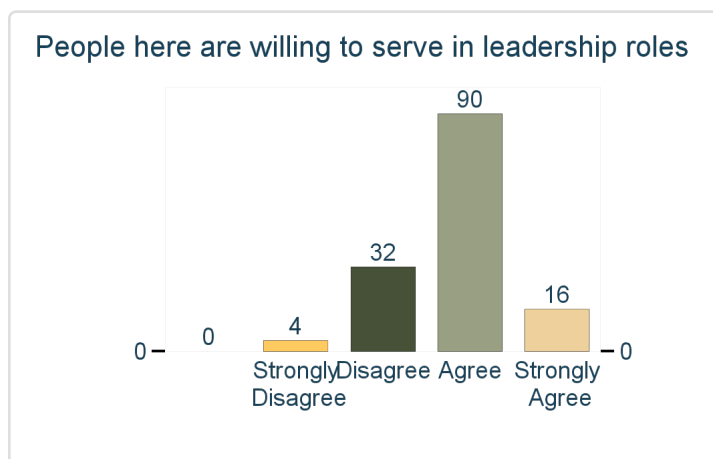
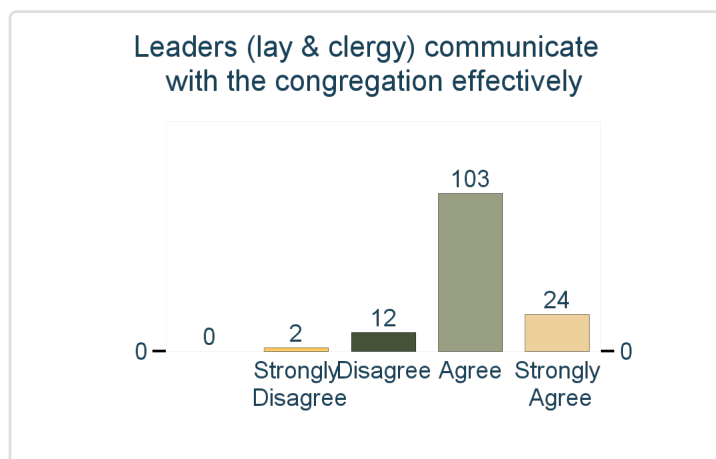


Leadership



A congregation's leadership style refers to both the pastor and its lay leadership. Prior research shows leadership that 'inspires people to take action' is associated with the most vital congregations including congregations that are growing.

The 'leadership style' that has the most negative effect is no style at all. Studies show that congregations with many people who say they are 'not sure' how to describe the leadership usually have lower scale scores. Why are people not sure? It may reflect respondents who are new to the congregation or visiting. The respondents may have little experience beyond worship. There may have been a recent leadership change and people don't know each other, or if it may reflect on a lack of clear, focused leadership.



Leadership's communication with the congregation is key to successful implementation of any strategy.

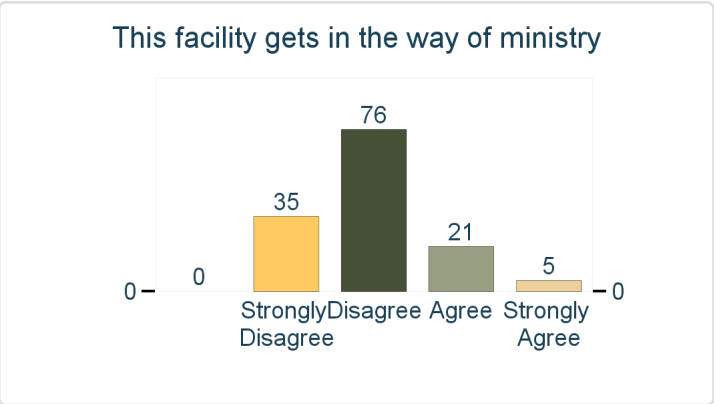
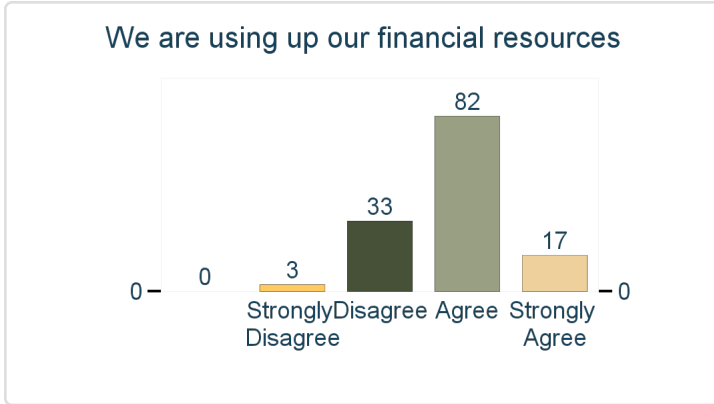
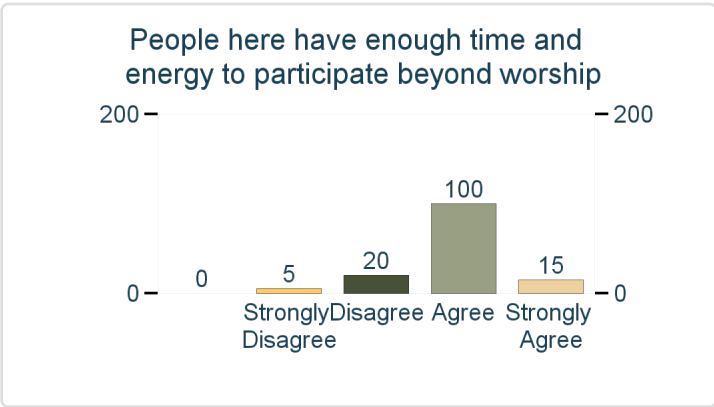
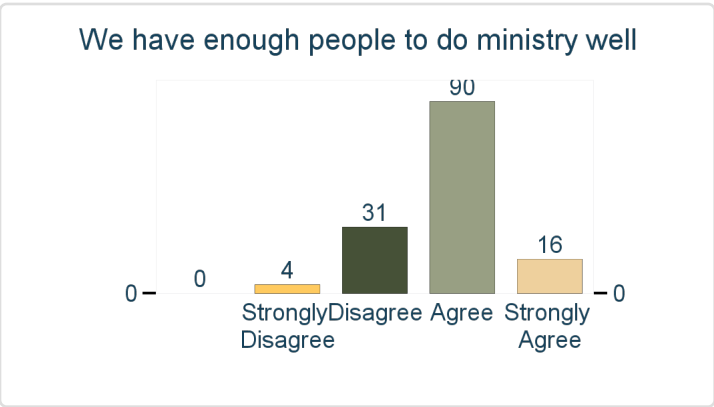
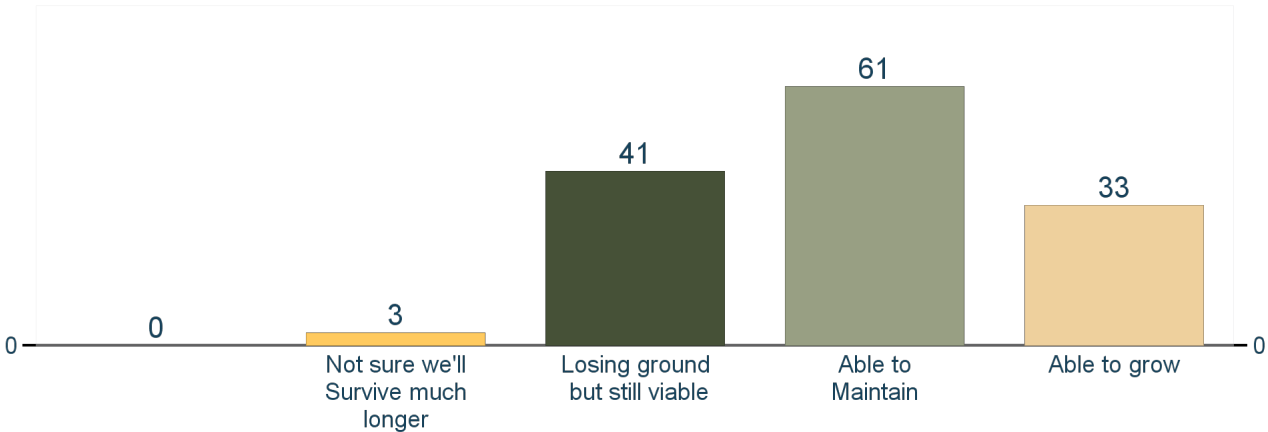
People's willingness to participate in leadership may relate to many factors including their lifestyles, how they are invited, whether their input is really welcome (are new ideas valued and used?), and their perception of whether the specific tasks are worth their time. Research suggests that people are more willing to lead when they can do things they are interested in rather than fill slots for the congregation. How does leadership identify where the energy lies in the congregation? How does your congregation ask potential leaders about their interests? How does leadership inspire new people to act on those



Sustainability

Congregations need resources to continue connecting people with God, each other and the world. Two primary resources include money (to pay for staff, fund ministries and maintain facilities) and people power (to engage in ministries). The vitality asked respondents to rate the congregation's overall sustainability. It also asked specific questions about resources.

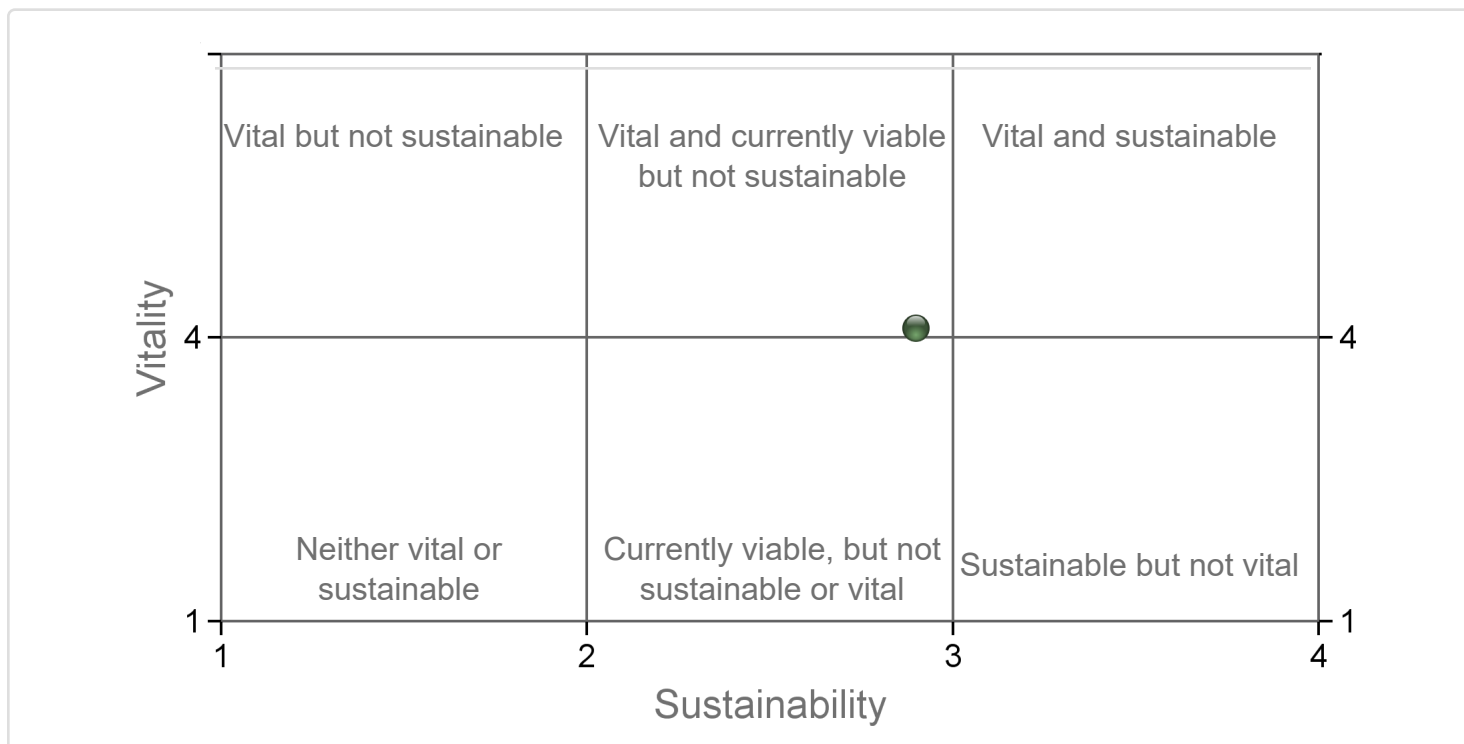
Overall Sustainability





Vitality & Sustainability

The dot on the chart below shows your congregation's overall vitality compared to your sustainability. The vitality score comes from the average of 15 key items that, when combined, show the congregation's overall connections to God, each other and the world. Scores over 4 are considered vital. The sustainability score shows the average from the question about overall sustainability. Average scores over 3 (able to maintain ministry) are considered sustainable. Average Vitality : 4.0 Average Sustainability: 2.9



What does this mean? Identify the box with the dot.

A: Vital but not sustainable: You are focused on God's work but may not have the necessary resources to keep going. Ask God about partnering with another ministry, re-imagining the shape of your ministry or finding another outlet for your spiritual gifts.

B: Vital and currently viable, but not sustainable: You may want to think more creatively about your congregation's structure. Focus on your assets and ask God what is really needed to do mission in your context right now. Are there specific skills you need? Are there partners who can help you?

C: Vital and sustainable: You are on track. Remain flexible and keep focused on the foundational issues (see next page). Address any disagreements with respect and keep God's call front and center.

D: Neither vital or sustainable: Discern whether your congregation has the energy to keep going or if it is time to celebrate your ministry's life and end it with dignity. This allows resources and remaining people to be used by God in other places. Deciding to let go and trust God's promises of resurrection can be a faithful response to God's call.

E: Currently viable, but not sustainable and not vital: Even though you are still viable, you may want to ask what kind of ministry you are hoping to sustain. Is this ministry primarily about sharing God's love with the world, or keeping your close-knit community going? What is God calling you toward? Spiritual discernment is key.

F: Sustainable but not vital: Spiritual renewal is your highest priority. Focus on God's presence and clarify God's call to your congregation. Explore and expand how you love God and your neighbors.



Building Blocks of a vital, sustainable congregation

There are nine areas that impact a congregation's health and vitality, but they are not all equally important. Vital, sustainable congregations must be built up from the bottom along two tracks. The bottom blocks form the foundation of your congregation.

Missional Track: Establishing God's active presence and discerning a clear mission sets the tone for the congregation's culture and attitudes about themselves and their neighbors. Those attitudes lead to programs/activities in the community and the congregation.



Leadership Track: Build capacity and create energy for mission by developing skills in lay and rostered leaders and strengthening relationships throughout the congregation. This leads to improved resource management and ideally, improved resources. Weak relationships and/or low trust can keep congregations from moving forward in mission.

How does your congregation stack up?

Strength in the foundational blocks is important to both vitality and sustainability. Often congregations in decline find that their foundation's blocks are weak. Weak foundations threaten long-term sustainability. Below is a summary of how your congregation rated its foundational blocks.

How your congregation experiences God's presence:

Your result: **22.6%**

Research suggests that transformation is possible when at least 20% of participants experience God as present and active. This score represents the percentage of all respondents who gave the strongest ratings possible for God's active presence in the congregation (pr. 8). Spiritual renewal is a critical first step in congregational renewal and vitality.

Sense of Mission:

Your average mission score from page two: **4.1**

This field summarizes the congregation's sense of mission. Ideally this number will be near 4.5. People in your congregation should be very clear about God's call.

Relationships:

Your result: **82%**

This field shows the percent of respondents who describe a healthy social climate (harmony or respectful disagreements). Ideally this number will be over 80%, but that is not always realistic. When congregation's work toward vitality, it tends to rock the boat and some people struggle. If this number falls below 80% it may be helpful to talk about how you can better engage disagreements more inclusively and respectfully.

Leadership:

Percent of people describing leadership as inspiring: **35%**

Vital, sustainable congregations most often have leadership that inspires others to action. Ideally this number will be over 50%. Review page 9. What kind of leadership does your congregation perceive? If most respondents do not say it is inspiring others to action, consider how to more intentionally engage people in pursuing their spiritual passions.

Resources: See page 10 to understand how your people, money and facility are contributing to your overall sustainability. Consider how the lower blocks are contributing to your current resource situation. If your sustainability is strained and the foundational blocks are weak, they may be at the root of the trouble.

To find resources for each of the building blocks, visit www.congregationalvitalityproject.com Resources tab.

Contact your synod's Director for Evangelical Mission to continue the conversation.

May God bless your upcoming missional conversations!