

# 2017 Planning Survey Results

## Watts Street Baptist Church

### Contents

Executive Summary	1
Missions format/structure	2
Missions Funding	5
Building Priorities	6
Building Funding	8
Communication	10
In Community	11
Looking Ahead	12

### Executive Summary

The Congregational Conversations Coordinating Committee conducted a survey in summer, 2017 to continue the planning process started in November 2016 with small group discussions. Three ad hoc groups have been working in the areas of nurturing our congregational life, exploring relationships with our neighbors, and caring for our church building. This survey gathered thoughts on themes that have emerged thus far in the process. Ninety-six people responded to the survey.

#### Areas of strong agreement:

- We want to build relationships with our neighbors, especially those nearby.
- Addressing unjust systems is a high missions priority.
- Roof repair is the highest building priority to address, and 78% of respondents are willing to increase their giving to help pay for it.

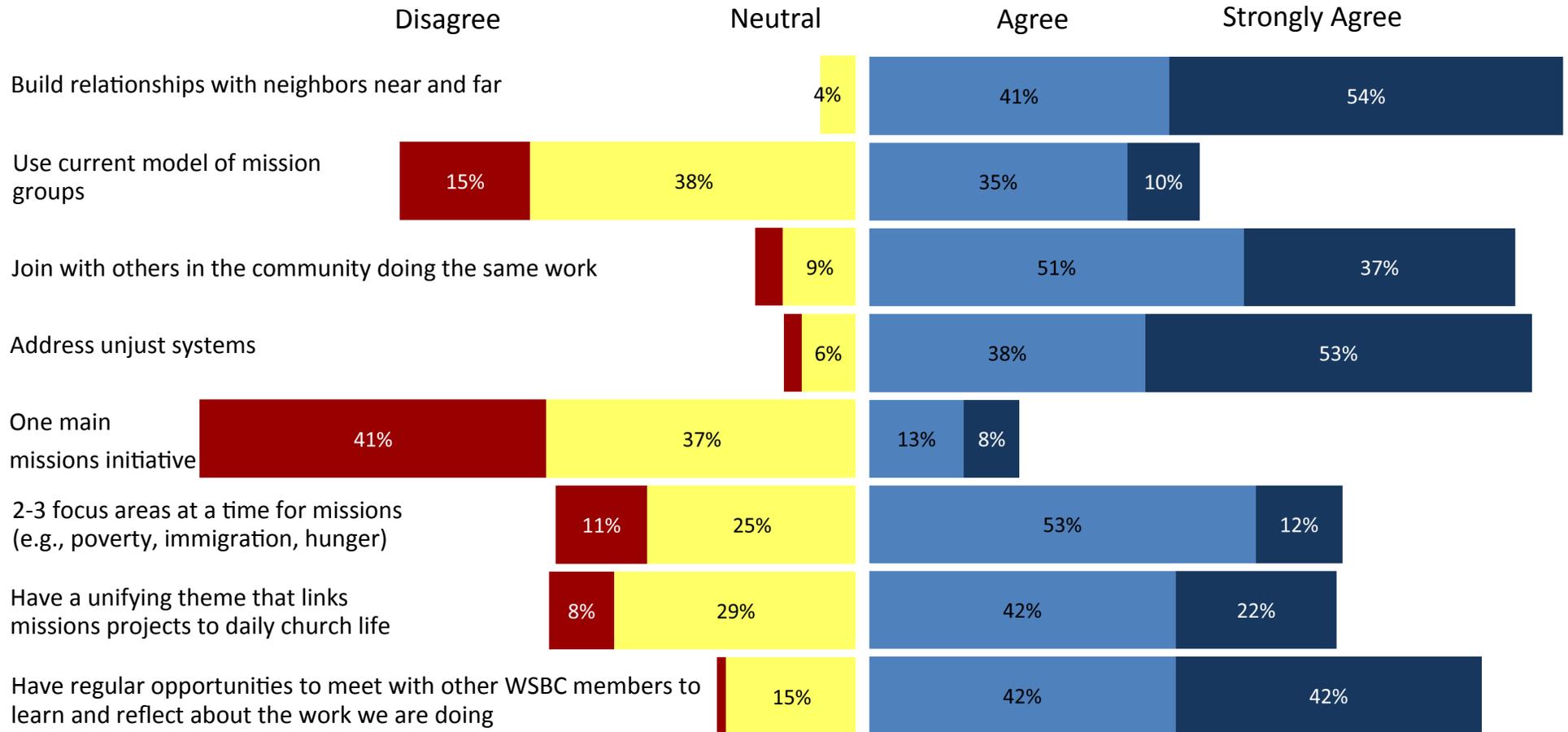
- Building repairs and maintaining systems is more important than making cosmetic upgrades.

#### Areas of majority agreement:

- 54% agree/strongly agree that we should start a conversation about a new fellowship hall/missions center, but most comments on the subject expressed reservations about taking on more expense and maintenance when there are so many needs with the current space.
- Most respondents think it's time to move on from the current goal of 25% of the budget being dedicated to missions and that we should consider a different structure for how to prioritize missions spending.
- After roof repair, top building priorities are replacing the HVAC (heating and cooling) system, safety features such as a fire detection system, and restoring the Good Shepherd window.
- There is strong interest in working to build stronger connections among our members, and while there is no one-size-fits-all approach to doing so, working together on meeting community needs and sharing in spiritual growth work are common desires.
- Members are excited about seeing the results of this planning process and how it will energize the congregation to move forward instead of only maintaining the status quo.

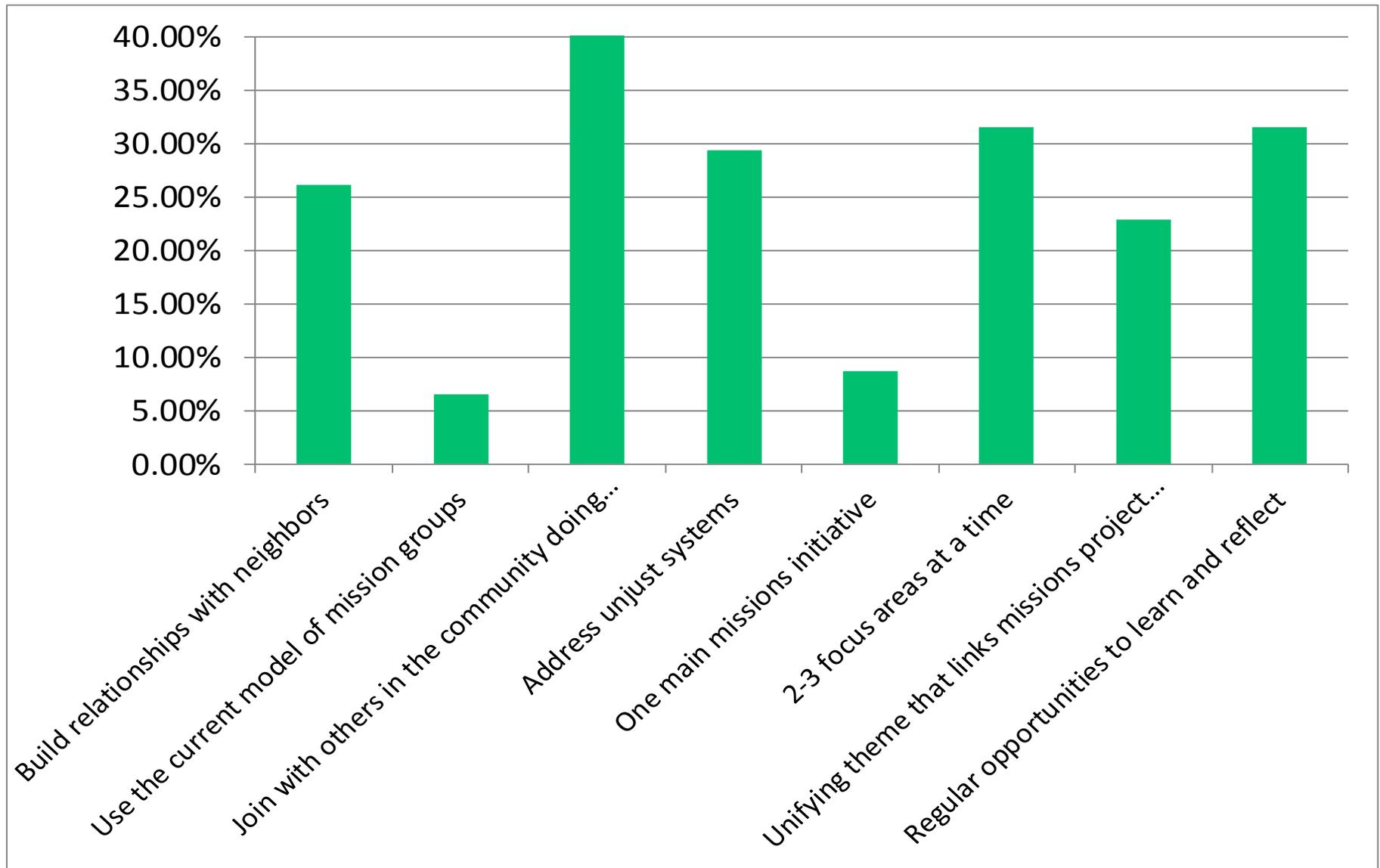
# Structure and Format of Church Missions

Regarding the structure/format of our church's missions, it's very important to...



# Structure and Format of Church Missions

As you consider the items above, what do you consider your top TWO priorities?



# Structure and Format of Church Missions

## SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

### **Build relationships with neighbors near and far**

Building relationships “near” rather than “far” is more important to four commenters. Interfaith relationships are mentioned by two people. Two wondered what is meant by neighbors. Folks would welcome more and deeper connections with other churches, to bridge the economic and racial gap, and as true collaborators (as opposed to a paternalistic approach).

### **Use the current model of mission groups coordinated by the Missions Committee**

Ten commenters think the missions model should be re-examined. Suggestions include coordinating with other committees, engaging more people, and having an overall strategy to identify priorities. Seven are in favor of keeping it as is. Commenters want to ensure there is an outlet for people who feel strongly about something and said that changing the language doesn’t necessarily mean there will be better communication about what’s happening with missions.

### **Join with others in the community doing the same work**

The strongest theme to emerge is joining with other faith communities to broaden the base and learn. This missions strategy has the highest percentage of people choosing it as one of two top priorities.

### **Address unjust systems**

There are six commenters to whom this is a very important calling. They see it as central to the teachings of Jesus and specifically

mentioned working against racism as a goal. One person thinks direct service is more important. Seven commenters think the phrase is too vague and that it may be difficult to agree on what is unjust.

### **Have one main missions initiative for the congregation, or two-three focus areas at a time**

The majority of commenters (15) feel that having just one missions focus at a time is too limiting, unrealistic, and has the potential to pull people away from work about which they are passionate. Even among the supporters for one focus, commenters state that the initiative would need to be multifaceted in order to engage the wider congregation.

When it comes to two-three focus areas at a time, there is broader support. Members feel that extra focus on a few things at a time would increase understanding and engagement.

### **Have a unifying theme that links missions projects to daily church life**

The majority of commenters think a unifying theme already exists, although they didn’t word it in exactly the same way (radical love of Christ, bringing of the kingdom, teachings of Jesus, being a Christian and a member of WSBC). A couple of folks would like to hear more about missions/social justice from church leadership.

### **Have regular opportunities to meet with other WSBC members to learn and reflect about the work we are doing**

Seven commenters enthusiastically support this idea in order to nurture each other for the long haul. Five support the idea but only if it means no additional meetings. Five believe that we already do this, especially through missions groups. One person mentions the need to expand the base of church leaders and increase grass roots decision making.

# Missions Funding

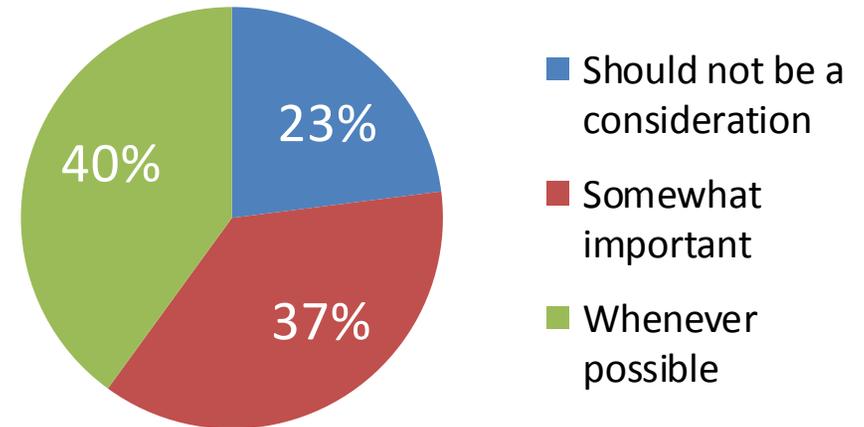
## Missions Budget Percentage and Strategy

Forty-two commenters think it is time to move on from the goal of dedicating 25% of the budget to missions; 31 support the current goal or something similar. For the supporters, a missions strategy that is both deep and wide is appropriate. Many also feel that it's an important and specific statement about serving people outside the church walls.

Of the commenters that are ready to move on, some still favor a specific, but smaller, percentage. Nine suggest diverting money for urgent building needs for a period of time. Eighteen people want us to define missions more broadly to take into account staff time, youth mission trips, in-kind building use, etc. This was a very strong theme throughout the comments, and there is wide support for viewing the budget more holistically.

Ten people mentioned the need to be more strategic or intentional about missions funding, looking at impacts and outcomes. Eight think that members should be more involved. Other preferences are that the strategy should focus on helping those in the immediate community; should allow for future new initiatives; should be transparent; should include partnering with other churches; should be restructured from the ground up. While a few people think that questions around the missions budget cause division, one person states that the tension between internal and external needs leads to "healthy conversation."

## To what extent should there be a personal connection for missions funding?

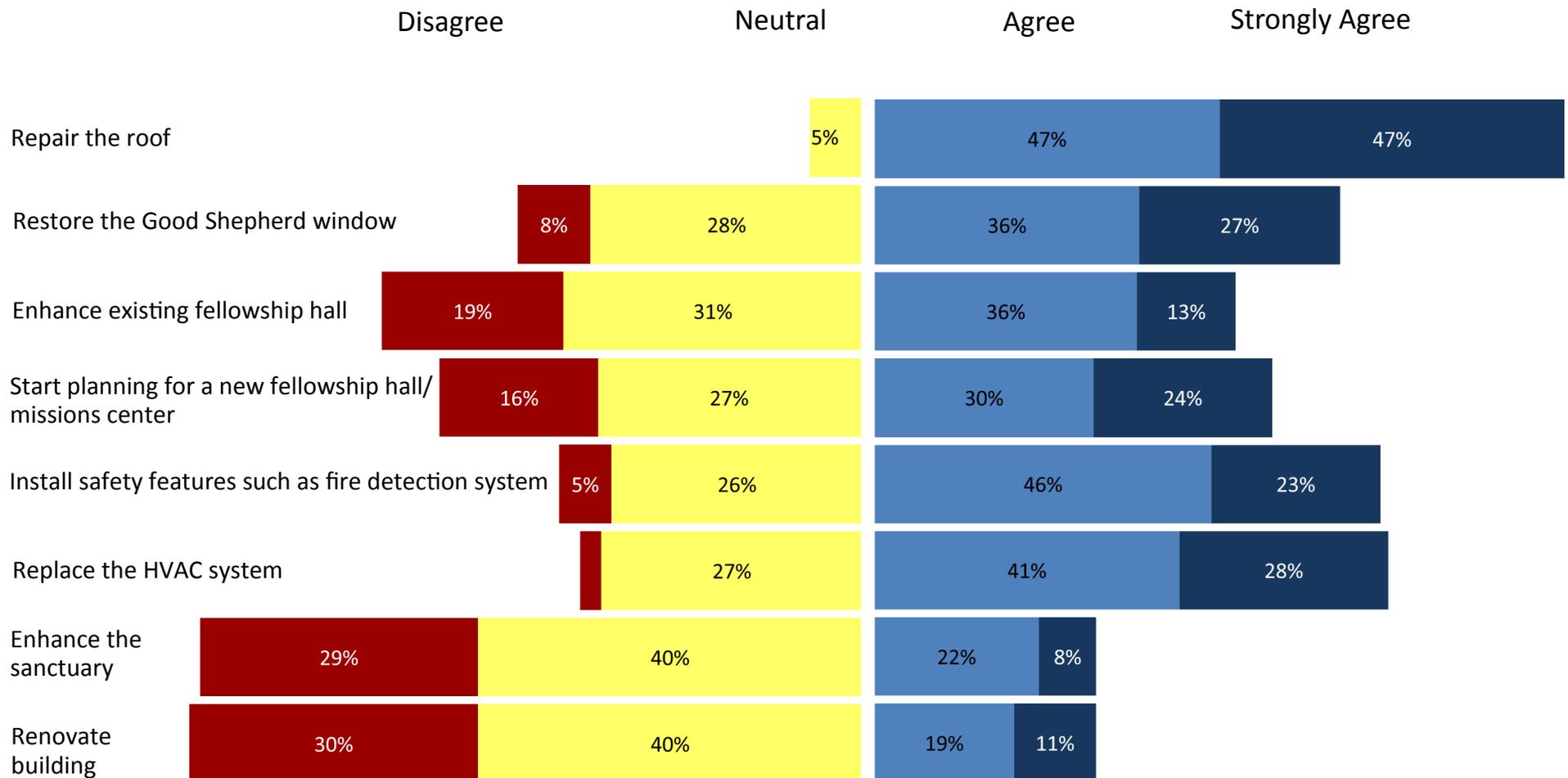


## To what extent should there be a personal connection with a WSBC member in programs the congregation supports with missions funding?

Nine commenters do not think a personal connection is the most important criteria in missions funding. People feel it's too limiting and that we should fund projects that align with our purpose and goals. A couple of people feel that it could spread us too thin if we support projects that are only connected to one or two people in the congregation. Five people say that the personal connection lends valuable insight and helps us prioritize what to fund among all the available options.

# Building Priorities

When thinking about our church building, a high priority in the next three years should be to...



# Building Priorities

## Roof repair

Ninety-four percent of responders agree or strongly agree that roof repair is a high priority in the next three years. Zero disagree. The comments further support this result. Sixteen people spoke in favor of repairing the roof. Nine people either wanted more information about the urgency of this need or said they would trust Building and Grounds members to guide the process. Three people said the roof should be repaired rather than replaced.

## Good Shepherd Window repair

Sixty-three percent agree/strongly agree that repairing this window is a priority, but the comments reveal that people do not know enough about the needed repairs. Most commenters are unclear on how bad it is and if it can wait. Six peoples' comments spoke strongly in favor of not waiting to repair this treasured asset.

## Enhancing Current Fellowship Hall

While acknowledging the need for a space with better acoustics, food preparation, and food serving, the majority of folks do not see a path to enhancing the current fellowship hall.

## New Fellowship Hall/Mission Center

Over half of survey respondents agree/strongly agree that we need to start planning for a new fellowship hall/missions center in the next three years. However, the comments revealed deep reservations about affordability, need, and trends toward shrinking churches. People want to hear more and cite the need for a deep, serious, church-wide conversation.

## Safety Features such as Fire Detection

People are in favor of safety features, but want to hear more on what is needed and why. Sixty-nine percent agree/strongly agree that safety features are a building priority, but it is clear from the comments that people don't understand what we already have, what is missing, and what kind of assessment has been done to state the needs.

## Replace the HVAC (Heating and Cooling) System

Respondents support replacing systems as needed based on expert recommendations. There are questions about urgency and efficiency. One person suggested contacting NC Interfaith Power and Light about possible funding resources.

## Enhance the Sanctuary

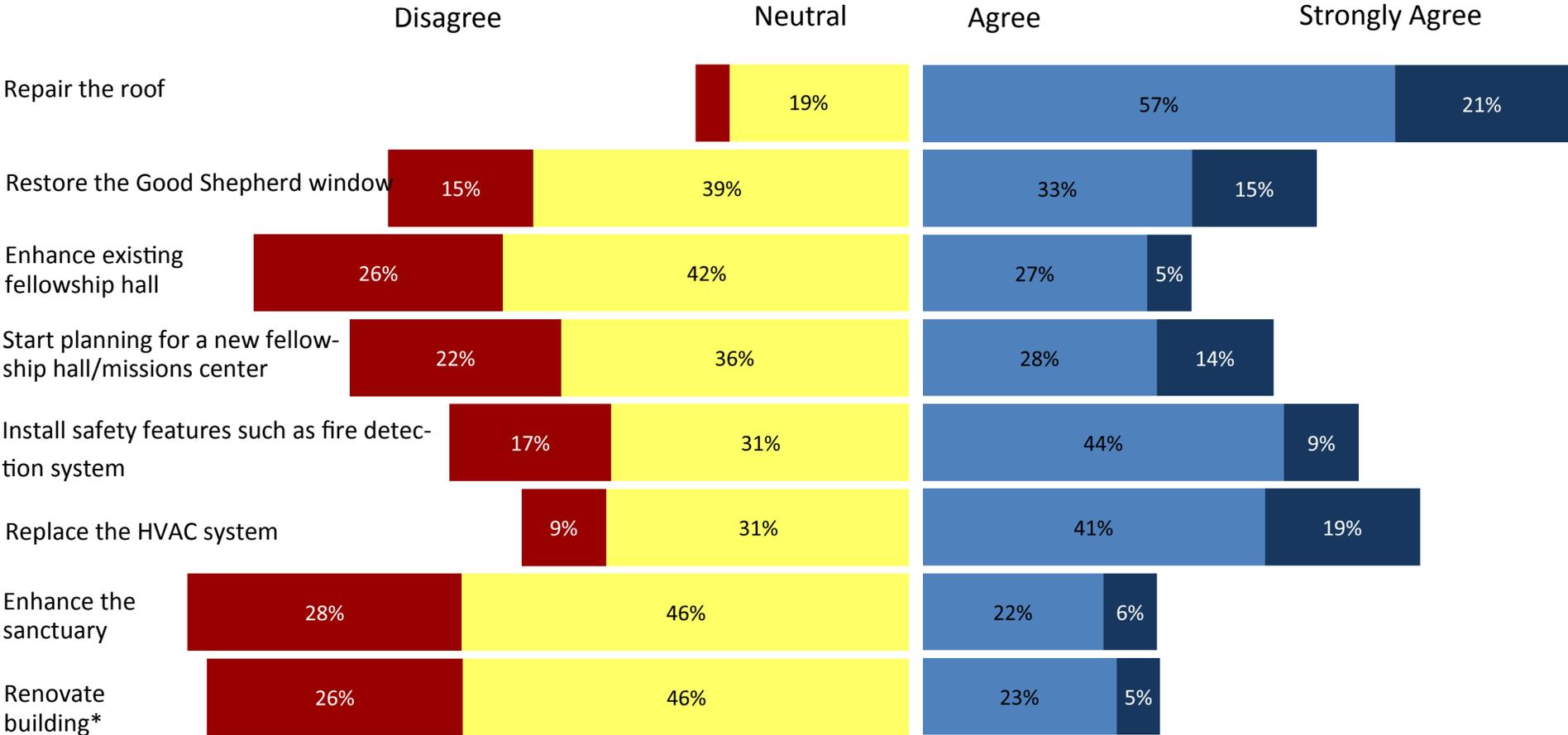
Improvements to the sanctuary are far less of a priority to most people than other building needs. People love the beauty, history, and simplicity of the sanctuary. Of the commenters that are in support of enhancements, new paint and expanding the choir loft were mentioned most often. Individuals also want to make the baptistery more central, upgrade the sound system, and open up the front for more flexible space. One person thought some of these can be volunteer projects.

## Renovate Using Existing Footprint

There is no strong support for renovating the building using the existing footprint, unless some church mission or process revealed a strong need for it.

# Building Funding

I would be willing to increase my financial giving to pay for these building projects:



\* Using existing building footprint

# Building Funding

## Giving

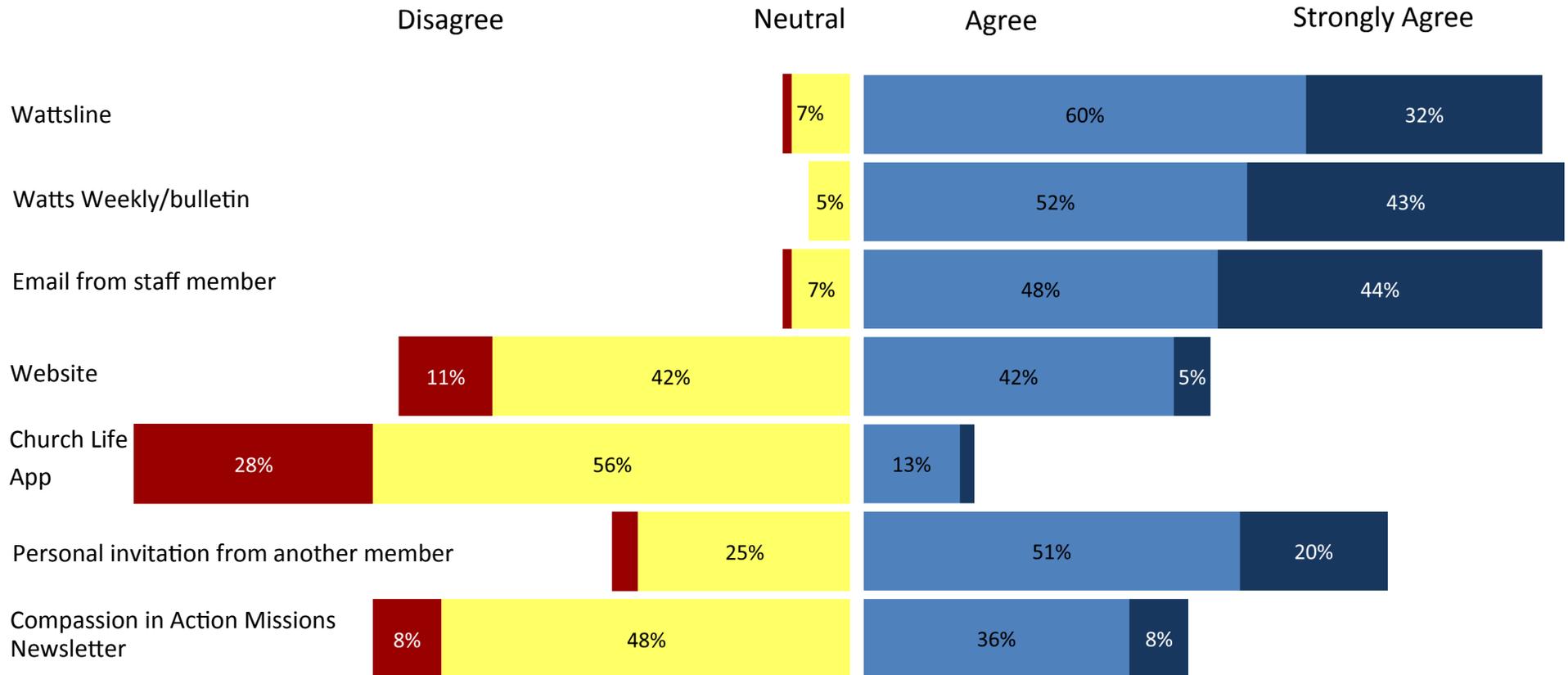
People approach giving differently and will not necessarily increase their overall giving to support specific building, program, or mission needs. However, 78% specifically said they agree/strongly agree that they would be willing to increase giving to support roof repair. Replacing the HVAC was the only other building item to see strong support, followed by safety.

## Building Funding Strategy

There is strong agreement that members want a safe, functional building that helps the church further its mission and values. The majority want to see needed maintenance and repair items that protect the integrity of the building completed as soon as possible. Many people said we need to develop a capital improvement plan with a timeline in order to plan for the big ticket items. Folks want to be realistic about money we think we can raise and to be cautious about taking on debt. Throughout the survey comments, people expressed a hope that the entire congregation would be energized to participate in decision making and helping to bring these planning efforts to fruition.

# Communication

The communication methods below are an effective way to receive information about the life of the church.

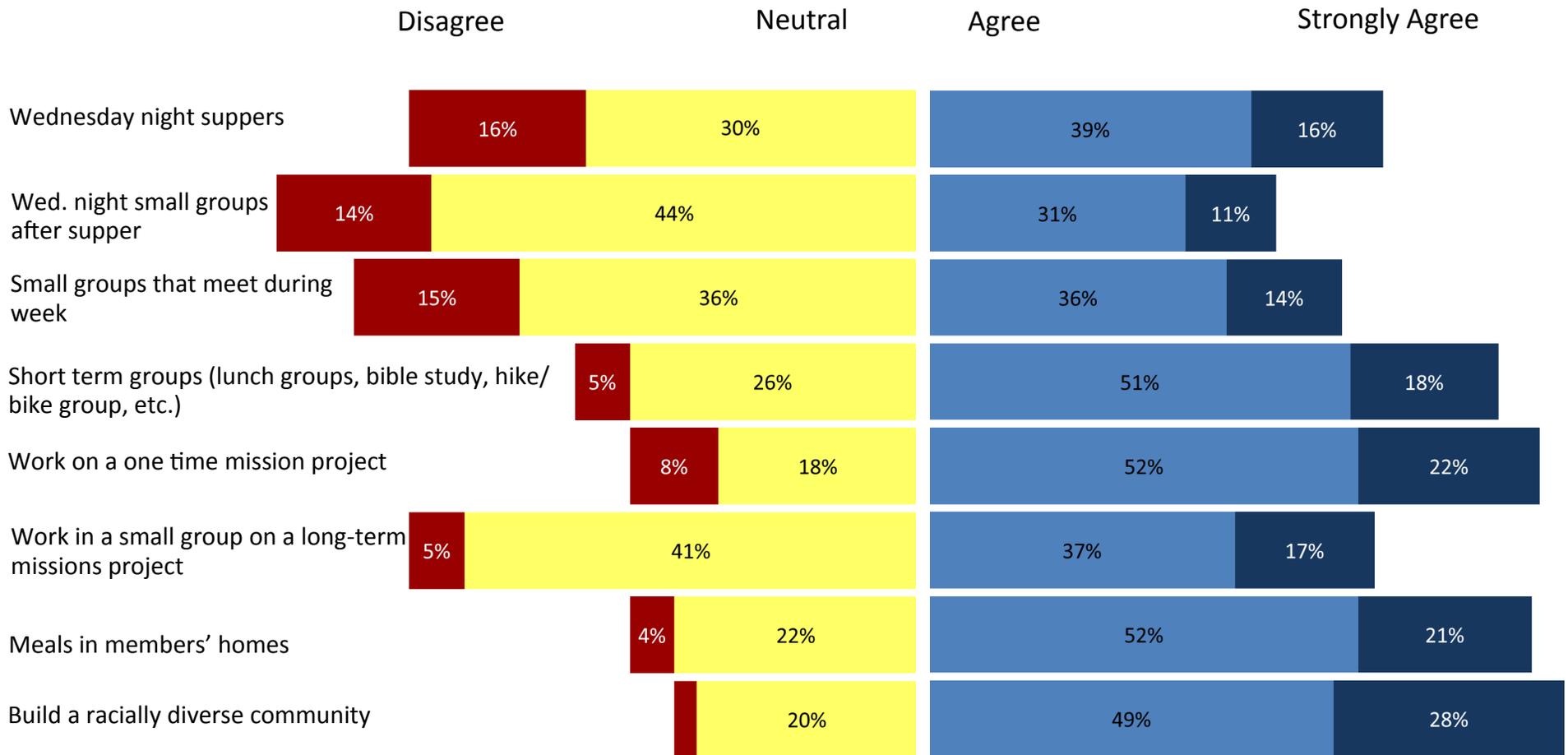


## Communications Suggestions

- Website is good. Put teasers in Watts Weekly to drive people there. Post the Weekly. Keep calendar up to date.
- There is interest in listservs—both informal, member-to-member to facilitate gatherings and topic-specific for more frequent communication.
- More social media
- Better coordinate all communications
- Announce things on Sundays whenever possible
- Better promote the Church Life App. People don't know what it is and how it works.

# In Community with Each Other

## How I would like to connect with others:



## Comments Summary

Seven people think Wednesday night suppers are inaccessible due to time (too early) and the noise level in the fellowship hall. While the survey indicates support for working for racial diversity, commenters have a lot to say about the difficulty of that task, since it

likely means a change in staff, worship style, music, and theology. Other suggestions include building community through mission groups and church work days. Folks also would like to gather more often in members' homes over a meal.

## In Community with Each Other

### **What inhibits fuller participation in church? Is there anything that can be addressed?**

Being too busy / not having enough time is the overwhelming response to this question. Remedies are not apparent since many have busy lives both in- and outside of church. Some suggested varying the time that activities are held, for example having activities after worship on Sunday or establishing a mission group that meets on the weekend instead of on weeknights. Another common response, noted by eight commenters, is the presence of defined social groups. Members tend to gravitate towards their same groups of friends, making it harder to integrate people who are outside these groups. Suggestions include having activities that create connections that aren't already present, including a wider variety of people onto church committees and even just changing pews on Sunday morning. Four commenters note the noisiness of the Fellowship Hall makes events there unpleasant and suggest improving that aspect. Three people note that they do not drive at night, due to age. And, one commenter believes that our vibrancy needs a boost to re-energize our congregation.

### **Considering all the ways we are in community together, the biggest unmet need as I see it is...**

Four commenters think that we need to do better with diversity in our membership. A few think that we need to pursue increasing membership numbers in an active way. Seventeen responders would like to see us make stronger connections among members. This might include learning about how other's gifts can be used in the church, having an on-boarding program for new members to help them find their places in the church, and organizing casual social

gatherings. Five people would like to see spiritual discovery and growth take a larger role in church life, not just a part of a Sunday school class. One of those suggests that we take opportunities to reflect on our life stories more. Four commenters express interest in having more activities for people who don't have children and are not retired, while three others want to see children and youth have more opportunities to participate with the rest of the congregation.

## Looking Ahead

### **The thing that most excites me about the next 3 years in our church life is...**

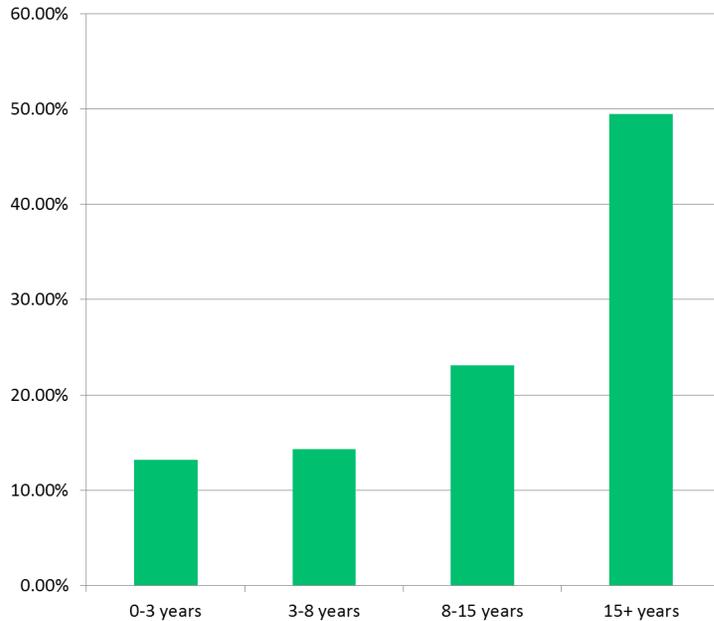
Discovering the results of this planning process and acting upon them are mentioned by 19 of the survey respondents, and six people are excited to come together with others to be more involved in the life of the church. Eight commenters look forward to having focused opportunities to work with mission activities in the local community and make connections there with different populations.

### **The thing that most worries me about the next 3 years in our church life is...**

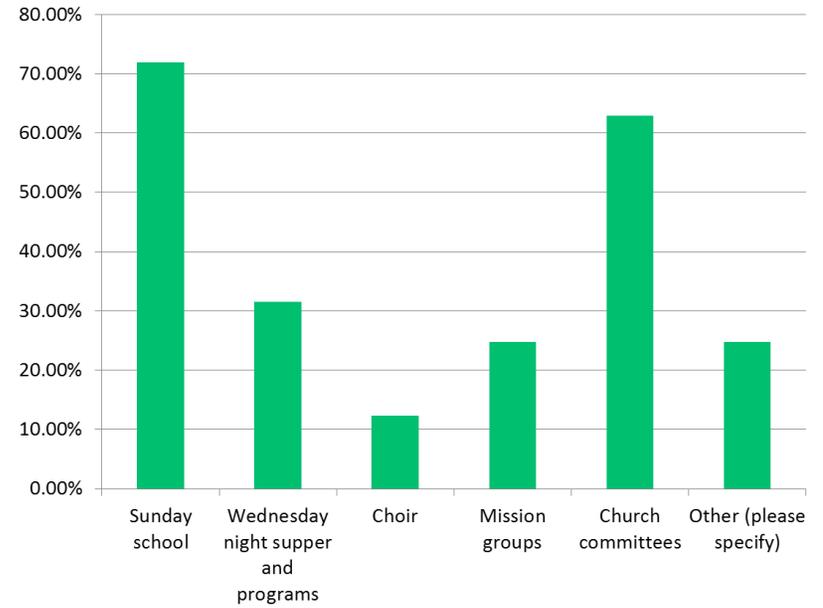
Answers to this question centered around 2-3 related topics. Seventeen responders are worried that we will not commit to change, instead relying on how we have always done things. Twelve people fear that we will have a lack of momentum to enact change. Eleven people have a concern about meeting budget needs, and another 11 have a concern about meeting building needs. Three commenters noted that continuing to build membership is a worry, and five are concerned about our ability to adapt and create connections with the diversity that surrounds us. One responder is concerned over our connection to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and its association with LGBT discriminatory practices.

# Who Took the Survey?

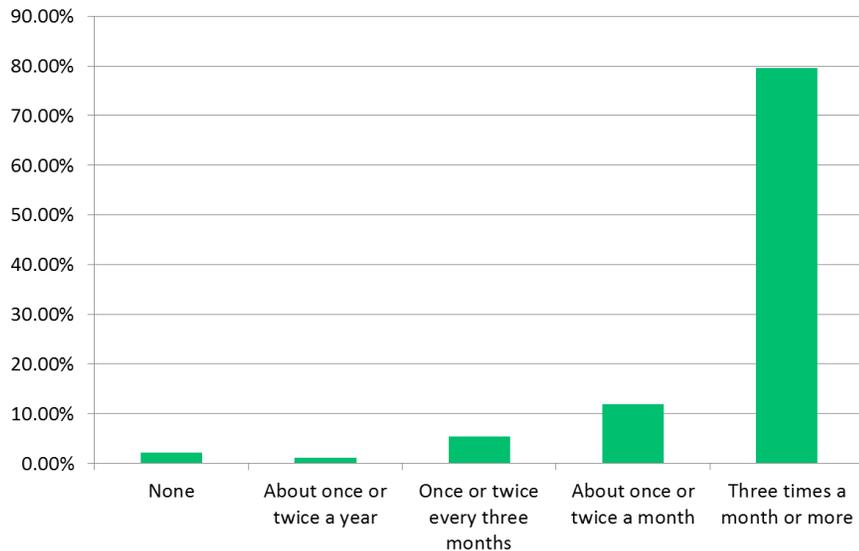
I have been a member or friend of the church for



Besides worship, which of the following do you participate in regularly? (Check all that apply.)



On the average, about how many times have you attended church worship services during the past year?



Age?

