

Session 1

The Australian Community and the Australian Church: Work from the National Church Life Surveys

For Grafton Clergy Conference
3rd February, 2023

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www.ncls.org.au





LISTEN TO EVERY
voice

Session 1

Insights into the mission context

SEE EMERGING
trends

Features of the Church Landscape

FOCUSED ON THE
future

About The Australian church

With a focus on Anglicans

UNDERSTAND THE BIG
picture

Session 2

Gaining insights from National Church
Life Surveys



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SEE EMERGING
trends

FOCUSED ON THE
future

UNDERSTAND THE BIG
picture

A Question to consider

What are the main trends you've seen in people's attitudes towards church, faith (based on the media or your own experiences)?

What are the main opportunities?



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SEE EMERGING
trends

FOCUSED ON THE
future

UNDERSTAND THE BIG
picture

Grafton stats

5,000 Anglicans in the 2016 census, 4,000 in 2021

- (about 1 in 5) people

By proportion, higher than the rest of Aust (about 1 in 10).

About 1 in 20 Anglicans regularly attend church in Aust.

Perhaps slightly more attend in Grafton.



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Insights into the mission
context



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About Australian Community Surveys

The Australian Community Survey has been run by NCLS Research & partners in 1998, 2002, 2009, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

NCLS Research aims to provide a picture of social attitudes, religion, spirituality, and wellbeing in Australian communities.



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More than half (56%) of Australians say they are familiar with the Christian faith.

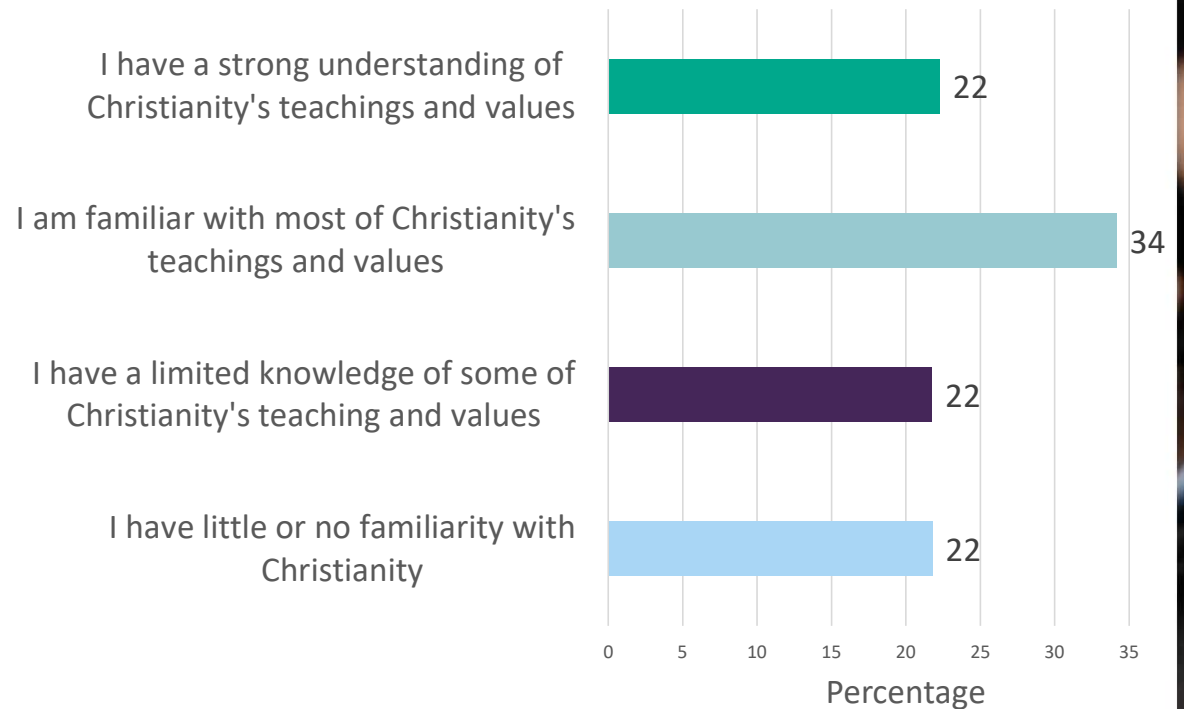
44% have limited, little or no familiarity



Strong understanding or familiar with most of Christianity's teaching and values

18-34 yrs	35-49 yrs	50-64 yrs	65+ yrs
56%	50%	55%	67%

How familiar are you with the teachings and values of the Christian faith?

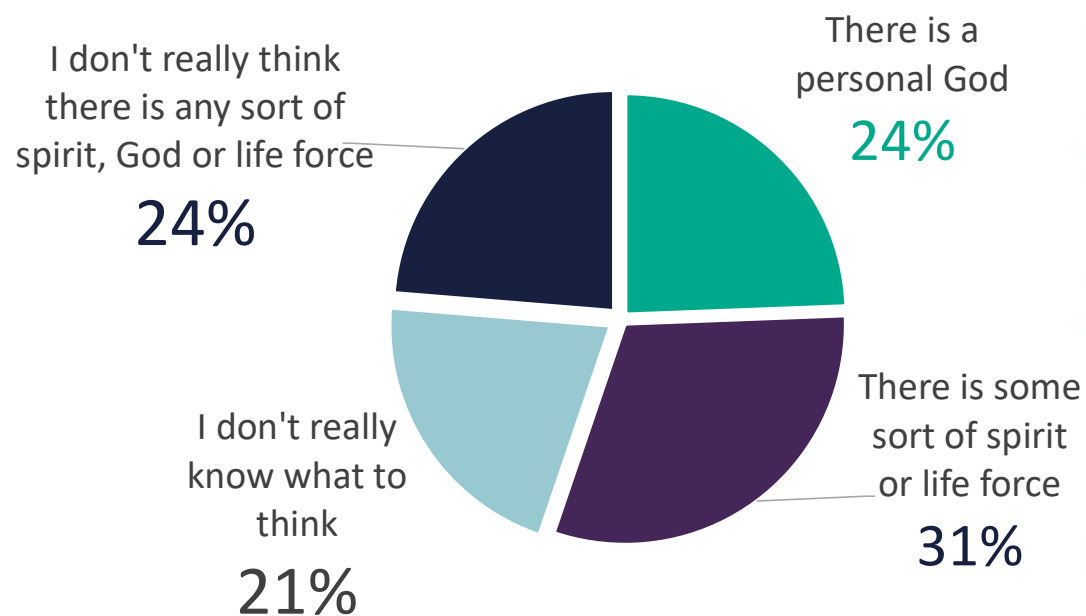


Source: 2021 Australian Community Survey run by NCLS Research (n = 1,286)

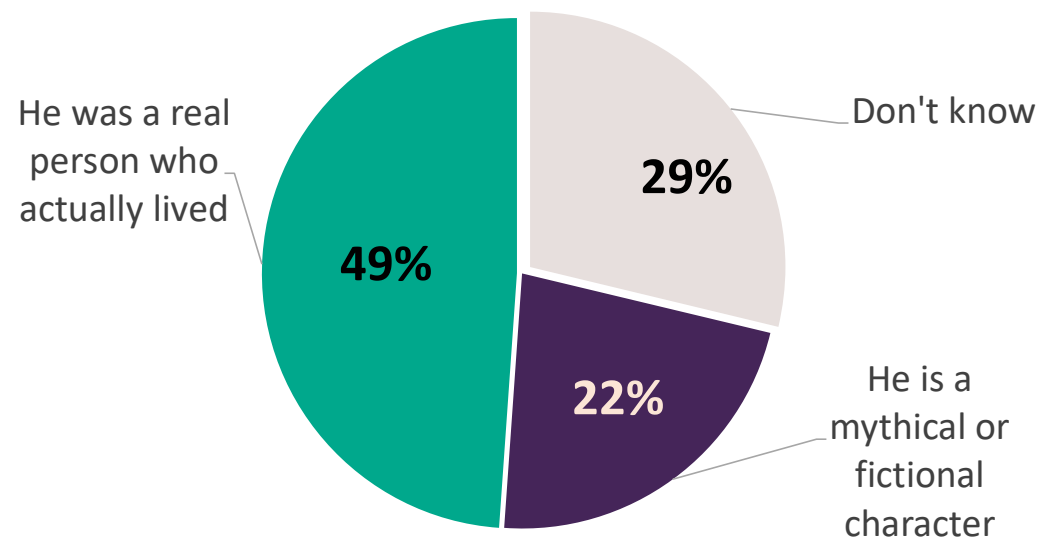
More than half believe in God, or higher power.
One in five don't know.
A quarter do not believe.

Belief about God

Which of these statements comes closest to your belief?

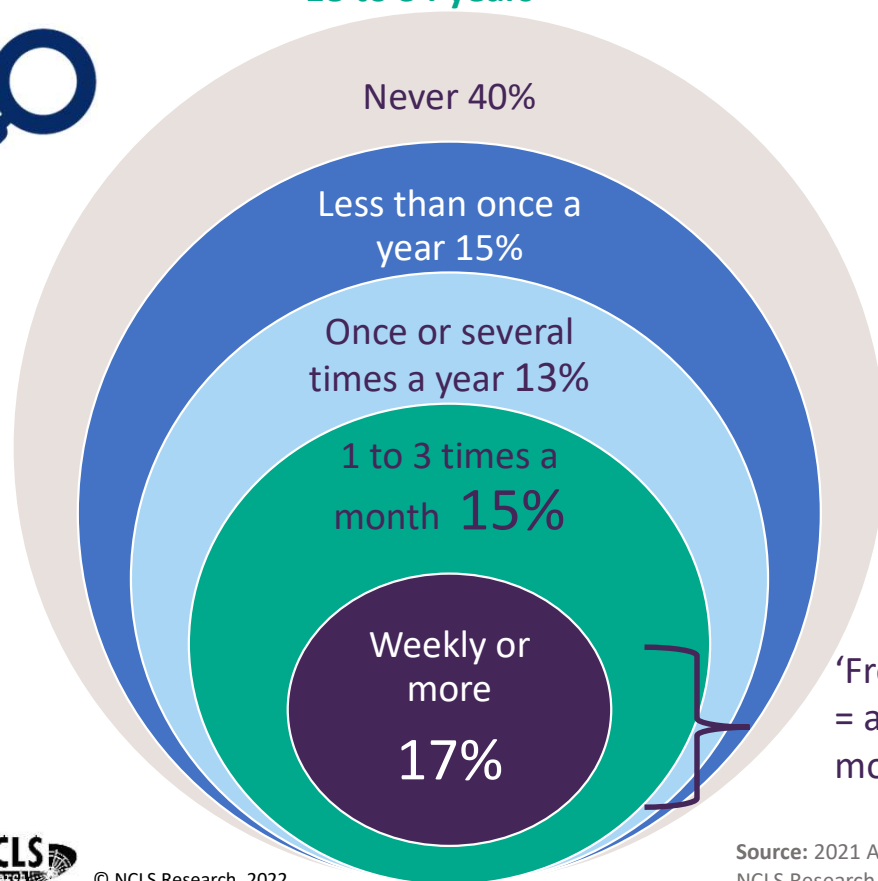


**Only half of all
Australians understand
Jesus to be a real person
who actually lived.**



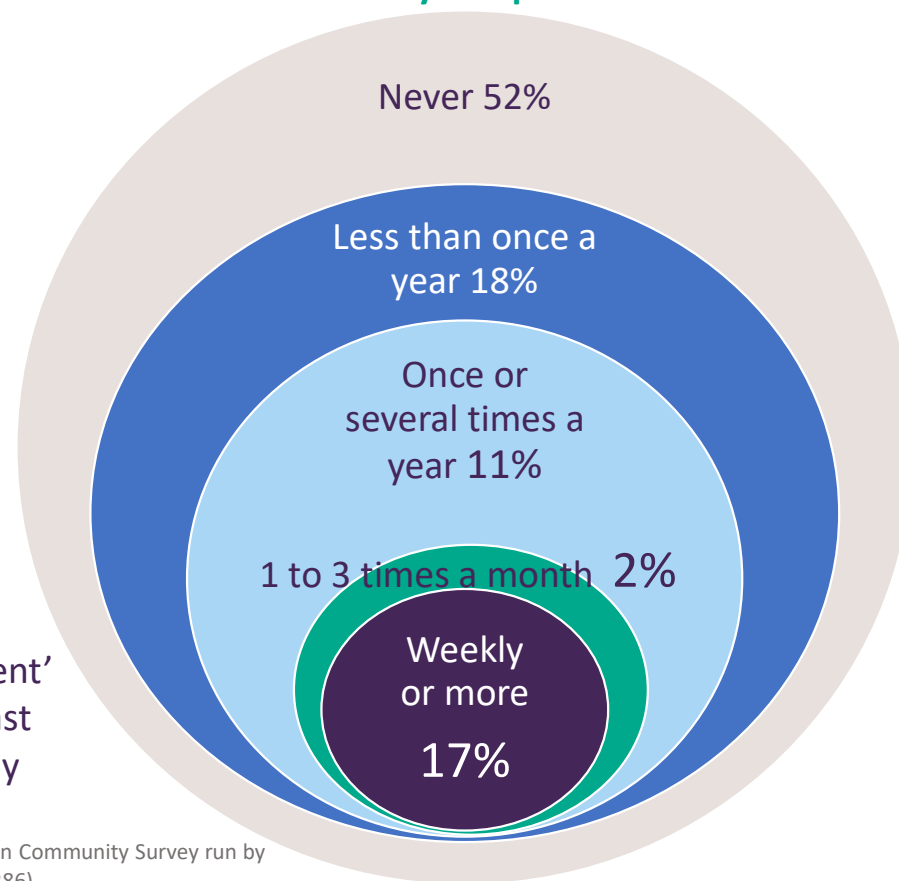
Frequent religious service attendance by age

18 to 34 years



'Frequent'
= at least
monthly

65 years plus



© NCLS Research, 2022

Source: 2021 Australian Community Survey run by
NCLS Research (n = 1,286)

Open to getting involved in church

Tried church in past five years?

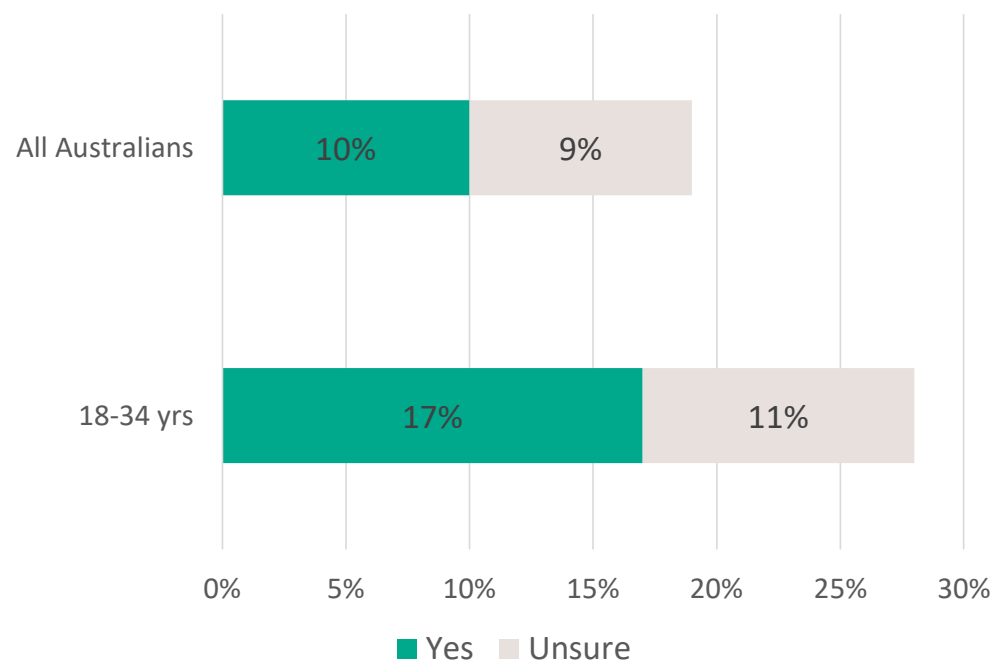
Two in 10 Australians may have tried to get involved in church in the past five years.

Three in ten 18 to 34 year olds may have tried.



© NCLS Research, 2022

Within the last five years, have you ever gone to a Christian church and been open to getting involved, but decided not to get involved?



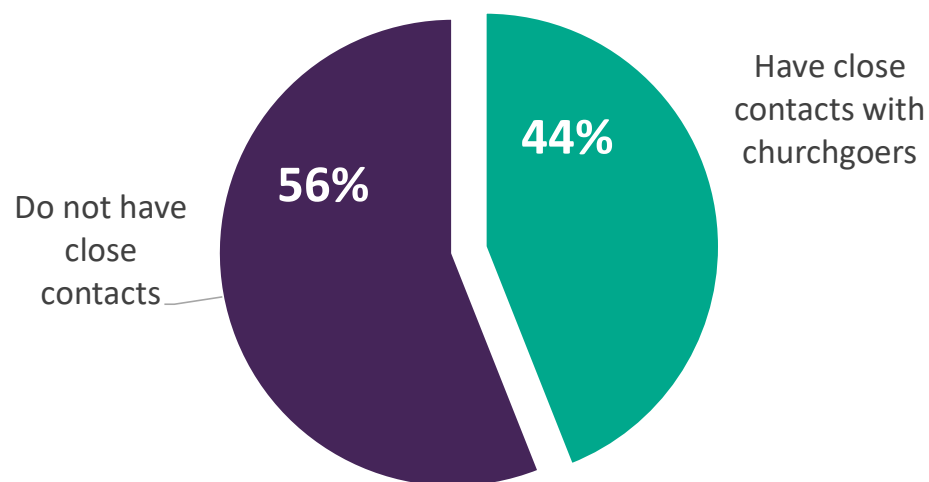
Source: 2021 Australian Community Survey run by NCLS Research (n = 1,286)

Three in ten

Australians are likely to go to church if invited by close friends and family

Relationship matters much more than anything else – but 56% do not have close contacts.

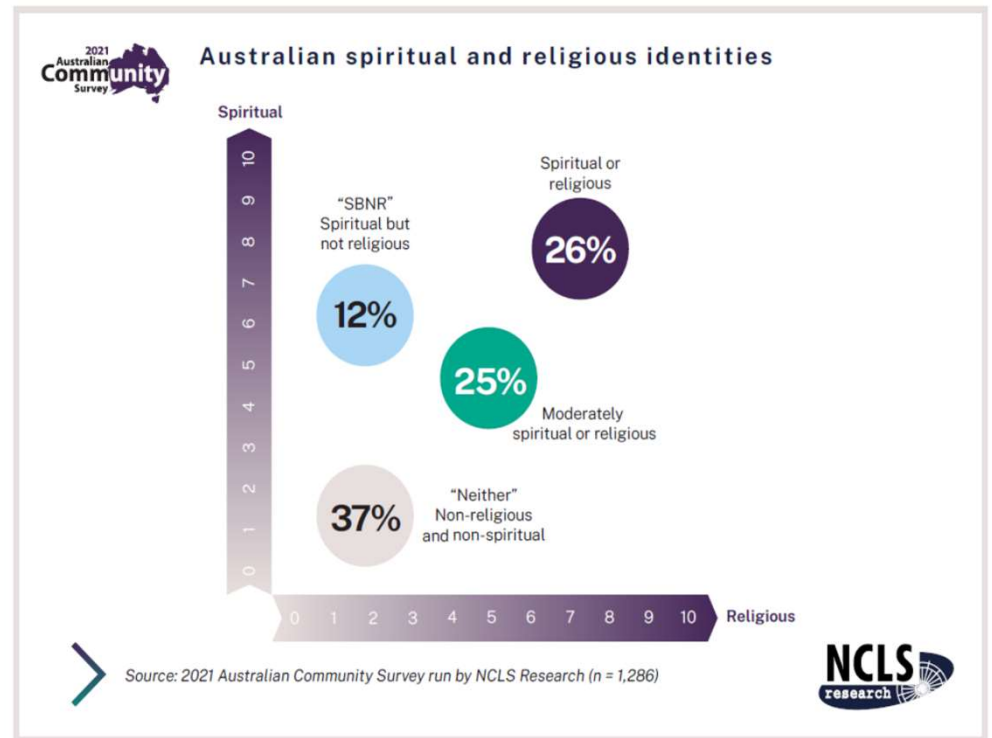
Close friends or family who attend church



Four clusters* of Australians

1. 'Religious and Spiritual'
 - people who are practising
2. 'Moderately religious and spiritual' – non-practising
3. 'Spiritual but not religious',
4. 'Neither religious nor spiritual'.

*Based on cluster analysis and indicative of four general approaches to religion and spirituality in Australia.



Why accept? **Relationships**, **curiosity** and **connection**

The most commonly given reasons were:

1. To support or affirm their friend or family member, for example:

"I would attend because it is important to the person who invited you, otherwise they wouldn't have invited you."

2. Curious about attending, or open to trying something new or different:

"I would accept as I like to be open minded."

3. Appreciated the idea of connecting with other people at church:

"It's a nice social experience if you go to church and mingle with and get to know other people."

Why decline? **Negative, no interest, non-religious**

The most salient reasons were:

1. Negative attitudes or feelings towards churches and/or Christianity:

“Out-dated and the reputation of the church has been tarnished for a long time due to paedophilia by the clergy.”

2. Attending a service did not interest them or was a waste of time:

“I have no real interest in attending religious services”; “...Could use my time better elsewhere.”

3. Not religious or spiritual identity or practices

“I do not believe in any religious figure, and nor do I participate in anything that has to do with religion.”

O.K., O.K., apart from a close network of friends, a sense of purpose, identity & value that it offers; putting aside the great scope for personal growth; ignoring the options available for exploring my relationship with God and contributing to my wider community;



WHAT ON EARTH
HAS MY CHURCH
DONE FOR ME??

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Australia Society – how it is changing

- Do less people go to church now?

By count, slightly, but by percentage of pop., yes, very much.

- Do many people still pray?

Yes, 30% pray (or meditate) once a week.

- Do many people believe in the supernatural?

Yes, over half have experience, or are open to it

Australia Society – how it is changing

BUT

- **Belief in God is going down**
Now a quarter of pop. Another 30% believe in some sort of 'spirit' or 'life force'.
- **Openness to spirituality doesn't give it first place**
- **Australians looking for spirituality, not religion**

Australia Society – how it is changing

These are the tectonic plates we are standing on

- Less people go to church now. *By %, yes, very much.*
- Belief in God is going down
- Openness to spirituality doesn't give it first place
- Australians looking for spirituality, not religion

Australia Society – how it is changing

If you were able to start again with today's Australians and had no limitations...

What would you do differently?

The groups that are growing are those most able to respond to that question

Opportunities?

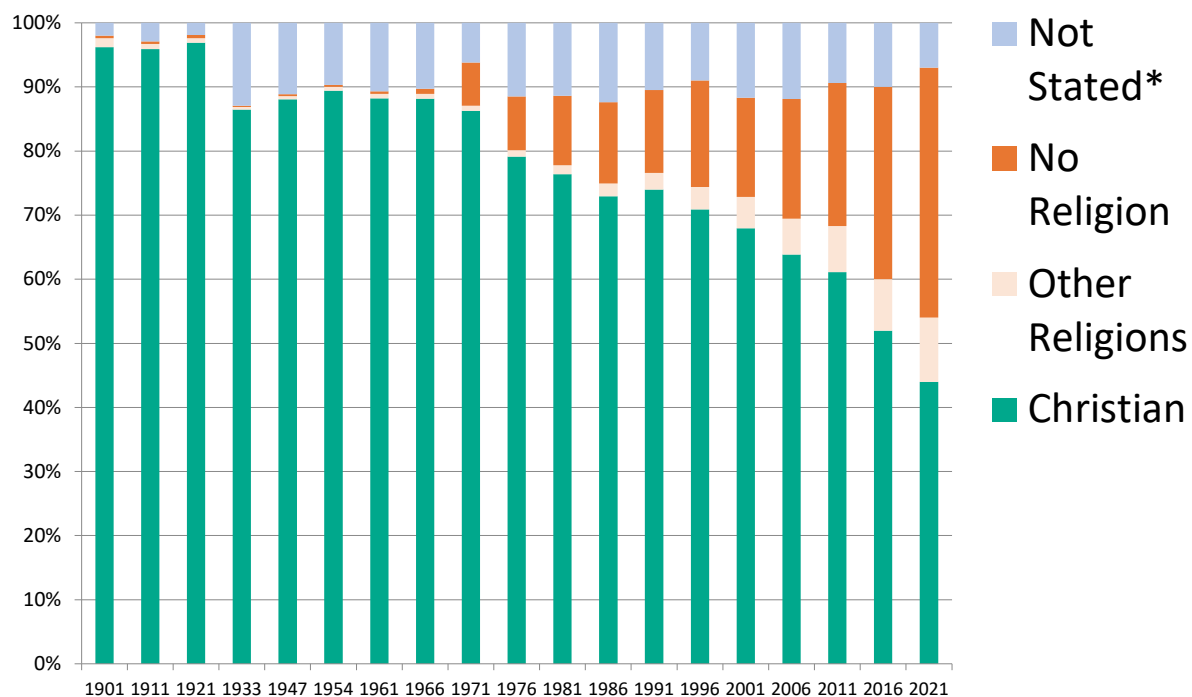
- Many Australians are looking for meaningful spirituality
- Educate people on who Jesus is, why He has been so influential
- Show meaning and answers society is longing for
- Show the opportunity for community

SEE EMERGING *trends*

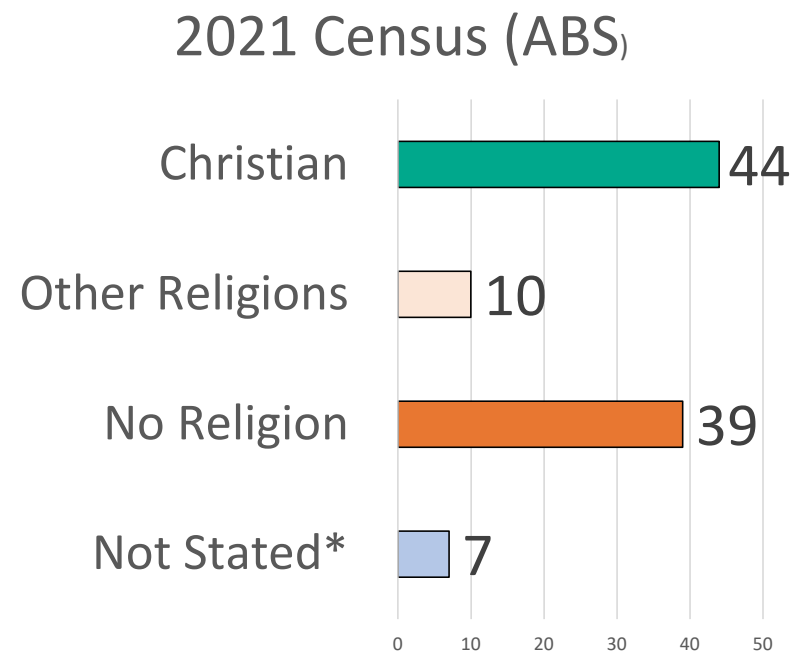
An overview of the church
landscape and the place of
Anglicans



Religious affiliation



Source: National Census of Population and Housing: Australian Bureau of Statistics

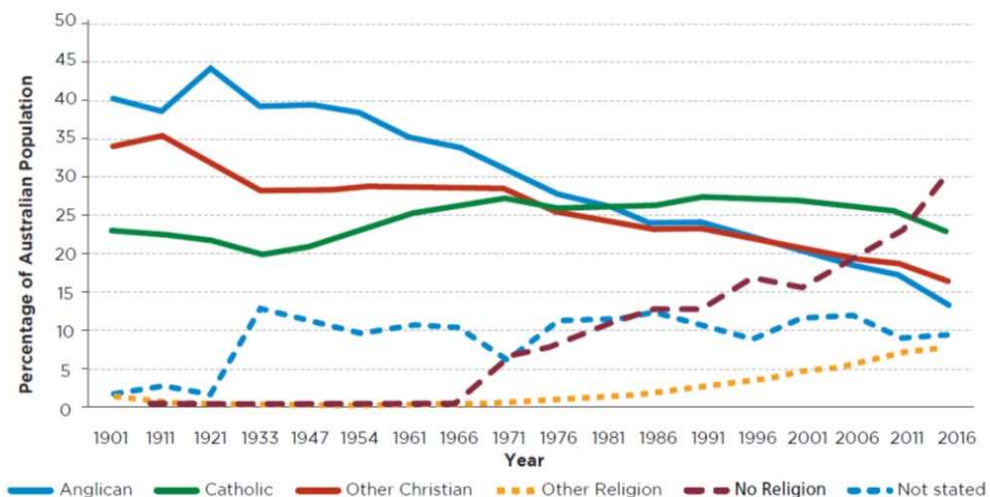


Religious affiliation

Religious affiliation has declined over the past century.

‘No religion’ has increased and was the largest group in the 2016 and 2021 National Census

Figure: Religious affiliation of Australians by denomination: 1901 to 2016



Anglican religious affiliation among Australians has declined

Table 3.1: Denominational affiliation of Australians: 1981 to 2016

	Year							
	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Anglican	26.1	23.9	23.8	22	20.7	18.7	17.1	13.3
Baptist	1.3	1.3	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5
Catholic	26	26.1	27.3	27	26.6	25.8	25.3	22.6
Churches of Christ	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2
Lutheran	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	0.7
Eastern Orthodox	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.1
Pentecostal	0.5	0.7	0.9	1	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Presbyterian and Reformed Churches	4.4	3.6	4.3	3.8	3.4	3	2.8	2.3
Salvation Army	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2
Seventh Day Adventist		0.3		0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Uniting Church	8.2	7.6	8.2	7.5	6.7	5.7	5	3.7
Other Christian	4.1	3.8	2	1.8	2.7	2.4	4.5	4.2
Christian total	76.4	73	74	70.9	68.0	63.9	61.1	52.1

* Religious affiliation is coded to the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups, Second Edition
Source: ABS data, Census of Population and Housing

Religious service attendance

There has been a decline in self reported religious service attendance and weekly church attendance. However, both had slowed (pre-pandemic)

Figure: Self-reported monthly religious service attendance in Australia: 1950 to 2018

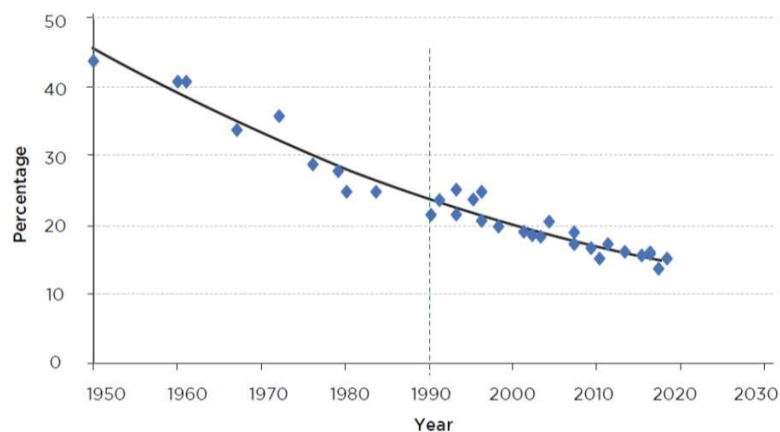
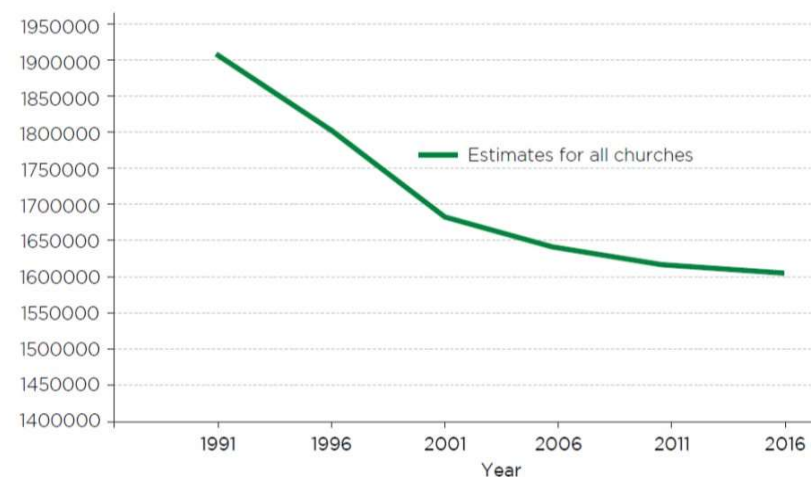
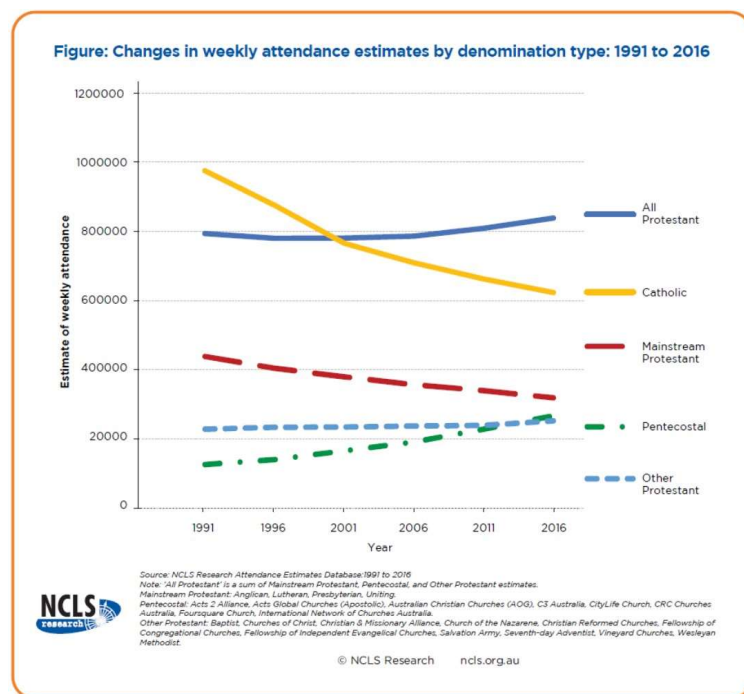


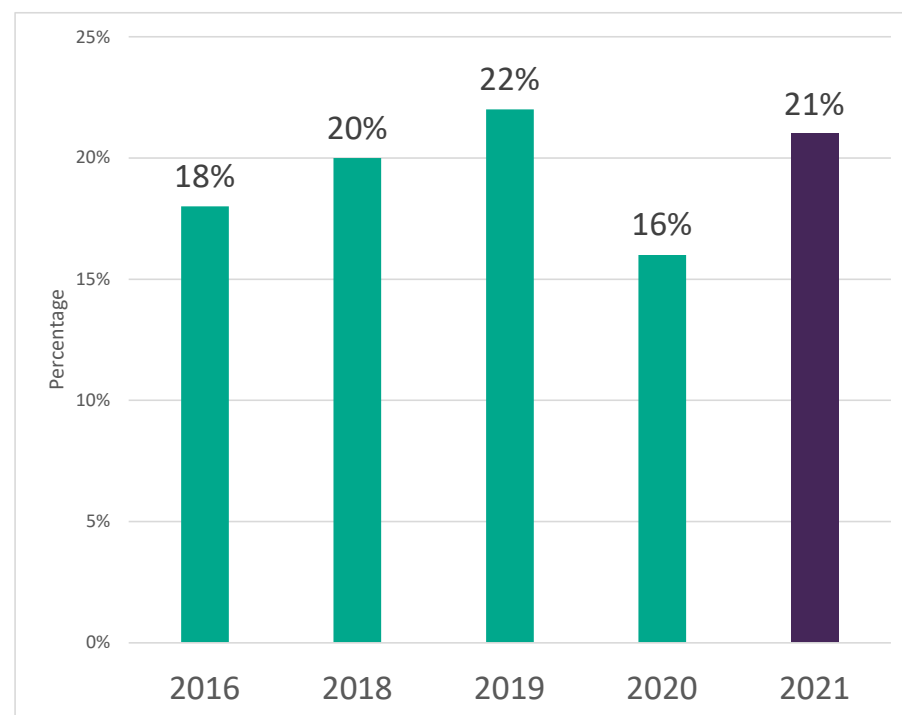
Figure: Changes in weekly attendance estimates: 1991 to 2016



1991 to 2016: Net estimated weekly attendance among Protestants increased



Religious services 2016 to 2021:
Return to pre-pandemic levels

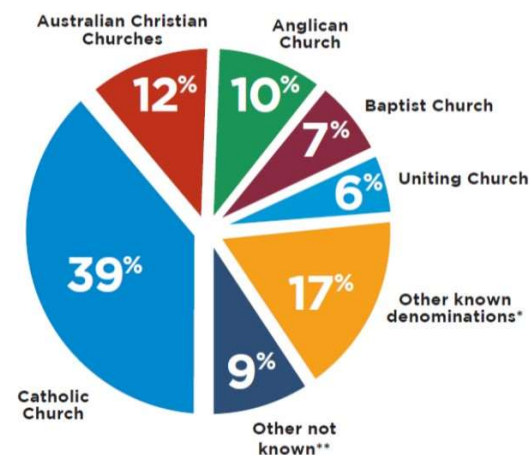


Denominations

1991 to 2016: The order of the 'top five' denominations has changed.

ACC (AOG) has moved from 5th to 2nd place.

Figure: Estimated proportions of weekly attendance by denomination (2016)



Source: NCLS Estimates of Attendance Database (n = 11,400).

* Each denomination/movement has less than 3% of all church attenders. Includes, in decreasing order of size, Churches of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist, Presbyterian Church, Lutheran Church, Salvation Army, International Network of Churches Australia, C3 Australia, CRC Churches Australia, Acts Global Churches (Apostolic), Christian Reformed Churches, CityLife Church, Christian & Missionary Alliance, Foursquare Church, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, Acts 2 Alliance, Wesleyan Methodist, Fellowship of Congregational Churches, Vineyard Churches, Church of the Nazarene.

** Includes estimate for Orthodox churches and other churches not listed.

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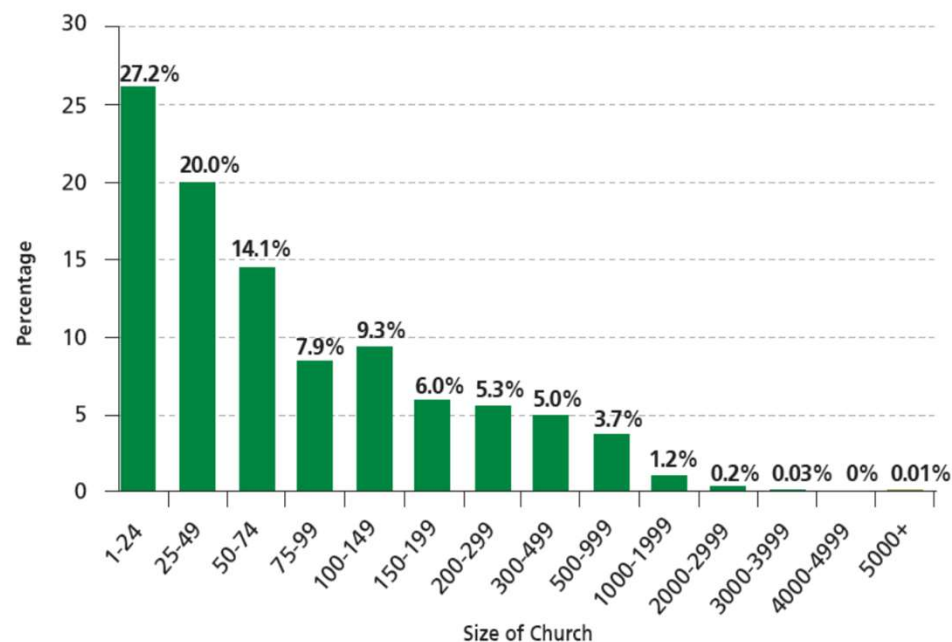
Source: Powell et. al. (2022). *Enriching Church Life* Ed 3. Sydney: NCLS Research.

Size of local churches

Around half of all churches across Australia are small (< 50).

Denominations who tend to have small churches include Anglican, Presbyterian, Uniting and Lutheran, churches. The median size was less than 40 attenders in an average week (2016).

Figure 3.10: Size of local churches: estimated weekly attendance in 2016 (%)



Source: 2016 NCLS - Estimates of Church Size. NB: 0.01% represents 1 church.

Source: Powell et. al. (2022). *Enriching Church Life* Ed 3. Sydney: NCLS Research.

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Focus on the Anglican
Church in Australia

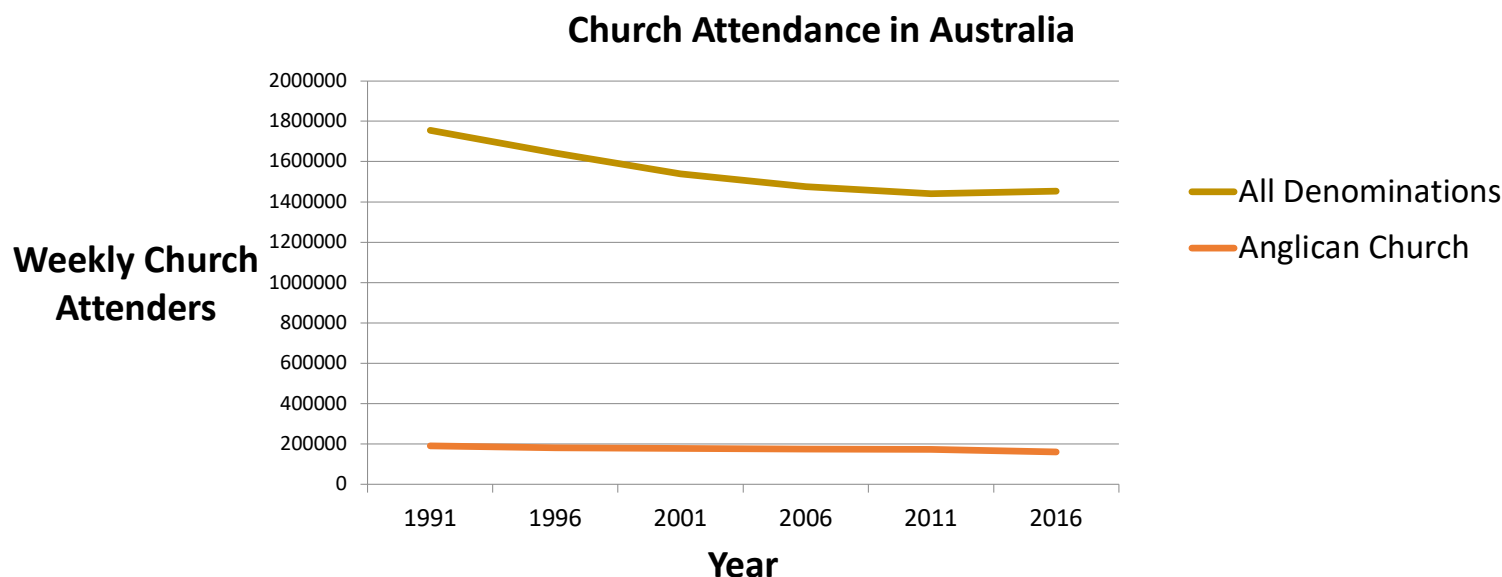


How has the church changed?

Anglican Church's size change has mirrored the national church.

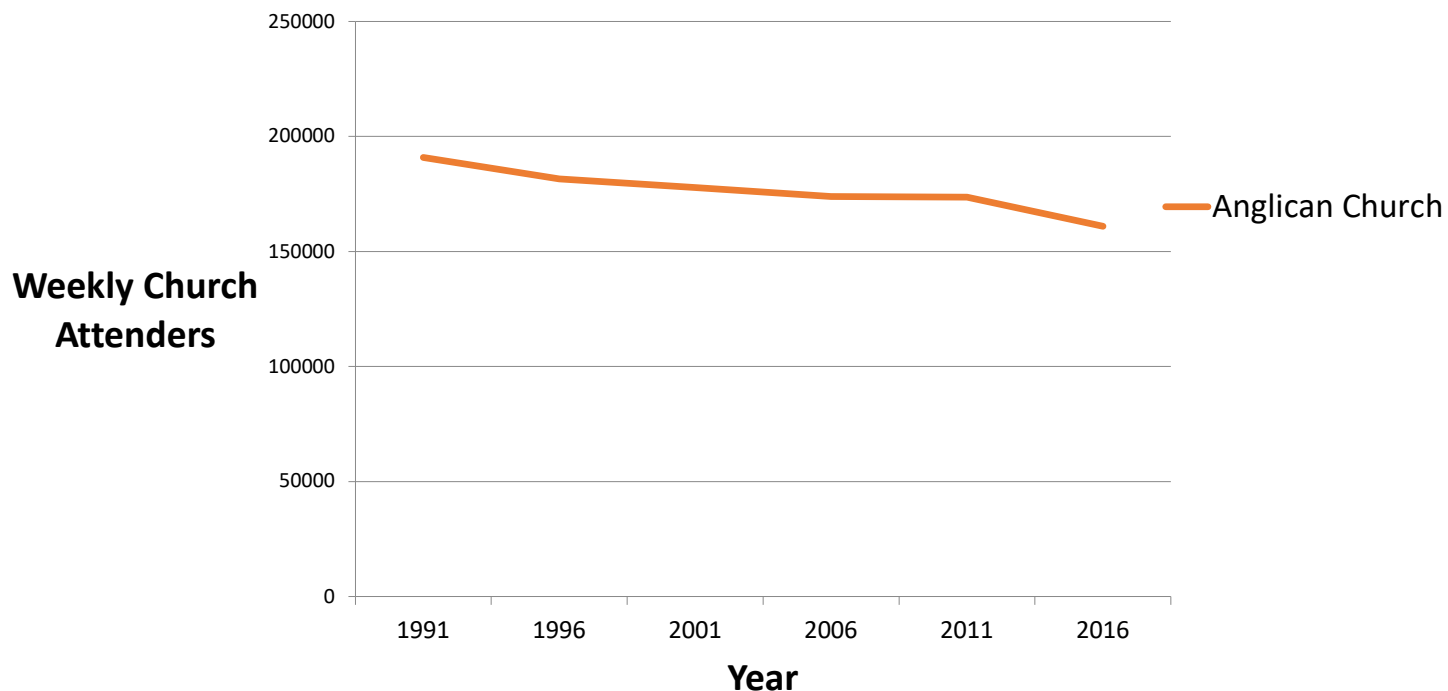
Anglican church is about 11% of the total Australian church (in 1991 and 2016).

Has shrunk in size by about 16% since 1991 (same as total Australian church).



The Anglican Church – some facts

Church Attendance in The Anglican Church, Australia



Has shrunk in size
(weekly attendance)
by about 16% since
1991 (same as total
Australian church).

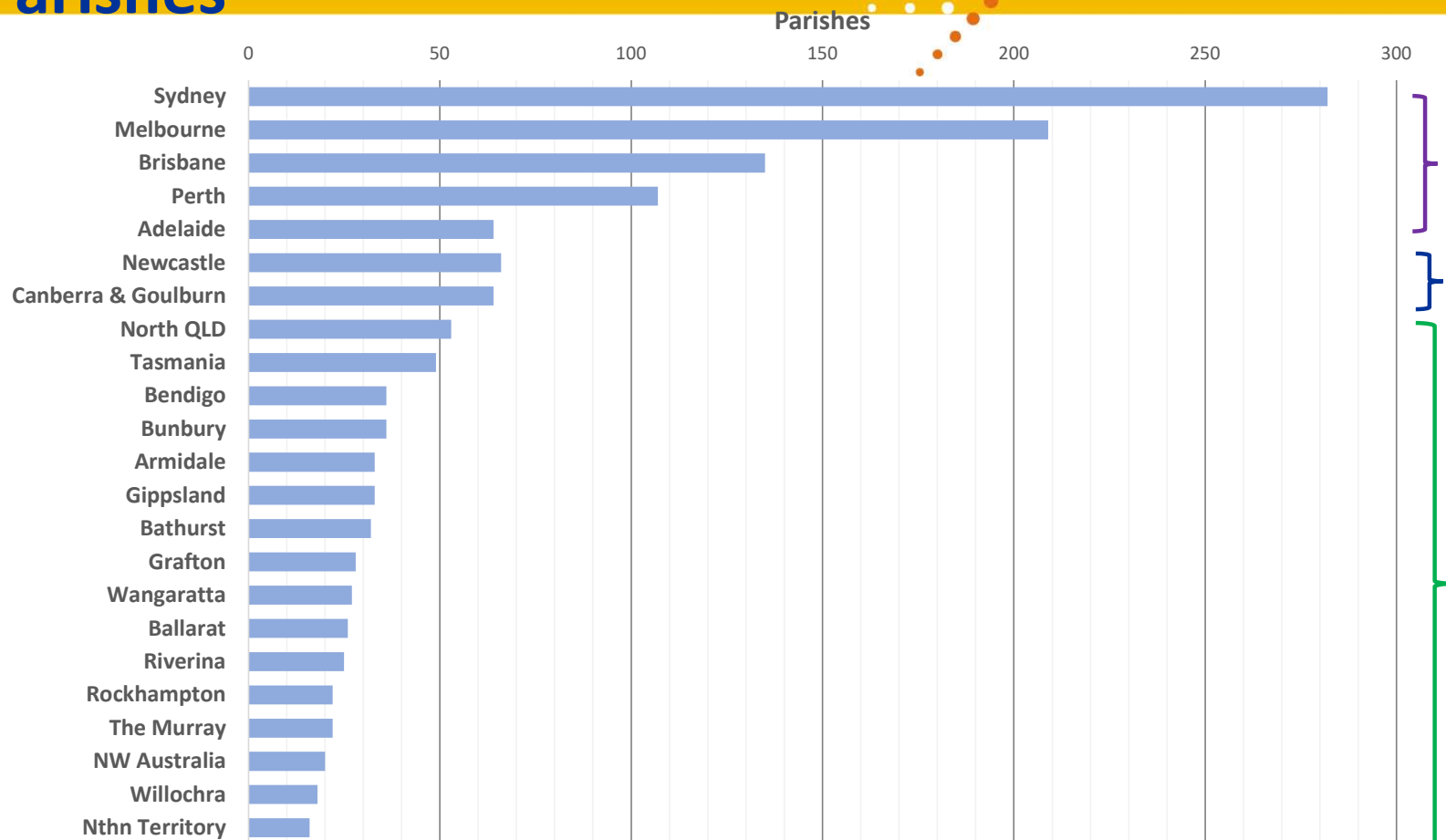
The Anglican Church – some facts

Dioceses – a quick summary

3 categories:

- *Large City (5) – contains a centre of more than 1,000,000*
- *Mixed (2) – contains a centre of more than 400,000*
- *Regional/rural (16) – contains smaller centres*

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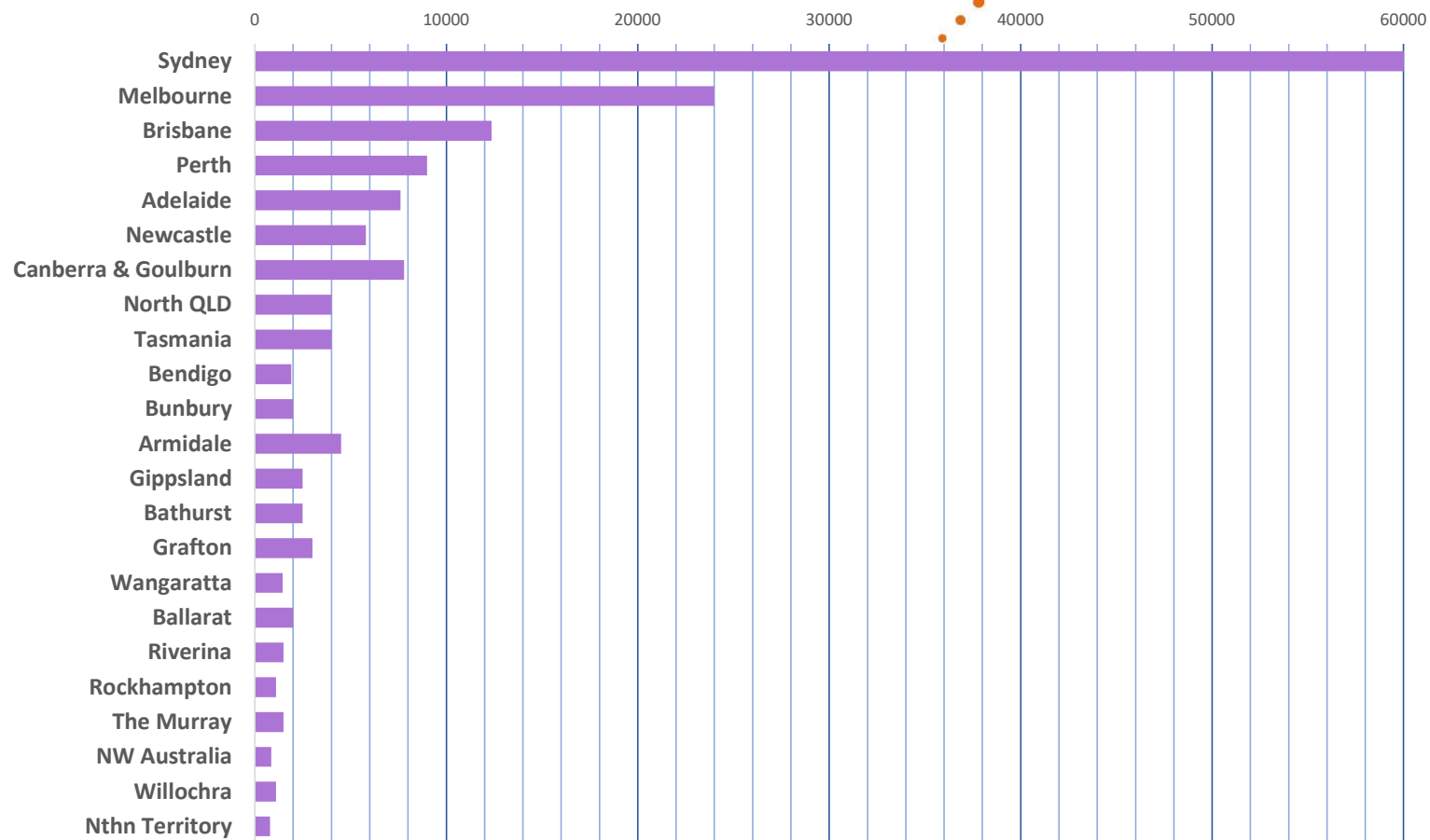


57% of parishes
across five capital
city dioceses

9% of parishes
across two mixed
dioceses

34% of parishes
across sixteen
regional/rural
dioceses

Weekly Attenders



Five capital city

Dioceses

70% of people.

Two mixed Dioceses

8% of people.

Sixteen

regional/rural

Dioceses

22% of people.

Dioceses

Region/rural

- *hold 34% of parishes, and 22% of attenders*
- *Used to hold one third of attenders*
- *since 1991 have lost one third of their weekly attenders*

Large City

- *hold 57% of parishes and 70% of attenders*
- *since 1991 have lost no attenders (as a group)*
 - *(the mix has shifted)*

Conclusions

- *5 capital city dioceses have always held the bulk of attenders*
- *the balance has shifted even more towards cities in the past 25 years*

Regional/rural Dioceses

The balance is changing as country Australia changes.

- *Population has shifted towards older age groups.*
- *Increased occurrence of drought in each decade*
- *Global competition for cheaper produce*
- *Increasing pressures to constantly adapt and diversify*
- *Water shortages are becoming acute*

Smaller towns (< 3,000) in particular have high dependence on rural activities for income, so these factors have major impact and put viability under threat.

Regional/rural Dioceses

Country church is different and has its own challenges.

- *Average number of locations*
 - *City dioceses: 1.5 locations per parish*
 - *Mixed or regional/rural dioceses: 2.5 locations per parish*

<i>Leader responsible for</i>	<i>(Regional/rural)</i>	<i>(City)</i>
<i>Only one location</i>	23%	68%
<i>Two locations</i>	20%	21%
<i>Three or more</i>	57%	11%

The optimum number of churches in a movement in Australia?

Baptist Church

- *Little institutional infrastructure to provide overall support*
- *Churches needed to find their own viability to establish and survive*
- *Passed 900 churches in 2001. Passed 1,000 in about 2014.*
- *About **1,040** now.*

ACC (formerly AOG)

- *One denomination and more than 2/3 of Pentecostal movement*
- *May have stabilised at about **1,070** churches.*

Parishes and Locations in 2016

<i>Anglican:</i>	<i>1,400 parishes</i>	<i>2,800 locations</i>
<i>Catholic:</i>	<i>1,240 parishes</i>	<i>2,020 locations</i>
<i>Uniting:</i>	<i>1,370 parishes</i>	<i>2,000 locations</i>

- The 'parished' denominations maintain many sites*
- Anglicans are still maintaining the most sites (although closing some)*
- Movements requiring viability to operate stabilised at 1,050 or so*
- Parished denominations have more than this in parishes (and far more in locations).*

Parishes and Locations

Anglican: 1,400 parishes 2,800 locations

- Anglicans are maintaining the most sites (closed 18% since 1991)*
- Movements requiring viability to operate stabilised at 1,050 or so*

Some positives:

- Anglicans have a foothold in many small communities that other movements would love to have*
- For every 1 Anglican who goes to church, there are **19 more** who don't.*
- Very high nominal affiliation with Anglicanism (for maybe one more generation).*

Faith Tradition and Identity

Church attenders across the Australian Anglican Church indicated identify with a 'faith identity' as follows:

Evangelical/Reformed	42%
Catholic/Anglo-Catholic	32%
'Don't identify'	21%
Charismatic/Pent	10%
Liberal/Progressive	6%
Other	3%

Grafton Attenders, 2021/22

Anglo-Catholic:	57%
Evang/Reformed:	20%
'Do not identify':	19%
Pente/Charismatic:	14%
Liberal/Progressive:	10%

- One large group – Anglo Catholic
- 'I do not identify' – 1 in 5
- Evangelical – 1 in 5
- Pente/Charism – 1 in 7
- Liberal/Prog – 1 in 10

I'd like one with
Baptist, Anglican and
Presbyterian with a
Pentecostal topping!

You choose one and
stick to it young man.
We don't do that
new style here!





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**Embracing and
accommodating diversity?**

**How does the community
see you?**

About National Church Life Surveys

Every five years

Largest, longest
running survey of
church life in the
world.

20+
denominations
and movements

Thousands of local
churches and local
church leaders

Hundreds of
thousands of
attenders

Every local church
gets their own
results & planning
resources



Sample size across the survey waves:
Attenders ranges from 120,000 to 450,000 attenders
Churches ranges from 2,500 to 4,500.

WHY SHOULD YOU *take part?*

YOU CAN HEAR ALL VOICES
& TAKE TIME TO LISTEN



IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS
AND USE THEM TO GROW

MAKE BETTER, MORE
INFORMED CHOICES



SEE HOW YOU COMPARE TO
OTHER CHURCHES

FIND OUT THE THINGS YOU
NEED TO KNOW



SUSTAIN AND SUPPORT
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

FIND OUT THE GIFTINGS
AND HOPES OF ATTENDERS



ADD TO THE PROFILE OF
YOUR DENOMINATION

TAKE STOCK OF YOUR
CHURCH'S HEALTH



INFORM WIDER
AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

2021ncls.org.au



Anglican participation

>37,000 completed attenders surveys
Grafton: 744 surveys from 22 parishes

LISTENING TO EVERY *voice*

About the people

A demographic profile of Grafton Anglican church attenders

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Demographics: gender, education and ethnicity

67% are female

Gender



34% have a school-level education

32% have a university degree

85% are born in Australia

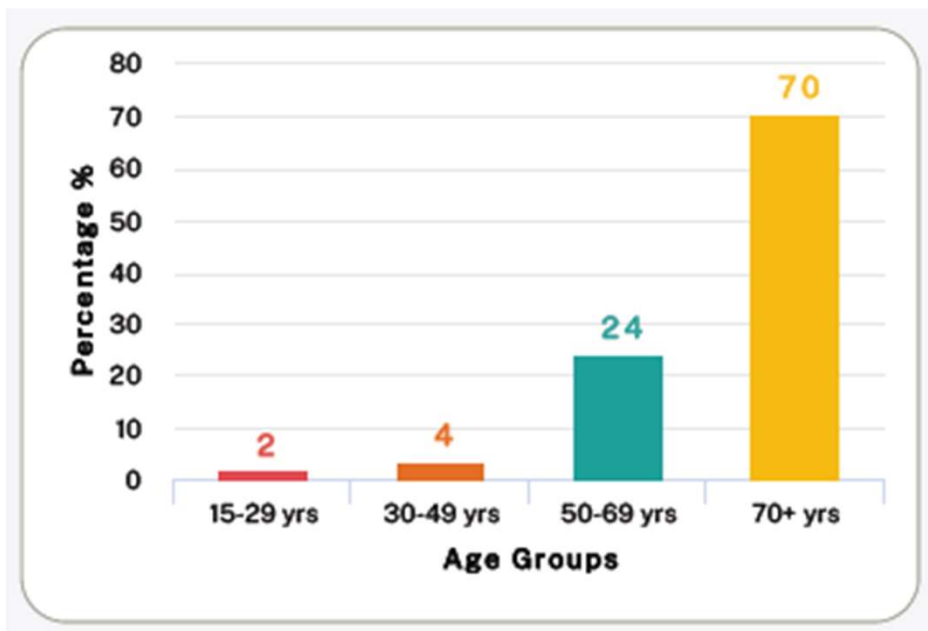
4% are born overseas in NESC

3% speak a language other than English at home

2% responses from indigenous background

Demographics: Age, marital status, employment

63% are 70 or over



63% are married

21% are widowed

73% are retired

19% have some employment

8% are employed full-time

About values and priorities

What Grafton Anglican attenders value

Views about priorities for their local churches in the next 12 months

.....



Most value:



61% Sharing in Holy
Communion/the
Eucharist/Lord's Supper



45% Traditional style of worship
or music



32% Sermons, preaching or Bible
teaching

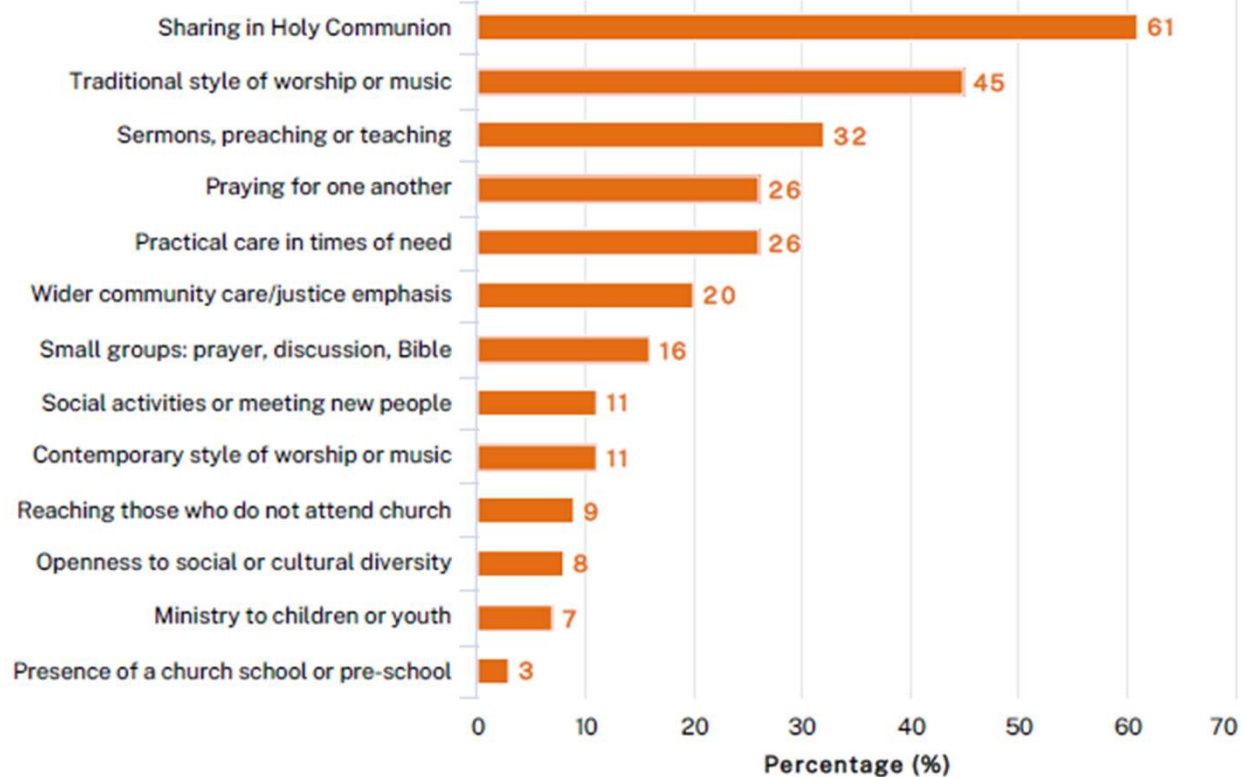


26% Praying for one another

Note: Attenders could select up to three options so percentages may not add up to 100%.



What people value about this church



Source: 2021/22 NCLS, Anglican Grafton Church Attender Survey (n=744)

Want to give attention to:



37% Building a sense of community



35% Worship services that are nurturing



27% Spiritual growth (e.g. direction)

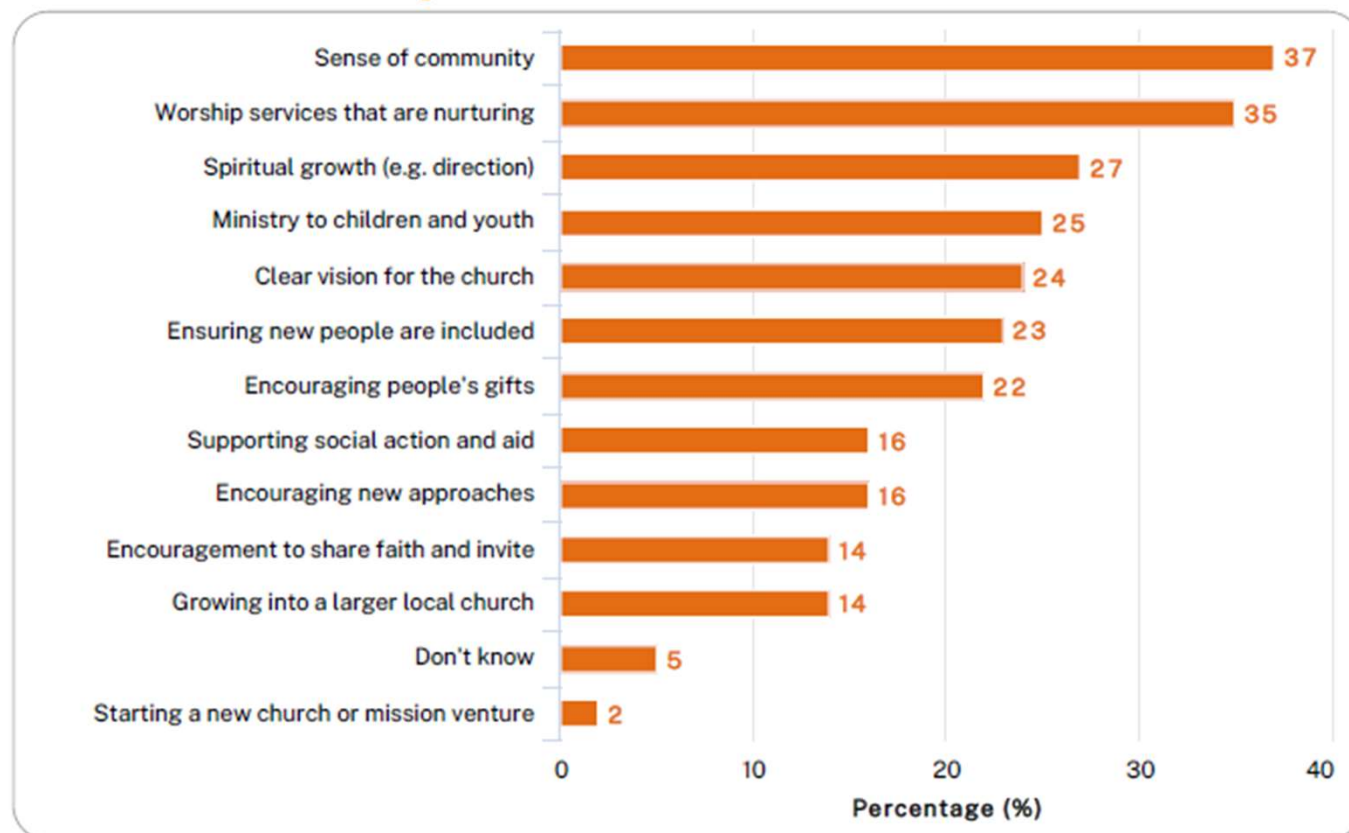


25% Ministry to children and youth

Note: Attenders could select up to three options so percentages may not add up to 100%.



Future priorities



Source: 2021/22 NCLS, Anglican Grafton Church Attender Survey (n=744)



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Grafton parishes

SEE EMERGING
trends

Demographics

FOCUSED ON THE
future

What people most value

UNDERSTAND THE BIG
picture

What people most want to see prioritized

For discussion during your break

Do you see these values and priorities mirrored in your parish?



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