



Session 2

How to learn from an NCLS Profile

For Grafton Clergy Conference
3rd February, 2023

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www.ncls.org.au

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



Protestant sample size across the survey waves:
Attenders ranges from 99,000 to 235,000 attenders
Churches ranges from 2,500 to 4,500.



LISTEN TO EVERY
voice

SEE EMERGING
trends

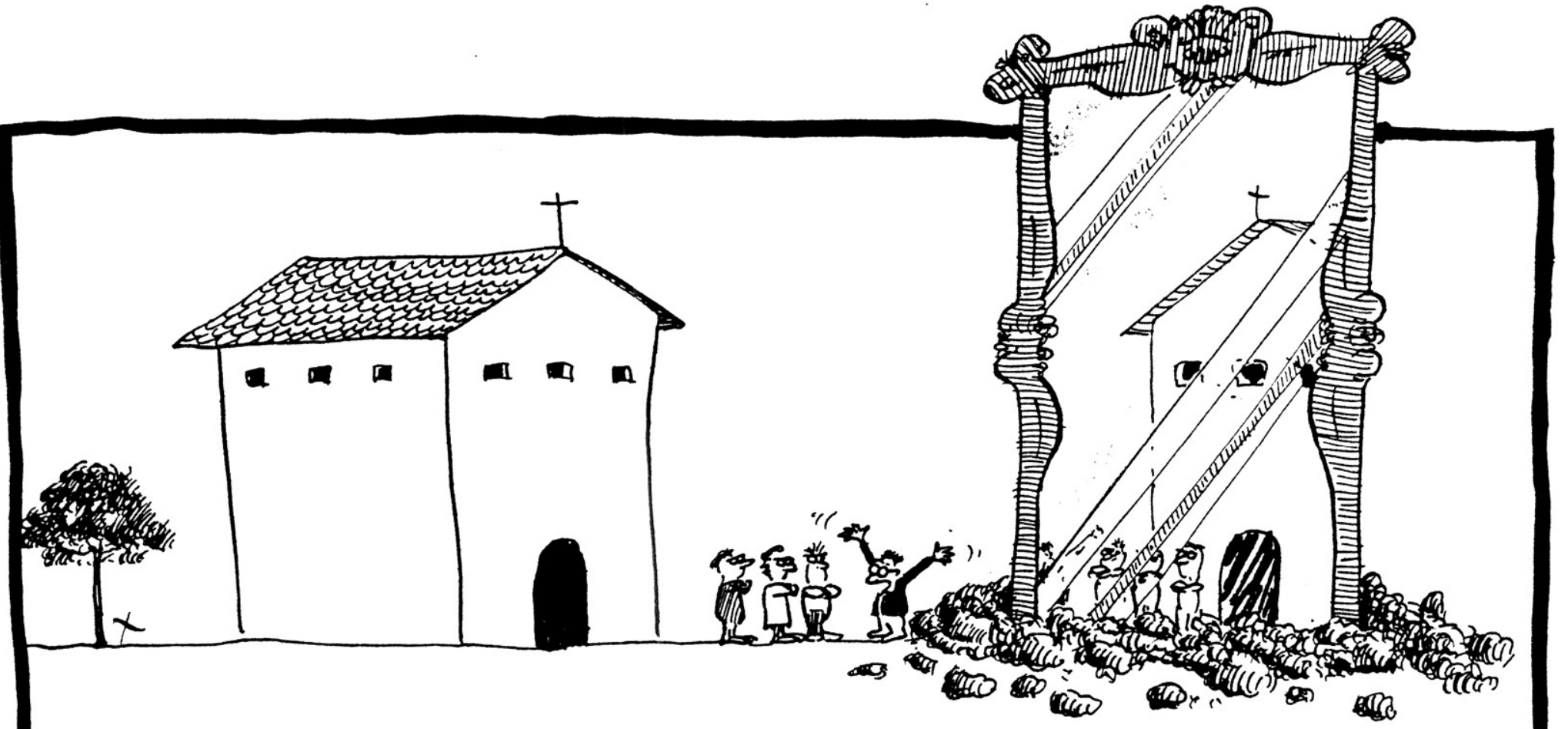
FOCUSED ON THE
future

UNDERSTAND THE BIG
picture

A Question to consider
What would you like to see achieved as a result of people participating in the NCLS?

How can it:

- assist vision, mission, and ministry?



LOOK!! ALL I SAID WAS:

"O LORD, SHOW US HOW TO SERVE YOU BETTER".....

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



2021 National

Church Life
Survey

30
YEARS

Anglican participation

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

LISTENING TO
EVERY
voice



About the people

Attendance and involvement patterns of Grafton Anglican church attenders



Attendance patterns among Grafton Anglicans in 2021/22

Attendance at their local church (including online)

97% are frequent attenders (monthly or more)

82% attend weekly or more

71% have attended their local church for more than five years

Attendance elsewhere (in person or online)*

69% do not attend any other church

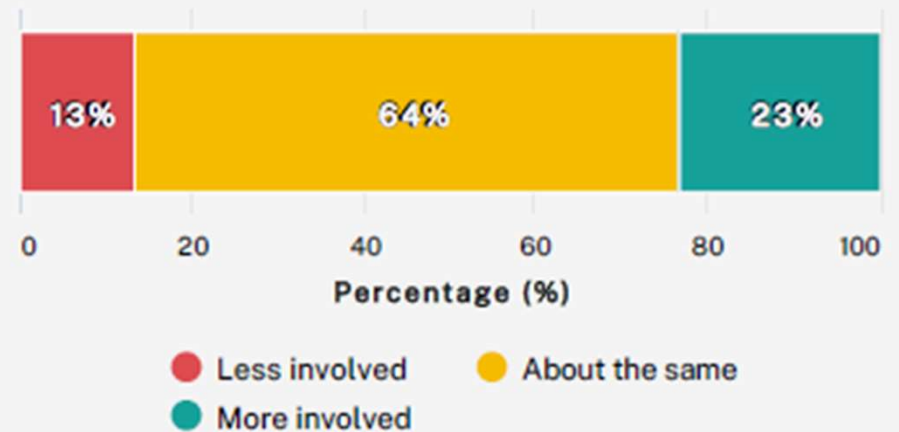
21% attend elsewhere, in person

14% attend elsewhere, via online services



Impact of COVID-19

Current involvement compared to 2019 (before COVID-19)



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

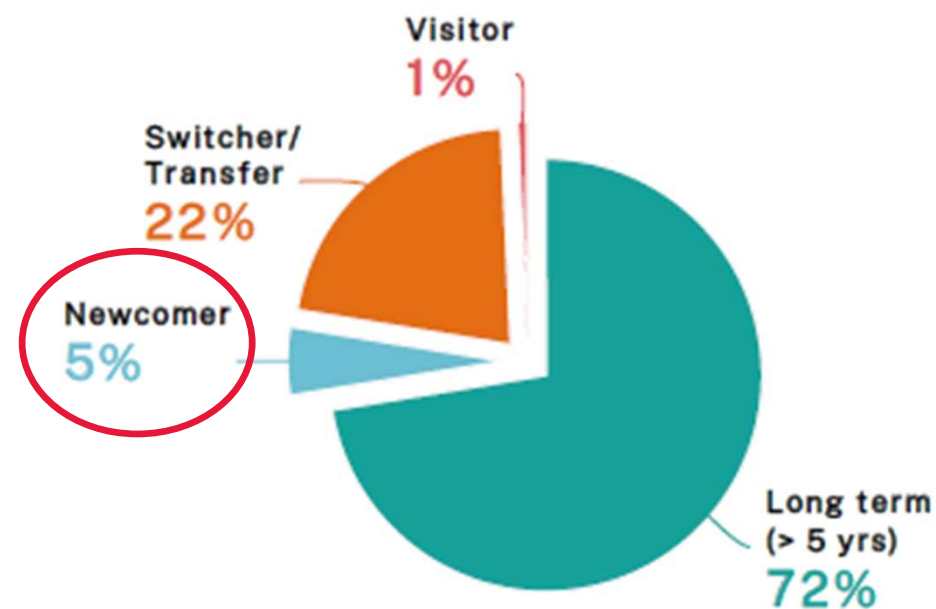
Attendance background

28% of attenders are new arrivals to their local church in the past 5 years

13% are transfers from other Anglican churches

9% are switchers from other denominations

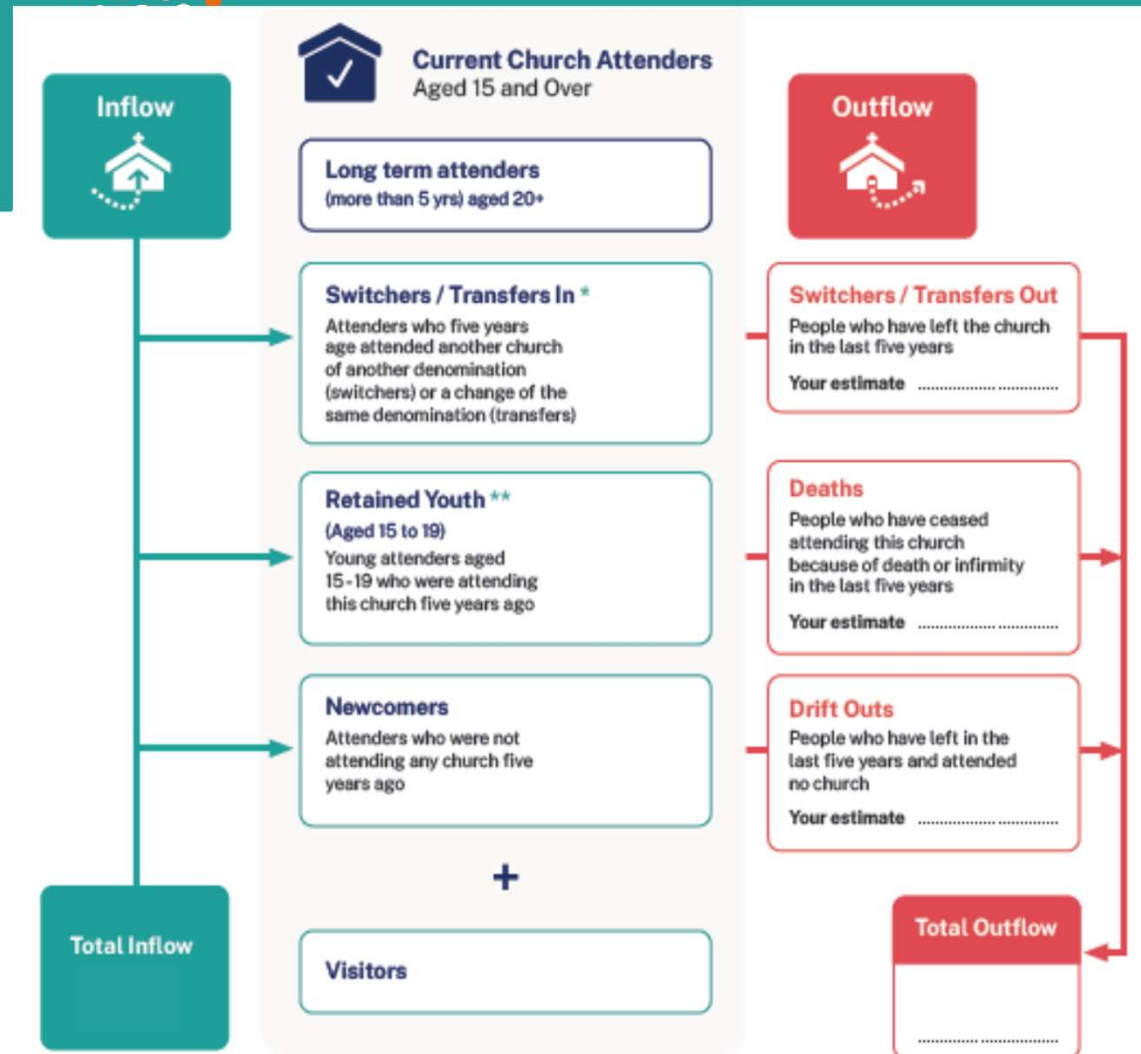
5% are newcomers without a recent church background



Inflow and Outflow

How do churches grow?

In numerical terms churches grow when the inflow of church attenders exceeds the outflow.





Research findings about newcomers to church life

Worship services important:

Church worship services are the most significant event that newcomers recall in helping them come to faith.

Trigger? Something missing:

What triggers first church attendance? Most commonly say that 'something was missing...'

Do not 'shop around':

Newcomers tend not shop around for churches.

What helped them stay?

The people come first.

Faith comes gradually:

More likely than other regular attenders to have come to faith through a gradual process

Growing, but not dogmatic:

Less 'dogmatic' in beliefs but experience God and growing

Enthusiastic:

Less involved, but most enthusiastic

Church health: NCLS Research model

UNDERSTAND
THE BIG
picture

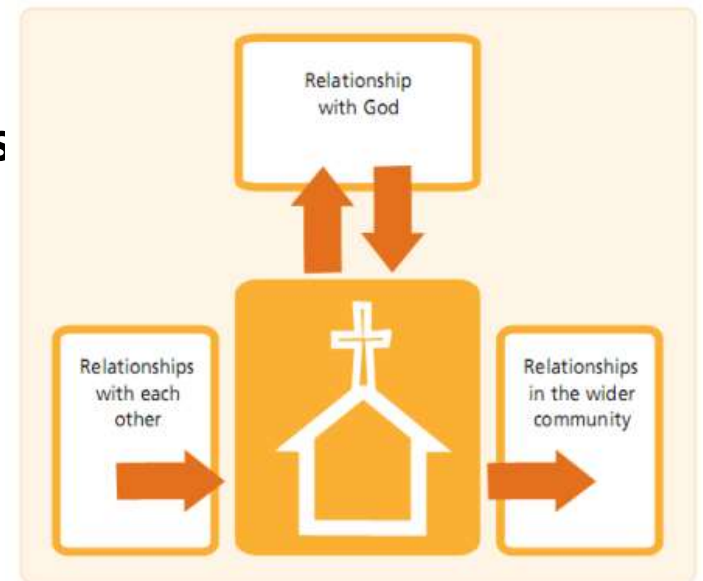
Goal-focused: What a church seeks to achieve

Healthy churches **help people in their relationships**

- with God
- with each other
- with the wider community

Healthy churches are “sustainable” in terms of their **attendance**

Healthy churches also have **vital leadership directions for the future**



Attendance
Measures

young
adult
retention

newcomers

attendance
change

Church health: NCLS Core Qualities model

UNDERSTAND
THE BIG
picture

NCLS Research describes nine Core Qualities and three attendance measures which are central to the life of a vital and healthy church.

The Internal Core Qualities



Faith



Worship



Belonging

The Outward Core Qualities



Service



Faith-Sharing



Inclusion

The Inspirational Core Qualities



Vision



Innovation



Leadership
Culture

Attendance Measures



Young adult
retention



Newcomers

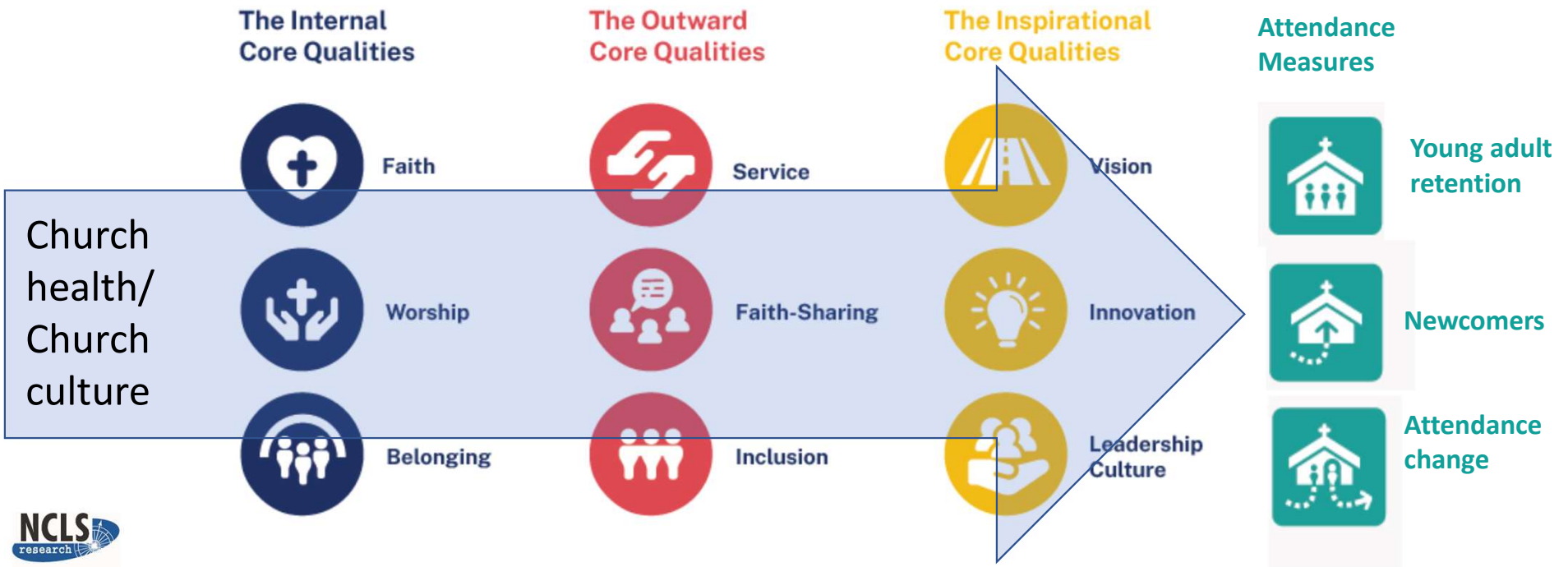


Attendance
change

Church health: NCLS Core Qualities model

UNDERSTAND
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picture

NCLS Research describes nine Core Qualities and three attendance measures which are central to the life of a vital and healthy church.



Strengths for the Diocese

- Faith
- Worship
- Inclusion/welcoming

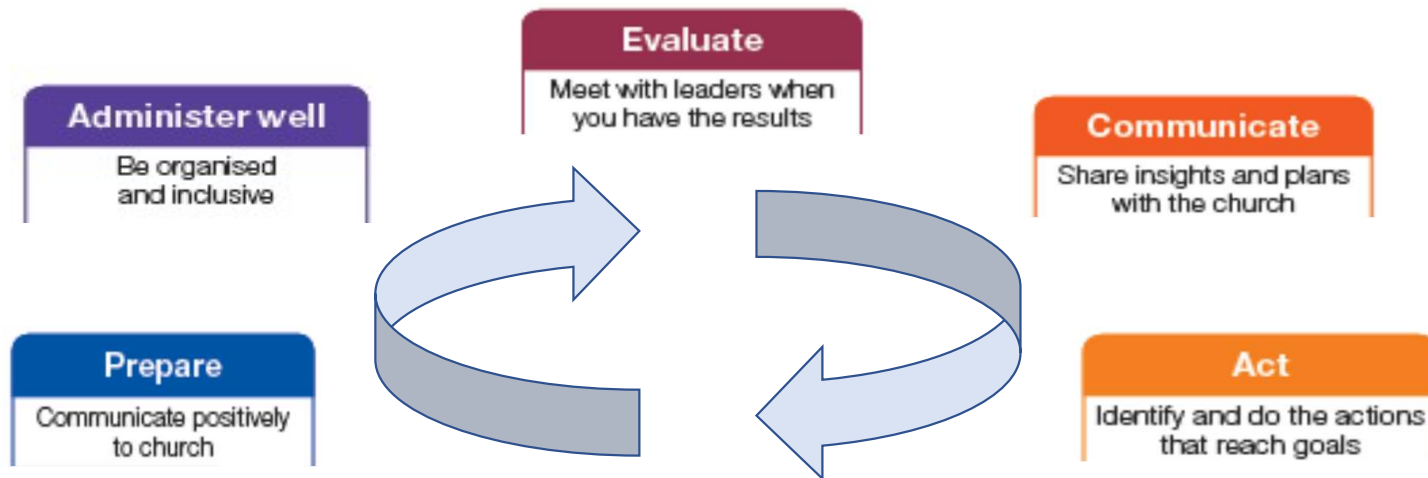
Main Challenge/Growth Area

- Vision



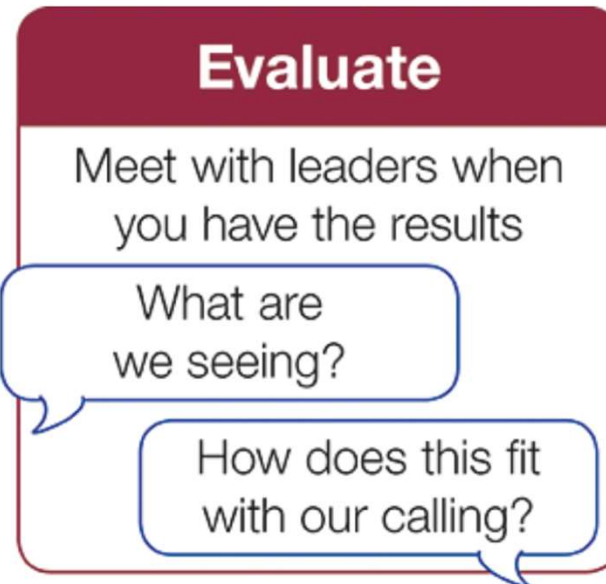
What will be the discovery, conversation at your parish?

5 steps to a successful survey experience



2021ncls.org.au/run-the-survey/5-steps-to-a-successful-survey/

5 steps to a successful survey experience



“What do we need to have a conversation about?”

2021ncls.org.au/run-the-survey/5-steps-to-a-successful-survey/



Examine / Discussion

Evaluate

The people of our church

Our church attendance and background

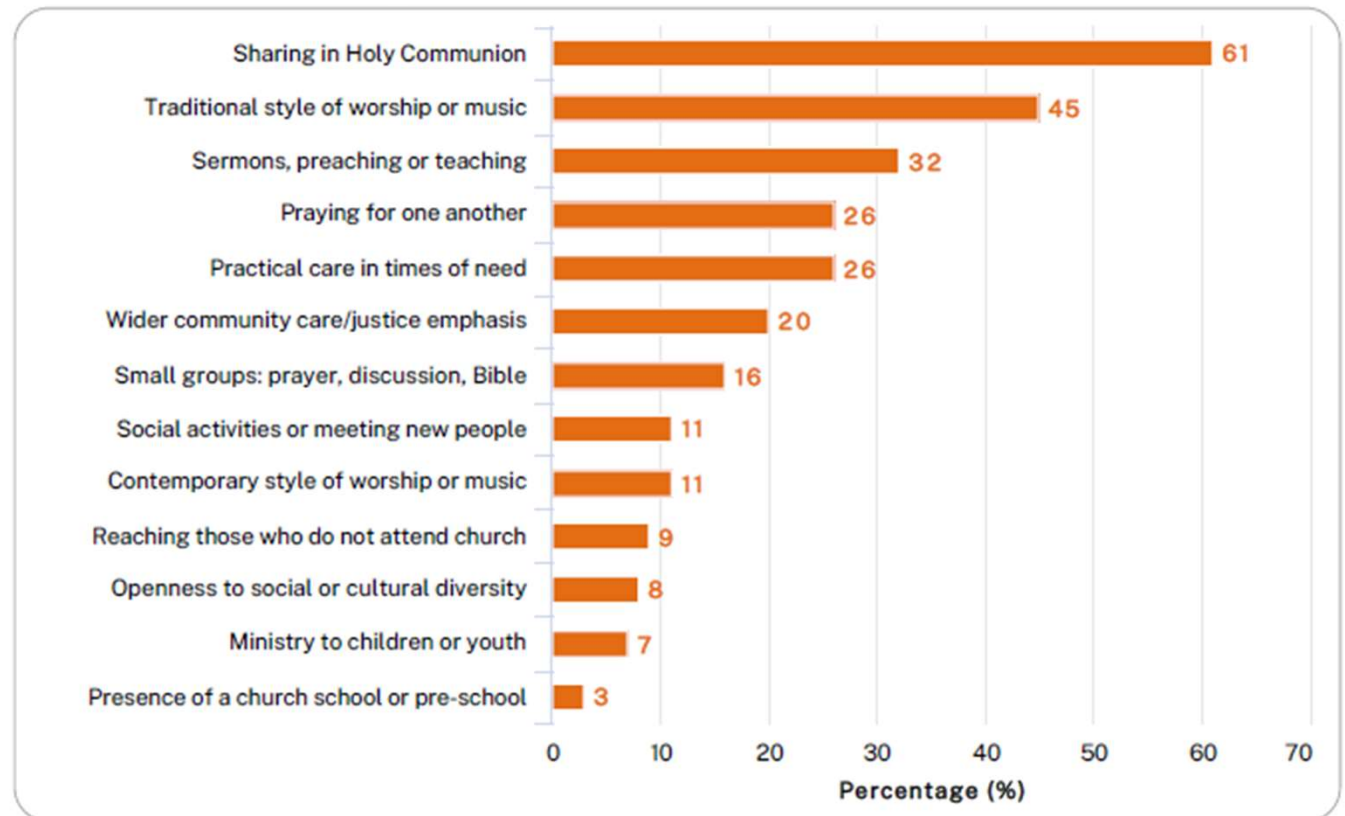
What we value and prioritise

.....





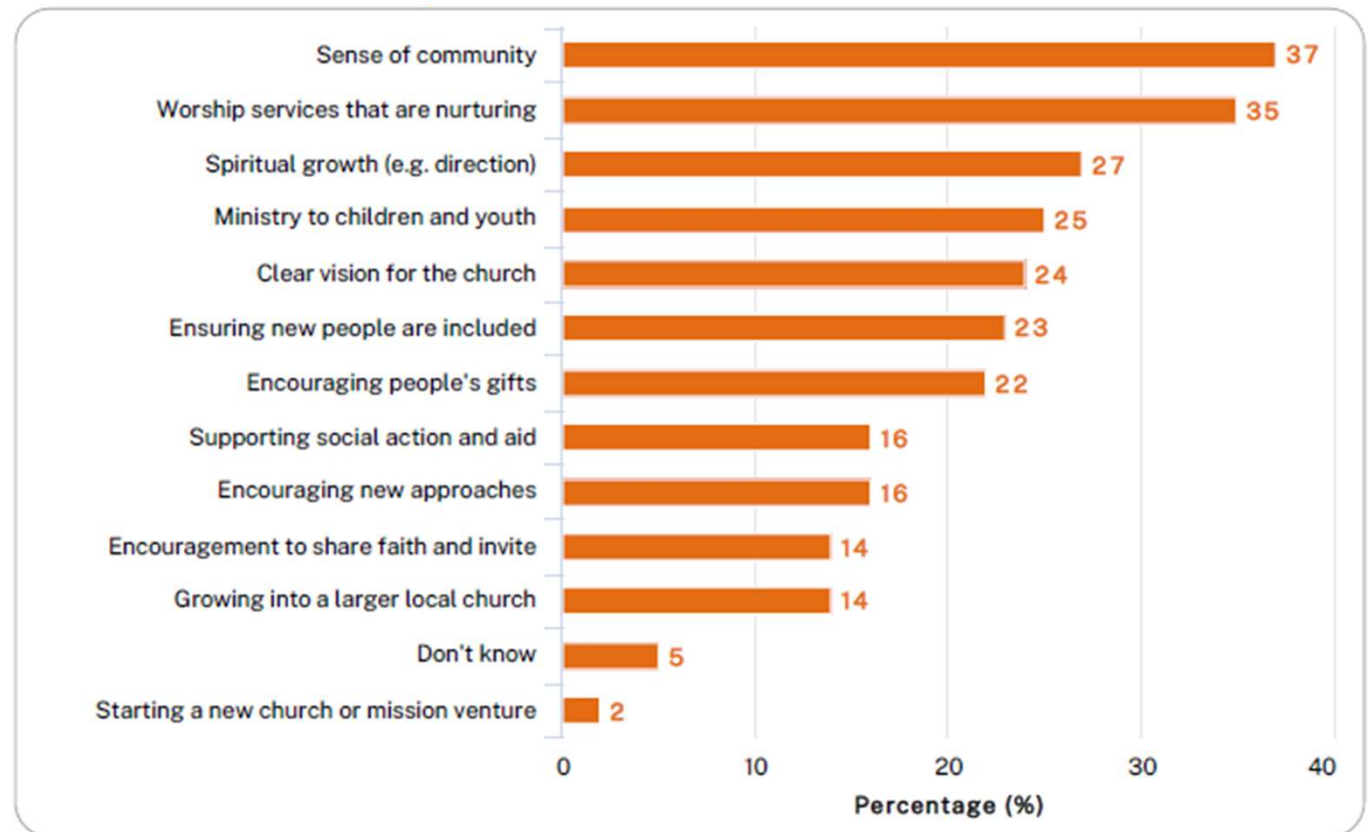
What people value about this church



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



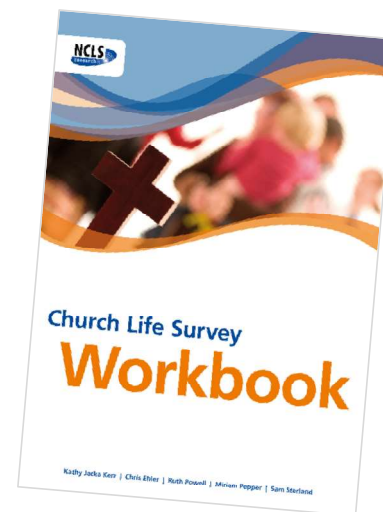
Future priorities



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

The Church Life Workbook provides tools, ideas and group processes to

- *Evaluate*
- *Communicate* and
- *Act*



Evaluate

Gain an Overview – Explore our Summary Profile

SUMMARY
Profile

Exploring the Summary
Profile Pages 2-4

The people of our church

Refer to **Page 2** of the
Summary Profile

Reflect/Discuss:

What does this information show about our churchgoers? Does anything surprise us?

Given our demographics (e.g. age, ethnicity, education etc.) what might it imply about the life and culture of our church? What insight comes to us from this?

Note here any points we would like to discuss with others, include in a report or take action on.



Our church attendance and background

Refer to **Page 3** of the
Summary Profile

Reflect/Discuss:

What stands out to you from the information about our people's attendance patterns and church background? What can you see about people's current involvement compared to 2019 (before COVID)? Note here any points you would like to discuss with other, include in a report or take action on.



What we value and prioritise

Refer to **Page 4** of the
Summary Profile

Reflect/Discuss:

Consider the aspects people chose in both categories - do any of these surprise us? How might our church respond to these values and priorities? What could be done to engage people more fully in each of the aspects of church life they most value and those they would most like to see priority given to? Note here any points we would like to discuss with others, include in a report or take action on.



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To do this exercise with your leadership

What will you need to do?

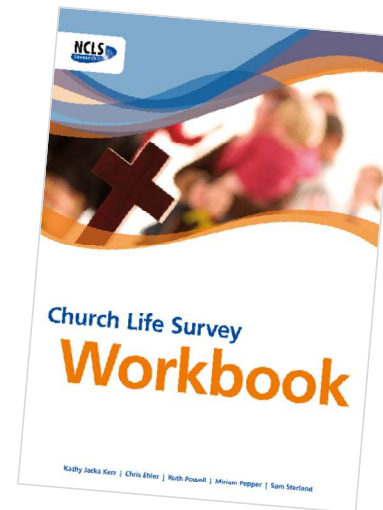
What do you anticipate will be needed:

- to have a positive discussion***
- to generate engagement from your leaders?***

What do you want to achieve from the discussion?

The **Church Life Workbook** provides tools, ideas and group processes to

- *Evaluate*
- *Communicate* and
- *Act*





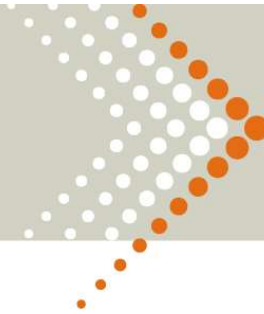
A local church process

Four things to consider

1. Passes through STAGES
2. Engage internally or with external input
3. Conversation is targeted
4. Appropriate to capacity



A local church process



LEAD THE conversation

1. Passes through STAGES

To make the most of the NCLS churches will move through all stages to action

Prepare

Communicate positively to church

Your opinion matters

We want your input as we plan

Administer well

Be organised and inclusive

We will hear everyone's voice

Evaluate

Meet with leaders when you have the results

What are we seeing?

How does this fit with our calling?

Communicate

Share insights and plans with the church

Celebrate these strengths!

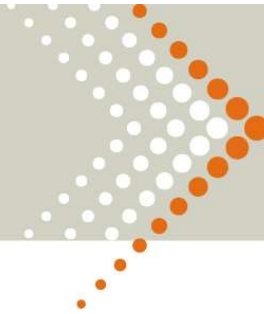
Let's pray for these challenges and plans

Act

Identify and do the actions that reach goals

Let's pursue our calling by...

Participate with us in being the church



2. Leaders engage together internally or with external input

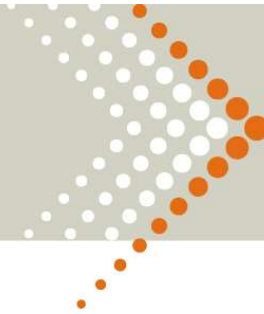
A local church process

An internal process, with:

- the **staff**
- the **leadership** team
- the **congregation**

or with external input:

- a **regional minister**
- a **coach**
- a **mentor**



LEAD THE conversation

3. Conversation is targeted

What do we want to examine?

Where are our strengths?

“What do we need to have a conversation about?”

The Internal Core Qualities



Faith



Worship



Belonging

The Outward Core Qualities



Service



Faith-Sharing



Inclusion

The Inspirational Core Qualities



Vision



Innovation



Leadership Culture

Attendance Measures



Young adult retention



Newcomers



Attendance change



A local church process

LEAD THE
conversation

4. Appropriate to capacity

What is our church ready for?

A short, simple process?

- Celebratory, affirming
- 1 meeting

A reflective, action process?

- Vision check-in, course correction
- 2 sessions

An in-depth vision-setting process?

- Vision discovery/creation
- Goal and strategy setting
- 4-6 sessions
- Integrated with Mission Action Plan



Church Life Survey

Workbook

Kathy Jacka Kerr | Chris Ehler | Ruth Powell | Miriam Pepper | Sam Sterland



Grafton Anglican Church Attenders

Internal Core Qualities

Faith

Worship

Belonging

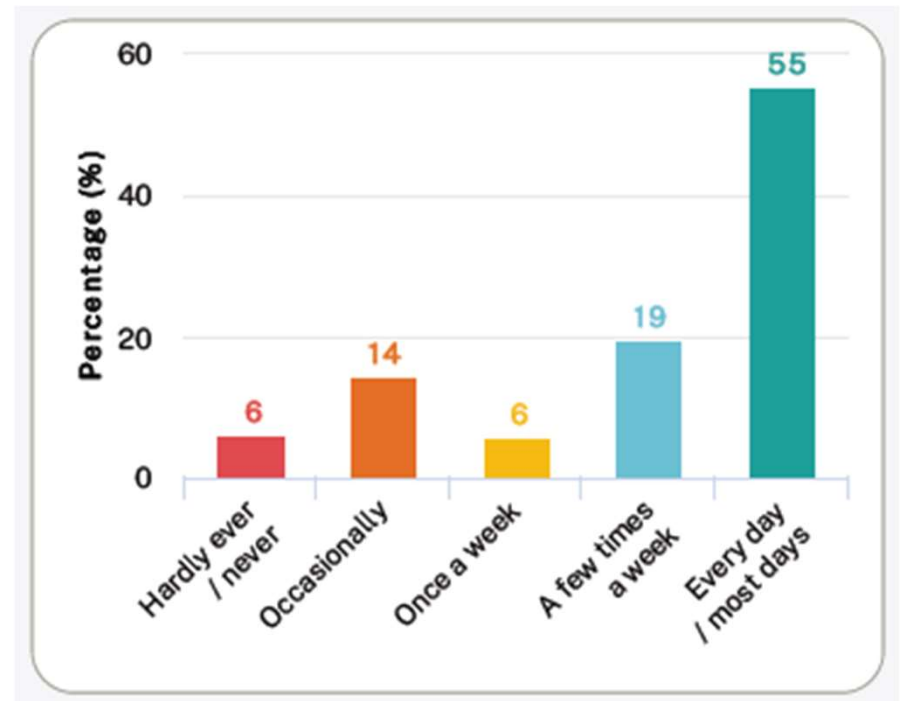
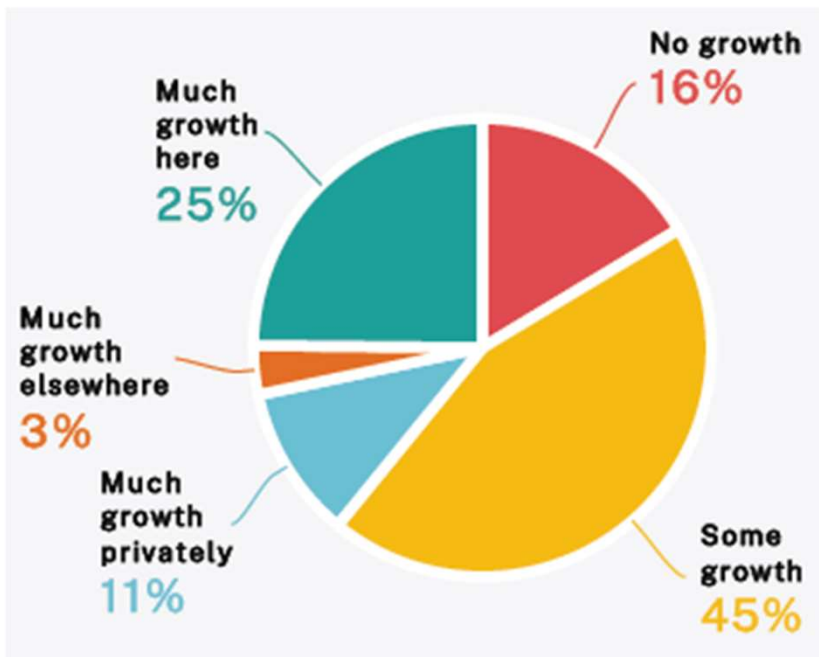


25%

of attenders said that they had experienced much growth in faith through church in previous 12 months

55%

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





93%

agree their faith influences decisions and actions in daily life

96%

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

Faith in families

76%

of attenders said that they had talk about matters of faith with other members of their household (19% live alone)

Intergenerational faith

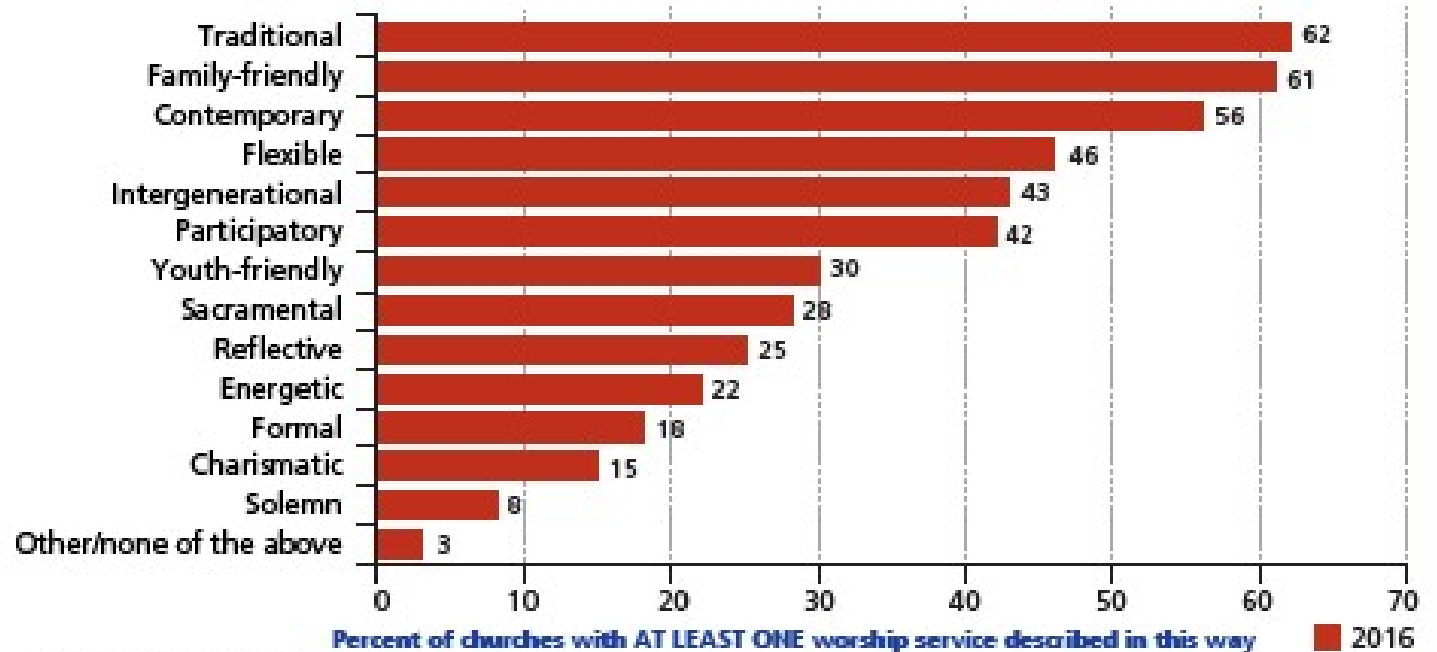
41% are satisfied with what is offered for children aged under 12 years

30% are satisfied with what is offered for youth aged 12 to 18

73% agree that people of all ages are encouraged to get involved at their local church

Terms used to describe church worship services across *all* denominations

Figure 2.4: Terms used to describe church worship services



Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Survey (n=2,517).

Church worship services

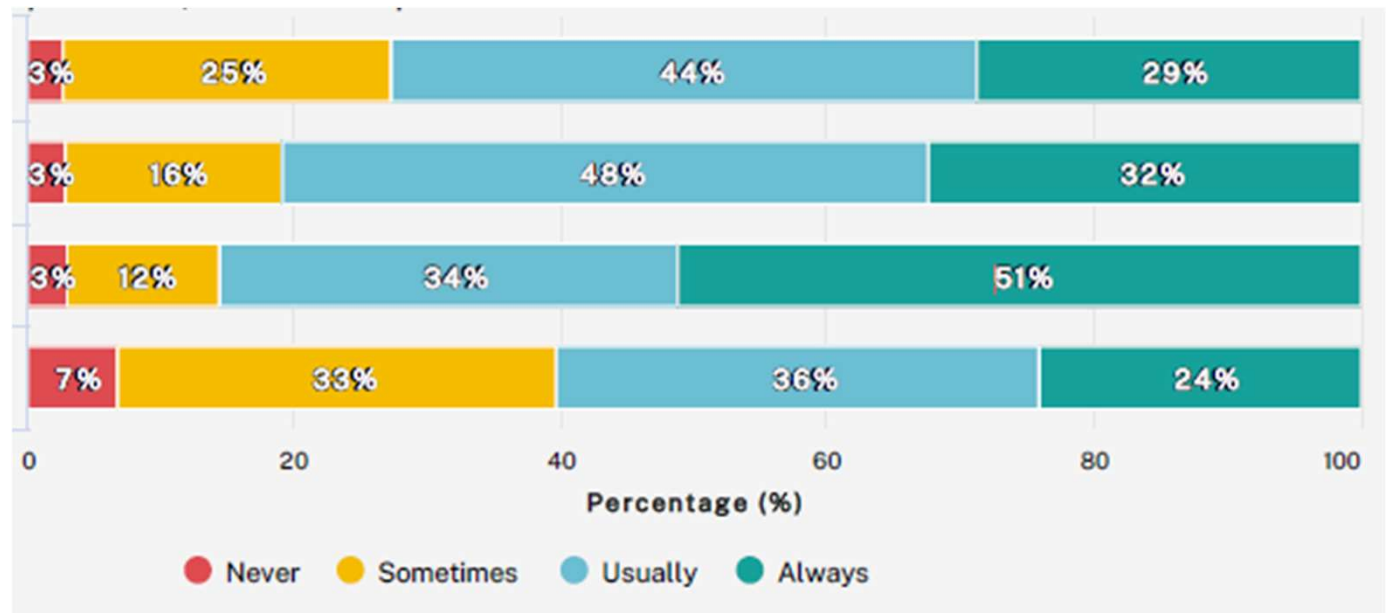
Grafton attenders always experience...

Inspiration **29%**

Helpful preaching **32%**

Music they appreciate **51%**

A challenge to action **24%**



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

About music in church worship services

Music (and traditional worship) is the **second highest** thing that Grafton attenders value at their local church (after Communion).

45% value traditional styles

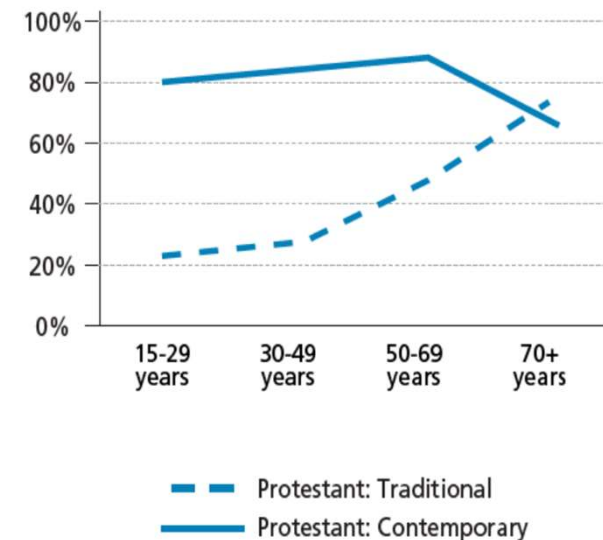
11% value contemporary styles

86% always or usually experience music they appreciate

Source: 2021/22 NCLS, Anglican Adelaide Church Attender Survey (n=1648)

Note: Younger attenders (under 70 yrs) prefer contemporary music*.

Figure 2.8: Styles of music most helpful in worship by age: Protestant (2016)



* In Protestant churches.

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

Belonging

Have a strong sense of belonging



62% always or mostly personally seek to make new arrivals welcome

26% are likely to follow up someone drifting away from church involvement

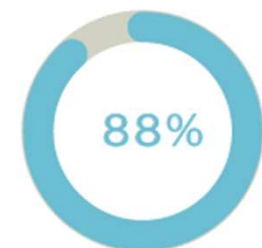
Inclusive

Agree their local church is inclusive of different kinds of people



Friendly

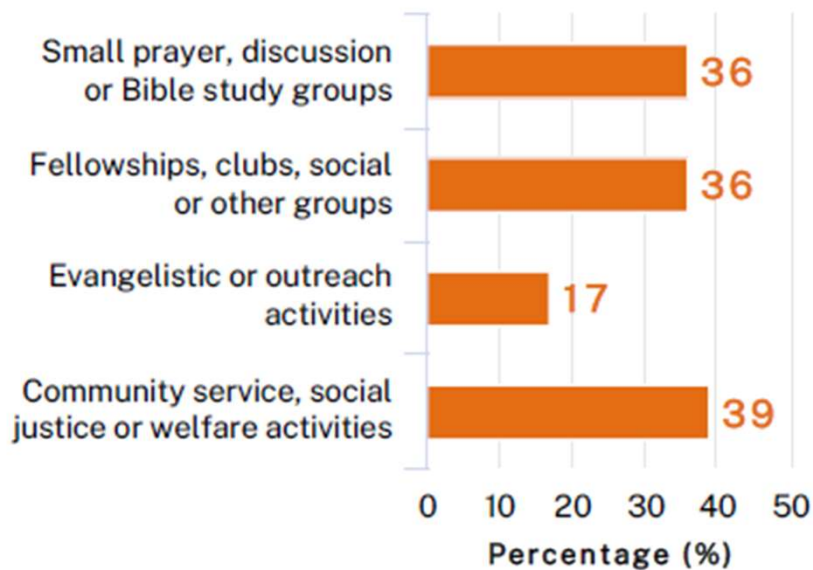
Found it easy to make friends in their local church



36%

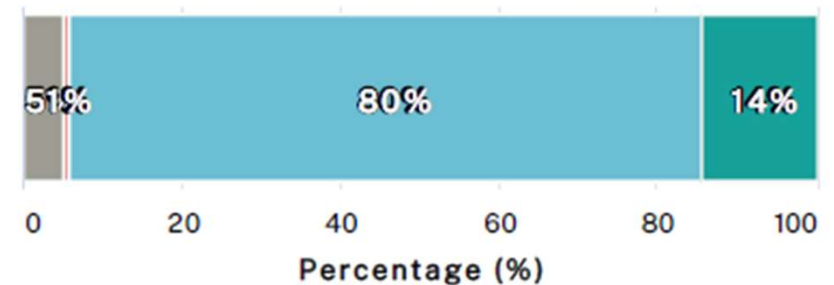
of attenders are in social groups.
36% are involved in small prayer or discussion groups.

Group involvement



14%

of attenders want to be more involved with their church than they currently are



- I am unsure
- Want to be less involved
- Happy with current level
- Want to be more involved



23%

have been coming less
than 5 years

21%

attend elsewhere at
least occasionally

82%

attend here weekly

12% are 2-3 times per month

Evaluate

SUMMARY
Profile

Exploring the Summary
Profile Pages 5-7

✚ How we relate to God

Refer to **Page 5** of the
Summary Profile

Reflect/Discuss:

What does this information reveal to us about the spiritual life and growth in faith of our churchgoers?

Does anything surprise us or challenge us? What insight comes to us from this?

Note here any points we would like to discuss with others, include in a report or take action on.



Grafton Anglican Church Attenders

Inspirational Core Qualities

Vision

Innovation

Leadership Culture



31%

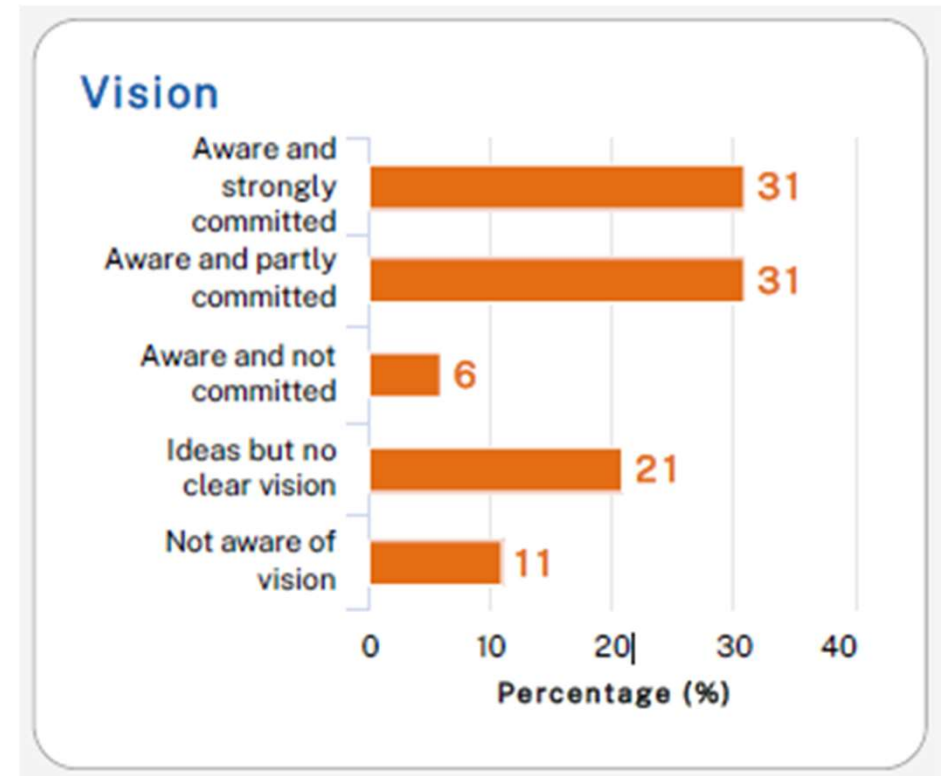
are aware of and strongly committed to the goals or direction of their church

21%

see ideas but no clear vision

11%

not aware of a vision



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

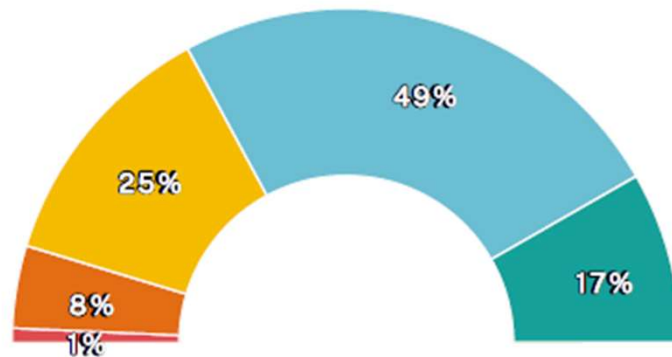
29%

are fully confident this church can achieve the vision, goals, or direction set

View of the church

66%

agree their local church is
always ready to try
something new



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

64%

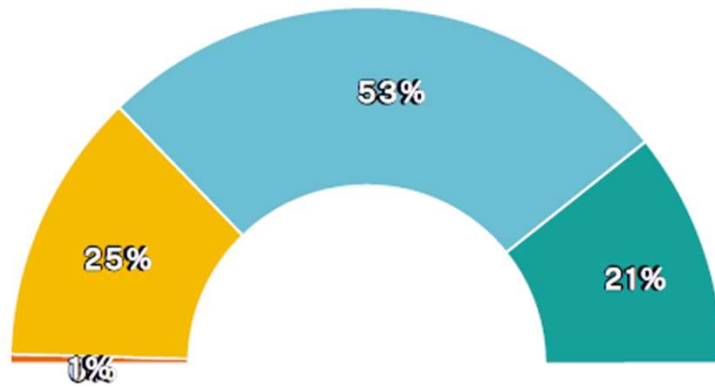
agree leaders encourage
innovation and creative
thinking

7% disagree

View of themselves

80%

agree they would support new initiatives in mission and ministry at their church



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

16%

put 'encouraging new approaches' in their top 3 priorities for the future of the church

2%

put 'starting a new church or mission venture' in their top 3 priorities for the future of the church

55%

agree 'leaders encourage me to find and use my gifts and skills'

22%

'to a great extent'

33%

'to some extent'



52%

of attenders perform a leadership or ministry role

68%

of attenders agree 'leaders here inspire me to action'

79%

of attenders agree their church has good and clear systems for how it operates

An important conversation? Vision for parish life and future

Important to keep some focus on this conversation

- there is 11% 'not aware' (Anglican Aust: 9%)
- 21% 'only ideas' (Anglican Aust: 13%)
- 31% strongly committed (Anglican Aust: 42%)
- confidence achieving a challenge, 29% fully confident, 47% partly confident (Anglican Aust: 42%, 39%)
- average perception of innovation and willingness from attenders to embrace it themselves



New Research using Organisational Culture Theory

People-focused

- **empowering**

Consistent

- **safe and reliable**

Adaptable

- **innovative**

Goal-oriented

- **mission focused**



Evaluate

SUMMARY
Profile

Exploring the Summary
Profile Pages 8

Our Vision

Refer to **Page 8** of the
Summary Profile

Reflect/Discuss:

How committed are people to our church's vision? Are they confident the vision can be achieved?
Does any of this information surprise or challenge us? What insight comes to us from this?
Note here any points we would like to discuss with others, include in a report or take action on.



Our attitude to innovation

Refer to **Page 8** of the
Summary Profile

Reflect/Discuss:

How do our churchgoers rate our church's readiness to try something new? How many would support the development of new initiatives in ministry or mission? What might this imply about the life and culture of our church? Does any of this information surprise or challenge us? Note here any points we would like to discuss with others, include in a report or take action on.

An icon representing three stylized human figures, used to denote a group or community.

Our leadership culture

Refer to **Page 8** of the
Summary Profile

Reflect/Discuss:

How are our churchgoers involved in leadership or ministry roles? To what extent do our attenders feel that leaders encourage them to find and use their gifts and skills and inspire them to action? What does this feedback reveal to us about our leadership culture at church? Does any of this information surprise or challenge us? Note here any points we would like to discuss with others, include in a report or take action on.

Reflection and Discussion

Q & A

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