Funding Forward:

A Pathway to More Sustainable Models for Ministry

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How did we get here?

TED Talk by Michele Wucker: "Why we ignore obvious problems -- and how to act on them"

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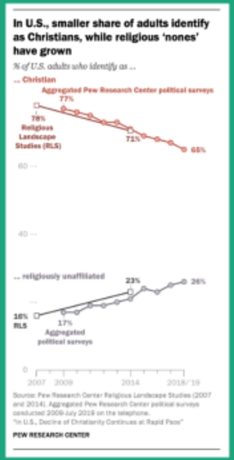
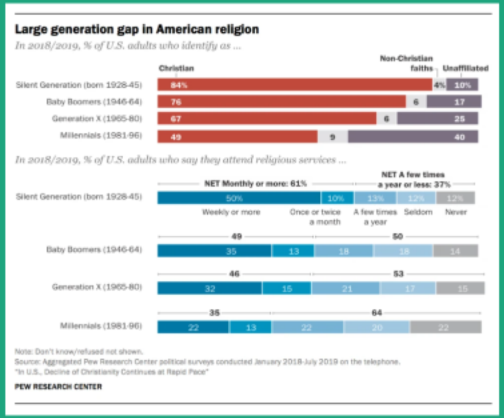
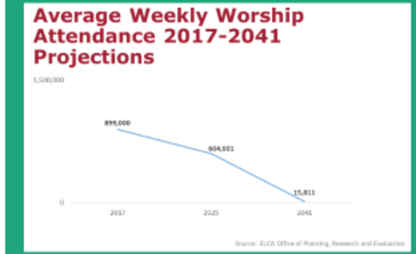
TED Talk by Michele Wucker: "Why we ignore obvious problems -- and how to act on them"

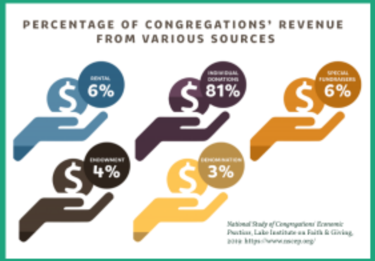
For many faith communities, it has (or will) become less and less feasible to fund their missions on tithes and offerings alone.

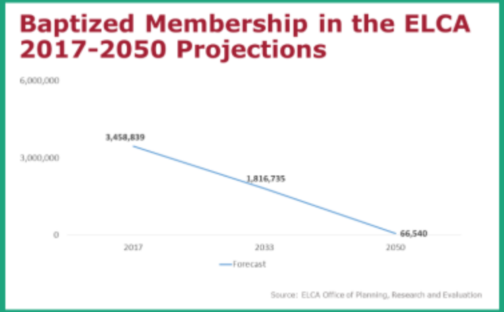
How did we get here?

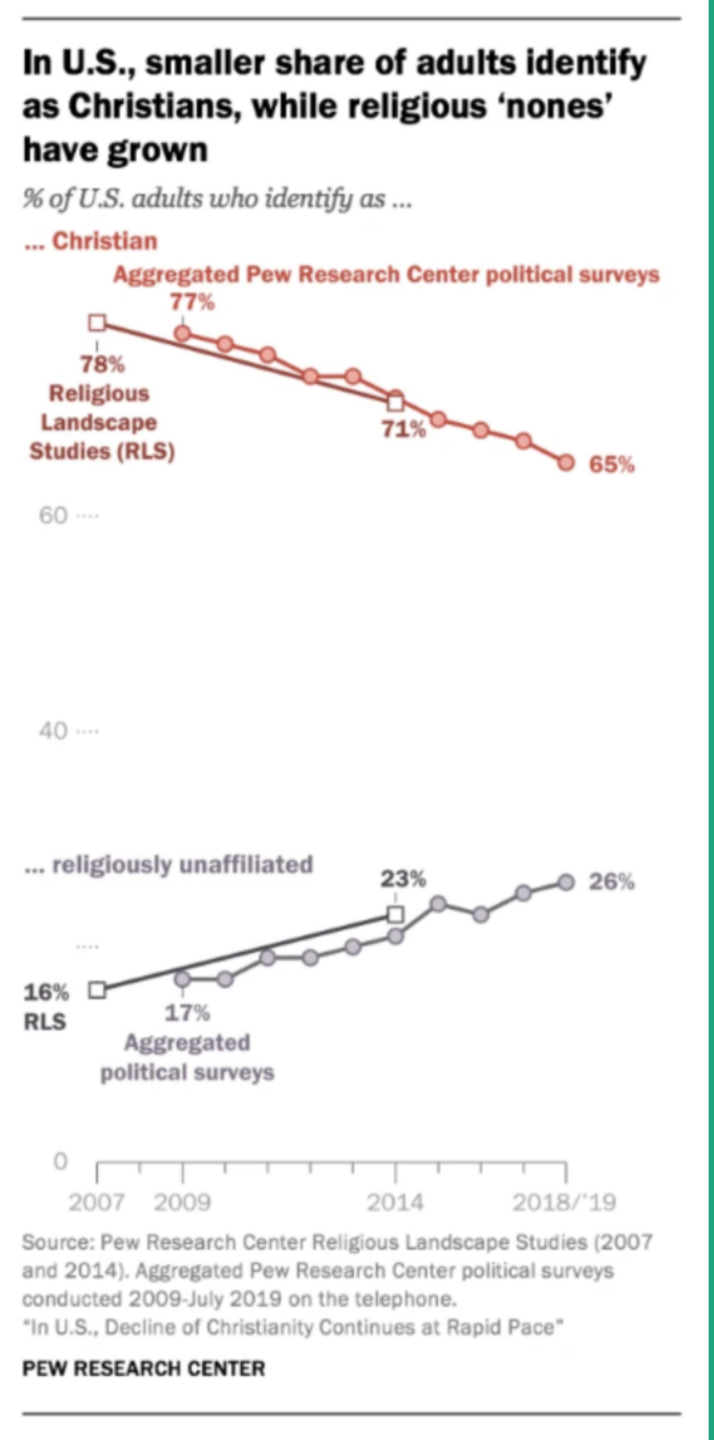


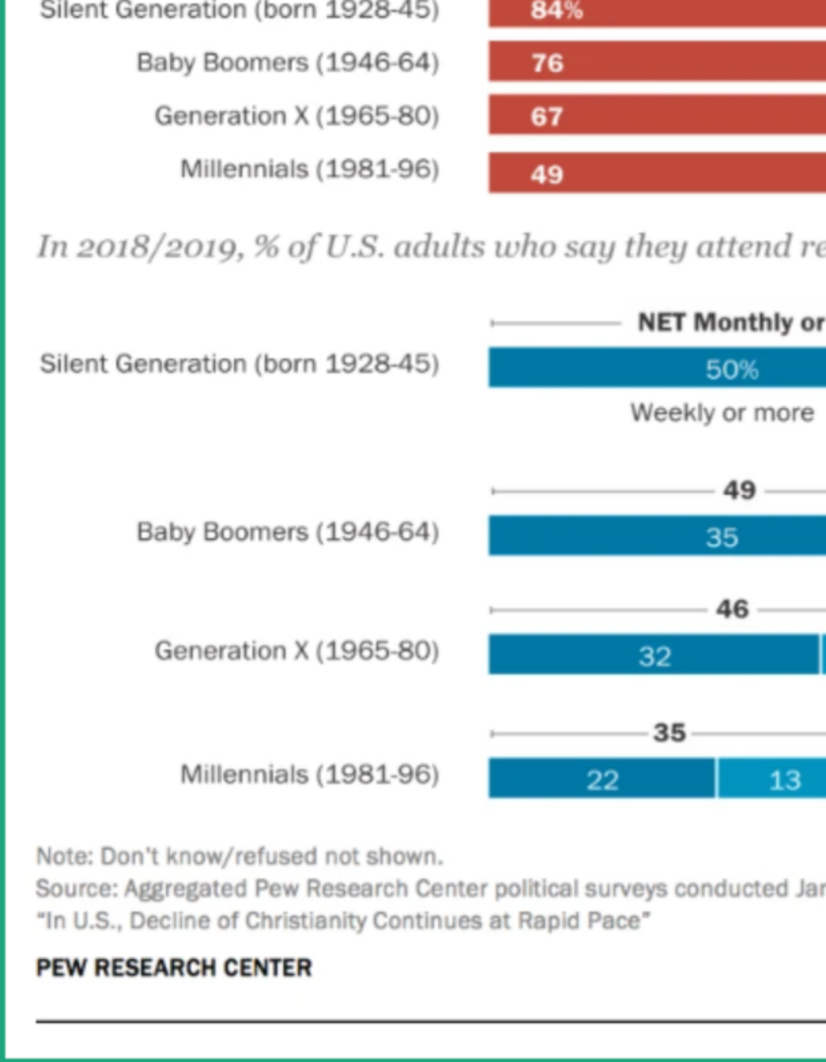









In U.S., smaller share of adults identify as Christians, while religious 'nones' have grown
% of U.S. adults who identify as ...
... Christian
Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys
77%
78%
Religious Landscape Studies (RLS)
71%
65%
60
40
... religiously unaffiliated
23%
26%
16%
RLS
17%
Aggregated political surveys
0
2007
2009
2014
2018/'19
Source: Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Studies (2007 and 2014). Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted 2009-July 2019 on the telephone.
"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"
PEW RESEARCH CENTER


Silent Generation (born 1928-45)
84%
Baby Boomers (1946-64)
76
Generation X (1965-80)
67
Millennials (1981-96)
49
In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who say they attend re
NET Monthly or
Silent Generation (born 1928-45)
50%
Weekly or more
49
Baby Boomers (1946-64)
35
46
Generation X (1965-80)
32
35
Millennials (1981-96)
22
13
Note: Don't know/refused not shown.
Source: Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted Jar
"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"
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Baptized Members
2017-2050 Project
6,000,000


dults identify
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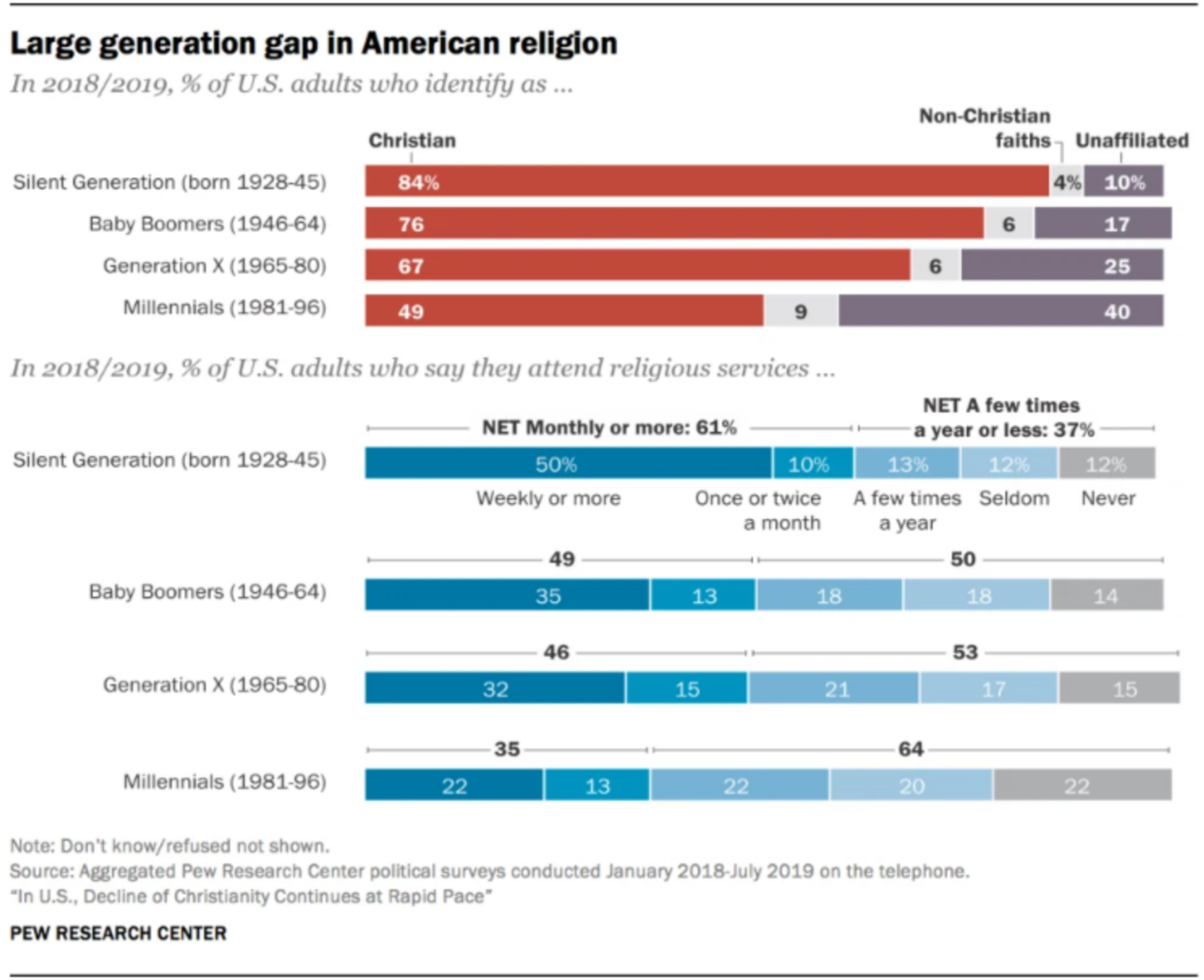
nter political surveys
65%
26%


Large generation gap in American religion
In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who identify as ...
Christian
Non-Christian faiths
Unaffiliated
Silent Generation (born 1928-45) 84% 4% 10%
Baby Boomers (1946-64) 76 6 17
Generation X (1965-80) 67 6 25
Millennials (1981-96) 49 9 40
In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who say they attend religious services ...
NET Monthly or more: 61%
NET A few times a year or less: 37%
Silent Generation (born 1928-45) 50% 10% 13% 12% 12%
Weekly or more
Once or twice a month
A few times a year
Seldom
Never
Baby Boomers (1946-64) 49 50
35 13 18 18 14
Generation X (1965-80) 46 53
32 15 21 17 15
Millennials (1981-96) 35 64
22 13 22 20 22
Note: Don't know/refused not shown.
Source: Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted January 2018-July 2019 on the telephone.
"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"
PEW RESEARCH CENTER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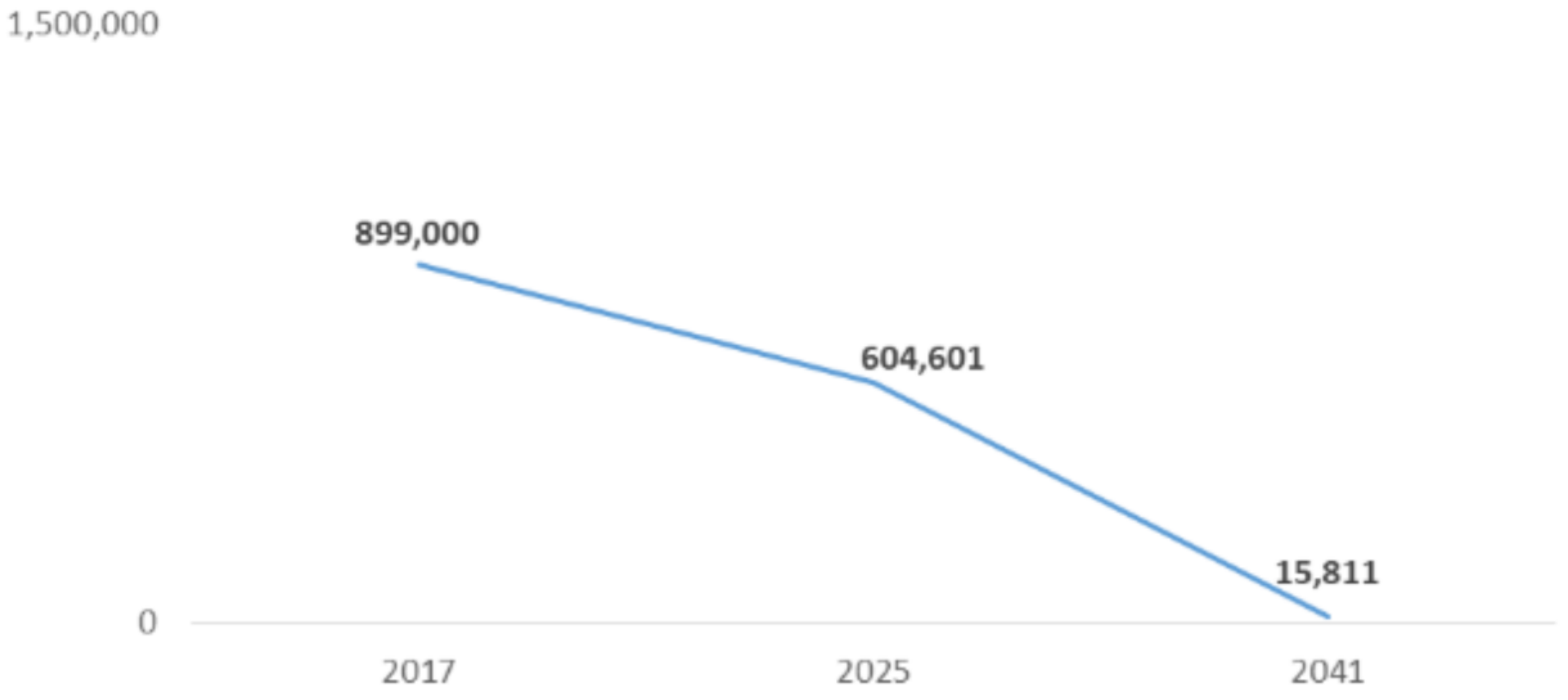
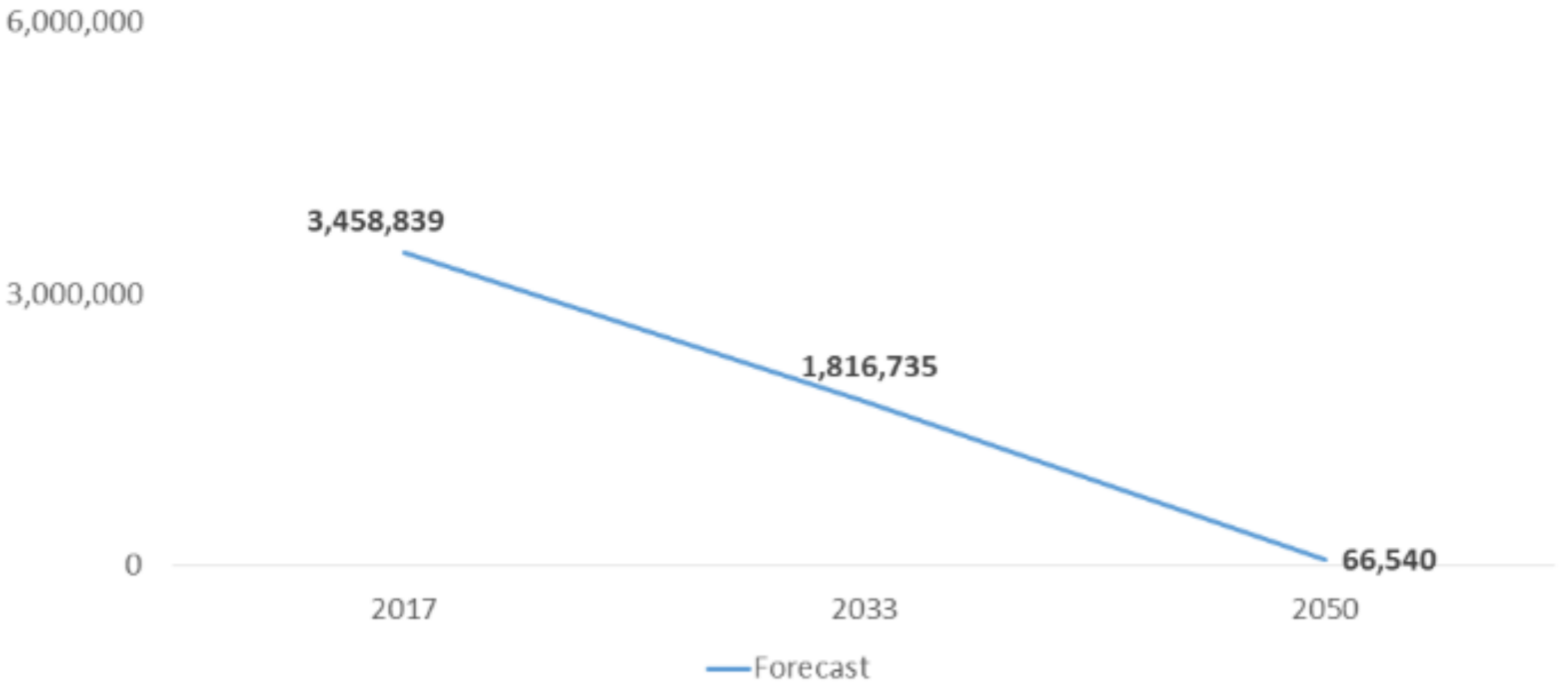
Average Weekly Worship Attendance 2017-2041 Projections



Source: ELCA Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Baptized Membership in the ELCA 2017-2050 Projections



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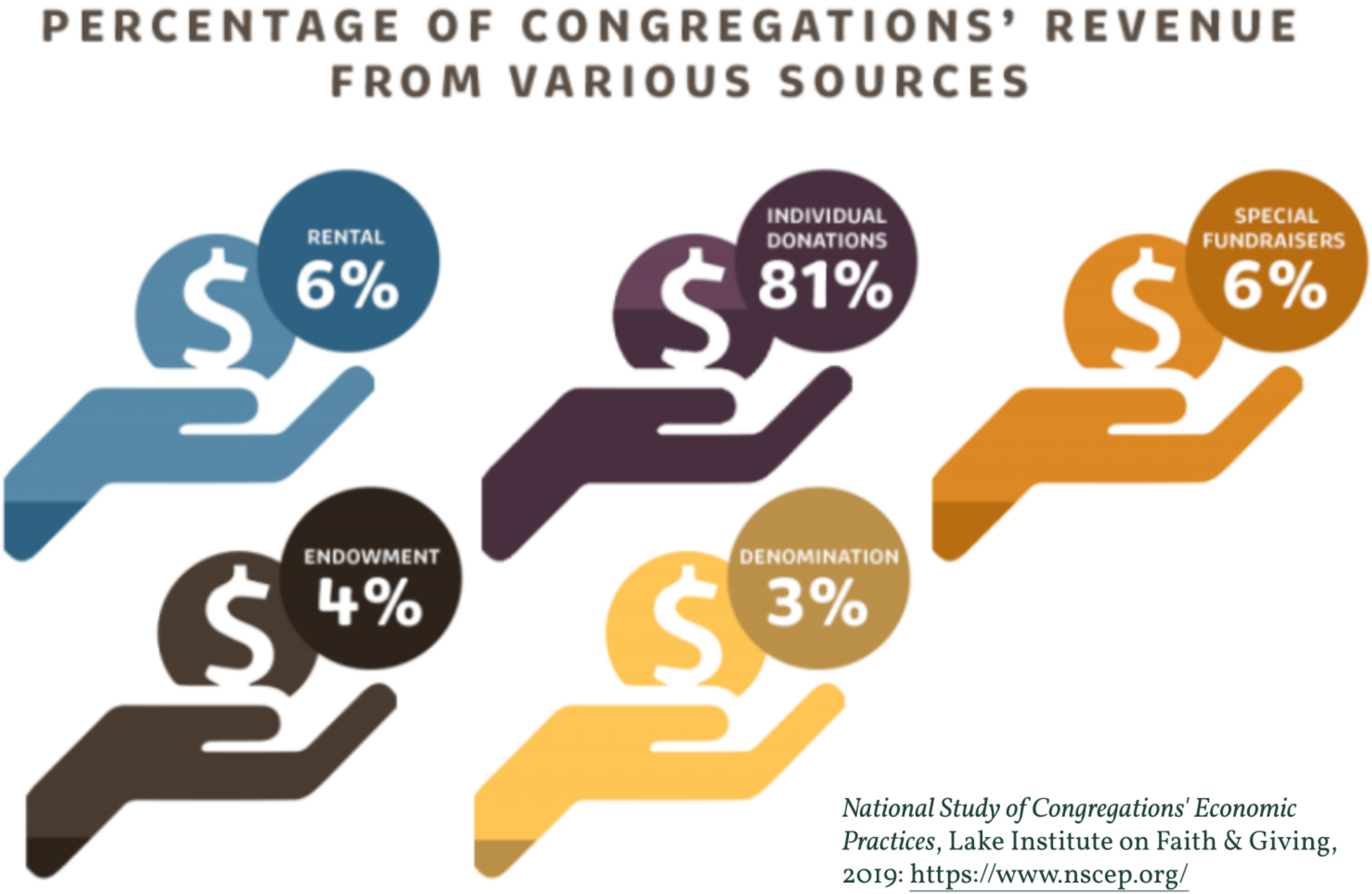
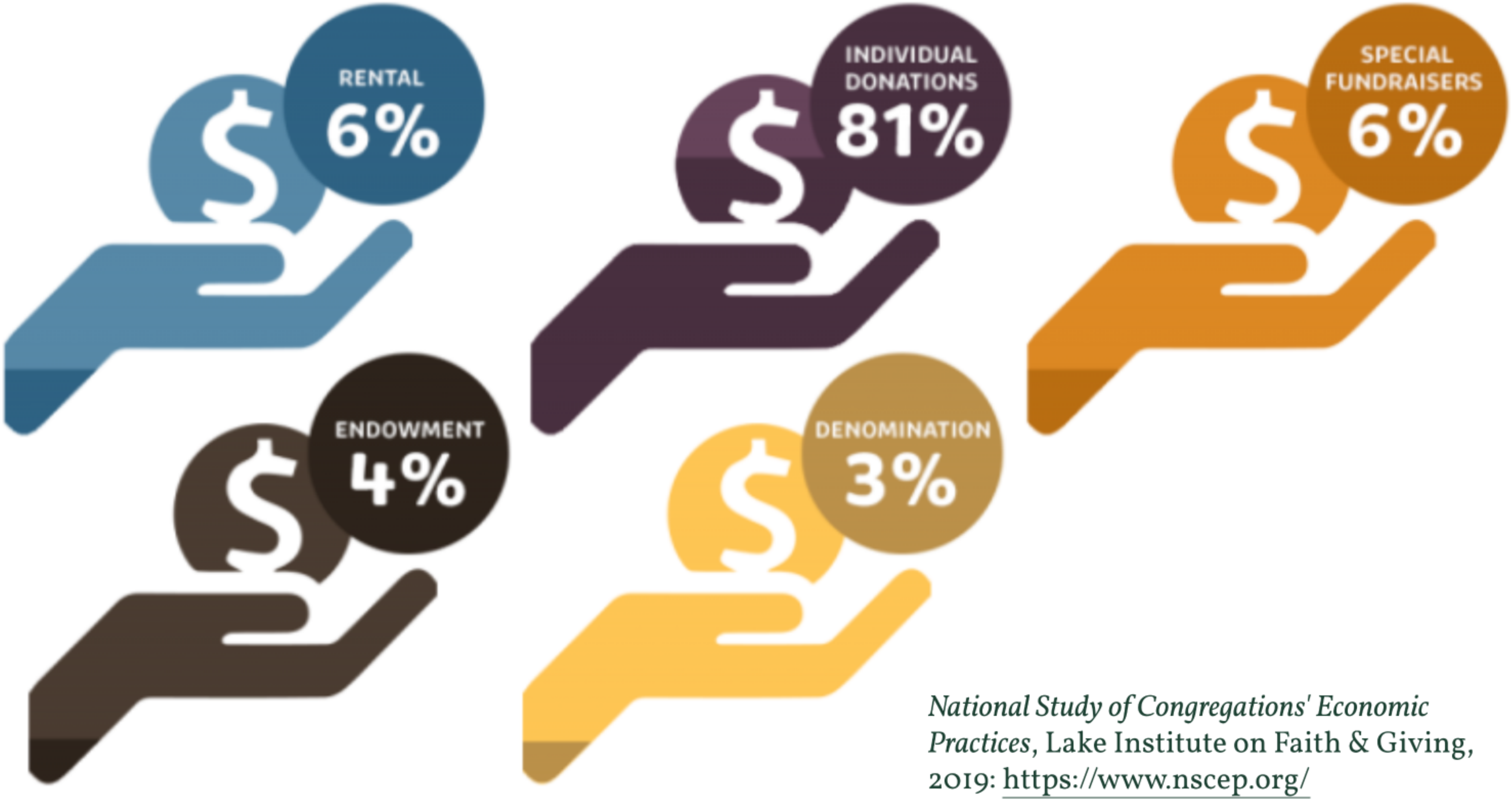


National Study of Congregations' Economic Practices, Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, 2019: https://www.nscep.org/

PERCENTAGE OF CONGREGATIONS' REVENUE FROM VARIOUS SOURCES



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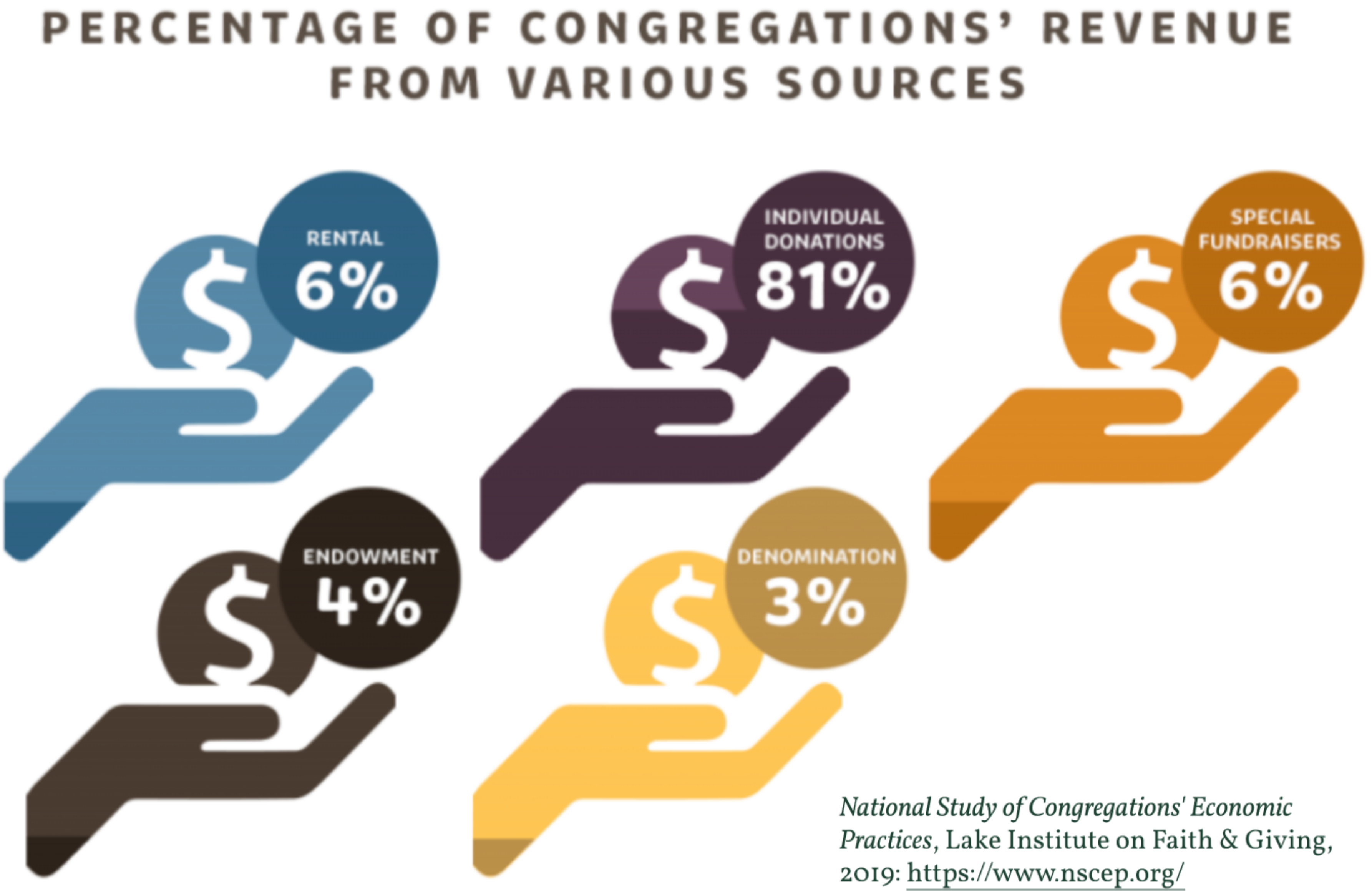

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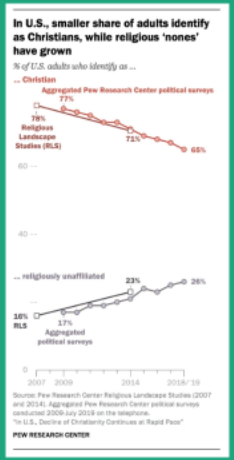
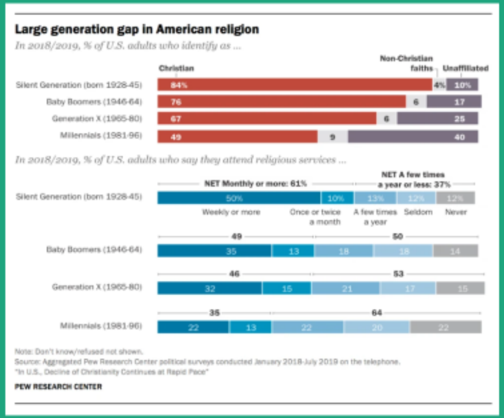
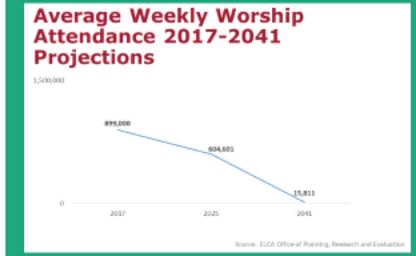
"in fact, **40% of congregations** receive essentially their entire annual revenue from individual donations" (14)

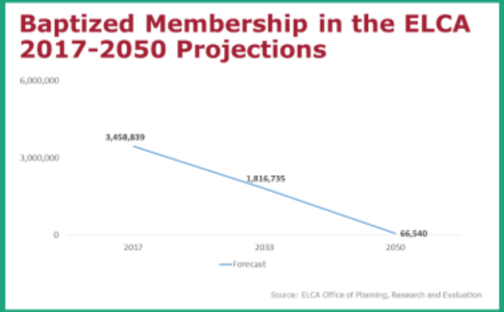
"The majority of financial resources that congregations receive comes from individuals, and the vast majority of those funds are given during a worship service (78%)." (17)

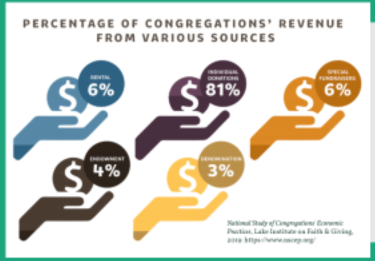
How did we get here?











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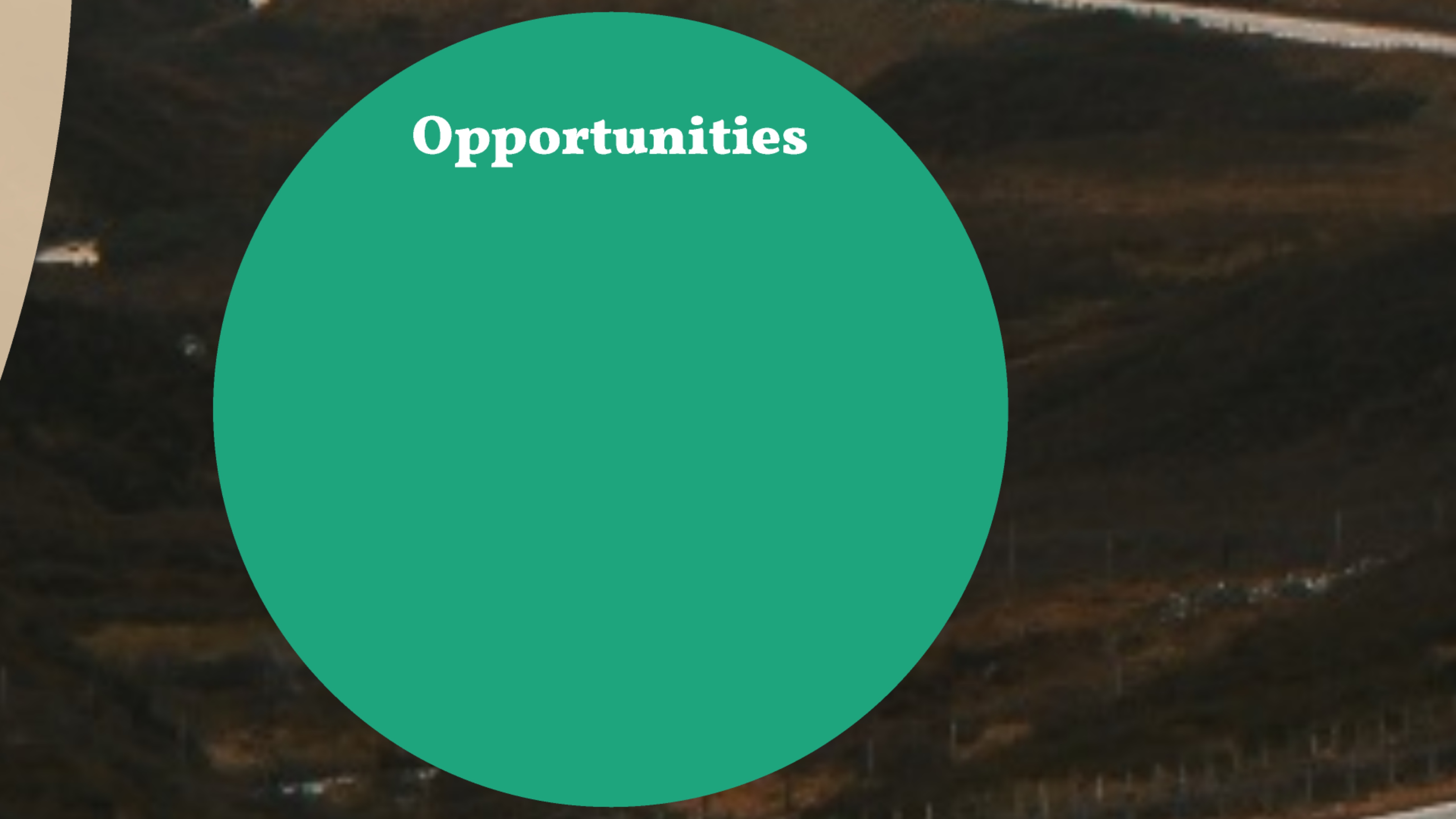
Opportunities



Opportunities

- Listen to where God is calling us next & discern God's mission
- Connect with the neighborhood & form new partnerships
- Tap underutilized resources
- Diversify income streams

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What is Funding Forward?

Finding more **sustainable** economic models for ministry that emerge organically from the organization's **mission**

"I remember standing for our congregational meeting in January [2022] and saying, 'We're presenting you this budget that the session has approved and you can see that we feel confident we can fund about half of it. So we're going to have to do something different.'"


Impact
Full

Anything but cookie cutter …

Anything but cookie cutter …

Anything but cookie cutter …

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Where Congregations Tend to Get Stuck

"Why" --> "What" --> "How"

Who took the survey?

Who took the survey?

101

Fall 2022:
Received 101 responses from across the U.S. (96%) and Canada (4%)

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101

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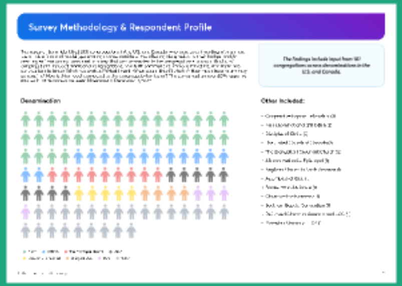
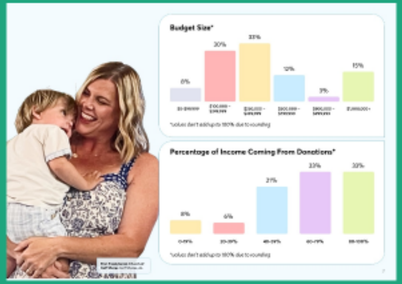


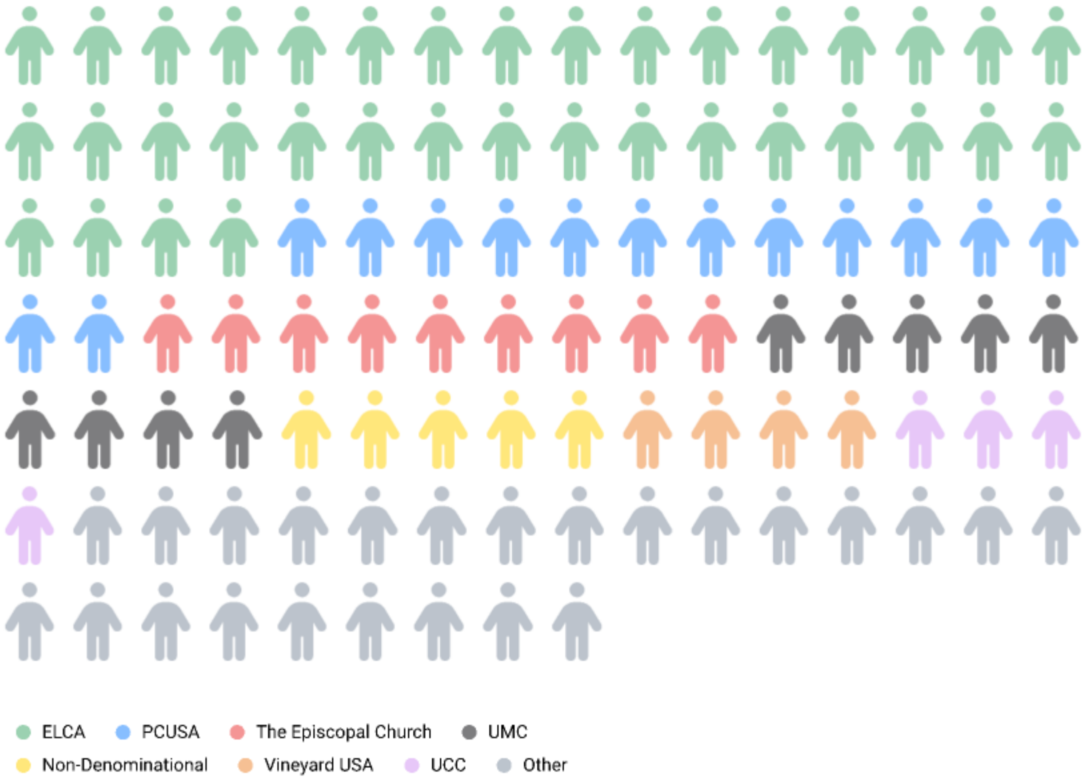


Survey Methodology & Respondent Profile

The research team identified 200 congregations in the U.S. and Canada who were experimenting with a more sustainable financial model (generating income outside of the offering plate, reducing their budget and/or creating self-sustaining ministries) in a way that was connected to the congregation's mission. This list of congregations included traditional congregations, new faith communities, campus ministries, and more. We were curious to know: What has worked? What hasn't? What would they like to try? How much income are they generating? How is this model connected to the congregation's mission? The survey had an over 50% response rate with 101 responses between November 8-December 9, 2022.

The findings include input from 101 congregations across denominations in the U.S. and Canada.

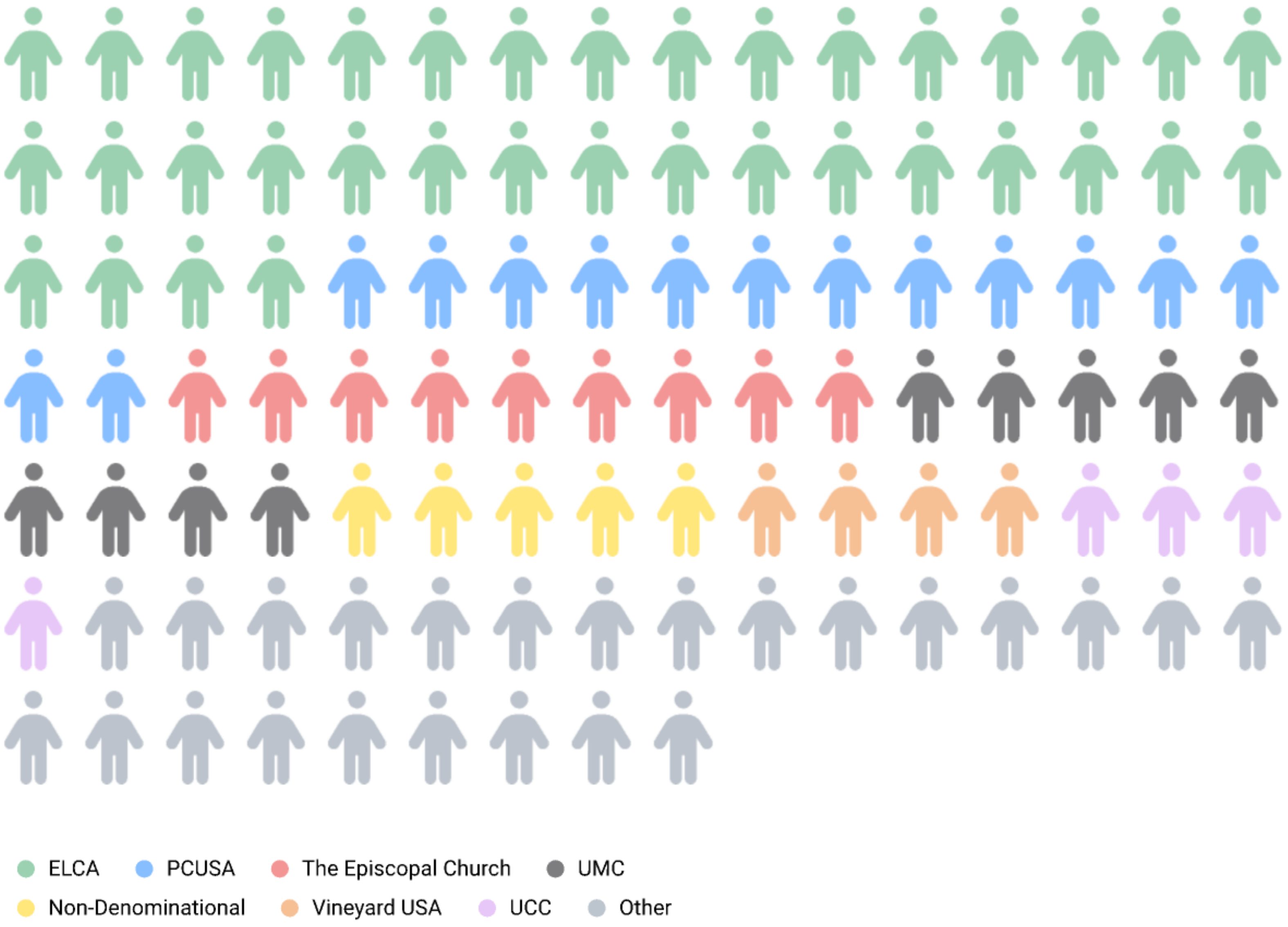
Denomination



Other Included:

- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (3)
- No denominational affiliation (3)
- Disciples of Christ (2)
- The United Church of Canada (2)
- The Evangelical Covenant Church (2)
- African Methodist Episcopal (1)
- Anglican Church in North America (1)
- Assemblies of God (1)
- Baptist World Alliance (1)
- Church of the Nazarene (1)
- Southern Baptist Convention (1)
- Reformed Church in America and UCC (1)
- Moravian Church & ELCA (1)

Denomination



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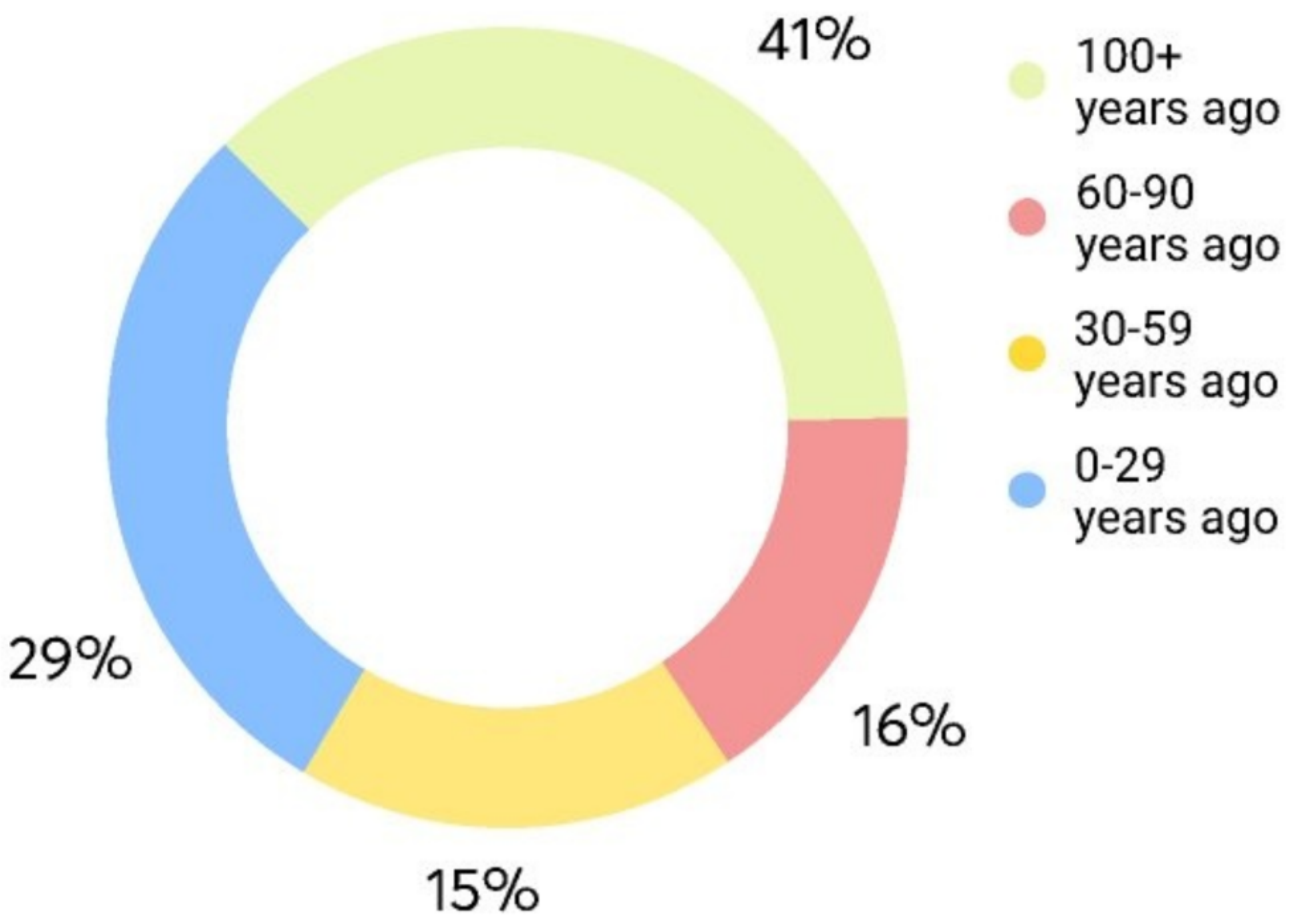
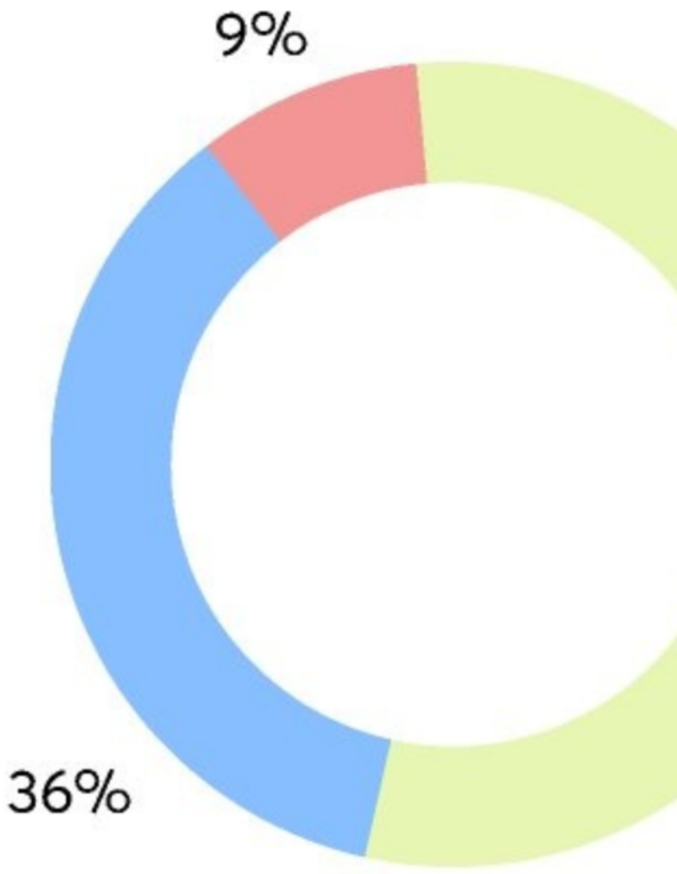
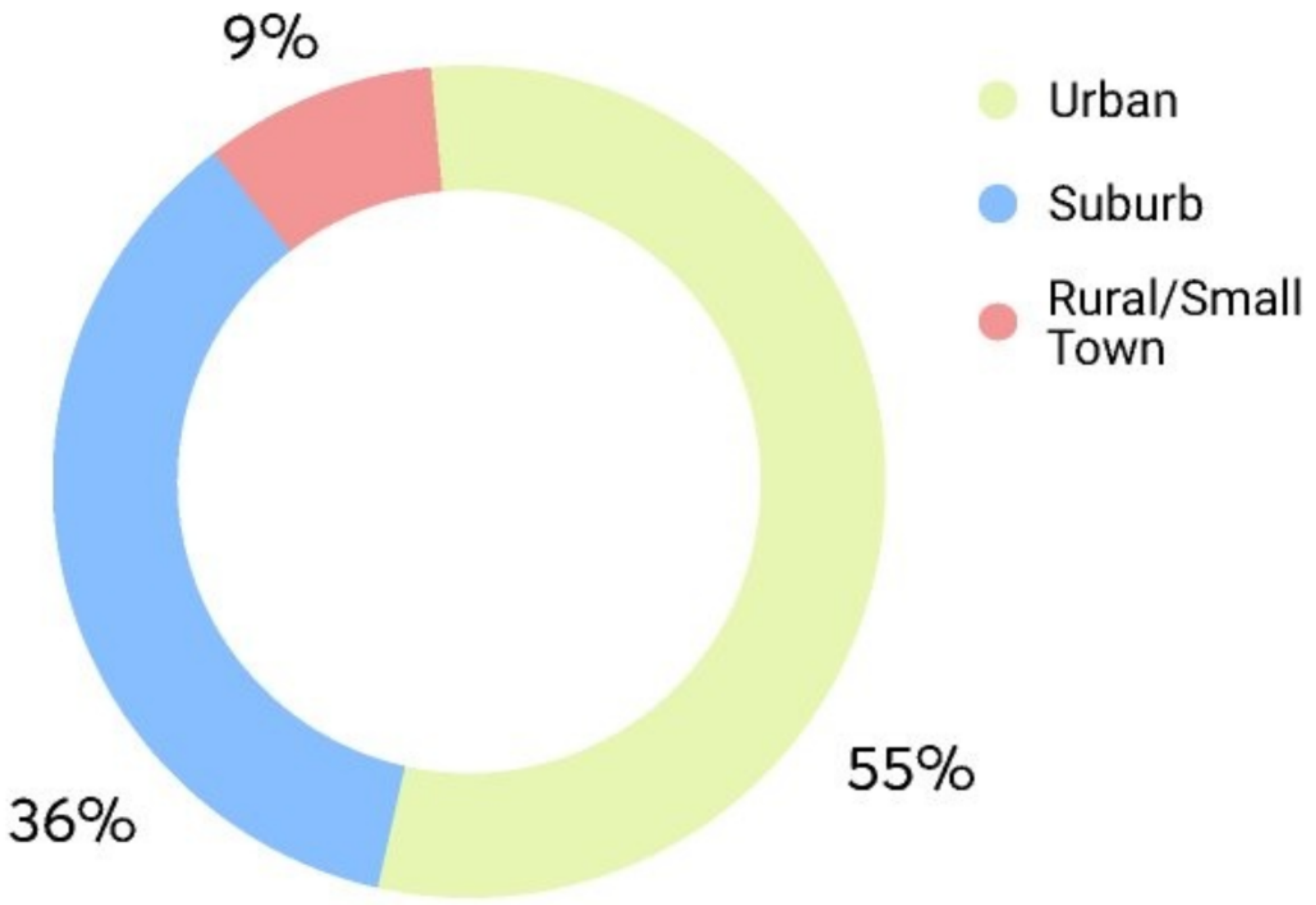
Congregation Start Date



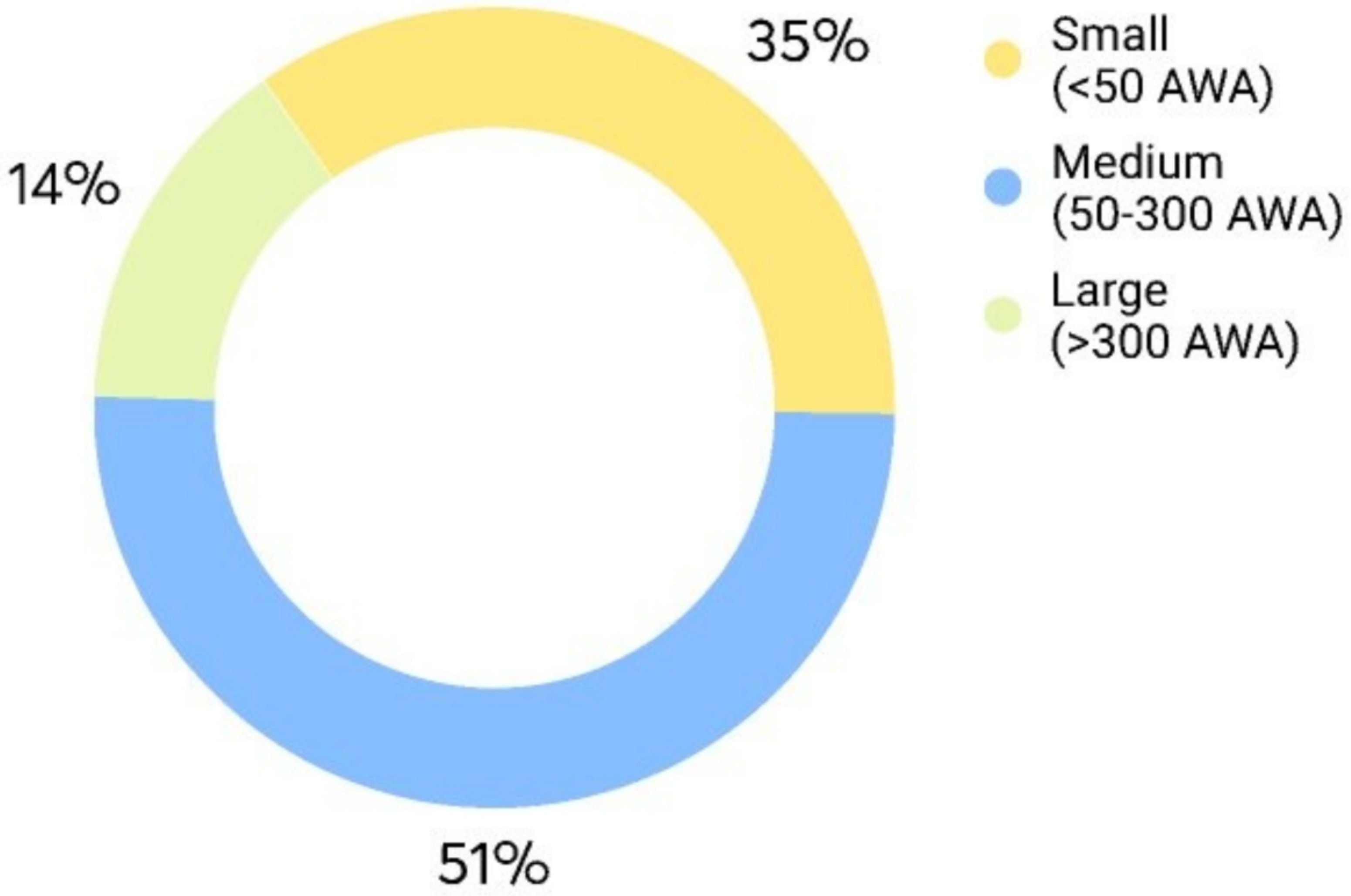
*values don't add up to 100% due to rounding



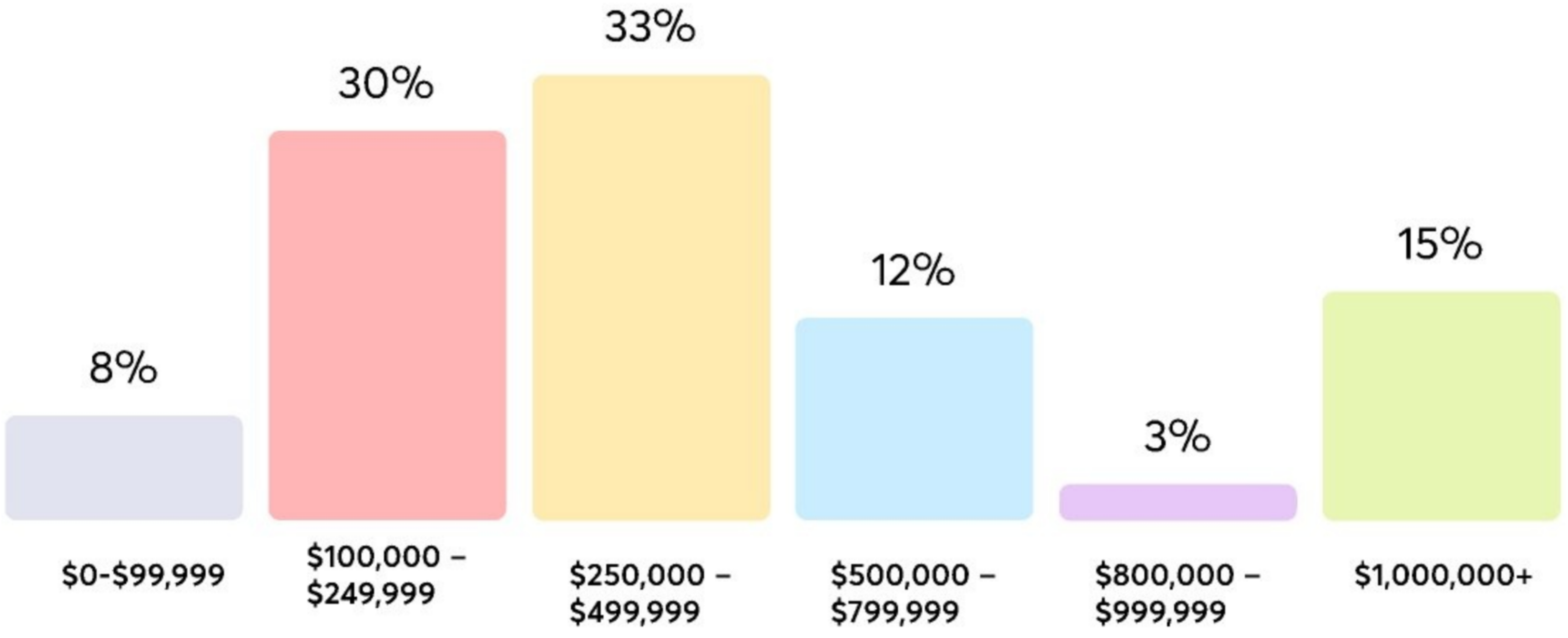
Context



Average Worship Attendance (AWA)

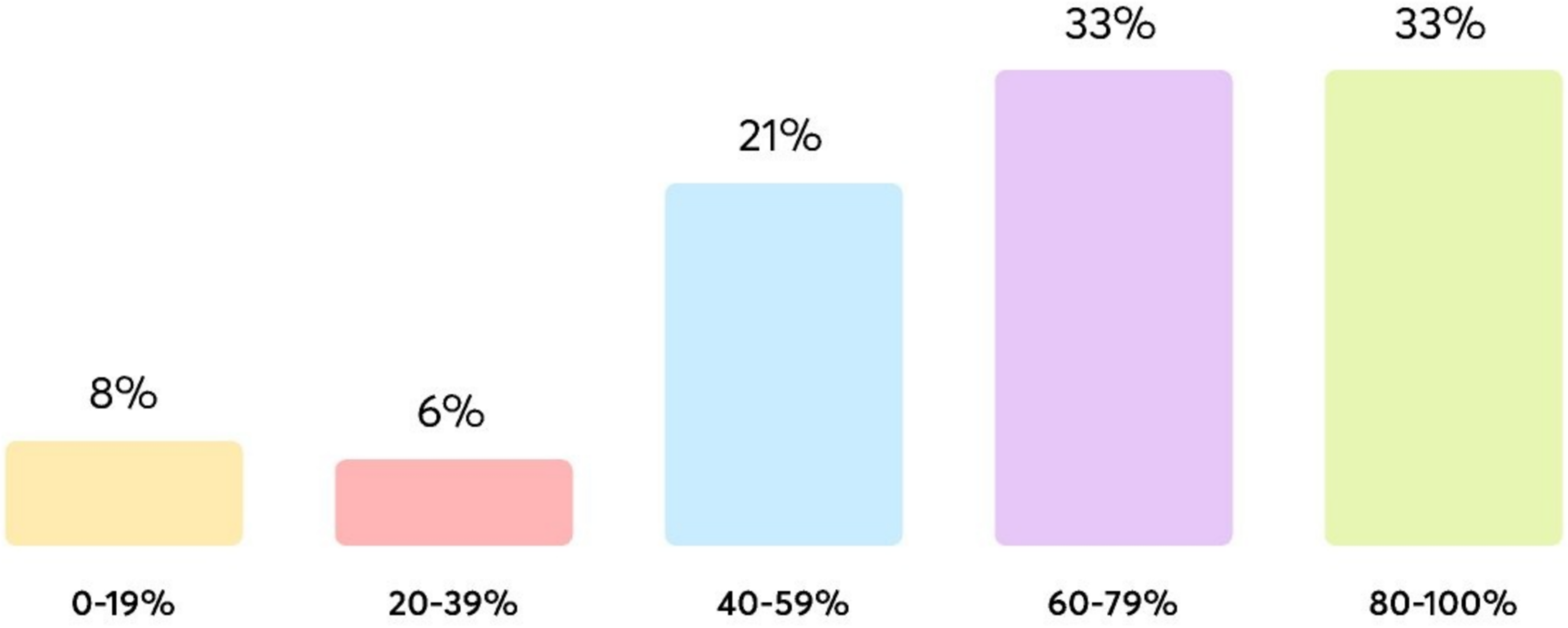


Budget Size*



*values don't add up to 100% due to rounding

Percentage of Income Coming From Donations*



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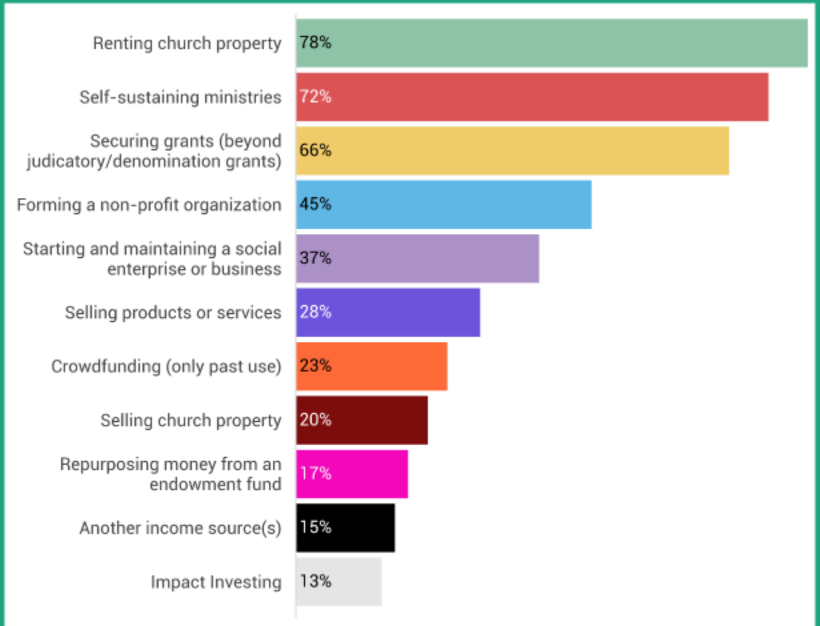
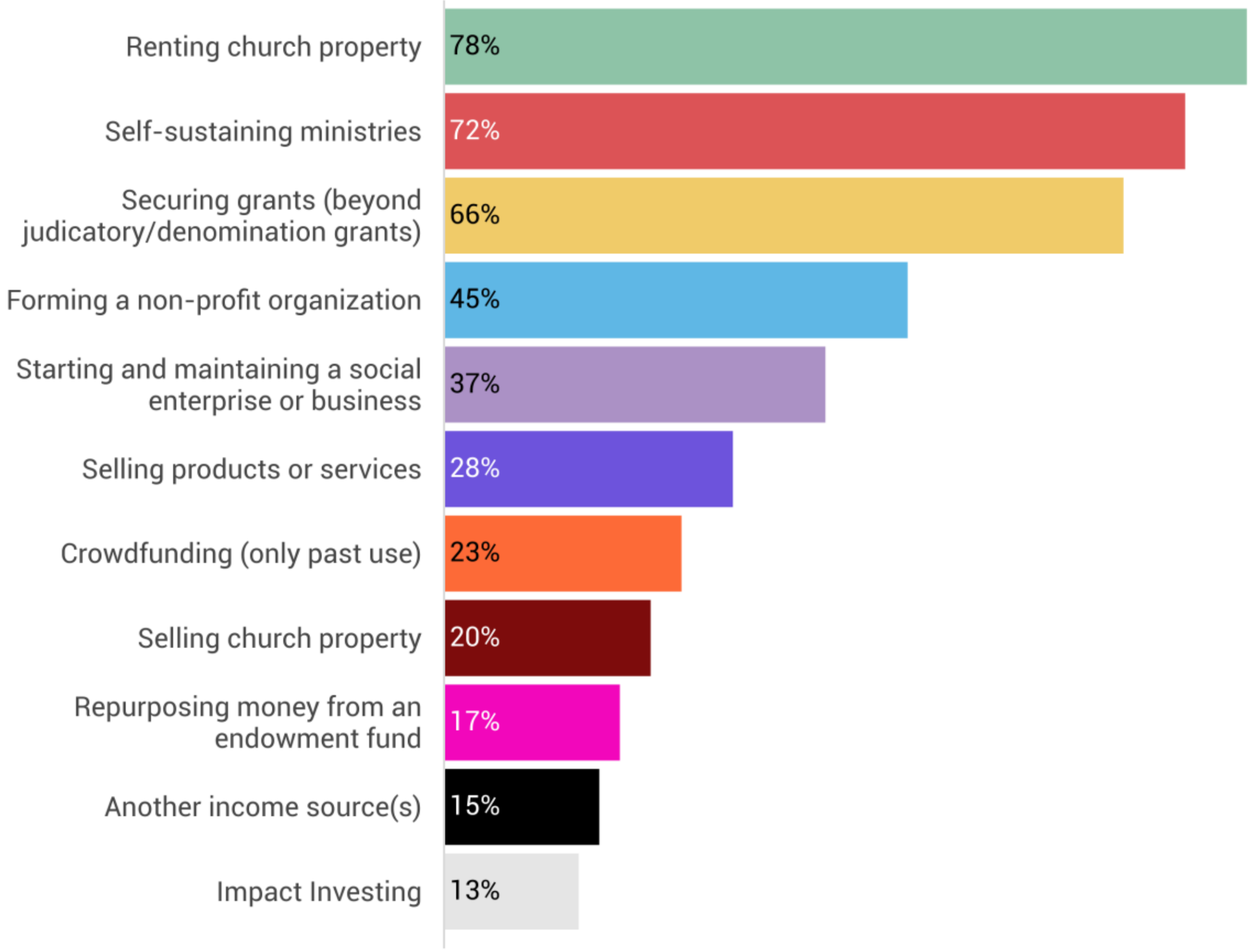
Income Sources



Other income sources included: Roller Skating Rink Ministry, producing theatre productions, leasing cell phone towers on property, parking lot revenue, leasing advertising space on digital sign, patreon sponsorship for our sermon podcast, etc.

92% of the congregations were using (or considering using) at least one income source outside the offering plate



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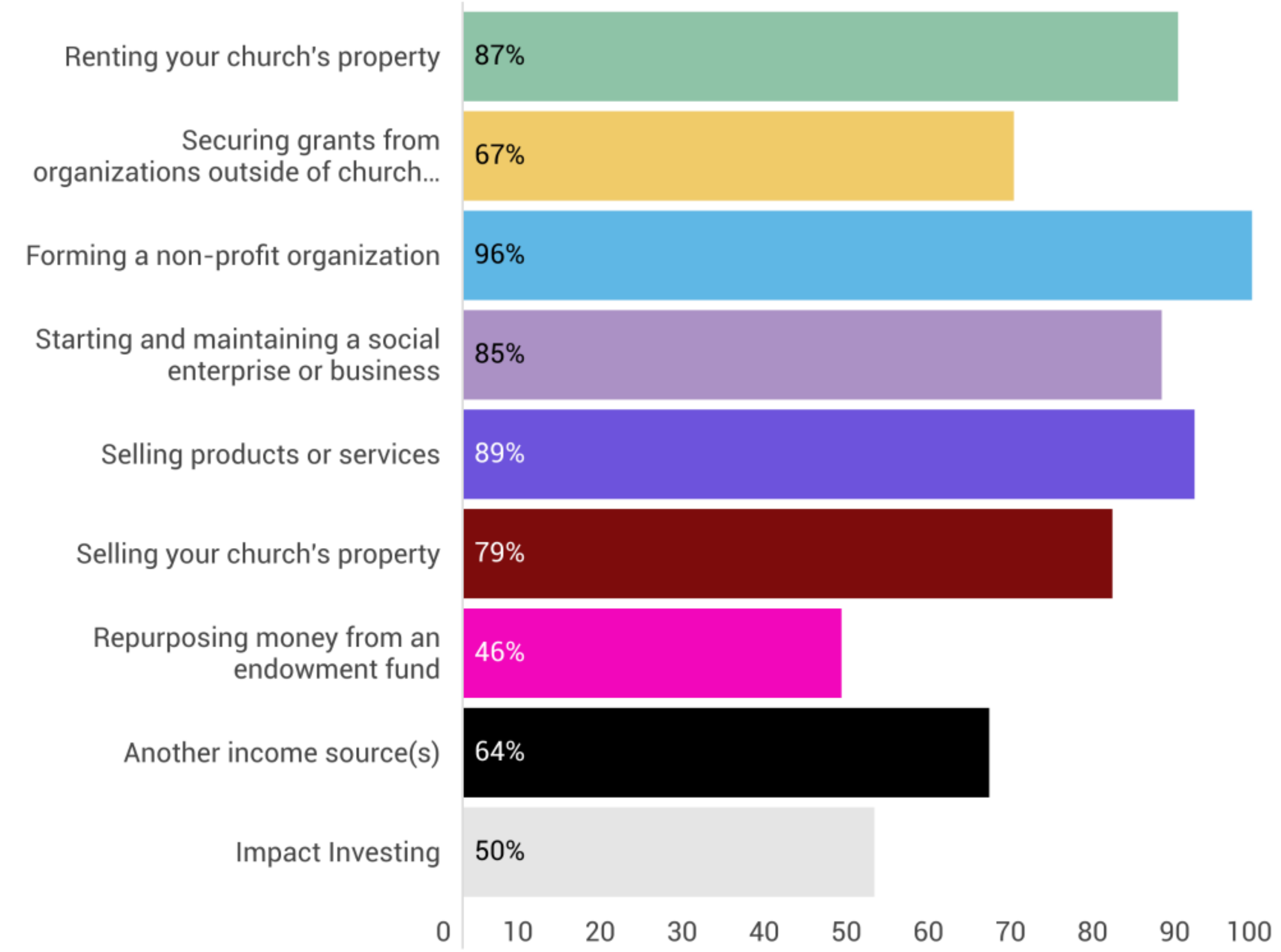
% of congregations who used the income source who said they had evidence it created relationships with people outside the church



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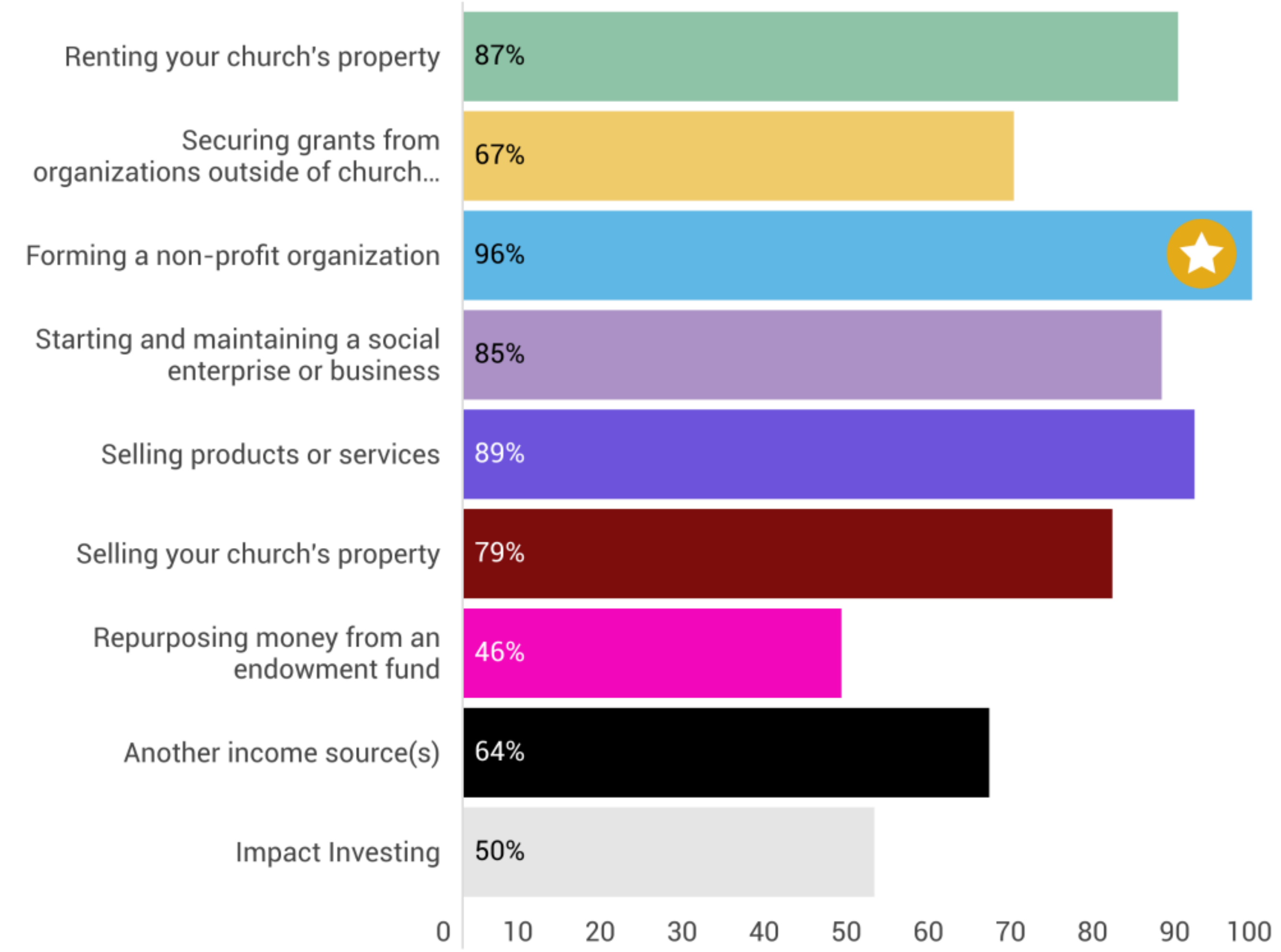

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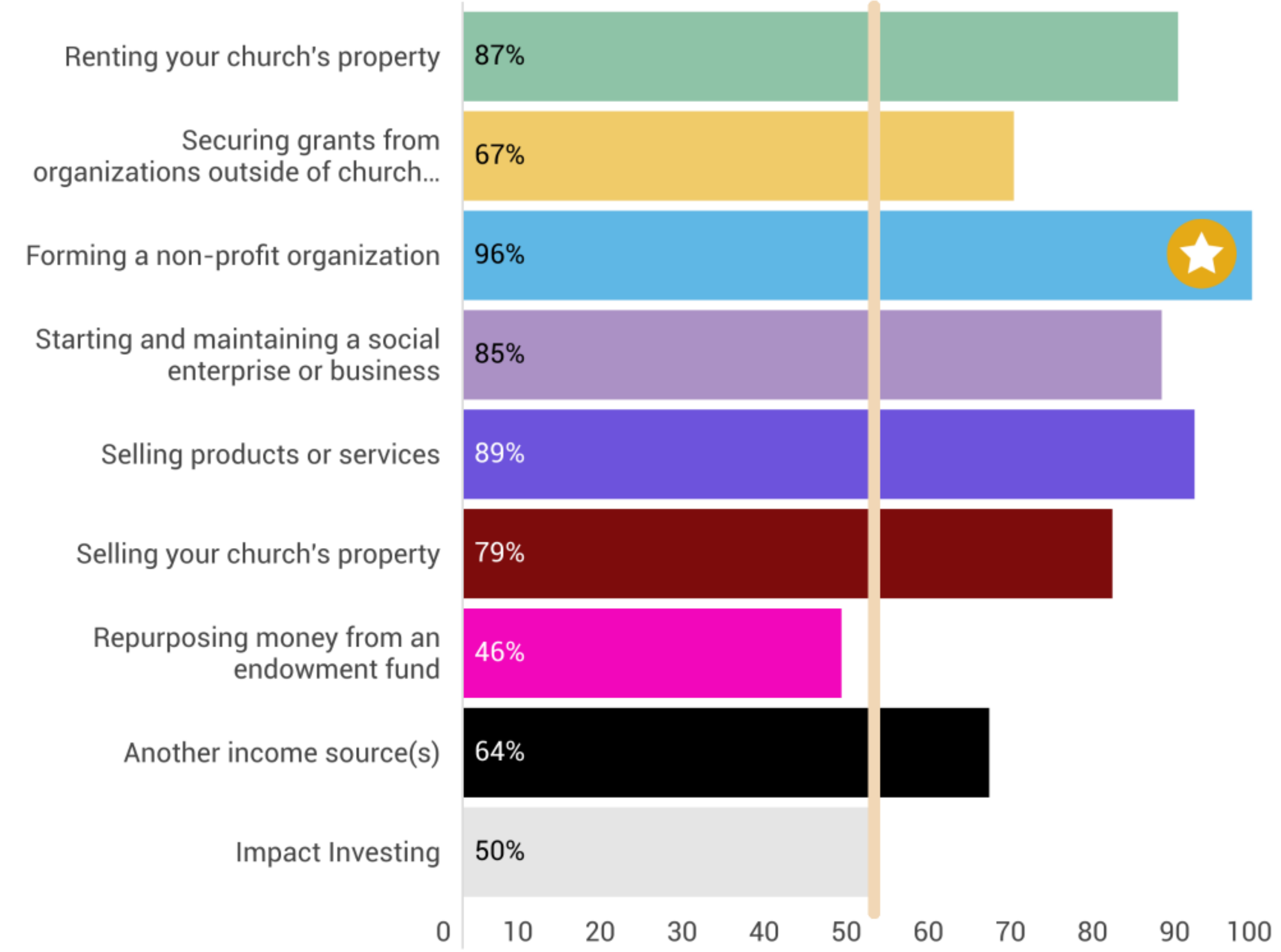

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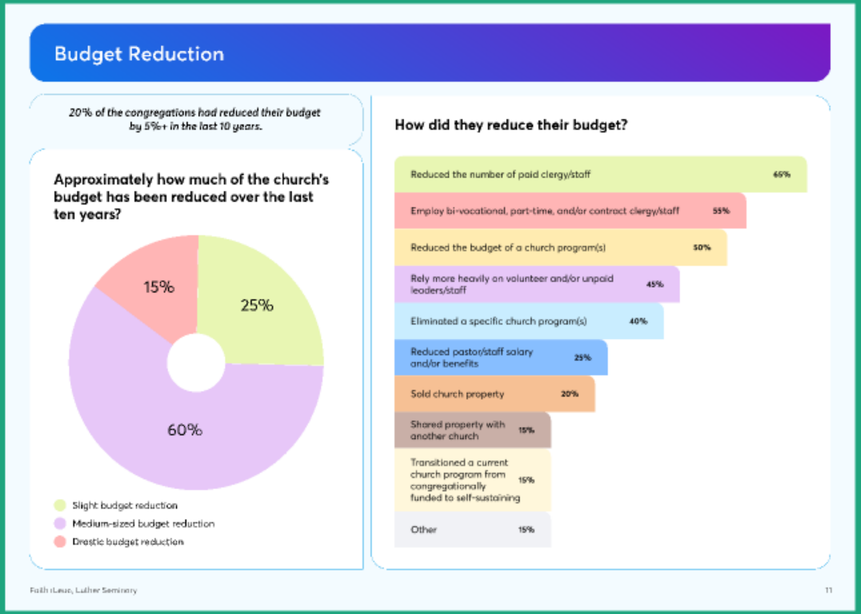
Budget Reduction



20% of the congregations had reduced their budget by 5%+ in the last 10 years

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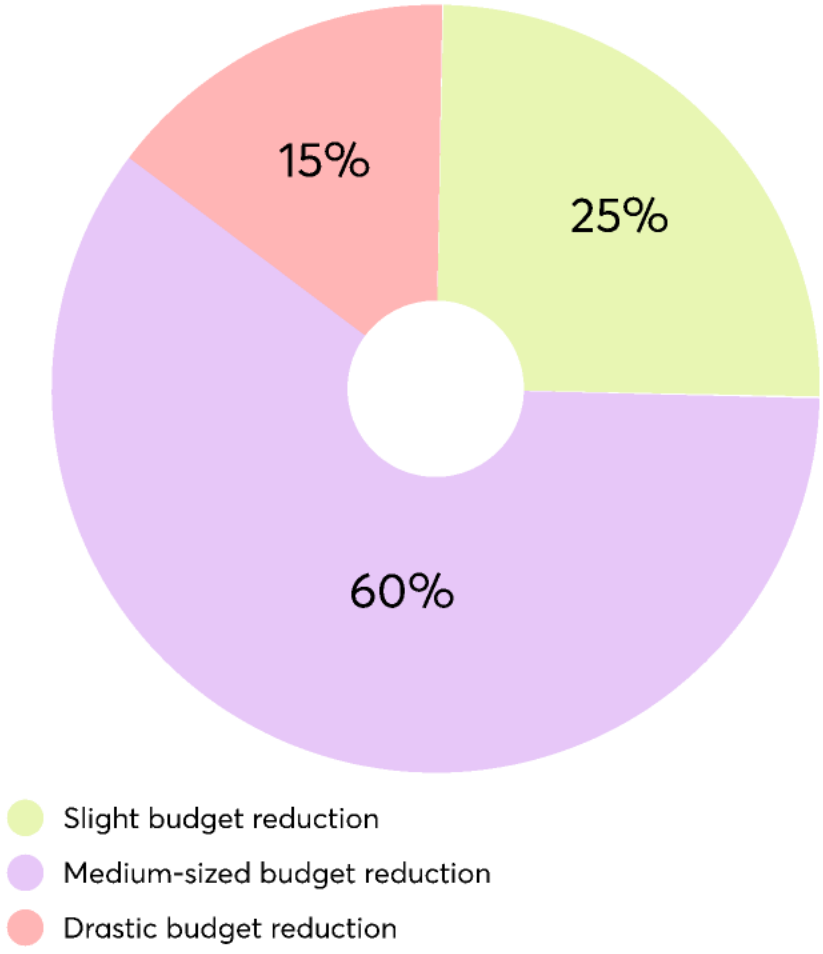
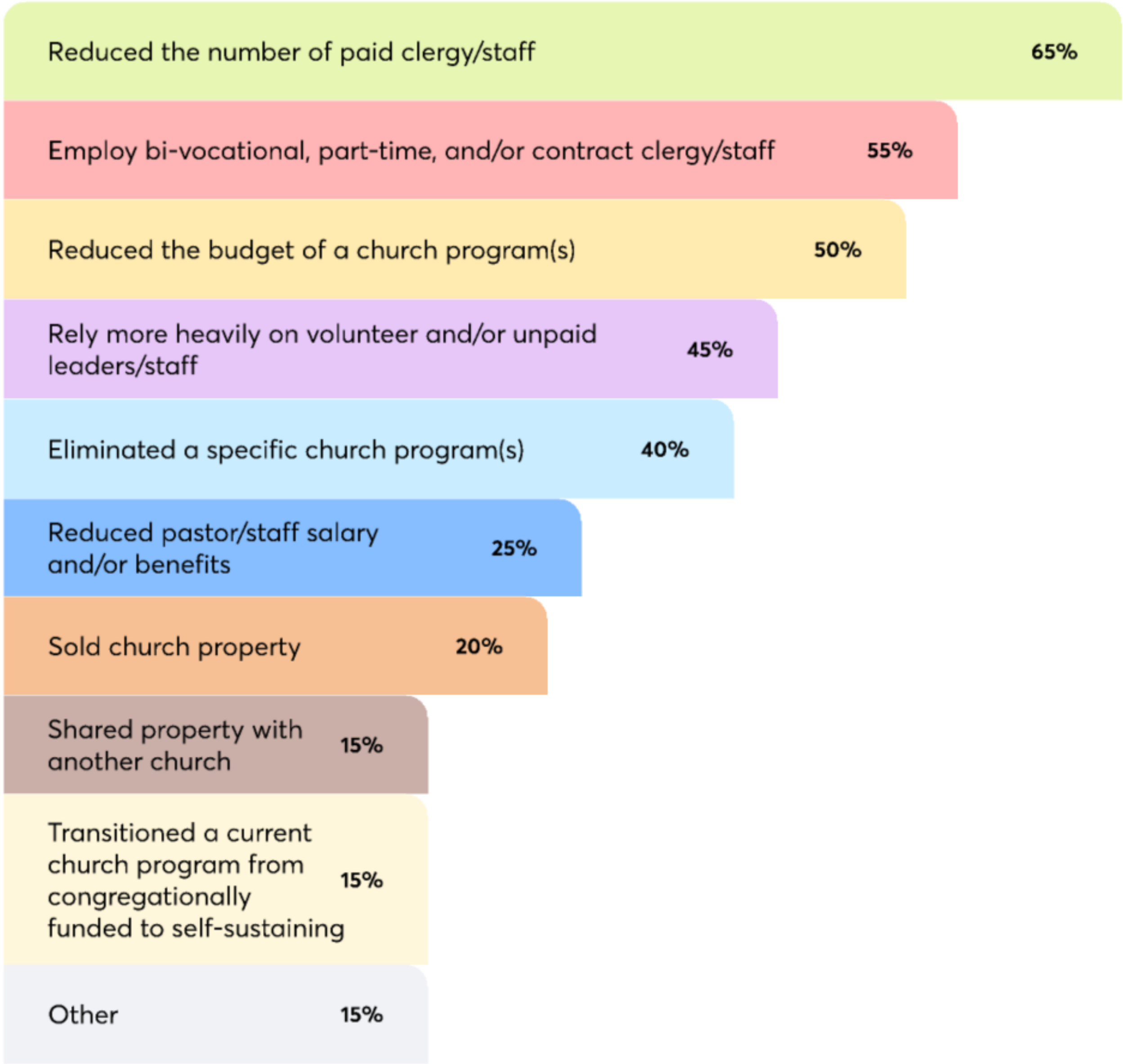
Approximately how much of the church's budget has been reduced over the last ten years?



How did they reduce their budget?



Where is God in the process?

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Without question, the most impactful learning was that God is present through the whole funding process. We asked, "As you think back on the work your church has done to add income sources, reduce the budget, and/or rethink staffing, where have you seen God at work?" We received over 90 responses to this question. We heard stories of big and small miracles, God's guidance, finding partners in unexpected places, and seeing God's love come alive in ways they never would have imagined.

God winks

"There have been so many "God winks" in this process - everything from unexpected financial gifts just when they are needed most, to doors being opened to find the perfect renters for the business center, to relationships being built with various people and organizations in the community, to a sense of purpose and anticipation about how God is leading and providing for the church. Last year at this time, I wasn't sure we would even be here, and the ways God is providing is amazing."

Easing conflict

"Grants have been a life-giving source of inspiration and experimentation for our congregation. **Since this is a new way of being church that I introduced, I give God 100% of the credit for easing the conflict that this paradigm shift would have caused.** Grants take up a lot of my time. The congregation just seemed to accept that there would be fewer staff working here due to budgetary constraints, and the rector would be less available to do other church duties."

Riding the spirit's wave

"In our newest venture that serves Christian leaders, God has been present blazing a trail of relationship and community ... And has even blazed a trail for our congregation to support and celebrate this vibrant ministry, whose impact goes far beyond the walls of our congregation to every continent on the globe and countless expressions of Christian witness. **It has felt more like following and riding the Spirit's wave than leading it at times.** God continues to show up now as we reach toward financial sustainability in connecting us with the right partners and organizations who are providing capacity building support and catching the vision for our mission."

It's God's ministry, not ours

"**From the beginning we have recognized that this ministry belongs primarily to God**, and we are invited into it (rather than us owning it and bearing the full burden of responsibility). This has freed us to take courageous moves in adding serving days, hiring staff, etc. God is present every time someone comes to volunteer or share lunch. The relationships we have in the kitchen and at the serving window are God's presence among us."

God brings energy and peace

"This has all been A LOT of work for us. The leadership of our church is burned out. And yet, God still finds a way to energize us with curiosity at what is next. We also continue to experience a sense of peace. Though it surpasses all our understanding at times, peace at the edge of a financial and ecclesial cliff is like feeling calm and content on hospice care. **We don't yet know if death is the next journey for our church, but in that uncertainty, God's peace abounds.**"

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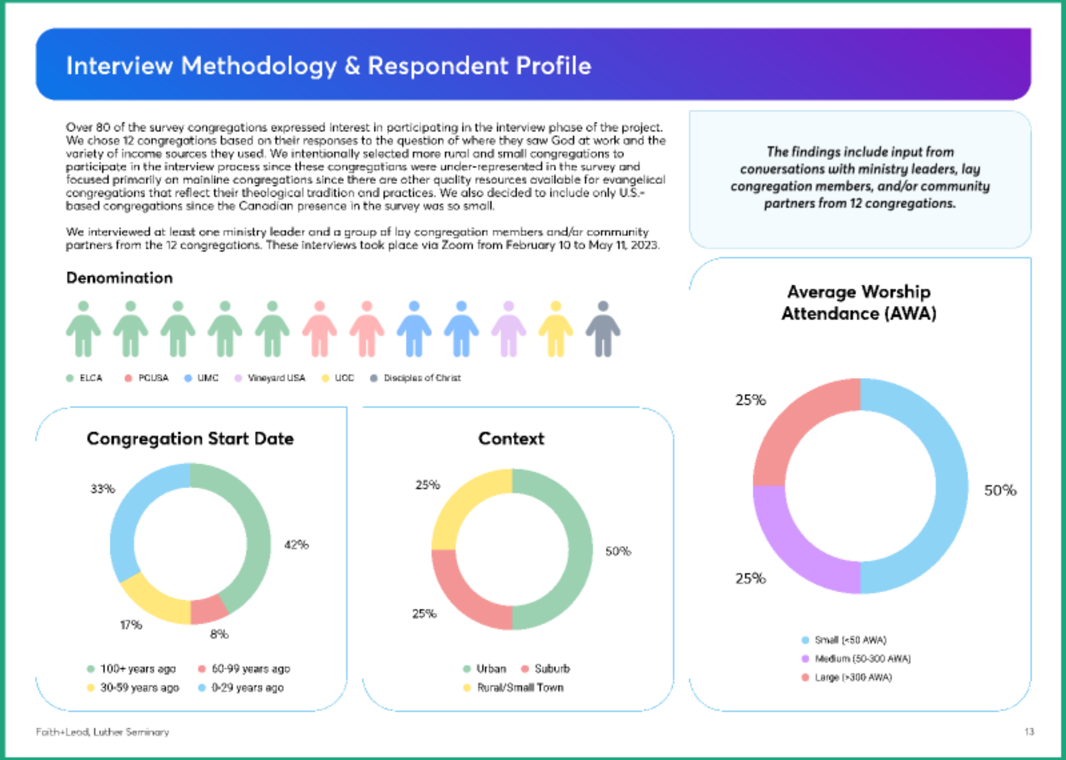
Who did we interview?



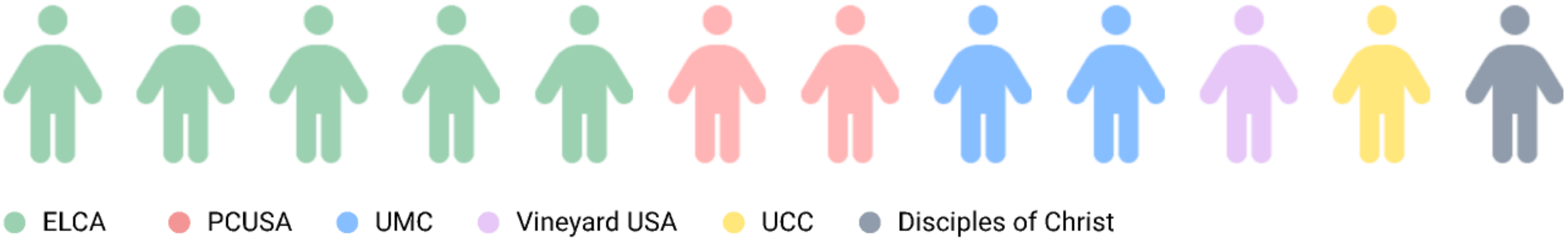
Interview Methodology & Respondent Profile

Over 80 of the survey congregations expressed interest in participating in the interview phase of the project. We chose 12 congregations based on their responses to the question of where they saw God at work and the variety of income sources they used. We intentionally selected more rural and small congregations to participate in the interview process since these congregations were under-represented in the survey and focused primarily on mainline congregations since there are other quality resources available for evangelical congregations that reflect their theological tradition and practices. We also decided to include only U.S.-based congregations since the Canadian presence in the survey was so small.

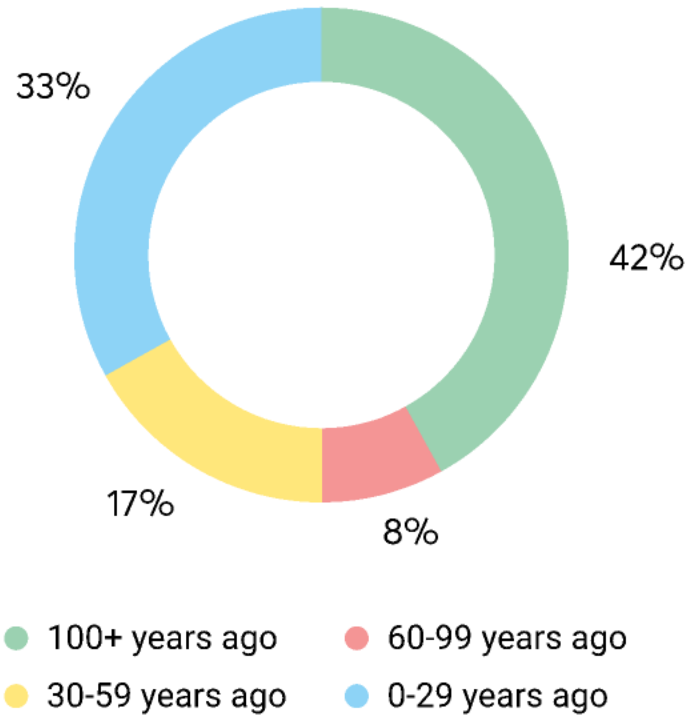
We interviewed at least one ministry leader and a group of lay congregation members and/or community partners from the 12 congregations. These interviews took place via Zoom from February 10 to May 11, 2023.

The findings include input from conversations with ministry leaders, lay congregation members, and/or community partners from 12 congregations.

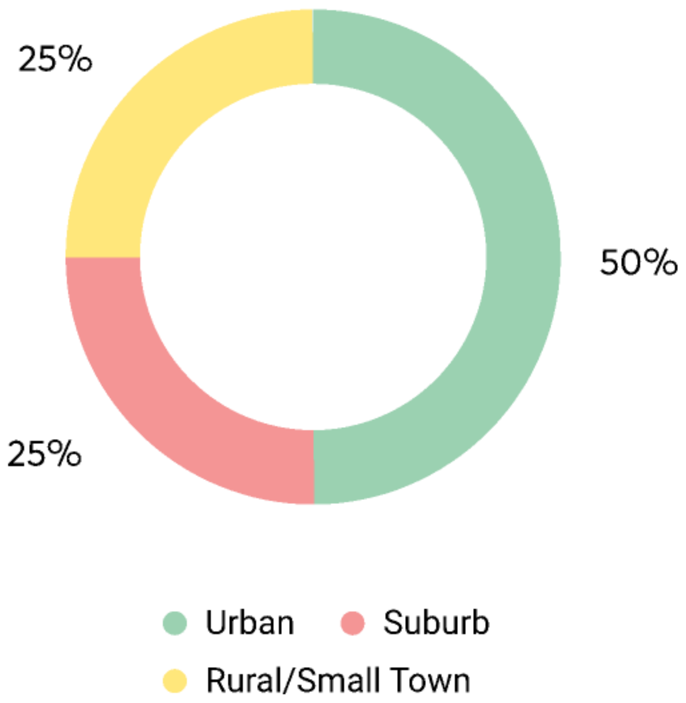
Denomination



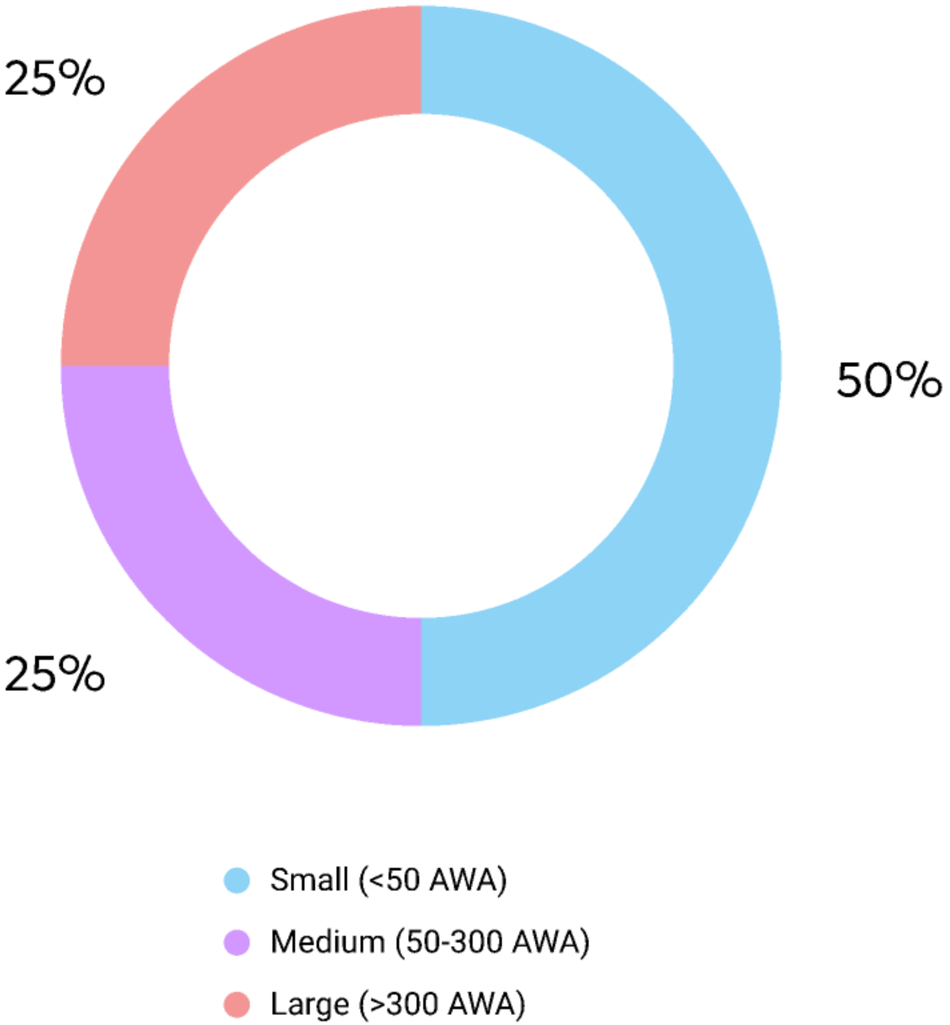
Congregation Start Date



Context



Average Worship Attendance (AWA)



Why did these congregations engage in funding forward?

Why did these congregations engage in funding forward?

God's mission
(106)

Why did these congregations engage in funding forward?

God's mission
(106)

Community Need
(99)

Why did these congregations engage in funding forward?

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What practices did they use throughout the process?

Robust list of **40+ practices** organized around these key themes: change, connection, focus (mission/ finances), leadership, learning, spiritual practices, and support

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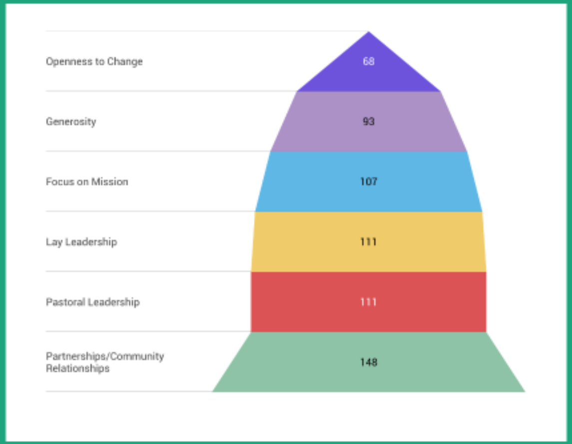

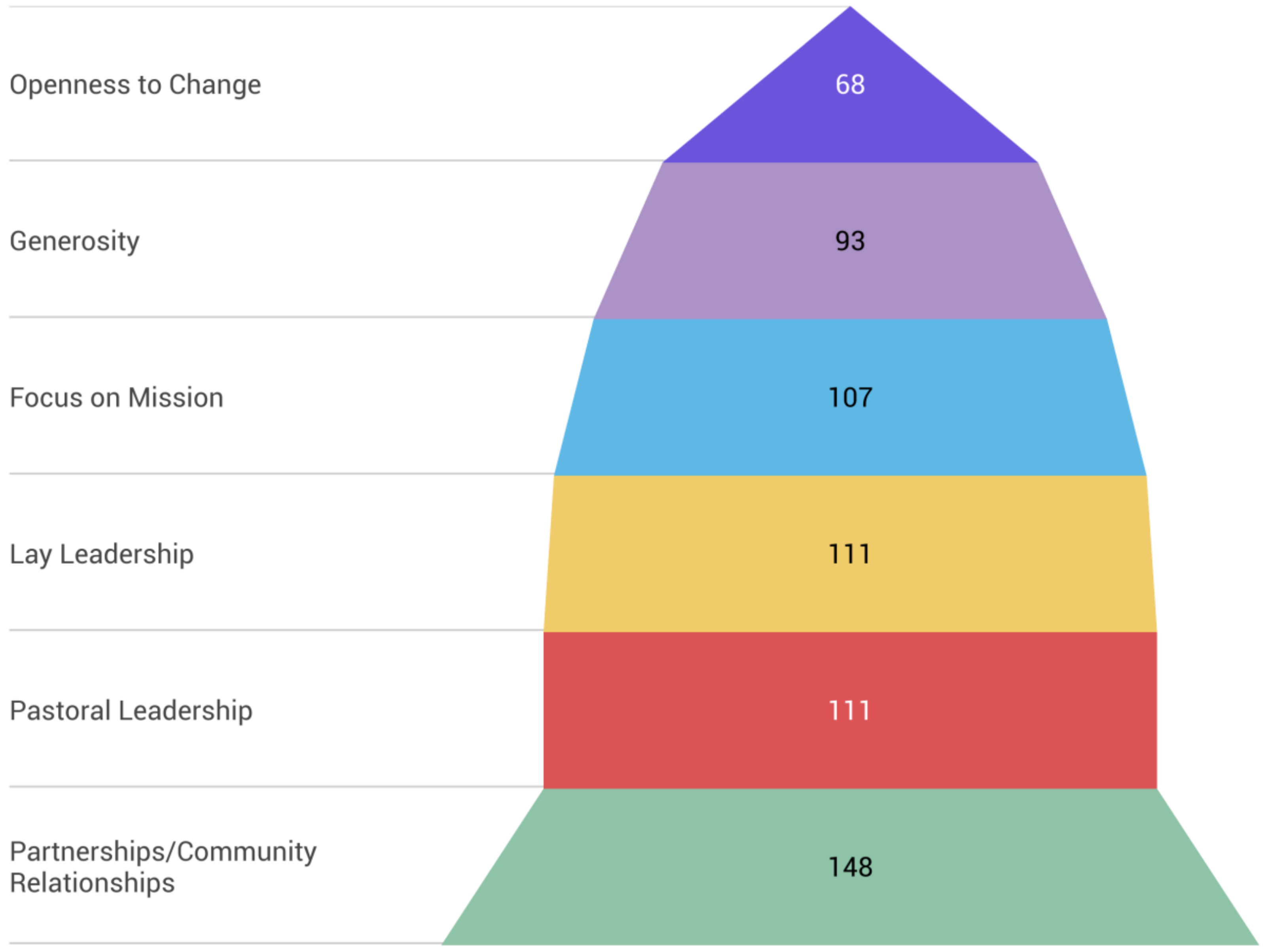
Openness to Change
68
Generosity
93
Focus on Mission
107
Lay Leadership
111
Pastoral Leadership
111
Partnerships/Community Relationships
148

Curious to learn more about our findings?

Check out our FREE research project e-book!

www.faithlead.org/stewardship

Questions?

Funding Forward:

A Pathway to More Sustainable Models for Ministry