



SYNOD PROFILE 2024

SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD, ELCA

ABOUT THIS PRESENTATION

This profile of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod was developed as an equivalent to a congregational **Ministry Site Profile**. The Transition Team's intention was to provide:

- ❖ an overview of the synod territory and congregational composition,
- ❖ a general explanation of the synod's finances,
- ❖ information about Rostered Ministers, the Conference Deans and Synod Staff,
- ❖ the role of the Bishop, and
- ❖ the results of a synod-wide survey intended to highlight the qualities needed in a bishop and the current vitality of the synod.

ABOUT THIS PRESENTATION

The information presented in this document has been accessed through a variety of sources. When appropriate, the source material will be indicated by an endnote reference.

Much of the congregational data was obtained from the ELCA's churchwide offices and comes from the 2022 annual Congregational Reports. This data was received by the synod office in September 2023. Data for 2023 will not be available until autumn of 2024.

Please note that not all of the synod's congregations completed their 2022 report. Typically, the ELCA will use the most recent numbers received when current data is unavailable.

It may be helpful to remember that like all reports of this kind, this is a "snapshot" in time.



ABOUT THIS PRESENTATION



SYNOD OVERVIEW

General Information about our Synod and Region

OUR MISSION

Activated by the gifts
of the Holy Spirit,
we equip the saints,
for **building up**
the body of Christ.



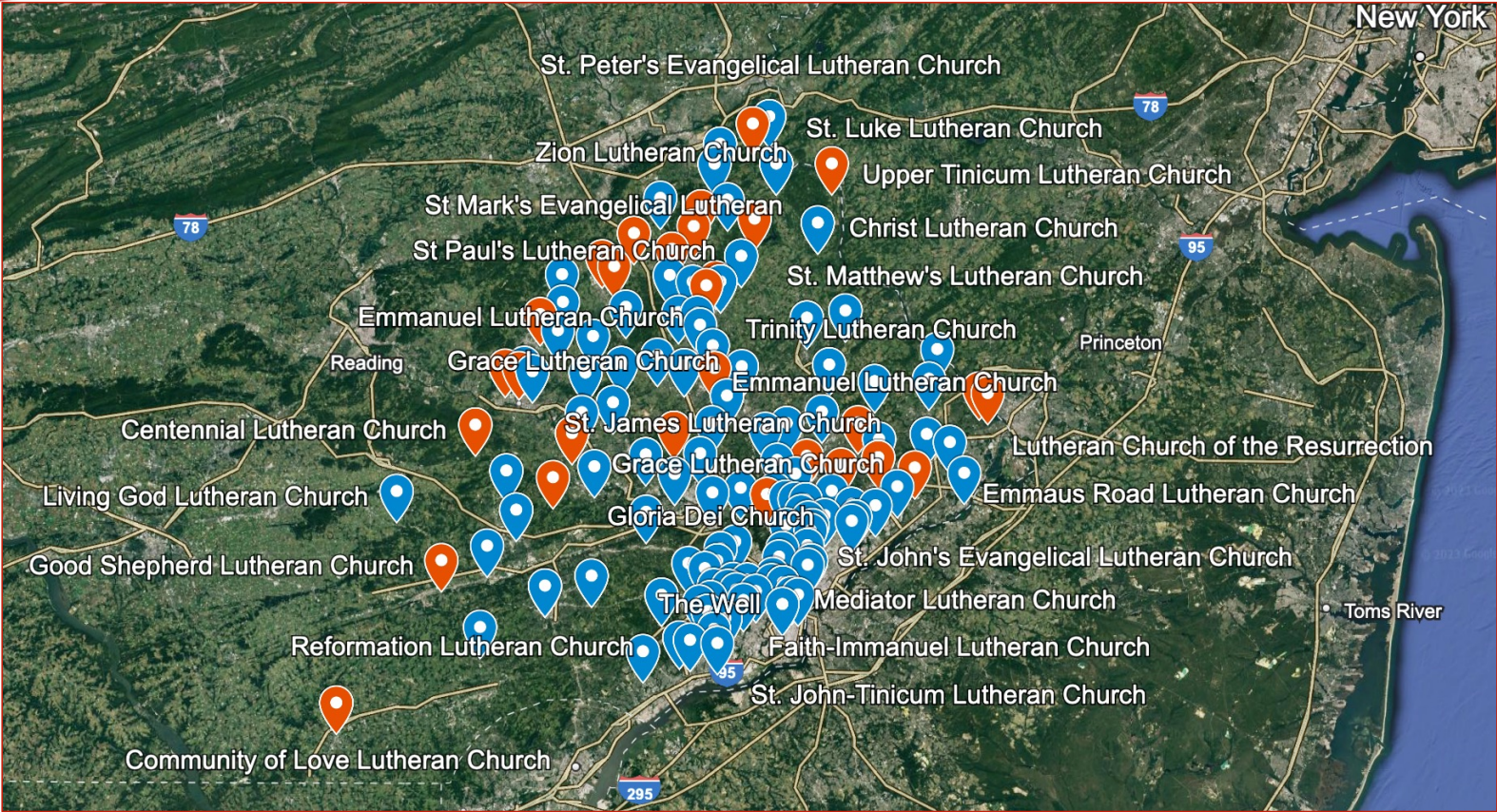
Synod Assembly, 2023

SYNOD OVERVIEW

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (SEPA) is comprised of the people of God in 146 congregations and a variety of other ministries, all doing God's work together.

SYNOD OVERVIEW

SYNOD TERRITORY²



SYNOD OVERVIEW

The SEPA synod territory includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties which cover 2154 sq. miles.



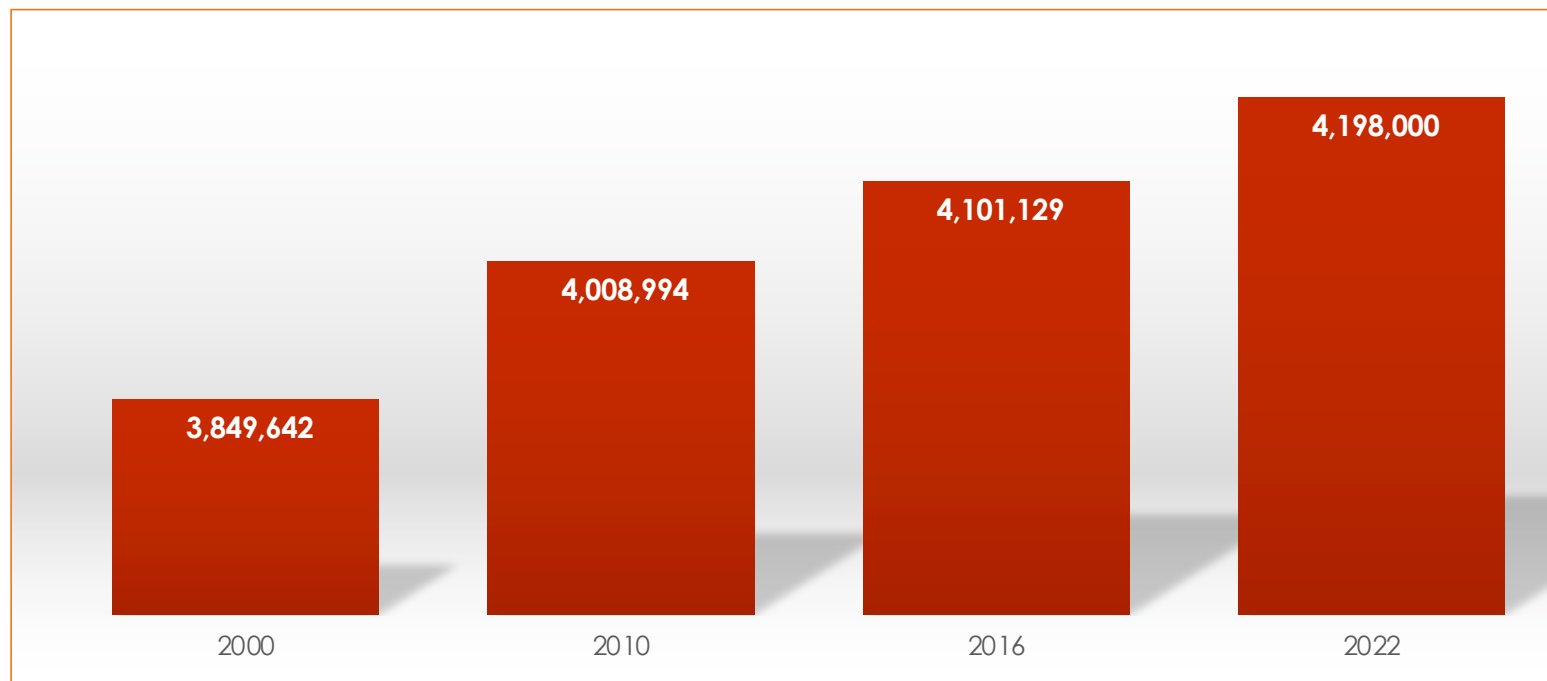
SYNOD OVERVIEW

THE SYNOD IS DIVIDED INTO 8 CONFERENCES

CONFERENCES	CONGREGATIONS
Central Philadelphia	13
Chester	15
Delaware	21
Lower Bucks	16
Lower Montgomery	24
Northeast/Northwest Philadelphia	15
Upper Bucks	24
Upper Montgomery	18

SYNOD OVERVIEW

GENERAL POPULATION OF THE REGION¹⁰

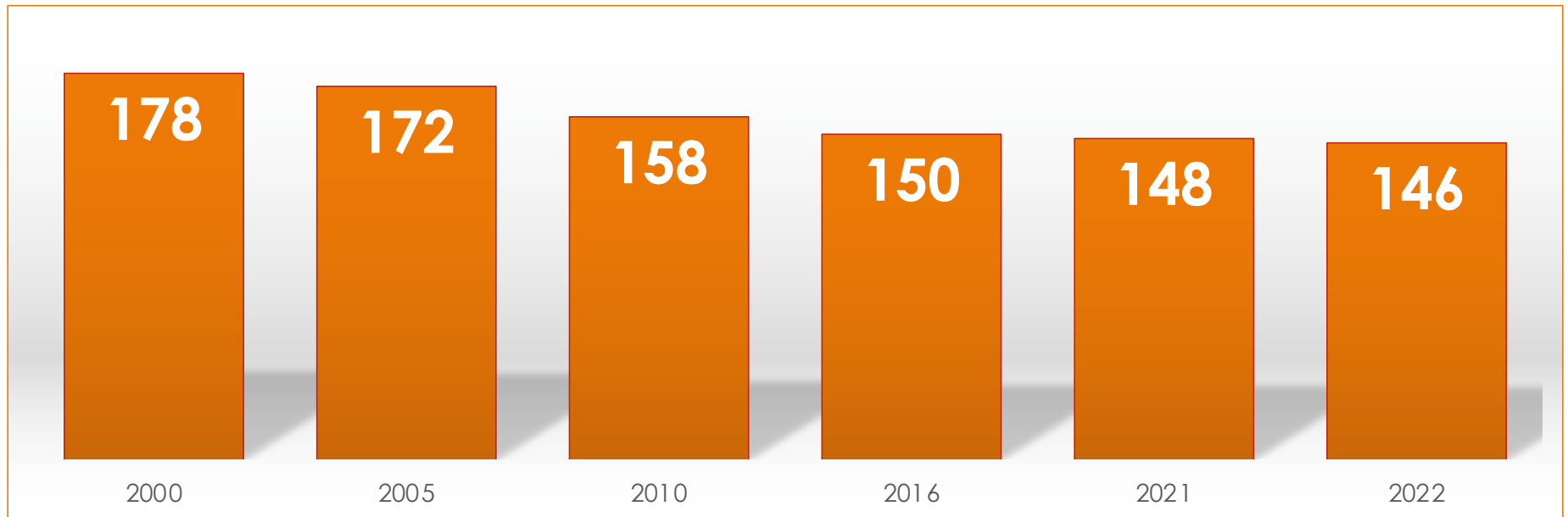


SYNOD MEMBERSHIP AS PERCENTAGE OF REGIONAL POPULATION⁴



SYNOD OVERVIEW

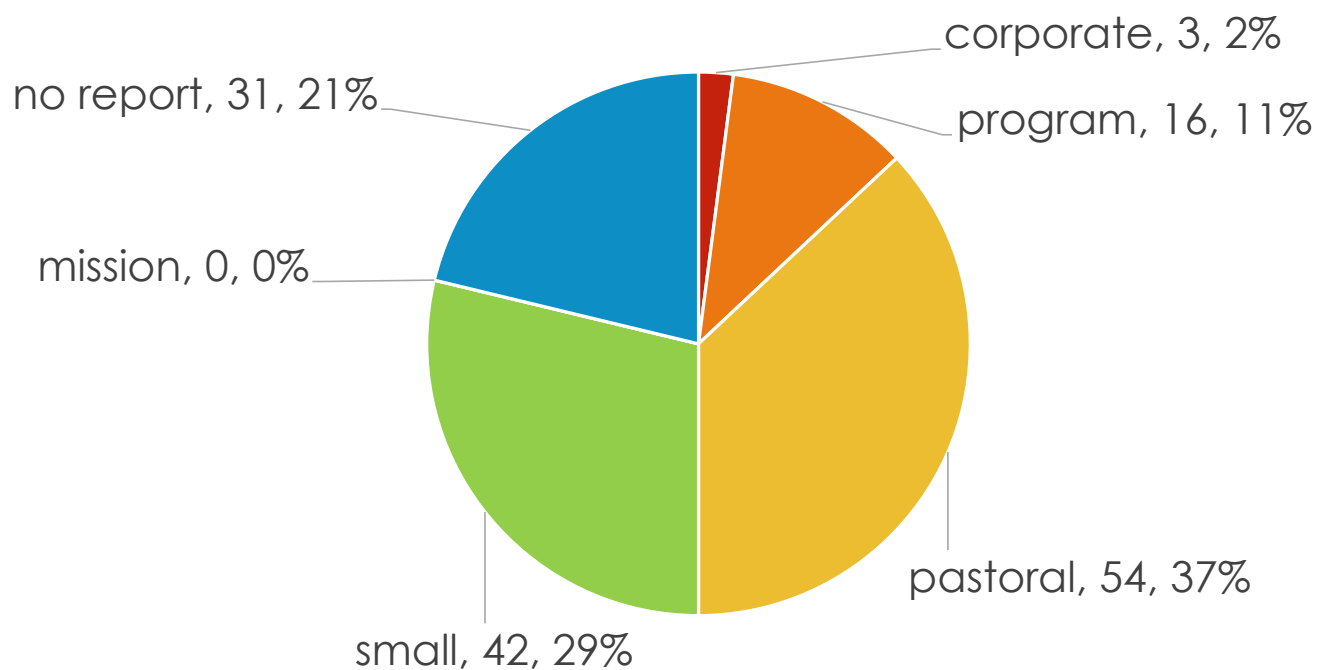
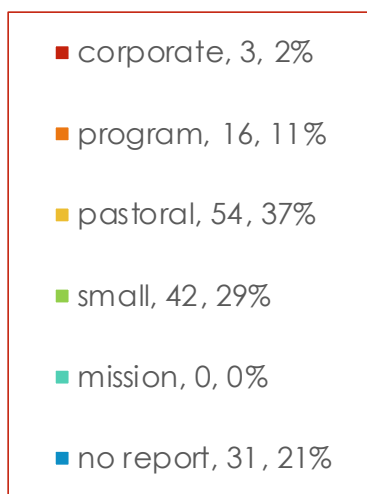
ORGANIZED CONGREGATIONS IN SYNOD



End of year statistics reported to ELCA.⁴

SYNOD OVERVIEW

SYNOD CONGREGATIONS BY SIZE OF AVERAGE WEEKLY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE



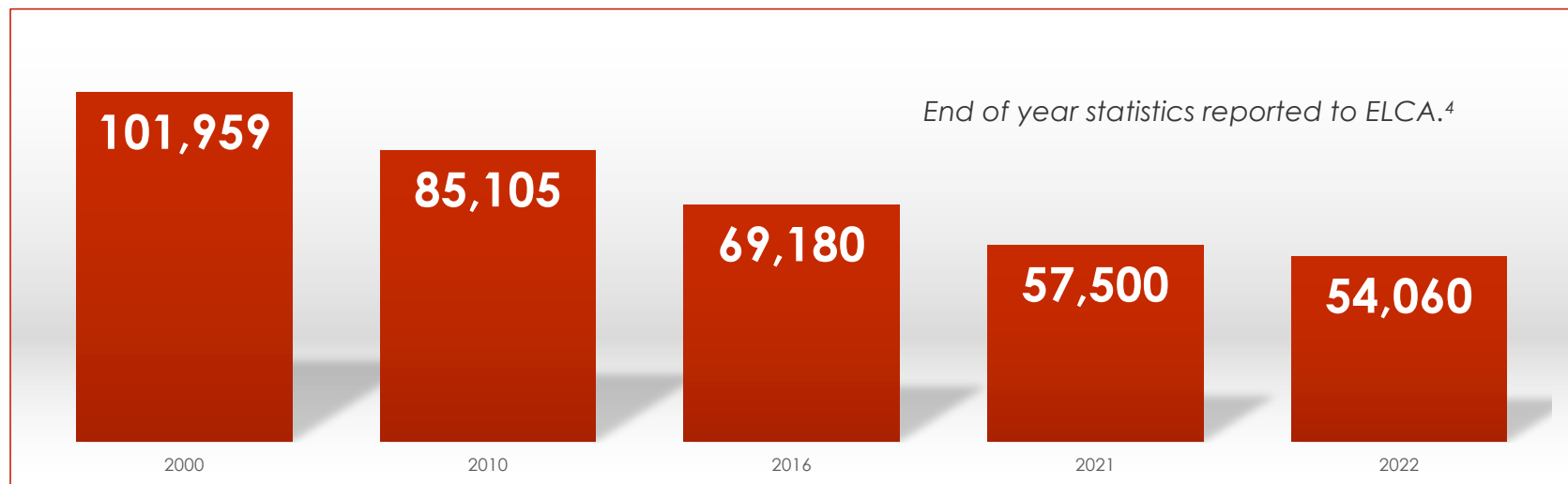
Corporate Congregation AWWA = 351 - 800
Program Congregation AWWA = 151 - 350
Pastoral Congregation AWWA = 51 - 150
Small Congregation AWWA = 1 - 50

These terms are used and defined by the ELCA.

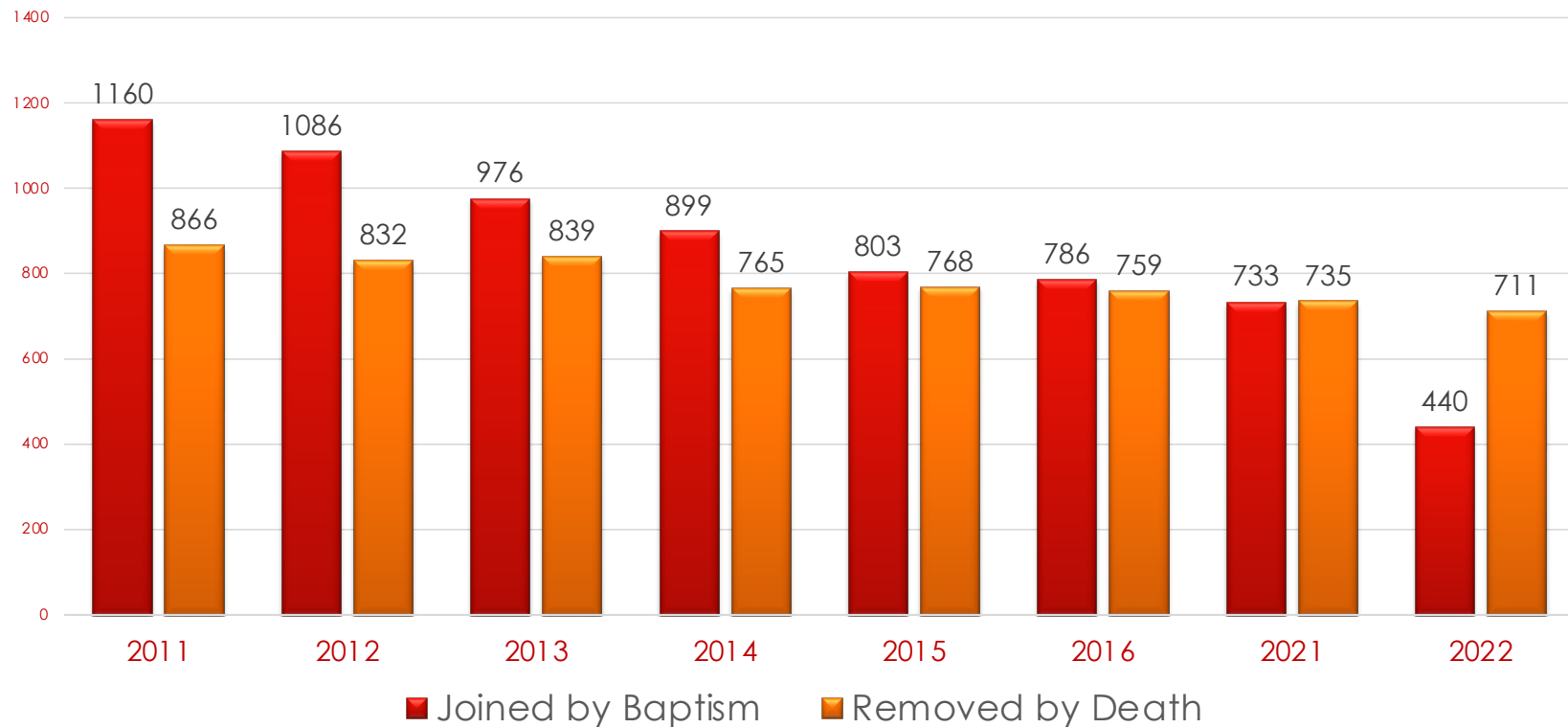
Source: ELCA Congregational Reports 2022⁴

SYNOD OVERVIEW

REPORTED BAPTIZED MEMBERSHIP

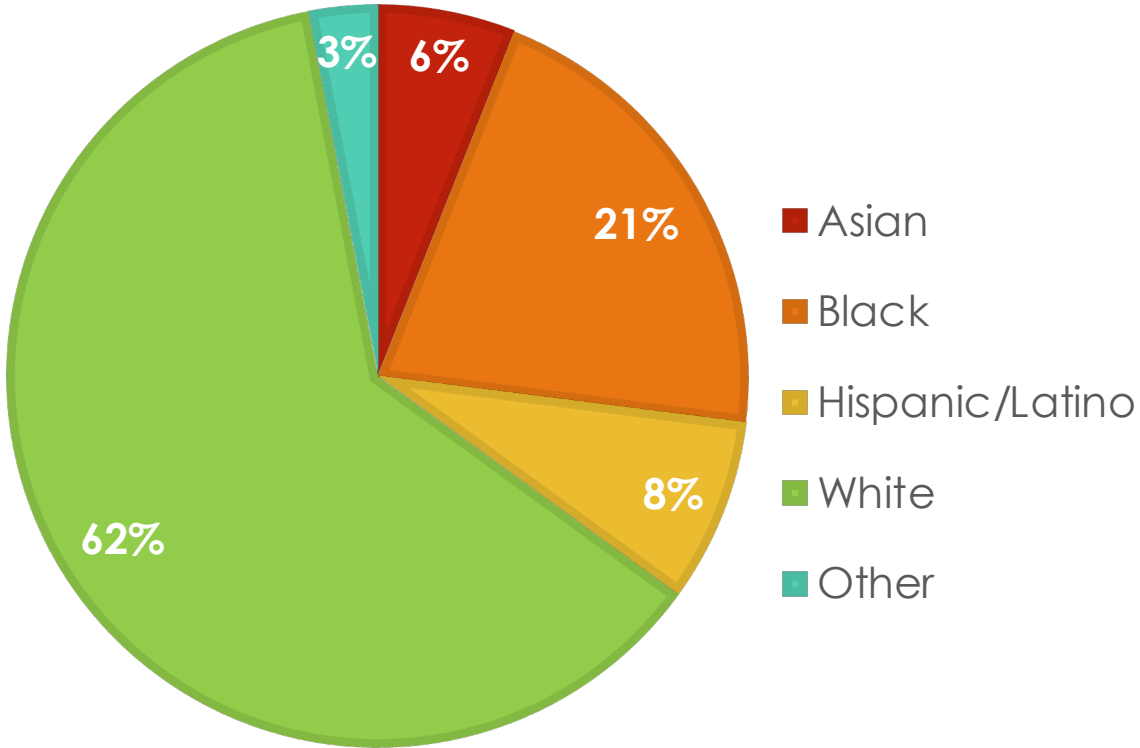


CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS⁴

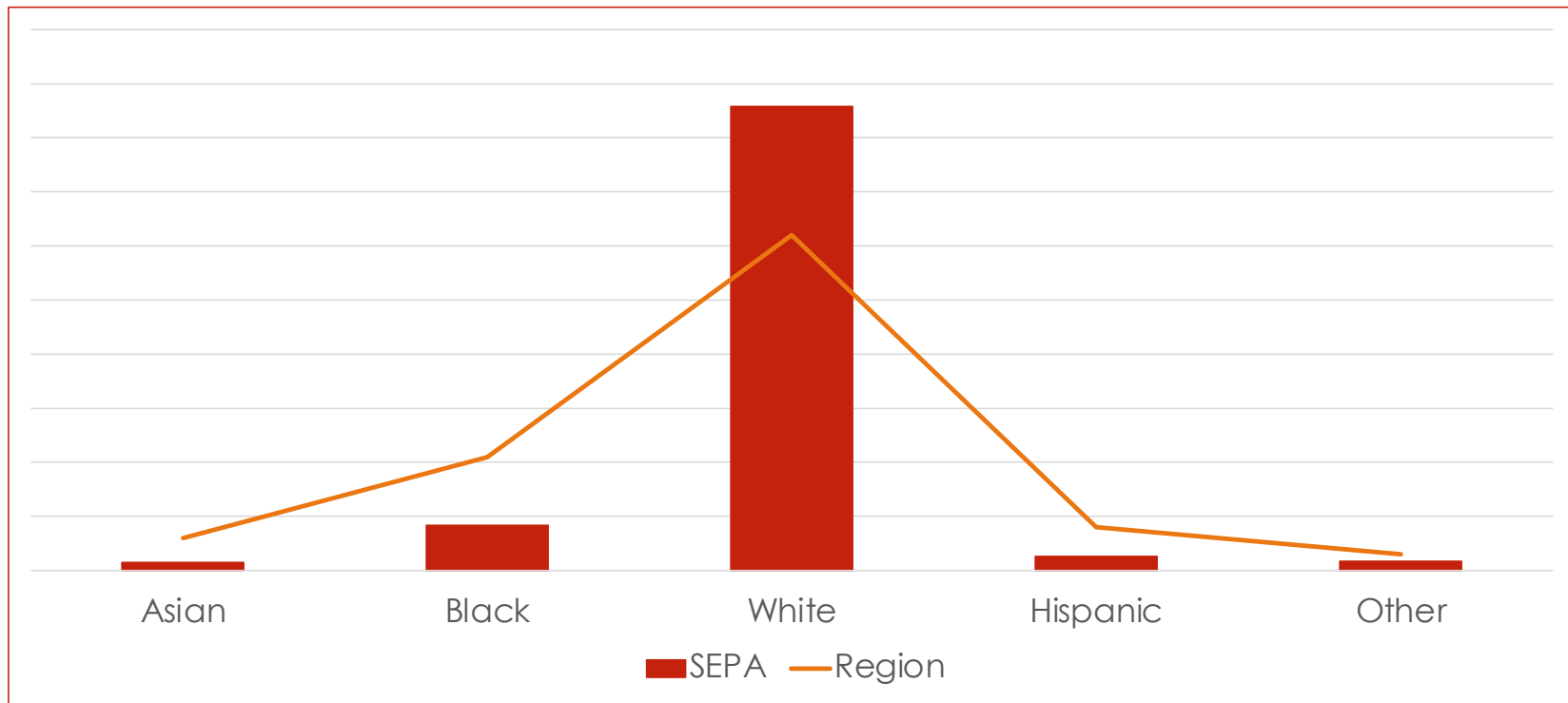


SYNOD OVERVIEW

RACIAL DIVERSITY IN 5 COUNTY REGION²



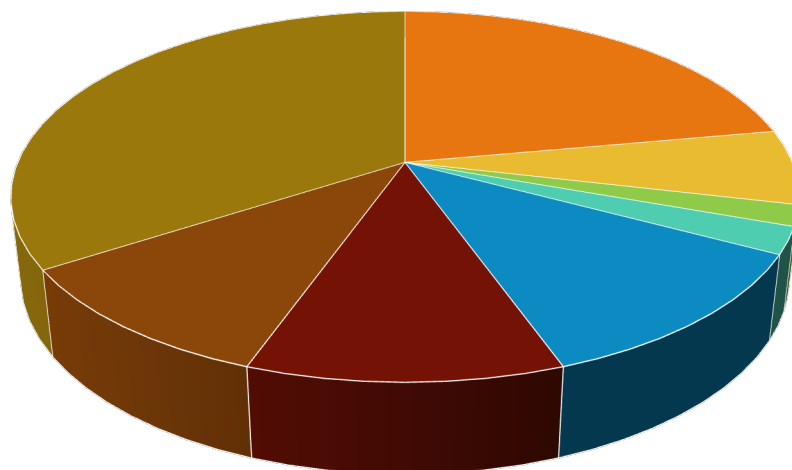
VISUAL COMPARISON OF RACIAL DIVERSITY IN THE REGION VS. SEPA SYNOD⁴



SYNOD OVERVIEW

PERCENT OF CONGREGATIONS REPORTING MULTIRACIAL PARTICIPANTS

Statistics from submitted ELCA Congregational Reports⁴

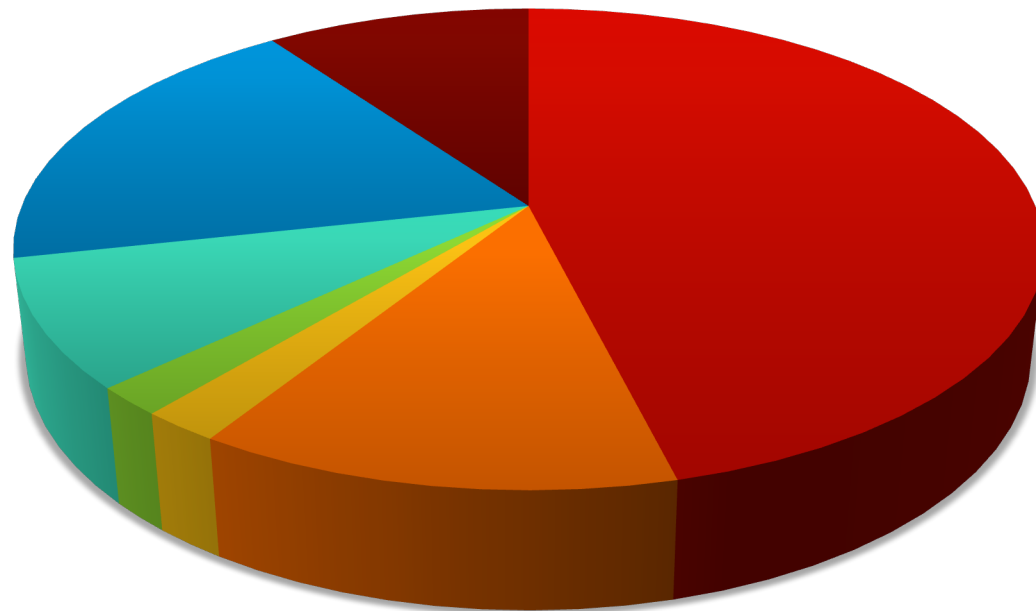


Note: these statistics were obtained from congregations where there is more than one racial or ethnic group represented in the membership. Congregations that have no racial diversity are not included.

- African American/Black: 58.2%
- African National/African Caribbean: 17.12%
- American Indian/Alaska Native: 4.79%
- Arab/Middle Eastern: 6.16%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 30.82%
- Latino/Hispanic: 28.77%
- Multiracial: 27.40%
- White: 89.73%

PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN BY RACE OR ETHNICITY OF CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERS in 2022

Statistics from submitted ELCA Congregational Reports⁴



- African American/Black: 6.50%
- African National/African Caribbean: 1.81%
- American Indian/Alaska Native: 0.30%
- Arab/Middle Eastern: 0.27%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 1.21%
- Latino/Hispanic: 2.62%
- Multiracial: 1.39%

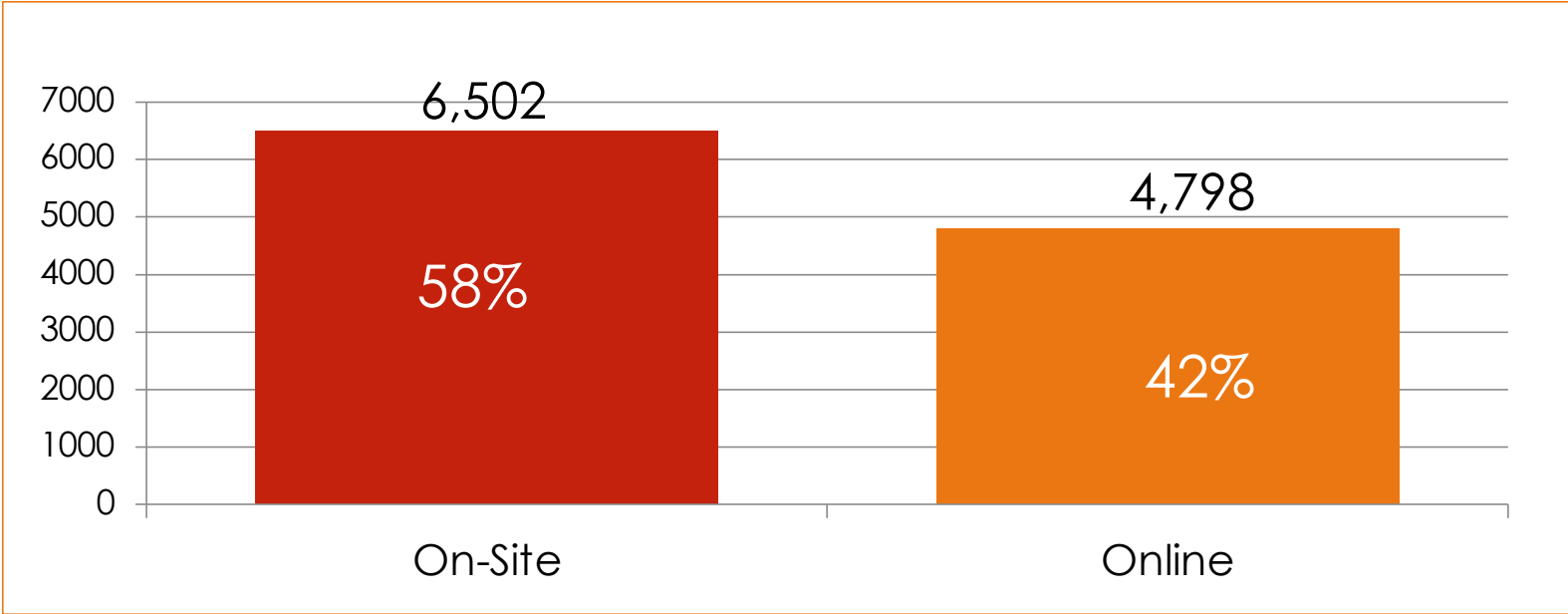
For the purposes of this chart, White participants were excluded. They make up 85.90% of the reported membership. The remaining 14.10% are reflected in the pie chart.

LANGUAGES USED IN WORSHIP⁴



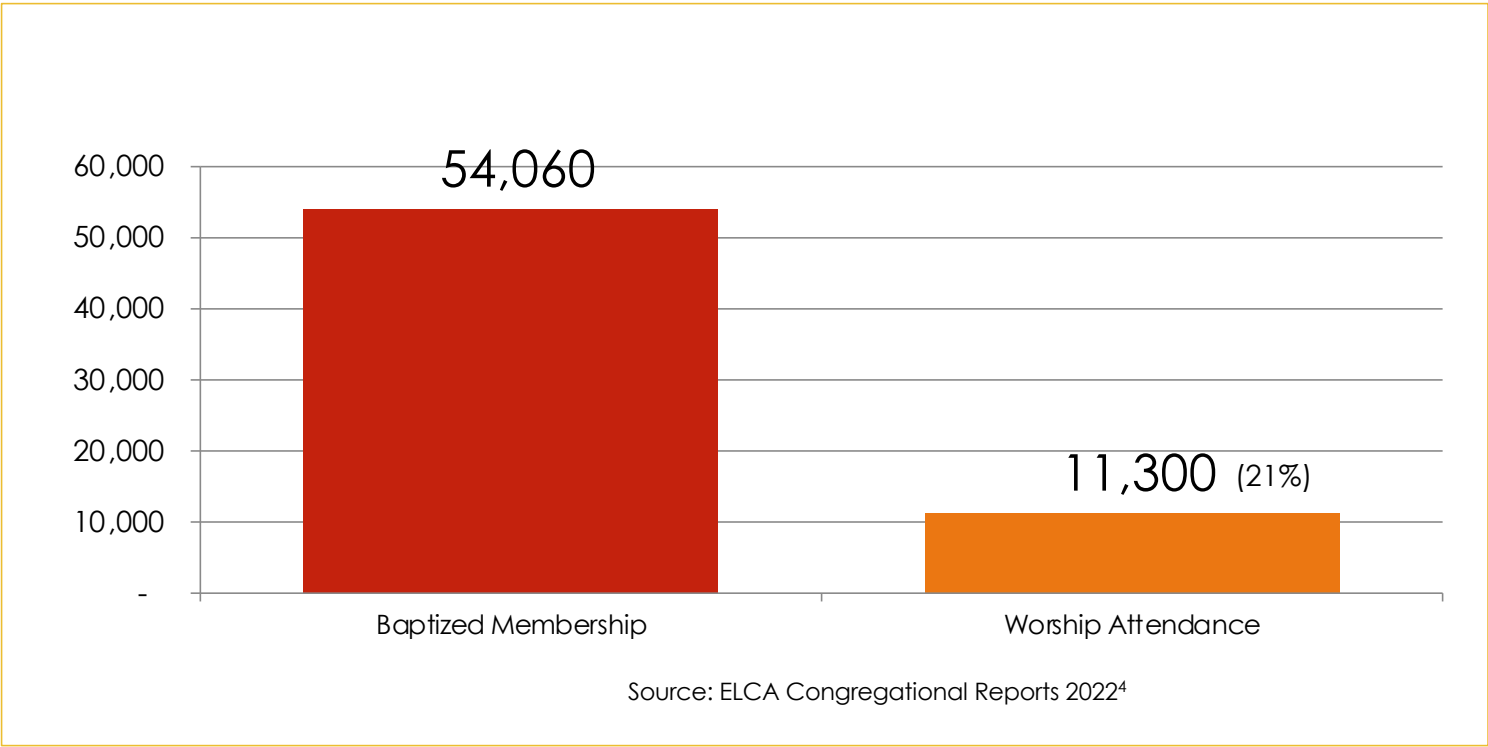
- English
- Spanish
- German
- Korean
- American Sign Language

2022 MODES OF WORSHIP ATTENDANCE⁴



Note: 96 congregations reported weekly online worship services in 2022. 100 congregations projected providing weekly online worship in 2023.⁴

2022 REPORTED MEMBERSHIP AND WORSHIP ATTENDANCE





SYNOD FINANCES

Synod Budget, Assets and Congregational Giving Patterns,



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The slide that follows is a summary of the Synod's operations for the years ending on January 31, 2023, 2022, 2021 and 2020 is presented in the table in millions of dollars.

NOTE: SEPA uses a fiscal year beginning on February 1 and ending on January 31 of the following year. Hence operating figures reflect revenues received and expenses incurred primarily in the prior year.³

FINANCES³

	2023	2022	2021	2020
OPERATIONS				
Congregational and partnership Support	\$1.6	\$1.7	\$1.7	\$1.7
Other*	0.9	0.4	0.5	1.4
Revenue**	0.6	0.9	0.6	0.4
TOTAL	\$3.1	\$3.0	\$2.8	\$3.5
EXPENSES***	\$2.5	\$2.4	\$2.4	\$2.6
TOTAL INCOME IN EXCESS OF EXPENSES	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.9
Nonoperating income (expense)****	(2.0)	0.9	1.4	4.7
NET INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS	(\$1.4)	\$1.5	\$1.8	\$5.6

*Primarily beneficial interest in perpetual trust.

** Primarily income from investments.

*** Includes approximately a 0.8 million contribution to the ELCA each year. Also included are operating expenses of \$1.4 million in 2023, \$1.3 million in 2022, \$1.3 million in 2021, and \$1.6 million in 2020.

**** Primarily reportable fluctuations in market value of investments and, in 2020, proceeds less expenses from the sale of Church property.

SYNOD ASSETS

The Synod's net assets were \$13.5 million in 2023, \$14.9 million in 2022, \$13.4 million in 2021, and \$11.6 million in 2020. The 1.4 million decrease in 2023 is primarily a result of the decline in market value of investments. Although a gain or loss is not realized until the investment is sold, for accounting purposes, it must be reported in the period in which the market value changed. Investments as reported on the Synod's balance sheet were valued at \$9.8 million in 2023, \$10.7 million in 2022, \$9.4 in 2021 and \$6.2 million in 2020.⁹

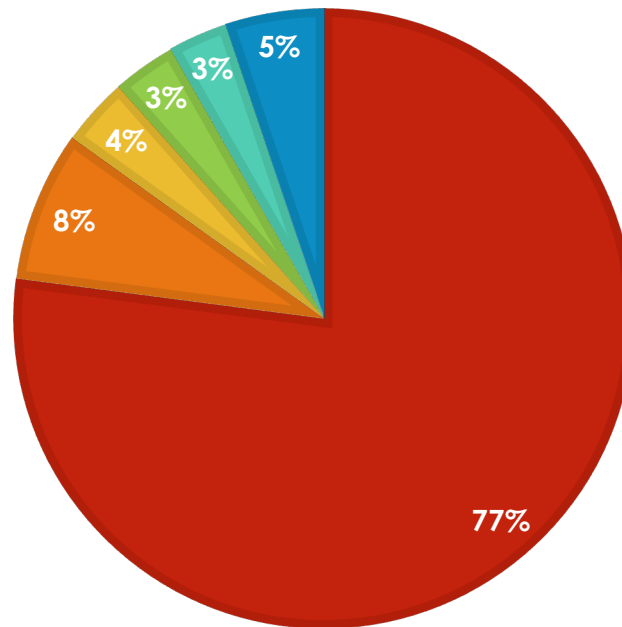
Of primary concern is the decline in contributions from congregations' partnership support since the pandemic. The Synod sends 50% of contributions from congregations to the ELCA. The decline in these contributions not only negatively affects the Synod but also the ELCA. Also, it should be noted that, the decline has continued thus far in the 2024 fiscal year.

Proceeds from the sale of church properties was \$0.5 million in 2022, \$0.5 million in 2021, and 4.3 million in 2020. No church properties were sold in 2023. The property of closed congregations is transferred to the Synod and subsequently sold. This trend indicates that struggling congregations are closing and thus, eroding the Synod's support base.

It should be noted that the gains and losses from investments as reported above include changes in the market value of these investments. Changes in the market value of investment are not realized until the investment is sold or redeemed. With the market's volatility recently, future swings may cause significant changes in the Synod's net assets.³

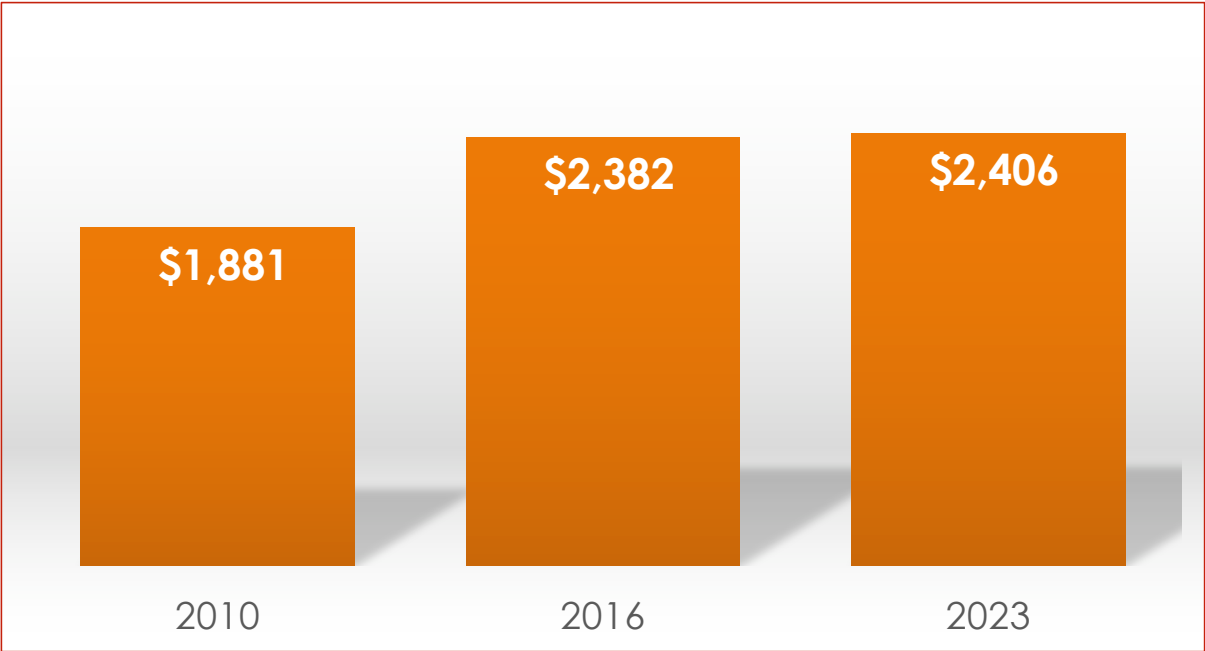
DISBURSEMENT BREAKDOWN FOR 2022³

- Current Operating Expenses
- Capital Improvements
- Payments on Debts
- Mission Support
- Other Synod Benevolence
- Other Expenses & Realized Losses

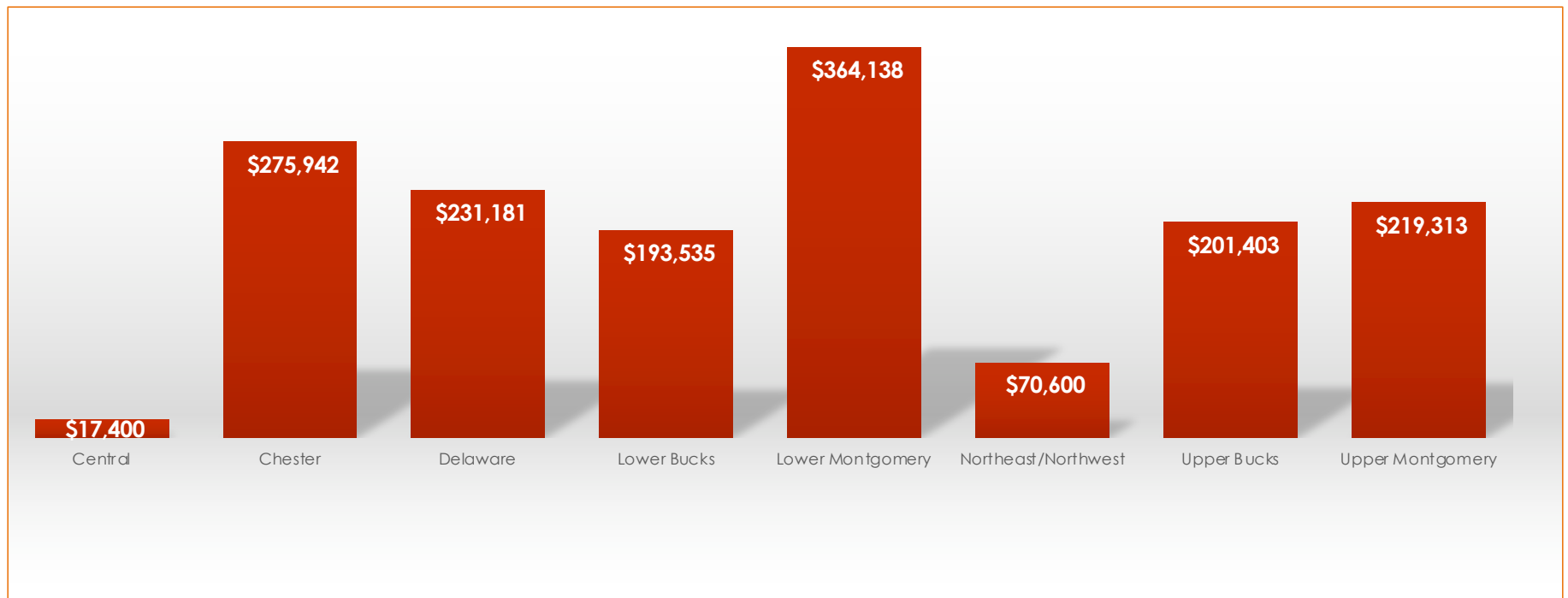


SYNOD FINANCES

ANNUAL GIVING PER WORSHIP ATTENDEE⁴



2022 MISSION SUPPORT BY CONFERENCE⁹





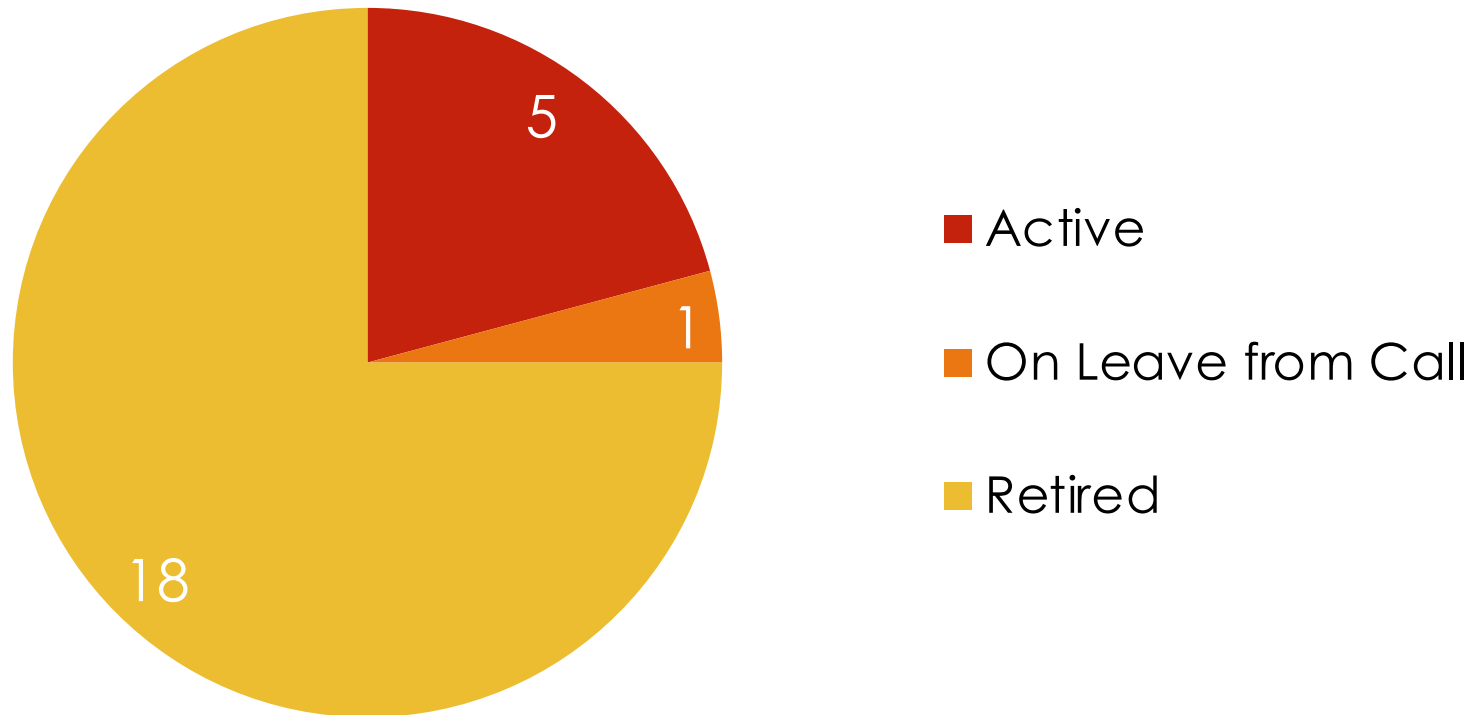
SYNOD LEADERSHIP

Information about Rostered Leaders

Survey of the Conference Deans and Synod Staff

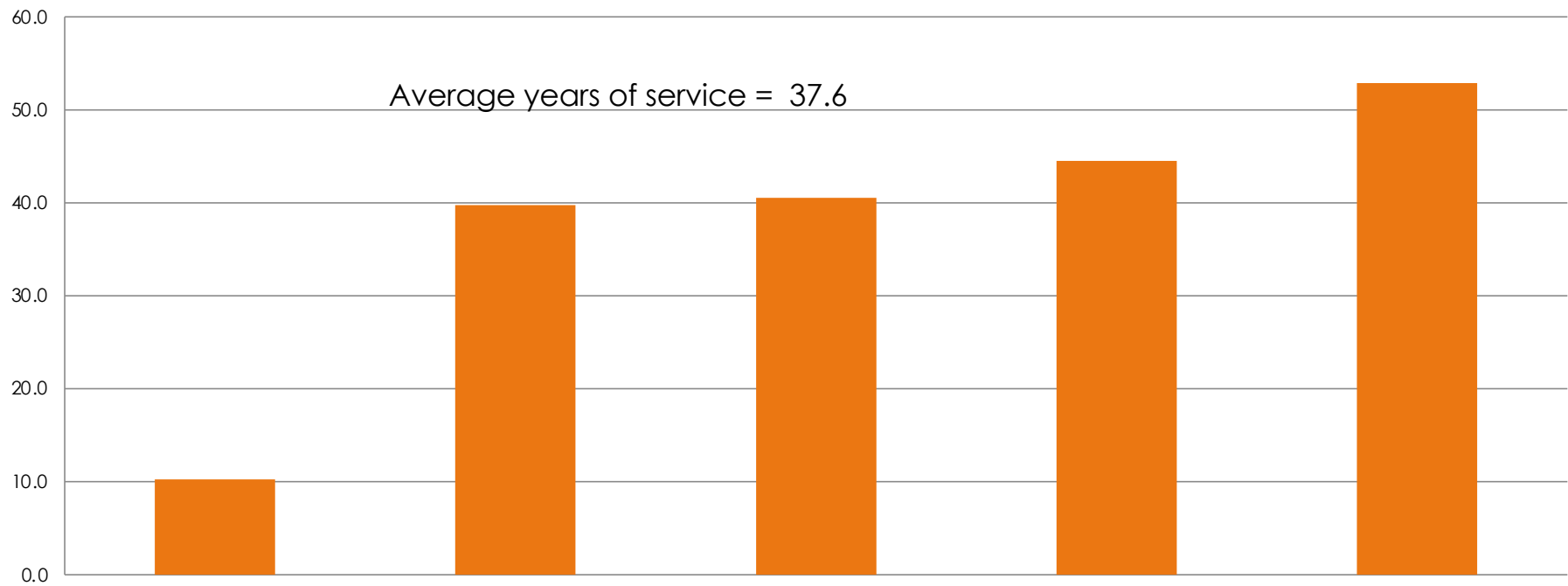
MINISTERS OF WORD & SERVICE

24 on Synod Roster¹¹



SYNOD LEADERSHIP: ROSTERED MINISTERS

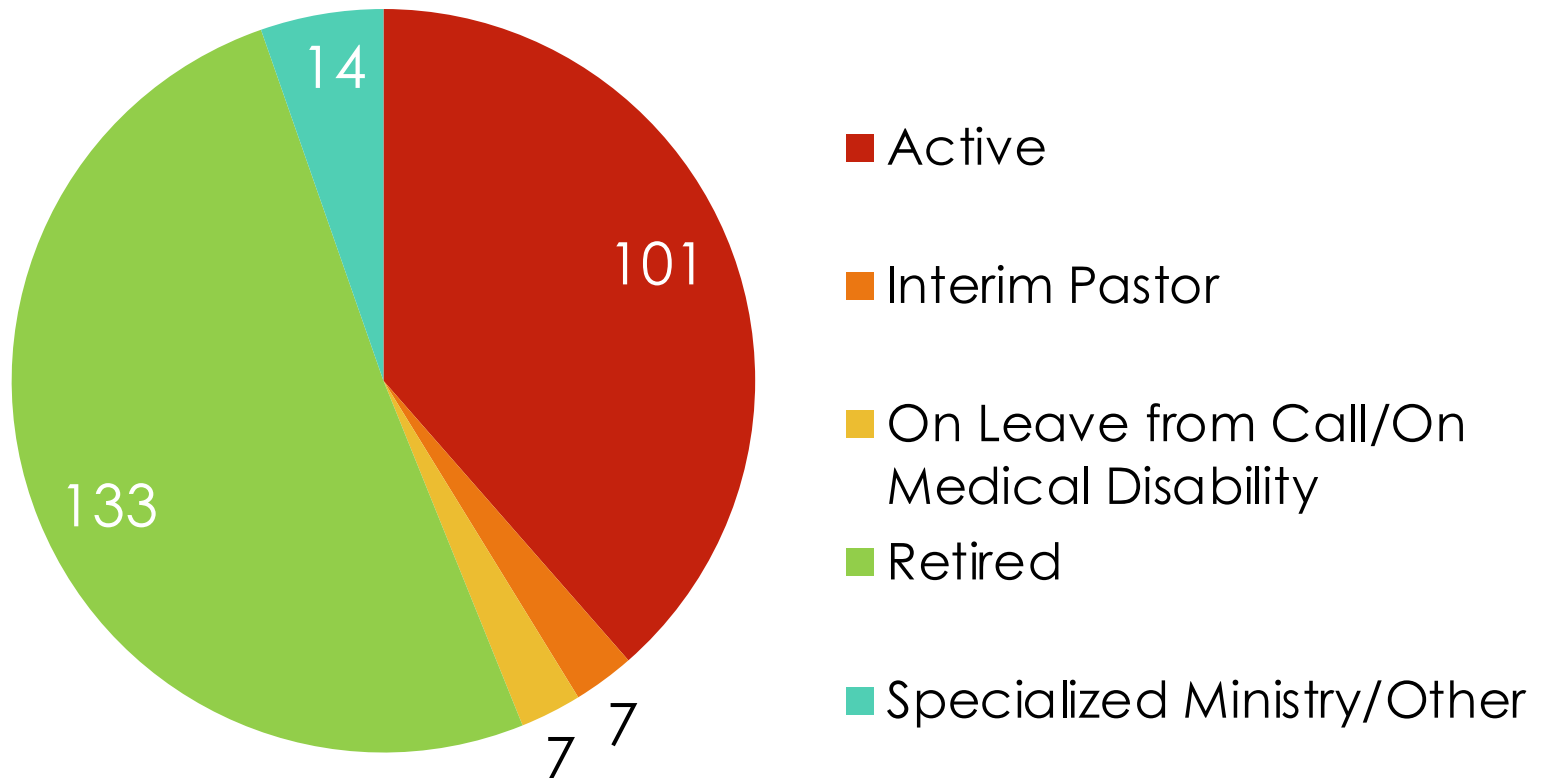
YEARS IN MINISTRY FOR THE 5 ACTIVE MINISTERS OF WORD AND SERVICE¹¹



SYNOD LEADERSHIP: ROSTERED MINISTERS

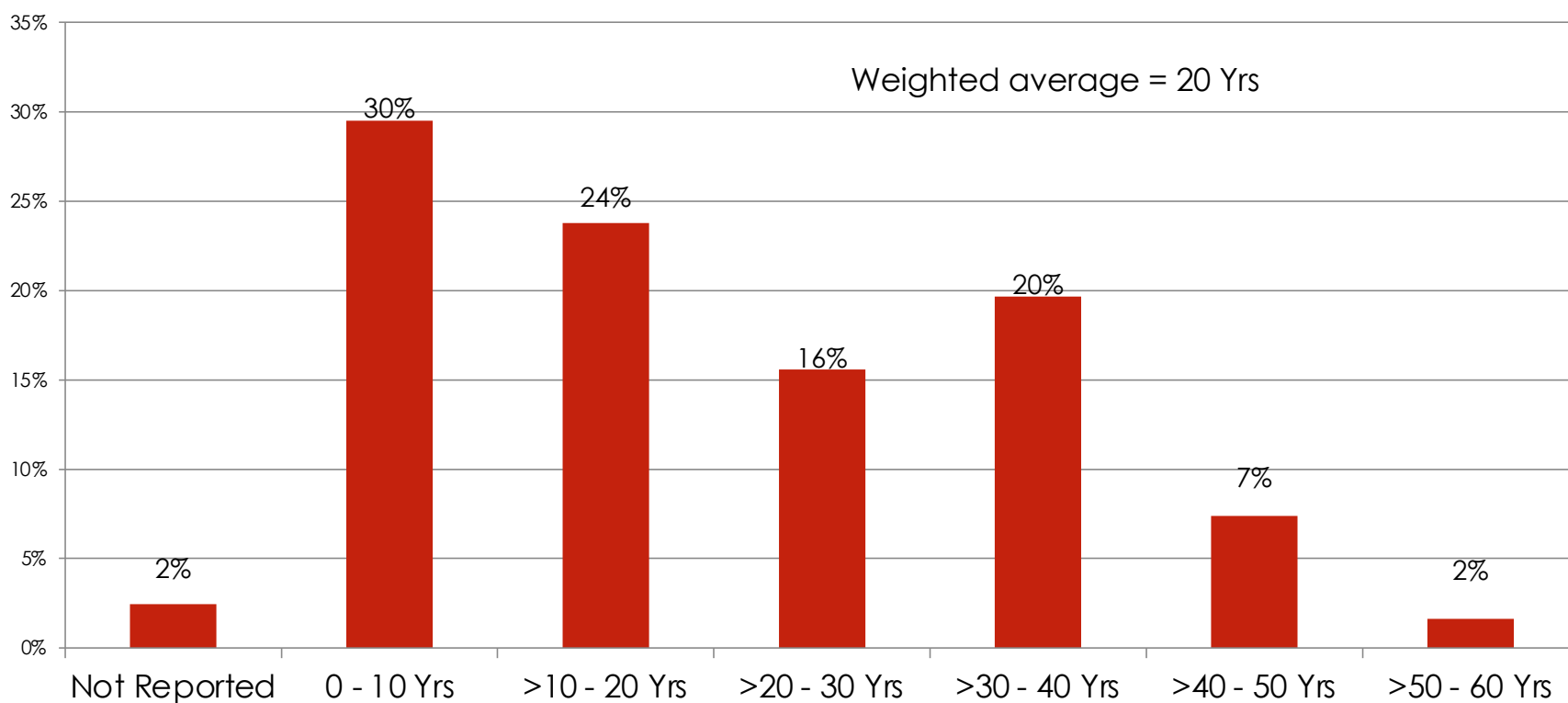
MINISTERS OF WORD & SACRAMENT

260 on Synod Roster¹¹



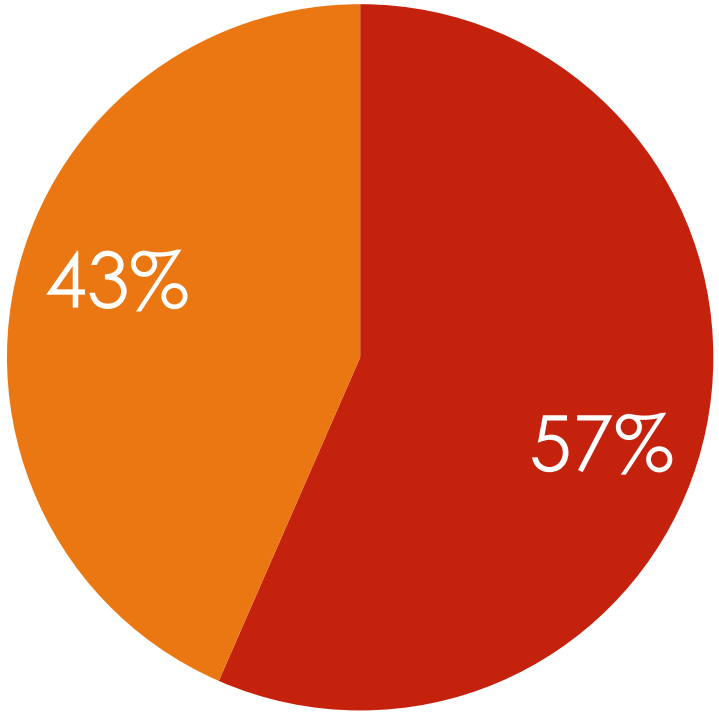
SYNOD LEADERSHIP: ROSTERED MINISTERS

YEARS IN MINISTRY FOR ACTIVE MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT¹¹



SYNOD LEADERSHIP: ROSTERED MINISTERS

GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF THOSE IN ACTIVE MINISTRY¹¹



■ Male
■ Female

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: ROSTERED MINISTERS

SURVEY OF DEANS AND SYNOD STAFF



Synod staff and Conference Deans were sent a short open answer survey designed to hear their thoughts on how their role relates to the role of the Bishop in SEPA Synod.⁵

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF



SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The survey was conducted online and was distributed in November of 2023.

Recipients included the twelve Synod staff members, the eight Conference Deans, the Chair of the Candidacy Committee and the Dean of the Interim Pastors. They were given the option of submitting their responses with their name or anonymously.

Ten responses out of a possible 22 were received.

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF



1: Can you name and describe your role as it relates to the office of the Bishop?⁵

- Participants describe their roles as:
 - ✓ Bishop's additional eyes and ears in the conference.
 - ✓ Part of the committee which make decisions to approve candidates to be ordained into the office of Word and Sacrament, or the office of Word and Service.
 - ✓ Responsible for providing direct support to Mission Developers and new ministries exploration and initiatives
 - ✓ Part of Dean's table with the Bishop
 - ✓ Part of Churchwide staff
 - ✓ Responsible for staff work for the functions of candidacy, mobility, fundraising, and first call education that are under the Bishop's purview.
 - ✓ Provide assistance to other synod staff with writing grants

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF

2: What does the new bishop need to know about your role?⁵

- ✓ Conference deans have enjoyed a close working relationship with the bishop.
- ✓ The deans are here to help, have a unique vantage point on the synod, and will offer whatever support that they can.
- ✓ There is a lot of wisdom around that the Dean's table and it is all there to support the bishop and share the weight of leadership.
- ✓ As one who is appointed by the Bishop I serve as long as the Bishop desires.
- ✓ The new experiment of the DEM role being shared between two rostered ministers has worked well so far. Other synods across the ELCA are doing the same and it looks like it is here to stay. The DEMs also serve effectively as congregational pastors.
- ✓ We are all in this together.
 - There is a team mentality that we are all working for the good of the church, which makes the process work so much easier.
 - This is vital as we move forward

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF



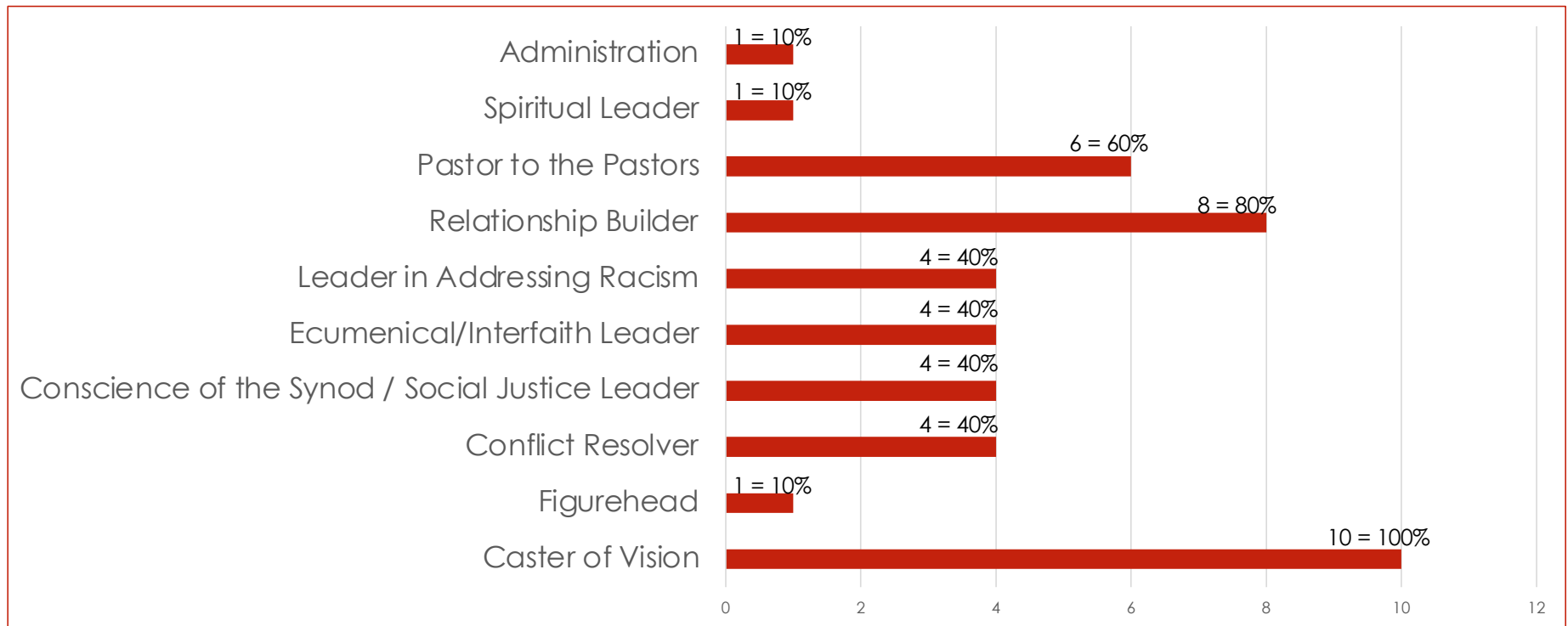
Responses to Question 2 continued

- ✓ The new bishop needs to be aware of the financial and building problems congregations are facing.
- ✓ If there is no progress made, there will no longer be congregations in the inner city of Philadelphia.
- ✓ My role works for me as it has been configured- but it might not work this well for someone else.
- ✓ That my role has a huge portfolio .
 - Doing what I can to keep all these ministry areas functioning.
 - To add more to my plate or take some of these roles to the next level, admin support would be necessary.
- ✓ Deans do a lot of work on the ground in our conferences.
- ✓ Often times deans are elected because no one wants to do the extra work, which puts extra burden on those individuals.
- ✓ The compensation doesn't match the amount of work or pressure.

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF

3: What skills or gifts are most essential for a person standing for election as our next Bishop?⁵

Ten responses were received.



SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF

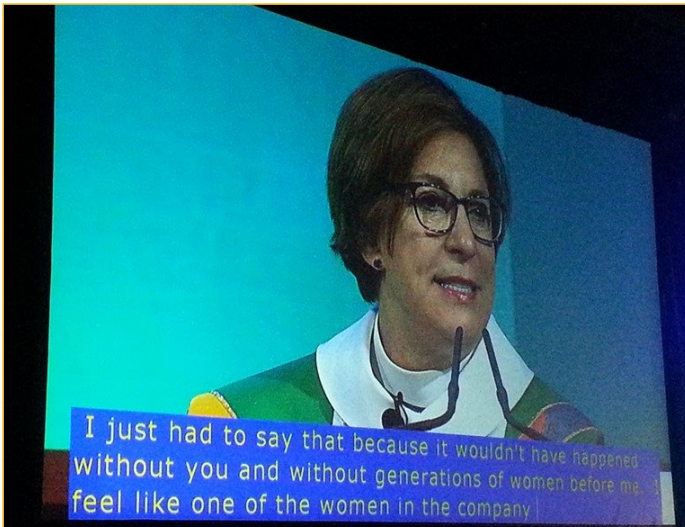
4: How would you define the role of bishop in SEPA?⁵

- Leader for the overall oversight and support of congregations while supporting the clergy that serve them.
- Listener. Listening allows the Bishop to offer a vision for the synod that is informed by various voices and will include and require the work of all our hands.
 - Listening first and foremost to God in prayer and trusting that God will speak, trusting that God is with us every step of the way, and that we do not have to be afraid.
 - Listening to leaders, to the pastors, to the people in the congregations each expressing their perspective, their hopes, their fears.
- Central spiritual and moral leader of our Synod who leads by public example.



SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF

Responses to Question 4 continued



- The bishop is first and foremost the pastor to the Rostered Leaders of this Synod. They should support us so the we can support our congregations through pastoral care, worship leadership, and the sacraments.
- They, and their office and staff, provide resources, guidance, and aid to congregations in difficult, turbulent, or transitional times.
- The bishop has a ceremonial role of being with churches and leaders for celebrations, anniversaries, and other social events.

- The role of the bishop is to cast the vision and to develop followers into leaders. They are the coach, cheerleader, equipper, and truth teller, empowering others to lead, convening various task force groups.

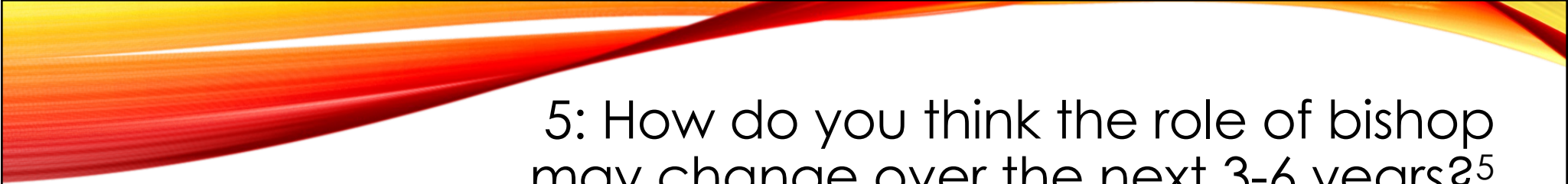
SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF

Responses to Question 4 continued

- As defined by the constitution, the role of bishop is primarily administrative. This administration is greatly enhanced by someone who can:
 - cast a vision and build the relationships to make it happen.
 - be at the forefront of the public ministry of the church in our area.
 - Have a firm grasp of administration and organizational aspects of the role..
- The role of the bishop should not only cast a vision, but also have or develop a clear plan as to how to get there.



SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF



5: How do you think the role of bishop may change over the next 3-6 years?⁵

- The bishop will be more involved in encouraging collaboration between a smaller number of stronger churches.
- The bishop will lead creative ways to address a growing clergy shortage.
- The church has been in a time of transition for a while now and that is likely to continue, and perhaps even accelerate in many ways.
- The bishop will need to be the one who continues to ask what's possible, what we can do, what new ideas we haven't tried yet, rather than be someone who tells us what we've always done, or what isn't possible.
- They will need to be someone who is open and flexible, someone who thinks outside the box, someone who challenges the synod and its rostered leaders to do the same.

Responses to Question 5 continued



- The bishop will need to be a faith leader, someone who continues to remind us over and over again that God has this, that God is at work, in our midst, and that while the church may change, God's presence and God's love never does.
- They will need to change as the landscape of the church changes. My guess is there will be more Holy Closures and yoking of congregations.
- They will need to address interim ministry, lay ministry, and declining funding in ways that their predecessors did not have to consider.
- They will still deal the impacts of the endemic and current ministry realities.
- The bishop will have to be a more agile thinker and innovator as the role of pastor and the calls that are available continue to change.

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF

Responses to Question 5 continued

- The bishop will be in a process and the length of that process is determined by the vision and gifted ears and tongue with spiritual thought.
- This role could significantly change as the church continues to experience accelerated levels of change.
- Congregations will be looking to the bishop as they feel the impact of the leadership crisis and shrinking financial realities over their next term.



SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF

Responses to Question 5 continued

In addition to the bishop's role within our synod:

- They will become a public and regional witness to our faith, inviting new people into the Lutheran tradition. I would like to see our new Bishop be on social media, television, and radio talking about what we believe and how we put faith into action regarding important social justice matters.
- Though the ELCA's future church strategy and the Renewing Lutheran Church commission are both currently doing their work, the next bishop will likely need to act on how we live into that future before the recommendations of those groups are ready.
- The Bishop will lead the evolution of the church in the next phase of the church's life.

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF



6: What would success look like for a bishop?⁵

- Having stronger congregations that are more closely connected to each other and the synod.
- It's hard to measure -likely be a moving target over the course of their term.
- Making connections, with leaders, pastors, and laypeople.
- Creating spaces where people feel like they can speak and feel heard. I think success also looks like a willingness to try new things, even if they fail.
- Continuing to learn and grow, being curious and not assuming we know the answers already.
- Making the Lutheran Church, our beliefs, our faith, our teachings, known outside of our Lutheran Circle.
- The church growing both in new people and in stronger faith and witness to our Lord.

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF

Responses to question 6 continued.



- Continuation of the current synod ministries and new ones that will continue to enhance the vision and mission of the synod.
- A thriving synod moving forward and bringing the congregations along side.
- Healthy and passionate lay leaders,
- Congregations playing a vital role in their communities
- Thriving witnesses to the gospel in as many communities as we can get them in.
- Vital, passionate, growing ministry with the Bishop's office offering support and encouraging new ways of doing church.

SYNOD LEADERSHIP: DEANS AND STAFF



Other Feedback from the Deans and Synod Staff⁵

- I would like the next bishop to have a proven track record of effective and creative parish ministry.
- I am thankful for Bishop Davenport, for her faith, leadership, example and witness.
- Without constitutional change, the Bishop's ability to change the realities of their call will be limited.
- Hopefully the next bishop will also help the Synod leaders navigate the coming changes in the churchwide organization.



THE ROLE OF BISHOP

As summarized from the Constitution of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.
Thoughts from Bishop Patricia Davenport.
Ministries, Teams and Boards

The Synod's constitution states that the bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly.

The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.¹




CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF BISHOP



In union with all ELCA ministers of Word and Sacrament the bishop is called to **speak publicly** to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, **advocating** dignity and justice and equity for all people, **working** for peace and reconciliation among the nations, **caring** for the marginalized, and **embracing** and **welcoming** a racially and ethnically diverse population.¹


CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF BISHOP



As this synod's pastor, the bishop shall **preach, teach**, and administer the **sacraments** in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church; provide **pastoral care** and **leadership** for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament, and its ministers of Word and Service; **ordain, consecrate and install** rostered ministers.¹

CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF BISHOP





The bishop shall exercise leadership in the **mission** of this church and in so doing: **interpret** and **advocate** the mission and theology of the whole church; **lead** in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod; **coordinate** the use of the **resources** available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church's life and witness in the areas served by this synod.

The bishop shall submit a **report** to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning this synod's life and work; and **advise** and **counsel** this synod's related institutions and organizations.¹

CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF BISHOP



The bishop shall **practice leadership** in strengthening the **unity** of the Church and in so doing:

- **exercise oversight** of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church;
- be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the **resolution of controversies** and for the **discipline** of rostered ministers and congregations of this synod.¹



The bishop shall

- be the chief **ecumenical** officer of this synod;
- be a member of the **Conference of Bishops** and consult regularly with other synod bishops;
- **foster awareness** of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches;
- **cultivate communion** in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod; and
- be *ex officio* a member of the **Churchwide Assembly**.¹

CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF BISHOP

The bishop shall **oversee** and **administer** the work of this synod, serving as president of the synod corporation and be the **chief executive** and administrative officer of this synod; presiding at all meetings of the Synod Assembly and provide for the preparation of agendas; ensuring that the **constitution** and **bylaws** of the synod and of the churchwide organization are duly observed within this synod, and that the **actions** of the synod in **conformity** therewith are carried into effect; etc.¹

CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF BISHOP





The bishop shall

- **direct and guide** the work of the other synod officers;
- **exercise supervision** over the work of all synod staff members;
- **appoint** all committees for which provision is not otherwise made;
- be a **member of all committees** and any other organizational units of the synod, except as otherwise provided in this constitution;
- provide for preparation and maintenance of **synod rosters** annually
- provide for prompt reporting to the secretary of this church as stipulated in the constitution
- provide for preparation and maintenance of a roster of the congregations of this synod and the names of the laypersons who have been elected to represent them; and
- appoint a statistician of the synod.¹

CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF BISHOP

THOUGHTS FROM BISHOP DAVENPORT⁷



The Role of the Bishop is fundamentally what is written in the ELCA Constitution. The constitutional role has not changed and is accurate, but

- It changes depending on what is going on in the church and the world.
- It will be defined by the new bishop.
- It will be shaped by world and local events.
- It is to be discerned in conversation with constituents.
- It is and will be led by the Holy Spirit and the voice of God.
- It is defined by how it is lived and how you show up.

THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP

It's being the pastor to the pastor in times of crisis.

- Being called during a pandemic meant a real shift.
- The normal order ramped down and new ways of being amped up.
- There was a flurry to figure out how to do communion and how to continue to worship together.
- Led to an appreciation of holy cyberspace and how to worship in and out of the sanctuary
- Pastors became First Responders. The bishop needed to be there for them, to have their back as they made decisions and to help them with making tough decisions.⁷



THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP: THOUGHTS FROM BISHOP DAVENPORT



The Role of Bishop is always changing.

- Changes can be based on church and civil leadership
 - Who will be elected president?
 - Dealing with red, blue and purple political divisions has become a large part of family and church life. How do we have these conversations?
 - Who are key leaders within the ELCA?
- Change can center on the theological conversations that are happening in people's homes and in our churches.

The expectations of the Role of Bishop are doable.

- When they are lived out based on the synodical make-up
- They require mindfulness toward healthy balance and self care.⁷

WHAT ARE THE GIFTS OF THE SYNOD?

Great Group of New Ordained Ministers

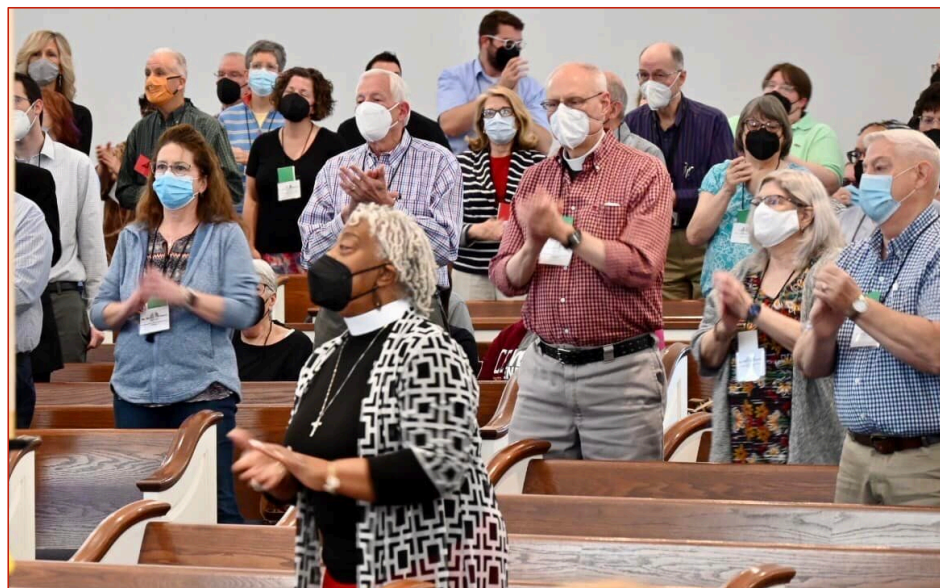
- New sense of kin-dom building
- Leaning into sharing faith and pursuing justice
- See us going full steam ahead with a new mindset: *It is on because in spite of it all, we are called to share the good news of Jesus Christ.*
- Willing to take a stand
- The clergy gap is shrinking

Strong and emerging Lay Leaders

- The synod is raising up a group of lay leaders equipped to serve that will assist in addressing clergy shortage. (Synodically authorized Lay Ministers.)⁷

HOW THE ROLE IS LIVED OUT

- By God's grace
- With strong faith
- By being surrounded by good staff and good leaders
- Knowing that prayer life is essential and foundational. Begin and end each day and every meeting with prayer.
- Modeling leadership supported by prayer and reflection. (Jesus took time away and apart and then made decisions.)⁷



THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP: THOUGHTS FROM BISHOP DAVENPORT



BISHOP DAVENPORT'S THOUGHTS ON THE GIFTS MOST NEEDED

- Administration
- Knowing (learning) how systems work (ELCA, synod, congregations)
- Ability to build relationships and work with a wide variety of people.
- Willingness to get to know all of the players
- Knowledge of budget building
- Willingness to show up
- Have a spirit wide open to loving

"Your gifts will make room for you."⁷

THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP: THOUGHTS FROM BISHOP DAVENPORT



GROUPS & MINISTRIES THE BISHOP CONNECTS WITH REGULARLY

Throughout the year the bishop meets with a variety of groups, task forces, committees and boards. Many of these commitments are mandated by the synod or organizational constitutions such as the Synod Council, the Conference of Bishops and United Lutheran Seminary. Others are based on the current organizational structure of the synod. Additionally, each bishop may find that they are invited to participate on a committee or board based on their personal gifts and interests.

SYNOD TEAMS AND COMMITTEES¹²

Office of the Bishop

- Synod Council
 - Administration
 - Audit Committee
 - Constitution Committee
 - Consultation Committee
 - Executive Committee
 - Finance Committee
 - Investment Committee
 - Nominating Committee
 - Process for Holy Closure of Congregations
- Council Officers Network
 - Committee of Deans and Eight Conference Networks
 - Transition Ministry Development Team
 - Intentional Interim Ministry
 - Bishop Election Teams
 - Transition
 - Discernment
 - Election

THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP: TEAMS AND COMMITTEES



Communications/Mission Interpretation

- Congregation Communicators Network
- Assembly/Event Media Team
- Now Normal Colleague Group

Finance and Development

- Finance Committee
- Fund for Mission
- Forward Together in Faith Grant Team

Congregational Vitality

- Congregational Vitality Team
- Resource Vision and Mission Partnership
- Generosity Team
- ELCA Coaching Network
- Love Revolution Team
- Mission Developers/Strategic Ministry Leaders

Other Teams and Networks¹²

- The Anti-Racism Team
- The African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA)
- diakonia™ Program Faith Formation Team
- Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa)
- Lutheran Disaster Response-Eastern PA
- Enthusiastic Learners Delightfully Enjoying Retired Status (ELDERS)

- Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia
- Zones of Peace
- Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity
- SEPA Women of the ELCA (SEPA WELCA)
- Synod Hunger Team
- Urban Ministry Taskforce
- SEPA Deputy Network
- Clergy Compensation Guidelines Team

Organizations and Boards¹²

- North Eastern Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Church Tanzania
 - Tanzania Companionship Team
- Bear Creek Camp
- Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries
- Gemma Services
- KenCrest Services
- Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

- Liberty Lutheran Services
 - Artman
 - Hearth at Drexel
 - Lutheran Disaster Response
 - Paul's Run
 - Village at Penn State
 - West Philadelphia Senior Community Center
- Lutheran Settlement House
- Thrivent
- United Lutheran Seminary

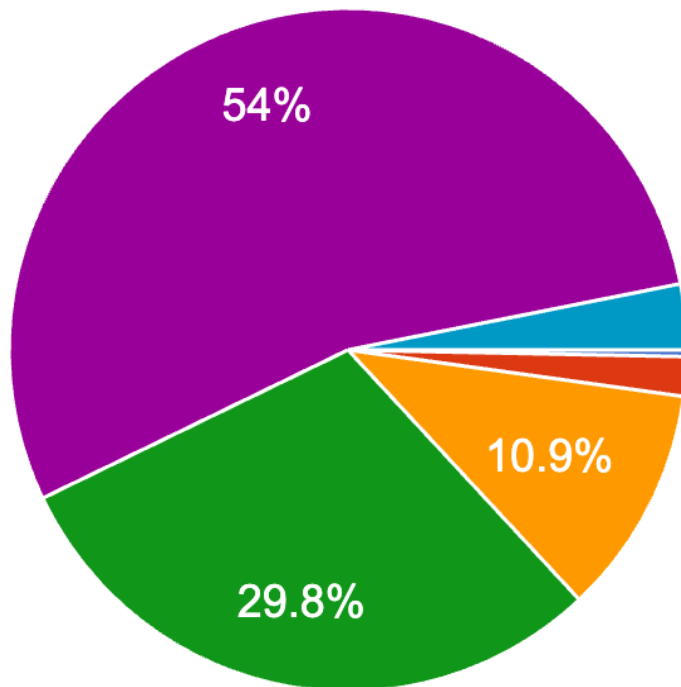


SEPA SURVEY SUMMARY

Results of the Questionnaire:
November 27 - December 11, 2023

322 SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

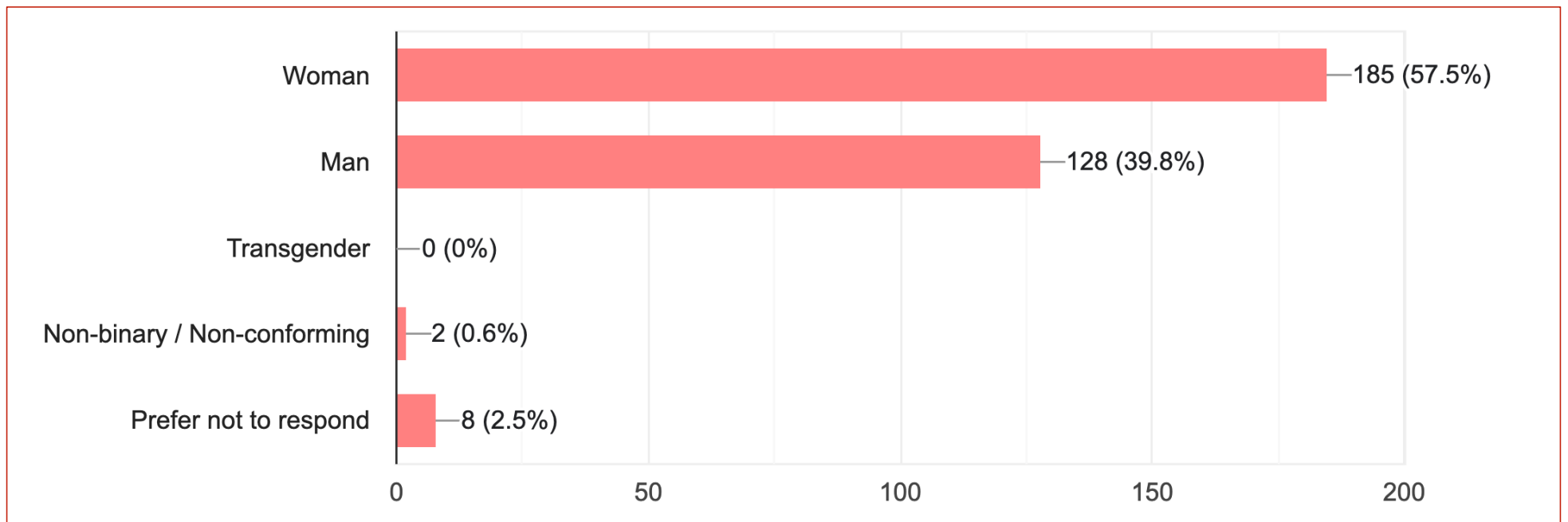
1. What is your age?⁶



- 0 - 17 (1)
- 18 - 29 (6)
- 30 - 49 (35)
- 50 - 65 (96)
- 66 - 85 (174)
- 85 & older (10)

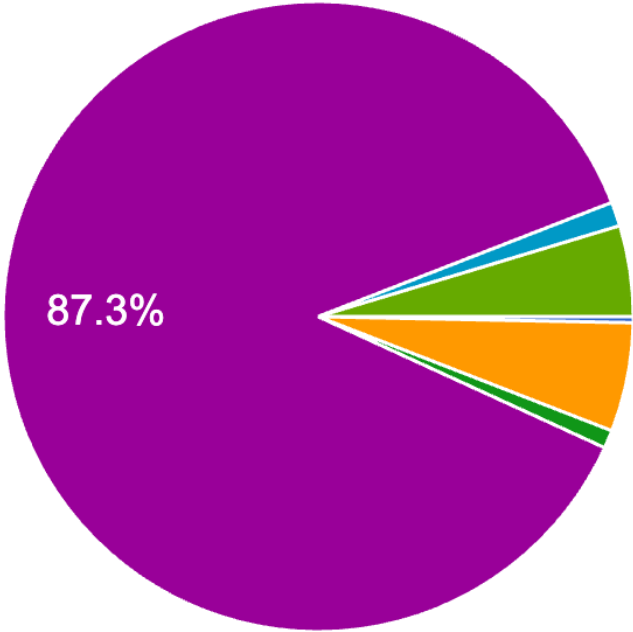
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

2. Gender Identity: select all that apply⁶.



SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

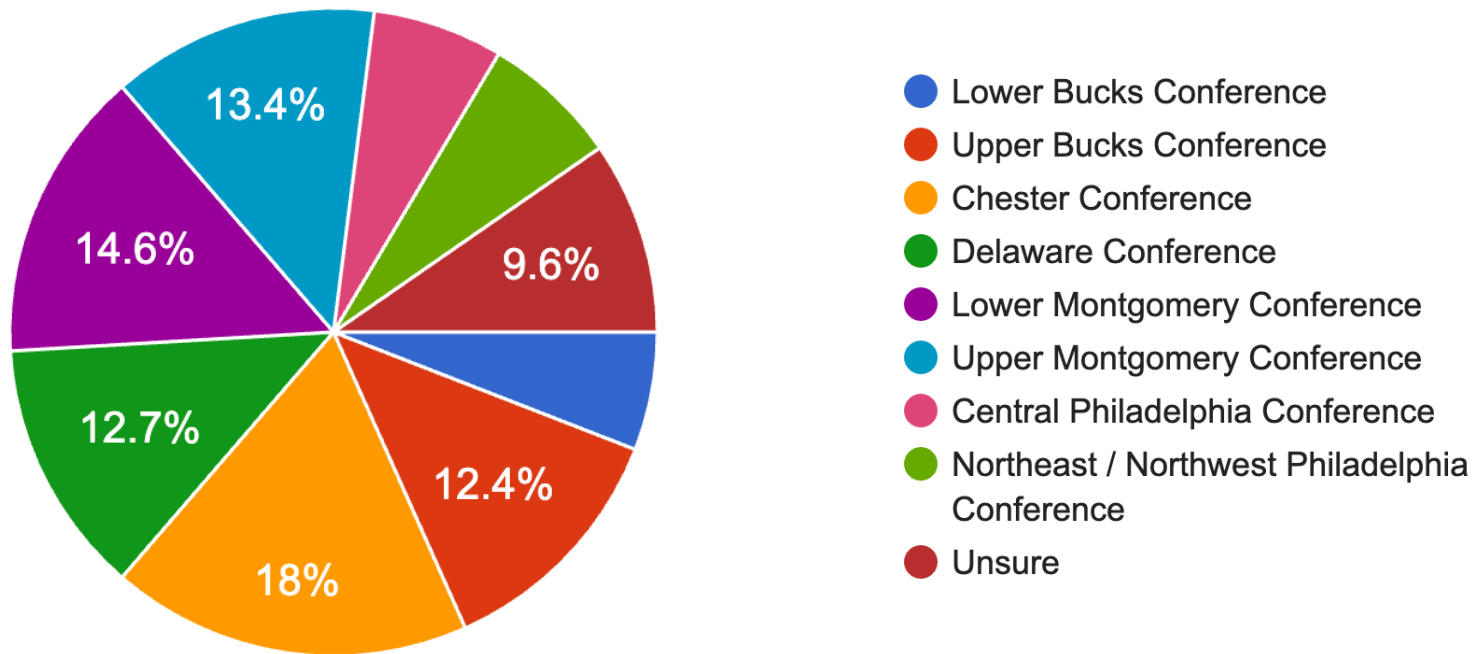
3. What race or ethnicity best describes you? Choose one⁶.



- American Indian or Alaskan Native – 0.3% (1)
- Asian or Pacific Islander - 0
- Black or African American – 5.6% (18)
- Hispanic or Latinx – 0.9% (3)
- White – 87.3% (281)
- Multiple Ethnicity – 1.2% (4)
- Other - 0
- Prefer not to respond – 4.7% (15)

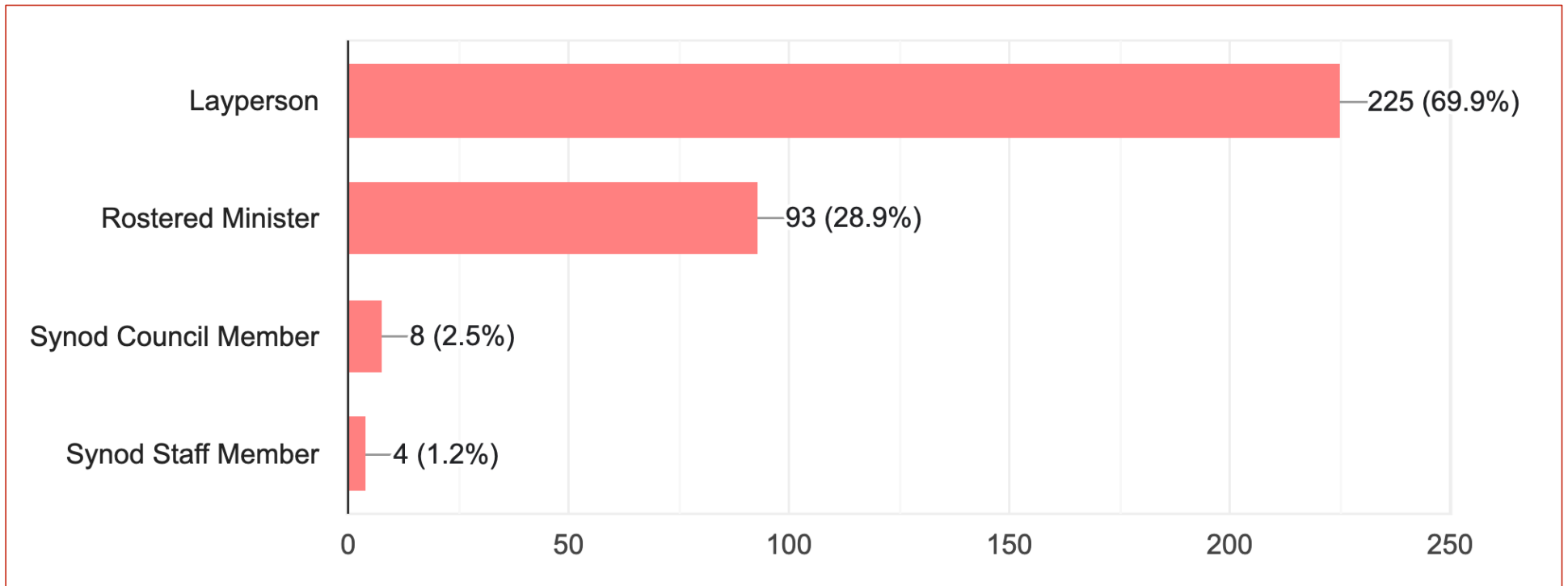
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

4. In what conference is your home congregation?⁶



SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

5. ELCA Roster Status: please check all that apply.⁶



SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

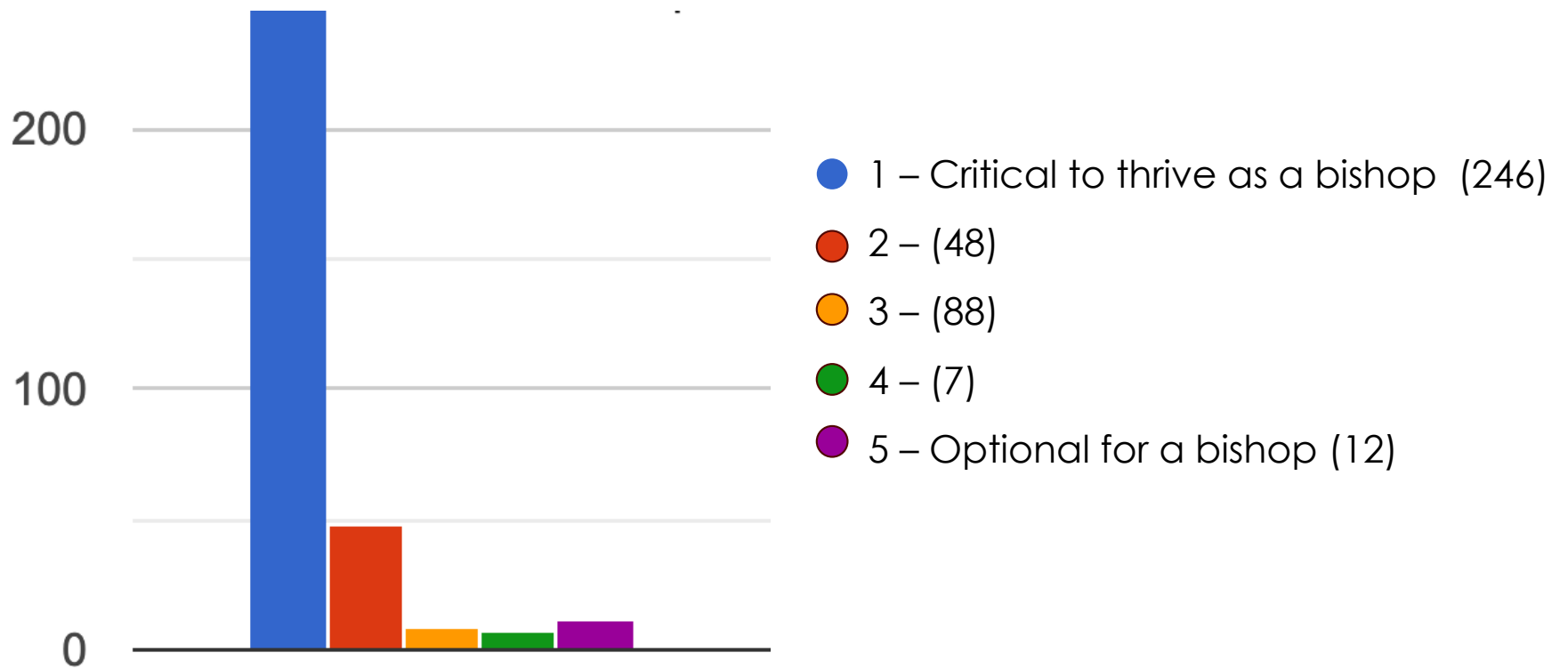
QUALITIES TO THRIVE AS BISHOP



The following characteristics might be seen as helping a pastor to thrive. As you consider the role of bishop, rate each of these qualities on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being *critical* to thrive as a bishop and 5 being *optional* for a bishop.

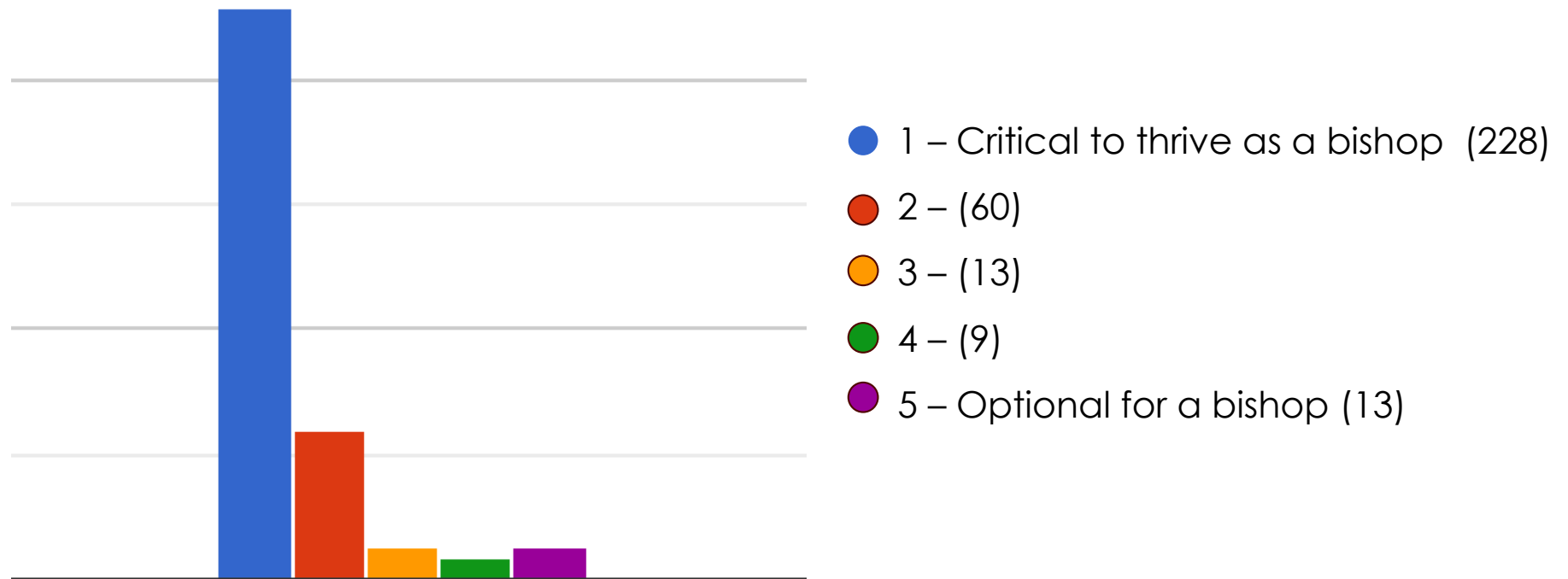
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

DEEP SPIRITUAL HEALTH



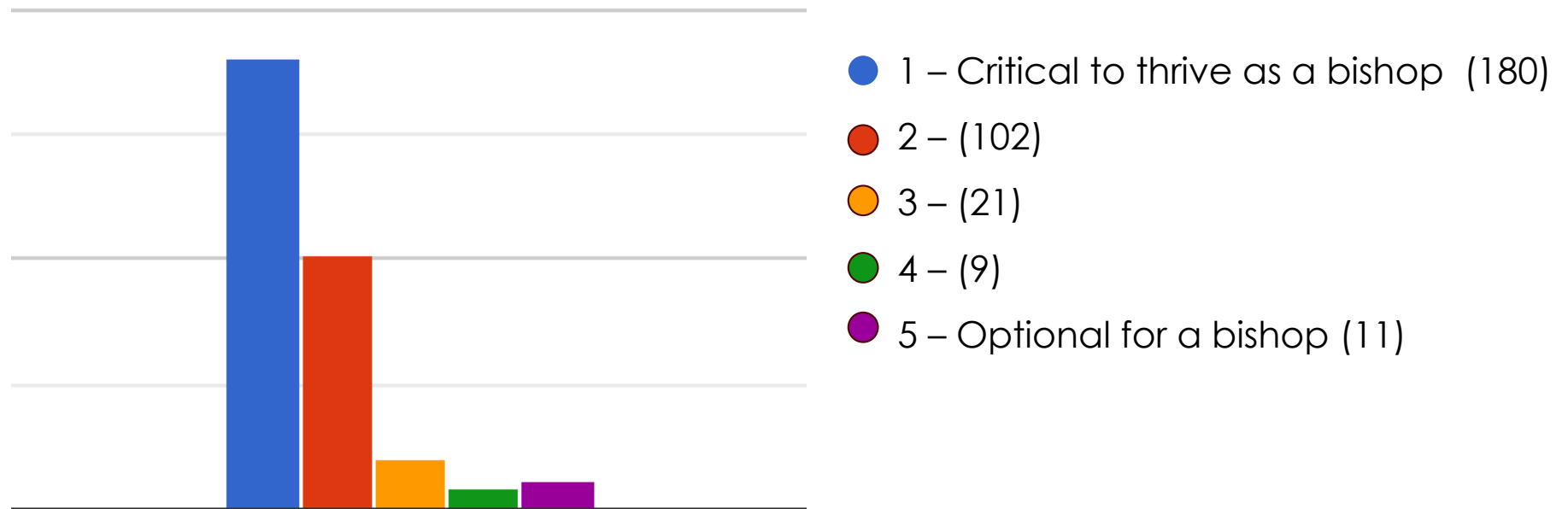
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

AN ABILITY TO CAST VISION AND SHARE THE BIG PICTURE



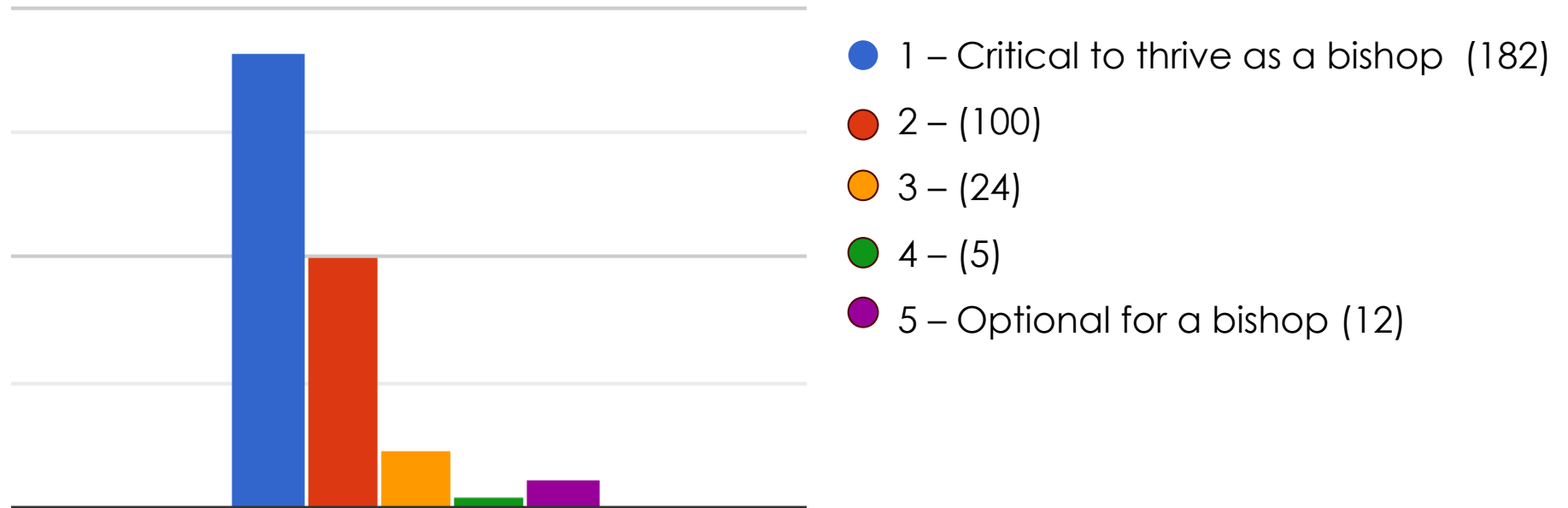
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

SKILLED AND EMPATHETIC LISTENER



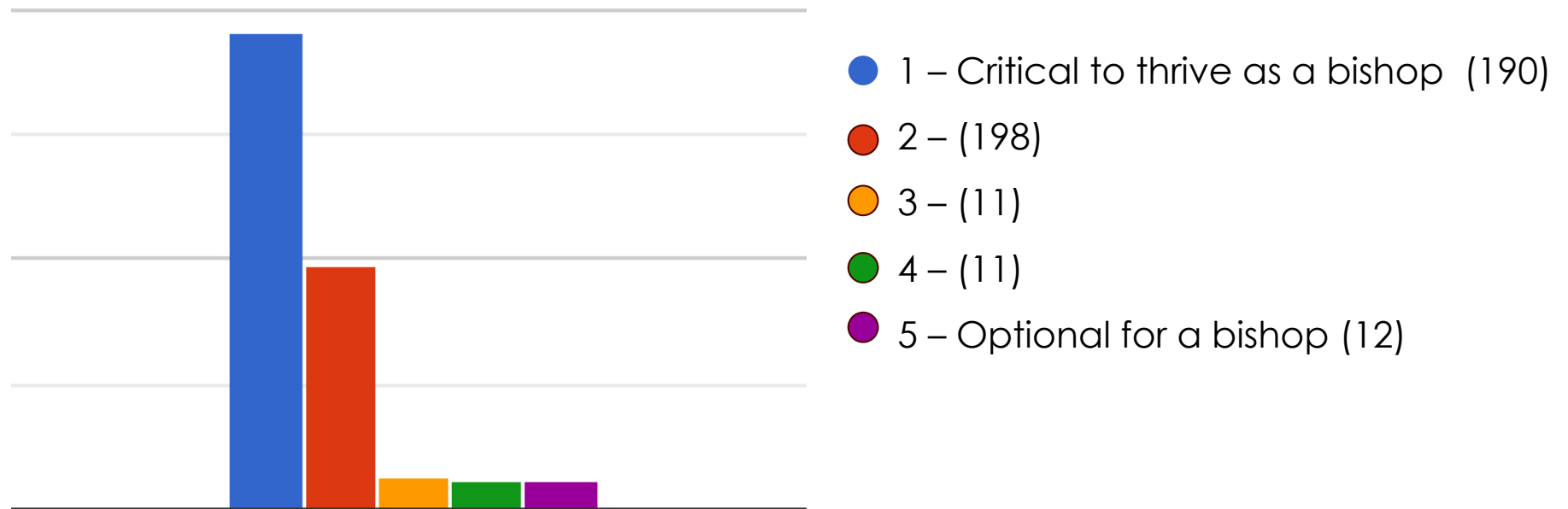
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

ABILITY TO DELEGATE AND MANAGE OTHERS



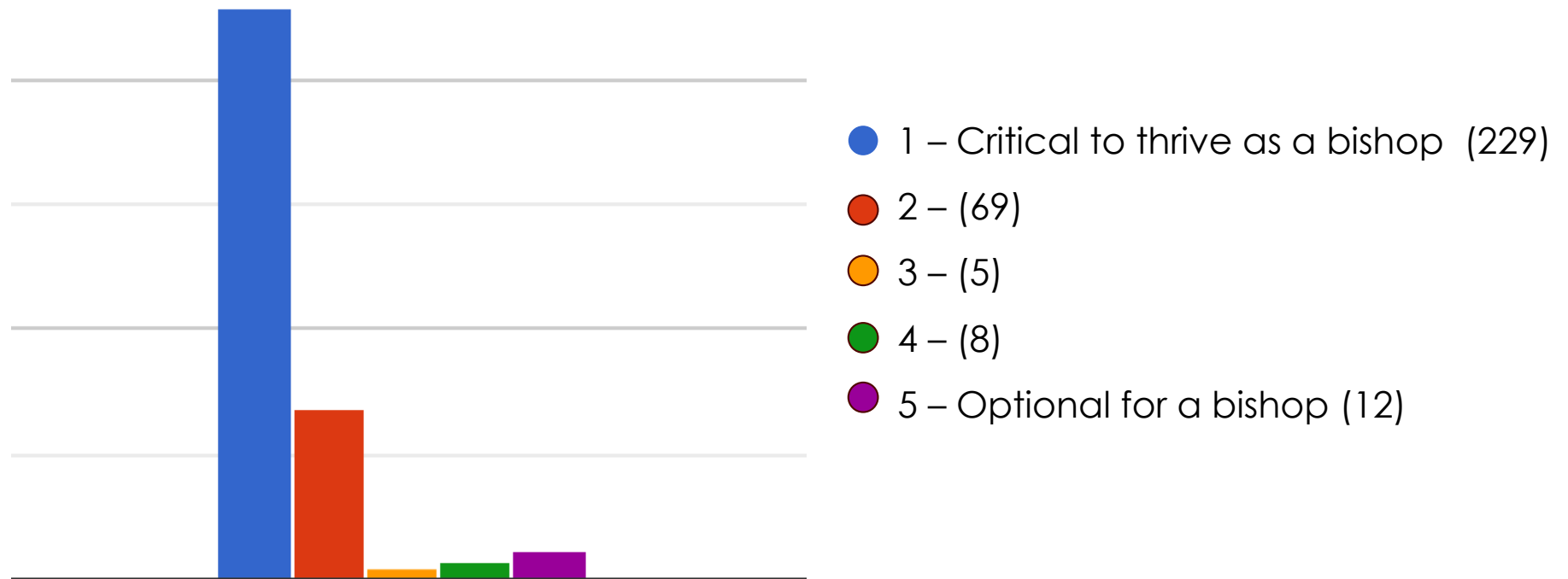
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-AWARENESS



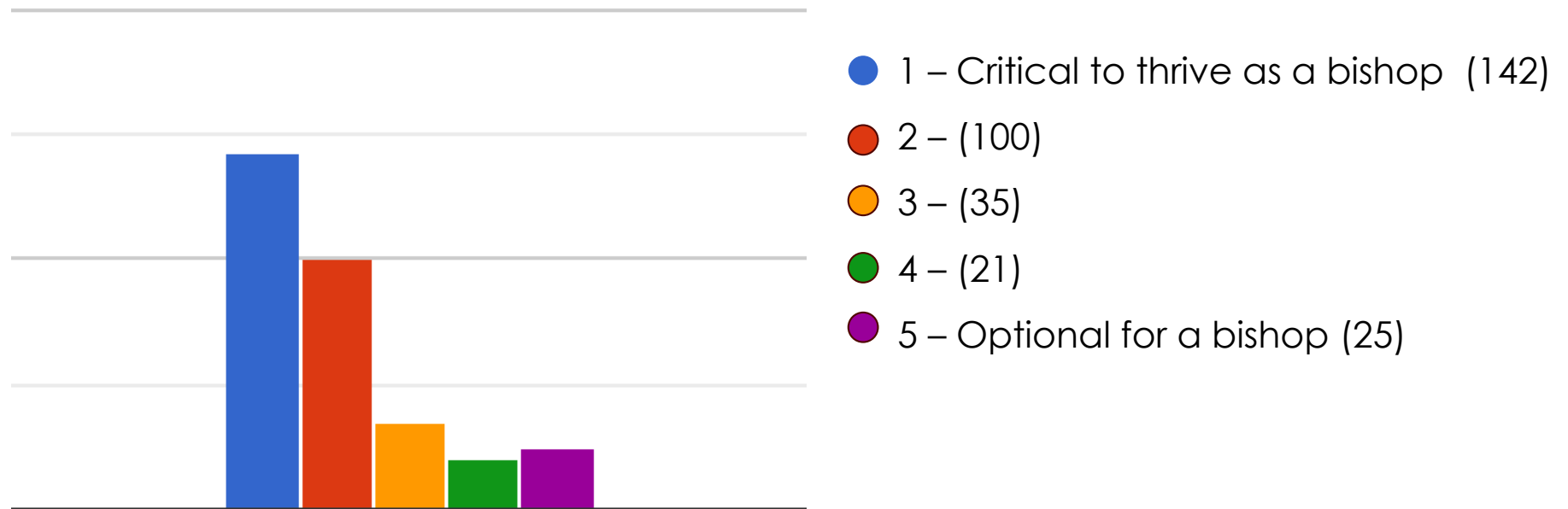
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

ABILITY TO BUILD TRUST



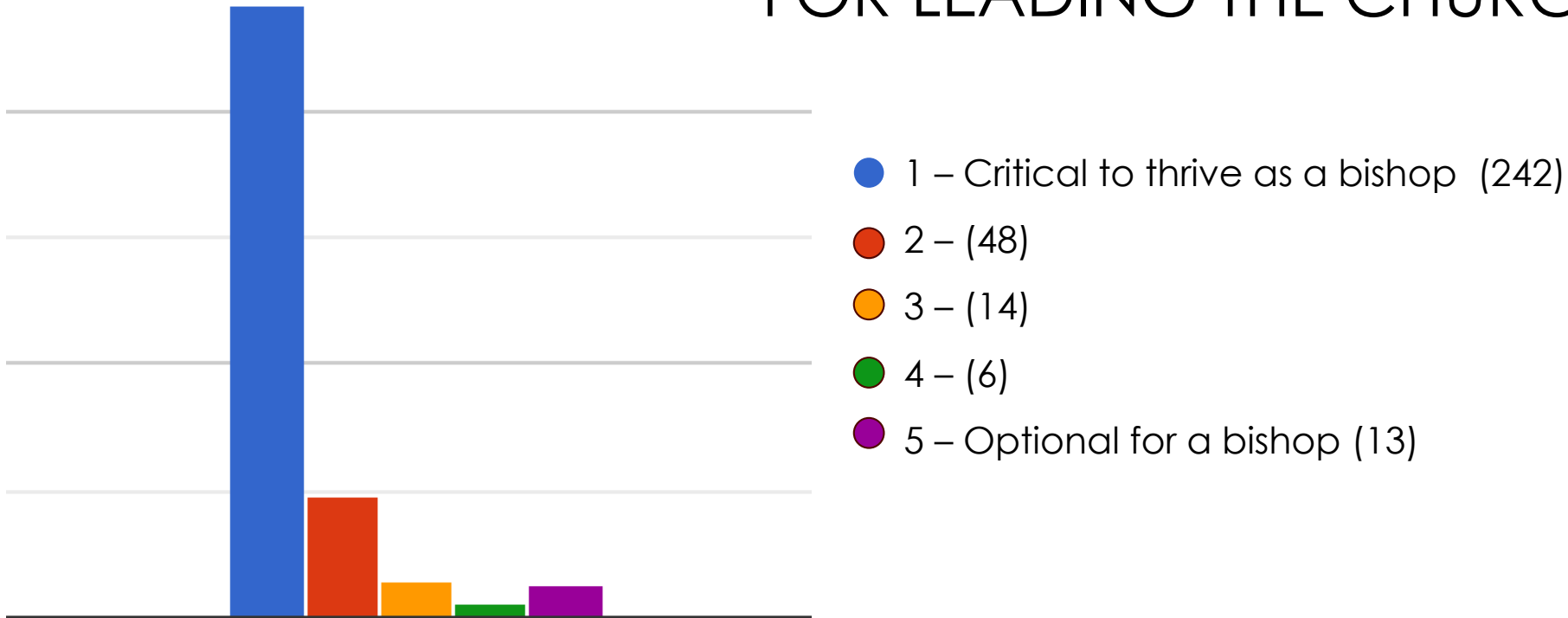
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

COMMITTED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIC RENEWAL



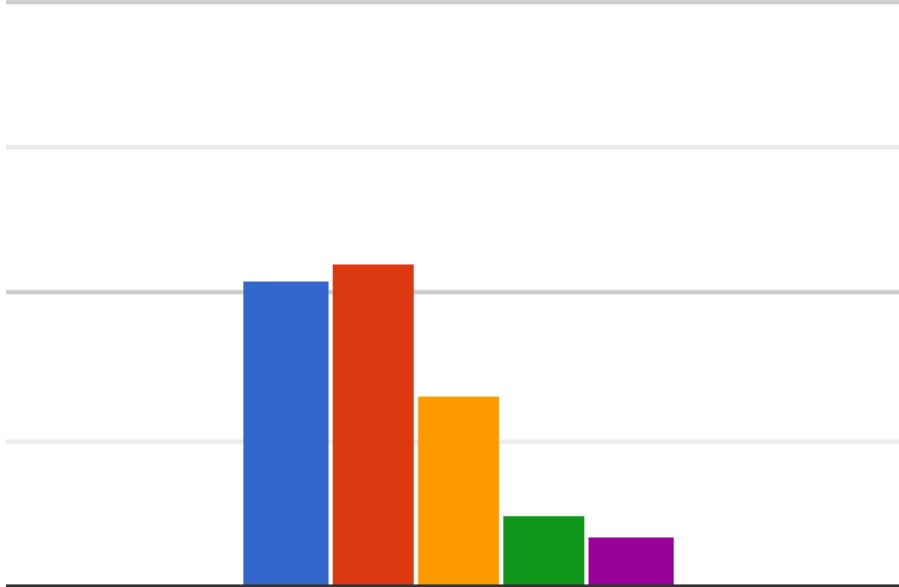
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

PASSION AND ENTHUSIASM FOR LEADING THE CHURCH



SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

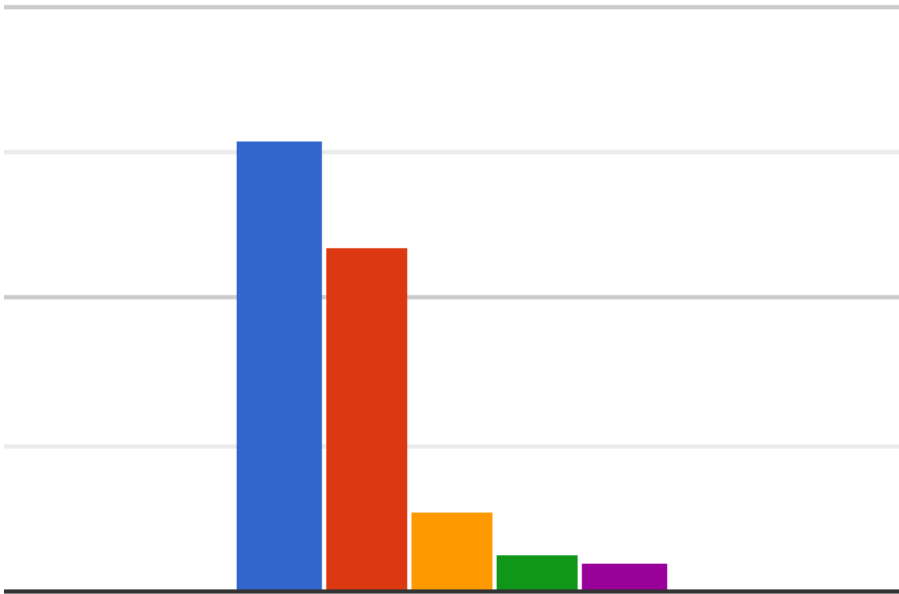
CALM AND GENTLE SPIRIT



- 1 – Critical to thrive as a bishop (105)
- 2 – (110)
- 3 – (66)
- 4 – (25)
- 5 – Optional for a bishop (17)

SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

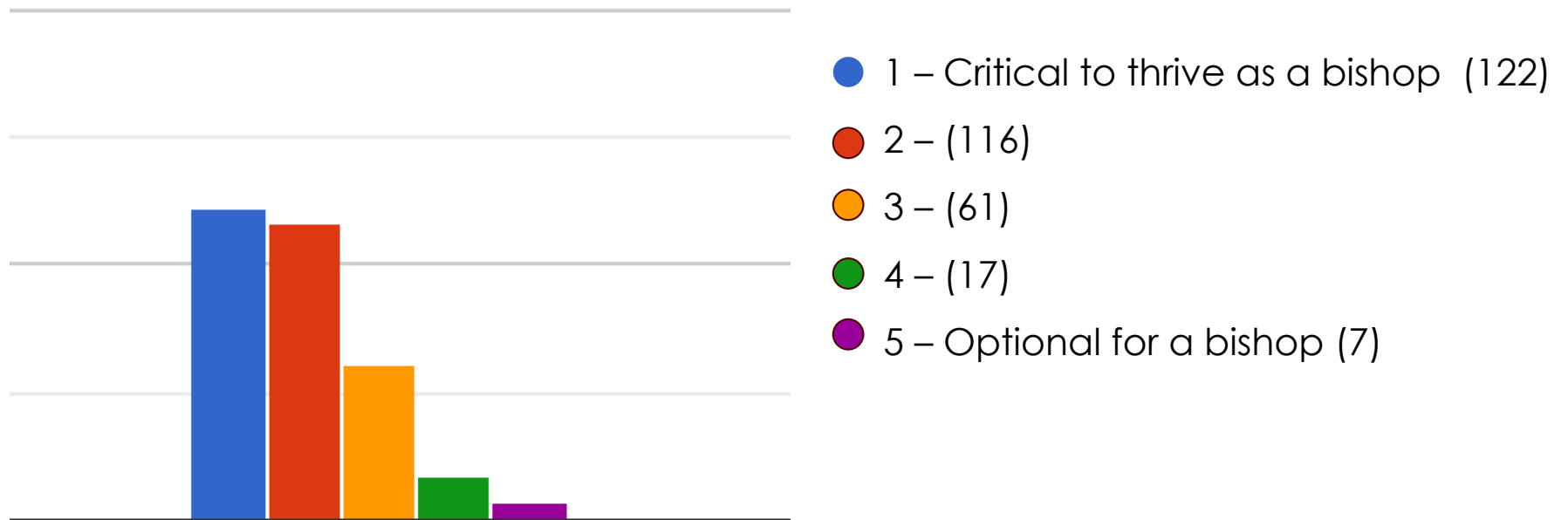
ABILITY TO PERSEVERE



- 1 - Critical to thrive as a bishop (154)
- 2 - (118)
- 3 - (28)
- 4 - (13)
- 5 - Optional for a bishop (10)

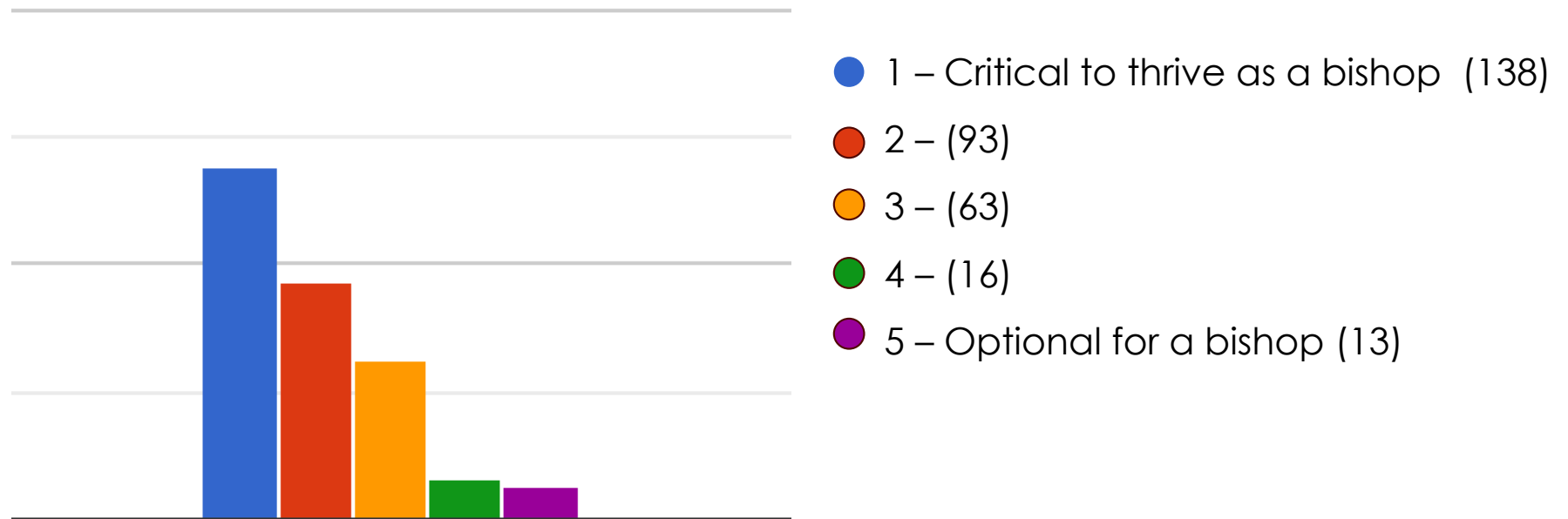
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

A COMMITTED EVANGELIST



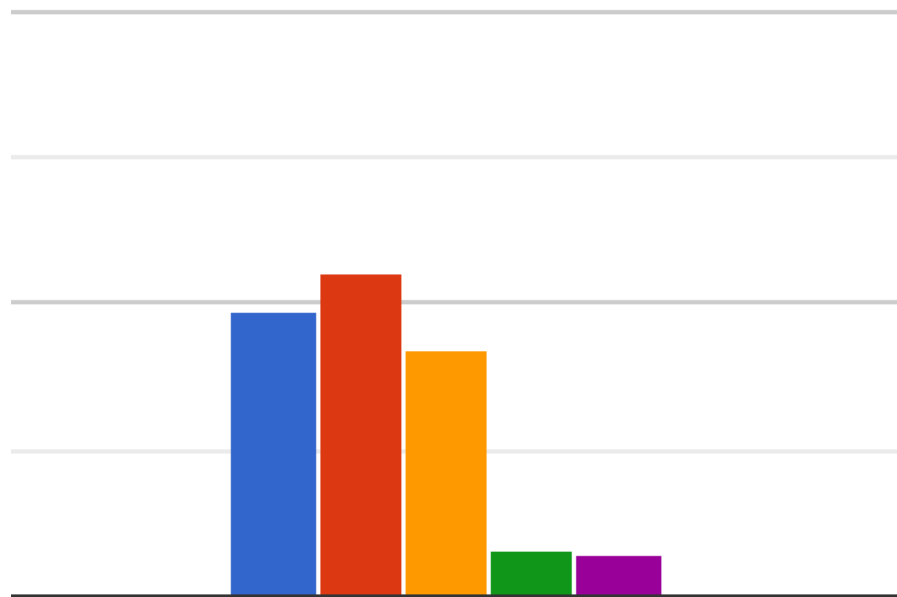
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

SPIRITUAL MENTOR



SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

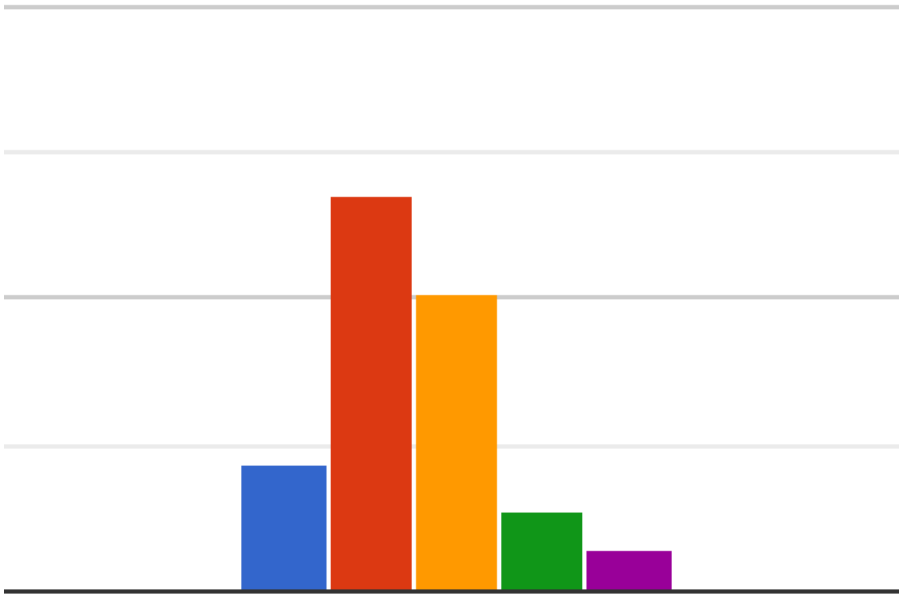
GIFTED PREACHER



- 1 – Critical to thrive as a bishop (97)
- 2 – (111)
- 3 – (85)
- 4 – (16)
- 5 – Optional for a bishop (14)

SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

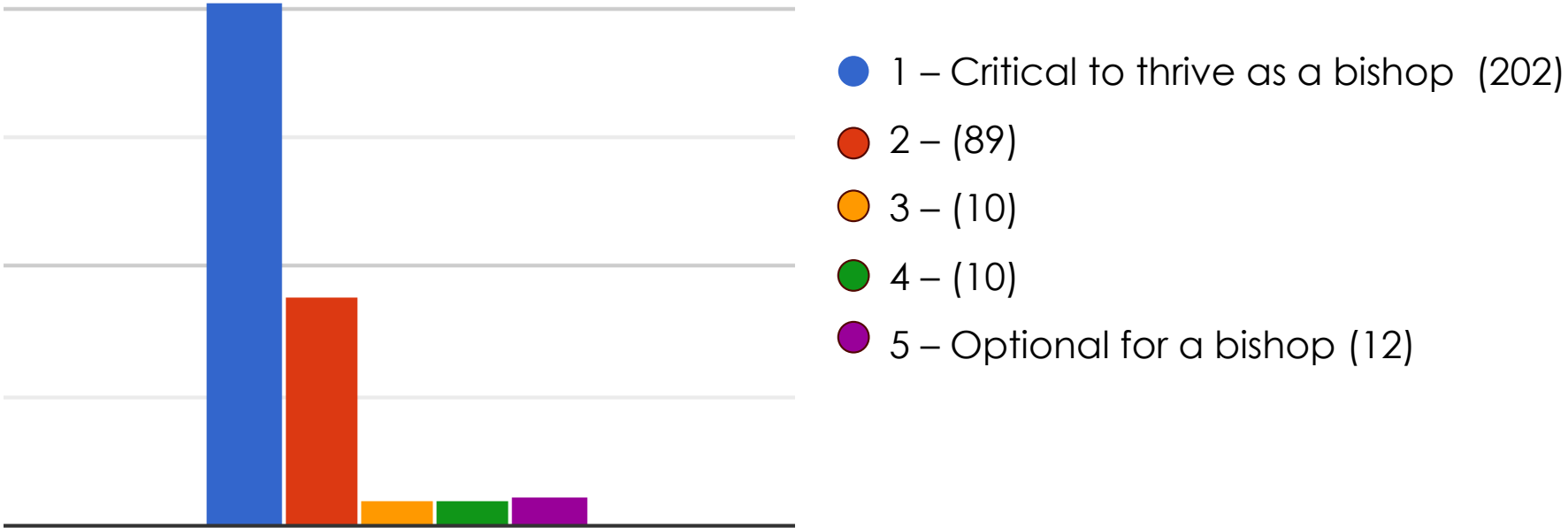
TALENTED WRITER



- 1 – Critical to thrive as a bishop (44)
- 2 – (135)
- 3 – (102)
- 4 – (27)
- 5 – Optional for a bishop (15)

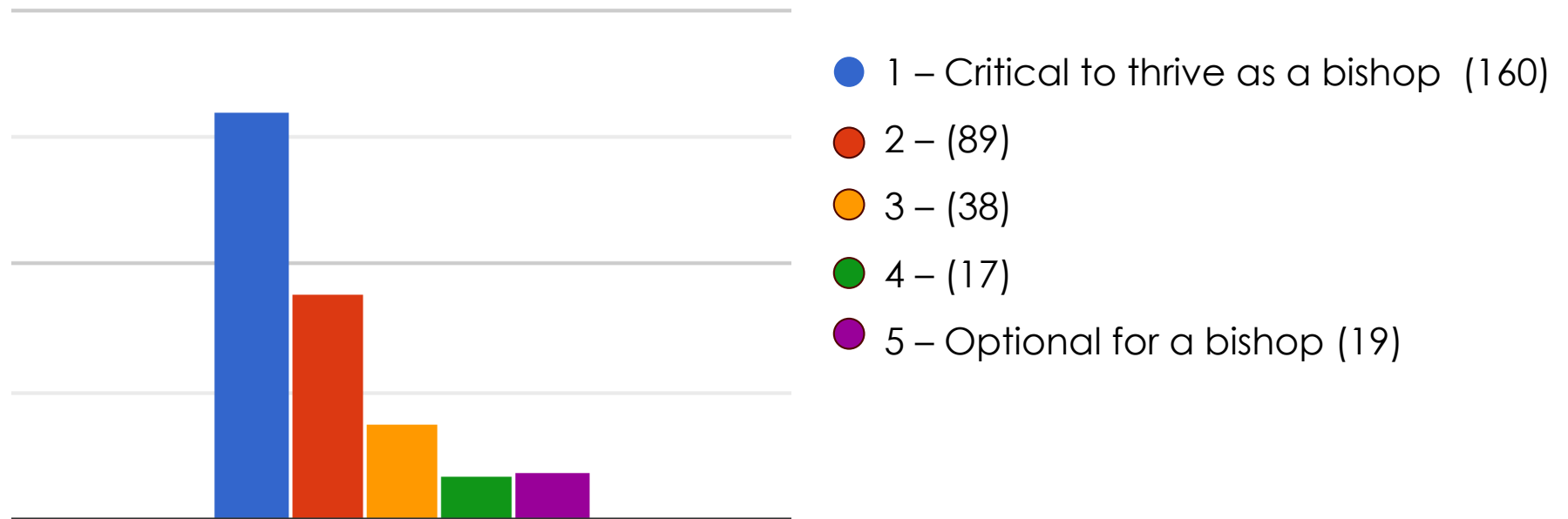
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

WILLINGNESS TO FULLY DISCERN THE HEART OF A PROBLEM AND ENGAGE IN CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING



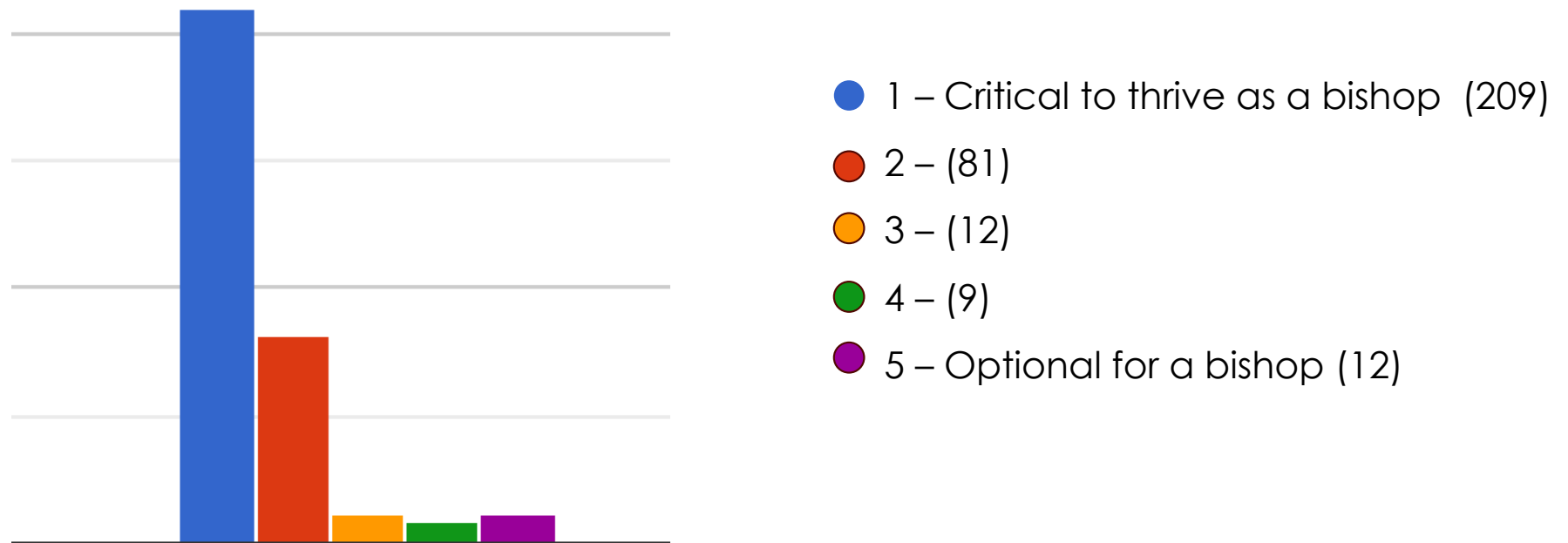
SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

STRONG UNDERSTANDING OF ELCA STRUCTURES AND CONSTITUTIONS



SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

REALISTIC OPTIMISM AND HOPE FOR MOVING THE CHURCH FORWARD



SURVEY RESPONSES: QUALITIES TO THRIVE

SIX HIGHEST RANKING QUALITIES

- Deep Spiritual Health – 246 rated as critical
- Passion and Enthusiasm for Leading the Church – 242
- Ability to Build Trust - 229
- An Ability to Cast Vision and Share the Big Picture – 228
- Realistic Optimism and Hope for Moving the Church Forward – 209
- Willingness to Fully Discern the Heart of a Problem and Engage in Creative Problem Solving - 202



SYNOD VITALITY⁶

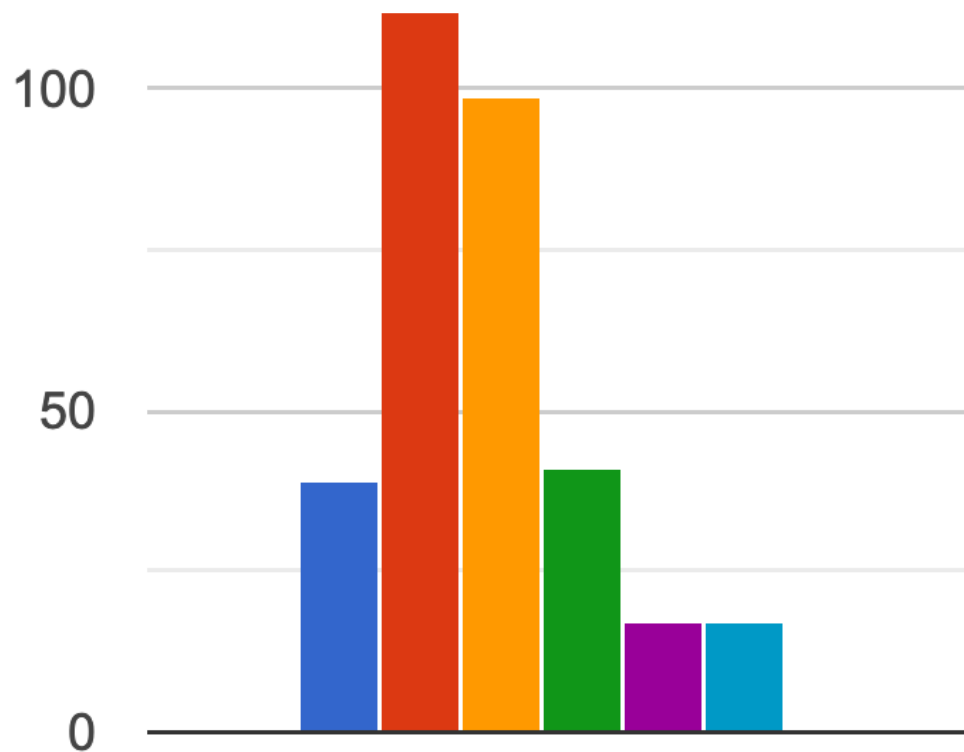
Church vitality can be measured in several ways. Each of these activities can contribute to the health and well being of ministry settings. As you consider the synod, how does it currently rate in these areas?

- Offers innovative and inspired worship.
- Encourages and promotes lifelong learning for all members.
- Leads and supports congregations in intentional and authentic evangelism.
- An outward incarnational focus that models how to be Jesus' hands and feet.
- Empower servant leadership within congregations and the larger church.
- Provides opportunities to develop and nurture relationships between congregations and members.
- Promotes a shared mission and common goals for the future of the synod.
- Cultivates and encourages resiliency among congregations that isn't focused purely on attendance and finances.

SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

OFFERS INNOVATIVE AND INSPIRED WORSHIP

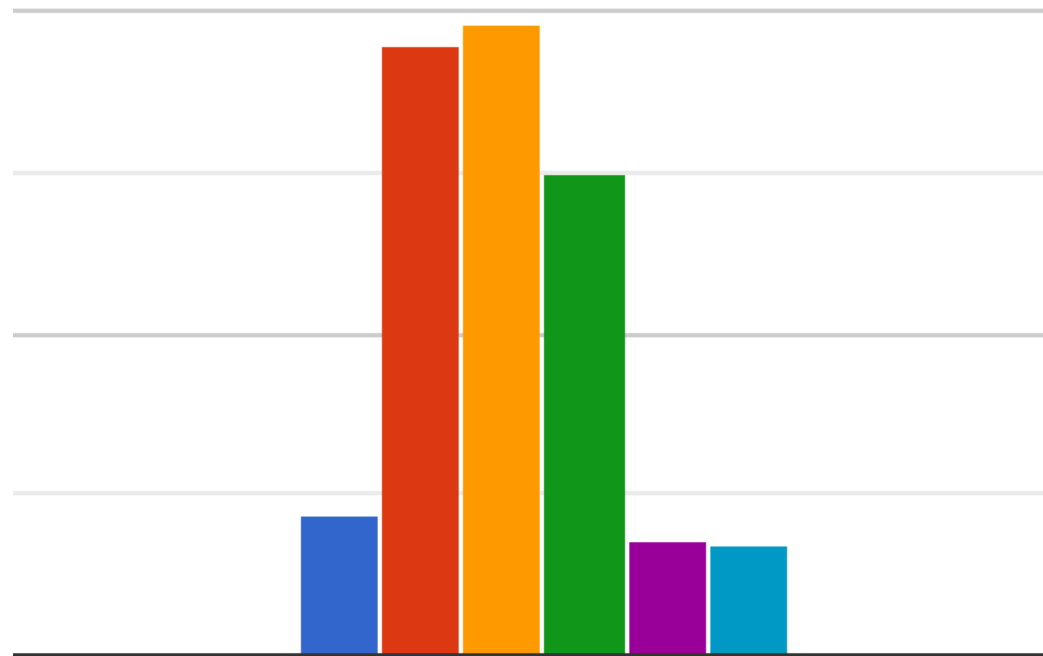
- 1 – Excellent (39)
- 2 – Good (112)
- 3 – Adequate (99)
- 4 – Somewhat Ineffective (41)
- 5 – Not Happening (17)
- 6 – Unsure (17)



SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

ENCOURAGES AND PROMOTES LIFELONG LEARNING FOR ALL MEMBERS

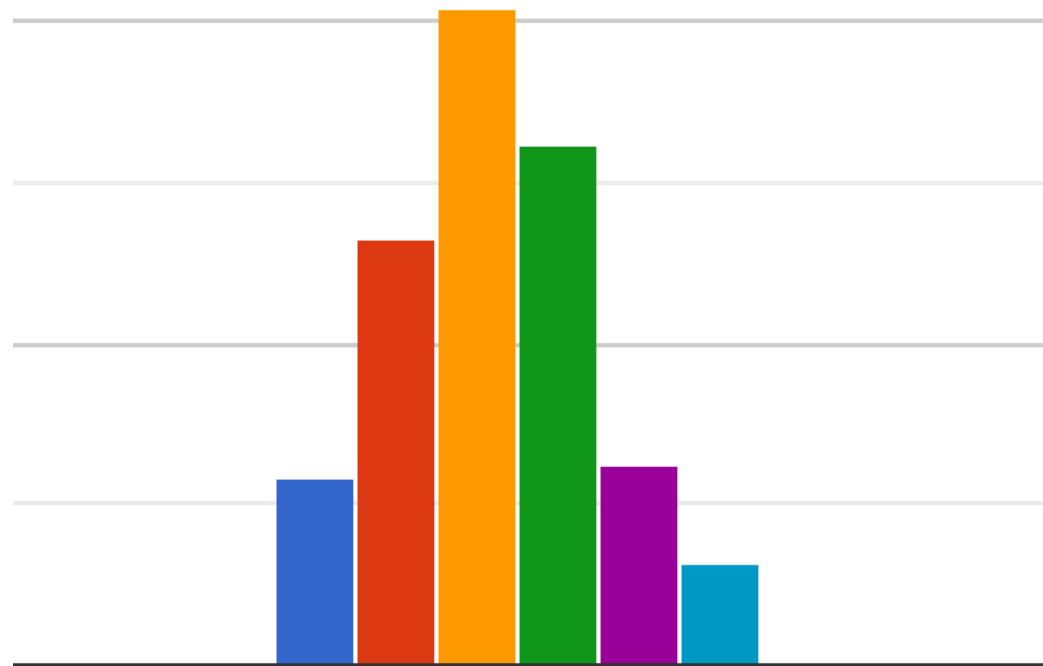
- 1 – Excellent (22)
- 2 – Good (95)
- 3 – Adequate (98)
- 4 – Somewhat Ineffective (75)
- 5 – Not Happening (18)
- 6 – Unsure (17)



SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

LEADS AND SUPPORTS CONGREGATIONS IN INTENTIONAL AND AUTHENTIC EVANGELISM

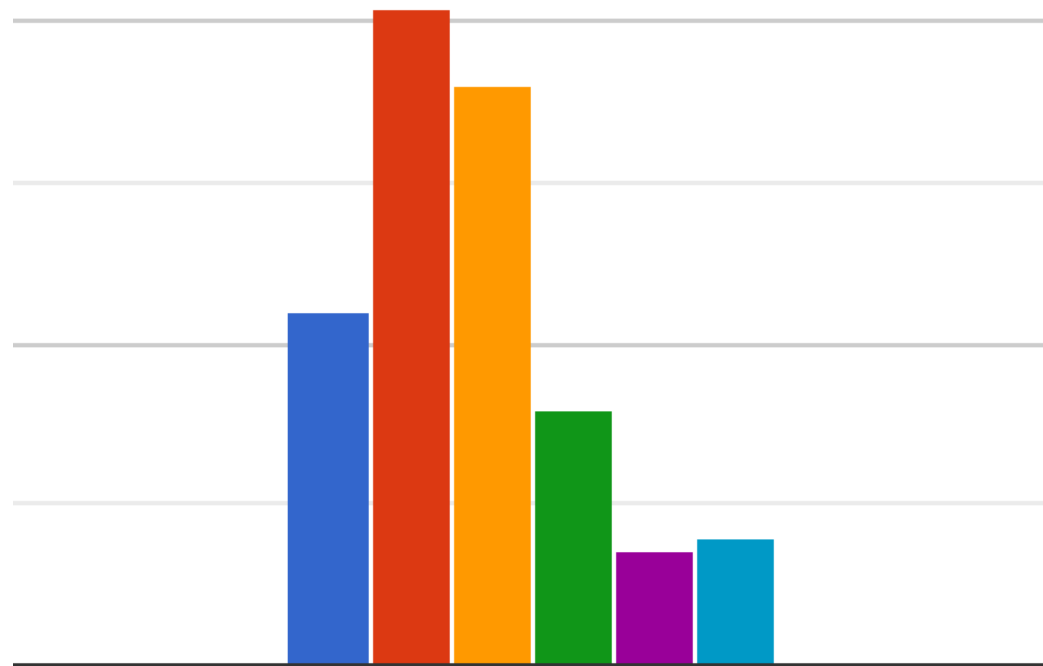
- 1 – Excellent (29)
- 2 – Good (66)
- 3 – Adequate (102)
- 4 – Somewhat Ineffective (81)
- 5 – Not Happening (31)
- 6 – Unsure (16)



SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

AN OUTWARD INCARNATIONAL FOCUS THAT MODELS HOW TO BE JESUS' HANDS AND FEET

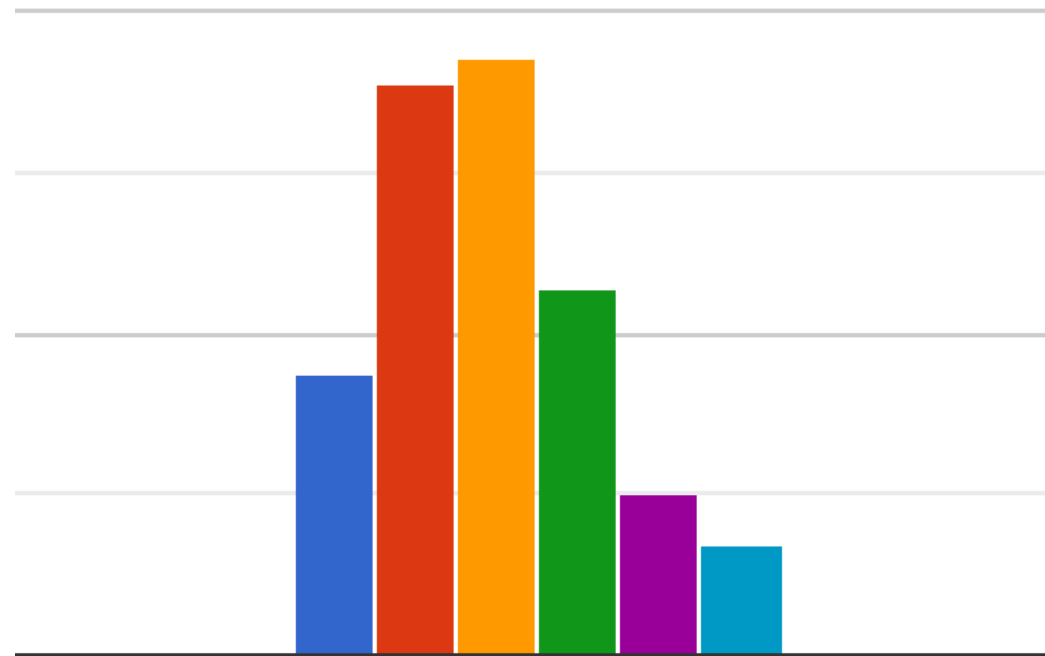
- 1 – Excellent (55)
- 2 – Good (102)
- 3 – Adequate (90)
- 4 – Somewhat Ineffective (40)
- 5 – Not Happening (18)
- 6 – Unsure (20)



SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

EMPOWERS SERVANT LEADERSHIP WITHIN CONGREGATIONS AND THE LARGER CHURCH

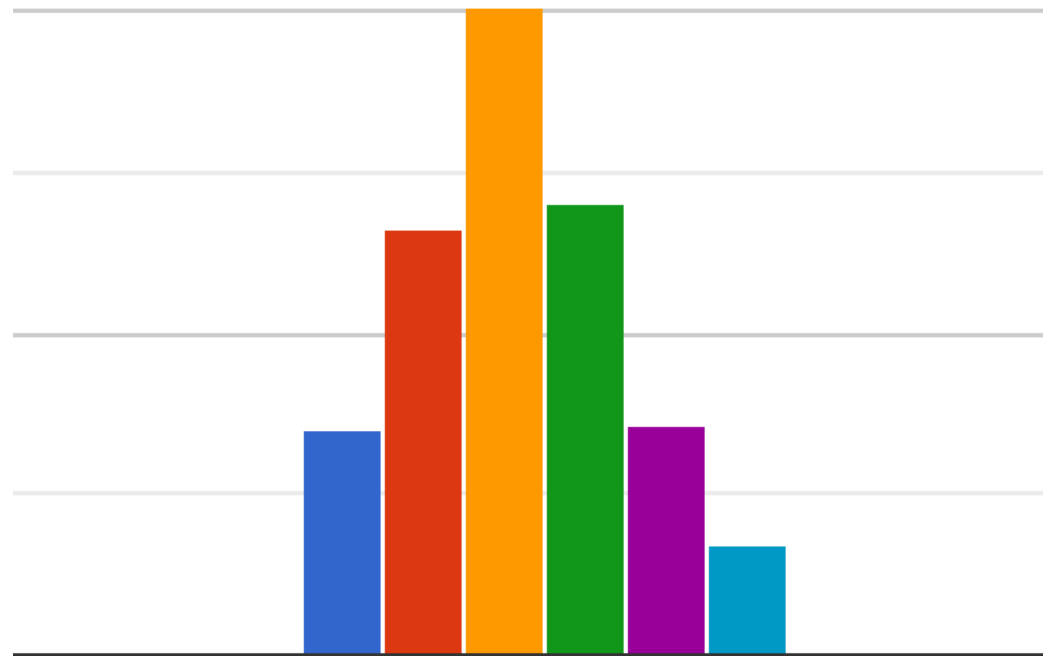
- 1 – Excellent (44)
- 2 – Good (89)
- 3 – Adequate (93)
- 4 – Somewhat Ineffective (57)
- 5 – Not Happening (25)
- 6 – Unsure (17)



SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP AND NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONGREGATIONS AND MEMBERS

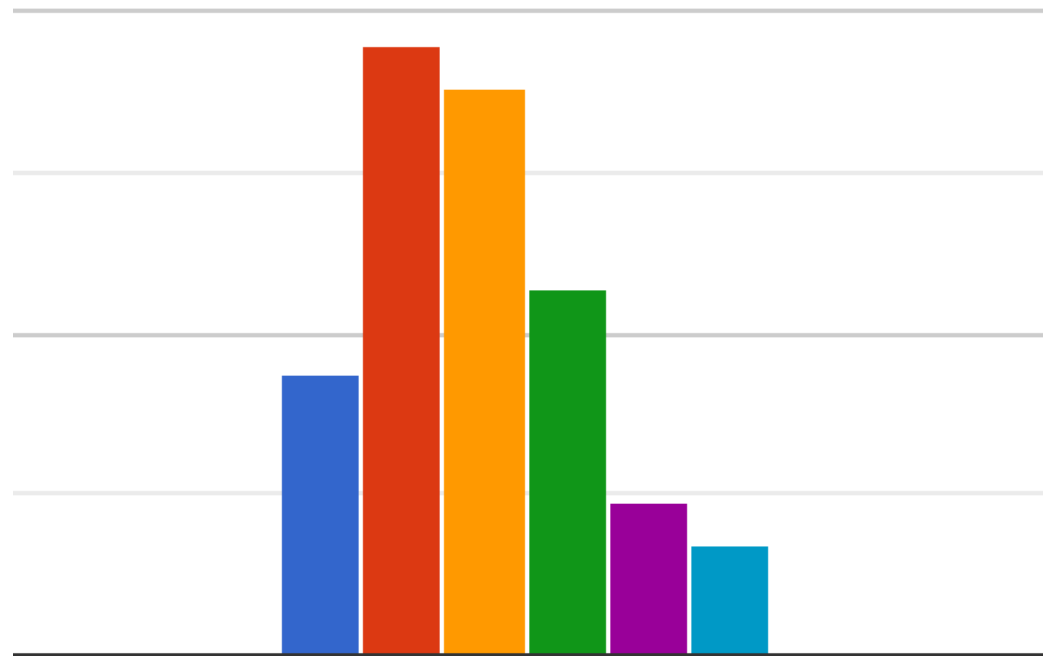
- 1 – Excellent (35)
- 2 – Good (66)
- 3 – Adequate (101)
- 4 – Somewhat Ineffective (70)
- 5 – Not Happening (36)
- 6 – Unsure (17)



SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

PROMOTES A SHARED MISSION AND COMMON GOALS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SYNOD

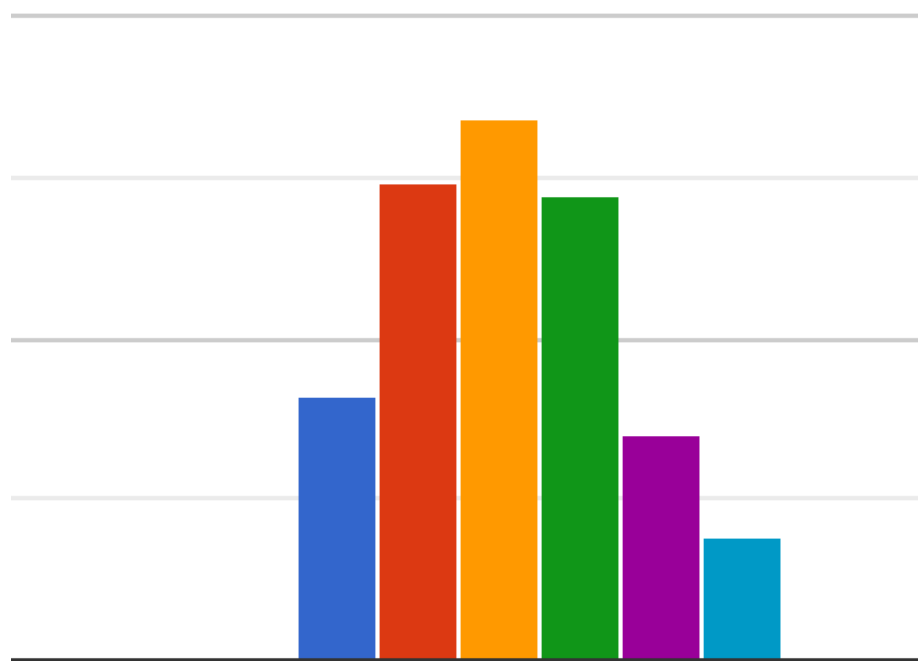
- 1 – Excellent (44)
- 2 – Good (95)
- 3 – Adequate (88)
- 4 – Somewhat Ineffective (57)
- 5 – Not Happening (24)
- 6 – Unsure (17)



SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

CULTIVATES AND ENCOURAGES RESILIENCY AMONG CONGREGATIONS THAT ISN'T FOCUSED PURELY ON ATTENDANCE AND FINANCES

- 1 – Excellent (41)
- 2 – Good (74)
- 3 – Adequate (84)
- 4 – Somewhat Ineffective (72)
- 5 – Not Happening (35)
- 6 – Unsure (19)



SURVEY RESPONSES: SYNOD VITALITY

Survey participants were asked three open ended questions. All responses were reviewed by members of the Transition Team who categorized the answers.

In the following slides, the top areas in each category have been shared, along with some more detailed thoughts.



SURVEY RESPONSES



In a rapidly changing culture which was dramatically impacted by the pandemic, how can the synod support congregations to accomplish God's work?⁶


Responses were reviewed by members of the Transition Team.
This review provided the five answers most frequently given.

Improve Communication - both mass and individual (99)

“A more visible presence of leadership from the bishop would be helpful--visiting congregations on Sundays, putting out (well-written) statements and videos to be a voice.

- Clear communication about the needs of congregations in the synod.
- Keep asking “what do congregations want?”
- Clearly share important updates on topics such as worship practices, particularly in a time of uncertainty such as the pandemic.
- Communicate more with non-rostered leaders in congregations and make sure to follow-up on message from lay people.

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 1A



In a rapidly changing culture which was dramatically impacted by the pandemic, how can the synod support congregations to accomplish God's work?

Visit (80)

"Listen to what congregations have to say. Visit them!"

- Regular visitation to congregations by the bishop and synod staff. If possible, every congregation would be visited in a year.
- Practice intentional accompaniment, specifically through pastoral care (prayer, active listening, mutual care and consolation, not counseling) for rostered leaders.
- Congregations in the "far reaches" of the synod and those in the inner city feel that the synod staff could be more accessible. Some feel a disconnect.
- Greater interaction with laity.

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 1B




In a rapidly changing culture which was dramatically impacted by the pandemic, how can the synod support congregations to accomplish God's work?

Help congregations embrace new paradigms as they move forward (78)

"[The church] needs to find a way to be relevant in a society that no longer sees value in religious institutions."

- Suggest specific actions that are or will motivate congregations to adjust to the new reality.
- Assist congregations in improving ability to provide streaming, etc. so that worship, meeting and other gatherings can continue to be accessed by folks inside and outside congregational membership. The pandemic gave opportunity to see that this can be done faithfully and effectively... we should learn from this.
- Help congregations to adjust to more members choosing online worship, especially as they are aging, and work to [help] these members stay engaged in God's Work.

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 1C



In a rapidly changing culture which was dramatically impacted by the pandemic, how can the synod support congregations to accomplish God's work?

More Training and Resources for All (63)

“Help congregations imagine ministries in new ways.”

- Training for lay leaders particularly in the areas of leadership, evangelism, community development, preaching and worship practices.
- Resources online and in print.
- Grow a multimedia office.
- Provide resources that model how congregations can work together.
- Renew the Diakonia program.
- Provide more ways for clergy to build collegial relationships.

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 1D



In a rapidly changing culture which was dramatically impacted by the pandemic, how can the synod support congregations to accomplish God's work?

Help Congregations to Develop Shared Ministries (60)

“Encourage creativity and collaboration among and between congregations.”

- Give direct and honest guidance on viability of congregations in trouble.
- Encourage congregations to work together and perhaps merge or create a parish with two or three congregations so focus can be on more than just survival.
- Create pathways for mergers. With dwindling attendance and budgets, we would be more effective in ministries and more faithful stewards of finances if we combined congregations.
- Establish system for measuring the viability of a congregation with attending action plans.

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 1E

In a rapidly changing culture which was dramatically impacted by the pandemic, how can the synod support congregations to accomplish God's work?



"I believe the synod and the ELCA need to step outside the box in examining what living a full Christian life entails. It goes beyond simply showing up to a nearby building on Sundays to worship God and read the Bible, and it needs to embrace "not obviously Christian" elements of life: guidance in professions, creative expression not simply for the church, assistance in skills building, opportunities for fellowship - a whole ethos of living."


SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 1

What new steps should the synod take to equip lay and rostered leaders for serving over the next five years?⁶



Provide training opportunities for laity to equip qualified individuals for better council leadership, preaching and leading worship. This could include convocations, workshops, classes at the seminary and mentoring.

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 2A



What new steps should the synod take to equip lay and rostered leaders for serving over the next five years?

Provide learning opportunities and resources for rostered leaders on topics including:

- Leadership skills
- Transition skills
- Family systems leadership for the modern church,
- Bible study
- Leading in a part-time congregation
- Social justice issues
- Technology
- New mission development
- Member engagement
- Improved mental health resources
- Opportunities for development of spiritual health and well being
- Support related to pay equity and finances

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 2B

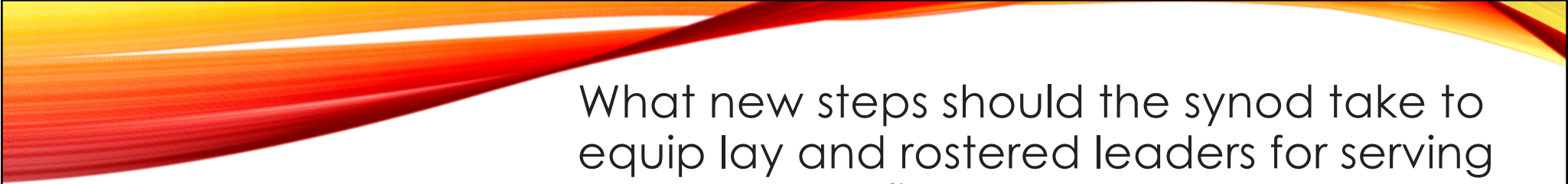
What new steps should the synod take to equip lay and rostered leaders for serving over the next five years?

Creating connections- between congregations, between congregations and the synod, among roster leaders, and with interfaith partners.

The purpose of these connections is for mutual support and to encourage working together in collaborations. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways including gathering leaders for listening times.



SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 2C



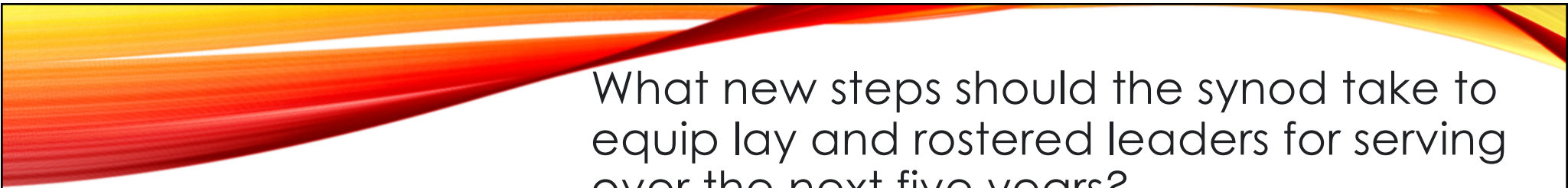
What new steps should the synod take to equip lay and rostered leaders for serving over the next five years?

Creation of innovative ideas and assistance with bi-vocational and multi-site ministries.

Suggested methods including creation of new ministry models, support via financial grants, training, clear vision, and better sharing of working collaborative models.

Instilling in them the confidence that we are called to serve using a wide variety of gifts and offering encouragement, training and affirmation of those gifts especially with such a critical shortage of Word and Sacrament ministers.

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 2E



What new steps should the synod take to equip lay and rostered leaders for serving over the next five years?

“Bring them (us) together without such emphasis on the boundaries of “clergy and lay” - not just “pastors forums and lay training forums” (and never the twain shall meet) and not just academic-minded training but interactions between different pastors and different laity, both online and offline, both academic and otherwise; and not merely in synod assembly and governance-based activities.

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 2



How can the synod help members feel connected to each other and to the whole?

Responses were reviewed by members of the Transition Team. This review provided the five answers most frequently given.

Encourage Interaction (158)

“Each Church is led by a Council - but the councils have no connection with each other - Some mechanism, led by the local Conferences that enable Council connectivity would be extremely helpful.”

- Synod/Church wide events, especially youth activities
- Provide opportunities for fellowship
- Synod ministry fair workshops
- Common interest clusters
- Pastor exchange
- More conference gatherings

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 3A

How can the synod help members feel connected to each other and to the whole?

Fortify Connections (38)

“Do you mean feel connected or actually be connected?”

- Engage by identifying congregational needs, struggles
- Develop a strategy to elicit trust, be transparent
- Visit regularly, actively work with the congregations
- Call a bishop who can network
- Synod's vision for the future



SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 3B

How can the synod help members feel connected to each other and to the whole?



Common Purpose (35)

“Concentrate on what we have in common as Lutherans, and not differences between people.”

- Encourage congregations to work together
- Create more opportunities for revival and service
- Mutual understanding
- Less politics, more love of one another
- Stress and support serving the wider community

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 3C

How can the synod help members feel connected to each other and to the whole?

Foster Education (27)

"...Through synod-wide worship opportunities and educational workshops."

- Provide workshops, retreats, seminars, etc. for learning and fellowship
- Educate congregations on the relationship and importance of the synod



SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 3D



How can the synod help members feel connected to each other and to the whole?⁶

*“Utilize retired lay people who have extensive experience in congregations to be listening ears, problem solvers, creative sparks for effective congregational ministry on all levels of church work. Retired does not mean leave them alone or they are no longer of value. Have the Bishop be the shepherd of rostered leaders and have a team of lay people who focus on needs of lay people. Focus on youth and young adult ministries to utilize their ministry in daily life and to coach those interested in getting into creative church work. The Bishop should not be traveling extensively away from the synod no matter how tempting or attractive that may be. Love the people in the synod and show that in as many ways as possible. Advocate for those who have skills and interested in ministry beyond the synod to serve in various capacities in the Conferences, ELCA, LWF, etc. **This question is all about relationship building** - letting people know you love them and are here with a listening ear and providing relevant feedback.”*

SHORT RESPONSE QUESTIONS: 3

CURRENT AND EMERGING MINISTRIES



NEW & STRATEGIC MISSIONS¹²

MISSION CONGREGATIONS

- 🔥 The Well
- 🔥 Mindfulness + Church

SYNODICAL AUTHORIZED WORSHIP COMMUNITIES

- 🔥 The Welcome Church
- 🔥 Kairos Communities
- 🔥 Nuevo Creation

STRATEGIC MINISTRIES

- 🔥 Trinity, Germantown
- 🔥 St. Michael's Kensington
- 🔥 Mediator, Philadelphia
- 🔥 Grace, Broomall

TEEM LED CONGREGATIONS

- 🔥 Community of Love, Oxford



CURRENT & EMERGING MINISTRIES



LOVE REVOLUTION: LOVE GOD AND LOVE NEIGHBOR

A Thriving Congregations Initiative Program

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod has received a \$1,070,392 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish a program called **Love Revolution: Love God and Love Neighbor – A Thriving Congregations Initiative Program.**⁸



Lilly Endowment Inc.

A private foundation since 1937

CURRENT & EMERGING MINISTRIES



Over the next five years the Love Revolution will work with a **cohort of congregations** and their **lay leaders** to deepen their **faith and discipleship** and **serve the needs** of their community. As we imagine the church we are becoming post-pandemic, we will help congregations focus on this core teaching of Jesus: love God and love neighbor. Love Revolution will **help congregations evolve** from an institutional church built on programs and resources into a **missional church built on relationships and service**.⁸

LOVE REVOLUTION: LOVE GOD AND LOVE NEIGHBOR

The project is being funded through Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative. The aim of the initiative is to **encourage the flourishing of congregations** by helping them deepen their relationships with God, enhance their connections with each other, and contribute to the vitality of their communities and the world.⁸



CURRENT & EMERGING MINISTRIES

REFERENCES

The following people have agreed to serve as references on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Deacon Kathleen Afflerbach

Bishop Christopher deForest
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Dr. Charles Leonard
United Lutheran Seminary

Ms. Kate Schnaath

Contact information is available upon request from Dr. Rodrick-Schnaath at RevHRod3@gmail.com

END NOTES

Information for this report was culled from:

¹SEPA Synod Constitution

²2023 Mission Insite Report

³SEPA Synod Mission Proposal and Financial reports

⁴ELCA 2022 Congregational Reports

⁵A survey sent to Synod staff and deans

⁶A survey sent to Synod congregational members

⁷An interview with Bishop Patricia Davenport

⁸Synod Press Release for the “Love Revolution” grant.

⁹Synod Treasurer Janet Neff

¹⁰Census data provided by Wikipedia

¹¹SEPA Directory of Rostered Ministers

¹²Office of the Bishop, SEPA Synod

Data was collected and analyzed by team members. It was compiled into a power-point presentation by the Rev. Dr. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath.



SYNOD TRANSITION TEAM

This Mission Profile was developed by the Transition Team for the 2024 Bishop Election Process in the Southeast Pennsylvania Synod.

Ms. Patricia Moore & The Rev. Dr. Heidi Rodrick-Schnaath, Co-chairs
The Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir, the Rev. Nathan Krause,
Ms. Jill Meuser, The Rev. Thomas Russert, the Rev. Maeve Schurz,
Mr. Brett Shaw, Deacon Thomas Snyder, Mr. Martin Vaughn,
Mr. Connor Watson and Mr. Everett Wick