



TOWN HALL #4

17 Dec 2023, 8pm

Transformation: Ministries & Mission Steering Committee

Australian Mission Centre,
Community of Christ

Schedule 17 Dec

Welcome & Opening prayer

1. Small groups: Preliminary report
 - Completed the sessions
 - Top-line overview
2. Survey + individual conversations
 - Initial trends from survey
 - Conversation guide available
3. Working Groups
 - Preference nomination
 - Resource preparation

Q&A

Closing Prayer



Overview:



7 small group sessions



43 different people attended



25 surveys complete or mostly complete



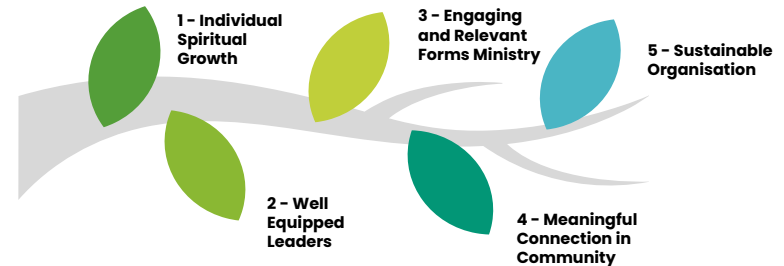
5 individual conversations complete, with more to be collected



17 pages of summary comments and themes for working groups to use



6 repeat attendees at small group sessions



Small group sessions: Preliminary findings



Individual Spiritual Growth

Opportunities to challenge and extend one self (either through learning or diversity of experiences) is a recurring theme.

Many of the spiritual growth activities people listed were individual pursuits, self-directing learning and applications of discipleship IRL (in-real-life).

Self-directed alone is not enough, even for the most faithful.

Regular connection and support with others of like mind is important

“I think if it was purely self led, I would have stagnated.”

It helps to have the community 'lead you into it' as you might not be so adventurous, intellectually or spiritually, if left to your own devices. Or as another said, “the community keeps you on track, stimulated, accountable, feeding new ideas in”

“We have been blessed with a depth of understanding and open-mindedness”; that means we can be a safe place for friends to share and grow; I have conversations with friends that “they can’t talk with others about”.

“[what] underscores all of that is this **sacred connection with one another and with the Divine**”

Emphasis on connection of spiritual growth with daily life; ‘living out faith’ in everyday life.

“the concept of church has expanded beyond the traditional Bible study or theological discussion...[into] more into day to day life facilitating a sort of day-to-day experience with God”

“Participating **more regularly** has helped increase my growth, but it’s also because I found a **group that I love** and feel heard”

Intergenerational interaction is stimulating for spiritual growth and challenge - for **both** the older and younger people in the conversation.

“In my younger days everything was exciting...I had lots of opportunities for spiritual growth, and we were fed...quite freely.”

Young adult activities that encourage opportunities **to extend oneself, become more self-aware, be challenged, learn and share in a diversity of experiences is important for personal and spiritual growth.**

Well Equipped Leaders

What's important for leadership?

Key Theme: **Growing new leaders**

Keywords: **Mentoring**, study, training, succession planning.

“[having] **vision and energy** in order”;

“A good leader is always observant ...[and] always **willing to listen....and prepared to back that observation and listening ;... discerning by action...** a good leader should be sensitive to our interconnectedness”

Key Theme: Forward Planning

Keywords: Regular, structured, organised, scheduled.

Key Theme: Volunteer Support

Keywords: Structure, mentoring, development, priesthood.

Key Theme: Visiting Ministry & Specialist Skills

Many testimonies shared of the power of visiting ministry throughout the generations.

What they were doing is bringing other people into sharing leadership

‘Visiting ministers that... had such a quality of spirituality about them and just lifted you up.’

“**our new leaders are going to come from a range of ages**”;... we will need to look] at development over a wider range than talking about just youth programs or young people.

How to build **visibility and linkages between groups and generations.**

“we know that [there are younger members and] they love the church and that they're working at it, but we don't see them. **We can't support them because we don't know them**”

Engaging and Relevant Ministries

Key Theme: Small Groups

Preference for the relational closeness of small groups, held more regularly. Larger group gatherings are still enjoyable, but don't need to be as regular. (Reunions, World Conference, etc)

"I'm definitely **drawn to smaller groups as opposed to larger groups**". "I'm able to be a lot more vulnerable in a smaller group...and that means that I get to know people a lot better...and they can hopefully get to know me better too."

"We're able to share special interests together, harder in a large diverse group"

Agreement in some groups that **different sizes work for different purposes**; rather meaningful experience come from the relevance.

"...one thing that I miss about big groups is you can disappear. You can kind of participate more and you're not called upon as much. When it's a small group..it can **demand a little bit more of you as a participant.**"

Key Theme: Sacred Connections

The deep relationships that are established within different ministries are critical to the long term engagement and sense of relevance, belonging, and satisfaction with the ministry.

The depth of the relationships, the mutual respect, and safety to explore and discuss together, and honour the experience of the other - that is a **relational environment that supports spiritual growth.**

Shared faith is core to the meaningfulness of the relationship.

"Conversations with faithful friends";

"Fellowship strengthening me spiritually"

"There are things I can only talk about with church friends"

Developing practical tools for discipleship and ministry.

Access to specialist teachers.

"we teach a lot of principles of Christianity, but not the tools in how to do them...what skills and expertise do we need to develop to fully enact Christian values?"

Connected Community

Key Theme: Inward and Outward Community

Reaching out to others beyond the organisation, developing sacred connections and community in the process - exploring new ways of doing that.

Being aware of **others in my local community and their needs for connection** and, reaching out and developing strong relationships (i.e) with migrant groups of other faiths “we share acommon understanding or feeling that life makes sense in terms of a Supreme Being ... God we're **sharing a level of faith and ministry** [to each other]

Key Theme: Individuals engage in diverse discipleship activities

Many daily life activities, personal spiritual practices (such as prayer, reading, podcasts), interpersonal relationship building, as well as offering ministry to the community via writing articles, preparing worships, leadership at camps, facilitating small groups, pastoral care and visiting ministries.

Key Theme: Incidental conversations

Getting together **regularly** allows for the incidental conversations that are at the core of building long term deep relationships.

The regular group gatherings, regardless of their program, provide a container for these connections to be made, and sustained, in a more **efficient** way than a schedule of one on one visits/calls.

“Sunday Morning church did make it easier to keep up with everyone. It's much harder now”

And a reflection about online programs: “It's harder to develop spiritual growth outward when your ministries are online, like actually connecting with your physical community and kingdom building.”

“That's actually one of the great things about camps and retreats, having time to talk to people in between the program and over meals”

‘Seeing people face to face... you can just tell that they're not ok, or that something's going on. It's hard to use your human intuition at a distance’

Sustainable Organisation

Key Theme: Organisational Support Still Valued

Where new ministries are emerging, formal support through church structure and resourcing is important

While “recognised some of the ‘limits’ present in the congregation model, however, it was strongly noted and agreed that **structured (/ formal) support is something that is needed by emerging ministries**

God is still as present as ever in the world, that hasn't changed. Maybe instead of people needing to come to church to discover God, we have to go to God to discover the church?

“[we have] got to come to grips with what is God doing, not what we're doing, but what God is doing, and what he's revealing to the church and to us....it's what he wants, not what we want.”

“How do we stay organised as a group. Where do we find the capacity to continue to be an organisation that meets and develops ourselves and our capacities, but is also open to that call and that invitation, and that faithful moving out.”

Key Theme: Seeker Ministries

Opportunity to **engage seekers** “what can I do? I'm willing to do anything. It doesn't have to be in the church. I'm more than happy to travel.”

What do we have to invite seekers to? How do with think of the 'front end' experience of becoming a disciple in the Community of Christ? what is the 'new disciple experience' if we are to be an invitational community that develops new disciples to serve?

What architecture exists to support faith formation, integration into the fellowship and culture of the church, regular programs that are available to welcome them into the fold?

Key Theme: Guilt

Guilt was a common emotion for many people who shared. Many sharing their desire to carry on programs that we've done in the past, and create the same experiences for the next generation.

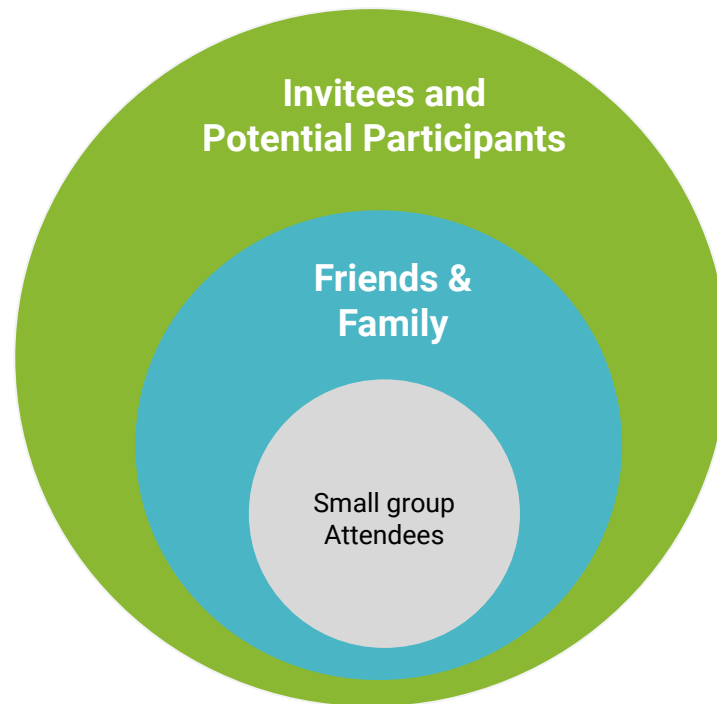
Sometimes feeling guilty about programs that secretly do not feed us. Recognition that **we're missing opportunities to do really good work now, and move positively into the future.**

Survey



Current status: still collecting

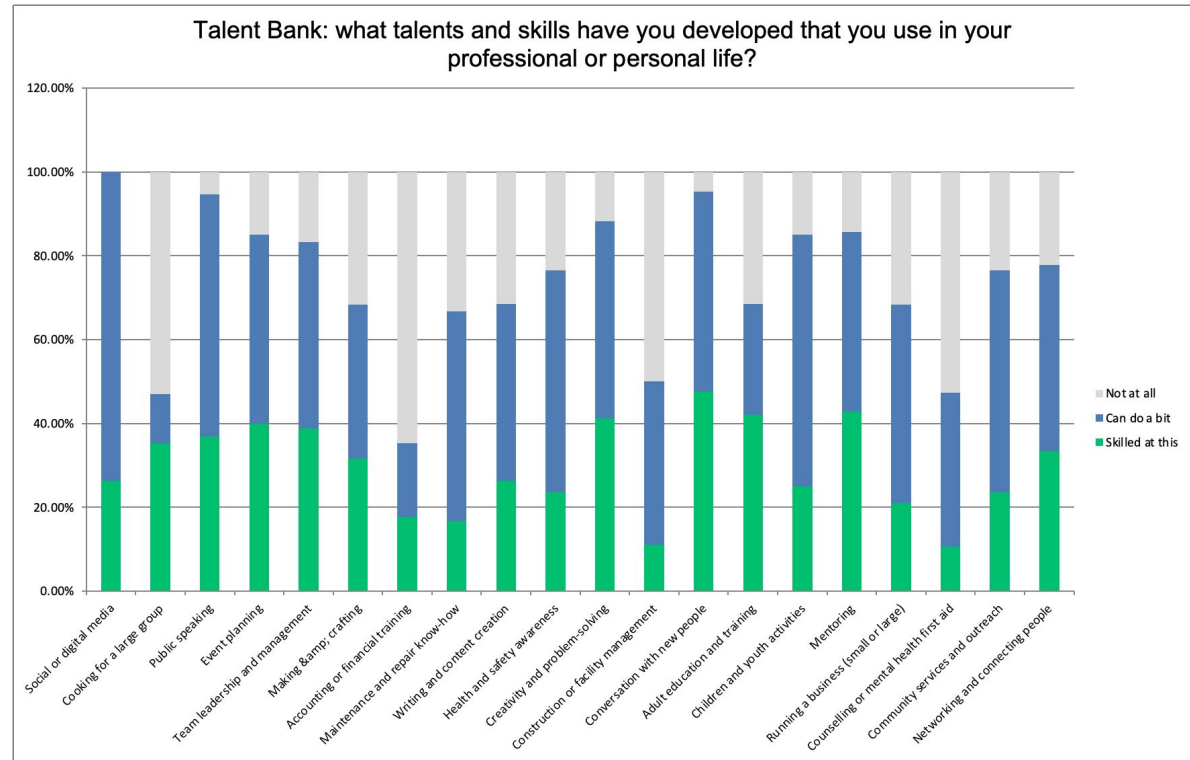
- 25 online surveys complete (or mostly complete)
- Word doc / hard-copy survey available
- Conversation guide now available by request
- Completion by end of January 2024 - *still so many to reach*
- Will keep receiving input after that, but working groups will be onto ideation phase
- Happy for groups to set a time to do the survey together, eg in a congregation or small group setting



Talent Bank

The top talents and skills so far (over 80% are skilled or can do a bit; listed by skilled...):

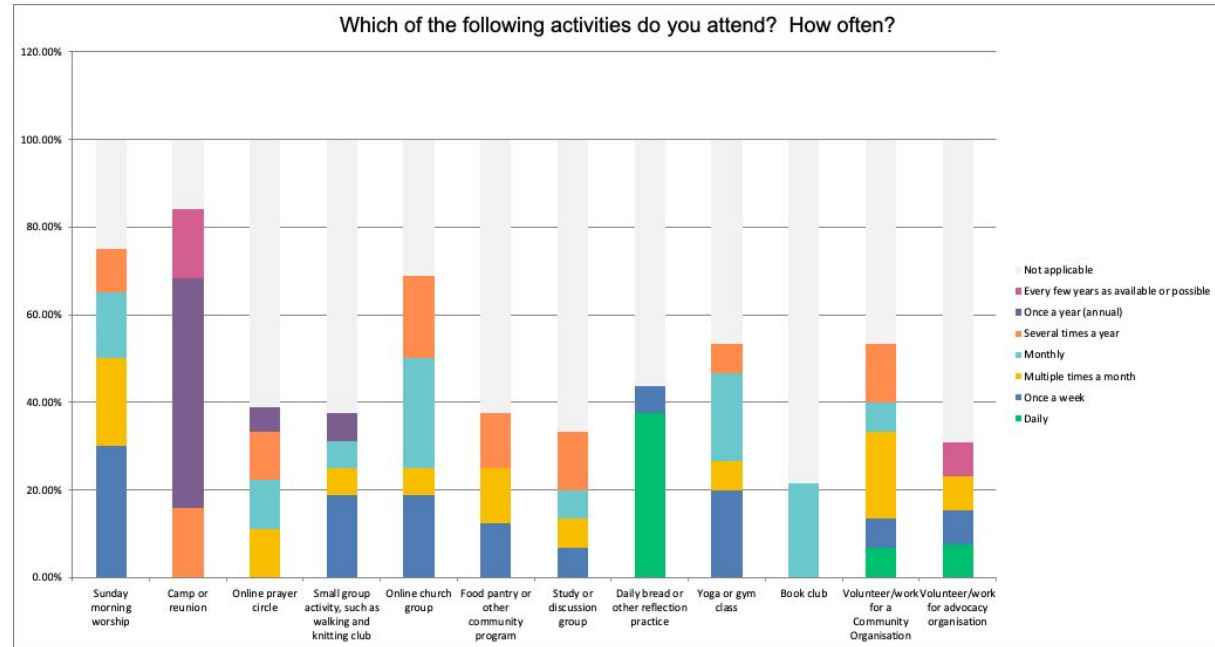
- conversations with new people
- mentoring
- creativity and problem solving
- event planning
- team leadership and management
- public speaking
- social or digital media
- children and youth activities



Activity Bank

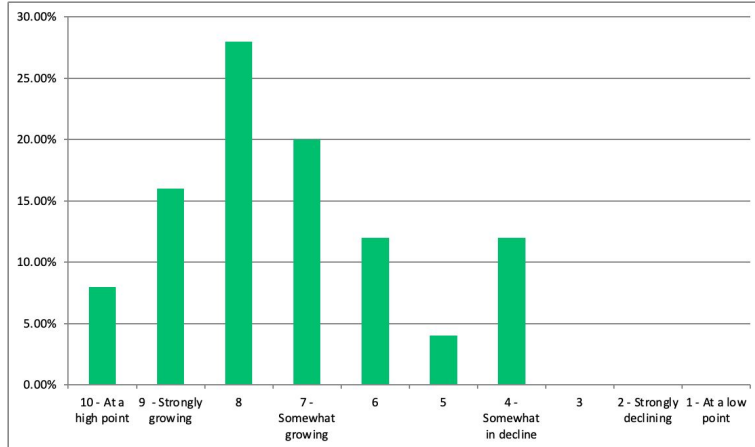
From the responses so far, the top-rated activities are (more than 8/20 people)::

- **Camp or reunion** (85% with most 1x per year)
- **Sunday morning worship** (75% with most several times per month)
- **Online church group** (70% with most monthly or several times per year)
- **Yoga or gym class** (55% with most once a week to monthly)
- **Volunteer or work for community organisation** (55% with most multiple times a month or several times a year)



Individual Spiritual Growth

Would you say your spiritual life is in growth or decline?



50% said they experience spiritual growth in the church's current programs and activities 'a moderate amount'.

10/25 said you think of yourself as being or developing as a disciple 'a lot' or 'a great deal', with another 9/25 rating it 'a moderate amount'

We have a wonderful list of programs, practices and tools you currently draw on to enrich your spirituality and look forward to adding to this as more responses come in.

Well Equipped Leaders

Note: Many open-ended responses for this section that have not yet been summarise, and we're looking forward to more coming in.

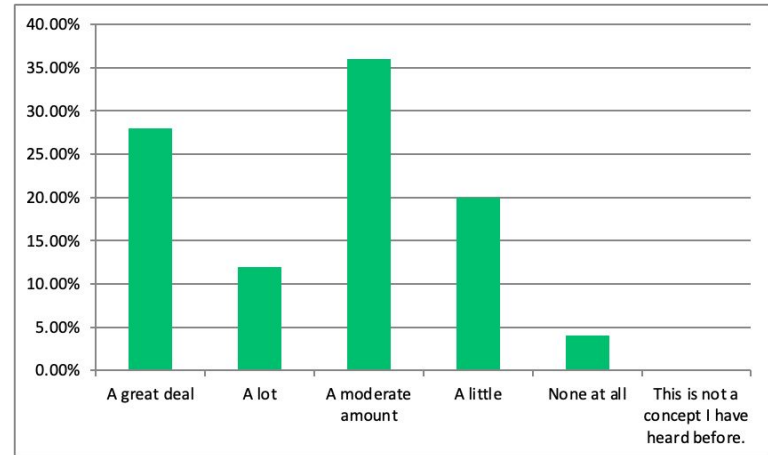
70% currently identify as giving ministry within the Community of Christ or in another setting

22/25 rated training in ministry and leadership as important 'a great deal' or 'a lot'

8/17 expressed that there are ways they would like to serve that are not currently being utilised.

20/25 so far are priesthood members; with 14 saying their priesthood office is a moderate to good fit & 5 saying "it's complicated"

How often do you think of yourself as being or developing as a disciple? Most people answered 'a moderate amount' or 'a great deal'



Engaging & Relevant Ministries

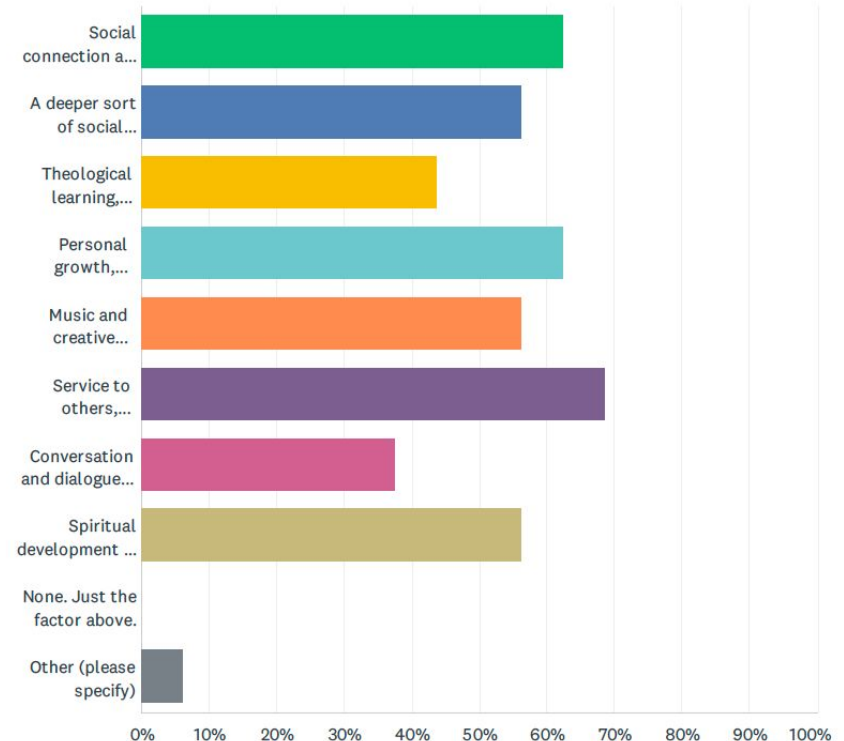
Note: Many open-ended responses for this section that have not yet been summarised, and we're looking forward to more coming in.

14/20 said regular worship regardless of format is 'extremely' or 'very' important

11/20 rated social connection (or sacred connection) as a factor that mattered most when considering content of programs, with personal growth, spiritual development/experiences and service to others the top-rated additional factors.

Great variance in what matters most when considering the types of programs you attend, spread across relevance of content, social connection with the people, impact of the program and regularity of time/place.

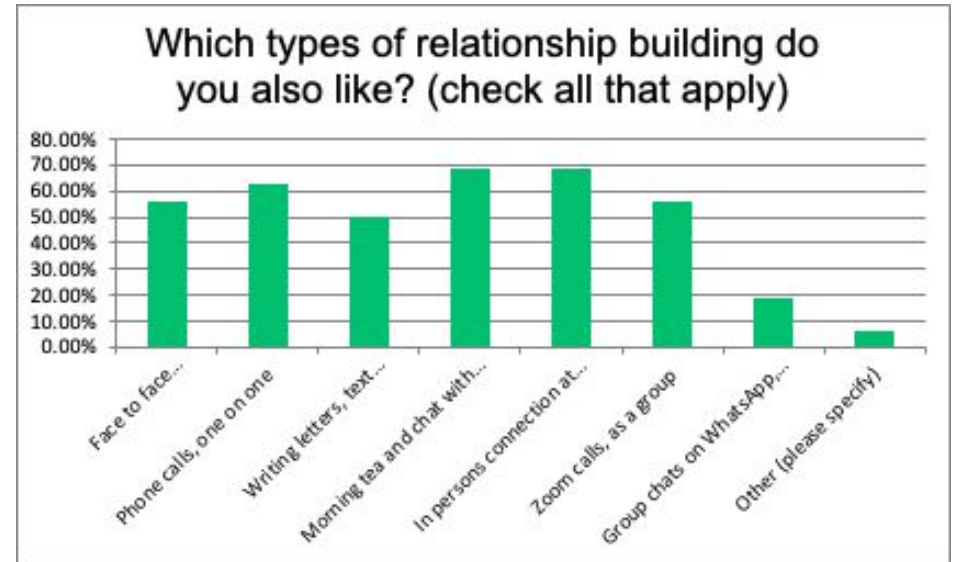
Which other factors are also important when considering content of programs



Connection in Community

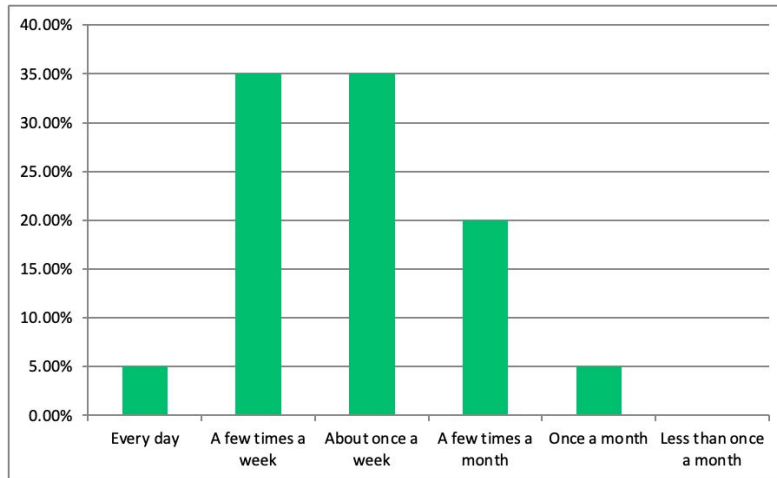
Note: Many open-ended responses for this section that have not yet been summarise, and we're looking forward to more coming in.

Great range of answers describing what community looks like to you. For example “a feeling or ownership” to “feel connected to each one” and “where I have involved myself”

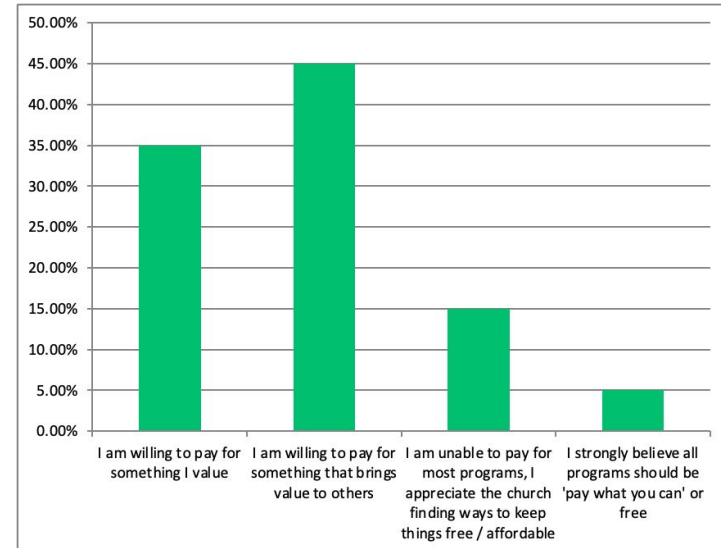


Sustainable Organisation

What capacity do you have to attend activities or provide leadership each week or month? (for all organisations, not church specifically)



When considering the cost of programs, how would you describe your willingness to financially support programs and the church?



Share the survey or Invite someone to a conversation

Key links for information and materials:

- Webpage.
<https://www.cofchrist.com.au/transformation>
- Email address:
transformingministryandmission@gmail.com

Is there someone you share with who hasn't been involved yet?

- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/transformationministry>
- Download a Word doc or request one from the team via email or by calling mission centre.
- Submit a summary of a conversation you have with them. Conversation guide available on request.

To just sign up for working groups use:

- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/transformationworkinggroup>

What you can do to help:

Is there someone you are in contact with who may need encouragement to engage with this transformation process?


Have a conversation and send us your summary of key comments or ideas.

- your family who don't participate regularly;
- take 15 minutes before a worship service to let folks complete the survey;
- ask friends of our programs what they're seeking;
- talk with those who no longer participate but were once quite engaged.

Working groups: Ideation

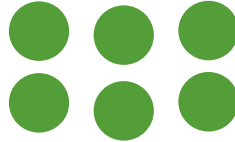


Working Group Preferences

 = first preference & indicated 'definitely would' or 'probably would' participate in transformation project

Each group to have a member of the steering committee & an Evangelist working with them

1 - Individual Spiritual Growth



4 - Connection in community



2 - Well-equipped Leaders



3 - Engaging and relevant ministries



5 - Sustainable organisation



Calendar for next phase:

	Date/Day	Topic // Focus
Survey	Continue consultation until end January	Reflect on 5 themes, Ideas, and Connections. Nominate to be involved in working groups
Town Hall #4	Sun 17 December	Preliminary report
Working groups	January. Each group will select a chair. A steering committee member & evangelist (TBC) attached to each group	Establish the working groups Background resources pulled together for each group; based on the discovery phrase inc the small groups, survey and individual conversations. Each group to draw upon a concise framework to develop innovative ideas for new ministries..
Discovery phase ends	31 January	Results from survey and conversations summarised for working groups. Final report to be prepared.
Town Hall #5	February	Working groups & the process Introduce dialogue sessions on 5 themes
Dialogue Sessions	TBC (February)	5 x conversations. Each based around ea specific theme facilitated by the relevant working group
In-person ideation workshop	May-June: 3-4 days in middle of 2024	The 5 working groups come together in person to fine-tune ideas and flesh out a small suite of ideas to prototype and try first.

Q&A Time

What questions do you have?

- Please ask – if you're not sure chances are someone else isn't sure either
- We will log them to investigate and report back if we can't answer them now

A few basic etiquette guidelines:

- Respect other perspectives that may be shared
- Speak from your perspective using “I” language, or “I heard you say...”
- Keep comments brief if you can – we have a limited time together and want as many as people as possible to have the opportunity to speak

Closing Prayer

