

# ***Funding Forward: A More Sustainable Pathway for Today & Tomorrow***



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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"



# How did we get here?

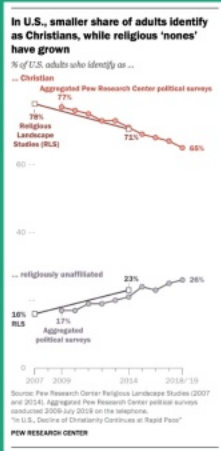


**TED Talk by Michele Wucker:** "Why we ignore obvious problems -- and how to act on them"

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?

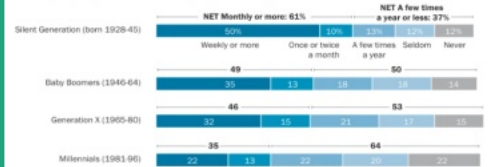


### Large generation gap in American religion

In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who identify as ...



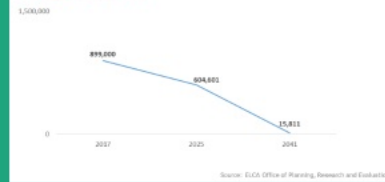
In 2018/2019, % of U.S. adults who say they attend religious services ...



Note: Don't know/refused not shown.  
 Source: Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted January 2018-July 2019 on the telephone.  
 \*% U.S. Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

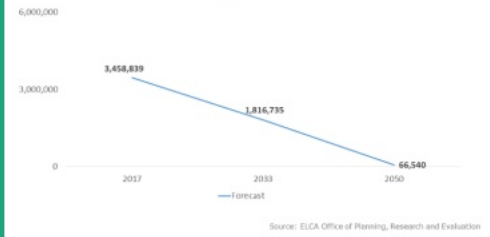
### Average Weekly Worship Attendance 2017-2041 Projections



### PERCENTAGE OF CONGREGATIONS' REVENUE FROM VARIOUS SOURCES



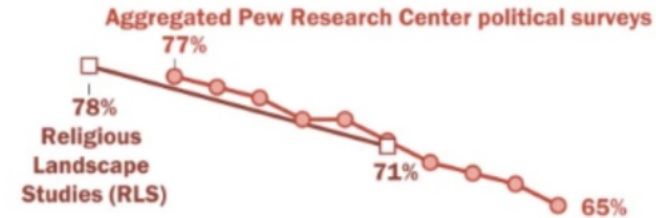
### Baptized Membership in the ELCA 2017-2050 Projections



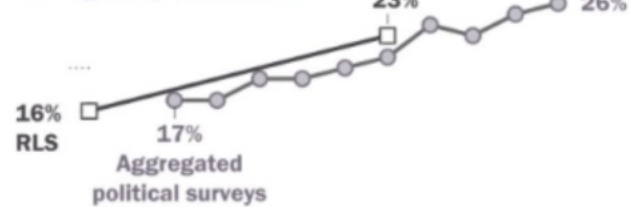
## In U.S., smaller share of adults identify as Christians, while religious 'nones' have grown

% of U.S. adults who identify as ...

### ... Christian



### ... religiously unaffiliated

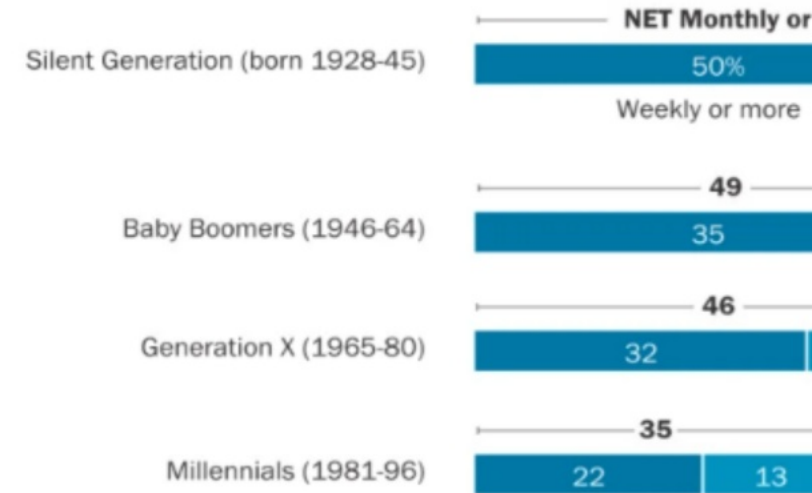


Source: Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Studies (2007 and 2014). Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted 2009-July 2019 on the telephone. "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

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 ...



Note: Don't know/refused not shown.

Source: Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted Jan. 2018-July 2019 on the telephone. "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

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## Baptized Members 2017-2050 Project

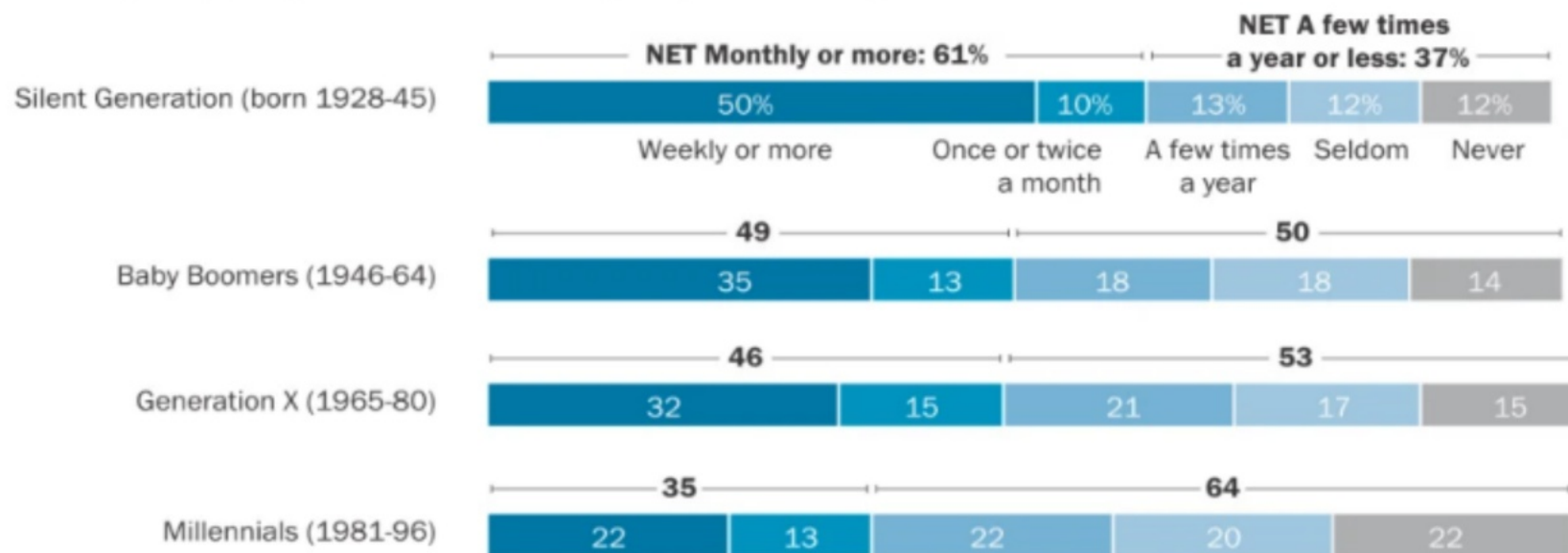
6,000,000

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"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

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## Average Attendance Projection

1,500,000

899,000

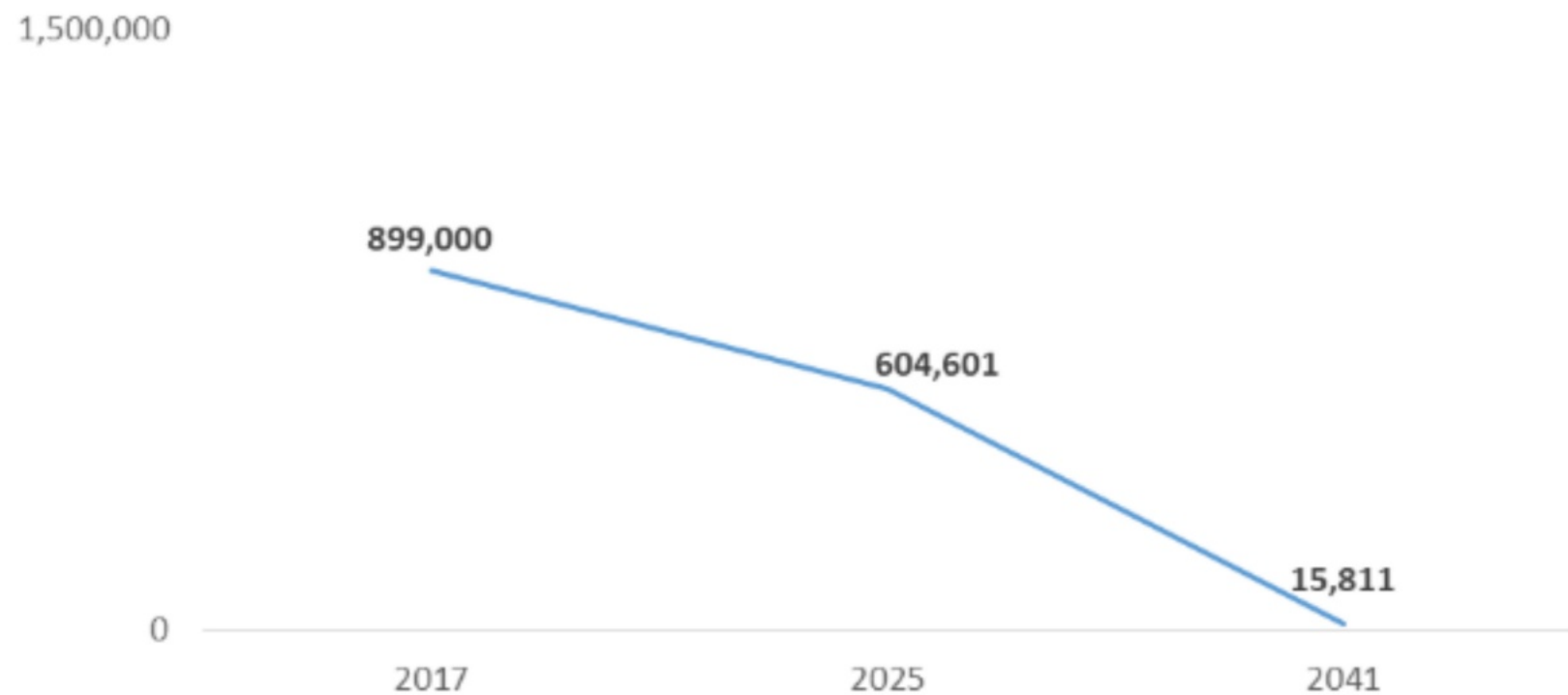
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PERCENTAGE



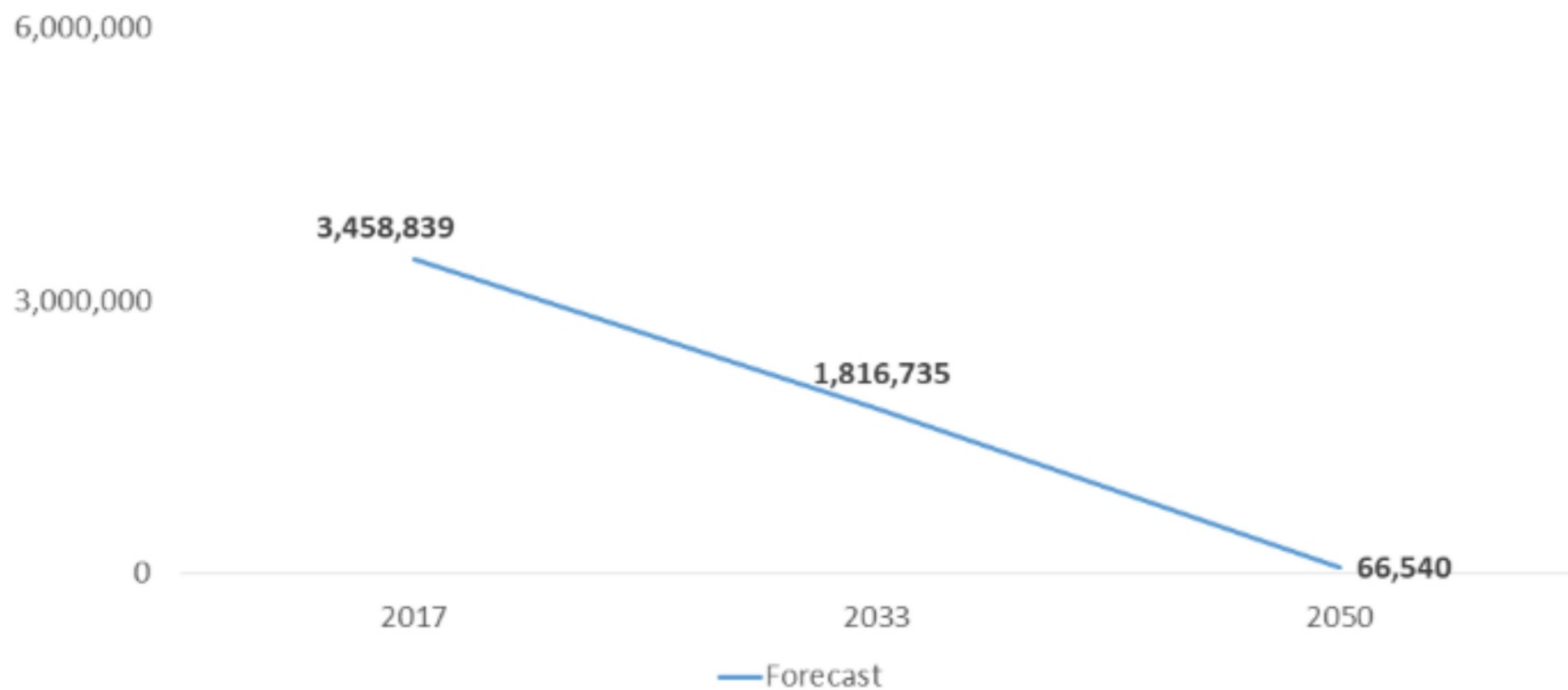
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Source: ELCA Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

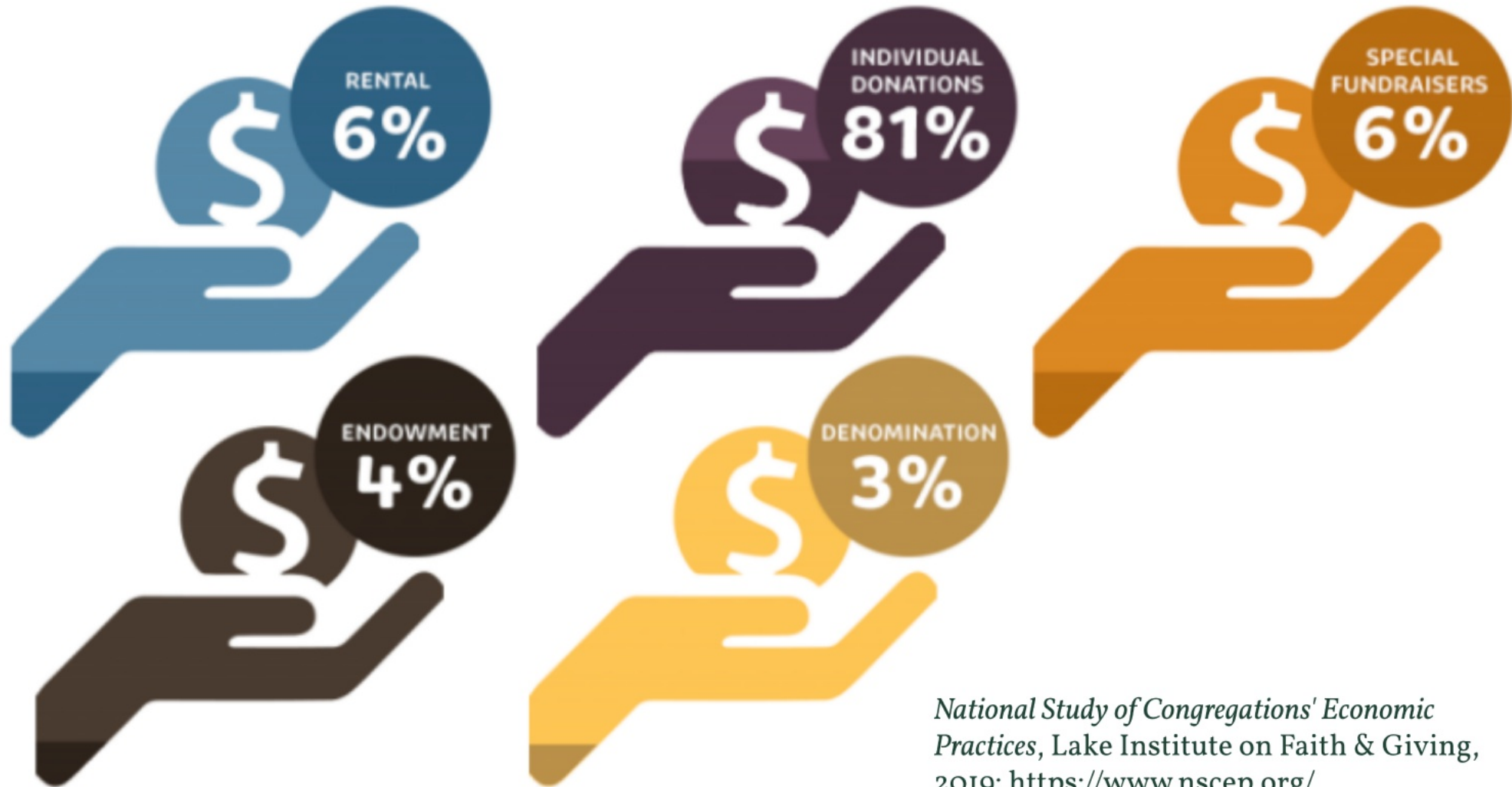


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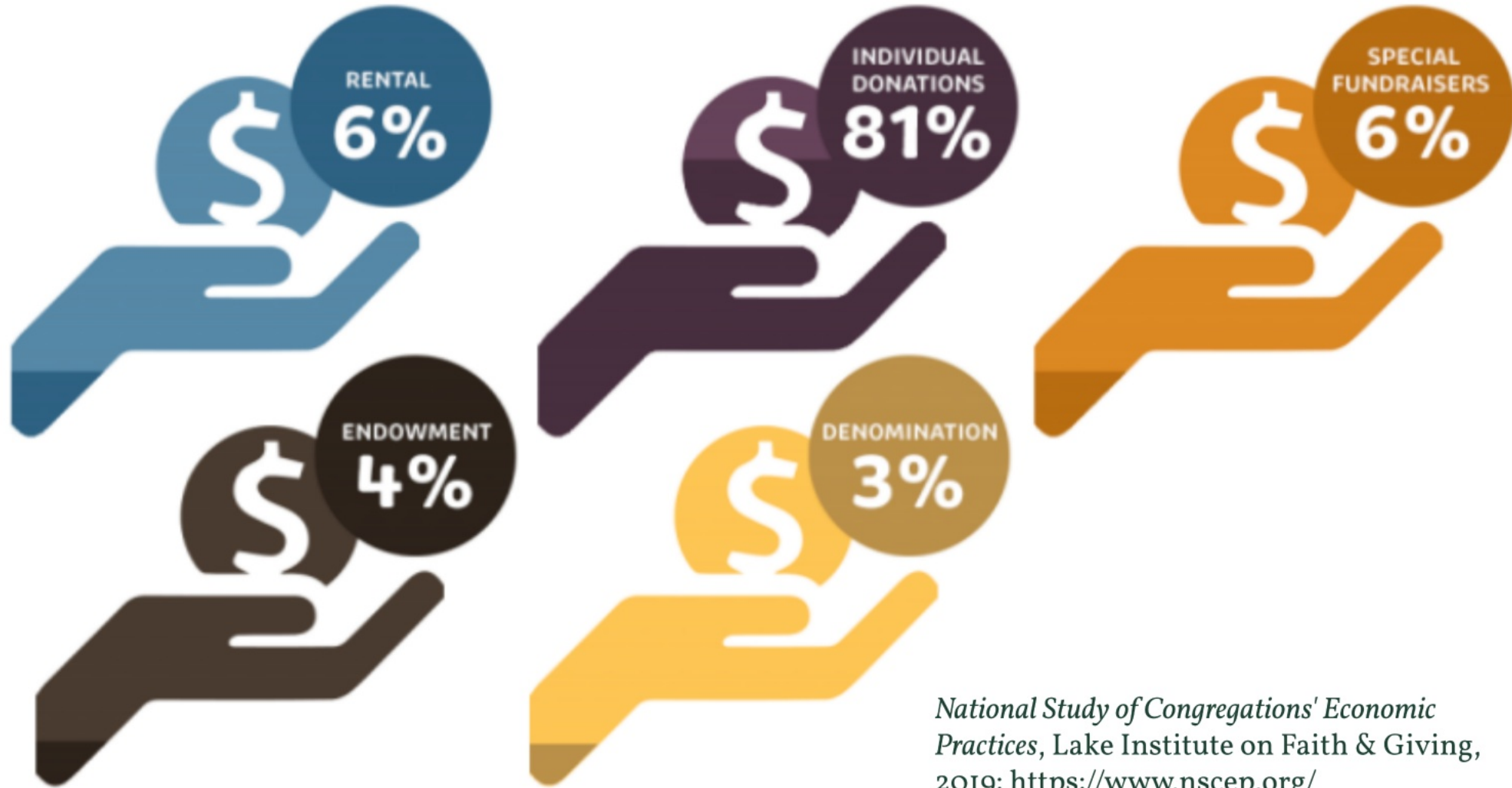
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# PERCENTAGE OF CONGREGATIONS' REVENUE FROM VARIOUS SOURCES



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

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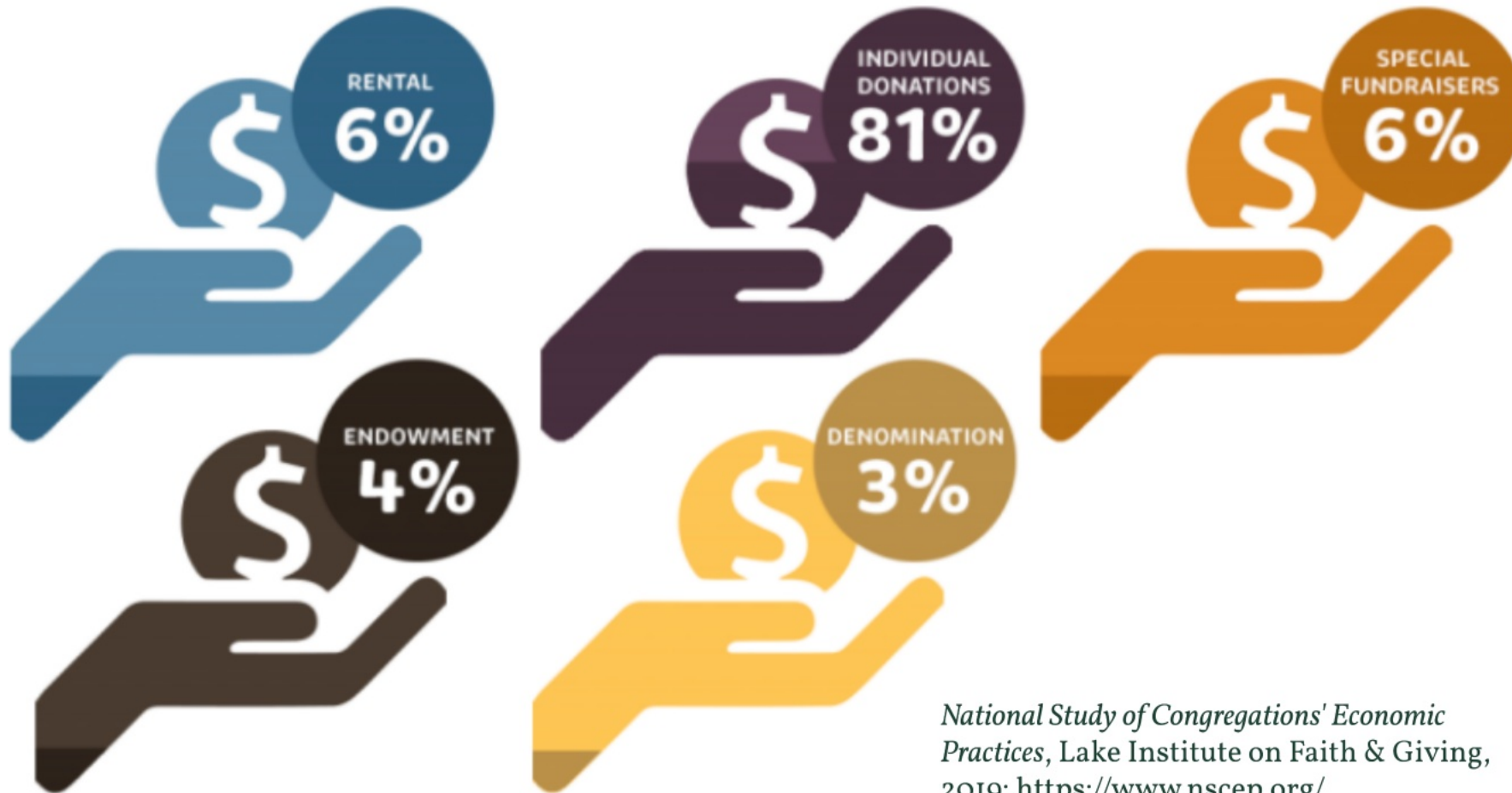
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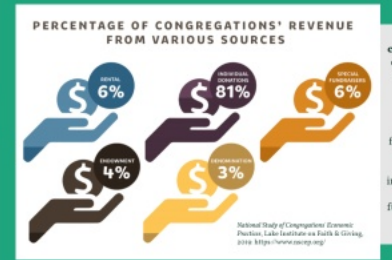
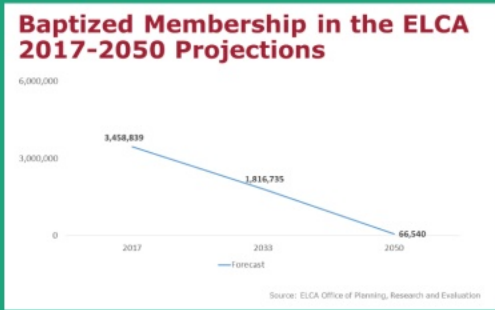
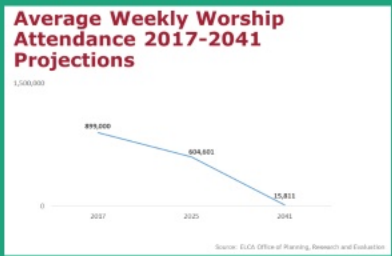
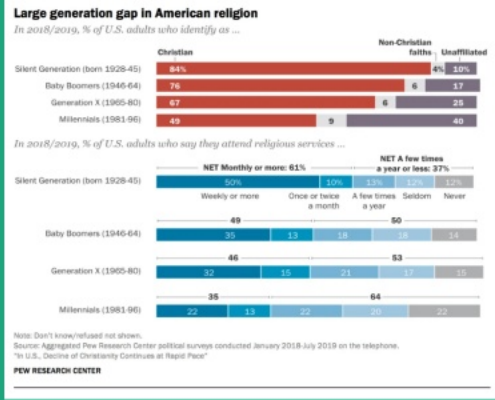
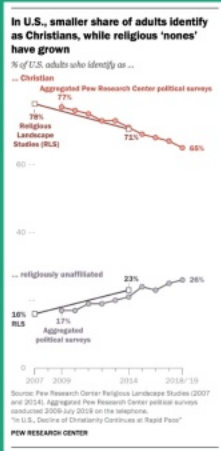


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“in fact, **40% of congregations** receive essentially their entire annual revenue from individual donations” (I4)

“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%).” (I7)

# How did we get here?



"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)

An aerial photograph of a vineyard with rows of grapevines stretching across a hillside. A large, solid teal circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the vineyard. The word "Opportunities" is written in white, bold, serif font at the top of the teal circle.

# 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

# ***Funding Forward: A More Sustainable Pathway for Today & Tomorrow***





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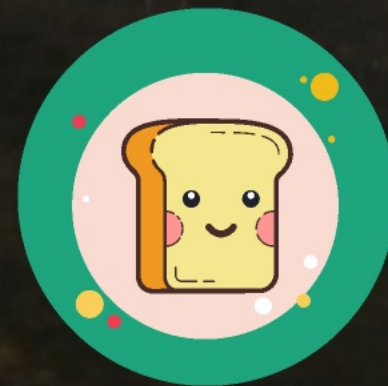
# What is Funding Forward?

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

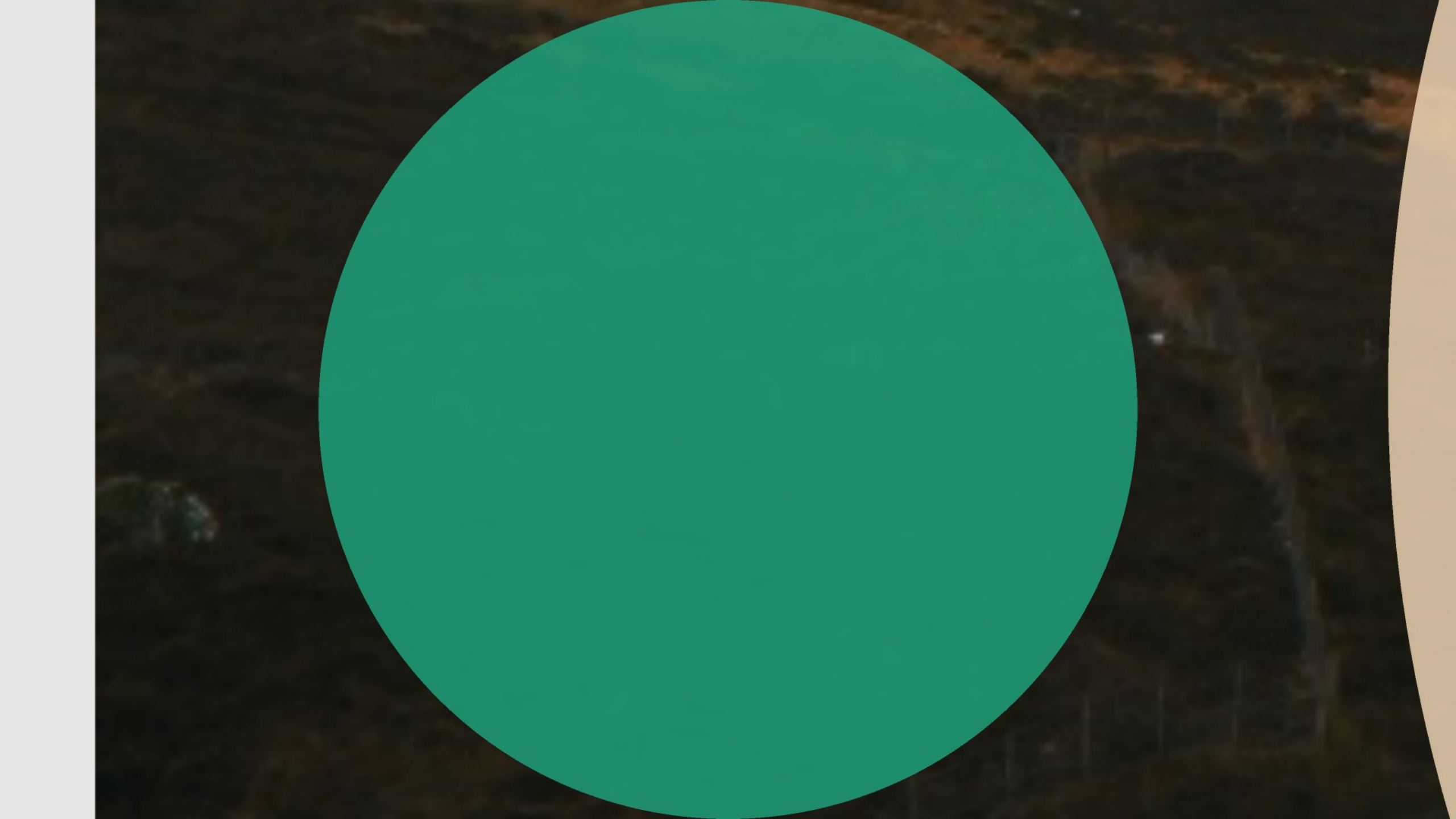


# What is Funding Forward?

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.'"













**Anything but  
cookie cutter ...**

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cookie cutter ...**



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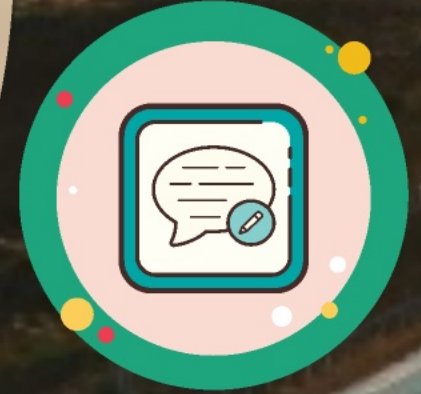
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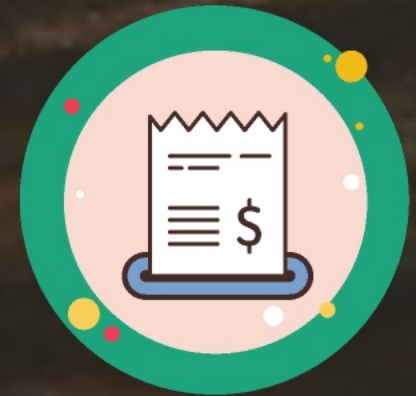


# Where Congregations Tend to Get Stuck



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

# Who took the survey?

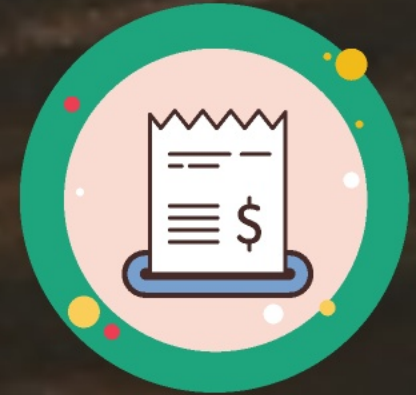




# Who took the survey?

**IOI**

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



# Who took the survey?

**IOI**

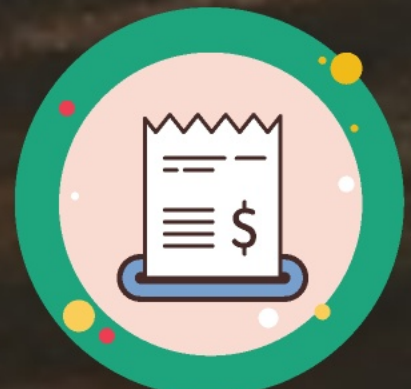
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## Congregation Denomination

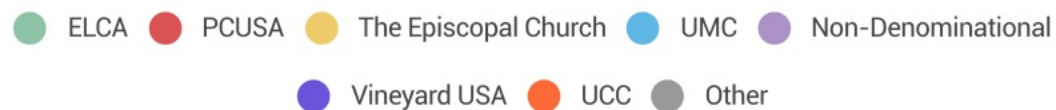


● ELCA ● PCUSA ● The Episcopal Church ● UMC ● Non-Denominational  
● Vineyard USA ● UCC ● Other

**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), and Moravian Church & ELCA (1)

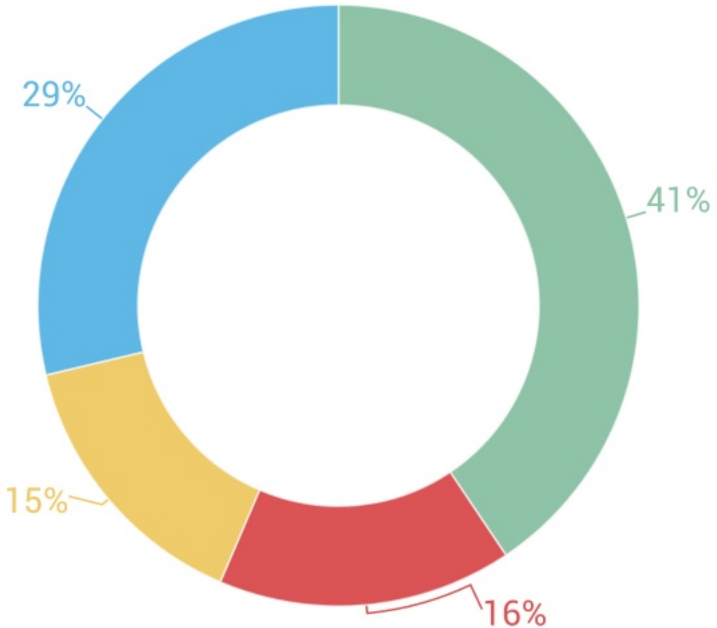


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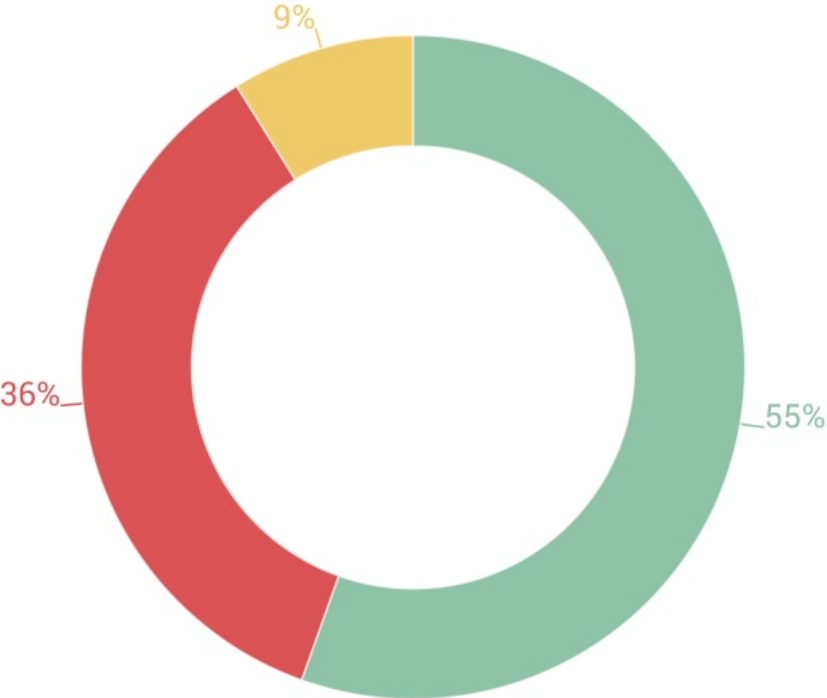
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# Congregation Start Date



- 100+ years ago
- 60-99 years ago
- 30-59 years ago
- 0-29 years ago

# Congregation Context

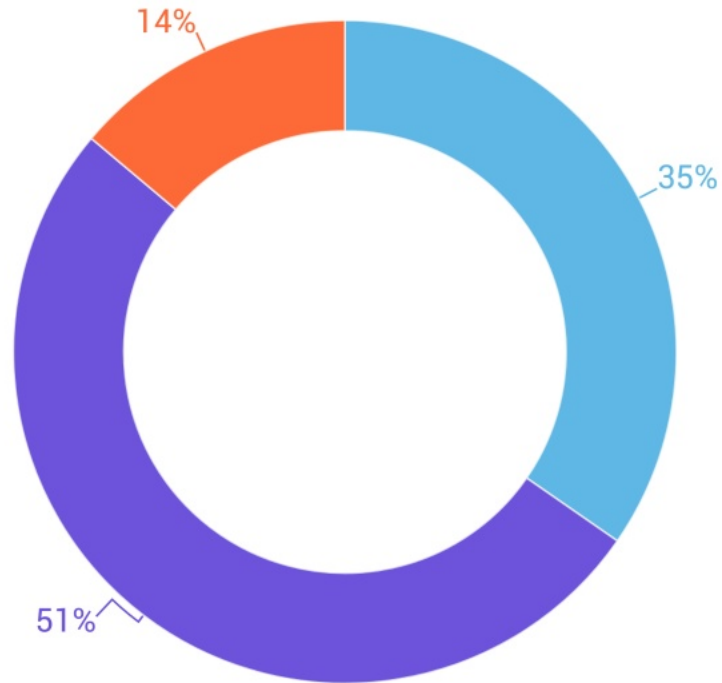


● Urban ● Suburb ● Rural/Small Town

Responses  
the U.S.

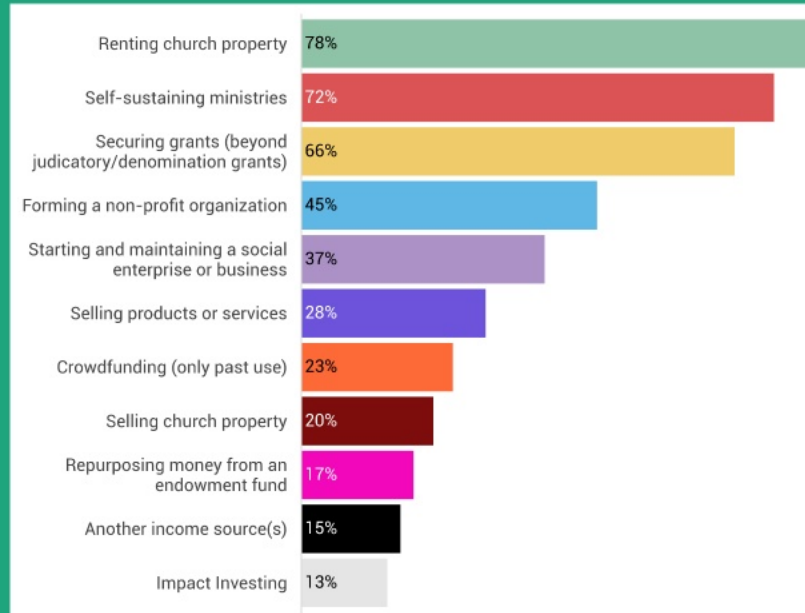
1 / 10%

## Average Worship Attendance (AWA)



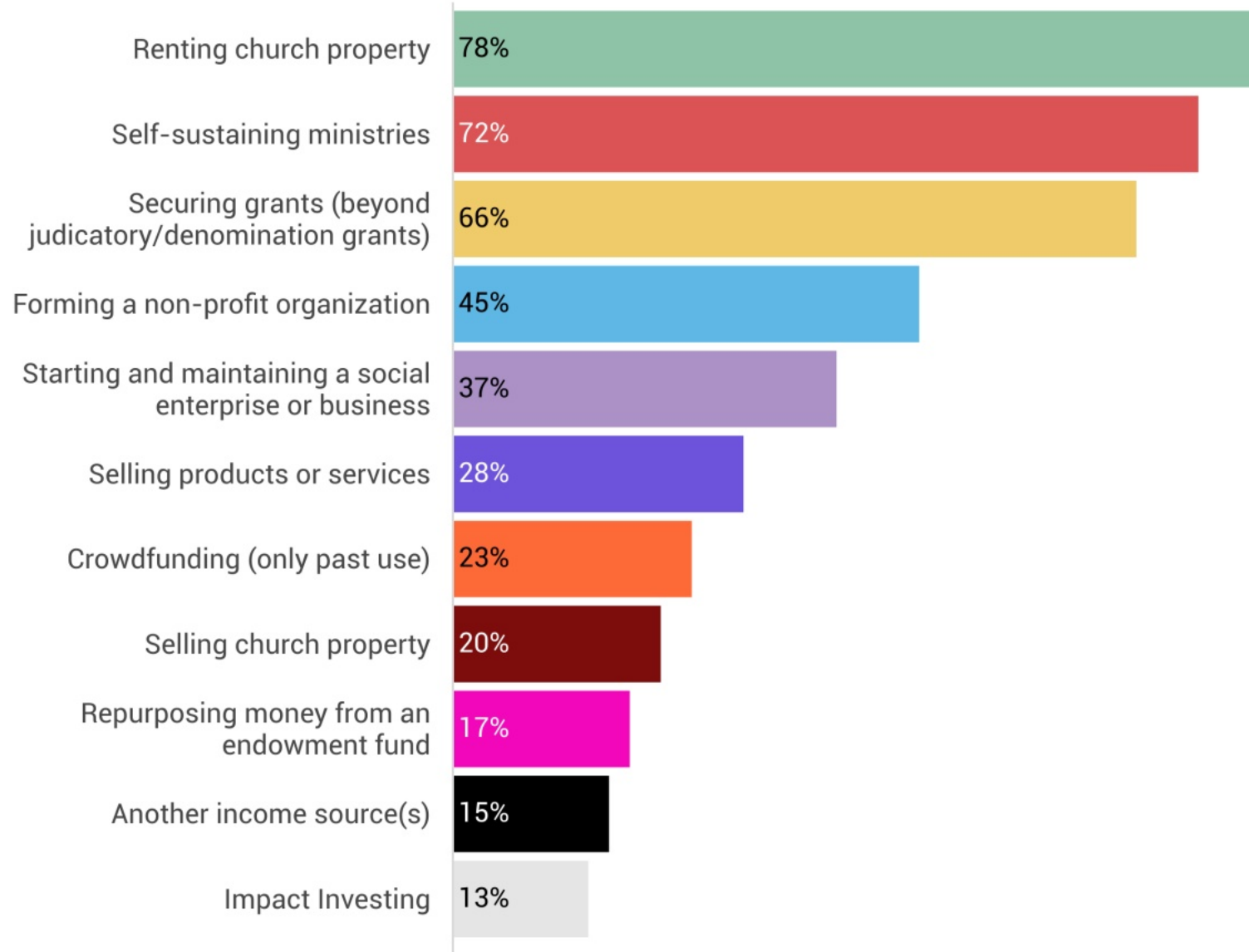
● Small (<50 AWA) ● Medium (50-300 AWA) ● Large (>300 AWA)

# 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

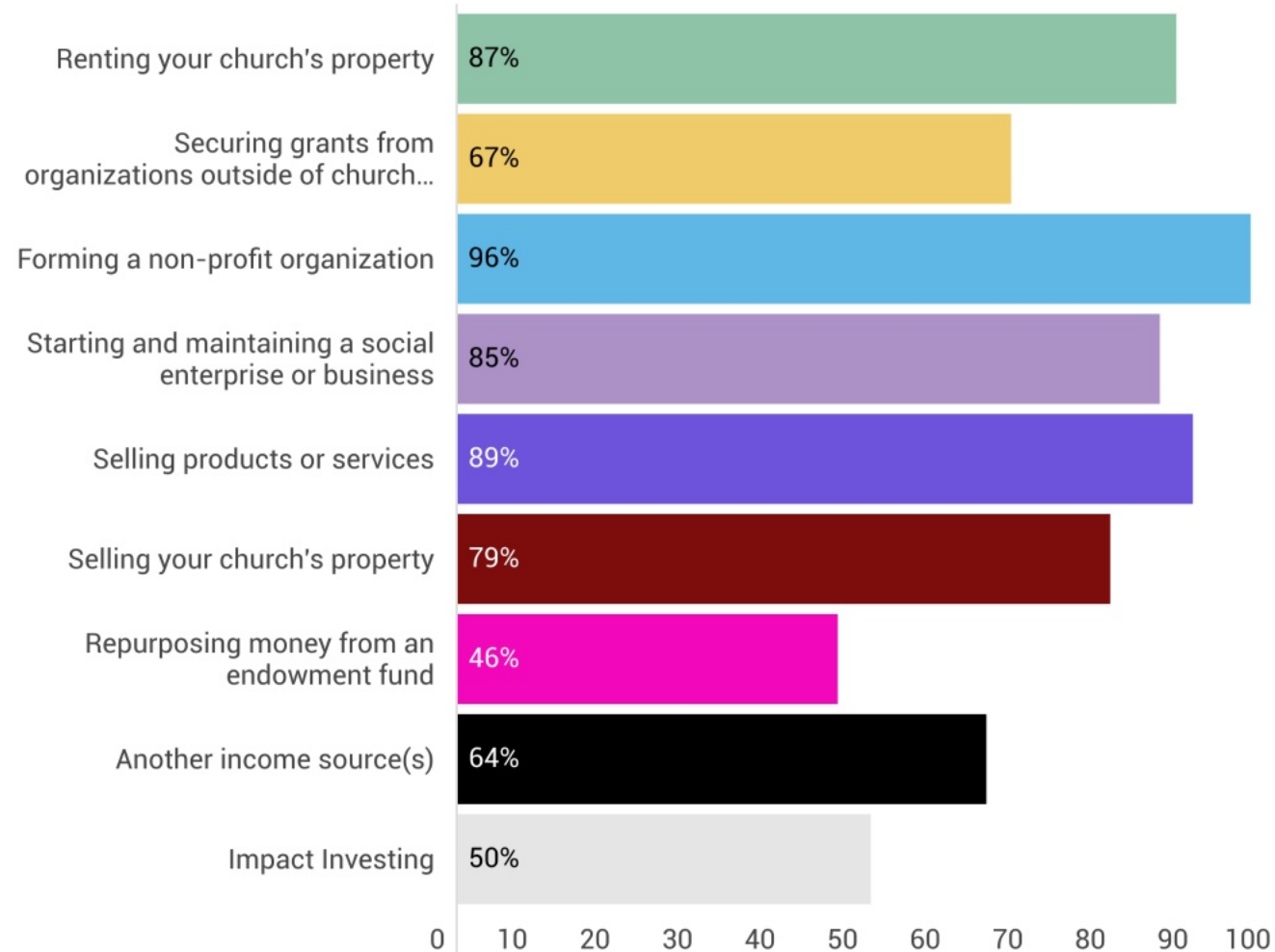


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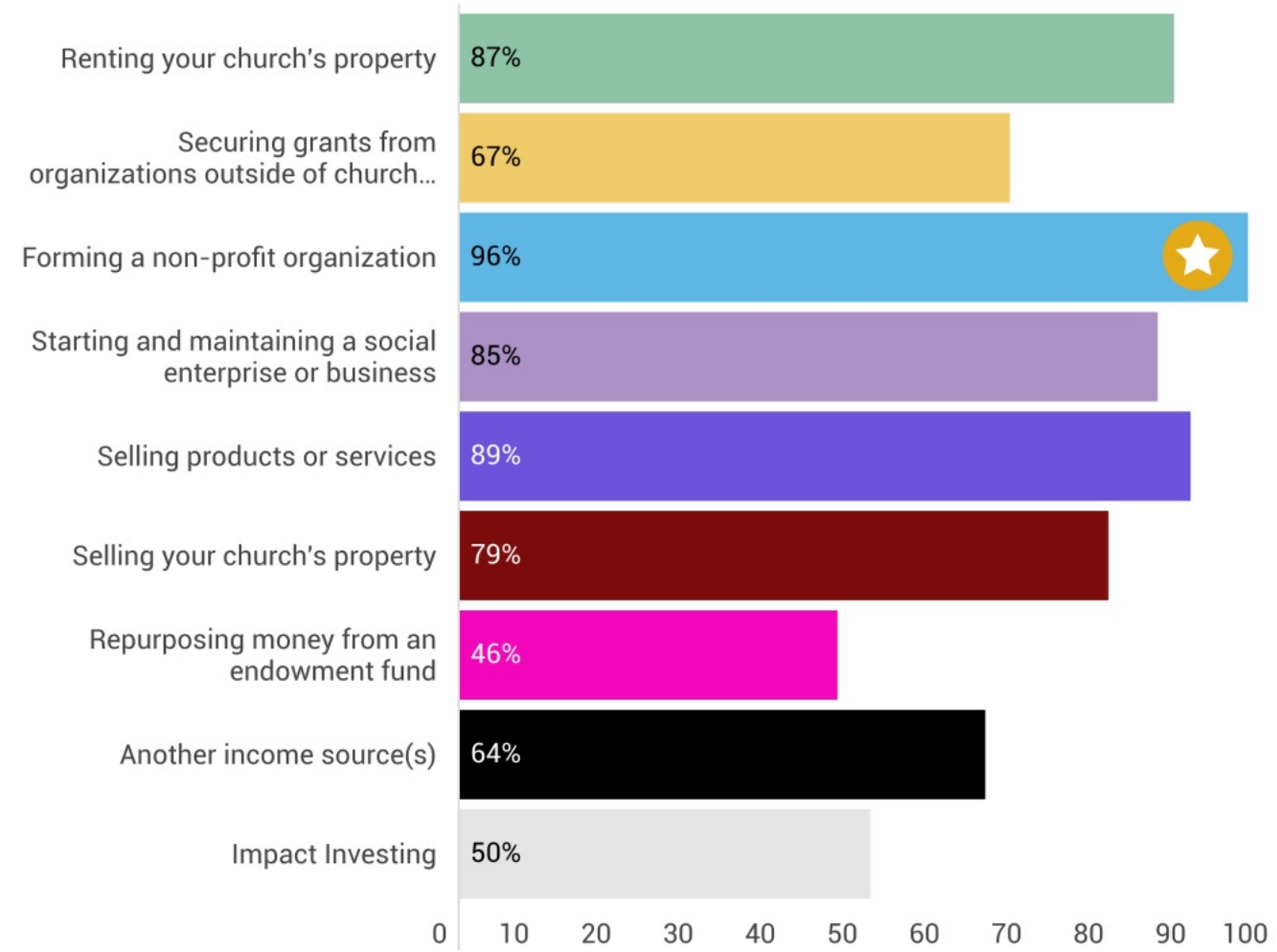


# % of congregations who used the income source who said they had evidence it created relationships with people outside the church



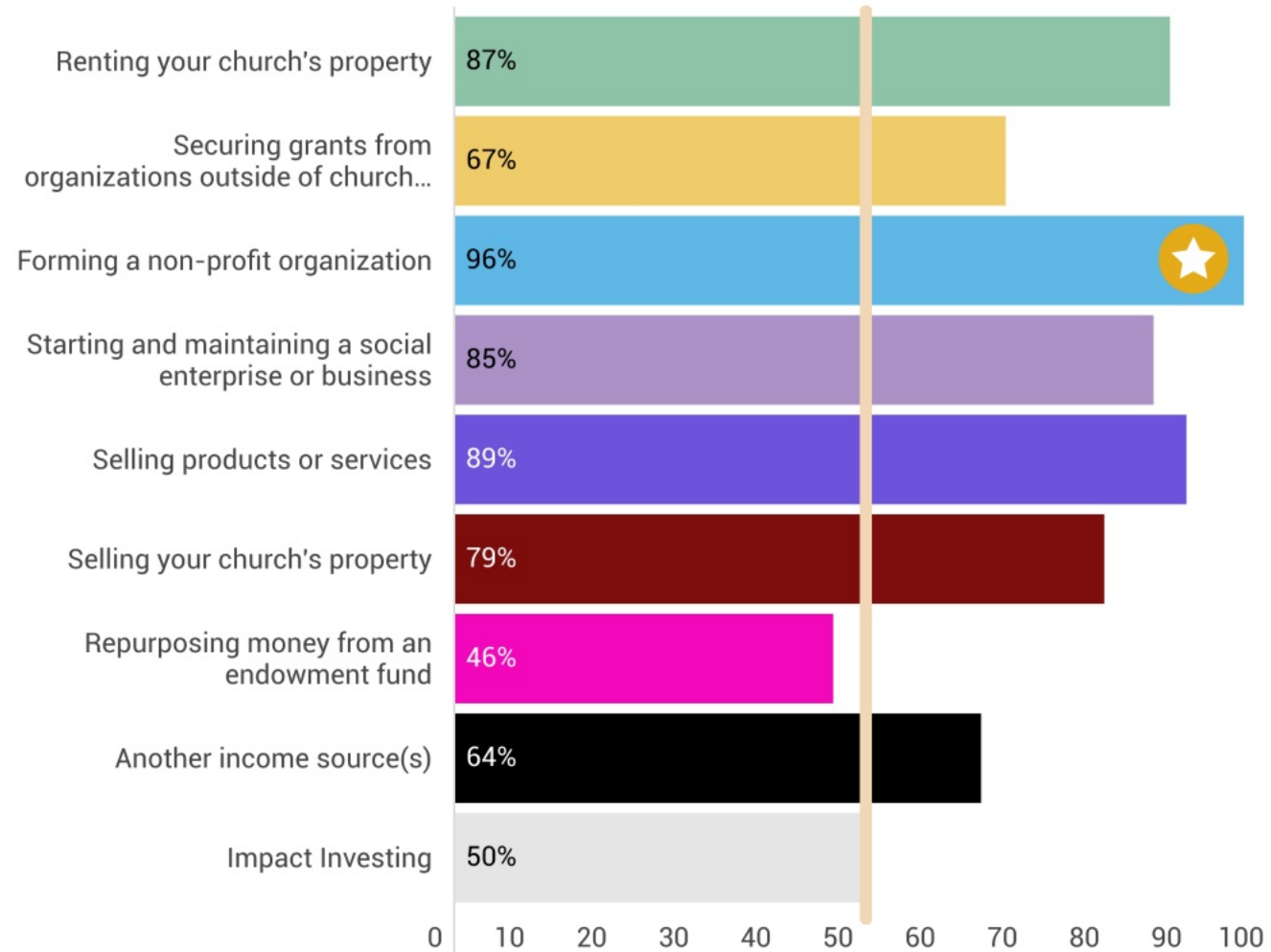
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## Living Out Mission: Social Enterprise

Congregations looking to live out their mission in a new way were most likely to sell products/services or start a social enterprise/business.



## Raising Funds: Property Rental

Congregations looking to raise additional funds are most likely to turn to renting their property.



## Meeting Community Need: Non Profit

Congregations looking to meet a need in the community were most likely to start a non-profit.

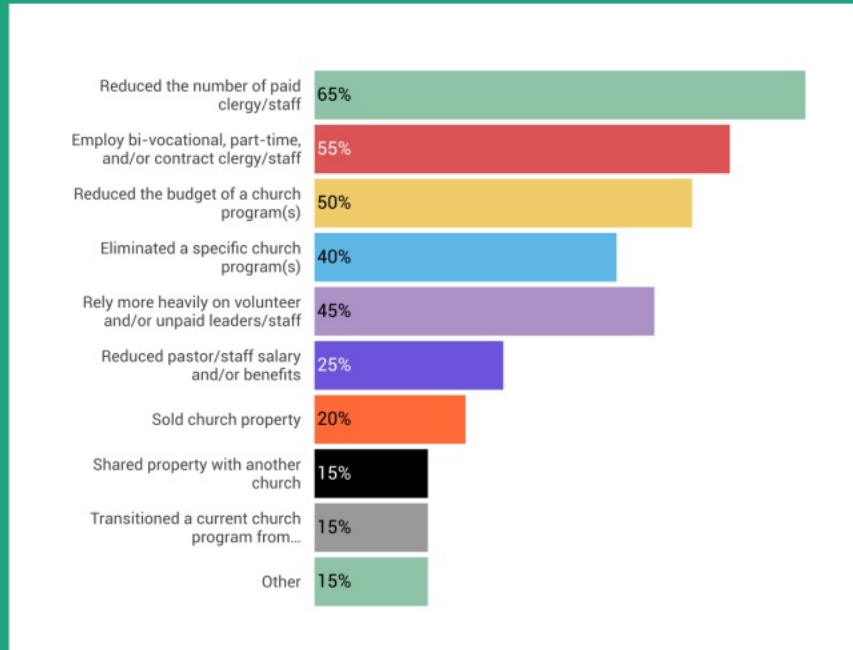


## Using Gifts: Sell Products/Services

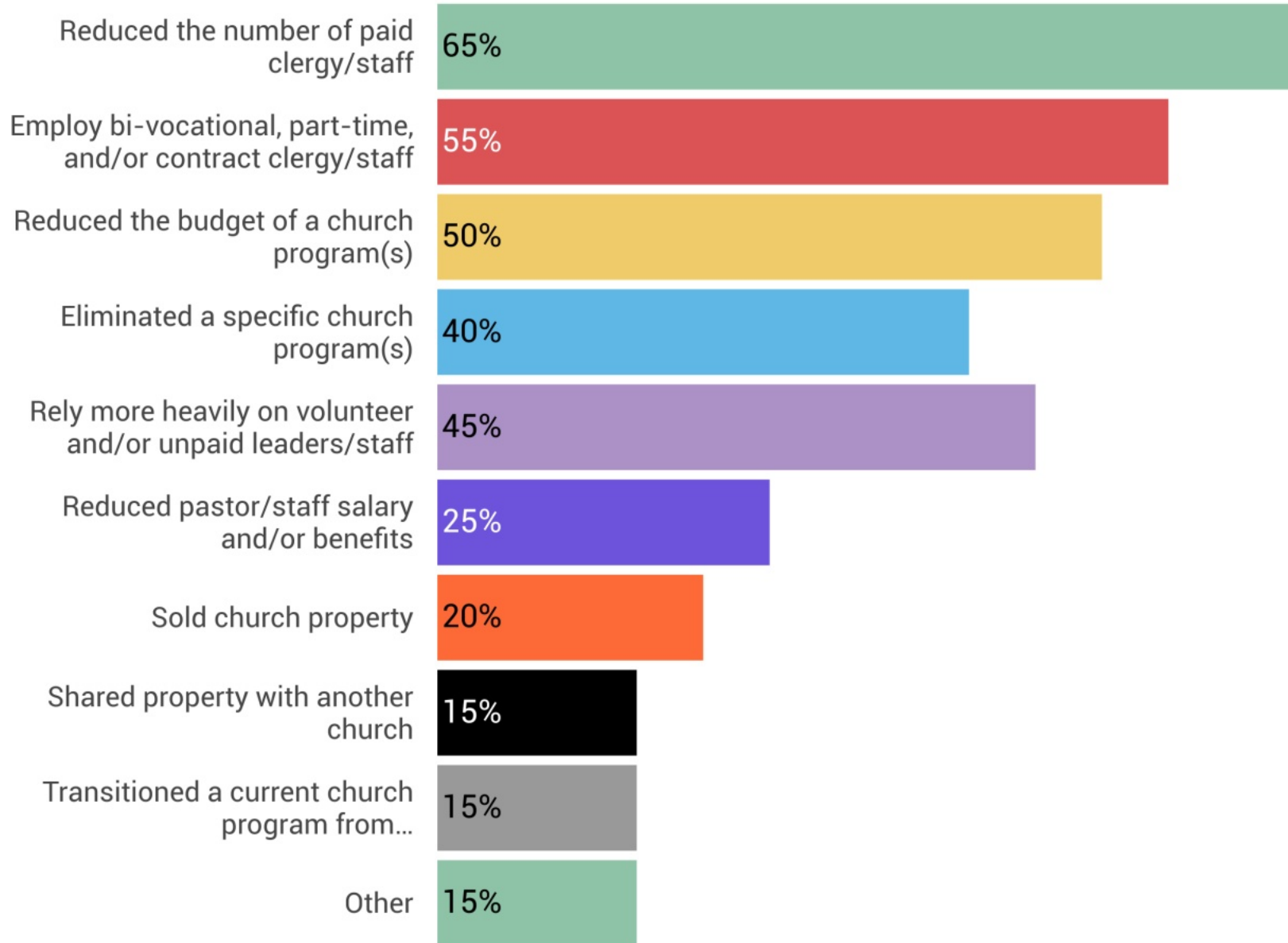
Congregations looking to tap the unique gifts of church staff or members were most likely to sell products or services.

92% of the  
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were using  
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plate

# Budget Reduction



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



20%  
cong  
had  
their  
5%+  
10 ye

# Where is God in the process?



## 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."*



## God winks

*"There have been so many "God winks" in this process - everything from unexpected financial gifts just when they were 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.**"*



## 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?**



# Who did we interview?

**12**

**Winter/Spring 2023:**  
5 (ELCA), 2 (PCUSA), 2  
(UMC), 1 (Vineyard), 1  
(UCC), 1 (Disciples of  
Christ)

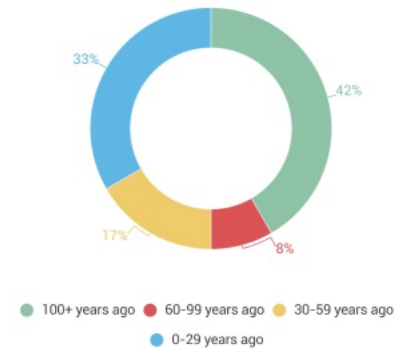


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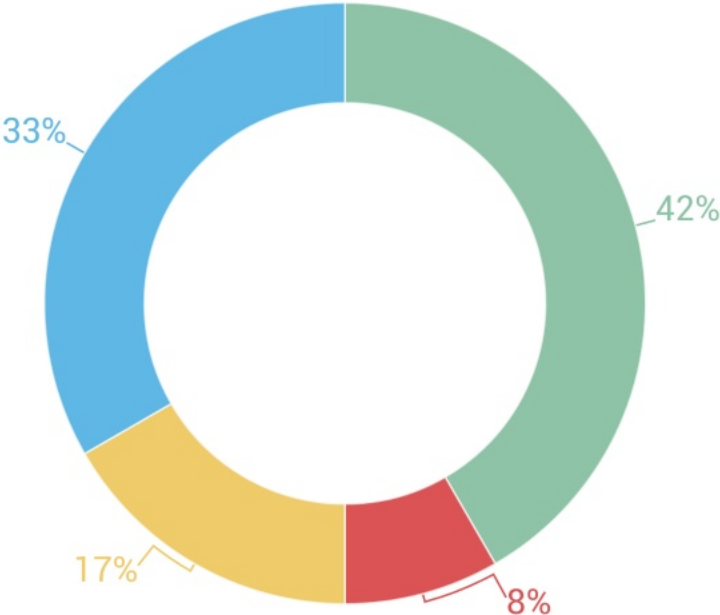
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Congregation Start Date



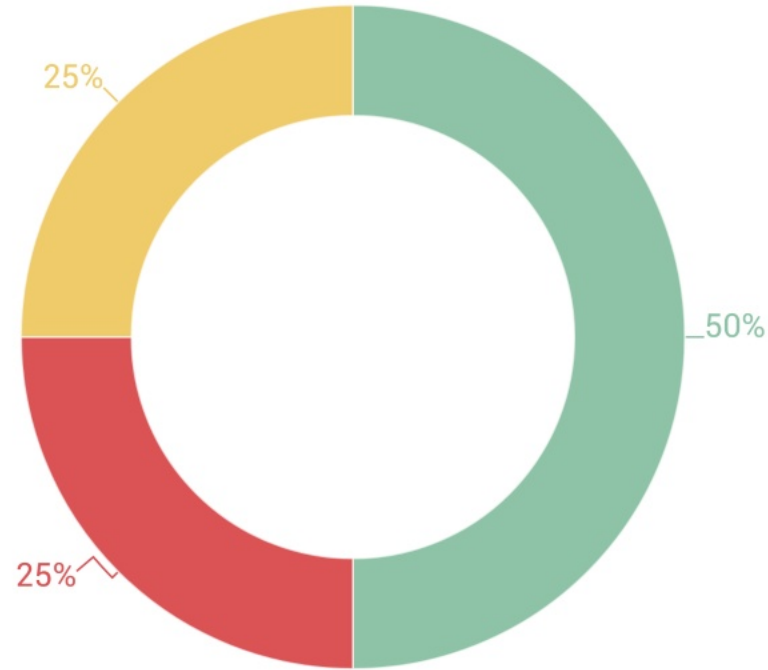
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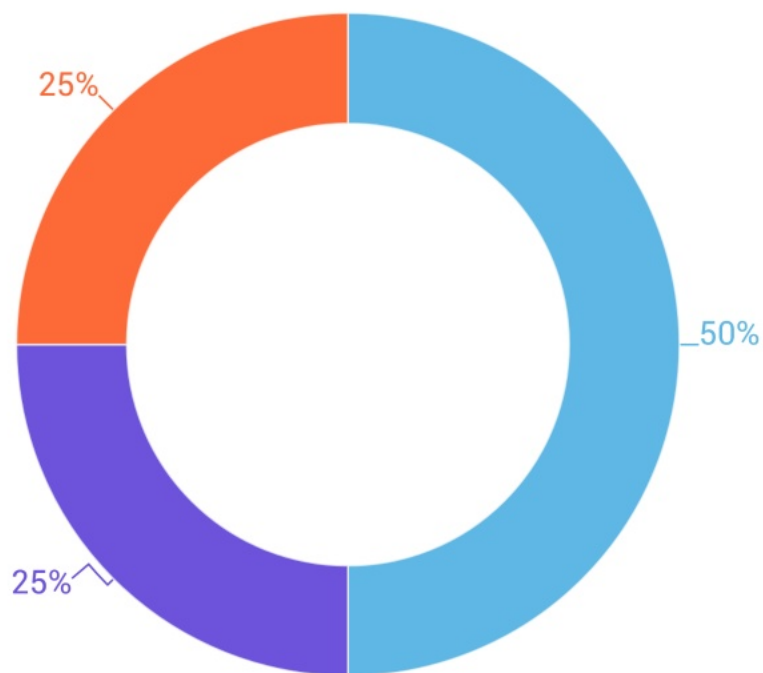
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● Urban ● Suburb ● Rural/Small Town

g 2023:  
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(and) i

## Average Worship Attendance (AWA)



● Small (<50 AWA) ● Medium (50-300 AWA) ● Large (>300 AWA)

g 2023:  
USA), 2  
and)

An aerial photograph of a coastline with a teal circle overlay. The circle contains the text 'Why did these congregations engage in funding forward?'.

**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)

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(106)

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**Underutilized Asset**  
(39)

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**God's mission**  
(106)

**Community Need**  
(99)

**Underutilized Asset**  
(39)

**Finances**  
(39)

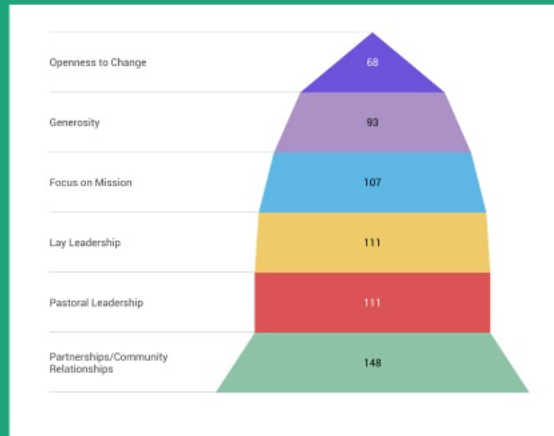
**Congregation Need**  
(12)

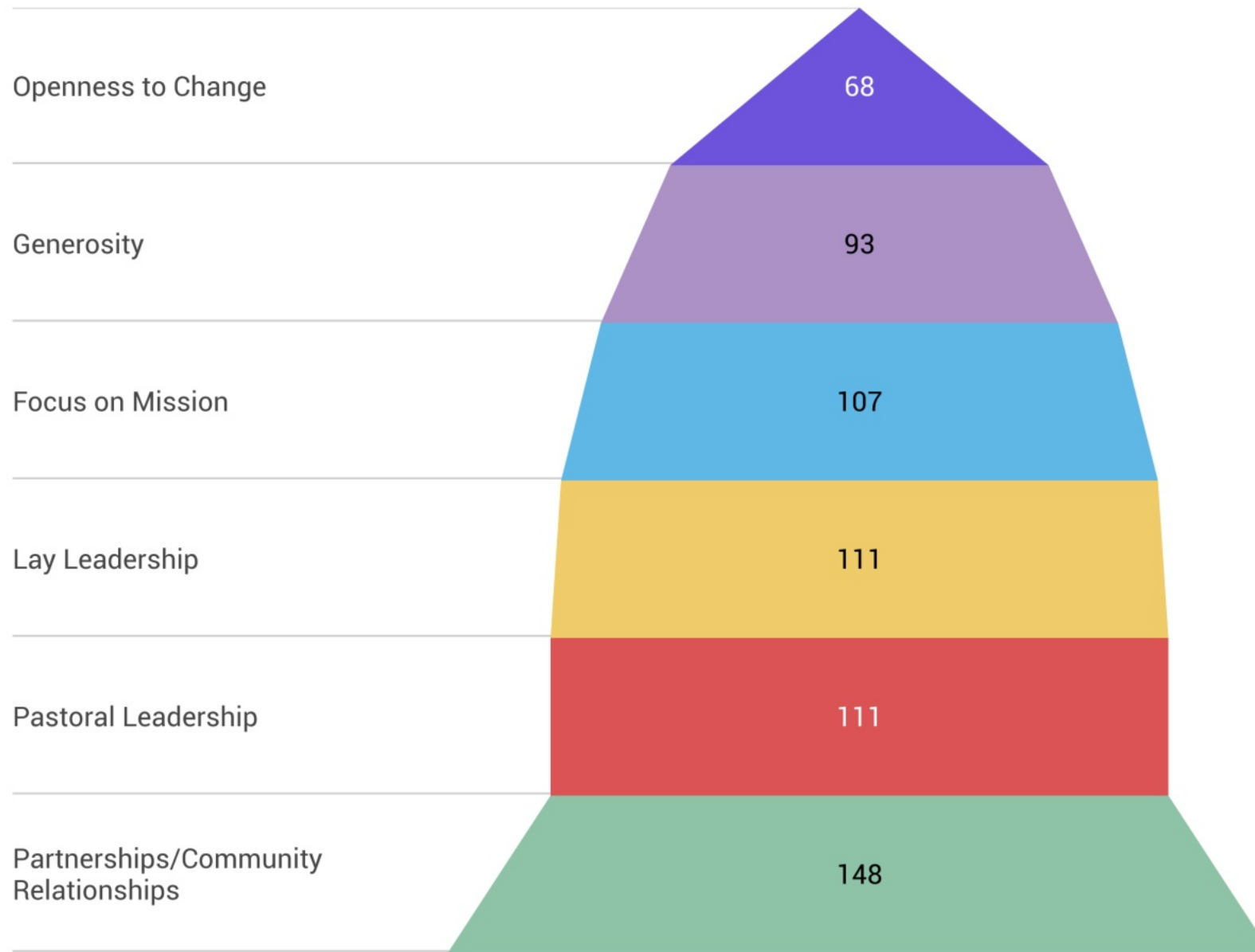
## What practices did they use throughout the process?

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

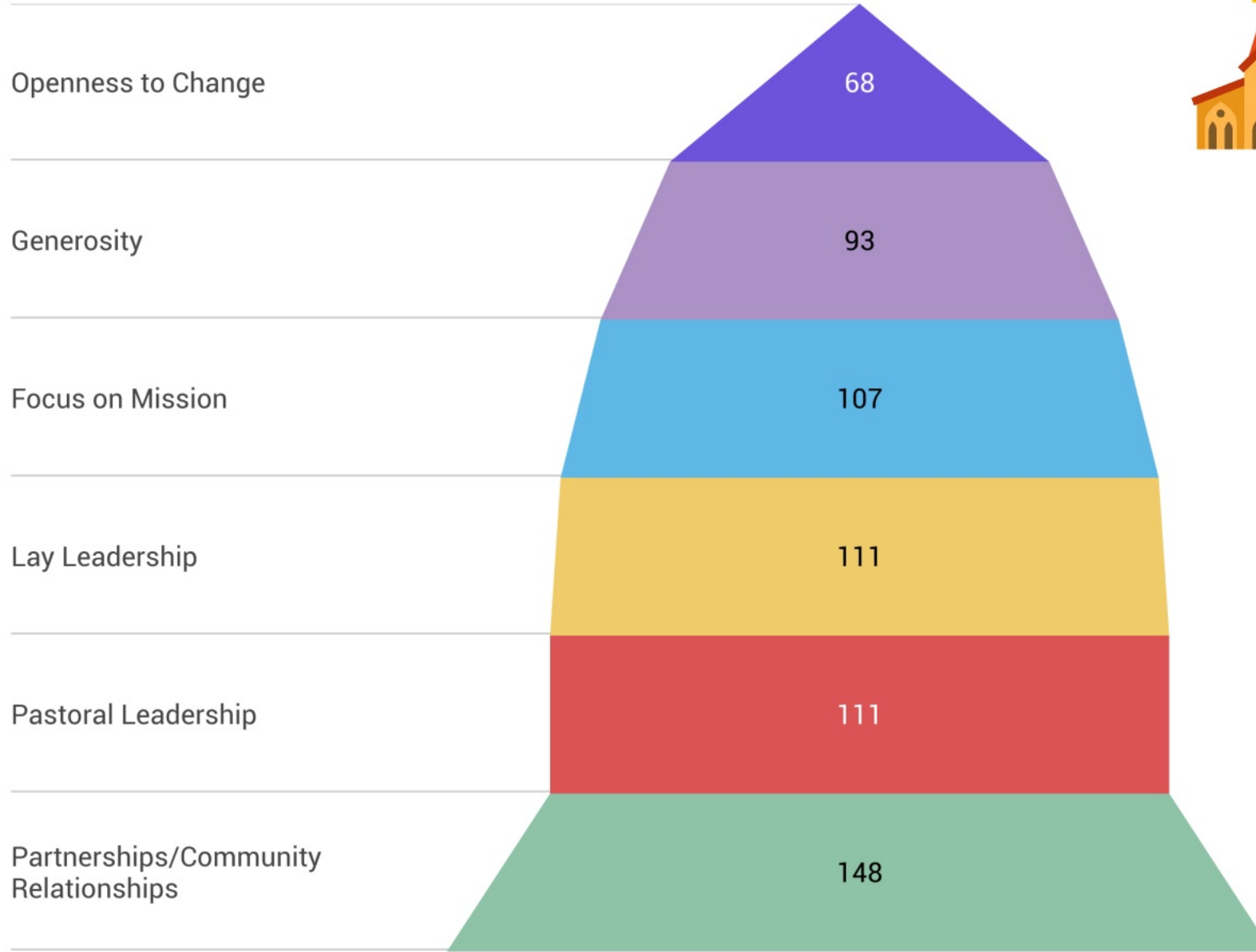
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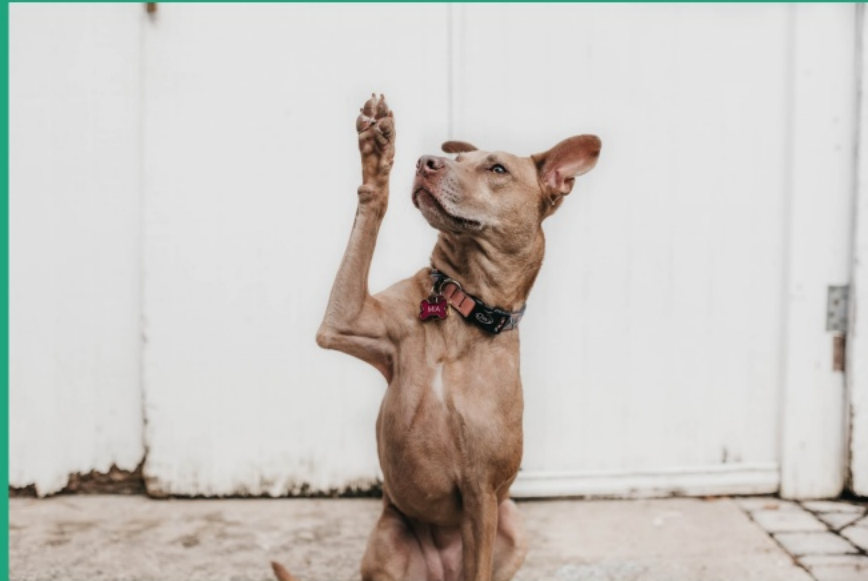


**Curious to learn  
more about our  
findings?**

Check out our FREE research  
project e-book!

[www.faithlead.org/stewardship](http://www.faithlead.org/stewardship)

# Questions about the research?



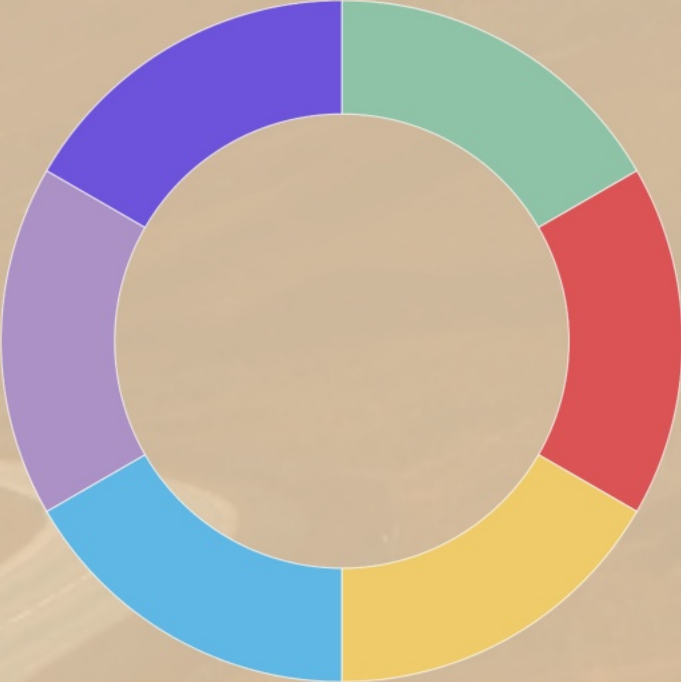
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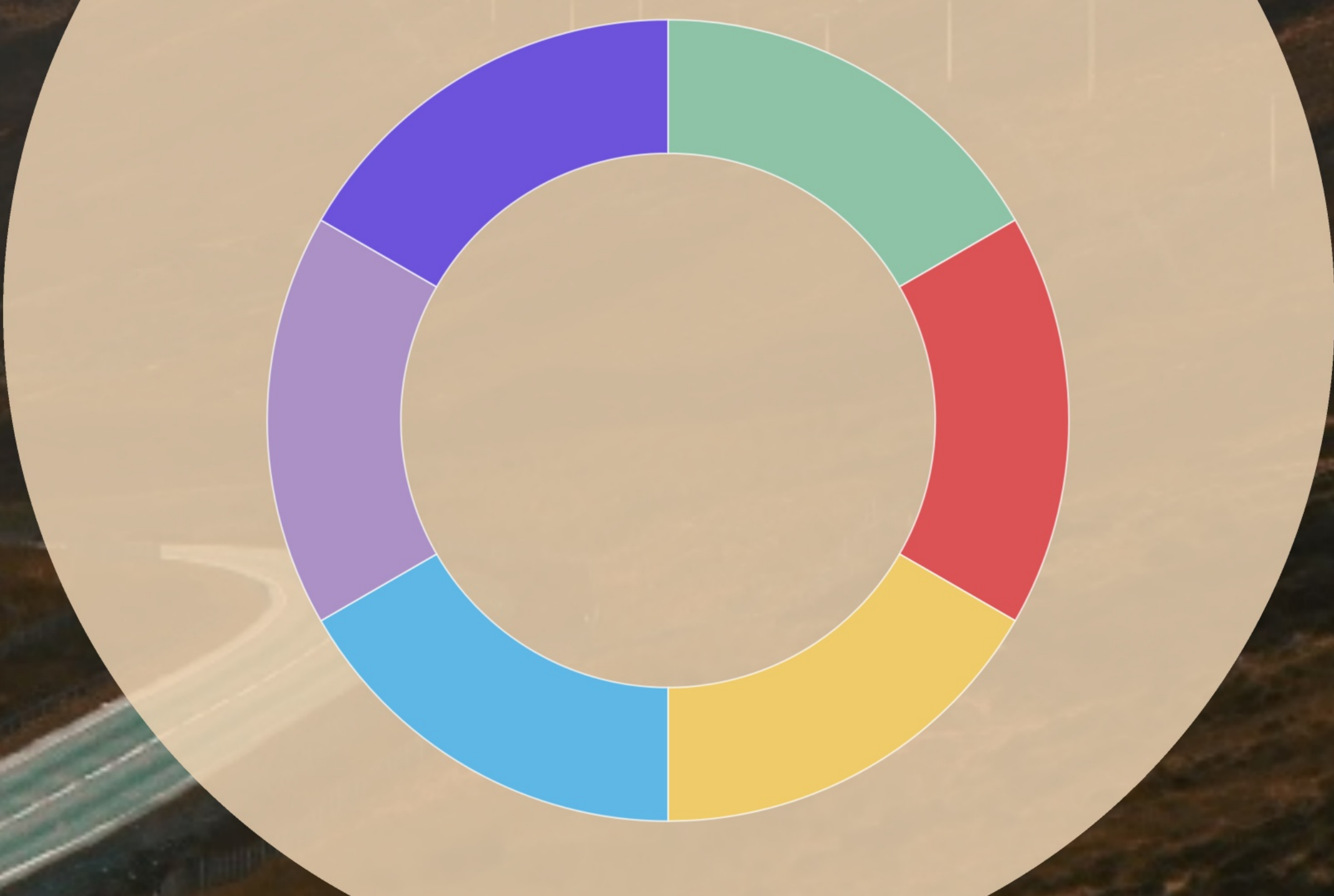


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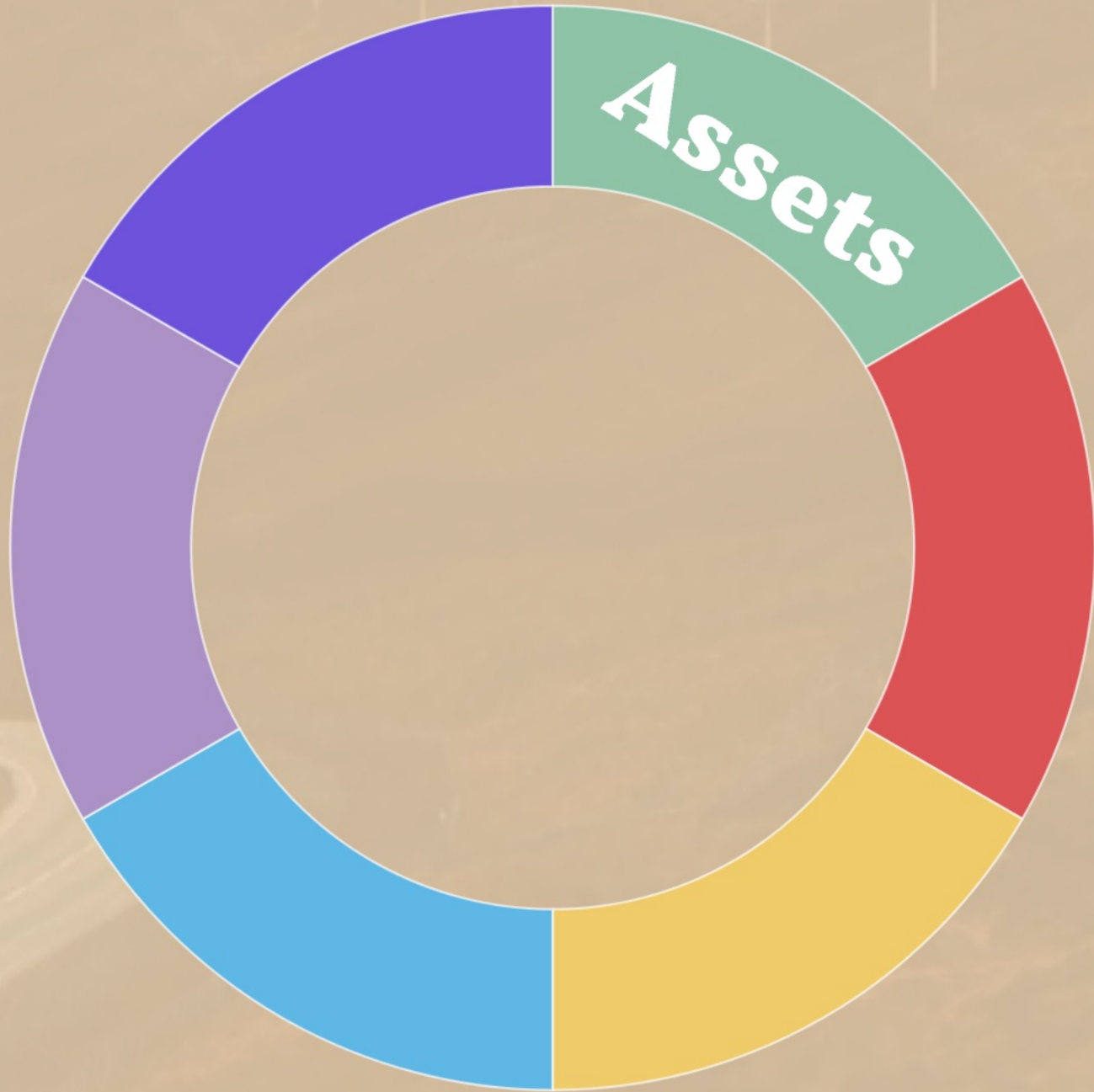


# Funding Forward Process





**Assets**





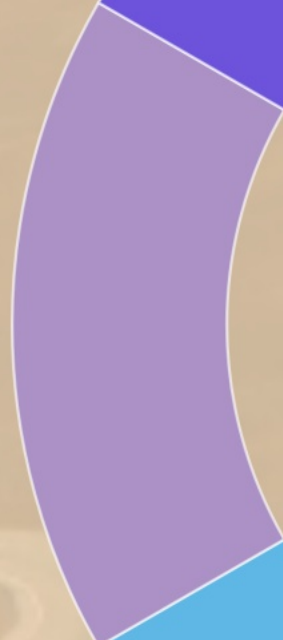
**Assets**

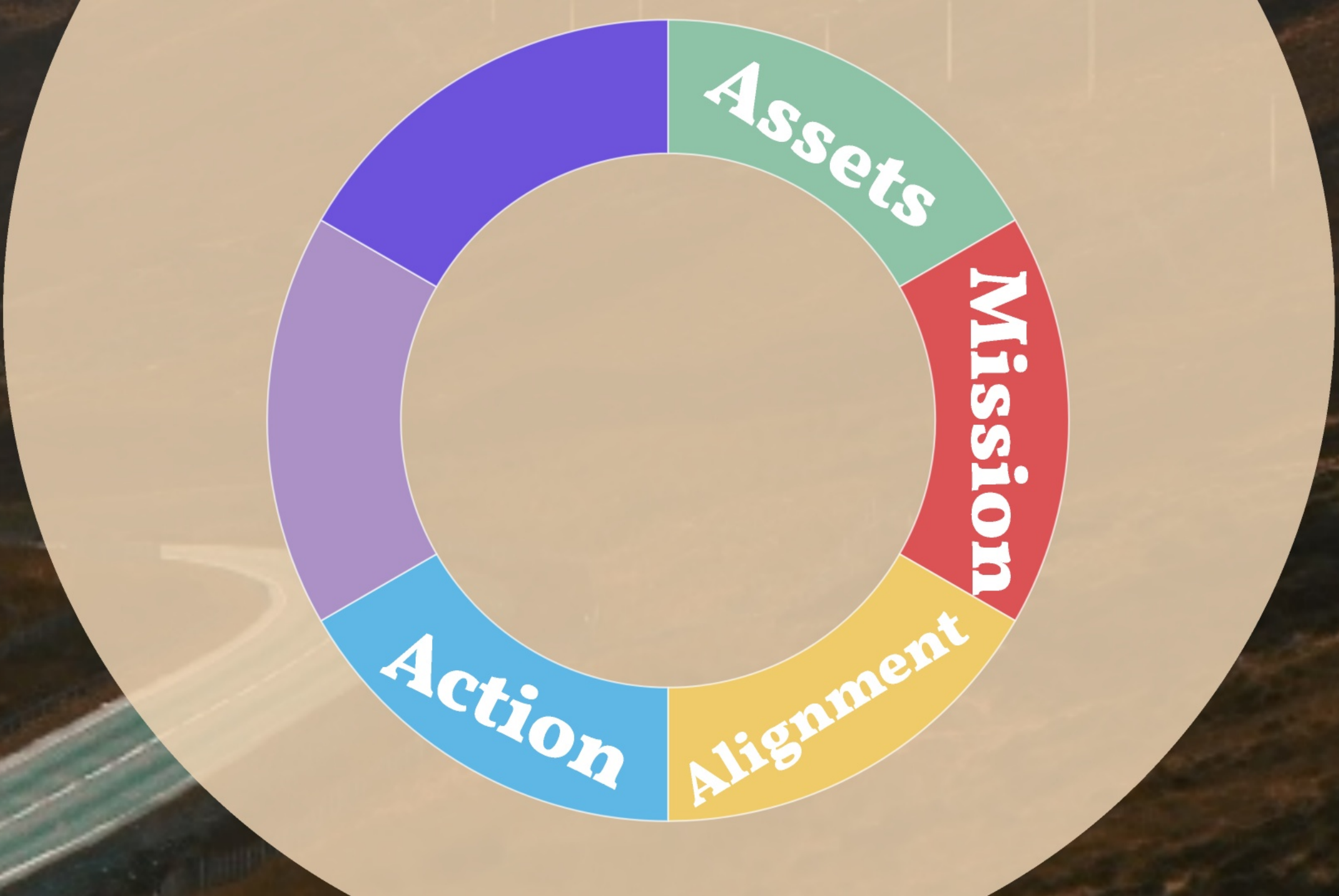
**Mission**

**Assets**

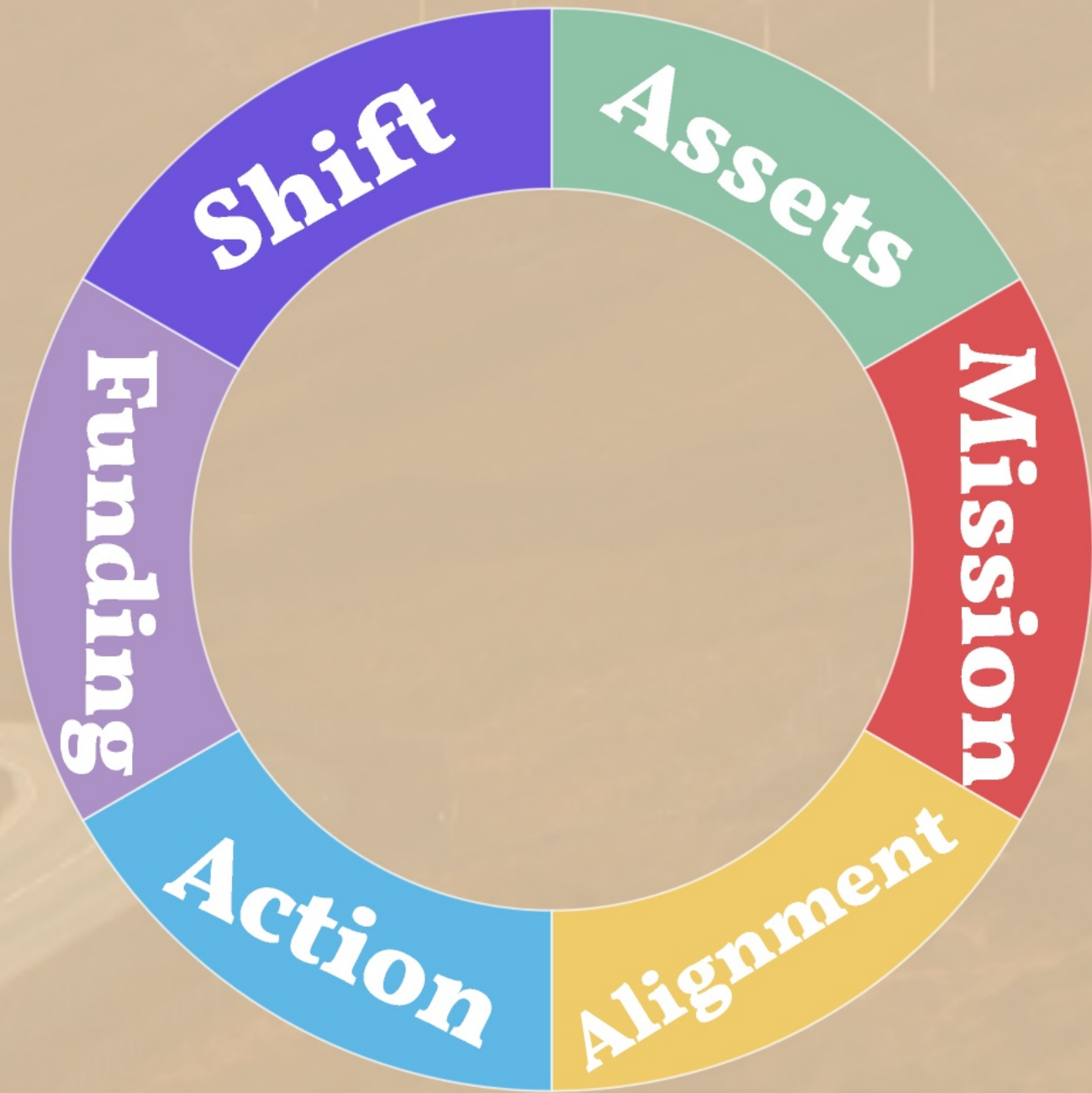
**Mission**

**Alignment**









**Shift**

**Assets**

**Mission**

**Alignment**

**Action**

**Funding**

**Shift**

**Assets**

**Mission**

**Alignment**

**Action**

**Funding**

**First Presbyterian**



**~1.5 years**

**Shift**

**Assets**

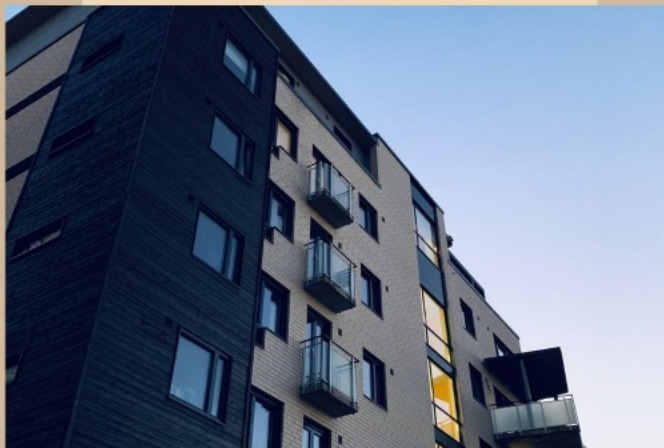
**Mission**

**Alignment**

**Action**

**Funding**

**Emory Fellowship**



**~11 years**



**Emory Fellowship**



**~11 years**

**Emory**



# Funding Forward Process



A large teal circle is centered on the page, containing white text. The background is a dark, blurred image of a field with several utility poles and power lines stretching across it.

What assets has God  
entrusted to your  
congregation's care?

What assets has God  
entrusted to your  
congregation's care?



**Financial**

What assets has God  
entrusted to your  
congregation's care?



**Financial**



**Skills**

What assets has God entrusted to your congregation's care?



**Financial**



**Skills**



**Time**

What assets has God entrusted to your congregation's care?



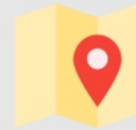
**Financial**



**Skills**



**Time**



**Network**

# What assets has God entrusted to your congregation's care?



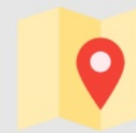
**Financial**



**Skills**



**Time**



**Network**



**Inventory:**  
10 for each  
category

How might your  
congregation join  
God's mission?





How might your  
congregation join  
God's mission?



How might your  
congregation join  
God's mission?



How might your  
congregation join  
God's mission?



# How might your congregation join God's mission?



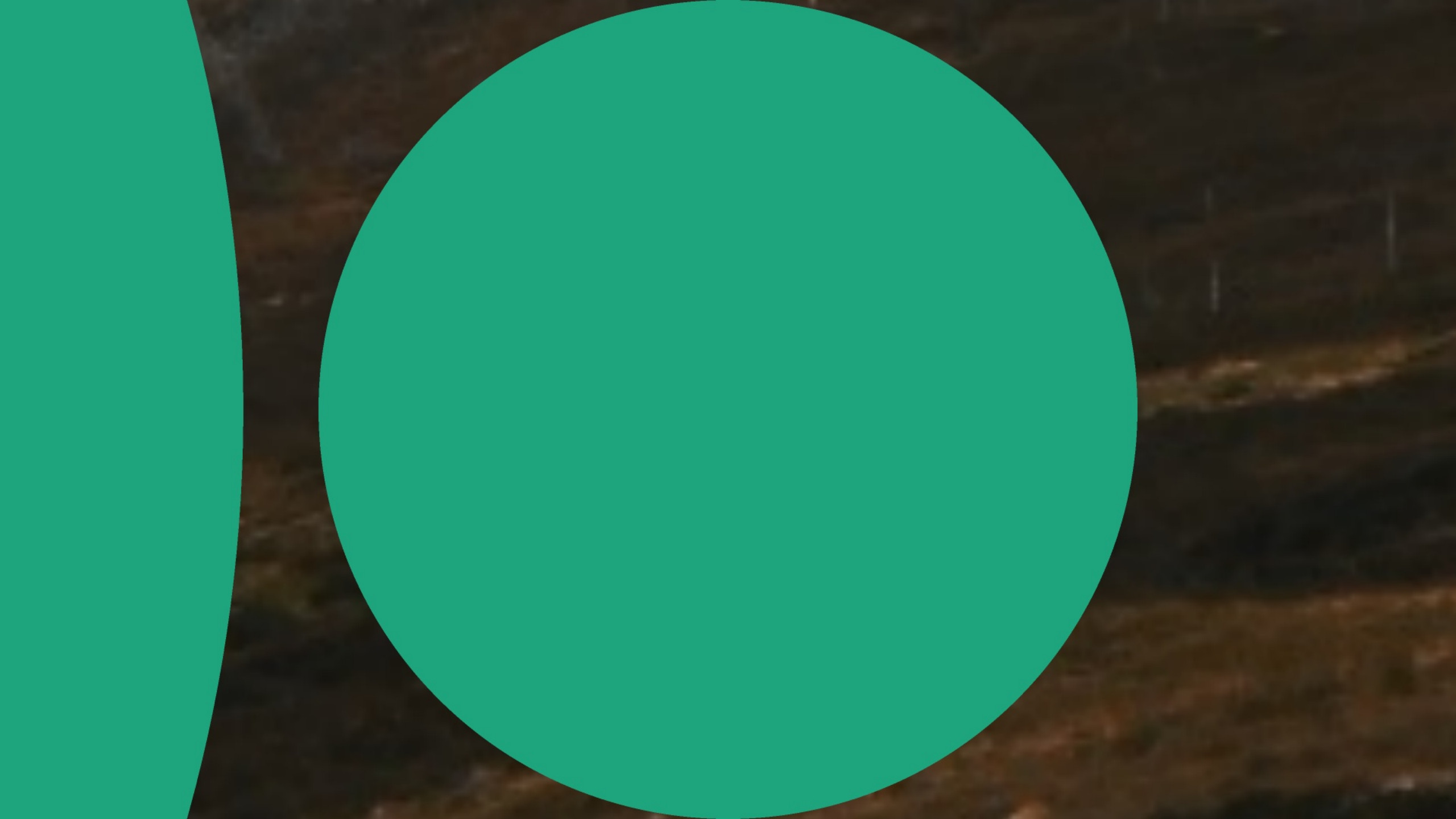
**Listen:**  
Talk with a  
neighbor





#YOUNGERTV

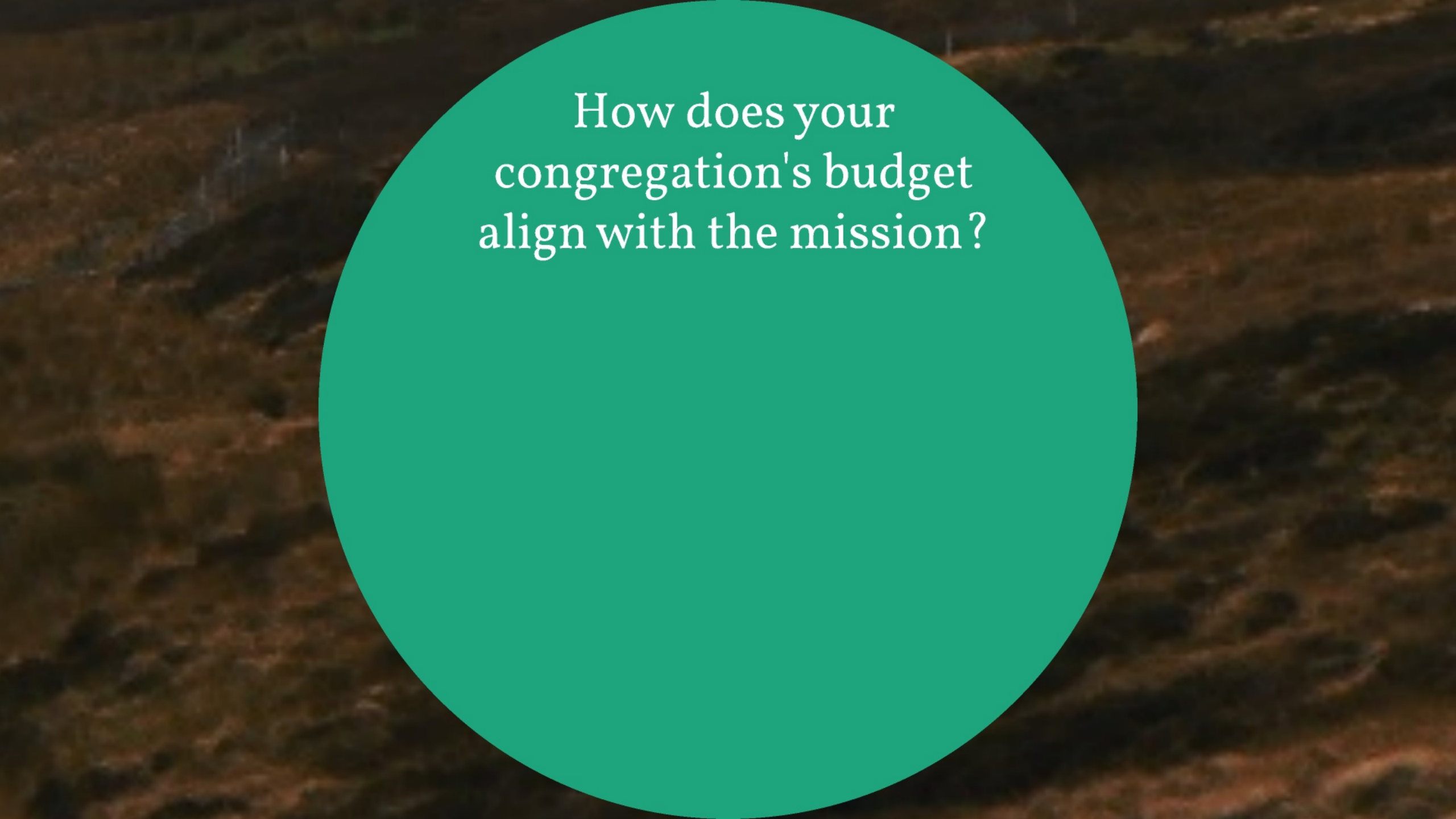
**I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY**



## Conversation Questions:

- What are your hopes for our community?
- What are a few of the most pressing needs in our community right now?
- What assets does our community have that are currently being underutilized or even untapped?
- If you had a chance to tell the church where they should direct their energies, what would you wish they would focus on?\*
- Who else should we be listening to?

\*Travis Norvell, "How One-to-One Conversations Reintroduced a Church to its Neighbors," LeadingIdeas, March 8, 2022.

A large teal circle is centered on the page, containing white text. The background is a blurred, high-angle photograph of a field with rows of crops, possibly corn, in shades of brown and green.

How does your  
congregation's budget  
align with the mission?



How does your  
congregation's budget  
align with the mission?



How does your  
congregation's budget  
align with the mission?



How does your  
congregation's budget  
align with the mission?



**Images for  
money &  
mission**

What might God be  
calling you to do?



What might God be  
calling you to do?



**Property**



What might God be  
calling you to do?



**Property**



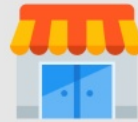
**Social  
Enterprise**



# What might God be calling you to do?



**Property**



**Social  
Enterprise**



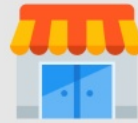
**Staffing**



# What might God be calling you to do?



**Property**



**Social  
Enterprise**



**Staffing**



**Self-  
sustaining  
ministries**

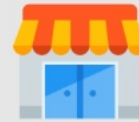




# What might God be calling you to do?



**Property**



**Social Enterprise**



**Staffing**



**Self-sustaining ministries**



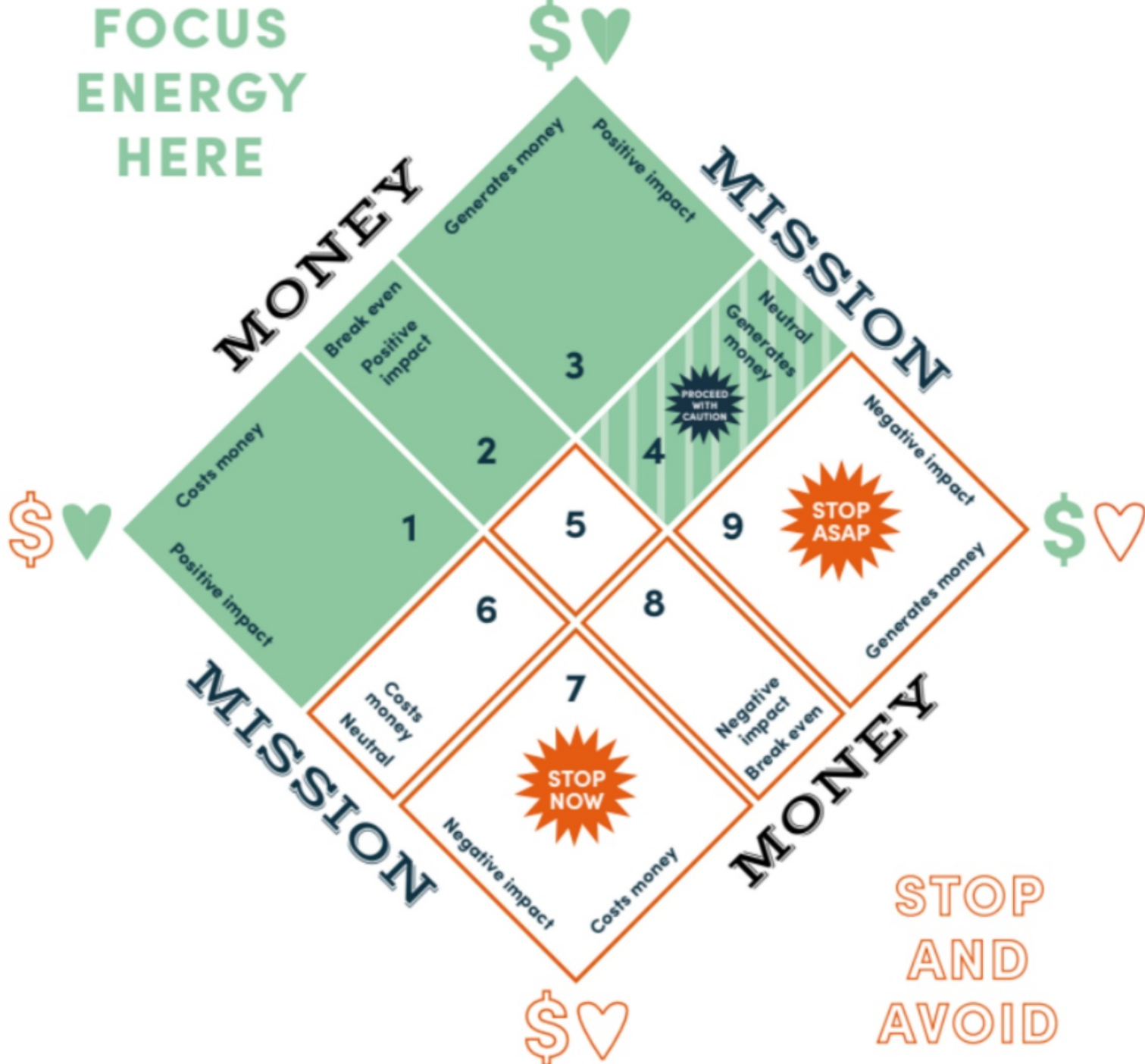
**Brainstorm**



# Money & Mission Alignment Tool from Rooted Good



FOCUS ENERGY HERE



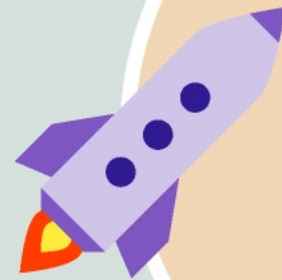
How might we fund  
what God is calling us  
to do?

**Inside  
funding**

**Outside  
funding**

How might we fund  
what God is calling us  
to do?

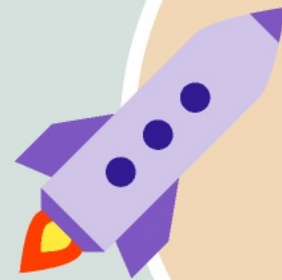
**Inside  
funding**



**Outside  
funding**

How might we fund  
what God is calling us  
to do?

**Inside  
funding**



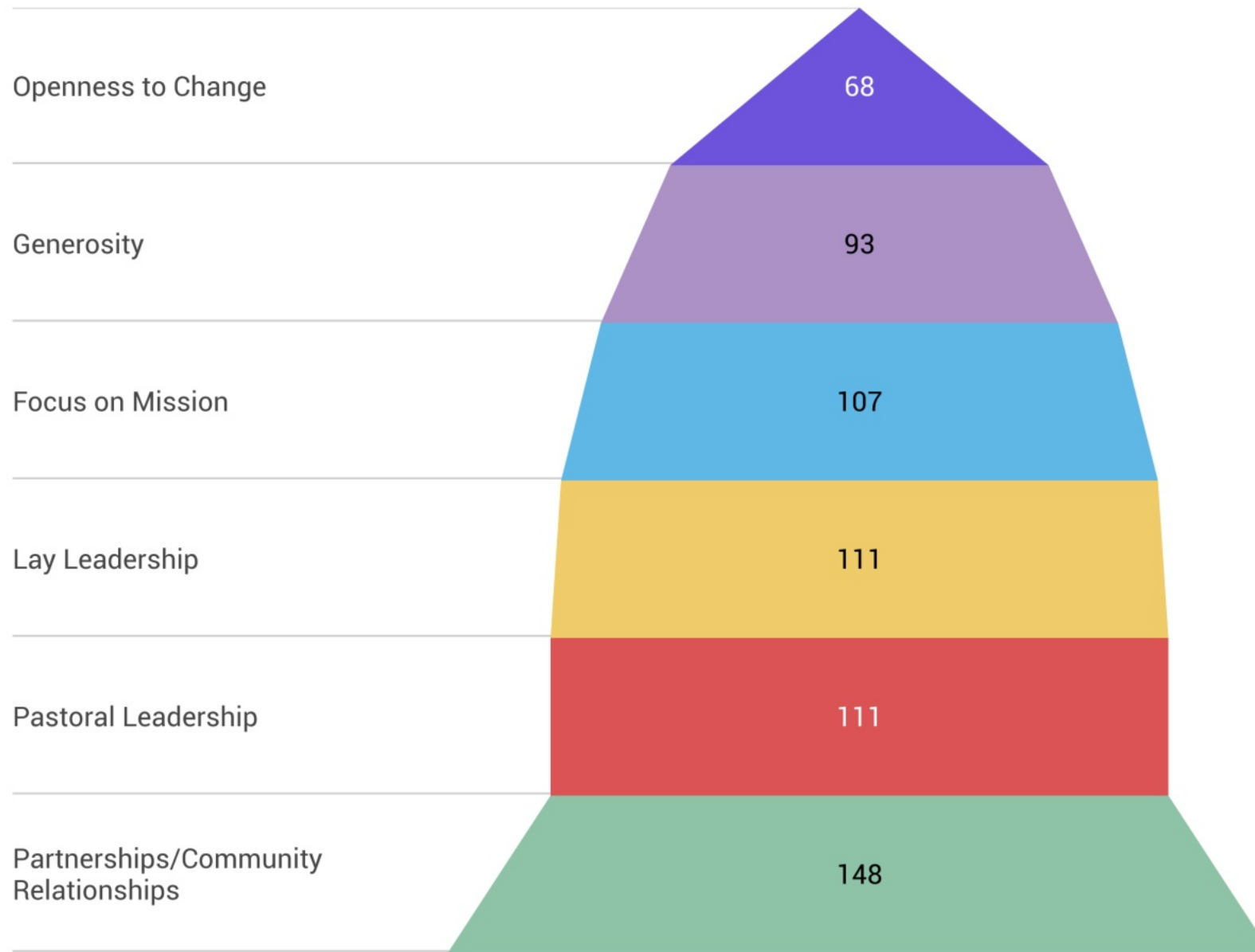
**Outside  
funding**



**Map your  
network**

# How can you shift your congregation's financial model?







# How can you shift your congregation's financial model?



# How can you shift your congregation's financial model?



**Celebrate  
Failure  
Together**

# ***Funding Forward: A More Sustainable Pathway for Today & Tomorrow***



# ***Funding Forward: A More Sustainable Pathway for Today & Tomorrow***



# Questions?



Find out more at  
**[faithlead.org/stewardship](https://faithlead.org/stewardship)**

# ***Funding Forward: A More Sustainable Pathway for Today & Tomorrow***

