

Summary of Responses to the FACT 2020 survey Question: What are the top 2 aspects of your congregation's ministry that you are most proud of? (max 50 characters)

Introduction

On February 24th, 2020, the Church of the Nazarene participated in the national interfaith FACT 2020 (Faith Communities Today) survey by sending out email invites to 2,005 Nazarene churches. A total of 326 churches began the survey, 257 completed the survey. The following is a brief summary of the responses to an open-ended question asking the leader's top two aspects of their congregation about which they are most proud.

This question is stated in a positive way, contrasting the question asked just before this one, which asked about the church leader's two top concerns about the future of their congregation. I previously summarized the results of that negative question, and so this is a companion summary to give the results of the positive question. While it is often the case that complaints come easier than compliments, the responses to this question affirm the Church is alive and well and that the prayer many of us pray regularly "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done," is in fact being answered in many of our churches.

Summary

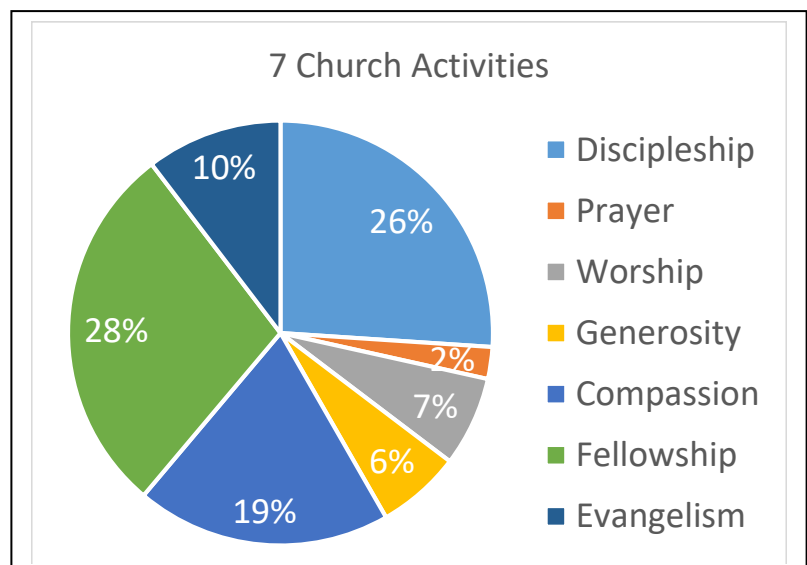
The open-ended question: **What are the top 2 aspects of your congregation's ministry that you are most proud of? (max 50 characters)** received 460 unique responses (74% of respondents gave the requested two responses, 7% only one, and 29% did not answer the question). The Word Clouds below show pictures of the most used words to the two responses. As the Word Clouds demonstrate, there was a wide distribution variety of responses to this question, for there are very few words which dominate the picture. Some of the larger words are "Ministry," "People," and "Worship."



Unlike the previous question, which asked about concerns for the future, the wide distribution of answers to this question did not lend themselves to being placed in three broad categories. In fact, while there were some similarities between the responses to these two questions in the areas of Evangelism, Discipleship, and Finances, there were many differences in the other categories. In other words, while Evangelism, Discipleship, and Finances appear to be both significant concerns for the future and proud ministries now, most of the other ministries for which church leaders are concerned and proud are not similar.

Because of this, rather than trying to force the 3 broad categories and 14 sub-categories of the “future concerns” question summary, I instead chose a new set of categories for these responses. After studying the responses, I found most all of them echoed closely to the description of the Early Church as reported in Acts 2:42-47. In that passage, we hear the Early Church was engaged in, as I summarize them, 7 main activities: Discipleship, Prayer, Worship, Generosity, Compassion, Fellowship, and Evangelism. Again, reading through the response to this question, I was struck by just how well most all responses echoed these seven activities. In the two largest categories, Discipleship and Fellowship, I made subcategories. Therefore, I have grouped the responses into the following 7 categories and four sub-categories (number of responses):

1. Discipleship (118)
 - a. Discipleship in General (35)
 - b. Spiritual Vitality (34)
 - c. Children and Youth Ministries (23)
 - d. Lay Leadership (26)
2. Prayer (11)
3. Worship (31)
4. Generosity (29)
5. Compassion (88)
6. Fellowship (129)
 - a. Loving/Friendly Church (47)
 - b. Fellowship in General (44)
 - c. Willingness to Change (23)
 - d. Unity (8)
 - e. Faithfulness (7)
7. Evangelism (47)



I. Discipleship

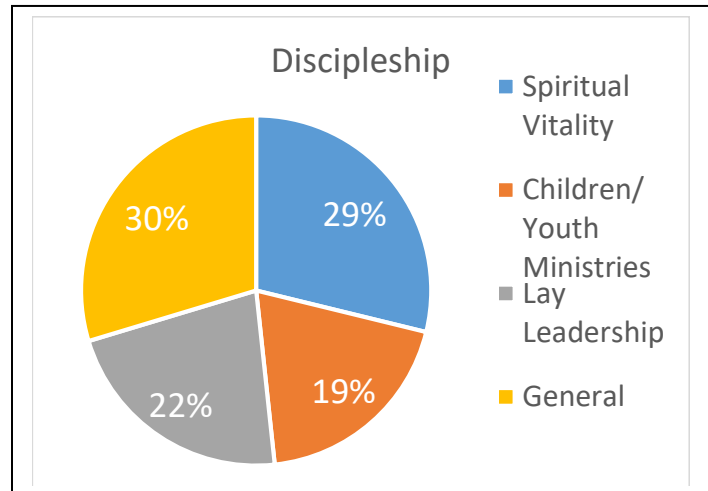
They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching... (Acts 2:42a)

Discipleship is a broad category, and even though I made four sub-categories, the **General** category is the largest and most diverse. Among the general responses in this category are “growth without resources,” “diversity in dialogue,” and a “teachable spirit in most members.”

Concerning **Spiritual Vitality**, church leaders report “spiritual growth in terms of unity, faithful giving, and desire for continued spiritual maturity,” “deep discipleship integrated throughout ministry,” and “Lives changed for Jesus.” Others report a “hunger for revival,” and “overall health and growth in small groups.”

The third largest sub-category is **Lay Leadership**. While the previous summary reported future concerns about pastoral leadership and pastoral transition, a significant number of leaders in this “positive” question reported strong lay leadership in their church. They mentioned “volunteerism” in general, but also specifically “the young adults are taking leadership,” and “cooperation of the leadership core.”

Finally, in the Discipleship category, respondents reported strong **Children's and Youth Ministries**. This ministry includes “reaching out to needy children at neighborhood school,” “and we have a growing children's ministry that is also used to reach out and bring in parents of those who do not attend our church.”



II. Prayer and Worship

...and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. (Acts 2:42b-43)

Respondents reported “answers to prayer,” “prayer is a priority here,” and “learning to embrace the discipline of prayer.”

Along the same lines, leaders report “Spirit-filled and spirit-led services,” “worship bathed in prayer,” “and we are an intergenerational church that worships and serves together.” Many simply listed “worship” and “music” as one of the two aspects of their church of which they are most proud.

III. Generosity and Compassion

...All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. (Acts 2:44-45)

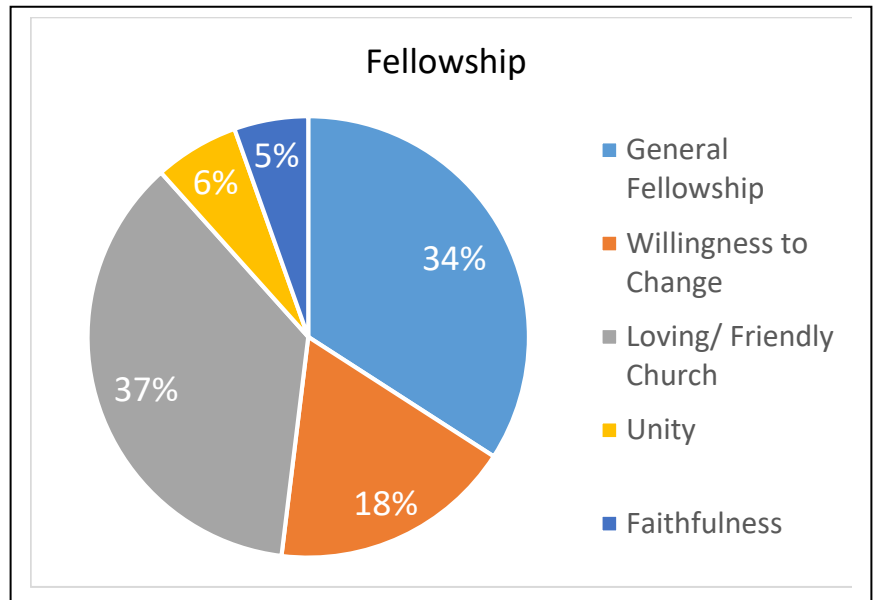
Generosity to both those inside and outside the Early Church continues to be an essential part of Nazarene churches. Respondents shared about both tithers and “consistent giving” to the church, but also of “generous hearts for missions” and a “Mercy Fund – set aside to assist community financially.”

From the answers given, **Compassion** takes on many forms in Nazarene churches. **Compassion** is expressed in service to food banks and “meeting the needs of the total human body.” However, it is also expressed in more specific ways, as reported, we “started a special needs congregation,” “I am most proud of our congregations sensitivity to read folks non-verbal, then loving/caring for their needs,” and “our strong multicultural work among Asian refugees.”

IV. Fellowship

...Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. (Acts 2:46)

Under the category of **Fellowship** are the sub-categories with both classic Christian virtues (Love, Unity, and Faithfulness), and a more modern expression of the Christian virtues, **Willingness to Change**.



Many responses were simply "Unity" and "Faithfulness," but others got more specific about what a **Loving/Friendly Church** looks like. For example, "while being conservative we remain a very welcoming and loving congregation!" and "that this is a very loving church and welcomes everyone equally when they visit." Here we see again, the dual activities of living out the Christian virtues to both those within the church, but also to those outside the church.

For the **Willingness to Change** subcategory, the respondents report being proud of their church being "willing" to "change," to "be challenged," to adapt and be flexible, being "open to new ideas," and having "faithful Seniors willing to try different things."

V. Evangelism

...praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)

Evangelism takes on many forms. The goal, as many respondents gladly report, is happening in their churches, "people accepting Christ and joining the fellowship." However, how they get there takes many forms. Respondents report inviting people to church is important, one even reports "attendees who haven't been saved yet are inviting friends." However, as we see in Acts, Evangelism often begins before the unsaved attend a church service. And so, many of the Evangelism responses focus on "reaching out beyond walls," "ministering to our surrounding culture," and continuing to focus on missions outside of the church."

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