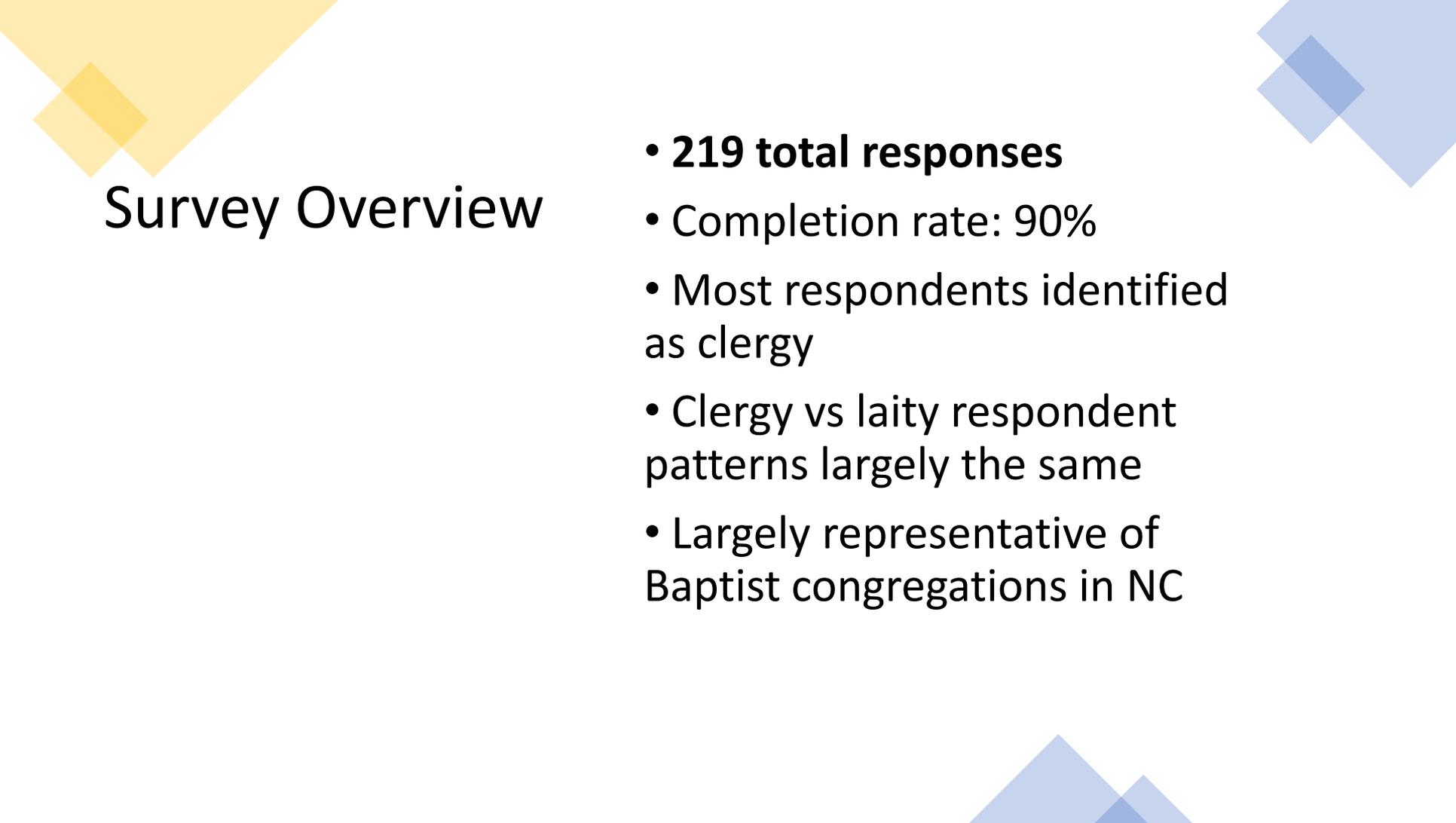




The post-pandemic Church

An emerging picture



Survey Overview

- **219 total responses**
- Completion rate: 90%
- Most respondents identified as clergy
- Clergy vs laity respondent patterns largely the same
- Largely representative of Baptist congregations in NC

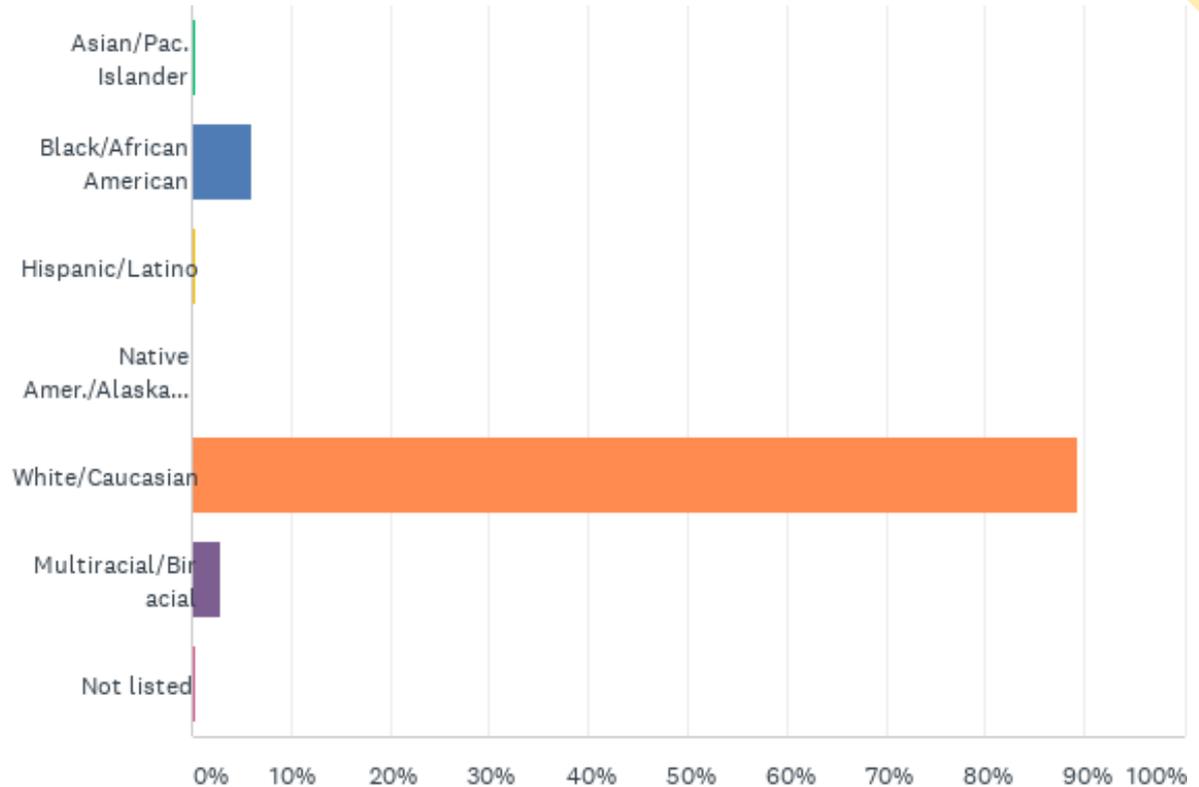


What is the
faith tradition
of your
congregation?

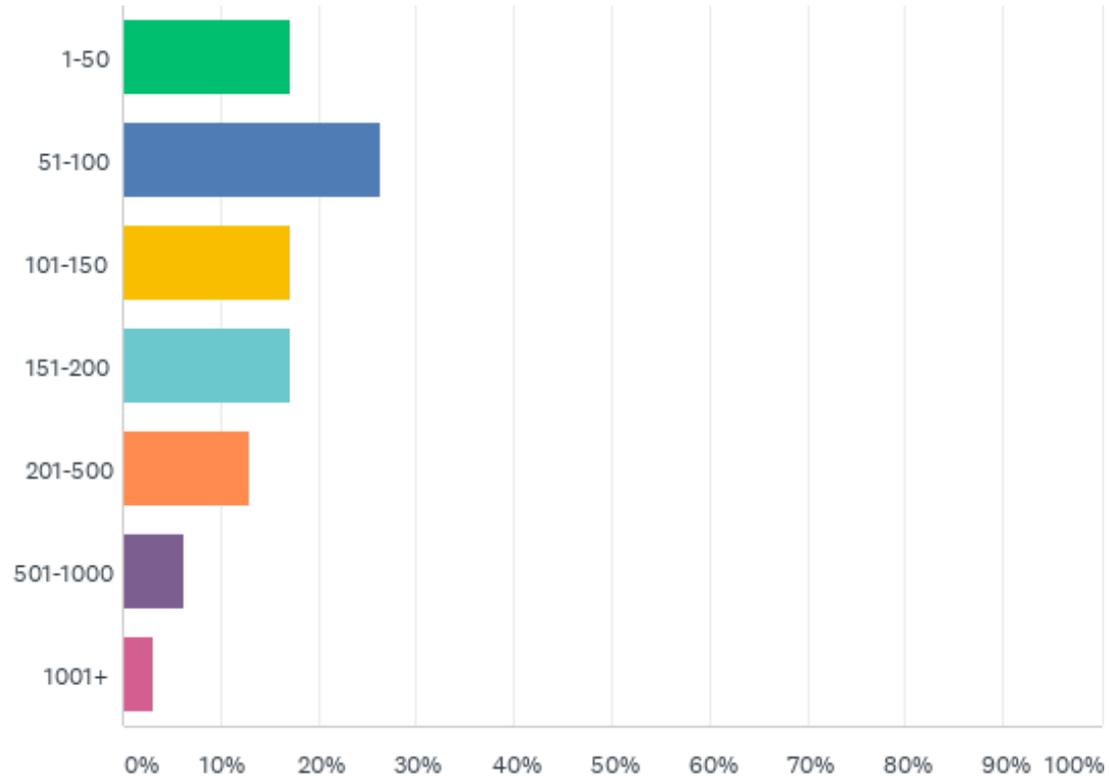
Top 5 Faith Traditions (with % of responses):

1. Southern Baptist Convention (31%)
2. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (16%)
3. Presbyterian Church USA (7%)
4. Moravian Church (6%)
5. United Methodist Church (6%)

What is the predominant racial/ethnic group in your congregation?



What was the approximate average weekly attendance for worship services before March of 2020?





Uneven
effects
on congregations

- 41% of churches declined in giving
- Congregational giving overall down 4.4% from March to June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.
- 55% of faith-based organizations — particularly those that are digitally savvy — experienced consistent or **increased** giving levels
- Catholic parishes and small **congregations under 50** weekly participants reported greater declines in participation & giving.

Additional Research

In-person attendance rates may reflect at least a 39% decrease from pre-pandemic numbers (Barna Research)

Digitally savvy organizations with a website, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and live streaming, saw 533% more donations than slow to adopt digital organizations (Givelify, Giving in Faith How Coronavirus Widened the Digital Divide)

A slight majority (52%) of congregations reported an increase in participation (Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, September 2020 COVID-19 Congregational Study)

Thriving Congregations Description

- Recognize their changing social and cultural contexts
- Clarity and action of mission
- Cultivate Christian Practices

Indicators of thriving:

- Engaged in ministry, Christian Practices, and living its mission
- Engaged in the community
- Exhibits growth – spiritually, membership, financially
- Intergenerational
- Manages conflict





Examples of
what
congregations
are doing

- Community outreach
- Concern for one another (internally)
- Worshipping together and Bible study



Impact of COVID-19:

- Shift from focus on #’s and \$, to engagement
- Less focus on physically being together
- More focus on needs of the community



A glowing red rectangular sign with the words "ON AIR" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The sign is set against a dark background and is framed by a white circular border.

ON AIR

Impact of COVID-19:

- More intentional about Christian practices and will continue
 - Using technology to enhance or improve worship
 - Increase prayer emphasis



During Covid-time,
Congregations
are:

- Strengthening relationships internally
- Strengthening relationships externally



Your Future Congregation

Observation One

Thriving Congregations
determine their allocations
for mission/ministry
financial support beyond
the local congregation
based on the congregation's
values not the
congregation's *available
funds*



Your Future Congregation

70% of participants responded they intend to support the same number of mission causes/non-profit partners beyond the pandemic

17% of participants responded they intend to increase the number of mission causes/non-profit partners beyond the pandemic

12% of participants responded they intend to reduce the number of mission causes/non-profit partners beyond the pandemic

Your Future Congregation

Possible explanations:

1. Clear and healthy definition/view of what constitutes a thriving congregation
2. Firm grasp of, and healthy commitment to, mission
3. Local ministry opportunities have been brought into clearer focus due to travel restrictions, isolation requirements and work from home expectations

Your Future Congregation



Observation 2



Thriving Congregations are engaged in community health ministries during the pandemic and intend to remain engaged beyond the pandemic

Participants identified the community health ministries in which their congregations had engaged during the pandemic, and the responses were as follows:



1. Feeding



2. Financial Resources



3. Clothing



4. Mental health



5. Physical health



6. Healthy eating resources

Your Future Congregation



When asked which of these community health ministries will continue beyond the pandemic, participants indicated that the congregation intends to keep each of these community ministries in place



Your Future Congregation

Observation 3

Thriving congregations have a healthy view of their facilities.

Your Future Congregation

89% of participants responded that they will be no more, and possibly, even less dependent upon their facilities in the future.

86% of participants responded that technology had positively impacted their congregation while facilities were closed or limited in their availability.

These findings are supported by other surveys that report that congregations do not intend to stop online worship/ministry options once facilities fully reopen.

Challenges

Observation 1

Thriving Congregations
address conflict in a healthy
manner

Challenges



When asked to rate their congregation's level of conflict during the pandemic, participants responded:



11% above average conflict



2% far above average conflict

Challenges

When asked how successfully their congregation has handled conflict during the pandemic

Only 13% responded "unsuccessfully"

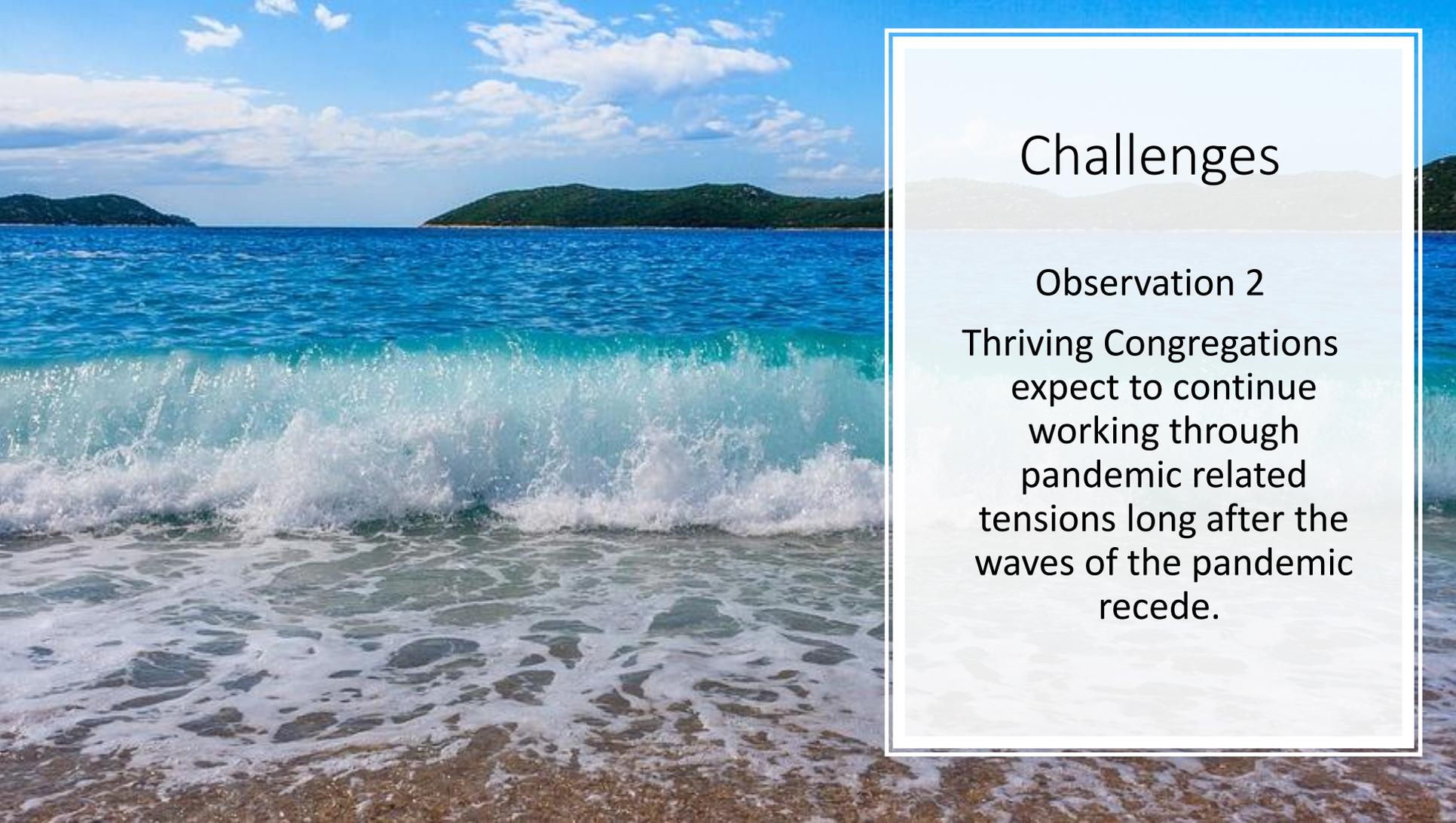
Challenges



When asked if their congregation has "discussed controversial topics without causing destructive conflict"



68% responded "agree" and "strongly agree"



Challenges

Observation 2

Thriving Congregations expect to continue working through pandemic related tensions long after the waves of the pandemic recede.

Challenges

The top three challenges identified by participants for the post-pandemic church are:

1. Physical attendance –
masking, social distancing
related issues
2. Financial support of mission
and ministry
3. Adapting to cultural
changes



Challenges

We are glad to see that more congregational leaders are recognizing the spiritual - social – physical – psychological drivers of health that impact individuals and communities.

The pandemic has called healthcare leaders to focus more attention on social challenges rooted in racial disparities in healthcare; some congregational leaders recognize these challenges exist in congregational contexts as well and have engaged these challenges in alignment with their mission.

The question is, "Will more churches pivot to engage these challenges and disparities or retreat to the sidelines?"

Challenges

We predict that those congregations that retreat to the sidelines will find any vitality they gained during the pandemic will be lost post-pandemic as the communities that surround these congregations turn elsewhere to find the messages of

hope and healing for all

that the church has claimed to possess but failed to express.