

Centered Life

CONNECTING SUNDAY TO MONDAY

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
EAU CLAIRE, WI

NOVEMBER 2008

I. Centered Life: Mission and Purpose

Thank you for participating in the Centered Life Initiative. We are excited to collaborate with your congregation to create new ways of calling, equipping and sending members to serve God in all areas of their lives—at home, in the workplace and community, and in the congregation.

To use the information in this report in a meaningful and appropriate way, it is important to understand the intent of Centered Life and the process in which your congregation is engaged.

Centered Life Mission Statement: The mission of Centered Life is to strengthen congregations to better equip and mobilize individuals and groups for their mission in daily life.

Centered Life recognizes that in congregations across the country, many Christians experience a disconnect between their faith and their everyday life. Christians are searching for ways to integrate how they live out their faith in their workplaces, communities and homes—the places where their deepest faith questions surface and are challenged. Further, congregations have often not helped individuals make the connection between Sunday and the rest of the week.

Centered Life's vision is to bridge that gap in order to equip Christians to live out their faith in God's world every day. Centered Life is not a program to be addressed with a few workshops or new techniques. Rather, it is a framework for helping congregations carry out God's mission and ministry in the world.

II. The Congregational Assessment

A. Design

The Centered Life Congregational Assessment is designed to determine whether members of your congregation are living centered lives and the ways in which your congregation is preparing members to live their faith in every situation. When you took the assessment, you probably noticed that it is divided into three main sections: About My Church, About Me, and the Personal Profile section. Below is a brief description to help you understand the purpose of each section.

Section 1: Personal Profile

This section gathers demographic information from members of your congregation who take the assessment. This provides you with a snapshot of your congregation's makeup and can be very useful for planning and implementation. It also asks members to report on the various types of assistance they would like the congregation to be providing to help them live out their faith more fully in daily life.

- a) Participant demographic data
- b) Congregational involvement
- c) Living out my faith

Section 2: About Me

This section measures the extent to which individual members of your congregation are aware of their gifts and call and feel connected to others. The “About Me” portion is based on three factors of individual change:

- a) Recognition of gifts and strengths
- b) Personal faith in action
- c) Connections with my congregation

Section 3: About my church

This section measures the extent to which your congregation equips members to live out their callings. The “About My Church” portion of the assessment is based on two factors for congregational change. The factors, listed below, represent different ways congregations can encourage individuals to grow in the development of their own callings.

- a) Empowering through worship and teaching
- b) Organizing to equip and send

Section 4: Overall satisfaction & summary

Section 5: Mean & norm comparisons

B. Reading the Report

As you read the report and consider how to use the information please keep in mind the following:

- *The assessment was completed by a “convenience” sample.*
The group that took the assessment represents 66% of those who worship on a typical weekend at Trinity Lutheran Church. It is recommended that the church gather information from at least 20% of those who worship on a typical weekend to get a good representative sample. This was a “convenience” sample of people who chose to participate by filling out the assessment. There was no attempt to pick a random sample from the congregation, which would have statistically improved the ability to generalize the results to the entire congregation. Therefore, as you read the results, understand that this information best represents the opinions of the group who took the assessment and the results may or may not be consistent with the rest of the congregation.
- *Utilize a “social validation” process to read the results.*
Centered Life continues to test and refine the assessment tool for validity (is it producing accurate information?) and reliability (is it producing consistent information?). Therefore, as you read the assessment results, use a “social” validation process by reviewing the results with a critical eye, asking whether or not the answers make sense relative to the way you understand your congregation. If the results do make sense, then consider using the data for making decisions. If not, consider additional sources of information for clarification and help with decision making.
- *Factor in “social desirability” as you review the assessment scores.*
Researchers know that there is a tendency for respondents to raise their scores with this type of assessment because of “social desirability”. “Social desirability” is the desire to answer positively about something because you have a vested interest in it. People often

give a more favorable rating for their congregation than they might for other types of surveys or organizations. Therefore, as you read the results of the assessment, be aware that some scores may be inflated in a positive direction because the assessment focuses on rating one's own congregation.

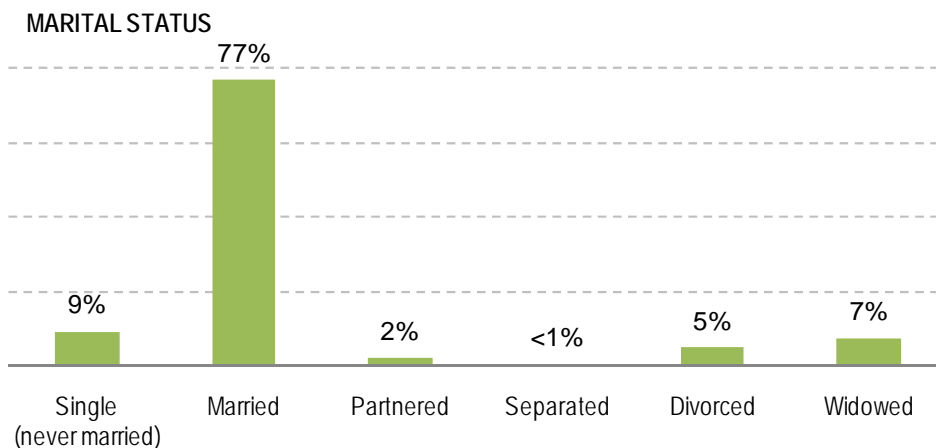
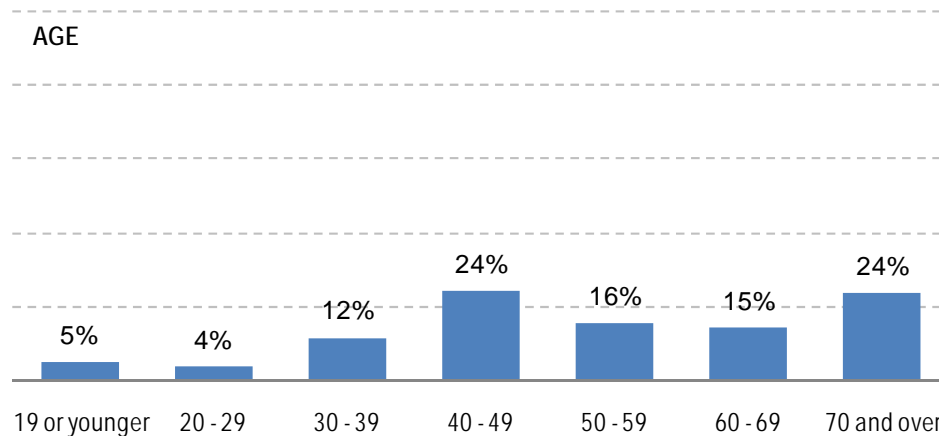
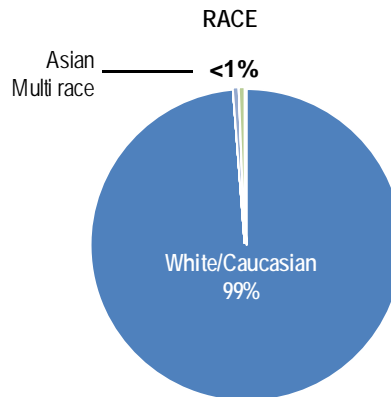
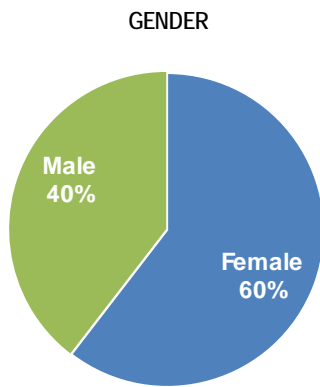
In conclusion, there are a number of considerations that should be taken into account when reviewing the data presented here. However, there is much to be learned from a thoughtful reading of the data. Please feel free to contact us at 651-641-3353 with any questions or concerns regarding how to interpret the data and contents of this report.

III. Assessment Results

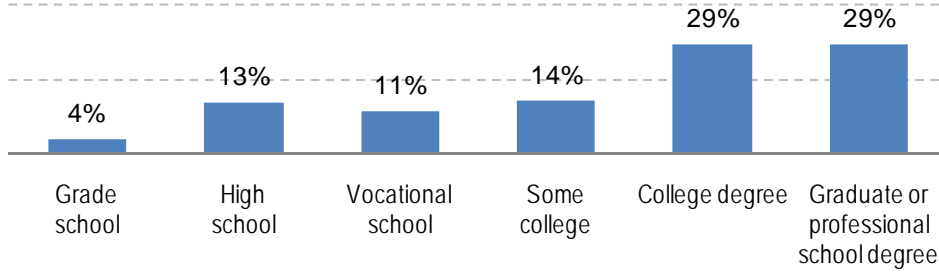
This report contains data taken from the Centered Life congregational assessment administered at Trinity Lutheran Church in October 2008 by 455 people. This represents 66% of those who worship on an average weekend in this congregation.

Section 1a: Participant demographic data

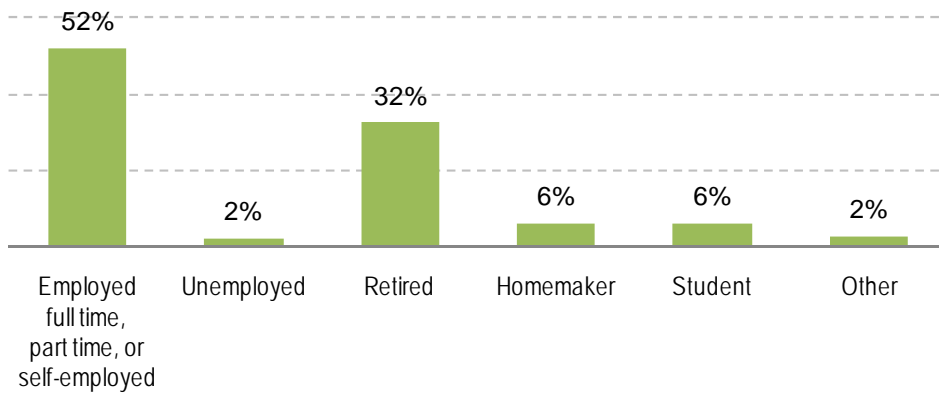
These charts are a snapshot of the people in your congregation that participated in the survey. Consider how the demographics of your worshiping group compare to the wider community that you serve.



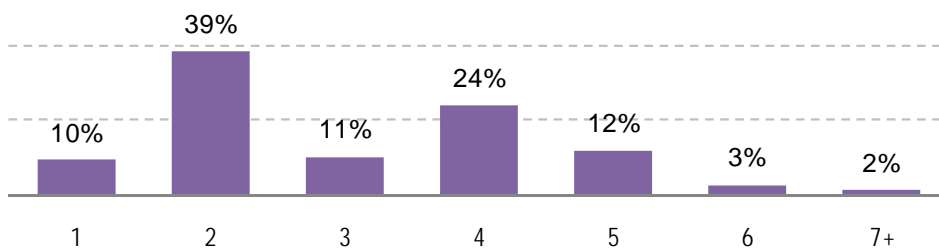
EDUCATION LEVEL



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

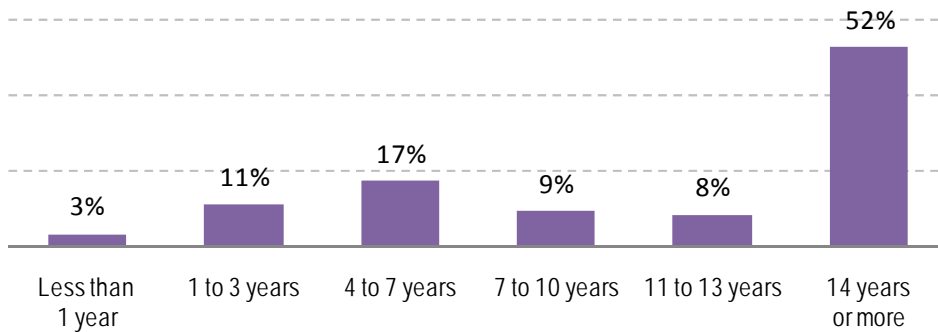


HOUSEHOLD SIZE

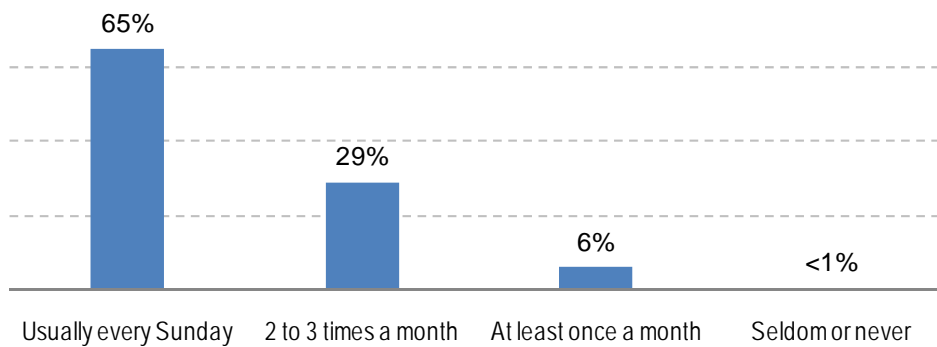


Section 1b: Congregational involvement

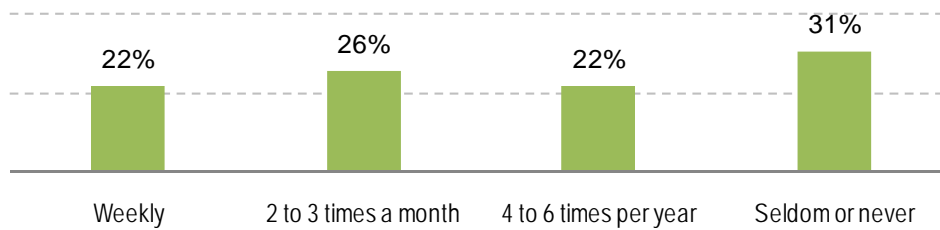
LENGTH IN MEMBERSHIP IN THIS CONGREGATION



MY SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

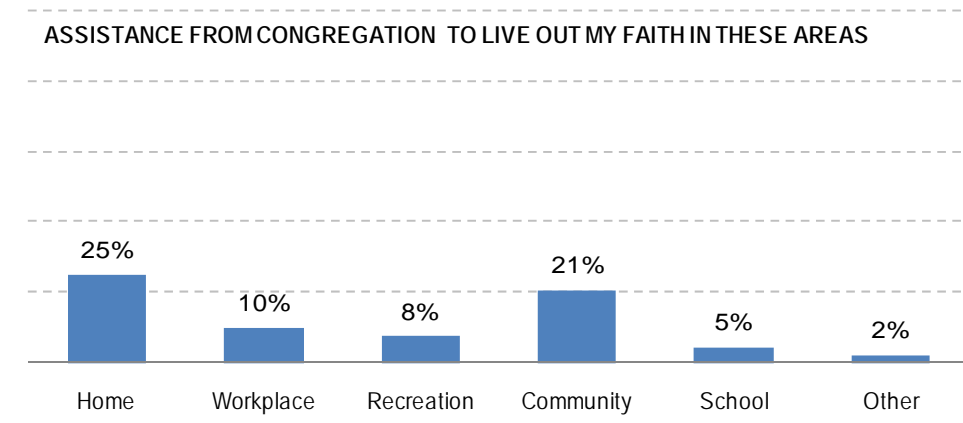
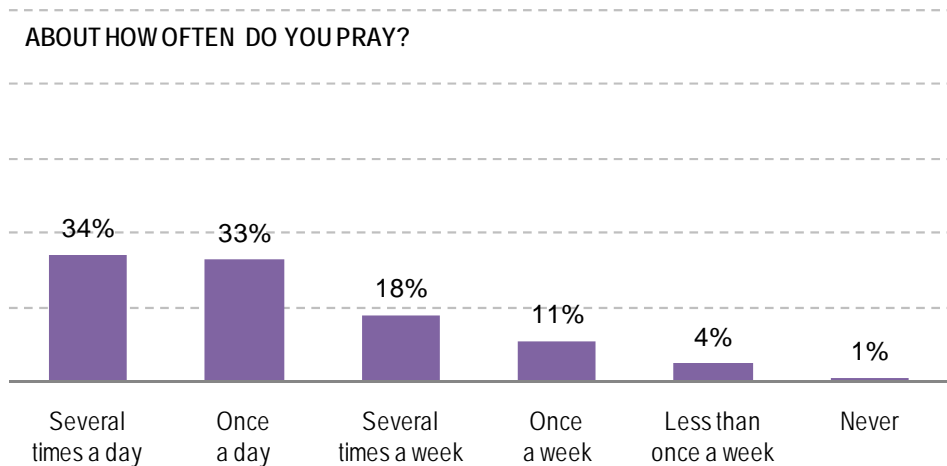


MY PARTICIPATION IN CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES



Section 1c: Living out my faith

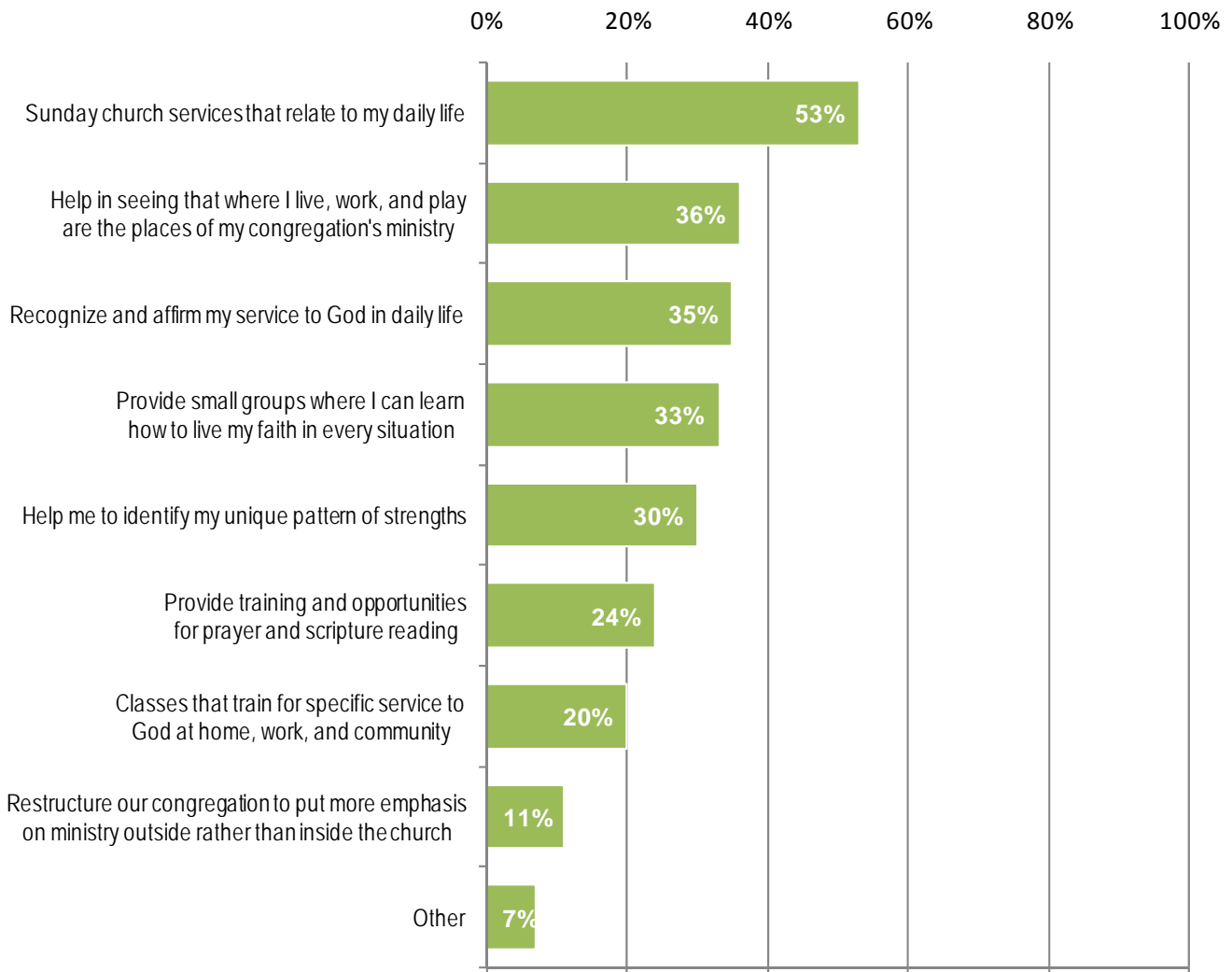
Keep in mind that often people will interpret “living out your faith” as evangelizing, not simply putting your faith in action in these important arenas. As their awareness of vocation increases, you can expect that more people will respond positively to these questions.



I would like assistance from my congregation to more fully live out my faith in these areas: Other:

- World.
- Family life, parenting.
- Continue with all of the support.
- Family.
- Family.
- With friends.
- Support is not given unless you are in the “in crowd”.
- Family outside of the home.

ASSISTANCE FROM CONGREGATION TO LIVE OUT MY FAITH IN THESE WAYS



This is one of the only places on the survey where we ask people what they want. Look at any of the areas with a percentage higher than 30%. This represents well over 100 people. The greatest area of interest is in the area of worship – not surprising since this is where most people are currently participating. This suggests that worship is the place where you can impact the most people. Build on this area of strength. Consider consciousness raising activities that can occur during worship services. Examples are Prayers for Podiatrists, Commissioning of Vocations or Backpack Blessing. These activities will also affirm the callings of your members in their daily lives. All of these can be found in the on-line Activity Toolkit.

Be sure to read the open-ended response to these last two questions. They can provide insight and enhance understanding of the results of the survey questions.

My congregation can provide assistance to help me more fully live out my faith in daily life in these ways: Other:

- I think our ministry team is wonderful and I thank God for them. I see Jesus in them.
- Do not feel called to do more.
- Money doesn't equate to personal involvement. Children are our primary learners by our example. Don't leave to others. Try God.
- Couple's group.
- Small groups that do activities to enjoy Christian fellowship/make new friends.
- I.e. Bible study for couples, women.
- Develop an attitude and feeling of being welcome by all.
- Saturday evening service.
- More active youth group.
- Help church members become closer and become a tighter and more sharing family. Bring out the quieter and reclusive ones and give them opportunity to open up and share.
- Couples club activities and bible share.
- We became members in the last year. We were told we would be contacted throughout our first year to see how we are doing. We have not been contacted once. We also filled out a strengths/interest. We have not heard from anyone yet. Church attendance decreases in summer due to travel.
- More ministry inside church too.
- Evening rather than day church groups/circles. Working full-time prohibits involvement.
- Free. Seems some members are more important than others. Cliques are formed.
- Much more bible readings. More sermons relating to Jesus teachings through the bible.
- Please pay more attention to current members and getting to know them.
- We have great ministers who seem to have good understanding of daily living.
- Build community within church.
- More old testament teaching, bible story preaching, and how these stories matter today.
- Connection with church members.
- Provide study and/or social activities for twenty's age group.
- Provide more opportunities for working empty nesters to interact for fellowship.

Section 2: About me

The assessment tool presented a series of questions in this section; each question corresponds to one of three factors:

- Recognition of gifts and strengths
- Personal faith in action
- Connections with my congregation

The questions are grouped by factor and presented below in rank order from highest to lowest score so you can see at a glance which items scored best.

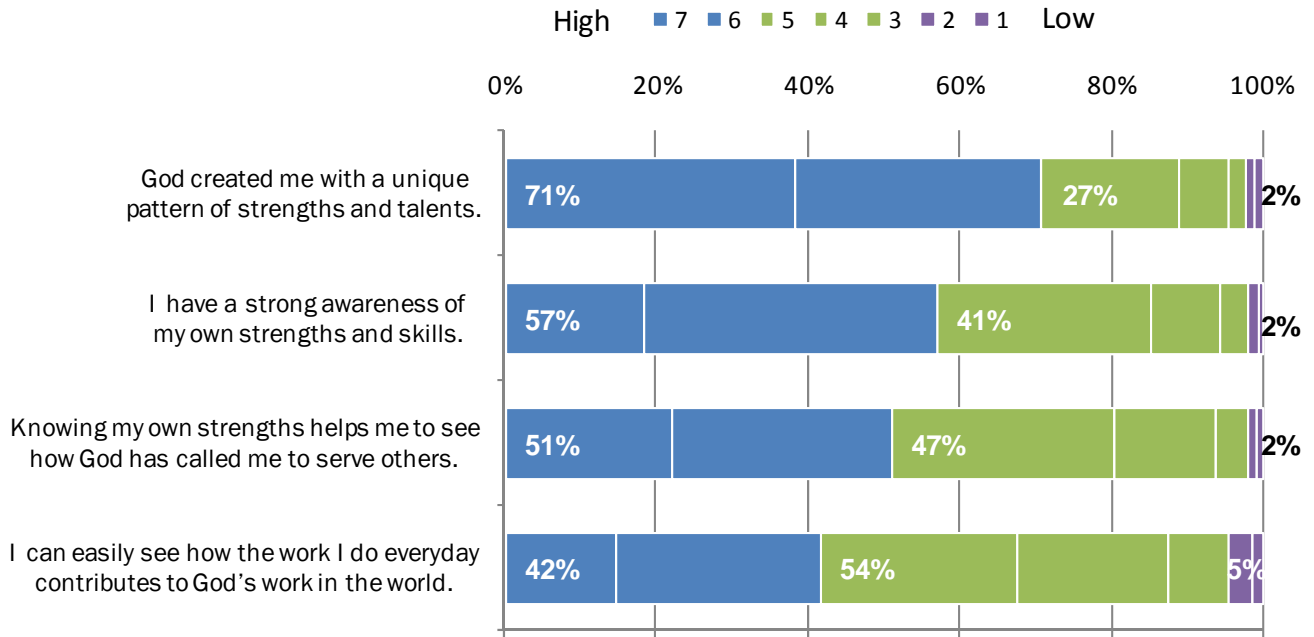
For each question, the bar chart reports the percentage of people who responded to that question from 7 to 1, with 7 = “Agree completely” and 1 = “Disagree completely”.

- Blue is the combined percentage of 6 and 7 responses (strongly agree)
- Green is the combined percentage of 5, 4 and 3 responses
- Purple is the combined percentage of 2 and 1 responses (strongly disagree)

As you read the results, consider, “Is this where we would like to see the scores for our congregation members, or should they be higher?”

Consider the green areas of the chart as opportunity for improvement. Ask, “What would we like to change, do more of, or do differently in the future to make significant improvement to our scores?”

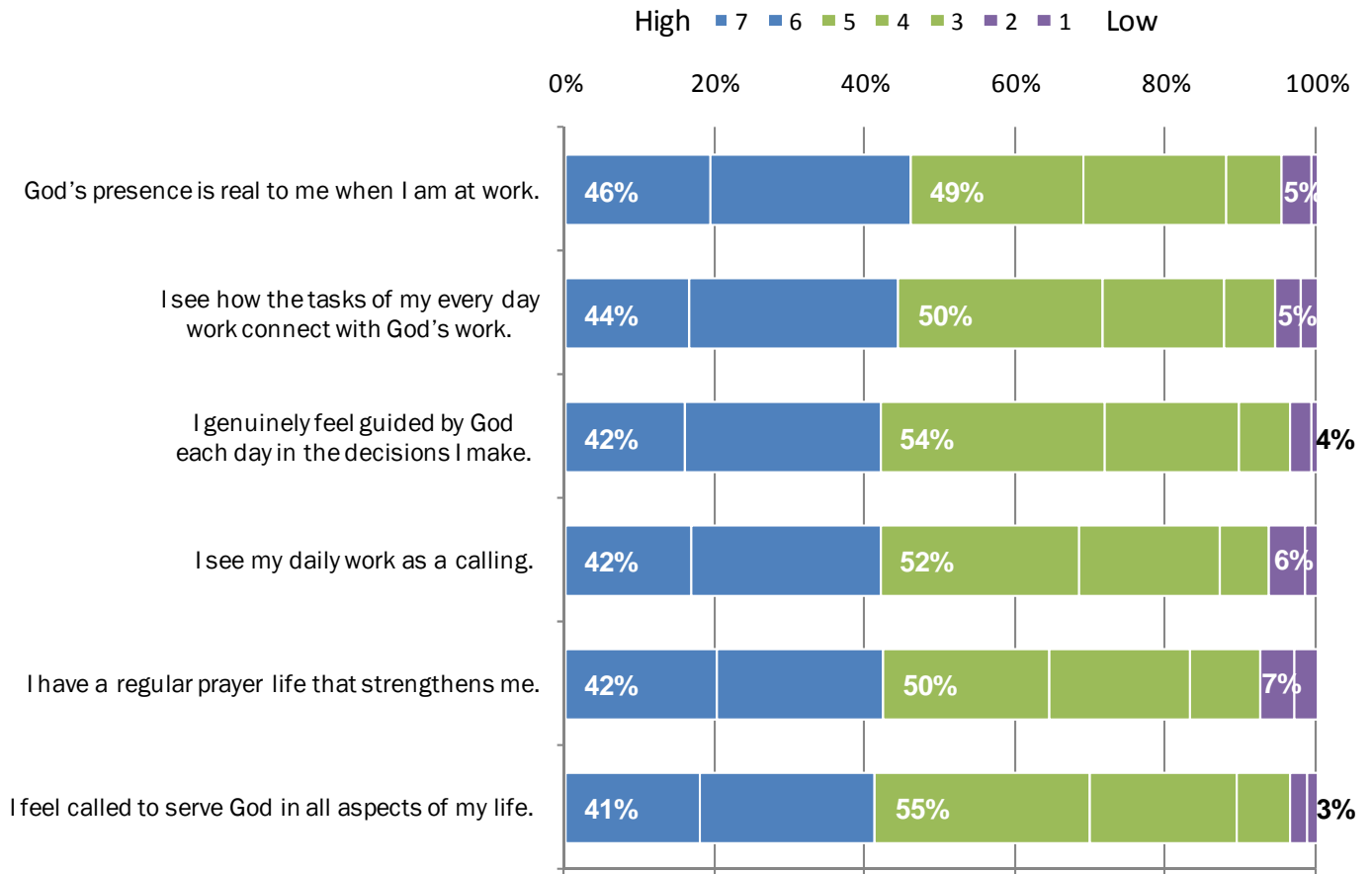
a. Recognition of gifts and strengths



While members strongly agree that God created them with a unique pattern of strengths and talents, fewer are able to claim their strengths and translate that to an understanding of their own vocation. Knowing gifts and strengths connects people with a sense of purpose.

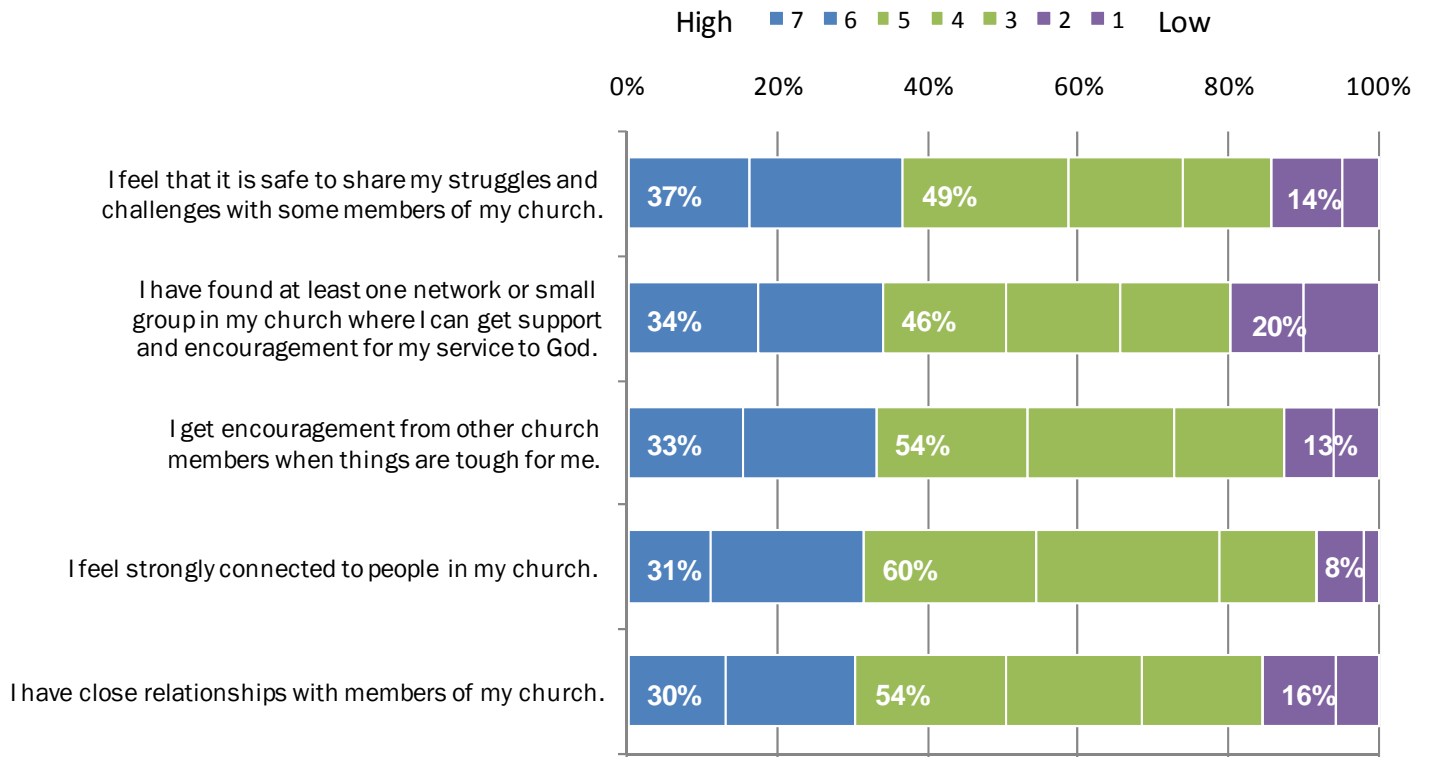
Members of your congregation would likely benefit from having a deeper understanding of what their unique pattern of strengths is and how God can use them in all the places that they already are - workplaces, at home, in leisure activities and in their community. The Discover Your Call workshops could be helpful to this. Another excellent resource for individual or group study is Parker Palmer's book "Let Your Life Speak."

b. Personal faith in action



Results here indicate that there is an opportunity to remind people, in ways small and large, that they have a calling in Christ. Nearly 60% of regular worshipers do not strongly connect their faith with their daily life through a sense of God's active presence, a regular prayer life and an awareness of their callings. Awareness of baptismal call brings greater fulfillment to people as they view their daily work as Christian calling, are able to actively discern God's presence and activity in the world and more fully integrate their faith into all aspects of life. Congregations support this through worship, small groups and educational opportunities that relate to the particular challenges of daily life.

c. Connections with my congregation



More than half of the people of Trinity do not have strong connections with others in the congregation. Strong relationships among members of the congregation can be a great source of encouragement and accountability as people learn from each other what it means to connect their faith with their daily lives. Too often people think they need to bring only their “Sunday best” to church. God loves us and meets us as we are and where we are. Our congregations can be a conduit of Christ’s love and grace to hurting people in our community and our pews. Small groups are usually the places where members learn how to care for and support each other in their daily walk with Christ. The best small group experiences are those that draw out life stories and experiences, provide a biblical context for people to work out their questions with each other and where people have a commitment to serving others.

Section 3: About my church

The assessment tool presented a series of questions that relate to the congregation in this section; each question corresponds to one of two factors:

- Empowering through worship and teaching
- Organizing to equip and send

The questions are grouped by factor and presented below in rank order from highest to lowest score so you can see at a glance which items scored best.

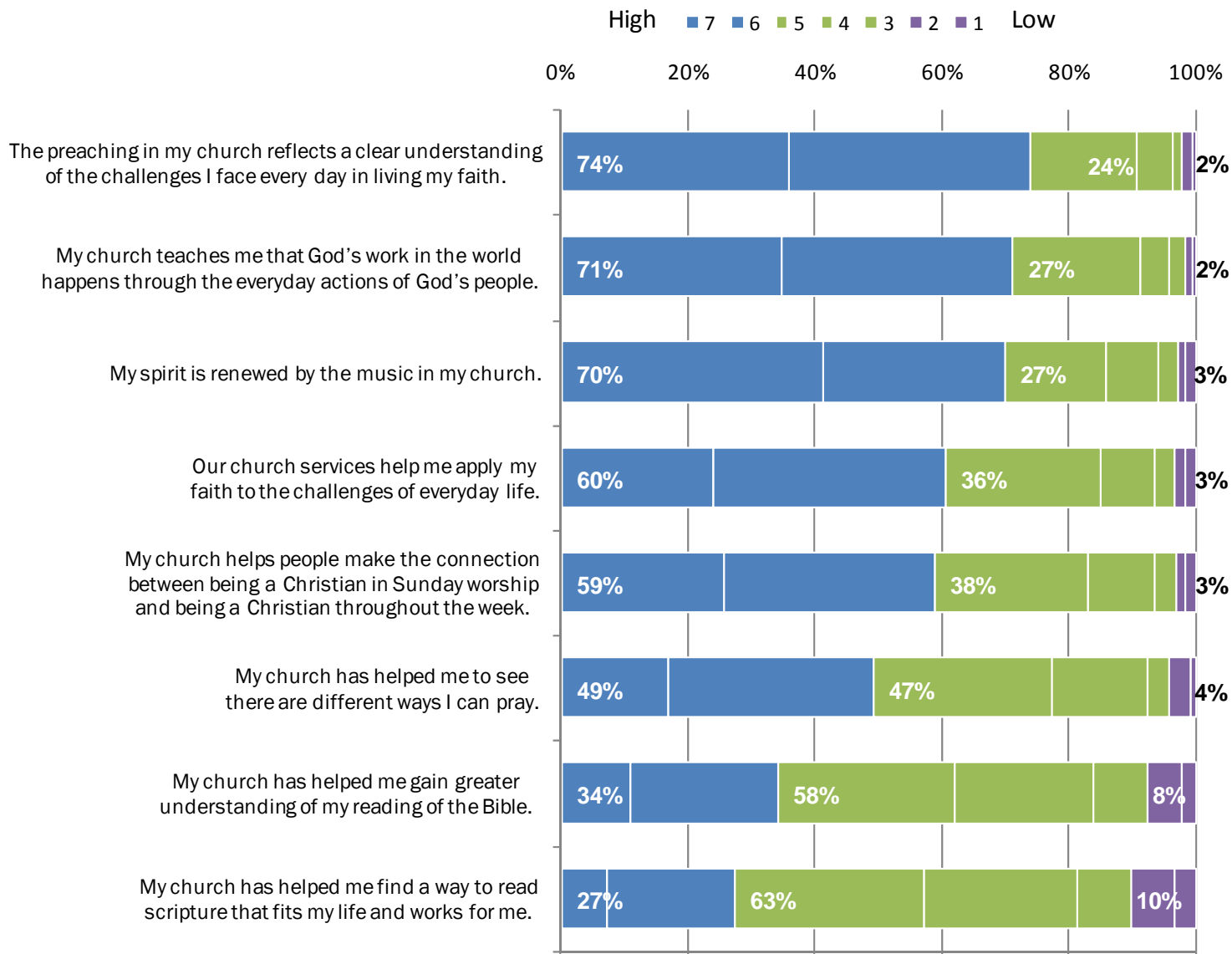
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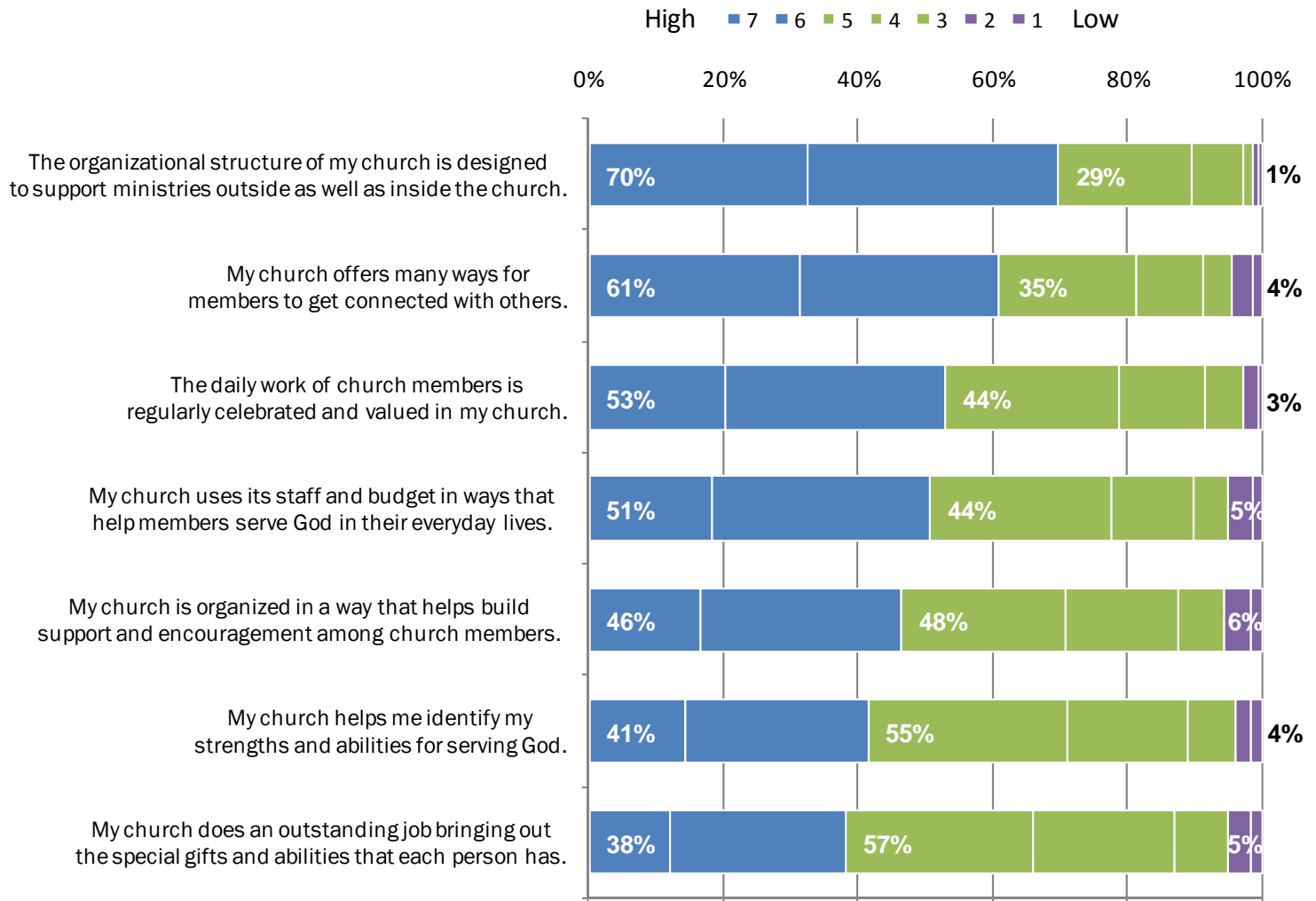
a. Empowering through worship and teaching



Results indicate that worship and preaching at Trinity are strengths. To build on this, Trinity can seek to further make worship relevant to daily living with active involvement by lay people in the shaping of the worship services. All of God's people can plan, preach, lead and serve the elements. The aim is to make worship the work of the people of God where members are active participants, not a passive audience. (See Meaningful Worship Pathway under Phase 6 on the Centered Life member website.)

Faith Practices is an area in need of strengthening in most Lutheran congregations. Many people are confused by the Bible and aren't sure how to pray. Teaching people to practice daily prayer and equipping them to understand the Bible will reap benefits for them individually and for the entire congregation. Check out the Faith Practices activities in the Centered Life website, the ELCA Book of Faith initiative (<http://www.elca.org/bookoffaith>) and Luther Productions resources on prayer and the scriptures. (<http://lutherproductions.com>).

b. Organizing to equip and send



Survey results indicate a strong emphasis on mission and ministry in the world. Also, overall satisfaction among members is high with regard to Trinity' efforts to equip them for their callings in daily life. You are doing a lot of things right! Continue to find ways to strengthen support and accountability among members through small groups. The best groups are those that have elements of mission and community – places where people are welcomed, cared for and nurtured in faith and where they are inspired for service to the world through meaningful ministries. Sustaining strong small groups requires a commitment of time and money from the congregation. Also, consider training one or more facilitators in the Discover Your Call (Dependable Strengths®) process which uses small groups and personal reflection to help people to identify their unique pattern of strengths and builds community among members.

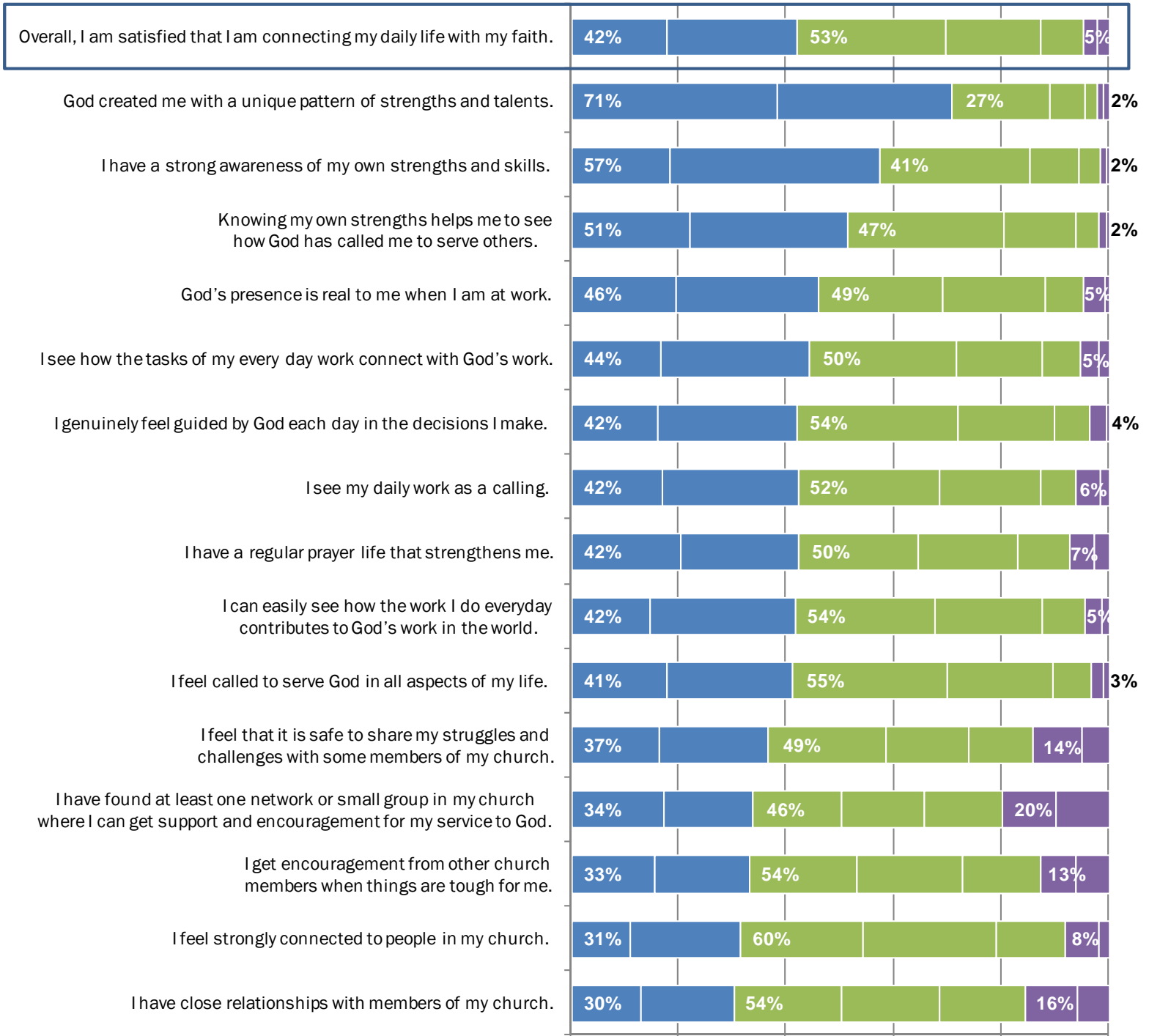
Section 4: Overall satisfaction & summary

This section of the report includes all questions from the About Me and About My Church on one page each. The questions are ordered from highest to lowest scores to allow for an easy comparison of items. Also included is the overall satisfaction question for each category.

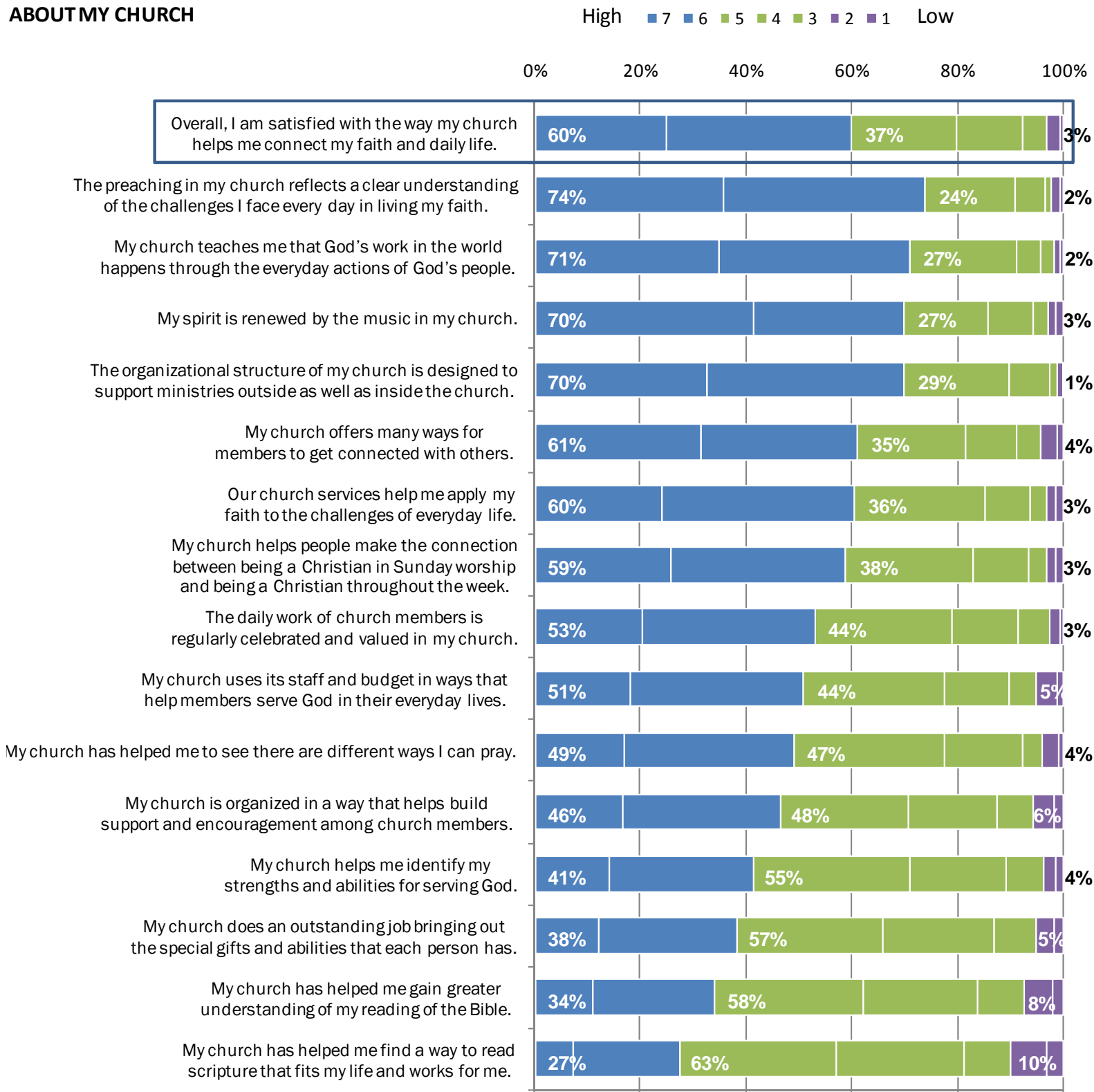
ABOUT ME

High 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Low

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%



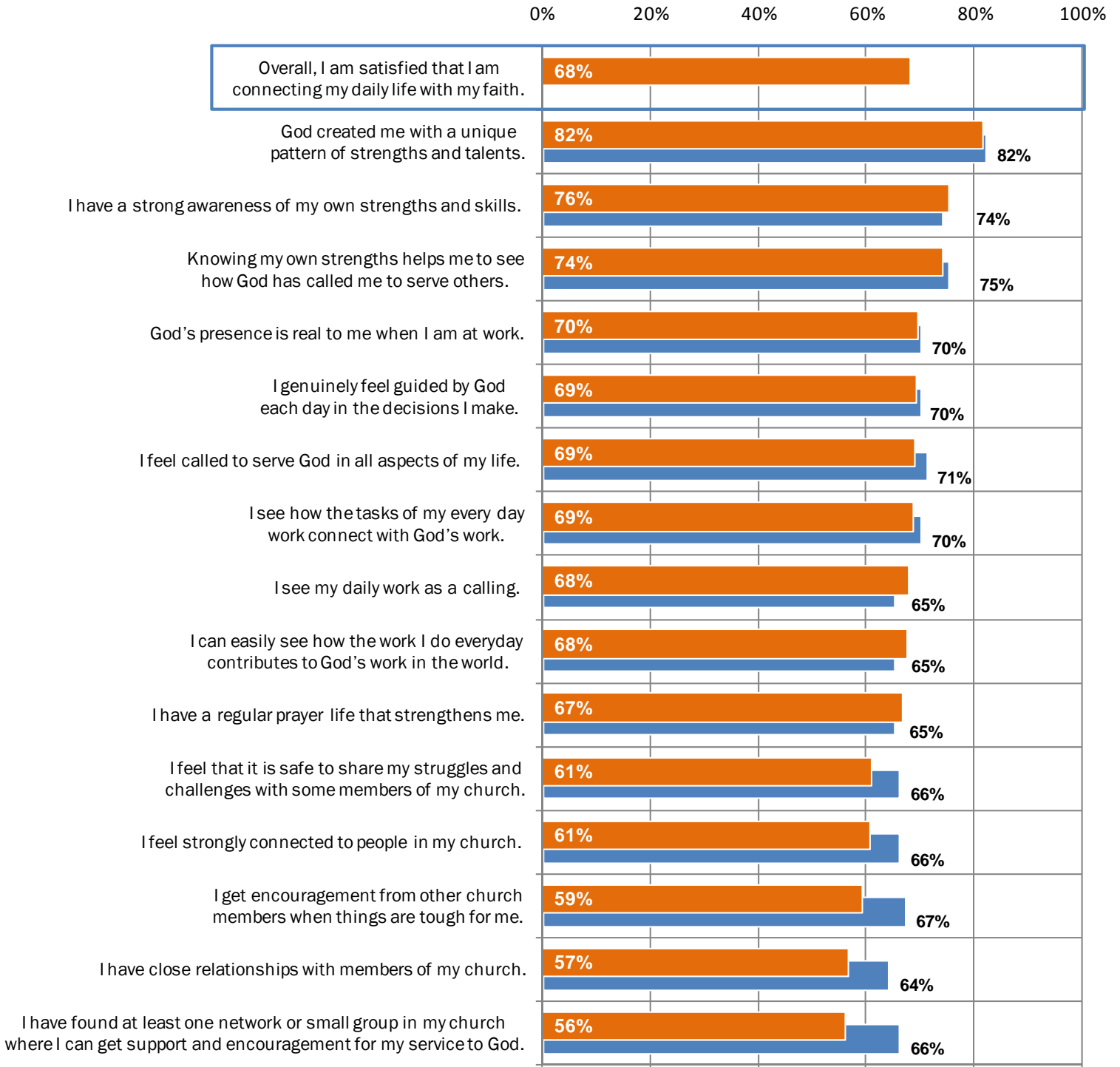
ABOUT MY CHURCH



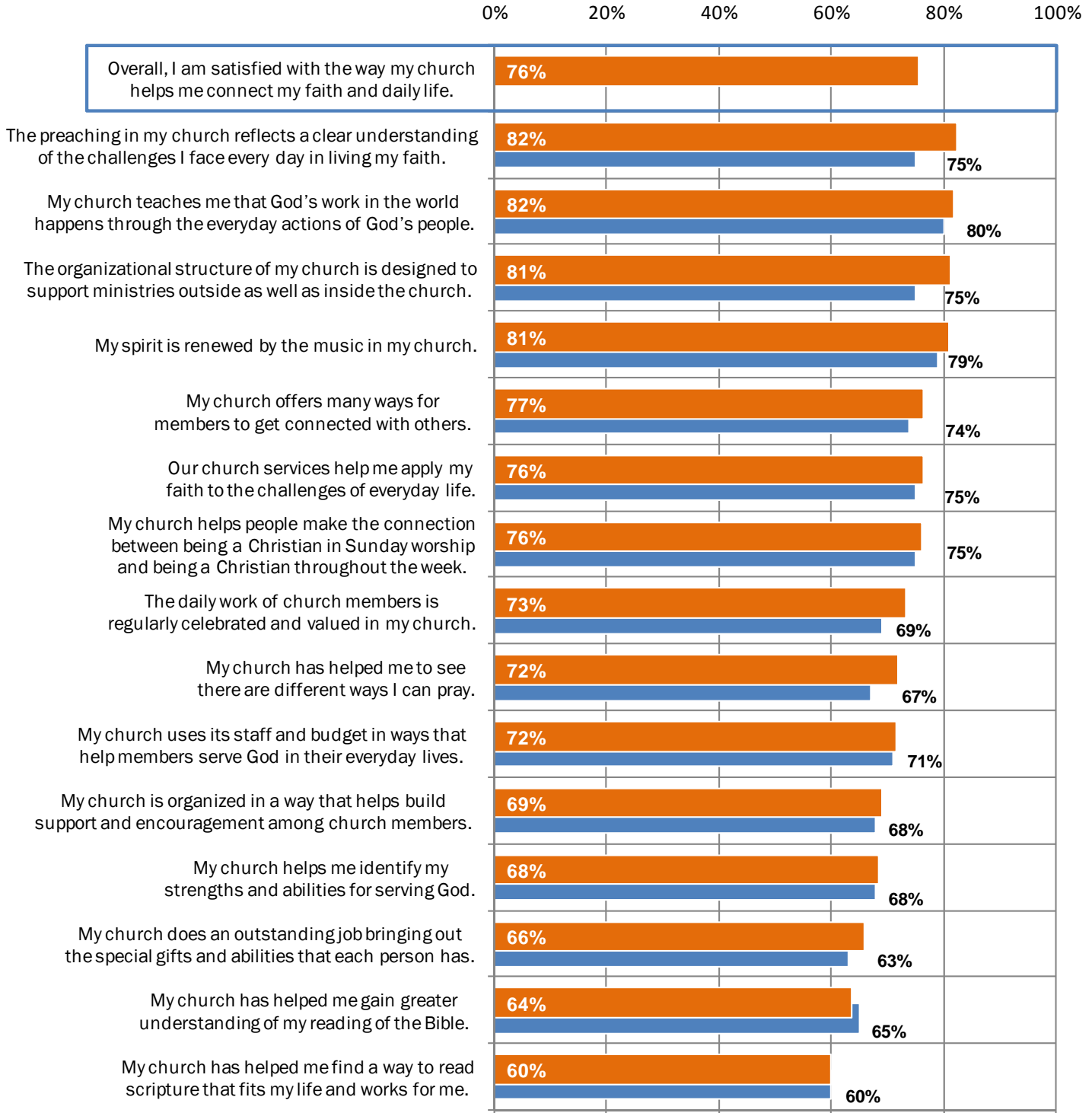
Section 5a: Mean & norm comparisons

This section provides a mean score for all questions expressed as a percentage. The questions are organized by About Me and About My Church and are ordered from highest to lowest. The blue line shows the mean score for a large sample of churches that have previously answered these questions.

ABOUT ME



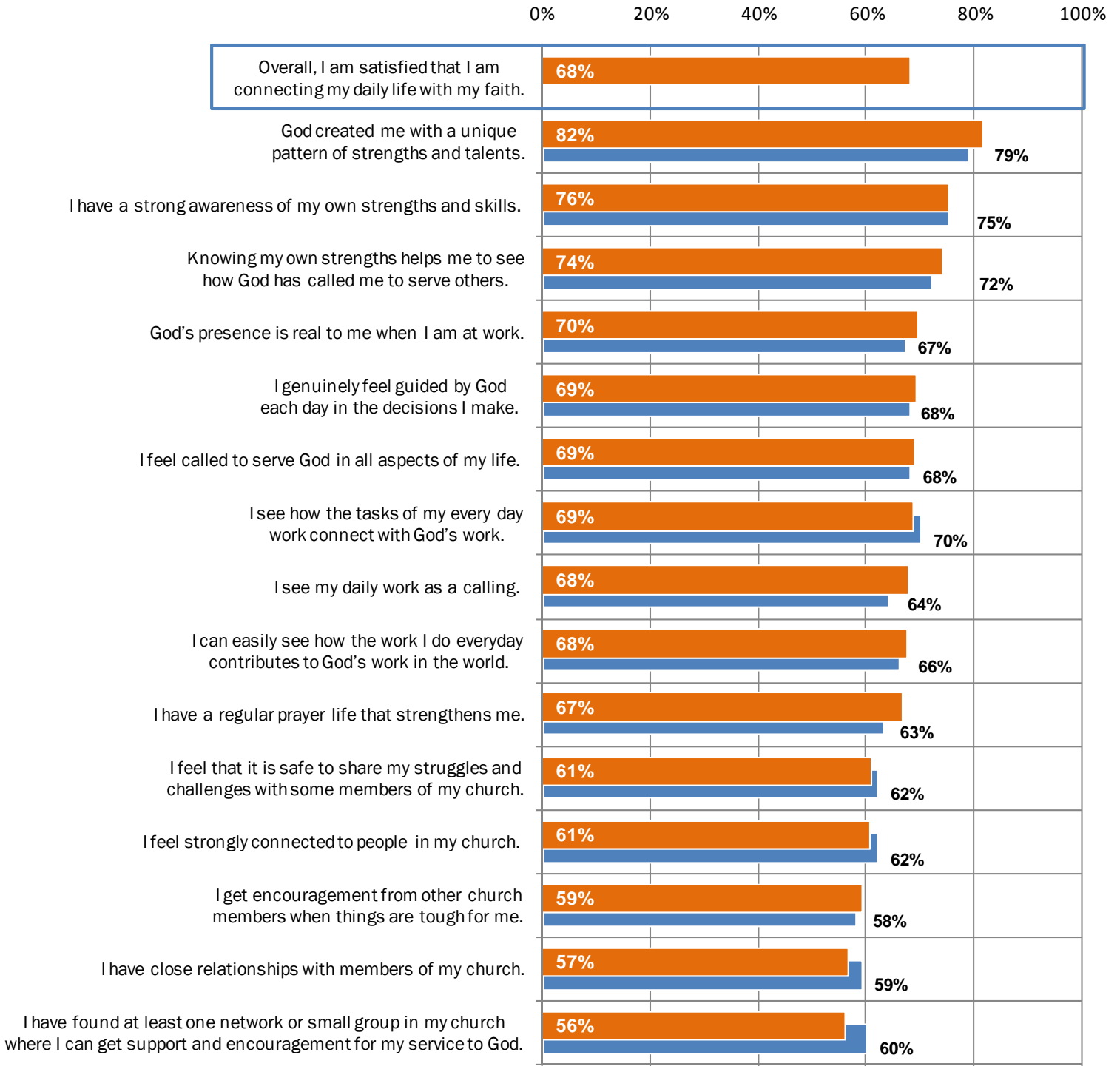
ABOUT MY CHURCH



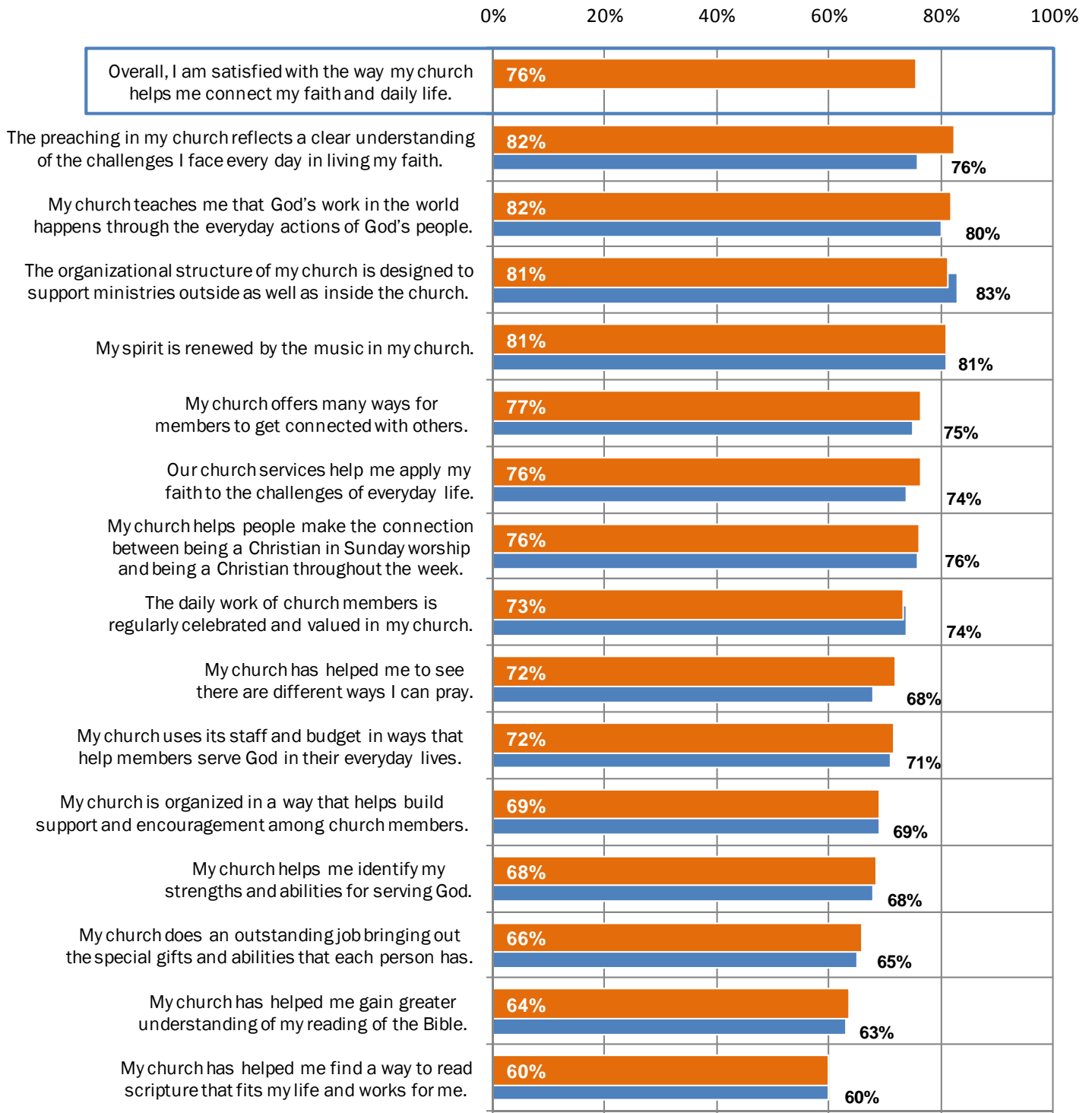
Section 5b: Mean & norm comparisons

This section provides a mean score for all questions expressed as a percentage. The questions are organized by About Me and About My Church and are ordered from highest to lowest. The blue line shows the mean score for the same question in Trinity's 2005 survey.

ABOUT ME



ABOUT MY CHURCH



Final Comments

Two new questions have been added to the most recent update of the assessment. One relates to member's satisfaction that they are personally connecting their faith with their daily life; the other is a rating of their satisfaction with the church's support in making the connection. The gap between responses suggests that they see the church as a place that equips them, but the connection is not fully made to their personal faith. This is not surprising. A renewed emphasis on daily callings requires a long term commitment in congregation. For some people, the connection is clear, others will need more time to see their daily callings as a means to fulfillment and a richer, more holistic life.

The assessment results indicate that a foundation has been laid and with a sustained commitment, the church will grow through God's activity in the lives of the people of this church in all the places they are vested – their homes, workplaces and communities. To that end, specific recommendations include:

1. Consider the use of the Discover Your Call workshops as a means of helping people connect with their strengths and gifts
2. Create opportunities for people to strengthen their personal faith practices, specifically prayer and scripture reading.
3. Commit to the development of small groups; increase emphasis on mission among existing small groups.

Using the Results

Now that you have reviewed the assessment report, you are ready to present the results to your congregation. Return to the Manual for information and tools to help you with this next step.

Once you have presented the results to your congregation, you will be moving into the implementation phase. The implementation phase utilizes the results of the Centered Life Congregational Assessment to help you choose resources and activities to carry out over the coming months.