

CHURCH STREET  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“Covid-19 Check-In” Survey

Report of Findings

June 9, 2020

## BACKGROUND

Invitation to respond emailed to church's database on May 20, 2020

Invitation also announced via Messenger on May 22, 2020

Survey closed to responses on June 1, 2020

N = 356 documented responses  
(349 via email, 7 via written/hard-copy questionnaire)

93% of respondents are current members. An additional 5% regularly attend but are not members

NOTE: This sample of respondents should not be considered statistically representative of the church's membership as a whole. Rather, it is a convenience sample of people who opted to respond to the survey. Nevertheless, the number of respondents provides an acceptable base for statistical comparisons among all those who participated.

# CONTENTS

Topline summary - Findings in brief: Page 4

Respondents' intent to re-gather for worship: Pages 5-7

Respondents' acceptance of precautions for in-person worship: Pages 8-11

Respondents' participation in online worship, online meetings and other offerings by the church: Pages 12-18

Respondents' opinions about when to re-gather: Pages 19-22

Affects of pandemic on respondents' well-being: Pages 23-25

Spiritual growth during the pandemic: Pages 26-27

Highlights of respondents' verbatim comments to request for additional feedback: Pages 28-32

## FINDINGS IN BRIEF

- A critical mass of worshipers exists for in-person worship, contingent on safety precautions for some
- These interested worshipers express favorable willingness and acceptance of precautions for in-person worship, including - -

Mask use

Temperature checks

Pre-registration and  
assigned seating

Alternative worship  
days/times

Temporary suspension  
of children and youth  
ministries/programs

Social distancing

Limitations on  
passing/touching objects

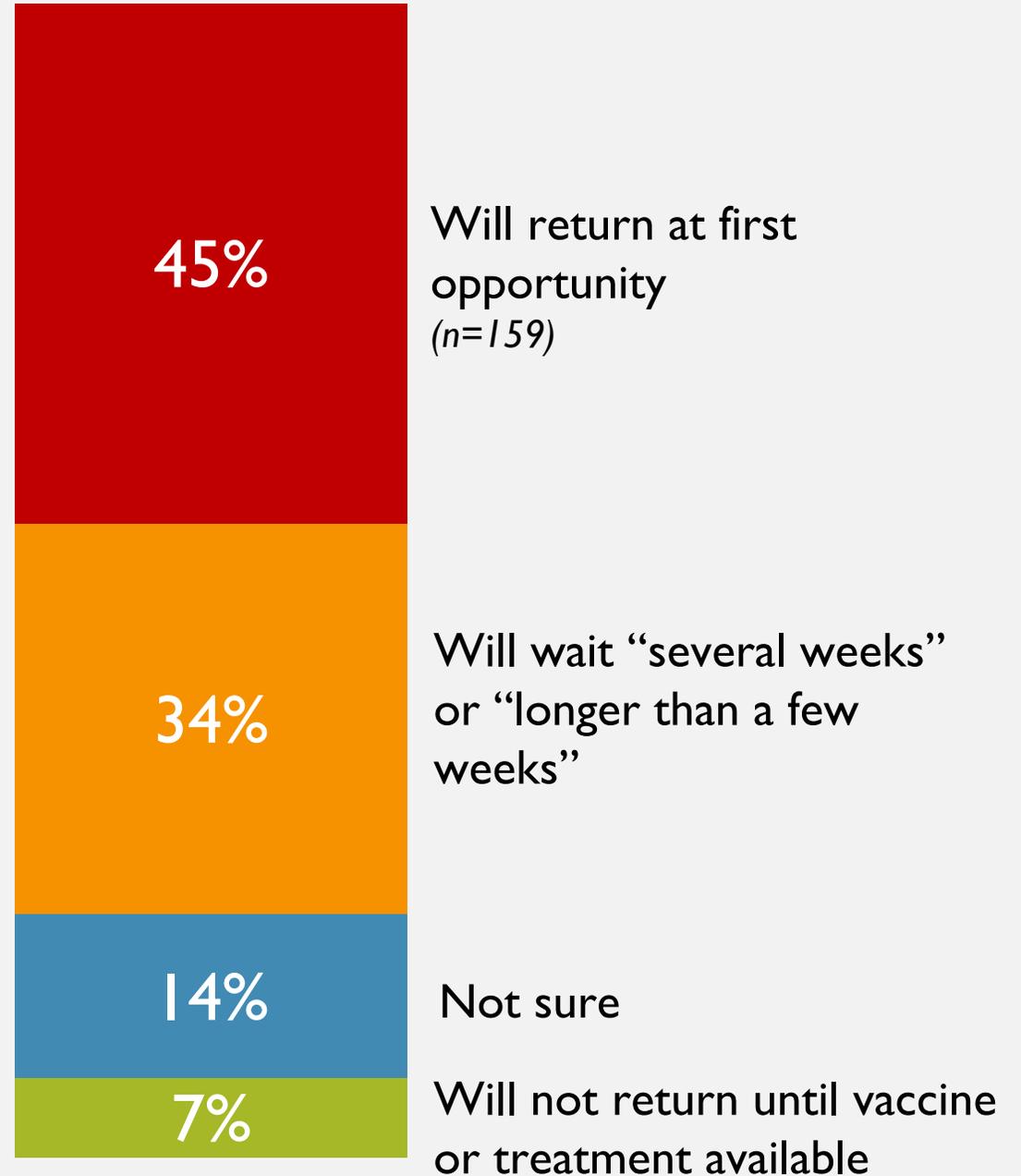
As well as other precautions

- There has been widespread viewership of online worship services, but less so of other online meetings/events
- Most viewing of online worship services has centered on Church Street, vis-à-vis other churches
- Rev. Jan Buxton-Wade's daily prayers have been widely followed
- Music events and spiritual enrichment services lead a list of several other desired online offerings
- The best indicator of when to resume in-person worship should be science-linked information (vs. economic signals)
- There is no apparent desire to rush resumption of in-person worship
- Indicators suggest the pandemic has had adverse effects on people's mental health, financial stress and job stability
- More than half of respondents claimed spiritual growth during the pandemic.

## Attending in-person worship when permissible

### FINDINGS:

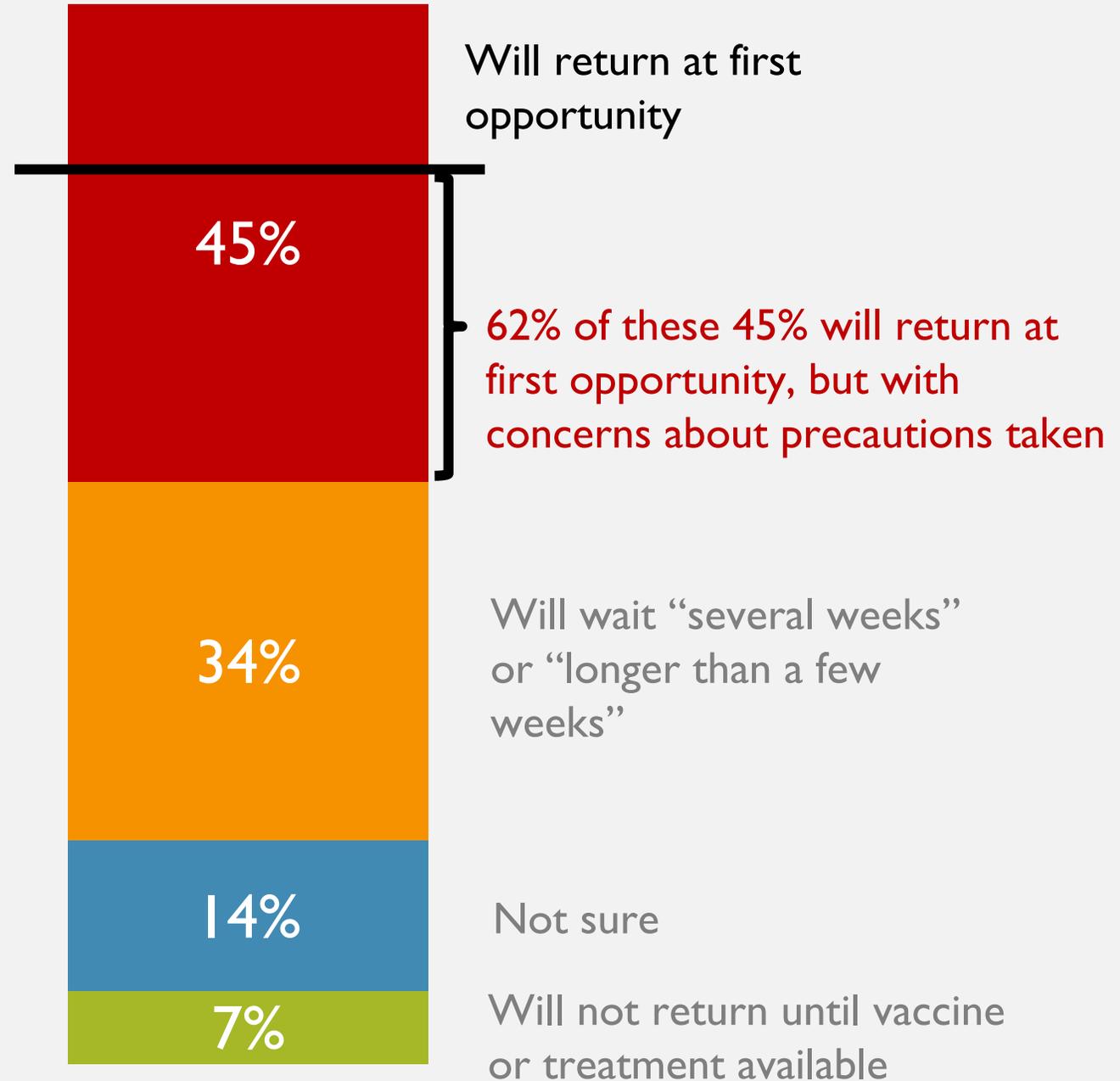
CRITICAL MASS  
EXISTS TO SUPPORT  
IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP



FINDINGS:

CRITICAL MASS  
EXISTS TO SUPPORT  
IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP,  
CONTINGENT ON  
PRECAUTIONS  
FOR SOME

Attending in-person worship when permissible



FINDINGS:

CRITICAL MASS  
EXISTS TO SUPPORT  
IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP,  
CONTINGENT ON  
PRECAUTIONS  
FOR SOME

## Commentary

- 159 respondents noted intentions to “return at the first opportunity” for in-person worship. Given that the pool of survey respondents represents less than 20% of the church’s full membership, it’s plausible to expect additional people to share that intention, although they did not participate in the survey. Conceivably, at least 150 people -- and most likely more than this -- would attend worship when services recommence.
- Degrees of reticence about attending are apparent, but the vast majority of respondents plan to start attending at some point after in-person worship services begin.
- A reasonable expectation is that even those who are apprehensive initially will begin attending as they observe other family/acquaintances attending, and as many other churches start “re-opening.”
- An obvious, yet unmeasured, factor that could negate these findings is a significant resurgence of the virus.

FINDINGS:  
ACCEPTANCE OF  
PRECAUTIONS  
GENERALLY  
FAVORABLE FOR  
IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP

*Mask use*



*Temperature check*



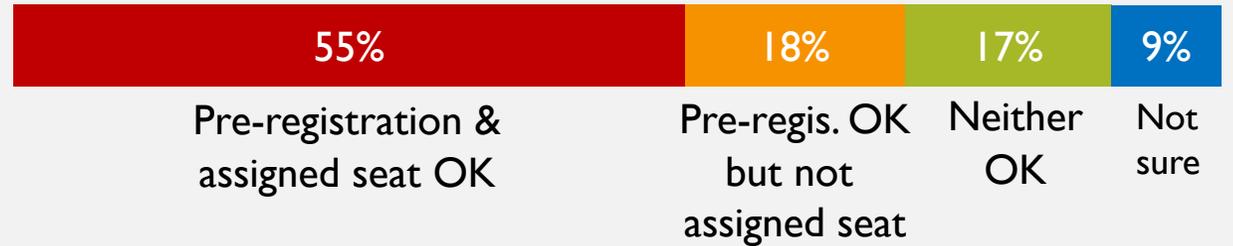
*Alternative worship days/times*



*(continued on next page)*

FINDINGS:  
ACCEPTANCE OF  
PRECAUTIONS  
GENERALLY  
FAVORABLE FOR  
IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP

*Pre-registration and assigned seating*



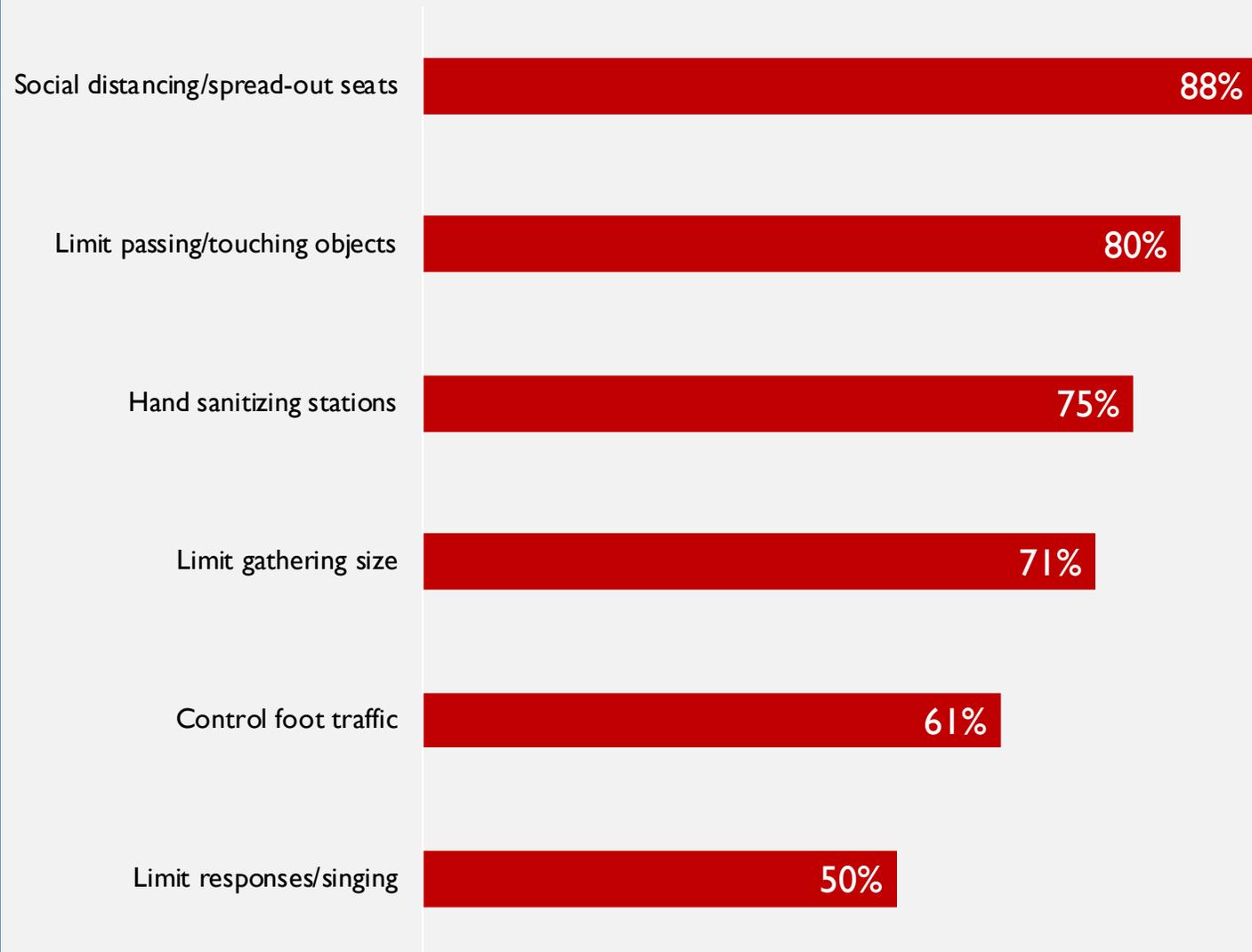
*Children and youth ministries*



FINDINGS:  
ACCEPTANCE OF  
PRECAUTIONS  
GENERALLY  
FAVORABLE FOR  
IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP  
(ALBEIT, LIMITATIONS TO  
AUDIBLE RESPONSES &  
SINGING LESS ACCEPTABLE)

## Precaution priorities

Total exceeds 100% due to multiple responses



Note: in verbatim responses, 4 people wrote, “no limits,” “return to normal,” etc.

FINDINGS:  
ACCEPTANCE OF  
PRECAUTIONS  
GENERALLY  
FAVORABLE FOR  
IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP  
(ALBEIT, LIMITATIONS TO  
AUDIBLE RESPONSES &  
SINGING LESS ACCEPTABLE)

## Commentary

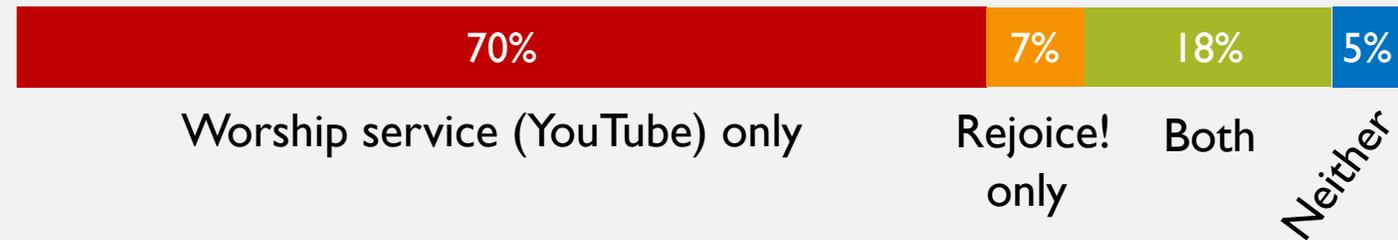
- As long as the virus persists and is communicable, people appear to be willing to adhere to limitations, precautions and other stipulations for in-person gatherings.
- Singing and vocal responses will still be desired by many, and consideration should be given to reasonable, yet safe, ways to incorporate these into worship.

FINDINGS:

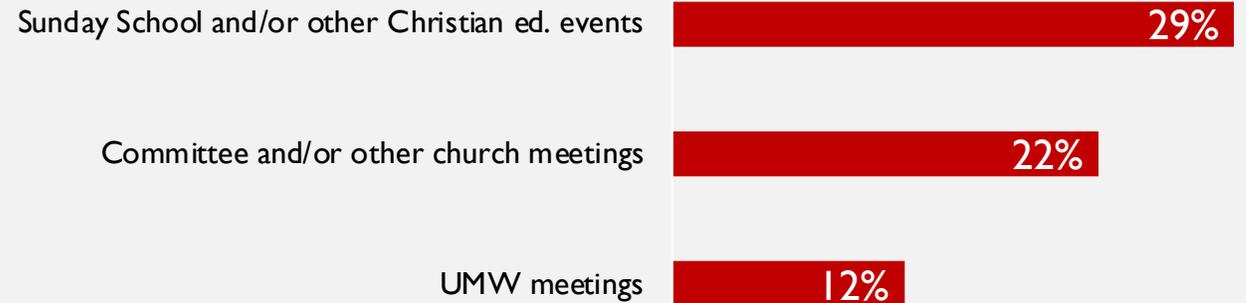
WIDESPREAD  
VIEWERSHIP OF  
ONLINE WORSHIP,  
BUT LESS SO OF  
OTHER ONLINE  
MEETINGS/  
EVENTS

*Worship services & Rejoice!*

95% have watched the worship service (YouTube) and/or Rejoice!



*Other meetings & events*



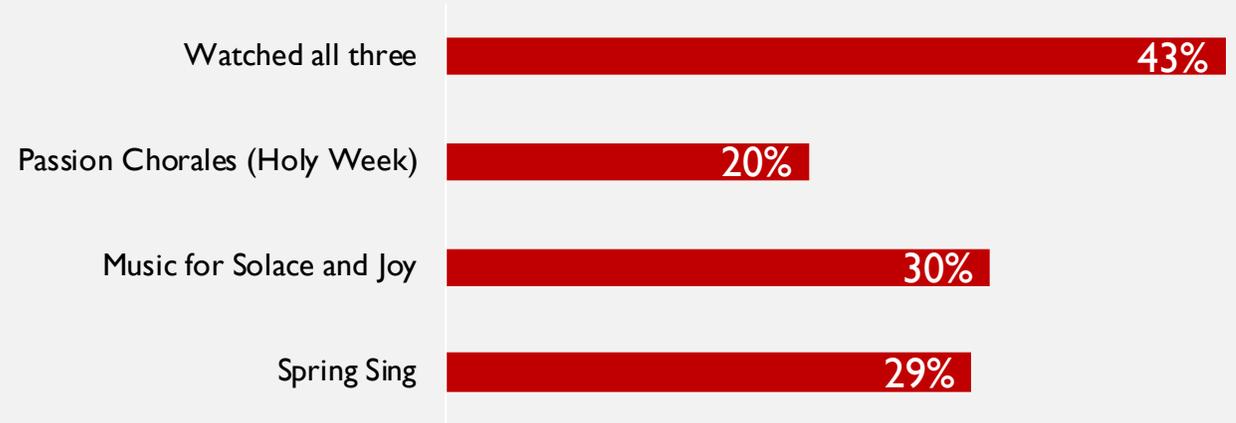
*(continued on next page)*

FINDINGS:  
WIDESPREAD  
VIEWERSHIP OF  
ONLINE WORSHIP,  
BUT LESS SO OF  
OTHER ONLINE  
MEETINGS/  
EVENTS

## Master Arts Series music presentations

55% watched at least one or more of the three events.

Of this group - -



## Monday & Thursday devotions

34% watched at least one or more of the devotions



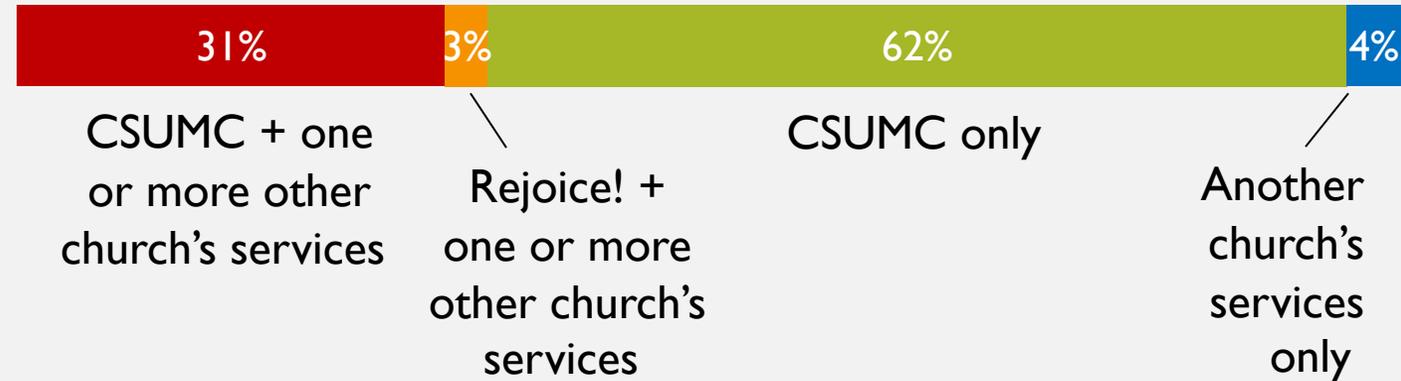
FINDINGS:  
WIDESPREAD  
VIEWERSHIP OF  
ONLINE WORSHIP,  
BUT LESS SO OF  
OTHER ONLINE  
MEETINGS/  
EVENTS

## Commentary

- Among the respondents to this survey, a worship experience -- even online, because it cannot be in-person -- is significant and presumed to be of highest importance.
- Rejoice!, though viewed by fewer people than the YouTube worship service telecasts, plays a key role in the overall worship opportunity, especially for people who do not use or underutilize the Internet.
- Although viewership of other online meetings and events is somewhat less than worship, the broader array of other events, meetings and online gatherings collectively provide opportunities for more rounded church engagement.
- The online music events, in particular, represent the second-most viewed online offerings by the church. This underscores the high value of the music ministry during these challenging times.

FINDINGS:  
MOST ONLINE  
WORSHIP  
“ATTENDANCE”  
CENTERED ON  
CHURCH STREET

*Online viewing of services from other churches*



**Commentary**

- Among nearly all survey respondents, Church Street is the primary source for worship

## FINDINGS:

# REV. JAN WADE'S DAILY PRAYERS WIDELY FOLLOWED

### *Reading of Pastor Jan's prayers*

95% read her prayers at least "a few times."

56% read them "all the time."



### *Reading of Pastor Jan's prayers*

*among sub-group of respondents\* who "have grown spiritually" during stay-at-home orders*

98% read her prayers at least "a few times."

70% read them "all the time."



\* In a separate survey question, 56% of respondents said they had "grown spiritually during the stay-at-home guidelines/orders of the pandemic" (n=197)

## Commentary

- In addition to online worship opportunities, Rev. Jan Wade's daily BINDING SOUL AND SOURCE prayers have been widely noticed and read.
- People's attentiveness to these prayers appear to have a correlation to their spiritual nourishment and growth, based on the higher percentages of prayer following among people who responded "Yes" to the question, "Have you grown spiritually during the stay-at-home guidelines/order of the pandemic?"

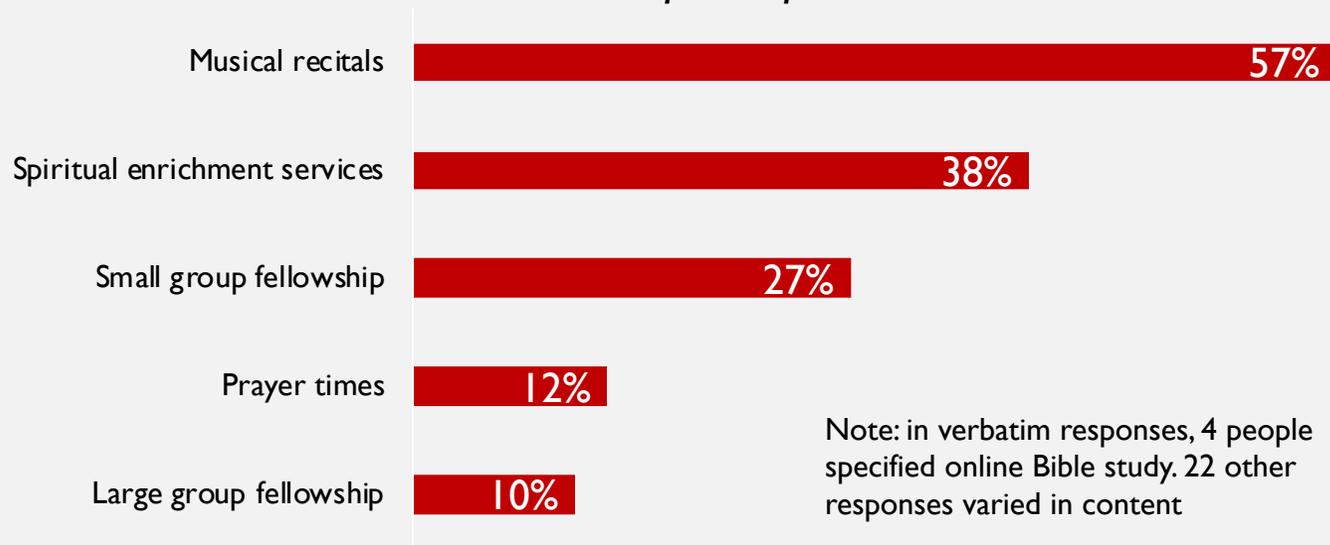
### FINDINGS:

REV. JAN WADE'S  
DAILY PRAYERS  
WIDELY  
FOLLOWED

FINDINGS:  
MUSIC EVENTS AND  
SPIRITUAL  
ENRICHMENT  
SERVICES  
LEAD A LIST OF  
SEVERAL DESIRED  
ONLINE OFFERINGS

## Preferences for “other online offerings”

Total exceeds 100% due to multiple responses



### Commentary

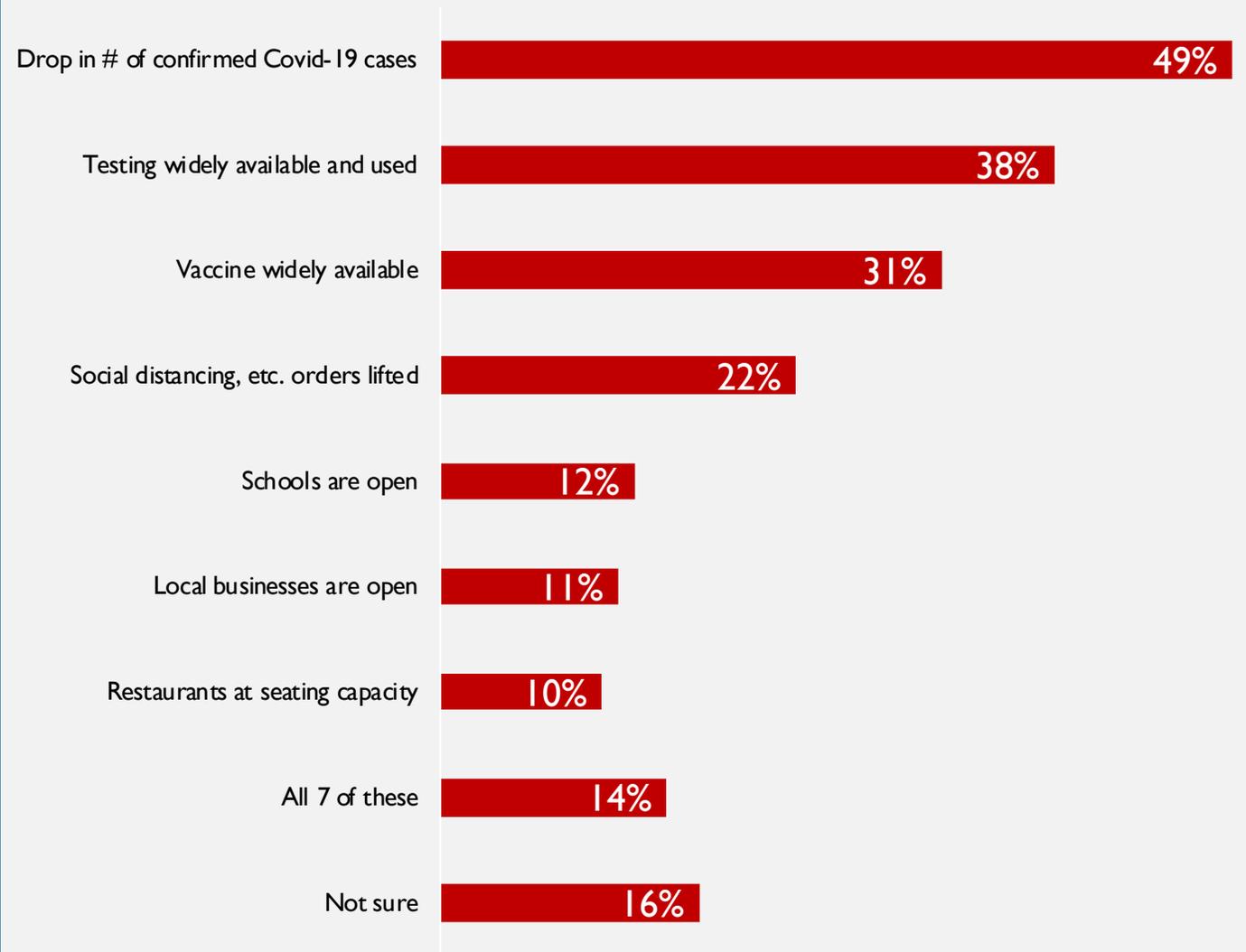
- In addition to other particular findings in the survey, the importance and spiritual value of music are clearly underscored with the responses to this survey question.
- Worthy of note: Only 62% of all respondents answered this question (the lowest response rate for all in the survey, except the final open-ended one). This may indicate that many people are generally satisfied with the current online offerings.

FINDINGS:

RE-OPENING:  
SCIENCE-LINKED  
INFO (VS.  
ECONOMIC  
SIGNALS) WILL BE  
BEST INDICATORS  
OF WHEN TO  
RESUME IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP

*“Best signal to you” that it is time to re-open for in-person worship*

*Total exceeds 100% due to multiple responses*



FINDINGS:  
RE-OPENING:  
SCIENCE-LINKED  
INFO (VS.  
ECONOMIC  
SIGNALS) WILL BE  
BEST INDICATORS  
OF WHEN TO  
RESUME IN-PERSON  
WORSHIP

## Commentary

- Within the context of (1) the reticence reflected in the findings related to attending in-person worship when permissible, and (2) people's willingness to attend worship while adhering to various precautions, the findings for this particular question further echo their intent to mitigate and neutralize risks with resumption of group gatherings.

FINDINGS:  
RE-OPENING:  
NO DESIRE  
TO RUSH

## *Preferred scenario when conference gives OK to resume gatherings*

Resume limited in-person worship, limited small groups, and continue online offerings

35%

Keep all activities online only; wait to see what happens with the virus as others re-open

23%

Resume in-person services immediately; continue online worship for those who cannot attend

20%

Meet in smaller groups or size-limited gatherings for a few more weeks before resuming in-person worship

9%

Not sure

12%

FINDINGS:  
RE-OPENING:  
NO DESIRE  
TO RUSH

### Commentary

- Although a total of 55% (35% + 20%) of respondents prefer the resumption of in-person services, no strong undercurrent is apparent for starting, per this question's findings plus the context of other findings in the survey.

Respondents were asked to self-rate their pre-pandemic and current perceptions of **physical health** and **mental health** on a 1-to-5 scale

FINDINGS:

INDICATIONS OF PANDEMIC HAVING ADVERSE EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH, FINANCIAL STRESS, AND JOB STABILITY

## Self-ratings: **Physical health**

Pre-Pandemic: Average rating = **4.32**

86% rated "4" or "5"



Now: Average rating = **4.25**

84% rated "4" or "5"



"Poor" = 1 (red)

2 (orange)

3 (green)

4 (blue)

"Excellent" = 5 (yellow)

## Self-ratings: **Mental health**

Pre-Pandemic: Average rating = **4.49**

94% rated "4" or "5"



Now: Average rating = **4.11**

77% rated "4" or "5"



"Poor" = 1 (red)

2 (orange)

3 (green)

4 (blue)

"Excellent" = 5 (yellow)

(continued on next page)

Respondents were asked to self-rate their pre-pandemic and current perceptions of **personal financial stress** and **job stability** on a 1-to-5 scale

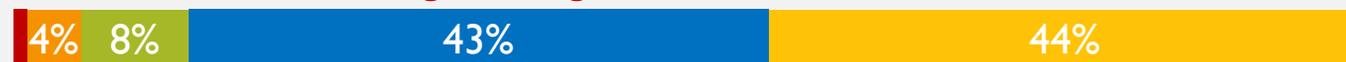
## FINDINGS:

INDICATIONS OF PANDEMIC HAVING ADVERSE EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH, FINANCIAL STRESS, AND JOB STABILITY

### Self-ratings: **Personal financial stress**

Pre-Pandemic: Average rating = **4.25**

87% rated "4" or "5"



Now: Average rating = **3.88**

69% rated "4" or "5"



"Extreme stress" = 1 (red)    2 (orange)    3 (green)    4 (blue)    "No stress at all" = 5 (yellow)

### Self-ratings: **Job stability\***

Pre-Pandemic: Average rating = **4.72**

97% rated "4" or "5"



Now: Average rating = **4.23**

82% rated "4" or "5"



In a stable job situation?:  
"Disagree" = 1 (red)    2 (orange)    3 (green)    4 (blue)    "Agree" = 5 (yellow)

\* Ratings calculations exclude "Does not apply to me" responses

## FINDINGS:

# INDICATIONS OF PANDEMIC HAVING ADVERSE EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH, FINANCIAL STRESS, AND JOB STABILITY

## Commentary

- The pandemic appears to have slightly eroded people's perceptions of their state of mental health, while adding to their financial stress levels.
- Additionally, there has been a slight erosion in perceived job stability among respondents who were/are employed.
- Nevertheless, perceptions for all these measures remain mostly positive/favorable. The changes from pre-pandemic to the present time, however, are worthy of note and sensitivity to the congregation.
- In a separate question, respondents were asked if they "would like a member of our clergy or prayer team to contact" them regarding changing employment/financial situations. All respondents replied, "No."
- Similarly, 98% said they are "in contact by phone, in-person or online with people" in their lives they can count on to help them "no matter what happens."

*Have you grown spiritually during the stay-at-home guidelines/orders of the pandemic?*

FINDINGS:

MORE THAN HALF OF RESPONDENTS CLAIM SPIRITUAL GROWTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

Not sure

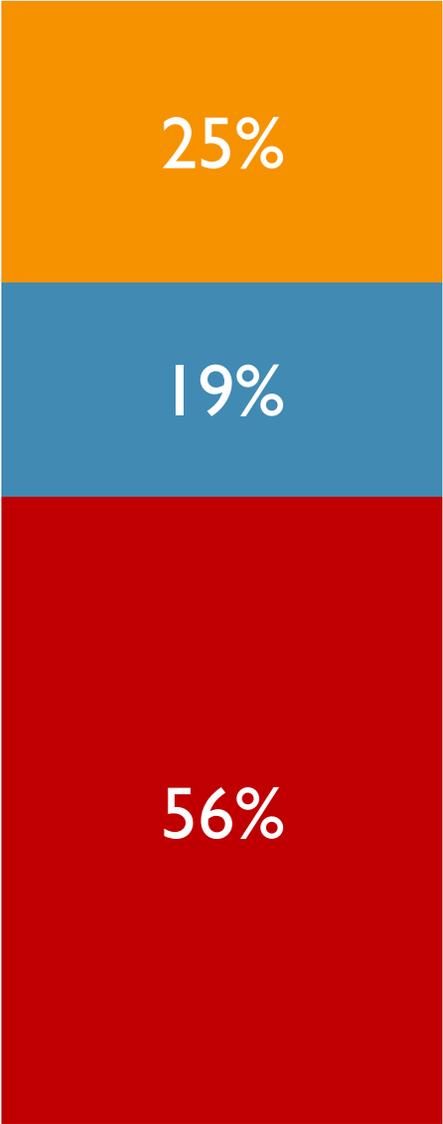
25%

No

19%

Yes

56%



## FINDINGS:

MORE THAN HALF  
OF RESPONDENTS  
CLAIM SPIRITUAL  
GROWTH DURING  
THE PANDEMIC

### Commentary

- The church's responses to the pandemic, and perhaps other unnamed resources of spiritual enrichment, have provided means for spiritual growth for more than half - - likely even more among the "not sure" respondents - - of the survey sample. Only 1 in 5 said they have not experienced spiritual growth.
- Although spiritual enrichment during such challenging times could seem to be a paradox, perhaps it is further evidence of a key foundation of our faith: That God always finds ways to nurture and strengthen the souls of God's people, even amid strife and adversity.
- In verbatim responses to the survey questionnaire's request for open-ended feedback, numerous respondents referred to spiritual enrichment by Rev. Wade's daily prayers, the online worship services, online music performances and other efforts by the church to help people continue to feel connected.

FINDINGS:

HIGHLIGHTS OF  
VERBATIM RESPONSES  
TO “ADDITIONAL  
FEEDBACK”  
QUESTION

The survey questionnaire’s final item was an invitation for respondents to provide additional open-ended feedback. 108 comments were submitted.

**In summary, based on synthesis of words, feelings and forms of written expression that appeared with multiple frequency, four themes surfaced:**

Praise and gratitude for the church’s many efforts despite the limitations posed by the pandemic

Expressions of lament over the current unavailability of in-person worship and other church-centered gatherings, although people understand and accept why it is necessary

Sense of connectedness, though not physical, felt by many

A variety of suggestions - some specific, others general - for the present time (while the church is still closed) and for the future re-start of services

The following four pages help illustrate each of these themes

FINDINGS:

HIGHLIGHTS OF  
VERBATIM RESPONSES  
TO “ADDITIONAL  
FEEDBACK” QUESTION

1 of 4 themes

Praise and gratitude for the church’s many efforts despite the limitations posed by the pandemic.

The praise and gratitude theme is the most prevalent of all in the comments and feedback. Some of the expressions refer to the church’s endeavors generally, while other are for specific programs and/or individuals.

Exemplary comments:

- *“The virtual services have been wonderful. Thanks to the ministers and staff for making them happen”*
- *“Thanks to the whole staff for a truly professional outreach.”*
- *“We think Church Street is doing a wonderful job in helping with the stress, both spiritual and physical, during this trying time”*
- *“It’s been great for us to be able to stop what we’re doing at home and come together to worship...It’s brought a sense of calm and purpose, so thank you”*
- *“I sincerely appreciate all of the extra efforts that have gone into providing me with meaningful worship experiences, especially the music offerings and Jan's daily prayer.”*

FINDINGS:

HIGHLIGHTS OF  
VERBATIM RESPONSES  
TO “ADDITIONAL  
FEEDBACK” QUESTION

2 of 4 themes

Expressions of lament over the current unavailability of in-person worship and other church-centered gatherings, although people understand and accept why it is necessary

Use of terms such as “mourn,” “miss,” “saddened,” “discouraged,” “loss” and “isolation” exemplify the descriptors that underscore a sense of worship and fellowship deprivation

Exemplary comments:

- *“It’s so easy to feel discouraged during this period of isolation”*
- *“I mourn our time away from each other, and I mourn our loss of corporate worship.”*
- *“I dearly miss church but I realize how dangerous this virus is”*
- *“I miss my church family desperately...whatever is best for church, good with me”*
- *“I miss seeing you all "eyeball to eyeball"...as it were...and look forward to the time we can once gather...to worship, learn, fellowship.”*
- *“I miss my church activities and even with the services on TV it is not the same as being in a place like Church Street.”*

FINDINGS:

HIGHLIGHTS OF  
VERBATIM RESPONSES  
TO “ADDITIONAL  
FEEDBACK” QUESTION

3 of 4 themes

Sense of connectedness, though not physical, felt  
by many

Although seemingly a paradox, online worship and meetings/other events for many have fostered a sense of emotional and spiritual connectedness

Exemplary comments:

- *“I am grateful for Sunday morning worship. It helps me to remember that I still have a connection there.”*
- *“I love our online services & devotions. I watch my friends church online also. I've learned what is most important during this pandemic:: My family, church family, friends & remaining healthy.”*
- *“I greatly appreciate the wonderful services on Sunday, and the Monday and Thursday devotionals have touch me spiritually. I feel as close or maybe closer to the staff, and my fellow worshipers.”*
- *“I have enjoyed the relationship with my SS class. We have had more time via Zoom to talk longer about the lesson and other concerns.”*
- *“Relationships with church members, clergy, Sunday School members and UMW have been strengthened.”*

FINDINGS:

HIGHLIGHTS OF  
VERBATIM RESPONSES  
TO “ADDITIONAL  
FEEDBACK” QUESTION

4 of 4 themes

A variety of suggestions - some specific, others general - for the present time (while the church is still closed) and for the future re-start of services

No specific suggestion was mentioned numerous times, but a wide array of thought and ideas were collected

Exemplary comments:

- *“Online Bible study“*
- *“Please keep Pastor Jan's emails coming for the foreseeable future. They are very comforting.”*
- *“I have even wondered about outdoor gatherings at the church with small to medium sized groups.”*
- *“Consider meeting in the gym; Chairs can be arranged for families. Easier to clean and control.”*
- *“Do what makes sense...I would lean toward a slow return to on-site worship.”*
- *“I think, too, the various online offerings over the last months have opened the possibilities of new thinking for the future. I encourage leadership to explore these possibilities.”*