



Edenton Street
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VISION PROCESS: LISTENING FINDINGS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

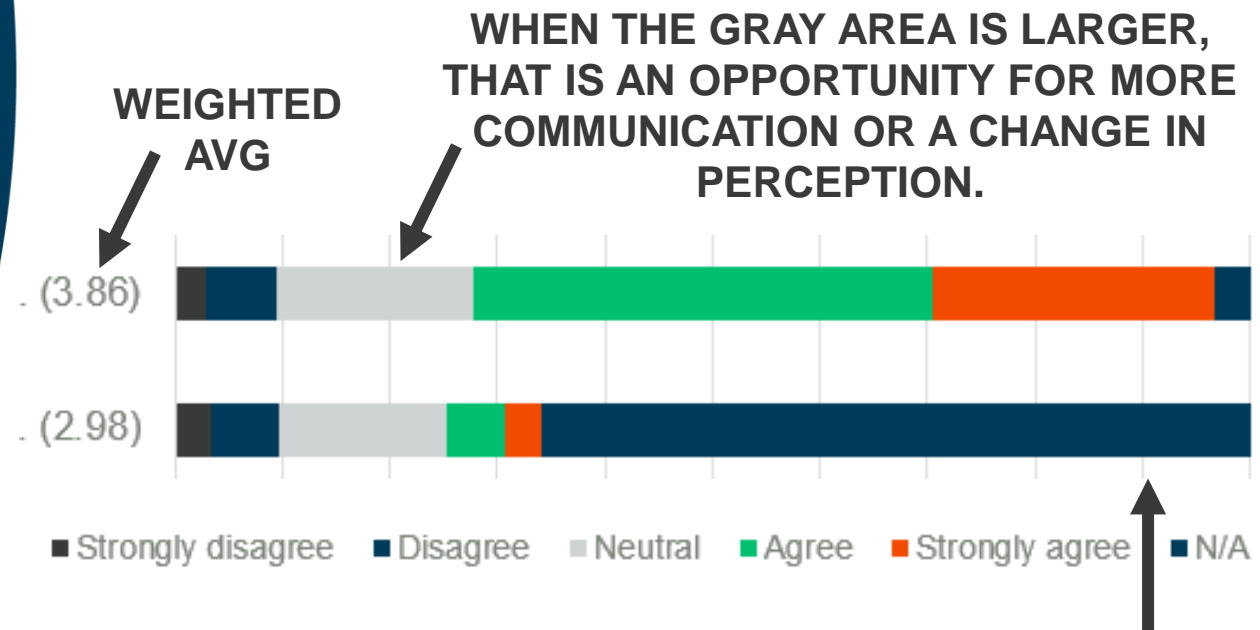
Armstrong McGuire



UNDERSTANDING THE FINDINGS

Between November 2023 and February of 2024, ESUMC conducted an intensive listening season across different mediums for members, visitors, partners, staff, and UMC leaders. The goal was to receive feedback on the current state of ESUMC, how changes and transitions over the past few years have impacted perceptions, and options for future direction. Overall, the feedback and data shows that ESUMC is operating from a position of strength and the community feels positive about the church. There are challenges and tension points but those vary based on subgroups within the church and are opportunities to increase engagement.

- Throughout this report you will see open ended feedback and data points based on combined responses from interviews, listening sessions, and survey.
- Ratings were requested on a 5-point scale with 5 being the positive viewpoint.
- Average ratings above a 3 are considered positive.



N/A = THE STATEMENT WAS NOT APPLICABLE FOR THESE PEOPLE. THEIR RESPONSES DID NOT IMPACT THE WEIGHTED AVG.

INTERVIEWS & LISTENING SESSIONS

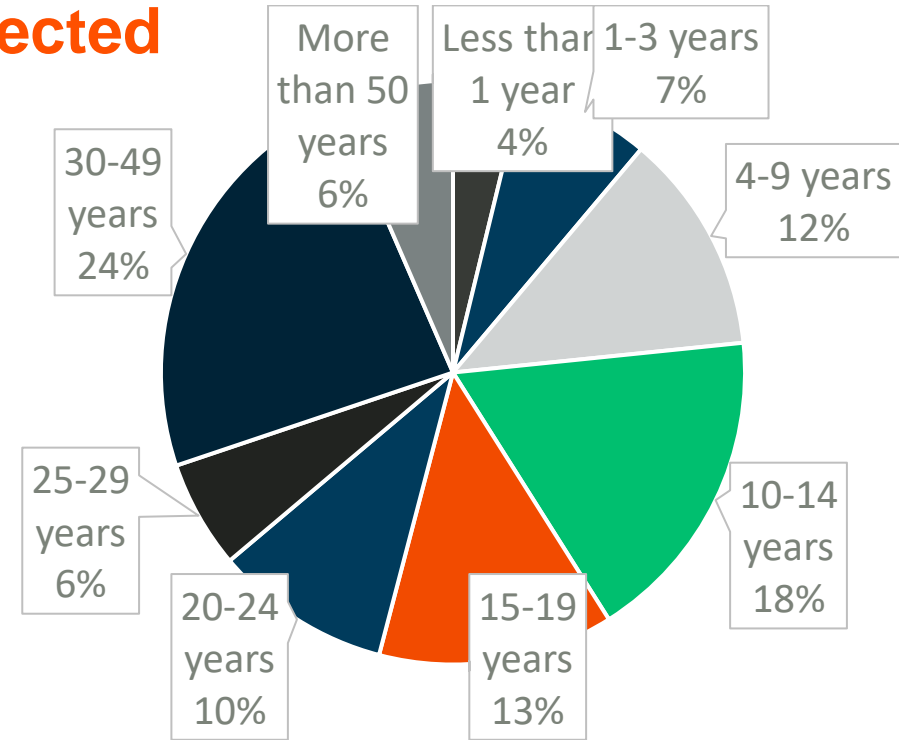
Staff interviews	21
Non-staff interviews	35
Listening Session Attendees	179
<u>Special Outreach</u>	<u>94</u>
TOTAL	310

- **Staff:** 21 participants
- **Engaged Membership:** 22 interviews
- **Community Partners:** 6 interviews
- **UMC Conference:** 2 interviews
- **Downtown Pastors:** 5 participants
- **Listening Sessions:** 179
- **Specialty Groups:** 60+ (choir, youth, SS classes, LGBTQ+, young adult, etc.)
- **Recently Decreased Engagement:** Currently 20
- **VLT Members:** 14

LISTENING SURVEY

Responses	381
• Decreased Engagement	115 (30%)
• Traditional Service	226 (59%)
• Contemporary Service	104 (27%)

Years Connected to ESUMC:



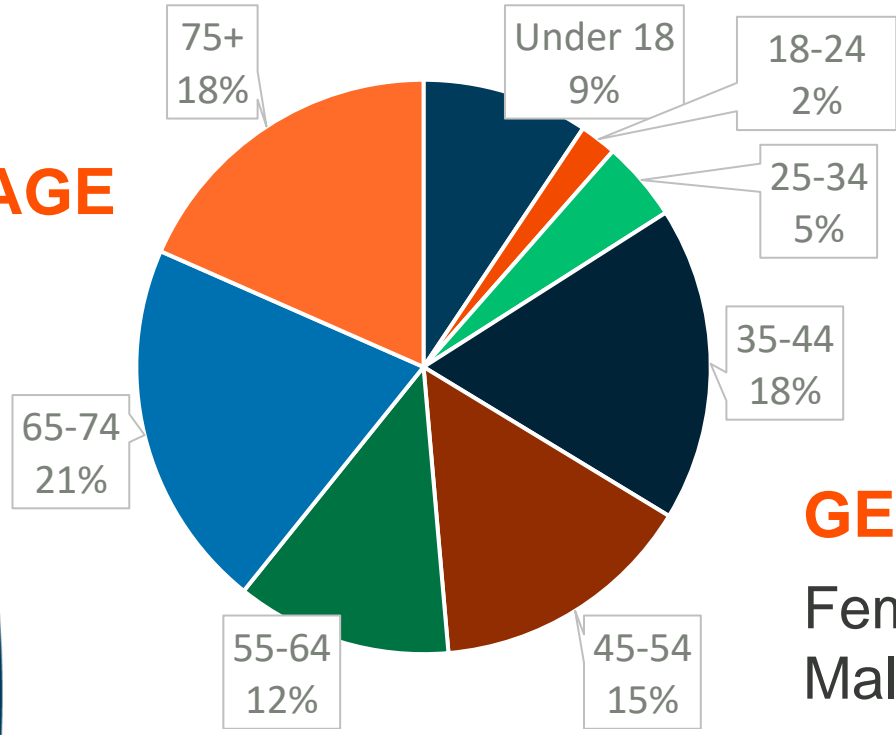
Connection to ESUMC:

Church Member	92%
Church Committee/Ministry Leader	21%
Former Committee/Ministry Leader	22%
Community Partner	1%
Visitor	5%
Pastor/Staff	4%

LISTENING SURVEY

Responses 381

AGE



GENDER

Female 61%
Male 39%

97% White or Caucasian

2% LGBTQIA+

DISTANCE TO ESUMC

Less than 10 minutes	23%
10-14 minutes	32%
15-19 minutes	27%
More than 20 minutes	18%

ORGANIZATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

UMC Mission: The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Effective Mission Delivery

3.5 out of **5**

Traditional Service: **3.5** out of **5**

Contemporary Service: **3.8** out of **5**

Engaged 30+ years: **3.3** out of **5**

Engaged 0-3 years: **3.8** out of **5**

Decreased engagement: **3.0** out of **5**

Overall Satisfaction

3.6 out of **5**

Traditional Service: **3.5** out of **5**

Contemporary Service: **3.9** out of **5**

Engaged 30+ years: **3.3** out of **5**

Engaged 0-3 years: **4.2** out of **5**

Decreased engagement: **2.7** out of **5**

STRENGTHS

- 1. Community and Welcoming Atmosphere:** The church is warm, welcoming, inclusive, and accepting of all types of people. There is a strong sense of community where everyone feels like they belong, regardless of their background or how long they have been attending.
- 2. Mission Focus and Outreach:** There is a significant emphasis on the church's dedication to serving the greater community. This commitment to outreach is evident through various ministries, missions, and partnerships with organizations in Raleigh. The church is praised for its efforts to make a positive impact beyond its walls and address the needs of the surrounding community.
- 3. Dedicated Members and Leadership:** The strength of the church lies in its members, both laity and staff, who are described as faithful, caring, compassionate, and dedicated to the church's mission and vision. There is also recognition of strong leadership within the church.

STRENGTHS

- 4. Spiritual Growth and Formation:** The church provides ample opportunities for spiritual growth and formation, especially for children, youth, and adults. Programs like Sunday School, Bible studies, music and worship arts, and youth ministries are highlighted as strengths.
- 5. Historical Legacy and Reputation:** The church's rich history, traditions, and its physical presence in downtown Raleigh contribute to its strength and reputation in the community. Many respondents appreciate the church's long-standing commitment to serving others and its impact over the years.
- 6. Facilities and Resources:** The church's physical facilities, including its beautiful sanctuary, are seen as assets that enhance worship experiences and enable various activities and ministries to take place. Additionally, the availability of resources and the financial stability of the church are noted as strengths.

CHALLENGES

- 1. Communication:** There is a recurring theme of communication challenges within the church, affecting member engagement and awareness of church activities and decisions. There is an overwhelming feeling that it is hard to navigate website, app, and QR codes to find needed information regardless of age.
- 2. Unity and Inclusivity:** Members express concerns about divisiveness within the church, particularly between different groups and services (e.g., the "Sanctuary" and "Gathering" designations or older members). Fostering a sense of unity and inclusivity among all members is crucial.
- 3. Membership and Outreach:** There is a concern about declining attendance and membership, along with the need to attract and retain younger members and engage with the broader community. There is a sense of grief after planting two churches and empty sanctuaries following the pandemic.
- 4. Financial Stability:** The feedback highlights concerns about the church's financial situation, exacerbated by declining membership and attendance. Ensuring financial stability and sustainability is a significant challenge.

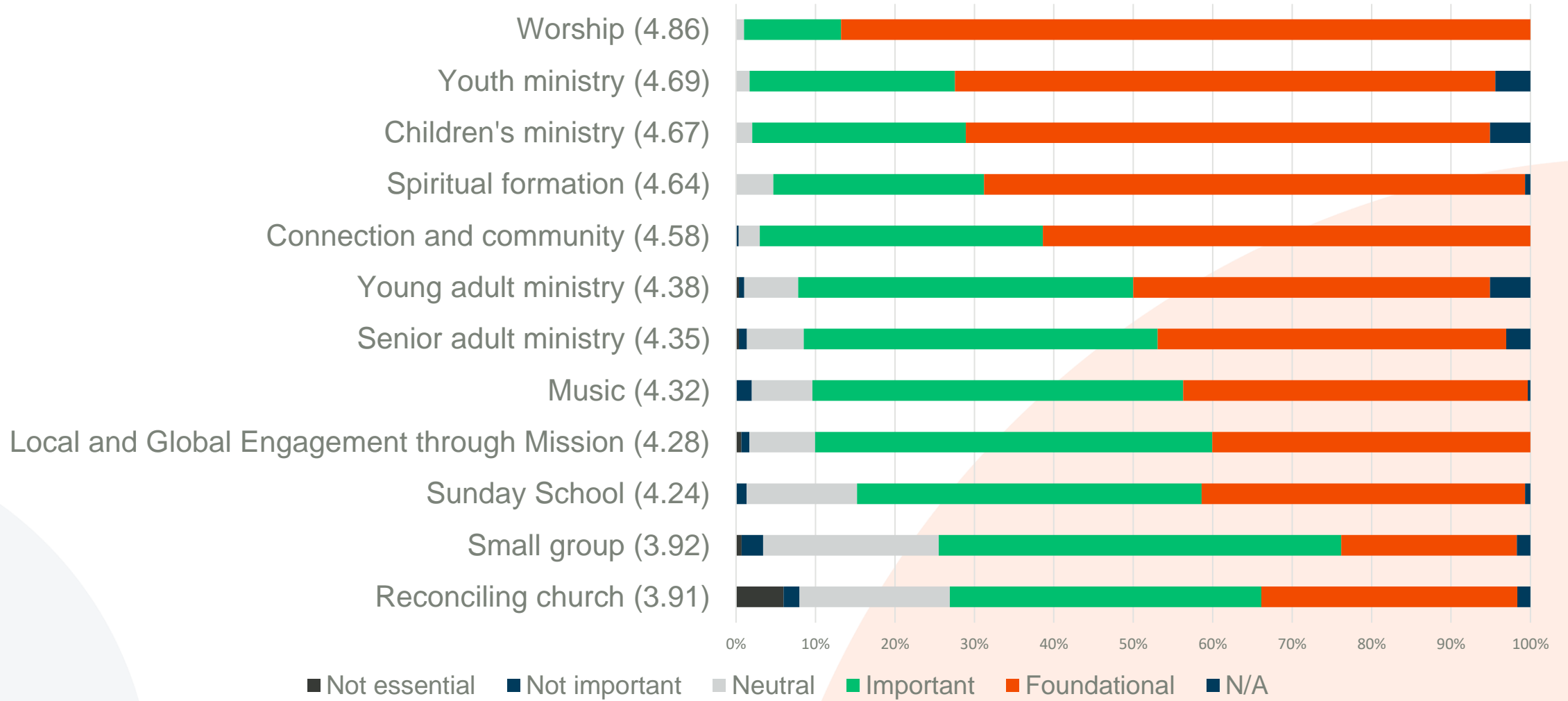
CHALLENGES

- 5. Adapting to Change:** Members mention the difficulty of adapting to changes within the church, including shifts in worship styles and church leadership. Balancing tradition with the need for adaptation and the abruptness of change coming back from the pandemic was a challenge.
- 6. Spiritual Connection and Engagement:** There is a desire for more involvement in church activities beyond Sunday worship to create real connections among members and visitors. A desire for small groups or missional communities was noted. Ensuring that the church maintains a strong focus on biblical teaching and spiritual growth is a concern, with some members seeking more emphasis on evangelism.
- 7. Diversity and Inclusion:** Some members express a desire for greater racial and cultural diversity within the church and more efforts to engage with different communities.
- 8. Pastoral Leadership and Care:** Concerns about pastoral leadership and the need for more pastoral care, particularly for older members, are evident in the feedback.

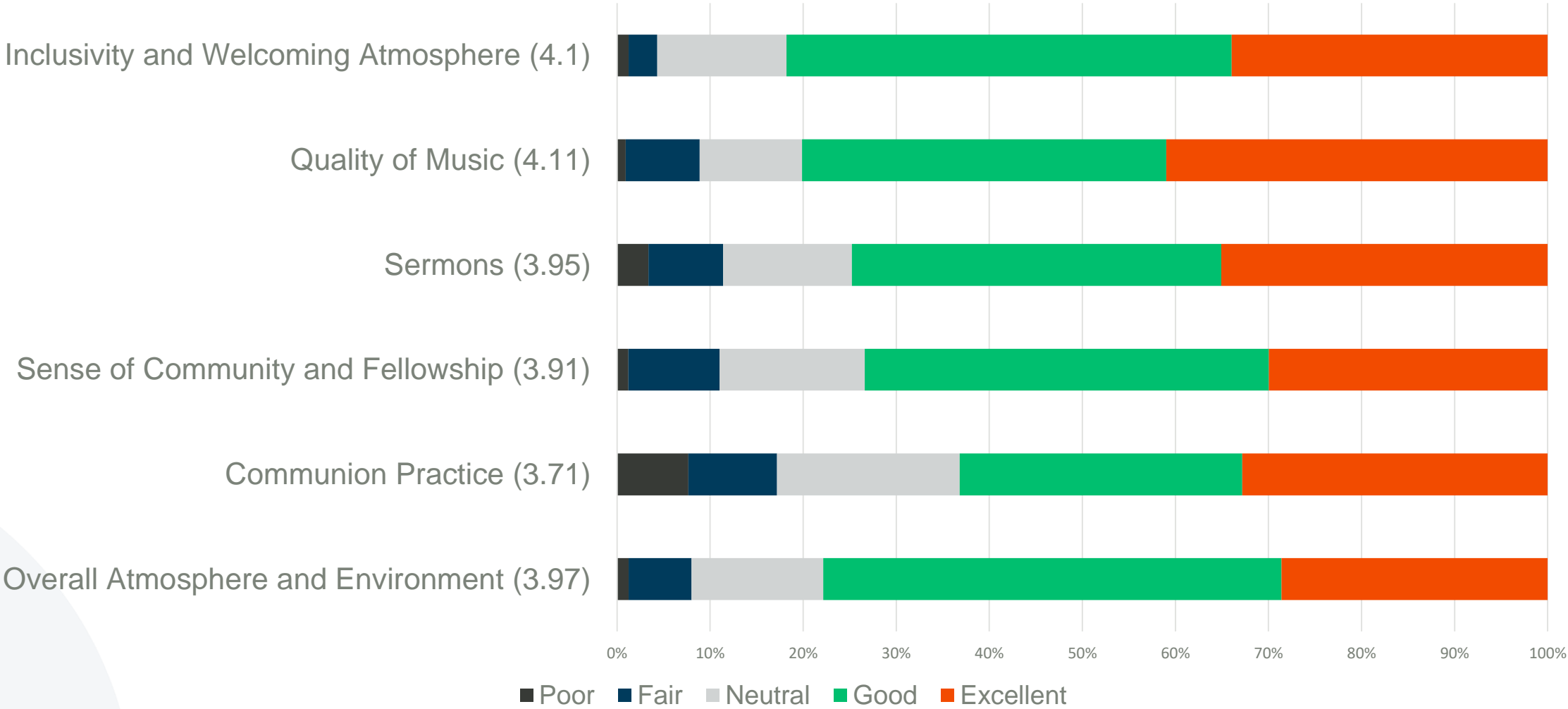
REASONS FOR DECREASED ENGAGEMENT

- 1. Changes in Worship Style and Structure:** Dissatisfaction with changes in traditional worship services, including alterations in liturgy, music, and sermon length. Some feel that the services have become too ritualistic or uninspiring. Others preferred less frequent communion.
- 2. Personal Tragedies and Struggles:** Several individuals cite personal tragedies or struggles that have made it difficult for them to attend church regularly like family health issues, family deaths, or traumatic events.
- 3. Disconnection and Feeling Unwelcomed:** Some respondent felt disconnected from the church community and express a lack of personal relationships or feeling unseen and unheard within the congregation. Some mention feeling unwelcomed due to their life circumstances, such as being single or older.
- 4. Disagreements with Leadership and Direction:** Respondents express dissatisfaction with changes in pastoral leadership, perceived lack of transparency in decision-making, and disagreements with perceived direction regarding social justice, the church's focus towards political issues, and adherence to Biblical standards.

ESSENTIAL MINISTRIES



WORSHIP



SPIRITUAL FORMATION

I am growing spiritually by engaging through ESUMC. (3.92)

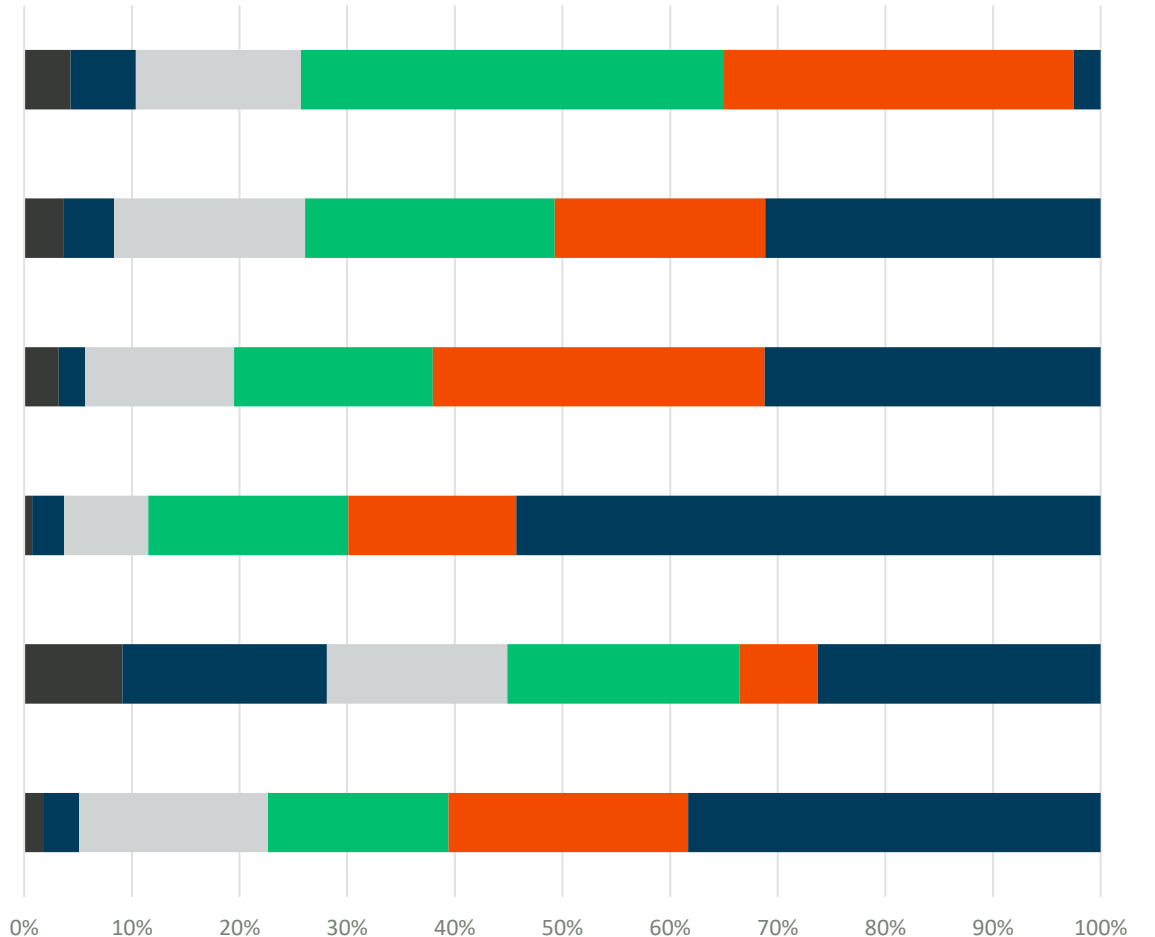
I am benefiting from Bible studies and classes. (3.73)

I am benefiting from Sunday School. (4.04)

My children and/or youth are growing spiritually through ESUMC. (3.99)

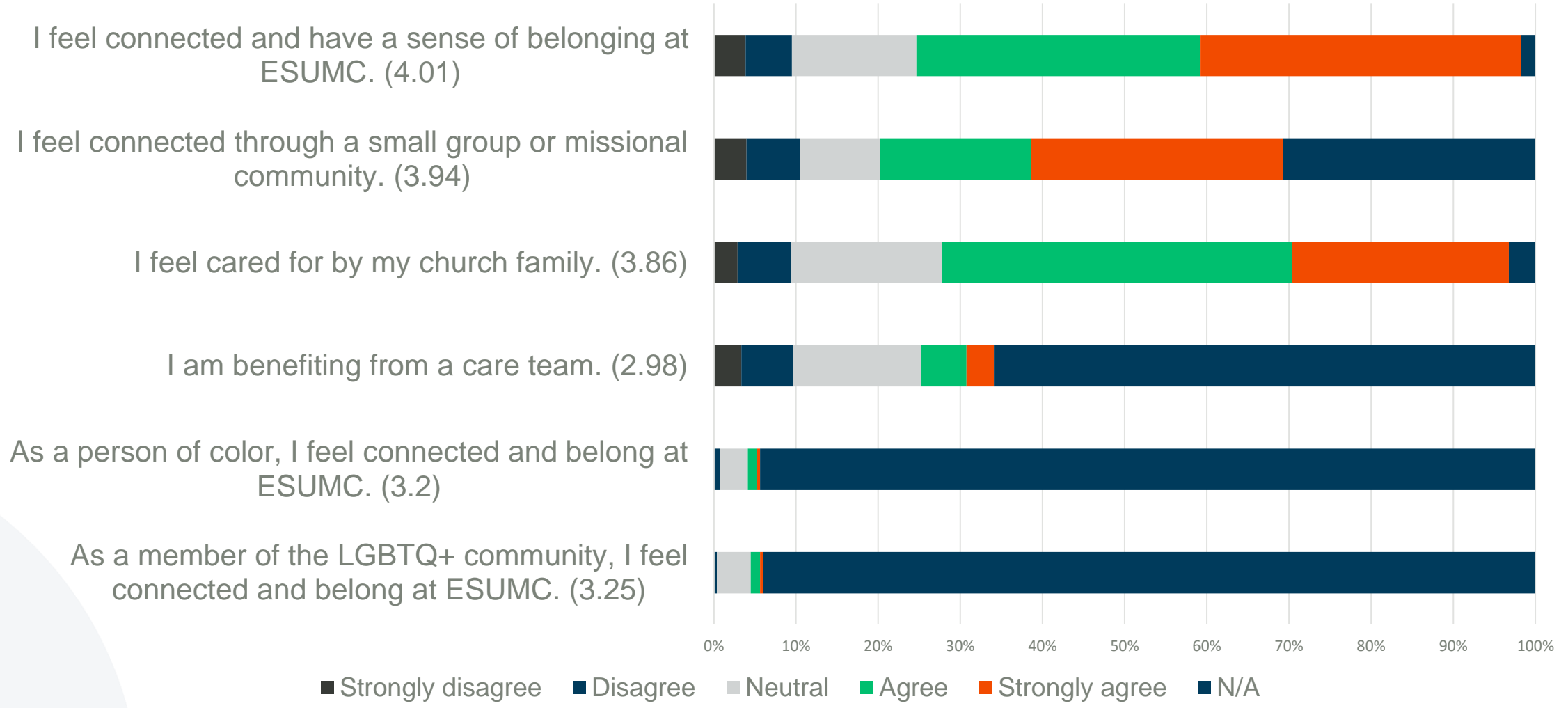
The Sunday School time frame is sufficient to support classes and children's ministry. (2.99)

I am benefiting from retreats or special workshops. (3.88)



Strongly disagree
 Disagree
 Neutral
 Agree
 Strongly agree
 N/A

CONNECTION



CONNECTION OPPORTUNITIES

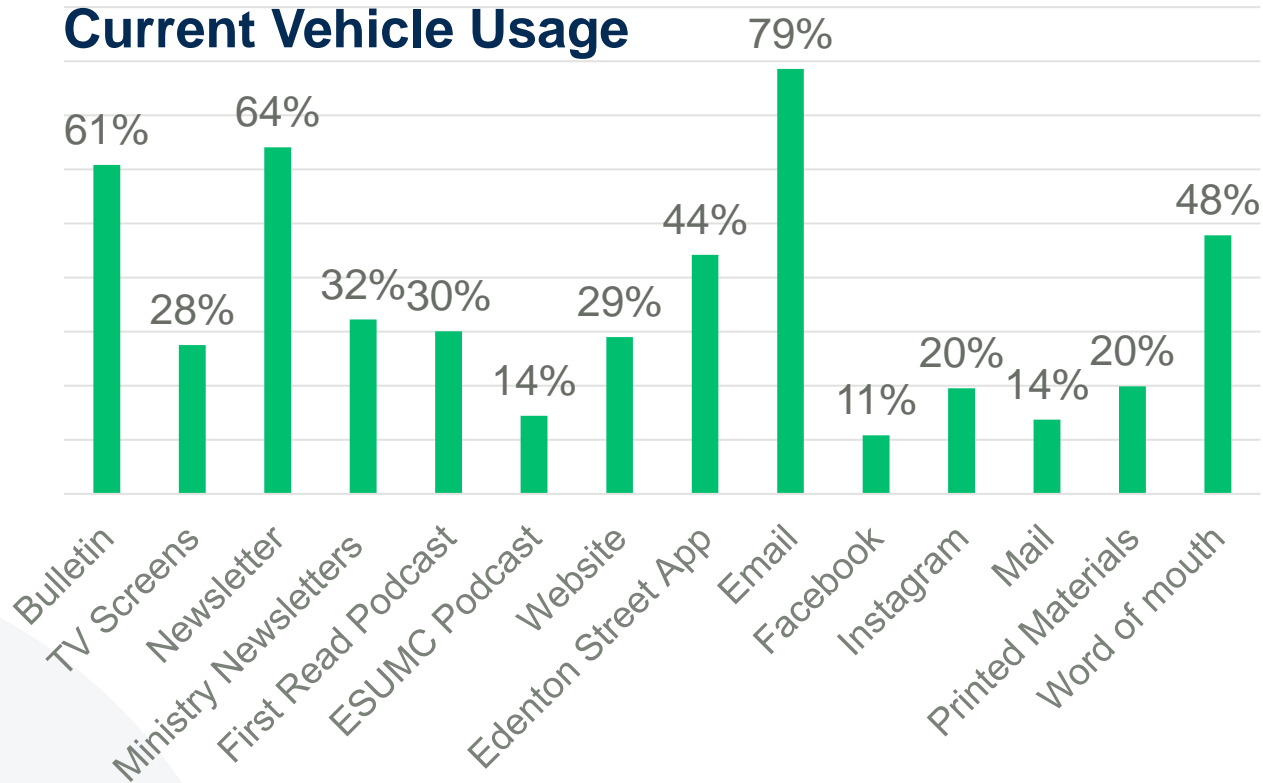
- 1. Increase in Sunday School Opportunities:** There is a desire for more time dedicated to Sunday school and the need for additional volunteers to support these opportunities. This is a need for children ministry as well as adult Sunday School.
- 2. Intergenerational Activities:** Many respondents desired the importance of fostering connections across different age groups within the congregation, suggesting ideas such as retreats, family missions, and cross-generational prayer teams.
- 3. Enhanced Communication:** There is a consensus on improving communication within the church community, including better dissemination of information about events, programs, and opportunities for involvement. Suggestions include simplifying the church bulletin, enhancing the church's social media presence, and utilizing various forms of communication to reach members of all demographics.
- 4. Revitalizing Small Groups and Missional Communities:** Several respondents expressed a desire to reinvigorate small groups and missional communities as avenues for deeper connection and spiritual growth.

CONNECTION OPPORTUNITIES

- 5. Inclusivity and Outreach:** There is a call for greater inclusivity, particularly in reaching out to marginalized groups within the congregation, such as LGBTQ+ individuals, and efforts to reconnect with members who may have become disconnected from the church community. There is a desire for a pastor of color.
- 6. More Fellowship Opportunities:** Respondents emphasized the importance of casual gatherings, fellowship suppers, game nights, and other social events as ways to build relationships within the church.
- 7. Support for Women's and Men's Ministries:** There is interest in strengthening women's and men's ministries to provide support, community, and mentorship opportunities for members. There is also a desire for more senior activities.

COMMUNICATIONS

Current Vehicle Usage



64%

want weekly updates

26%

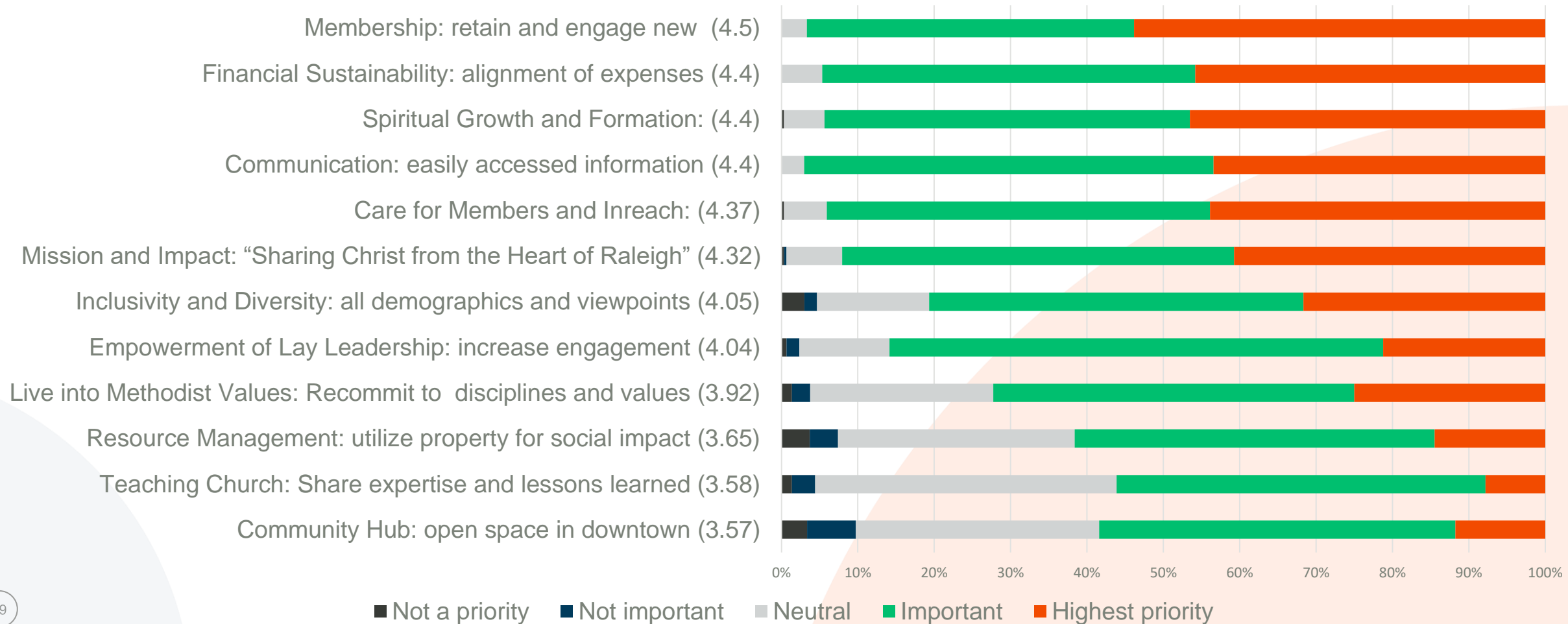
want updates a few times a week

Suggestions

- Diverse methods of communication with consistency across channels
- Website overhaul
- Robust weekly email newsletter that covers all activities and events in one place

DESIRED CHANGE: Would like to receive more information through the website and text.

FUTURE DIRECTION PRIORITIES





Edenton Street
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THANK YOU!

Armstrong McGuire

