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The Church in West Michigan

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The Church in West Michigan

Prepared for:
HNR 499 – Professor Fenik

By Jacob Sackleh

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Executive Summary

Objectives

This study focuses on the perception of people in Western Michigan regarding their experience with the church, either currently or in the past. This research specifically examines millennials and their relationship to/with the church, social belonging characteristics, pastoral qualities, and perception of church operations and the way they relate to people living in West Michigan.

Methods

A survey was conducted with a convenience sample of 152 respondents. All respondents live in Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, or Allegan Counties in Michigan and were 18 years of age or over. Survey data was downloaded from Qualtrics to SPSS, where it was analyzed. All tables and charts used information from outputs from SPSS and were created in Microsoft Excel.

Findings Highlight

- Respondents perceive 31-50 year olds to make up a majority of a church's congregation.
- A majority of respondents felt their church emphasized outreach as a part of its mission.
- Most respondents felt that millennials were engaged in Sunday service and volunteering for their church.
- Although most respondents felt reaching out to millennials were important, less than half of all respondents felt outreach to millennials was successful.
- Three reasons for millennials leaving the church were presented to survey takers and 40% of all survey respondents personally connected to those reasons.
- Expectations for pastors in their various roles are very high.
- Seminary experience matters to a majority of all respondents.
- Over 80% of all respondents felt their pastor was meeting expectations in various roles as a leader in their church.
- A majority of respondents felt their church provided a good community for them.
- A majority of respondents felt their church provided a good community for family, friends, and the community.

Recommendations

- There appears to be a lack of representation in terms of younger generations in the church today.
- Church leadership should explore new methods for outreach and look at ways to evaluate effectiveness.
- Churches should look at total volume of millennials in their church, not simply how engaged the current millennials are.
- Leadership can look into more methods for outreach to millennials.
- Look deeper into reasons as to why millennials leave the church.
- Investment in pastors is key moving forward and Seminary is a means to achieve some of this investment.
- Finding more ways to create a good community is always a necessity for a church.
- Further evaluate for how members feel about their church community for themselves and for others.

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on the perception of people in Western Michigan regarding their experience with the church, either currently or in the past. This research specifically examines millennials and their relationship to/with the church, social belonging characteristics for church members, the value of pastoral qualities, and perception of the church community and the way they relate to people living in West Michigan.

An Overview of the Church in Western Michigan

The region of West Michigan, though often loosely defined as a specific geographic region, is frequently associated with being a part of the “Bible Belt.” Given the fact that the Bible Belt, though distinctive in its nature regarding the prominence of Christianity in the area, is largely a vague term when it comes to defining an area in Michigan. The labeling or associating of an area as the Bible Belt originated with H.L. Mencken coining the term in 1925. Often, his conversation or dialogue regarding the Bible belt was not necessarily specified in any way other than his referring to “areas dominated by rural Baptists and Methodists.” (Tweedie). West Michigan’s belonging to the Bible Belt is a concretely defined idea in this regard. Although there are definitely urbanized areas in West Michigan, the emphasis of churchgoing and church culture are prominent in the region.

For this research, I have specified Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Allegan counties as the geographical region of West Michigan. Although West Michigan typically applies to more counties than just these four, all four counties are geographically in contact with one another, have large amounts of churches and see church culture as a prominent component of their region. Because of this, these four counties, aka K.O.M.A. are also formally and informally referred to as being part of the Bible Belt in West Michigan. The distinction of this area as a “Bible Belt” clearly implies a nature of exception to the norm, meaning a Bible Belt culture could very well defy or have characteristics contrary to “normal” or even average trends in Christianity due to the heavy concentration of church culture. This is the root purpose and curiosity behind this research. Because church culture is so evident in this area of the state of Michigan (K.O.M.A.), I am interested to know if the Bible Belt of Michigan is facing some of the prevalent, nationwide issues for the church today, and if churches in Western Michigan are experiencing the effects of the national trends in Christianity.

Interviews

In order to strengthen my understanding of individual experiences in the Church in West Michigan, I decided to interview people living in the K.O.M.A. region and ask them about their experiences. The interview followed a defined set of questions (see Appendix Five) and focused on personal experience growing up in the church along with experiences in the church today. A few interviewees experienced scheduling conflicts and were unable to meet. I ended up conducting four interviews in total. In the same way I handled research results, I decided that anonymity was a key factor in these interviews, thus naming each person I interviewed as Person #1, Person #2, and so on. Personal information was not collected, other than the information each individual shared during their interview. The transcript of each interview can be found in Appendices 1-4.

It was imperative that I interview people with varying experiences with the church, which was my eventual result at the conclusion of the interview process. Of the four, three of them are currently involved in the church. Person #1, though they grew up in the church, has not attended church in a long time, and provided a strong opinion of an “outsider’s” perspective on church culture (1). Person #2 is a current employee at a West Michigan church, and is a co-director for the youth ministry program there (2). Person #3 grew up in the church, and although they are not employed by a church, they are extremely involved in youth ministry as well as a volunteer in Young Life (3). Person #4 was also unique in that they were the only person to grow up only attending Christian schools (despite college), and they offered the perspective of someone whose parents were employed by a church while they were growing up (4).

Although each of these interviewees came from different backgrounds and different understandings of the church, some common ideas and concepts were brought up in the interviews. All four interviewees said something about how church is a place of worship, or enjoying time with God. Here’s what a few of them said:

“The church is a place where people join, people meet and they celebrate their God” (1, 2016)

“Church as a whole should be a place of worship, and a place to share that worship with other believers, just to glorify the name of God.” (3, 2016)

In these interviews, we discussed the concept of community as well. This idea eventually broke down into two different ideas. The church creates a community within itself for the individuals that are a part of it. The church also reaches out to the community, and has a necessary role in the community

“Well, I think one of the wrong assumptions about the church is that is a building and that it’s an exclusive group of people. It was never meant to be that. It was meant to be a community. It is supposed to be an environment that IS community. You could not have a building and it could still be a church. And I think a church is supposed to be a community.” (2, 2016)

“The purpose of the church is to teach people about the love of Christ and what he can do for them, and to bring new people into the faith, and to help people grow and sustain their faith. As well it’s to provide outreach to the community.” (4, 2016)

A final, major component of the interviewees’ answers had to do with the root mission and purpose of the church.

“The church is a place where people join, people meet and they celebrate their God, the higher power that they believe is very important to their lives.” (1, 2016)

“I think the core root of a church is a focus on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and he died and rose again to save us from our sins. That should be the focus of the church. That one message. And for people to find that message and to follow that message.” (2, 2016)

“But the end goal of using a church is as a way to praise and worship and glorify God.” (3, 2016)

“And the purpose of going to church is to learn about him (God). And to learn how to live our lives for him. And to learn how to serve him.” (4, 2016)

The sole, over-arching concept of church is the focus of God. Obviously, all four interviews discussed God and his significance in the church because it seems inevitable and self-evident. There are additional things that are a part of these answers that merit attention. All four persons interviewed talked about how church is about God as well as the significance of God. They also all branched from that thought into the significance of learning about God and celebrating or worshipping God. Why is this so significant? Person 1 does not regularly attend church, has not gone in a long time, and has disagreements with the church. Although they (1, 2016) “grew up in the church,” their lack of involvement is important to note, especially when they still express common themes compared to Persons 2, 3, and 4 who all currently attend church regularly.

Interviews are not the only resources indicative of these common themes. Matt Slick wrote for CARM, Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, (Slick, n.d.) that The purpose of the [church](#) is to worship God ([Luke 4:8](#), [John 4:23](#), [Rev. 4:10](#)), study His Word ([2 Tim. 2:15](#), [1 Cor. 4:6](#)), pray ([Acts 2:42](#)), love one another ([John 13:35](#), [Phil. 1:1-4](#)), help each other ([Gal. 6:2](#)), partake of baptism and the Lord's supper ([Luke 22:19-20](#)), to learn how to live as godly people ([Titus 2:11-12](#)), and to be equipped to evangelize the world ([Eph. 4:12](#), [Matt. 28:18-20](#)).

CARM (Church, n.d.) also has a definition of church that explains how a church can be understood in two ways. One view would be the believers on God and in Jesus Christ. The other would be a local body of people in an area that has or reflects belief. Interestingly enough, this definition re-affirms the quote (see above) from Person 2, when they talk about community and the church as a concept that has multiple aspects to it. Church is not just a body of believers, it is supposed to be more than that. Moving forward, community is an important component of this research. There is much, much more to community than simply the general idea of it. This

includes the demographics of church community, trends in the community, leaders in the community, how welcoming a community is, and many other factors.

Current Trend of Christianity

According to Dr. Richard Krejcir's research in 2007, for every 100 churches that opened in the United States, 400 closed. An additional, concerning component to these research results from 2007 was how 77%-87% of Americans identified themselves as Christian in studies (Krejcir). This number has been about the same for a while now, which is a problem for the church in the United States. More and more individuals that identify as Christians, though they still give themselves the distinction of being "Christian," no longer feel it is appropriate or necessary to be a part of the church. These individuals explain this decision to no longer attend church is due to how their "spiritual" faith holds a greater priority over their "religious" faith, thus providing ample justification for not being a part of organized religion (Grossman).

From a global perspective, 32% of people considered themselves to be Christian. This barely contrasts with world religion data from 1910, when 35% of people considered themselves to be Christians (Pew Research Center). Despite cultural, technological, governmental, and social change over the span of 100 years, Christianity still makes up almost exactly the same percentage of the world population that it did 100 years ago. The largest changes in Christianity appear to be the representation of Christians between denominations as well as the geographical distribution of Christians throughout the globe. While Europe held 66% of the world's Christians in 1910, it held only 25.9% in 2010. The shift of global distribution of Christians has very much been one of an exodus of sorts from Europe. From 1910 to 2010, Christian global population has increased in the Americas (27.1%-36.8%), Asia-Pacific (4.5%-13.1%), and Sub-Saharan Africa (1.4%-23.6%) (Pew Research Center).

With the knowledge of a declining church in the United States and an overall level presence of Christians throughout the globe, a primary question for church leaders would be why the Christians still in the United States are no longer interested in church membership and/or involvement. The reality of the declining church is now a main talking point in the discussion of current church health in the United States, creating a message of alarm and concern for church leadership. Clearly, mass amount of Christians deciding not to attend church is a concern for church leadership.

Millennials

One of the greatest concerns of the church today is millennial engagement and involvement. Although the institution of a church is not designated as a “for-profit” business, a church still has to look at the younger, upcoming generations while considering future plans for its operations. Millennials, born between the years 1890 and 2000, differ quite substantially from other generations in terms of their needs and their priorities in group dynamics. Unlike older generations in the United States, millennials put a strong emphasis on purpose, and individual meaning behind each part of a church’s operations, which heavily contrasts the high emphasis placed on church activity and attendance by older generations (III). A church’s inability to tend to these needs may very well be contributing to reduced attendance and involvement of millennials in the church today.

Millennials also prefer different leadership styles. They look for leaders that focus on a more individualized, transformative experience rather than a “big picture” message (III). In general, this need is met by a more intimate, mentoring role taken on by church leadership to ensure feelings of worth and connectedness by millennials. This demand for much more intimate experiences with leadership will, without a doubt, call for changes in the way church leadership live out their roles. Church leadership throughout the entire United States views the characteristics of millennials as a potential issue moving forward as churches continue to engage the younger generations in their ministry. As churches determine a plan of attack for approaching and appealing to younger generations, they have to realize the importance of millennial engagement in their congregation.

Without the presence and engagement of millennials in the church, churches face drastic potential problems. First and foremost, churches are losing the opportunity to gain and maintain potential members for their congregation. Lacking connection with this new “set” of members not only yields an immediate issue with next generation membership decline, but it also means that the children of the millennial generation are even less likely to get involved in church as well. The ramifications of lowered attendance as time progresses results in a church losing donations and, in turn, it’s capacity to operate as a church. The same holds true for volunteering and employment. Millennial detachment from the church means less millennials will be involved as volunteers. This would dramatically reduce a church’s manpower for missions and outreach programs that are vital. An employment void would come to be as well. Losing

millennials interest in church involvement and working could also very well imply a potential for fewer and fewer up and coming individuals that could and/or are interested in working for a church.

Pastoral Qualifications

Another concern regarding the current church in the United States is that pastors are not qualified, either at all or in the right ways, to be teaching to and leading a congregation. A primary component of this argument is that pastors, while preaching their sermons, are not preaching in the right manner. Delivering direct sermons rooted in Biblical doctrine should be a priority, and people such as Keith M. Wulff (former President of the Religion Research association) feel pastors are not meeting proper standards in that regard (Wulff). On the same note, Wulff argues further that Biblical Doctrine is key to proper sermons, regardless of a conservative or liberal Christian audience.

Wulff's second concern regards seminary programs. Although he does willingly admit that those attending seminary programs are no longer the "crème of the crop" that they were 2-3 decades ago, seminary is still overall a vital component to the evaluation of a pastor (Wulff). Either way, an interesting argument is presented in Wulff's writings. Seminary programs are intended to develop and grow future leaders in ministry, and a presence, or lack thereof of a seminary experience could very well effect a pastor's ability to lead a church. This stems not only into their ability to study and teach from the Bible, but their capabilities and qualifications to make decision related to monetary operations, personnel moves, etc.

Pastors are one of the most prominent components that an individual will have from their first impression of a church, let alone what their long-term impression would be after being a part of a congregation for a longer period of time. Pastors do much more than speak on Sundays. They often contribute to strategic decisions regarding strategy for church operations, planning for sermon series or events, and providing spiritual leadership not only to congregation members but to staff members as well. Because they are a leader in many more than one sense of the term, it is imperative to have equipped pastors leading a church. Their capability in their role is a large factor that determines the community in a church's congregation.

Feelings of Connectedness and Satisfaction

The extent to which individuals feel connected to their church as a community and in terms of other individual members is another factor to consider while examining the Church in

West Michigan. A study in 2011 looked at relational attachment in parishioners and how it corresponded with their satisfaction of being a part of their evangelical congregation. They used two questionnaires in their research to determine correlations between the two variables. The first questionnaire evaluated attachment patterns in adult relationships, which would designate each survey-taker into one of four attachment styles to their church: Secure, Fearful, Pre-occupied, and Dismissing. The second measured satisfaction regarding congregational leader, members of the church community (Scott Hamilton). And various other factors and components of the survey-takers experiences in their church.

After performing an ANOVA (analysis of variance) test on their results, they found that people that felt secure attachment with their church found the most satisfaction with their church, whereas those that reported fearful attachment found the least amount of satisfaction with their church (Scott Hamilton). Although this is a seemingly obvious conclusion, it is important to consider the importance of connectedness to a church community and how it influences the perception of one's experience with their church. Because of this reality, connectedness and satisfaction is a factor that will be evaluated in this research.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to evaluate perception of experiences in the Church in West Michigan. This study is designed to do the following:

1. To evaluate perceived age distribution in the congregations of the survey respondents.
2. To examine the emphasis of membership outreach.
3. To determine perceptions of millennials and their relationship and whether:
 - a. Millennials are engaged in services and volunteering.
 - b. They should be a focus in outreach.
 - c. It seems millennials are leaving the church.
4. To explore expectations of pastors, perceived importance of a pastor's seminary program, and perception of pastoral capabilities.
5. To evaluate respondents feelings of connectedness and belonging in their church community.
6. To determine respondents' perception of their church's ability to provide a good community for various people.

Methodology

Survey Creation

Through the examination of primary sources (see above) I was able to determine specific foci my survey. While creating the survey, I wanted to ensure that I followed general survey creation methods. I started with two qualifying questions, the first one addressed an age requirement (surveyors had to be 18 or older to participate), and the second question addressed my geographical distinction regarding whether the participant lived in Western Michigan. If the survey taker did not meet the age requirement, they were taken to the end of the survey. The same thing was established for anyone that answered the question regarding which county they lived in. If they answered “no,” they were also taken to the end of the survey. I then asked a few more general questions regarding church involvement in the past and present, and I then asked more detailed questions that tie back to the core interests and curiosities that drive the mission and purpose of this research.

The middle portion of the survey then focused on digging deeper into some primary objectives and interests of this research. These included millennial involvement and interest, pastoral qualifications, feelings of connectedness, and levels of involvement for those taking the survey. Finally, the last questions in the survey were general demographics questions, all of which were designated as “optional.” The final survey was created in Qualtrics, an online survey building tool provided by the Seidman College of Business, and it was revised multiple times before it was launched on April 1st, 2016.

IRB approval

Grand Valley State University has protocol regarding how students and faculty conduct research when it involves human subjects. Because this research collects data from people living in West Michigan through the use of a survey, I had to apply to the HRRC (Human Research Review Committee) via the IRB (Internet Review Board) to be approved to conduct research by way of the survey I created. Upon completing and finalizing the survey well I submitted my HRCC exempt application onto IRB.net to allow the HRRC board to review my research methods and, in turn the potential risk of human subjects. I completed a CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) training program for Human Research – Group 2 Social & Behavioral Investigators and Key Personnel in 2014. I attached this certification to my exempt application as an additional certification that verified my competence and abilities to conduct my

research ethically. The Grand Valley State University HRRC Board approved my application to conduct research on March 30th, 2016.

Survey Distribution

My method for distributing the survey was entirely online. Upon activating the survey in Qualtrics, I was able to send a link out that would take potential survey takers to the online version of the survey. I used entirely public information and public forums to distribute this survey. The first method I used was posting on public Facebook pages, such as “Allendale Informed” and “Muskegon Helping Muskegon.” While sharing the survey link on these pages, I also made myself, as well as this final research write-up, available to anyone interested in learning more information about the survey, the project as a whole, and any other curiosities regarding the research. A sample of the text I used in my social media posts can be found below in the appendices.

My second method for distribution was sending an e-mail to pastors and other church leaders throughout the designated region of Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Allegan counties. I used Google searches as well as online directories for area churches to access websites of churches and, in turn, to find e-mails of church leaders. I ended up finding about 20-25 e-mails, all for different churches, per county, acquiring a total of 99 e-mails. I then sent the e-mail out to the pastors. A sample of the text I used in my e-mails to the pastors can be found below in the appendices.

Data Collection

I had a little over a week to collect data, and I ended up having over 200 responses, some of which were incomplete due to the survey taker quitting before completing the survey, not being a resident of a K.O.M.A. county, or because they were under the age of 18. Qualtrics automatically stored all responses online within its software, and I was able to extract the data as an SPSS file. I then deleted all incomplete survey responses and coded the data to make it possible to perform statistical analysis on the data.

Statistical Analysis

All statistical analysis was performed in Qualtrics. Any graphs or charts were either generated in Microsoft Excel or part of an output feature available through SPSS software. Interpretations from SPSS analysis were used to make recommendations.

Data Analysis and Results

Profile of the Sample

In total, 222 people responded to the survey, however only 152 of individuals completed the survey. A profile of the sample demographics can be used to better understand the individuals who took part in the survey.

The survey included the following demographic questions:

- Age
- Employment status
- Highest level of schooling completed
- Frequency of attending church

Age

Table 1.0 below shows the average age of the sample is 37.50 with a standard deviation of 15.54, meaning most survey takers were within the age range of 22 years of age to 53 years of age. The large standard deviation is indicative of a wide range of variability in the ages of the survey responders.

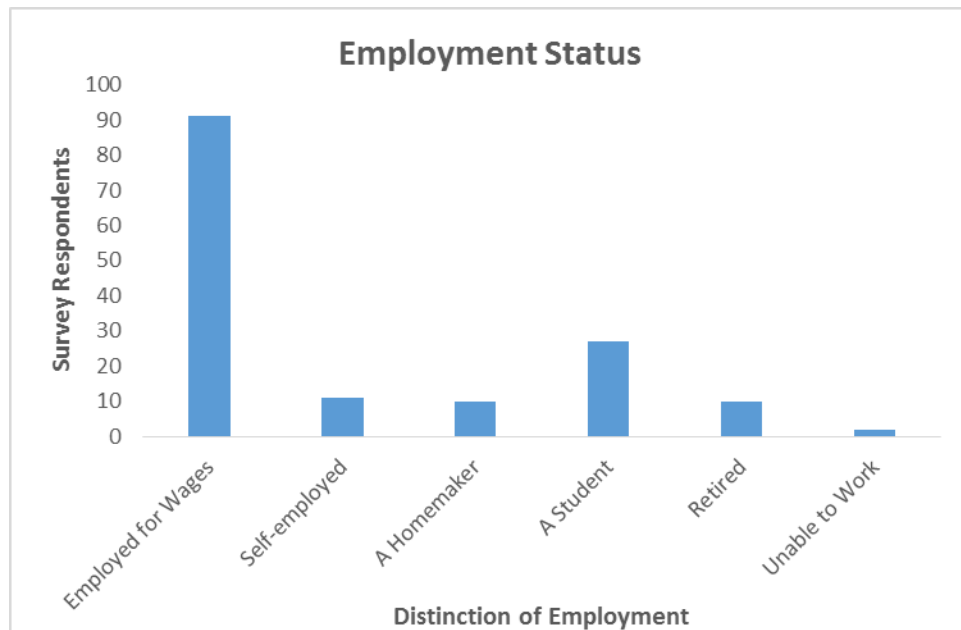
Table 1.0
Respondent's Age

Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
What is your age?	37.50	15.54	18.00	72.00

Employment Status

Of all the respondents, only one elected not to share their current employment status. The two largest distinctions for employment status were “Employed for Wages” (91 respondents) and “A Student” (27 respondents). These two groups alone account for 118 of the 152 survey respondents (77.65).

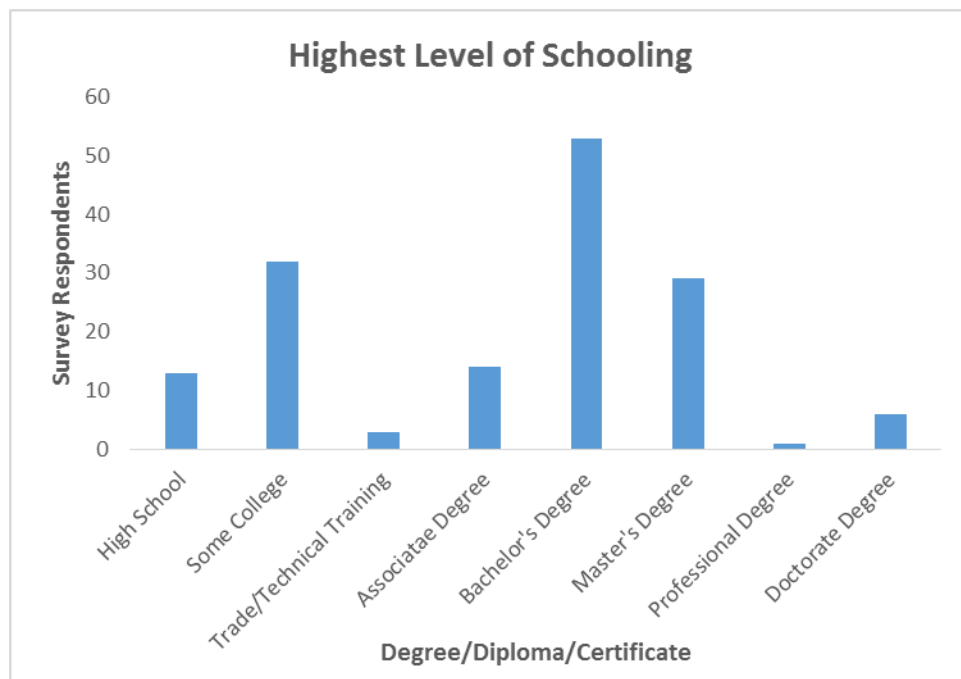
Figure 1.0 – Employment Status



Highest Level of Schooling

A majority of the survey respondents in the sample have earned either a Bachelor's Masters, or Doctorate Degree (63% of the sample). Very few have had no college experience whatsoever, meaning this sample is very educated.

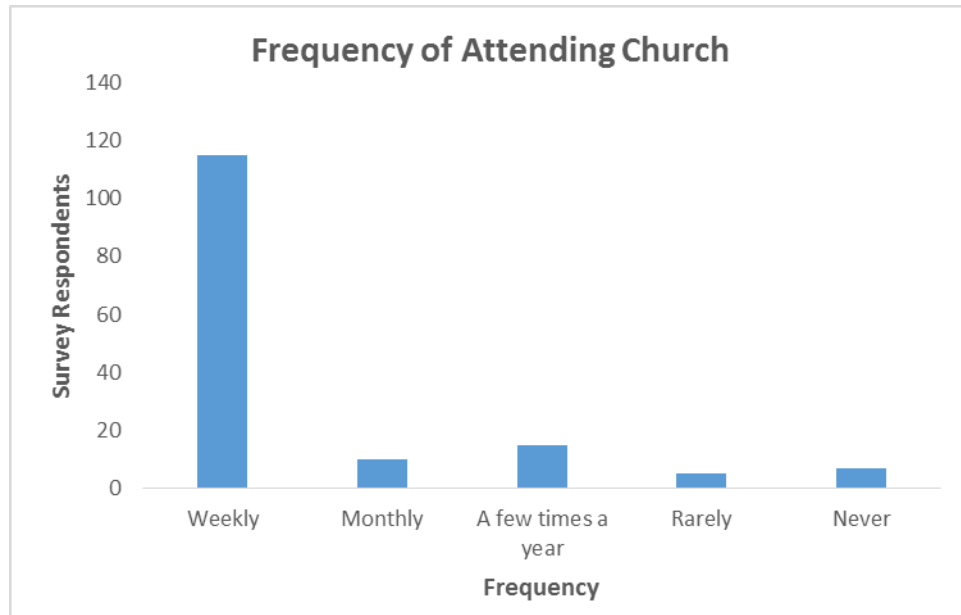
Figure 2.0 – Highest Level of Schooling



Frequency of Attending Church

Of the 152 respondents, 115 of them said they attended church on a weekly basis. A total of 27 respondents said they attend church a few time each year (15), rarely (5), and never (7).

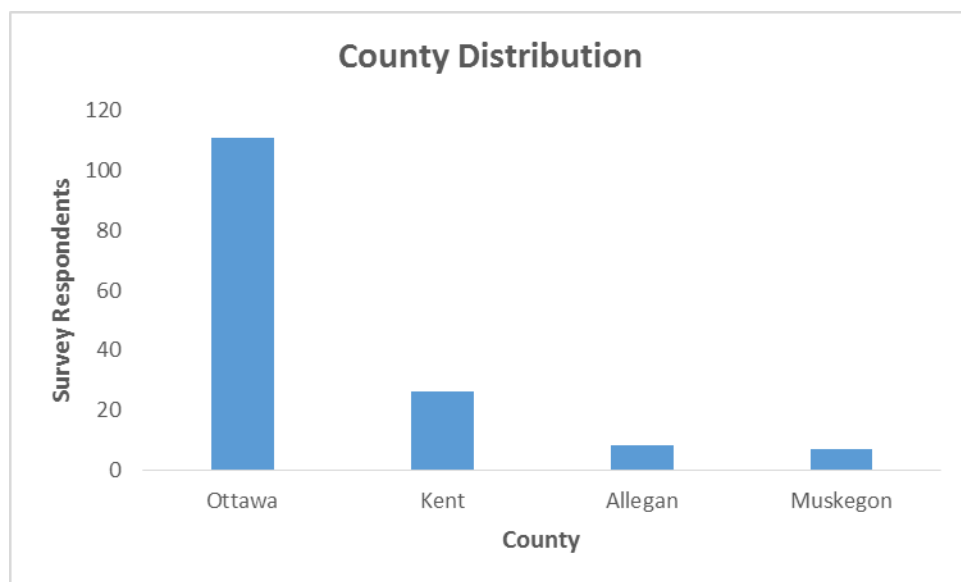
Figure 3.0 – Respondents Frequency of Attending Church



County Distribution

A majority of the survey respondents were from Ottawa County (111). Respondent totals for Kent, Allegan, and Muskegon County were 26, 8, and 7 respectively.

Figure 4.0 – Respondents County of Residence

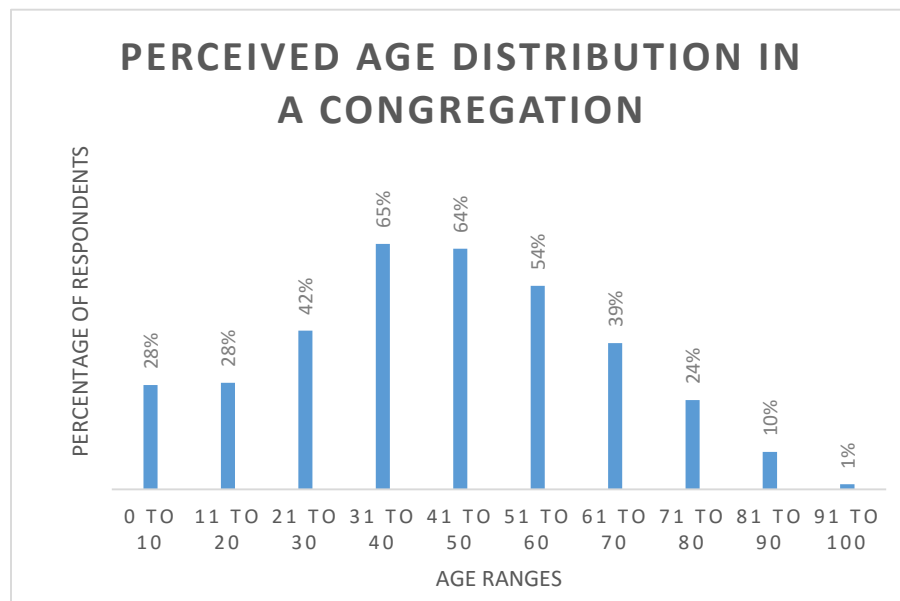


Descriptive Results

Objective 1: To evaluate perceived age distribution in the congregations of the survey respondents.

Survey respondents were asked what age groups a majority of their congregation consisted of. Ages were broken into ranges of 10 and those taking the survey were able to select as many age ranges as they felt were appropriate. The graph below indicates perceived age groups in their congregation. Over 50% of survey takers selected 31 to 40, 41 to 50, and 51 to 60 as age ranges they felt were prominent in the ages of congregation members.

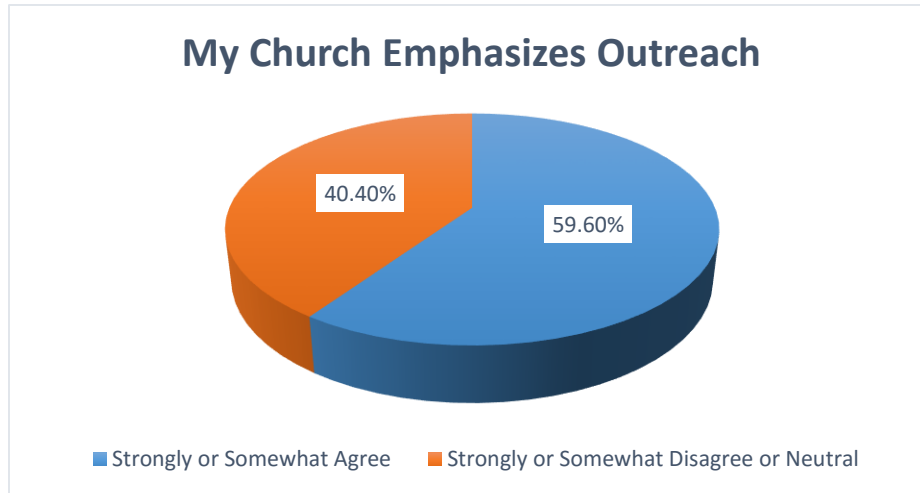
Figure 5.0 – Perceived Age Distribution in Respondents Congregations



Objective 2: To examine the emphasis of membership outreach for churches in West Michigan.

The survey asked to what extent it seemed that survey-takers felt their church emphasized outreach. It said, “My church actively seeks out members,” and survey-takers were able to explain their level of agreement by use of a 5-point scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” 59.6 % of all respondents chose either “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” with that statement.

Figure 6.0 – Evaluation of the Emphasis of Church Outreach

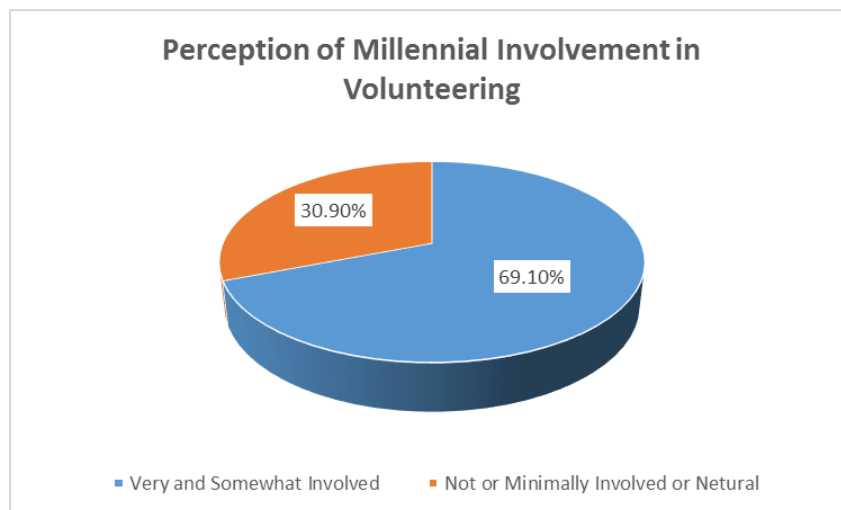


Objective 3: To determine perceptions of millennials and their relationship and whether:

- *Millennials are engaged in services and volunteering.*
- *They should be a focus in outreach.*
- *It seems millennials are leaving the church.*

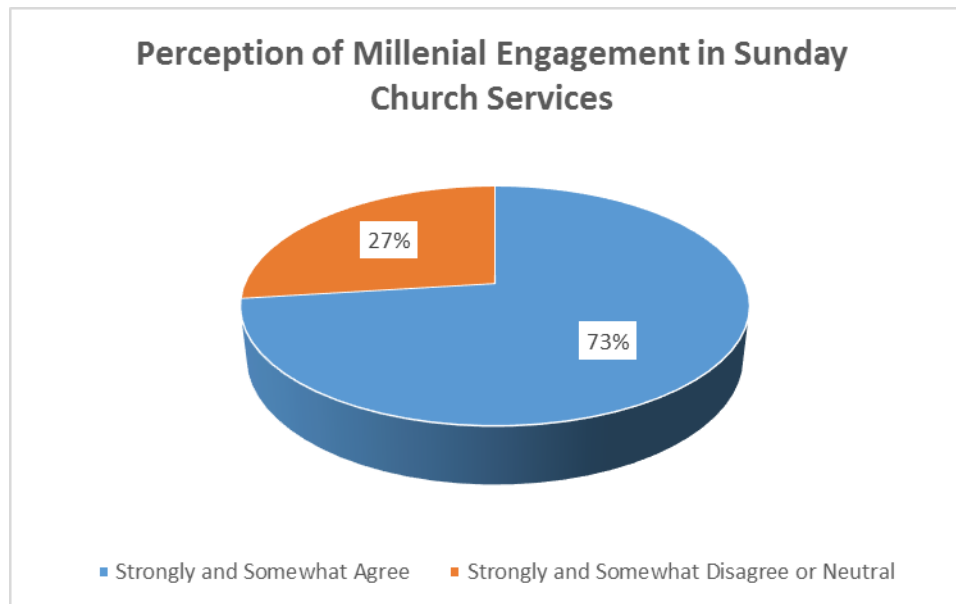
The perception of millennial involvement in volunteering at the respondents' church was evaluated by the use of a 5-point scale ranging from "Not Involved at All" to "Very Involved." 69.10% of all respondents indicated that they felt millennials were either "Very" or "Somewhat Involved" in volunteering.

Figure 7.0 – Perceived Millennial Involvement in Volunteering



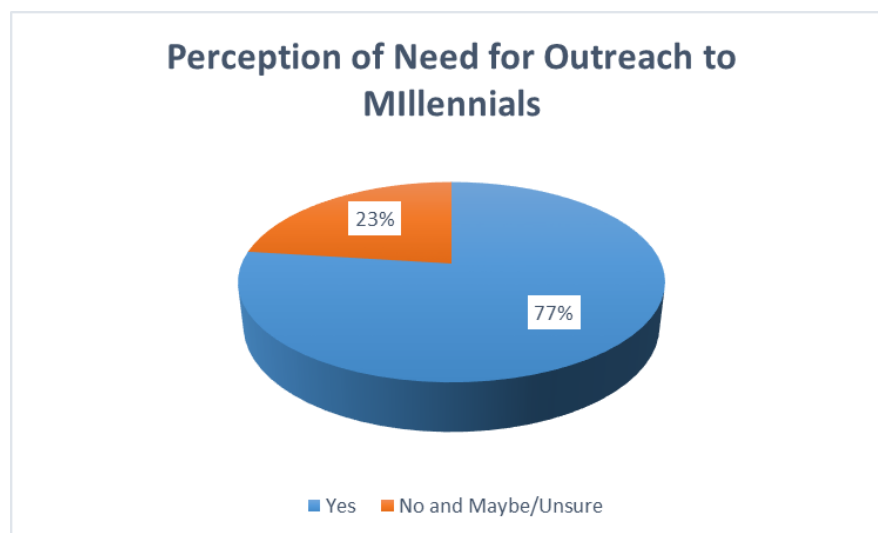
The perception of millennial engagement during Sunday church services was also evaluated by the use of a 5-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. Of all the respondents, 73% of them felt that millennials were engaged in Sunday church services by saying they either “Strongly” or “Somewhat” agreed.

Figure 8.0 – Perceived Millennial Engagement in Sunday Church Services



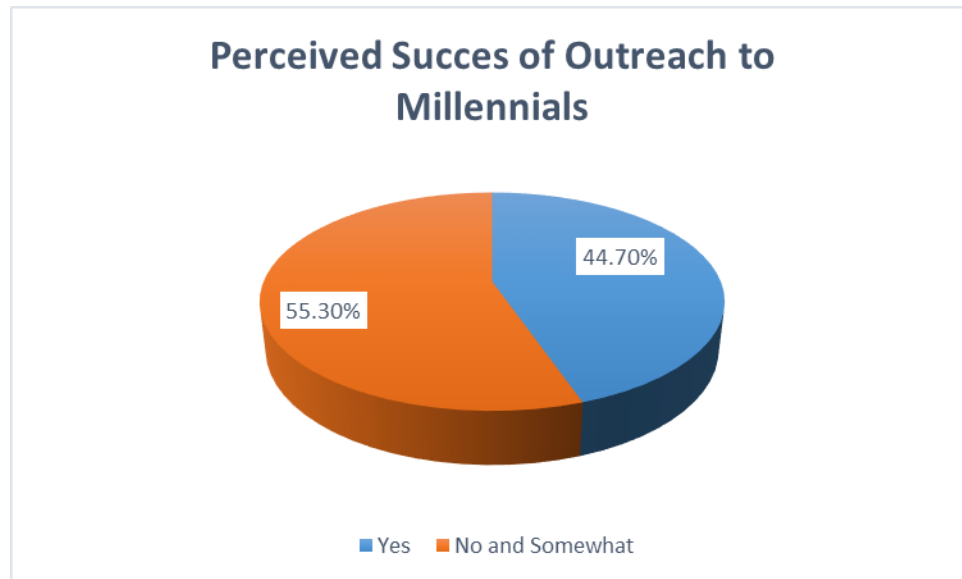
The perception of the need for outreach to millennials was evaluated by asking the survey-takers whether they felt reaching out to millennials mattered. There were three answers to choose from: Yes, NO, and Maybe/Unsure. Of the total responses, 117 (77%) of the respondents selected “Yes” as their answer to the question.

Figure 9.0 – Should Millennials be an Emphasis in Outreach?



The survey also inquired about perceived effectiveness of outreach to millennials. Once again, there were three available responses: Yes, No, and Somewhat. Only 68 of the total responses (44%) were “Yes.”

Figure 10.0 – Is Outreach to Millennials Successful?



The final component of millennials in the church consisted of potential reasons millennials would leave their church. A question was asked regarding personal account of millennials leaving a church and, in turn, what potential factors contributed to the departure of said millennials.

Table 2.0 – Reasons Millennials Leave the Church

I personally know millennials that have left the church for the following reasons:			
	Question the beliefs of the church?	Have personal issues with an individual or individuals in their church?	Have ideological issues regarding social or political beliefs?
Total Selections	72	62	73
Percentage of Sample	47.4%	40.8%	48.0%

Objective 4: To explore expectations of pastors, perceived importance of a pastor’s seminary program, and perception of pastoral capabilities

In order to explore respondents’ emphasis on the importance of pastoral abilities, the survey asked a three part question exploring the importance of Biblical knowledge, strategic planning abilities, and spiritual leadership abilities of pastors. For each category, 80% or more

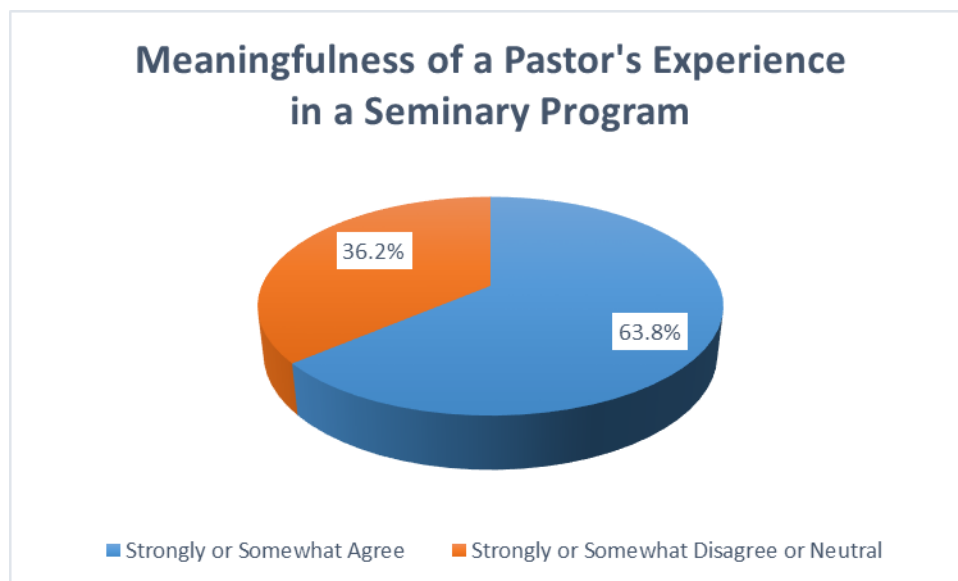
respondents chose either “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” for each distinction of pastoral abilities.

Table 3.0 – Importance of Various Traits in Pastors

In order to be effective leaders, pastors should be qualified in terms of:			
	Biblical Knowledge	Strategic Planning	Spiritual Leadership
Total Strongly Agree Responses	133	53	134
Total Somewhat Agree Responses	15	71	13
Percentage of Population	97.4%	81.6%	96.7%

This research also investigated the perceived emphasis of how important it is that a pastor goes through a seminary program. The survey offered a 5-point scale to answer the question, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” 63.8% of the respondents chose “Strongly Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” as their response to the answer.

Figure 11.0 – Meaningfulness of Completing a Seminary Program



Lastly, the survey evaluated the respondents’ perception of how their pastor performed their duties. The question could be answered with 6 options. The first five were the typical five point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” and the 6th option existed for those that are not part of the church.

Table 4.0 – Evaluation of Pastoral Abilities

My Pastor:					
	Is a strong spiritual leader for the congregation as a whole.	Is a strong spiritual leader on an individual level.	Connects well with all members of the congregation.	Is an excellent resource for Biblical or theological questions I have.	Represents how I should go about living my faith in my day-to-day life as a Christian
Total Strongly Agree Responses	100	95	86	96	98
Total Somewhat Agree Responses	30	30	33	27	26
Percentage of Population	85.5%	82.2%	80.9%	86.2%	81.6%

Objective 5: To evaluate respondents’ feelings of connectedness and belonging in their church community.

In order to evaluate each respondent’s social connections, feelings of comfort, and sense of belonging at church, the survey asked a question with a 5-point scale for responses regarding these topics. The answers ranged from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Over 70% of all respondents either chose “Strongly Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” as a response for each of the three statements.

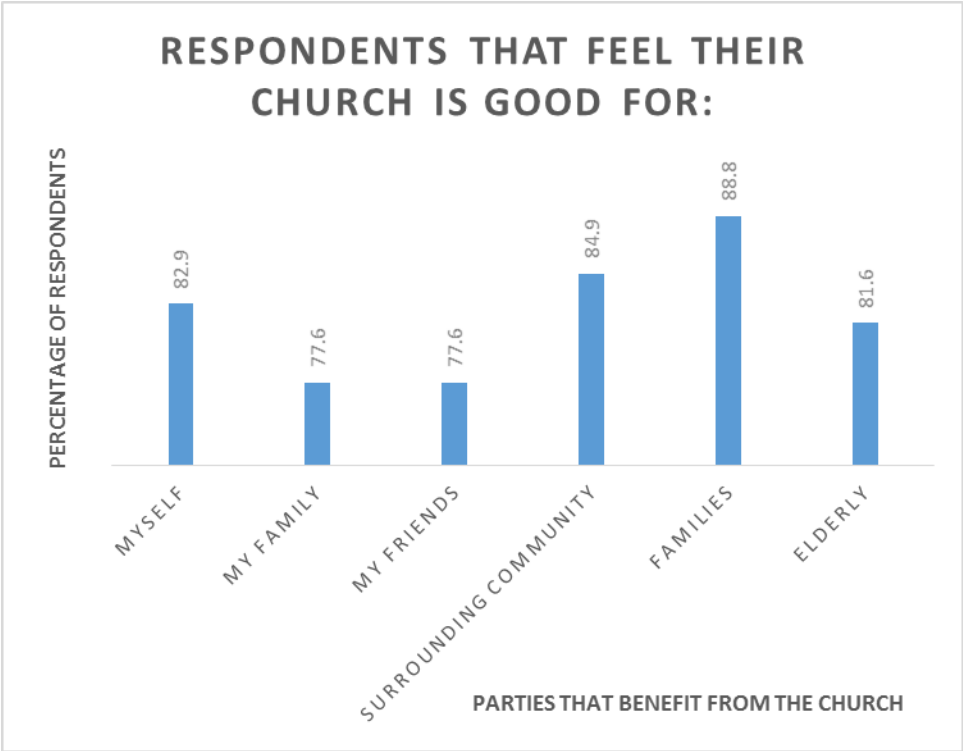
Table 5.0 – Evaluating Feelings of Connectedness and Belonging

Indicate How Much You Agree with the Following Statements			
	I have a strong social connection with other members of my church.	My church is a safe place where I am comfortable talking about my issues in my life.	I feel a sense of belonging when I am at my church.
Total Strongly Agree Responses	67	64	87
Total Somewhat Agree Responses	43	48	36
Percentage of Population	72.4%	73.7%	80.9%

Objective 6: To determine respondents’ perception of their church’s ability to provide a good community for various people.

In order to evaluate who respondents felt their church community was “good for,” they were asked to select from a list all people or groups that would benefit from being a part of their church community.

Figure 12.0 – Percentage of Respondents that Feel Their Church is Good For:



Limitations

Sample Error

This study was based on data provided by survey responses from residents of K.O.M.A. It was limited by sample size, time it took to collect responses to the survey and to perform analysis, the effectiveness of survey distribution, and the lack of county-to-county diversity in the study. Because of this, the reader should be cautious in applying the findings of this research as generalized information regarding the population.

The survey itself had a total of 222 responses, however only 152 of those responses were complete in that the survey respondents completed the entire survey. The population across all four counties is around 1,177,940. Due to extremely low responses to the e-mail distributing the survey, the survey was likely distributed to far fewer people than the rough amount. If 99 different congregations were reached, and each one had roughly 100 members in their church, the survey could have reached around or even over 10,000 people. Lack of responsiveness to e-mails as well as posts on various Social media definitely contributed to a small sample size.

In total, there were only 9 days available for collecting data from the survey. This short stretch of time could have limited total responses to the survey. Due to such a short window of time for data collection, the small sample size for such a large population may not present a very accurate representation of data regarding the population as a whole.

Of the 152 complete responses to the survey, only 41 of the respondents (27% of the sample population) lived in Kent, Muskegon, or Allegan County. This heavily skewed representation of the four counties in this study may also contribute to skewed results from this population sample as well. Although all four counties are considered a part of West Michigan in the study, variances in many cultural and social components of church culture may contribute to data that is not necessarily equally representative of the four counties in K.O.M.A.

A final limitation to this research is the remarkable lack of responsiveness from survey distribution efforts. With the exception of a few pastors, over 85% of the pastors and church leaders that received the e-mail did not respond whatsoever to e-mails regarding the survey and asking for assistance in distributing it. Because of this, creating a larger sample became extremely difficult to do considering the already short amount of time designated for data collection. Lack of cooperation and responsiveness from church pastors/leaders was an equally frustrating and hindering factor in the process of data collection.

If I Were to Do This Again

- I would have allowed for a much longer time to do data collection. Although I was able to get a significant amount of responses in a little over 1 week, having more responses would increase validity and variability of the data.
- I would have gone through the survey even more to examine whether it was digging into my objective effectively. Although extensive and very detail-oriented, the survey could have focused more on later objectives, such as community.
- I would have had more people read through and take the survey. I had multiple people look at it, however I should have had even more look at the survey to look for errors or areas that needed improvement. Despite being read through and revised multiple times with many sets of eyes looking at it, slight errors were still made.
- I would have used different methods to distribute the survey. Although some methods were effective, it would have been much more efficient to reach out to pastors in more ways than sending out e-mails. I would have also reached out to them by calling them, or even sending snail mail.
- In addition to using different methods to distribute the survey, I also would have had some sort of system to follow-up with my initial outreach. This, of course, would also require a longer period of time for data collection.
- Using ranking instead of using lists that simply prompt survey-takers to “check all that apply” would have allowed for more distinction regarding questions such as the one that inquired about the survey-takers perception of age ranges that are prominent in their congregation.
- A majority of the questions in the survey were scale questions. Implementing more nominal and ordinal questions would have allowed for greater depth and greater understanding of respondents’ feelings about various topics.
- Unfortunately, I forgot to add a question regarding gender in my demographics questions at the end of the survey. Although my research still yielded thought-provoking results, this is a key question when it comes to creating a profile for your sample and, in turn, creating strong connections and arguments through the use of the collected data.
- A larger sample size would be hugely beneficial to better data mining and analysis for this research. Though the sample size of this study had age ranges across the board, a

greater volume of responses would be more conducive to creating a sample that more accurately represents the population.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Objective 1: To evaluate perceived age distribution in the congregations of the survey respondents.

- Conclusion: According to the data, 31-40 and 41-50 year olds were perceived to be the most prominent age group in each respective respondent's congregations. The next largest age groups were 51-60 and 21 to 31. Only 28% of the sample felt people in the age ranges of 0 to 10 and 11 to 20 were prominent age ranges that made up their congregation.
- Recommendation: There is slight cause for concern with these perceptions. A drastic drop-off in age groups in terms of younger generations is definitely an area for concern. This is a potential area for concern – millennials may very well lack presence in the West Michigan church.

Objective 2: To examine the emphasis of membership outreach.

- Conclusion: Almost 60% of all survey respondents' felt their church emphasized outreach to the community and potential members.
- Recommendation: Outreach is pivotal to a church's health and longevity in many, many ways. Although 60% of all respondents felt outreach was emphasized, a higher number would be much more desirable, especially when aggregate trends of Christianity in the United States are considered. Evaluating where churches are at in terms of outreach strategy and the success of that strategy may be an area to look at in terms of church operations.

Objective 3: To determine perceptions of millennials and their relationship and whether:

- *Millennials are engaged in services and volunteering.*
- *They should be a focus in outreach.*
- *It seems millennials are leaving the church.*
- Conclusion: In terms of the involvement of millennials in congregations regarding services and volunteering, almost 70% of respondents felt they were involved in volunteering and even more felt they were engaged in services. The topic of outreach specific to millennials saw 77% of respondents feeling it was important, however only 44.78% of them felt outreach to millennials was successful. 40%-48% of respondents felt that millennials left the church due to three different reasons (see Table 2.0).

- Recommendation: Seeing the perceived level of involvement both in terms of volunteering and in terms of being engaged in Sunday services is encouraging information for church members and church leaders alike. The only concern regarding this conclusion is that it does not take into account actual volume of millennials, which leads into the component of outreach to millennials. This research has already indicated the potential for a sharp drop-off in terms of millennials making up a prominent part of church membership in their congregations. Because of this, the information regarding outreach is a concern. If 77% of respondents felt that outreach to millennials was important, but only 44.7 of respondents felt this outreach was unsuccessful, this is a potential area to address for church leadership. Another area of concern is the data shared in Table 2.0. Over 40% of all survey respondents personally knew a millennial that had left the church due to the three various reasons. Digging deeper into this issue may very well be a useful endeavor for church leaders.

Objective 4: To explore expectations of pastors, perceived importance of a pastor's seminary program, and perception of pastoral capabilities.

- Conclusion: In terms of leadership traits in pastors, expectations were extremely high in terms of Biblical Knowledge and Spiritual Leadership abilities. Although strategic planning was not as high (only 81.6%) it is still viewed as an important trait for a pastor to have. Seminary experience mattered to survey respondents as well. 63.8% of them felt that whether a pastor had gone through seminary was important or not. Over 80% of respondents felt their pastors were meeting expectations over an array of five different roles a pastor can play as a leader of their church.
- Recommendation: Investing in pastoral leadership can never be emphasized enough in the church. Seeing so many respondents agree that Pastor's should be capable not only as spiritual leaders and Biblical knowledge but also strategic planning shows just how valued and highly regarded the role of a pastor is in the church. Seminary experience is important as well, and may very well be an area to consider for church leadership. Although not nearly as many respondents felt as strongly about the importance of seminary as they did pastoral traits, it was still a considerably important factor. In terms of pastors fulfilling their duties as a leader to their congregation, 8 out of 10 survey

respondents felt they were meeting expectations, a very good indicator for the adequacy of current pastors and the way they are executing their leadership roles in their church.

Objective 5: To evaluate respondents' feelings of connectedness and belonging in their church community.

- Conclusion: A majority of survey respondents felt their church was a good environment for them. 70% of all respondents felt a social connection, felt their church is a safe environment, and felt a sense of belonging while at their church.
- Recommendation: This information is another encouraging component of this research, especially in terms of sense of belonging felt at the church, which was actually an agreed-upon statement for 80.9% of all respondents. Although feelings of connectedness seem to be prominent among respondents, this is still always an area upon which churches can improve. Churches are places of spiritual and communal nourishment, and ensuring that a church fulfills that part of their mission should always be a priority.

Objective 6: To determine respondents' perception of their church's ability to provide a good community for various people.

- Conclusion: 77% of survey respondents felt their church was good for themselves, their family, their friends, the surrounding community, families in general, and elders.
- Recommendation: Interestingly, a higher percentage of respondents agreed to the statements regarding their church community's level of conduciveness for different parties than they did themselves in many cases. These answers raise a few questions regarding how church members evaluate their own needs and the fulfillment of those needs by their church and how they compare and contrast with the needs of external parties, especially the surrounding community, families in the community, and elderly members of the community. Examining potential reasons for this may prove to be an area worthy of greater exploration for church leadership.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Person #1 Interview

Me: How frequently do you currently attend church?

Person #1: I rarely go. I might go once or twice a year for major holidays like Christmas and Easter but other than that I do not regularly attend church.

Me: When was the last time you attended church?

Person #1: I honestly do not remember. It was a long time ago.

Me: So would you say it was more than a year ago?

Person #1: Yes, definitely more than a year ago.

Me: What does your family do?

Person #1: We used to go every Sunday. I grew up in the Catholic Church and going to mass was very regular and a very common thing for us.

Me: Does your family still attend church.

Person #1: To my knowledge, no. Like I said, we might go here and there on a holiday but we mostly do not go.

Me: Did you go to church at all growing up?

Person #1: Yes, I did. Like I said, I went to church almost every weekend. I also went to another class of sorts on Wednesday nights. We would learn about Bible stories, do activities, etc.

Me: Wait, was this called Catechism for you?

Person #1: Yeah it was.

Me: What were your positive impressions of Catechism?

Person #1: In some ways, I liked it a lot. I had friends that were there so I was able to hang out with them. And we got to sit on really nice chairs, we had nice facilities (projectors). It wasn't too challenging and I was able to have a lot of fun. But I honestly had some issues with Catechism.

Me: And what were those issues?

Person #1: I feel that there were quite a few restrictions in terms of what I could believe and what we could talk about. I had questions that were definitely controversial to Christian beliefs but I was not allowed to ask them. There were a handful of times where I tried to talk about topics such as evolutions, the dinosaurs, etc. and my attempts to converse were stifled. It became

more and more frustrating for me and I became increasingly disinterested not only in going to Catechism and Mass on Sundays but just Catholicism and Christianity in general.

Me: So was there anything you would have changed?

Person #1: I would have allowed for more discussion. I feel like it was really unfair for me to not be permitted to ask tough questions. I feel like my Catechism instructor was almost limiting themselves with a narrow and skewed view of the world. It honestly did not make sense to me. There is a comic that I think of a lot when I think about church and it reminds me of how I felt about going to Church and going to Catechism. The comic shows a scientist throwing objects into a portal of sorts and the objects come out on the other side to a caveman. With each object that is thrown in, the comic represents the result of that object and its use by the cavemen in the next strips of the comic. The comic shows that all is well for a while (cavemen discover fire, different technologies are discovered). But then the scientist becomes frustrated with the portal/device and eventually starts throwing crap that is just lying around in the laboratory. And one of the things lying around in the laboratory is a Bible. The comic shows that once the Bible is thrown back to the cave man, society reverts and stops developing and growing. I know, yeah, It's extreme. But that's what I think the church is like. Or what Christians are like. They limit themselves because of what they believe in and how they go about entertaining and exercising those beliefs.

Me: Wow, that's a very elaborate way to say you aren't a fan.

Person #1: I definitely don't think they're dumb. Christians, I mean. I don't think they're dumb or anything. I just think there are limitations from subscribing to those beliefs.

Me: Okay, thank you for sharing that. So, from what you have said, I assume you do not have any interest to attend church or regularly attend?

Person #1: No. I am not really interested in attending regularly. I don't think I would enjoy it and I don't believe what churches believe.

Me: Do you have any friends that currently attend church? Friends that do not?

Person #1: Well, yes. I have friends that do and do not go to church. Most of them do not go, though.

Me: What about your friends that do go? Do they invite you? Do you feel invited or welcomed to join them?

Person #1: I have not been specifically invited by them, no. They have never brought it up directly to me but I am okay with that. When, no –IF they were to ask me if I wanted to go with them I would say no. Now, I don't think that would defend them or anything. I think they would understand that it's nothing against them. I just have no interest in going. I don't think it serves a purpose for me.

Me: Okay, so what do you think a church is for? What purpose does the church serve?

Person #1: I think the church is a place where, hmm. The church is a place where people join, people meet and they celebrate their God, the higher power that they believe is very important to their lives. And that's fine, but I also think the church needs to stay within itself. It's okay to talk about what you believe within your circle of friends or people that believe what you do, but it goes too far when people in church or people that go to church start to share it with people on the outside. They should not do that. I think they should stick to themselves. They should not try to convert people or change people's minds on issues. It could be a big issue or a little one. They should just stick to themselves. Now, this is not just my viewpoint for Christians, for church. I feel this way about all religions, all beliefs. Your belief in a higher power should not be public, it should be private. Sharing those things, your beliefs, will just result in offending people. It will result in arguments and tension.

Me: So what do you feel a church does for an individual? Or for a family?

Person #1: For a person? It allows them to go to a place, maybe a safe haven, where people with similar beliefs meet. And they get to learn about God in this place. There are like-minded people that also believe what this person believes. It's a place where they can learn more about what they believe and where there are people that will agree with them. Once again, though, it's a private place. It needs to be private, contained to just the church and the people at that church too.

Me: What do you think the church's role should be in a community?

Person #1: Well, in respect to helping people, I think it is very important. There are plenty of churches that reach out to the community and do great volunteer work. I like that, I think it is good. And I also think that it helps a lot. Churches definitely change and impact communities in a positive way when they get involved and help out. Once again, it is really important to not push their beliefs on these people. The church can help and the church can be there for people in need but they should not use it as a vehicle to share their beliefs or push them on other people.

Me: What about the government?

Person #1: Okay, so that's definitely a problem. The church should not be a part of the government and it definitely should not run the government either. I definitely believe in and completely support the idea of the separation of church and state. The church is not a power or an officiating body, it is a group of people that have faith and that should be sharing their faith just with those that have common beliefs. Implementing beliefs of faith is definitely a problem. A really big one for me is abortion. I personally do not think abortion is a good thing but I also do not feel the government needs to make a rule about it. That is pushing things way too far and reaching too far into what people should be doing. The government should not be telling people what to do with their bodies. It is the woman's decision what to do with her baby, not the government. And that is the problem with church. Because they do not support abortion, they are trying to make this belief a law. And that's too far, its too much. They can have their own beliefs, but it needs to stay with them. Their beliefs related to their faith should not be tied into or become law. Separation of church and state is super important and it needs to be emphasized a ton moving forward.

Me: Okay, so how would you explain church to someone?

Person #1: What do you mean, like anyone?

Me: Yeah.

Person #1: I would tell them that a church is a place where people meet to share their beliefs and their ideals. It's a private place, its separate from everything else and it allows a person to have community and support and to learn about God in an encouraging and safe environment as well. It can be a safe haven or a place of refuge and it allows a person to get fulfillment. But it is a place separate from other things. It is supposed to be a place that does not impose or push its beliefs on others. A place that does not create a social or political agenda.

Me: Okay, last thing. Finish this sentence. Church is _____

Person #1: A place for someone to learn about their beliefs in a private place. Where others believe the same or similar things.

Appendix 2 - Person #2 Interview

Me: What was your first experience with a church?

Person 2: My first experience that I would remember was when I was a little kid.

Me: Elaborate please.

Person 2: I just remember my parents going to church and thus the family went to church. I was a crazy kid so it was not a conducive environment to my human person.

Me: I am assuming you have been going to church on and off.

Person 2: Through my childhood, it was an on and off church experience up until middle school. Then I was going to church at a pretty consistent rate. I also changed in my senior year of high school. Then in college I continued the trend of going to church and attending.

Me: What was your reason for going intermittently when you were younger?

Person 2: I was unable to drive and unable to walk 20 miles away to church all the time. I was not always able to go.

Me: So, your parents did not go?

Person 2: They went off and on. When you are raising three boys the weekends are pretty crowded with sporting events and things of that sort.

Me: When you were younger, what was your impression of the church?

Person 2: Before middle school?

Me: Sure

Person 2: Once you reach middle school and high school you can begin to choose whether you want to go to church or not, even if your parents are still dragging you to it. You are able to more consciously decide what church is and if you like it. When you are a kid and you are going with your parents, it is more their decision than yours. It is more of a family tradition as a kid than it is when you hit middle school and high school, where you can begin to understand the point of going.

Me: So you decided to go more consistently when you reached middle school?

Person 2: At that point I was going to youth group and things of that sort and it was much more of a program that fit me.

Me: Your main draw to the church was that they had something that fit you?

Person 2: my main draw to start off with in middle school was an environment where my friends were and environment where I was not told to sit down, shut up, stop talking, you're ruining the

sermon, and things of that sort. It was an environment that was much more conducive to my learning style. And yes they provided me with that environment. And I wasn't necessarily going for the sake of learning about God but being in a conducive environment all the while having an environment that was Christ-centered was big in terms of my growth.

Me: Talk again about the environment that you were in.

Person 2: In middle school it was youth group – so as a middle schooler you were in that “between stage.” You had games to play, we would sing songs about God but the songs would also be fun and energetic. All the while still focused on God. You know, there were games and I also had a lot of friends that went to youth group and there was also a culture of my friend group to go. That's really what drove me back to going to church. And also, me myself wanted to pursue this. At the beginning I may have been wanting to pursue friends, or that cute girl going to youth group but those two drives were not just because of the social institutional church, I also believe there was a spiritual context to it. And that was a door God was opening for me to go to church.

Me: Would you include this explanation in regards to high school?

Person 2: I stayed at the same church until junior year- so from 7th grade until junior year (in high school). And the youth group I fervently pursued. And my parents went to the same church because of us kids going to the youth group. So that was kind of our church. Junior year there was a big falling out in terms of my family at the church. Just with a couple ways they treated my younger brother and my parents versus the way they treated myself and my older brother. When that falling out happened my parents did not want us necessarily going to youth group at that church so I. Again, I add the spiritual aspect that God led me to a certain direction – and then I started going to another church and the pursuit in that church was (1) music, because I was able to play my guitar and (2) it was also very contemporary, and that connected with me.

Me: So by the time you were going in high school that was very self-driven?

Person 2: Yes

Me: So on a scale of 1-10, 1 being completely dependent on your parents commitment and 10 being dependent on your commitment where were you in high school.

Person 2: I would say I was at a 7 because I always respected my parents and my parents decisions. SO if they did not want me going to a specific church or if they did not want me going I felt a good son would be respectful of my parents. So I would say I was still respectful of their

wishes in that regard. My drive at that time was definitely to go to church and go to youth group. Again, a lot for the social atmosphere but at the same time there was a lot of spiritual learning that happened in my life.

Me: Now you go regularly, correct?

Person 2: Yes.

Me: Are you more dependent or independent now?

Person 2: I mean, independent now. There comes a point in your life where you break from your family. And in college, and at this point in my life I am making those decisions on my own. And yes, I will respect what my parents input is but it does not necessarily control what my direction is.

Me: So, where are you from 1-10

Person 2: 10

Me: What do you think the purpose of a church is? What functions does it serve? What does it do?

Person 2: You can break down a church in terms of its social structure, in terms of its programming, in terms of its leadership, but I think the core root of a church is a focus on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and he died and rose again to save us from our sins. That should be the focus of the church. That one message. And for people to find that message and to follow that message.

Me: Do you think that is the sole purpose or do you think a church has other roles?

Person 2: I think there are two different questions here. One is what is the purpose of a church and then what has the church taken on as its purpose? I think the role of the church is solely that pursuit. I think the more realistic church is a different - it is much different than the role that a church should solely take. Because now the church I think, if we are looking at it ideally, is a community. A church is a refuge, a place you can go in times of trouble. Whether it is marital trouble, drug trouble, any trouble. It is a place of refuge, a place of community, and I would even say it is almost a place of influence too in terms of life change.

Me: If you think the church is based solely on the message of the resurrection, how does the church execute its role to share that? How do you think the church does that?

Person 2: How does it share the Gospel message of the resurrection?

Me: How does the church share the Gospel message? What does it do to share the Gospel message? Or what does it do to live it out?

Person 2: See the question you ask is so wide. I don't think there is one answer to that because churches approach it in so many different ways. Being a person that works in the church as a youth minister and kids minister there is not a simple answer because churches are always trying to find that answer.

Me: What does your church do to reach that message?

Person 2: Well, when I am looking at it, a big focus is to church the "un-churched," which means you reach out to those people that have been disenfranchised by politics, cliques, tradition, whatever it may be. Those are the un-churched people. So my church is looking to reach out to people that are un-churched and say, "hey we are going to try to cut through that red tape, that is dividing people from Jesus. Ultimately all of that tradition, all the politicking provides a divider between Jesus and people. So my church wants to cut that and say "we want to share Jesus with you in the most real way possible." Programatically, many churches run a Sunday service, which is a setting for a large-group lesson. You come for worship, community, etc. It provides the basis of a lot of church function. And from there the church breaks down into what a lot of churches would call a traditional small-group, in which my church is the big idea group. This is where you indulge in questions concerning what you talked about on Sunday. So it is explicating a lesson and applying it to your life and then in a smaller context people have the ability to divulge personal opinion on stuff like that, learn things. These groups have a key leader that helps facilitate it and that helps make the lesson very personal. Further on, there are very many social groups and encouragement for mentor groups and things like that. There are rock-climbing groups, beer brewing groups, so many other groups that my church has. The focus is, again, on enjoying an activity with people while still being Christ-oriented.

Me: So there is a focus on creating community, correct?

Person 2: Yes

Me: What do you think could change about your church?

Person 2: There are two things a church can be: invitational and challenging. Invitational means it welcomes someone to the church. Take the messiness, goodness, badness and just come. Live life with us. Then on the other side of the spectrum there is challenging. This means "hey we want you to grow in Christ and strengthen your prayer life. We want you to become a stronger

leader in whatever regard you are supposed to be. We want you to be serving the way Christ served in our community. We want you to open up your life and share what is going on and how Christ could be working in it.” So there is two different things there. Invitation and challenge. I think our church has both. There is high invitation. We are very good at it. Again, the focus is to bring in people that are already very wary of church. If you are challenging people that have been disenfranchised by the church it is not necessarily going to work. So, what you need to do is invite them in and provide an environment that is welcoming. It needs to specifically look like the first song that you hear is a contemporary song like U2, Bruce Springsteen, Taylor Swift. It’s a song where people walk in the doors and say hey this is familiar, this isn’t church-ey. Oh, and another thing. When they walk in the doors on a Sunday morning the first thing they see and smell is popcorn. We are known as the popcorn church because we serve popcorn to people. We break down barriers in a unique and different way. It shows people that it is a welcoming place in more ways than just one. You can have your coffee in your hand, popcorn in your hand, and you have heard a song that you already know, So you have already experienced things you are familiar with – that make you comfortable. You feel a little bit of connection to what is happening. So I think our invitation is really great. I think the challenge part is there but it is a hard part to implement because of the culture of it as well. I think our teachable lessons are great and our small groups go well. It’s just about getting people to show dramatic life change once they have entered the doors.

Me: What is the churches role outside of itself? Should the church be involved in the community? To what extent.

Person 2: Well, I think one of the wrong assumptions about the church is that is a building and that its an exclusive group of people. It was never meant to be that. It was mean to BE a community. It is supposed to be an environment that is community. You could not have a building and it could still be a church. And I think a church is supposed to be a community. I think that is where real world change should happen from – on a local, community level and I think that’s where it should be initiated.

Me: Should the church also share its message and purpose in the community?

Person 2: Yeah without a doubt. A lot of people could see it as pushing an agenda. Its not. Its sharing hope.

Me: What about the churches involvement in social and political issues?

Person 2: I think you are talking again about what church is. It's community. If you are sharing a community that is like-minded across the board, political and social decisions are going to be made on that level. I think the idea of separation of church and state has negative ramifications on believers. If your beliefs are changing the way you vote, you are still not achieving separation of church and state. I think separation of church and state is a broken ideal. It will never work. The only way you will have separation of church and state is if there is no church and there is no state, only one or the other in existence.

Me: One final things. Complete this sentence. Church should

Person 2: love

Me: Church is

Person 2: love

Me: Welcome to my church, we believe in

Person 2: Jesus

Appendix #3 - Person #3 Interview

Me: What is the first church experience you ever recall?

Person 3: I grew up in the church, so my first experience would probably be worship center which was like church school for little kids. In the middle of service we would leave and go down to worship center. We would leave and sing songs, do a craft and then get a little snack. It was usually pretzels or goldfish, goldfish were always better, unless the pretzels had the little Hershey's kiss in the middle. I think my earliest church memory would be Sunday school with my mom because she was a teacher. In her classroom learning about all of the Bible stories in the Bible – the ones they could tell little kids at least.

Me: So do you currently attend church?

Person 3: I do.

Me: And you have been attending your entire life?

Person 3: Yes

Me: How has the transition gone as you have gone from being a child to now in terms of dependency. Do you go now because you want to or because it's what your family does?

Person 3: Right now I go for me, definitely. I actually go to a different church than my parents do. I kind of broke off, well I didn't break off but I chose my own climate and style so to speak. My parents go to a very conservative church which by no means is bad but I like something more contemporary. So I chose the church I am at right now for me.

Me: So your family still attends church now?

Person 3: Yes they do.

Me: Do you go to a different church with very different services because you have differing beliefs from them?

Person 3: It is more of a stylistic and contemporary decision.

Me: Do you have friends that go to church?

Person 3: I have friends at my church, and my girlfriend goes there with me, we go there together and we have friends there that we know. But I also have friends at different churches and I have visited with them before. I also have friends that do not go to church at all. They don't believe. I am sort of all across the spectrum.

Me: What were your reasons in the past to attend and not attend church.

Person 3: The biggest influence was the fact that my family went. We didn't go sometimes because we had family parties, events, or we were out in Holland at the beach, but we went almost every Sunday to both services – morning and night. I was kind of expected to go because that is what we did as a family. I was never really pressured or forced to go but I was raised in the expectation of "this is what you do."

Me: Would you say you now go to church on your own accord. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being dependent on other people and 10 being your own individual desire, where would you place yourself?

Person 3: A 9. I think there are other factors that influence where and if I go. I have attended a couple different churches, so the friends I have at those various churches are an influencing factor. Not that they're the only factors, but it is nice to have a place you go where you have community and support. Where there are people that sit next to you and you won't be alone in the pew somewhere.

Me: For the most part it's individual.

Person 3: Yes, I am not being pushed in any way.

Me: What were your other experiences in terms of Bible Study, Kids Ministry, youth group, things you lead and do not lead. Are you involved now? Are you leading things now?

Person 3: I grew up going to Sunday school and when I graduated that in fourth grade I moved on to Catechism. I did that up through my senior year of high school.

Me: Do you mind if I interject?

Person 3: Yeah, go ahead.

Me: You called it Catechism?

Person 3: Yeah, we read through the Heidelberg Catechism. We did not read it or anything but we went through the question and answer thing.

Me: Explain your current role in the church. Your current perspective. It can be broad or specific to your individual experiences.

Person 3: The church I grew up at, I was involved in youth group all through high school. I did some mission trips with them and some other stuff, so that was cool. The church I am at now, I do not have much of a role in other than just attending. I am not really even a member, not officially yet. But I have done Christian summer camps the past two summers. I lead Young Life, which is a Christian organization that reaches out to middle school and high school kids by

using volunteer leaders in the community so we meet up with them and have youth group meetings weekly. We hang out, play games, build relationships and share the Gospel and how it is acting and impacting our lives. In terms of the broad church as a whole, I think we all play a part in the way we live and how we minister to others. I think everything speaks to something.

Me: What do you think the role of the church is? For the community, for an individual, etc.

Person 3: I think the church has a lot of roles, all within the realm of the main role of making disciples of all nations. That's in the Bible. Where Jesus talks to his disciples and tells them to go out and make disciples of all nations. And the church came out of that so the church, and its role is to make more disciples. And they do that by a lot of different goals. If you are talking about community, I mean the church I am a part of right now hosts block parties and stuff to trigger community interest and to get people to come in and get involved. Like I said, I do young life, which is a global thing. It's in 71 different countries. But I mean even that on a global scale is a big outreach mission to kids.

Me: So you think outreach is important?

Person 3: I think it's huge. It's the center of the church. Being missional and being God-reaching, being witnesses whether it's a global scale or a community scale.

Me: What would you tell someone if they asked you what a church would do for them?

Person 3: I think at the core of what church is, its not necessarily there to do something for us. Church as a whole should be a place of worship, and a place to share that worship with other believers, just to glorify the name of God. And so if they are coming with the aspect of "what is this going to do for me" I don't know. I think you can definitely get things out of church. I think churches are to teach us. To instruct us and guide us and show us how to reach a better life. But what the end goal of using a church as a way to praise and worship and glorify God. As opposed to going for "oh it makes me feel good about my life, it helps me be happy, it helps me get along with my parents." Now those are all good things among themselves but I do not think that should be the central goal of church.

Me: So you think church contributes to happiness?

Person 3: I think it definitely does. I think it allows us to seek and know God more. When we know him more we are able to be filled with his guidance, his governance, his sovereignty, we are able to know him better. And that gives us peace. And peace is huge. Peace and joy are what

we get when we are following Jesus closely. And I think those, though they are different than happiness are more important than happiness.

Me: What do you think the role of the church should be in the government?

Person 3: Cutting right to the deep of it, aren't you? (laughs)

Me: (Laughing) It's my favorite one to ask

Person 3: I think it's a very interesting, very important question. I think its one that takes up a lot of thought to kind of grasp and process. From the way I was raised, especially in West Michigan, the consensus is that Christians should rule government because we are the chosen people of God sent to rule the world. Whether or not that true, I don't know, I do know that we are called to stand for justice, stand for truth, and I would love it if that would infiltrate politics, but I also understand that the country as a whole is a business. They try to make money to serve their citizens. And I get that's sometimes those principles don't align with Christian principles. So I get where the butting of the heads happens so to speak because I think ideally I would love the government to be missional and to help the poor. And take care of people that cannot take care of themselves. But on the other hand the government has 1,000,010 other responsibilities that take up its time and resources. And they can't always devote all their time and money to helping the poor and speaking up for those who can't speak for themselves. And that creates a lot of conflicts because a lot of Christians would argue that the government should devote most of if not all of its resources to helping people and the government has so many other things to focus its time and effort to. And again there's the whole abortion thing that gets brought up whenever anyone talks about Christians and politics. And its always such a touchy subject. Because as a believer I do believe in the value of human life. But as someone with rational thought I also think there's a point where depending on the severity of the case, if the mother is in danger, if the baby is in danger, if (heaven forbid) it is a rape case, or unwanted pregnancy; and I don't have all the answers to this. But think this is where it's more grey than black and white. Because a lot of Christians see it as "abortion is terrible all the time, it is evil and sinful – never do it). It's black and white. It's a yes or no issue. But I think as humans who can look at things from both sides and can look at things hopefully from the side of a mother who was raped. That sucks. It's something no one should ever go through. And if, I don't know. I can see where there would be guilt in that. And the idea of I don't want this baby because it reminds me of what I have been

through. Not that I am saying adoption is the answer but I can see where someone would be considering that as an option.

Me: How would you explain church to someone who has no idea what church is? What does it do?

Person 3: Those are two different questions. And two very important questions. I think what the church was created to be, what it was in Biblical times is not what it is now. I think it has gone far away from the original idea and the original intent of what church is supposed to be. I mean if you look at the book of Acts 2:42 it talks about the disciples holding everything together in common. Meeting the needs of their community, living very sacrificially. I don't see that with the church now. Sometimes I see the church now as everybody look at us. We are so great and so big. We have all these resources and a giant video screen. We serve 20,000 on four of our campuses. And its all about the buildings and the programs and the money. And that's not at all what Jesus calls the church to be. I think if you get down to what the church is supposed to be its not even a building it's a group of people who come together along the common love, trust, faith and guidance in Jesus Christ and who agree to meet together to hang out, to share meals, talk about their stories and their faith and what God is doing in their lives. And then to go out and serve. And bring in other people who don't know the gospel. And continue to grow in a missional way and not as an attraction or entertainment source. What the church is supposed to be and what some churches are and some churches aren't now. It's a group of people who love Jesus, who love other people. And who are sacrificial in the way they go about living their lives. And I think the church would do well to get back into that. I think a lot of people have been turned away from the church. Because a church is not like that any more. Churches are seen as judgmental, hypocritical, and not the kind of place where people feel welcome. That's the exact opposite of what Jesus was and what his disciples were. If you go through the Bible it talks about this so many times, that Jesus and his disciples go to people who don't normally have a place in society. They go to the crippled, the lame, the people with disabilities, people with sicknesses, the tax collectors, ordinary fisherman. They went out to everybody. Because they were not above or below anyone. They just loved people, and that's what the church is missing.

Me: Complete this sentence. The church is ____

Person 3: Trying to be a community surrounded and grounded in Christ – but it gets away from that pretty often

Me: The church should be

Person 3: Community founded in Christ

Me: Do you have anything else you want to share?

Person 3: I just hope that people who don't know about church will get a second chance. If they have had a crappy experience the first time around. I think a lot of churches do a crappy job of being open and welcoming to people different their congregation. And think that sucks and I think it's unfair. So if you have been hurt by the church, I am sorry. We are just trying to protect their stupid little way of life. Come on back. Because we want to get this right. We want to witness to all people regardless of who they are or how they look or how they came in. Sometimes a church gets it right and sometimes they don't. But people are the same way. So if we give people a second chance why not the church.

Appendix 4 - Person #4 Interview

Me: Do you currently attend a church?

Person 4: Yes

Me: How frequently do you attend your church?

Person 4: Pretty much every week.

Me: Do you go because there are external forces pushing you to go or is it all internal motivation to go?

Person 4: It's mostly internal.

Me: Okay, answer the same question on a scale of 1-10. 1 is all external motivation, 10 is all internal motivation.

Person 4: 8

Me: Does your family go to church?

Person 4: My family goes to church/

Me: Do they go to church with you?

Person 4: When I am at home, yes.

Me: When you are home do you go to the same church as them?

Person 4: Yes.

Me: So when you are home, do you consider yourself to be a part of the same church family?

Person 4: Yes.

Me: Do you have friends that go to church? Do you have friends that do not go to church?

Person 4: Combination.

Me: Please elaborate.

Person 4: My boyfriend goes and I have other friends that go, but not as much any more. A majority of my friends do not go now. At least not to the same church I am going to.

Me: Have you always gone to church?

Person 4: Yes.

Me: Please explain some of those experiences.

Person 4: What do you mean.

Me: AS a youth, did you go to church consistently? Did you do anything other than going to church on Sundays?

Person 4: Pretty much every Sunday was church. And then we would go home for nap time.

Me: Did you only go on Sundays?

Person 4: I went to a youth group on Wednesdays as well. And when I was younger it was Owana, which was structured for preschool through first grade. You would learn Bible verses, have game time, and having like a story time. After 6th grade I went to whatever youth group things was on Wednesdays. In middle school it was called oasis and in high school it was called WSM (Woodside Student Ministries).

Me: Would you say this was consistent throughout your childhood and growing up?

Person 4: I mean until later high school when I had sports practices on Wednesdays and I was not able to go as much. But yes.

Me: Overall were those experiences positive or negative as you were growing up?

Person 4: For me, positive.

Me: Why?

Person 4: Well, I don't have anything specific. But I don't think I would still be part of a church if they were not positive experiences. They formed my entire youth along with, you know, going to a Christian school. I would say they were positive because I look back on them fondly.

Me: Were there any negative things you experienced?

Person 4: I wouldn't say negative specifically in the context of my church, I would just say that growing up in a church in and of itself has its downfalls because it's almost forced upon you for your entire childhood so it makes it harder to make a personal decision about whether or not you should go to church. But the church itself was good. I was provided a lot of opportunities to serve, a lot of opportunities to learn. I made some good friends that I am still friends with. And I mean, churches have issues but not any that influenced me personally.

Me: Would you mind sharing some of those issues.

Person 4: Well just because my parents both work at a church I know some of the financial issues, employee issues, you know, like control issues. I know the inner workings of the church basically and that the church is not perfect by any means.

Me: Overall would you saying going to church right now is a positive or a negative experience for you?

Person 4: Can it be a neutral experience?

Me: Sure

Person 4: I wouldn't say it is either positive or negative.

Me: Why?

Person 4: Just because I don't feel as connected with my current church.

Me: In what ways?

Person 4: In social ways I guess.

Me: So culture and community?

Person 4: Honestly it has been hard to pinpoint this whole thing myself.

Me: Can you think of anything you would change?

Person 4: Well I don't think it's necessarily something that can be changed. I think the community is not diverse enough to include people who are my age.

Me: What do you mean?

Person 4: College aged people in their early twenties. And if they are in their early twenties they are married and have a baby. And that makes it so even though they are the same age it makes it hard to connect to somebody who is married and has a baby when you are not either of those things.

Me: What is the purpose of a church?

Person 4: To teach people about the love of Christ and what he can do for them, and to bring new people into the faith, and to help people grow and sustain their faith. As well it's to provide outreach to the community.

Me: DO you think churches are successful in those roles

Person 4: I think there are some churches that are successful in those roles. I think that churches could be more successful.

Me: Why?

Person 4: Because churches, just like humans, are imperfect and there is not a perfect system the any church employs in order to accomplish the purposes that they have. So there's some churches that are not smart with their money. Some churches aren't, you know, reaching out to the community in the way they should, some churches aren't even really loving people the way they should.

Me: And you think those are important things?

Person 4: Yeah, and I think that a church should be monetarily smart. I think it's important for a church to be reaching out into its community and not just ignoring the problems that exist.

Me: What do you think a church does for an individual?

Person 4: Provides support and shows Christ's love to them, first and foremost, and teaches them and guides them in their faith.

Me: How can a church guide someone in their faith.

Person 4: By teaching. By having a supportive community.

Me: DO you think the church should have a role or impact in the government.

Person 4: Yes, but not in the sense of the church having an impact in the government, but in the fact that people's beliefs who are a part of the church should impact the government because the people are part of the government and of the church. I guess the whole separation of church and state thing is actually meant to keep the state out of the church. To keep the state from telling the church what to do. I learned about it in high school and I cannot remember how exactly I learned about it or what happened to start it. But I know that that's what it was originally created for.

And a democracy is supposed to be representative of the people in the community. And if that's true, you can't just take the church out of it because the church shapes who a lot of people are and it's going to shape their beliefs and therefore it's going to influence who they vote for, how they vote, and what they want from the government. I think that if you take the church out you are completely shutting out an entire group of people. So I think it is important for the church to be in the state. Mostly because there are people in the community that are going to have beliefs because of the church. Does that make sense?

Me: Yes! It does make sense.

Me: Imagine you have to explain church to a total stranger that does not understand it at all?

Person 4: Do they know who God is? Or is God a completely foreign concept as well?

Me: Let's assume it is all foreign to them.

Person 4: Well, I would start out with explaining that the people who are in that building believe that there is an all-powerful being who created us and who rules over us. And the purpose of going to that church is to learn about him. And to learn how to live our lives for him. And to learn how to serve him. I don't know how much longer of an explanation I would have to give.

Me: Complete this sentence. Church is _____

Person 4: A place to worship God.

Me: The church should be _____

Person 4: A place to worship God.

Me: Is there anything else you want to share or say?

Person 4: I think that purpose and intentions of the church are good. I think that human involvement in it has made it less and less perfect. And the biggest issue I see with it would be the denominational separations and that people who claim to believe in the same God are at each others throats because of small interpretive differences. And I think that needs to be resolved. That would be huge. If you were to bring everyone together who believes in God and the same God and to all work for him and serve him together, you could accomplish amazing things. But the problem is that we cannot come together because people are too proud, almost. Other than that I think that there are issue but the church is still living. And that is very important to keep in mind.

Appendix 5 – The Church in Western Michigan – Questions/Prompts

1. Do you currently attend church?
 - a. Frequency of attending
 - b. Last time you attended church
 - c. Family?
 - d. Friends?
2. Reasons to still attend OR what are your past experiences with church?
 - a. Positive?
 - b. Negative?
 - c. Bible study, Catechism, kids ministry experience?
 - d. Anything you would change?
 - e. not attend
3. Role of the church – what does the church do?
 - a. For an individual
 - i. What will this church do for me?
 - b. In the community
 - c. In the government
4. What is the church?
 - a. Someone who does not know it, explain it
5. Finish the sentence:
 - a. Church is _____
6. Person #3 – a lot of those questions, I have never been asked before

Appendix 6 – Sample Social Media Post

Hello!

My name is Jacob Sackleh and I am a student at Grand Valley State University. I am finishing my last semester of school and will be graduating as a Marketing major on April 30th. Although my area of study does not specifically pertain to Religious Studies or Christianity, I am greatly intrigued by the church in Western Michigan. The culture and the dynamic of churches in Western Michigan has always been interesting to me, and I decided to make my senior project for the Fredrik Meijer Honors College focused on this. I have defined “West Michigan” as Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Allegan counties and I have created a survey to collect data regarding various components of church. A big emphasis of this research is how churches are looking towards younger generations (specifically millennials), along with how church members perceive experiences with leadership, small groups, and other parts of a church’s ministry. Below is the link to my survey that I am using to collect data for my senior project. I would greatly appreciate it if you would take the time to take this survey and answer all questions to the best of your ability. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete and will be “live” until the end of the day on April 10th. I also want to ensure you that anonymity is key in the entirety of my research process. All information collected and shared will be kept completely confidential and no individuals will be identifiable in the survey results nor in the final research write-up.

Thank you again for your help in my research. If you are at all interested in reading my final write-up, please private message me, or comment on this and let me know that you are interested and I will be more than happy to send you a copy of it.

Thank you again and have an excellent day!

https://gvsumarketing.col.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9ZcYk04Qv9cNmOp

Appendix 7 – Sample E-mail to Pastors

Hello!

My name is Jacob Sackleh and I am a student at Grand Valley State University. I am finishing my last semester of school and will be graduating as a Marketing major on April 30th. Although my area of study does not specifically pertain to Religious Studies or Christianity, I am greatly intrigued by the church in Western Michigan. The culture and the dynamic of churches in Western Michigan has always been interesting to me, and I decided to make my senior project for the Fredrik Meijer Honors College focused on this. I have defined “West Michigan” as Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Allegan counties and I have created a survey to collect data regarding various components of church. A big emphasis of this research is how churches are looking towards younger generations (specifically millennials), along with how church members perceive experiences with leadership, small groups, and other parts of a church’s ministry.

Below is the link to my survey that I am using to collect data for my senior project. I would greatly appreciate it if you would share the link with members of your congregation and anyone else who you feel would be able to contribute to my research by taking this survey. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete and will be “live” until the end of the day on April 10th. I have also attached a PDF of the survey to this e-mail address. Feel free to look at it before passing it along. **I also want to ensure you that anonymity is key in the entirety of my research process. All information collected and shared will be kept completely confidential and no individuals will be identifiable in the survey results nor in the final research write-up.**

Thank you again for your help in my research. If you are at all interested in reading my final write-up, please e-mail me back sharing the fact that you are interested and I will be more than happy to send you a copy of it.

Thank you again and have an excellent day!

https://gvsumarketing.col.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9ZcYk04Qv9cNmOp

Appendix 8 – SPSS Printouts – Profile of the Sample

Age

Statistics

What is your age?

(optional)-Age

N	Valid	133
	Missing	19
Mean		37.5038
Std. Deviation		15.54106
Minimum		18.00
Maximum		72.00

What is your age? (optional)-Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18.00	1	.7	.8	.8
19.00	1	.7	.8	1.5
20.00	4	2.6	3.0	4.5
21.00	17	11.2	12.8	17.3
22.00	18	11.8	13.5	30.8
23.00	3	2.0	2.3	33.1
24.00	1	.7	.8	33.8
25.00	4	2.6	3.0	36.8
26.00	3	2.0	2.3	39.1
27.00	2	1.3	1.5	40.6
28.00	1	.7	.8	41.4
29.00	2	1.3	1.5	42.9

30.00	1	.7	.8	43.6
31.00	2	1.3	1.5	45.1
33.00	4	2.6	3.0	48.1
34.00	2	1.3	1.5	49.6
35.00	2	1.3	1.5	51.1
36.00	1	.7	.8	51.9
37.00	4	2.6	3.0	54.9
38.00	1	.7	.8	55.6
40.00	3	2.0	2.3	57.9
41.00	1	.7	.8	58.6
42.00	3	2.0	2.3	60.9
43.00	2	1.3	1.5	62.4
44.00	3	2.0	2.3	64.7
45.00	1	.7	.8	65.4
46.00	4	2.6	3.0	68.4
47.00	1	.7	.8	69.2
48.00	3	2.0	2.3	71.4
49.00	2	1.3	1.5	72.9
50.00	2	1.3	1.5	74.4
51.00	3	2.0	2.3	76.7
52.00	4	2.6	3.0	79.7
53.00	3	2.0	2.3	82.0
54.00	2	1.3	1.5	83.5
55.00	2	1.3	1.5	85.0
56.00	2	1.3	1.5	86.5
57.00	2	1.3	1.5	88.0
59.00	2	1.3	1.5	89.5
60.00	1	.7	.8	90.2

61.00	1	.7	.8	91.0
63.00	3	2.0	2.3	93.2
65.00	1	.7	.8	94.0
66.00	1	.7	.8	94.7
67.00	4	2.6	3.0	97.7
68.00	1	.7	.8	98.5
69.00	1	.7	.8	99.2
72.00	1	.7	.8	100.0
Total	133	87.5	100.0	
Missing System	19	12.5		
Total	152	100.0		

Employment Status

Statistics

Employment Status - Are
you currently (optional)

N	Valid	151
	Missing	1

Employment Status - Are you currently (optional)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed for wages	91	59.9	60.3	60.3
	Self-employed	11	7.2	7.3	67.5
	A homemaker	10	6.6	6.6	74.2
	A student	27	17.8	17.9	92.1
	Retired	10	6.6	6.6	98.7
	Unable to work	2	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	151	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.7		
Total		152	100.0		

Highest Level of Schooling

Statistics

What is the highest degree
or level of school you have
completed? (optional)

N	Valid	151
	Missing	1

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (optional)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (i.e. GED)	13	8.6	8.6	8.6
	Some college credit, no degree	32	21.1	21.2	29.8
	Trade/technical/vocational training	3	2.0	2.0	31.8
	Associate degree	14	9.2	9.3	41.1
	Bachelor's degree	53	34.9	35.1	76.2
	Master's degree	29	19.1	19.2	95.4
	Professional degree	1	.7	.7	96.0
	Doctorate degree	6	3.9	4.0	100.0
	Total	151	99.3	100.0	
	Missing System	1	.7		
Total		152	100.0		

Frequency of Attending Church

Statistics

How frequently do you
currently attend a service
at a church?

N	Valid	152
	Missing	0

How frequently do you currently attend a service at a church?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Weekly	115	75.7	75.7	75.7
Monthly	10	6.6	6.6	82.2
A few times a Valid year	15	9.9	9.9	92.1
Rarely	5	3.3	3.3	95.4
Never	7	4.6	4.6	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

County Distribution

Statistics

Which county do you live
in?

N	Valid	152
	Missing	0

Which county do you live in?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ottawa County	111	73.0	73.0	73.0
Kent County	26	17.1	17.1	90.1
Allegan County	8	5.3	5.3	95.4
Muskegon County	7	4.6	4.6	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 9 – SPSS Printouts – Descriptive Statistics (Objectives)

Perceived Age Distribution

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-0-10

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	42	27.6	100.0	100.0
Missing System	110	72.4		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-11-20

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	43	28.3	100.0	100.0
Missing System	109	71.7		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-21-30

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	64	42.1	100.0	100.0
Missing System	88	57.9		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-31-40

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	99	65.1	100.0	100.0
Missing System	53	34.9		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-41-50

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	97	63.8	100.0	100.0
Missing System	55	36.2		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-51-60

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	82	53.9	100.0	100.0
Missing System	70	46.1		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-62-70

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	59	38.8	100.0	100.0
Missing System	93	61.2		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-71-80

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	36	23.7	100.0	100.0
Missing System	116	76.3		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-81-90

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	15	9.9	100.0	100.0
Missing System	137	90.1		
Total	152	100.0		

A majority of people in my church fall into this age range (pick multiple if you feel it is appro...-91-100

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	2	1.3	100.0	100.0

Missing System	150	98.7		
Total	152	100.0		

Membership Outreach

Statistics

My church:-Actively seeks
out new members.

N	Valid	151
	Missing	1

My church:-Actively seeks out new members.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	47	30.9	31.1	31.1
Somewhat agree	43	28.3	28.5	59.6
Neither agree nor disagree	25	16.4	16.6	76.2
Somewhat disagree	19	12.5	12.6	88.7
Strongly disagree	8	5.3	5.3	94.0
N/A	9	5.9	6.0	100.0
Total	151	99.3	100.0	
Missing System	1	.7		
Total	152	100.0		

Millennial Outreach

Statistics

	To what extent are millennials engaged in volunteering at your church?	Millennials are engaged during Sunday church services.
N	Valid	152
	Missing	0

To what extent are millennials engaged in volunteering at your church?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very involved	45	29.6	29.6	29.6
Somewhat involved	60	39.5	39.5	69.1
Neutral	15	9.9	9.9	78.9
Valid Minimally involved	24	15.8	15.8	94.7
Not involved at all	8	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Millennials are engaged during Sunday church services.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	64	42.1	42.1	42.1
Somewhat agree	47	30.9	30.9	73.0

Neither agree nor disagree	17	11.2	11.2	84.2
Somewhat disagree	19	12.5	12.5	96.7
Strongly disagree	5	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Should millennials (people born between the years 1980 and 2000) be a focus in your churches outreach...

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	117	77.0	77.0	77.0
No	11	7.2	7.2	84.2
Maybe/Unsure	24	15.8	15.8	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Is your church's outreach successful?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	68	44.7	44.7	44.7
No	28	18.4	18.4	63.2
Somewhat	56	36.8	36.8	100.0

Total	152	100.0	100.0
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Statistics

	I personally know millennials that have left the church for the following reasons (check all that...- Question the beliefs of the church?	I personally know millennials that have left the church for the following reasons (check all that...-Have personal issues with an individual or individuals in their church?	I personally know millennials that have left the church for the following reasons (check all that...-Have ideological issues regarding social or political beliefs?
N			
Valid	72	62	73
Missing	80	90	79

Evaluating Pastors and Pastoral Expectations

Statistics

		In order to be effective leaders, pastors should be qualified in terms of:- Biblical knowledge	In order to be effective leaders, pastors should be qualified in terms of:- Strategic planning abilities	In order to be effective leaders, pastors should be qualified in terms of:- Spiritual leadership
N	Valid	152	152	152
	Missing	0	0	0

In order to be effective leaders, pastors should be qualified in terms of:-

Biblical knowledge

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	133	87.5	87.5	87.5
Somewhat agree	15	9.9	9.9	97.4
Neither agree nor disagree	1	.7	.7	98.0
Strongly disagree	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

In order to be effective leaders, pastors should be qualified in terms of:-

Strategic planning abilities

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	53	34.9	34.9	34.9
Somewhat agree	71	46.7	46.7	81.6
Neither agree nor Valid disagree	17	11.2	11.2	92.8
Somewhat disagree	8	5.3	5.3	98.0
Strongly disagree	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

In order to be effective leaders, pastors should be qualified in terms of:-

Spiritual leadership

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	134	88.2	88.2	88.2
Somewhat agree	13	8.6	8.6	96.7
Neither agree nor Valid disagree	2	1.3	1.3	98.0
Strongly disagree	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

**Whether or not a pastor goes through seminary impacts my perception of
their abilities to lead a...**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	52	34.2	34.2	34.2
Somewhat agree	45	29.6	29.6	63.8

Neither agree nor disagree	26	17.1	17.1	80.9
Somewhat disagree	14	9.2	9.2	90.1
Strongly disagree	15	9.9	9.9	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My pastor: (select "N/A" if you do not regularly attend church)-Is a strong spiritual leader for the congregation as a whole.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	100	65.8	65.8	65.8
Somewhat agree	30	19.7	19.7	85.5
Neither agree nor disagree	2	1.3	1.3	86.8
Somewhat disagree	2	1.3	1.3	88.2
N/A	18	11.8	11.8	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My pastor: (select "N/A" if you do not regularly attend church)-Is a strong spiritual leader on an individual level.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	95	62.5	62.5	62.5

Somewhat agree	30	19.7	19.7	82.2
Neither agree nor disagree	6	3.9	3.9	86.2
Somewhat disagree	2	1.3	1.3	87.5
Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.3	88.8
N/A	17	11.2	11.2	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My pastor: (select "N/A" if you do not regularly attend church)-Connects well with all members of the congregation.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	86	56.6	56.6	56.6
Somewhat agree	33	21.7	21.7	78.3
Neither agree nor disagree	4	2.6	2.6	80.9
Somewhat disagree	10	6.6	6.6	87.5
Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.3	88.8
N/A	17	11.2	11.2	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My pastor: (select "N/A" if you do not regularly attend church)-Is an excellent resources for Biblical or theological questions I have.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	96	63.2	63.2	63.2
Somewhat agree	27	17.8	17.8	80.9
Neither agree nor disagree	8	5.3	5.3	86.2

Somewhat disagree	1	.7	.7	86.8
N/A	20	13.2	13.2	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My pastor: (select "N/A" if you do not regularly attend church)-Represents how I should go about living my faith in my day to day life as a Christian.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	98	64.5	64.5	64.5
Somewhat agree	26	17.1	17.1	81.6
Neither agree nor disagree	6	3.9	3.9	85.5
Somewhat disagree	5	3.3	3.3	88.8
N/A	17	11.2	11.2	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Evaluating Feelings of Connectivity

Please select a response for the following statements:-I have a strong social connection with other members of my church.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	67	44.1	44.1	44.1
Somewhat agree	43	28.3	28.3	72.4
Neither agree nor disagree	18	11.8	11.8	84.2
Somewhat disagree	11	7.2	7.2	91.4
Strongly disagree	4	2.6	2.6	94.1

N/A	9	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Please select a response for the following statements:-My church is a safe place where I am comfortable talking about my issues in my life.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	64	42.1	42.1	42.1
Somewhat agree	48	31.6	31.6	73.7
Neither agree nor disagree	13	8.6	8.6	82.2
Somewhat disagree	7	4.6	4.6	86.8
Strongly disagree	11	7.2	7.2	94.1
N/A	9	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Please select a response for the following statements:-I feel a sense of belonging when I am at my church.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	87	57.2	57.2	57.2
Somewhat agree	36	23.7	23.7	80.9
Neither agree nor disagree	9	5.9	5.9	86.8
Somewhat disagree	5	3.3	3.3	90.1
Strongly disagree	8	5.3	5.3	95.4
N/A	7	4.6	4.6	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Evaluating Church Community

My church is a good community for-Myself

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	96	63.2	63.2	63.2
Somewhat agree	30	19.7	19.7	82.9
Neither agree nor disagree	13	8.6	8.6	91.4
Somewhat disagree	1	.7	.7	92.1
Strongly disagree	4	2.6	2.6	94.7
N/A	8	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My church is a good community for-My family

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	89	58.6	58.6	58.6
Somewhat agree	29	19.1	19.1	77.6
Neither agree nor disagree	15	9.9	9.9	87.5
Somewhat disagree	1	.7	.7	88.2
Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.3	89.5
N/A	16	10.5	10.5	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My church is a good community for-My friend(s)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	84	55.3	55.3	55.3
Somewhat agree	34	22.4	22.4	77.6
Neither agree nor disagree	15	9.9	9.9	87.5
Somewhat disagree	3	2.0	2.0	89.5
Strongly disagree	4	2.6	2.6	92.1
N/A	12	7.9	7.9	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My church is a good community for-Families

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	101	66.4	66.4	66.4
Somewhat agree	34	22.4	22.4	88.8
Neither agree nor disagree	5	3.3	3.3	92.1
Somewhat disagree	3	2.0	2.0	94.1
Strongly disagree	1	.7	.7	94.7
N/A	8	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My church is a good community for-The surrounding community

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	Strongly agree	82	53.9	53.9	53.9
	Somewhat agree	47	30.9	30.9	84.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	10	6.6	6.6	91.4
	Somewhat disagree	2	1.3	1.3	92.8
	Strongly disagree	2	1.3	1.3	94.1
	N/A	9	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

My church is a good community for-Elderly

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	79	52.0	52.0
	Somewhat agree	45	29.6	81.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	12	7.9	89.5
	Somewhat disagree	4	2.6	92.1
	Strongly disagree	4	2.6	94.7
	N/A	8	5.3	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	