

Summary of Ministerial Evaluation Survey

On these pages you will hear the many voices of our congregation as we reflect on our first season – fall, winter and spring – in the company of our co-ministers, Melora and Shana.

Unitarians treasure democracy. Asking you regularly for your individual opinions on many aspects of our faith community's life is democratic to the core. Our collective response is occasionally loud and sometimes messy but the intention is always to seek the truth, as each of us understands it. So this is a worthy enterprise. And survey results point the way for us.

The survey asked you what you think of our co-ministers' work to date under several subject headings. And you responded. Many voices combined to shout: they are splendid! You were asked how well we are doing our many parts as members in the congregation and you were more critical. Many voices combined to suggest that we are occasionally good, sometimes just adequate and that there are important aspects of what we do which need improvement.

In sum, our collective voices suggest we are much blessed at this date in our history but that there are leaks in our boat and, as always, the patching to be done is ours to do. There is no one else.

Initiating, administering and reporting on this congregational survey is the work of the Committee on Ministry. Some of you told us that the survey was too long, too detailed, too complex, that there were too many parts where you felt incapable of answering. Yet more than 150 of you soldiered through it. We thank you. We believe it is better that a survey seems to ask too much rather than too little.

Here is a sampling of your comments. (All comments can be read by request in the full 88 page collection of survey responses.)

On counselling and pastoral care:

- *I was stunned in a wonderful way when both Shana and Melora reached out to us as soon as they arrived. It was touching, supportive and really changed how I feel about my place in the church and my relationship with our ministers. I feel seen and valued.*
- *I appreciate the effort they have put into getting to know the congregation on a personal level. I hope they stay a long time.*
- *I cannot imagine any better care and support than my family and I received in our recent bereavement.*

On congregational ministry:

- *From day 1 of "candidating," I was delighted to see them out before service, greeting folks as they arrived and talking to folks in the seats in the sanctuary prior to service.. I see them having conversations with people after service that seem focused and intense. I am very moved by the 'business cards' handed out to the children in RE. It says worlds about their commitment to us and to our children.*
- *I have been very impressed with Melora's path to membership, which encourages new people to attend an orientation and then a Considering Membership session, before joining*

the church. I have been concerned in the past that people have joined before knowing much about us, have not connected and disappeared soon after.

- *One of the responsibilities of every member and friend that I feel most strongly about is the welcoming of new people regardless of who they are. I still consider this one of the weakest areas that needs much more commitment of the part of many. It's risky to approach a stranger yet it's crucial for that stranger to feel acknowledged and welcomed, preferably by a few people each time they come to church.*

On practical arts

- *I know some of us have difficulty getting organized before the deadline looms, but the ministers' working further into the future than we are used to, will help us learn to be organized.*
- *I have seen the ministers in so many roles and love their openness in asking us what we need. The process for me is the main draw as to why I choose to belong to the UU community.*
- *Learning how to work together effectively and efficiently takes time. My experiences in working with Shana and Melora have shown me that I have much to learn. They have been most consistent role models for me.*
- *We have wonderful volunteers who dedicate so much of their time. I do worry about burnout for some dear folks.*

On personal growth and professionalism:

- *My biggest concern was that they would burn out by being too involved and not keeping enough for themselves. (How does a really committed person work 'half-time'?) I am feeling less concerned about this as I see them working it out with us.*
- *Early days yet - and I hope the congregation is able to respect boundaries so that work life balance is not an issue*
- *Their relevant self-disclosure about their own lives is a comfort to me. They are so eager and busy that I worry about burn-out.*
- *I think we have become a bit softer and not as critical of each other. I think we need many reminders about respecting and supporting each other.*
- *Pet projects, such as complex voting systems, have been adopted, allowing majority opinions to be ignored.*

On teaching all ages:

- *This is an outstanding strength for the ministerial team.*
- *I would love more training of laity and children's spiritual development educators.*
- *I'd like to see the "liberal" accentuated more, perhaps becoming more progressive, with more offerings from faith traditions other than Christianity.*
- *I have found the lay-led services of much poorer quality. There seems to be a strong need for teaching and coaching lay people about how to present an uplifting and engaging service.*
- *Exceptional children's programming, weak in adult education*
- *Disruptive to have too many people involved in any particular service because it tends to become too busy. I also feel challenged by the number of people who light candles every Sunday. As it is now, I close my eyes and try to use the time for meditation.*

On social action:

- *“I see this as an area of strength in our church and it should not be a priority of the minister's in these first years.”*
- *“It's early days. I think our ministers have rightly focused on quality Sunday services, pastoral care and polishing our administration. Soon I hope they will become more involved in social justice issues.”*

On denominational affairs:

- *This area seems to be a real swamp, where energies can be spent with no real affect. I remain to be convinced that this is what we should be spending time and energy on.*
- *Co-hosting the 2010 ACM was a strength. Providing a president for the CUC board is a strength. Paying the full annual program contribution to the CUC is a strength.*
- *Please explain what the measurable objectives are and why we should involve ourselves.*

On worship:

- *Fantastic scholarship and presence in the pulpit. As a newcomer, this drew me to the church. The ministers are the main reason I hate to miss a Sunday. I have been profoundly changed by their words. We treat each other better because of what we have learned from them. Love Shana singing.*
- *I appreciate the ability of both ministers to handle unexpected situations during a service, their warmth and spontaneity and their willingness to be their natural selves. I value their different views as we have humanist and theist members who need to feel respected.*
- *I have difficulty with prayers addressed to someone, even if generic terms like spirit of life are used. "Thank you" implies a personal being: "let us give thanks" leaves it open.*
- *The lay-led services have not been up to par. More training is needed. They appear even worse when compared to our ministers' high standard.*
- *Services every Sunday, whether minister or lay led, are high quality in every respect, including accessibility for deaf people, excellent music, beautiful rituals, compelling messages.*
- *I appreciate many things the worship committee does on behalf of the congregation. I have seen new things tried, more new people involved and other signs of vibrancy. I have a concern, however, that the Sunday services format seems to be based on a Christian protestant model. Such terminology and structure is a barrier to me because I don't have a protestant background. I'd like to see some robust discussion on the current format and whether there are opportunities to grow and develop it, with more borrowed from other traditions such as Buddhist, Hindu, Wiccan, earth-based, etc.*

On our strengths in creating a loving, respectful, nurturing church community:

- *We have a good community. Building relationships just takes time.*
- *Church is somewhat like family; you don't chose them and there can be prickly times for some. It is the things we do together that make a difference.*
- *It's hard to give constructive feedback when the ministers seem to be doing everything with such sensitivity, style, intelligence, humour, insight; they are just outstanding in every way*

that I can think of. The only challenge I could identify is if they are creating such high expectations, will they be able to keep up the fantastic job they are doing?

On what challenges we all face in creating a loving, respectful, nurturing community:

- *I'm always stunned by how frightened many people are of differences. It's easy to know that every person is entitled to their own opinion and that the opinion of the other person is equally valid; however it's much harder when I'm one of those people and feel quite strongly about whatever the topic at hand is.*
- *Maintaining connections with a growing congregation. nurturing new leadership. Much of our lay leadership is tired and aging.*

On our strengths in maintaining a focus on spiritual deepening?

- *Our ministerial team seems to have enabled some of us to be more open about who we are. In the past it has not always seemed safe to be honest.*
- *This is one of the reasons for which I attend our church, for sermons which inspire. I am sure this is the case for a large number of people, and a fact which can be capitalized on.*
- *Our strengths are our ministers who are authentic in their work to bring spiritual deepening to us and through their understanding that this is a lifelong process which eludes perfection.*
- *As a humanist, this is not a felt need on my part.*
- *I think we need to continue to explain the broader possibilities in the whole subject of spirituality. Personally I was a bit taken aback to find atheists present at the spirituality groups since I presumed that they would have no interest in such a topic. So it's been good for me to learn that my definition of spirituality was far too narrow.*
- *The challenge, of course, is to remain respectful of differing viewpoints without seeming to have no deeply-held perspective at all. In other words, to inspire without being didactic. That will always be a challenge for Unitarians.*

* * *

There are many bits and pieces among the survey results which will interest you, and we've included the summary graphs in the pages that follow. But at the end of the day, this congregational survey is not just about numbers and graphs or even opinions. It is about sounding the collective heartbeat of our community. Is the heartbeat strong and steady, filled with hope? Is it racing with anxiety or plodding in despair? Here is what you said. You decide.

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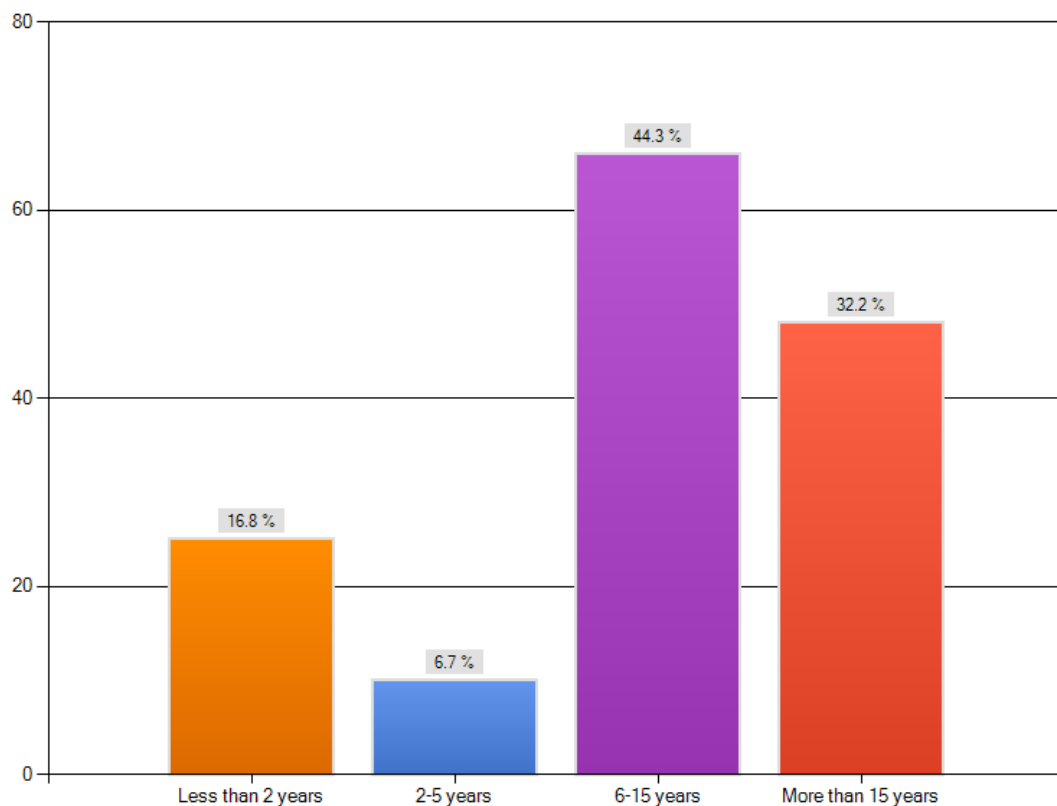
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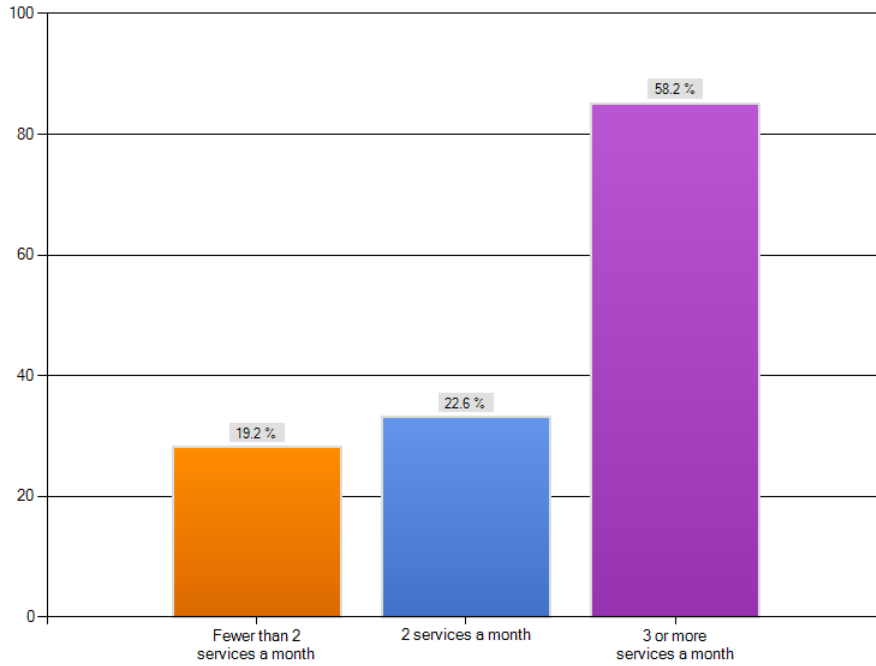
I. Introduction and About You

1. Your name and phone number (the survey responses are uploaded to a repository where the data is tabulated by a computer, and the congregation is only provided with aggregate information. And for the most part, this aggregate data will reveal the trends and insights we are interested in. But members of COM, the Ministers, and the survey administrator, Forrest Smith, will be privy to knowing who said what, and be able to consider the implications of that if necessary. If you have any questions about privacy or anonymity, please talk with a member of COM, listed at the end of this document.)

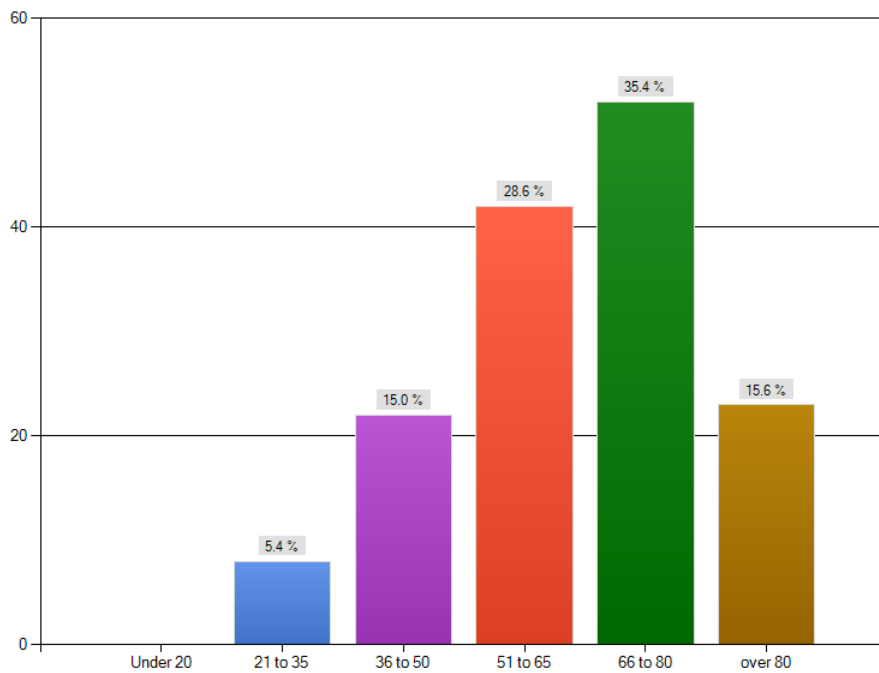
2. How long have you attended this congregation?



3. Over the past four to six months, typically how often have you attended the church service on Sunday morning?

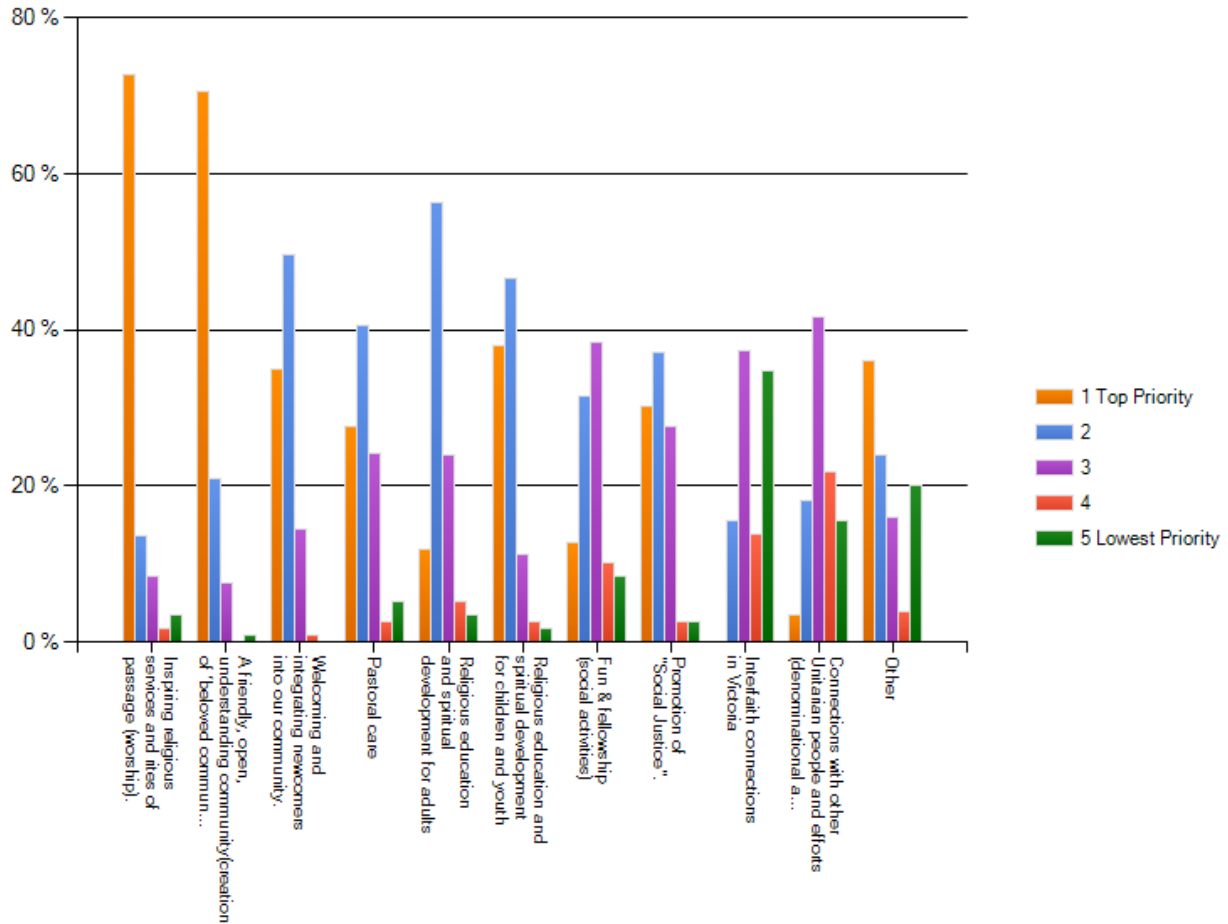


4. What is your age?



II. Congregational and Ministerial Priorities

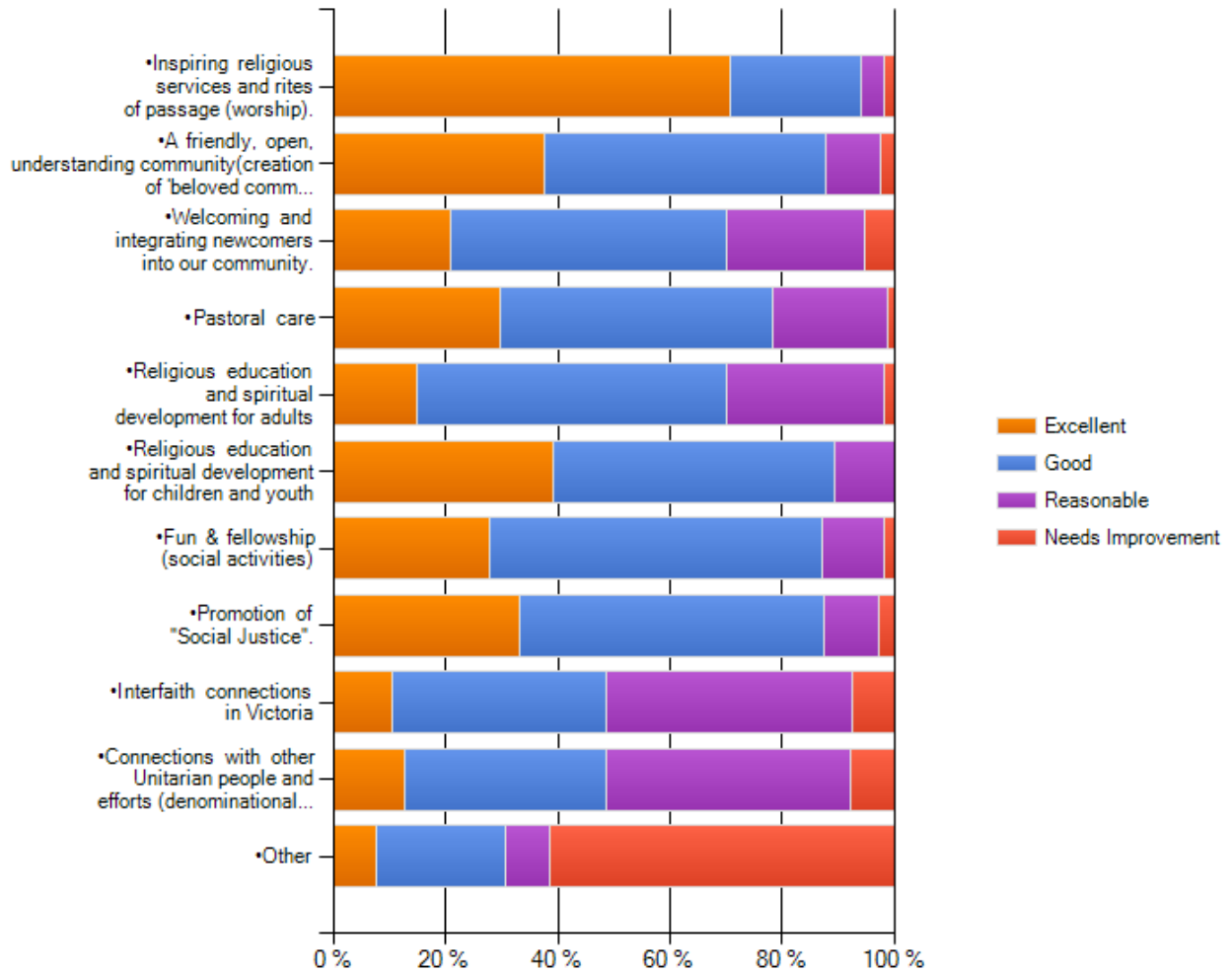
5. What should our church community be most focused on providing?



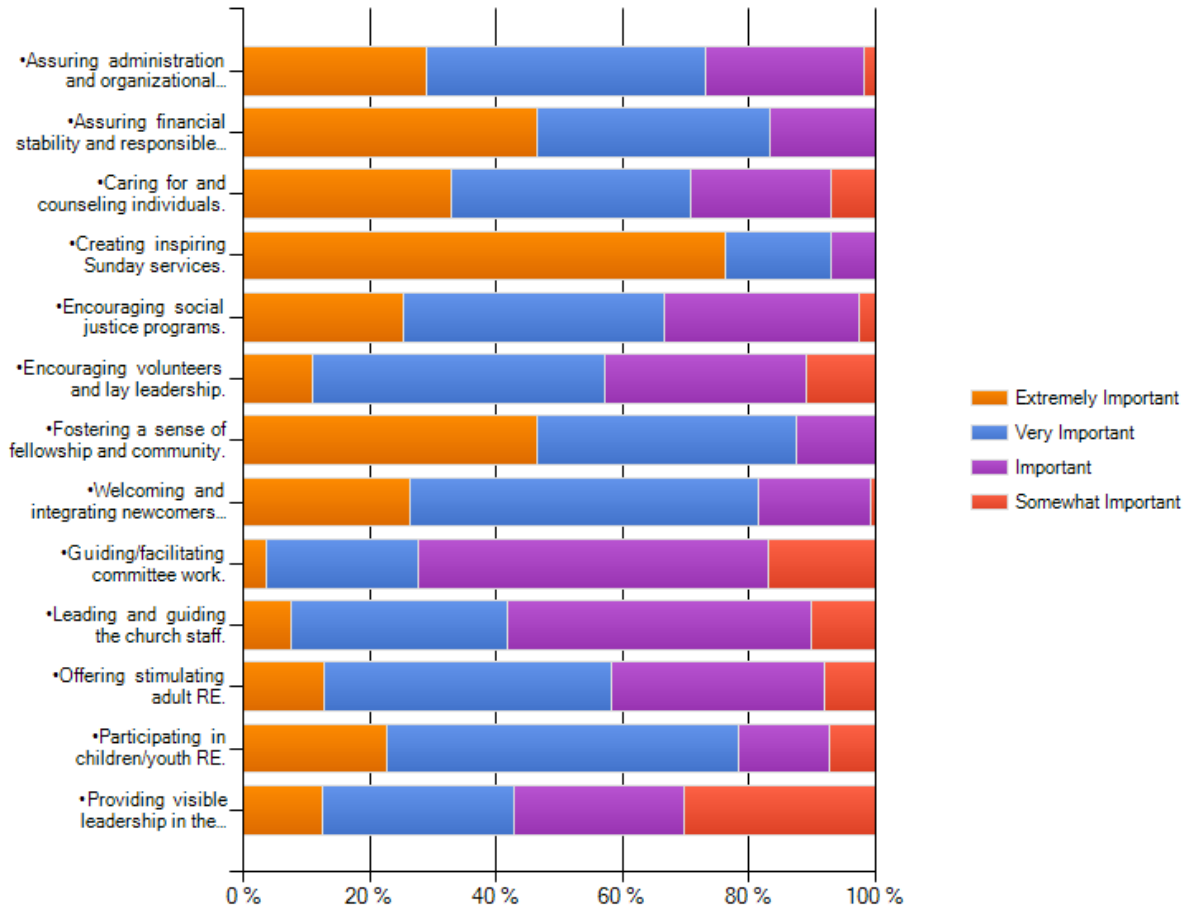
Answer Options	% rate important (1+2)	% rate unimportant (4+5)
Inspiring religious services and rites of passage (worship).	86	5
A friendly, open, understanding community	92	1
Welcoming and integrating newcomers into our community.	85	1
Pastoral care	68	8
Religious education and spiritual development for adults	68	8

Religious education and spiritual development for children and youth	84	4
Fun & fellowship (social activities)	44	19
Promotion of "Social Justice"	67	5
Interfaith connections in Victoria	16	49
Connections with other Unitarian people and efforts	22	37

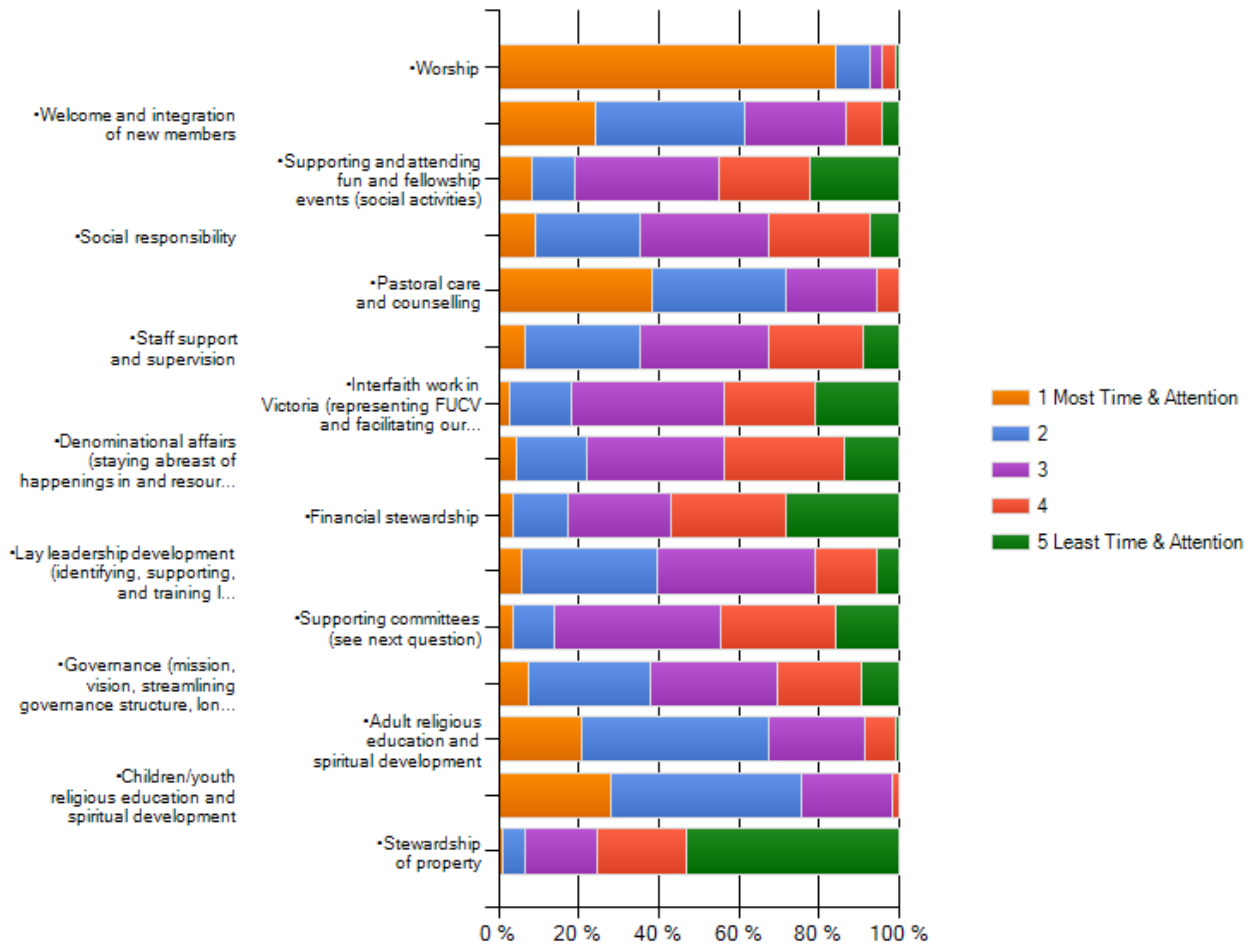
6. How well is our church community doing at providing the following?



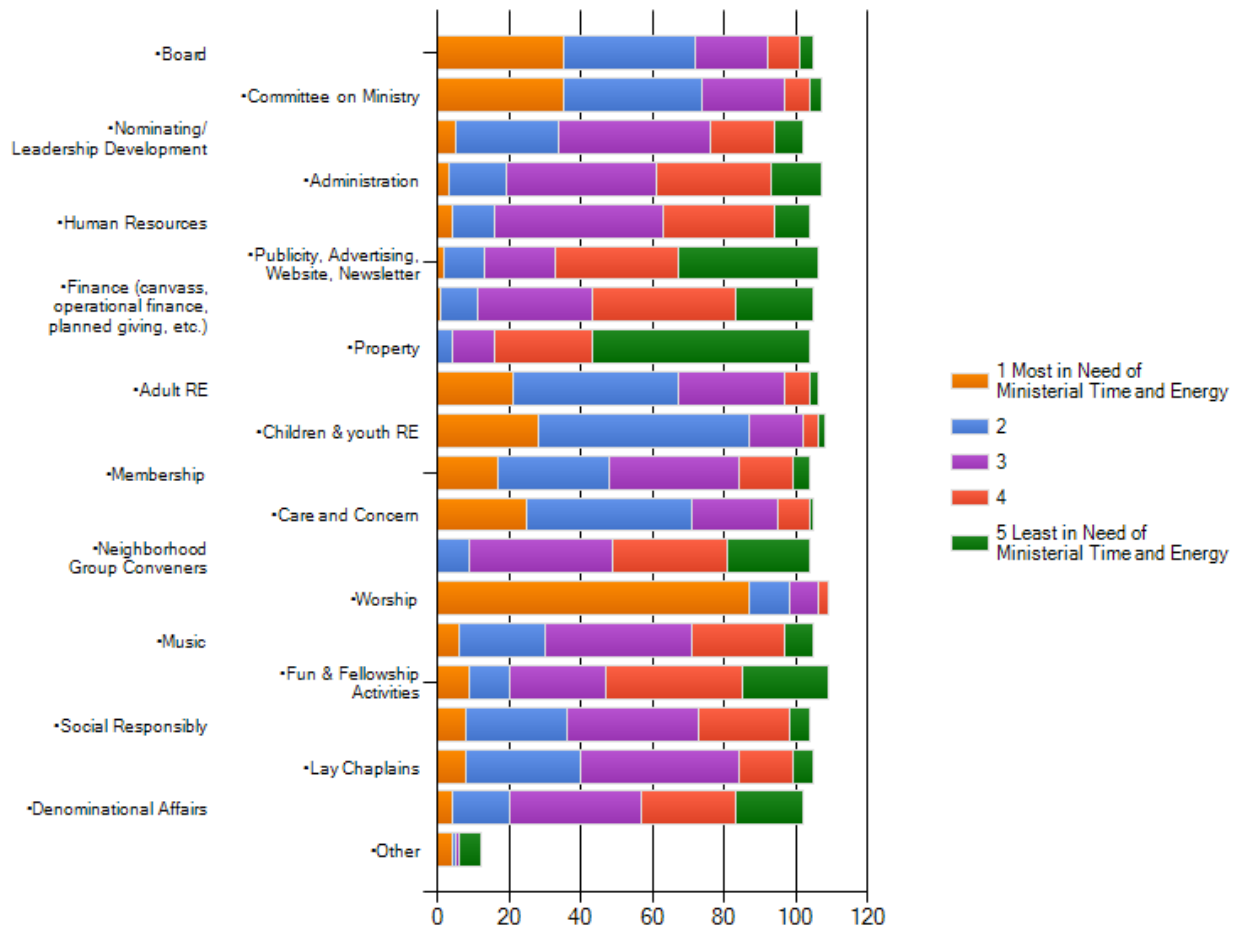
7. Given that responsibility in the church is shared among the minister, other staff, lay leadership and members, how important are each of the following functions to the success of the church?



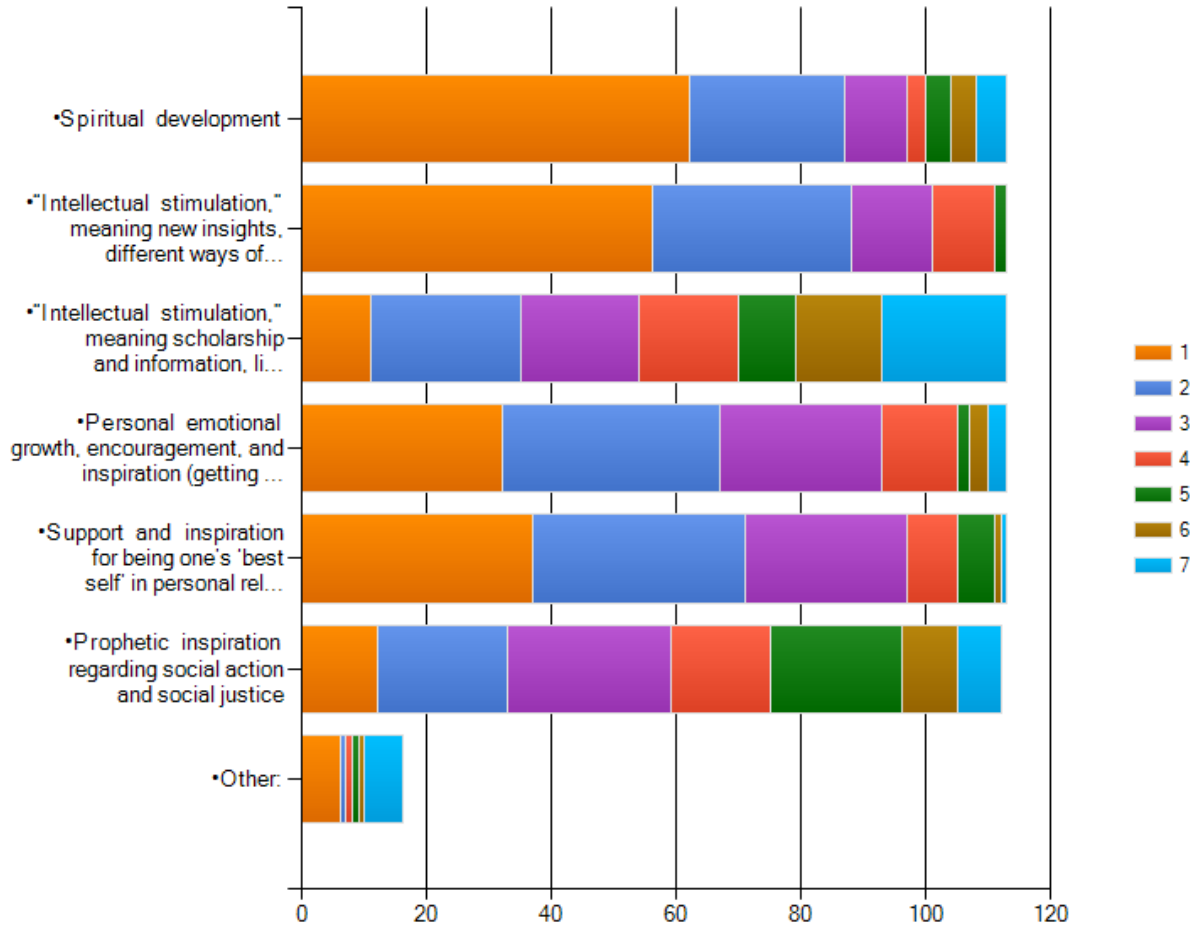
8. A variety of functions comprise a minister's work. Each minister has to prioritize these functions, and thus her time. In what rank order would you like our ministers to do so? Another way to phrase this is, given that our ministers can't do everything, which areas do you want them to prioritize, and which areas are OK to give less time and attention?



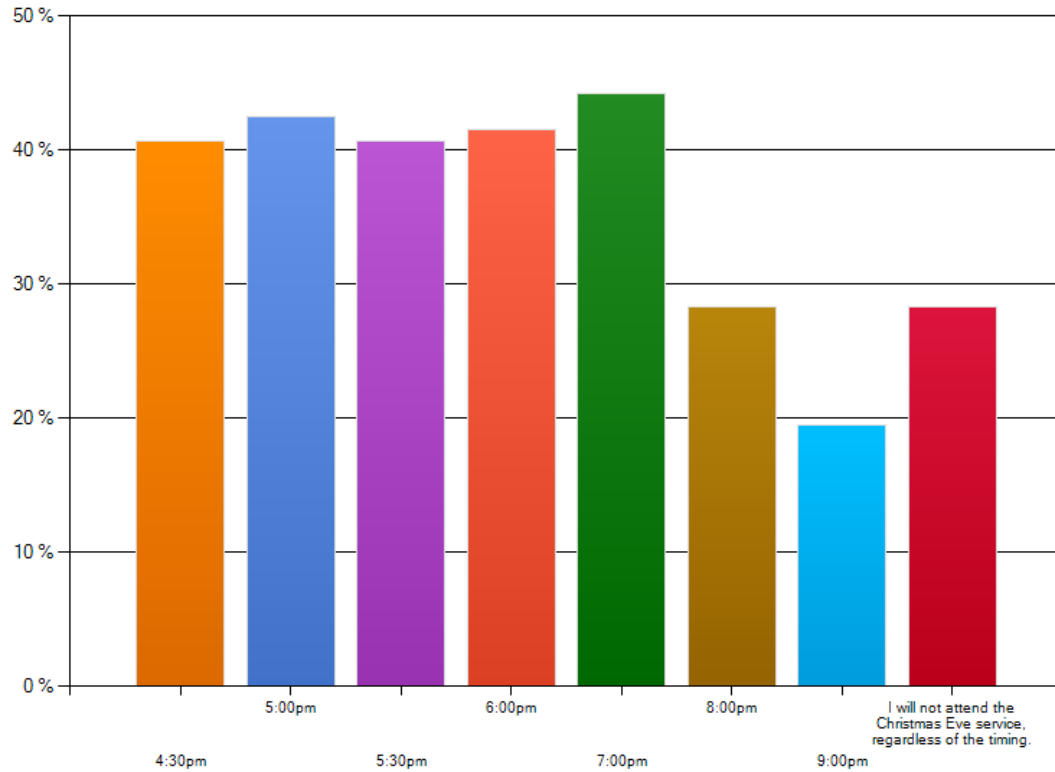
9. Which committees should our ministers spend the most time and energy supporting?



10. In worship and religious education, what do you most need from your ministers?



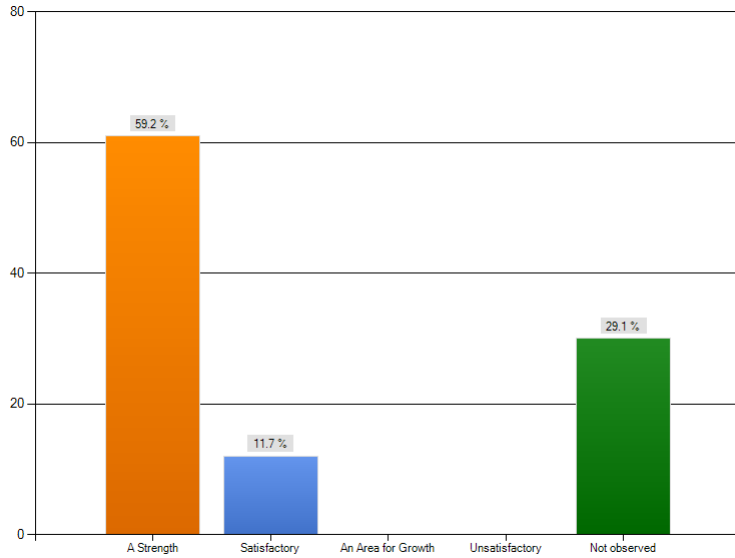
11. Christmas Eve: Mark the times you would attend a Christmas Eve service?



III. The Professional Ministerial Team

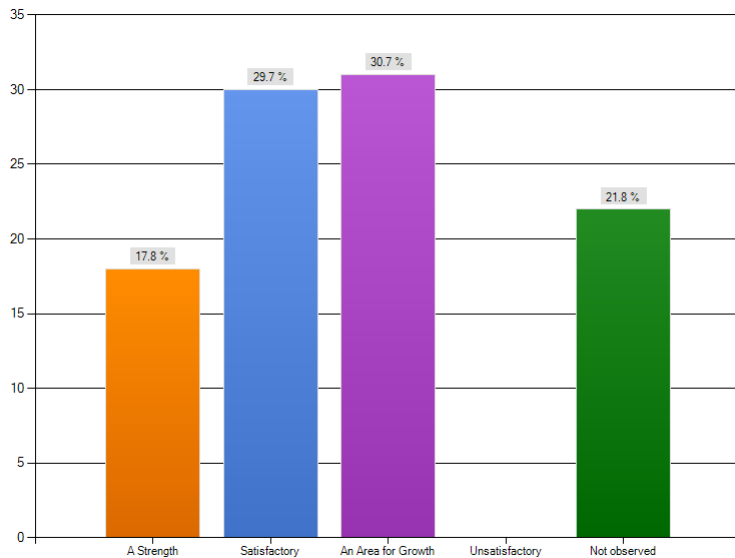
For each of the areas of ministry which follow, the ministers' performance is evaluated. The ministers are sharing one job, so members were asked to evaluate them as a team. Further, given that ministry is a shared responsibility between clergy and laity, members were asked to evaluate the congregation's contributions in each areas as well.

12. Counseling and Pastoral Care: Ministerial Team. Consider: availability, responsiveness, warmth, empathy, knowledge of family systems, skill level in pastoral care, confidentiality, hospital visitation, etc.

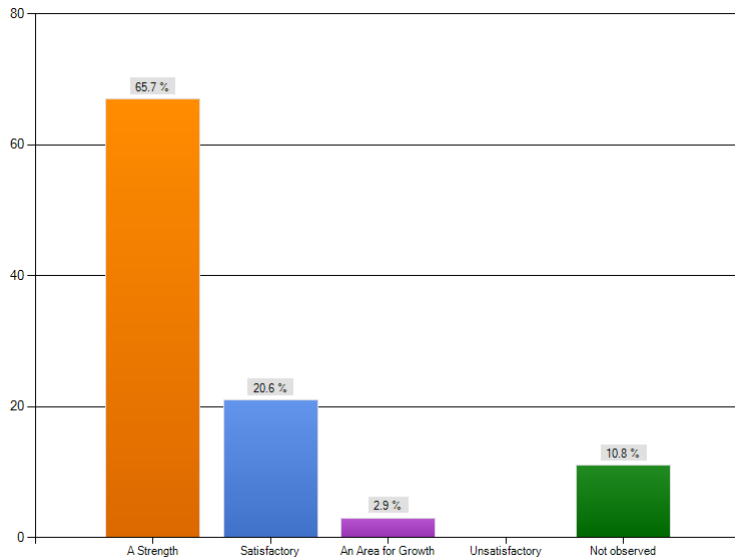


13. Counseling and Pastoral Care: Ministerial Team. Have you any thoughts, compliments or suggestions to offer the ministers in this area?

14. Counseling and Pastoral Care: Congregation

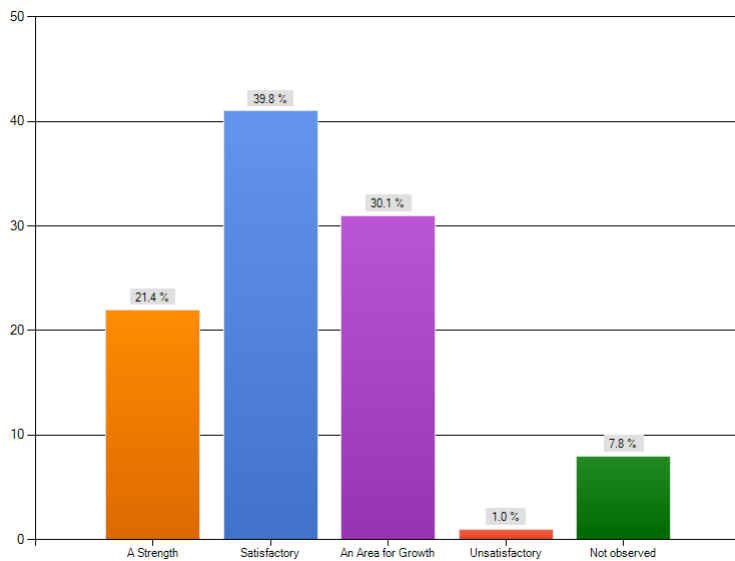


15. Congregational Ministry: Ministerial Team. Consider: integration of new members, creates a welcoming environment, encourages a sense of community, encourages growth, supports broad variety of programs, involvement of others in planning and conducting programs, pastors to various age groups, etc.

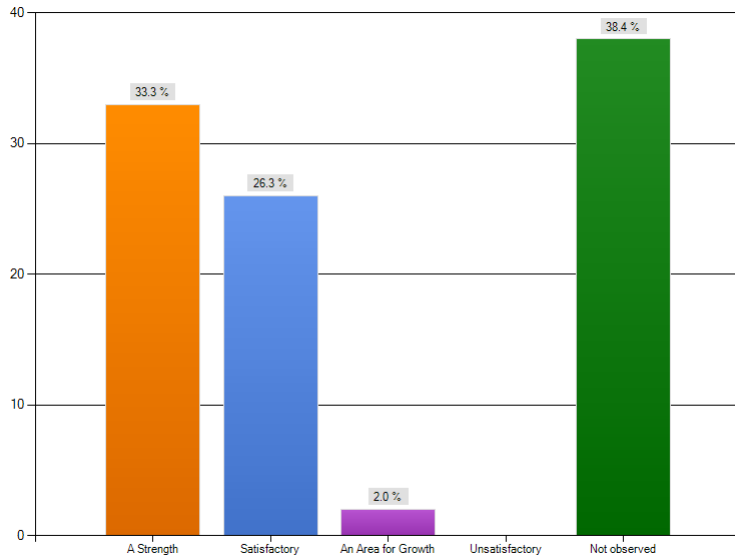


16. Congregational Ministry: Ministerial Team. Have you any thoughts, compliments or suggestions to offer the ministers in this area?

17. Congregational Ministry: Congregation

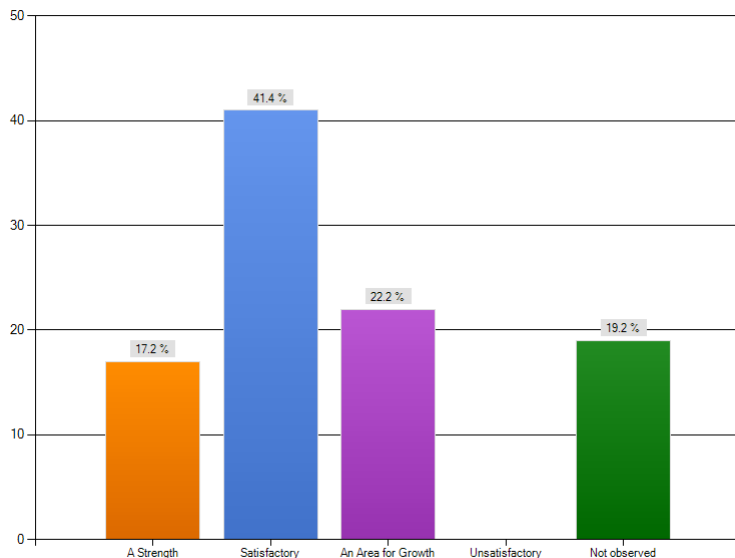


18. Practical Arts (Administration, Organizational Skills, and Leadership): Consider: administration, organizational development, management of staff, attention to detail, support and development of others, recognition and appreciation of others, delegation of responsibility and authority, follow through and completion of tasks, time management, attention to finances, etc.

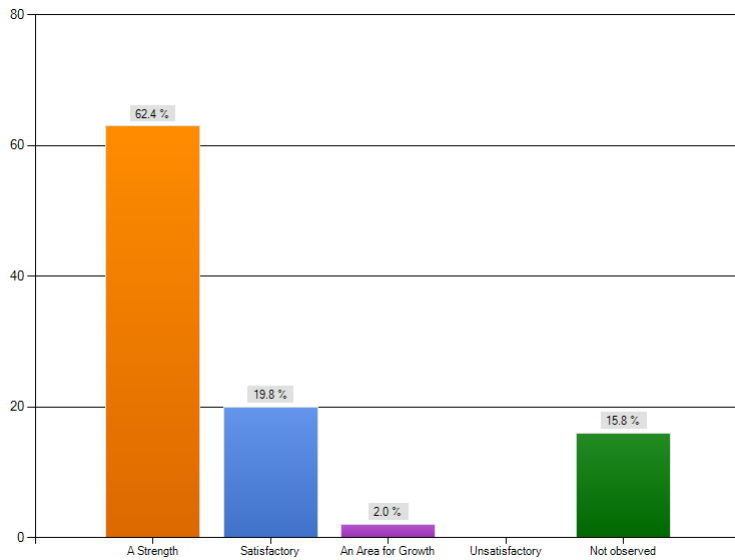


19. Practical Arts: Ministerial Team. Have you any thoughts, compliments or suggestions to offer the ministers in this area?

20. Practical Arts: Congregation.

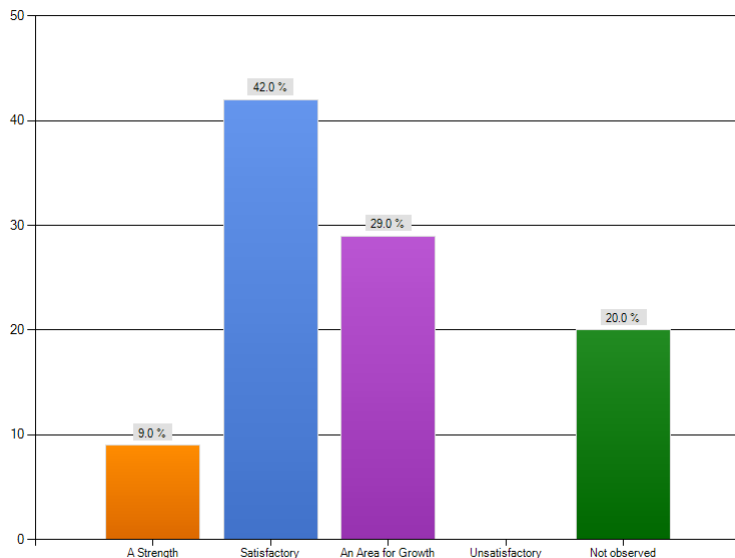


21. Personal and Professional Growth: Ministerial Team. Consider: performance under stress, hears criticism and feedback, skillfully gives constructive criticism and feedback, conveys energy and enthusiasm, sense of humor, professional presentation of self, gives evidence of a spiritual life, manages conflict, models a healthy balance of work and personal/family life, etc.

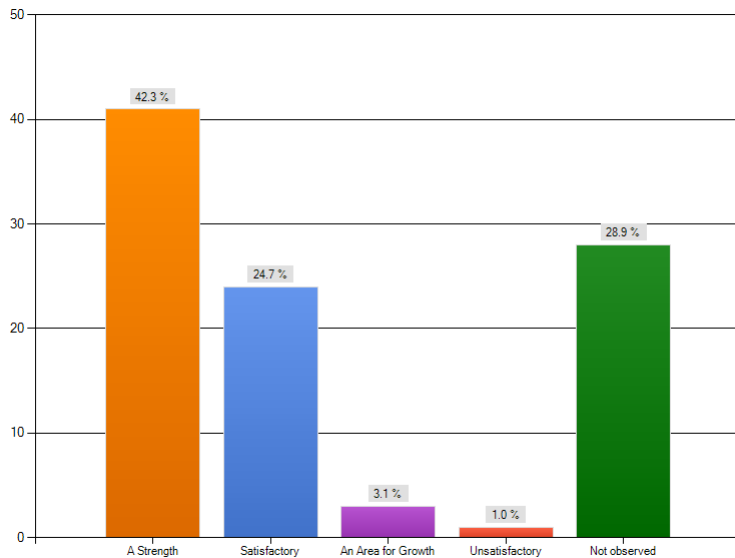


22. Personal Growth and Professionalism: Ministerial Team. Have you any thoughts, compliments or suggestions to offer the ministers in this area?

23. Personal Growth and Professionalism: Congregation

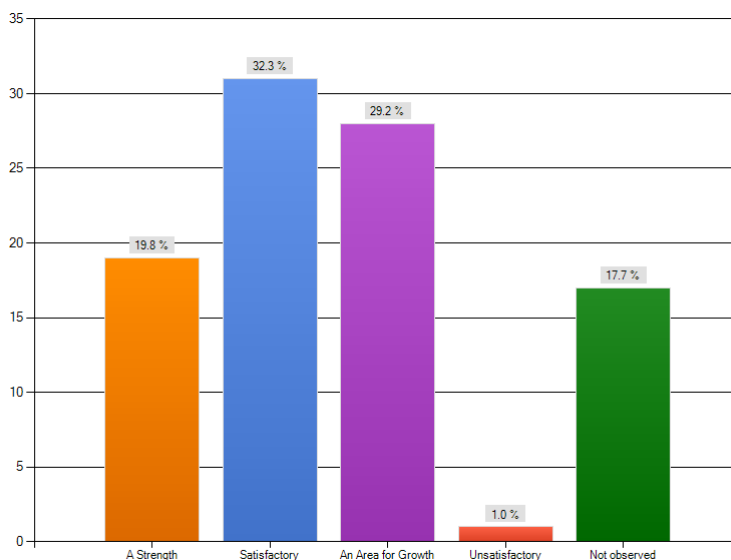


24. Teaching All Ages: Ministerial Team. Consider: program development and coordination, seminar design and facilitations, teacher training, supports teachers in planning and conducting classes, provides program resources and support for parents, teachers, and colleagues, intergenerational activities, programs for children, youth and adults, volunteer recruitment, articulation of liberal religious education approach and philosophy, knowledge of resources and curriculum, etc.)

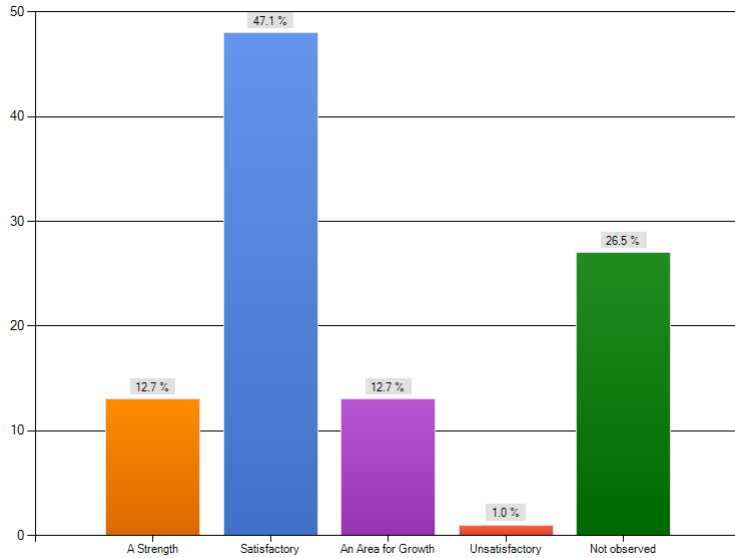


25. Teaching All Ages: Ministerial Team. Have you any thoughts, compliments or suggestions to offer the ministers in this area?

26. Teaching All Ages: Congregation

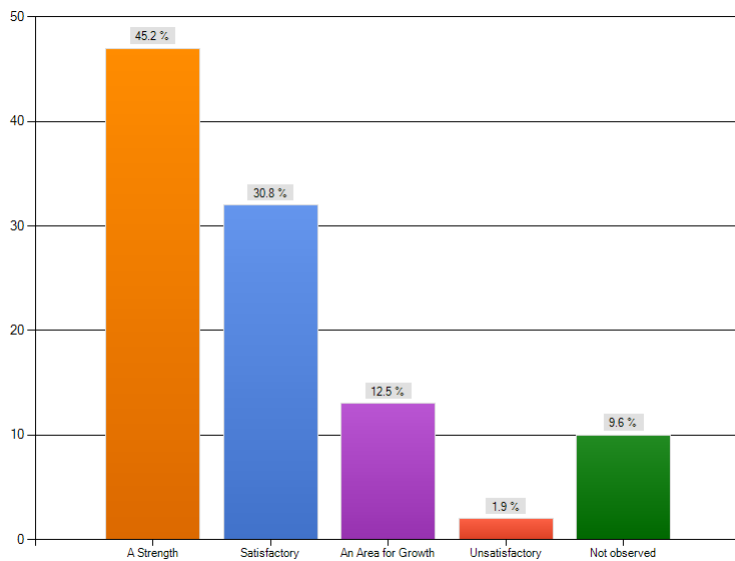


27. Social Action (Outreach): Ministerial Team. Consider: involvement in addressing community/social concerns & issues, encourages congregational involvement in community/social issues, leads the congregation in addressing issues of social justice and anti-racism, etc.

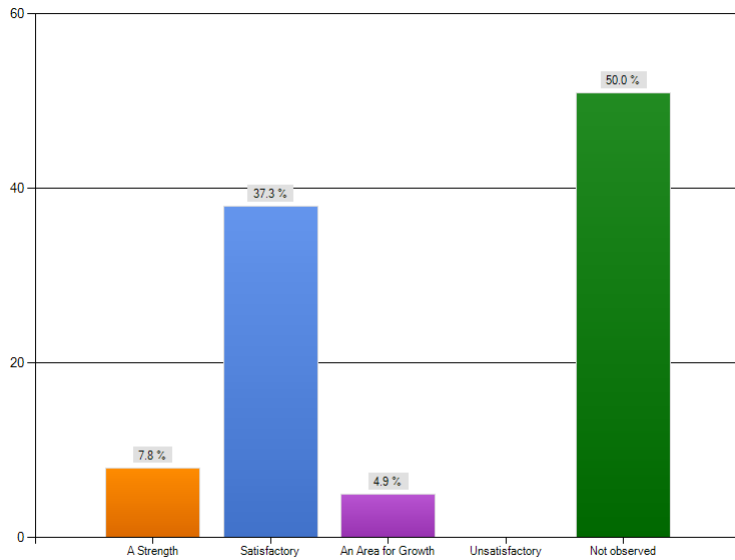


28. Social Action (Outreach): Ministerial Team. Have you any thoughts, compliments or suggestions to offer the ministers in this area?

29. Social Action (Outreach): Congregation

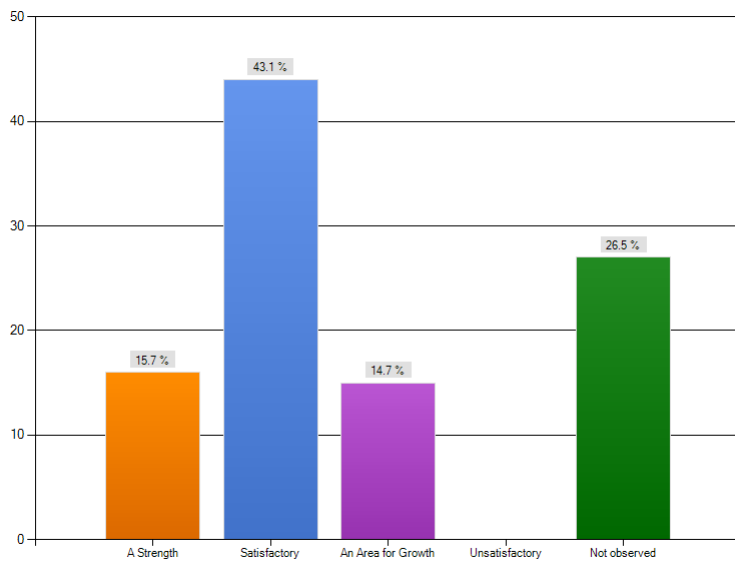


30. Denominational Affairs: Ministerial Team. Consider: involvement in Unitarian Universalist denominational activities, encouragement of member involvement at the regional and national levels, informs congregation of denominational concerns and issues, etc.

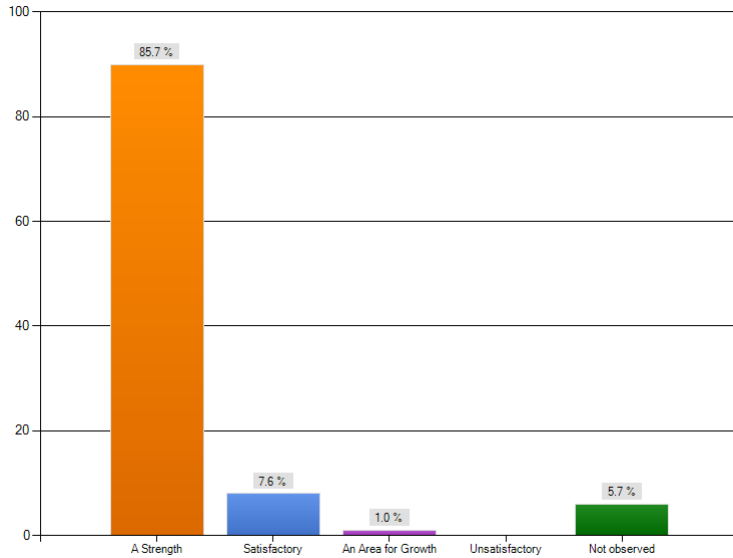


31. Denominational Affairs: Ministerial Team. Have you any thoughts, compliments or suggestions to offer the ministers in this area?

32. Denominational Affairs: Congregation

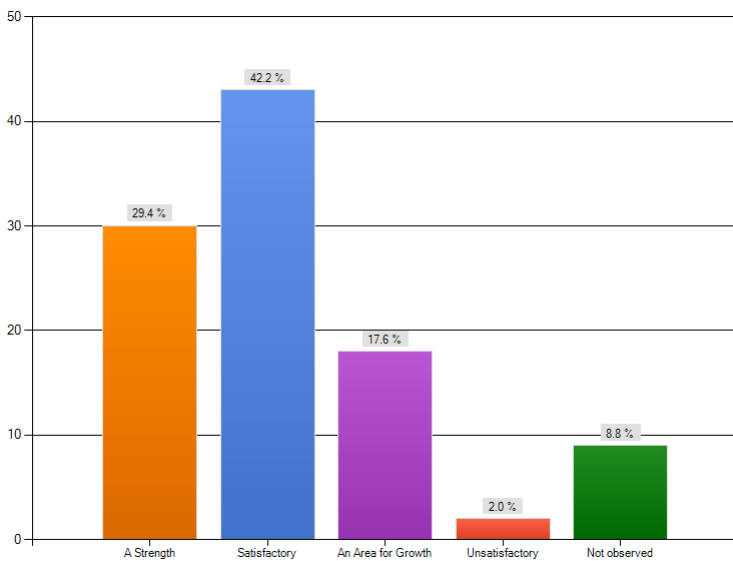


33. Worship: Ministerial Team. Consider: preparedness, coherence, intellectual challenge, spirituality, creativity, inspirational message, effective use of humor, effective use of ritual, music, prayer and meditation, readings/stories, rites of passage, pulpit presence, voice, etc.



34. Worship: Ministerial Team. Have you any thoughts, compliments or suggestions to offer the ministers in this area?

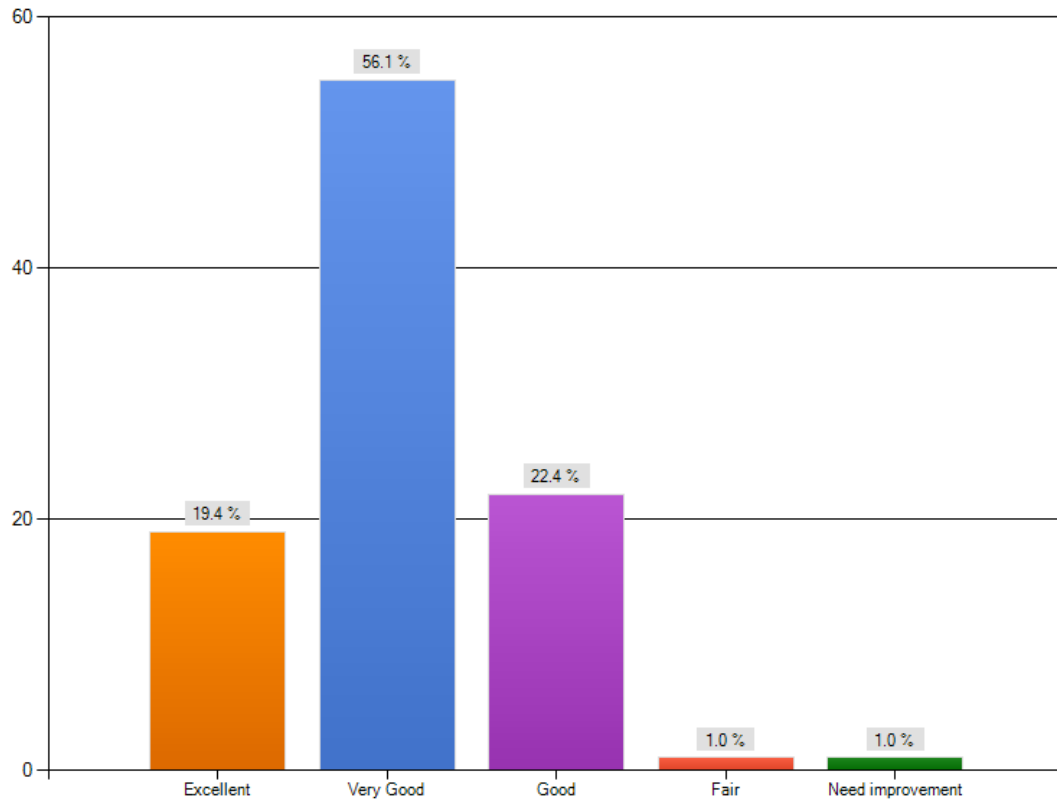
35. Worship: Congregation



IV. Evaluating Progress On Our Top Two Goals

At the ministerial start up workshop in November 2010, the lay leaders and the ministers each identified goals for the near future of our congregation. The following two were shared goals (i.e., they were identified independently by both lay leaders and ministers).

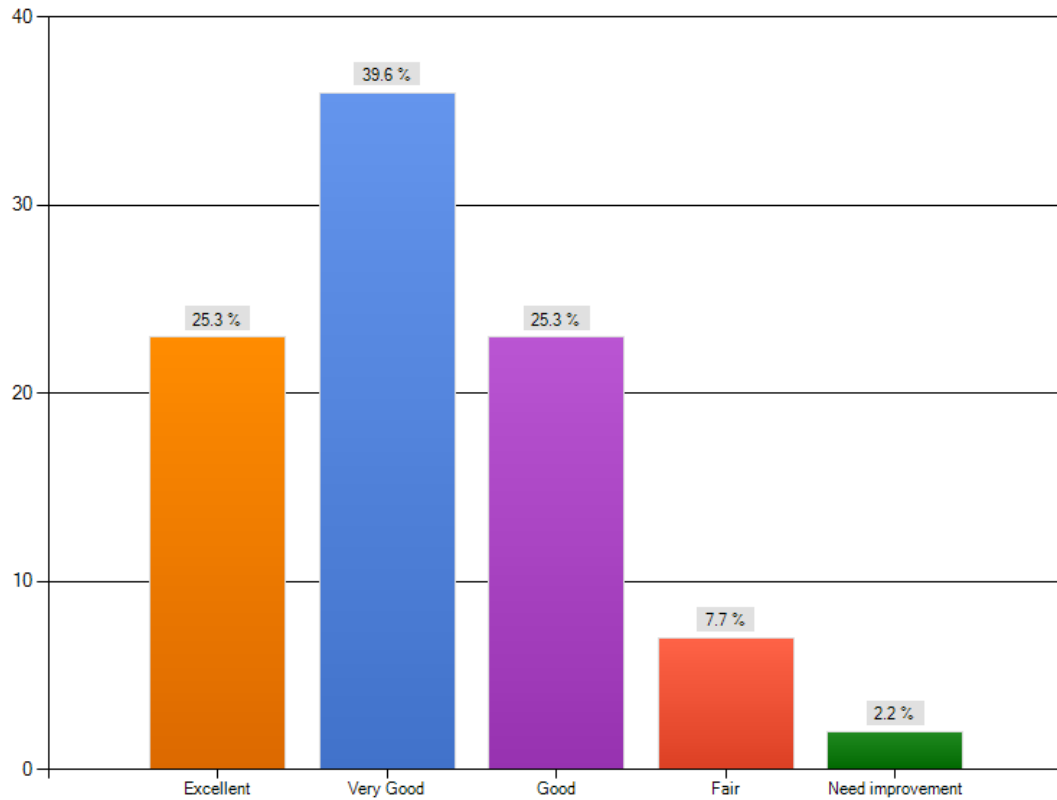
36. Goal One: to create a loving, respectful, nurturing church community. How are we as a church doing?



37. What are our strengths in creating a loving, respectful, nurturing church community?

38. What challenges do we all face in creating a loving, respectful, nurturing church community?

39. Goal Two: to maintain a focus on the importance of spiritual deepening. How are we as a church doing?



40. What are our strengths in maintaining a focus on the importance of spiritual deepening?

41. What challenges do we all face in maintaining a focus on the importance of spiritual deepening?

42. The purpose of the Committee on Ministry (CoM) is to promote the optimal functioning of the professional ministry of the Church. Please feel free to make any other comments that you think will inform the Committee on Ministry in the box below.