

Summary of Results from 'The Great GBC Survey'

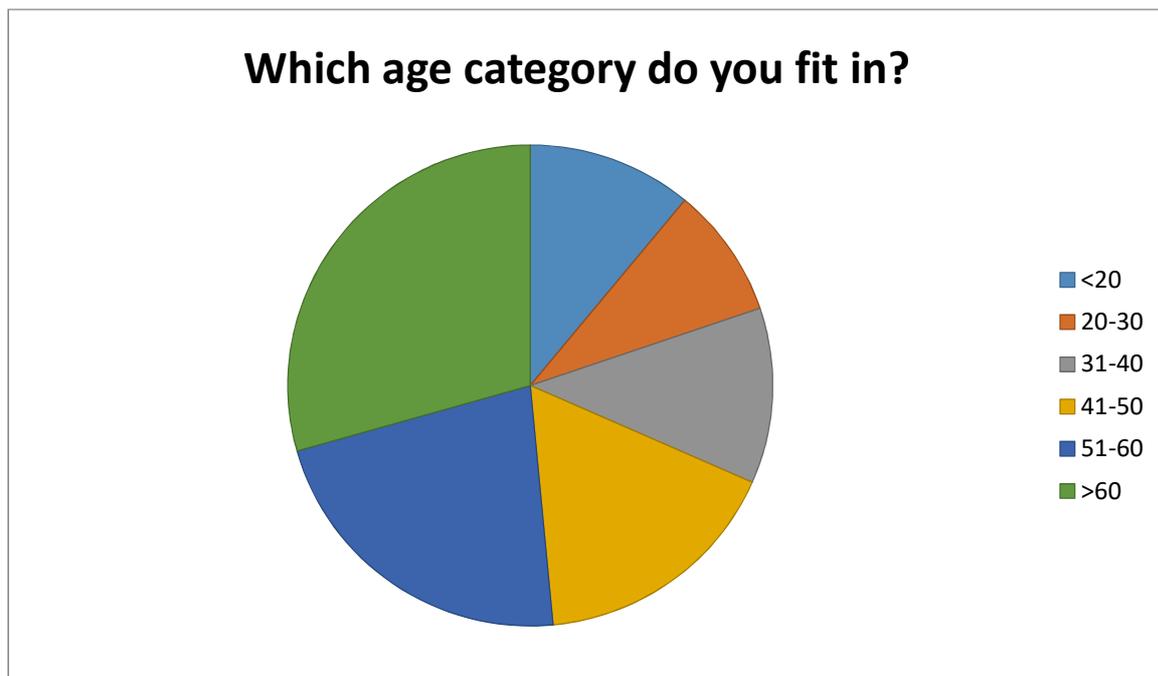
Between 23rd August and 13 September 2016, 138 attendees of GBC completed a survey exploring their relationships with God, their relationships and involvement within church life, and their relationships and activities outside of gathered church. The results have been sliced and diced in a number of ways. In the main, this report simply reveals the answers to each of the 21 questions asked in the survey and offers basic analysis, with some suggestions as to how we might want to respond in the light of these.

Because so many people completed the survey, where each age group is well represented, and because everything was completely anonymous, we can be fairly confident about the results yielded by the survey. As with any survey though, we must remember that the answers given represent how people perceive reality, which may differ, in varying degrees, to reality itself. There is also the possibility that some questions may not have been understood in the way intended, although we worked hard on making questions clear, which included a pilot run.

Overall, the survey shows that we can be really encouraged by the many ways that God has been (and continues to be!) at work amongst our church family. Although there are of course areas highlighted where we will want to consider how we might grow, these are outnumbered by the areas where we need to affirm and celebrate.

SECTION 1: Me & God

Question 1: Which age category do you fit in?

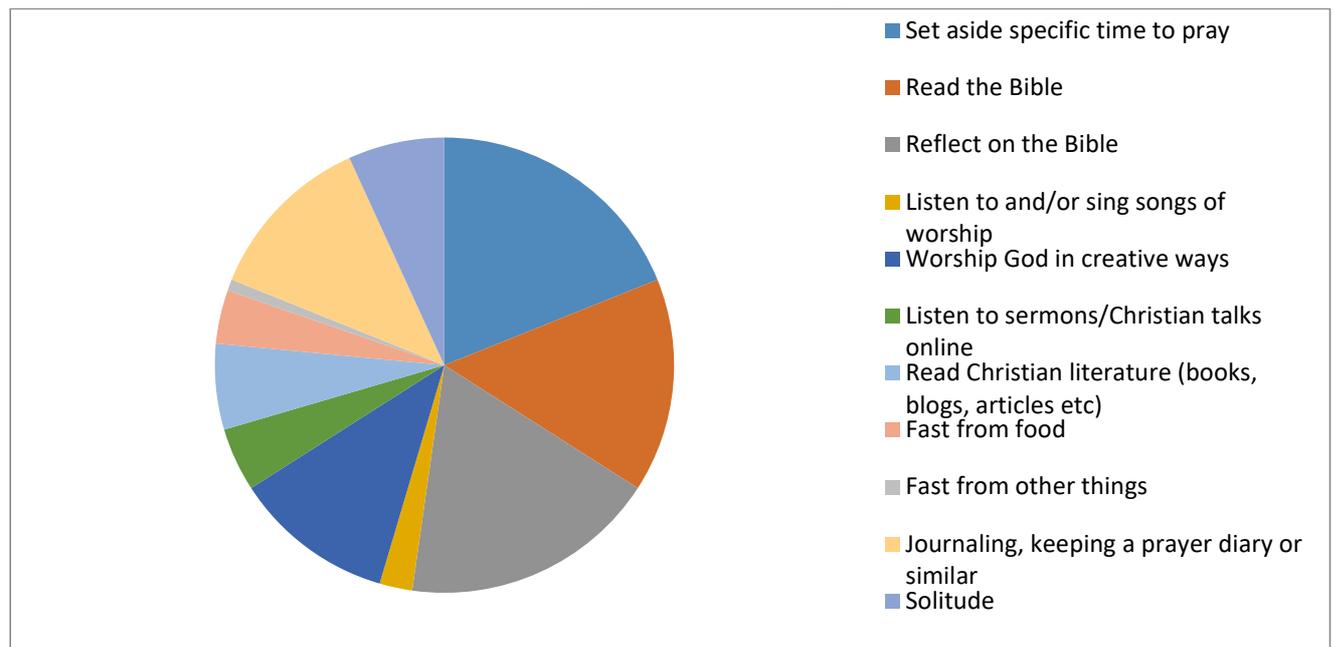


Question 2: How often do you do the following?

Answer Options	Every day/most days	About once a week	About once a month	Very Rarely	Never	Response Count
Set aside time to specifically pray	81	25	9	18	4	137
Read the Bible	59	55	5	15	3	137
Reflect on the Bible	47	55	8	18	2	130
Listen to and/ or sing songs of worship	57	64	9	7	0	137
Worship God in creative ways	22	24	25	43	10	124
Listen to sermons/ Christian talks online	12	23	20	49	32	136
Read Christian literature (books, blogs, articles etc)	27	32	29	41	8	137
Fast from food	2	3	6	57	68	136
Fast from other things	0	4	8	64	59	135
Journaling, keeping a prayer diary or similar	13	10	13	41	59	136
Find solitude	38	22	17	46	10	133

Overall, these results are very positive: the majority of people are regularly setting aside time to pray, to read Scripture, to reflect upon it, and to worship God by listening to and/or singing songs of worship. A good number of people are reading Christian books too. Fasting from food doesn't seem to be particularly popular, apart from a couple of people who look like they might be taking a bit too far!

Question 3: Which one of these would you most like to grow in?



As well as praying and reading & reflecting on the Bible being the spiritual practices that people report doing the most regularly, they are also the ones where they would most like to grow. Perhaps this is because they are so fundamental to Christian growth. In addition to this, there are a fair number of people who would like to grow in creative worship and keeping a journal/prayer diary.

Question 4: Which of the following sentences describe the challenges you face in spending deliberate time with God?

1. It's hard to find the time (50%)
2. I feel guilty that I don't spend enough time with God (50%)
3. I struggle to focus during these times (48%)
4. It's hard to find a quiet place to focus (30%)
5. I just forget (27%)
6. I often don't feel like doing it (24%)

For many, busyness is largely unavoidable. Within the demands of everyday life, people find it hard to make time to intentionally connect with God. Because we are so aware of all the things we have to do, and are often tired trying to keep all the plates spinning, when we do get round to these times with God our thoughts are all over the place! However, we know that lots of busy people do make space for regular devotional times and they find them useful. While busyness is a genuine issue, if we have the desire to spend time with God and are willing to think outside the box, it is possible for any person to regularly hear from God's word and have the opportunity to talk to him.

Interestingly, guilt levels are just as high amongst those who read the Bible frequently as amongst those who do not! Regardless of performance, many feel like they are never doing enough.

Question 5: Which of these reflect how you feel about your own Bible reading?

I generally feel like I can understand what I am reading	69.2%
I use study notes, commentaries or similar to help me	58.5%
When I read the Bible I feel like I am getting to know God better	58.5%
I am generally able to apply what I read to my everyday life	41.5%
I generally find reading the Bible worthwhile and rewarding	58.5%
Reading the Bible is helping me to change as a person	41.5%
There are portions of the Bible I find challenging and would like help to explore further	41.5%
I make an effort to commit passages of scripture to memory	20.8%

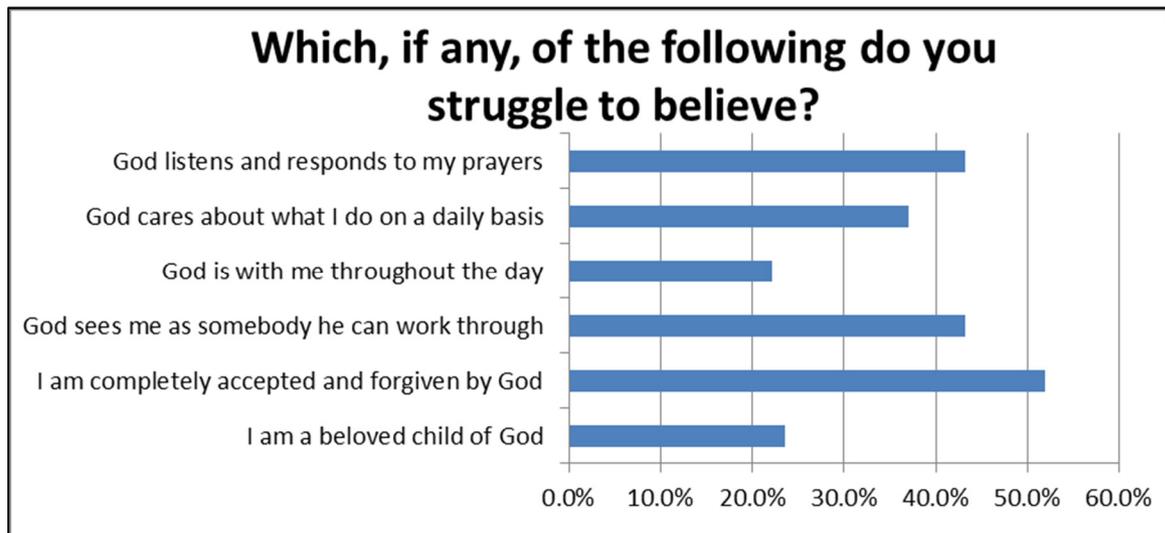
As well as Bible reading frequency being relatively high, people also say that they can generally understand what they are reading and a good number of people are making use of Bible study resources. While over half find Bible reading a rewarding experience and that it is helping them to get to know God better, over one third of people don't. In general, we find applying what we read to our everyday lives harder than just understanding the passage, which is not surprising as plausible applications to everyday life are not always apparent. Over half of us do not find that Bible reading is helping us to change as people. This means there are some people who read it, enjoy it, but don't ultimately feel like it's making a huge amount of difference in their life.

Question 6: What 3 words would best describe your relationship with God?



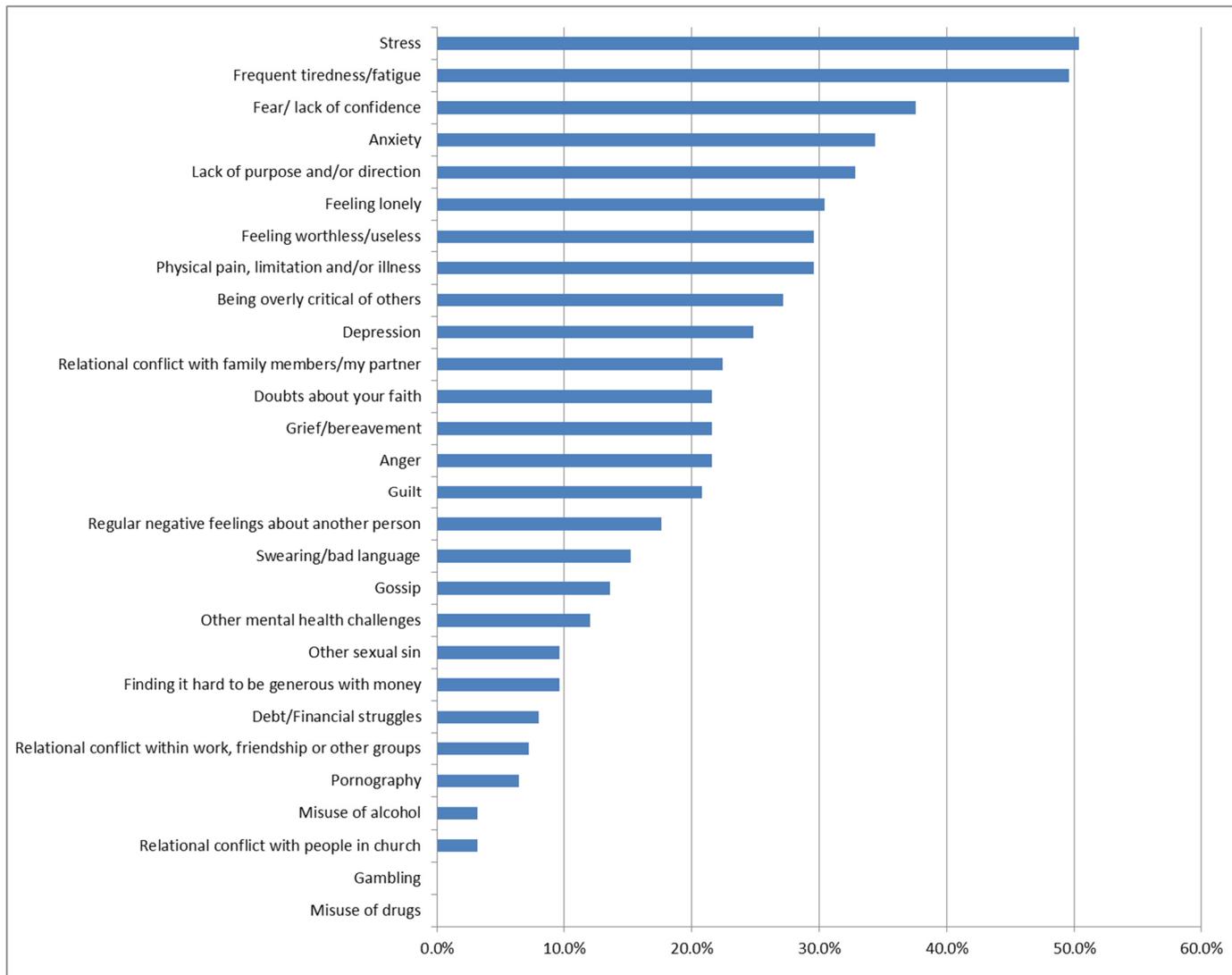
For this open question, we have attempted to group similar words together and put them under uniformed headings. This wordle provides an impression of the kinds of words people used to describe their relationships with God. The larger the word, the more frequent word within that category were used. Encouragingly, words that convey warmth and consistency were the most numerous.

Question 7: Which, if any, of the following do you struggle to believe?



Positively, the majority of people do not struggle to believe that they are a loved child of God and that God is with them during the day. However, there appears to be somewhat of a contradiction in terms: while people say that they do believe that God loves them, many struggle to believe that their prayers make a difference, that God cares about what they are doing, that God can work through them, and that he forgives and accepts them. So while many have a sense of being loved in a generic way, it seems that many of us need help to grasp and feel what that love actually is, which surely includes God's forgiveness, interest, listening ear and the ability to use us in accordance with his good plans.

Question 8: Over the past 12 months, which, if any, of the following have had a significant impact on your life?



From the graph above, it is immediately apparent that a large chunk of people in and around GBC struggling with stress and tiredness & fatigue (around 75% picked at least one of these!) Levels of mental health challenges are also relatively high, with many facing battles with depression, anxiety, fear and a generally low view of themselves.

It is also worth drawing to our attention that GBC report relatively low struggles with the 'classic' sins, such as swearing, pornography, alcohol and gambling. On the whole, our struggles seem to be more within our 'inner worlds', with negative, critical, sad or angry feelings.

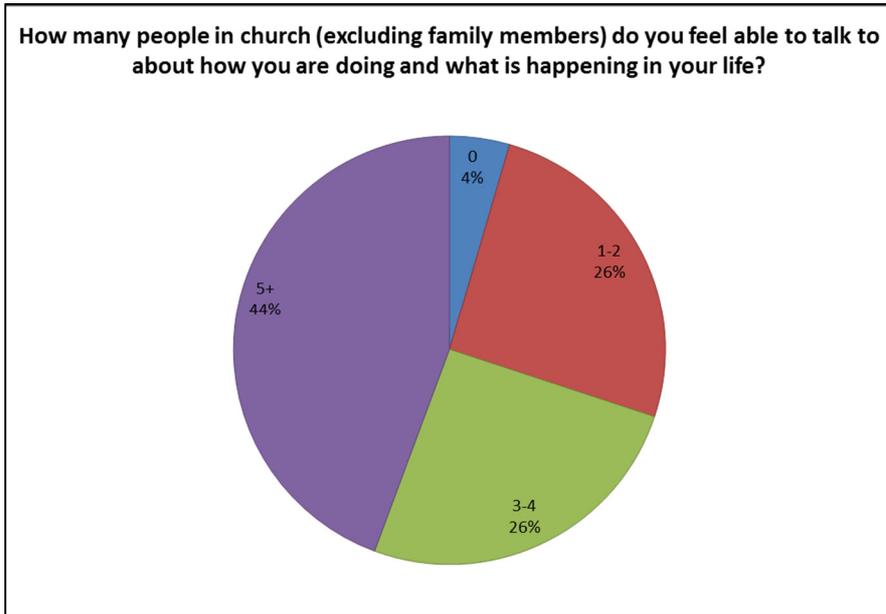
SECTION 2: God, You and the Church

Question 9: Respond to the following statements:

	Yes	Sort of	Not really	Total
I feel like I have a place within GBC	64.66% 86	27.07% 36	8.27% 11	133
I volunteer in one or more activities/duties within GBC	74.05% 97	12.21% 16	13.74% 18	131
I feel like God is using me to make a positive difference within the life of the church	43.61% 58	27.82% 37	28.57% 38	133
Being part of GBC helps me to live the rest of my life better	62.41% 83	26.32% 35	11.28% 15	133

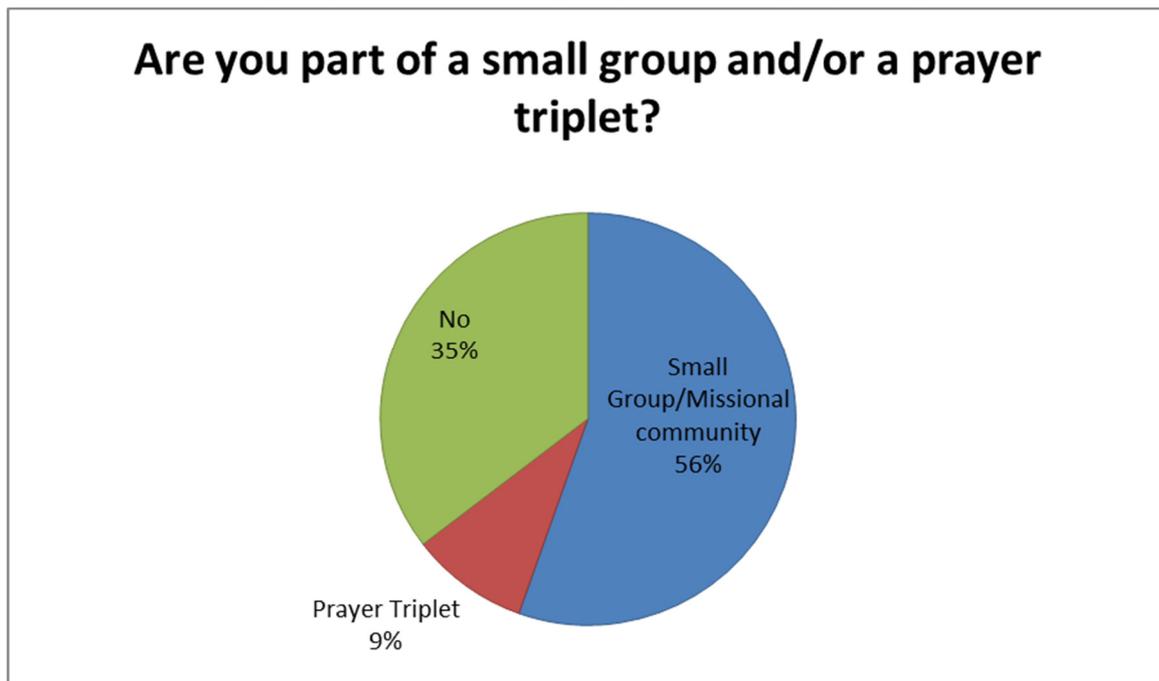
This is brilliant: the majority of people feel like they have a place within GBC and that being a part of it helps them to live the rest of their lives better. A massive three quarters of respondents volunteer in at least one church-based/led activity. The one statistic that is worthy of an eyebrow-raise is that only 44% of people have a clear sense that God is using them to make a positive difference within the life of the church. For the vast majority, this is an issue of perception not matching with reality. Just by volunteering, people are making a positive difference. That's without taking into account the difference people make just by being who they are and encouraging people with their words and actions.

Question 10: How many people in church (excluding family members) do you feel able to talk to about how you are doing and what is happening in your life?



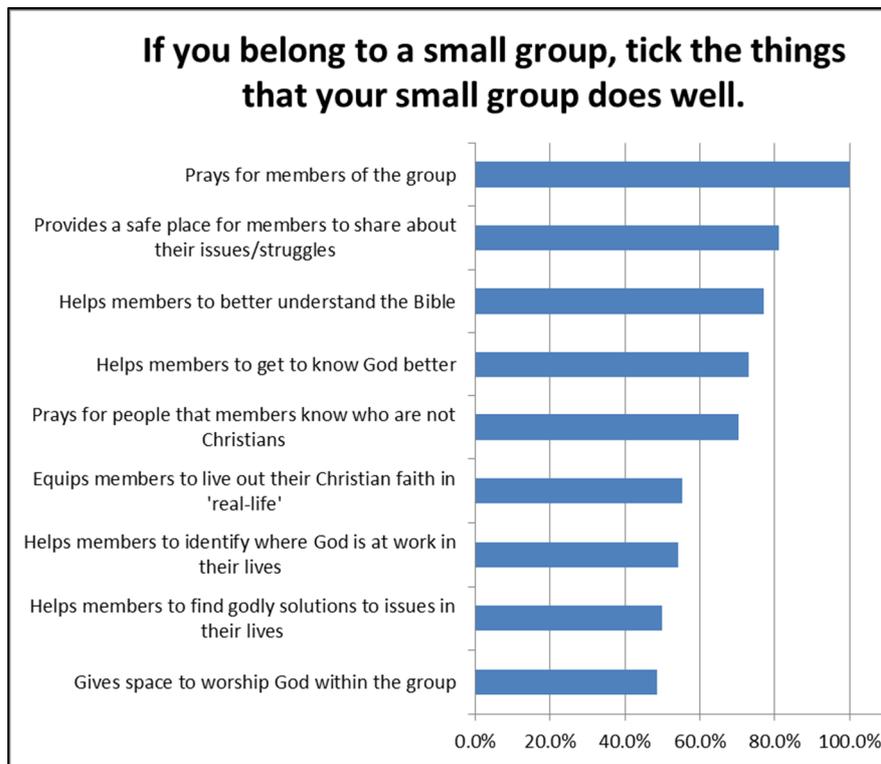
Again, this is really encouraging and the sign that our community life is strong, where the vast majority have at least one person within the church with whom they can talk openly about their reality. The fact that almost half report having five or more is brilliant!

Question 11: Are you part of a small group and/or a prayer triplet?



Around two thirds of respondents are involved in some kind of small group or prayer triplet, which is excellent and reflects the value that we place upon these groups within our church culture.

Question 12: If you belong to a small group, tick the things that your small group does well.



Small groups are doing an excellent job of providing a safe place for members to talk about their lives, to look at God’s word and to pray for one another. This again reflects the fact that we are generally pretty strong in the ‘up’ and ‘in’ dimensions of discipleship. Despite attempts to encourage worship (in the sense of praising and adoring God) within small groups, this is the area that scores the lowest. It is also interesting to note that groups are less strong when it comes to equipping and helping members to connect Christian faith and Scripture with everyday life, which admittedly can be a tricky thing to do and is not always a conscious priority for us.

Question 13: If you are not part of a small group, what are the reasons you have for not belonging to a small group?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I don't like these kinds of settings or I feel uncomfortable in them	40.0%	20
I don't have time/I have too many other commitments at the moment	36.0%	18
I feel as though I have adequate support through other means (e.g. Prayer triplets, mentoring or other groups outside of GBC)	28.0%	14
I have been in a small group before and did not have a good experience	20.0%	10
The times the current groups meet does not fit with my schedule	10.0%	5
I have health problems that make it hard for me to attend meetings	10.0%	5

While there are some things that we can do to increase participation within small groups, a significant number of those who are not involved just do not like these kinds of settings (or at least think that they don't!) Over a third of people say they are too busy and just under a third find adequate support through other means.

SECTION 3: God, You and the World

Question 14: To what extent do you feel that God is using you to make a positive difference in the following areas of life?

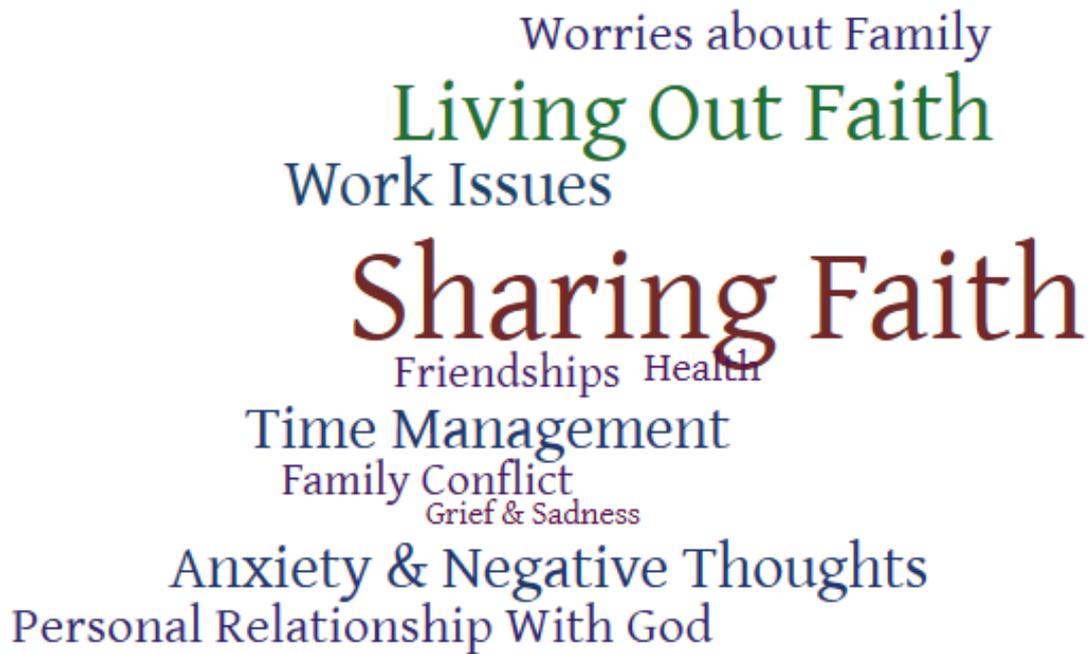
	A lot	Some	A little	Not at all really	N/A	Total
Within your family	24.60% 31	40.48% 51	20.63% 26	12.70% 16	1.59% 2	126
Within your workplace	13.45% 16	23.53% 28	17.65% 21	11.76% 14	33.61% 40	119
Within your neighbourhood	5.51% 7	26.77% 34	33.07% 42	34.65% 44	0.00% 0	127
Within your place of study	2.63% 3	4.39% 5	5.26% 6	8.77% 10	78.95% 90	114
Within your friendship circles	16.13% 20	33.06% 41	36.29% 45	12.90% 16	1.61% 2	124
Within the UK and beyond	9.84% 12	18.03% 22	23.77% 29	36.07% 44	12.30% 15	122

NB: when looking at these numbers, remember to take N/A into account (the higher the N/A, the more weight needs to be given to the percentages within that row).

The first thing to be said here is that there is probably a gulf between perception and reality i.e. people are probably making more difference than they recognise. Perhaps there is also some reticence about blowing one's own horn? It is encouraging to see that the vast majority do recognise that they are at least making some or a little difference.

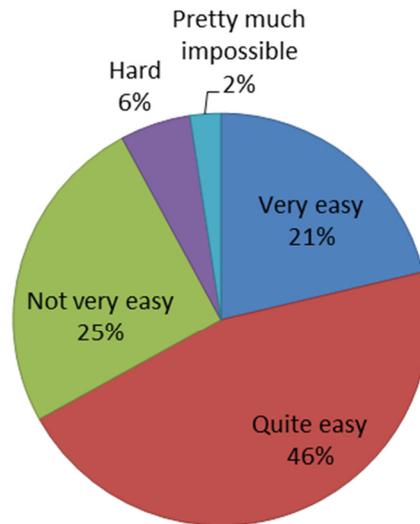
That being said, many of us recognise that making a positive contribution as a Christian person beyond the walls of the church can be difficult, especially in the immediate areas where we live where the majority of people these days keep themselves to themselves. This is particularly pertinent as we think about how we might be proactive in reaching out to Romans' Edge residents.

Question 15: What is the biggest challenge you face outside of church?



This wordle shows that the main challenges people are aware of outside of church life are to do with talking about their faith and applying their faith, both generally in everyday life and specifically within the workplace. Family issues, anxiety & negative thoughts, and managing busyness are also quite prominent.

Question 16: How easy do you find it to be open about the fact you are a Christian?

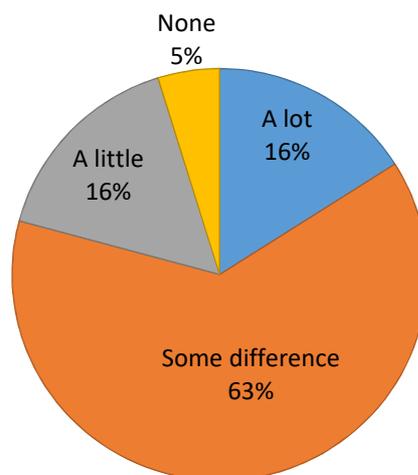


How easy do you find it to be open about the fact you are a Christian?

Considering the increasingly secular culture within which we live, where the fundamentals of Christianity are regularly undermined, it is encouraging that around two thirds of us find it fairly easy to be open about our faith. For those who find it harder, it is likely that their environment is to some extent a factor. Hopefully, as we seek to strengthen people’s sense of mission within the world, they will feel increasingly more comfortable being open about their faith.

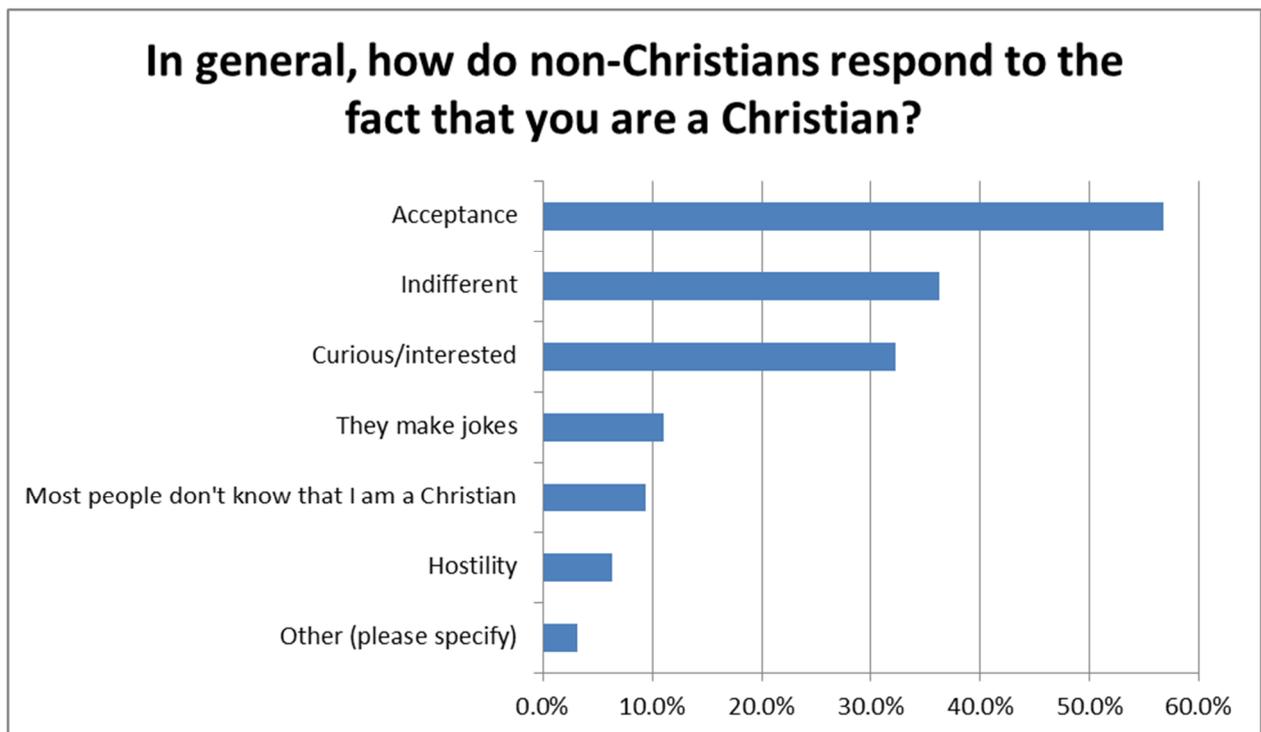
Question 17: To what extent do you think people see a difference in you because of your faith?

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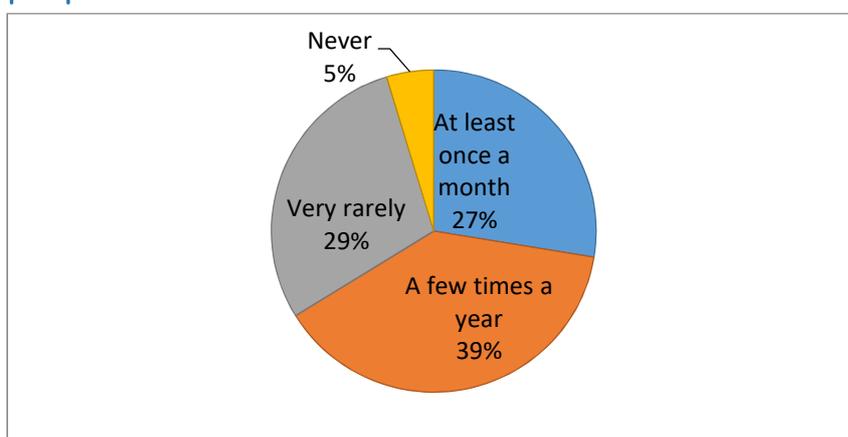
This is encouraging and forms an important part of how we share our faith. The fact that over three quarters of us feel that people see a difference in us is something to be affirmed and can encourage us as we think about how we provide a positive witness within the wider community. A life lived well is an excellent platform from which to communicate the reality of Jesus.

Question 18: In general, how do non-Christians respond to the fact that you are a Christian?



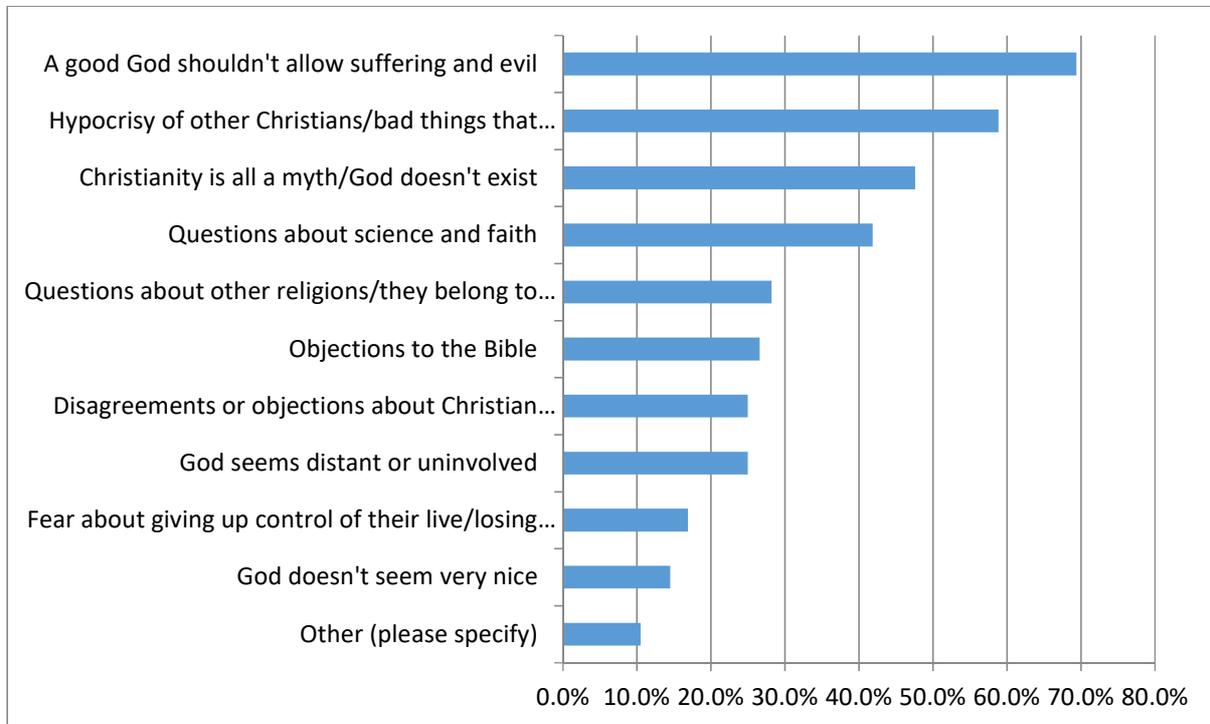
This is really interesting and worth noting: the environments within which most of us inhabit are generally accepting of our Christian faith, and then within this acceptance, some people don't really care while others are interested in finding out more about what we believe.

Question 19: How often do you have conversations about Christian faith with people who are not Christians?



Obviously, it would be great if more people were sharing their faith more regularly. But the fact that two thirds of respondents are talking about their faith at least a few times a year is good news.

Question 20: What types of questions/objections are people around you most likely to have?



No real surprises here – but it is a helpful reminder that many perceive Christian faith (and more specifically, the institution of the church) to be hypocritical and/or culpable for historical wrongs and abuses.

Question 21: If/when you have conversations about the Christian faith, how do you generally feel during them?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Unsure what to say	46.2%	55
Afraid of causing offence	42.0%	50
Unsure how to answer their questions	35.3%	42
Excited	21.0%	25
Pressured	18.5%	22
Relaxed	17.6%	21
Embarassed	15.1%	18
Confident	14.3%	17
Scared	13.4%	16

In these conversations, the main challenges we face are that we are often unsure what to say, are unsure how to respond to questions and are scared of offending people. Given that evangelism is often a highly emotive subject for people, a remarkably low number ticked emotional words. May this suggest an underlying level of indifference and lack of enthusiasm?