

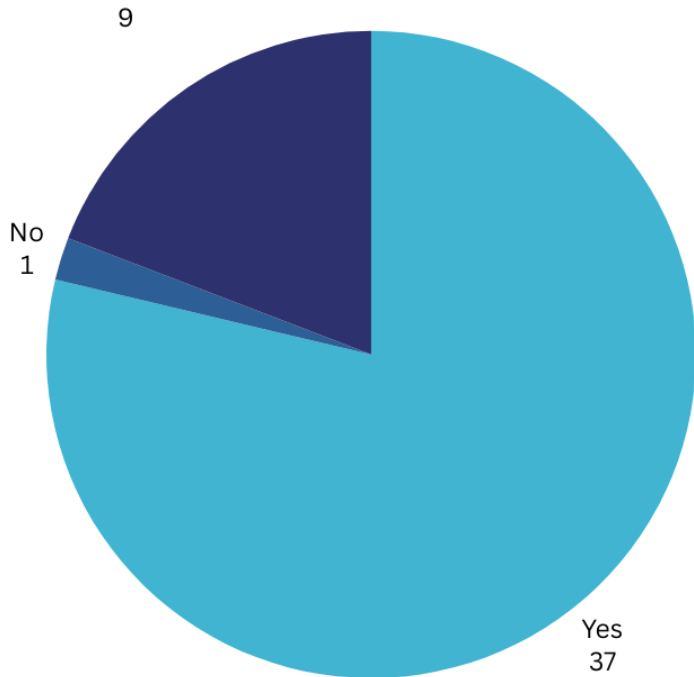
*Overarching themes synthesized from the responses to the
Welcoming Diversity Inventory
June 2024*

[Link to presentation from June 7, 2024](#)

(A live recording of the presentation can be found on the church's youtube.)

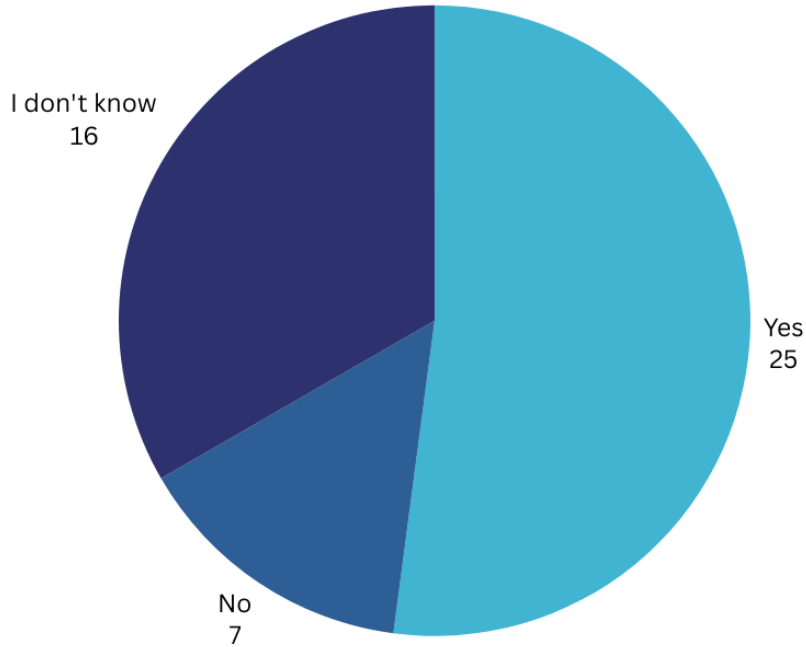
1. It is important to me that my pastor preaches and communicates about race and racism in a way that connects to my faith and spiritual formation. (47 responses)

I've never thought about it



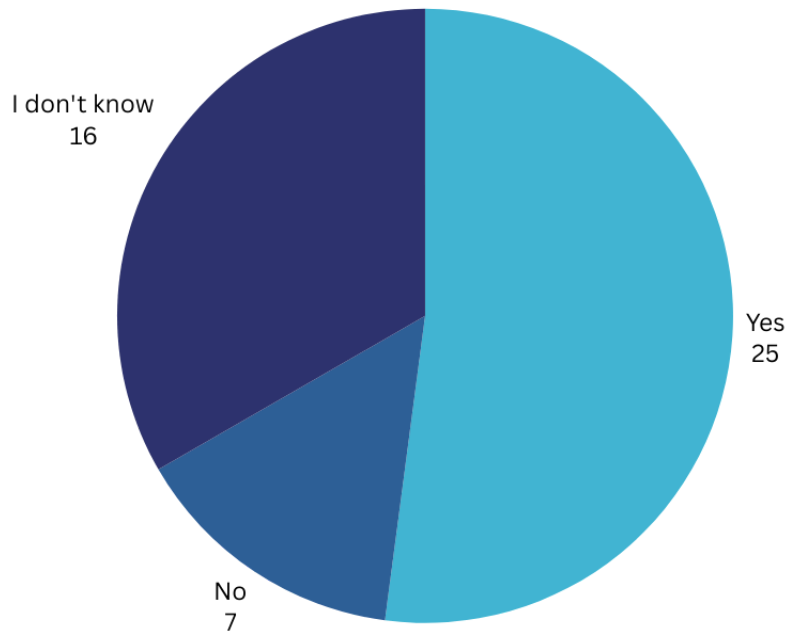
Yes 79%
No 2%
I've never thought 19%

2. Our congregation has engaged in open conversations and/or training regarding race, racism, and white privilege. (48 responses)



Yes 52%
No 15%
I don't know 33%

3. I am comfortable with diverse styles of preaching and worship. (48 responses)



Yes 52%
No 15%
I don't know 33%

4. Describe ways your congregation might assist a pastor whose race doesn't match the majority of your members in connecting with your surrounding community. (48 responses)

Overarching Themes:

Welcoming and Supportive Attitudes/Actions

- **Personal Welcoming:** Many responses emphasize the importance of welcoming the pastor personally and warmly, reflecting a congregation's tradition of hospitality and support.
- **Congregational Reputation:** Highlighting the congregation's history of being open, affirming, and resilient in the face of adversity.
- **Visible Support:** Demonstrating visible and tangible support for the pastor, such as writing articles in local newspapers, hosting community luncheons, and offering translation services during services to ensure all feel included.

Open Communication and Dialogue

- **Open Conversations:** Encouraging ongoing, open dialogue within the congregation and with the pastor to address any concerns or uncertainties and to foster mutual understanding. Working collaboratively with the pastor to understand their needs, preferences, and experiences; Seeking their advice on how best to navigate any racial or cultural challenges to promote a more inclusive environment.
- **Feedback and Discussions:** Utilizing post-service discussions, open forums, and other platforms to facilitate honest conversations about race and inclusion.

Community Integration

- **Community Introductions:** Actively introducing the pastor to local businesses, community leaders, and groups to help them establish connections within the community. This is also an opportunity to diversify the congregation.
- **Participation in Local Events:** Encouraging the pastor to participate in local events, festivals, and community activities to increase visibility and foster relationships.

Education and Awareness

- **Awareness Training:** Providing training and resources to raise awareness about racial and cultural differences, helping congregants understand and support the pastor better.
- **DEI-Focused Activities:** Engaging in activities, initiatives, and organized events aimed at celebrating diverse cultures, combating racism, and promoting inclusivity within the church and the broader community.

These themes collectively underscore the importance of a proactive, supportive, and inclusive approach in helping a pastor of a different race connect with and thrive in the surrounding community.

5. Would a Pastor whose race doesn't match the majority of your members be welcomed within the community? Why or Why not? (44 responses)

Overarching Themes:

General Openness and Acceptance

- **Historical Inclusivity:** Many responses highlight the congregation's history and practice of being welcoming and inclusive to all, regardless of race. Some responses mention the congregation's history of accepting women and LGBTQ+ individuals as a positive indicator for welcoming a pastor of a different race.
- **Mission Statement:** References to the church's mission statement of welcoming all reinforce the commitment to inclusivity and support for a diverse pastoral leadership. There is a strong belief that within the church, the pastor would be welcomed warmly and supported by the congregation.
- **ONA (Open and Affirming):** The congregation's commitment to being Open and Affirming (ONA) suggests a strong foundation of acceptance and inclusivity. However, based on several responses, the results suggest we need to discuss the definition of open and affirming for the congregation.

Need for Awareness and Training

- **Sensitivity Training:** There is an acknowledgment that inclusion or sensitivity training might be beneficial to ensure a smooth and genuinely welcoming environment.
- **Learning Opportunity:** Differences are viewed as opportunities for growth and learning within the congregation.

Concerns About Broader Community

- **Church vs. Community:** Responses indicate concerns that while the church itself is seen as welcoming, there is uncertainty about the broader community's acceptance, particularly in a predominantly white and conservative area (Long Island). Some view the broader community as potentially less welcoming than the church. Some responses express concerns about the practical challenges and potential difficulties a pastor of a different race might face, acknowledging the complexities of the current social and political environment.

Individual Uncertainty

- **Mixed Views:** Some responses express uncertainty or personal indifference about the issue, indicating a range of perspectives within the congregation.
- **Hopeful Optimism:** Despite uncertainties, many responses are hopeful that the pastor would be welcomed, citing the congregation's inclusive nature and positive intentions.

These themes reflect a mix of optimism, commitment to inclusivity, and realistic concerns about the broader community's reception, highlighting the need for ongoing dialogue and proactive efforts to ensure a genuinely welcoming environment for a pastor of a different race.

6. What additional work, training or conversations might need to take place within your church before you could call a pastor whose race doesn't match the majority of your members? (39 responses)

Overarching Themes:

Guest Speakers and Training Opportunities

- **Guest Preachers:** Inviting guest preachers from different backgrounds to share their experiences and perspectives, helping the congregation to learn and adapt.
- **Workshops and Training Sessions:** Organizing workshops and training sessions for the congregation on diversity, inclusion, privilege, and cultural education to better understand and support a pastor of a different race and foster a more inclusive environment.

Open Conversations and Discussions

- **Dialogue and Communication:** Promoting continuous open conversations within the congregation to address any reservations or concerns and to reaffirm the church's commitment to inclusivity and diversity.
- **Personal Reflection and Improvement:** Encouraging individual members to reflect on their own attitudes and to seek improvement in their understanding and acceptance of diversity.
- **Openness to Suggestions:** While some members are unsure about the specific needs, they express openness to suggestions and guidance on how to best support a pastor of a different race.

Acknowledging Historical Context and Progress

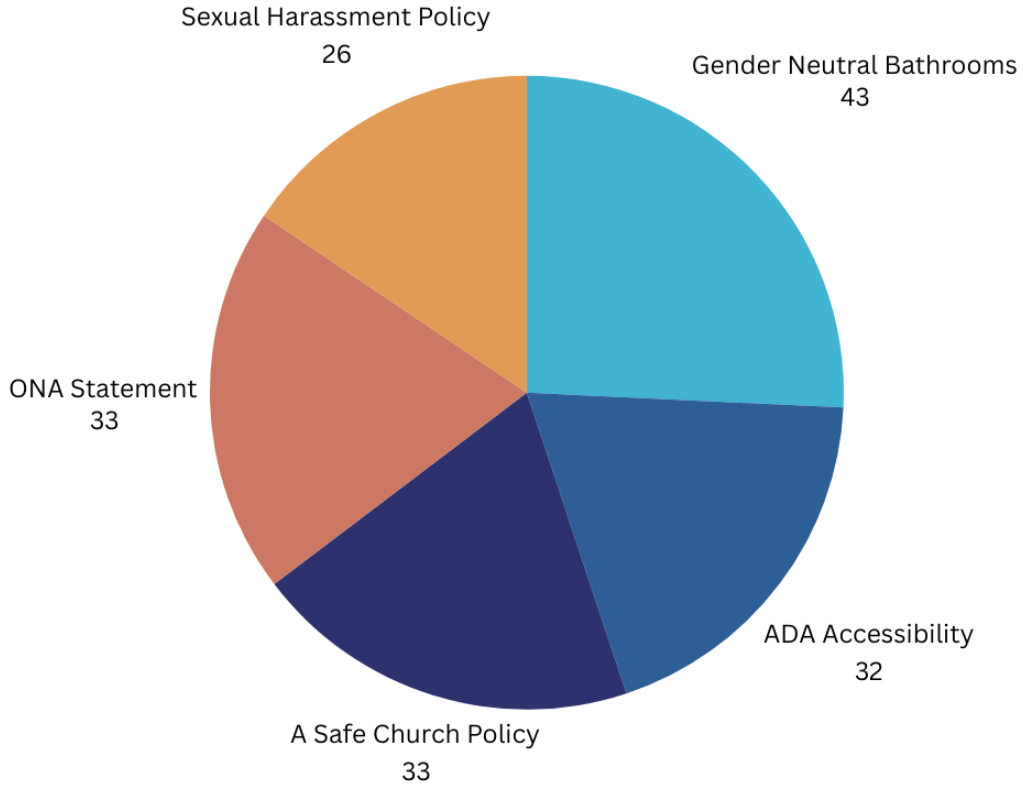
- **Historical Commitment to Civil Rights:** Recognizing the church's long history of promoting civil rights and its positive impact on the congregation's attitudes towards diversity.
- **Learning from Past Experiences:** Reflecting on past experiences, such as the acceptance of LGBTQ+ members, to inform the approach to welcoming a pastor of a different race.
- **Belief in Current Openness:** Some responses indicate a belief that no additional work or training is needed, as the congregation is already seen as open and welcoming.

Addressing External Challenges

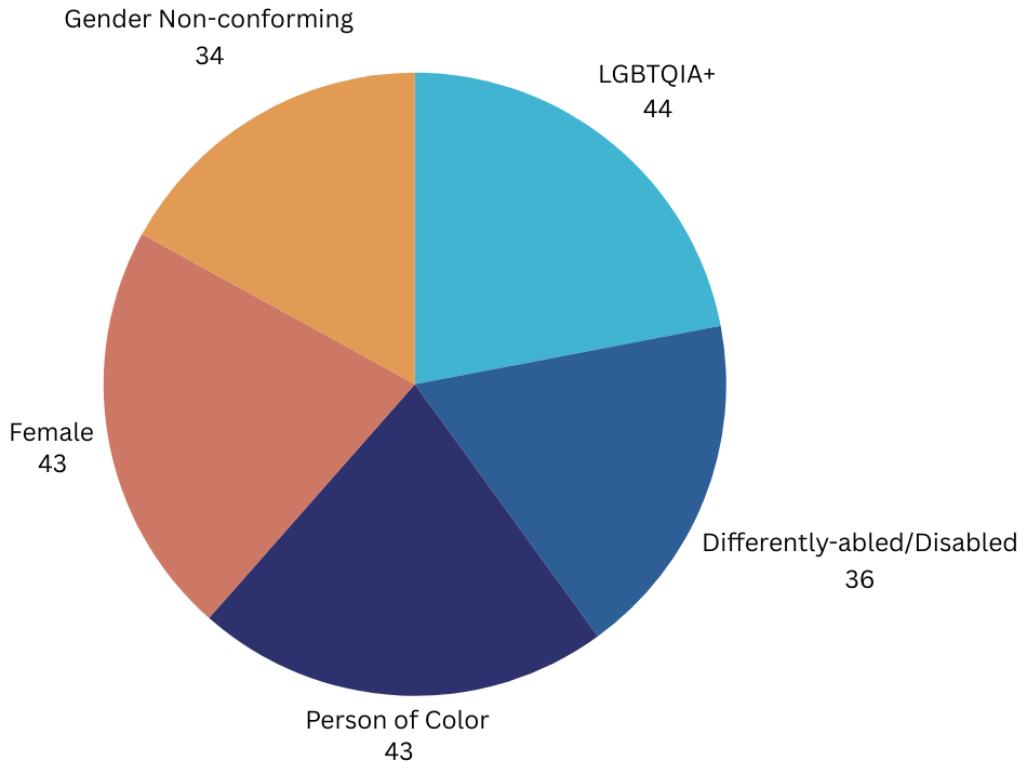
- **Community Prejudices:** Recognizing the potential challenges posed by the broader community's prejudices and exploring ways to address these issues proactively.
- **Political Climate:** Considering the impact of the current political climate on the congregation's dynamics and the pastor's role in navigating sensitive issues.

These themes reflect a combination of proactive efforts, historical strengths, and a commitment to continuous improvement in fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for a pastor of a different race.

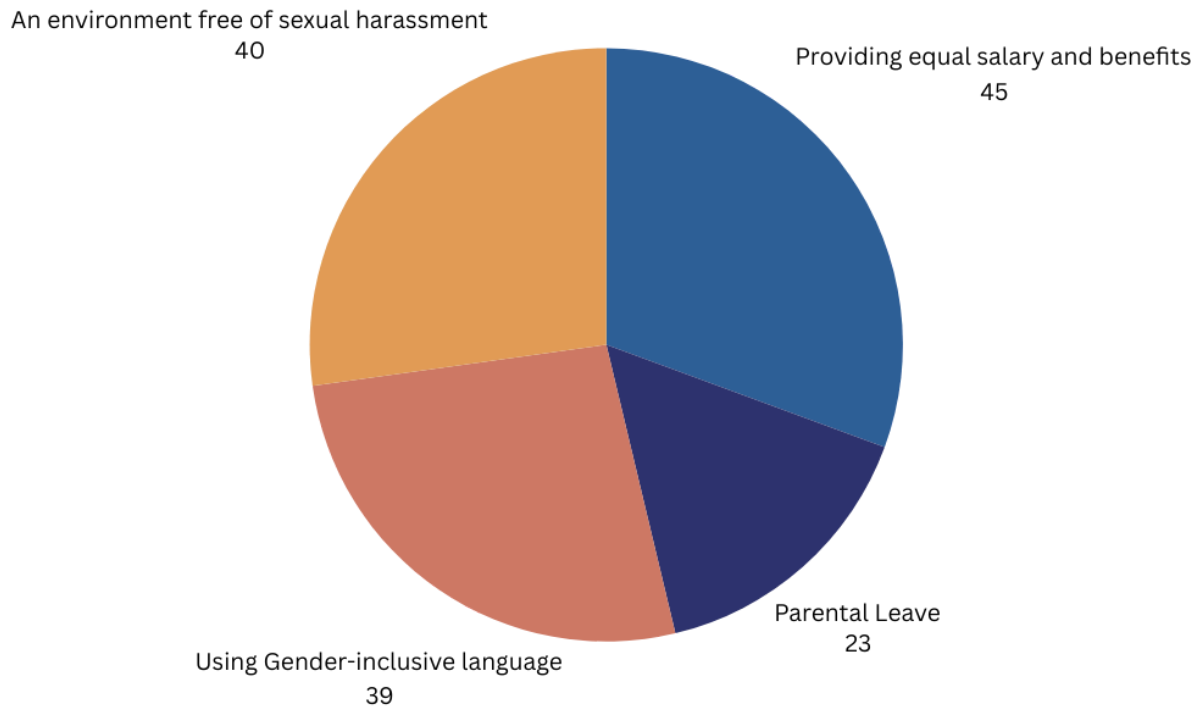
7. Creating an inclusive, accessible facility is important to us. Our congregation has:



8. I personally am open to calling as our minister a person who is:



9. *Our congregation is committed to:*



10. *What additional work, training or conversations, if any, might need to take place within your church before you could call a female pastor? (42 responses)*

Overarching Themes:

Established Acceptance of Female Pastors

- **Previous Experience:** A significant number of responses state that no additional work, training, or conversations are necessary because the congregation has successfully welcomed female pastors and leaders in the past.

Potential Areas for Improvement

- **Sexual Harassment Training:** There is a suggestion to ensure that policies and training on sexual harassment are up-to-date and offered, particularly for members who may not have had recent training or any training at all.

Ongoing Dialogue

- **Addressing Needs:** Some responses suggest that open and honest conversations regarding the specific needs of a female pastor could be beneficial, even if no major issues are anticipated.

These themes collectively suggest a high level of readiness and acceptance within the church for calling a female pastor, supported by a positive track record and a confident belief in the congregation's inclusivity. Any additional steps would primarily focus on ensuring up-to-date training on sexual harassment and maintaining open conversations to address any specific needs of a female pastor.

11. What additional work, training or conversations, if any, might need to take place within your church before you could call an LGBTQIA+ pastor? (42 responses)

Overarching Themes:

Established Acceptance and Experience

- **Previous Experience:** Many responses highlight the church's long history and experience with LGBTQIA+ pastors, indicating a well-established acceptance and familiarity with LGBTQIA+ leadership.

Potential Areas for Improvement

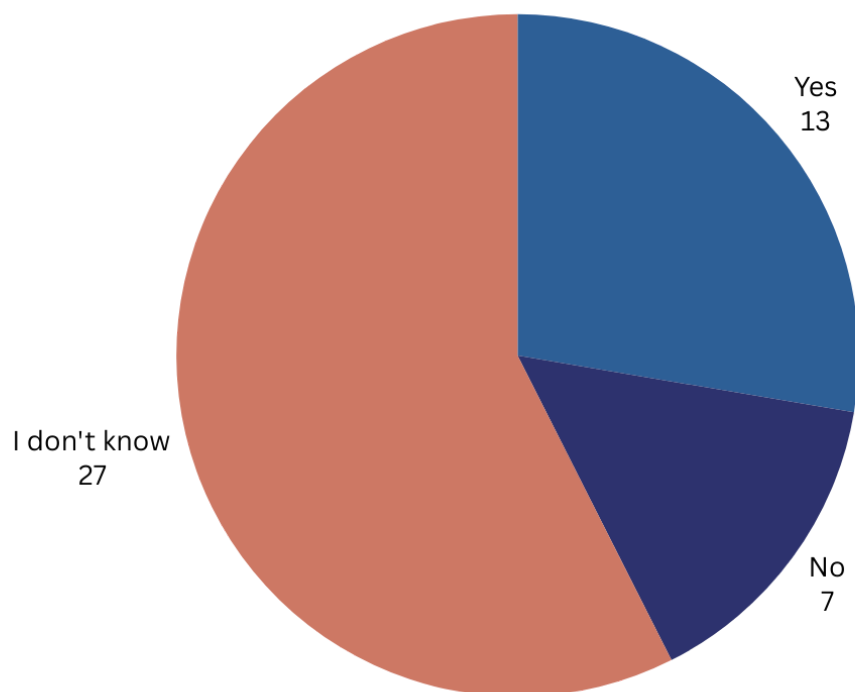
- **Continued Learning and Growth:** While there is confidence in the congregation's acceptance, there is also an openness to learning more about the evolving spectrum of LGBTQIA+ identities and ensuring that the church remains a safe and welcoming space for all.

Inclusivity Beyond LGB

- **Transgender and Non-Binary Awareness:** Some responses suggest a need for further education and conversations specifically focused on understanding and supporting transgender and non-binary individuals, as this may be a newer area for the congregation.

These themes collectively suggest a high level of readiness and acceptance within the church for calling an LGBTQIA+ pastor, supported by a strong track record and a confident belief in the congregation's inclusivity. Any additional steps would primarily focus on refreshing training and expanding awareness to include the full spectrum of LGBTQIA+ identities, particularly transgender and non-binary individuals, while maintaining open and supportive conversations.

12. Has your church pledged to create a welcoming environment for a minister or family member with mental health challenges? (47 responses)



Yes 28%
No 15%
I don't know 57%

13. Describe the steps that your congregation has taken to ensure that your church is a place where those with mental health challenges are provided a safe environment to tell their stories and share their journeys: (38 responses)

Overarching Themes:

General Inclusivity and Support

- **Welcoming Environment:** Despite the lack of specific initiatives, many responses highlight that the church practices a general welcoming and inclusive attitude towards everyone, including those with mental health challenges.
- **Encouragement to Share:** There is a belief that the church environment is open and safe for members to voice their needs, share their stories, and discuss their mental health challenges. Some responses mention the practice of talk back sessions or other church activities, which provide a platform for individuals to share personal stories and discuss various challenges, including mental health issues.

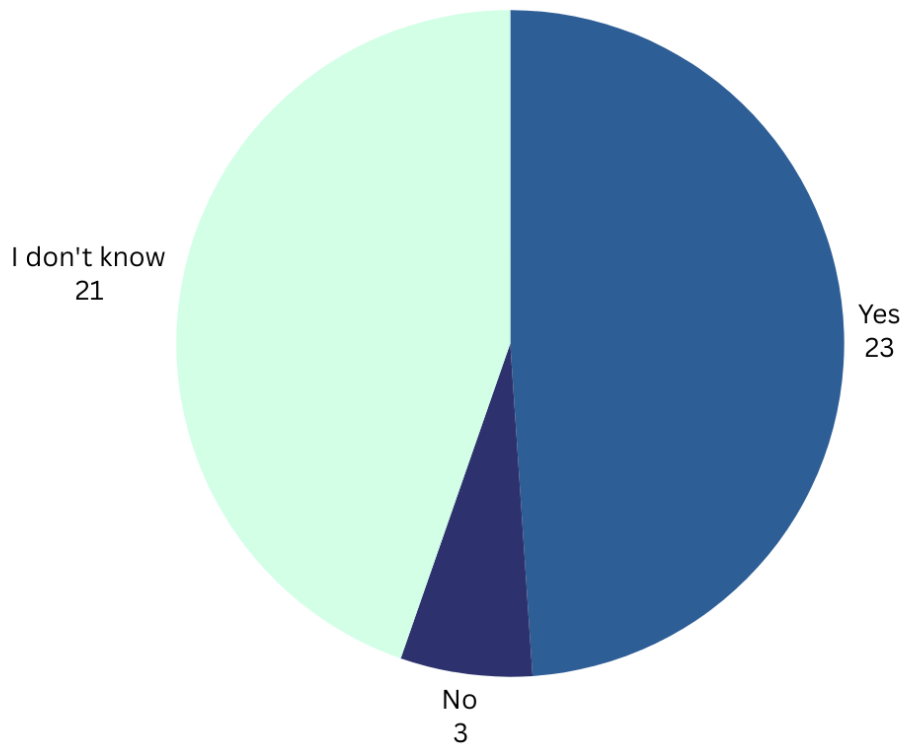
Need for Awareness and Training

- **Addressing Mental Health Explicitly:** Many responses indicate that they are unaware of existing deliberate steps or initiatives taken to ensure a more supportive environment for those with mental health challenges. There is a recognition that the topic of mental health has not been explicitly discussed and that addressing it openly could be beneficial.

- **Information Sessions and Discussion:** Some responses suggest the need for more information gathering, discussions, and possibly training to better understand and support those with mental health challenges.
- **Mixed Views on Readiness:** While some responses reflect confidence in the church's ability to support individuals with mental health challenges, others express uncertainty or concern about the adequacy of current practices and the readiness to address these issues more explicitly.

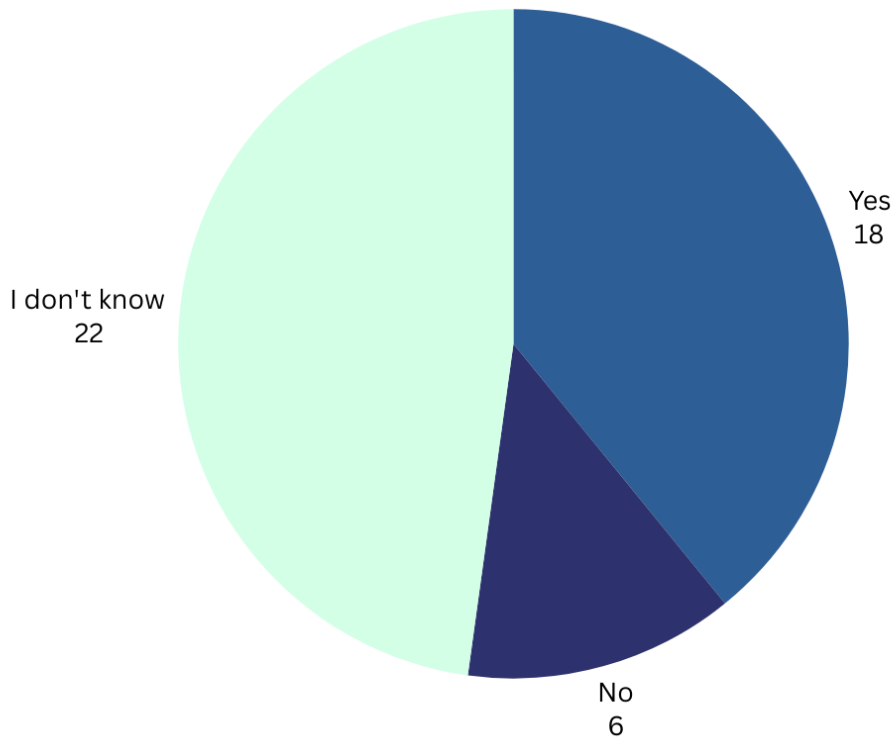
These themes collectively suggest that while the congregation is generally inclusive and welcoming, there is a need for more deliberate and structured steps to support individuals with mental health challenges. This could include increased awareness, open discussions, specific training, and the development of explicit initiatives to ensure a truly safe and supportive environment for all members.

14. As a church member, are you committed to recruiting, nominating, and supporting persons with mental health challenges (as defined in the Glossary) to serve in leadership positions within your congregation? (47 responses)



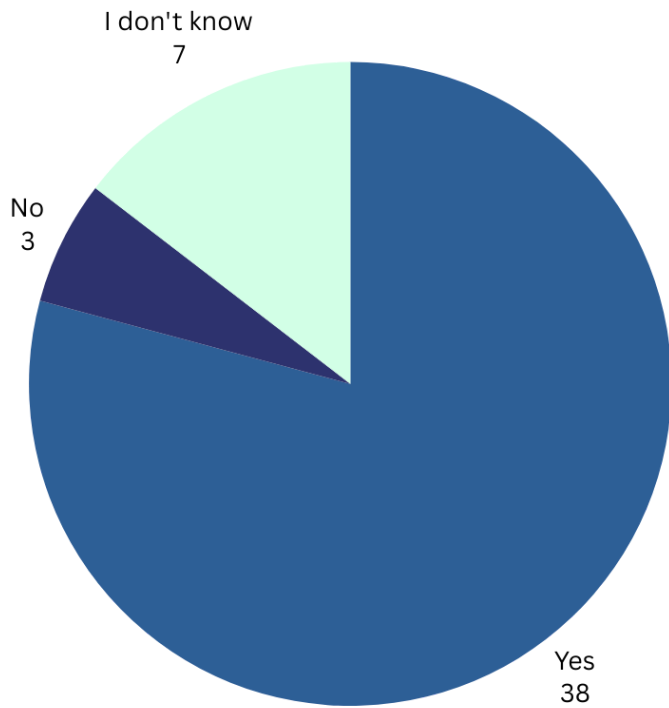
Yes 49%
No 6%
I don't know 45%

15. Are you personally open to intentionally calling a pastor or other staff person with mental health challenges? (46 responses)



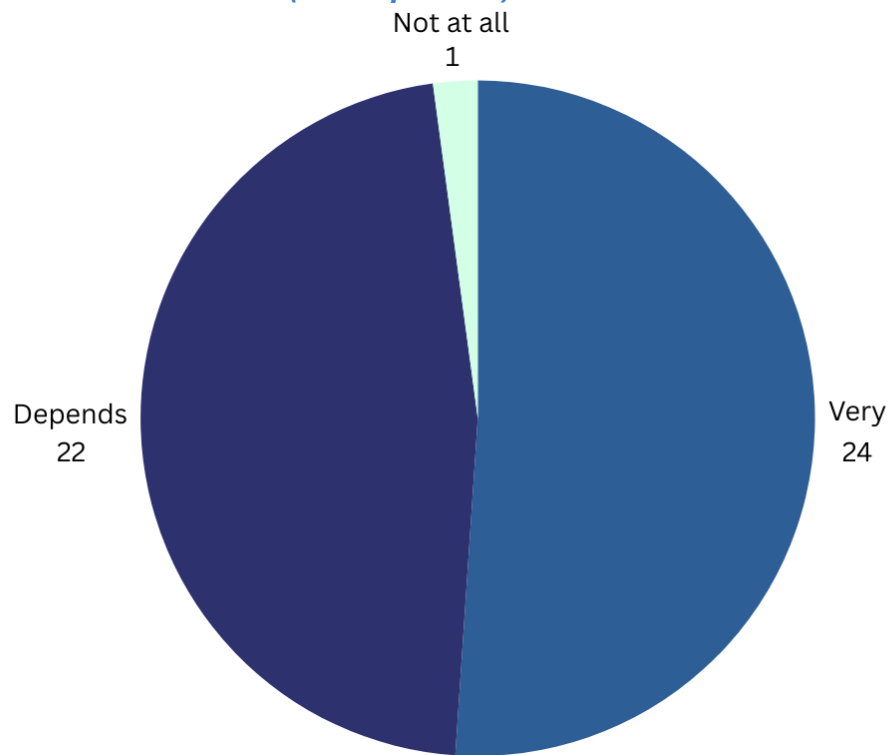
Yes 48%
 No 13%
 I don't know 39%

16. Are you personally open to intentionally calling a pastor or other staff person with physical/mobility challenges? (48 responses)



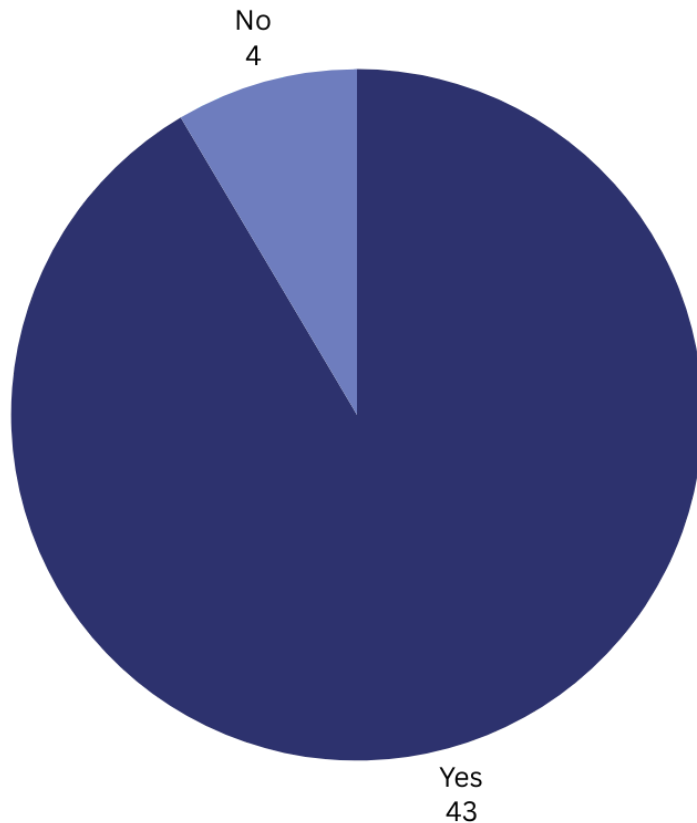
Yes 79%
 No 6%
 I don't know 15%

17. How willing is your church to make adjustments to your facility/building in order to accommodate a pastor or their family member with physical/mobility disabilities? (47 responses)



Very 51%
Depends 47%
Not at all 2%

18. Would you personally be open to attending sensitivity training related to engaging with persons with disabilities? (47 responses)



Yes 91.5%
No 8.5%

19. What additional work, training, or conversations might need to take place within your church to prepare you in calling a pastor or a member of their family with physical disabilities? (36 responses)

Overarching Themes:

Accessibility Needs

- **Assessment/Modifications:** Many responses emphasize the need to assess and modify the church's physical infrastructures, including Chancel and Parsonage, to accommodate individuals with physical disabilities. The challenges of making modifications to a small, historic church building are noted.
- **Case-by-Case Basis:** The need to address accommodations on a case-by-case basis, depending on the specific type of physical disability, is recognized.
- **Gap in Knowledge:** Some responses mention that the church is already prepared for individuals with disabilities, while others highlight significant gaps in current accommodations.

Financial Considerations

- **Funding and Grants:** Several responses point out the financial challenges associated with making necessary modifications. There is a suggestion to explore grants or other funding sources to support these changes.

- **Budget Constraints:** Concerns are raised about the church's current financial situation being insufficient to cover the costs of required adjustments.

Training and Education

- **Call for Training:** There is a call for training on how to best facilitate and support a pastor or member with physical disabilities, including hearing or vision impairments.
- **Open Conversations and Active Listening:** Many responses highlight the need for open and honest conversations within the congregation about the needs and accommodations for individuals with physical disabilities.
- **Involving the Community:** Involving local agencies, experts, and/or individuals with experience in physical disabilities to educate and guide the congregation is suggested.

Inclusive Attitude

- **Willingness to Adapt:** There is a general willingness among congregants to accept and make necessary adjustments for individuals with physical disabilities, reflecting a positive and inclusive attitude.

These themes collectively indicate that while there is a strong willingness within the congregation to support a pastor or a family member with physical disabilities, significant steps need to be taken in terms of physical modifications, financial planning, training, and open dialogue to ensure a truly inclusive and accessible environment.

20. What additional work, training, or conversations might need to take place within your church to prepare you in calling a pastor or a member of their family with mental health challenges? (38 responses)

Overarching Themes:

Awareness and Education

- **Mental Health Training:** Many responses highlight the need for training to educate congregants about mental health challenges, the various types, and how to support individuals facing these challenges.
- **Clarity on Pastor's Needs:** Having more information and understanding regarding the particular mental health challenges being faced by the pastor or their family member is emphasized as a recurring theme.
- **Open Conversations:** There is a strong emphasis on the need for open conversations within the congregation about mental health challenges, promoting a better understanding and reducing stigma. There was acknowledgment that this could be an opportunity to improve overall mental health awareness and support for the congregation as well.

Mixed Reactions and Concerns

- **Varied Levels of Support:** There are mixed reactions, with some congregants expressing reluctance or concern about calling a pastor with mental health challenges, highlighting the need for more extensive discussions and education.

- **Concerns about Capability:** Concerns about whether a pastor with mental health challenges would be able to effectively lead and counsel the congregation are noted, indicating the need for more in-depth consideration and reassurance.

These themes collectively indicate that while there is a willingness within the congregation to support a pastor or a family member with mental health challenges, significant steps need to be taken in terms of awareness, education, open dialogue, and creating a supportive environment to ensure inclusivity and acceptance.

21. Is there anything else that you would like to share about the welcoming environment of your congregation? (36 responses)

Overarching Themes:

Commitment to Welcoming and Openness

- **Welcoming Atmosphere:** Members believe the church has a welcoming atmosphere with efforts to greet and integrate new members that makes them feel included and valued. Many responses express personal satisfaction and delight in being part of the congregation, highlighting the loving and caring nature of the community.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** There is a desire to increase diversity, particularly in terms of age, race, and family demographics, and to make the church more inclusive and accessible for younger families, working families, and people from different backgrounds.
- **Pioneering Inclusivity:** The church has a history of being inclusive, having been one of the early Open and Affirming (OnA) churches and having called LGBTQIA+ ministers in the past.
- **Ongoing Educational Opportunities:** There is an overall openness to learning and having conversations to address new challenges and circumstances. Members acknowledge that there is always room for improvement in being welcoming and inclusive.

Internal Challenges

- **Interim Leadership:** Some members highlight internal struggles and the need for interim leadership to address power dynamics and conflicts that currently exist.
- **Openness to Different Perspectives:** While the congregation is generally open and tolerant, there are varying opinions on certain issues, indicating the need for continued dialogue and understanding.

Welcoming Leadership

- **Expectations for Leadership:** There is an expectation that new leadership will continue to embody the church's values of openness, compassion, and inclusivity.
 - **Desire for Liberal Thinking:** Some members express a desire for a liberal-thinking pastor who aligns with the church's inclusive and progressive values.
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Summary

The overarching themes highlight a congregation that is deeply committed to being welcoming and inclusive, with a history of pioneering inclusivity and a willingness to continuously improve. While there are internal challenges and varying opinions, the overall environment is one of openness, learning, and community engagement.