



Communications Survey Results

February 2020

Goal: Improve conference communications



- Understand what current conference communications tools people use
 - What is most useful to them?
 - What can be improved?
- Learn what new tools we could provide to improve conference communications for both clergy and laity

The Process

Focus groups / listening sessions

Conducted November '18 – January '19

- 19 groups in 5 different locations
(Fairfax Station, Richmond, South Hill, Staunton, Virginia Beach)
- 98 people, representing 10 districts
- Active and retired clergy, church staff, youth, laity, and leaders serving in local churches, in districts, and on conference boards and agencies



The Process

Written survey

Conducted June – July '19

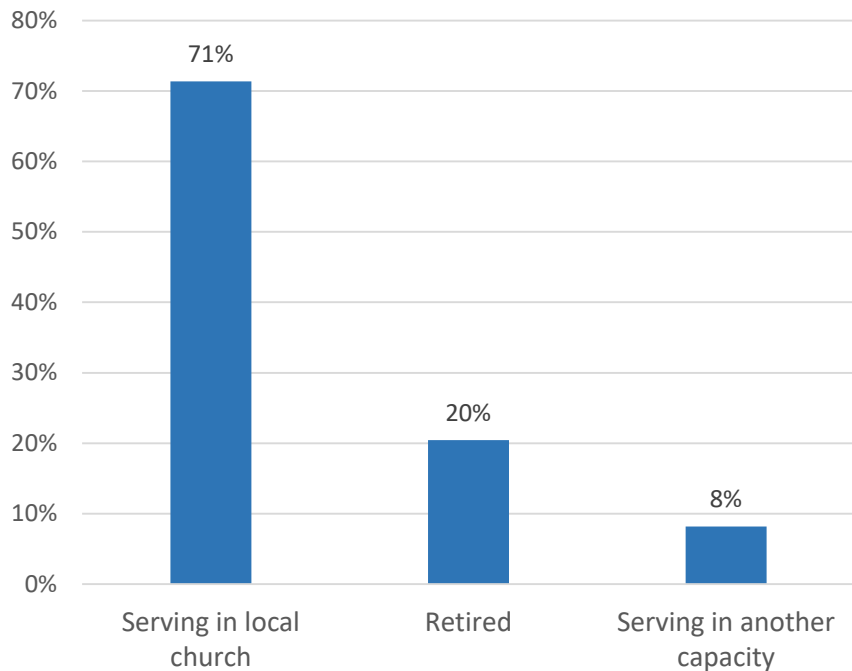
- 2,147 people took the survey
- Promoted in the Advocate magazine, weekly e-Advocate emails, on ClergyNet and LaityNet, on VAUMC.org, in 15 district emails, on conference social media channels, announced and distributed at Annual Conference, emailed to the EVC local church leaders and made survey available during AC presentation through number that attendees could text to.



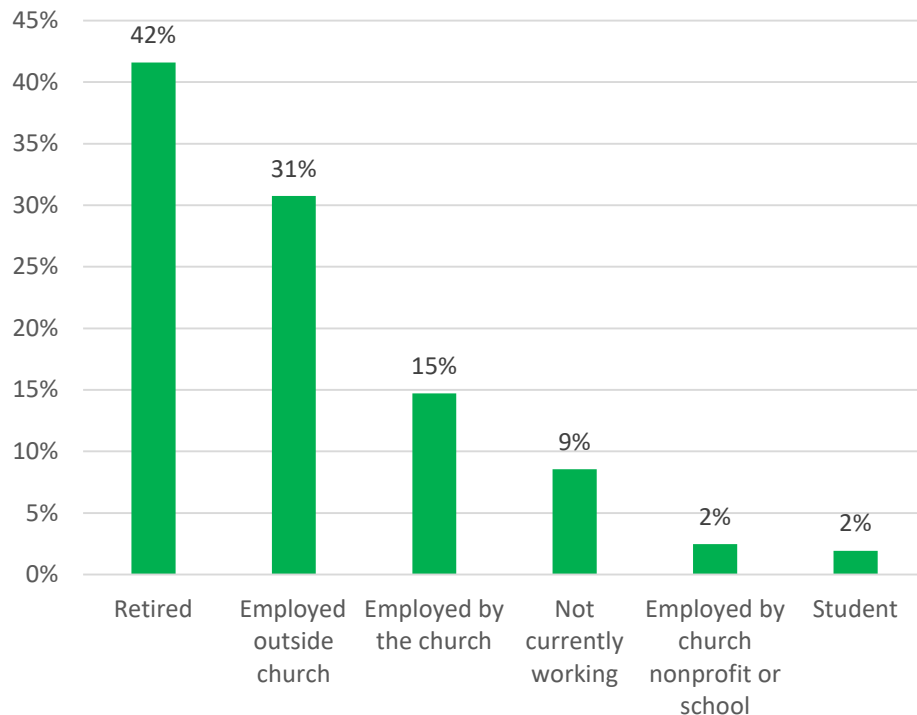
2,147 Survey Participants

- Note: “Laity” can be a confusing term
 - Some laity don’t know what it means
 - Others think this only refers to the Lay Leader, or those in leadership positions

Clergy = 440



Laity = 1,707



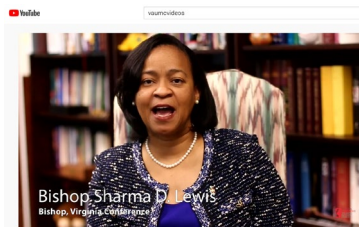
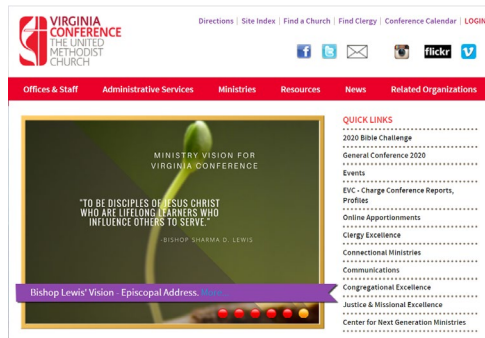
Good demographic balance

- Geographical
 - All 16 districts well represented
 - Good mix of urban, suburban, and rural
- Ages
 - Good mix of ages 36+
 - 115 people age 21 – 35
 - 24 people 20 & under
- Church size
 - All church sizes well represented



Conference communications tools

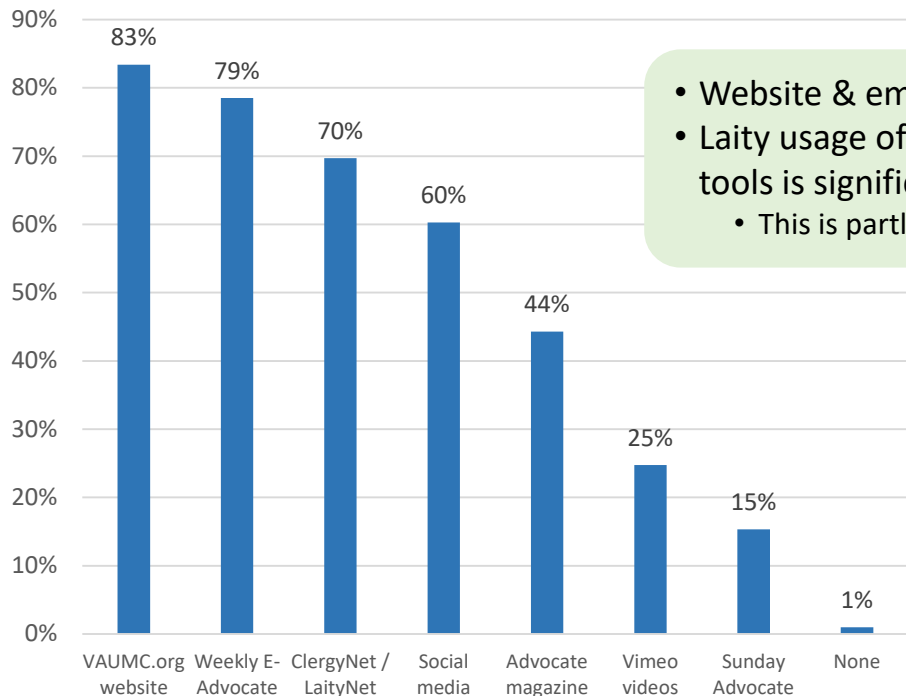
- VAUMC.org website
- Weekly e-Advocate newsletter
- ClergyNet / LaityNet emails
- Social media   
- Advocate magazine
- Vimeo / YouTube videos
- Sunday Advocate church bulletin insert



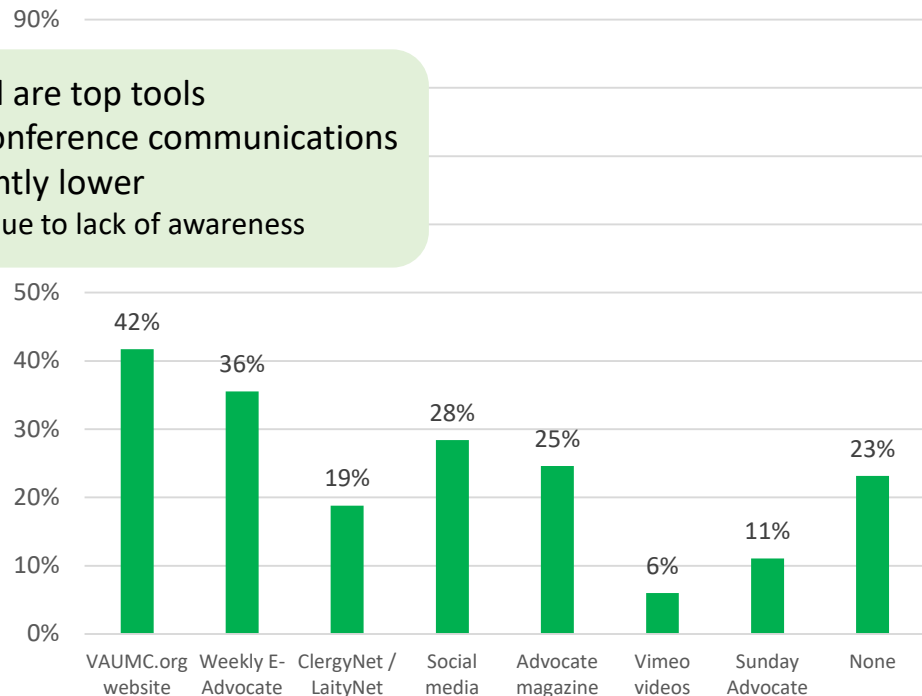
Current conference communications tools usage

In what ways do you CURRENTLY receive Virginia Conference information including news, event information, ministry ideas, how-to information, and stories? (Please check all that you currently use.)

Clergy



Laity

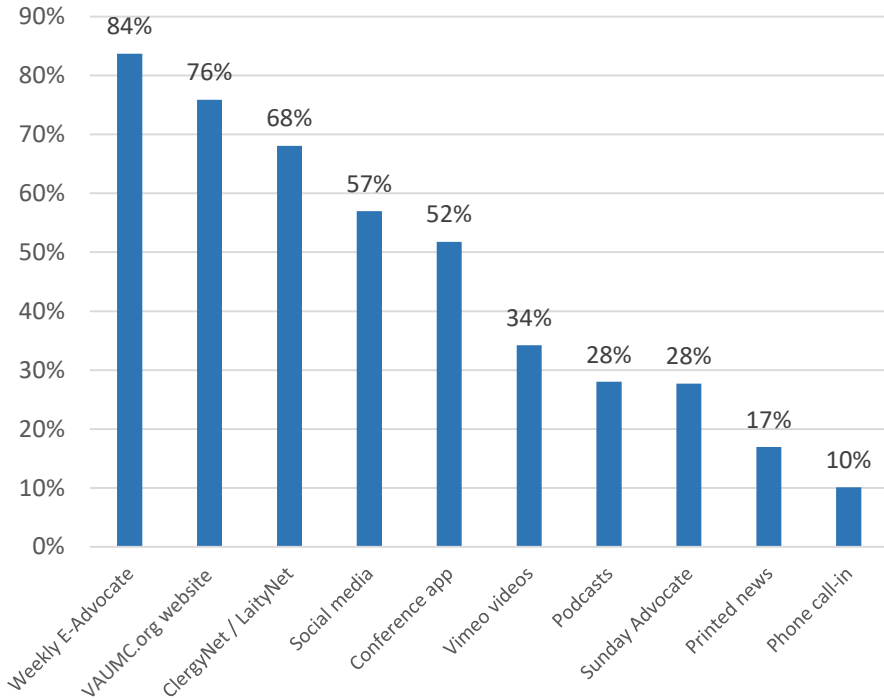


- Website & email are top tools
- Laity usage of conference communications tools is significantly lower
 - This is partly due to lack of awareness

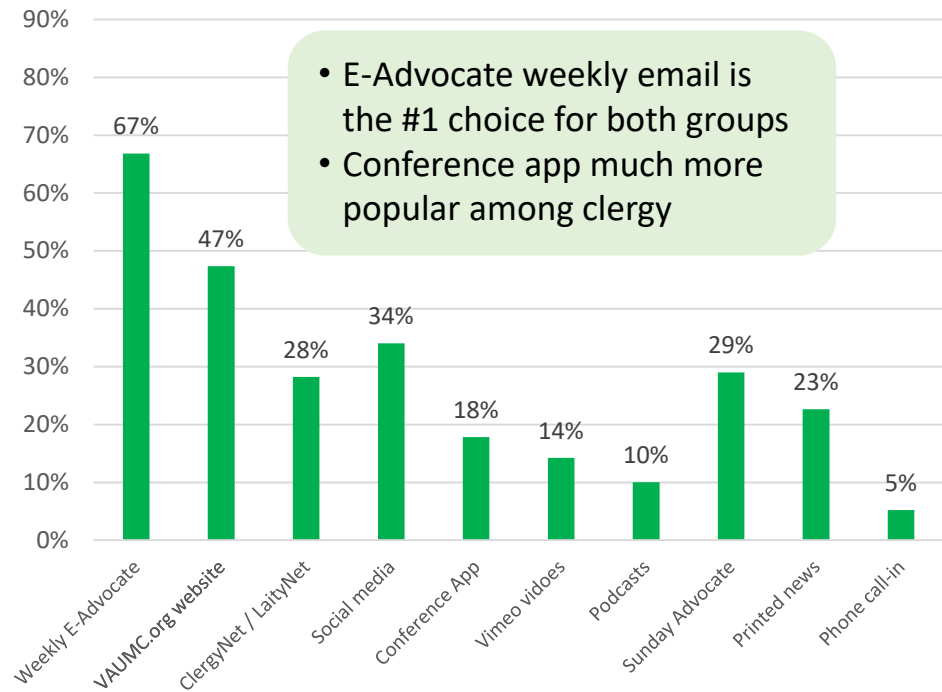
Desired conference communications tools usage

If the communications tools listed below were all available to you, which ones would you use to get information from the Virginia Conference, including news, event information, ministry ideas, how-to information, and stories? (Check all you would use.)

Clergy



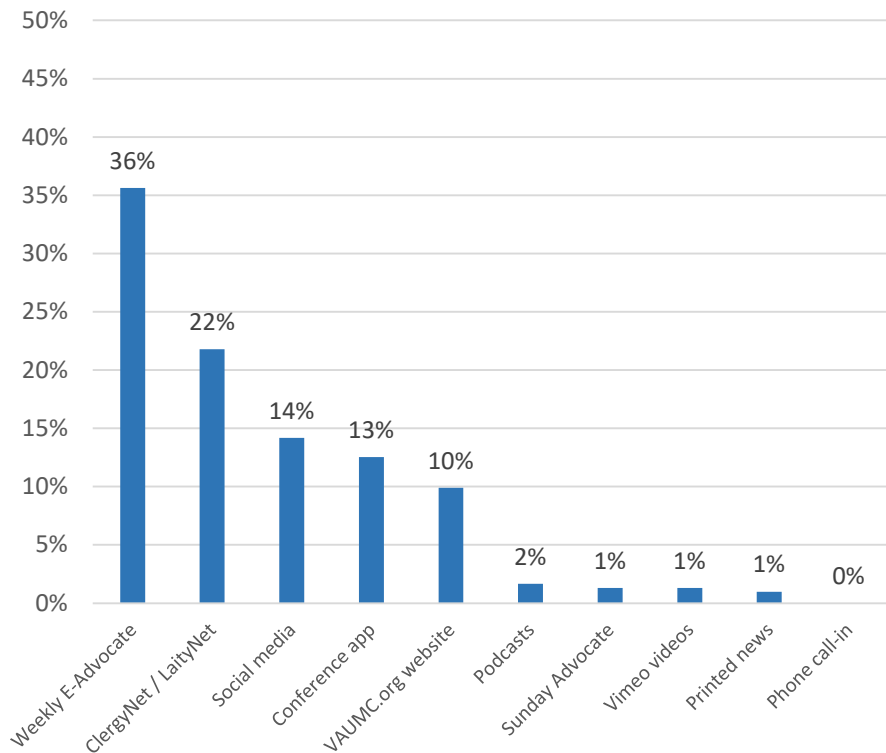
Laity



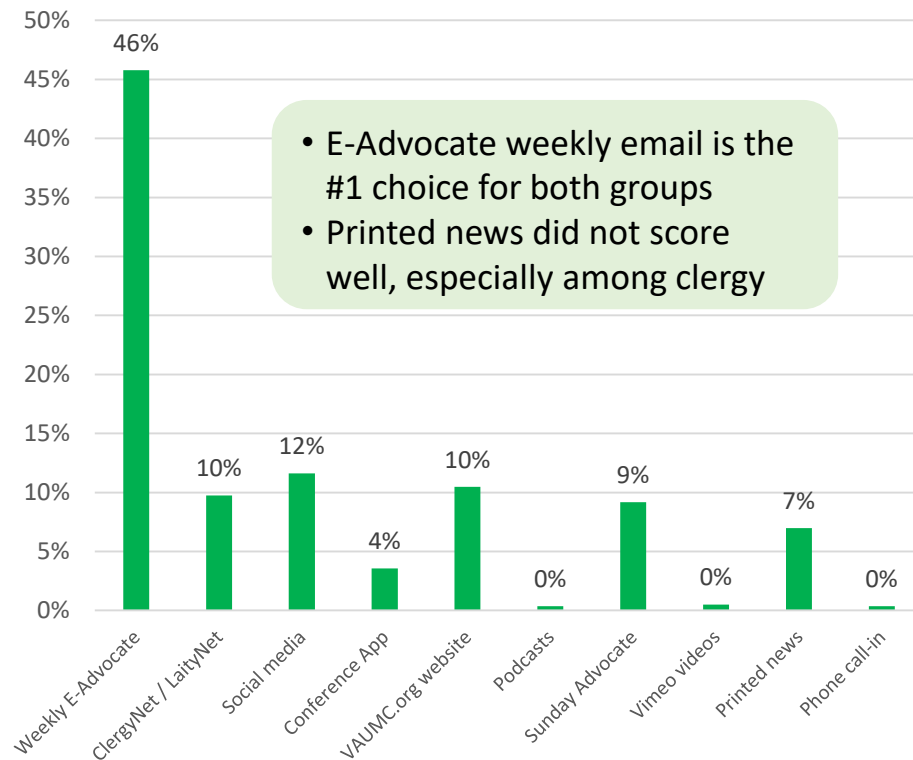
Top choice - conference communications tool

Which Virginia Conference communications tool would you use MOST frequently? (Pick one.)

Clergy



Laity



Current e-Advocate email subscribers

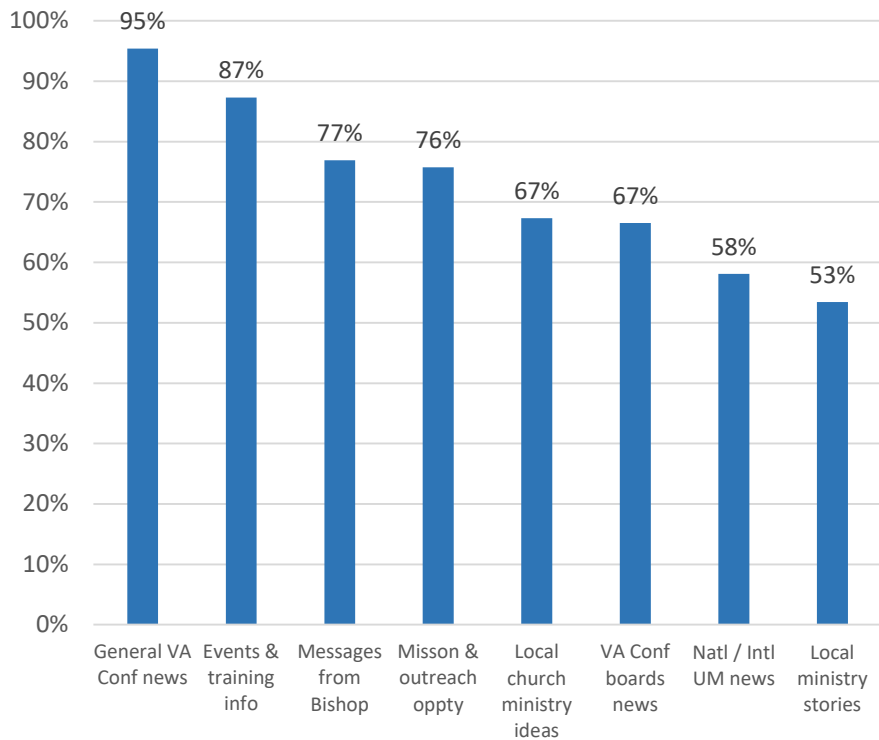
- All clergy are automatically signed up for the E-Advocate through their vaumc.org e-mail addresses
 - Only 72% of clergy reported receiving the e-Advocate
- Many laity are not aware of the e-Advocate
 - 27% of laity reported receiving the e-Advocate
 - 35% of laity said they would be interested in signing up



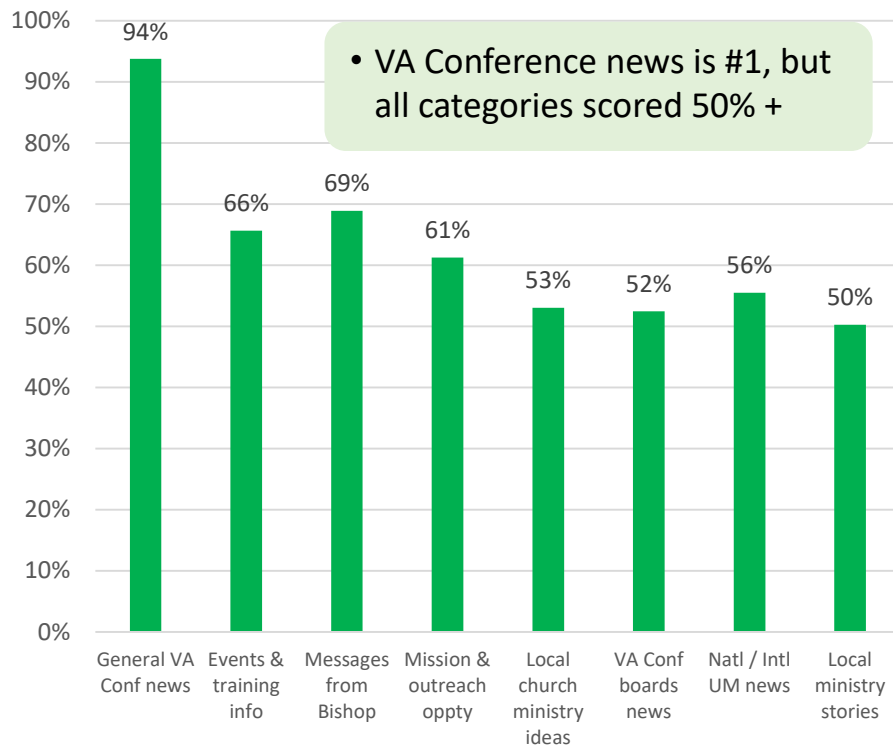
Desired content in e-Advocate weekly emails

What type of information would you like to receive in the weekly e-Advocate email newsletter? (Check all that apply.)

Clergy



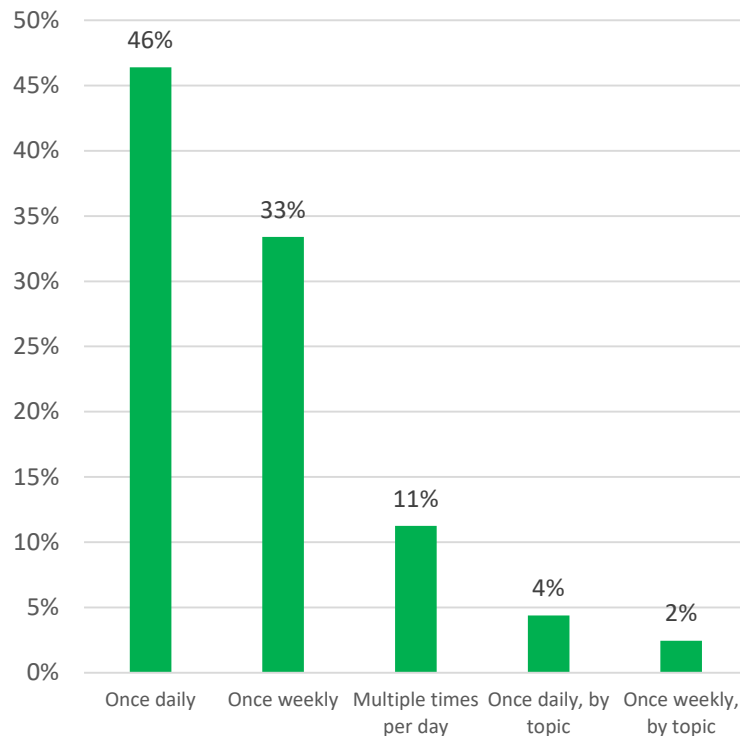
Laity



ClergyNet and LaityNet email groups

- LaityNet - 22% of the laity surveyed are currently signed up
- ClergyNet – 76% of the clergy surveyed are currently signed up
- Majority of recipients do not want multiple emails per day
 - Lack of awareness of how to change their email settings

How would you prefer to receive these emails?



Sunday Advocate

Church bulletin insert

- Only 8% of those surveyed currently use the Sunday Advocate church bulletin insert
- Lack of awareness of this resource
 - 26% of clergy and 16% of laity are interested in starting to use the Sunday Advocate



Nurturing a dementia-friendly church

Church members with dementia are often relegated to the margins of the congregation's life and mission, and their gifts and needs are rarely acknowledged. Yet the church is strategically positioned to make a significant difference, and people affected by dementia potentially play a vital role in the life and mission of the church. When they really belong, the church is transformed, and their lives are enriched. Becoming a dementia-friendly church where people with cognitive impairments and their families belong is a theological and ecclesial opportunity and challenge.

Remembering those who are forgotten ~ Because of the stigma attached to forms of dementia and the accompanying denial, people with symptoms are often hidden from the congregation. They drop out of activities and withdraw from participation. The initial action in nurturing a dementia-friendly congregation is simply to know those within the community who are living with dementia. Entering the world of the cognitively impaired and their families and caregivers is like entering another culture with difference in language, worldview, habits, behavior, and needs.

Support groups ~ Caring for people with dementia is stressful, exhausting, and isolating. Studies over the last two decades of the effects of caregiving on family members have concluded that caregiving constitutes a national health problem in the United States. The detrimental effects on the physical, mental, emotional, and relational health of caregivers are well documented. Churches are well positioned to counter the deleterious consequences of caregiving by intentionally supporting family members. Support groups for people in the early state of dementia are also needed, and they are much less readily available.

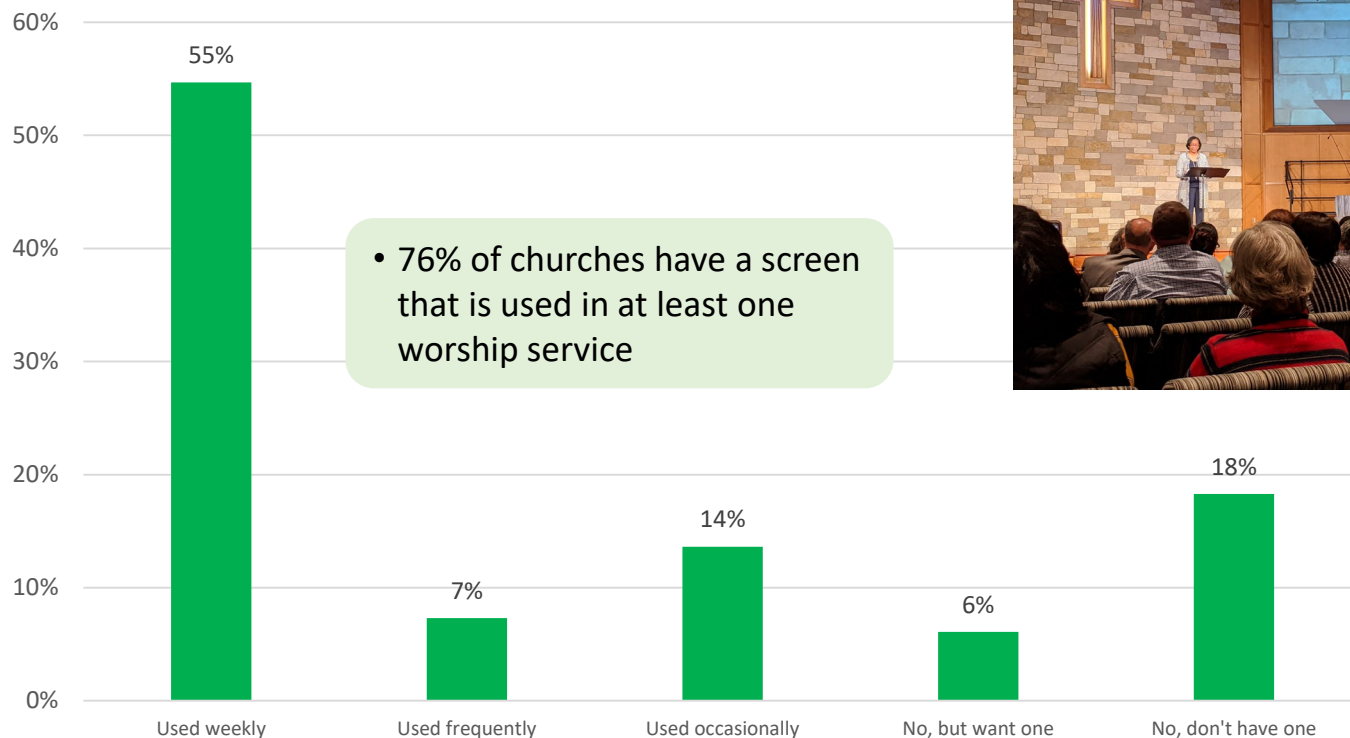
Adult day care ~ A growing number of churches are offering adult day care programs that are designed to provide care and companionship for older adults who need assistance and supervision. Not all such centers are designated exclusively for people with dementia, but those with cognitive impairments are among the most frequent participants.

Respite care ~ Family members of people with dementia need respite from the persistent demands of caregiving. First United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, offers a creative combination of adult day and respite, with caregivers receiving special attention. A uniquely creative aspect of the program is that people in early-stage dementia serve as volunteers who work with people in a more advanced stage.

Simple acts of support ~ Recruit, train and supervise a cadre of visitors/friends of those with dementia and their families and maintain regular contact with those confined to home or a facility; provide a weekly meal for families caring for loved ones with dementia; volunteer to sit with a person with the disease to give the caregiver a break. ~ Lewis Center for Church Leadership

Screen usage during worship

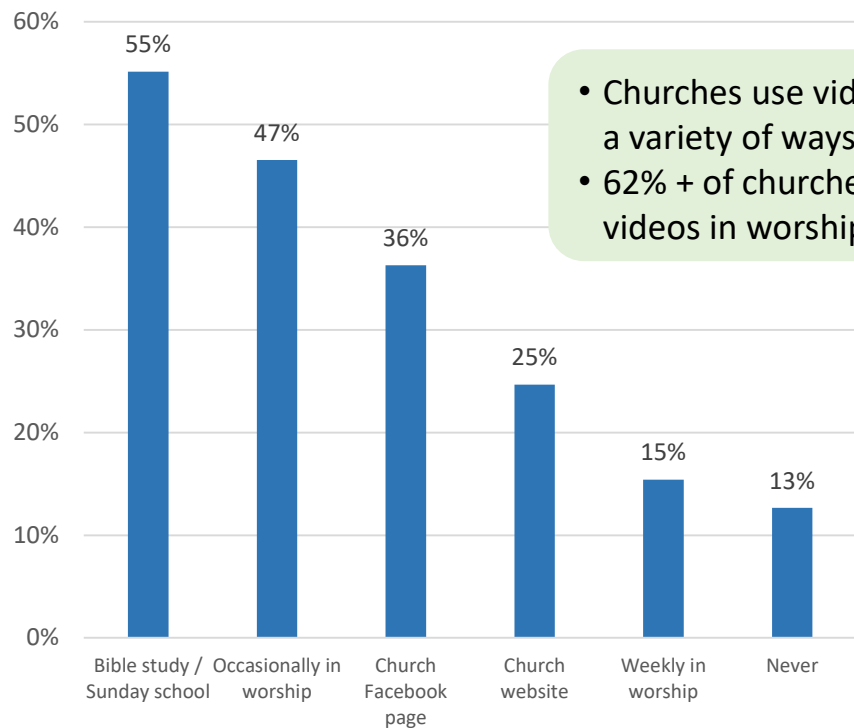
Does your church have a screen (or wall area) that you use to show videos, slides, or other images during any of your worship services?



Church video usage

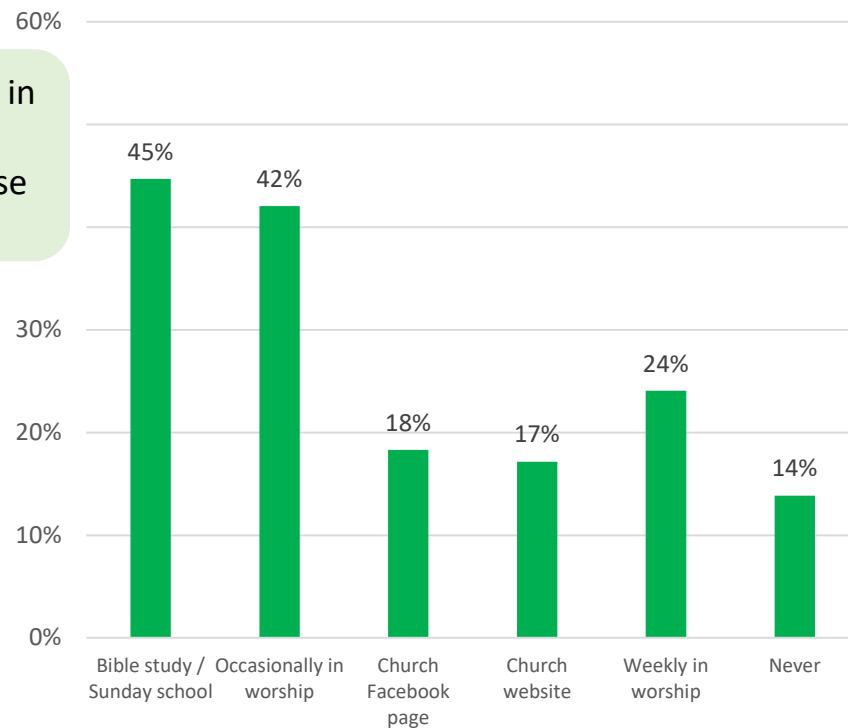
How does your church use videos? (Check all that apply.)

Clergy



- Churches use videos in a variety of ways
- 62% + of churches use videos in worship

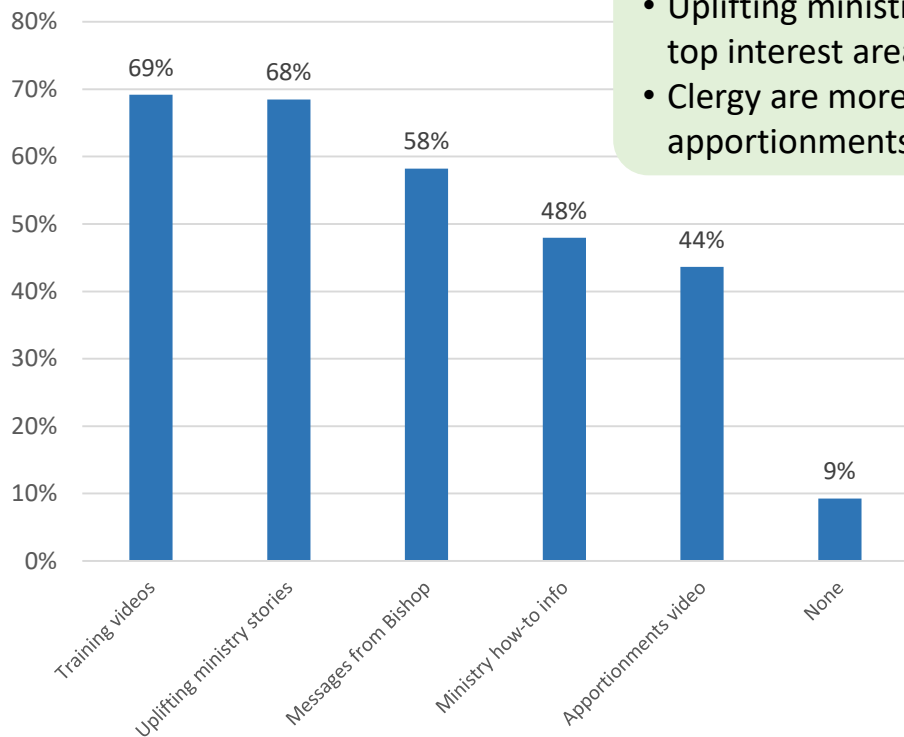
Laity



Conference video topics

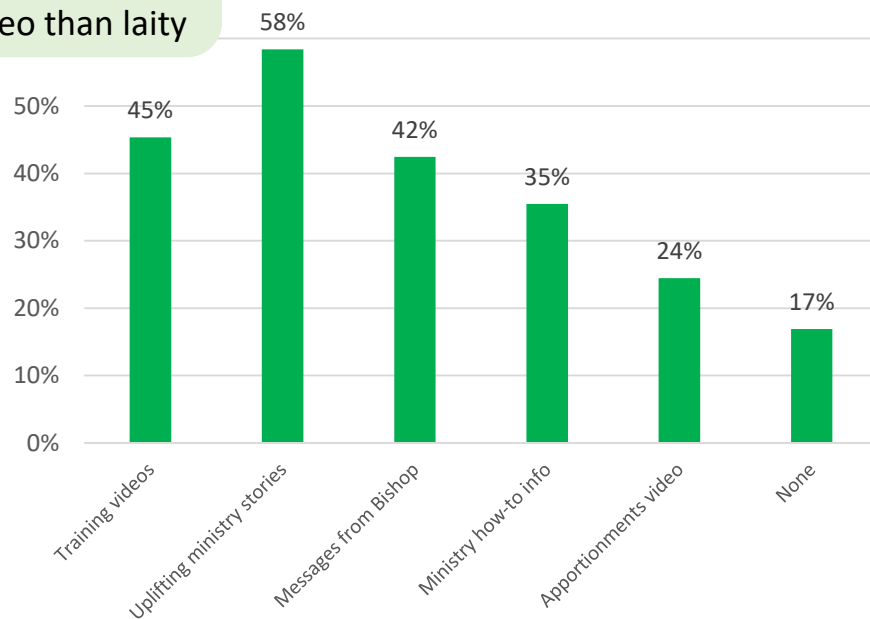
What video topics would you like to watch personally, or use in your church? (Check all that apply.)

Clergy



- Uplifting ministry stories are a top interest area
- Clergy are more interested in an apportionments video than laity

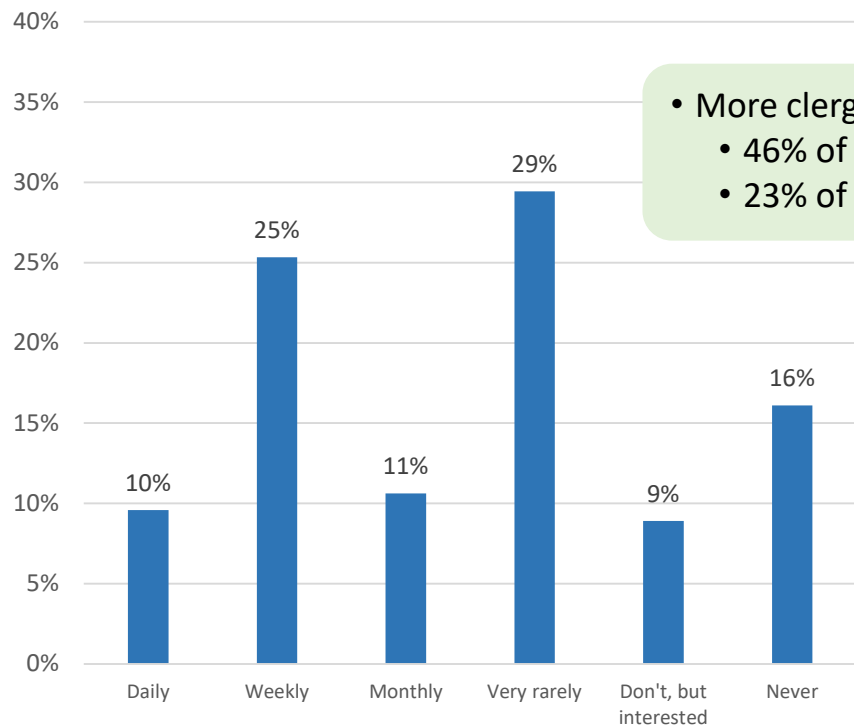
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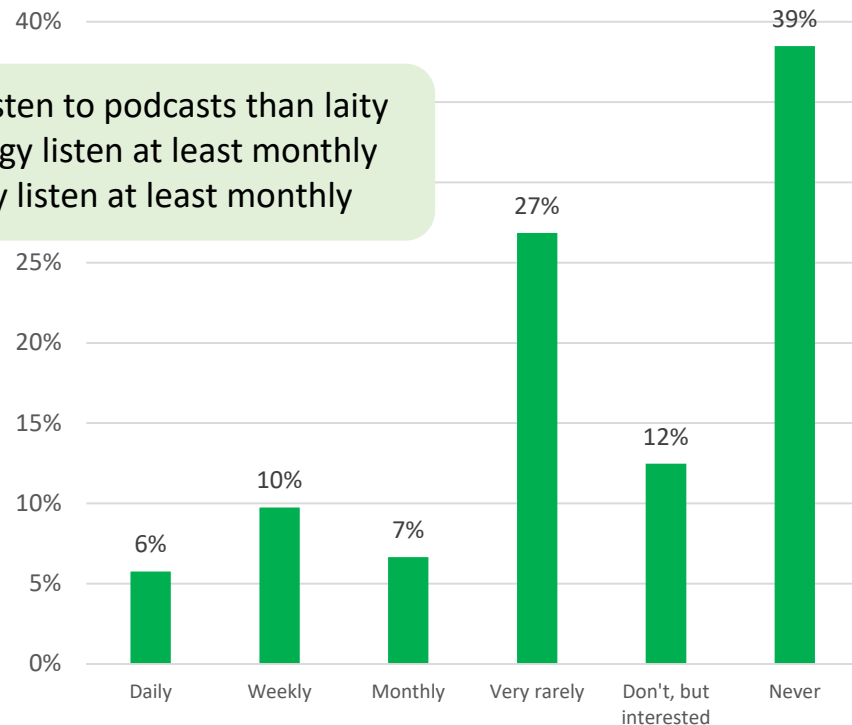
Podcasts

How often do you listen to podcasts (a digital audio recording you can download to a computer or mobile device like a smart phone)?

Clergy



Laity

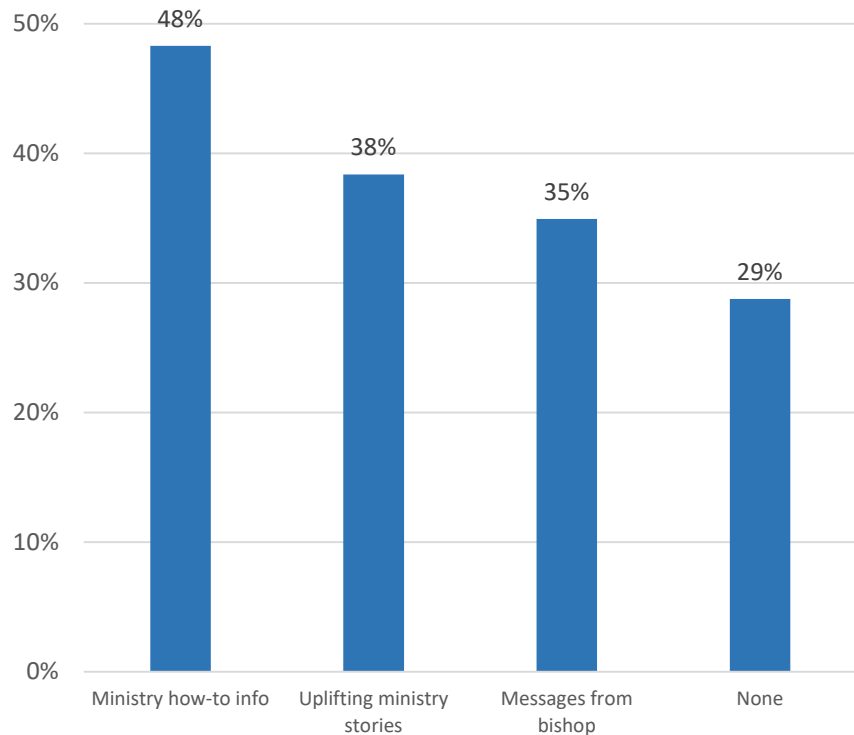


- More clergy listen to podcasts than laity
- 46% of clergy listen at least monthly
- 23% of laity listen at least monthly

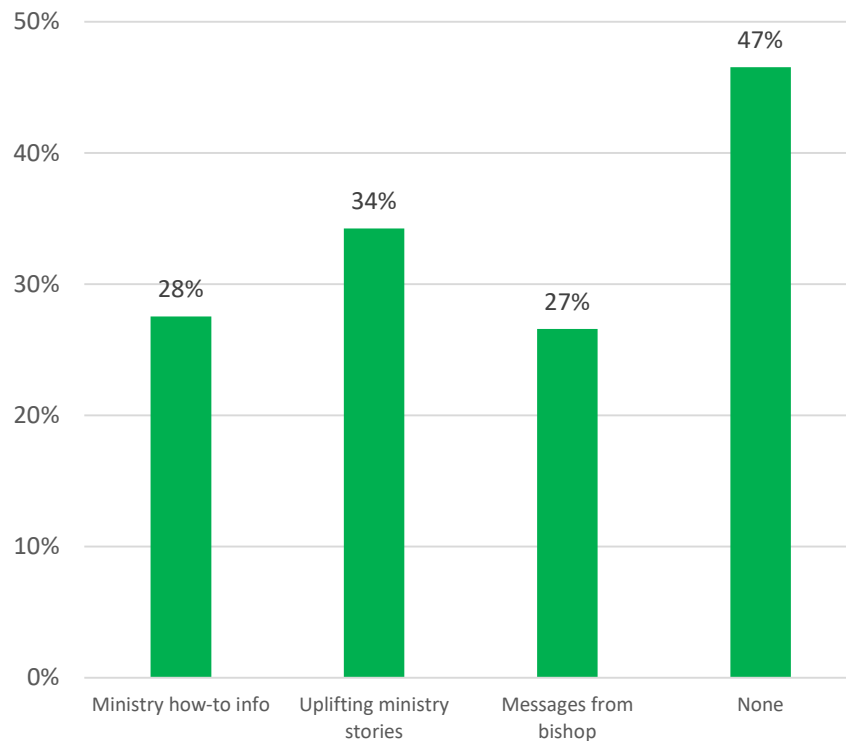
Podcast topics

What podcast (audio recording) topics would you be interested in? (Check all that apply.)

Clergy



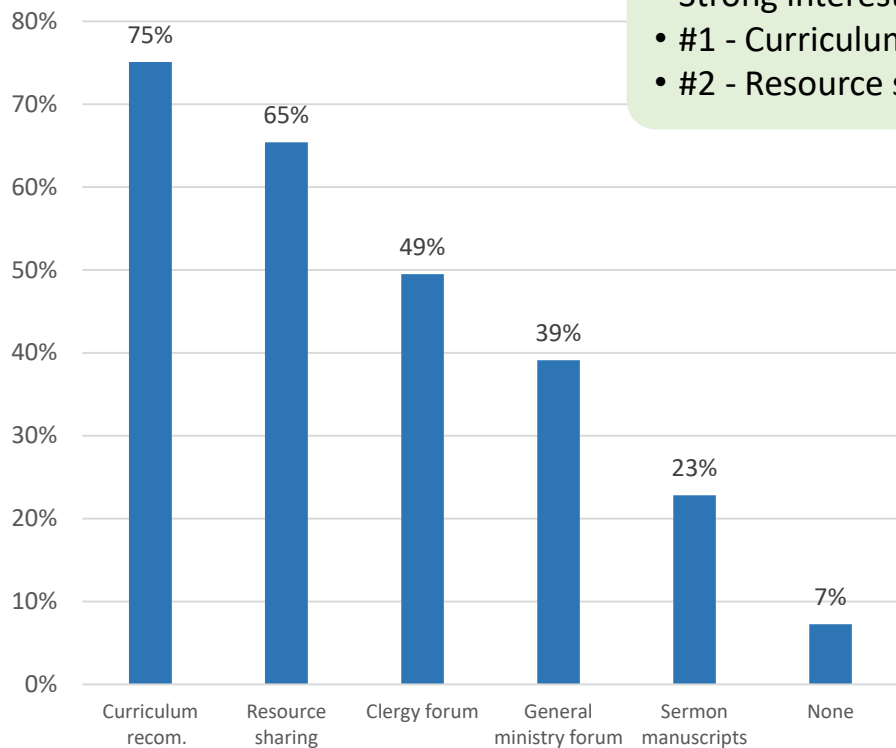
Laity



Resource hub

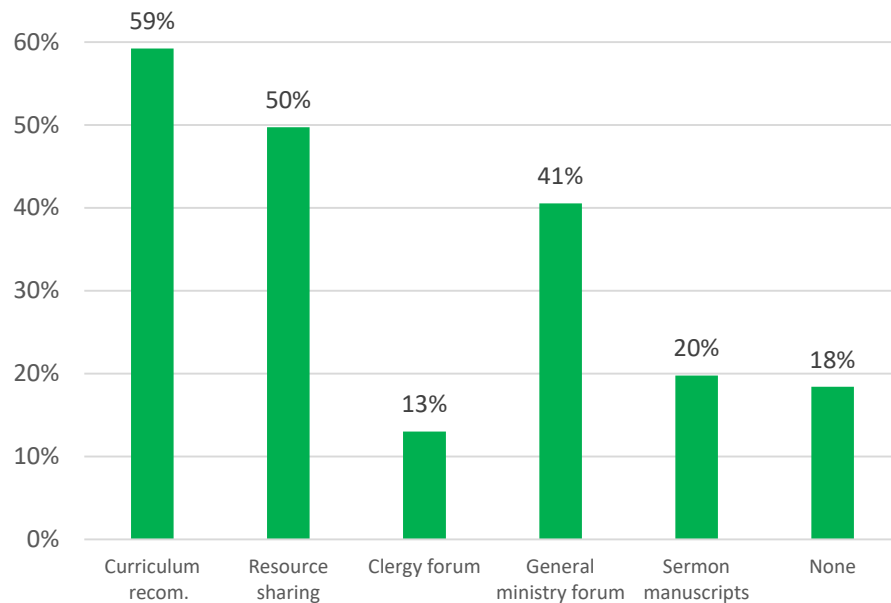
If the conference added a section to the website that served as a resource hub for local churches, what type of information / resources would you like to see there? (Check all that apply.)

Clergy



- Strong interest in a Resource Hub
- #1 - Curriculum recommendations
- #2 - Resource sharing

Laity



Key takeaways

- Clergy are stronger users of conference communications
 - Higher level of awareness, and important for their job
 - Usage of vaumc.org emails is still a barrier for some
- Low laity awareness of conference communications tools
 - Also lack of understanding of the meaning of the term “laity”
- Email is the top communications tool
- Screen and video usage has grown
 - 76% of churches have a screen used at least occasionally in at least one worship service
 - 62% of churches use videos during worship at least occasionally
- Clergy interests
 - Areas where clergy needs / interests are stronger than laity:
 - Conference app – 52% interested vs. 18% of laity
 - Podcasts – 28% interest vs. 10% for laity; 46% of clergy listen monthly vs. 23% of laity

Board of Communications projects

- Increase laity awareness & involvement in conference communications
 - Sign up local church leaders on the EVC & Annual Conference email lists
 - Promote sign ups on the website, in social media, etc.
 - Help reduce barriers and make signups easier
- Resource Hub
 - Investigate the best way to implement this
 - Curriculum recommendations strong #1 interest area, but multiple other areas also scored well
- Sunday Advocate
 - Develop promotional strategy to increase awareness among clergy
 - Review the format & determine if this could also serve as a potential conference outreach tool for homebound members, and those without access to digital communications

Resources

- Want a copy of this presentation?
 - www.VAUMC.org/survey
- Want to sign up for conference communications?
 - www.VAUMC.org/survey