
Southwestern Minnesota Synod Bishop Election Report

John Hessian

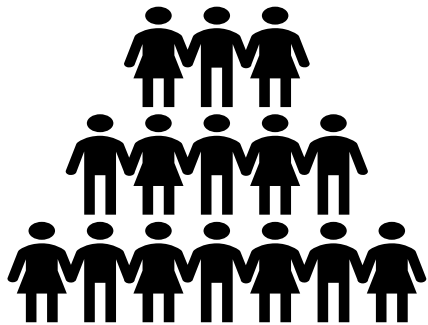
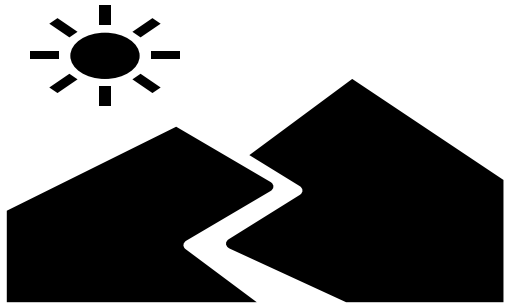
ELCA Research, Analysis and Data

March 2021



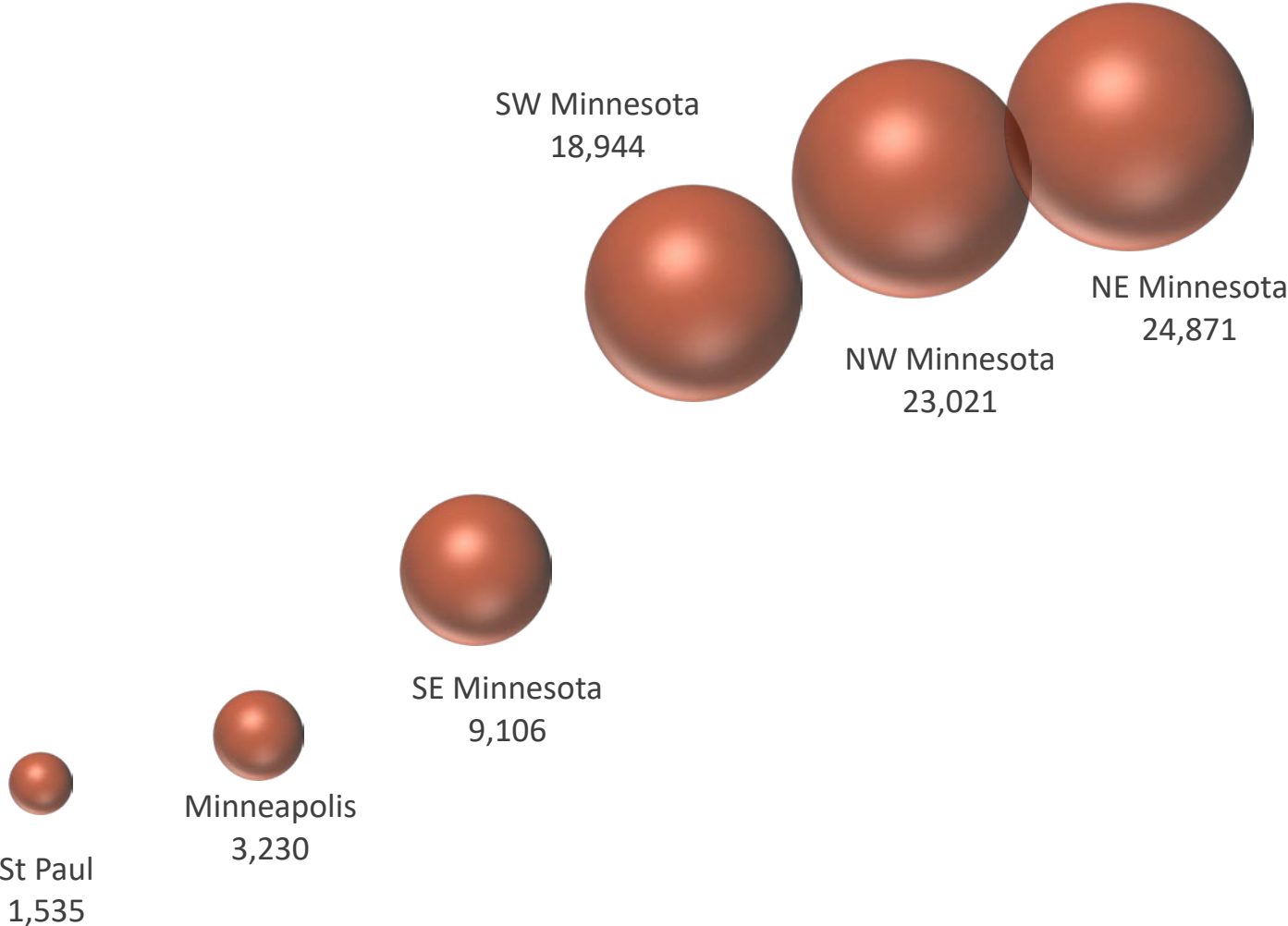
Who will fill these boots?

The people of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod will call a new bishop to replace Bishop Jon Anderson after 18 years of service.



Territory, Demographics and Religious Landscape

Territory in Square Miles



Southwestern Minnesota is the 37th largest synod geographically. Alaska is the largest and the Saint Paul Area is the smallest.

Southwestern Minnesota is much larger than the Saint Paul Area, Minneapolis Area or Southeastern Minnesota Synods.



KEY FACTS

966,384

Population

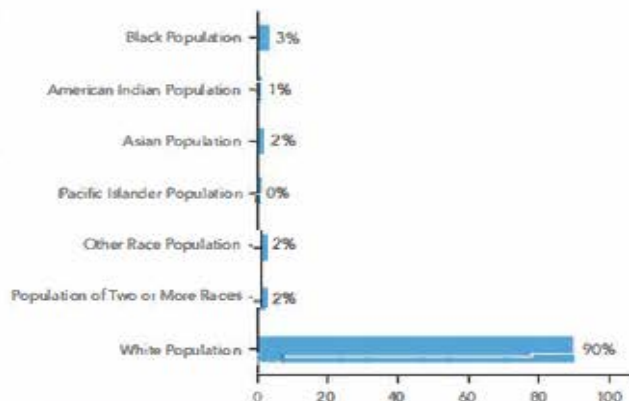
38.0

Median Age

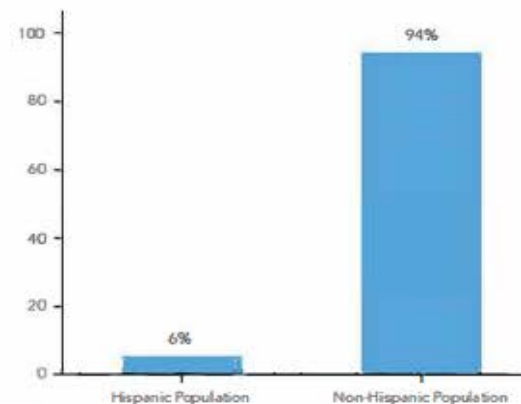
\$63,518

Median Household Income

2020 Population by Race



2020 Hispanic Population



POPULATION TREND

SWMN

2010 Total Population (U.S. Census)	901,281
2020 Total Population (Esri)	966,384
2025 Total Population (Esri)	1,000,317
2020-2025 Population: Annual Growth Rate (Esri)	0.69%

POVERTY

36,744

317,748

2014-2018 ACS Households Below the Poverty Level

2014-2018 ACS Households at or Above the Poverty Level

EDUCATION

7%

No High School Diploma



30%

High School Graduate



36%

Some College



26%

Bachelor's/Grad/Prof Degree

HOUSING STATS

\$197,382

Median Home Value

\$9,504

Average Spent Mortgage/Basics

\$655

Median Contract Rent

73%
2020 Owner Occupied Housing Units

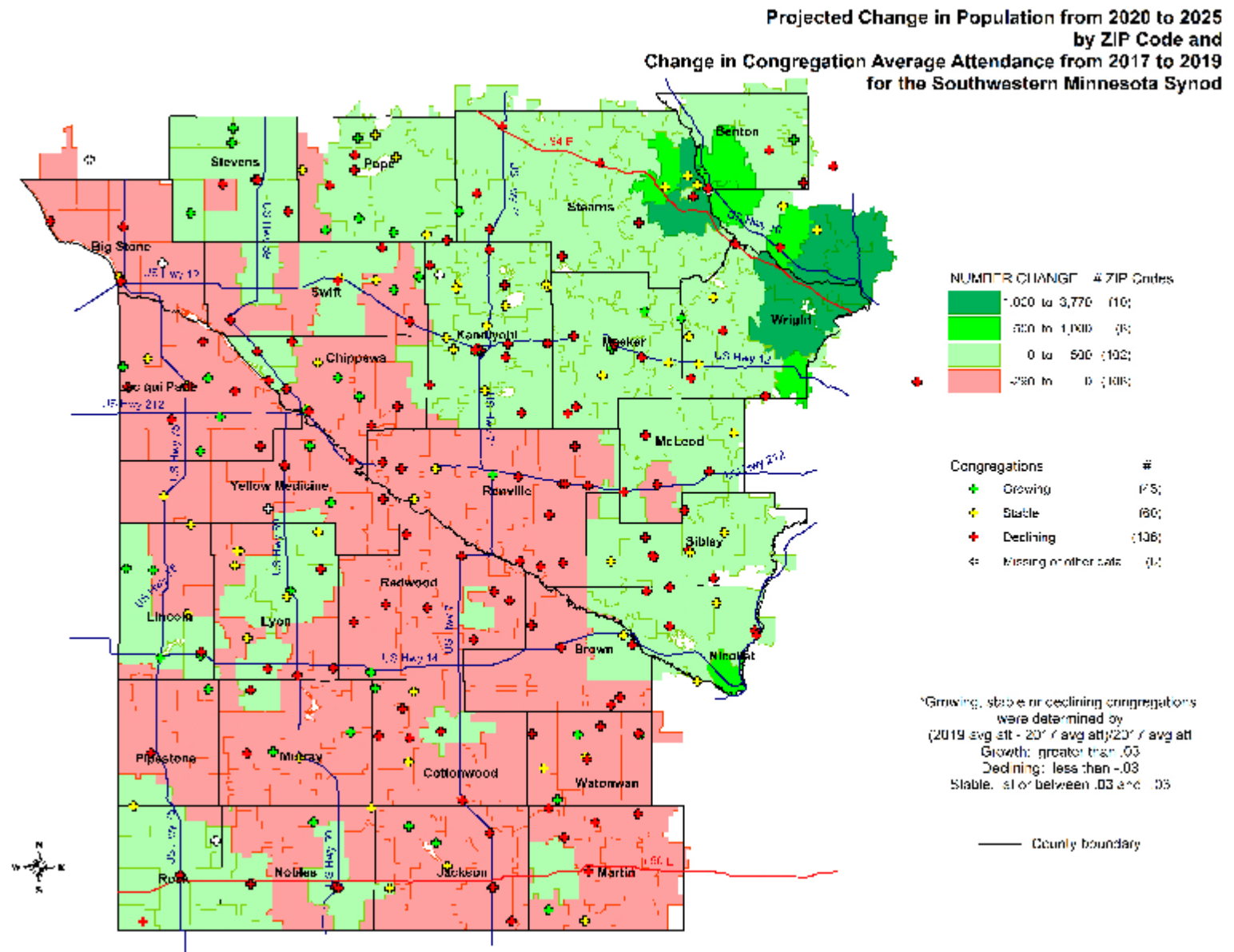
27%
2020 Renter Occupied Housing Units

Population Projection 2020-2025

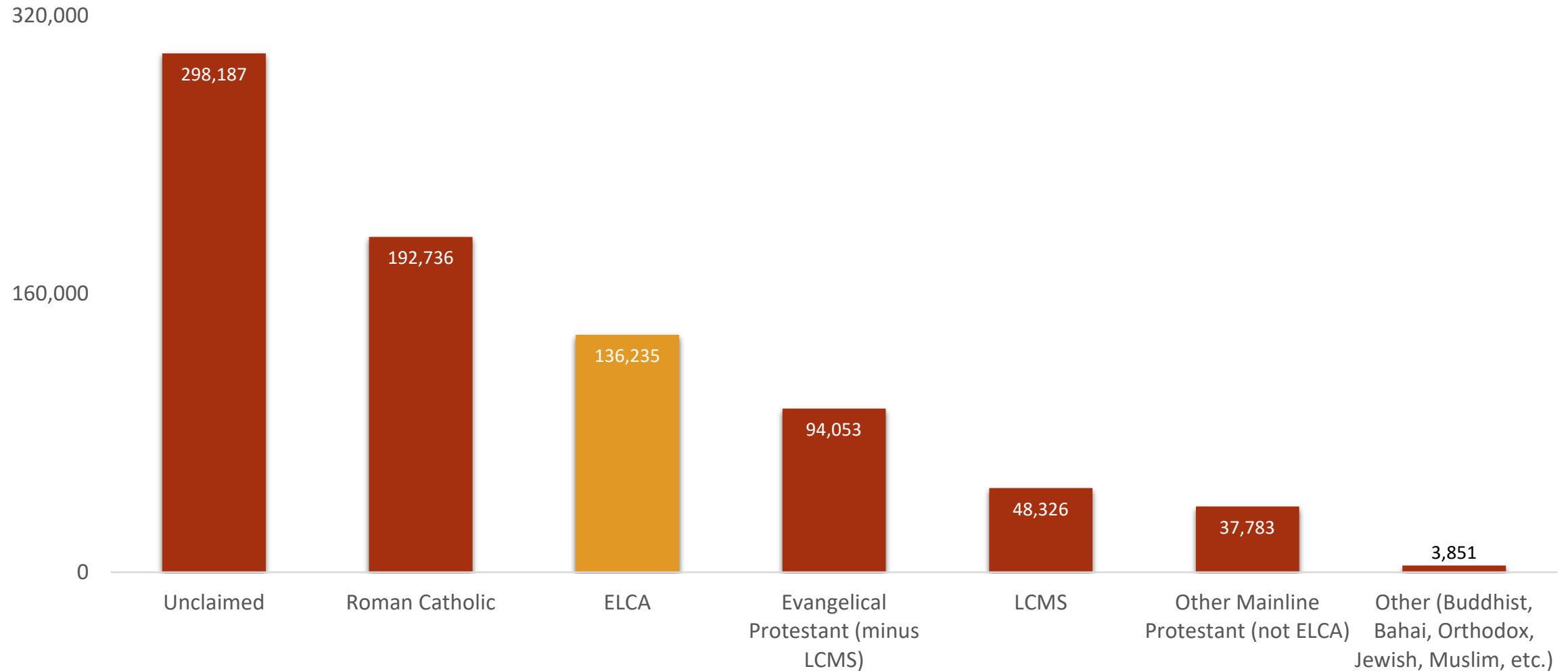
Average Attendance Changes 2017-2019

The population in the
northwestern part of the
synod is expected to grow
from 2020 – 2025.

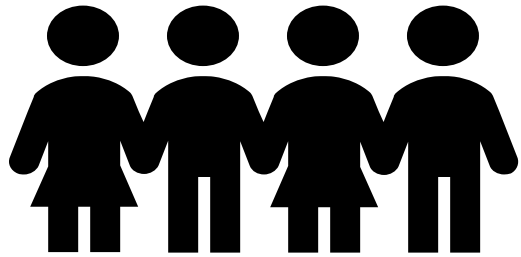
However, average attendance
at most congregations
declined from 2017 - 2019.



ELCA congregations play a prominent role in the life of Southwestern Minnesota.

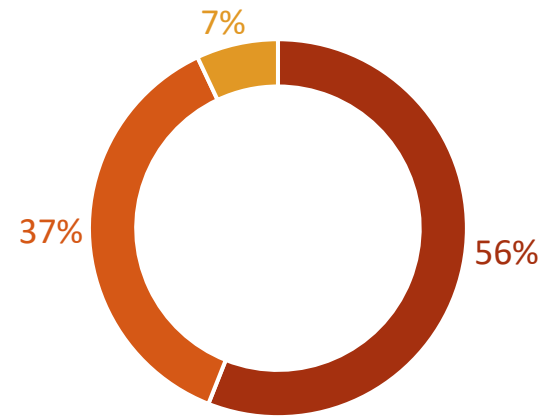


In 2010, 136,235 people were baptized members of ELCA congregations. The ELCA is the most prevalent mainline denomination in Southwestern Minnesota. 78% of all people claimed by mainline denominations are ELCA Lutherans.



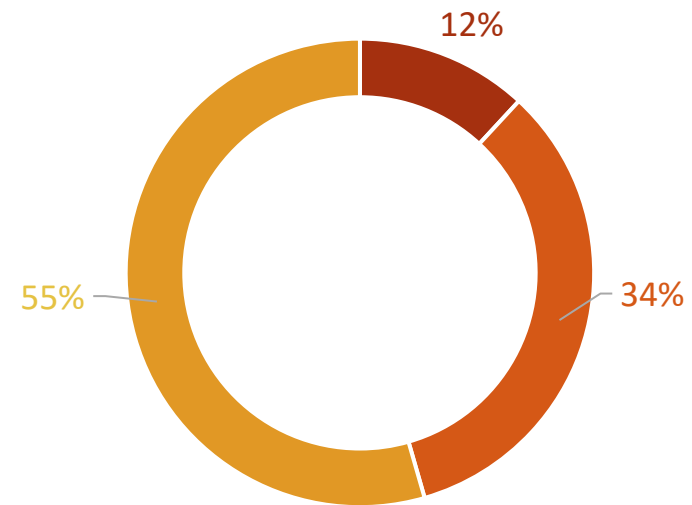
Survey Respondent Characteristics

Over half of the respondents are lay members or active participants of SW Minnesota congregations. (N=345)



- Lay congregational member or active participant
- Rostered Minister in Southwestern Minnesota
- Other (church employee, retired pastor, pastor from another synod, etc.)

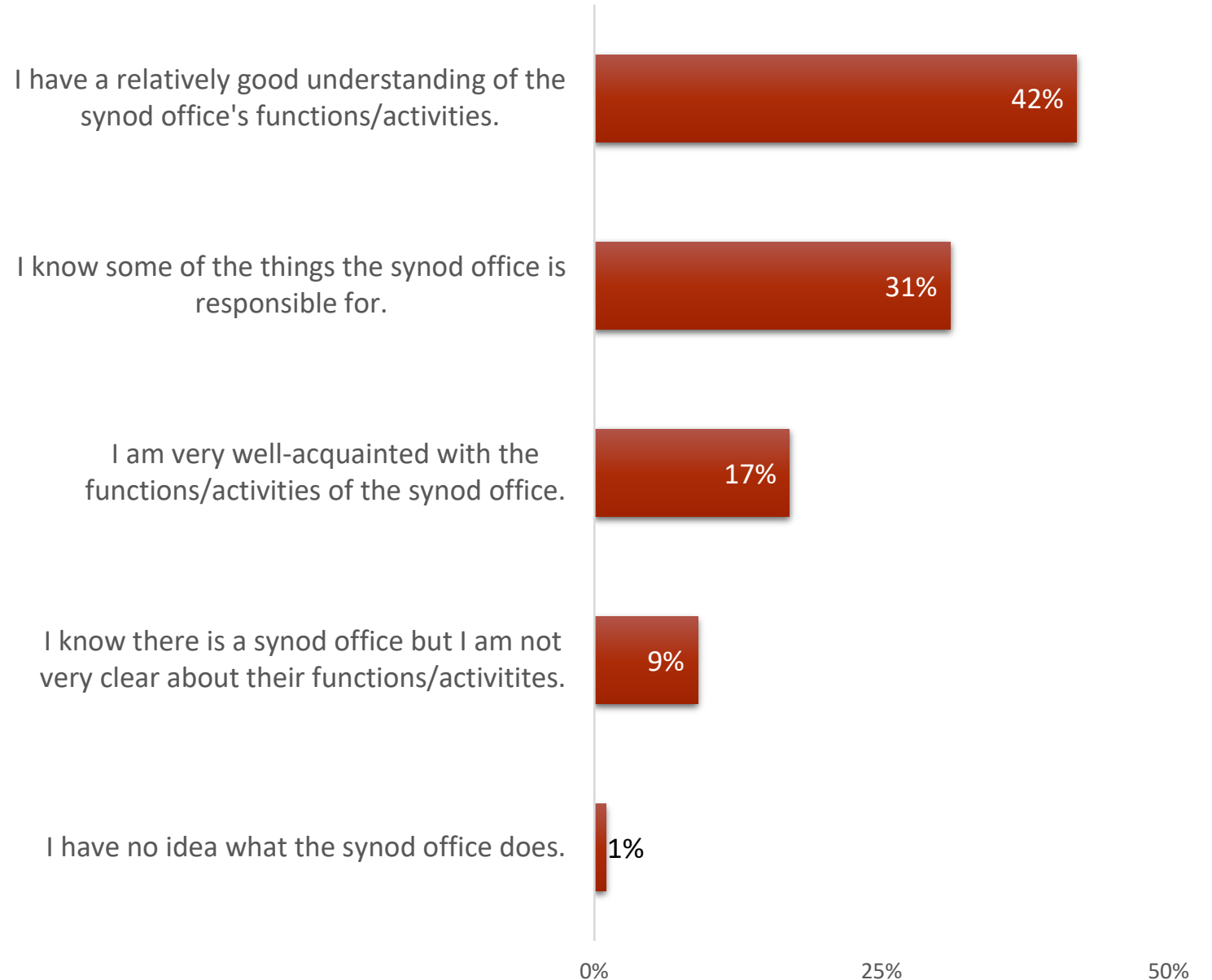
Over half of the respondents are 61 or older. (N=348)



- 40 or younger
- 41 to 60
- 61 or older

Knowledge of the Synod Office

Most of the respondents have a relatively good or very good understanding of the functions and activities of the synod office. (N=409)



Knowledge of Partnered Organizations

The respondents also are aware of the organizations with whom the synod partners.

Foci	# of Responses
Green Lake Lutheran Ministries	346
Women of the ELCA	345
Luther Seminary	343
Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa	332
Gustavus Adolphus College	332
Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota	324
Campus Ministry (various universities)	316
Shetek Lutheran Ministry	297
Lutheran Youth Organization	267
Shalom Hill Farm	266
Lutheran Men in Mission	252
Luther Crest Bible Camp	238
Minnesota Council of Churches	221
Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota	171



Foci and Advice for the Next Bishop

Most Important Foci for Next Bishop

The respondents feel the most important area on which the next bishop should focus is vision and planning.

Foci	# of Responses
Vision and Planning	154
Evangelism and Outreach	138
Pastoral Care of Rostered Ministers	133
Building Healthy Community	111
Healthy Conflict Management	107
Children, Youth and Family Ministry	101

Advice for the Next Bishop

Be visible and Communicate

- ❑ Make sure to visit congregations.
- ❑ Make sure to be in communication with congregations.

Pray and Listen to the Holy Spirit

- ❑ Faith must be your guide.
- ❑ Walk in the path of Jesus.

Delegate Responsibilities

- ❑ Collaborate.
- ❑ Get a good team and trust them to do their work.
- ❑ You can't do everything alone.

Be a Unifier

- ❑ COVID has caused so many disruptions and divisions.
- ❑ Political and civil unrest have caused so many divisions.

Challenges, Opportunities and Building up God's Mission

Challenges

Membership Decline
Attendance Decline
Attracting New People to Church

Rostered Minister Shortage

Relevance
General Decline of Church in People's Lives
People are too busy to make time for church.
People are not as religious as they used to be.

COVID-19 and its effects on church and society

Increasing Ethnic Diversity in Southwestern Minnesota
Changing Demographics in Southwestern Minnesota
Learning about Anti-Racism

Technology
Online Presence of Congregations
Virtual Dimension to Church

Community Outreach
Working Outside the Church's Walls
Working with non-ELCA groups

Gospel Message
Lutheran Theology
Spreading the Good News

Opportunities

Building up God's Mission – The work being done by the congregations of the SW Minnesota Synod

Providing Food for Food Pantries
Providing Free Cooked Dinners
Providing Personal Items
Providing Clothes

Community Volunteering
Neighborhood Cleanup
God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday

Proclaiming the Gospel
Preaching the Word
Sharing the Good News