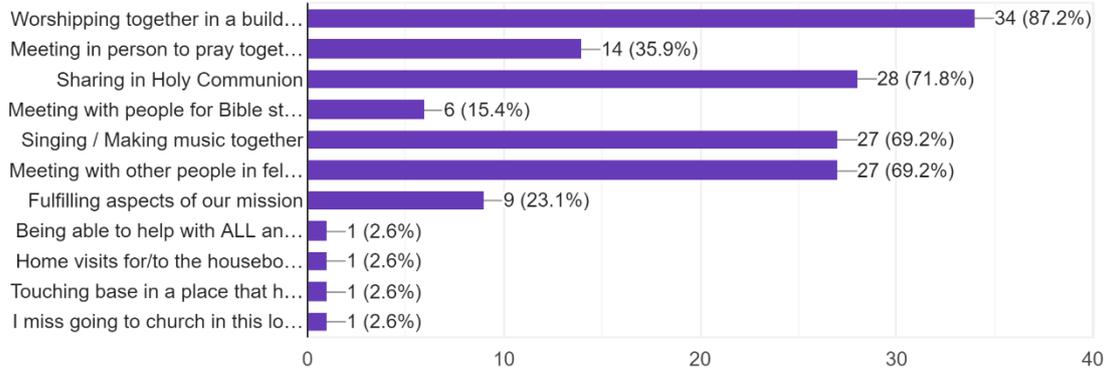


Ainsdale Methodist Church Survey 2021

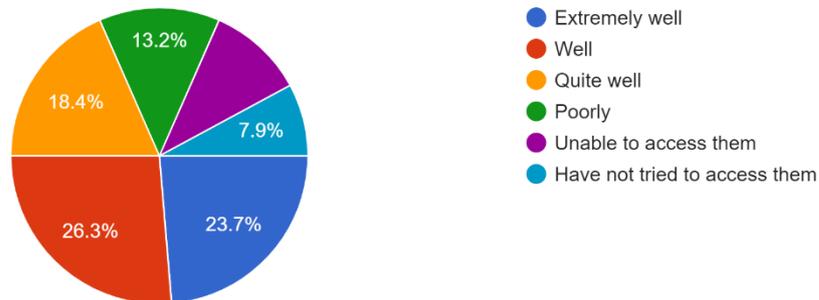
1. What aspects of church life have you missed most during the lockdowns due to COVID-19? Select more than one if you wish.

39 responses



2. During lockdown how would you rate how well you've adapted to the circuit services on-line?

38 responses



3. What place do you think the circuit services on-line have in the future?

36 responses



4. Following COVID-19 how should the church now move forward?

30 responses

Forget Zoom meetings

Take time to adjust to worshipping/socialising together again.

Look at all the ways of being church that we would both like and can practically support, considering the pressure on ministers & preachers.

Consider how the church can continue with a declining congregation – join with another church locally either Methodist or Other.

Reach out to our community.

Embrace new ways of being church - listen to how God wants us to engage in his mission.

Be aware of taking on too much with limited resources.

As a circuit continue with some form of on-line worship for those who cannot come to church.

5. What do you enjoy most about belonging to Ainsdale Methodist Church?

36 responses

Worship

Fellowship

Prayer

Lasting Friendships

Variety & mostly(!) richness of the preaching & music

Sense of Belonging

Pastoral support

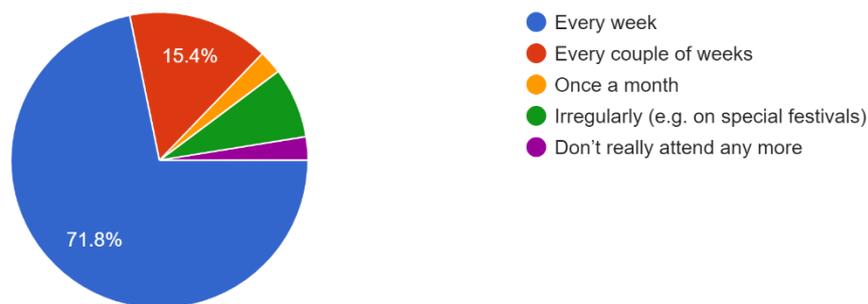
The active & important part the church plays in the community e.g. through Ainsdale Lunch & Leisure

'My Second Home'

Being accepted for what I am

6. Ignoring the current COVID-19 restrictions which of the following best describes your attendance at Sunday worship?

39 responses



7. What do you appreciate most about worship at AMC?

34 responses

Familiarity

Feeling of togetherness & community as we worship

Blend of teaching & music

Receiving Holy Communion

Communion with God, a time to be still & challenged by the Word

Variety of services & preachers

The creative involvement of different people in each service.

8. What do you dislike about worship at AMC, if anything?

20 responses

Two people thought church was cold in winter with cold seats near the windows.

Some people thought we should vary where we worship eg. garden, hall, lounge, though some thought services in the lounge uncomfortable and distracting.

Some people did not like the following worship formats - hymn /prayer sandwich, lengthy sermons or simply going over the readings again.

Some thought there were too many preachers over one quarter. Continuity was needed.

Some thought there were too many new hymns in a service and sometimes the words didn't match those in the books or on screen.

9. What form of service do you prefer? e.g. Traditional, Iona, Songs of Praise

38 responses

Variety was the majority viewpoint (more than 65%).

Of the rest most favoured the Traditional format with occasional use of other formats.

Suggested use of Iona or similar for smaller more intimate/informal services

Songs of Praise services were appreciated.

One respondent wanted to see worship be modern & informal – current worship with organ led hymns is a barrier to younger people feeling comfortable.

10. Would you like to see more services taking place and, if so, when and in what form? (e.g. joint services, midweek, breakfast, etc.)

33 responses

Of 33 responses 6 were a definite No – in particular being mindful of the number of people available to lead worship. One service on Sunday & Wednesday prayers all we can realistically manage at the moment.

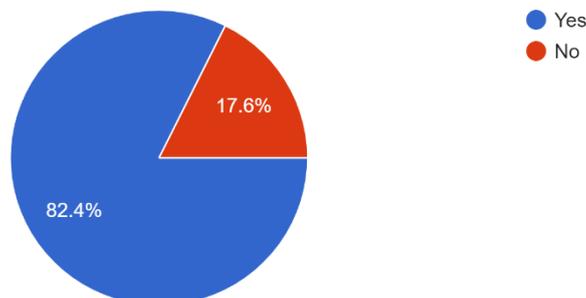
There is support for the Wednesday morning prayers

As part of our mission we need to consider what times during the week to hold worship to try and reach those for whom Sunday is not possible – perhaps with a more relaxed format. Need to consider availability of families.

We should share more worship & types of services with other churches in the community – would help spread the workload.

11. Do you feel comfortable inviting others to our worship?

34 responses



12. Why did you give the previous answer?

33 responses

The majority felt that we are a welcoming community with worship usually of a high standard.

Some felt that it would depend on the preacher – some are more accessible than others.

If inviting a group of younger people would need to tailor the service e.g.Schools Harvest

One person highlighted the need for more awareness of mixing at social activities, coffee mornings, etc. as it is still easy to feel like an outsider.

It can be difficult because of a lack of acceptance of Christianity generally in the population.

Concern that people with no experience of worship would find any service ‘alien’.

Church is too formal, pews uncomfortable. No continuity of preaching – perhaps have one preacher for a series of services.

13. What do you get from the music in the service?

35 responses

Music is essential to any worship, creating a spiritual and uplifting atmosphere which helps to focus the mind and communicates the theme of the service. It is a way of sharing our faith with enjoyment, joy and praise and celebration; the musicians using the various accompaniments to portray the powerful and lyrical nature of the hymns and songs.

There were one or two comments that people found the music sometimes too ‘musical’ with not enough scope for the Holy Spirit to lead us in our worship; our current style being too inhibitive with an accent on the need for musicians to be technically perfect.

14. What do you like/dislike about the mixture of hymns/songs we currently use in worship?

35 responses

Whilst many like the balance of traditional hymns and new songs we currently have in our services, there are some who prefer to sing just the traditional hymns as they find the modern ones difficult to follow, repetitious in content and sometimes tuneless. There was a call to have more opportunity to learn the songs BEFORE being used in a service.

15. What do you feel about incidental music before, during and after the service (not including hymns/songs)? E.g. singing during communion

38 responses

Many people appreciate listening to music before services and find it helpful in preparing for worship. During communion some prefer just music and no singing with some liking total quietness and others finding singing from a small group or soloist helpful in creating a suitable atmosphere.

Most people are pleased to experience a variety of incidental music before, during and after services.

16. Please give any suggestions for improvements in the use of music in services.

23 responses

There were a variety of suggestions as to how to improve the music in our services including the use of professionally recorded music (with the proviso that our system be improved!), the opportunity for the occasional use of groups both singing and instrumental, and to have some Songs of Praise style of services.

There was also a suggestion that soloists, singing groups and videos could be used to teach new hymns and songs prior to them being used in services. However, there was also a request for the style of hymns/songs and the choice of instruments used to be considered to suit the congregation for our services. This might encourage young people to attend services and remove barriers.

17. Should more use be made of the projection system in our services? (Please specify)

29 responses

Most people think use is sufficient but would not mind if used more if appropriate.

Some highlighted issues around using the screen:

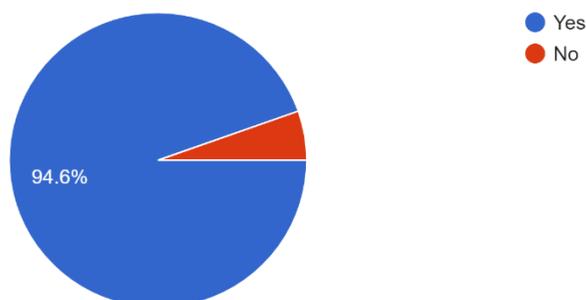
- Excludes those who are visually impaired
- Distracts from prayers if have to follow on the screen
- Too much use of screens in everyday life already
- Insufficient volunteers to operate it – Pete & Jan do an excellent job but we shouldn't expect them to always be available

On the positive side:

- A visual message may be more effective
- We should use it to share stories from the World Church
- Could be used to identify music in the service
- Bible readings could be projected to aid those hard of hearing or when the preacher wants to use a different Bible version – downside, this creates a lot of work beforehand.
- Singing hymns from the screen is more uplifting as people can sing out.

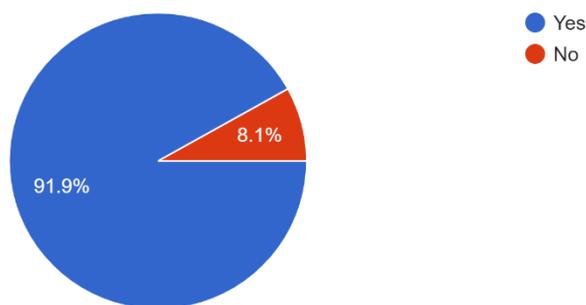
18. Are you able to see the screen clearly?

37 responses



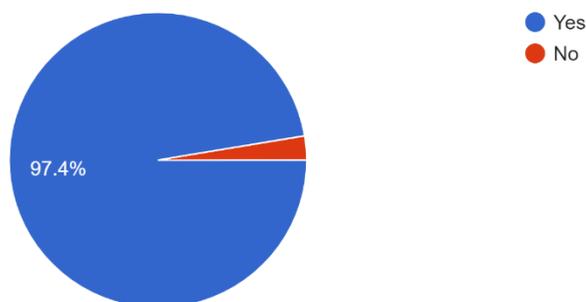
19. Are you able to hear clearly the services taking place?

37 responses



20. Is the church a welcoming, safe and comfortable place for you both physically and mentally?

38 responses



21. If you answered no to the previous question, how could it be improved?

4 responses

Improve the heating

Padding on unyielding pews!

Church is looking old & weary, is physically uncomfortable & doesn't allow for a variety of ways of worship.

22. Is the space in the church used to the best advantage, and, if not, how could we improve it?

27 responses

There were concerns over the flexibility of our sanctuary with suggestions as to how it could be better used. These ranged from where people might consider sitting to improve our fellowship to the replacement of certain of the furnishings, including the pews, to gain better use of the area. **In-depth discussions were recommended to talk through these matters.**

There were several positive comments with regard to the opening up of the transepts enabling more varied styles of worship which was a request that appeared a few times.

The one negative was that only 7 out of 27 replies felt that the sanctuary was used to its best advantage!

23. Does the church enhance or diminish our worship?

34 responses

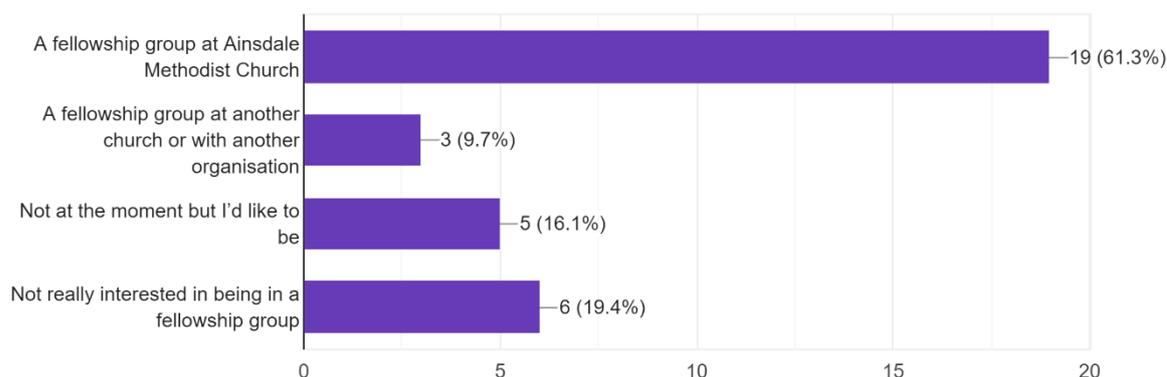
To some extent there was a cross-over in replies to this question in Q22, with various calls for more flexibility of the church premises to make it easier for the disabled, more varied forms of worship and areas for study and quiet reflection. However, a good number of people felt that the sanctuary enhanced our worship in that it was an attractive, sacred and peaceful place but that there was room for improvement which might encourage future generations to whom the present surroundings hold no memories and to whom 'tradition' isn't an important factor.

There were comments that -

- a. The surrounds shouldn't matter as it was the Spirit that enhances our worship, not the building.
- b. We should be 'challenged and 'shaken down' by removing, or being removed, from our familiar 'idols' contained within our current sanctuary and embracing simplicity rather than old fashioned furniture and fittings. Only then can the Holy Spirit move more powerfully'.

24. Are you in a regular fellowship or study group? (tick all applicable)

31 responses



25. What do you appreciate most about being able to meet in a fellowship group?

18 responses

Bible study

Learning to understand the Bible and entering into discussion with others whilst supporting each other through prayer and fellowship.

Learning more about God, and faith together, in an informal setting, and finding help and support on the journey of faith.

Having discussions in a safe and comfortable environment, while getting to know each other better, building up trust and being able to discuss with each other in a kind and loving manner.

Wednesday Prayer Service.

Monthly Prayer Fellowship.

26. If you do not attend a fellowship group can you suggest one thing that might encourage you to do so?

9 responses

Choice of Topic

Time and venue of group, for example Daytime groups rather than evenings.

Access to groups via zoom, so it could be accessed remotely.

Time constraints

Alpha Course.

27. Suggestions for new activities / groups.

12 responses

Discussion groups and talks on interesting topics which are open and interesting to both men and women.

Contextual Bible Study with discussion of topical issues and Biblical insights.

Book Club, using both secular and Christian material.

Possible" Thought for the Day Meeting".

A breakfast group, or something similar, to encourage families of the congregation to come in.

Community activities from the church eg litter picking showing a presence from the church within the village.

Advertising a safe space where people can come and just" be".

Peace and justice forum.

To join in with activities already provided by Ainsdale Lunch and Leisure.

A support group for carers.

Drama Group.

28. What is, or was, your main occupation? (If you have had a few, then list the ones you think are the most significant)

33 responses

Education

Teacher

Teacher's Assistant

Lecturer

Secretarial

Engineer

Civil Servant

Design Engineer

Nursing

Midwife

Computer Consultant and Project Manager

Hairdresser

Retail

Pharmacy Technician

Chemist Assistant

Dental Nurse

Salesman

Managing a business

Occupational Hygiene Specialist

Insurance

Nanny

Pharmacist

29. What are the life experiences you have to share with others? (Think about the things in life that you have overcome or opportunities that you have been given and give you unique things to share)

20 responses

Resilience, leadership skills

Having children

Sport and outdoor activities, long distance running

Travel

Good listening skills

Life changes through unexpected happenings and experiences.

Experience of working with children, and young people.

Pastoral visiting, keeping in touch with people

Chairman of organisations

Being a local preacher

Experience of navigating the complexities of the care system, whilst supporting family member with dementia.

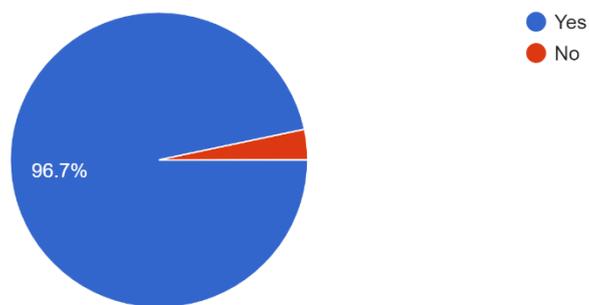
Experience of being a single person in the 21st century and of singleness within the church.

Experience of having a spouse who doesn't attend church.

Reflections of having blessings showered on you, even in problematical times.

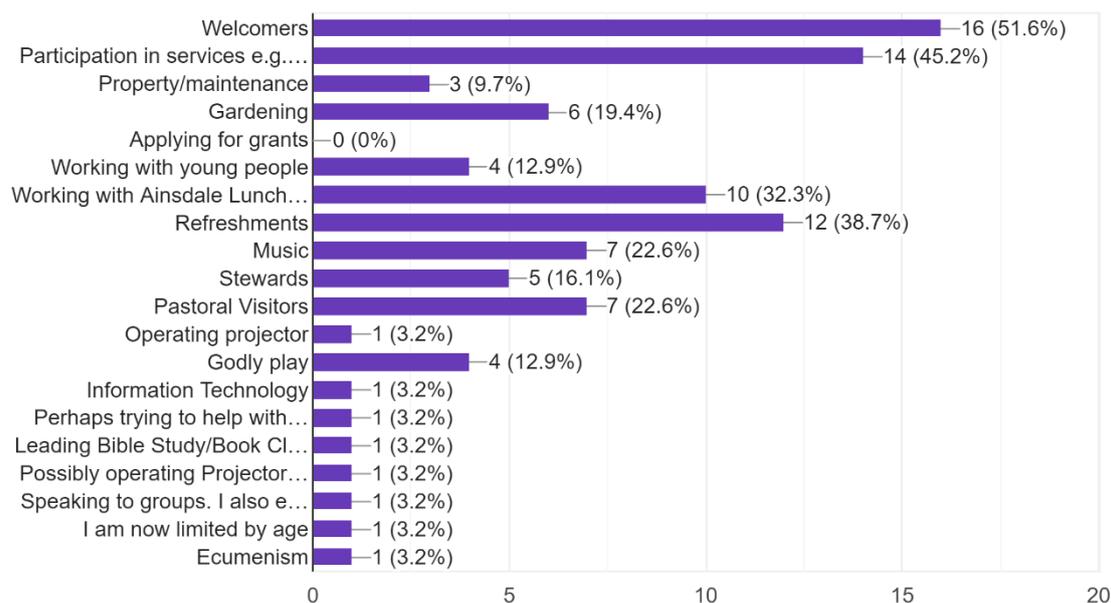
30. Are you willing to volunteer some time to the life of our church even if it is only on an occasional basis?

30 responses



31. Below are areas where help is often needed, please tick any that you might be willing to help with.

31 responses



32. What impact do you feel Ainsdale Methodist Church has on the local community?

30 responses

‘the Church on the Green’, the ‘Church that’s always busy’

Known in the community for work/activities that go on during the week i.e Ainsdale Lunch & Leisure, Foodbank, Flu Clinics etc. which bring a large footfall through the building.

Excellent position within the village.

Part of CtiA which provides opportunities for the community to meet together.

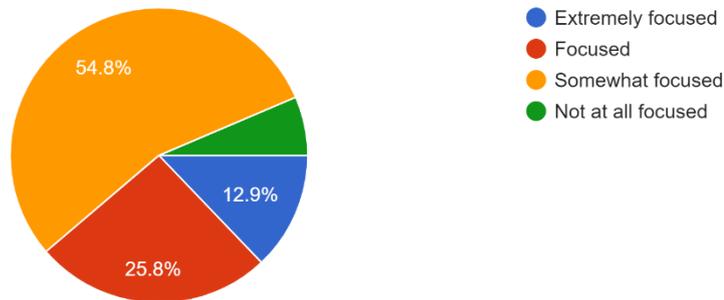
Home to Octave.

Rental of rooms for meetings, parties, concerts etc.

Impact mainly through community service – other than for funerals most local people don’t go into the church itself.

33. How focused do you feel we are as a church on the spiritual needs of the wider community?

31 responses



34. Why did you give the previous answer?

23 responses

We find it difficult to promote what we stand for spiritually and to interest the community to join us in worship. We are aware of a need but can feel out of our depth and ill-equipped for the task. For various reasons there are huge barriers that prevent people stepping inside the building. If the community doesn't want to know, end of story.

Sometimes we are a little inward looking. It's not easy to know what are the spiritual needs of the wider community and we don't know how to find out.

Although the Church premises house many community activities we do not necessarily focus on spiritual needs. Bereavement courses are helpful. We do not run any courses for people to understand the Christian faith.

I'm not sure that the people who use the premises during the week see very much of our spiritual side.

We do a lot through Ainsdale Lunch & Leisure for the elderly in the community but this doesn't seem to translate into worshippers. Many of the congregation pursue a 'mission' to help others through helping at activities during the week.

Difficult to judge how this might be discerned and responded to. Ainsdale is a busy community with diverse needs.

I think we could open up the church regularly for people who need a quiet safe space.

Also lack of Social Media presence needs to be addressed.

35. What could be improved about the way we care for the spiritual and practical needs of our community?

17 responses

Practical needs of older people well catered for with ALL.

Engage with people where they are at.....at shops, schools etc.

Find ways of engaging particularly with young people & families. Informal worship, children's activities, Café Church

Work with other groups/churches to pool resources.

Raise our profile, utilise social media eg Facebook

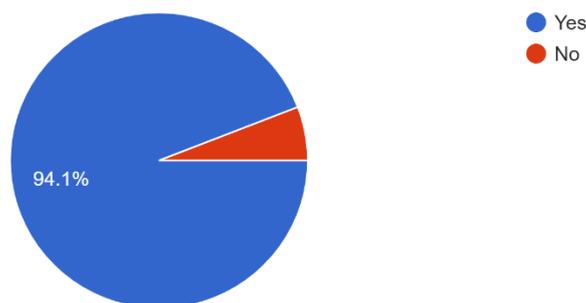
Run introductory courses, maybe Alpha Course

Open the church for private prayer, open the Community garden to all and use it for worship too.

Liaise with community partners (schools, social prescribers) to find out needs of the community.

36. Do you feel Ainsdale Lunch & Leisure is part of the church's mission?

34 responses



37. If you answered 'yes' to the previous question - how could this mission be improved?

24 responses

Close collaboration & communication between church & ALL.

Work proactively on some projects with ALL.

Invite ALL to services/events around specific Christian festivals

Open up the church as a space ALL are welcome in

Be intentional about communicating what we are about: posters advertising events, cross displayed in all rooms, prayer request box etc. We do not need to apologise for being church.

Better support from Circuit & CTiA

This mission needs to run alongside the main mission of the church to spread the gospel – it shouldn't detract.

38. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please add here any other comments you wish to make about the life of our church at this time.

13 responses

As we have been through a time like no other we must allow ourselves the space and opportunities to regroup, heal and be restored. Must be aware that others may need to journey at a different pace and everyone should be able to be honest about their experiences and where they are now. This is a great opportunity to do church differently so we mustn't lose that. People offer what they can (not what they think they should) and we cut our cloth accordingly. Don't try and do everything but do what we do well. Our priorities should be the worship of God, nurture and care of one another and service of our neighbours local and global.

We, along with all churches are at a crossroads. Do we need to honestly face what we have learned through the experiences of the last year and to ask how we can best act on what we have learned? If we are to remain open as a building, do we, for instance, need to enable the sanctuary to be more open as a place of private reflexion and prayer? There is a lot more discussion and engagement to be done.

In spite of the best efforts of the on-line service and the weekly newsletters, which have been much appreciated, I can hardly express my great disappointment at the closure of the church. I felt a rug had been pulled out from under my feet when I needed it most.

Our church is so precious. I have had a lot of recent tragedies to work through but have healed and God can now use me more! I'm excited about how creative we can be and let go of practices that do not minister to the unchurched. I know we need to work more imaginatively and with other Christian organisations

39. Please indicate which age group you are in

38 responses

