

Debre Mihret St Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

**Tsion Ballo
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Organziation Communication
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Executive Summary

This communication audit evaluates the internal communication practices of St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, focusing on how these practices affect youth and volunteer engagement. Data was collected through six interviews with key stakeholders, including two youth leaders, two volunteers, one committee leader, and one committee member, as well as a survey completed by 66 respondents. The survey and interviews explored how communication flows within the church, the challenges members face, and opportunities for improvement.

The findings revealed a communication structure that is primarily top-down, with committee leaders making decisions and later informing the congregation. Youth and volunteers often feel excluded from decision-making, which has created frustration and disengagement. A volunteer shared, “They decided everything and tell me the day of the event,” highlighting how last-minute communication hinders effective preparation and participation. Youth members expressed similar concerns, feeling their contributions are dismissed or undervalued due to their age, with one remarking, “It’s like just because we are younger, we must listen to everything they say.”

Survey results confirmed these issues, showing dissatisfaction with the clarity and timing of communication. Members indicated a preference for more inclusive planning processes, timely updates, and improved digital communication tools. Committee leaders acknowledged these challenges, noting that the current communication structure does not encourage collaboration or transparency, particularly with younger members and volunteers.

Recommendations include establishing clearer feedback mechanisms, improving communication tools such as WhatsApp or email for timely updates, and involving youth and volunteers earlier in the planning process. These changes aim to create a more inclusive and transparent communication environment, fostering stronger connections among church members and increasing engagement across all groups. This audit emphasizes the importance of addressing communication barriers to build a united and collaborative church community.

Introduction

St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, established in 2010, is a cornerstone of the Ethiopian Orthodox community, providing a spiritual and cultural foundation for its members. The church offers a wide range of services, including weekly sermons, ceremonies like baptisms and weddings, annual holiday celebrations, and charity events aimed at supporting the local community. It also hosts youth programs, such as Amharic language classes and Bible study sessions, designed to

maintain cultural traditions and convey religious teachings. The church serves not only as a place of worship but also as a gathering space where members can connect, celebrate, and preserve their Ethiopian heritage.

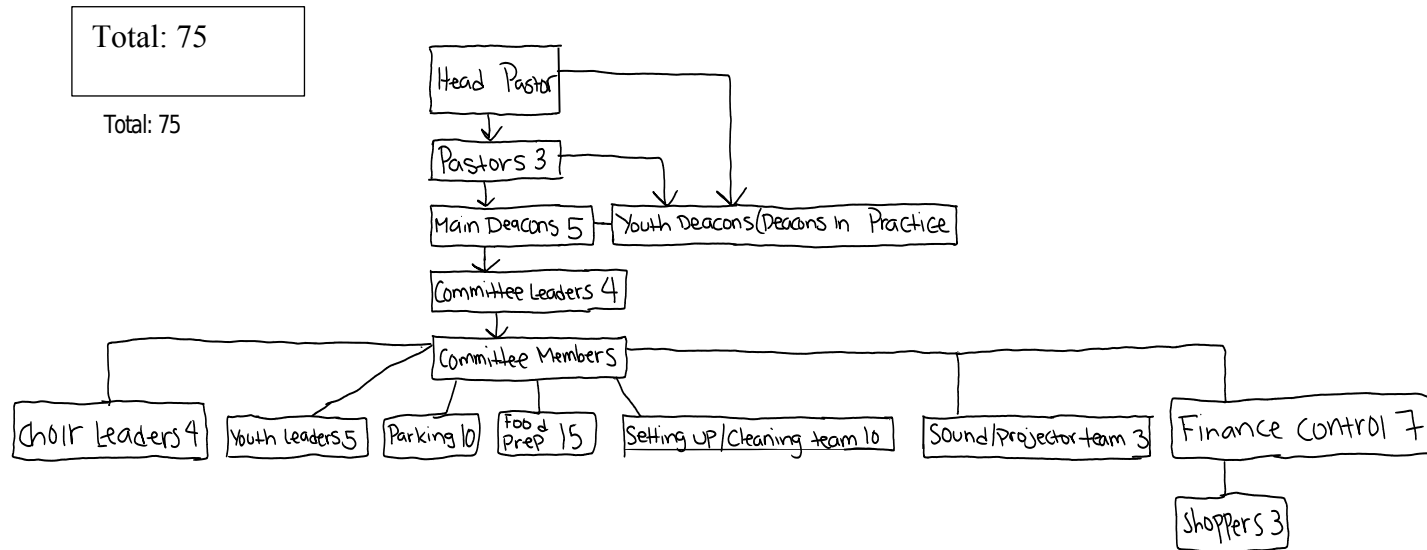
As an entirely volunteer-led organization, St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church relies heavily on the dedication and goodwill of its members. Approximately 50 to 80 individuals are actively involved in its operations, including senior leaders, youth leaders, and other volunteers. The church's leadership structure is informal, with senior clergy and respected elders overseeing decision-making and guiding religious practices. Members take on roles such as organizing events, teaching, and coordinating charitable initiatives. Despite the sense of community fostered by this informal structure, it often leads to role ambiguity and communication inefficiencies.

The church plays a vital role in connecting the Ethiopian Orthodox diaspora, many of whom are first-generation immigrants or children of immigrants. While senior members often uphold traditional practices, younger members sometimes feel disconnected due to generational differences. Youth programs, for instance, are viewed by many younger participants as overly formal and lacking engagement. These challenges highlight the need for a comprehensive audit of the church's communication practices to bridge generational gaps and improve overall engagement.

Leadership within the church is guided by a hierarchical yet collaborative structure. At the top is the Head Pastor, supported by three additional pastors who oversee religious services and spiritual guidance. Below them, deacons, both senior and youth, assist in facilitating ceremonies and managing organizational tasks.

Committee leaders oversee specific functions, such as event planning, financial management, and youth engagement, and are supported by broader volunteer teams.

St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Org. Chart



This project will focus on analyzing the effectiveness of the church's communication strategies, identifying areas for improvement, and recommending practical steps to enhance member satisfaction and participation. By addressing these issues, the church can strengthen its operations and foster a more inclusive and engaged community.

Methodology

This communication audit employed a mixed methods approach to collect comprehensive data on the communication practices at St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. By combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study ensured a well-rounded understanding of the church's strengths and challenges. The methods used included interviews, surveys, observations, and document analysis.

Six in-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders from various levels of the church's structure: two youth leaders, two volunteers, one committee leader, and one committee member. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and focused on topics such as role clarity, feedback mechanisms, communication challenges, and youth engagement. The interviews used open-ended questions, which encouraged participants to share detailed insights into their personal experiences with the church's communication practices. For example, some interview questions included: "How do you perceive your role in the church's communication system?" and "What challenges do you face when trying to coordinate events or activities?" The goal of these interviews was to uncover qualitative data that could not be obtained through structured surveys, offering deeper insights into the church's internal dynamics.

A structured survey was then distributed to 75 active church members, including volunteers, committee members/leaders, and youth members. The survey achieved an 88% response rate, with 66 completed responses. The survey consisted entirely of multiple-choice questions, designed to explore a range of topics, including preferred communication channels, satisfaction with current youth programs, and perceptions of

leadership transparency and feedback mechanisms. For instance, one multiple-choice question asked respondents whether or not they were comfortable giving feedback on church activities and programs. The survey provided quantitative data, which allowed for the identification of trends and common preferences across the church's membership.

Two major church events were observed to understand real-time communication practices. Each observation session lasted approximately 60 minutes and focused on several aspects: how effectively the communication was conveyed during event planning and execution, the interactions between leadership, volunteers, and members, and the usage of communication tools such as microphones, slideshows, or handouts. During these observations, it became evident that the lack of clear written communication led to confusion, as multiple teams focused on the same tasks while essential duties, such as organizing refreshments, were overlooked.

Additionally, document analysis was conducted on the church's promotional materials, such as social media posts, flyers, and event announcements. This analysis aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the church's outreach efforts. The review revealed inconsistencies, such as delayed social media posts and missed opportunities for using digital tools to reach a wider audience. Although flyers were useful during services, they were not as effective in reaching members who did not attend, highlighting the need for more inclusive communication strategies.

The mixed-methods approach was chosen because it allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the church's communication practices. Interviews provided rich qualitative insights, while surveys delivered broader, measurable data.

Observations captured real-time communication dynamics that were not easily identified through other methods, and document analysis verified the effectiveness of outreach materials. While the study faced limitations, such as time constraints that prevented further observations and the reliance on digital surveys, the combined methods provided a reliable basis for the audit's conclusions.

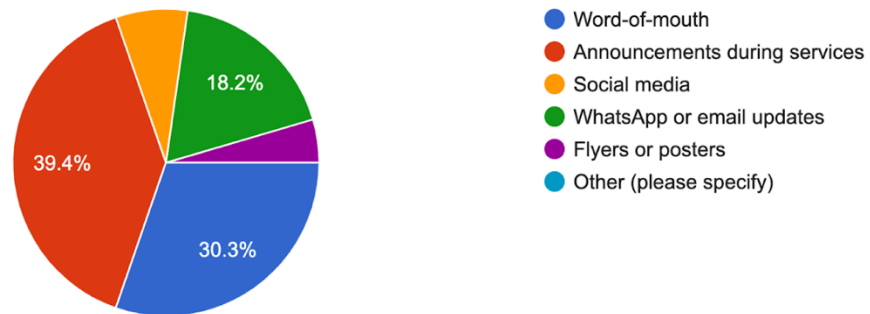
Results

The survey responses from 66 participants provided valuable insights into the church's communication practices, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. The data collected from the surveys, as well as insights gained through observations and interviews, offer a comprehensive understanding of the current communication landscape at St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Below is a detailed summary of the findings.

Survey data revealed that the church primarily relies on traditional communication methods, such as word-of-mouth and announcements during services. The survey did not include questions directly asking about digital communication tools, but it was clear from the responses that a significant number of participants rely on the more personal, face-to-face interactions that occur during church services or community events. Several respondents expressed that they would appreciate more consistency in how updates are delivered, especially when it comes to the timing of event announcements. One participant noted, "We sometimes hear about events too late to participate or prepare." This feedback indicates a need for more timely and structured communication methods, especially when it comes to event announcements.

How do you usually hear about church events or announcements?

66 responses

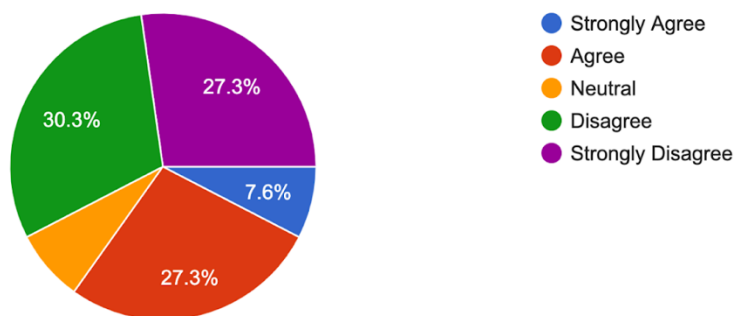


A significant portion of respondents (57.6%) expressed dissatisfaction with the clarity of roles during church activities. Many participants reported confusion about their specific duties during events, which often led to duplicated efforts or neglected responsibilities. For example, one respondent commented, “Volunteers are not always sure what they are responsible for, which causes confusion during events.”

This issue of role ambiguity was confirmed during the observation of a recent church event, where multiple volunteers worked on setting up decorations, while other essential tasks—such as managing refreshments—were overlooked. The lack of a clear system for assigning responsibilities and communicating tasks may be undermining the effectiveness of church operations.

Do you feel roles and responsibilities during church events are clearly defined and communicated?

66 responses

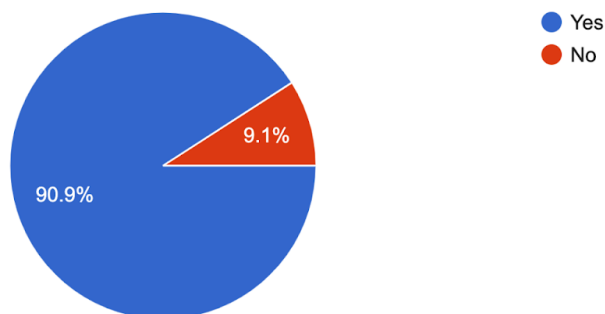


The audit revealed that feedback mechanisms within the church are underutilized, largely due to cultural factors that discourage direct criticism of leadership. Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents reported feeling uncomfortable providing feedback during events or meetings. Many participants indicated that feedback, especially critical feedback, is often perceived as disrespectful, and they avoid sharing their thoughts for fear of offending others.

However, 90.9% of respondents stated they would feel more comfortable sharing feedback if there were anonymous mechanisms in place. This was corroborated by comments such as, "I would feel more comfortable giving feedback if there were anonymous forms or an online platform where I could share my thoughts without fear." The preference for anonymous feedback systems suggests that introducing tools such as suggestion boxes or online surveys could encourage more open and honest communication within the church community.

Would an anonymous feedback system encourage you to share ideas or concerns?

66 responses

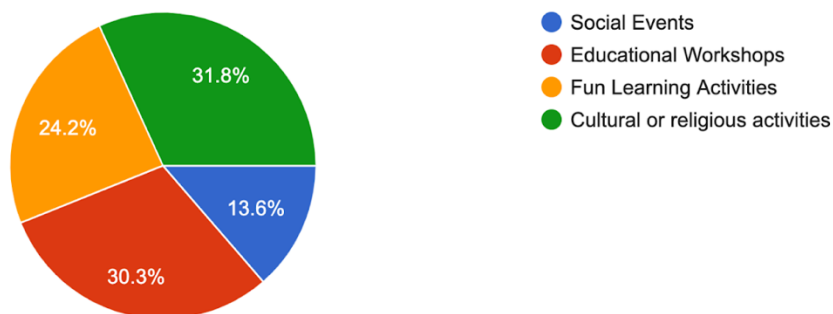


Youth engagement remains an area of concern. While programs like Amharic language classes and Bible study are considered valuable, a lot of youth respondents found them too formal and "school-like." These youth members expressed a desire for more interactive, social, and fun activities that would foster stronger engagement with the church community. For example, one respondent noted, "We need more activities that are fun and engaging, like movie nights, game nights, or activities that mix learning with socializing."

Participants suggested that offering hybrid programs combining educational content with enjoyable, social aspects would better meet the needs of younger members. This could include more dynamic Bible study formats, cultural activities, or volunteer events designed to appeal to both learning and socializing preferences.

What types of youth activities do you think should be prioritized?

66 responses

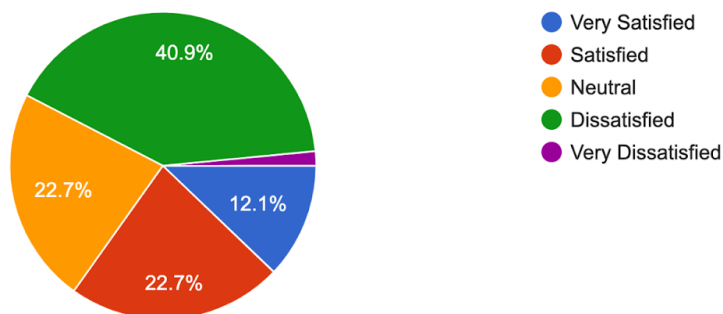


Despite the challenges, overall satisfaction with the church's communication practices was moderate. 34.8% of respondents indicated they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the communication within the church, while 22.7% were neutral, and 42.5% expressed dissatisfaction. This suggests that while communication is generally functioning, there are areas that need improvement to ensure that all members feel well-informed and engaged.

Survey comments revealed that many members are satisfied with the church's sense of community, which often compensates for communication gaps. However, there is a clear recognition that improvements in communication could further strengthen member participation and satisfaction. One respondent said, "I love the community, but it could be even better if we had more timely and clearer communication about upcoming events and changes."

How satisfied are you with the church's overall communication?

66 responses



These findings suggest that while the church excels in fostering a sense of community and maintaining tradition, there are significant opportunities to improve communication through clearer role definitions, more inclusive feedback systems, and the adoption of digital tools to engage members. The next section will analyze these findings in more detail and apply relevant organizational communication concepts to offer actionable solutions.

Application of Course Concepts

In understanding and improving communication within St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, several key concepts from our class materials provide essential insights. These concepts from Brewer and Westerman, The Arbinger Institute and Oshry help to analyze the communication challenges and offer solutions that are both theoretically grounded and practical for this specific organization. The following discussion explores the relevance of **role clarity**, **feedback loops**, and **the outward mindset** to improving communication in the church context.

Role clarity is a foundational concept in organizational communication and is vital for effective collaboration and task management. Brewer and Westerman define role clarity as the clear understanding of one's responsibilities and how they contribute to the organization's goals. When roles are not clearly defined, individuals may experience confusion, overlap in tasks, and frustration due to unclear expectations. This is a key challenge faced by St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, where volunteers often report that they are unsure of their duties during events. As mentioned in the survey, 57.6% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with role clarity, with many stating that they were unclear about their responsibilities.

Brewer and Westerman emphasize that clear communication of roles within an organization leads to better productivity and satisfaction. In the case of St. Michael Church, role ambiguity results in inefficiencies, as volunteers often duplicate efforts or leave critical tasks unaddressed. For example, during a major event, several volunteers worked on setting up decorations, but the management of refreshments and other logistics was neglected.

According to Brewer and Westerman, when roles are clearly defined, everyone involved has a sense of ownership and accountability, which leads to better communication and overall success. In the case of the church, clearer role definitions would not only enhance efficiency but also reduce volunteer dissatisfaction. This could be achieved through the development of clear role descriptions for each volunteer, detailing specific duties and expectations during church events and activities. This would allow for smoother event coordination and greater involvement from all members.

In organizational communication, feedback loops are critical for continuous improvement and adaptation. The Arbinger Institute emphasizes the importance of resolving conflicts at the "heart" by encouraging open and honest feedback between all levels of an organization. However, during the interview process, it became clear that some youth participants and volunteers at St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church are experiencing a "heart at war" mindset, which creates barriers to effective communication.

As mentioned in *The Anatomy of Peace* a "heart at war" mindset is one where individuals see others as obstacles or objects to be overcome, rather than as people with their own needs and perspectives. In St. Michael Church, youth participants and volunteers often feel that their opinions are disregarded by committee leaders and members. One youth participant shared, "Honestly, I feel like there is no point in sharing my opinions, they're not even gonna listen." Another youth participant stated, "They decided everything and tell me the day of the event." These comments reflect feelings of frustration and resentment towards leadership, as the youth feel disempowered and excluded from decision-making processes.

Additionally, another respondent noted, "It's like just because we are younger, we must listen to everything they say." This quote highlights a perception of hierarchical authority and a lack of respect for youth contributions, further perpetuating the "heart at war" mindset. The youth feel that their input is not valued and that they are treated as passive recipients of decisions made by older leadership.

This heart at war mindset creates a closed communication climate, where members are less likely to speak out, share ideas, or contribute meaningfully. It fosters

frustration and disengagement, which can hinder both personal growth and organizational development.

To address this, the church needs to cultivate a "heart at peace" mindset. The Arbinger Institute explains that a heart at peace sees others as people with their own needs and challenges, fostering empathy and understanding. Church leaders should strive to see the contributions of youth and volunteers as valuable and actively invite their feedback. This could involve creating safe spaces where their opinions are welcomed and acted upon, such as through anonymous feedback channels or regular discussions where youth and volunteers can voice their concerns without fear of judgment.

Additionally, church leadership should practice active listening and ensure that their decisions reflect the input of all members, not just senior leadership. By adopting the outward mindset (discussed next), church leaders can create a more inclusive and communicative environment, breaking down the barriers created by a heart at war mindset.

The concept of the outward mindset is particularly relevant to improving communication and fostering collaboration within organizations. The outward mindset focuses on seeing others as people with their own needs, challenges, and perspectives, rather than as obstacles to be dealt with or objects to be controlled. This mindset shifts the focus from self-interest to a broader, collective understanding of mutual goals.

In the context of St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the leadership and congregation are often entrenched in a "closed inward mindset", where communication flows from the top down, and feedback is viewed as potentially

disrespectful. This inhibits the ability of church members particularly the youth and volunteers to express their needs, concerns, and desires for engagement in meaningful ways. As one survey respondent noted, “I would feel more comfortable giving feedback if there were anonymous forms or an online platform where I could share my thoughts without fear.”

The outward mindset concept can be applied to change this dynamic. By encouraging leadership to view feedback as an opportunity for growth and to recognize the contributions of all church members as valuable, the church can shift its communication culture from one of authority-driven to a more collaborative, participatory environment. For example, when church leaders adopt the outward mindset, they will not only listen to feedback but actively seek it, addressing concerns as they arise and showing members that their input is truly valued.

A practical application of the outward mindset could include regular town hall-style meetings where leadership and members discuss church matters openly. This would allow all members, including youth and volunteers, to engage in conversations with leadership, fostering mutual understanding and increasing overall involvement in church activities. As a result, church communication would become more inclusive and collaborative, enhancing the sense of community within the congregation.

Barry Oshry’s *The Possibilities of Organization* explores the dynamics between different levels within an organization and how those dynamics shape communication and decision-making. Oshry emphasizes the importance of understanding the systemic issues that affect communication, such as power imbalances and role perceptions. St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church’s leadership structure—where decisions

are largely made by senior clergy and elders—can create a sense of distance between leadership and the congregation. This hierarchical system, while effective in some areas, can limit open communication and discourage members from expressing their opinions freely.

Oshry's model highlights the importance of creating more balanced, reciprocal relationships between leadership and members. In St. Michael Church, empowering youth and volunteers to take on more active roles in church decision-making could help break down communication barriers and foster a more inclusive environment. By involving members more deeply in the church's operations, leadership can encourage a culture of collaboration rather than authority-driven decision-making. Oshry's framework suggests that organizations thrive when they are more inclusive and egalitarian, and this principle can be applied to the church's communication structure.

To improve communication and decision-making, St. Michael Church should consider implementing regular forums or focus groups where members from all levels of the church can openly discuss their concerns and ideas. These forums would encourage dialogue between leadership and the congregation, leading to more balanced power dynamics and a more open and communicative environment.

By applying these organizational communication concepts: role clarity, feedback loops, the outward mindset, and communication climate, to the challenges faced by St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, it becomes clear that there are several actionable steps the church can take to improve its internal communication. These improvements will not only address current issues but also strengthen community

engagement, increase transparency, and foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all members.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the survey, interviews, and observations, along with the application of relevant communication theories, several recommendations are made to enhance communication practices at St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. These recommendations focus on improving role clarity, fostering more effective feedback loops, promoting an outward mindset, and enhancing the communication climate within the church.

One of the most pressing issues identified during the audit is the lack of role clarity within the church. Volunteers reported significant confusion about their responsibilities during events, leading to inefficiencies and frustration. To address this, the church should improve the clarity of roles and expectations through clear communication and pre-event planning. Before each event, church leadership should hold a meeting with all involved volunteers to clearly outline each person's responsibilities. Providing written or digital event agendas that detail tasks for each volunteer can ensure that everyone knows their role and how it contributes to the success of the event. By enhancing role clarity, the church can reduce confusion and improve overall event coordination, making sure that all tasks are completed efficiently and that volunteers feel more confident and involved.

Another important recommendation is to establish anonymous feedback channels within the church. The survey and interviews revealed that many youth and volunteer participants feel uncomfortable providing feedback, especially critical

feedback, due to fear of being perceived as disrespectful. To overcome this barrier, the church could introduce anonymous feedback tools such as suggestion boxes or online surveys. These channels would allow church members to express their concerns and provide suggestions for improvement without fear of judgment. It is also essential for church leadership to demonstrate openness to feedback by responding transparently to it. After gathering feedback, leaders should publicly acknowledge the input and outline any changes or actions being taken as a result. This approach would help build trust, show that feedback is valued, and encourage a more open communication environment in the future.

In addition to anonymous feedback, the church can benefit from adopting the outward mindset, as outlined by The Arbinger Institute. The outward mindset focuses on seeing others as people with their own needs, challenges, and perspectives, rather than as obstacles or objects. Currently, some youth and volunteers at the church feel disempowered and excluded from decision-making processes, which has led to frustration and resentment. To shift from a closed inward mindset to an outward mindset, church leaders should actively work to include youth and volunteers in the decision-making process. This could involve regular feedback sessions where leaders seek input from all members. When church leadership adopts the outward mindset, they will not only listen to feedback but actively seek it, addressing concerns as they arise and showing members that their input is truly valued.

By creating more opportunities for youth and volunteers to engage in decision-making and event planning, the church can foster a more inclusive and collaborative environment. This will help break down the barriers created by a hierarchical structure

and encourage a more participatory approach to communication. Empowering youth and volunteers in this way will strengthen their connection to the church and encourage more active involvement in church activities.

Additionally, the church should work to improve its communication climate by fostering a more open and supportive environment. The audit found that communication within the church is often hierarchical and top-down, which can create feelings of alienation, particularly among younger members. To address this, church leadership should prioritize creating a communication climate where all members feel safe to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns. One way to do this is by holding regular town-hall meetings or informal forums where leadership and members, including youth and volunteers, can discuss church matters openly. These meetings would allow members to ask questions, share ideas, and collaborate with leadership on important decisions. By creating an open communication climate, the church can ensure that all voices are heard and valued, leading to increased trust and stronger community engagement.

Finally, youth engagement should be a priority for the church. Many youth members have expressed a desire for more interactive and social activities that blend learning with fun. Currently, some youth programs, such as Bible study and Amharic classes, are perceived as too formal and “school-like,” which may hinder engagement. The church should enhance its youth programs by incorporating more dynamic and enjoyable activities, such as game nights, cultural workshops, or social events that foster a sense of community and engagement. Moreover, the church should empower youth to take on leadership roles within these programs, allowing them to lead events, organize activities, and have a voice in decision-making. Providing youth with

leadership opportunities will not only increase their sense of ownership but also encourage them to be more involved in the church community. This empowerment will strengthen their connection to the church and make their participation more meaningful.

By addressing these key areas: role clarity, feedback mechanisms, adopting the outward mindset, fostering a positive communication climate, and increasing youth engagement; St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church can significantly improve its communication practices. These changes will help the church create a more inclusive, transparent, and collaborative environment where all members feel heard, valued, and empowered. This will not only improve operational efficiency but also deepen the sense of community within the church.

Follow Up

This communication audit has been an insightful and transformative experience, offering valuable lessons about organizational communication, as well as personal growth in understanding the dynamics within St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Through this project, I have gained a deeper understanding of how communication can shape organizational culture, influence relationships, and affect overall effectiveness. The process has provided me with opportunities to reflect on my own communication skills and the ways in which I can contribute to creating more effective and inclusive communication practices in any organization.

One of the most significant things I learned was the complexity of communication within a volunteer-driven organization. St. Michael Church, like many other volunteer-based organizations, relies on the goodwill and dedication of its members to maintain its operations. However, the lack of clear communication about roles, expectations, and

feedback can lead to confusion, frustration, and disengagement, as was evident in the survey and interviews. As someone involved in organizational communication, it was a reminder of the importance of establishing clear communication channels that can bridge the gap between leadership and volunteers, especially when there is no formal structure to rely on.

I also learned that communication is not just about transmitting information, but about fostering an environment where everyone feels heard and valued. The youth and volunteers in the church expressed frustration with being excluded from decision-making processes, often feeling that their opinions were disregarded by the senior leadership. This reinforced the idea that effective communication involves listening, creating spaces for feedback, and ensuring that all voices are considered in decision-making. In reflecting on this, I realized how much hierarchical communication can stifle the voices of those in less powerful positions. It became clear that shifting to a more collaborative and inclusive communication style would greatly enhance the overall dynamics of the church.

From an organizational communication perspective, this project helped me understand the importance of role clarity and its direct impact on efficiency and satisfaction. As volunteers reported confusion about their roles during church events, it highlighted how ambiguity in role definitions can lead to operational inefficiencies. I realized that clear expectations and defined roles are critical to effective communication and collaboration. When people understand their responsibilities, they are more likely to perform their tasks with confidence and enthusiasm, leading to more successful and smooth-running events.

This project also underscored the need for feedback loops in any organization. I learned that feedback is not just a tool for improvement but a means of building trust and engagement. In St. Michael Church, the lack of safe and effective feedback channels contributed to a "heart at war" mindset, where members felt that their opinions were not valued. In a way, I've come to appreciate how feedback mechanisms are integral to the health of an organization and its communication system. As a result, I believe I will be more intentional about advocating for feedback systems in any organization I am part of in the future.

Personally, this project also taught me about the importance of active listening and empathy in communication. Observing how youth participants and volunteers hesitated to speak out due to concerns about their opinions being dismissed made me reflect on how I communicate in my own personal and academic settings. I learned that listening with an open mind and recognizing the concerns of others are crucial in fostering understanding and improving communication. This experience reinforced my commitment to fostering a "heart at peace" mindset, where I strive to view others as individuals with valid perspectives, instead of seeing them through the lens of authority or hierarchy.

Finally, this project has deepened my understanding of how organizational communication directly influences an organization's culture and the relationships among its members. Through this audit, I saw firsthand how communication, or the lack thereof, can either build trust and community or foster resentment and disengagement. It was a powerful reminder of how effective communication is at the heart of every successful

organization, whether it's a workplace, a community group, or a religious organization like St. Michael Church.

In conclusion, the insights gained through this project will not only help improve communication within St. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church but also inform my approach to communication in all future endeavors. This experience has deepened my appreciation for the complexities of organizational communication and the ways in which it can shape the effectiveness and culture of any organization. I now recognize that communication is not just about sharing information; it's about creating a space where people feel understood, valued, and empowered to contribute their ideas and feedback. This realization will guide me in my future work, both as a communicator and as a team member, ensuring that I contribute to environments that foster open, inclusive, and transparent communication.

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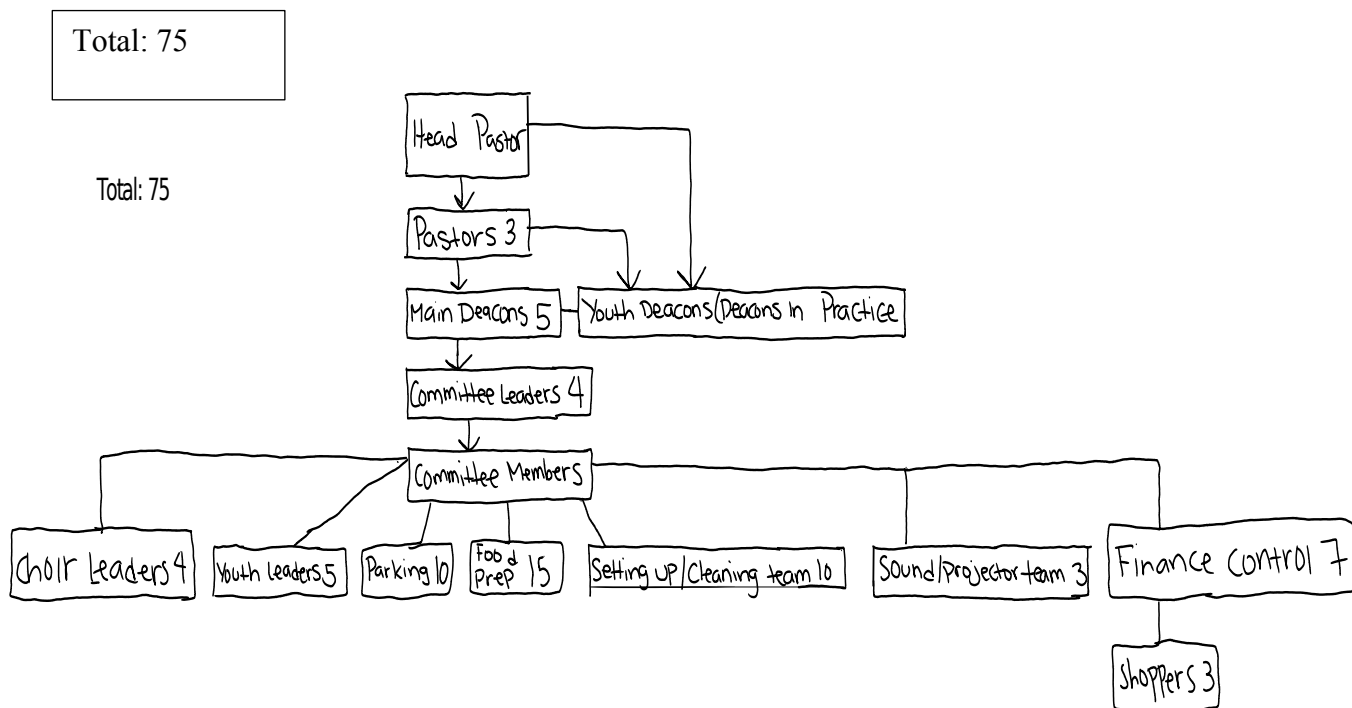
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Organizational ChartSt. Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Org. Chart

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the current communication structure within the church?
2. What challenges do you face in communicating with other members or leaders?
3. How do you typically receive updates about events or church activities?
4. Do you feel your voice and opinions are heard by the church's leadership? Why or why not?
5. How would you improve communication within the church to make it more effective?
6. What role does the youth play in church events and decisions?
7. Are there any specific issues you have observed regarding communication between youth and older members/committee leaders?
8. How comfortable do you feel providing feedback or suggestions to the leadership?
9. What methods of communication do you believe would be more effective for reaching all members?
10. Can you share an example of a recent event or situation where communication worked well or failed?

Interview Notes

i. Abel Weldemedin (Committee Leader)

Abel is a committee leader responsible for overseeing decisions related to church events and activities.

How would you describe the communication in the church?

Abel described the communication process as largely top-down. Committee leaders make most of the decisions, and then they inform the rest of the church community. While this structure helps maintain control and efficiency, he acknowledged that it sometimes alienates younger participants and volunteers.

What challenges do you face with communication?

The main challenge, according to Abel, is the disconnect between decision-makers and the rest of the church. Youth and volunteers often feel like their input isn't valued, which leads to disengagement.

Do you think the youth feel included in decision-making?

Abel admitted that the youth don't feel as involved as they should. He said, "We try to involve them, but they often feel like their voices aren't heard. It makes it difficult to engage them." How could communication be improved?

Abel suggested involving the youth more in the planning and decision-making stages. He believes that establishing feedback loops and creating spaces for open dialogue would go a long way in improving engagement and showing that the youth's opinions are valued.

ii. Henok Amerga (Volunteer)

Henok is a volunteer who has been active in assisting with events and activities at the church.

How do you feel about the current communication?

Henok expressed frustration with the timing of information. "We usually find out about events only a day or two before, and it doesn't give us enough time to prepare properly. It's stressful," he said.

What could be done to improve things?

He suggested utilizing digital platforms like WhatsApp or email to keep everyone informed earlier and more effectively. Henok emphasized that these platforms would help keep people connected, especially the younger members.

Do you think your opinions are valued in decision-making?

Henok doesn't feel that his input is considered in decision-making. He mentioned, "It feels like the committee decides everything, and we just have to go along with it. It's hard to feel like our opinions matter."

What changes would you like to see?

Henok suggested more inclusive planning sessions where volunteers and youth can offer their ideas. He believes this would help create a sense of ownership and involvement among all members.

iii. Ezra Siyoun (Youth Leader)

Ezra is a youth leader who guides younger participants and helps with organizing youth-focused church events.

How do you feel about communication within the church?

Ezra acknowledged that the communication is often unclear. "Sometimes we get the information too late, and that affects how well we can prepare. It's frustrating because we want to do our best," he said.

Do the youth feel like they're being heard in decisions?

Ezra confirmed that many of the youth feel excluded from the decision-making process. "They don't think their voices matter. They feel like decisions are already made before they even get a chance to speak up."

What improvements would you suggest?

Ezra recommended holding regular meetings where youth can be more directly involved in the decision-making. He suggested creating informal sessions where the youth could share their ideas on upcoming events and activities.

iv. Meron Yared (Committee Member)

Meron is a member of the church committee who helps with planning and managing events.

How does communication happen in the church?

Meron explained that most of the decisions are made by the committee and then communicated to the rest of the church. However, she acknowledged that this can leave people feeling disconnected, particularly the youth. "There's not enough collaboration or back-and-forth communication," she noted.

What are the biggest communication challenges you've noticed?

Meron recognized that there's a gap between those who plan events and those who help execute them. Volunteers and youth often feel out of the loop because they aren't included early enough in the process. "By the time they find out about the event, it's almost too late for them to fully contribute," she explained.

How do you think the youth feel about this?

Meron agreed that the youth often feel left out of the decision-making process. "They feel like they're just being told what to do, rather than being asked for their thoughts or ideas." What can be done differently?

Meron recommended using more digital tools to improve transparency, such as shared calendars or apps that keep everyone updated on event details. Additionally, she suggested

regular check-ins with volunteers and youth leaders to ensure their input is part of the planning process.

v. Eyerus Azbate (Youth Leader)

Eyerus is another youth leader who works closely with younger church members.

What are your thoughts on the current communication?

Eyerus said that communication is often too last-minute, which makes it difficult to be prepared for events. "We don't find out about things until it's almost time to do them, and that leaves us scrambling," she explained.

Do you think the youth feel involved?

Eyerus agreed that the youth feel excluded from decision-making. "They feel that their input doesn't really matter. It's like the decisions are already made for them, and they're just supposed to follow along."

How can the communication process improve?

Eyerus suggested that the youth should be given more opportunities to lead and be involved in the planning process. "If they were included more, even in small ways, they would feel more invested and heard."

vi. Edom Seyifu (Volunteer)

Edom is a volunteer who helps organize and execute church activities, particularly those involving younger participants.

How does communication affect your role?

Edom shared that delayed communication often leaves volunteers in a difficult position. "When we don't know what's happening until the last minute, it's hard to plan. It makes us feel like we're not really part of the process," she said.

Do you feel like the youth are treated equally in the decision-making process?

Edom confirmed that the youth often feel overlooked in favor of the committee's decisions. "It seems like they don't get a say in what happens. The decisions are already made by the time they know anything."

What changes would you recommend?

Edom suggested that regular meetings and check-ins would help create more transparency. She believes this would allow everyone, including youth and volunteers, to feel like their input is valued. "It would also reduce the feeling that the committee is just telling everyone what to do," she added.

Survey Questions

Demographics



Description (optional)

What is your role in the church?

- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Youth Participant
- ☐ Leadership/Committee Member

How long have you been involved with the church?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7+ years

What age group do you belong to?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-40
- ☐ 41-60
- ☐ 61 and above

Communication Channels

Description (optional)

How do you usually hear about church events or announcements?

- ☐ Word-of-mouth
- ☐ Announcements during services
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ WhatsApp or email updates
- ☐ Flyers or posters
- ☐ Other (please specify)

How effective do you find the current methods of communication? *

- ☐ Very Effective
- ☐ Somewhat Effective
- ☐ Not Effective

How satisfied are you with the frequency of church communication?

- ☐ Very Satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very Dissatisfied

Role Clarity



Description (optional)

Do you feel roles and responsibilities during church events are clearly defined and communicated?



- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

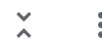
Have you experienced confusion or overlap of tasks while volunteering?



- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

Have you experienced any challenges while volunteering or participating in events?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Feedback Mechanisms

Description (optional)

Do you feel your opinions and suggestions are valued by the church leadership?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

How comfortable are you sharing feedback during meetings or events?

- ☐ Very Comfortable
- ☐ Somewhat Comfortable
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat Uncomfortable
- ☐ Very Uncomfortable

Are you comfortable giving feedback about church activities or programs? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Would an anonymous feedback system encourage you to share ideas or concerns? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Youth Engagement



Description (optional)

Do you believe current youth programs meet their needs and interests? *

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neutral

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree



What types of youth activities do you think should be prioritized? *

☐ Social Events

☐ Educational Workshops

☐ Fun Learning Activities

☐ Cultural or religious activities

☐ Other...

Overall Satisfaction

Description (optional)

How satisfied are you with the church's overall communication? *

- ☐ Very Satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very Dissatisfied

Do you feel the church is making sufficient efforts to engage members? *

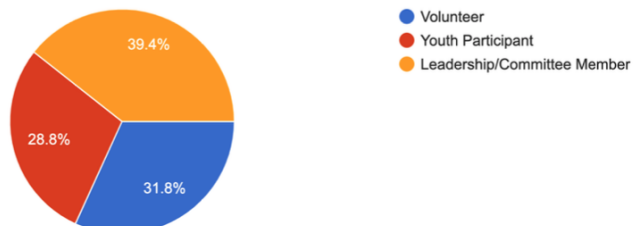
- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Results

Demographics

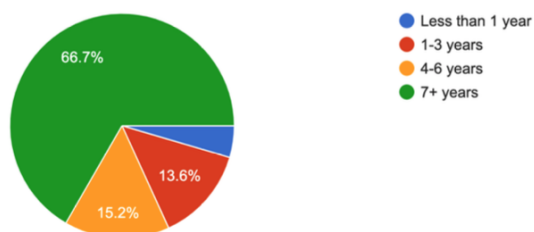
What is your role in the church?

66 responses



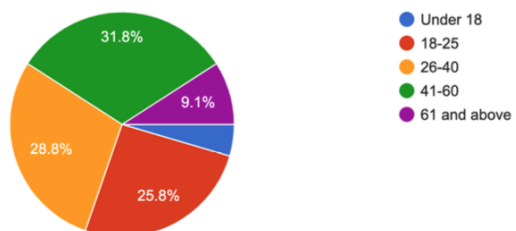
How long have you been involved with the church?

66 responses



What age group do you belong to?

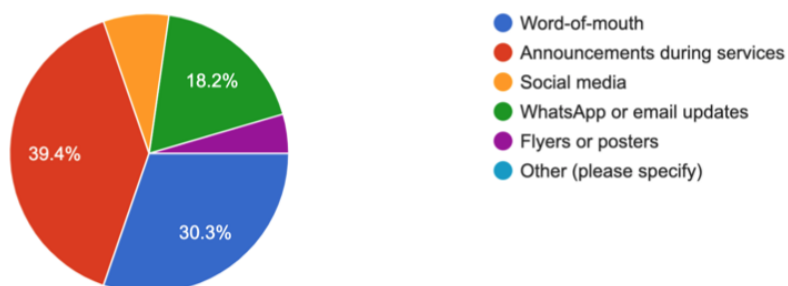
66 responses



Communication Channels

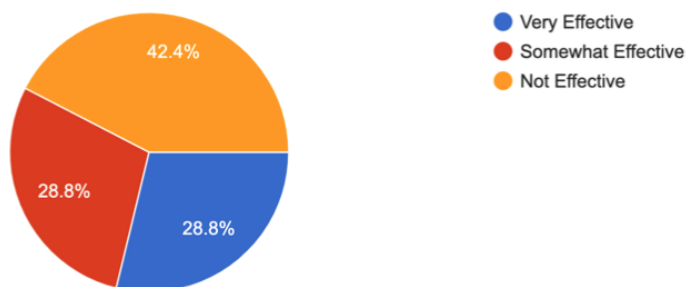
How do you usually hear about church events or announcements?

66 responses



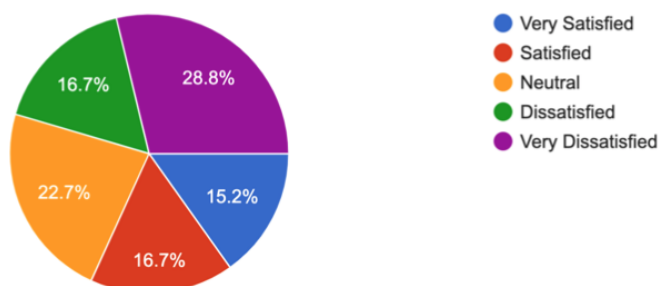
How effective do you find the current methods of communication?

66 responses



How satisfied are you with the frequency of church communication?

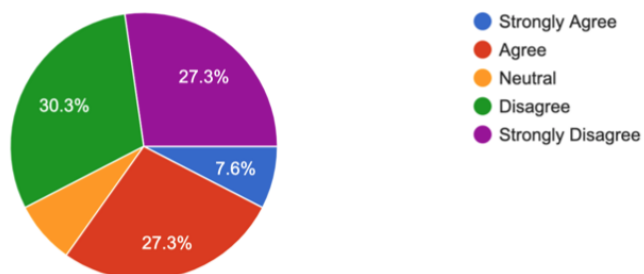
66 responses



Role Clarity

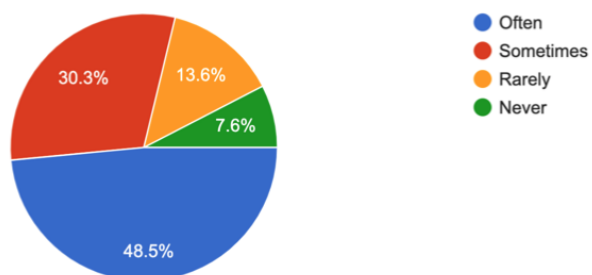
Do you feel roles and responsibilities during church events are clearly defined and communicated?

66 responses



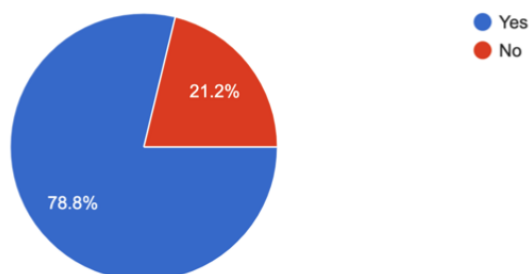
Have you experienced confusion or overlap of tasks while volunteering?

66 responses



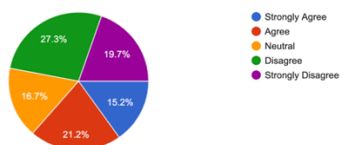
Have you experienced any challenges while volunteering or participating in events?

66 responses

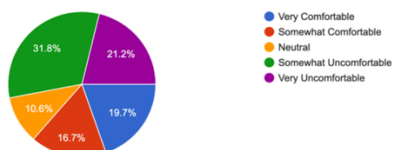


Feedback Mechanisms

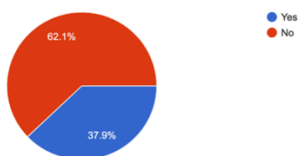
Do you feel your opinions and suggestions are valued by the church leadership?
66 responses



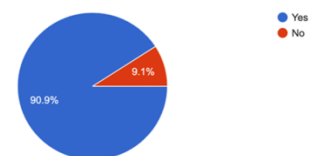
How comfortable are you sharing feedback during meetings or events?
66 responses



Are you comfortable giving feedback about church activities or programs?
66 responses

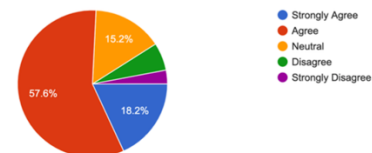


Would an anonymous feedback system encourage you to share ideas or concerns?
66 responses

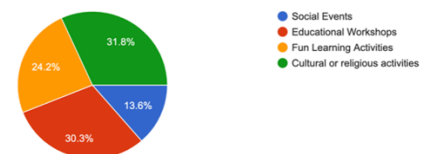


Youth Engagement

Do you believe current youth programs meet their needs and interests?
66 responses



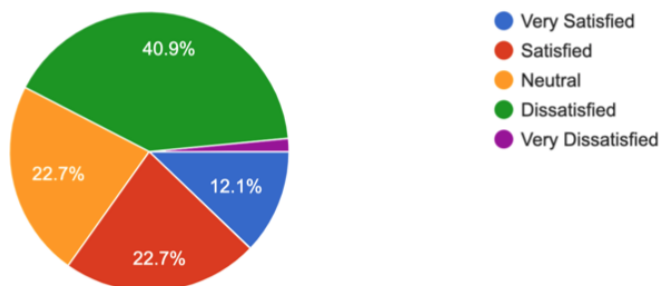
What types of youth activities do you think should be prioritized?
66 responses



Overall Satisfaction

How satisfied are you with the church's overall communication?

66 responses



Do you feel the church is making sufficient efforts to engage members?

66 responses

