


ELCA Congregation Pulse Survey – Christian Education & Faith Formation October 2024

ELCA Research and Evaluation
July 2025



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

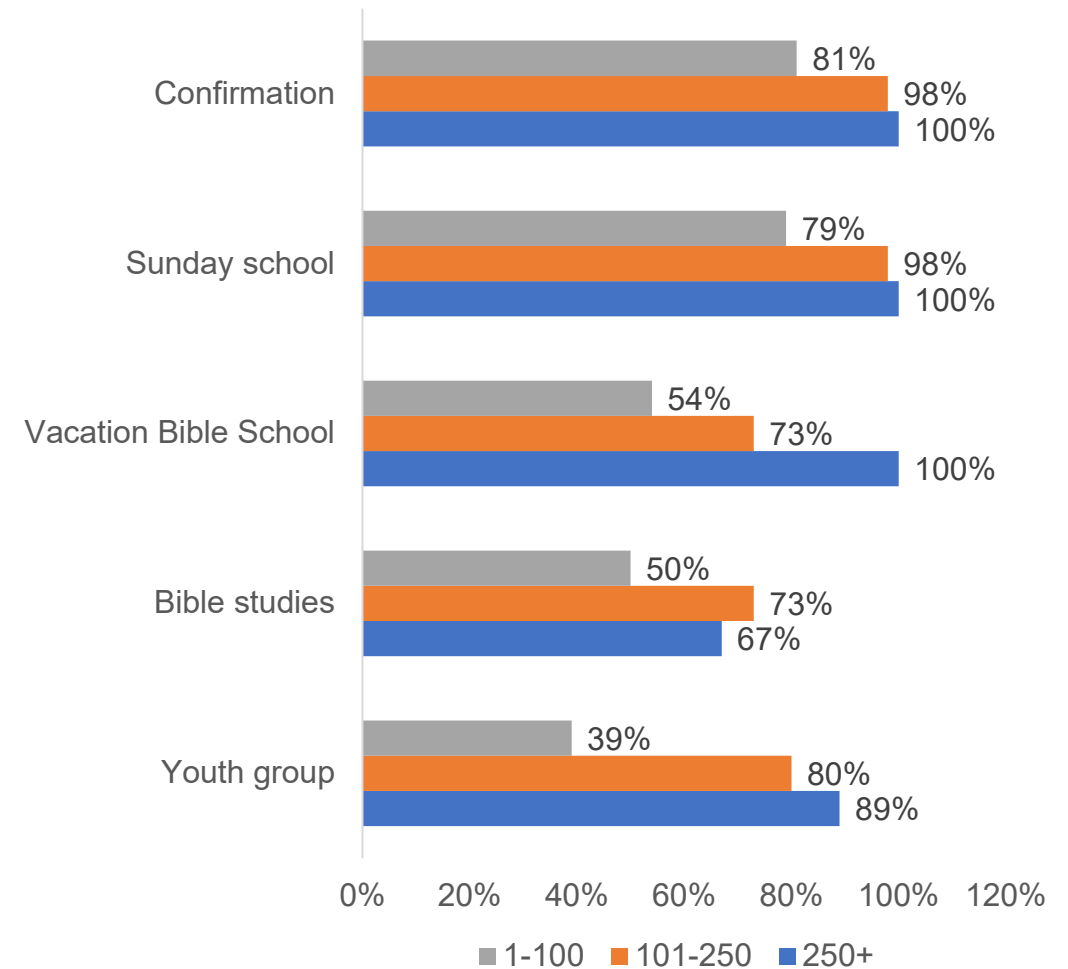
ELCA Congregation Pulse Survey Overview

- The ELCA Congregation Pulse Surveys are an experimental effort to allow ELCA congregations and worshiping communities to communicate their perspectives, strengths, and development needs to synods and the churchwide organization.
- The October 2024 Pulse Survey was distributed to 1,842 congregations and worshiping communities. Key informants from 541 of these communities responded to the survey, for a response rate of 29%. Responses came from congregations and worshiping communities in 62 of 65 synods.
- Responding congregations and worshiping communities were largely representative of the ELCA in terms of average in-person worship attendance and racial diversity; some small differences were observed in community context. Responses were more likely to come from urban congregations and less likely to come from rural congregations than the ELCA overall.

	Avg Worship Attendance (in-person)			Community Context			% Active Participants (BIPOC)
	1-100	101-250	251+	% Urban	% Suburban	% Rural	
Respondents	84%	14%	2%	45%	21%	34%	5.6%
ELCA overall	85%	13%	3%	37%	18%	45%	6.4%

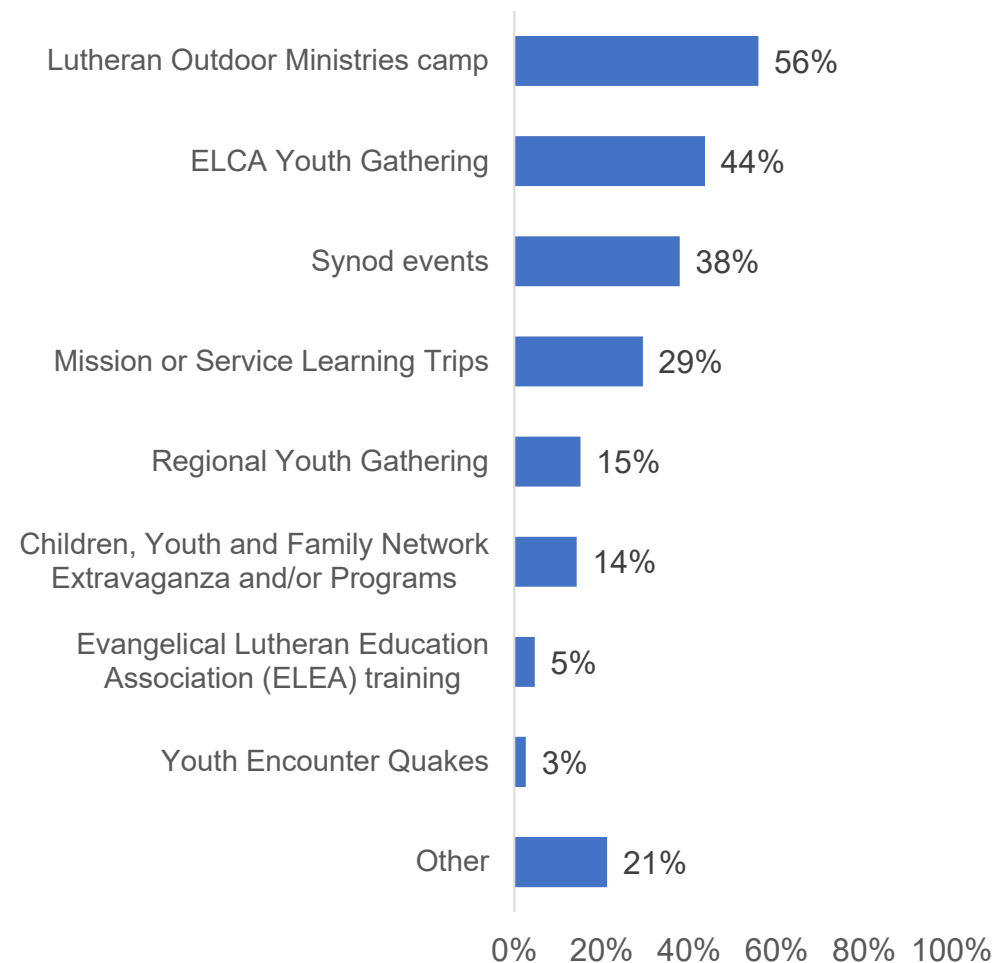
Faith formation opportunities for children and youth

- All congregations that responded to the October 2024 Pulse Survey offered a variety of faith formation opportunities. The most common faith formation opportunities offered were confirmation (83%) and Sunday school (81%). This was true in larger, medium-sized, and smaller congregations.
- In general, larger and medium-sized congregations were similarly likely to provide each formation opportunity, with one exception (Vacation Bible School).
- Smaller congregations were consistently less likely to provide each formation opportunity. In the cases of youth group and VBS, these congregations were much less likely to provide these opportunities than larger and medium-sized congregations.



Faith formation opportunities beyond the local setting

- Nearly two-thirds of responding congregations (64%) reported that their children or youth had participated in at least one faith formation offering beyond their local setting in the past 2-3 years.
- Among rural and urban congregations, children and youth most frequently attended Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (65% and 58%, respectively). Among suburban congregations, children and youth most often attended the ELCA Youth Gathering (60%) and LOM (56%).
- Participation in faith formation opportunities was related to the size of the congregation. Smaller congregations reported that children and youth participated in ELCA Youth Gathering, synod events, and mission or service-learning trips at a much lower rather than larger congregations. It is notable that these smaller congregations reported children and youth attending LOM at a rate comparable to medium-sized congregations.



Relevant training of children's ministry leader

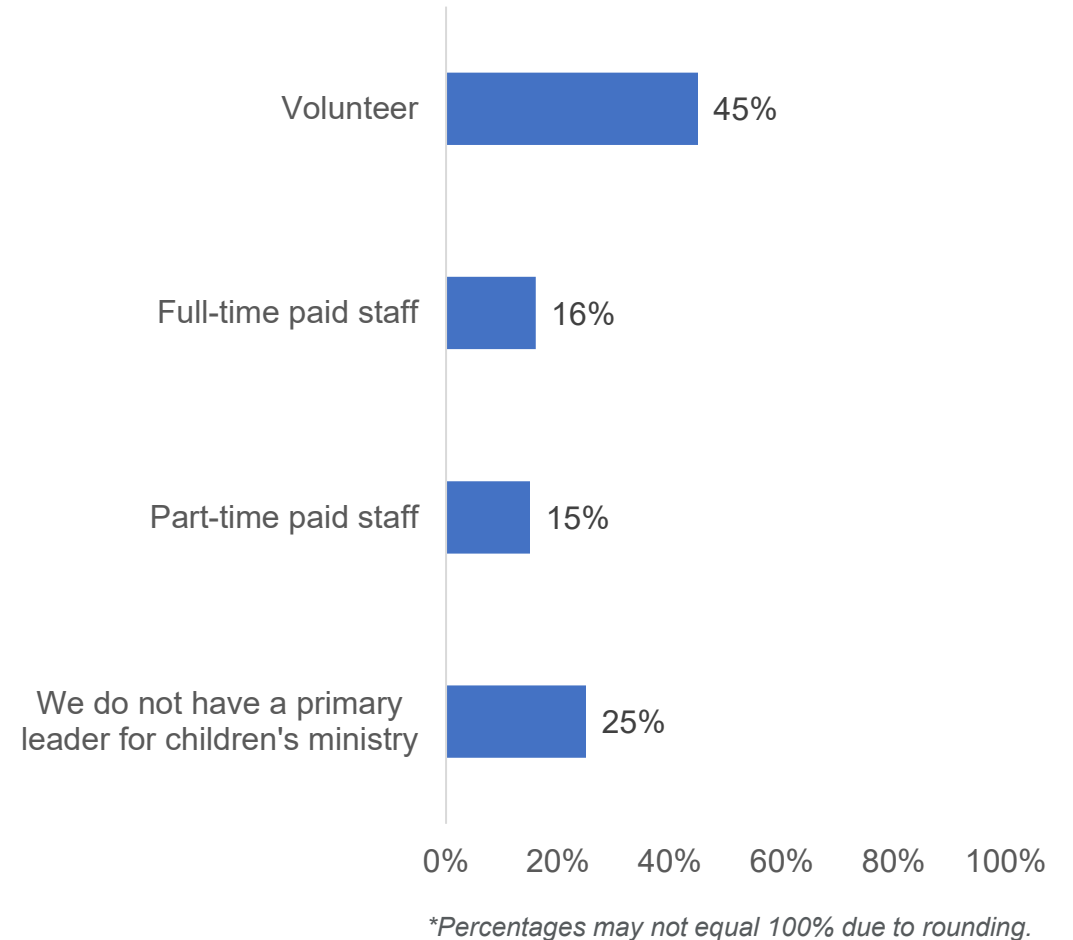
- Congregations most frequently reported that their children's ministry leader had received training or mentoring on the job (35%). Leaders were less likely to have received formal training, either in their undergraduate work (24%) or in seminary (18%).
- Across all community contexts, congregations were most likely to report that their children's ministry leaders had received training or mentoring on the job. When it came to formal training, suburban congregations were most likely to report that their children's ministry leader had received relevant undergraduate training (32%), and urban congregations were most likely to report that their leader had been seminary trained (24%).
- More than 20% of reporting congregations indicated they do not have a children's ministry leader. This was consistent across community contexts. It was considerably more likely in smaller congregations (26%), compared to medium-sized (6%) and larger congregations (0%).



**Percentages do not equal 100% due to selecting all that apply.*

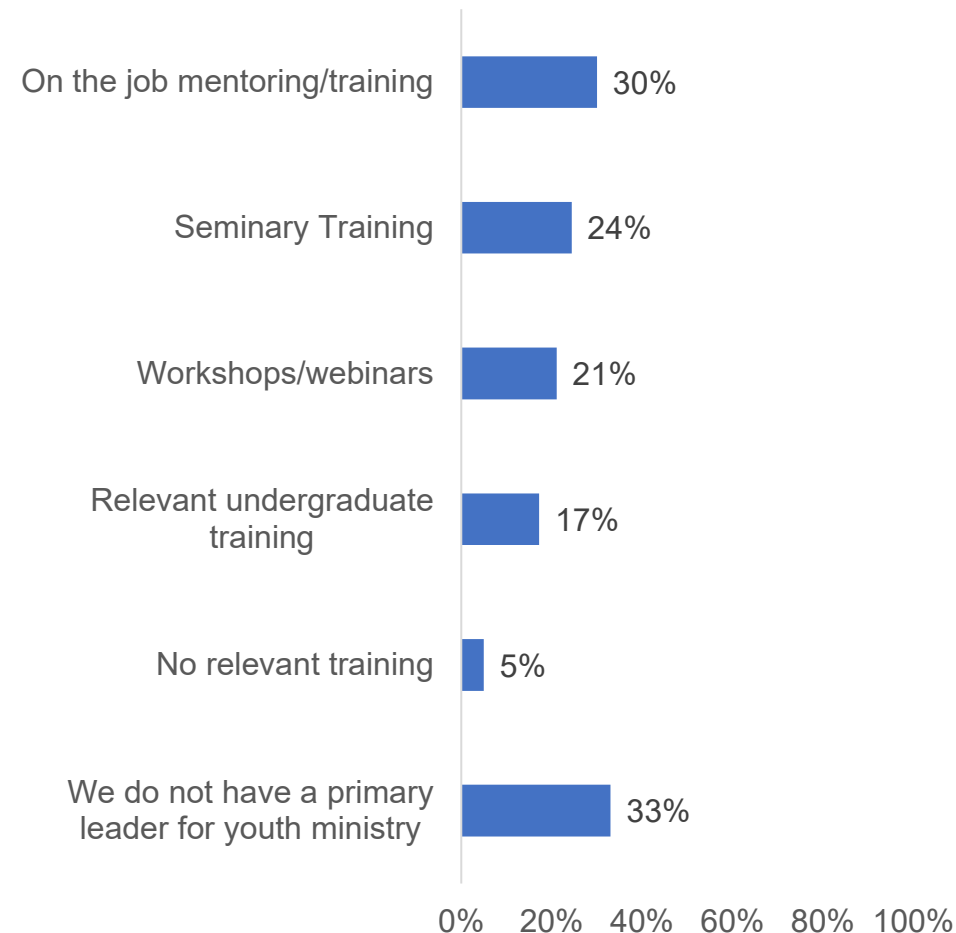
Employment status of children's ministry leader

- Nearly half of reporting congregations (45%) indicated that their primary leader for children's ministry is a volunteer.
- Rural congregations were considerably more likely to report that their primary children's ministry leader is a volunteer (63%), compared to approximately one-third of urban and suburban congregations.
- Congregation size also played a role in the staffing of children's ministry.
 - None of the larger congregations that responded indicated that their primary children's ministry leader was a volunteer.
 - Medium-sized congregations were the most likely to report having a full-time staff person for children's ministry (46%), compared to 33% of large congregations and 10% of smaller congregations.



Relevant training of youth ministry leader

- Congregations most frequently reported that their youth ministry leaders had received training or mentoring on the job (30%). Additionally, one-quarter of congregations reported that their youth ministry leader had received seminary training.
- There were not large differences in the training profiles of youth ministry leaders across different community contexts. Mentoring and training on the job as well as formal seminary training were the most common among rural, urban, and suburban congregations.
- Differences were more pronounced by congregation size. Larger congregations were much more likely to report that their leaders had received on the job training (78%). Medium-sized congregations were more likely to report that their leaders had been formally trained (38% in seminary; 49% in undergrad).
- One-third of congregations indicated they do not have a youth ministry leader. This proportion was consistent across community contexts, but not when congregation size varied. None of the larger congregations and only 9% of medium-sized congregations reported that they did not have a primary leader for youth ministry.

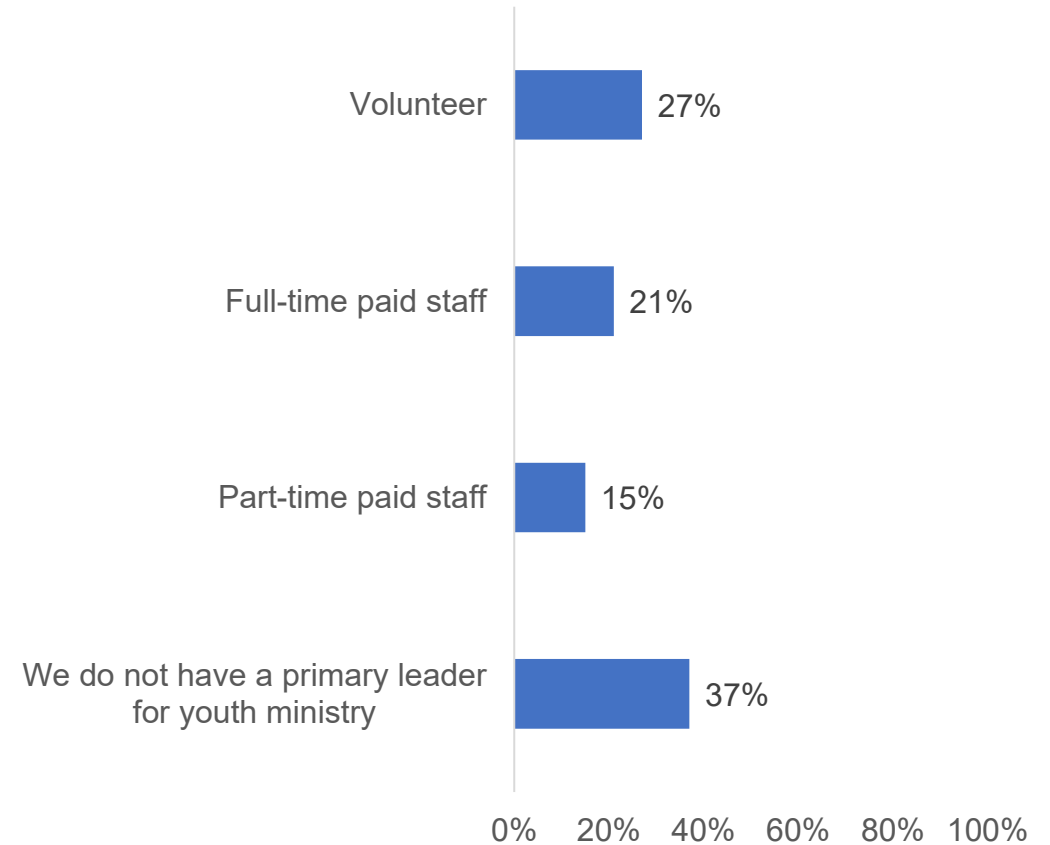


**Percentages do not equal 100% due to selecting all that apply.*



Employment status of youth ministry leader

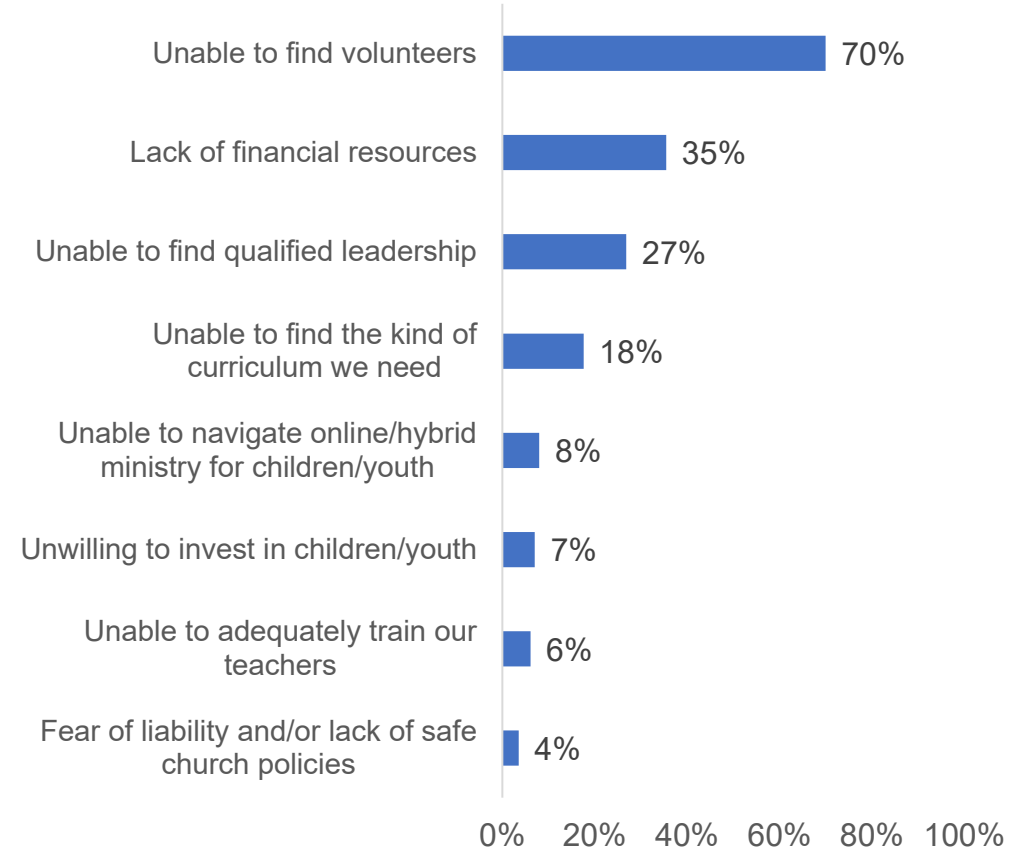
- One-quarter of congregations reported that their primary youth ministry leader was a volunteer. This was relatively consistent across congregations of different sizes. Slightly less frequent (21%) was employing a full-time staff person.
- Compared to urban and suburban congregations, rural congregations were more likely to report that their youth ministry leader was a volunteer (36%) and less likely to report employing a full-time staff person (17%).
- Larger and medium-sized congregations were much more likely to have full-time staff (48% and 44%, respectively).
- Smaller congregations were much more likely to report that they did not have a youth program (43%), compared to 11% of medium-sized congregations and none of the larger congregations.
- Overall, congregations were more likely to report that they had a primary leader for children's ministry compared to youth ministry. They were also more likely to report that the children's ministry leader was a volunteer.



**Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.*

Challenges facing congregations

- The greatest challenge facing congregations around the faith formation of children and youth is the inability to find volunteers (70%). This was the most common challenge reported for congregations of all sizes and community contexts.
- Another common challenge included the lack of financial resources (35%).
 - Surprisingly, a higher percentage of larger congregations (50%) reported lack of financial resources than smaller (36%) or medium-sized (26%) congregations*.
 - Urban congregations were the most likely to report a lack of financial resources (43%), compared to suburban (36%) and rural congregations (22%).



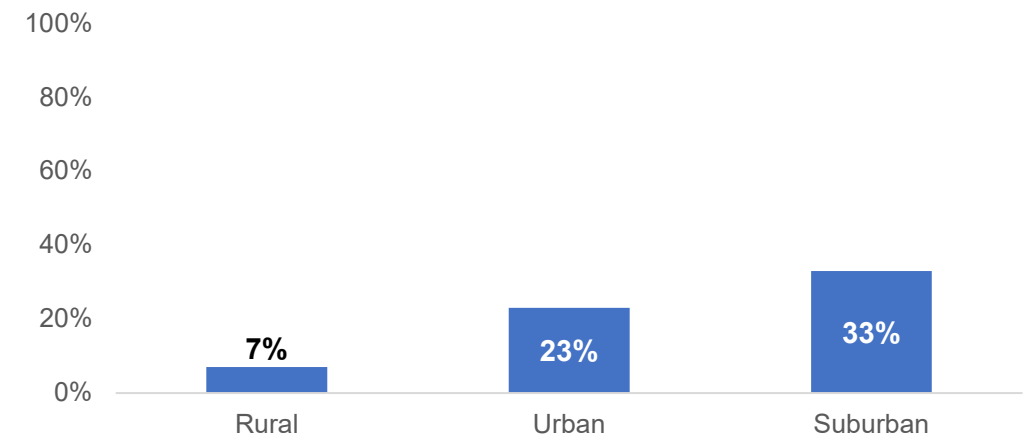
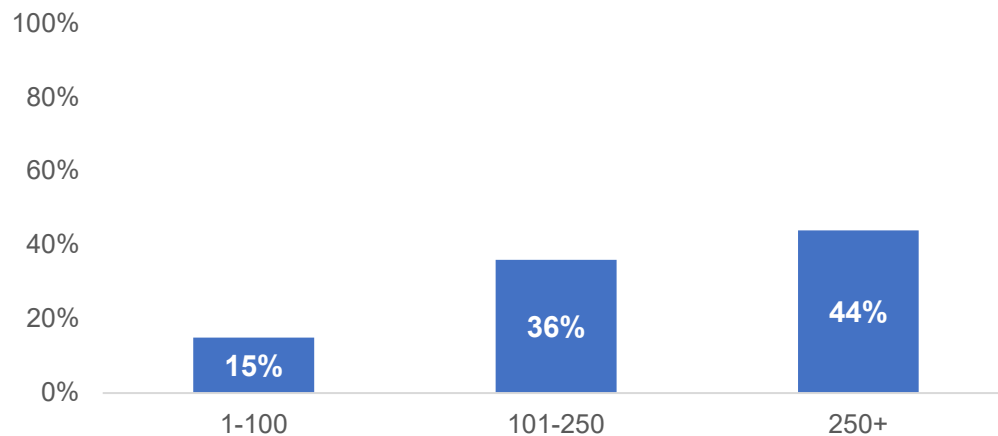
Congregations' needs regarding faith formation

- The most frequently reported need of congregations was ideas for partnering with other congregations (44%).
 - Congregations across community contexts reported this need at a similar rate (ranging between 42% for urban and 53% for suburban congregations).
 - Perhaps not surprisingly, smaller and medium-sized congregations more often reported ideas for partnerships as a need (47% and 46%, respectively) than did larger congregations (29%).
 - Of the “Other” responses provided, many focused on needing children, youth or young families and not having them.
- Urban (31%) and suburban (34%) congregations more frequently indicated they needed affordable training for volunteers/teachers than rural congregations (20%).
- Compared to smaller congregations, medium-sized congregations were more likely to indicate they needed guidance on safe church policy and guidance on how best to use online platforms for faith formation.



Early Childhood Learning Centers

- Overall, less than 20% of responding congregations reported operating an early childhood learning center.
- Larger congregations were the most likely to have an early childhood learning center, though a substantial proportion of medium-sized congregation (more than one-third) also operated these centers.
- Suburban congregations were more likely than congregations in other community contexts to operate an early childhood learning center. Very few rural congregations operated such a center.



Frequency Tables

Which of the following faith formation opportunities does your congregation/worshiping community currently offer for children and youth? (In-person)

In-person		Sunday School	Confirmation	Youth Group	Bible Studies	Vacation Bible School
Overall (n = 454)		81% (366)	83% (375)	47% (213)	55% (249)	58% (264)
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n = 301)	79% (238)	81% (243)	39% (118)	50% (150)	54% (163)
	101-250 (n = 55)	98% (54)	98% (54)	80% (44)	73% (40)	73% (40)
	251+ (n = 9)	100% (9)	100% (9)	89% (8)	67% (6)	100% (9)
	Rural (n = 120)	84% (101)	88% (105)	43% (52)	53% (63)	66% (79)
Community Context*	Urban (n = 152)	80% (122)	83% (126)	51% (77)	53% (81)	52% (79)
	Suburban (n = 71)	87% (62)	85% (60)	52% (37)	62% (44)	62% (44)

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.

Which of the following faith formation opportunities does your congregation/worshiping community currently offer for children and youth? (Online)

In-person		Sunday School	Confirmation	Youth Group	Bible Studies	Vacation Bible School
Overall (n = 454)		2% (11)	7% (30)	1% (3)	13% (57)	0% (0)
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n = 301)	2% (6)	7% (20)	<1% (1)	11% (34)	0% (0)
	101-250 (n = 55)	2% (1)	4% (2)	0% (0)	18% (10)	0% (0)
	251+ (n = 9)	22% (2)	22% (2)	11% (1)	33% (3)	0% (0)
	Rural (n = 120)	2% (2)	3% (4)	1% (1)	7% (8)	0% (0)
Community Context*	Urban (n = 152)	4% (6)	8% (12)	1% (1)	16% (25)	0% (0)
	Suburban (n = 71)	1% (1)	9% (6)	0% (0)	14% (10)	0% (0)

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.

In which of the following faith formation opportunities for children and youth has your congregation/ worshiping community participated in the last two to three years?

Lutheran Outdoor Ministries camp	56% (192)
ELCA Youth Gathering	44% (150)
Synod events	38% (130)
Mission or Service-Learning Trips	29% (101)
Regional Youth Gathering	15% (52)
Children, Youth and Family Network Extravaganza and/or Programs	14% (49)
Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) training	5% (16)
Youth Encounter Quakes	3% (9)
Other (See pp. 18-20 for verbatim responses)	21% (73)

**Number of respondents was 344.*

In which of the following faith formation opportunities for children and youth has your congregation/ worshiping community participated in the last two to three years?

	In-person Worship Attendance		
	1-100	101-250	250+
Lutheran Outdoor Ministries camp	58% (124)	60% (31)	78% (7)
ELCA Youth Gathering	40% (85)	62% (32)	56% (5)
Synod events	35% (75)	50% (26)	56% (5)
Mission or Service Learning Trips	24% (52)	58% (30)	56% (5)
Regional Youth Gathering	14% (31)	17% (9)	22% (2)
Children, Youth and Family Network Extravaganza	11% (23)	25% (13)	11% (1)
Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) training	3% (6)	13% (7)	22% (2)
Youth Encounter Quakes	3% (6)	4% (2)	0% (0)
Other (See pp. 18-20 for verbatim responses)	21% (45)	13% (7)	0% (0)
Total respondents within category*	215	52	9

**Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.*

In which of the following faith formation opportunities for children and youth has your congregation/ worshiping community participated in the last two to three years?

	Community Context		
	Rural	Urban	Suburban
Lutheran Outdoor Ministries camp	65% (57)	58% (67)	56% (29)
ELCA Youth Gathering	31% (27)	46% (53)	60% (31)
Synod events	36% (32)	37% (43)	50% (26)
Mission or Service Learning Trips	24% (21)	38% (44)	44% (23)
Regional Youth Gathering	17% (15)	14% (16)	10% (5)
Children, Youth and Family Network Extravaganza	9% (8)	18% (21)	13% (7)
Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) training	2% (2)	5% (6)	12% (6)
Youth Encounter Quakes	1% (1)	3% (3)	6% (3)
Other (See pp. 18-20 for verbatim responses)	23% (20)	23% (27)	8% (4)
Total respondents within category*	88	116	52

**Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.*

In which of the following faith formation opportunities for children and youth has your congregation/ worshiping community participated in the last two to three years? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- We have the pre-school but currently only have one two years old and one infant.
- Adopt a Highway Program; Feed My Starving Children Day
- adventure trips
- all youth are currently invited and included in any youth, Sunday School, and related events/programs with Advent Lutheran.
- automotive/community gardening
- Back to school event
- Camp Wapo
- Campformation - not at a LOM camp
- CityReach (a program in which teenagers learn from unhoused persons), Outdoor Church street ministry, Faith Kitchen meal program
- Citywide Mainline Denominations Youth Group
- Conference~ Catechism retreats and field trips
- Confirmation Camp
- Confirmation retreats
- creation of localized service opportunities with neighboring congregations
- currently only confirmation and Sunday school for our few
- Deep Dive Confirmation--shared with 10 other ELCA congregations in St. Paul, MN
- Ecumenical Campus Ministry Retreats/Spring Breaks
- Estudio bíblico vacacional,
- Faith Forward
- Free Spanish Class, Book Club, Fine Arts Class
- God's Work, Our Hands
- Good Shepherd community preschool and Wednesday early public school dismissal Bible club
- Hace un año y medio tres de nosotras participamos de un nuevo material para la escuela bíblica. El material aún no ha sido publicado.
- Have not done these in the last 2-3 years.
- Holden Village May Youth Weekend
- Intergenerational activities
- Intergenerational events, youth groups
- Intergenerational themed events
- International service learning trips
- KidZKlub Activities
- Lay-leader led catechism (first in several years)
- Leadership Lab; Quad City Area Ignite; local service events (men's mission, river cleanup, Crop Walk)
- LifeWise Academy
- Local connection w other congregations, called Discipleship Now
- Local Cultural/Service Experiences
- Local gathering and church events
- Local service events
- Lutheran Bible Camp
- Lutheridge
- Newly formed area Youth Ministry-Next Generation

In which of the following faith formation opportunities for children and youth has your congregation/ worshiping community participated in the last two to three years? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- No children or youth in this congregation
- none the ELCA is no place to teach youth about Jesus
- Our Minister of Youth relocated (spouse's job) so we are determining the next steps there
- Our youth have outgrown these opportunities.
- Participation in worship service as lector, acolyte and crucifer
- Performing Arts Ministry camps during the summer.
- PLM Academy
- SAM support
- SKY multi-church youth group, our own family camps, Family & Friends Gathering, Christian preschool and family preschool chapel.
- Synod Youth Group Events
- The above questions do not apply as we have NO children.
- Theater Camp (new!)- and Family Camp (past)
- Unfortunately in this rural community, the recent ELCA Youth Gathering was held the same week as the County Fair which is a strong commitment for our youth.
- Unfortunately these groups have sold themselves to political ideologies
- Vacation Bible School
- VBS and Youth seminars
- We currently have a two-year-old coming regularly, a one- and a three-year-old coming occasionally and a middle-school youth on rare occasions. It is difficult to build and support programs for children and youth with small numbers. But we are prepared in standby mode if children come. Outreach to young families has not been successful so far.
- We do not have any youth at this time.
- We do not have any youth in our congregation at present.
- We have a mixture of children ages but not enough for a full Sunday School. Front room kids is offered to all the children during the worship service.
- We have Confirmation with 4 other churches and several confirmation retreats
- We have no children or youth. Like so many congregations these days, nearly everyone is retired, but they sure are vital.
- We have no youth or children at this time.
- We have no youth. However, we have supported Luther Springs, and our congregation sent three teens to the Youth Gathering from another congregation.
- We have only had 2-3 children in our congregation. But now as we share space with a United Methodist congregation, they participate in the UMC Sunday School.

In which of the following faith formation opportunities for children and youth has your congregation/ worshiping community participated in the last two to three years? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- We have very few youth, and most Sundays, none are present. We offer our version of Sunday School (called Children's Church) and Confirmation when needed. VBS is held in conjunction with our sister church.
- We mostly have small children.
- We only have 3 children who regularly attend services. We are mostly retirees.
- Wednesday Evenings at the church and community field trips "Adventures on the Run"
- Yearly special offerings for local or synod recipients
- Youth activities sponsored by local churches together
- Youth are included in our social gatherings and worship. This is our next area of focus.
- YouthWorks

What relevant training has the person who is the primary leader for children's ministry in your congregation/ worshiping community received?

		Seminary Training	Relevant undergraduate training	Workshops/ webinars	On the job mentoring /training	No relevant training	I am not aware of training they received	We do not have a primary leader for children's ministry	Other (See pp. 22-23 for verbatim responses)
Overall (n=473)		18% (83)	23% (111)	22% (102)	35% (166)	7% (33)	16% (77)	21% (100)	16% (76)
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n=321)	15% (49)	18% (59)	19% (60)	31% (98)	7% (21)	18% (57)	26% (83)	16% (51)
	101-250 (n=55)	33% (18)	49% (27)	38% (21)	56% (31)	5% (3)	9% (5)	5% (3)	22% (12)
	251+ (n=9)	11% (1)	56% (5)	44% (4)	89% (8)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Community Context	Rural (n=126)	14% (18)	19% (24)	17% (21)	29% (37)	9% (11)	25% (31)	17% (21)	16% (20)
	Urban (n=158)	24% (38)	26% (41)	26% (41)	39% (62)	6% (10)	13% (20)	23% (36)	15% (23)
	Suburban (n=72)	21% (15)	32% (23)	29% (21)	42% (30)	1% (1)	15% (11)	18% (13)	14% (10)

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.

What relevant training has the person who is the primary leader for children's ministry in your congregation/ worshiping community received? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- a retired teacher who loves kids
- active elementary school teacher
- Alimentar a los desamparados
- all are teachers by profession and use a purchased curriculum (deep blue by cokesbury)
- Both ladies have worked in the junior high school system.
- Camp leader for many years
- Certificate program
- Certified teacher
- Congregational Faith formation Certification.
- Currently led by Interim Pastor
- Diakonia
- Do not have children in the congregation at this time.
- ELCA Extravaganza, Boundaries Training
- Elementary teacher
- Extravaganza
- Former teacher
- Godly Play Core Training
- graduate degree in congregational ministry (not from a seminary)
- Hold a Masters Degree in Elem. Ed.
- I provide chapel weekly for our preschool and do a children's message each Sunday as Pastor.
- I serve as Pastor but also handle most of the children's ministry with the help of faithful volunteers.
- Lifelong history of participating in and leading youth ministry at our congregation
- lifelong Lutheran with a love for children and the gospel
- Local Elementary/Middle School Teachers
- Most are either teachers or have children themselves.
- No teníamos niñez en la congregación hasta hace un año que están congregandose tres familias con niñez y juventud. Van desde 1 año hasta los 15 años.
- None, but works with our pastor to make it relevant and true to the ELCA practices.
- On line
- Our children's ministry leadership is shared among the participating families
- Our congregation doesn't have a group of children and youth.
- Our most significant leader is a retired elementary teacher
- Our Youth leader is an ELCA Deacon
- Parent/physical therapist and also a school teacher
- Pastor and volunteers on our Life-long Learning team create and administer the children's formation activities
- Pastor has a background in youth ministry- not sure of specifics
- Pastor is currently taking a main role along with a newly formed Education committee
- Pastor led
- Pastor led programming
- Pre-school/kindergarten school with 108 students
- professional educator
- public school teacher

What relevant training has the person who is the primary leader for children's ministry in your congregation/ worshiping community received? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- relevant experience on a service/mission trip staff
- Sabbatical granted for study and travel to other congregations
- school teachers
- School teachers
- see previous question
- She is a "special needs" teacher in her full time job.
- She is a retired school teacher
- Strong network of CYF ministers in the region whose conversations, workshops are part of ongoing work
- Synodical Deacon (MNYS)/Growing in Faith program
- the ministry was previously being led by a lay person (Council president) prior to start of new pastor in 4/2024
- The pastor would be responsible for children's ministry. There are no children.
- They are Mother's, Teacher's and Grandmother's
- They are parents and life long Christians
- This is a primary focus for the congregation's pastor
- This is an individual hired by the UMC congregation with whom we share space.
- This is the pastor.
- Volunteer leaders and Pastor share this ministry
- Volunteers
- Was trained in the LCMS as an educator and youth leader.
- We are currently seeking a leader.
- We are in the process of looking for a children's youth minister partnering with another area church. At this time, our pastor and a group of parents are ministering to the children and youth.
- We do not have an active children's ministry.
- We have a full-time children's ministry position budgeted for, but it is currently vacant. One of the pastors currently is serving as the primary children's ministry leader.
- We have a group of volunteers who are not trained who work with the pastor on youth ministry.
- We have a retired Family and Children's Minister from a Methodist Congregation who is always available for Children and Youth Ministry whenever needed. But we usually don't have any children at worship.
- We have a team of paid and volunteers who share the roll of leadership.
- We have an interim youth minister right now
- We have multiple volunteer leaders.
- We have no children or children's ministry.
- We have no youth or children at this time.
- we have no youth under the age of 5
- We have volunteer leaders for different age groups
- Working on a master's degree in counseling, Safe Haven.
- Works professionally as a children's social worker
- Years of experience with rural VBS and Youth ministry

Is the primary leader for children's ministry a volunteer or paid staff?

		Volunteer	Part-time paid staff	Full-time paid staff	We do not have a primary leader for children's ministry
Overall (n=483)		45% (215)	15% (70)	16% (78)	25% (120)
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n=327)	48% (156)	13% (41)	10% (32)	30% (98)
	101-250 (n=55)	31% (17)	18% (10)	45% (25)	5% (3)
	251+ (n=9)	0% (0)	67% (6)	33% (3)	0% (0)
Community Context	Rural (n=125)	63% (79)	6% (8)	10% (13)	20% (25)
	Urban (n=164)	31% (50)	20% (32)	23% (38)	27% (44)
	Suburban (n=72)	35% (26)	27% (20)	20% (15)	19% (14)

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.

What relevant training has the person who is the primary leader for youth ministry in your congregation/ worshiping community received?

		Seminary Training	Relevant undergraduate training	Workshops/ webinars	On the job mentoring /training	No relevant training	I am not aware of training they received	We do not have a primary leader for youth ministry	Other (See pp. 26-27 for verbatim responses)
Overall (n=464)		24% (113)	17% (80)	21% (98)	30% (137)	5% (25)	8% (37)	33% (152)	12% (54)
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n=310)	25% (76)	12% (38)	17% (52)	25% (77)	5% (14)	8% (25)	37% (116)	12% (38)
	101-250 (n=55)	38% (21)	49% (27)	40% (22)	53% (29)	4% (2)	5% (3)	9% (5)	15% (8)
	251+ (n=9)	22% (2)	33% (3)	56% (5)	78% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11% (1)
Community Context	Rural (n=120)	23% (27)	12% (14)	17% (20)	28% (33)	5% (6)	12% (14)	36% (43)	12% (14)
	Urban (n=154)	32% (49)	22% (34)	26% (40)	30% (46)	4% (6)	6% (10)	30% (46)	10% (16)
	Suburban (n=69)	26% (18)	26% (18)	25% (17)	38% (26)	4% (3)	4% (3)	30% (21)	9% (6)

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.

What relevant training has the person who is the primary leader for youth ministry in your congregation/ worshiping community received? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- A Mother who wants the same experience she had growing up
- Basketball coach and substitute teacher in the schools
- Both ladies have worked in the junior high school system
- certificate program
- Congregational Faith formation
- CYF events in the
- Diakonia
- ELCA Extravaganza, Boundaries Training
- Extravaganza, years of experience
- Godly Play Core Training
- Holds a Masters Degree
- Interim Pastor
- It is the same person who provides ministry to the children
- Led by Solo Pastor
- Life experience
- Local Elementary/Middle School Teachers
- Most are teachers or are parents.
- No youth attending at this time. Our low number of members, mostly age 50 and above, makes outreach to build a program and draw community youth difficult.
- none at this time, interim Pastor overseeing development of this area
- on staff with a service/mission trip organization
- one of our leaders is a retired teacher, the other is a teacher assistant
- Our Pastor is leading the youth ministry leader at this time
- Pastor
- Pastor leads confirmation, volunteer leads Sunday school
- Pastor led
- Pastor Luther is working with an interim
- Pastor teaches confirmation youth. Lay leader youth ministry.
- Previous Experience working with youth as a LE officer.
- Prior leader resigned due to health - had bachelors degree; In transition now hiring new leader with relevant undergrad training
- Rebuilding of youth ministry is currently happening, led primarily by the pastor and volunteers
- Same as above
- same fulltime person leads children and youth ministries, with help from parttime staffother
- Same person as #10
- Same person as before -- ELCA Deacon
- Same person as children's ministry
- School teachers
- The pastor would be responsible for youth ministry. There are no youth.
- The youth point is the pastor/director
- This is a primary focus for the congregation's pastor
- This is the same person who does Children's Ministry/ (See above)

What relevant training has the person who is the primary leader for youth ministry in your congregation/ worshiping community received? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- Until August 2024, the Associate Pastor had this responsibility but accepted a new call elsewhere so this position is currently vacant.
- Volunteer
- We are in the process of looking for a children's youth minister partnering with another area church. At this time, our pastor and a group of parents are ministering to the children and youth.
- We collaborate with partner churches
- we currently have no youth attending
- We do not currently have any teenagers active in our church
- We do not have a youth ministry
- We do not have an active youth ministry.
- We do not have anyone who is currently leading youth ministry because of a lack of attending youth members.
- We do not have such a post.
- we have children just reaching the youth ministry age
- We have no young people.
- We have no youth or children at this time.

Is the primary leader for youth ministry a volunteer or paid staff?

		Volunteer	Part-time paid staff	Full-time paid staff	We do not have a primary leader for youth ministry
Overall (n=467)		27% (125)	15% (68)	21% (100)	37% (174)
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n=310)	27% (84)	13% (41)	17% (53)	43% (132)
	101-250 (n=56)	20% (11)	21% (12)	48% (27)	11% (6)
	251+ (n=9)	22% (2)	33% (3)	44% (4)	0% (0)
Community Context	Rural (n=118)	36% (42)	10% (12)	16% (19)	38% (45)
	Urban (n=159)	19% (31)	16% (25)	30% (48)	35% (55)
	Suburban (n=70)	20% (14)	24% (17)	26% (18)	30% (21)

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.

Which of the following challenges has your congregation/worshiping community experienced around the faith formation of children and youth?

Unable to find volunteers	70% (219)
Lack of financial resources	35% (111)
Unable to find qualified leadership	27% (84)
Unable to find the kind of curriculum we need	18% (55)
Unable to navigate online/hybrid ministry for children/youth	8% (25)
Unwilling to invest in children/youth	7% (22)
Unable to adequately train our teachers	6% (19)
Fear of liability and/or lack of safe church policies	4% (11)

**Number of respondents was 313.*

Which of the following challenges has your congregation/worshiping community experienced around the faith formation of children and youth?

In-person Worship Attendance

	1-100	101-250	251+
Unable to find volunteers	73% (148)	72% (28)	75% (6)
Lack of financial resources	36% (72)	26% (10)	50% (4)
Unable to find qualified leadership	25% (50)	28% (11)	38% (3)
Unable to find the kind of curriculum we need	16% (32)	21% (8)	25% (2)
Unable to navigate online/hybrid ministry for children/youth	9% (18)	10% (4)	0% (0)
Unwilling to invest in children/youth	9% (18)	0% (0)	13% (1)
Unable to adequately train our teachers	7% (14)	5% (2)	13% (1)
Fear of liability and/or lack of safe church policies	3% (7)	5% (2)	13% (1)
Total respondents within category*	203	39	8

Community Context

	Rural	Urban	Suburban
Unable to find volunteers	78% (64)	66% (73)	80% (36)
Lack of financial resources	22% (18)	43% (48)	36% (16)
Unable to find qualified leadership	28% (23)	23% (26)	29% (13)
Unable to find the kind of curriculum we need	15% (12)	19% (21)	20% (9)
Unable to navigate online/hybrid ministry for children/youth	5% (4)	7% (8)	11% (15)
Unwilling to invest in children/youth	5% (4)	5% (6)	11% (5)
Unable to adequately train our teachers	9% (7)	4% (4)	7% (3)
Fear of liability and/or lack of safe church policies	2% (2)	4% (4)	7% (3)
Total respondents within category*	82	111	45

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.

What needs does your congregation/worshiping community have in regard to faith formation of children and youth?

Ideas for partnering with other congregations/worshiping communities	44% (172)
Affordable training for volunteers/teachers	28% (109)
List of recommended curricula and their costs	27% (103)
Resources on Lutheran identity	24% (91)
Guidance on how best to use online platforms for faith formation	20% (76)
Guidance on safe church policy	17% (65)
Other (See pp. 33-37 for verbatim responses)	41% (157)

**Number of respondents was 387.*

What needs does your congregation/worshiping community have in regard to faith formation of children and youth?

In-person Worship Attendance

	1-100	101-250	251+
Ideas for partnering with other congregations/worshiping communities	47% (122)	46% (20)	29% (2)
Affordable training for volunteers/teachers	25% (65)	27% (12)	57% (4)
List of recommended curricula and their costs	26% (68)	25% (11)	14% (1)
Resources on Lutheran identity	21% (54)	30% (13)	14% (1)
Guidance on how best to use online platforms for faith formation	16% (41)	34% (15)	29% (2)
Guidance on safe church policy	16% (42)	23% (10)	0% (0)
Other (See pp. 33-37 for verbatim responses)	45% (119)	18% (8)	43% (3)
Total respondents within category*	262	44	7

Community Context

	Rural	Urban	Suburban
Ideas for partnering with other congregations/worshiping communities	47% (46)	42% (53)	53% (33)
Affordable training for volunteers/teachers	20% (20)	31% (39)	34% (21)
List of recommended curricula and their costs	29% (28)	24% (31)	26% (16)
Resources on Lutheran identity	20% (20)	23% (29)	21% (13)
Guidance on how best to use online platforms for faith formation	14% (14)	21% (27)	19% (12)
Guidance on safe church policy	15% (15)	14% (18)	21% (13)
Other (See pp. 33-37 for verbatim responses)	43% (42)	36% (46)	32% (20)
Total respondents within category*	98	127	62

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.

What needs does your congregation/worshiping community have in regard to faith formation of children and youth? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- A Christian Education program that could be used by an affiliated child-care facility.
- A curriculum 1) provides an adult level synopsis of the story they are teaching with key points to keep in mind. 2) a curriculum whose activities reinforce and deepen the understanding of the story they are learning. (We find Spark rotate does not do this adequately).
- Actual youth attendance
- As a dwindling, elderly congregation, we have no children or youth
- Attracting families with children and youth
- Being able to afford paid youth minister (other than the pastor)
- better methods to promote our children's ministry
- Building our congregation with new families with children/youth
- Children
- children & youth willing to participate in faith formation
- children and youth
- children and youth
- Children and youth
- Children and youth not present
- children and youth to attend
- Children and youth to do faith formation with
- children and youth who want to be involved in these things or are willing to leave the local area.
- Children and youth. We have a total of four under 18.
- Children do not regularly attend/participate
- children over the age of 4
- coaching and guidance to help key leaders n moving forward and building more identity in youth and family ministries.
- College age appropriate resources
- Committed volunteers and more youth and children.
- Community schedules create major conflicts youth. Too many youth sports and music events take valuable time away from church youth programming.
- competing with school sports and activities as well as the ministries of non-denominational churches in the area
- Confirmation curriculum could be more age and language appropriate for today's youth.
- Congregation is "aging out".
- Curricula that are welcoming and affirming - RIC supportive
- Curriculum that is easy to use by lay folks; right now our pastor is writing all of the classes for our K-4 class because we only meet once a month and there are not good, affordable resources for this.
- Curriculum to cover wide range of ages in one classroom
- Do not understand the question
- Encouragement for parents to make it a priority
- encouraging parents to bring youth/children to participation in sharing the Good News. Parents often think a program needs to be in place and established before committing to participate.
- Flexible resources that adapt to two kids or ten because we never know

What needs does your congregation/worshiping community have in regard to faith formation of children and youth? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- funding for a more adequate salary and training and rest
- Funds to call a youth pastor.
- Guidance in community building when our youth have very busy schedules that don't often intersect.
- Guidance on helping families prioritize faith formation
- Guiding children & parents to resist woke religion
- Having parents bring children to church. We are not attracting young families.
- Helping families realize the importance of faith formation over other choices/activities.
- How to attract families with children and youth to a 275+ year old church that overwhelmingly has 60+ year old population in the community within a 3 mile radius of the church. And How to do any outreach since the congregation has a high percentage (90+%) of mostly older adults whose response is that it is someone else's turn to work with children and youth. This congregation also shares a part-time with another congregation.
- how to break through families' time commitments
- How to build consistency in participation
- How to encourage the congregation to interact with/show support for the children and youth beyond financially.
- I have no idea
- Ideas for drawing in families with children and youth.
- Ideas for revitalizing engagement of youth and children
- Ideas on getting children and youth to come in the first place.
- Inconsistent participation of children and youth who are part of our congregation.
- Just need children and youth
- lack of children
- Lack of children and youth - we work with those we have
- Lack of children attending church
- Lack of children attending worship or children/youth activities
- lack of investment of parents/adults to have youth involved; interest in youth to be involved
- Leaders
- Los materiales en español son vitales para poder avanzar.
- Lots of curriculum exists, but most of it has questionable or problematic content. ELCA World Hunger has good VBS curriculum, but it's one of the few exceptions. I'm not a fan of just about any confirmation curriculum out there.
- Members who are young and vital enough to be able to volunteer with youth and family ministry. We also lack young families.
- more bodies
- more children
- more children and youth
- more children to attend
- More children/youth in congregation.
- more kids
- More kids would be great!
- More volunteers

What needs does your congregation/worshiping community have in regard to faith formation of children and youth? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- Navigating time constraints that today's families are under.
- Need children/youth
- need to be open to using our Endowment Fund monies
- Need to get unstuck from old models
- Needing youth & volunteers
- New ideas to engage with the families of today and their specific experiences.
- No youth programs at the present time
- None of these. Where's the option of "no kids in community."
- Nothing at this time.
- Number of children who attend
- numbers of children/youth are limited
- Our challenge - attracting enough children and youth. Lack of younger adults willing to take on robust outreach and development program. Older adults have less energy and lack the same connections to other young families.
- Our challenge is not in providing faith formation opportunities, it is having families participate fully and regularly.
- Our congregation is an older population. There are very few children in attendance on a regularly basis.
- Our new pastor has a large youth background and we are in the brainstorming phase of how to become more of a side-door resource/ministry for children and youth vs. expecting to see kids in church every Sunday.
- Our pastor is retiring at the end of February and I am still waiting for someone from the synod to contact me.
- Our youth group is not active right now.
- Outreach/invitation to youth and children (currently very few children/youth involved in our church)
- Parental support
- Parental support for activities
- Parental support. Parents have to navigate many competing activities that cause difficult choices in the family.
- Parents who have an interest in this. Our kids are very busy and we have few
- Participation of youth
- Pastoral leadership
- Presence and engagement of youth
- Real ways to actually connect with youth and their parents to make church a priority and not an after thought
- Redefine YM as serving the neighborhood youth and elevating how youth participate beyond "youth group."
- Resources for teaching one-on-one for confirmation. Resource for Sunday School or VBS that work with 3-5 students.
- Resources to encourage and support faith in the home
- Sharing of ideas in local area for children/youth ministry
- Since we are a rural church, our challenge was to find a time when parents could bring their children to church for Sunday School.
- Small congregations with youth who are very, very active in sports and often miss even Sunday morning worship due to sports commitments made first by their parents.

What needs does your congregation/worshiping community have in regard to faith formation of children and youth? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- St Andrew youth and children are invited to be part of Advent youth communities.
- The biggest reason for lack of children and youth in church is that church attendance is dropping across the board...fewer new families, fewer children and youth.
- The few kids we have are so busy that parents don't have the time to bring their kids to events.
- the large flexibility in attendance
- This congregation is an old congregation and has no youth
- time - challenges getting consistent participation
- Trained staff available to work
- Unknown-too few children attendance
- Very few youth
- Very rural and remote small congregations with very poor internet in the county.
- Ways to encourage FAMILIES to join the church. We have no kids and our congregation is aging and dwindling.
- Ways to welcome and retain young families with children
- We actually lack children and youth.
- We are a small, aging congregation with very few youth--and even less who regularly attend or participate. Guidance on how to once again build an active children and youth faith formation ministry would be much appreciated.
- We currently don't have enough children attending regularly to support a program
- We develop our own schedule of Wednesday evening classes using Godly Play. We only need more volunteer adults because our classes are full!
- We do not have many youth. Congregation is aging
- We do not have youth in our congregation at this time.
- We don't have a lot of children. We might have one child in grade 6 and another in grade 10.
- we don't have any children or youth.
- We don't have active youth right now
- We have just one family with 2 children. Problem is lack of children/youth.
- We have no children currently in our congregation
- We have no youth for several years until recently
- We have no youth or families with children.
- We have partnered with the Methodist, Episcopal, and UCC churches in our area for Joint Youth Ministry.
- We have the ideas congregations around us lack youth as well. Pastor teaches confirmation class in which four other Lutherans were invited. Only one other youth was available. inter-congregational work is a struggle due to lack of pastors/or any staff to coordinate efforts
- We have very few children and youth, so meaningful programming is a challenge.
- We have very few children and youth. The ones who are here are very involved in worship and attend Sunday School, help with community projects

What needs does your congregation/worshiping community have in regard to faith formation of children and youth? (Verbatim responses to Other)

- We incorporate children and youth in worship and we cannot get them to show up to scheduled activities due to school and sports conflicts
- We just don't have a large number of parents able/willing to bring kids regularly. Wide, sprawling school districts etc make this hard.
- We just need a few more children and youth
- We just need more kids.
- We lack children.
- We lack children.
- We need children
- We need children and youth
- We need children and youth!
- We need children to have a program. Zero attendance from young families in our area is the main problem.
- We need children to participate. We are an aged congregation.
- we need kids, and dont have any
- We need members with families!
- We need more children and youth
- We need more children.
- We need more children/youth!!!
- We need the children and young people. If we had them in attendance, we can work out the resoures.
- We need the kids
- We need to make a decision about hiring a staff person
- We need youth.
- .we only have 3 children in the congregation, 2 of whom are under age 3 so we don't really have any faith formation programs
- willingness of parents to bring them weekly
- would love to see training include new models of faith formation (getting away from Sunday school model since it is not working anymore). Also as every congregation we grieve the loss of more children and we also grieve the commitments that keep families from engaging on a regular basis
- Y O U T H
- Young Mothers to engage with their children about Faith
- Young people. We are an aging congregation with no families of young children anymore.
- youth
- youth are busy, rebuilding a program from scratch is hard

Does your congregation/worshiping community operate an early childhood center or school?

		Yes	No
Overall (n=494)		18% (89)	82% (405)
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n=339)	15% (51)	85% (288)
	101-250 (n=55)	36% (20)	64% (35)
	251+ (n=9)	44% (4)	56% (5)
Community Context	Rural (n=128)	7% (9)	93% (119)
	Urban (n=168)	23% (39)	77% (129)
	Suburban (n=76)	33% (25)	67% (51)

*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents.