

## Results: Youth Ministry Resources Questionnaire (mailed October 2002)

Department for Research and Evaluation, ELCA

Victoria Flood

August 2004

### Background

Staff from the Youth Ministries and Gathering Team of the Division for Congregational Ministries wanted more information about high school youth ministry programs across ELCA congregations. In addition, they wanted to know what is important to congregations when using resources for these programs. The questionnaire was restricted in scope to gather information on resources and programs directly related to or produced by the ELCA Youth Ministries and Gathering Team and did not include specific resources from other units or Augsburg Fortress. This information is expected to assist the Youth Ministries and Gathering Team in better meeting the needs of congregations with respect to resources.

A questionnaire was created and mailed to a random sample of 600 congregations within the ELCA for gathering this information. (See attached for the questionnaire and the complete response data for each question.) A total of 399 completed responses were received, for a response rate of 67 percent. Those congregations that responded were similar in size (determined by average worship attendance) and relatively similar in regional location<sup>1</sup> to the composition of congregations across the ELCA.

For purposes of analysis throughout this report, congregation size is categorized into three categories, based upon average worship attendance in 2002, as reported by congregations. The three categories are:

- Small, average worship attendance of 1 to 150;
- Medium, average worship attendance of 151 to 350; and
- Large, average worship attendance over 350.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of congregations that responded are small in terms of average worship attendance.

**Table 1: Responding Congregations by Size**

Size of Congregation	Number* of Responding Congregations
Small	282
Medium	84
Large	31

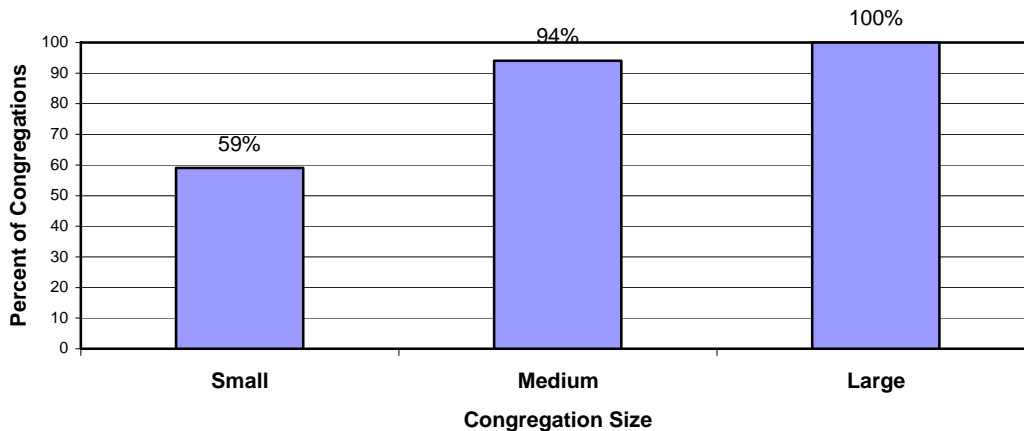
\*Average worship attendance was not available for two of the responding congregations

---

<sup>1</sup> The percent of responding congregations from Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 was within one percentage point of the percent of all ELCA congregations in those regions. The percent of responding congregations from Region 5 was nearly four percentage points higher than the percent of all ELCA congregations in that region. Conversely, the percent of responding congregations from Region 9 was about three percentage points less than the percent of all ELCA congregations in that region.

Nearly 70 percent of congregations (277 congregations) indicated their congregation has a high school youth ministry program. Larger congregations are more likely to have high school youth ministry programs than are smaller congregations. In fact, as shown in Figure 1, 100 percent of the largest congregations that responded had these programs.

**Figure 1: Congregations with a High School Youth Ministry Program, by Congregation Size**



*Summary*

High school youth ministry groups range in size, though small congregations are more likely to have smaller groups and large congregations are more likely to have larger groups. Most congregations, no matter their size, report having adult volunteers as at least one category of primary leaders for the high school youth ministry program. Large congregations are more likely to have lay, paid Youth Ministers as primary leaders and are least likely to have Pastors as primary leaders, compared to small and medium congregations.

Adult volunteers were chosen by over 60 percent of congregations as those who are the primary users of high school youth ministry program resources. Congregation uses for these resources include youth meetings, Sunday school classes, and youth retreats. Congregations with adult volunteers as primary leaders were no more or less likely to choose certain sources for program resources, but they were more likely than not to indicate that print resources would be most useful. This information suggests that the target audience of adult volunteers is an important audience and they might make a resource choice based on whether it is available in print format. The fact that they are no more or less likely to choose certain sources is positive news in the sense that they do not have developed loyalties to places other than the ELCA. However, this information also indicates they have no developed loyalty to ELCA resources, either.

Sources for program resources are significant among congregations with Pastors and those with lay, paid Youth Ministers as primary leaders. Congregations with Pastors as primary leaders are more likely than not to choose Augsburg Fortress as a source<sup>2</sup>, whereas congregations with lay, paid

---

<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire did not take into account that many of the youth ministry resources carried by Augsburg Fortress are resources produced by other independent publishers not affiliated with the ELCA. Augsburg Fortress may be indicated as the “source,” meaning the purchase point, even though it may not be the actual publisher.

Youth Ministers as primary leaders are more likely than not to choose other publishers as a source. In addition, as opposed to congregations with adult volunteers, congregations with lay, paid Youth Ministers as primary leaders are more likely not to indicate that print resources would be most useful.

Overall, familiarity seems relatively high for most of the ELCA-related youth ministry program resources, but usage percentages were not nearly as high as familiarity percentages. For those resources with the greatest disparity, it might be worthwhile to determine why certain resources are not being used and, if increased usage is desired, how to increase the usage.

The top responses shared by all congregations for resources they would like to see developed are for resources related to the Bible, being Lutheran, and devotions. Interestingly, a survey conducted by the ELCA Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) and completed by youth at the 2003 ELCA National Youth Gathering<sup>3</sup>, showed that Daily Prayer and Organized Bible Study were effective predictors for determining whether youth's score would be high for his/her spiritual fulfillment response. The responses from the two surveys would seem to be complimentary. However, the LYO survey also showed that when asked directly about various items, the Organized Bible Study item was rated the lowest by youth in terms of being necessary for a fulfilling spiritual life. This would suggest that even if Organized Bible Study is important for spiritual fulfillment, youth do not recognize this as such.

### *Detailed Analysis of the Survey Responses*

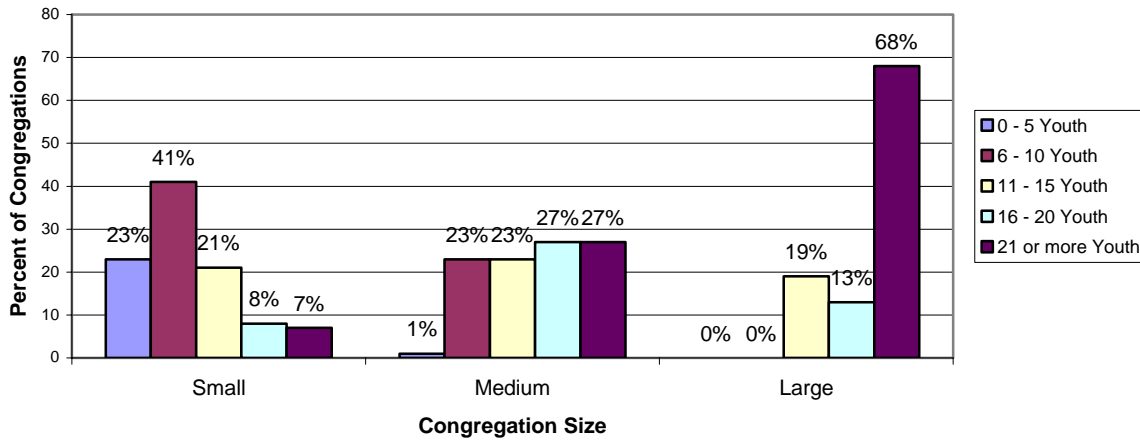
#### *Size of High School Youth Group*

Congregation responses were spread across all size categories, from '0 to 5 youth' to '21 or more youth.' The category with the highest response, 31 percent, was '6 to 10 youth.' These percentages, however, change significantly, depending upon the size of the congregation. As shown in Figure 2, small congregations are more likely to have smaller youth groups (10 youth or fewer). And, not surprisingly, large congregations are more likely to have the largest youth groups (21 or more).

---

<sup>3</sup> For more information about these survey results, please contact the Department for Research and Evaluation, ELCA.

**Figure 2: Size of Youth Group, by Congregation Size**

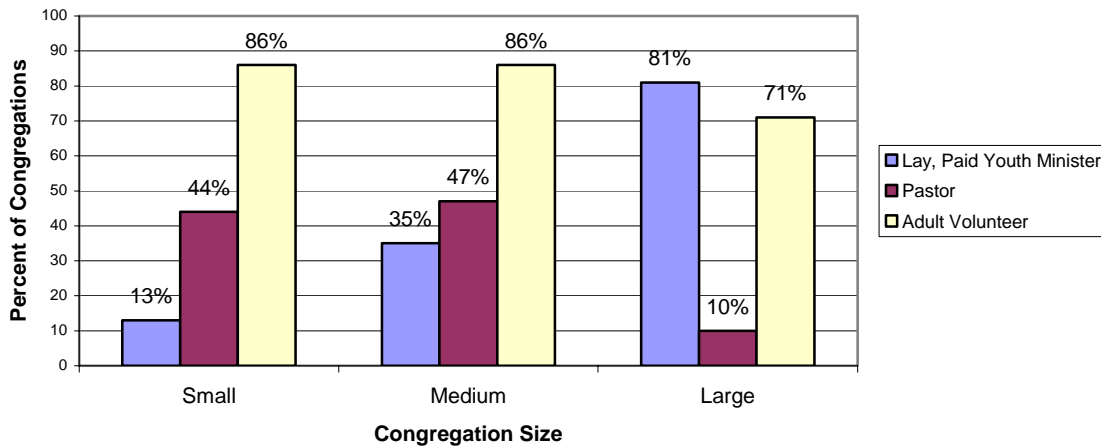


### *Primary Leaders*

Responding congregations were asked who the primary leaders are for the high school youth program in their congregations. Most congregations, 84 percent, report having adult volunteers as primary leaders. Fewer than 50 percent of all congregations report the use of other leaders as primary leaders. For example, 40 percent of congregations report the pastor as a primary leader and 27 percent report a lay, paid Youth Minister as a primary leader. Fewer than 20 percent report having youth volunteers as primary leaders and fewer than 5 percent report having an ordained, paid Youth Minister as a primary leader.

As shown in Figure 3, some of these percentages change significantly, depending upon the size of the congregation. For example, large congregations are far more likely to have a lay, paid Youth Minister as a primary leader than are small, or even medium, congregations. Conversely, large congregations are least likely to have a pastor as a primary leader.

**Figure 3: Primary Leaders, by Congregation Size**



As for who in the congregation is the primary user of high school youth ministry program resources, the responses follow similar percentages as for who are the primary leaders. As shown in Table 2, the three responses with the highest percentage were Adult volunteers, Pastor, and Youth Minister (lay paid staff).

**Table 2: Primary Users of High School Youth Ministry Program Resources**

Primary User	Percent of Responses
Adult Volunteer(s)	61%
Pastor	32%
Youth Minister (lay paid staff)	26%
Youth Volunteer(s)	15%
Youth Minister (ordained paid staff)	3%
Other	7%

*Use of Youth Ministry Program Resources*

The top three responses for congregational uses for high school youth ministry program resources are as follows:

- Youth meetings – 64 percent;
- Sunday School classes – 56 percent; and
- Youth retreats – 48 percent.

However, for both ‘Sunday School classes’ and ‘Youth retreats’, medium and large congregations are more likely to choose these responses than are small congregations. Over 60 percent of both medium and large congregations chose these responses, as compared to fewer than 50 percent of the small congregations.

In addition, 11 percent of all congregations with a high school youth ministry program responded ‘Our congregation does not use high school youth ministry resources.’ Fifteen percent of small

congregations chose this response, as compared to five percent and seven percent, respectively, for medium and large congregations.

### *Sources for Program Resources*

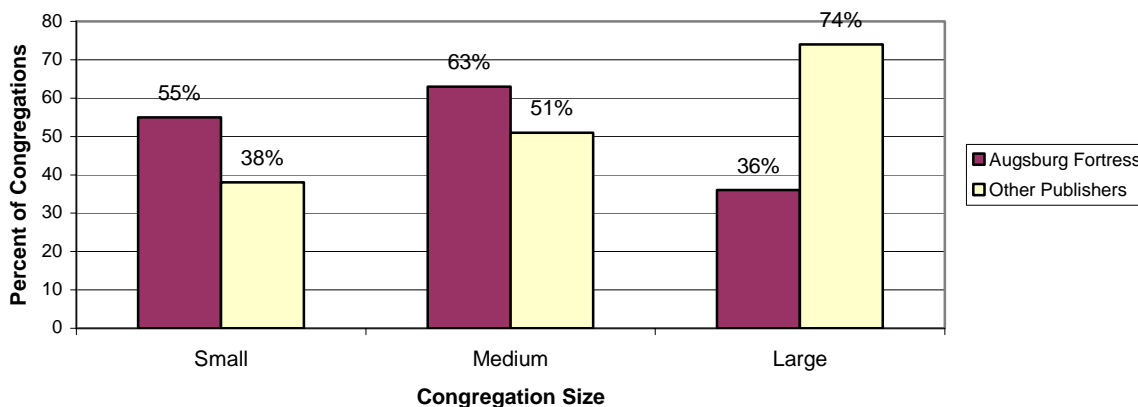
The top four responses for sources congregations use for obtaining high school youth ministry program resources are as follows (as noted in Footnote #2, “source” could mean the purchase point or the actual publisher of a resource):

- Augsburg Fortress – 55 percent;
- Their own congregation (We create our own resources) – 53 percent;
- Other publishers – 46 percent; and
- ELCA Youth Ministry Website – 33 percent.

For ‘Other Publishers,’ the top responses were Group Publishing – with at least 35 responses, and Youth Specialties – with at least 17 responses.

The data show that two-thirds of congregations, 68 percent, chose multiple sources for these program resources. There is no significant difference among the small, medium, or large congregations with respect to choosing multiple sources. However, there is a difference among congregation sizes for the preference for two specific sources, as shown in Figure 4. Large congregations are least likely to choose ‘Augsburg Fortress’ for a source, while they are most likely to choose ‘Other Publishers’ as a source.

**Figure 4: Sources for Youth Ministry Resources, by Congregation Size**



Of the top three responses for primary leaders, congregations with adult volunteers are no more or less likely to choose certain sources. However, the data show that congregations with Pastors chosen as primary leaders are more likely to choose ‘Augsburg Fortress’ as a source than not to choose them as a source. Conversely, congregations with lay, paid Youth Ministers as primary leaders are more likely to choose ‘Other Publishers’ as a source than not to choose them as a source.

### *Resource Format*

'Print' was the format chosen to be most useful by the most congregations – 53 percent. This was followed by Internet-based – 46 percent; Video – 31 percent; and CD-ROM – 23 percent. Many of the respondents, 43 percent, chose multiple responses. However, there was little overlap between those choosing 'Print' and those choosing 'Internet-based.' Of the 146 respondents choosing 'Print' and the 126 respondents choosing 'Internet-based,' only 46 chose both of these responses.

There were no significant differences among congregation sizes for choice of format. However, the data show a few differences among primary leaders with respect to 'Print' format for resources. Congregations with adult volunteers as primary leaders were more likely to choose 'Print' format than not to choose this format. Conversely, congregations with lay, paid Youth Ministers as primary leaders were more likely not to choose 'Print' format than to choose this format.

### *Familiarity and Use of Specific Resources*

Question number 8 lists eight various ELCA-related youth ministry program resources. Congregations were asked about their familiarity with and their use of these resources. As shown in Table 3, resource familiarity ranges from 62 percent to 86 percent, depending upon the resource. For those familiar with the resources, use (defined as both regular and occasional use) ranges from 27 percent to 76 percent, depending upon the resource.

**Table 3: Resource Familiarity and Use**

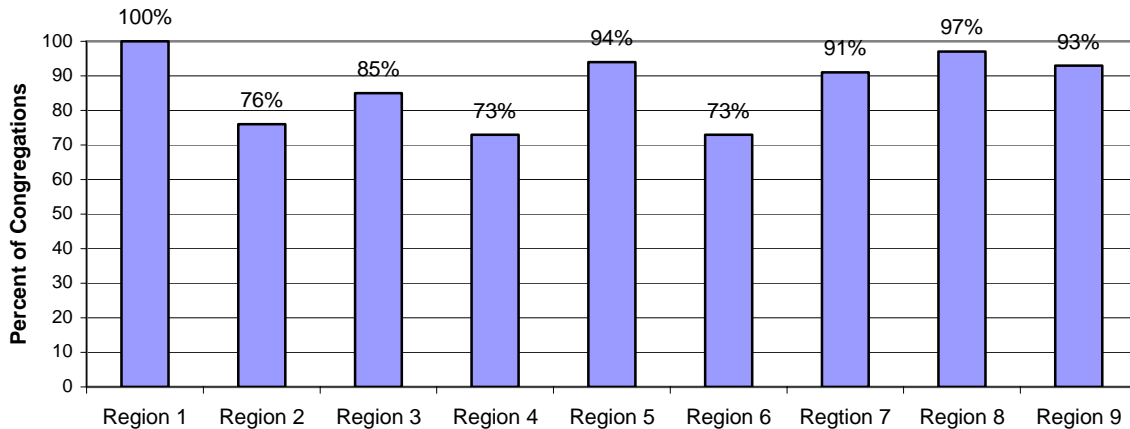
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Percent of Congregations Familiar with the Resource</b>	<b>Percent of Congregations Using the Resource</b>
ELCA Youth Gathering Website	86%	76%
ELCA Youth Ministries Website	80%	66%
ELCA Youth Ministries Website links	75%	50%
<i>Reel World</i> Movie Discussions	70%	40%
ELCA Youth Ministry Network Website	69%	42%
<i>The Playbook: Resources for Youth Ministry</i>	69%	37%
<i>Faith Lens</i> Bible Study	62%	27%

Small congregations were more likely than medium or large congregations to respond that they were not familiar with most of the resources. The exceptions to this were the resources specifically related to the Youth Gathering: 'ELCA Youth Gathering Website' and '*The Playbook: Resources for Youth Ministry.*' In addition, small congregations were least likely to use certain resources, compared to medium and large congregations. These resources include 'ELCA Youth Ministries Website,' 'ELCA Youth Ministries Website links,' and 'ELCA Youth Ministries Network Website.'

## Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza Event

The *Extravaganza* event, sponsored annually by the ELCA Youth Ministry Network, is described as continuing education and networking for leaders in youth ministry. As shown in Figure 5, over 90 percent of congregations in five regions reported either never attending or not being familiar with the event.

**Figure 5: Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza Event, by Region  
(percent that have never attended or are not familiar with the event)**



Perhaps not surprisingly, the data show that small congregations are more likely than medium or large congregations to have responded that they have never attended or that they are not familiar with the event

## Information Provided by All Congregations

All congregations, regardless of whether they reported having a high school youth ministry program, were asked to share what resources they would like to see developed and what topics or issues are of most importance to the high school youth in their congregations. The top response, over 20 percent of the comments, to the resources that congregations would like to see developed was Bible- or Lutheran-related resources and/or devotions. Other responses, each with approximately 10 percent of the comments, included resources that:

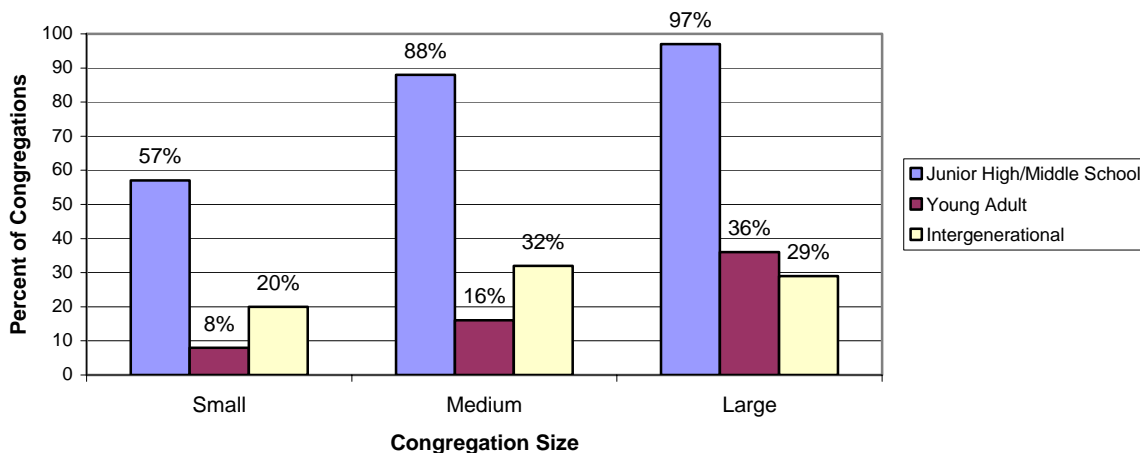
- can be used for discussion, is a small group setting, or on a retreat;
- are video/multimedia or internet-based;
- are easy for lay leaders to use and/or assist with how to begin a youth ministry program; and
- are activity-based, such as sports, recreation, or service trips.

Other comments were provided about the topics or issues of most importance to the high school youth in the congregation (as reported by the person completing the questionnaire, who may or may not have consulted with the high school youth in their congregation). Two topics each comprised nearly 20 percent of comments: Interactions with peers (including faith sharing) and Dating/Relationships/Sex/Sexuality. Other responses, each with approximately 10 percent of the comments, included:

- The future after high school, college, education; and
- World religions and what it means to be Lutheran.

In addition, all congregations were asked about other youth ministry programs that might exist in their congregations. As shown in Figure 6, a high percentage of congregations of all sizes report having a Junior High/Middle School youth ministries program. However, medium and large congregations are more likely to have this type of program than are small congregations. Fewer congregations reported having either Young Adult or Intergenerational youth ministry programs. However, again, the data show that small congregations were least likely to have these types of programs.

**Figure 6: Other Youth Ministry Programs, by Congregation Size**



Finally, congregations were provided with a list of various activities and asked to respond whether youth and young adults are involved in their congregations in these ways. Activities with a high percentage of respondents included:

- Acolytes – 81 percent;
- Lectors – 65 percent;
- Vacation Bible School teachers/leaders – 65 percent; and
- Communion Assistants – 53 percent.

Activities with a low percentage of respondents included:

- Church Council members – 19 percent; and
- Voting members to Synod Assemblies – 7 percent.