

Inside a Church Merger:

The Good, Bad and Ugly

from Actual Examples



EXPANDED AND
UPDATED

BETTER TOGETHER

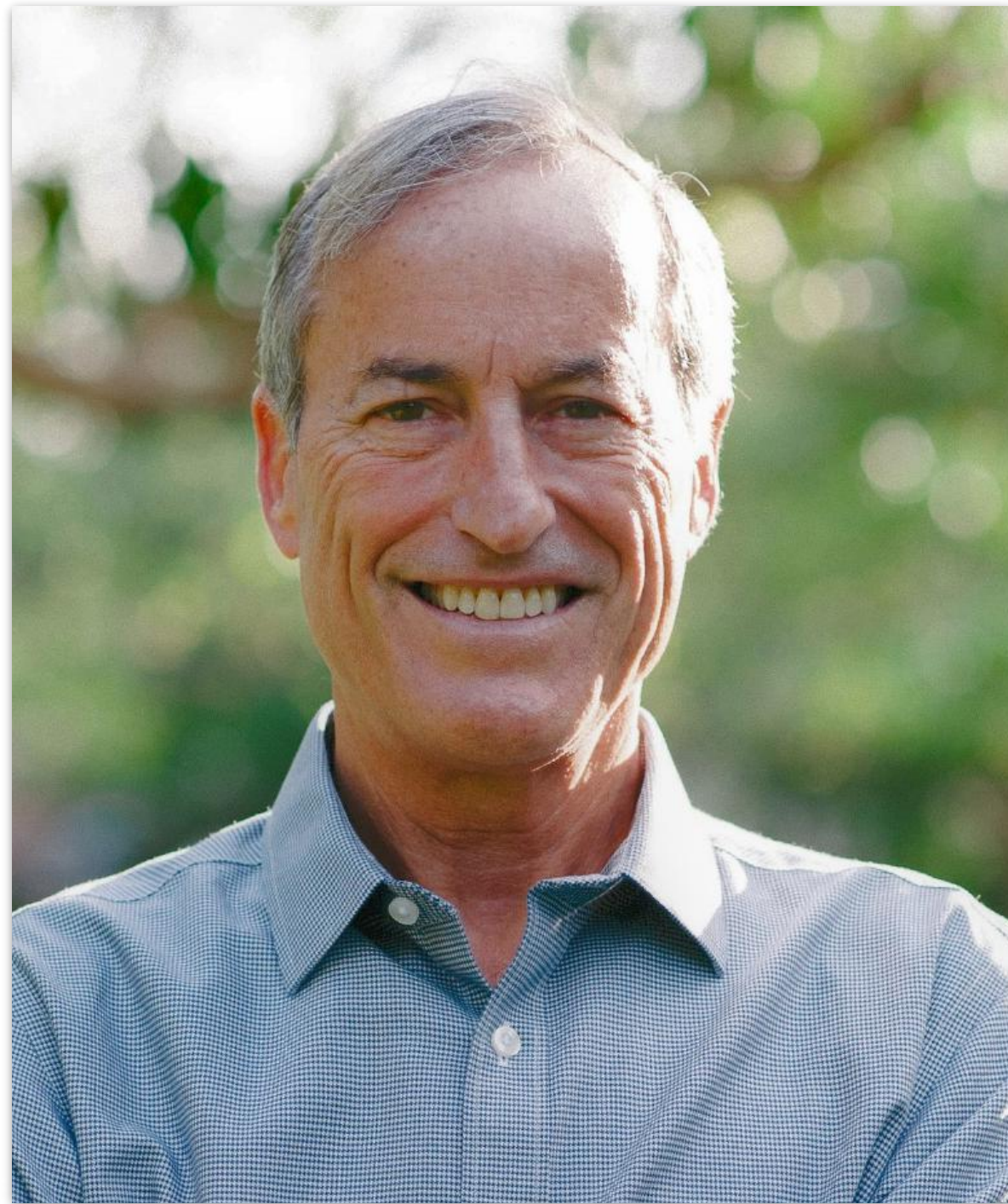
Making Church Mergers Work

Jim Tomberlin
and Warren Bird

Foreword by Craig Groeschel

Meet Our Guests

Jim Tomberlin



Pastor for 4+ decades

Multisite pioneer

***Multisite + Merger
Specialist with The
Unstuck Group***

***Chief of Staff @ Christ
Fellowship Miami***

Warren Bird



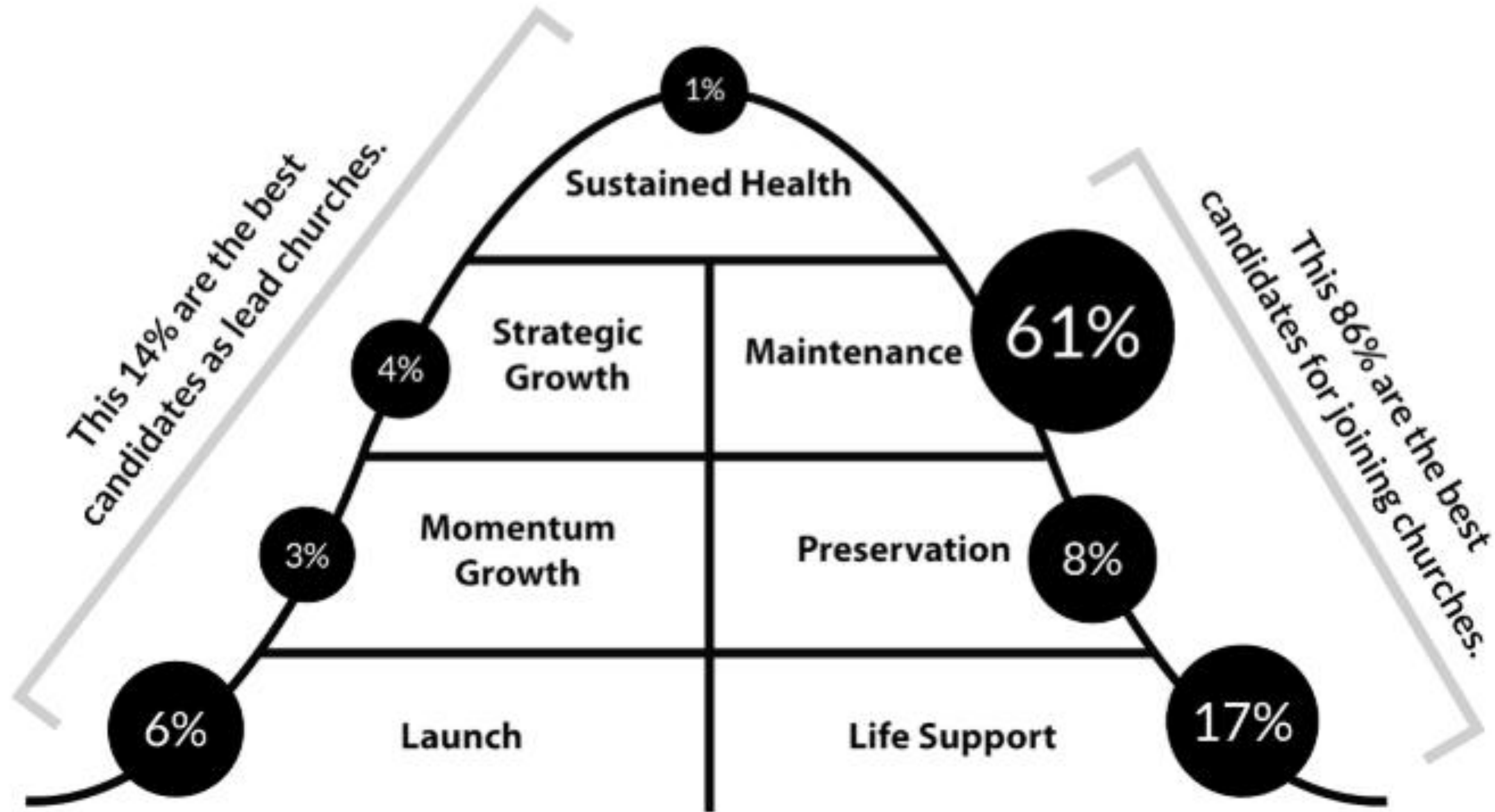
Pastor & seminary prof

Multisite pioneer

***Author/coauthor of 33
books***

***VP of Research,
Evangelical Council for
Financial Accountability
(ECFA.Church)***

100% of Churches Are Candidates for Merging



The Merger Dance

Every church merger involves a lead church and a joining church. The merging of churches is a delicate dance where one leads and the other follows.



Two Key Terms: Every merger involves a *lead church* and a *joining church*. The merging of churches is a delicate dance where one leads and the other follows.

The lead church represents the dominant or primary culture that will continue through the merger. The joining church is the congregation that will be lifted or otherwise shaped to become more like the lead church.

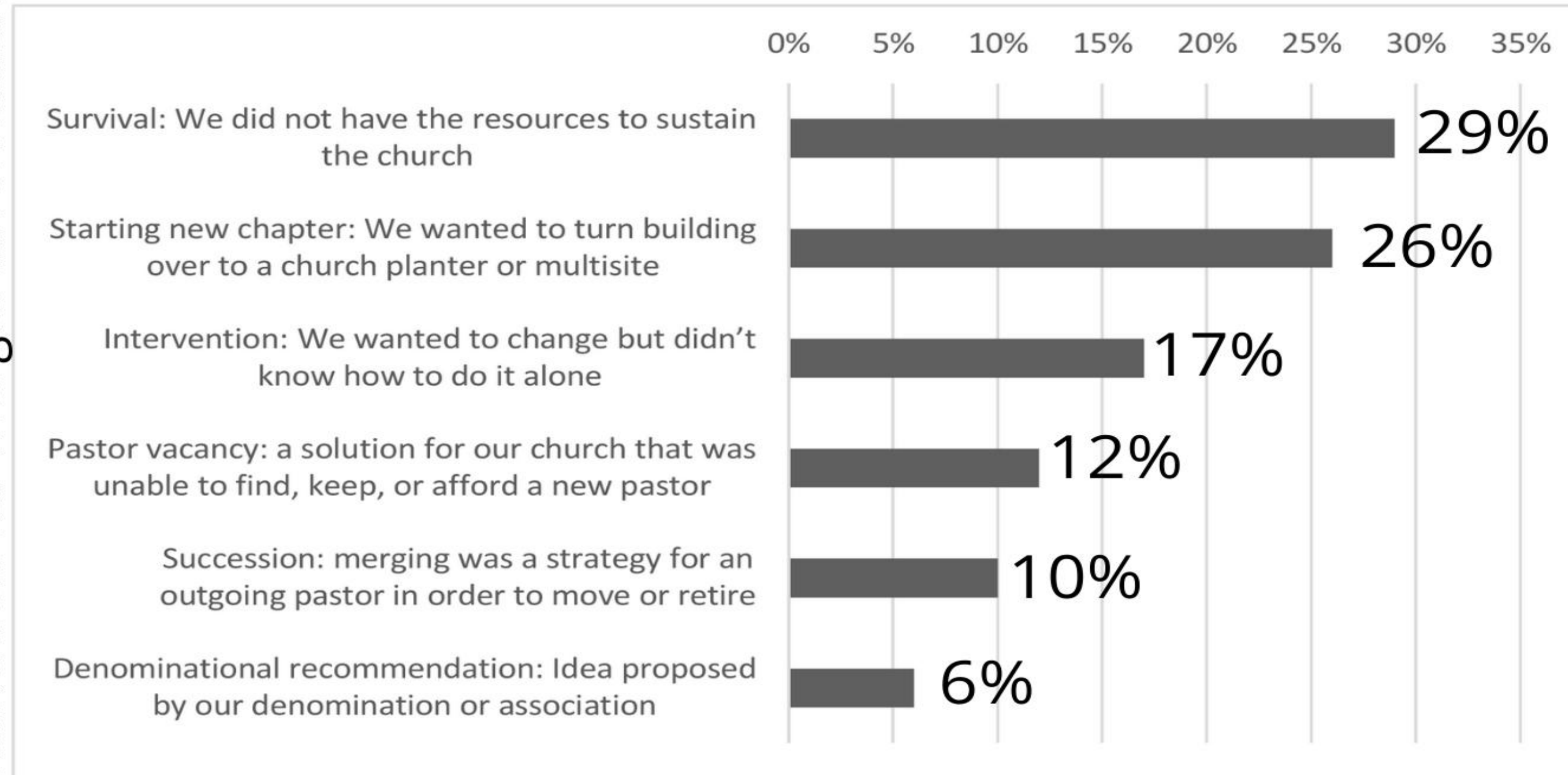
The image shows the exterior of a brick church building. In the foreground, a blue banner is mounted on a silver tripod stand. The banner features a white circular logo with a blue teardrop shape inside, and the text "Liquid Church" is printed vertically in white. The church building has a prominent portico supported by four white columns. The entrance consists of a set of white double doors with a wreath hanging on the left door. The brickwork is a mix of red and tan. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The text "UNION COUNTY MOUNTAINSIDE" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

UNION COUNTY MOUNTAINSIDE

Merger Fact 28

For Joining Churches, the Greatest Reason to Merge Is Survival

Motivation for Merger Involvement?

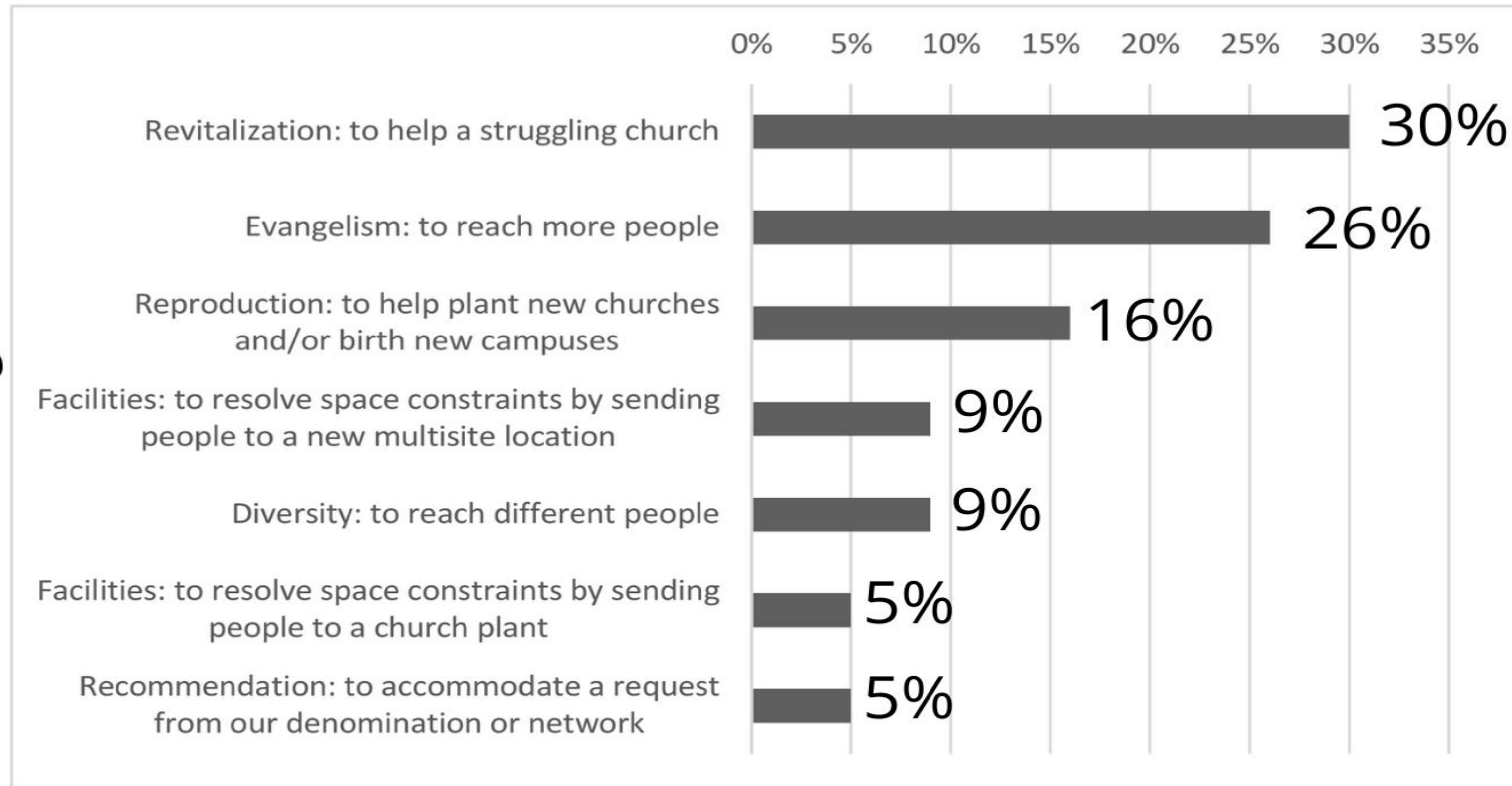


2019 Survey (asked only of joining churches): *What motivated your church to get involved with a merger?*

Merger Fact 27

For Lead Churches, the Greatest Reason to Merge Is to Help Revitalize a Struggling Church

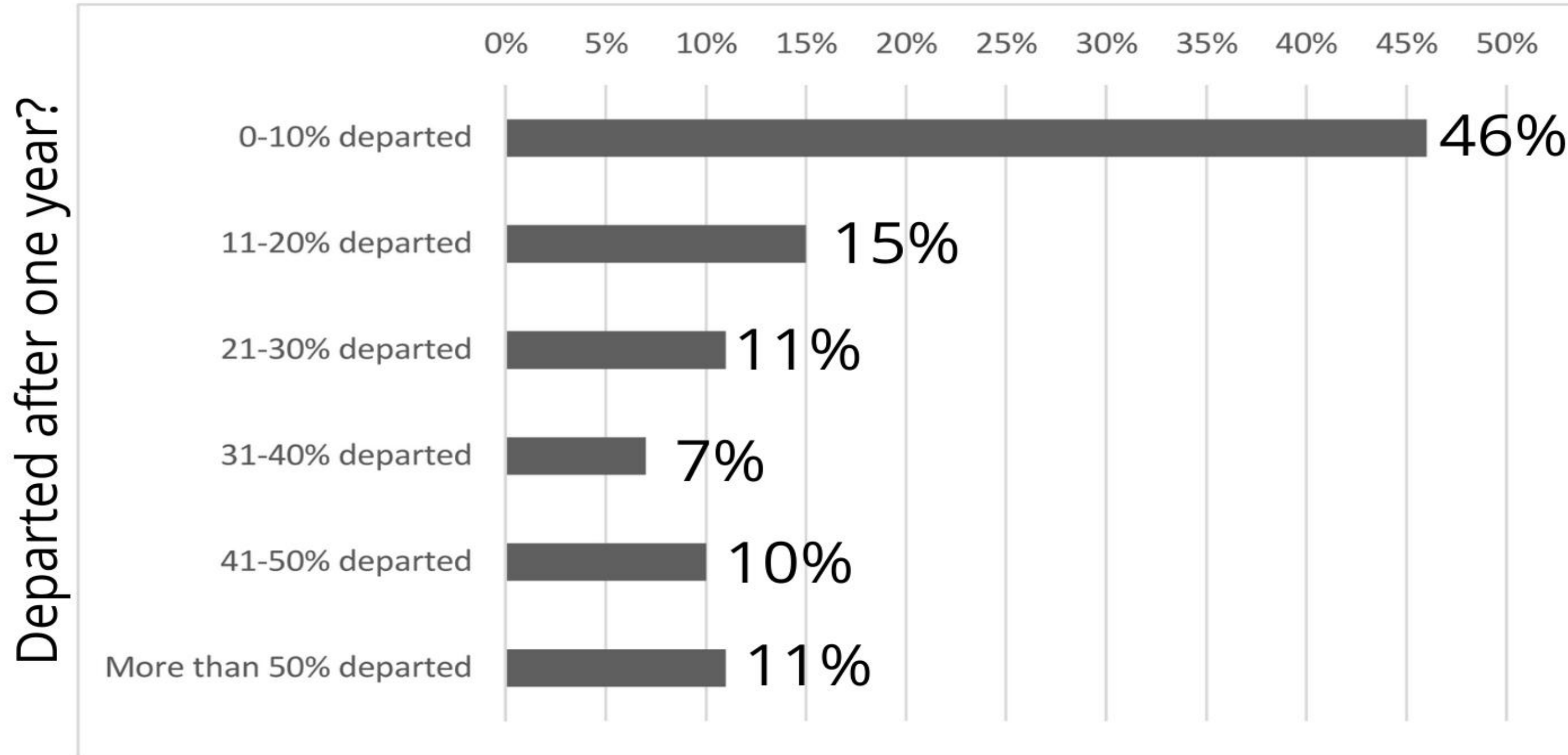
Motivation for Merger Involvement?



2019 Survey (asked only of lead churches): *What motivated your church to get involved with a merger?*

Merger Fact 10

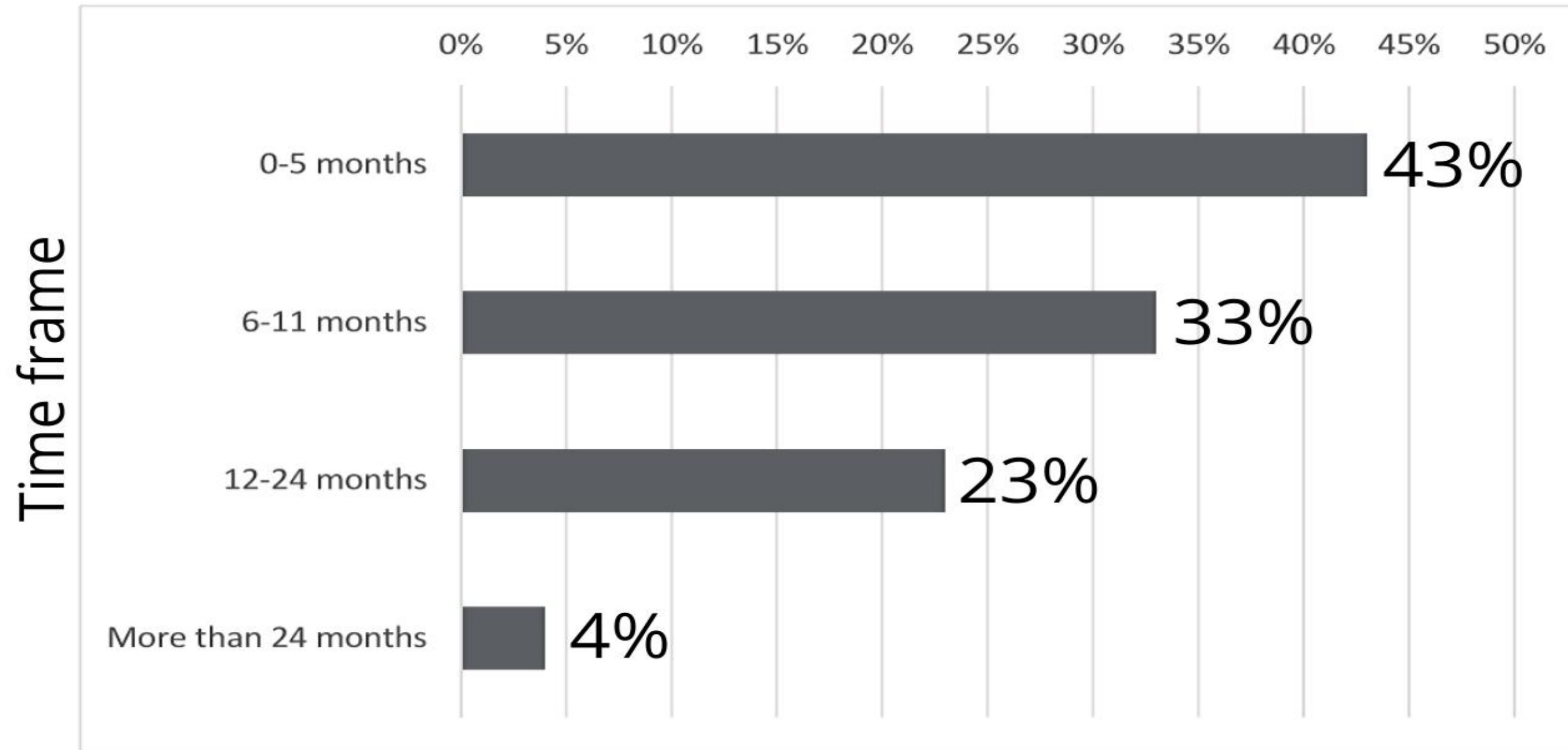
Only a Small Percentage of Joining Church Members Depart Post-Merger



2019 Survey: One year after the merger, what percent of the people from the joining church had departed because of the merger?

Merger Fact 7

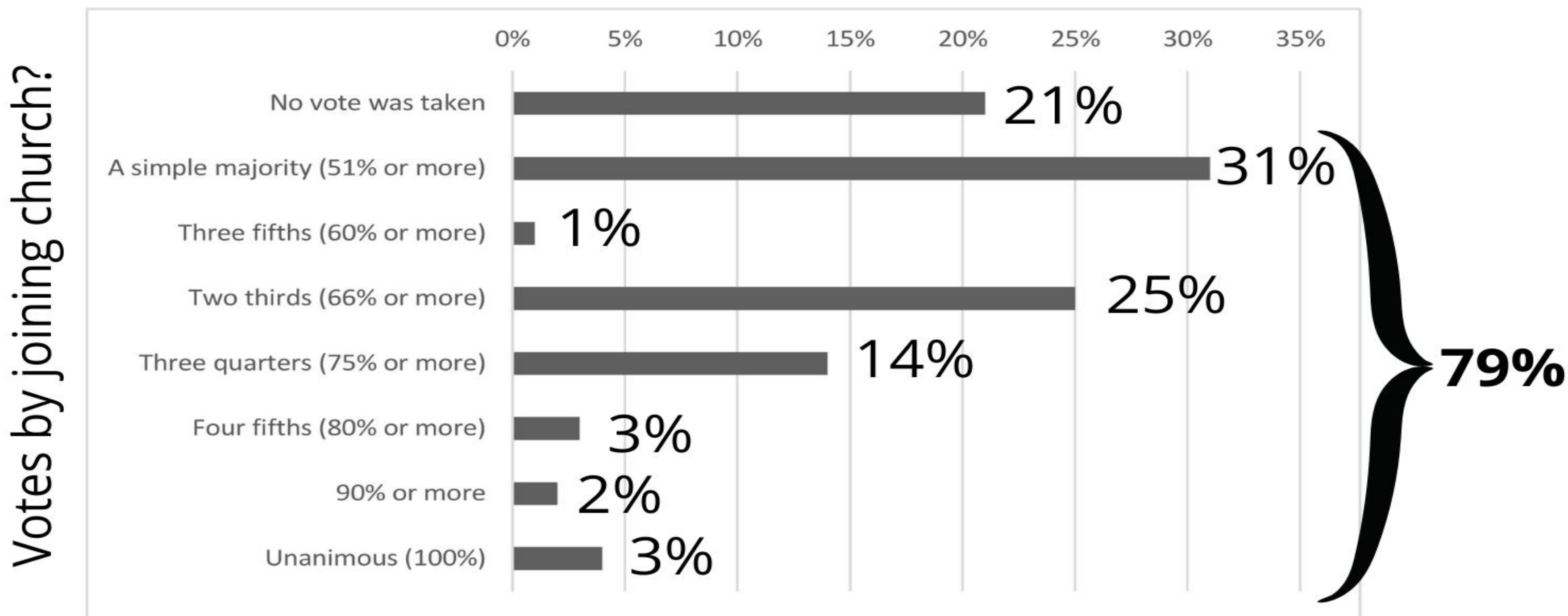
The Average Merger Time Frame Is 8 Months



2019 Survey: How many months passed between the initial discussion to merge and the completion of the merger?

Merger Fact 6

4 in 5 Joining Churches Vote about the Merger, Many Requiring Only a Simple Majority

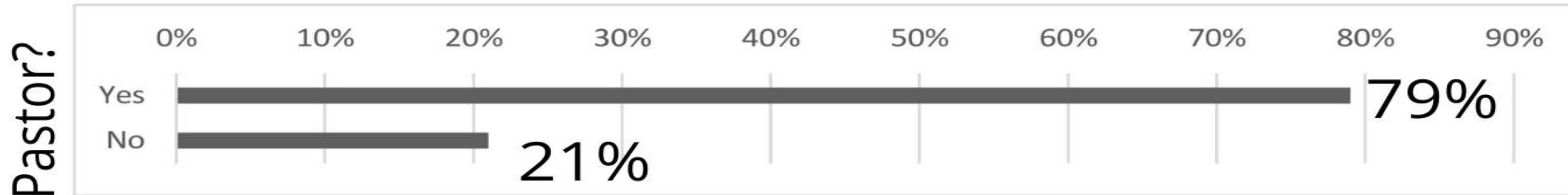


2019 Survey: *At the joining church, what percentage of "yes to merge" votes did your constitution or bylaws require?*

Merger Fact 16

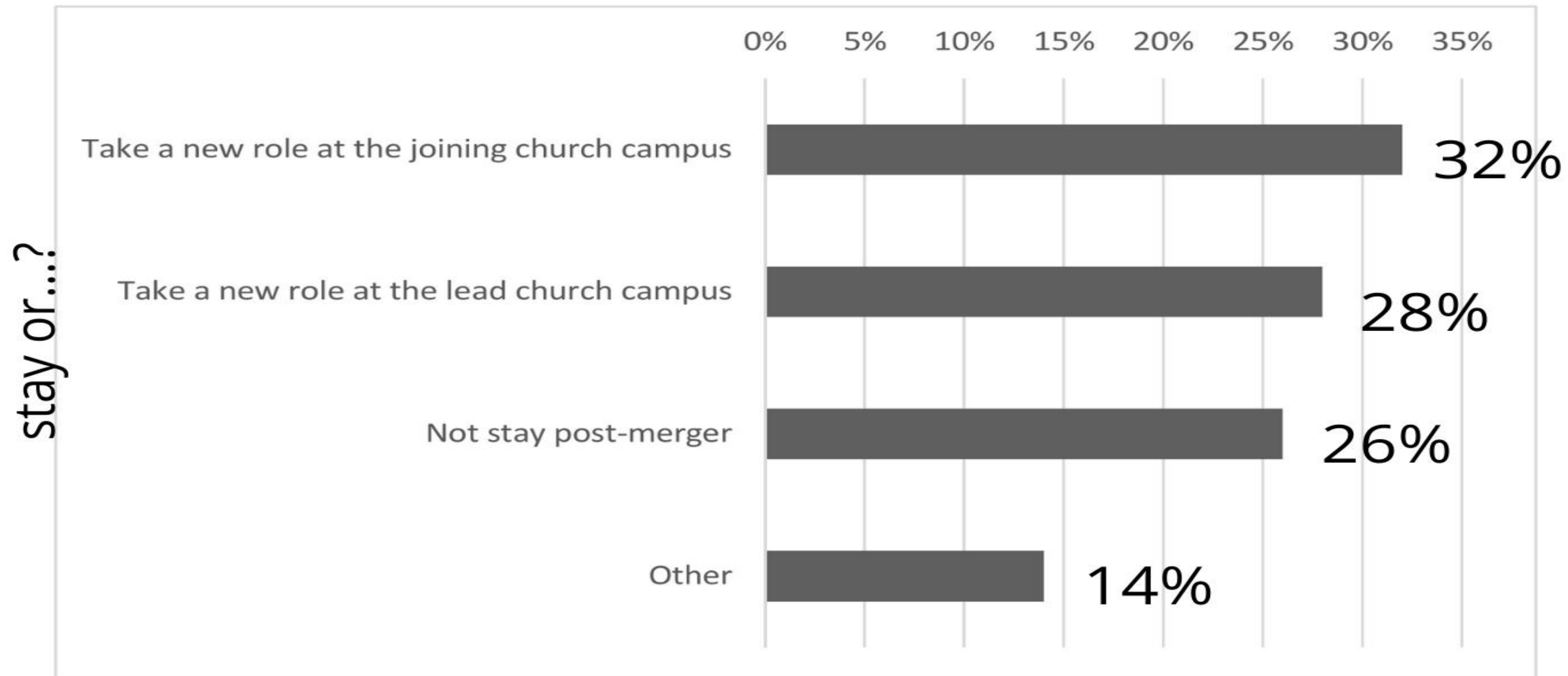
Most Joining Churches Have a Pastor Who Stays

Joining Church



2019 Survey: *Did the joining church have a pastor when the merger discussions began?*

Joining Church Pastor

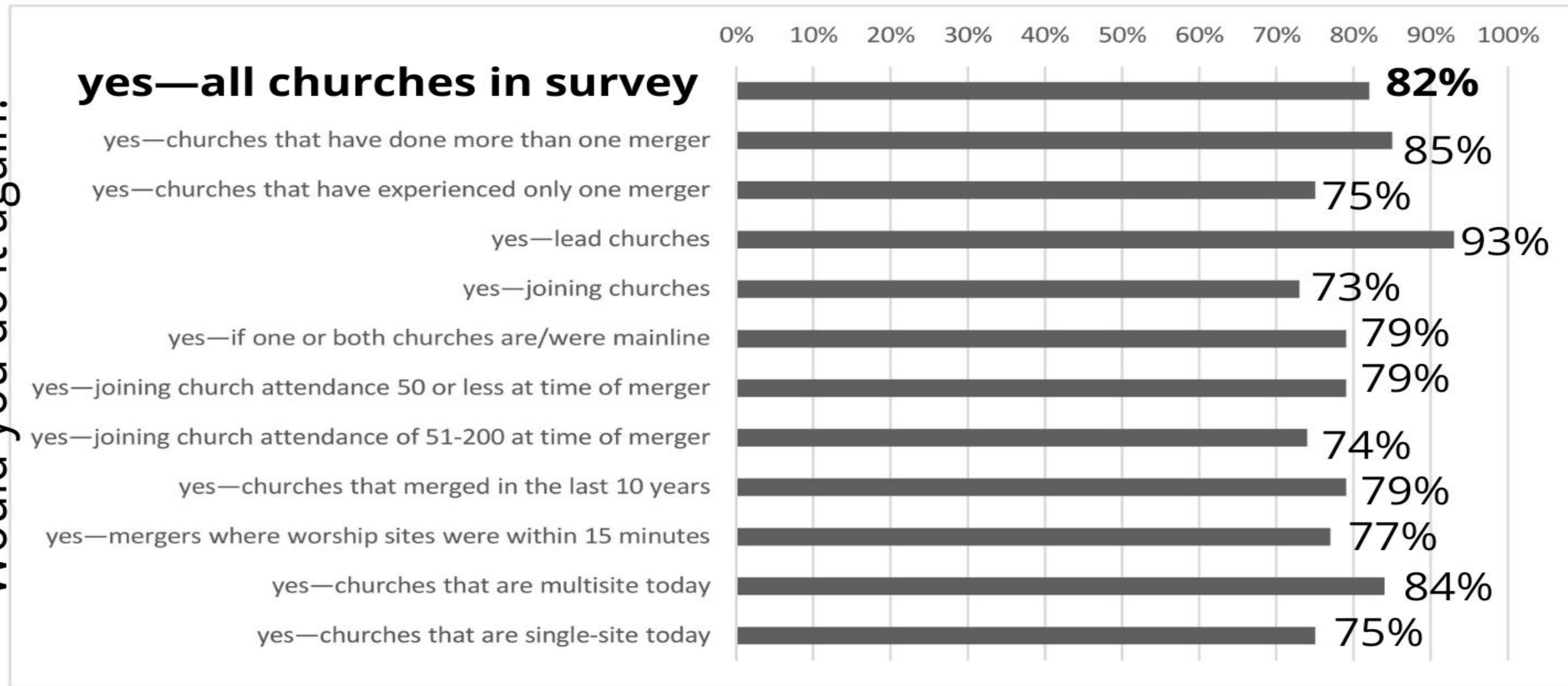


2019 Survey: *Did the pastor of the joining church stay or...?*

Merger Fact 8

82% of Surveyed Mergers Said They'd Do It Again

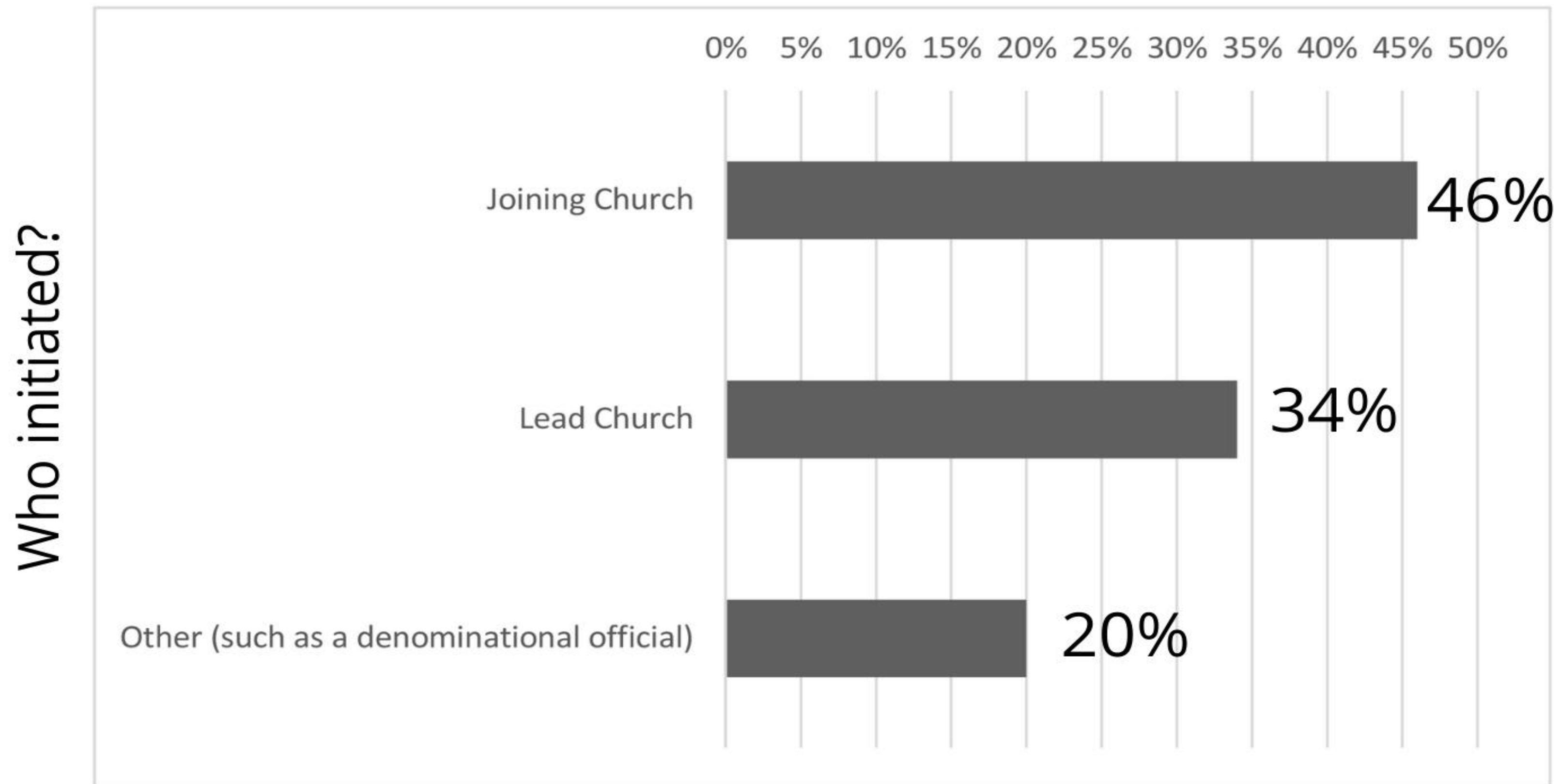
Would you do it again?



2019 Survey: *Would you do this merger again?*
(Options: yes, no, or unsure.)

Merger Fact 25

Both Joining Churches AND Lead Churches Initiate Mergers



2019 Survey: *Who initiated the merger?*

COVENANT
IS JOINING
SOUTHBRIDGE

PINE HOLLOW MIDDLE SCHOOL
SUNDAYS | 9 + 10:30 AM

SOUTHBRIDGEFELLOWSHIP.COM

Southbridge Fellowship



- **Founded: 2007**
- **Growing, 650 attendance**
- **School rental**
- **Southern Baptist**
- **Budget \$1.1m / No debt**

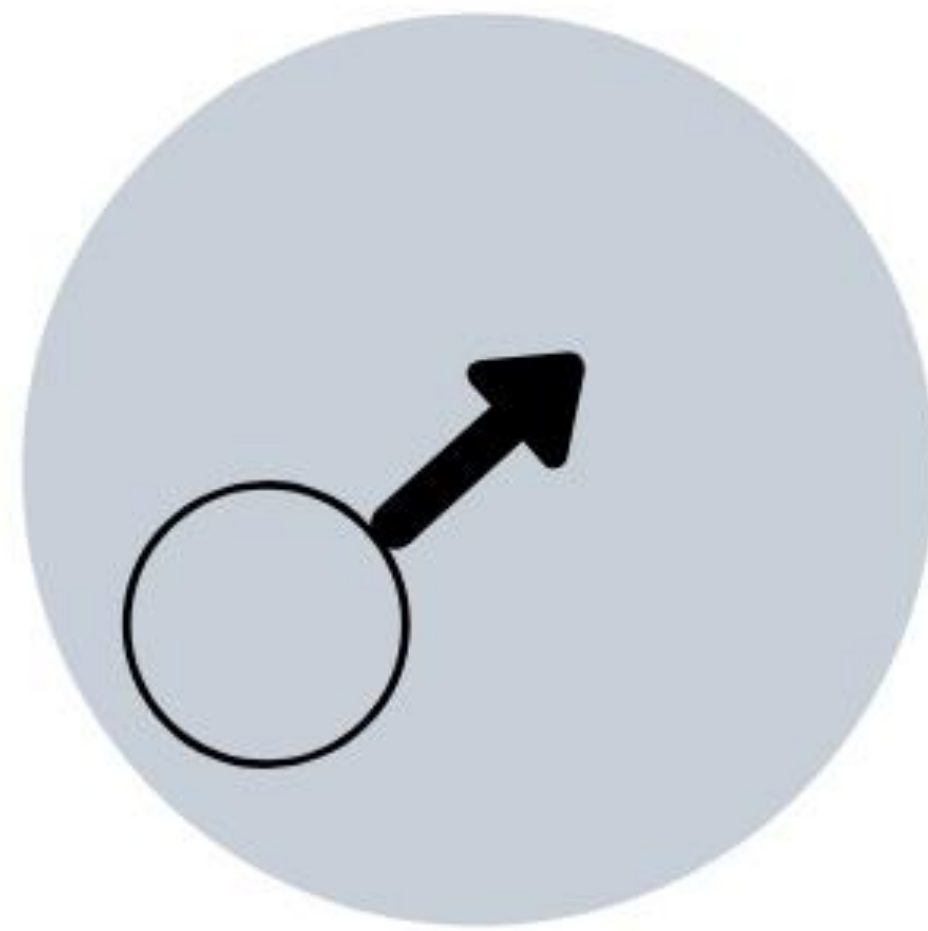
Covenant Church



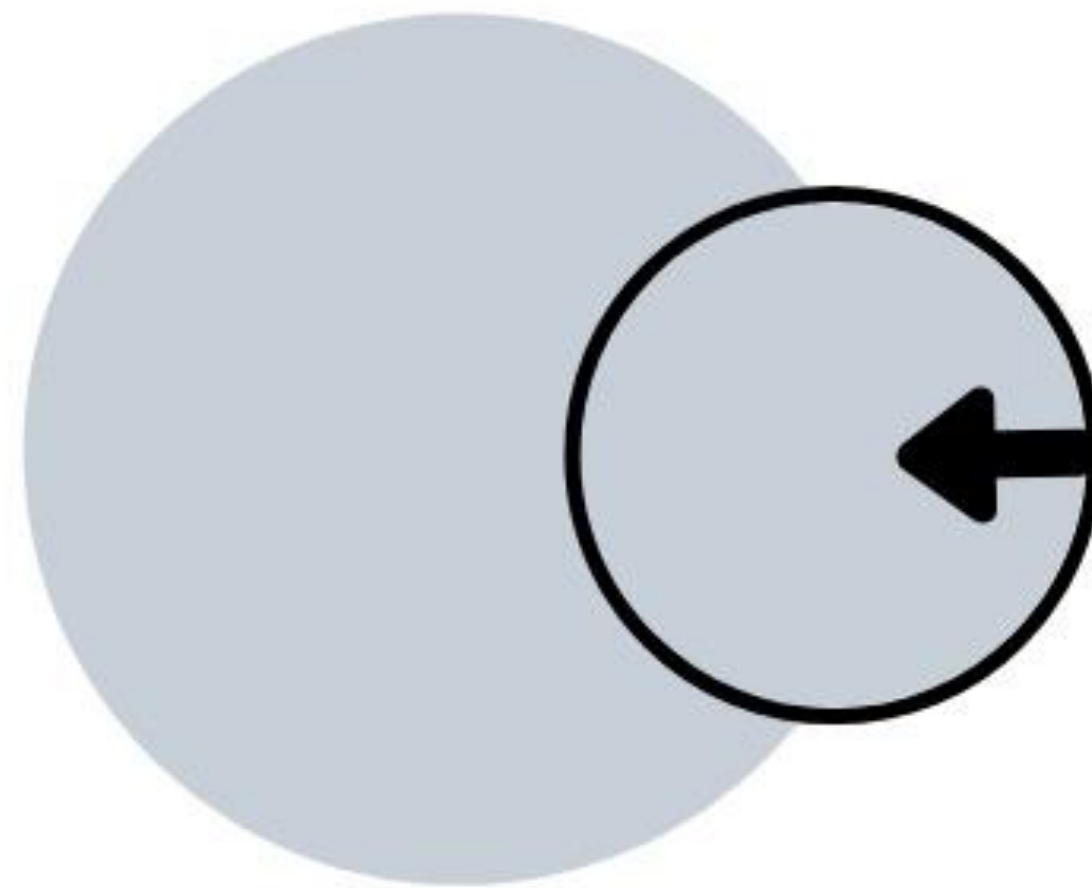
- **Founded 1983**
- **Declining, 150 attendance**
- **12 acres, 850 seat facility**
- **Non-denominational, charismatic**
- **Budget \$585k / Debt: \$875K**

Four Models of How a Merger Happens

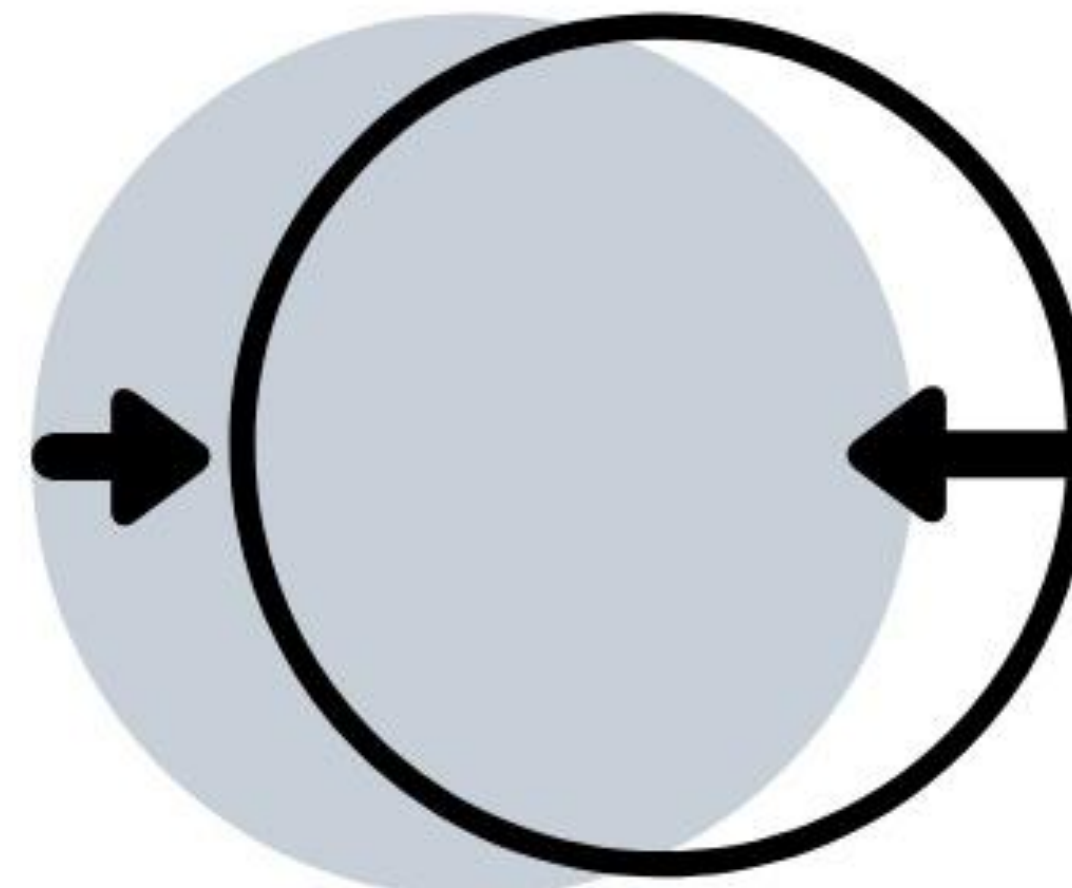
Rebirth
(Absorption)



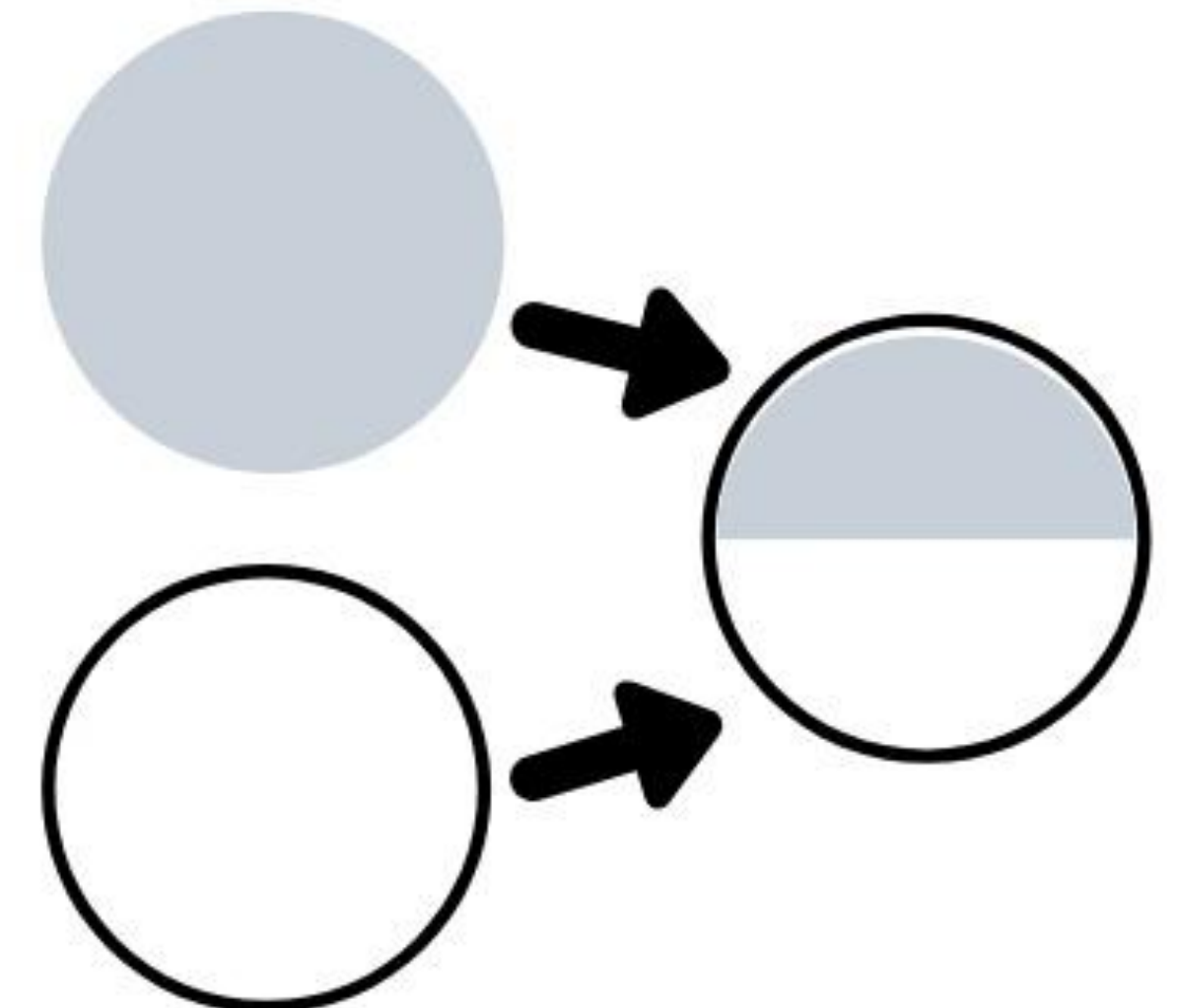
Adoption
(Integration)



Marriage
(Realignment)



ICU
(Survival)



5 Stages of a Merger



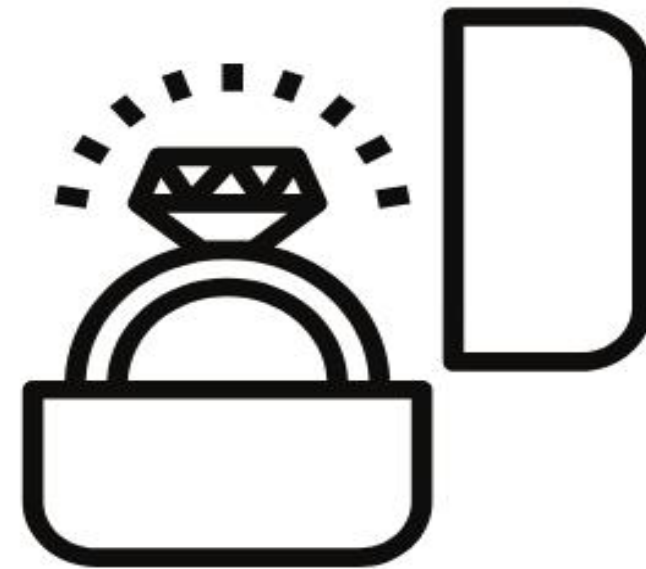
1.
Exploration
(dating)

**DEFINE THE
RELATIONSHIP**



2.
Negotiation
(courtship)

**ADDRESS
THE ISSUES**



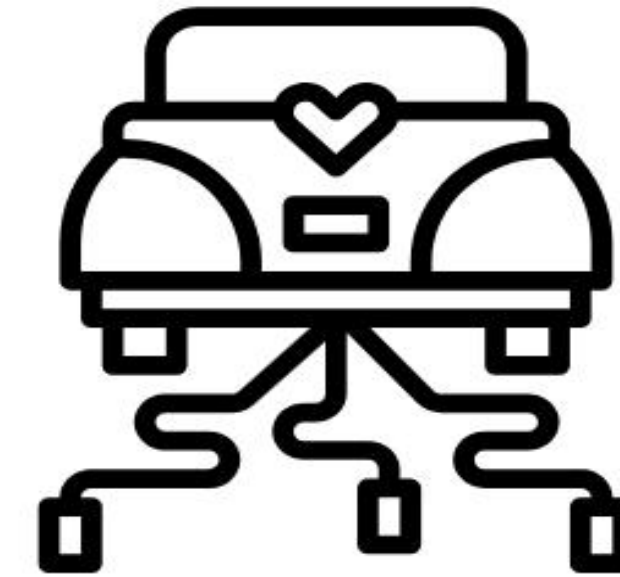
3.
Declaration
(engagement)

**OVER
COMMUNICATE**



4.
Consolidation
(wedding)

**VOTE /
AFFIRMATION**



5.
Integration
(marriage)

**STABLIZE
GROW
MULTIPLY**

How To Think About Merger Success

MERGER SUCCESS IS NOT ...

100% Retaining staff, church members and attenders

100% Approval of members

Saving a facility for emotional or nostalgic reasons

Preserving a church name

Maintaining the status quo

INSTEAD FOCUS ON ...

Retaining people who embrace a shared vision for the future

100% Engagement of those who approve

Stewarding a facility for Kingdom purposes

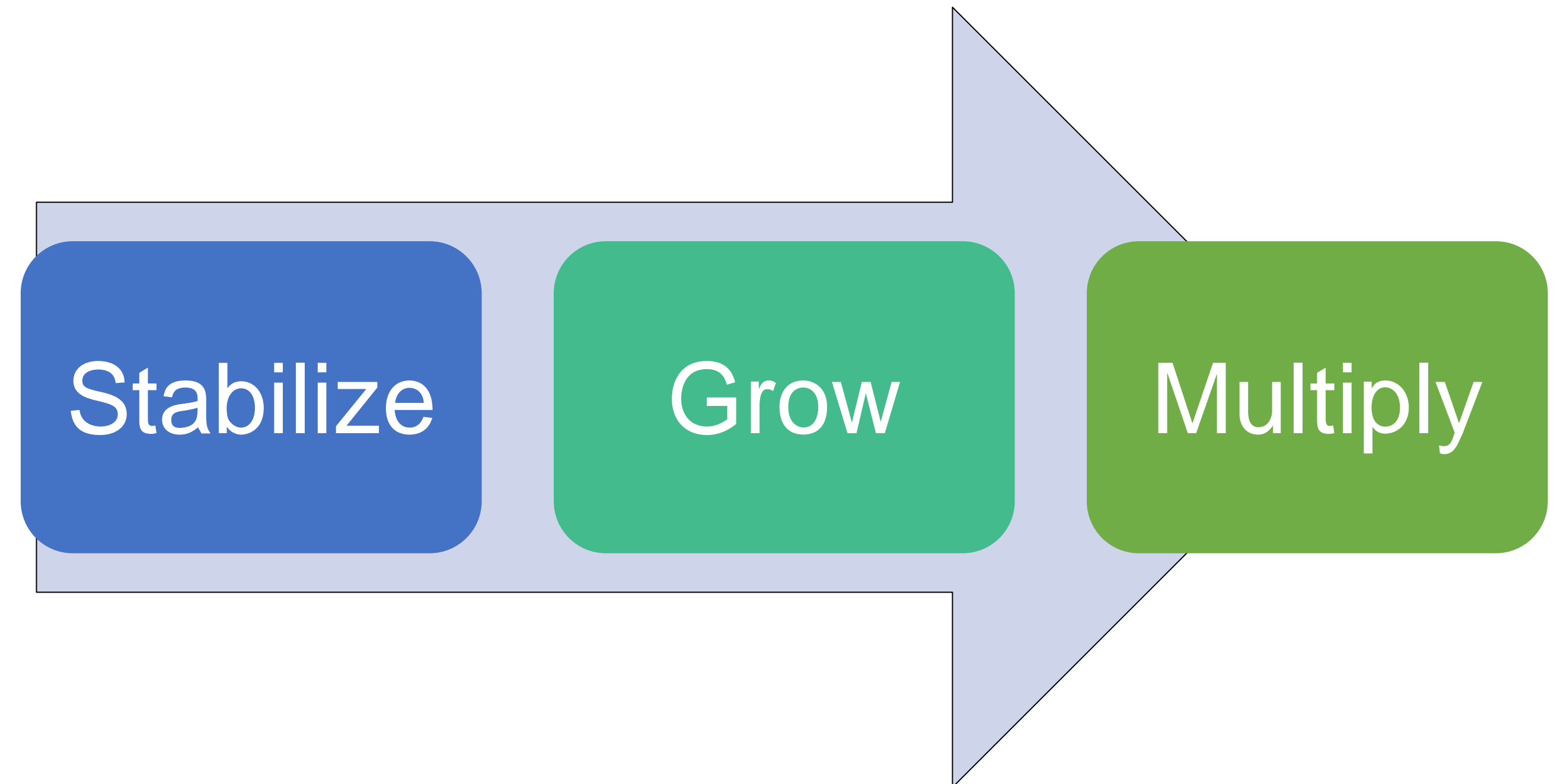
Leveraging a legacy

Beginning a new life cycle

Church Merger Success Milestones

KEY RESULT AREAS

- **Mission-Vision**
- **Integration**
- **Attendance**
- **Finances**
- **Community**
- **Impact**





BETTER TOGETHER!

July 2020

Attendance: 1,000+ (Feb 23, 2020)

Debt: \$875k retired

Building: \$2m renovation

Retained from Joining Church:

- **110 of 150 attendees**
- **3 out of 4 staff members, pastor 1 year severance**
- **All 8 Board members**
- **2 currently serving as Board members**

Should Our Church Merge?

1. Would our congregation be better by merging rather than remaining separate?
2. Could we accomplish more together than we could separately?
3. Would our community be better served if we joined together?
4. Could the kingdom of God be further enlarged by joining together?



NOW AVAILABLE!

Q & A