

SOUTH CENTRAL FIELD
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

HOW PASTORS ARE RESPONDING
TO THE CHALLENGES OF

COVID-19



Church Survey Summary Report



30 June 2020

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has reminded us of the commonness of our humanity as it has impacted the global family. It has also magnified our connectedness and how mutually dependent we are on one another.

To better understand how COVID-19 has and is affecting the Nazarene congregations on the South Central Field, the Resource Center for Pastoral Leadership at Southern Nazarene University (RCPL) executed a survey for the purpose of gaining a sample of Nazarene pastors and churches on the SCF - collecting information from a group of pastors with a range of circumstances, experiences, and challenges who were willing to help the RCPL discuss issues and resource pastors and other front-line ministers.

While it was not the goal, the percentages realized were surprisingly close to the distribution of Nazarenes in the USA for categories such as distributions by size of congregation and age ranges. The sample, while not random or designed to be representative, seems not to have missed categories that could benefit from the study.

This study would not have been possible without the involvement of highly regarded Church of the Nazarene researcher, Kenneth Crow, Ph.D., who served as the primary consultant on the survey, and Doris Betts, Executive Assistant, Office of Church Relations at SNU.

Respectfully,

Terry N. Toler, Ed.D.
Vice President for Church Relations

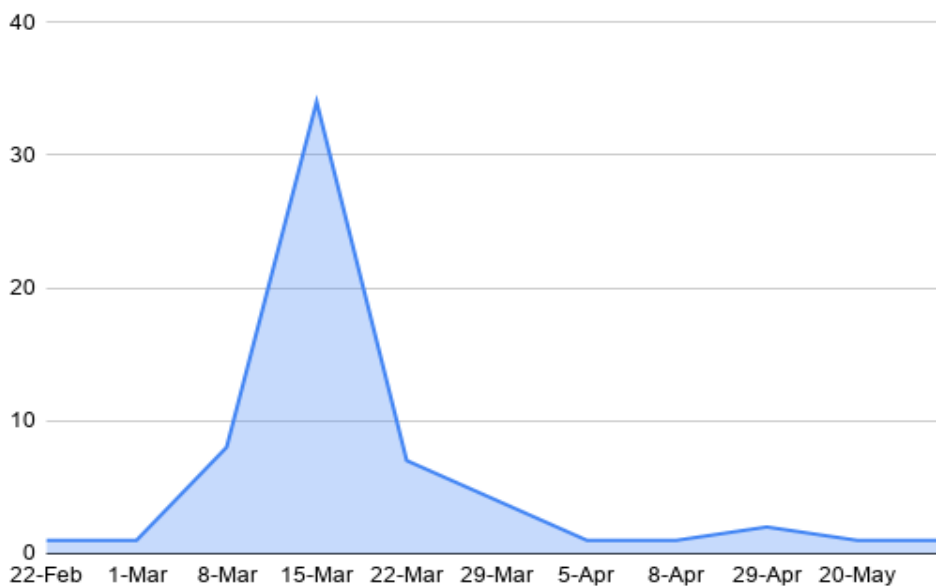
OBSERVATIONS

The timing of the survey itself was important. As it went out (to 541 recipients on May 20, 2020) the nation was being challenged to open all gatherings for worship and given some guidelines for doing that. All of this made the study even more relevant. The survey was closed on May 26, 2020.

The 11% rate of response was especially heartening (43% open rate, with a 33% click rate) given that pastors, in the midst of very challenging days, took the time to complete the survey.

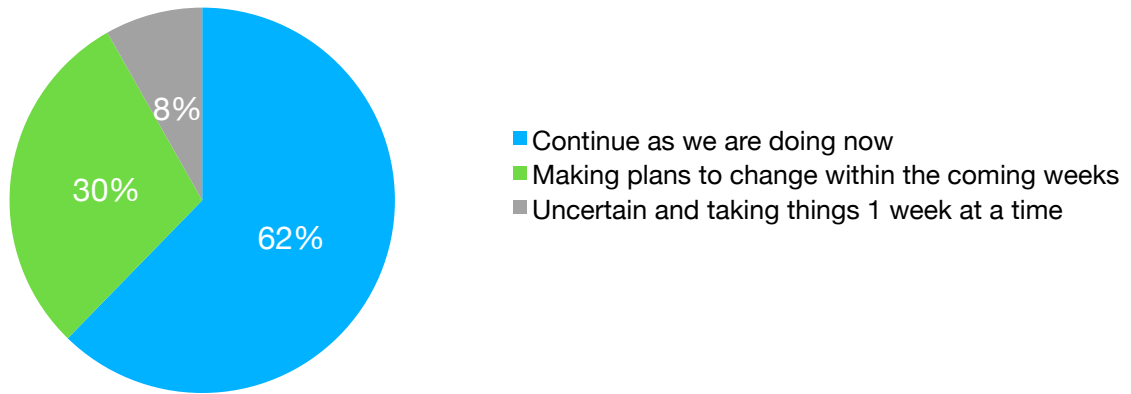
WORSHIP ISSUES AND DECISIONS

1. Last service together: For more than half (56%) of these churches, March 15, 2020 was the date they had their last face to face gathering as a congregation when shelter-in-place orders were being put into effect.



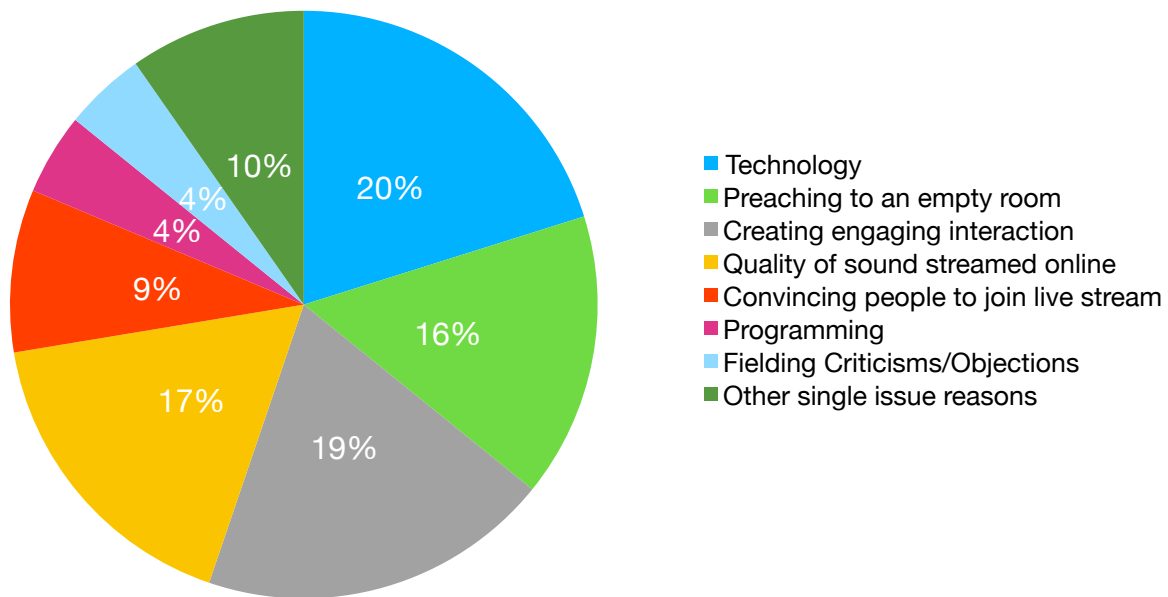
2. Almost half (51%) report starting face-to-face gatherings again as the shelter-in-place orders were being lifted, with May 17th being the date reported more than any other (11%) for restarting.

3. Only a few (8.2%) of the churches said their future plans for corporate worship were to “continue as we are doing now.” A larger group (29.5%) said they were uncertain and plan to take things one week at a time. However, a majority (62.3%) said they were making plans to change what (or how) they are doing in coming weeks.



4. Almost all (96.7%) plan to permit congregational singing when they return to in-person gatherings.

5. For churches doing online gatherings the biggest obstacles were technological and sociological. 44.3% cited technology as a significant challenge, citing issues of quality of the broadcast, technical support and convincing people to join the broadcasts (42.6%).

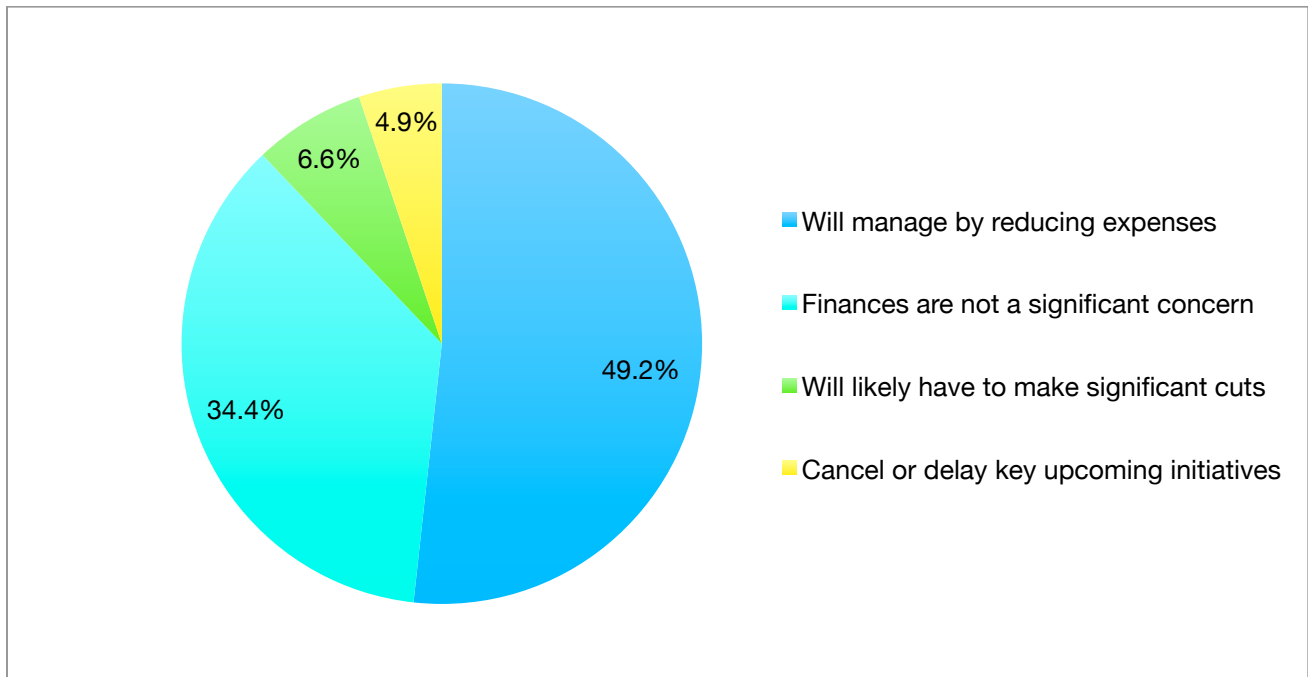


FINANCES

1. When asked “*how prepared is your church financially to face this crisis?*” one-third (34.4%) of these pastors said finances are not a significant concern.

Almost half (49.2%) said “*it will be tight, but we will manage by reducing expenses without too much pain.*”

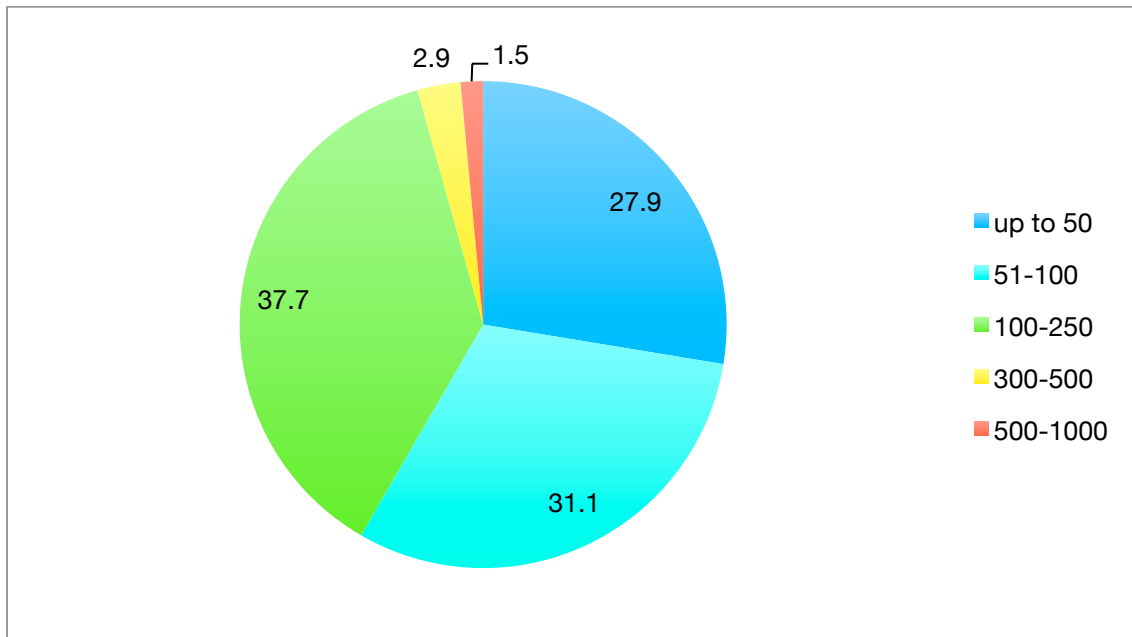
On the other hand, about one-in-ten said “*we will likely have to make significant cuts*” (e.g. *pay cuts, layoffs, etc.*) (6.6%) or “*we will likely have to cancel or delay key upcoming initiatives*” (4.9%).



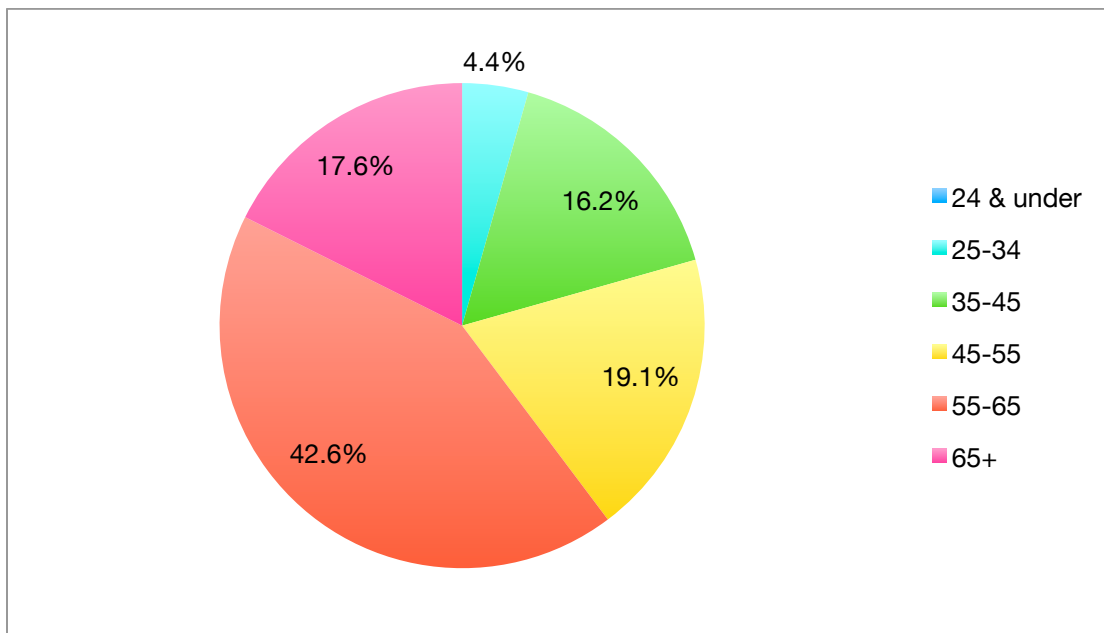
2. About one-in-five (18%) of these pastors said they are bi-vocational because it is necessary to supplement their family income. Of these, most (70.6%) said their secondary employment has not been affected by the epidemic. While this relatively high level of family financial stability is reason for thanksgiving, the 29.4% who have been affected present a significant cause for concern.
3. Most of these pastors (60%) who are married said their spouse is employed outside the home. Of these, most (80.8%) said this employment has not been affected by the epidemic. Again, the minority who have been affected are an important cause for concern.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. The distribution of these pastors by size of church is somewhat similar to the size distribution generally in the USA Church of the Nazarene. The majority (59%) are smaller than 100, 37.7% are 100 to 250, and 3.3% are larger than 250.



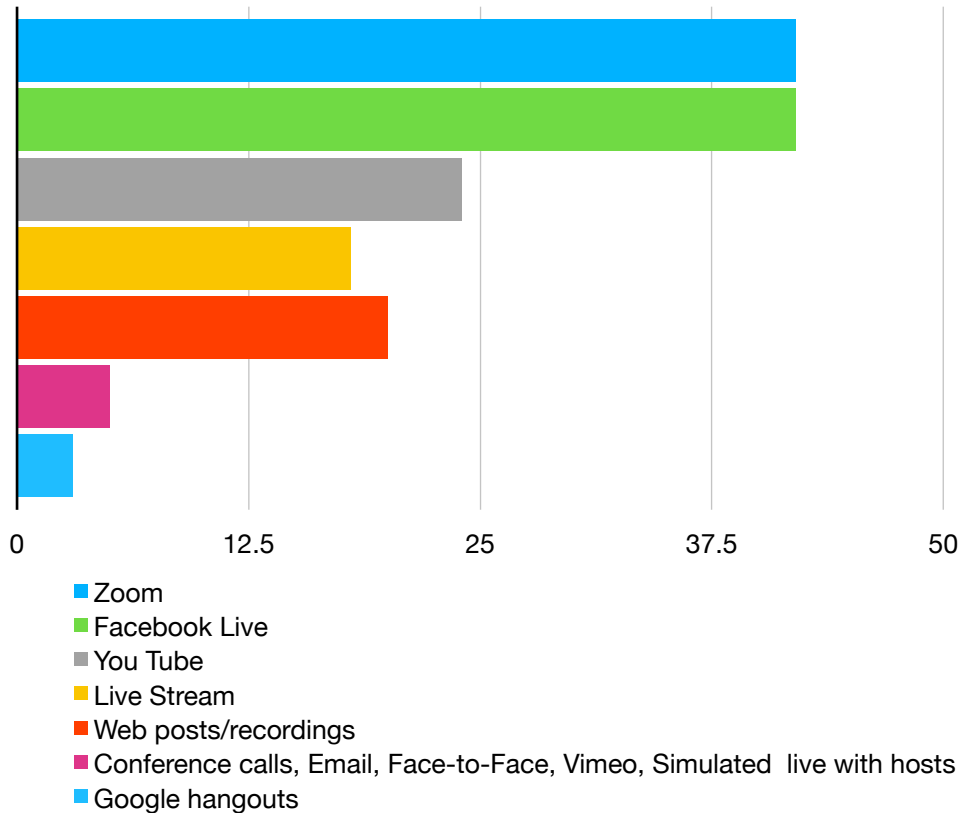
2. The distribution by age range of the pastor has, like most adult groups in the U.S.A., a majority (63.9%) in the general baby-boomer range (55+), with about one-third (32.8%) in the Buster range, and only 3.3% in the Millennial range.



3. 93% of respondents were male, 7% female

GENERAL RESPONSES:

1. In response to the question regarding usage of applications, or platforms being used to facilitate meetings and ministry, pastors reported the following:



2. What opportunities to serve have been created by the epidemic? (multiple response options were provided)

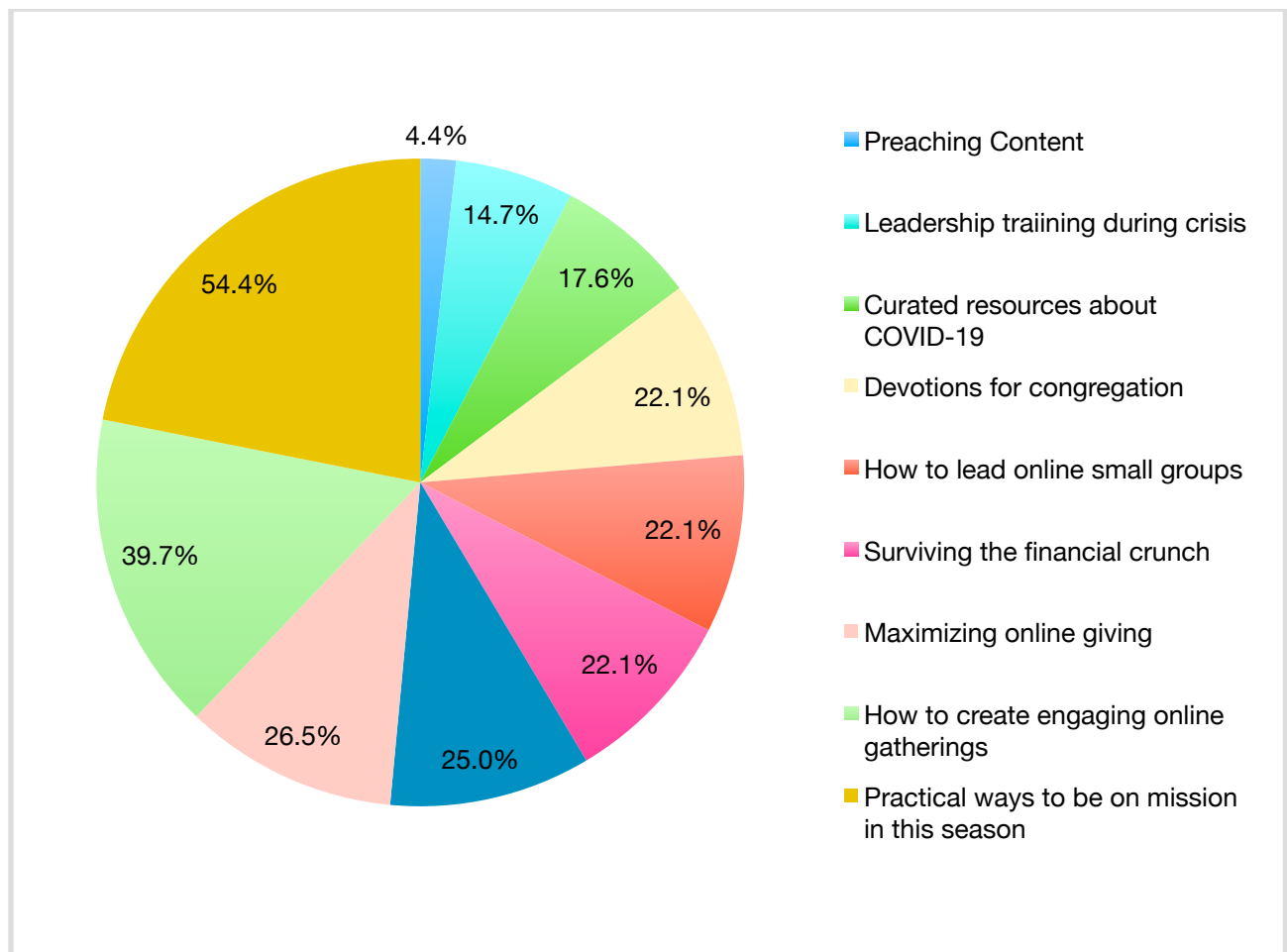
- 67.6% Assisting quarantined people with shopping
- 41.2% Providing online equipment and help for at-home education
- 35.3% Helping families unable to visit sick or dying relatives
- 17.6% Grief counseling – especially when shelter-in-place orders prevented public gatherings for funerals
- 10.3% Front line worker support
- 5.9% Assisting quarantined people with automobile maintenance while they were unable to get out

Other responses included: HS senior recognitions, assisting area schools in providing meals to students, connection with people across the US via zoom (former members, etc.), financial assistance to those in need, food pantry, food distribution, community non-perishables box.

- When asked what “forced changes” in the church life have been adopted out of necessity that pastors believe will continue even after the initial crisis subsides, 57% referenced maintaining an online presence in one form or another (online services, Facebook live, online giving, zoom board meetings, etc.); how best to keep people engaged (Zoom SS classes, small groups, daily video devotionals, etc.); develop social distancing guidelines, cleanliness of facilities, sanitizing stations and so forth.

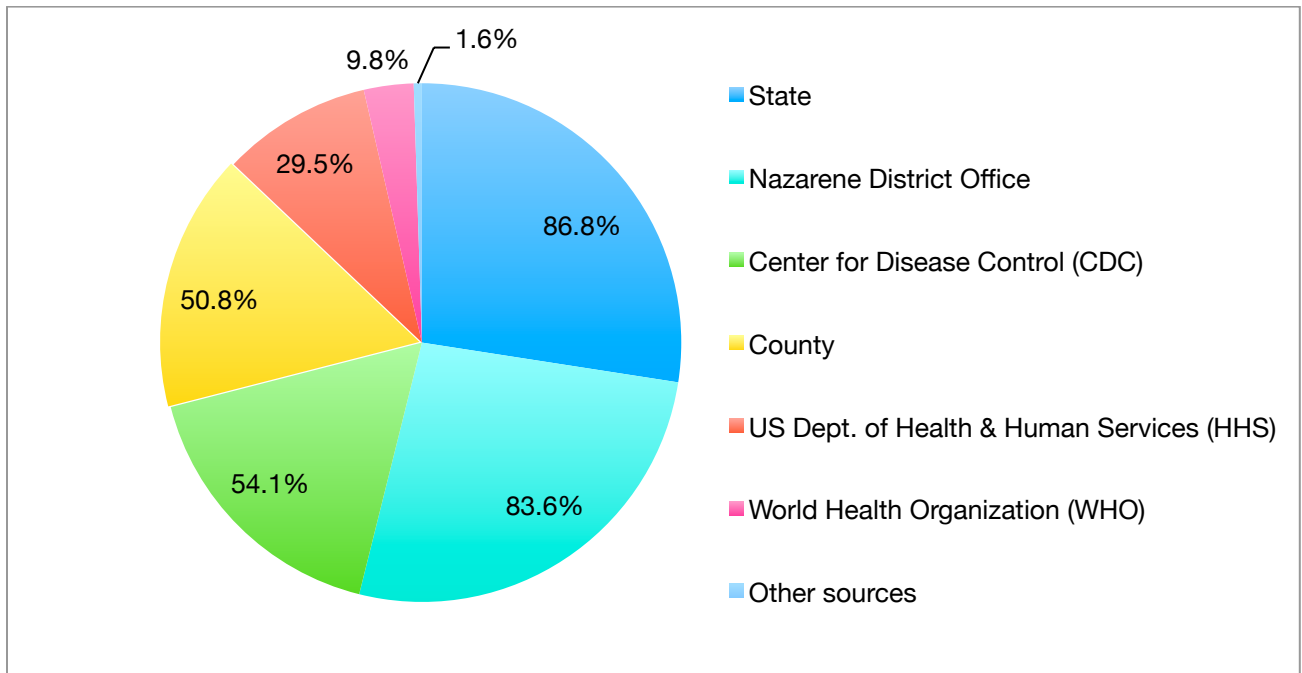
RESOURCES:

When asked about what kind of resources are needed to navigate these turbulent times pastors suggested the following:



COVID GUIDELINES/PROTOCOLS:

Guidance regarding re-opening reflects a strong link between following state guidelines and counsel from Nazarene District Offices.



NOTATION:

The Billy Graham Center's Send Institute (BGC), Exponential, Leadership Network, Catalyst, discipleship.org and ARC surveyed a non-random sample of pastors and church leaders regarding the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and the effect on the church. With over 1,500 leaders responding, the BGC produced a COVID-19 Church Survey Summary Report on March 27, 2020. The Resource Center for Pastoral Leadership (RCPL) followed the Billy Graham Center's pattern of inquiry, adapting questions, as well as creating unique inquiries for this survey.

The following timeline, provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) provides context regarding the outbreak of COVID-19 cases in the U.S.:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/29-06-2020-covidtimeline>