the fellowship

COMPLEMENTARIAN CONGRUENCE TEAM (CCT)

Survey Results

What we heard from our churches

the fellowship

COMPLEMENTARIAN CONGRUENCE TEAM (CCT)

How to Read These Results

Dear Fellowship family,

Earlier this year we invited every church to share its perspective on Article 9 of our Affirmation of Faith and Bylaw 4.1(a)(iii). Over 250 churches responded, from all five regions, along with well over a thousand written comments. Thank you for the prayer, care, and time you gave to this work.

Over these past months the Complementarian Congruence Team (CCT) has poured many hours into listening to you. What follows is simply what we heard, question by question. These results are a snapshot taken at one point along the way, not a vote or a decision. The survey was meant to help National Council and the CCT keep listening as we discern together toward FNC 2027.

A few things will help you read them well. As we worked through your responses, we found that some questions could be understood in more than one way, so a number on a chart does not always tell the whole story. Many of you also wrote comments that add important context the charts cannot show. To protect your privacy we cannot share individual comments, but they have shaped the summaries alongside the questions they speak to.

You will find two kinds of notes beside the charts. The gold box, “How to read this question,” is the CCT’s own guidance on what was asked and what to keep in mind. It is the CCT’s reading of the results, not a survey finding. The grey box, “What churches commented,” sums up the main themes from your written comments. Questions 27 to 30 asked how a church would respond if the Fellowship changed its current position. They had no space for comments, so each carries a short explanatory note of its own.

We share these results in good faith and ask you to receive them in the same spirit. Please keep praying for the CCT and National Council as we listen, consider what we have heard, and seek the Lord’s wisdom together.

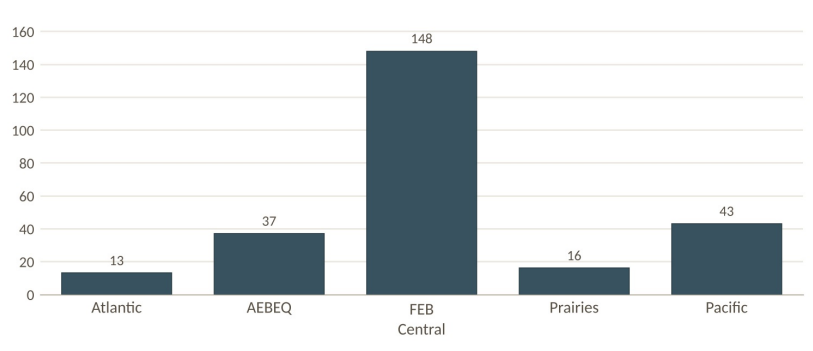
Blessings,

Rev. Steven Jones
President, The Fellowship

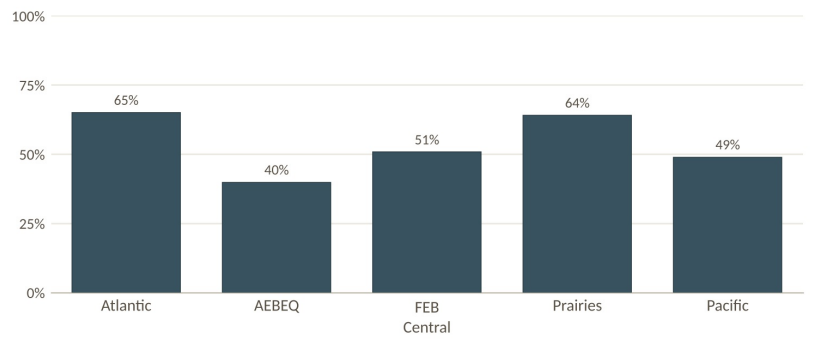
Rev. Dr. Jonathan Stairs
National Chair, The Fellowship

Who Responded

257 churches in total, about half of all Fellowship churches.



Number of churches responding, by region



Percentage of churches that responded, by region

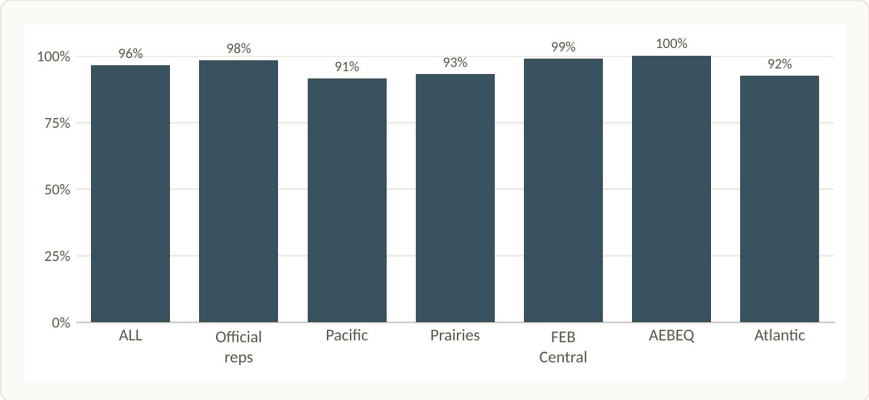
SECTION ONE

Article 9

This is the Article 9 revision proposed at FNC 2025, which did not pass.

> *"We believe that the universal church, the Body of Christ, comprised of all true believers in heaven and on earth, is expressed on earth in local churches. We believe a properly ordered local church consists of believers, baptized by immersion, who have been called out from the world, separated to the Lord Jesus, and voluntarily associated for the ministry of the word, the mutual edification of its members, the propagation of the faith, the observance of the ordinances, and the doing of good works. We believe it is a self-governing body responsible for exercising its own divinely awarded gifts, precepts, and privileges under the lordship of Christ, the Head and Chief Shepherd of the church. We believe that its officers are biblically qualified elders, who shepherd and oversee God's flock, and deacons, who serve and support."*

Q10 To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "We believe that the universal church, the Body of Christ, comprised of all true believers in heaven and on earth, is expressed on earth in local churches."



WHAT CHURCHES COMMENTED (40 COMMENTS)

"in heaven and on earth"

11 comments regarding the phrase "in heaven and on earth": implies deceased believers are part of local churches on earth; believers outside formal church

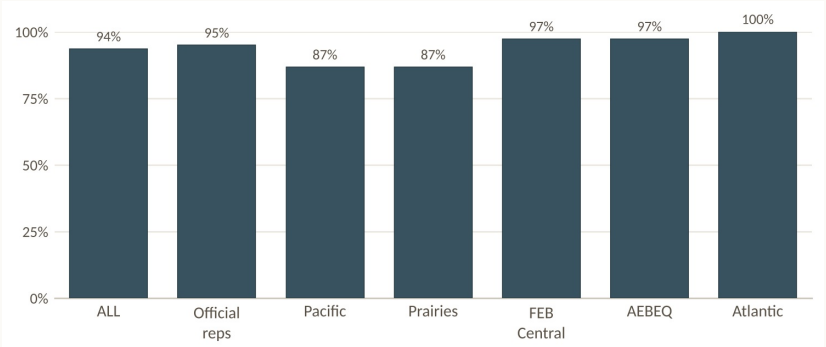
9 comments regarding genuine believers existing outside formal local church membership due to location, health or circumstance

"Universal church"

8 comments about appreciating the addition of the universal church

2 comments about "église eschatologique" being a more precise theological term for "universal church"

Q11 **To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "We believe a properly ordered local church consists of believers, baptized by immersion, who have been called out from the world, separated to the Lord Jesus; and voluntarily associated for the ministry of the word, the mutual edification of its members, the propagation of the faith, the observance of the ordinances, and the doing of good works."**



WHAT CHURCHES COMMENTED (71 COMMENTS)

“Immersion”

28 comments about immersion clause effectively excluding those baptized by other modes who are members of Fellowship churches

“Properly ordered”

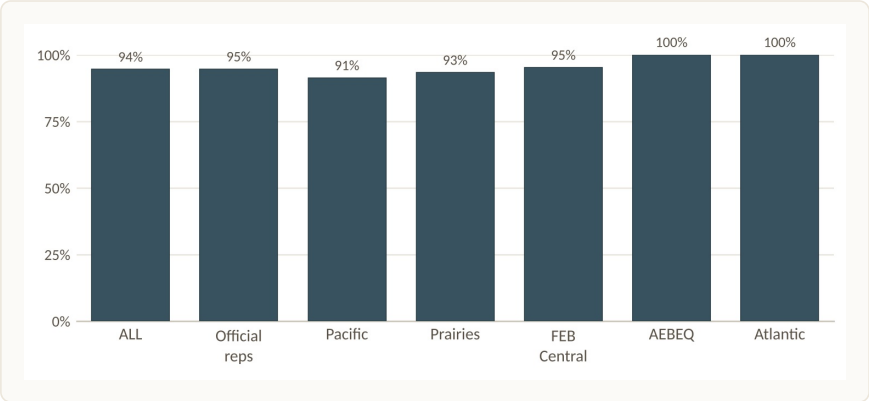
18 commented immersion is not a universal qualifier – implies other churches are not “properly ordered”

7 commented that they welcomed this phrase as a useful clarification of Baptist ecclesiology

Exceptions

9 comments about providing exceptions for immersion for health or other valid reasons

Q12 **To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "We believe the church is a self-governing body responsible for exercising its own divinely awarded gifts, precepts, and privileges under the lordship of Christ, the Head and Chief Shepherd of the church."**



WHAT CHURCHES COMMENTED (67 COMMENTS)

"Local church"

22 comments that "the church" is ambiguous and should specify the "local church" to avoid confusion with the "universal church"

Definitions

14 comments about need for further explanation in a catechetical or accompanying document for phrases like "precepts" and "divinely awarded"

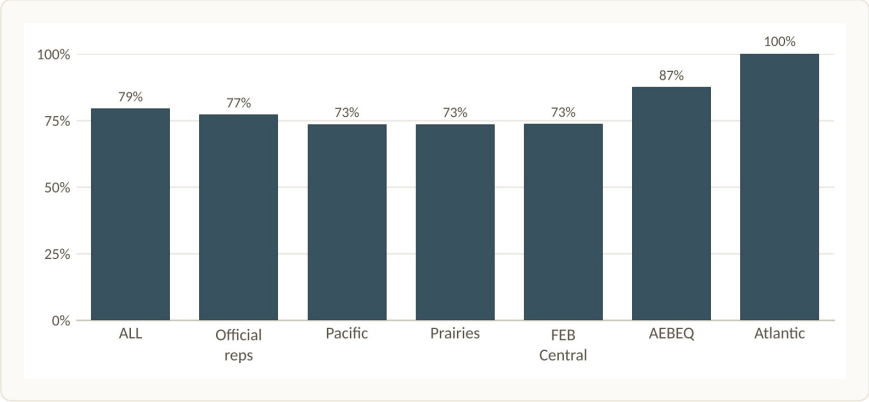
"Self-governing"

11 comments that churches shouldn't be isolated or unaccountable; there is a responsibility to the broader body of churches

Interdependent

5 comments (all French) requested adding interdependent as churches are autonomous but work in collaboration with other local churches

Q13 To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "We believe that its officers are biblically qualified elders, who shepherd and oversee God's flock, and deacons, who serve and support."



WHAT CHURCHES COMMENTED (248 COMMENTS)

"Biblically qualified"
98 comments that "biblically qualified" is ambiguous if it doesn't include "male"
"Pastor/Elder"
52 comments that "pastor" should be included alongside "elder"
10 French comments that "pasteurs/anciens" should be used together
Theologically correct
28 comments that this statement is theologically correct and that "biblically qualified" implicitly includes the gender requirements if the bylaws and policy statements are clear
"Officers"
18 comments that this term was too ambiguous – needs defining; include biblical references for elder and deacon roles
Deaconesses
8 comments to acknowledge deaconesses alongside deacons

Q14 Are there any additional clarifications or wording changes needed to Article 9 before it is presented to delegates at FNC 2027?

WHAT CHURCHES COMMENTED (189 COMMENTS). THIS QUESTION INVITED WRITTEN RESPONSES ONLY.

Elder/Pastor/Overseer
62 comments about these 3 titles; should be seen as synonymous and describing one office, not separate roles
55 comments to include gender-restrictive language and clearly state elders and pastors must be male
"Biblically qualified"
22 comments requesting a clear statement of what qualifications are expected (with reference to 1 Timothy and Titus)

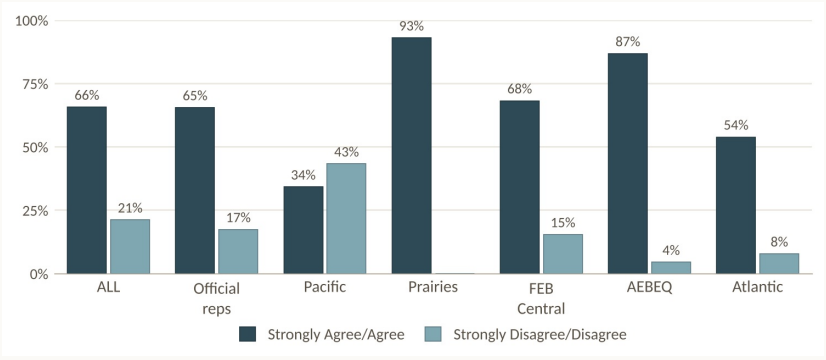
SECTION TWO

The Bylaw, Practice & Structure

These questions concern two existing documents: Bylaw 4.1(a)(iii) and the current, non-binding Position Statement. They ask whether the bylaw should be rewritten for FNC 2027, and whether the Position Statement should be elevated to a binding Policy Statement.

> *"Notwithstanding the provisions in 1.3(c), it accepts that the pastoral office in the church is reserved for qualified men recognized by the church for oversight of the doctrine and practice of the church."*
>
> BYLAW 4.1(A)(III), AS ADOPTED NOVEMBER 2019

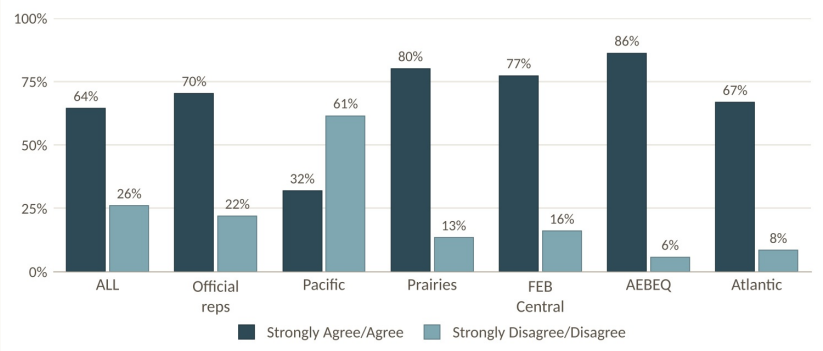
Q15 If the matter where to be revisited, the Fellowship National Bylaw 4.1(a)(iii) should be rewritten and presented at FNC 2027 for delegate approval.



WHAT CHURCHES COMMENTED (236 COMMENTS)

Confusing
48 comments that the question was not clear; were they voting to rewrite, affirm, or replace the existing bylaw
"Pastoral office"
41 comments insisting the bylaw must reference the term "elder" not just
"pastoral office"
8 comments in French wanting it to be distinguished between women exercising a pastoral function and holding formal office (the latter being male only)
Rewrite
38 comments supporting a rewrite provided it strengthens rather than weakens the statement by naming men explicitly
Don't rewrite
29 comments that the current bylaw is already clear and not to be changed (unless the change strengthens it)

Q16 If the matter were to be revisited, the existing Position Statement (non-binding) should be rewritten and presented for approval at FNC 2027 as a Policy Statement (binding document).



WHAT CHURCHES COMMENTED (219 COMMENTS)

Confusion

52 comments that indicated confusion over whether “rewritten” meant changed or simply elevated to binding status

Support binding status

44 comments that support the position statement becoming binding to provide accountability and consistency

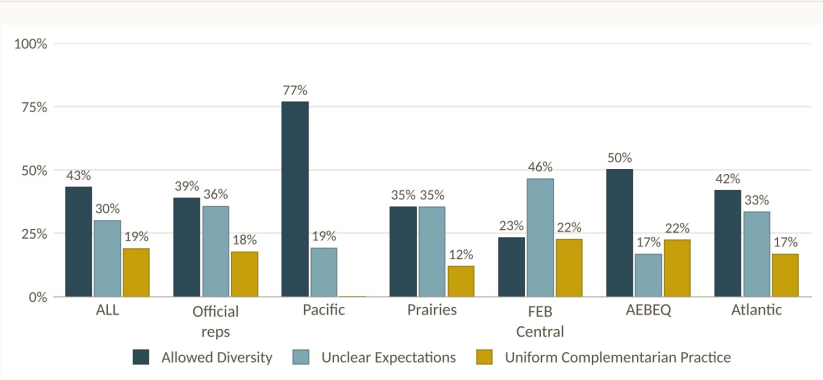
Oppose binding status

31 comments that if it became binding it would override congregational governance (autonomy concerns)

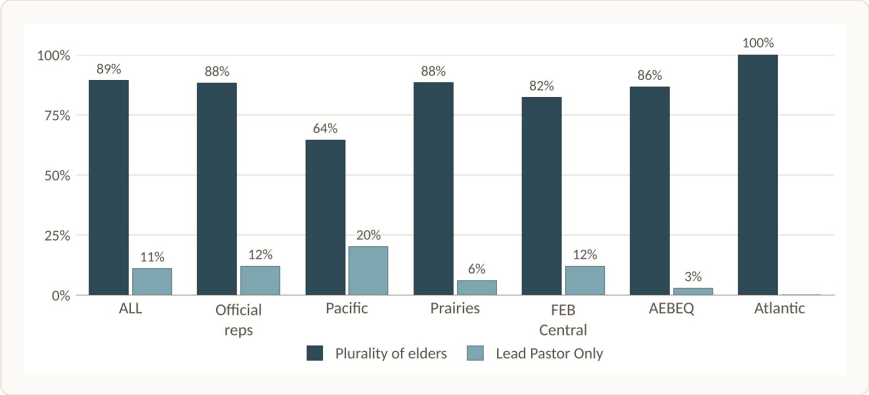
Don’t rewrite

28 comments supporting the current document as it is and it just needs to be made binding

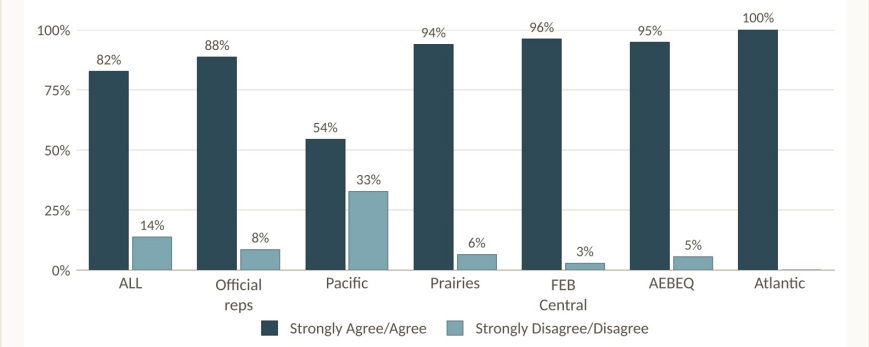
Q17 Based on your experience in the Fellowship, would you say the Fellowship has:



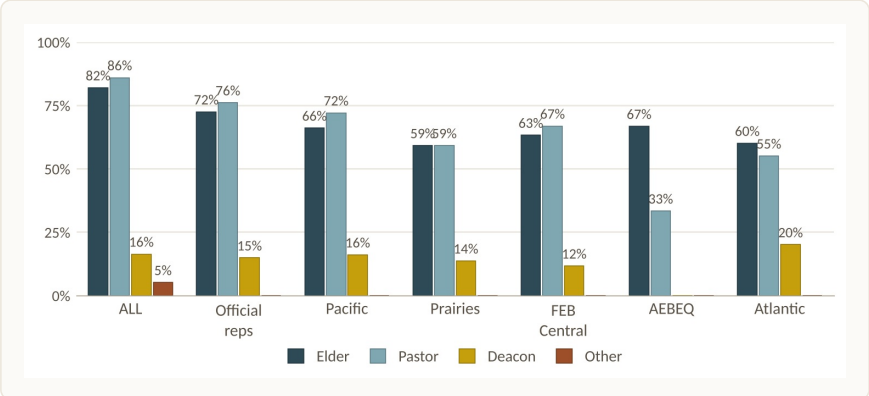
Q18 Who fills the oversight office in your church?



Q19 The oversight office in the local church is for qualified male leadership only.



Q20 Which of the following titles do you apply to the individual(s) who fill the oversight office in your local church? Select all that apply.

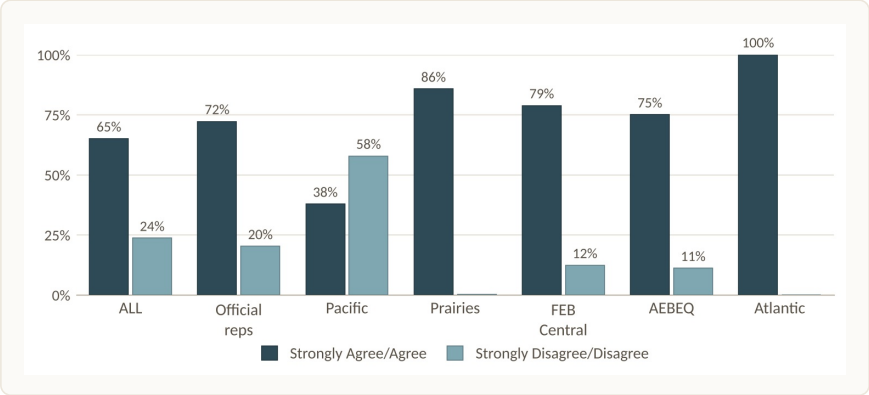


HOW TO READ THIS QUESTION

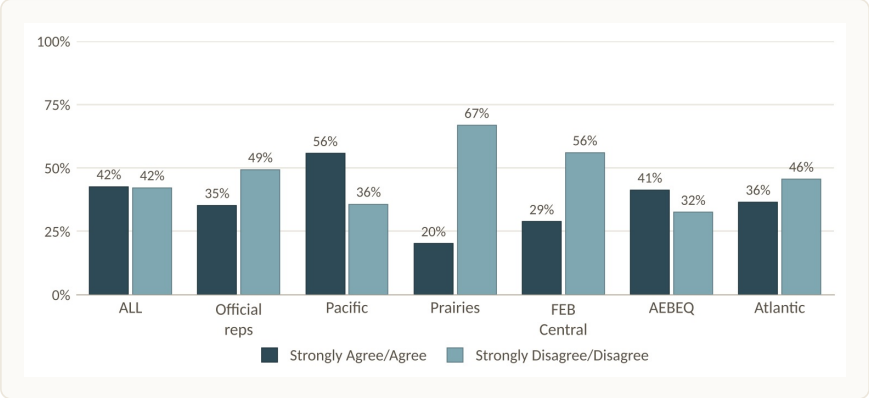
This question asked which titles a church uses for the people who fill its oversight office, and a church could select every title that applies.

Many churches use more than one, for example, both Elder and Pastor, so the bars add up to more than 100%. Read each bar on its own: it shows how many churches use that title, not a share of one whole.

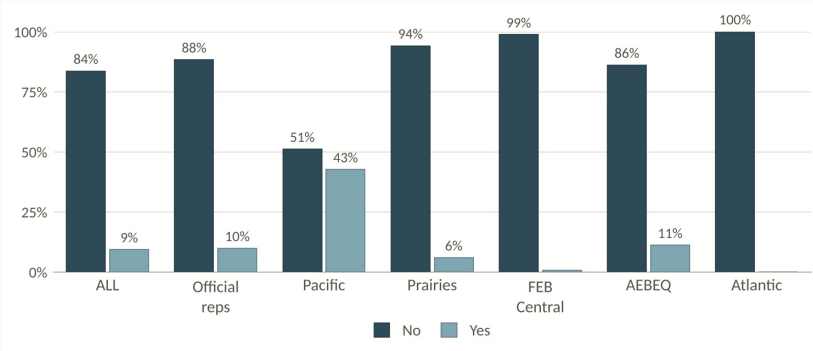
Q21 **The title "Pastor" is only to be used for the oversight office.**



Q22 **To what extent do you or your church agree with the following statement? "Fellowship Regions should be permitted to establish specific complementarian applications or expectations for churches in their Region, within the broader doctrinal boundaries of the National Fellowship."**



Q23 In your church, do women currently serve in the oversight office?

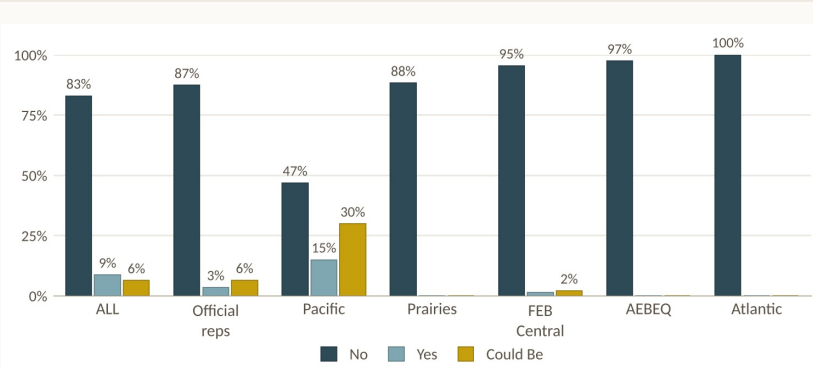


HOW TO READ THIS QUESTION

The survey defined the term this way: "Due to the varied use of terms across our Fellowship churches, we will use the term 'oversight office' to refer to the position that provides spiritual oversight, shepherding, and discipline of the local church. For some churches, this may refer to any of the following: Elder, Deacon, Lead Pastor, Pastor, Minister, etc."

Because the definition grouped the governing office with roles such as deacon and staff pastor, which many churches fill with women, a "yes" need not mean women serve as elders or overseers. The Pacific result especially reflects the reality of this ambiguity. Their answers do not necessarily describe the actual governing practice of their churches.

Q24 In your church, are women currently referred to as "Pastor"?

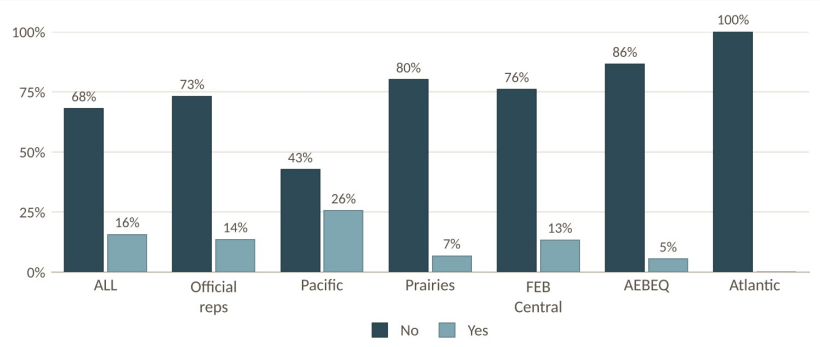


HOW TO READ THIS QUESTION

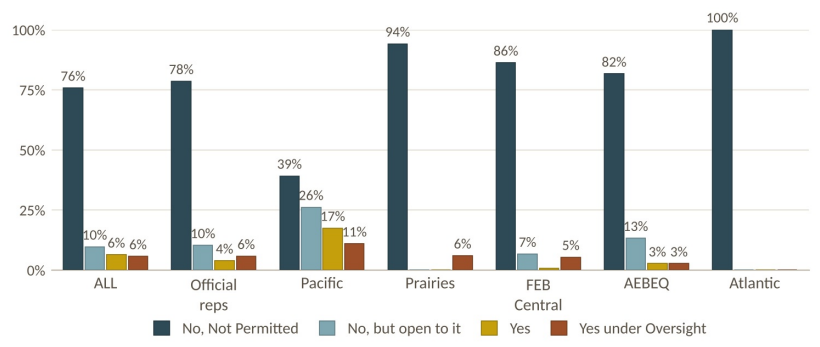
This question asked whether women in a church are currently called "Pastor."

The "No" answer includes two different groups: churches that simply do not use the title for women, and churches that hold it is not permitted. So 87% of churches say no, but not all for the same reason. A further 6% do not use it now but say it could be possible.

Q25 In your church, are men currently referred to as "pastor" who do not serve in the oversight office?



Q26 Do women currently preach in the primary worship gathering of your local church?



HOW TO READ THIS QUESTION

This question asked whether women currently preach in the primary worship gathering of the church.

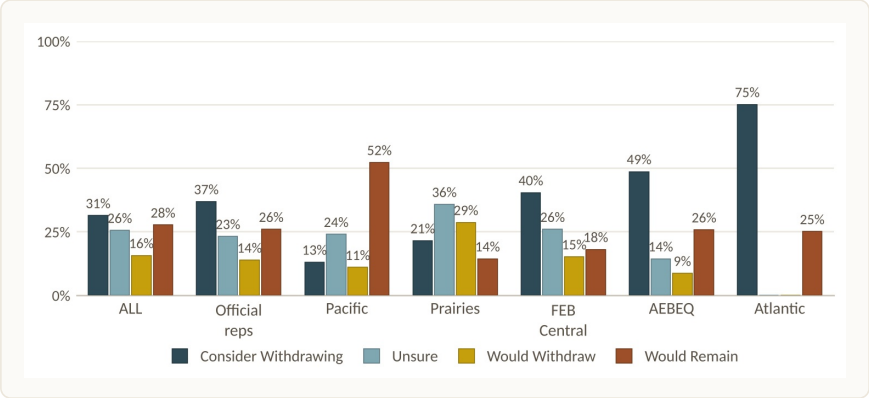
It was not a simple yes or no. Answers ranged from "No, not permitted" (79%) and "No, but open to it" (10%) to "Yes, under oversight" (6%) and "Yes" (4%). The result shows a range of current practice.

SECTION THREE

Scenario Questions (27–30)

Four questions asked how a church would respond if the Fellowship changed its current position. These are possible directions, not decisions. Each carries a short explanatory note of its own.

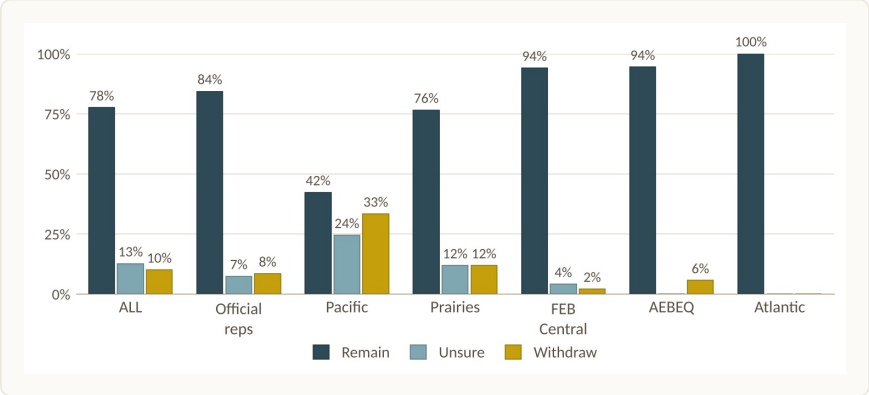
Q27 If the Fellowship required local churches to have men only in the oversight office, but permitted churches to have women serve as pastors, how would your church likely respond?



HOW TO READ THIS QUESTION

This question brought together two matters many churches hold separately: men only in oversight, and women serving as pastors. A church that could affirm one but not the other had no way to say so in a single answer, so these responses hold more than one view at once. The outcome of this question could therefore be called into question.

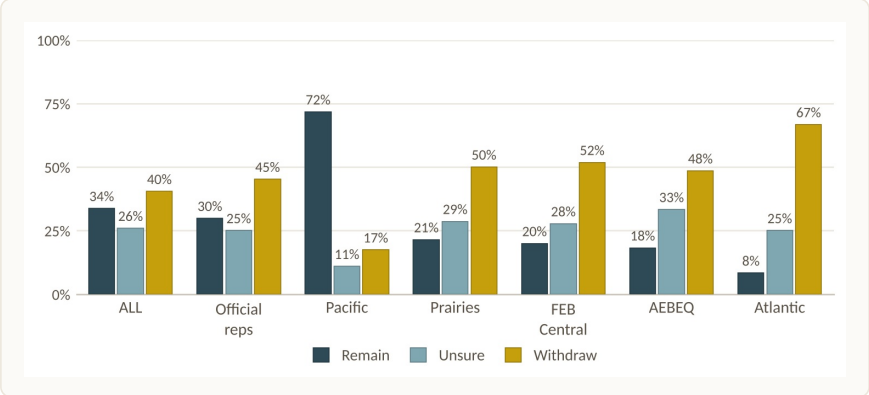
Q28 If the Fellowship were to formally restrict the office and terminology of Elder/Overseer AND Pastor to qualified men only, how would your church likely respond?



HOW TO READ THIS QUESTION

This question combined two things that are not always the same: reserving the elder/oversight office for men, and reserving the title of "Pastor" for men. A church may hold the first and still use "pastor" more widely, so a single answer could not tell the two apart. Some responses reflect the title as much as the office. The outcome of this question could therefore be called into question.

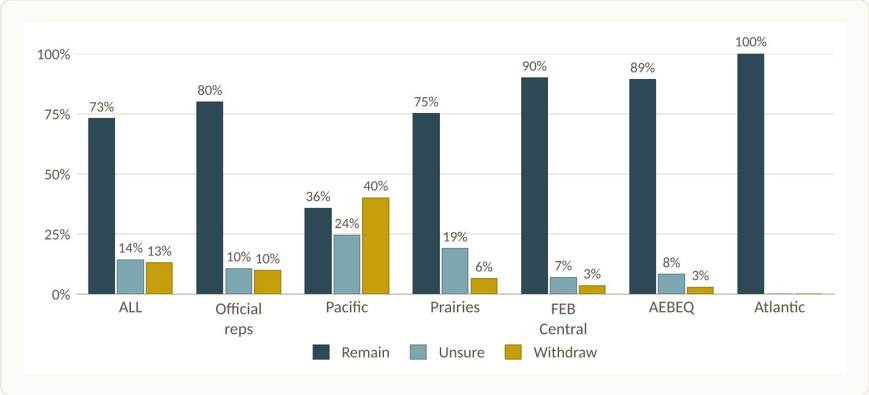
Q29 If the Fellowship were to give freedom to local churches to allow women to preach, under the oversight and authority of the elders/overseers in the primary worship gathering of the local church, how would your church likely respond?



HOW TO READ THIS QUESTION

This question reads as a single, clear question: would a church remain in the Fellowship if women were permitted to preach, under the authority of its elders, in the primary worship gathering? It is a weighty one, and we present the result as churches answered it.

Q30 If the Fellowship were to formally prohibit women from preaching in the primary worship gathering of the local church, how would your church likely respond?



HOW TO READ THIS QUESTION

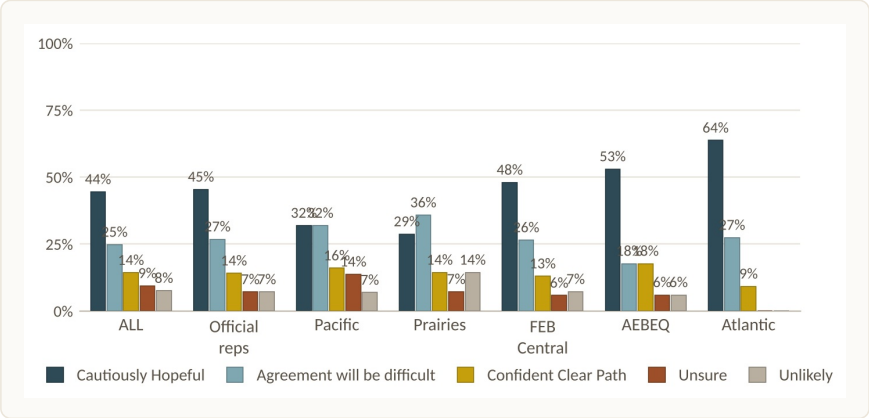
This question asked two things together: whether women should be prohibited from preaching, and whether that should become a formal, binding rule across the Fellowship. A church may hold the conviction and still wonder if such a rule should be binding as a test of fellowship, so a single answer could not separate the two. The outcome of this question could therefore be called into question.

SECTION FOUR

Looking Ahead

How churches view the road toward FNC 2027, and final comments to the CCT.

Q31 Which best reflects your current outlook regarding the complementarian congruence process leading to FNC 2027?



Q32 Is there anything else you would like to share with the Complementarian Congruence Team (CCT) as they continue their work?

WHAT CHURCHES COMMENTED (239 COMMENTS). THIS QUESTION INVITED WRITTEN RESPONSES ONLY.

Define pastor/elder/overseer

58 comments agreeing that the Fellowship's core problem is terminological inconsistency and it needs to be resolved first

Methodology

34 comments expressing concern about the survey design and wondering if the process is theological study or political polling

Church withdrawals

18 comments expressing concern about churches withdrawing over this process; churches on both sides of the complementarian issue may withdraw