

ST. ALBERT UNITED CHURCH
RESULTS OF CHURCH RE-OPENING SURVEY
AUGUST 6, 2020 REPORT

Overview

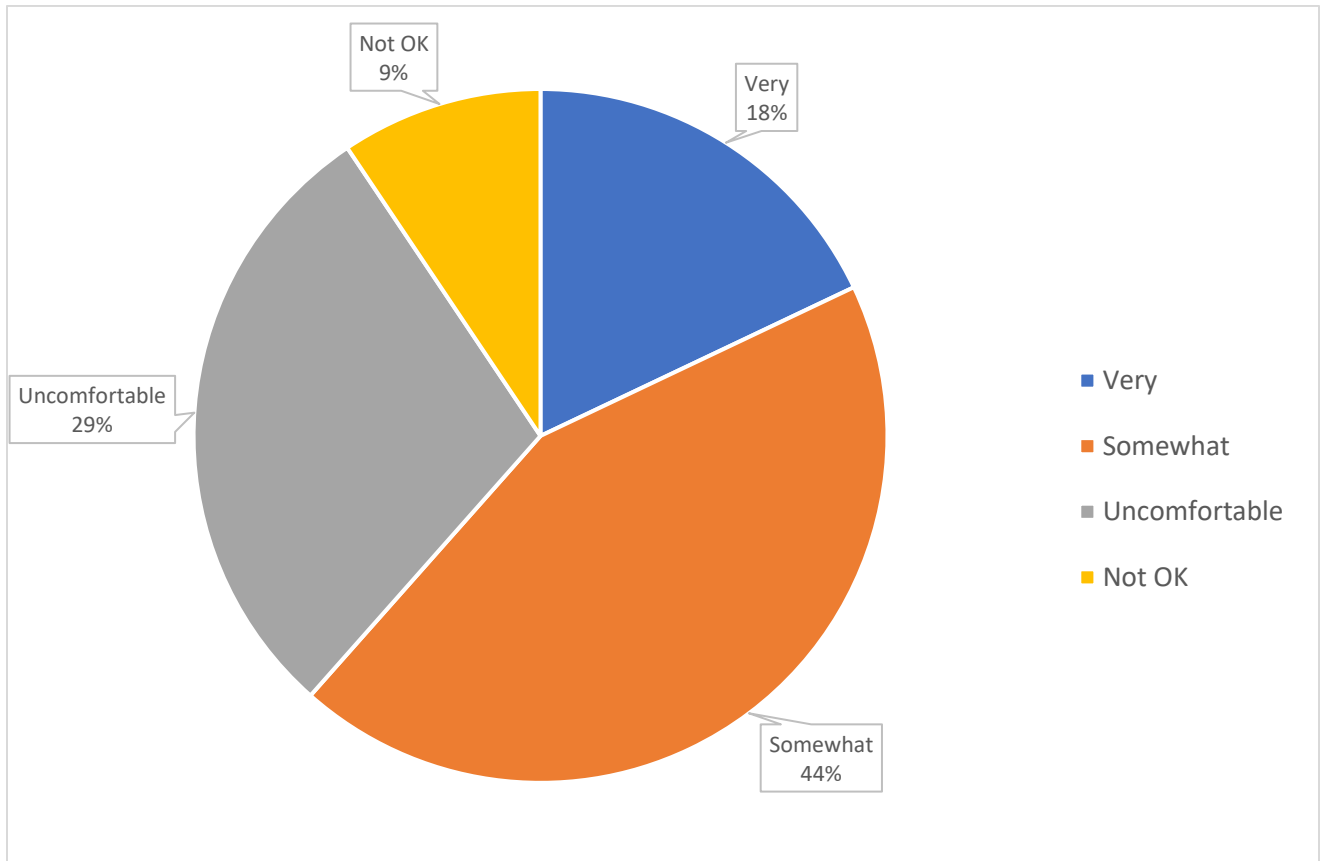
A majority of the survey respondents are very or somewhat comfortable attending an in-person worship service providing every effort is made to follow COVID19 protocols. This includes wearing masks (now mandatory in St. Albert in public in-door spaces as of Aug. 8, 2020), physical distancing, hand sanitizers used before entering the church or sanctuary, eliminating social time and managing traffic flow. It will be extremely important to let people know about the measures being taken to ensure their safety.

In-person services were also recognized as being important for people who may not be able to connect using technology, are more isolated socially or are at higher risk for health reasons. Live-streaming services will continue to be important for people who are at higher risk and may not be able to attend in-person services.

A total of 117 survey responses were received between July 13 and August 6, 2020 consisting of 108 on-line responses and 9 submitted in hard copy.

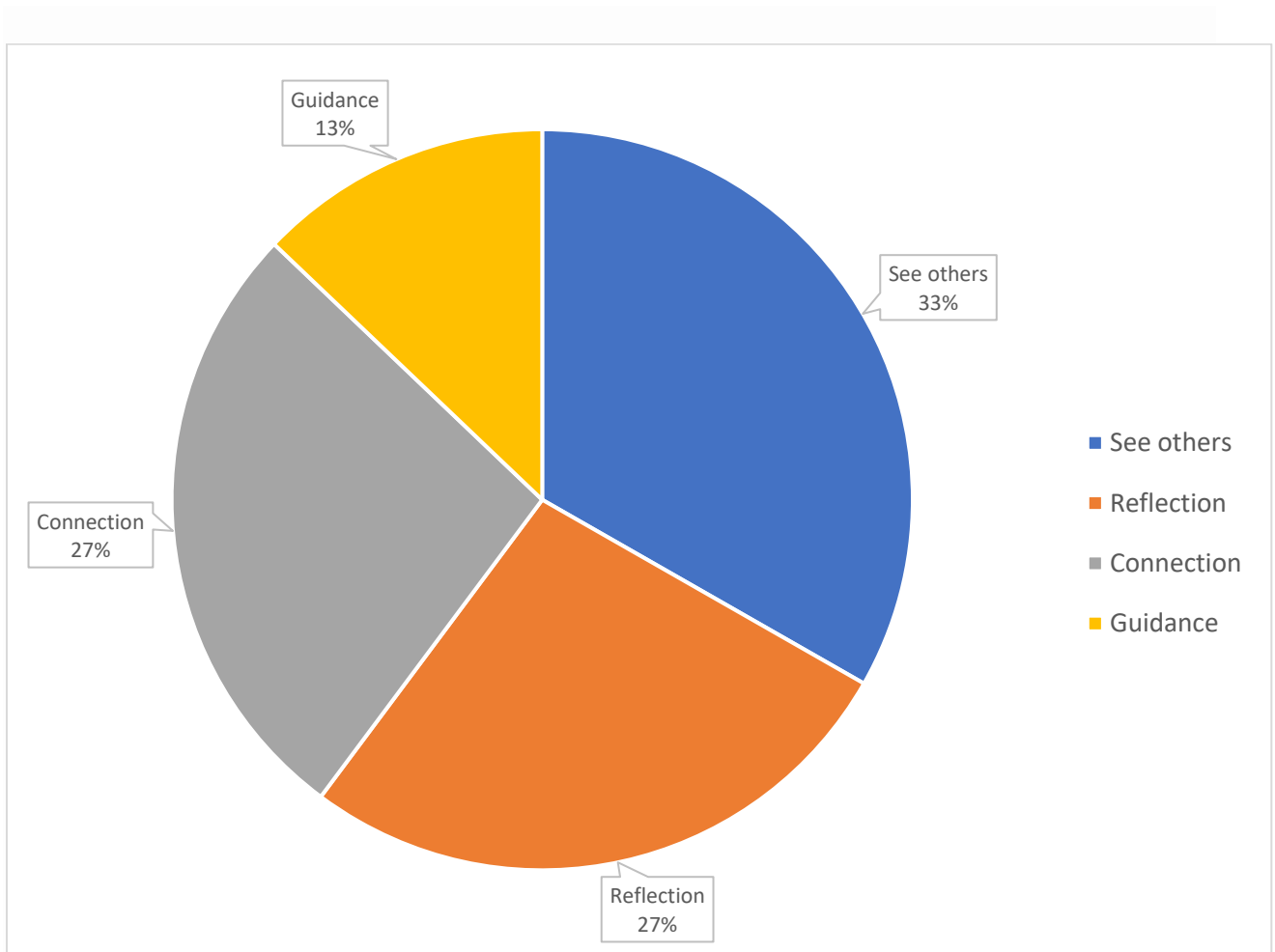
Comfort Level Attending an In-Person Service

The congregation was asked how comfortable they would feel attending an in-person service, providing all of the current provincial COVID19 guidelines were being met.



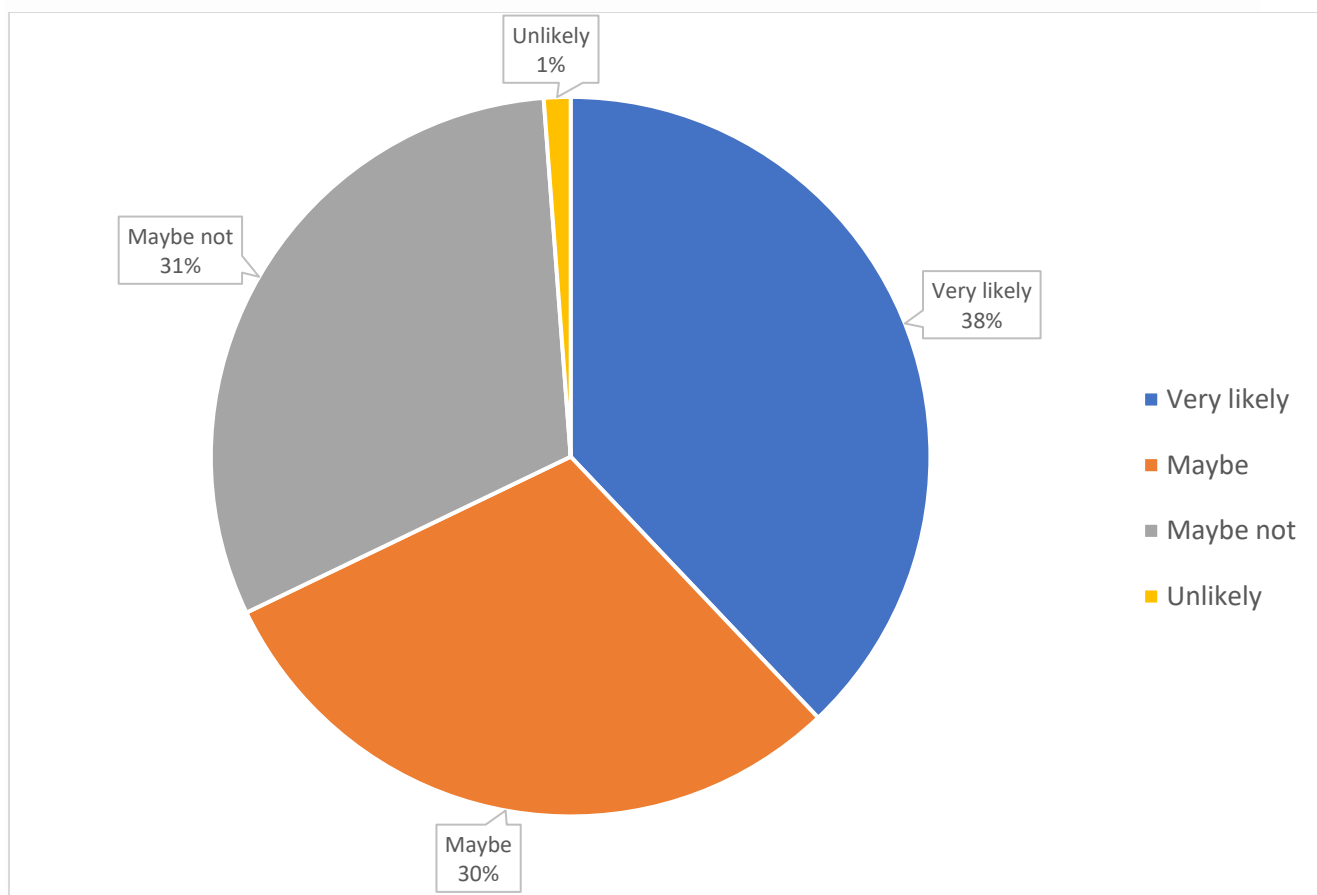
What People Miss About Being in Church

The congregation was asked to identify what they missed most about being in church. Suggested responses were: seeing and talking to other members of the congregation; focused time for reflection; feeling connected to a larger purpose, and guidance in my spiritual life.



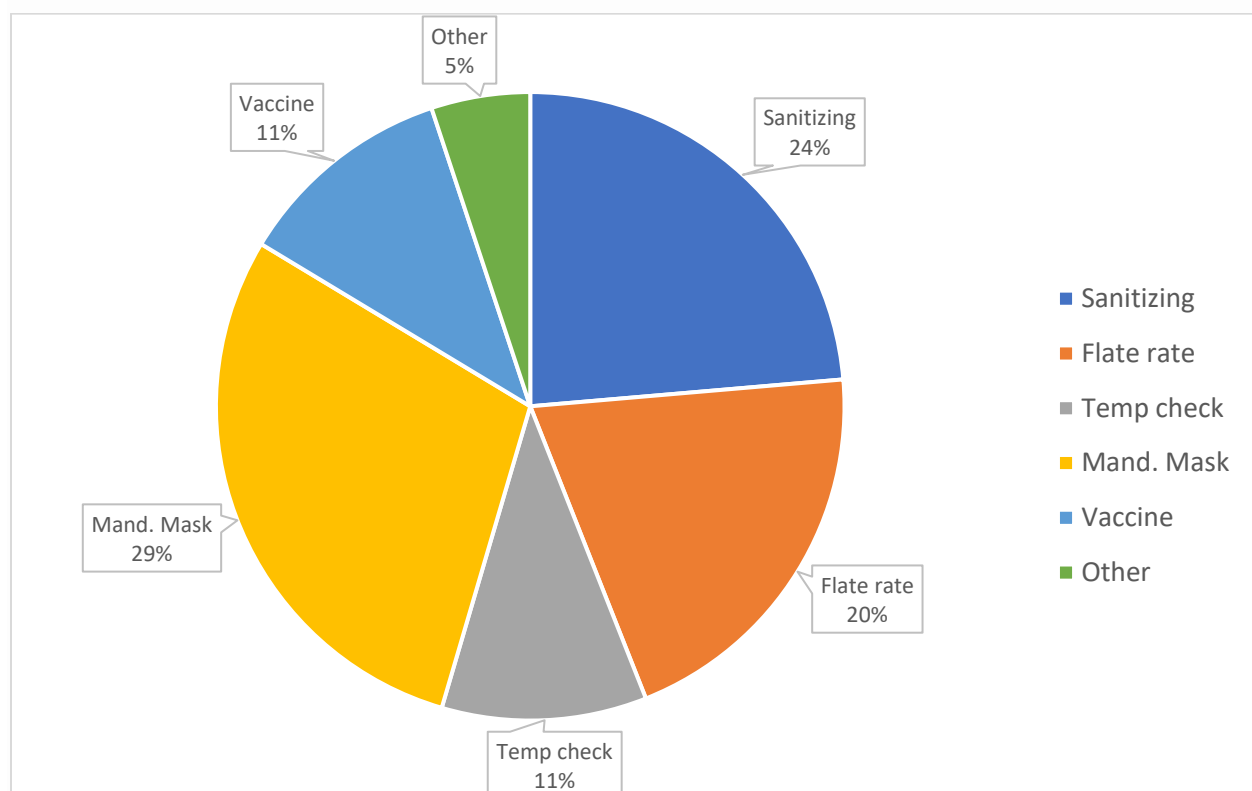
Interest in Watching Live-Streamed Sunday Worship Services

The capacity in the sanctuary, when chairs are spaced to follow physical distancing, is 65 people. The congregation was asked how likely they were to watch live-streamed St. Albert United Church worship services when they were unable to attend in person.



What Else Needs to Happen to Make People Comfortable Attending

People were given four suggested answers as well as an opportunity to identify other needs. The suggested responses were: need to be confident SAUC is rigorously sanitizing the church; rate of COVID19 infection needs to be flat in Alberta; temperature checks of all people entering church for worship; mandatory wearing of masks in the church; and a vaccine is available.



Other comments included ensuring spacing/social distancing is being done, hand sanitizer is available upon entering the building and sanctuary and masks are worn. Other suggestions included having taped music given that singing is not permitted and possibly having the ministers contact members of the congregation by phone.

Other Ways to Meet Needs

Ten suggestions were made for meeting people's needs besides attending in-person worship services on a Sunday. Here are the responses ranked in order from most to least important.

1. Sunday live-streamed services
2. Small ministries/meetings of 6-10 people held during the week, led by a minister
3. Small ministries/meetings of 6-10 people held during the week, not led by a minister
4. Weekly Zoom Bible study
5. Podcasts
6. Broadview Zoom Discussion group
7. UCW Zoom meetings
8. Zoom Committee meetings
9. Book Club Zoom meeting
10. Handbell choir

Resuming In-Person Small Group Meetings

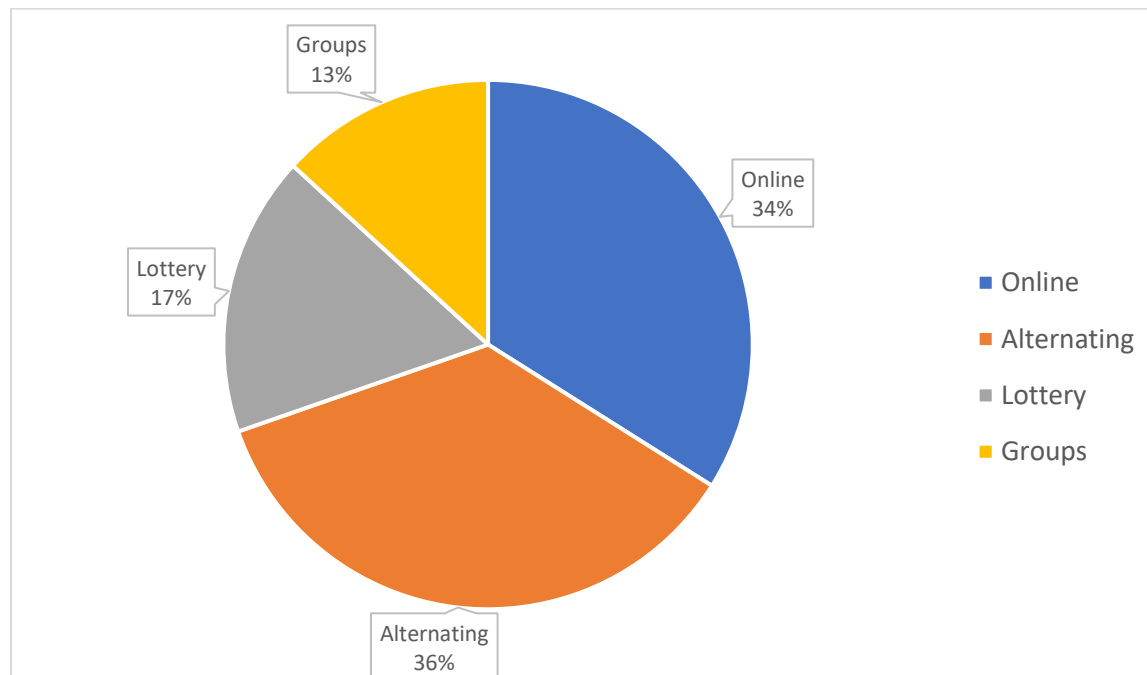
Most people responding to this question were in favour of resuming in-person small group meetings but a significant number of people said meetings should only resume if physical distancing is observed and masks are worn. A few people were more comfortable with maintaining Zoom meetings until the COVID19 infection rate was flat (or eliminated) in Alberta.

Having Your Children Attend Sunday School

This question was not applicable to 89 per cent of the people responding to the survey. 9 of the 11 people who answered this question were very/somewhat interested in having their children attend Sunday School on a Sunday morning once the church re-opens.

How to Determine Who Attends an In-Person Sunday Worship Service

There were four suggested responses to this question: on-line sign-up to reserve a space each week (first come, first serve); alternate weeks attendance; lottery to see who attends; divide the congregation into groups to attend a particular Sunday e.g. alphabetically.



There were two other suggestions on this topic in the comments later in the survey:

- Reserve some spaces each week for seniors who are not technically inclined; people who live alone or are grieving; and seniors (or others) who do not have internet and/or computer access.
- On-line sign-up but people who register beyond the 65 capacity are given first right of refusal to attend the following week.
- Capacity might be more than 65 if family bubbles are taken into account

Other Considerations For Re-Opening The Church

- Several people emphasized the importance of following all COVID19 protocols and safety measures e.g. mandatory masks, physical distancing

and hand sanitizers; no social time; well-managed traffic flow; additional caution when cases are increasing in the province.

- Comfort with in-person gatherings may fluctuate as fall weather and cold and flu season approach.
- Live music (individual distancing) or tape music is important given that there is no congregational singing.
- May need to reach out to the community and provide more information using social media e.g. web, Facebook, Instagram.
- Can have the service bulletin on the screen.
- It may be possible to have the church open at specific times similar to the Easter vigil.
- Potential reputation damage needs to be considered e.g. if a COVID19 case is traced to the church it could damage the church's long-term viability
- The minister could introduce and share one interest of an individual member each service since the congregation won't be able to mingle.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

There were no survey responses from people aged 20 years or younger.

