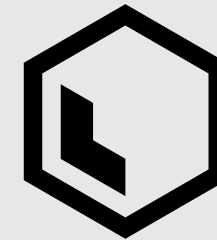
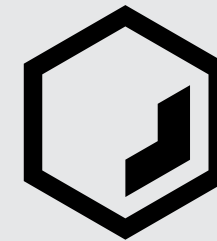


# **YOUNG ADULTS AND THE CHURCH**

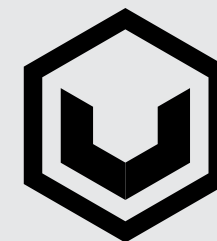
In the Pacific  
Northwest and US



Why do (or don't) young adults go to church?

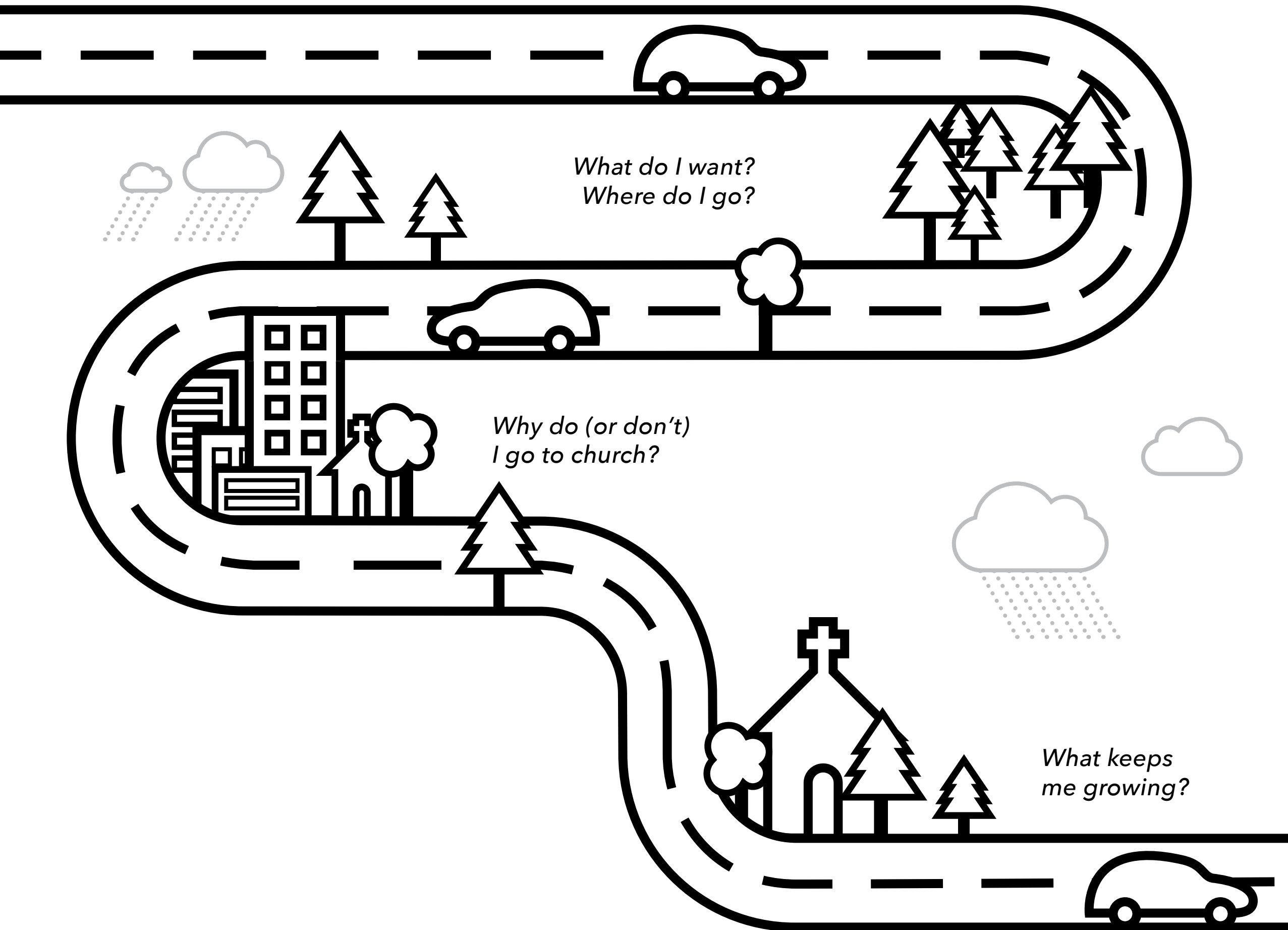


What does church provide for young adults?



How do young adults grow in their faith at church?





*What do I want?  
Where do I go?*

*Why do (or don't)  
I go to church?*

*What keeps  
me growing?*



**OUR  
QUESTIONS.  
THEIR  
QUESTIONS?**

The data is designed to be a catalyst to conversations.



# WHY DO [OR DON'T] YOUNG ADULTS GO TO CHURCH?

Out of 20 on-ramps and 22 off-ramps, young adults in the US identified these as the top 5 on-ramps and off-ramps.

## What do young adults say are their top on- and off-ramps to church?

### ON-RAMPS

### OFF-RAMPS

1  
People in churches seem to care about each other.

1

1  
Christian faith communities are resistant to change.

2  
Church is a way to get involved in helping poor and disadvantaged people.

2

2  
I tend to have political views that are in disagreement with Christian faith communities.

3  
Church is an opportunity to meet other people.

3

3  
People in Christian faith communities are hypocritical and judgmental.

4  
Church is an opportunity to deal with grief or loss.

4

4  
The leaders in Christian faith communities are hypocritical.

5  
I feel welcomed by the leaders in the church (e.g., pastors).

5

5  
Christian faith communities do not create spaces to talk about real or controversial issues.



# WHY DO [OR DON'T] YOUNG ADULTS GO TO CHURCH?

While young adults may self-report other reasons as being the most significant predictors of their attendance, the data suggests these on-ramps are what actually predict attendance.

Young adults in the US who agree with these statements are more likely to attend church frequently

*Church is essential for my growth as a person*



$r = 0.681$

*Fellowship with other people is important*



$r = 0.656$

*Church feels like 'home'*



$r = 0.594$

*My family attends church*



$r = 0.526$

*I feel welcomed by the leaders in the church*



$r = 0.522$



Does not predict attendance at all



Predicts attendance perfectly



Young adults in the US who agree with these statements are less likely to attend church frequently

$r = -0.558$



*Churches are not authentic and transparent spaces*

$r = -0.553$



*Church does not help me develop spiritually*

$r = -0.532$



*Christianity doesn't adequately address suffering, cruelty, or injustice in the world*

$r = -0.510$



*Church is not a space where I feel I can build meaningful relationships*

$r = -0.505$



*I feel like I do not have a voice in the church*

-1

0

Negatively predicts attendance perfectly

Does not predict attendance at all

## WHY DO [OR DON'T] YOUNG ADULTS GO TO CHURCH?

These off-ramps are negatively correlated with young adults' church attendance.



## **YOUR TURN TO REFLECT**

Why do or don't young adults in your community go to church?



How does your experience compare with the data we've collected?



How do these answers compare with what you hear?



# WHAT DOES CHURCH PROVIDE FOR YOUNG ADULTS?

Research indicates that these are the top 11 values for young adults.

- Autonomy:** I value my independence and the capability to make my own decisions.
- Stability:** I value job security; financial security (for both my needs and wants); commitment to people or organizations with a solid reputation and pattern of growth.
- Relationships/belonging:** I value warm satisfying relationships, accountability, and belonging; I value being accepted by others even when discussing difficult topics.
- Peace:** I value self-acceptance, restoration, and relaxation.
- Purpose/meaning:** I value having a sense of purpose/direction and meaning in life.
- Fun:** I value allowing time and space to be creative, adventurous, and to play.
- Spiritual growth:** I value developing higher awareness/consciousness; engaging in spiritual practices (meditation, prayer, etc.); acknowledging a higher power/god.
- Personal transformation:** I value being able to develop and connect my body, mind, and spirit.
- Social transformation:** I value helping others in need; pursuing justice and beauty in the world through the creation of networks for good; a chance to be part of something bigger than myself.
- Networking:** I value having access to networks of organizations, mentors, career development, and people with similar interests; use of social networks to find community.
- Unique contribution:** I value having my personal significance recognized by others and adding value to a group/community; being seen by others; having mastery.

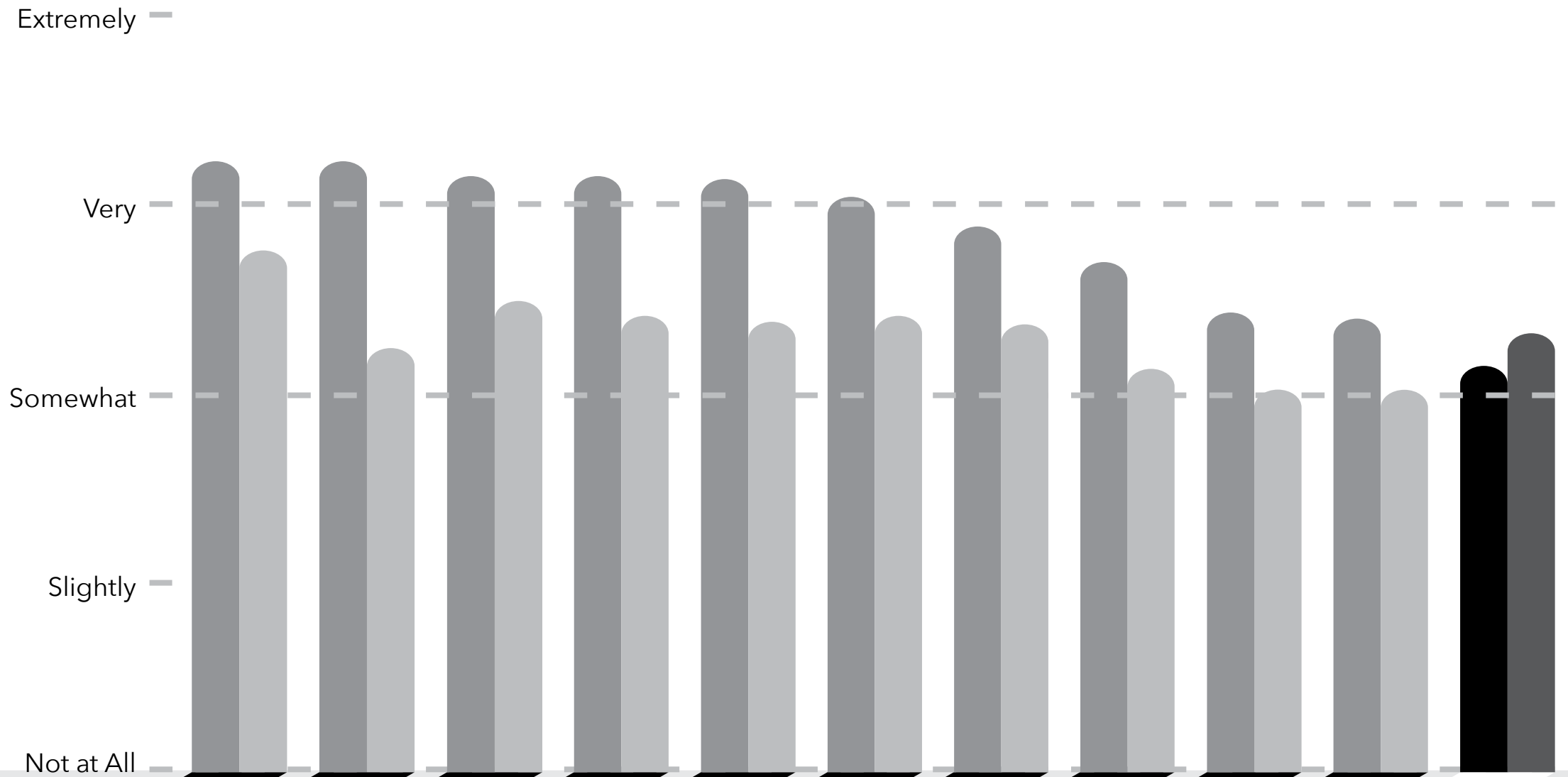


# WHAT DOES CHURCH PROVIDE FOR YOUNG ADULTS?

Young adults in the US find less satisfaction than importance in all 11 values **except spiritual growth.**

They see spiritual growth as the **least important** of the values.

## 11 Top Values: Importance vs. Satisfaction



■ Importance  
■ Satisfaction



Top values were assessed based on ratings of importance and satisfaction derived from literature. Data was gathered from a combined sample of young adults in the US and PNW (N=296).





## WHAT DOES CHURCH PROVIDE FOR YOUNG ADULTS?

Young adults' values are fulfilled by various roles (communities or places) in their lives. The top values they reported as being fulfilled by the church are:

- spiritual growth
- peace
- social transformation

These values are somewhat uniquely fulfilled by the church as they do not show up as a top value for many other roles.



Top values were assessed based on ratings of importance and satisfaction derived from literature. Data was gathered from a combined sample of young adults in the US and PNW (N=296).

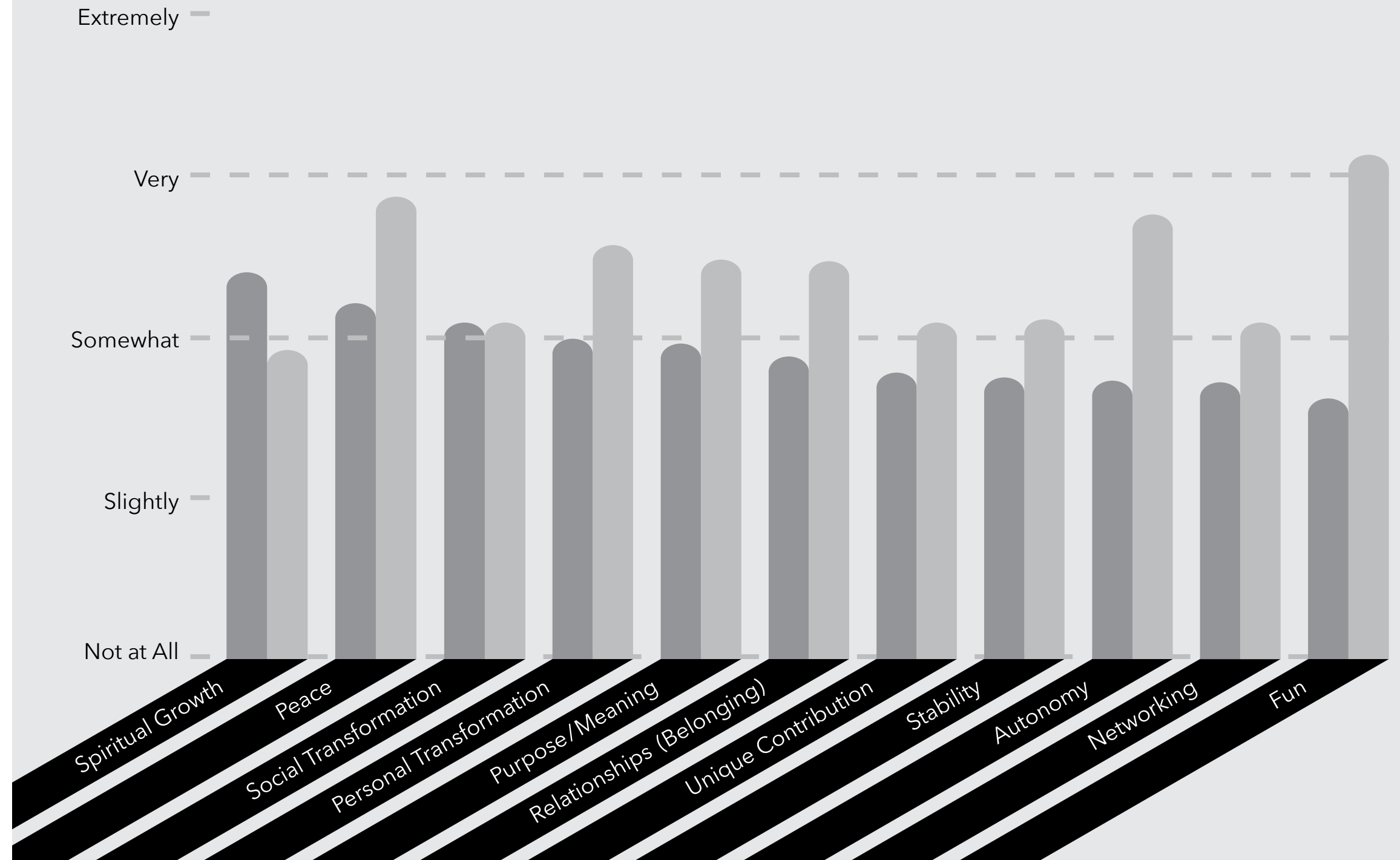


# WHAT DOES CHURCH PROVIDE FOR YOUNG ADULTS?

Young adults say these are their most common third places:

- 1 The Gym
- 2 Outdoors
- 3 Social Groups
- 4 Exercise Class/Sport
- 5 Yogo Studio/Meditation

## Church vs. Third Place in Fulfilling Top Values



Top values were assessed based on ratings of importance and satisfaction derived from literature. Data was gathered from a combined sample of young adults in the US and PNW (N=296).

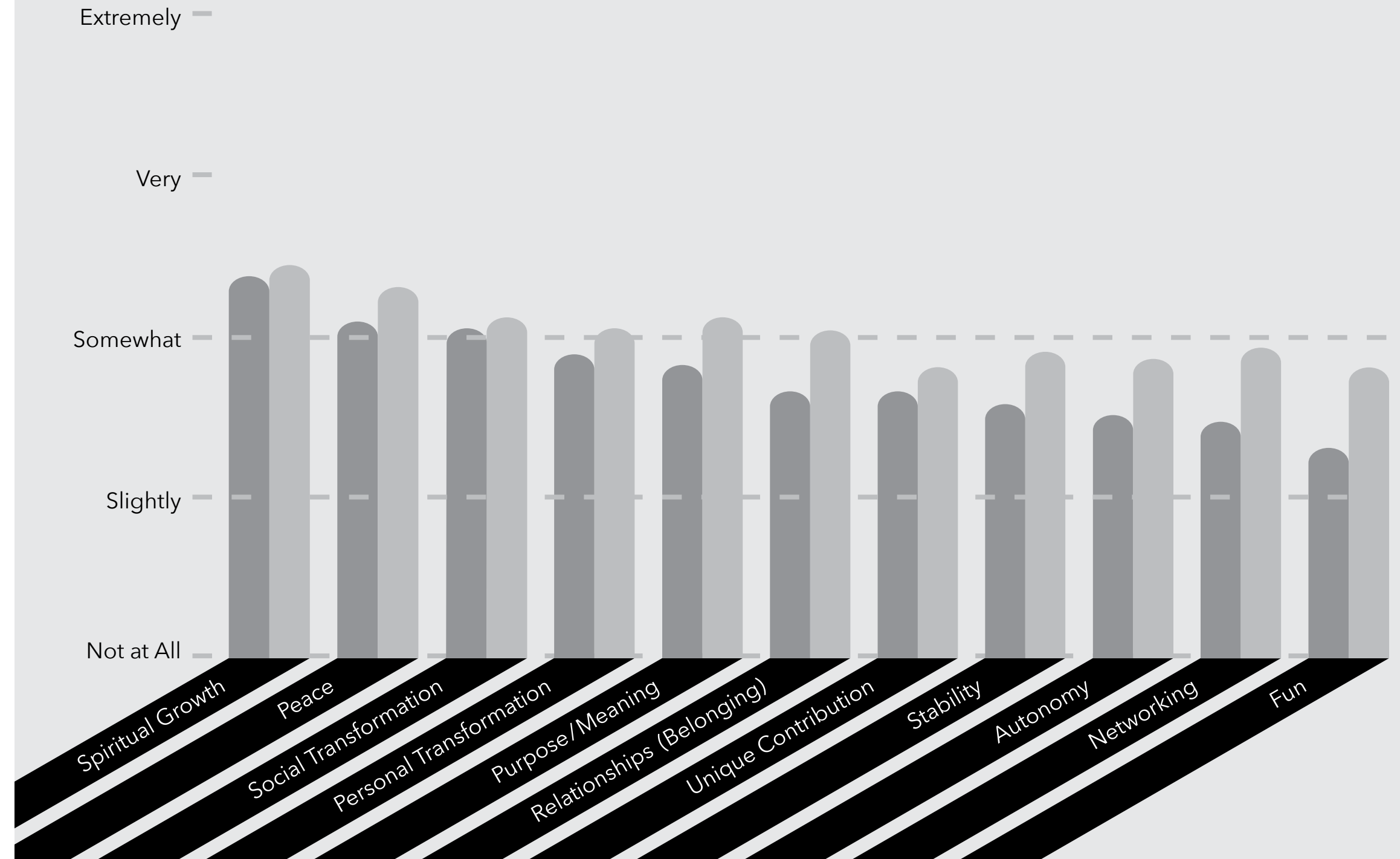


# WHAT DOES CHURCH PROVIDE FOR YOUNG ADULTS?

Young adults in the PNW feel all their top values are less fulfilled by the church compared to young adults in the rest of the US.

Well...

## PNW Church vs. US Church in Fulfilling Top Values



Top values were assessed based on ratings of importance and satisfaction derived from literature. Data was gathered from a combined sample of young adults in the US and PNW (N=296).



## **YOUR TURN TO REFLECT**

Which, if any, of these values does your church naturally demonstrate?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which values do you wish were more present?

\_\_\_\_\_

Finish the sentences, "I like...," "I wish...," "I wonder if...," to go deeper in your conversation.



## HOW DO YOUNG ADULTS GROW IN THEIR FAITH AT CHURCH?

These 12 statements act as a faith maturity scale measuring faith growth within young adults.



*"I help others with their religious questions and struggles.*

*"I seek opportunities to grow spiritually.*

*"I feel a sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.*

*"I give significant portions of time and money to help other people.*

*"I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.*

*"I feel my life is filled with meaning and purpose.*

*"I care a great deal about reducing poverty in my country and throughout the world.*

*"I apply my faith to political and social issues.*

*"The things I do reflect a commitment to Jesus Christ.*

*"I talk with other people about my faith.*

*"I have a real sense that God is guiding me.*





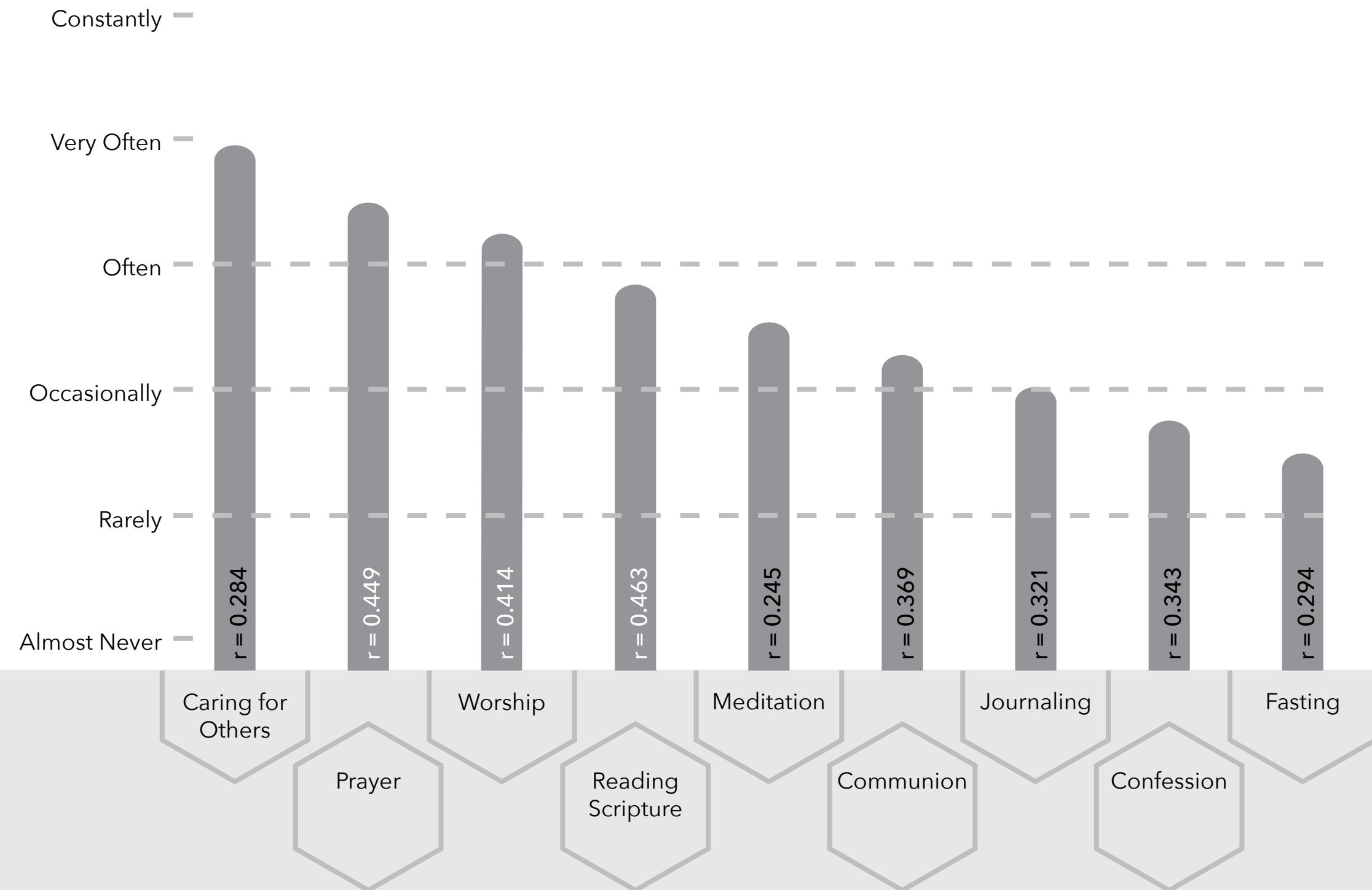
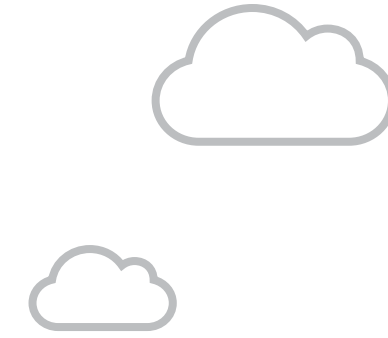
## HOW DO YOUNG ADULTS GROW IN THEIR FAITH AT CHURCH?

Each of these nine faith practices significantly predict young adults' faith growth in the U.S. sample. This graph displays how frequently young adults engage in each practice.

The numbers on each bar indicate the strength of the relationship between that practice and young adults' faith growth (the higher the number, the more that practice predicts higher faith growth).

Prayer, worship, and reading scripture are the strongest predictors of faith growth in young adults.

### Frequency of Faith Practices in the US





## HOW DO YOUNG ADULTS GROW IN THEIR FAITH AT CHURCH?

Once young adults are involved in a church, how can churches support them as they grow in faith? Three types of church practices contribute to young adults' faith growth:

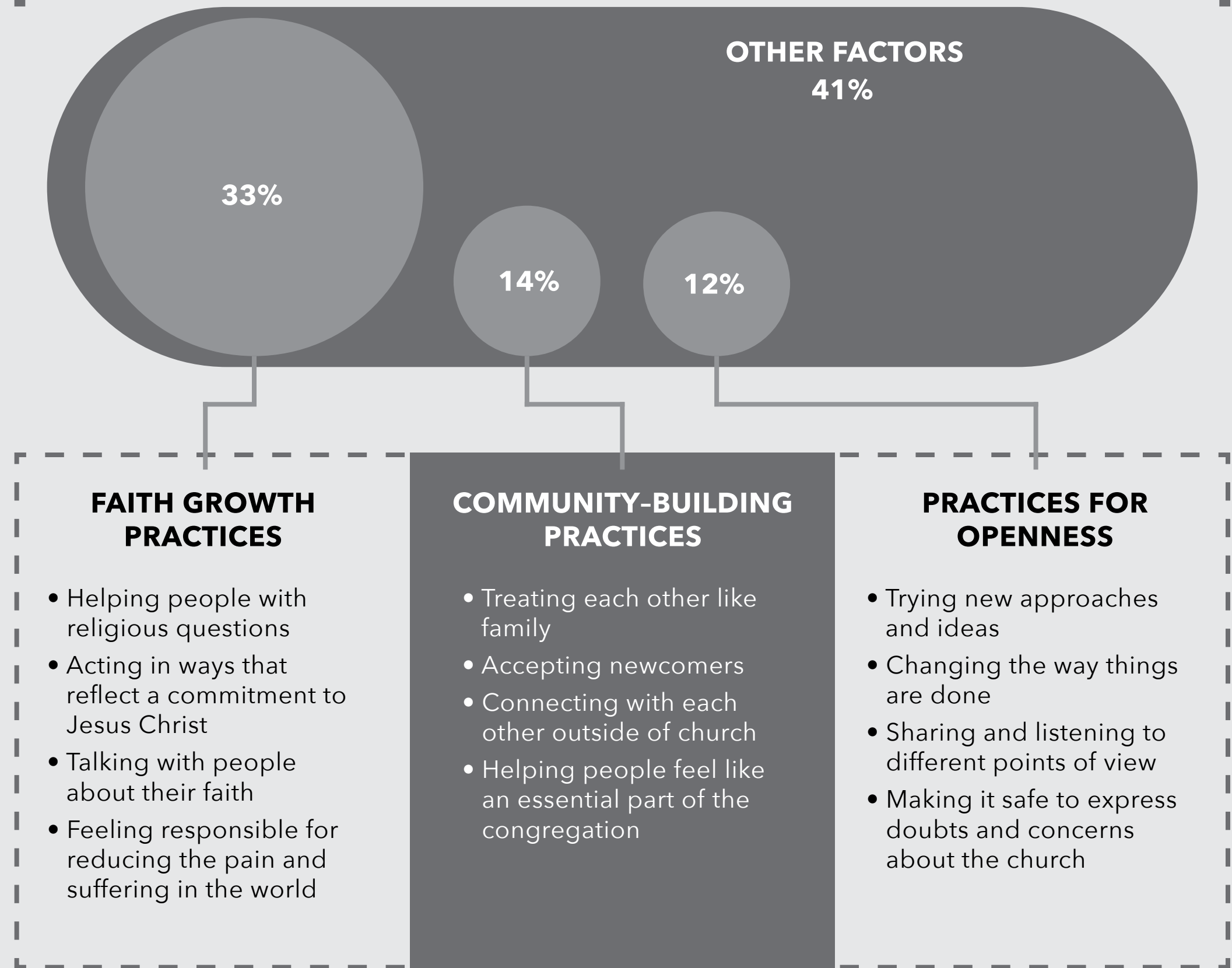
**Faith growth practices**  
(33% overlap)

**Community-building practices**  
(14% overlap)

**Practices for openness**  
(12% overlap)

Data was gathered from a combined sample of young adults in the US and PNW (N=352).

### Faith Growth of Young Adults





## YOUR TURN TO REFLECT

How do young adults at **your** church grow in their faith?

\_\_\_\_\_

How do the young adults at **your** church compare with this data?

\_\_\_\_\_

For young adults: Does this reflect your experience?

What are your practices for deepening faith?

\_\_\_\_\_

What spiritual practices would you like to offer?

\_\_\_\_\_

What has been working in your congregation for young adult faith growth that you could support better?





## CONTACT US

[feedback@pivotnw.org](mailto:feedback@pivotnw.org)

We'd love to hear your journey and we'd love to hear your questions.  
When writing us, please reference version 1.201805

