

*Preventing the losses;
reclaiming the lost*

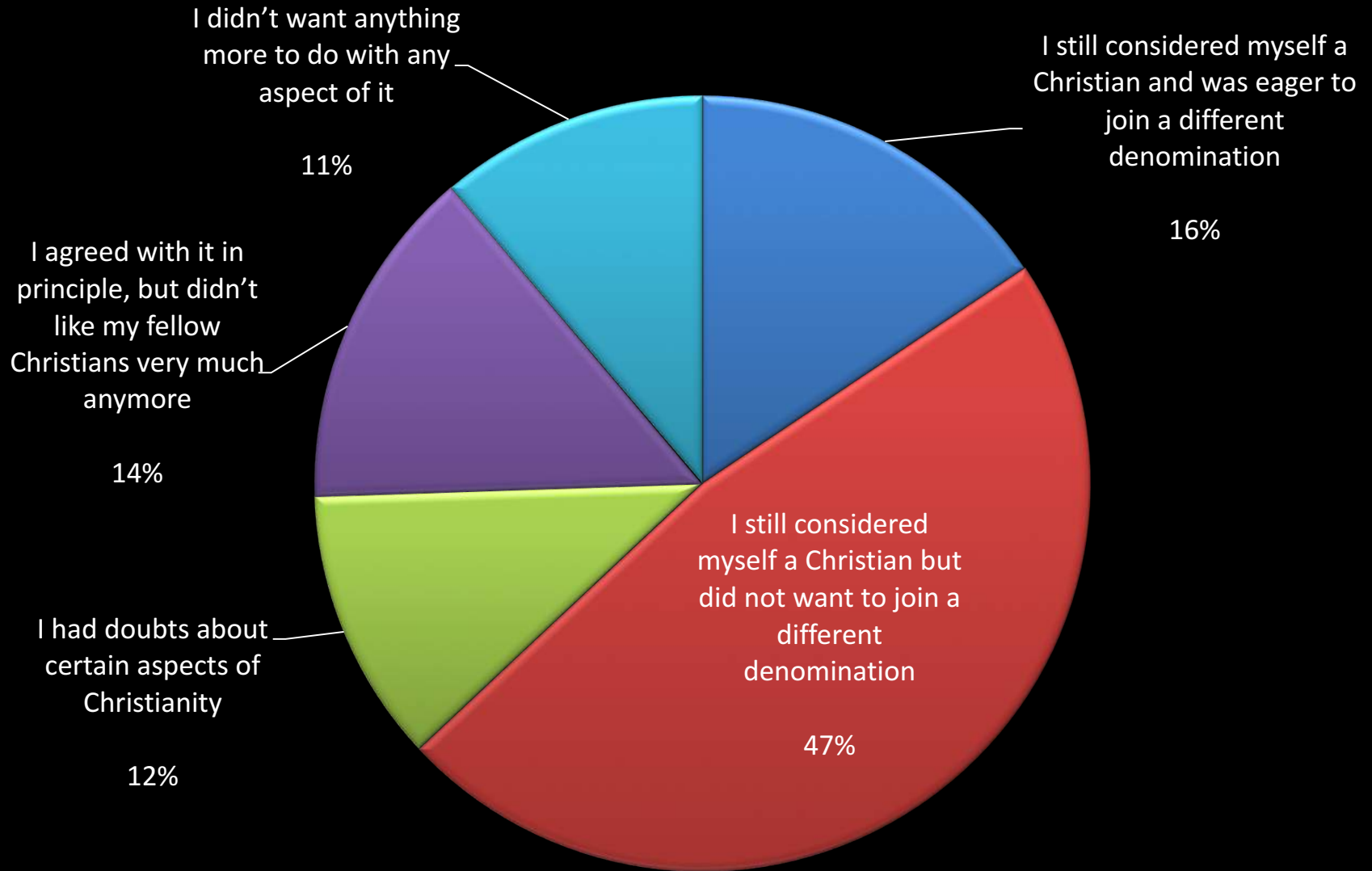
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Director of Archives, Statistics, and Research

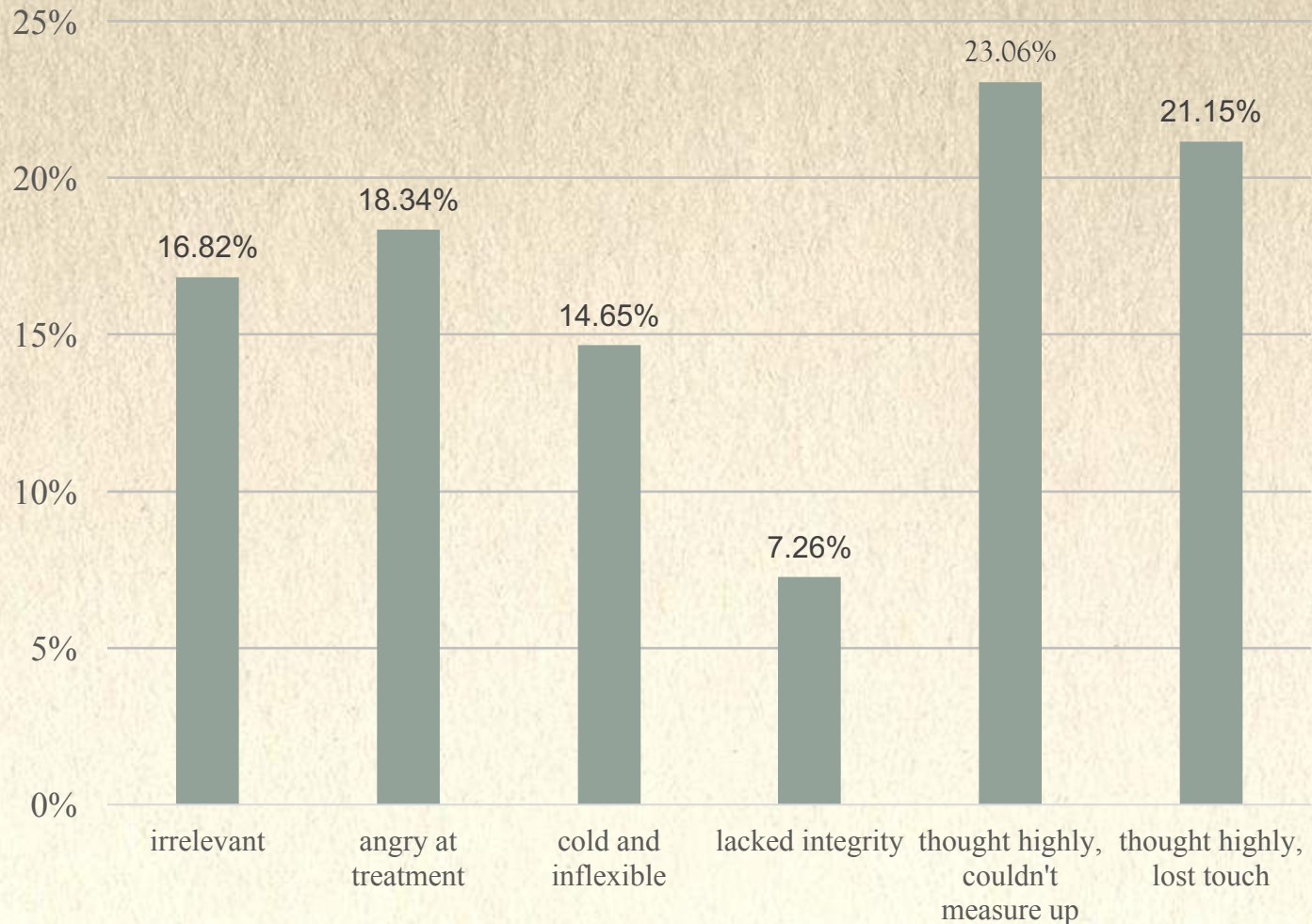
Having seen the reasons why “they didn’t leave”, today we will look at **why they did** — which implicitly tells us how to prevent many of them from leaving.

Research also offers insights on how to reconnect and reclaim.

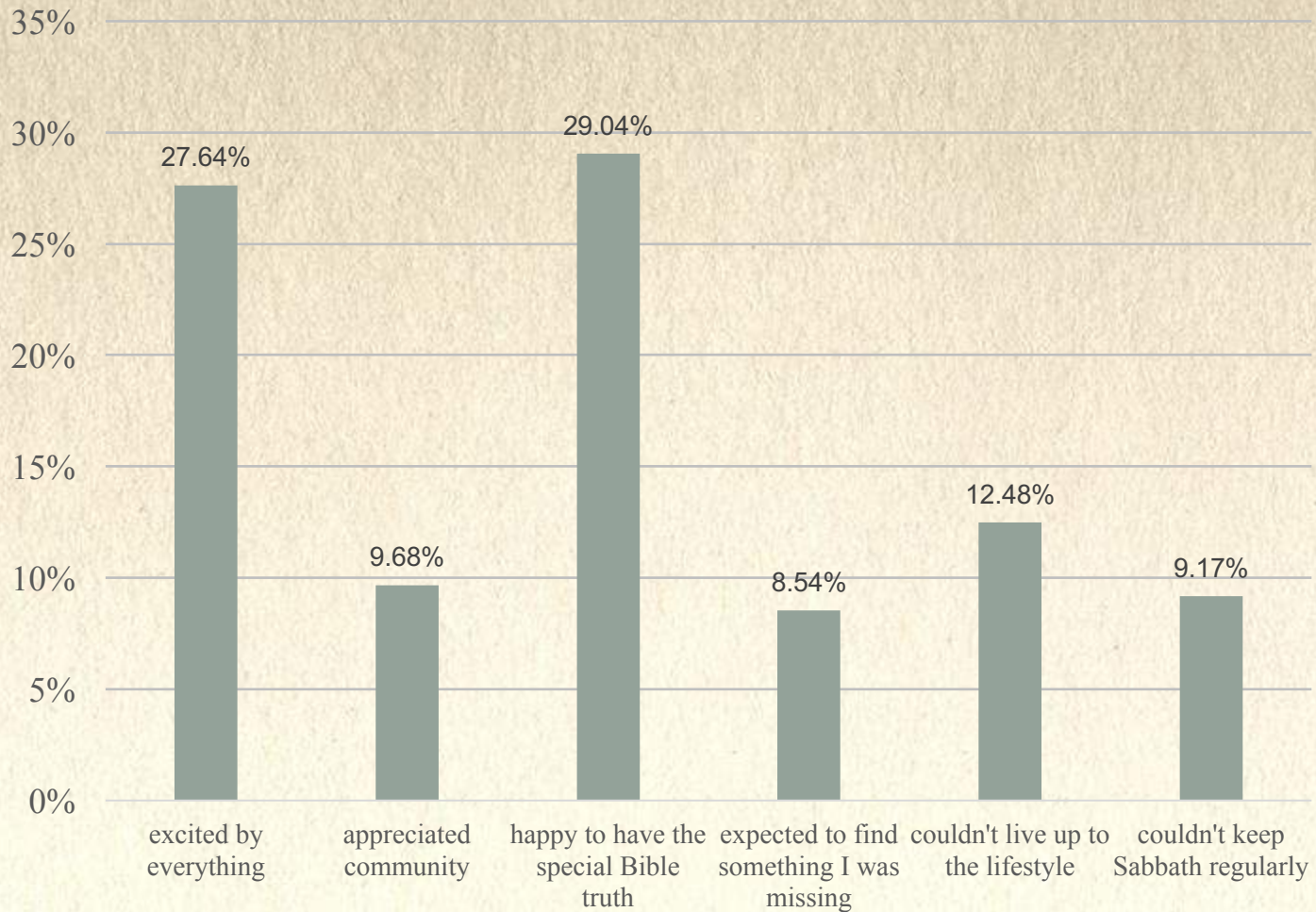
What did you think of Christianity at the time you left the Adventist church?



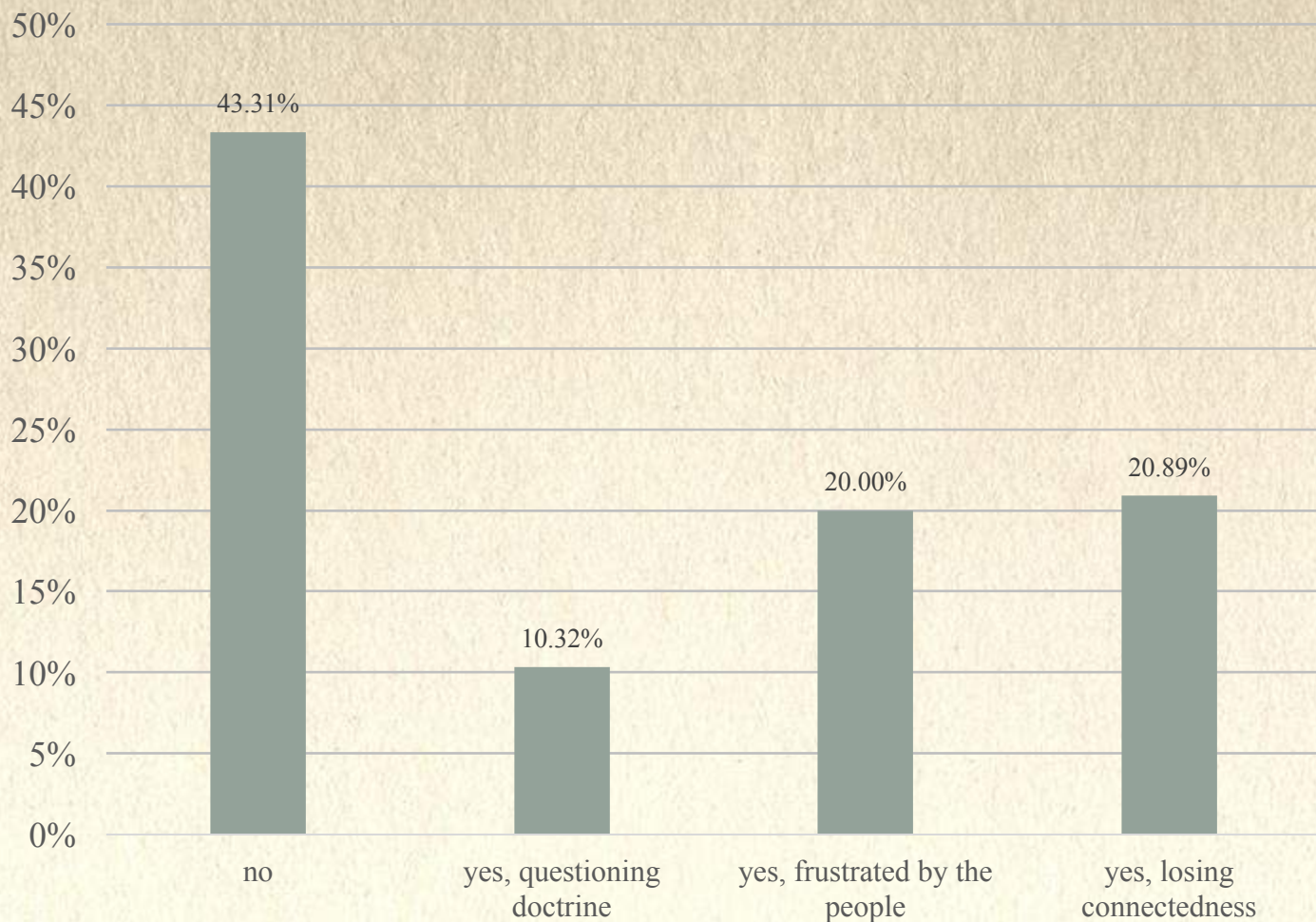
View of Adventist Church at Departure



View of Adventist Church: first 5 Years after Baptism



Change in View of Adventist Church, 5 Years before leaving?



Again, we're seeing why people *didn't* leave rather than why they did...

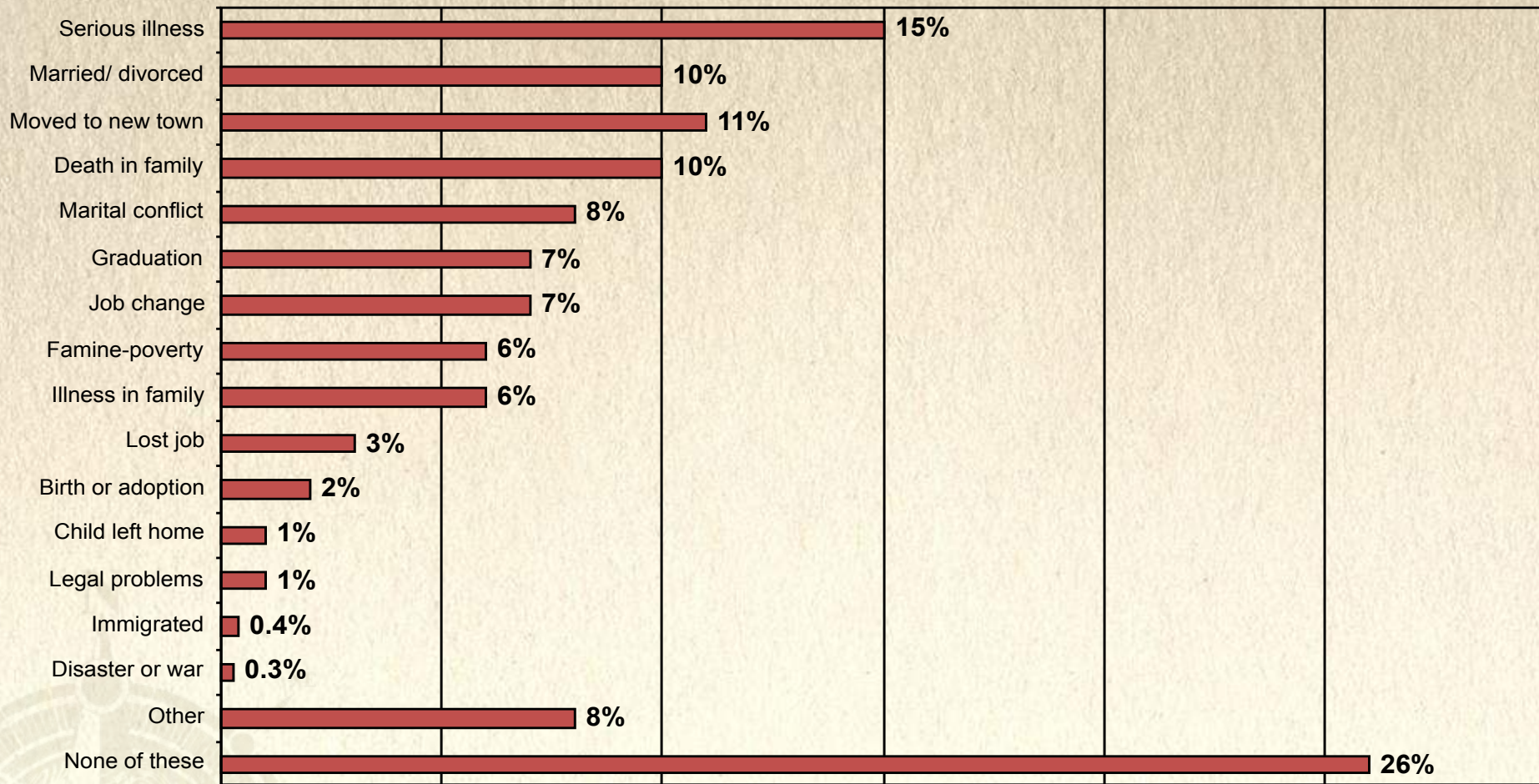
So what *are* the reasons for departure?

And what can we do about it??

Nurture & Retention

Creating caring
and welcoming
church communities

Life Events in the Year Leading Up to Decision to Stop Attending



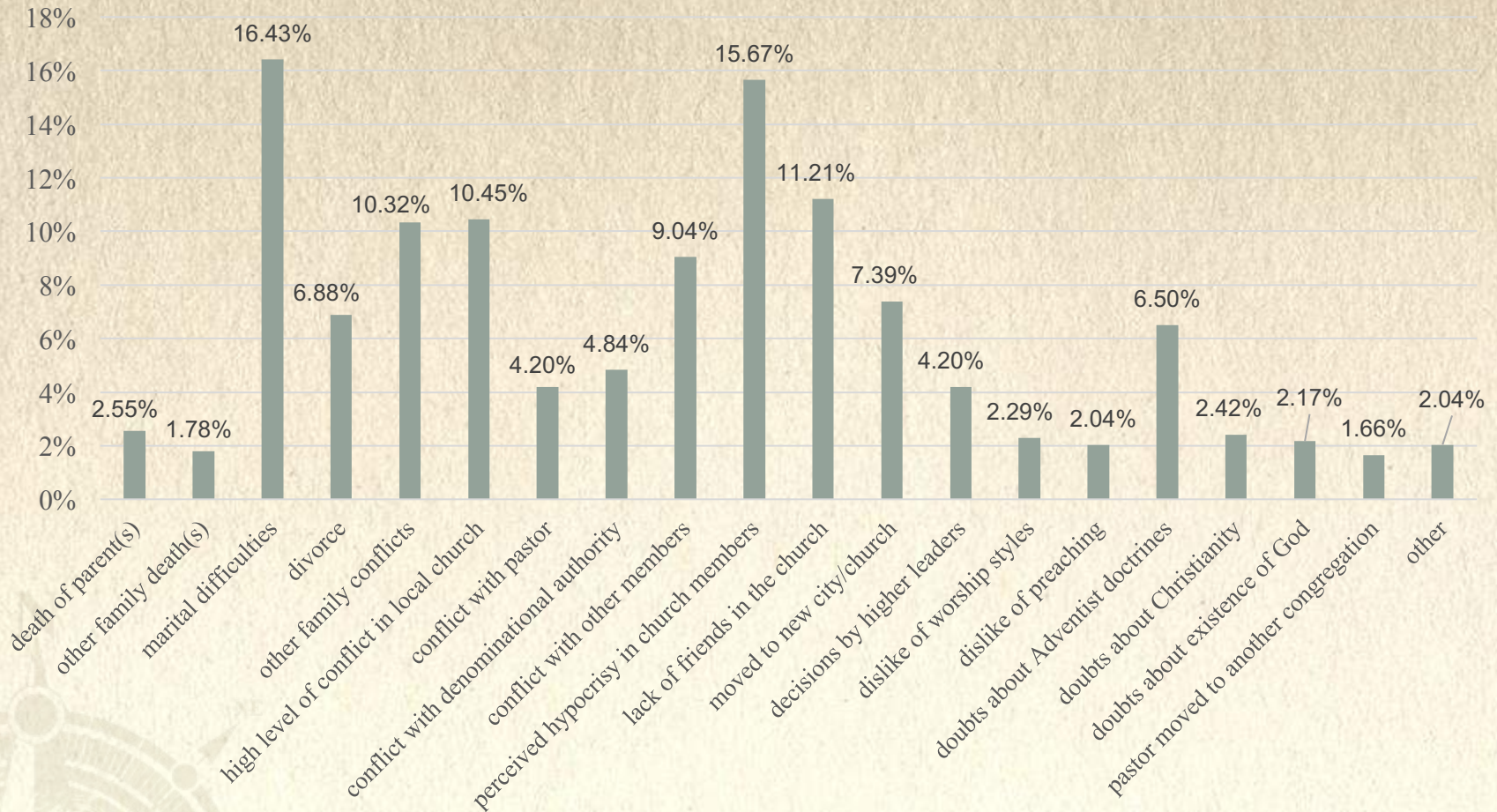
Most Important Reasons Why Decided to Stop Attending

- 28% No big issue; I just drifted away
- 25% Lack of compassion for the hurting
- 19% Moral failure on my part
- 18% I did not fit in
- 14% Too much focus on minor issues
- 13% Conflict in the congregation
- 12% Moral failures of members
- 11% Moral failures of leaders
- 11% Pressure from family or friends
- 10% Race, ethnic or tribal issues

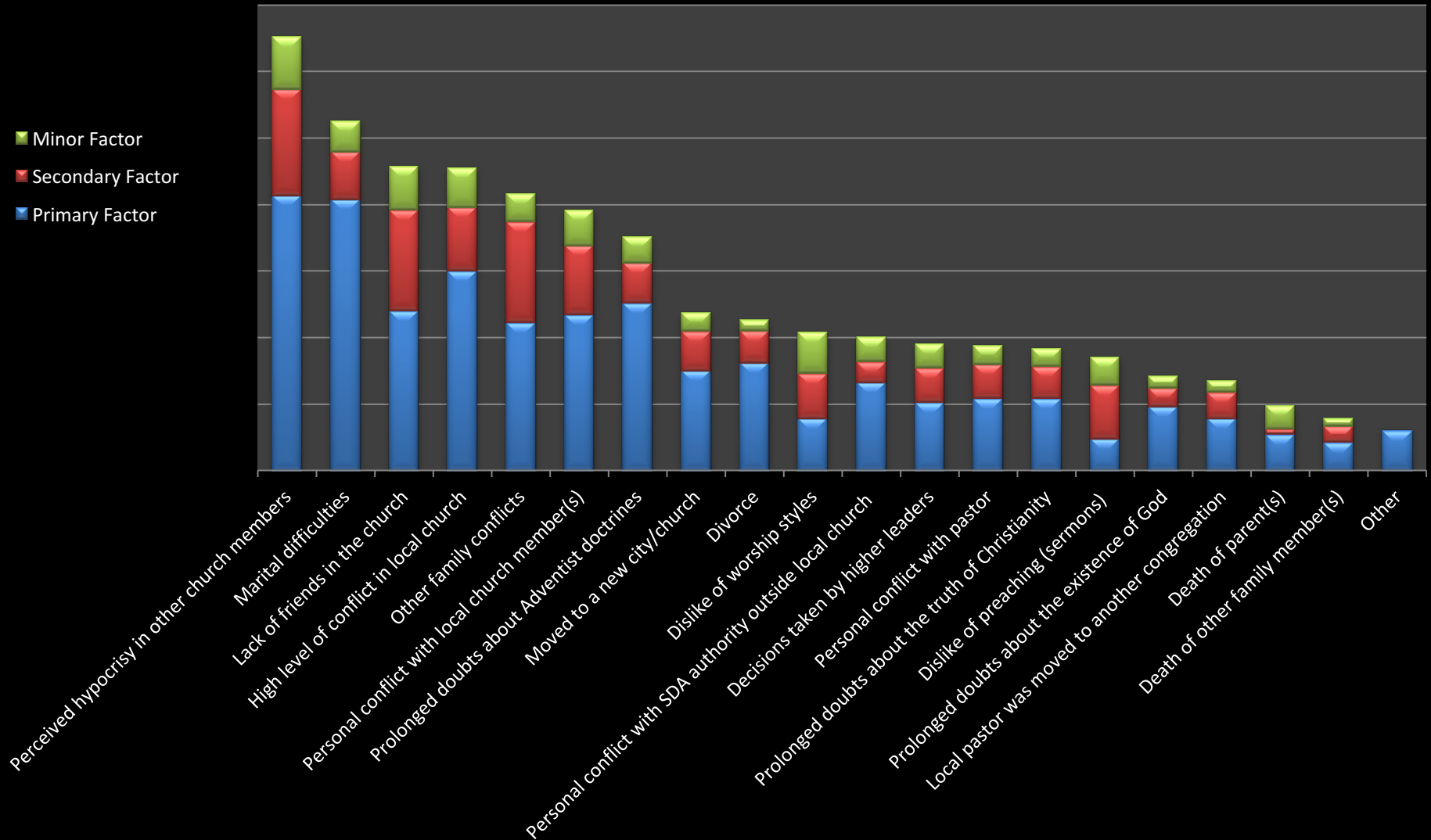
Most Important Reasons Why Decided to Stop Attending

- 8% Few members of my age group
- 7% Legalistic attitudes
- 6% Pastor was dictatorial
- 6% Church did not do much to help the poor
- 5% I did not believe some doctrines
- 5% Unrealistic demands on members
- 4% Low standards
- 3% The worship was not very spiritual
- 3% Too much asking for money
- 2% Church voted to drop me from membership
- 1% Apostate ideas were promoted

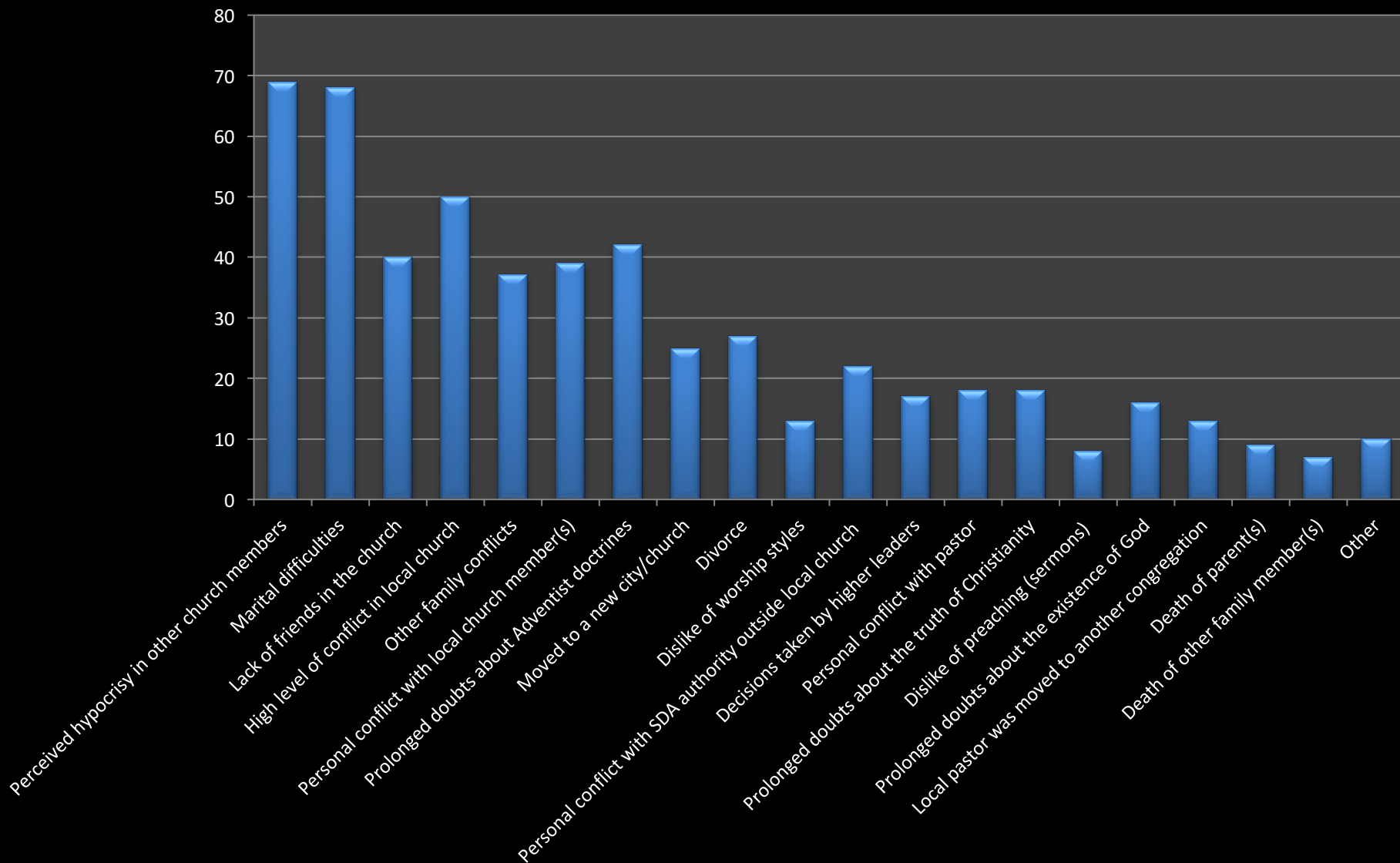
Primary Triggers for Departure



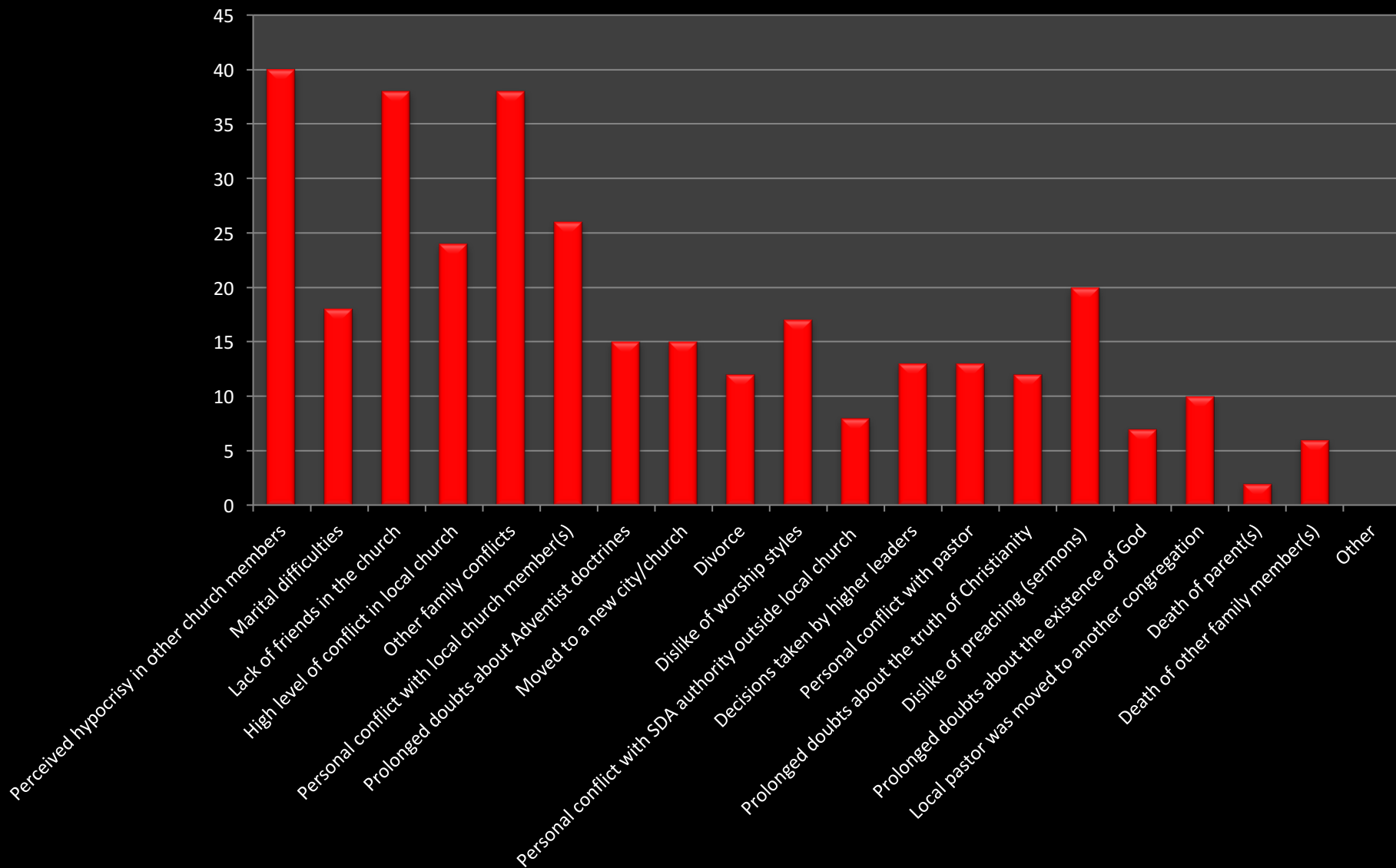
What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members



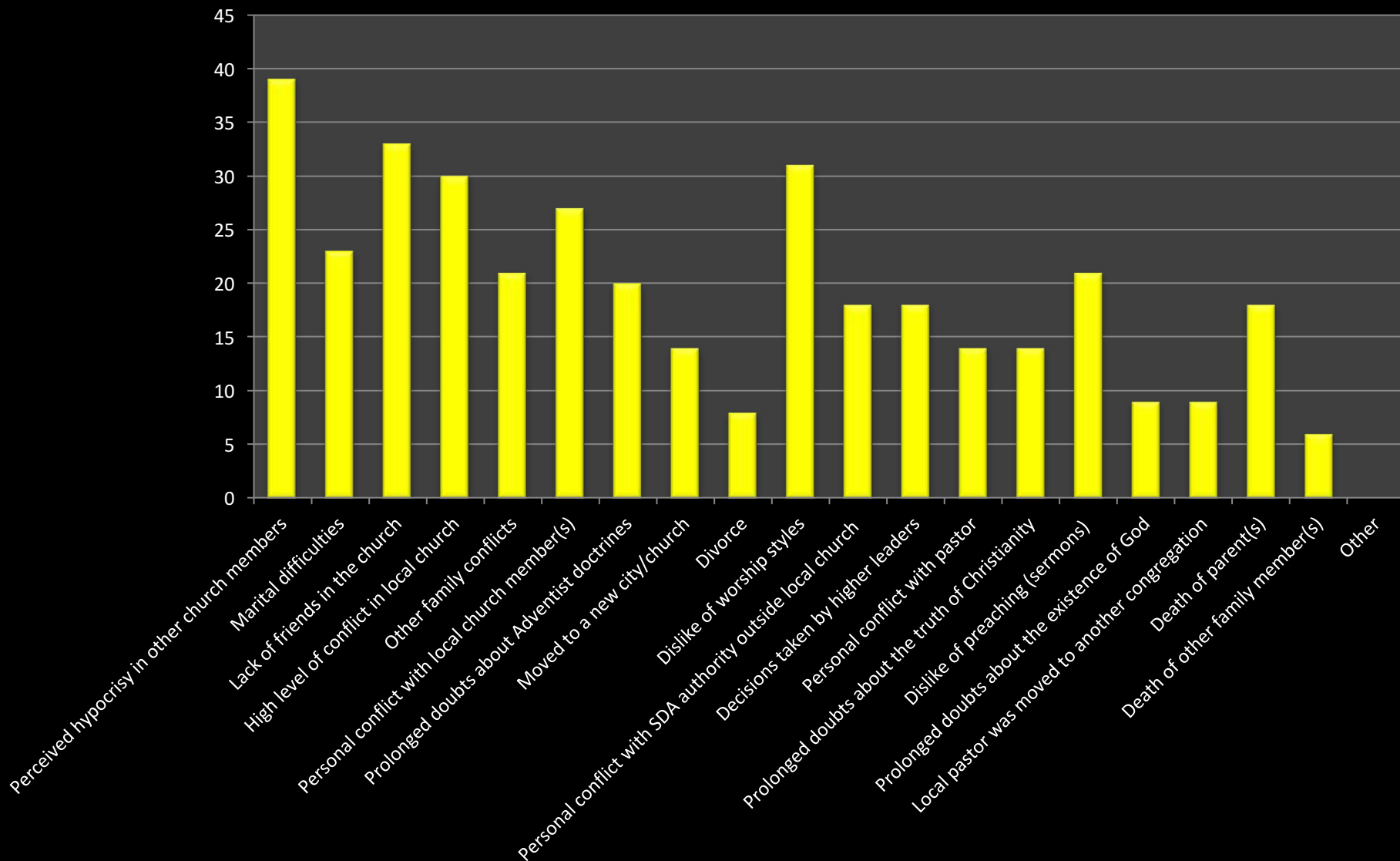
What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members – Primary



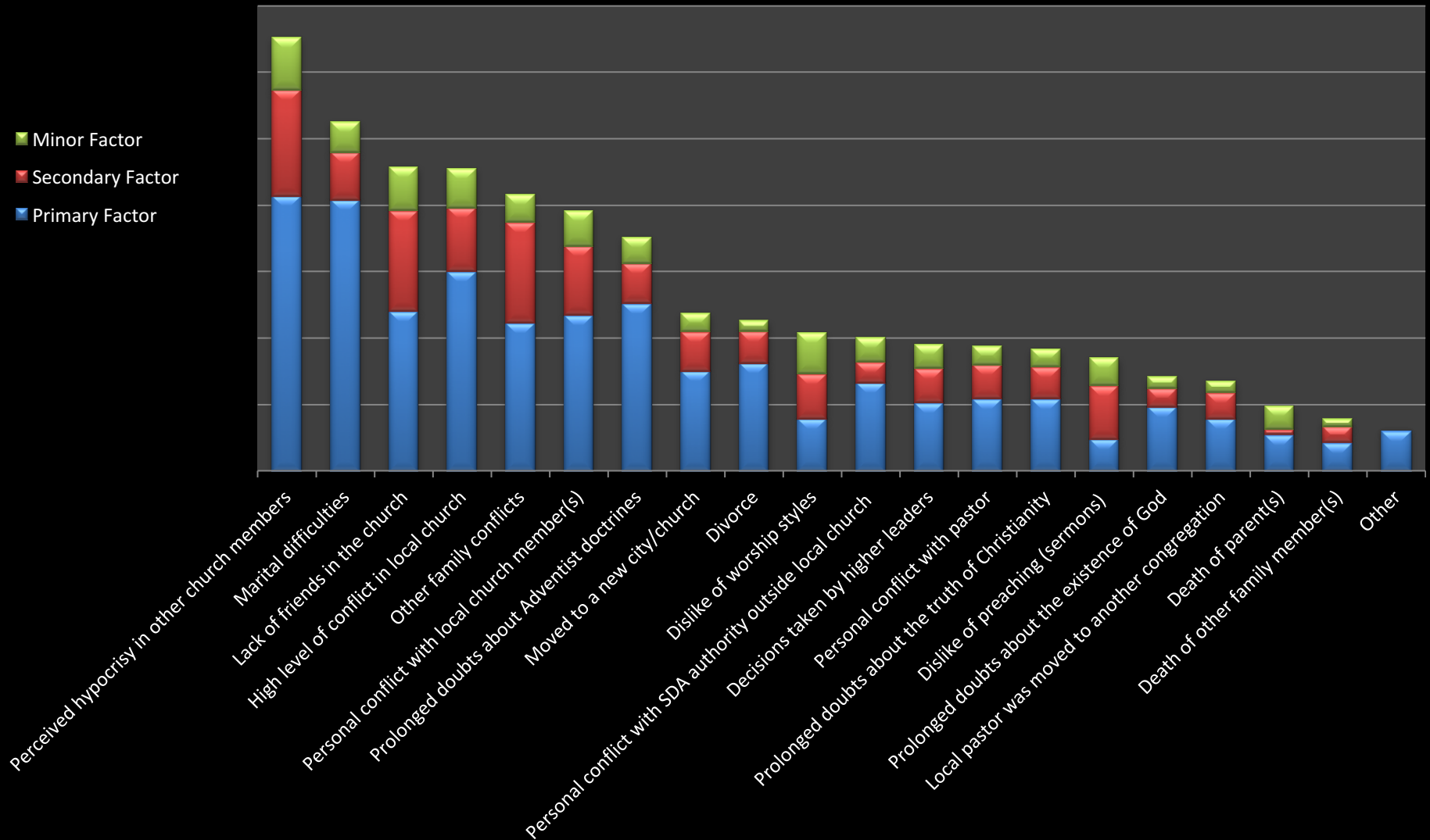
What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members – Secondary



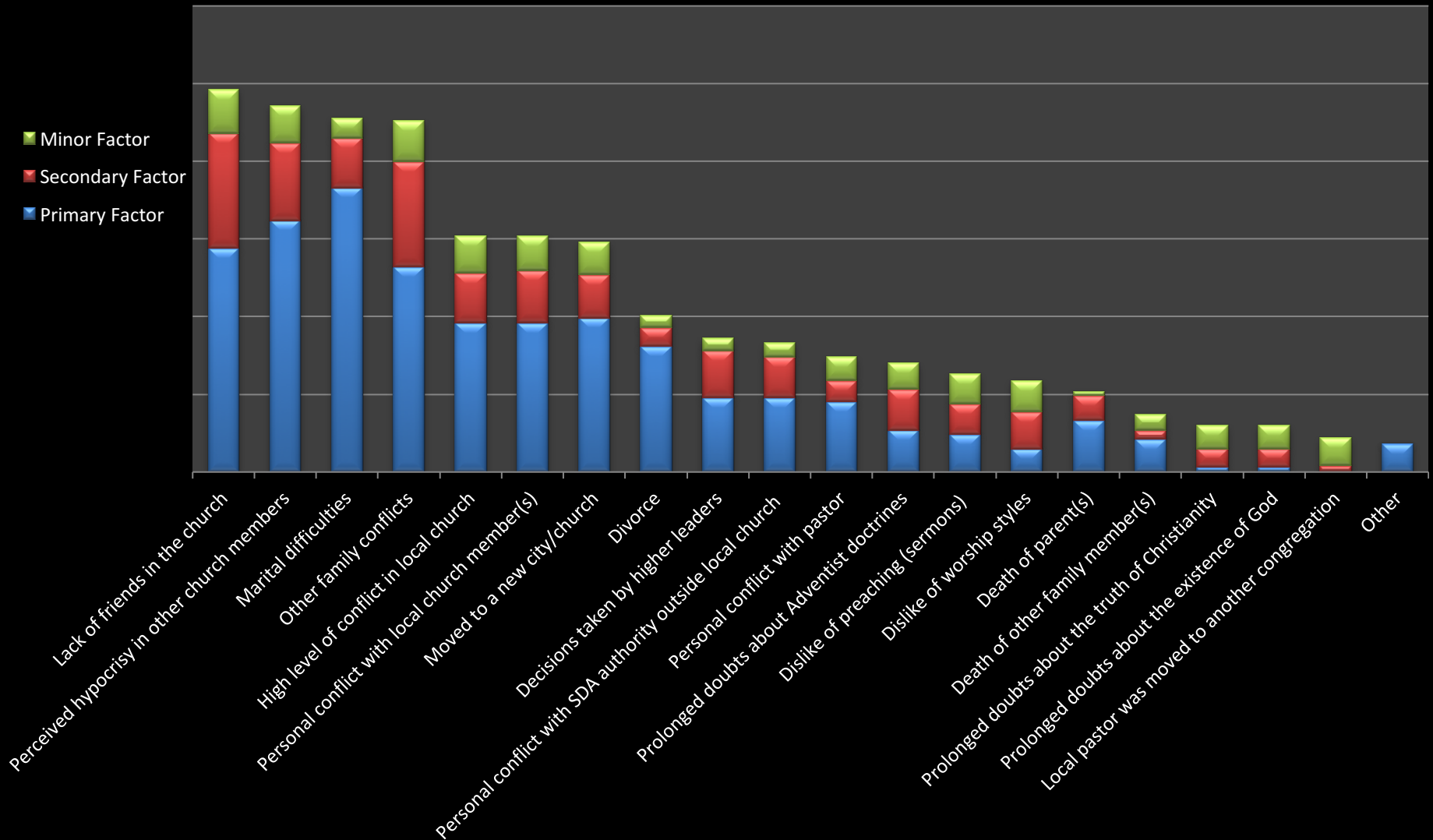
What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members – Minor Factor



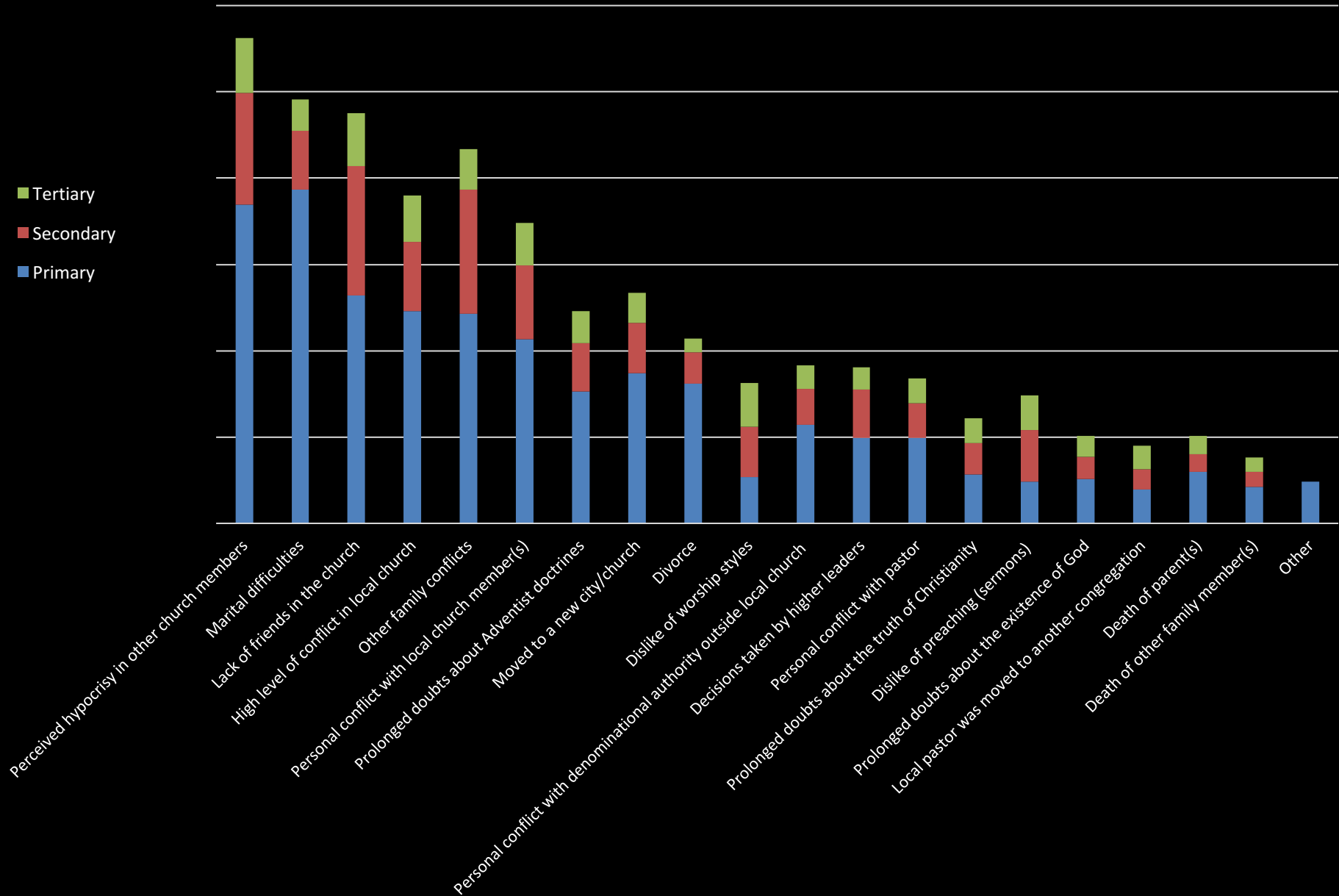
What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members



What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Returned Members



What event triggered your decision to leave? (weighted) (all survey 2)



It's not about doctrines



It's about relationships

It's not about doctrines

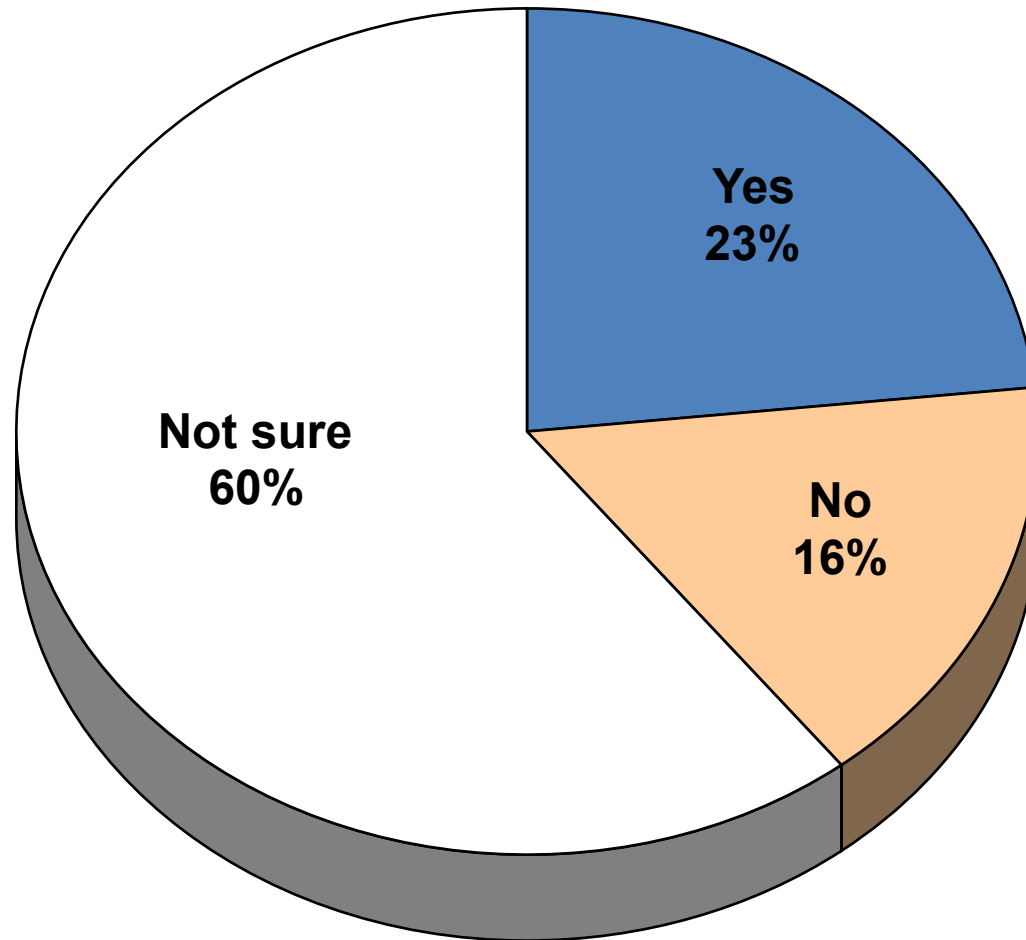


And about caring for people

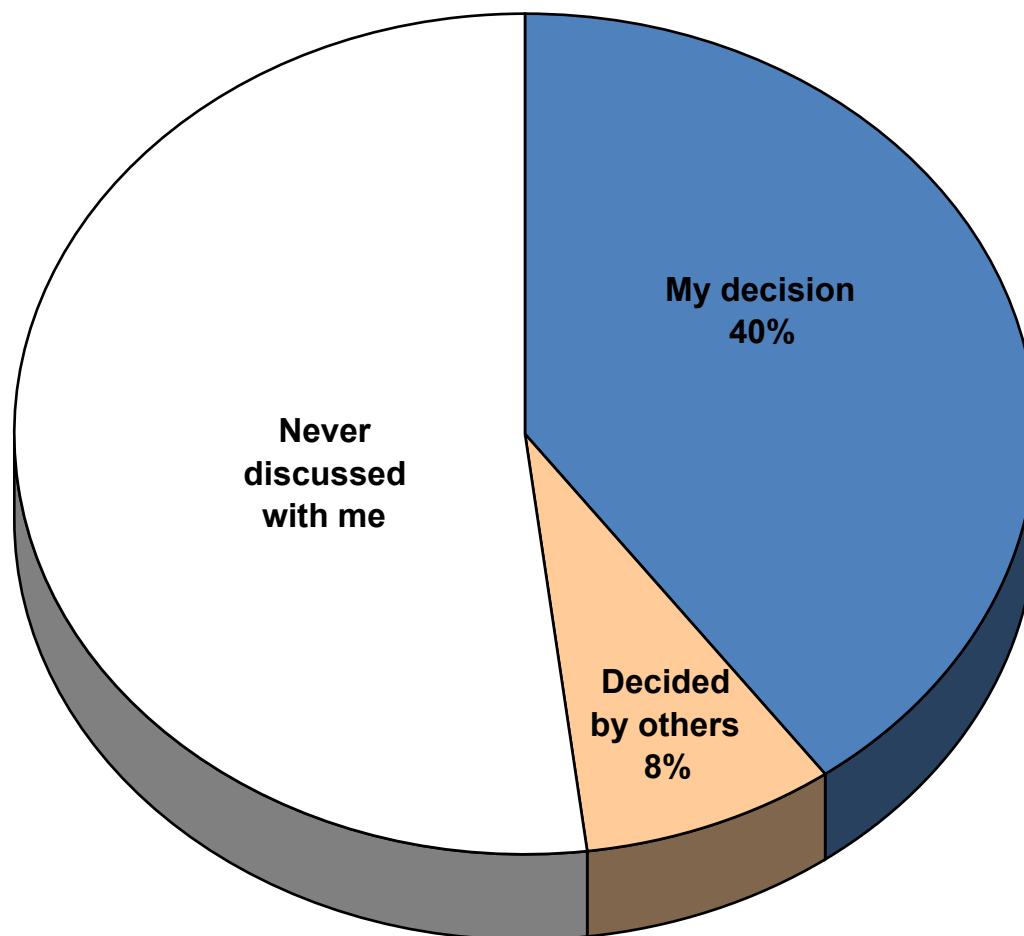
What Happened When They Stopped Attending Church

- 40% No one contacted me
- 19% A church member came to visit me
- 17% A local elder came to visit me
- 15% A local church member contacted me by phone
- 10% An Adventist relative made contact
- 9% The pastor came to visit me
- 6% The pastor contacted me by phone or Email
- 3% An Adventist, not a local member contacted me
- 2% I received a letter in the mail
- 0.3% Printed material was mailed to me

Is your name still on the membership list?



Did you decide to withdraw or were you expelled from the church?



Pastors need to be equipped and trained — & then they train elders & church- members

In light of these statistics that show pastors engage very little with members who stop attending church, it is not surprising to find that 53% of global pastors say they never received training in nurturing and retaining members in their first degrees; of pastors with a Masters degree (53%) the same proportion say that they received no training in these areas in their postgraduate study.

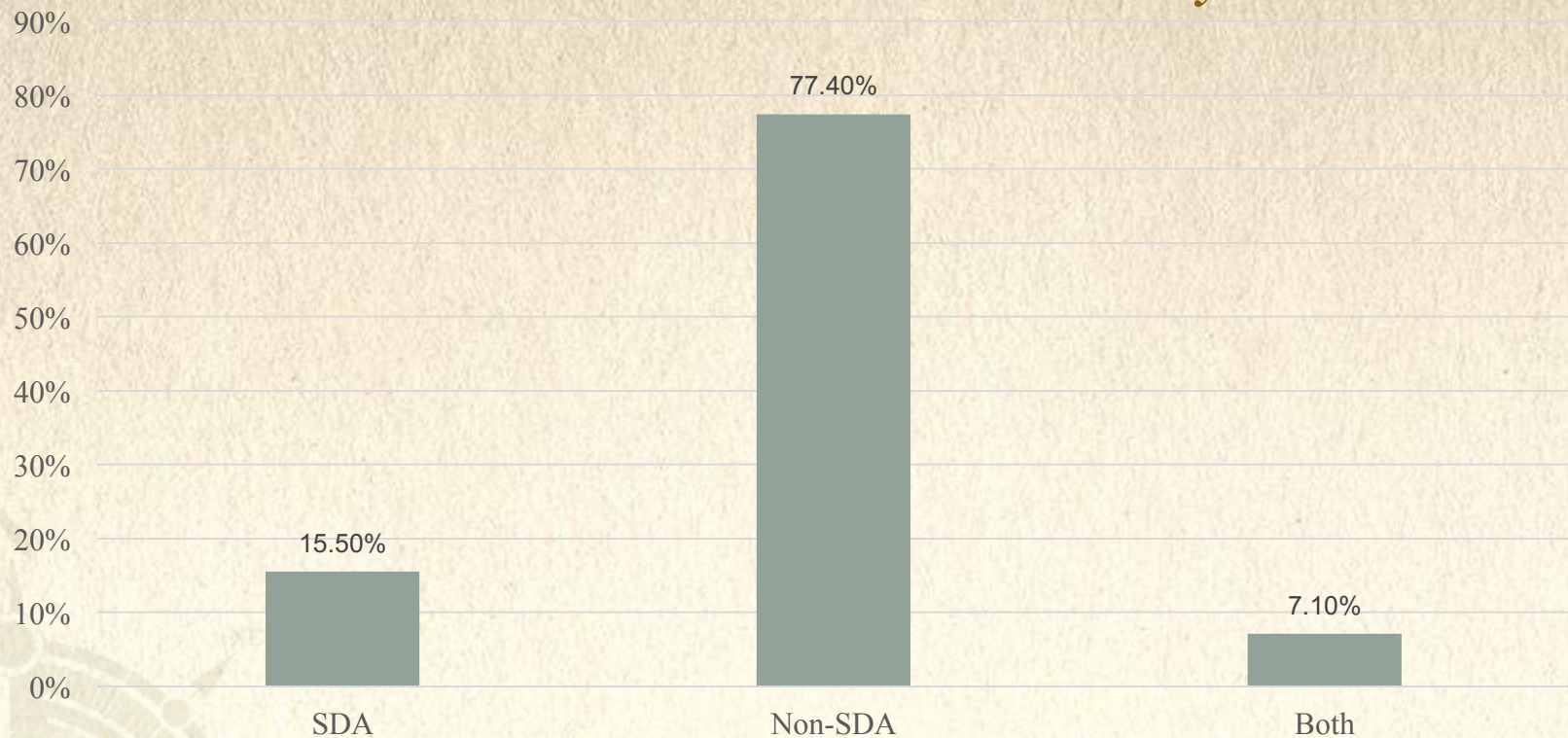
Stopping the haemorrhage, healing the wounded

Creating caring
and welcoming
church communities

*Preventive measures against
member loss*

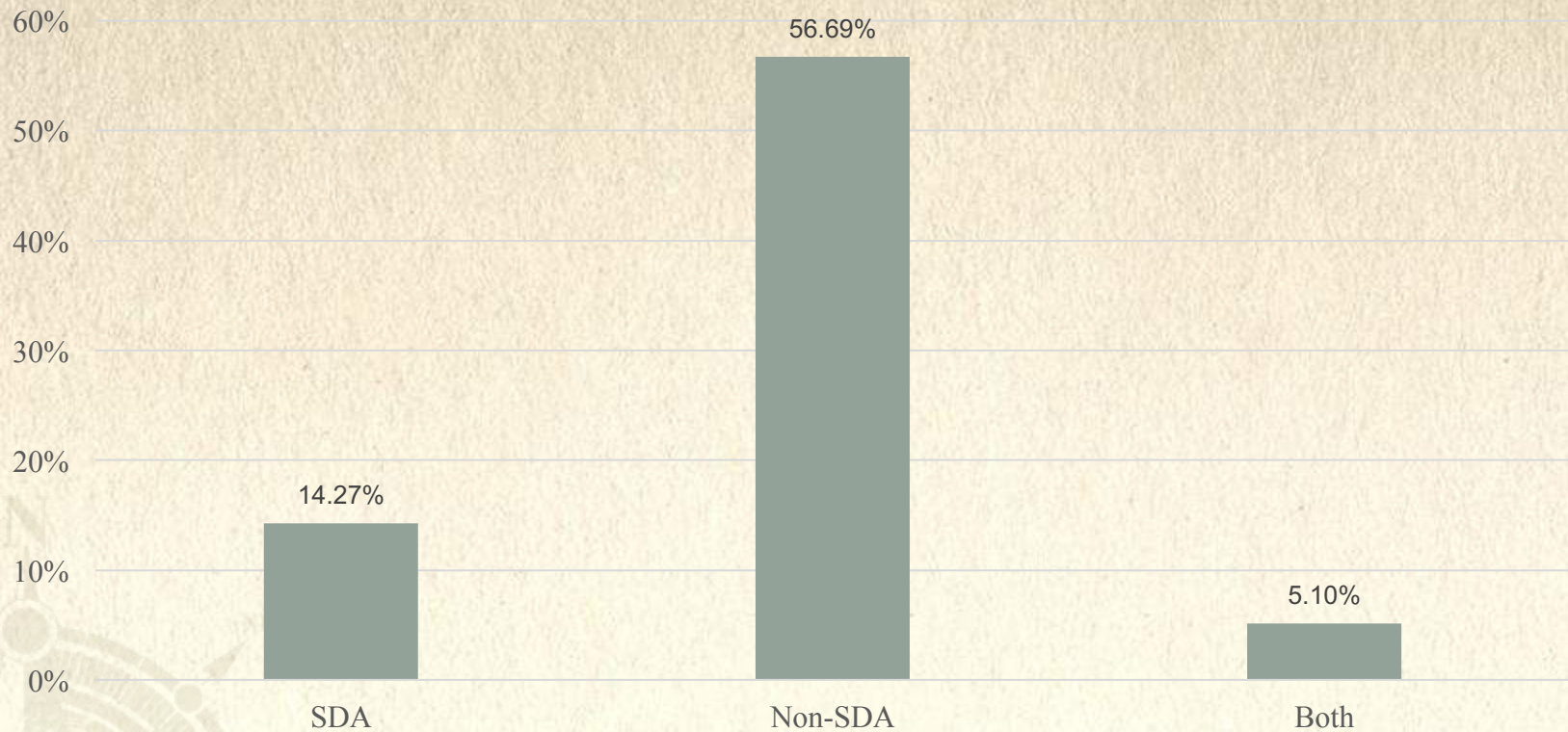
Ex-Members: Attended Primary (Elementary) School

*Current Members = 46% Attended an SDA
Primary School*



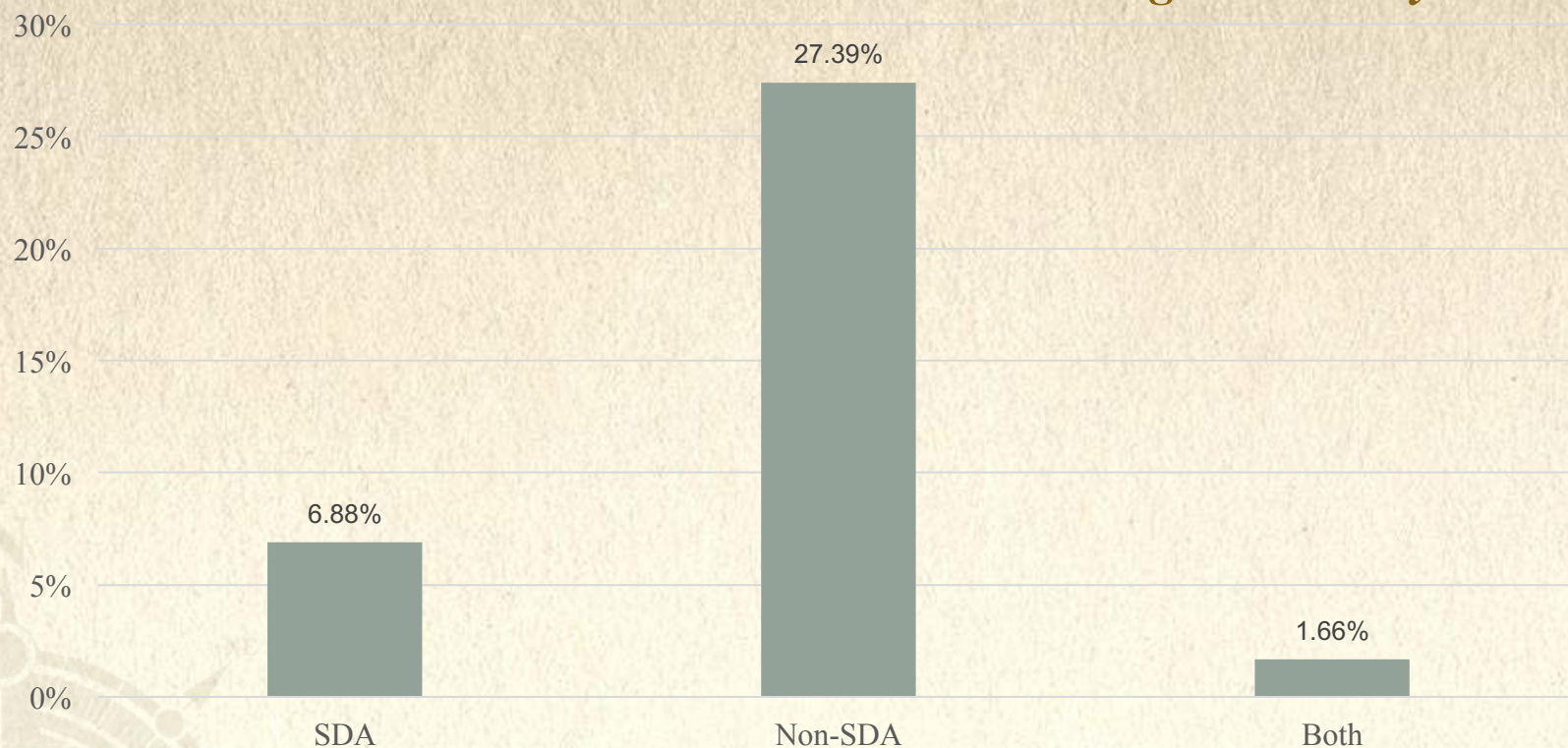
Ex-Members: Attended Secondary (High) School

Current Members = 35% Attended an SDA Secondary School



Ex-Members: Attended college or university (tertiary/further/higher)

Current Members = 13% Attended an SDA College/University

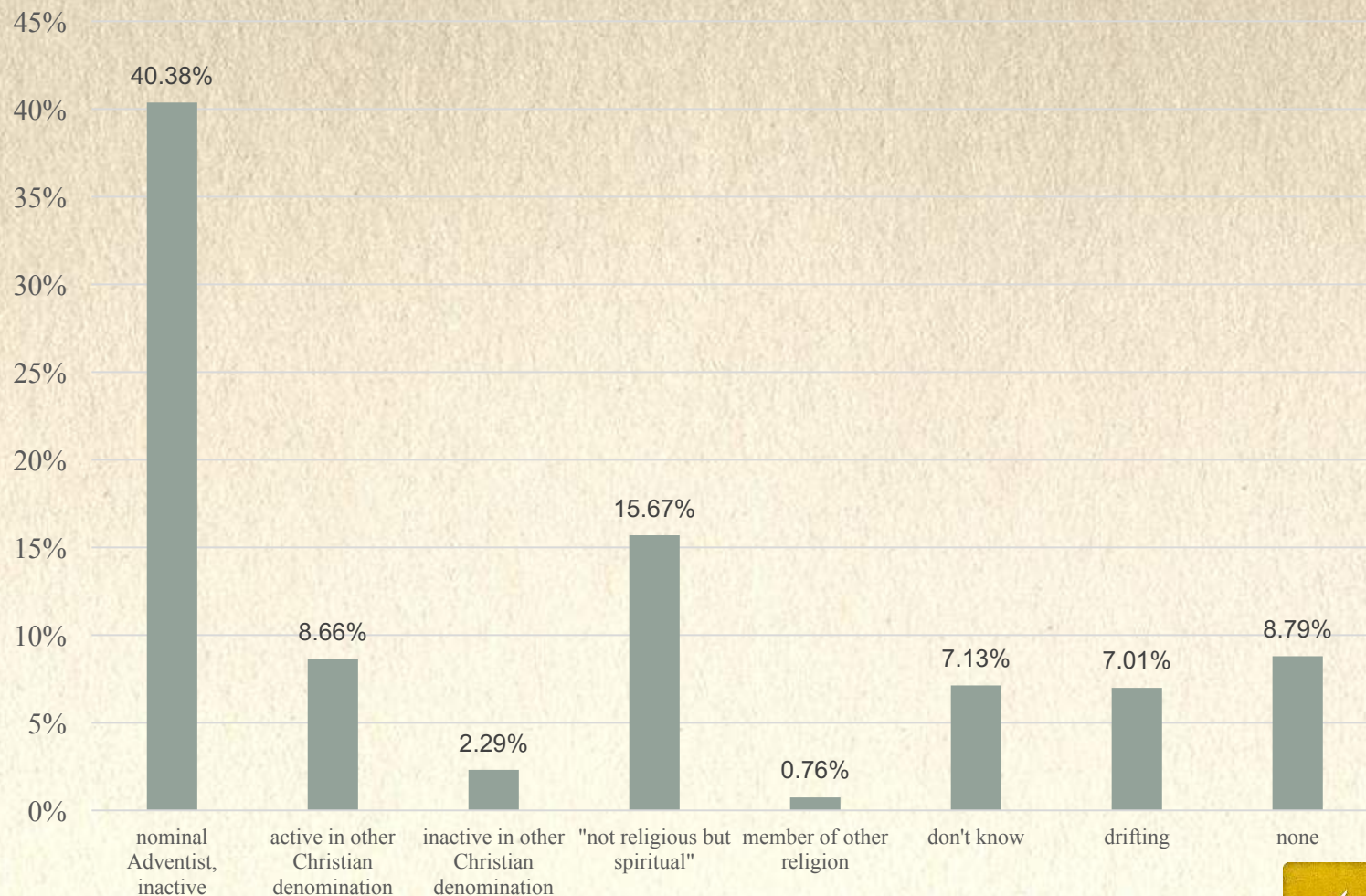


Nurture & Retention

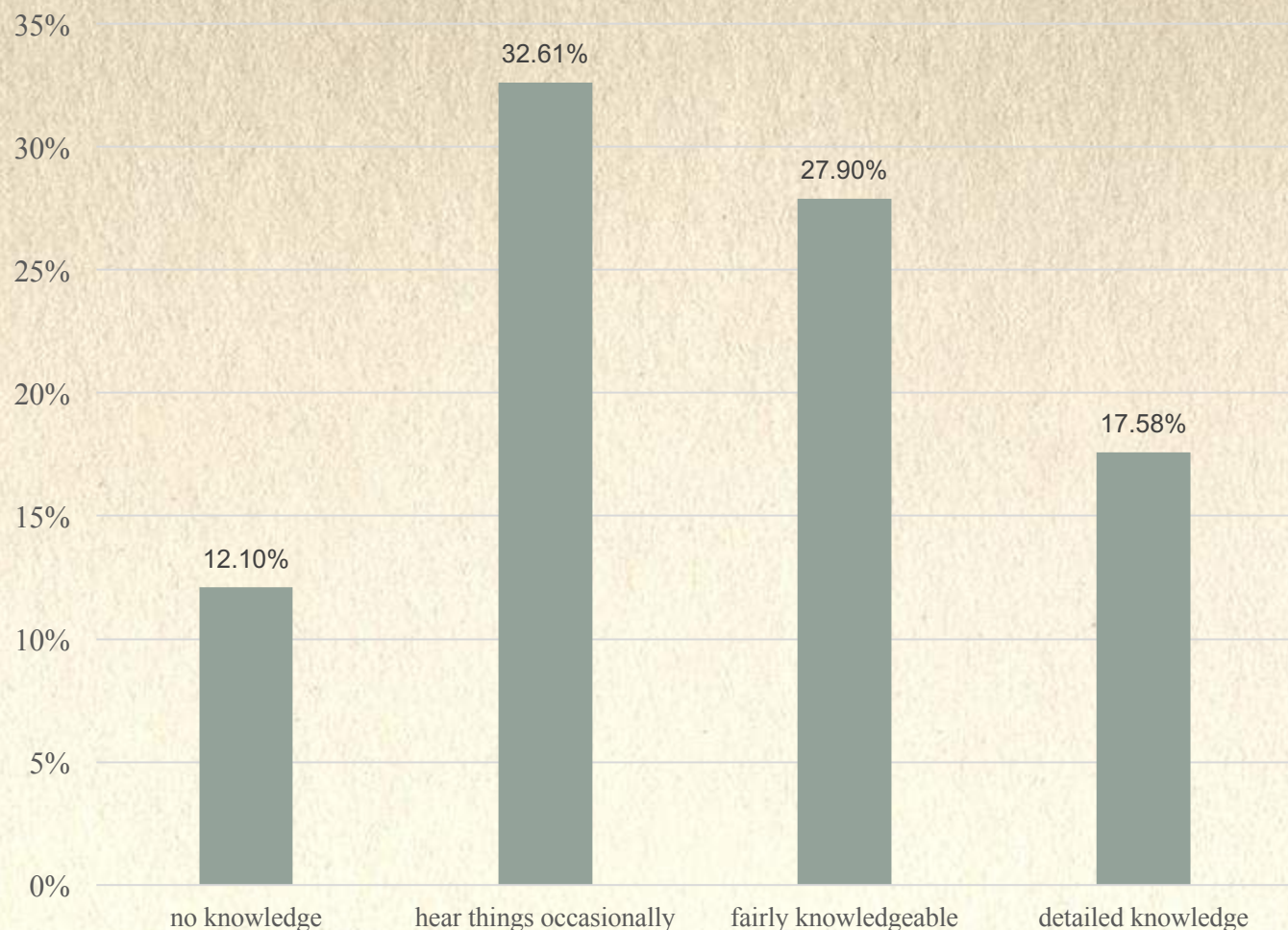
*Reconnecting & reclaiming for the
kingdom*

Now we know why they left;
might they come back?

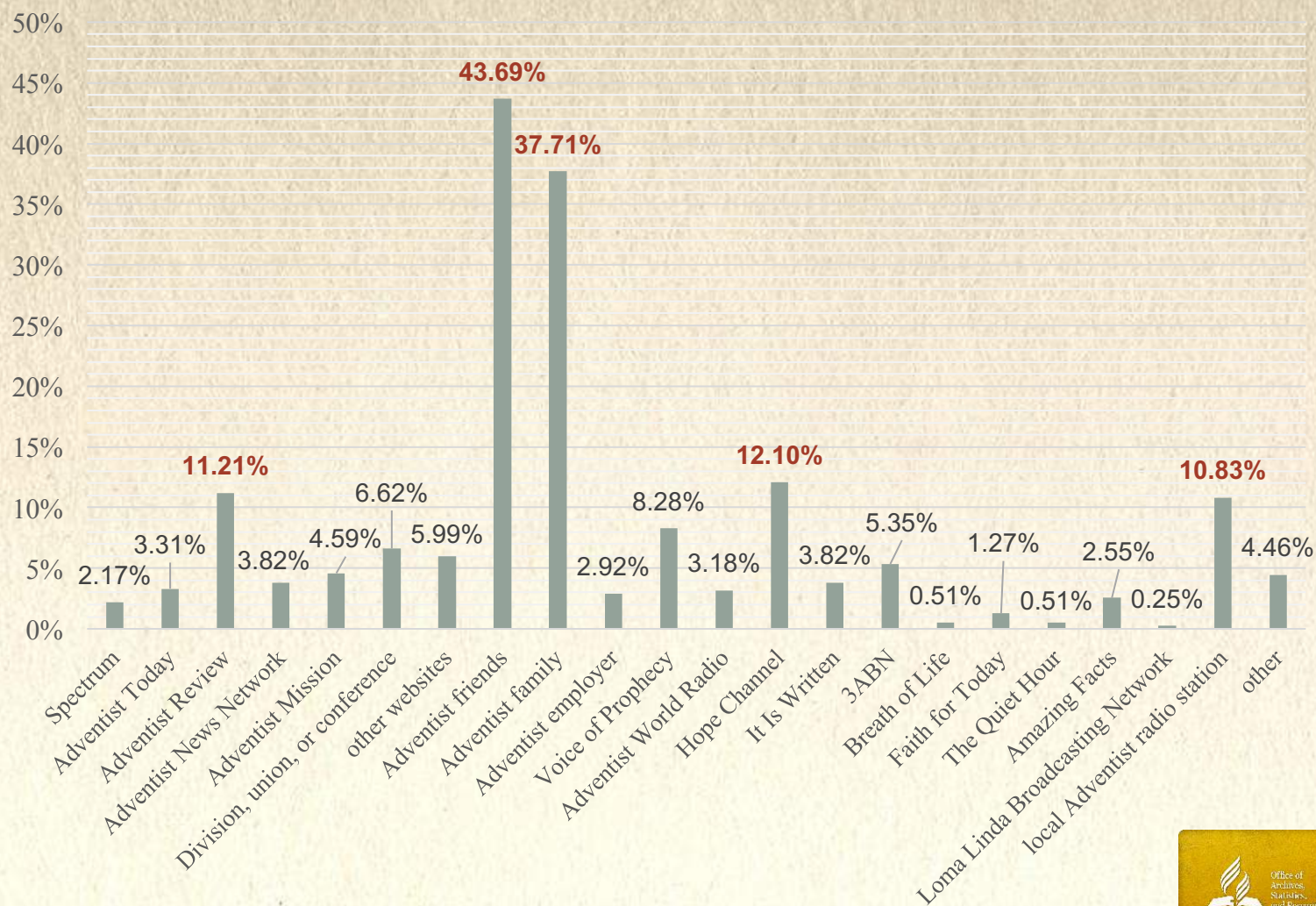
Religious Affiliation After Stopped Attending Church



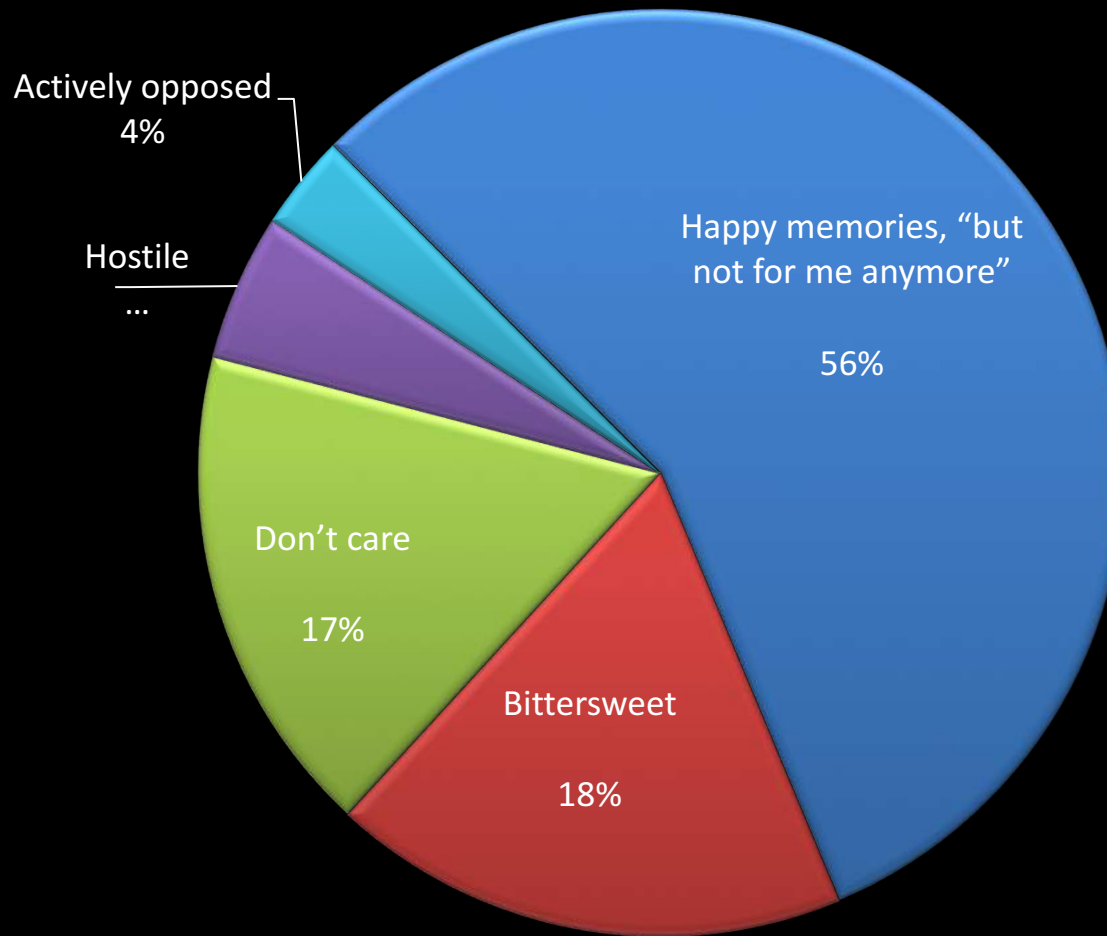
Awareness of Developments in Adventism



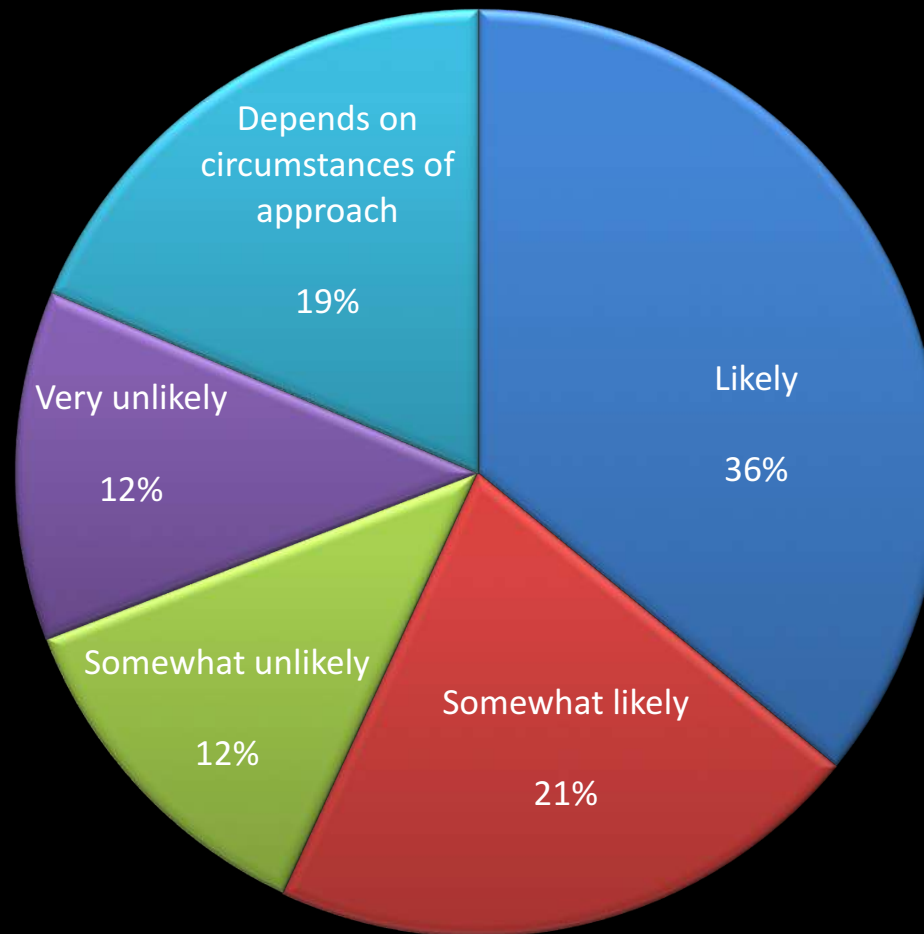
Sources of Information



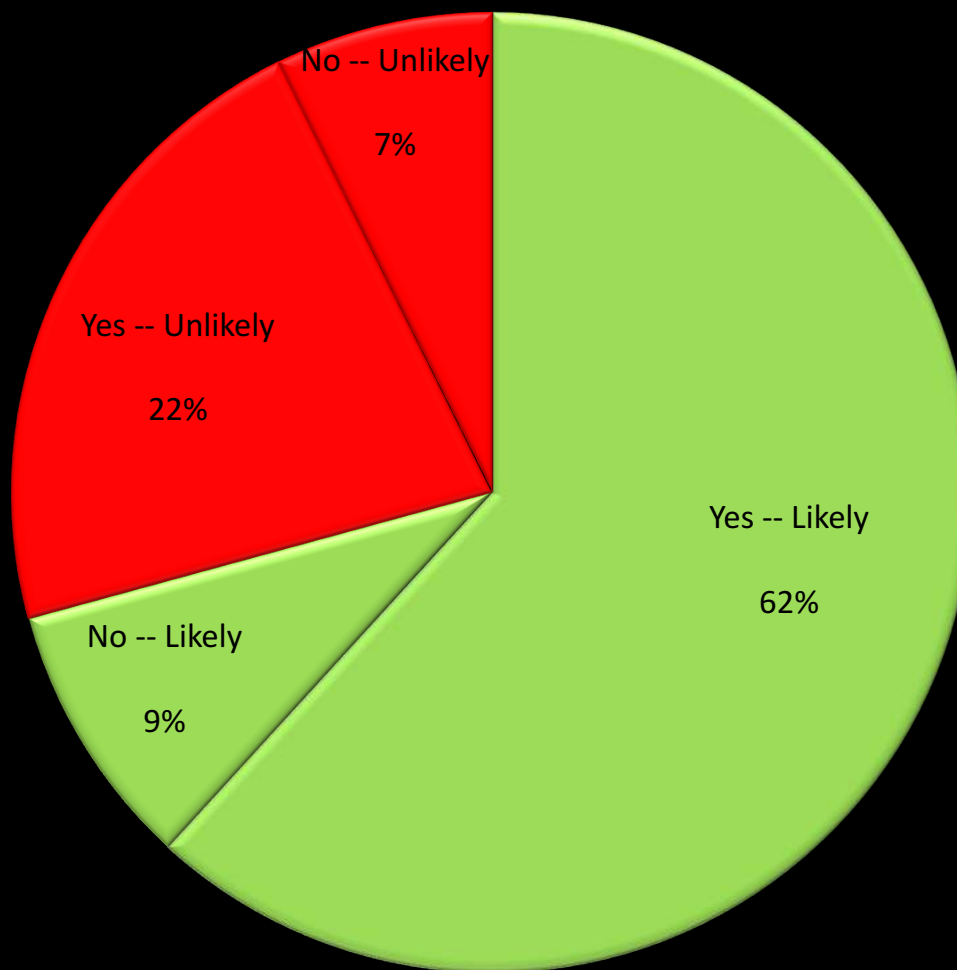
How do you presently feel about Adventism? (Former Members)



How would you rate your openness to reconnect? (Former Members)



Correlation between Visitations after leaving and openness to reconnect with the Church – Former Members



“How then should we live?”

- **Administrators** need to prioritize discipleship and let pastors know that is a priority
- **Pastors** need to work **collaboratively** with their **elders** and with church members
- **Small groups** have a **vital** role to play
 - South Philippines Union: after terrible attrition, introduced a new measure: *every* new member, the moment after their baptism, is introduced to a small group, which will be their spiritual family

“How then should we live?”

- **Make contact** with former members of your local church—offer an apology for anything you or other church members may have done to offend and tell them they are always welcome
- **Use neutral ways to reconnect:** e.g., music . . .
- And when former (or current!) members who have not attended church for a while *do* come, *welcome* them, like the father of the prodigal son . . .

not like too many Adventists . . .

Recommendations

1. Every union to have an active discipleship program
2. Adopt attendance counts as standard, to focus attention on the issue of who is attending—and who is not
3. Use membership software in all fields: keeping track of members will help pastors and elders know who is slipping away

Recommendations

4. Specific training in nurture, retention and discipling to be part of all ministerial and theological education programs (i.e., Newbold College of Higher Education)
5. Implement comprehensive, practical training in conflict resolution and reconciliation at all levels: union, conference & mission employees, and in all local churches

Recommendations

6. Every union to appoint a Nurture and Retention Coordinator; and to establish a Nurture and Retention Committee, chaired by one of the officers, with the Coordinator as secretary, and including the following departmental directors:

Children's Ministries, Education, Family Ministries, Ministerial, Sabbath School & Personal Ministries, Women's Ministries, Youth Ministries

The Good Shepherd

“In the parable [Luke 15] the shepherd goes out to search for one sheep—the very least that can be numbered. So if there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one.”

Ellen G. White,
Christ's Object Lessons, p. 187

First global Summit on Nurture, Retention, and Discipling

- All the presentations given at the 2013 World Summit on Nurture, Retention, and Discipling are available:
- http://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture_home
- (along with audio recordings of the discussion sessions that followed each presentation)

Other Resources

- http://www.adventistresearch.org/research_reports

Under “Retention Studies”:

Full reports on the two studies of former and inactive members that are summarised in this presentation

- http://www.adventistresearch.org/astr_presentations

Copies of David Trim’s reports to Annual Council in 2014 and 2015, which draw out key findings and statistics

Other Resources

- <http://southern.libguides.com/c.php?g=490463&p=3853417>

A report on American graduates of Adventist universities and how connected they feel to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

- <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/Revised%20Adventist%20Youth-Connected%20and%20Disconnected%20Oct%202013.pdf>

A presentation by Galina Stele that brings together data, from several studies, on young Adventists around the world and factors affecting their retention