

# NAES CHAPLAINCY SURVEY REPORT

FALL 2024



National Association  
of Episcopal Schools  
*Excellence Through Association*

# ABOUT THE NAES CHAPLAINCY SURVEY

The National Association of Episcopal Schools conducted the NAES Chaplaincy Survey in the fall of 2023 and received 101 responses.

The purpose of this survey is to provide a demographic profile of chaplains and characteristics of the chaplaincy across the country for analytical, comparative, and reporting purposes as well as to assist heads of school, rectors, bishops, governing boards, and vestries in important program-level decision-making.

The results provide a profile of chaplains and the chaplaincy including school demographics, chaplain demographics, employment, roles and responsibilities, and reflection on the chaplaincy. Additionally, the data will serve as a foundation for an upcoming comprehensive research study of the chaplaincy in Episcopal schools to be released in 2025.

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## SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

In our survey of chaplains across the United States and Guam, we received an impressive total of 101 responses, providing valuable insights into the diverse landscape of educational institutions they serve. Notably, the majority of responses were from chaplains serving in schools situated in California (9), Florida (10), and Texas (16).

Delving deeper into the demographics of these schools, we found that 35% cater to students in PK-5th Grade or PK-8th Grade, with the next largest portion, constituting 25%, serving students from PK-12th Grade. Regarding the organizational structure, 44% of the represented schools were Independent Day Schools, followed by 26% Parish Day Schools and 17% Independent Boarding Schools. The geographical distribution revealed that 60% of these institutions are situated in urban areas, with 31% in suburban locales and 9% in rural settings.

Additionally, the majority, accounting for 91%, are co-educational while 9% are single-sex establishments. Enrollment figures also varied, with 22% of schools reporting enrollments between 1000 and 1999 students. The most prevalent bracket, at 41%, fell between 300-599 students, distributed as 18% for 300-399, 12% for 400-499, and 11% for 500-599. This comprehensive overview provides valuable insight into the diverse landscape of educational institutions served by chaplains in the region.

## CHAPLAIN DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic profile of chaplains in the surveyed schools presents a diverse and dynamic picture. In terms of gender, 57% identify as female, 40% as male, 2% as other, and 1% as Non-Binary. Ethnically, 91% identify as White, while 6% identify as Black/African American, 2% as Asian American, and 1% as Latino/Hispanic American, with one response indicating simply as “American.” When it comes to sexual orientation, 83% identify as heterosexual, 5% as lesbian, 3% as bisexual, 3% as gay, 3% prefer not to answer, 2% as queer, and 1% as asexual.

Sixty-five percent of chaplains are in their first decade of total experience as school chaplains in any school, with 45% having 1-5 years and 20% with 6-10 years. Many chaplains are new to their current schools with 59% of chaplains in years 1-5 of service, and 22% in years 6-10. Notably, 46% of chaplains have no experience as parish priests while 30% have 1-5 years, and 15% have 6-10 years of experience. Regarding roles within the church, 64% are priests in The Episcopal Church, 24% are lay chaplains, 5% are ordained in a different denomination, 5% are seminarians, and 2% are deacons in The Episcopal Church. This multifaceted profile underscores the rich diversity of backgrounds and experiences within the chaplaincy profession.

## CHAPLAIN EMPLOYMENT

Most chaplains, 85%, are employed by the school with 12% having shared employment between the school and the church. Only 3% of chaplains are employed by the church. Regarding responsibilities, 78% are full-time with the school. 7% are part-time with the school and part-time with the parish. 6% are part-time with the school only. Other include full-time with Cathedral and part-time with the

school, full-time with the school and two Sundays a month at the church, and full-time with the school with other church responsibilities.

A majority of chaplains (81%) have a formal job description for their position, while 19% do not. Among those with job descriptions, 67% find them accurate reflections of their roles and responsibilities; however, 15% disagree. The remaining 18% do not have a job description.

The majority of chaplains (52%) report directly to the Head of School. Of senior chaplains, deans, or head chaplains, 84% report directly to the Head of School. Other reporting lines include the Head Chaplain, Division Head, and a combination of roles within the school and church. While 49% do not have regular meetings with the Head of School, 18% meet weekly, 19% every other week, and 14% once a month.

Slightly more than half of chaplains (51%) serve on the senior leadership team led by the Head of School. Regarding evaluations, 63% receive a regular review from the school, while 27% do not. Evaluation by the Church is less common, with only 14% reporting regular reviews, and 40% indicating no such evaluation.

Half of the chaplains surveyed reported that the school contributes 18% to the Church Pension Program as part of their compensation; however, 21% do not qualify for this program. The contribution structure varies for others. In terms of housing, 35% receive neither school housing nor the diocesan allowance, while 22% receive school housing and 24% receive the diocesan allowance.

## CHAPLAIN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### SCHOOL WORSHIP

The frequency of chapel leadership varies among schools. Twenty-four percent of chaplains lead chapel three times a week, while 21% lead it twice a week, and 20% lead it once a week. Eighteen percent of chaplains lead chapel five times a week, and the remaining 18% selected “other.”

Chaplains provided a range of practices regarding the Eucharist in schools. Twenty percent have it once a week, while 19% never have it. Twenty-nine percent hold the Eucharist once a month, 10% four times a year, 5% twice a

year, and 4% once a year. Some schools adjust the frequency based on the division level within the school.

In terms of attendance, chaplains reported that parents and other community members attend school worship with varying regularity. Thirty percent always attend, 47% attend sometimes, and 23% attend rarely.

### TEACHING

Among chaplains, 9% do not have teaching responsibilities. Among those with teaching duties, which encompass instructional time excluding lesson planning, 19% dedicate 9-10 hours per week to teaching classes, while 18% allocate 5-6 hours per week. Furthermore, 15% spend 3-4 hours, and another 15% spend 7-8 hours, with an additional 8% dedicating 1-2 hours per week. A small portion, 3%, report spending 12 hours, and 2% spend 20 hours per week teaching.

In addition to teaching time, 21% of chaplains teach two different classes or courses per year or per semester/trimester if their courses change during the year. Thirteen percent teach

three courses, 10% teach four, and 7% teach five. Six percent teach six courses, while 20% teach only one. For the remaining 23%, their teaching responsibilities fall under “other.”

Regarding class size, the majority of chaplains (80%) have an average class size of 10-19 students in the courses they teach. Eleven percent have classes with 20-29 students, 7% have classes with 1-9 students, and 2% have classes with 30 or more students.

## **SERVICE LEARNING, DEI, AND CRISIS RESPONSE**

Chaplains play a significant role in various aspects of school life. A majority (47%) of those leading Service Learning/Community Service programs dedicate one to two hours weekly to planning and implementation. While a smaller percentage devotes more time, the commitment is substantial.

DEI initiatives are another area of focus. A significant portion of chaplains (55%) are not directly responsible for leading these efforts due to their schools having a dedicated DEI Director/Coordinator. However, for those involved in DEI

leadership, the time commitment is comparable to Service Learning, with 65% spending one to two hours per week.

Crisis response is a critical function with 53% of chaplains serving on their school’s crisis response team dedicating one to two hours weekly. The time investment can fluctuate based on the nature and frequency of crises.

## **ADDITIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Beyond their core roles, many chaplains take on additional responsibilities. A third of respondents teach confirmation or other Christian formation classes, typically investing one to two hours per week. Similarly, 38% serve as supply priests for local parishes, with time commitments ranging from one to ten hours per week.

Diocesan responsibilities and interfaith engagement are also part of the chaplain’s role. The majority (42%) allocate one to two hours per month to diocesan obligations, while 48% dedicate a similar amount of time to interfaith work.



## REFLECTIONS ON THE CHAPLAINCY

The Reflections on the Chaplaincy section of the NAES Chaplaincy Survey uses the data collection instrument designed by John Caperton for his doctoral research “The Nature of the Ministry of School Chaplains in Church of England Secondary Schools.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Chaplains report the “top three most important or significant aspects of their work” are**

***Spiritual:*** the chaplain’s role as a spiritual leader in the community, seeking to bring to bear the insights of spirituality on all aspects of school life

***Pastoral:*** the chaplain’s role as someone committed to the care and well-being of all members of the school community

***Liturgical:*** the chaplain’s role as a planner, organizer, facilitator, and leader of collective worship and other worship events in the school

### **While chaplains report the “least important or significant aspects of their work” are**

***Prophetic:*** the chaplain’s role as someone “speaking truth to power,” challenging the school to review its life in the light of Christian faith

***Missional:*** the chaplain’s role as a person of faith commending the Christian faith to others and nurturing faith in all

***Pedagogic:*** the chaplain’s role as a teacher of and about the Christian faith in the context of both Religious Studies and Christian catechesis

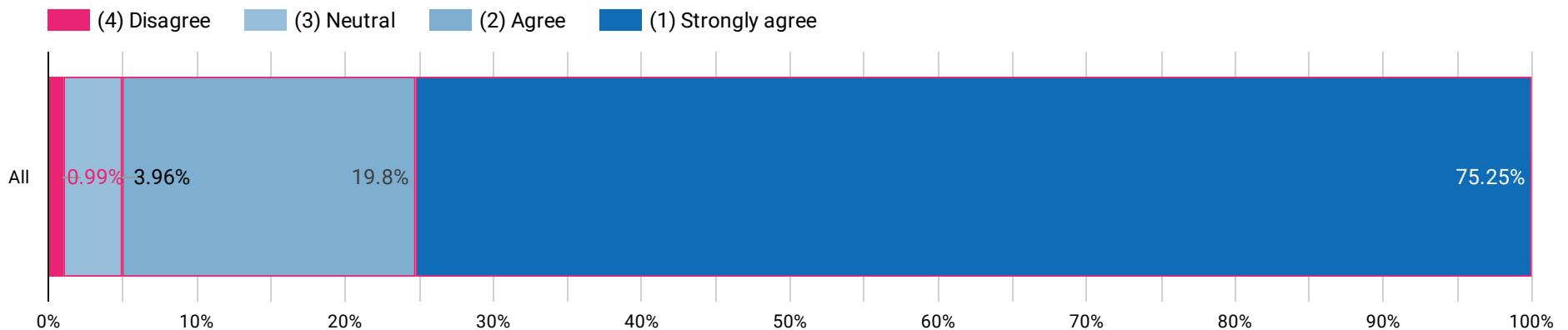
<sup>1</sup> Caperton, John Philip. “The Nature of the Ministry of School Chaplains in Church of England Secondary Schools.” Thesis, Anglia Ruskin University, August 2012.



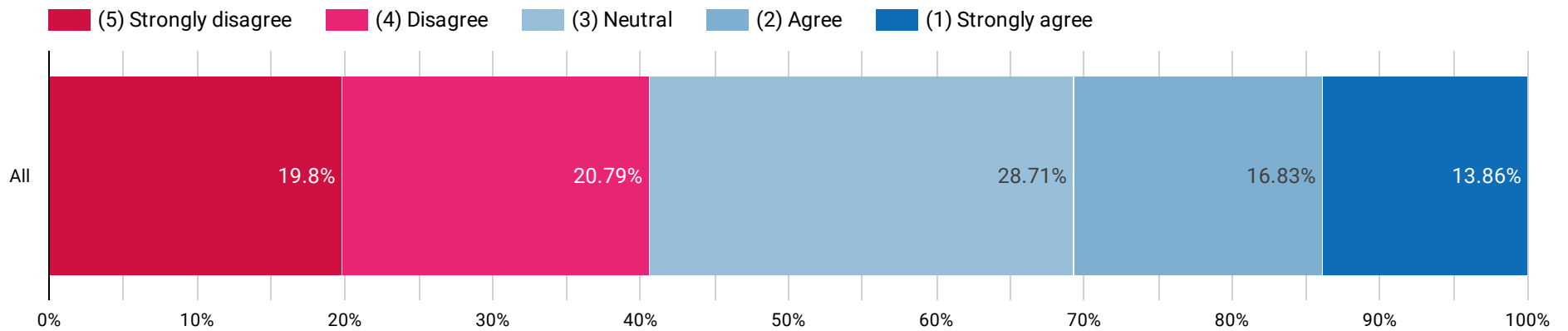
CHAPLAINS' RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING PROMPT:

*Many school chaplains describe their work as a specific and special vocation. Reflecting on the nature of your own work as a school chaplain and your own sense of vocation, please show your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about school chaplaincy:*

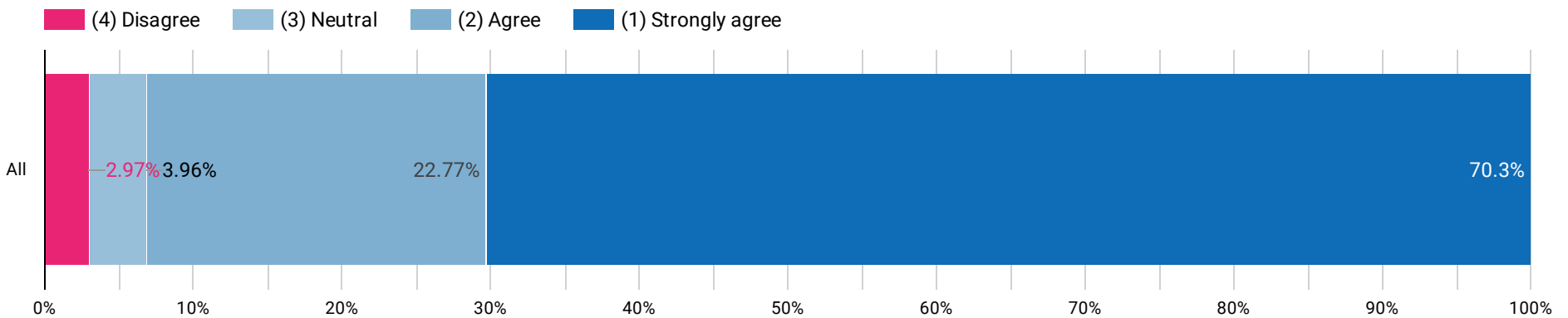
**1** *Being a school chaplain is a special vocation to which I feel called by God.*



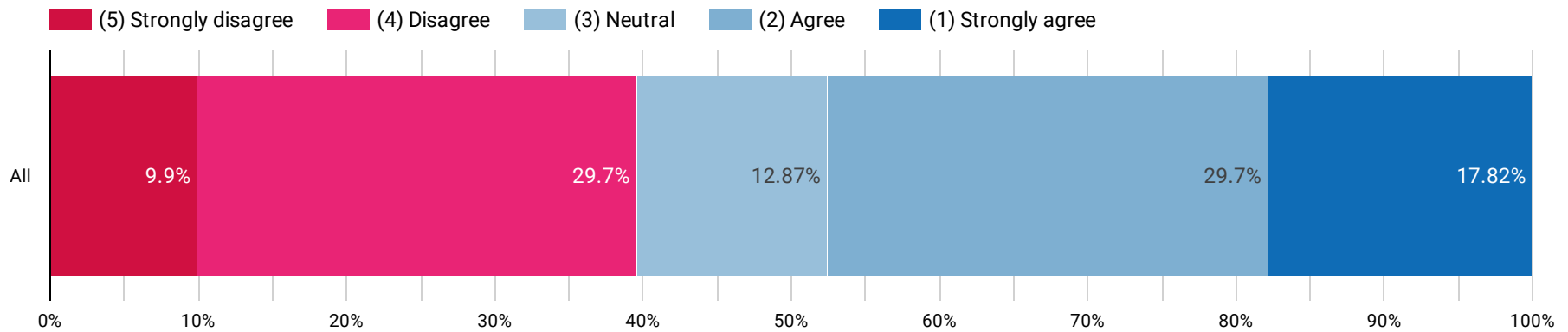
**2** *Being a school chaplain is something I currently enjoy, but I also hope to spend time ministering in a parish.*



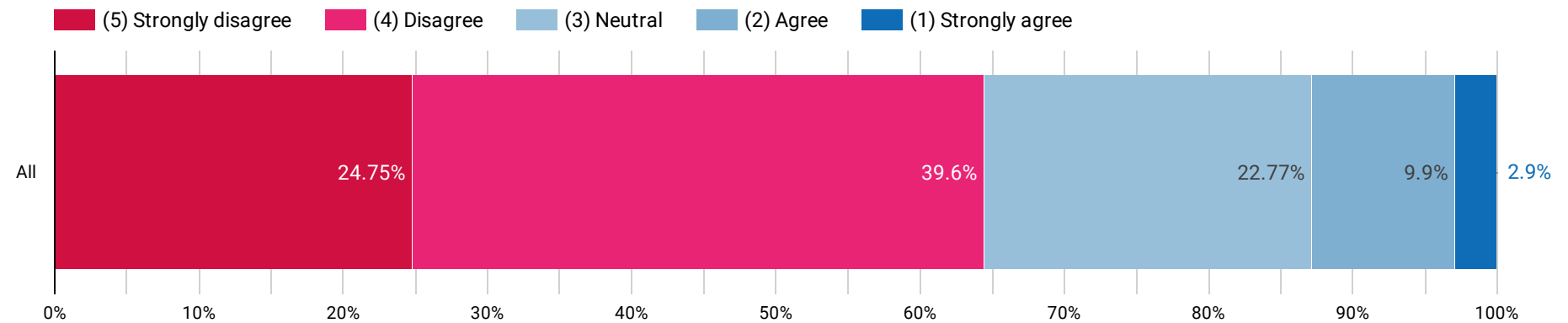
**3** *Being a school chaplain means you are in close contact with the young people you would never see in church.*



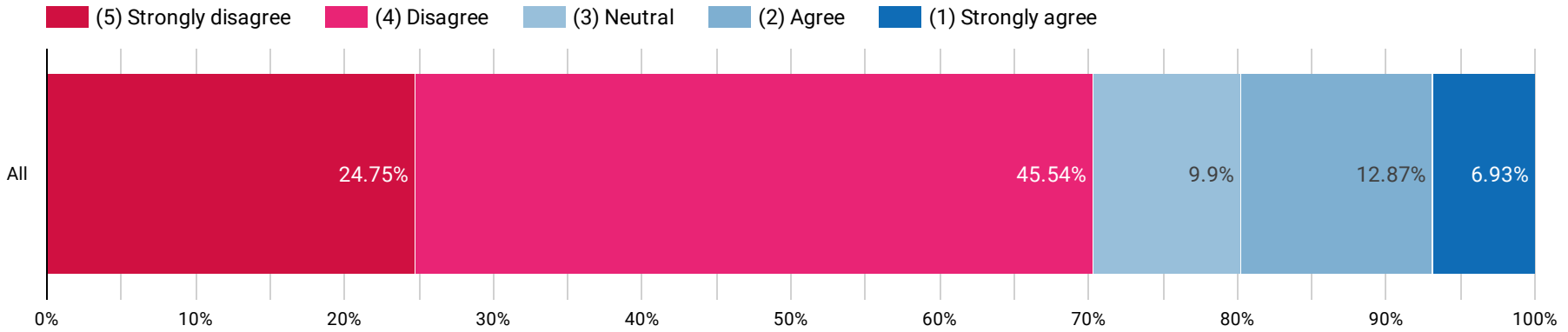
**4** *As a chaplain you are the one person in the school community who can offer total confidentiality.*



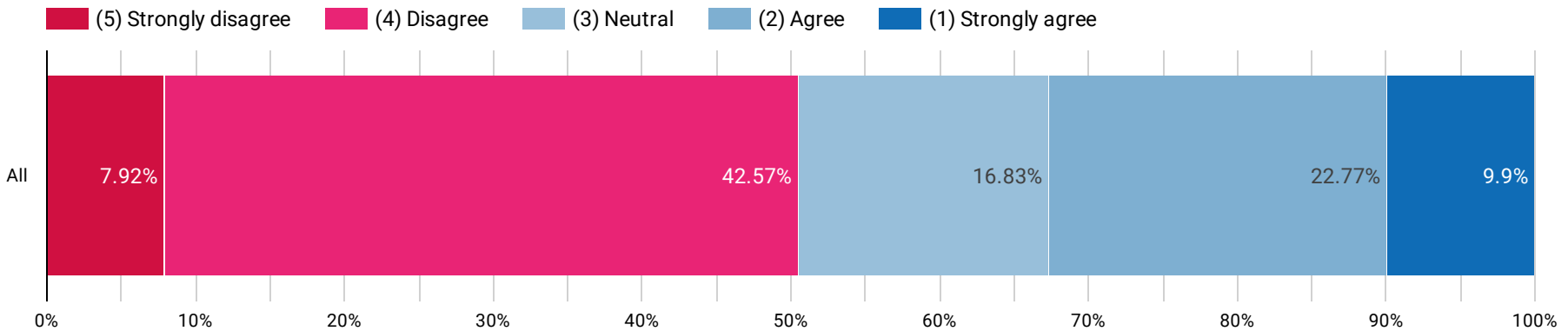
**5** *Celebrating the Eucharist is the most important single thing I do as a school chaplain.*



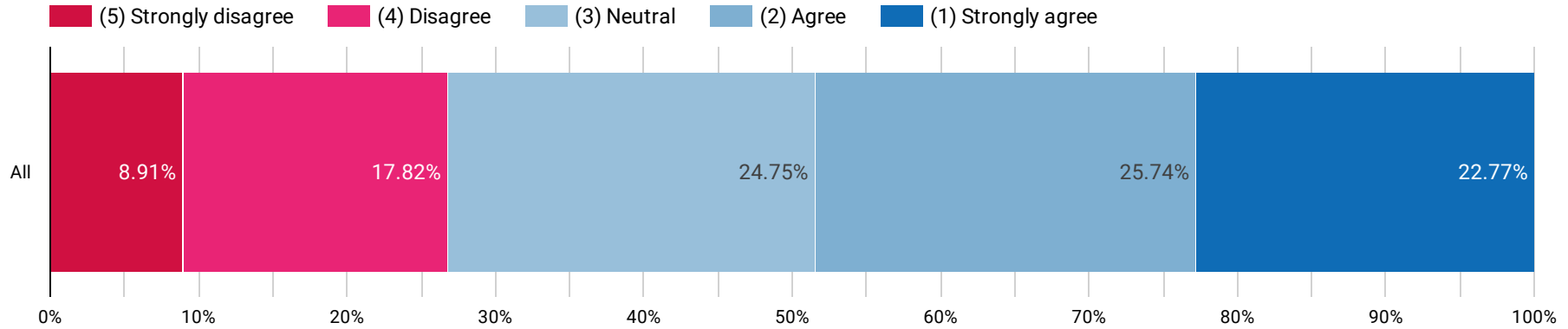
**6** *A school chaplain doesn't have much real influence on the way the school runs.*



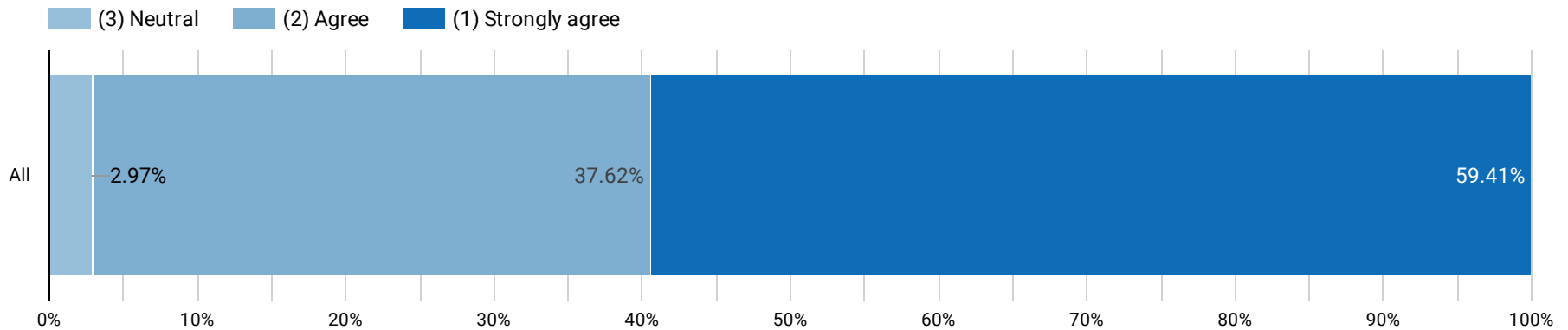
**7** *Not very many people in the school seem to understand what I do as a school chaplain.*



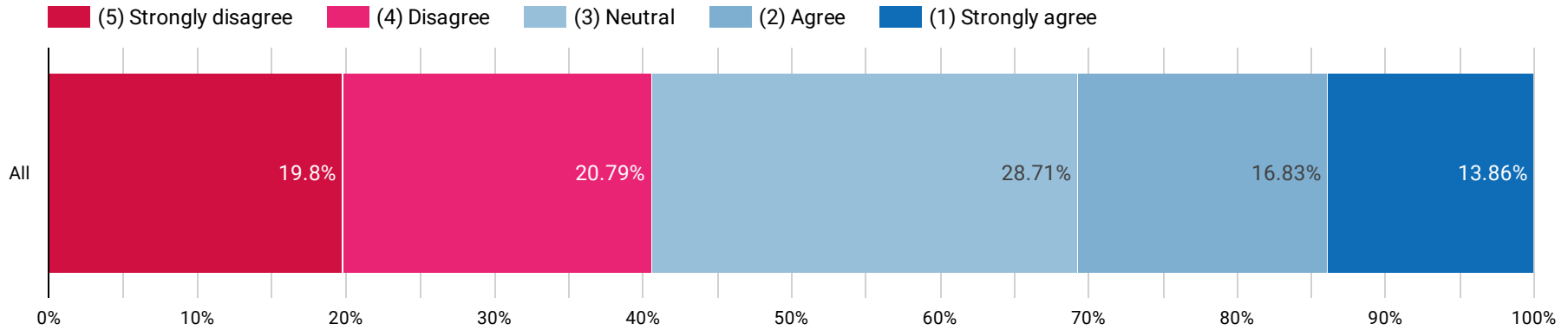
**8** *As chaplain, I have a special relationship of trust with the head of school who consults me about key decisions.*



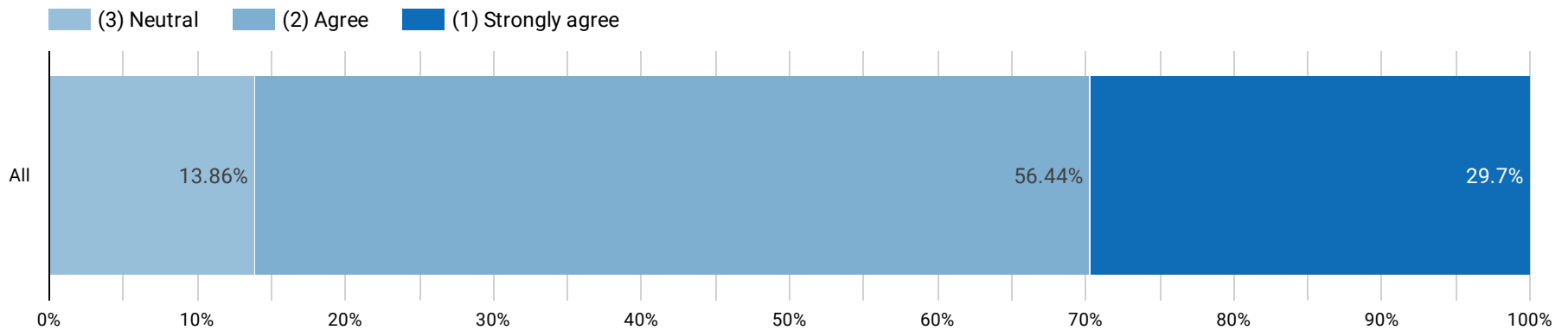
**9** *The chaplain has a real opportunity to influence the young and to change the course of their lives.*



**10** *Being a school chaplain is something I currently enjoy, but I also hope to spend time ministering in a parish.*



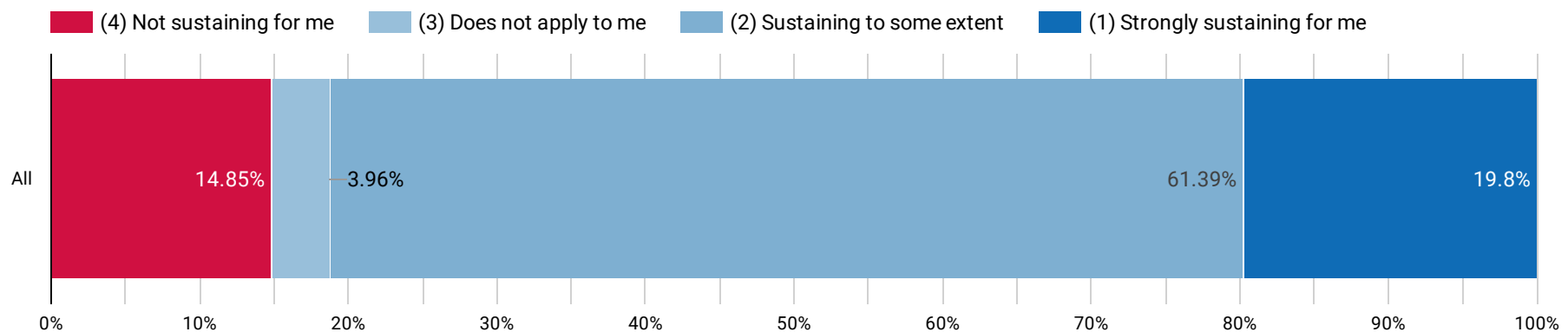
**11** *Students from other faith traditions in the school see me as a faith leader and seek my support and advice.*



## SOURCES OF SUSTENANCE

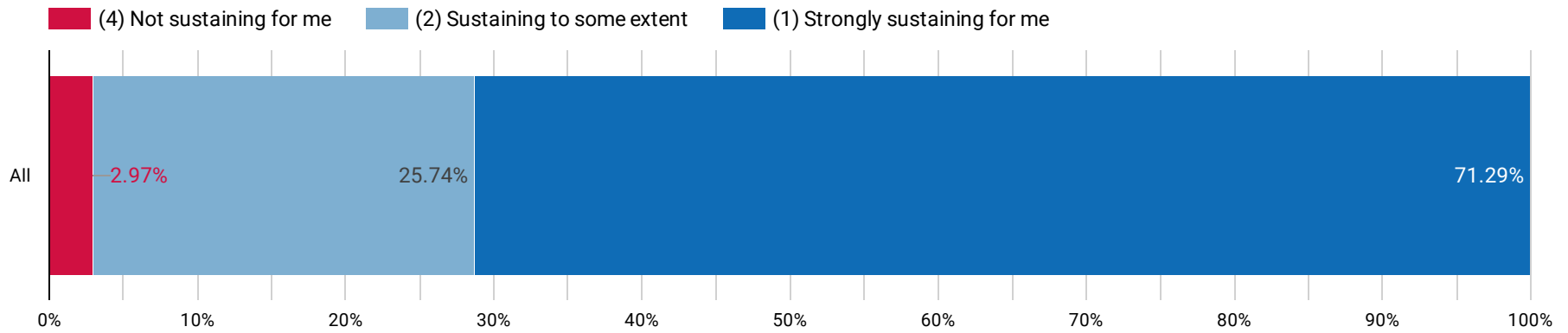
*The ministry of school chaplaincy, like other ministries, may be sustained in several ways. Reflecting on the nature of your work as a school chaplain, please identify from the list below the importance for you of the different, named sources of sustenance or spiritual support.*

**1** *My sense of connection and involvement with the wider community of school chaplains.*

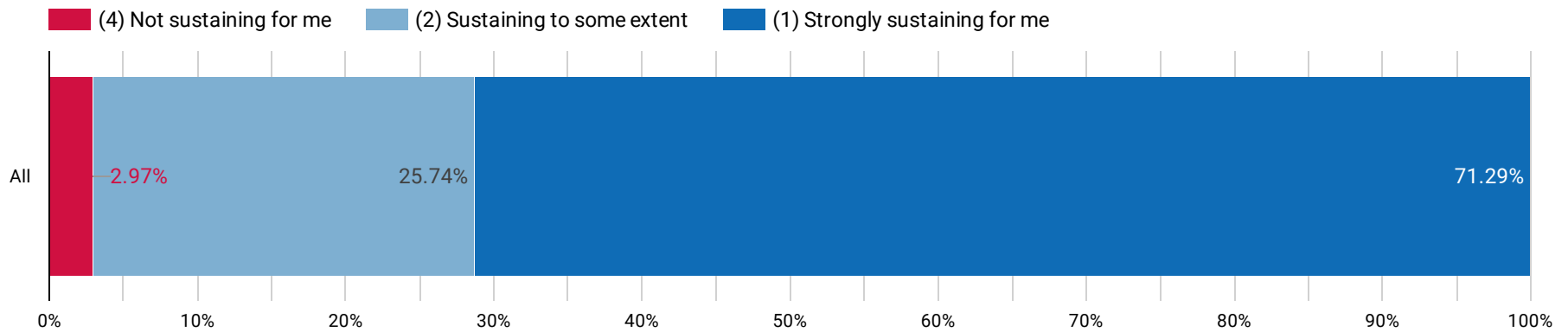




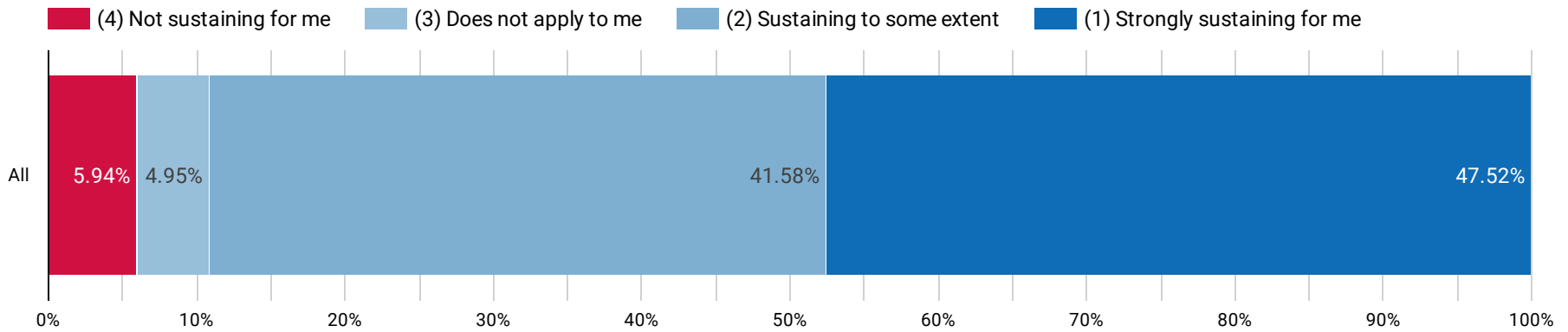
**2** *The support of my teaching colleagues in my school*



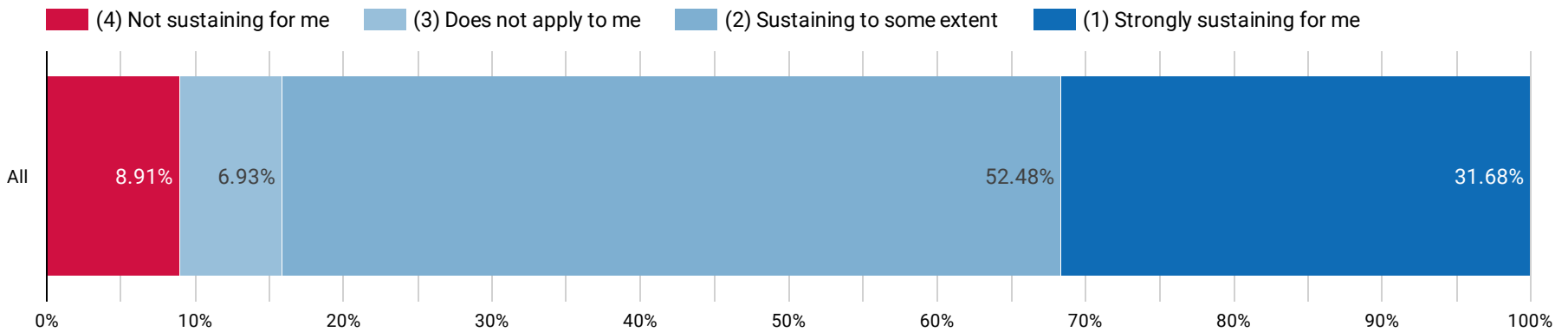
**3** *The backup of my family and friends*



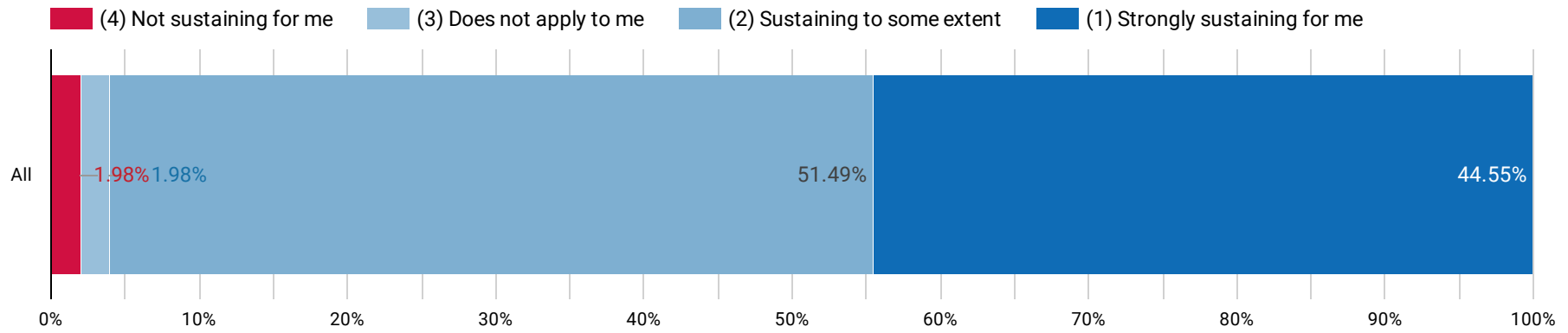
**4** *The personal support of my head of school*



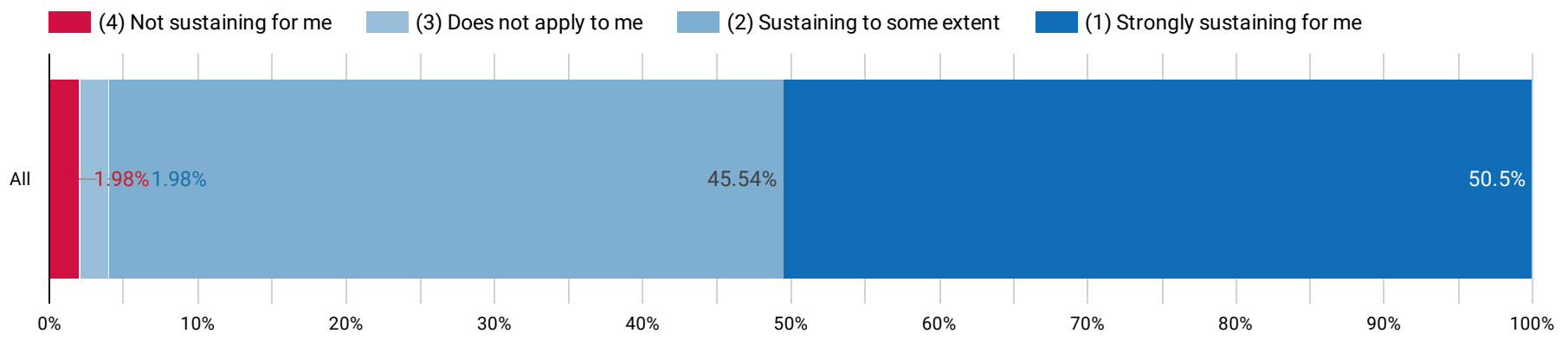
**5** *My involvement in a worshipping Christian community outside the school*



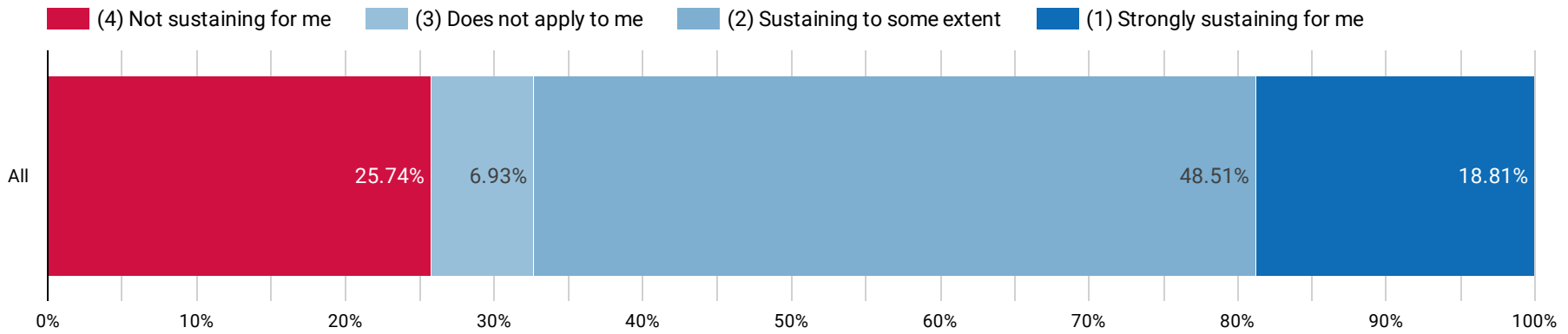
**6** *My own, private spiritual reading*



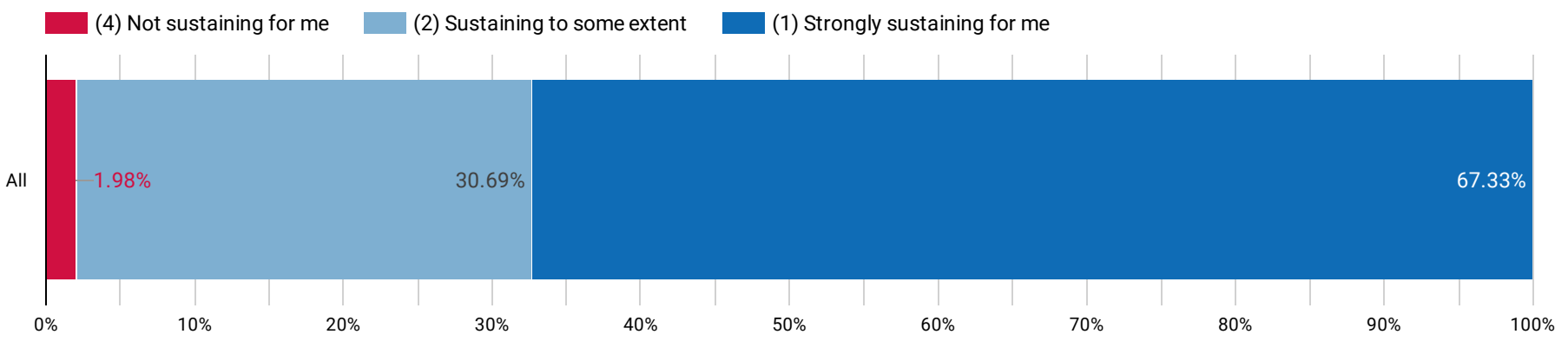
**7** *Frequent and regular participation in the Eucharist*



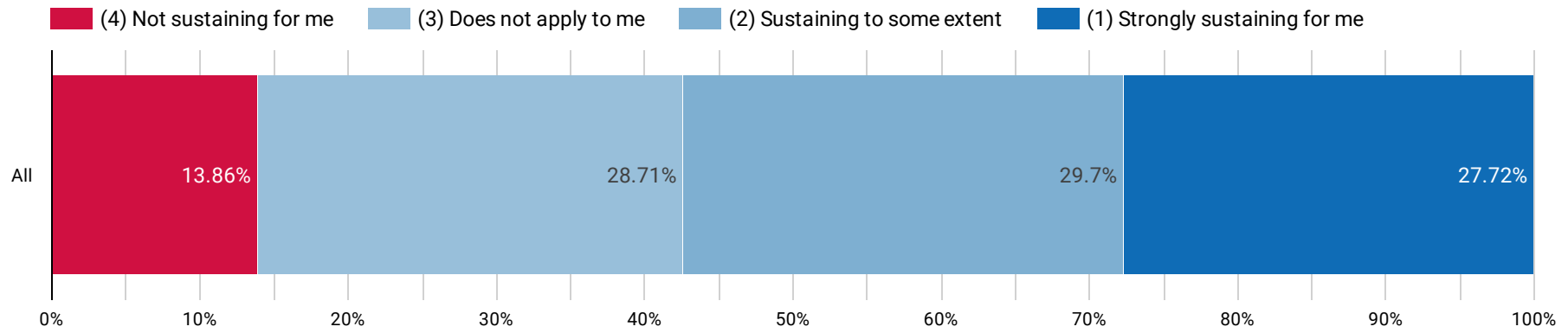
**8** *My involvement with the local community of clergy and church staff*



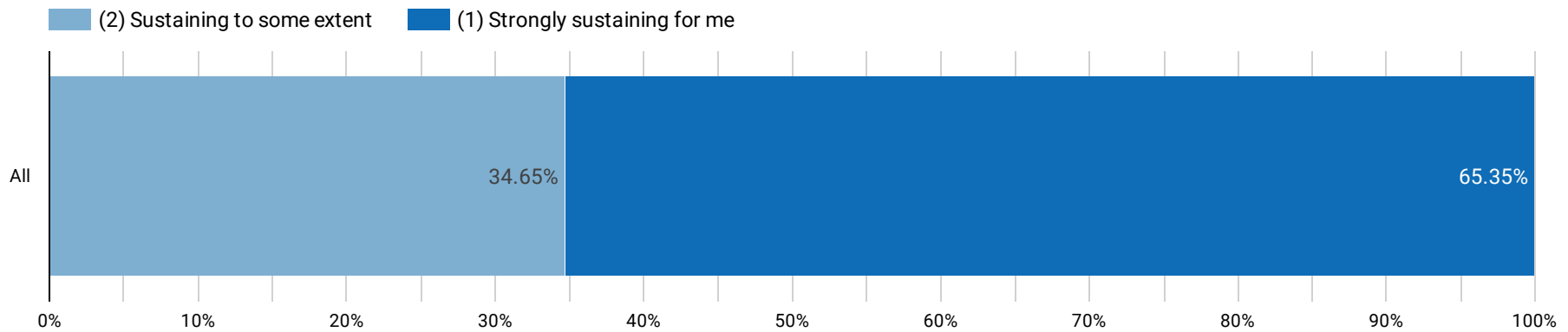
**9** *My holidays and personal interests*



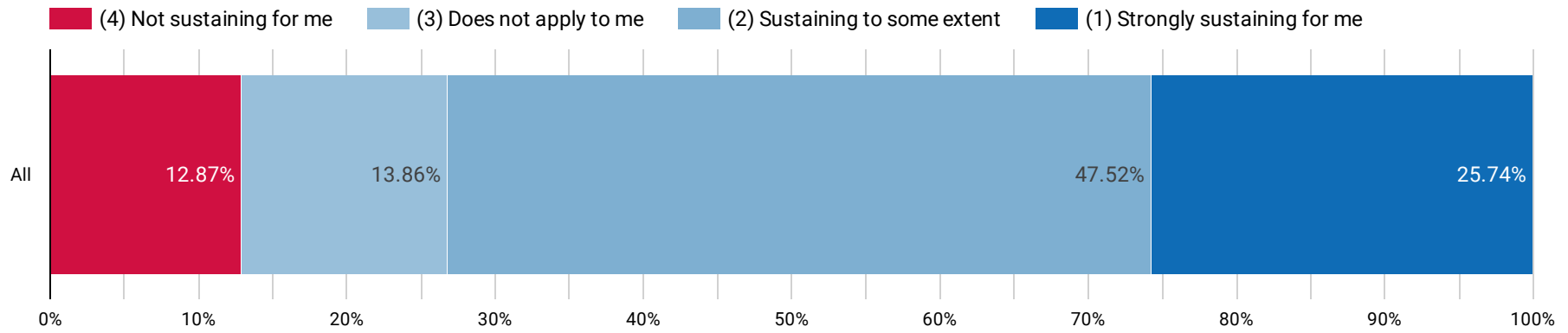
**10** *The opportunity of regular retreats*



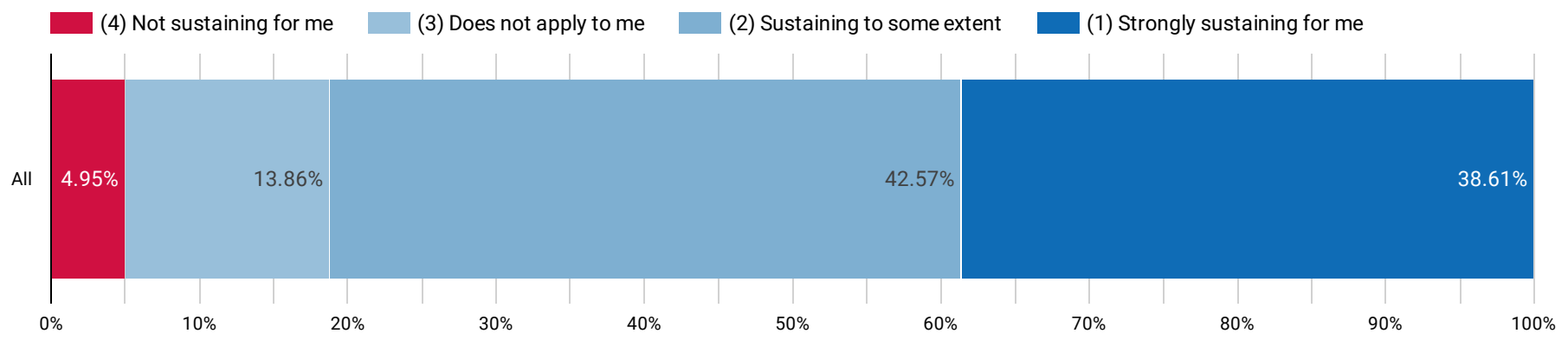
**11** *The appreciation of the students*



**12** *Higher-level theological study*



**13** *Spiritual direction or companionship*

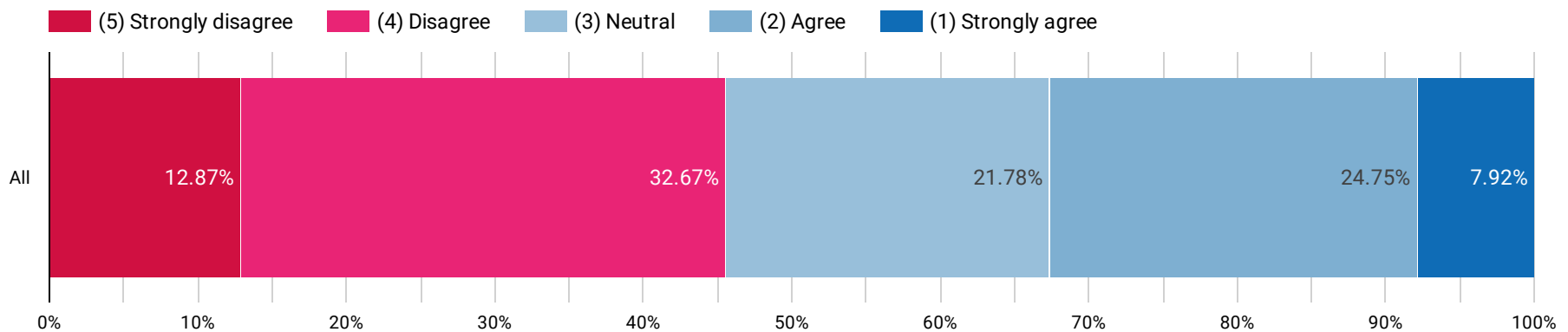


CHAPLAINS' RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING PROMPT:

*Chaplaincy in schools is experienced by some chaplains as a fairly isolated or misunderstood ministry in relation to the wider Church. Reflecting on both your own work as a school chaplain and your understanding of the wider Church, please show your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:*

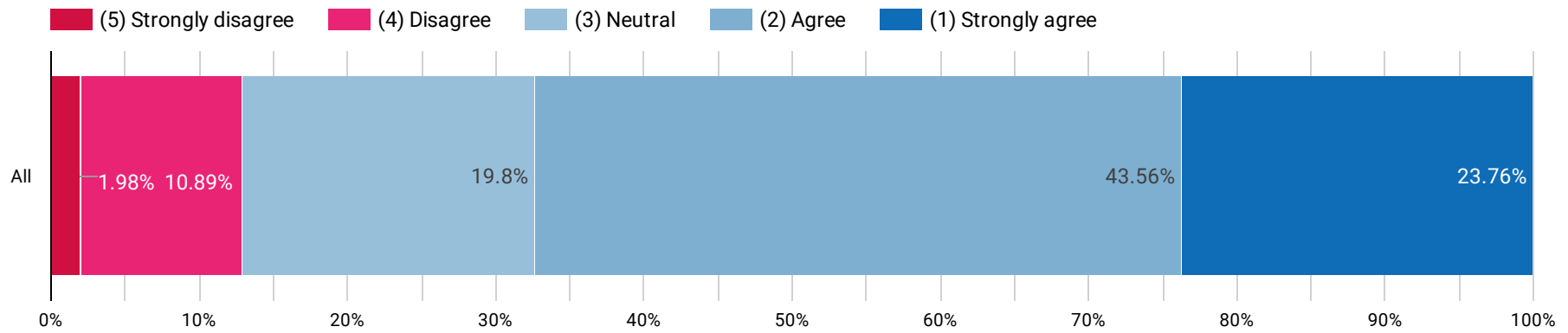
1

*In my diocese there is a strong sense of the vital significance for the Church's future of the ministry of school chaplaincy.*

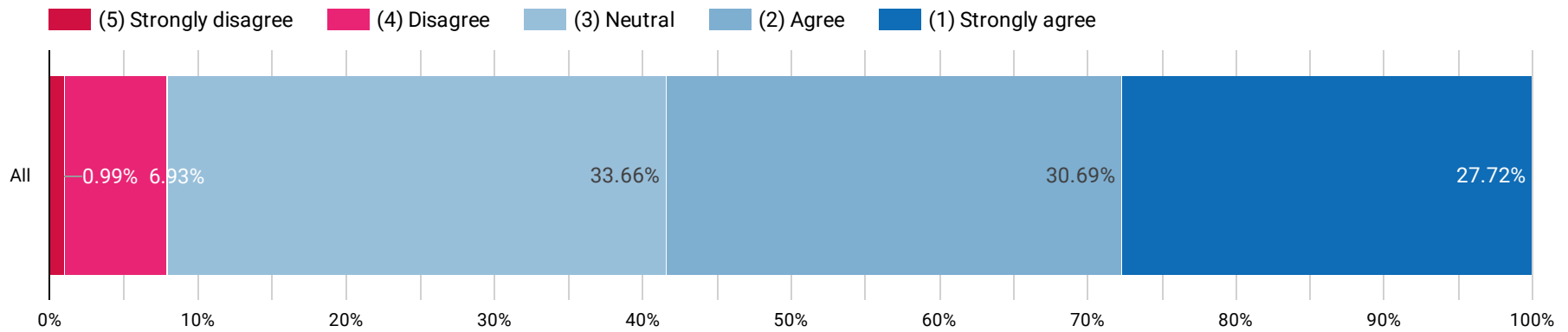




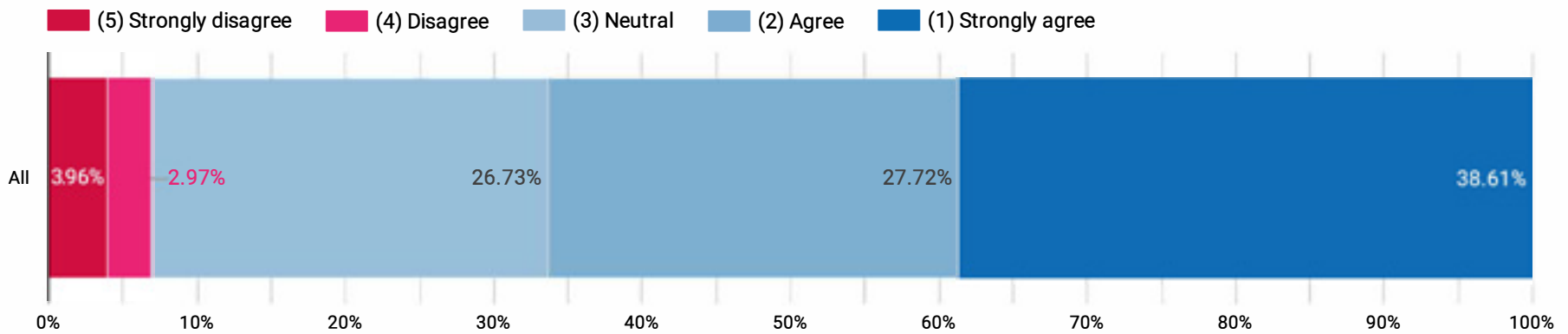
**2** *I feel somewhat detached as a school chaplain from the mainstream work of my diocese and deanery.*



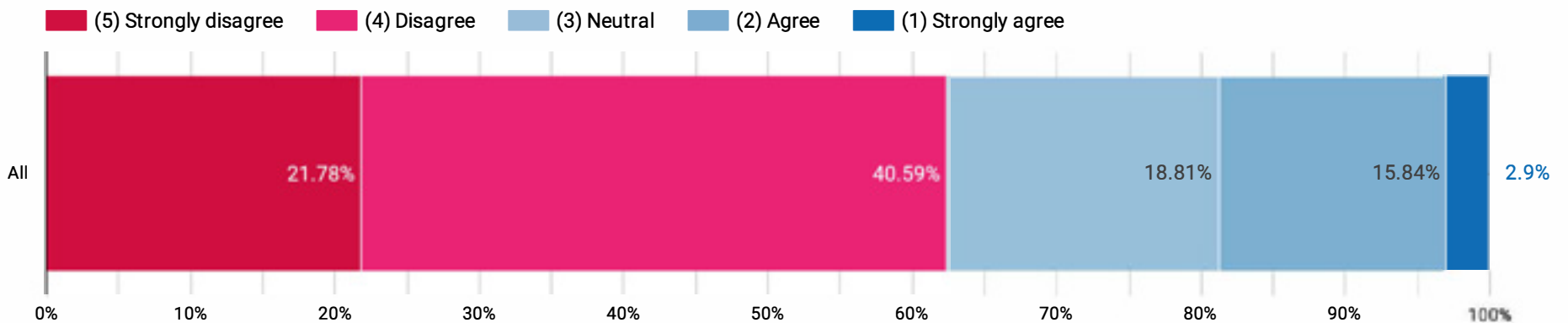
**3** *The national strategy of The Episcopal Church takes little account of the potential of school chaplaincy.*



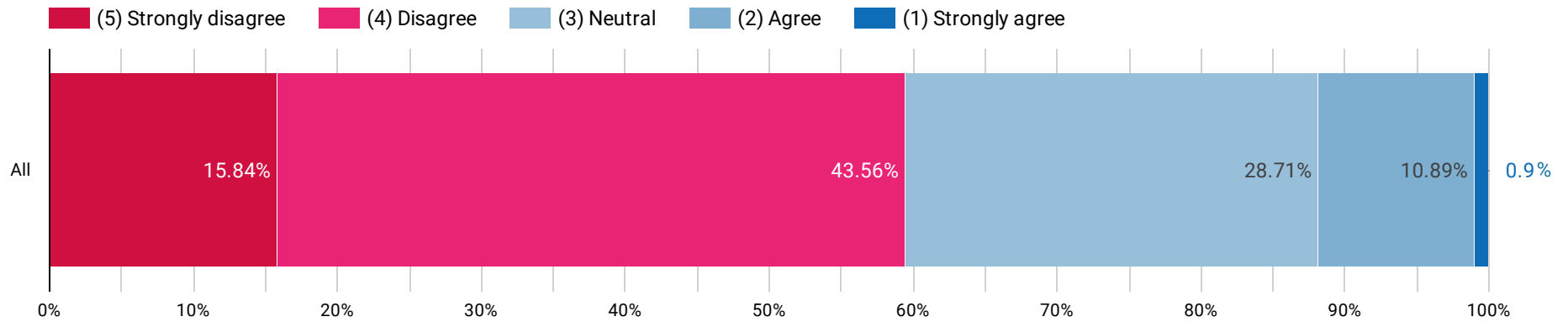
**4** *I am confident that my Bishop strongly supports the work of school chaplains.*



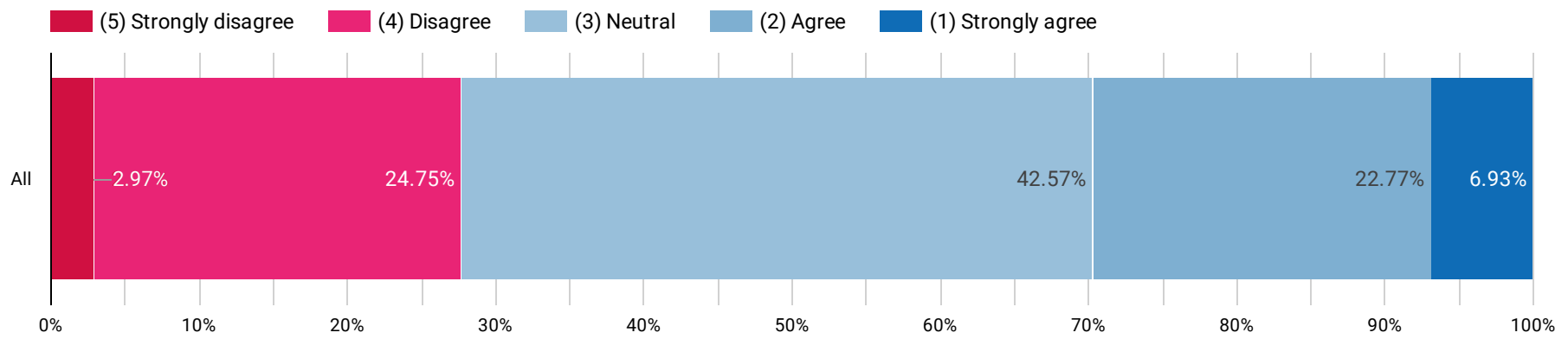
**5** *My diocese not only has its own guidelines for the work of school chaplains, but also arranges regular support sessions.*



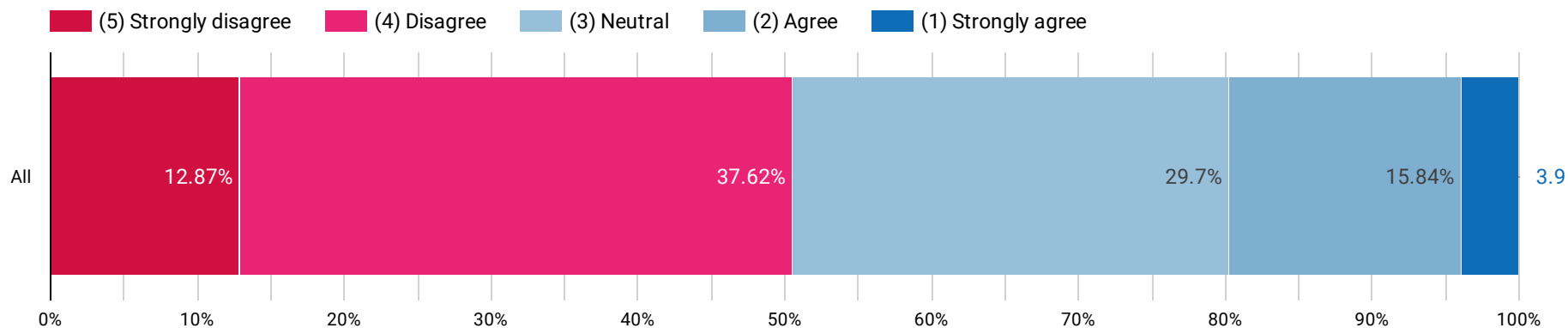
**6** *School chaplaincy is admired in the Church as a pioneering ministry.*



**7** *I understand that once out of the parish system and working in a school chaplaincy, it is difficult for a clergy person to get back into parish ministry.*



**8** *In my work as a school chaplain, I feel unsupported by my diocese.*



## OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

### QUESTION ONE

*Your role is something you understand better than anyone else. Please help us to grasp how you see your work by completing as clearly as you can the following sentence, and please feel free to extend your response if you wish to do so.*

*“The core of my work as a school chaplain is about...”*

School chaplains play a vital role in supporting the emotional and spiritual well-being of students and the wider school community. They create a safe space for people of all faiths and backgrounds to explore their beliefs and values. Based on responses, the following seven core responsibilities emerged:

### **Core Responsibilities:**

- Provide spiritual care and support to students, faculty, and staff.
- Foster a welcoming and inclusive religious or spiritual environment.
- Lead religious services and observances.
- Teach religious studies or ethics classes.
- Be a role model of faith and compassion.
- Provide pastoral counseling and guidance.
- Advocate for the spiritual aspects of school life.

### **The following response reflects what was mentioned most frequently:**

#### ***Provide spiritual care and support to students, faculty, and staff***

- *“Reminding the entire community that God loves them no matter what, exposing them to the sacred stories, communicating the school’s Episcopal identity, and providing support.”*
- *“Getting the students given into my care to understand that they are loved by God, that God knows them and has blessed them with an array of gifts and talents, and that they are called by God to use those gifts and talents to make a difference in the world.”*
- *“Coming alongside members of the School Community and speaking hope into their lives.”*

- *“Providing pastoral care and mental health counseling services.”*
- *“Caring for the members of my community by extending the love of God in Christ through pastoral care, teaching, and liturgy.”*
- *“Walking alongside students in their spiritual journeys, supporting them through the joys and challenges of their lives, serving as a role model of compassion and integrity for them, and offering insight into how they might grow into the fullest and best versions of themselves.”*

**Mentioned frequently:**

***Foster a welcoming and inclusive religious or spiritual environment***

- *“Building a caring community that is inclusive of all and serves all, that reflects the kingdom of God in its diversity and radical demonstration of love.”*
- *“Building relationships with all of the school’s constituents, reminding people we are part of something greater than ourselves; pointing to the core values of the school; and helping people understand that it is necessary to make the stranger our neighbor.”*
- *“Including everyone in the love of God.”*

- *“Respecting the theological and spiritual capacity of students. Students explore and articulate their own spiritual beliefs.”*
- *“Making sure every member of the community knows how very much they are loved by God.”*
- *“Building community by encouraging and supporting individuals in their explorations of spirituality and faith, providing inclusive chapel services rooted in the Episcopal faith, striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the inherent dignity of every human being.”*

***Lead religious services and observances.***

***Teach religious studies or ethics classes.***

***Be a role model of faith and compassion.***

- *“Living an evangelical witness in the community.”*
- *“Providing an authentic model of moral and ethical behavior.”*

***Provide pastoral counseling and guidance.***

- *“Be a supportive presence and a prophetic voice.”*
- *“Being a priest to all people.”*
- *“Being a supportive and prayerful presence to everyone in the community, sharing the love of God through relationship and worship.”*
- *“Building relationships with students and nurturing faith where possible.”*



- *“Fostering an environment for spiritual exploration and spiritual formation on campus through Chapel, the classroom, and the totality of engagement with students, faculty, and staff.”*
- *“To be a pastoral presence in the lives of my students.”*

***Advocate for the spiritual aspects of school life.***

- *“Advocating for the spiritual aspects of daily life across faith traditions.”*
- *“Keeping the Episcopal Identity of our school at the forefront of who we are and what we do; daily chapel is a part of that, but not the only place where Episcopal Identity should be valued/demonstrated.”*

- *“Living into what it means to be an Episcopal school. I am the ‘Episcopal’ presence on the campus.”*
- *“Leading in the Episcopal identity as a school by convening the community; praying our values, concerns, and expectations; cultivating a spiritual practice and ethical living; and promoting religious pluralism.”*
- *“Providing space for students to explore their spirituality and experience God’s presence. Learning about themselves and connecting with others is a key aspect of spirituality and what it means to be a good person and like Christ.”*
- *“Upholding the school’s mission ‘to educate students in mind, body, and spirit to prepare them for lives of meaning and purpose’ and being a key figure representing that mission in our full parish and school community.”*

## QUESTION TWO

*You understand better than anyone what inspires and sustains your work. Please help us to grasp this by completing as clearly as you can the following sentence:*

*“As a school chaplain, I am sustained and inspired most of all by...”*

### **Most Common Response:**

***Relationships with Students:*** Chaplains find their interactions with students to be a source of inspiration and joy. They are particularly inspired by students’ curiosity, growth, and expressions of faith.

- *“Witnessing students’ expressions of growing faith (in class, chapel, conversations).”*
- *“The wonder and discovery of students.”*
- *“The inherent goodness of each student and the insights they offer daily.”*
- *“Moments when you can make a meaningful difference in a student’s life.”*
- *“Knowing you are planting seeds of God’s love in the lives of students.”*
- *“Hearing from students about their interest in God, religion, etc.”*
- *“Students taking the time to share their reflections and questions with you.”*
- *“Alumni returning to connect with you about their faith journey.”*

### **Mentioned Frequently:**

**Spiritual Growth:** Many chaplains mentioned a sense of purpose or calling that sustains them. They are inspired by the opportunity to support the spiritual growth of others, including students, faculty, and the broader community.

- *“A sense of purpose or calling that sustains you.”*
- *“The opportunity to support the spiritual growth of others (students, faculty, community).”*
- *“Your own spiritual practice and joy of relationships at the school.”*
- *“Personal theological & biblical studies/spiritual meditations/prayers.”*

- *“Feeling a sense of vocation, community, and spiritual practices.”*
- *“Maintaining a conscious contact with God through prayer, study, and meditation.”*

**Community:** Feeling like part of a supportive community is important to chaplains. This includes relationships with colleagues, friends, family, and their faith community.

- *“Feeling like part of a supportive community.”*
- *“Relationships with colleagues in and out of school.”*
- *“Feeling a sense of belonging with the rest of the school community.”*
- *“The joy of being part of an amazing community of faculty, staff, students, and alumni.”*

- *“My community of teachers, families, and students reflecting to me that they are impacted by my work.”*
- *“The joy that comes with living and working in an intentional community.”*
- *“Walking with your community through the everyday ups and downs of life.”*

**Additional responses:**

**Personal Spiritual Practices:** Prayer, meditation, and personal study are important for many chaplains.

- *“Prayer, meditation, and personal study.”*
- *“Daily Office.”*
- *“Sabbath time with God.”*
- *“Staying connected emotionally and theologically and relationally to the Liturgy, Eucharist, and close friends.”*
- *“Prayer and the sacraments.”*
- *“Practicing Christ’s Life and Love and Light in my own journey.”*

**Opportunities for Reflection:** Time for reflection allows chaplains to process their experiences and grow in their roles.

- *“The time and opportunity to read and glean wisdom from others.”*
- *“My relationships with colleagues in and out of school, allow me to reflect spiritually on my work, what parts I should celebrate, and how I can do it better. This reflection is profoundly theological.”*

- *“Academic theological study and engagement in the act of education in my school, continue to be what sustains me in my role as a chaplain. This is what inspires me: getting to learn more about how to be a Christian by learning from other faiths, traditions, and practices.”*

**Engagement and Impact:** Knowing that their work is making a positive difference is important to chaplains. This can be seen in student feedback, expressions of appreciation from the community, and the positive changes they witness in others.

- *“Feeling a sense of purpose, like my work matters in individual lives and the life of the school.”*
- *“I am inspired by student relationships and the feeling that that relationship has made a difference for the student.”*
- *“Members of our school’s community expressing that what we are doing in chapel is meaningful to them, and hearing from administrators that this work is important.”*
- *“I am sustained when students take the time to share with me their interest in God, religion, the Bible, church activities, personal spiritual reflections, and good questions. I am also greatly sustained when my peer colleagues come to me for support in any way, trusting that I am able and willing to offer my support and that it benefits their lives and work.”*
- *“The joy and fulfillment of what I do. The students’ responsiveness and involvement with Chapel and Values Classes is clearly what sustains me in this work.”*

- *“By my students. A couple of years ago, when I was at a school that ended in 8th grade, I came back to campus after a meeting and was told I had a group of students waiting for me. I went to meet them and they were all alumni. They said, ‘[our friend] has died, can we go to the church and pray with you.’ My students, who all went to different high schools, knew to come back to the church when something got real and hard. In this case, one of their classmates from our school had died suddenly. They knew to come and pray together. I knew then that my work in the world was good.”*
- *“The engagement of students, parents, or teachers in the services I provide whether teaching or pastoral care.”*

**Learning and Development:** Some chaplains mentioned the importance of ongoing learning and development, through theological study or collaboration with other chaplains.

- *“Ongoing learning and development, through theological study or collaboration with other chaplains.”*
- *“Learning from other chaplains and spending time relaxing with other clergy.”*
- *“Designing curricula, teaching across traditions—rather than simply teaching catechesis, for example—has enabled me to grow in ways that I never thought possible.”*
- *“The opportunity/privilege to serve and lead—to be part of crafting chapel services when the sum of the liturgy is greater than its parts.”*

## QUESTION THREE

*Since your own individual perspective may not be represented accurately in any of the statements above, please help us grasp how you perceive this issue by completing the following sentence as clearly and fully as you can:*

*“As far as the relation of school chaplaincy to the wider Church is concerned, it seems to me that...”*

This data suggests a complex relationship between school chaplains and the wider Episcopal Church. While many chaplains feel undervalued and disconnected, there’s also a strong belief in the importance of their work and a desire for a more collaborative relationship with the Church.

### **Value and Recognition**

**Feeling Undervalued:** Many respondents feel that school chaplaincy is seen as “lesser than” parish ministry. They express concerns about a lack of resources and support compared to parish priests.

- *“School chaplaincy is often misunderstood or considered secondary. It’s often seen as an ‘easier’ role than parish ministry. Often, chaplains are considered in a pejorative way, similar to how Associate Priests in parishes are often treated.”*
- *“The Church fails to see the potential of school ministry or to raise up people for this ministry. I have heard several priests talk about school chaplaincy being what you do when you burn*



*out or can't handle parish ministry anymore. It's very frustrating to me! School chaplaincy is a fulfilling and wonderful calling."*

- *"School chaplains are not understood or appreciated by the broadest church community, only due to lack of exposure and knowledge."*
- *"As someone ordained in another denomination who did not 'come up' through an Episcopal diocese or seminary, I am not on the Episcopal Church's radar."*
- *"When I go to diocesan events, I'm often seated at a table labeled 'non-parochial.' I am literally defined by what I am not."*
- *"The impact and potential of school chaplaincy is not understood. It seems to continue to be seen and treated as a second-class ministry*

*vocation with little to no seminary training and not much diocesan support."*

- *"The Church does not fully understand the work of school chaplains. Many professional development opportunities are geared toward parish clergy, including the timing of conferences. I feel blessed to serve as a school chaplain and that it is one of the best roles in the Church. My bishop is a champion for the Episcopal schools in our diocese, which is heartening."*

**Lay Chaplaincy is undervalued:** There is a complex relationship between the lay chaplaincy and The Episcopal Church that results in lay chaplains feeling undervalued while there is a call to see the value in expanding lay chaplaincy in schools in support of the Church.

- *“Although I believe this is improving (thanks in part to the good work of support and advocacy for chaplains on the part of NAES), overall there is still a sense in the wider church that school chaplaincy is a lesser form of ordained ministry. I continue to hear anecdotes of clergy being counseled away from school chaplaincy in seminary, or school chaplains being counseled into parish ministry by their bishops and fellow clergy. Lastly, I often hear that there is a shortage of qualified chaplains to fill chaplaincy positions in schools, and it seems to me that this is an excellent opportunity for the Church to raise up professional lay chaplains to serve in this ministry. However, most schools*

*are unwilling to consider lay chaplains for chaplaincy positions and there is still not a clear path for this.”*

- *“Chaplaincy is often misunderstood, especially Lay Chaplaincy.”*
- *“If you aren’t ordained your role is not as honored by the Church.”*
- *“Lay ministry is undervalued.”*

**Importance of School Chaplaincy:** There’s a strong belief that school chaplaincy is a vital and impactful ministry. Several responses highlight the potential for reaching young people and families outside of traditional church settings.

- *“School chaplaincy is a thriving area of ministry that yearns to be more fully seen, understood, and supported by the wider Church.”*

- *“Episcopal schools are the best present and future ministry of TEC.”*
- *“The wider Church needs to learn a lot from all forms of chaplaincy. School chaplaincy, in particular, can enable the church to reimagine how to be more responsibly Christian and engaged in an increasingly globalized and pluralistic world, given its focus on education and formation of the ‘whole child.’”*
- *“School Ministry is a mission field for helping people experience Christ’s Life and Love and Light, and for sending forth leaders equipped to share that Life and Love and Light in the world, regardless of whether they become members of an Episcopal Church.”*
- *“Episcopal schools are the future of the church. The one place we are reaching young people is in our schools, and I hope the Church recognizes this mission field.”*
- *“Chaplaincy is the best reflection of the work of the Church in the world. Chaplains meet people where they are and have a chance to be with them every day.”*
- *“School Chaplaincy has a unique place in the wider church. It is critical and has an effect where the relationship with the church may not be evident and where faith formation may not be practiced.”*

## Relationship with the Wider Church

**Disconnect and Isolation:** There's a sense of disconnect or isolation from the wider Church. Some respondents feel a lack of awareness or appreciation for their work.

- *“Episcopal schools are the ‘best kept secret’ in the Episcopal Church. That sounds cliché, and yet there really is so very little recognition of our work.”*
- *“School chaplaincy is not deemed as a full ministry. We are on the sidelines. I think people are curious but see us as outside the Church.”*
- *“The wider Church does not currently understand, appreciate, or value the work of ministry in non-parish settings, including school chaplaincy.”*
- *“There is a sense of disconnect on account of the Church's primary focus on parish ministry and social justice in the world; the small number of clergy and Episcopal parishioners who attend (or can afford to attend) private schools themselves; and basic awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the Episcopal Schools.”*
- *“Clergy colleagues fail to understand the extent to which Episcopal School will be self-sustaining well into the future as parishes simultaneously will be on the decline. I do not think the larger church or Bishops understand the extent of this probable dynamic in the next 50 to 100 years.”*
- *“It's never been difficult for me to understand where the ‘growth industry’ is in the Anglican tradition as it's lived out in the United States. It's quaint to hear people in ‘the church’ ask*

*distant questions about school ministry, as if we all live in 18th Century Oxford. In the 21st Century, schools are where all the action is!”*

**Desire for Collaboration:** There’s a call for more collaboration and support from the Church. Some positive experiences of support within dioceses or from colleagues were mentioned. Several responses acknowledge the potential for school chaplaincy to benefit the Church as a whole.

- *“The Church needs to accept and prepare for an increased focus on our schools... as they will carry out the mission of the Church to larger communities than parishes can reach.”*
- *“We feel like an untapped resource. I don’t know how you might tap it, but we are doing missional work, working in multi-faith communities.”*
- *“The wider church could learn a lot from all forms of chaplaincy. School chaplaincy, in particular, can enable the church to reimagine how to be more responsibly Christian.”*
- *“The Church is missing a huge opportunity to bear witness to the Gospel in the wider world and to connect with families where they are.”*
- *“The wider church could put more resources toward students. They will be the people who will fill the pews and do the holy work when their generation grows up.”*

## CONCLUSION

The NAES Chaplaincy Survey, conducted by the National Association of Episcopal Schools in the fall of 2023, garnered 101 responses, offering valuable insights into the diverse landscape of chaplaincy across the United States and Guam. The survey aimed to provide a demographic profile of chaplains and characteristics of the chaplaincy, serving as a resource for decision-making among educational leaders and clergy. The data will be used to inform ongoing research projects in school chaplaincy and guide our work as NAES in developing programs and resources to serve chaplains and their schools.

The results revealed a rich tapestry of school demographics, showcasing variations in size, structure, and geographic distribution. Notably, California, Florida, and Texas emerged as regions with significant representation. Schools ranged

from serving students in early childhood through high school, with a mix of independent day, parish day, and independent boarding institutions, predominantly situated in urban settings.

Chaplain demographics reflected a diverse array of backgrounds, with variations in gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation. Their employment status, roles, and responsibilities showcased a blend of full-time and part-time positions, with many chaplains also serving in pastoral or liturgical capacities.

The survey delved into school worship practices, highlighting the frequency of chapel leadership and the presence of the Eucharist, as well as community attendance patterns. Additionally, it sheds light on chaplains' teaching responsibilities, class sizes, and number of courses taught,

emphasizing the multifaceted nature of their roles within educational settings.

Chaplains derive inspiration primarily from their interactions with students, their own spiritual practices, and the supportive community they are part of. However, the survey also highlights a complex relationship between school chaplaincy and the wider Episcopal Church. While there is a strong sense of vocation and commitment among chaplains, many feel undervalued and disconnected from the broader church.

The findings of this survey underscore the critical role of chaplains in Episcopal schools. To fully

leverage the potential of this vital ministry, the Church must recognize and support the unique challenges and opportunities faced by school chaplains. Fostering a stronger connection between school chaplaincy and the wider Church can collectively enhance the spiritual formation of students and strengthen the overall mission of the Church.

Overall, the NAES Chaplaincy Survey serves as a comprehensive resource for understanding the complexities and nuances of school chaplaincy, providing valuable insights for stakeholders and informing future research endeavors in this vital field.



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