



# SURVEY REPORT

*Your relationship with our community*

Document Version: Final

**LivelyStones**  
COLLECTIVE

## Introduction

The *Lively Stones Collective* is a collaboration of various Christadelphian initiatives across the world, dedicated to building up the spiritual health of the Christadelphian community. We believe that true faith in Jesus Christ is marked by positive, practical results in all our lives.

We have been deeply concerned by the number of people that are struggling in - or leaving - our community. In early July 2015 we conducted a survey to understand how people view their relationship with our community. We wanted to understand why people lose faith and leave, and how they feel about their relationship with our community.

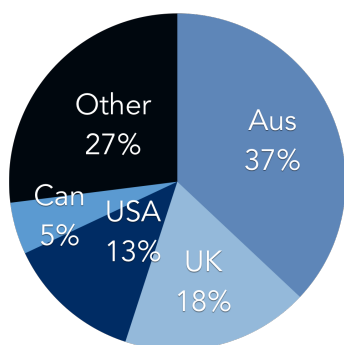
The survey was conducted online via Survey Monkey, and an open appeal was made for people to take part. All in all, just over 230 people responded, and we are profoundly grateful to those who took the time. This feedback has been invaluable to us.

This was not a satisfaction survey. It did not ask people what they like or dislike about the community, nor did it encourage people to comment negatively on the community. People were at liberty to skip questions, and every section had an open comment box to permit people to say whatever they liked about the topic. Some people used this to complain about the survey, some people used it to say what they liked or enjoyed about our community. Everyone was able to express what they thought about our community, positive or negative.

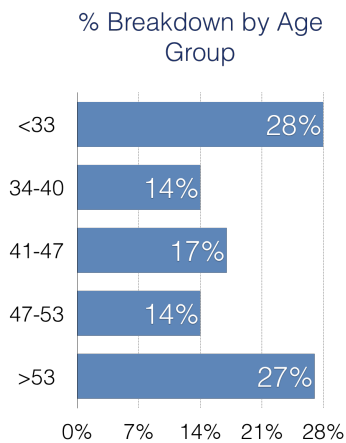
The topics and questions were selected on the basis of lengthy discussions with those who have either left our community, or suffered significant damage to their faith.

Some respondents only answered a few questions and then skipped the rest, and there were some who only responded for the purpose of criticising the survey, and offered no meaningful data, other than to express their dislike for the initiative (in this regard, 2 responses were deleted). There were others who felt that such surveys are not needed, and people should just leave our community if they're experiencing problems with it.

% Breakdown by Country



Link to survey:  
<https://goo.gl/eomt8T>



The comments that have been quoted were provided by the respondents. We are not presuming to judge the circumstances behind the comments, or suggesting we agree with all the comments. We are *not* saying these results represent our entire community, but we *are* saying these comments describe very real feelings, and there will be many others who are feeling the same way. As a community we need to be honest in the way we address these issues and find ways to help and support those who need it.

In synthesizing these comments we identified three key areas of concern:

- *Sexual abuse;*
- *Internal conflict and attitudes;*
- *Diminishing Biblical awareness.*

The discussion that follows highlights the most pertinent results from the survey, and has been grouped according to specific discussion themes.

## Understanding Why People Leave



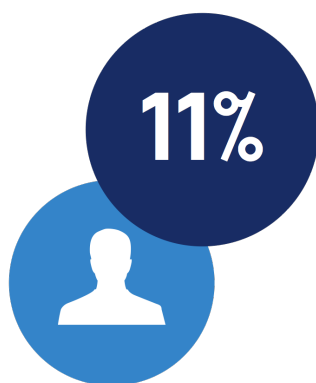
Generally speaking, it seems that behavioural issues are the main concern and cause for people leaving the community. Only one respondent said they had left over a doctrinal issue.

Approximately 18% of those who responded could be placed into one of these two groups:

- 1) Those who are baptised, but not currently members;
- 2) Those who are baptised, who are currently members, but who no longer 'self-identify' as Christadelphians.

These comments are from the first group, i.e. those who are baptised, but are not currently members of an ecclesia:

- *"I don't think sweeping sexual abuse under the carpet is dealing with the issue".*
- *"When I reported sexual abuse to leaders in my ecclesia I was told not to be a naughty girl and to stop making up stories".*
- *"Mistreatment of victims of sexual abuse is a major failing in the Christadelphian community. As a group they are responsible for enormous amounts of damage and pain to their members. There is nothing like the follow-up and care required provided for those who have been hurt and instead they are often victimised further and driven away".*
- *"The amended/unamended dispute has caused my reduced faith and prevented many from converting or being baptised".*
- *"My faith is never damaged by people. I never lost my faith".*
- *"I dislike preaching as it's frequently rude, disrespectful and self opinionated. A genuine believer who lives by their faith is more impactful than an argumentative bigot".*



11% no longer  
self-identify  
Christadelphian

When considering those respondents that are baptised, and do still attend ecclesias, we noticed that 11% no longer identify themselves as Christadelphians to those outside the meeting:

- *"We spend our time and energy on internal bickering when we could pour ourselves into the community and be actual Christians. We claim the high ground religiously but the reality is so many other churches actually live Christ so much better, even if they get heaven, hell, the trinity and the devil all wrong".*
- *"A holier than thou attitude by some ecclesias is unhelpful..."*
- *"We use fellowship as a weapon".*
- *"We don't follow the simple principles of Grace and Love universally".*
- *"Abuse in marriage and within family is too often excused, especially with female victims blamed, ignored, invalidated and revictimised as their perpetrators are allowed to continue".*
- *"There is SO little support for this kind of abuse with in the Christadelphian community and other fringe groups; and you are made to feel ashamed that it happened and that you are the one at fault".*
- *"Jargon such as "the truth" is unhelpful and cringe-worthy to the younger generation".*

In psychology, cognitive dissonance is the mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time, performs an action that is contradictory to one or more beliefs, ideas or values, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values.  
(Source: Wikipedia).

In terms of understanding why people might find atheism a credible option, this quote stood out amongst all the others:

*"Atheism offers freedom from the pain, trauma and cognitive dissonance many Christadelphians experience in their ecclesias (and indeed often in their marriages and own personal spiritual life and values). There is often less cognitive dissonance in atheism, because you can be true to yourself and your own values more - as opposed to unnecessary and unloving legalistic rules and irrelevant dogma and theology which often results in the social deconstruction of the ecclesia".*

What is sad to note between these two groups of comments, is the profoundly negative impact of sexual abuse and ongoing ecclesial strife. It is robbing people of any comfort and safety in our community to the point that some have left, while others who remain are not comfortable being identified as part of the community.



## What Damages Faith?

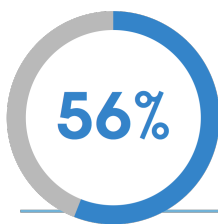
So, what damages our faith? What would cause a respondent to comment, *"I refer to myself as a Christian and say that I go to church when talking to non Christadelphian friends. I am becoming more and more embarrassed and ashamed to refer to myself as a Christadelphian"*.

We asked a set of questions that focused on the reasons why Christadelphians become atheists.

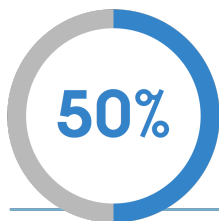
**56%** of respondents agreed this statement: "Doctrinal disputes within my ecclesia or between ecclesias, reduce my confidence in my ecclesia or our community and challenge or damage my faith".

This view was echoed many times:

- *"Doctrinal and fellowship disputes are the biggest stain on our community"*
- *"We seem to argue, fight and divide over fringe issues and ignore the core of what the Gospel really means"*
- *"My faith is personal and so undamaged by problems in the community. What is damaged is my inclination towards fellowship"*.
- *"My faith is strong, I do not want to leave or become an atheist, however I see behaviours of others that can easily drive others to leave. Sometimes I am embarrassed because of all the fighting... I distance myself from others in the community and my ecclesia, and that is not right, but I cannot stand the arguments and behaviours anymore"*.



Doctrinal disputes within my ecclesia or between ecclesias, reduce my confidence in my ecclesia or our community and challenge or damage my faith



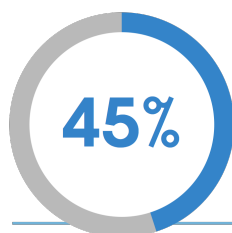
Our practices contribute to Christadelphians becoming atheists...

**50%** agreed that our practices contribute to Christadelphians becoming atheists. These practices and attitudes may seem trivial, but over time they gradually erode the foundation of faith. For example:

- *"Cliques and elections largely based on dominant families*

*harm ecclesias”.*

- *“I have personally witnessed the damage that disfellowship does to the faith of once believers”*
- *“I have watched a generation of young people walk away from us - not because they don't believe in God but because they see nothing attractive in a church that is narrow, judgmental, self-centred and not at all christ-like”.*
- *“I often feel like I'm part of an elitist private members club with lots of unwritten rules and a hierarchy based on family ties & cliques”.*
- *“I struggled with the way rules about clothing and formalities were so important when stories I heard about families struggling to hold themselves together and assisting those with mental problems seemed addressed only in gossip”.*
- *“There's a real fear within our community and it's driving people away or making people live in fear”.*



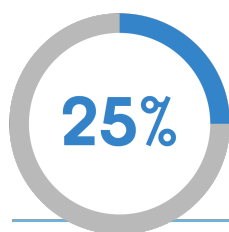
Poor management of issues such as rape, sexual abuse, addictions, and domestic violence, reduce my confidence in my ecclesia or our community and challenge or damage my faith

Another leading cause is our community's response to abuse, addiction and violence. **45%** of respondents agreed with this statement: “Poor management of issues such as rape, sexual abuse, addictions, and domestic violence, reduce my confidence in my ecclesia or our community and challenge or damage my faith”.

- *“Pastoral care in our community is a joke, we hide sexual abuse and sexual misconduct like its no big deal, but haul people in front of the AB when they get divorced, or question the interpretation of the ‘all inspired CCA’”.*
- *“We have very little idea how to deal with rape, sexual abuse, addictions, and domestic violence, and the evidence shows that we often deny it, bury it, or deal with it badly when it crops up”.*
- *“Christadelphia is very out of touch with practical personal and family issues such as those mentioned*



*above and does not know how to respond. This means that individual ecclesias are left to deal with it and they will often do it poorly due to lack of training, understanding and not willing to make use of specialist services 'in the world'.*



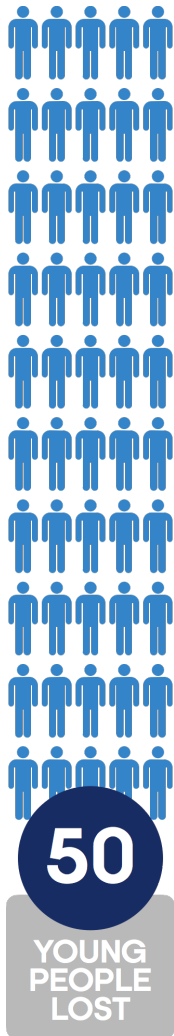
Non-doctrinal beliefs can contribute to Christadelphians becoming atheists

25% agreed that our beliefs can contribute to Christadelphians becoming atheists. This was clarified by the following comments:

- *"Ignorance and arrogance towards academic subjects (Psychology, History, Archaeology, Physics, Biology etc.) contribute to people losing faith in our community's ability to be intellectually honest and its ability to reason accurately".*
- *"I'm in the under 30's group, who feel more tolerable towards these silly petty issues and would rather meet in fellowship and worship with an open heart. Rather than get "offended" by petty things and grumble... This is how the older generations act".*
- *"Recently feeling rather disheartened by how my so called brothers and sisters have acted regarding trivial differences within my ecclesia".*

It is a common misconception that those who leave the meeting have "lost their faith", but this is an overly simplistic judgement. Consider this comment: *"No matter what is lacking in my Ecclesia, my faith will not be damaged. There may be a point where I will have to leave my Ecclesia. But I will never turn my back on the Truth".*

It shows that perhaps our behaviour could be driving away the faithful as well.



## Atheism and Finding Faith

The rise of Atheism is having a marked impact on our community, and as a whole we are not well prepared to deal with the issue. This has been a major concern of the Lively Stones Collective, and one of the key drivers for its formation.

Of those responding to the survey, 6% identified as atheist, and 56% know an ex-Christadelphian who is now an atheist.

For example, one respondent said this: *"I can count more than 50 young people I have grown up with that are now atheists, agnostic or just apathetic and don't care at all. The common thread from my friends who have left is they left because of the bad behaviour of others, and because difficult questions were squashed rather than discussed openly"*.

This observation about squashing difficult questions was supported by another who wrote, *"Ignorance and arrogance towards academic subjects (Psychology, History, Archaeology, Physics, Biology etc.) contribute to people losing faith in our community's ability to be intellectually honest and its ability to reason accurately"*.

Comments like these help to explain why 25% agreed with the statement: *"Certain beliefs contribute to people becoming atheists"*.

The comments from respondents about atheism show we have a lot of work ahead of us to build a robust and evidence-based response to it.

## Regarding Evidence

Regarding the point about evidence, one respondent wrote: *"It was a bit hard to fill this out as I am now an atheist, but what I pretty much feel is I would need evidence beyond the Bible to believe again..."*

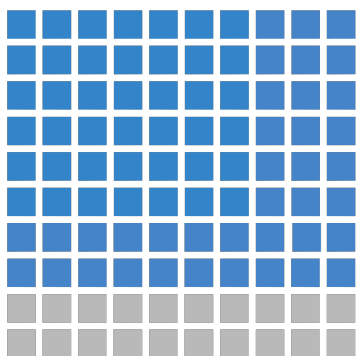
Another wrote: *"...with those who don't accept the Bible as any kind of authority there is no point quoting it. The traditional CDn diet of "proofs" is hopeless at dealing with real-life problems and tends to produce platitudes and cliches without any attempt to understand*

*where other people are at”.*

Although a majority (77%) felt confident in their ability to defend their faith, less than half the respondents (45%) felt that our community prepares us well to defend our faith. For example, this comment was offered in support of that statement:

*“Our community does not prepare us feel to defend our faith at all. We are archaic in most of our attitudes, and many won't engage with us simply because we are not seen to have relevant attitudes to the community around us”.*

80% Biblical faith is built on evidence



80% of respondents agreed that **Biblical faith is based on evidence**, and almost 93% of respondents agreed that external evidence supporting the Bible increases their faith. Likewise, the vast majority (about 85%) feel more confident preaching to others when there is **external evidence to support the Bible**.

These high percentages are also reflected in comments that have been quoted. They show the need for a robust preaching strategy that is evidence-based. Opinion and self-assurance are not sufficient.

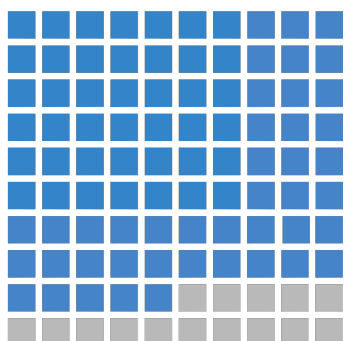
It was interesting to note that in our younger generations (i.e. those under 33 years old) only 16% "agreed" or "strongly agreed" they felt confident preaching using only the Bible; whereas that number climbed to 71% when asked about having external evidence to support the Bible. Thus the younger generations are clearly concerned about the need for external preaching only with a Bible.

## Credibility and Subject Matter Authority

42% disagreed that our community's speakers are "reliably accurate on specialised subjects" such as archaeology, history, original Bible languages, and science.

*“Our community suffers from something similar to the churches that believe they are correct merely because they have holy spirit gifts. In our case it is called ‘the truth’. Many people believe they have nothing to learn from expertise outside of our community, particularly if it contradicts a strongly held idea”.*

85% Encourage greater use of scholarly literature

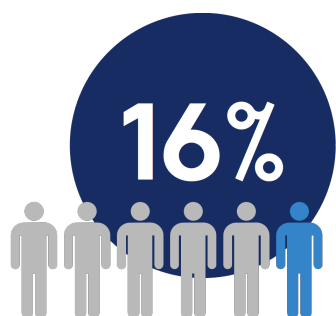


85% of respondents agree (29% 'strongly agree') we should encourage greater use of scholarly literature on specialised subjects such as archaeology, history, original Bible languages, and science; and 75% agreed that our community's speakers are more trustworthy when they present third party evidence for their conclusions.

- *"Speakers need to develop better presentation and facilitation skills, particularly in the case of Bible classes, in order to encourage people to contribute and pursue independent study".*
- *"We are out of touch with what is happening in the world around us. Speakers are no longer putting time and effort into their talks but rather relying on the talks/ study they did a long time ago or reusing another brother's work".*

It's worth noting that not all study needs to be academic in nature, and there those who feel that our learning needs to include a broader range of experiences. One respondent observed that, *"Scholarly evidence is an important strand for some, and those who have talents and interest in see areas should be encouraged to share their expertise. But that is not the only kind of "speaking" needed - we also need to hear from a range of members, male and female, who can share their experiences of living a Christian life, with honesty about their problems, so that we grow together in relationships, not in academic study".*

In the next section we will consider how important these broader experiences are.



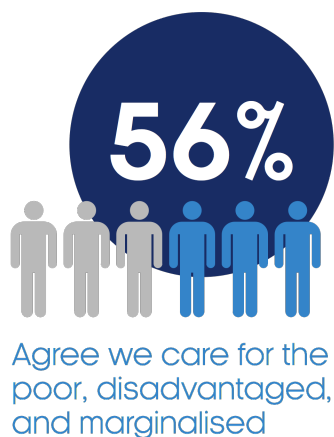
Agree we deal with abuse better than other Christian groups

## Pastoral Care

When it comes to proving pastoral care, we have a significant problem to address. **Less than 16%** of the respondents felt that our community deals with issues such as rape, sexual abuse, addictions, and domestic violence, better than other Christian groups. About 19% felt that we do it better than non-Christians.

Consider these comments:

- *"We are better at caring for the poor and disadvantaged within the ecclesia, but could use more work on the outreach side".*
- *"Christadelphia is very out of touch with practical personal and family issues ... This means that individual ecclesias are left to deal with it and they will often do it poorly due to lack of training, understanding and not willing to make use of specialist services 'in the world'".*
- *"Pastoral care in our community is a joke, we hide sexual abuse and sexual misconduct like its no big deal, but haul people in front of the AB when they get divorced, or question the interpretation of the 'all inspired CCA'".*
- *"I do know that the CSN helpline regularly gets appeals for help on these issues but that, shockingly, there are still ecclesias that will not allow any CSN publicity because 'we don't have those problems here'".*
- *"There is no program to help mental illness, or addiction, or other problems that I am even aware of".*
- *"The older generation still have a hold over the younger concerning some issues which are just not on their agenda, or they are clueless about, or don't want to know about".*
- *"We have very little idea how to deal with rape, sexual abuse, addictions, and domestic violence, and the evidence shows that we often deny it, bury it, or deal with it badly when it crops up".*



This result - and the supporting comments - indicate how much we have failed each other when it comes to providing pastoral care. It's not only pastoral care that suffers, but also the way we care for the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalised.

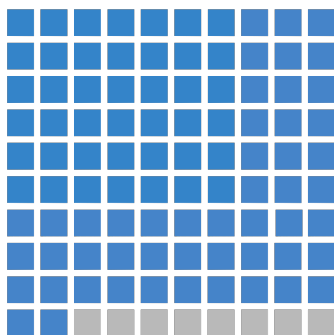
35% of respondents "mildly agreed" that we care for the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalised; with only 21% indicating that they "agree" or "strongly agree". Note these comments:

- "About five years ago, during an AGM of the ecclesia, the topic arose of the fields of people who lived in the poor side of town, the 'rough' side, where a lot of people with serious financial problems, single mothers, people with drug dependency. I was sort of shocked with the majority of those attending stated such things as 'We don't want those sort here with all of their problems' - that was a word-for-word exact statement that one middle aged sister made. The young brother who thought that it would be a good idea to preach to the poor and the fatherless in their distress, sadly, he didn't get any support..."*
- "We do not (as a community) engage anywhere near as much as we should in looking after and thereby reaching out to the poor and homeless and marginalised and lonely. This is so important - it should be the growing place/test bed for our faith, as by it we truly begin to understand what it is to love God and love people".*

This lack of pastoral care and community outreach has deep implications for the welfare of our members. This comment seems especially apt:

*"We have railed against education and 'higher learning' that we are now ill equipped for the challenges of the 21st century. We puffed out our chest and said 'we have the TRUTH' and became proud and complacent. We forgot about growth and became guards. We forgot about discipleship and became each others disciplinarians".*

92% Sexual abuse should be reported to authorities



## Sexual Abuse

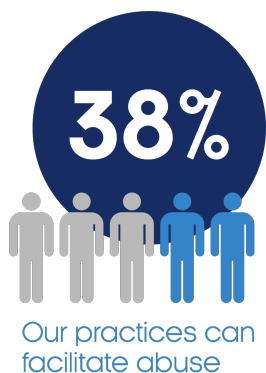
With regards to attitudes towards sexual abuse, **92%** of respondents agree that crimes involving sexual or physical abuse should be reported to the relevant authorities. (2% disagreed and 6% answered 'Don't Know').

When asked if "*Biblical teaching encourages us to report crimes to the authorities*", **67%** agreed that it does (20% disagreed, 13% answered 'Don't Know'). It's possible that the gap between the 92% and the 67% indicates that people are uncertain about clear Bible direction, but still feel morally obliged to report the issue anyway.

What is perhaps more alarming, is that when asked if "our community's culture and practices strongly discourage sexual/physical abuse" **only 58%** agreed with this, and **38%** felt that our culture and practices **can facilitate or justify abuse**.

However one may choose to interpret the numbers, the supporting comments show this is a significant problem that has not only hurt many people, but has also led to people leaving our community. These comments below speak for themselves, and need no further explanation:

- *"I have withdrawn myself from the Ecclesia I belonged to, as they were covering up a Brother's infidelity with another man's wife (in the Ecclesia)".*
- *"Mistreatment of victims of sexual abuse is a major failing in the Christadelphian community. As a group they are responsible for enormous amounts of damage and pain to their members. There is nothing like the follow-up and care required provided for those who have been hurt and instead they are often victimised further and driven away".*
- *"Power structures are maintained by encouraging those in lower positions to put up with and forgive abuse, in the hope that the person in the higher position will be inspired and change their ways voluntarily. I've heard so many stories of*



*higher position brethren engaging in questionable sexual and business activity and they are protected by a wall of silence because no one has the courage to address the issues”.*

- *“Too often people are allowed to continue in leadership roles when there is knowledge of abuse”*
- *“My understanding is that believers should not go before unbelievers to decide legal matters. My answers are based on the assumption the questions refer to actions towards fellow believers. I would report non-believers to the relevant authorities”.*
- *“Abuse in marriage and within family is too often excused, especially with female victims blamed, ignored, invalidated and revictimised as their perpetrators are allowed to continue”.*
- *“The tendency to victim-blame and expect abused wives or children to simply “forgive” and stay in an abusive situation is all too likely”.*
- *“I believe we have at least person in my ecclesia that did this and the younger sister I know personally is left to feel uncomfortable. He got away with it and is in good standing and she is left wanting to stop attending because it is so very uncomfortable. She is told since she is technically an adult it is on her to address him as he continues to do things that made her very uncomfortable”.*





Our speakers or publications sometimes make racist remarks

## Racism

It's not just in matter of sexual abuse where our attitudes towards pastoral care fail us. **5 out of 10** respondents felt that our community harbours racist attitudes, and that our publications or speakers sometimes make racist comments.

The feeling that we harbour racist attitudes increases to **61%** for age group under 34, so it appears that our younger generations are more culturally aware and sensitive to this.

Interestingly, in the comments section one person noted this: *"The insidious racism I have heard from brothers and sisters truly horrifies me but it is mostly from the older generation. The young are much less like this because their world just is more multi cultural"*.

- *"There are quite a few brethren that hold the belief that black people in general are inferior because of the curse of Ham. I don't see any evidence of anyone in the audience or Magazines contesting or resisting such ideas".*
- *"I met a brother who believed that black people were inferior and would always be servants due the the story of Noah of how Ham (meaning "black") would be a 'servant of servants'".*
- *"We don't talk about issues like racism but it's something I feel passionate about. (As with sexism etc.) At an Adelaide EOYS, the speaker was racist in his comments from the platform. I was outraged".*

By way way of contrast, **43%** agreed that we generally send a clear and consistent message against racism, so as with many things, it is probable that there are pockets of good and pockets of bad.

However, some of the comments also discussed perceptions around class-consciousness as well. Such as:

- *"It's not just race but what class you're in. I have found especially in Australia people who are well dressed get more respect than any other person".*

- *"I find the community more class conscious than racist personally".*
- *"White Western privilege is rife. Colonial attitudes to converting the natives - also rife".*
- *"What about discrimination in the community based on social class and education?".*



## Periodicals

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As part of the survey we also sought to understand how the community connects with our official publications.

For the age group under 33; **1 in 5** read Christadelphian, Lampstand, and The Bible Magazine. This number fell to almost **1 in 6** for Testimony and The Tidings (North America).

By comparison, for those over 40, **two-thirds** read Christadelphian, Testimony and the Bible Magazine. **75%** read The Tiding (North America) and **50%** read the Lampstand.

Much has been said about the “online generation” but the comments received in response to this question indicate it is a matter of content not media or format. Some of the reasons given for the lack of engagement with these magazines include:

- *“I used to read such periodicals with interest but now I have given up. I have lost confidence in our community's ability to critically examine and evaluate important issues”.*
- *“I honestly don't know, I don't read them. No interest, bores me to even think about them”.*
- *“These periodicals have hardly changed in 160 years in the main content, and still promote out-dated social views”.*
- *“They have become irrelevant, not only because the content is so poor but also because the delivery medium is to last century”.*
- *“The Christadelphian is a caricature of what it once was. Its recent embrace of (topics like) Blood Moons is shameful. They have forsaken their heritage”.*

That being said, there was a positive comment acknowledging the changes that the Christadelphian magazine has been making: *“I love The Christadelphian magazine's new look, being able to receive online, love having the hymn book along with my Bible on various devices so I've always got them with me”.*



## Conclusions

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As discussed in the introduction, this survey was never expected to yield purely positive results. We needed to understand the negative, and we needed to understand why people are leaving our community, and so we structured the survey to explore those issues. We feel we have only just scratched the surface.

We are aware that a sample-size of 230 may not be representative of the community as a whole, but it does represent the voice of 230 people telling us how they feel or what they have observed.

When someone can say that *"Atheism offers freedom from the pain, trauma and cognitive dissonance many Christadelphians experience in their ecclesias"* it is a loud trumpet-call to rethink our approach and behaviours, because these are NOT the fruits we are supposed to grow (Gal 5:22-26). Understandably, this will apply to some areas less than others, but that doesn't mean we should avoid the conversation. In this hyper-connected world thoughts travel at the speed of the social network in which they are aired.

The survey results clearly demonstrate that very few people leave our community over doctrinal differences. To address this, we need to first acknowledge, and then respond to the real reasons why we continue to lose so many.

We are not extrapolating results and suggesting (for example) "These results show our community is racist". But we are saying these are the perceptions within our community, and these are reasons why some people are losing faith.

The point we are making is that whatever the number is, we still need to address these concerns. There will be countless others who will share these concerns, but did not speak out.

Although the survey dealt with a variety of questions, there are three main concerns or root causes that we are focusing our efforts on, and we are seeking to create further *constructive and positive* dialog with interested groups within our community.

Firstly, we need to recognise our foundation is not solid as we might like to think.

In years gone by, our community was alive with sound critical scholarship and well reasoned debate. Sadly, it appears we have lost this foundation, and its effects are showing. This should be not confused with a purely academic approach to Bible study, but the fact is many of us have either lost, or never been taught the ability to critically explore and reason from the scriptures.

We are replacing genuine convictions with a form of social or communal obedience. As a result of this, we are not developing spiritual resilience.

This is problematic, because when faced with the real challenges associated with sexual abuse or internal conflict, many in our community no longer have a secure spiritual foundation upon which to stand while they seek direction on these issues.

Clearly, we need to revisit our attitudes to Bible study and explore new ways to reconnect with the younger generations that are leaving us. This includes exploring new ways to build a rational, credible, and evidence-based approach to defending our faith.

We need to rethink our Sunday School curriculum. As one respondent noted, *"From children we are raised with a pre-suppositional faith, and that pre-supposition is 'God Exists'. We are never actually taught what reason to assume that is even true, we just jump straight into nice bible stories, and from there on it is just assumed 'God Exists'".*

It's one thing to talk about developing spiritual resilience (patient endurance), but we should not have to be doing this to withstand threats that are **inside** our community.

That brings us to the next two areas of concern.

## Secondly, we need to make a strong stand against abuse.

We need to front up to the problem of abuse and the damage it has done. To quote one respondent, *"This is one of the biggest cancers in our community. I have been told by an AB that we must forgive sexual abuse because it's nothing like what Christ suffered. It is disgusting to think how much of this sickness we sweep under the carpet to protect perpetrators"*.

Dealing with issue is not going to be easy. It is tempting to focus on the perpetrators, but more importantly it is about ensuring we develop the right support mechanisms and support culture for the victims of the perpetrators. They are the innocent ones that have been leaving our community, or fighting their emotions, and this should not be so. We also need to recognise the victims are not only those who were directly abused, but also the innocent family and friends that are impacted by these issues.

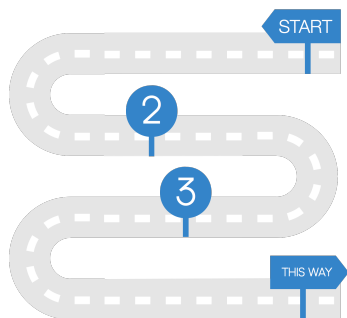
One can't help but note that as a community, we seem able to use the platform to talk about every evil under the sun except for this. Even as we were preparing this report, there were those who were telling us not to raise this issue as it should not be discussed openly. It's worth remembering that 4 out of 5 respondents feel that even non-Christians do a better job of dealing with this than we do. We are not known in the secular community for our stand against child abuse; in fact, we are virtually silent on the topic, even within our community.

Our care/support groups have resources to address this, but we are not empowering them, and this has become one of the top priority issues. These support groups need to be given recognition for the incredibly difficult and challenging work that they do, and we need to create a safe environment in which people can seek help.

### Thirdly, we need more mercy and less conflict.

The comments made by the survey respondents make it clear that acrimonious and belligerent behaviour has been a significant factor in driving people away from our community. As with the problem of abuse, all too often it is the innocent ones that we lose. It's worth bearing in mind that a number of the respondents were clear that they have not lost their faith, they simply have no desire to be part of such a quarrelsome and divisive culture.

Solving this problem will be a longer, harder road; but it begins with dialogue and awareness of the impact and harm it causes. It is time that the "moderates" made their voices heard to offer refuge to those that are adversely affected by these issues before they lose patience and leave.



## Where to from here?

We are very eager for this survey to be seen as the start of something positive and engaging in our community.

We would like to connect with Christadelphian care/support groups around the world to explore how begin to reconnect with those who are hurting and those who need out love and support.

We feel that all Christadelphians – young and old – need open, non-threatening, and non-judgemental forums where they can raise topics and concerns without fear or regret. We would like to ensure they see such things as aids on a positive and faith-affirming journey.

We have begun building resources to provide engaging and meaningful Bible studies, as well as pastoral and practical-living guides that openly address the issues and concerns that are relevant to today's youth.

In the near future we will conduct a more targeted survey to further explore some of the issues we have discussed in this report.

Furthermore, we at LSC would welcome any engagement or other positive ideas that could help those who are most at risk.



# LivelyStones COLLECTIVE

Lively Stones is dedicated to building up the spiritual health of the Christadelphian Community. We believe that true faith in Jesus Christ is marked by positive, practical results in the lives of others.

To that end, we seek to improve Biblical literacy, effectively engage the society around us, and offer mutual encouragement to those who need it most. Jesus Christ is at the center of everything we do.

Building on the foundations of the first apostles, we are constantly striving to meet the current and future needs of our community as we wait for the return of our Lord

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