



POLYTHEIST
Community Center

Results of the Survey 2016: Future of PCC

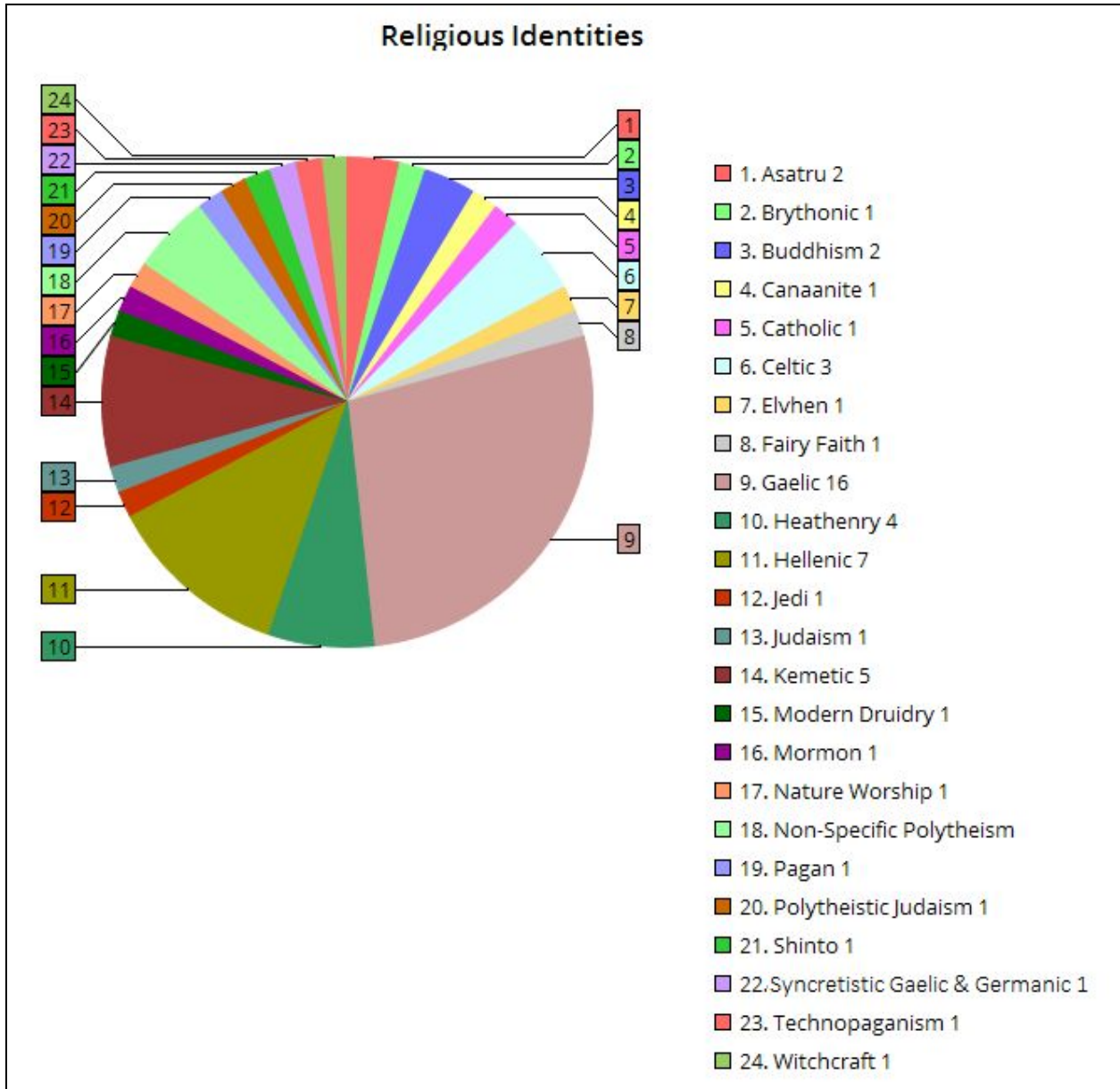
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Demographic

This section of the survey results addresses who partook in the survey.

In total, there were thirty-nine responses to the survey.



“Chart A”

In Chart A, the category “Gaelic” includes those who wrote “Irish”, as a way of keeping things simpler. I also took any “Reconstructionist” label to refer to what the person is a

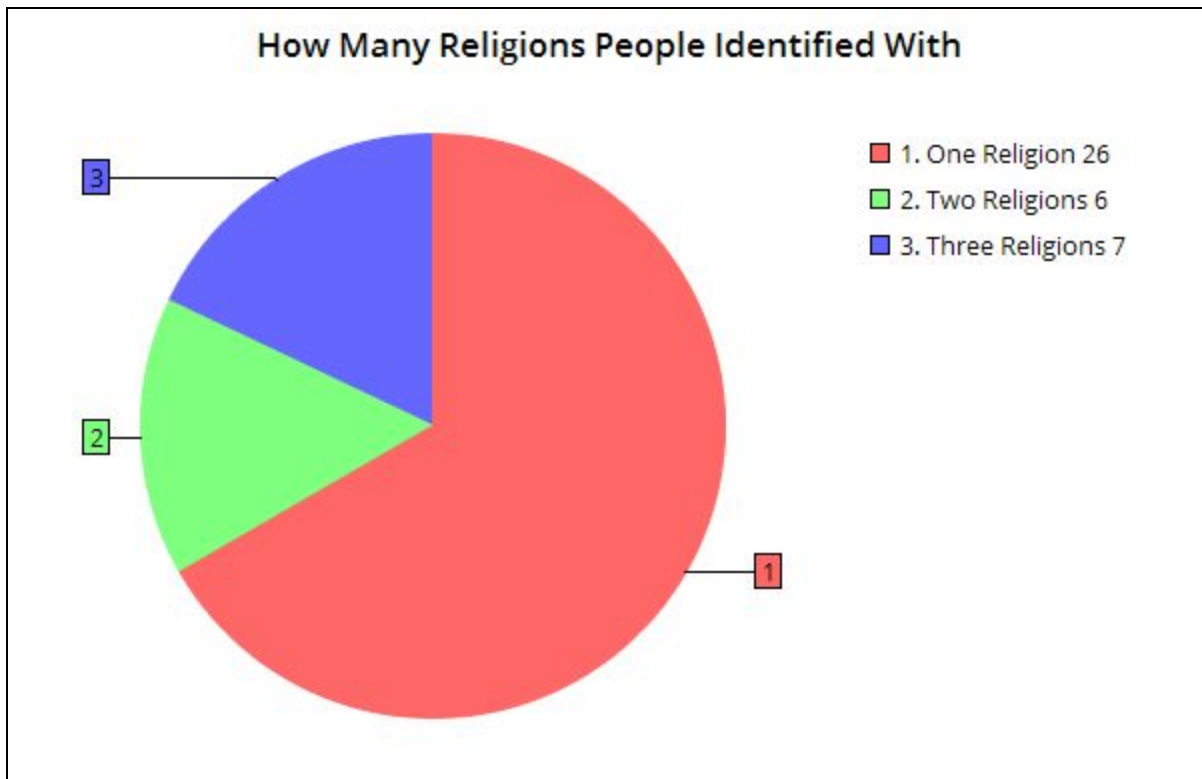
reconstructionist of, eg: a Gaelic Reconstructionist got put into the Gaelic category. I also combined the two types of Buddhism listed into “Buddhism.”

“Judaism” and “Polytheistic Judaism” stayed separate because I took “Polytheistic Judaism” to be separate from standard Judaism.

“Non-Specific Polytheism” refers to the people who put down “Polytheism” or in one case “Polytheism, but no Specific leaning as of yet.”

There was also someone who listed “nature worship” down as their religion, which is to not say that others on the list do not engage in a type of nature worship; instead, it just means that is how the particular person answered the question. Likewise, there was one person who specifically wrote down “Pagan” as their answer, which is not to say that the other participants of the survey do not see themselves as pagan but instead elected to write something more specific down as their answer.

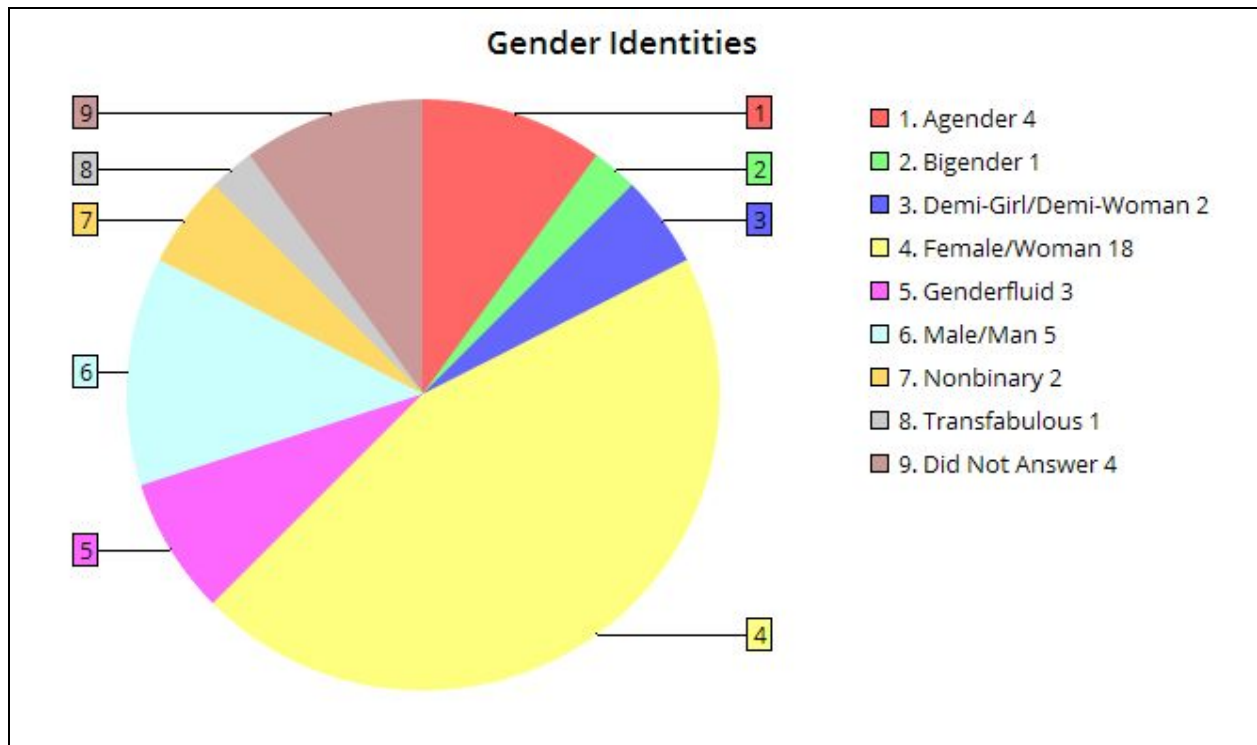
This list is also just individual religions mentioned in the answers, which neglects to show how many people are involved in many religious identities. Below is a chart to showcase this.



“Chart B”

Chart B shows that while the majority picked only one religious label for themselves, one-third of the survey participants identified with multiple religions.

Both Chart A and Chart B showcase the range of religious beliefs of the participants. Not only are there various beliefs, but about one-third of the participants identify with more than one religious grouping.



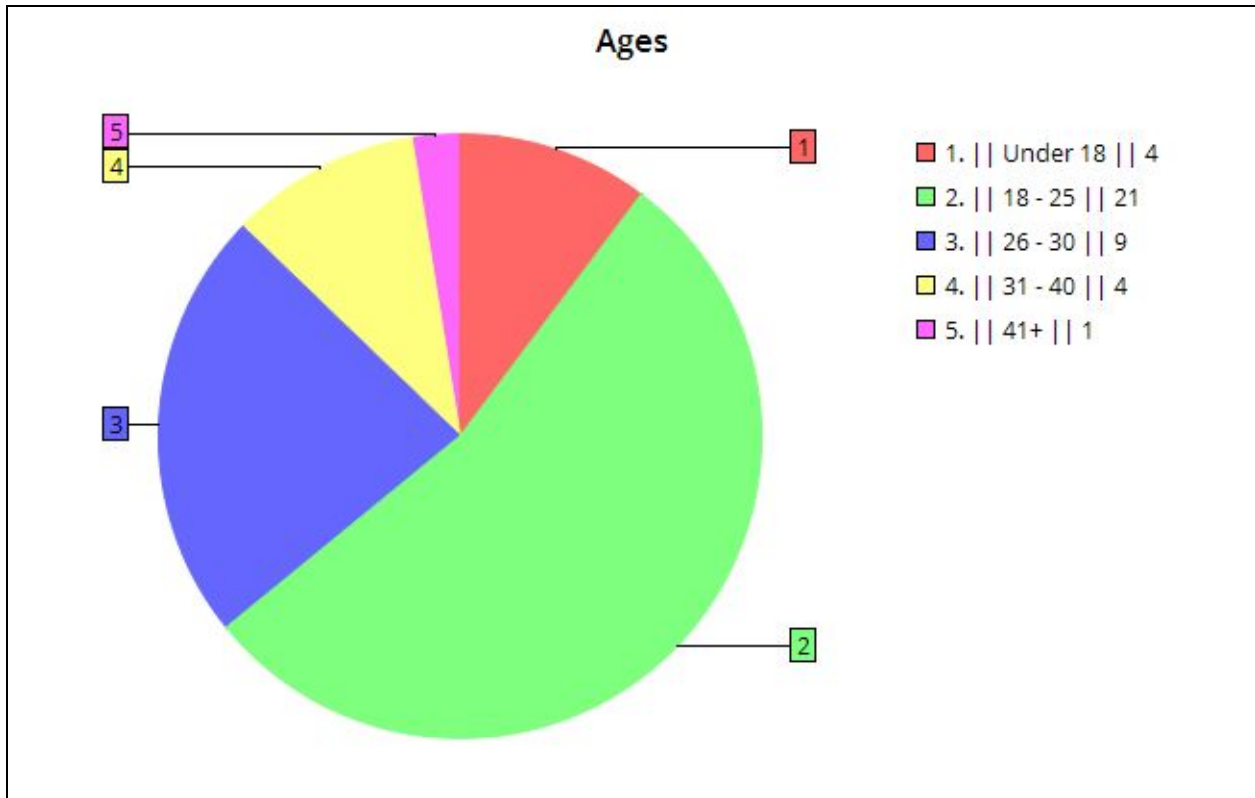
“Chart C”

For the above graph on gender identities, I condensed people who identified with “cis [blank]” down to just “Female/Woman” and “Male/Man.” This is mainly to avoid any confusion with how most people identified as “woman” or “man” without the cis or trans adjective. I also lumped “woman” and “female” together as one category and “male” and “man” into one category.

I want to note that while “Nonbinary” is a grouping of genders, it is also a valid gender choice. However, it does not make the other people who may identify broadly as non-binary but specifically as something else not non-binary.

The “Did Not Answer” grouping is comprised of people who answered in a way that was not a gender identity. These four answers were: “I don’t have one”, “CIS heterosexual”, “She/Her”, and “yes”.

Chart C is useful to have because it shows to me how diverse the participants once again are. While there is one gender that is almost half the participants, there is still a range of answers. This just once again furthers the point that the Polytheist Community Center needs to be a safe place for non-binary genders and those questioning their gender identity.



“Chart D”

The age category had answers for the survey participants to select from. Chart D shows more than half the survey participants are between the ages of 18 and 25. This age group may have been the majority due to advertising the survey primarily on Tumblr, which is known for having a younger user base.

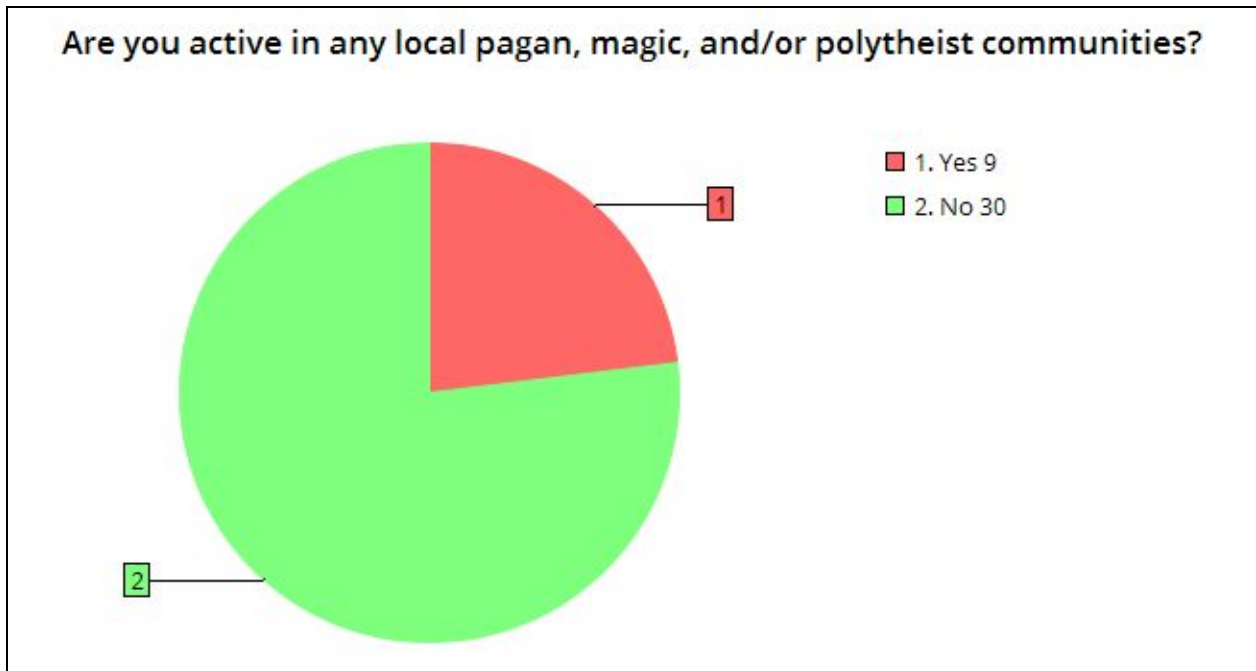
With the participants being majorly younger polytheists, this will bias the survey in a few ways. First, the answers are coming from people who are more likely to be “new” to polytheism. Second, the answers are coming from people who grew up with technology, which in my opinion leads to a more informed decision on how technology can or cannot help build a community. Third, the participants may have limited experience being part of the broader polytheist community. These are biases may not be true for the entire demographic, but are more likely given the ages.

The majority of the participants being younger may indicate that communities comprised of older polytheists are not adequate in some way. This is only a hypothesis, though the short-answers in section titled “Online Communities vs. Offline Communities: Choice Opinions” do support it.

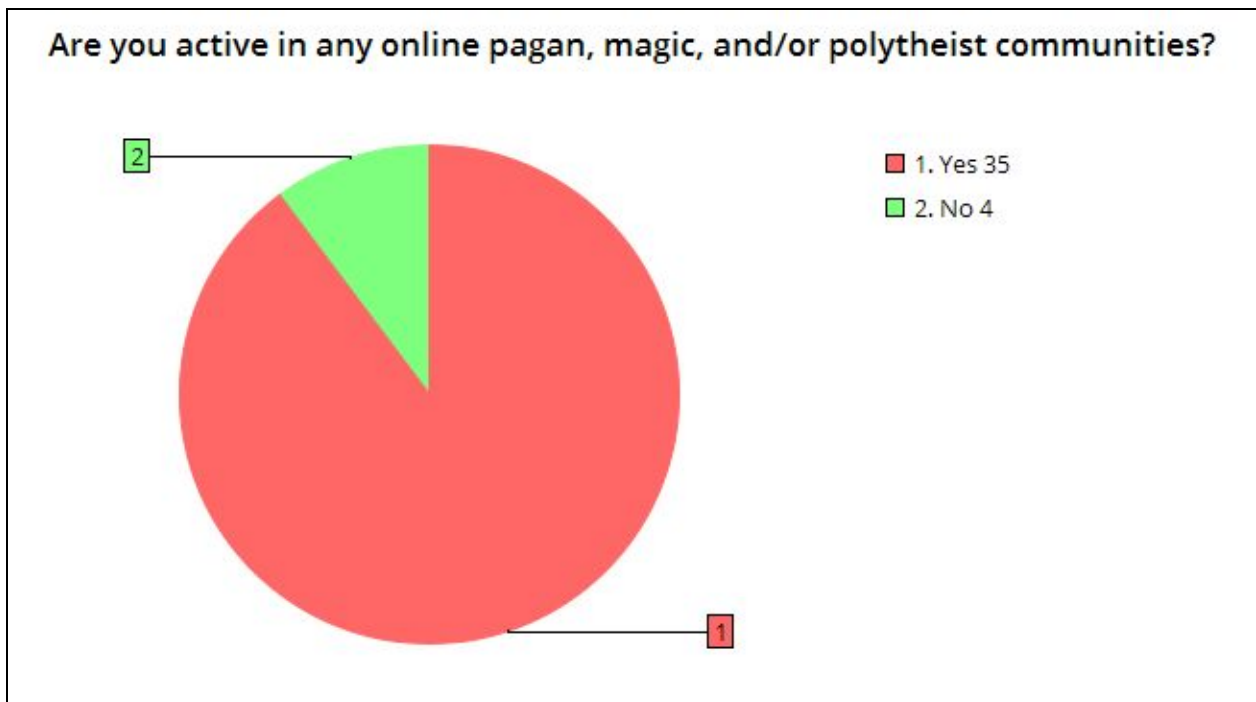
Lastly, these results show that the Polytheist Community Center so far is not doing an adequate job reaching older polytheists. It can also be noted that with only thirty-nine participants the Polytheist Community Center is also not reaching many people period.

Online vs. Offline Communities

This section of the survey results addresses online vs. offline communities, the latter also being called “local” or “meatspace” communities.



“Chart E”



“Chart F”

Chart E shows that an overwhelming majority of participants are not involved with offline communities, whereas Chart F shows that an overwhelming majority participants are involved with online communities. There was one person who was not involved with any type of communities.

This showcases that most participants find a community online. Whether people choose online communities over offline communities is not clear, however. These results instead may showcase how most people do not have access to an offline community, which the short-answers in section titled“Online Communities vs. Offline Communities: Choice Opinions” point to.

Online vs. Offline Communities: Choice Opinions

The following are opinions about the different types of communities made by survey participants. The prompt was “What is your opinion of local vs. online communities?”

I tried to did not include those who did not have an opinion. I also tried to limit the repetition that some comments had so that each comment brought something new. In random order, here are the comments:

“What local communities I have found have been very New Age, problematic, appropriative, or just didn't respect my religious, spiritual, or personal views. Online communities have these problems as well, but it's easier to find like minded folks.”

“I like that online groups are more specific to my religion. That being said, I'm still going to look into local groups.”

“They each have their strengths. I don't get out of the house a lot, so online community has been a bit of a necessity; in addition, I live in a rural area and while there are other pagans, finding anyone who follows any of my particular faiths is iffy. That said, I do have a small, wonderful local community of friends and they are a center of my life.”

“There are no local communities in my area and though I'm pretty shy and hesitant of being a vocal participant in online communities, I'm a big lurker and read a lot of the content.”

“I feel they both have value, for different reasons. Online communities are simply the more accessible option for me right now, though I'd love to meet other GaelPols, or polytheists in general.”

“I'd really like to be in a local community, but it seems like there's just not very many polytheists in my area.”

“I'M TORN. I've never really been part of a local one. It would be nice, but, an online community would of course be way more convenient... I'd really love an online community that could feel more, idk, local somehow? Like via more regular checking in with one another, video chats, just something where I can feel

like I can build more of a relationship with people if that makes sense? Sometimes I feel like I'm just spewing facts into the ether and getting other stuff spewed back.”

“There aren't too many local/in-person communities for polytheists, and I'd like to have a safe place to have that.”

“Both is good -- online can help break the local echo chamber, and local is important for that affirmation that minority religious folk exist in your area”

“Local groups definitely fill a void that online communities just can't. However, I'm currently stuck in a location where all the local groups are either affiliated with overtly racist organizations or don't really mesh with my worldview at all. Having people to discuss stuff with online is better than nothing, even if we can't participate in rituals together in quite the same way.”

“To be frank, I've never been to a Local community event. That being said, I can't really weigh in on Local communities. As for Online Communities? Absolute GODSEND, especially ones with members that strive to be informed about their religion of choice, and strive to give thoughtful answers in discussion. It's also great finding a space that advocates both informed discussion, and fellowship. (Polytheist Community Forums strikes the nail on the head with a balance between informed discussion, and fellowship.) I feel far more confident about my ability to think critically about a topic, when I know I have an online Community to turn to that has all the things mentioned above. Not to mention the emphasis placed on making PCF a safe space!”

“Online communities give the gift of anonymity, and are especially helpful for solitary workers”

“I've found far more community and fulfillment online.”

“Online is better, more open, more relevant.”

“Online allows finding others and promotes learning, but local would give a more solid sense of community”

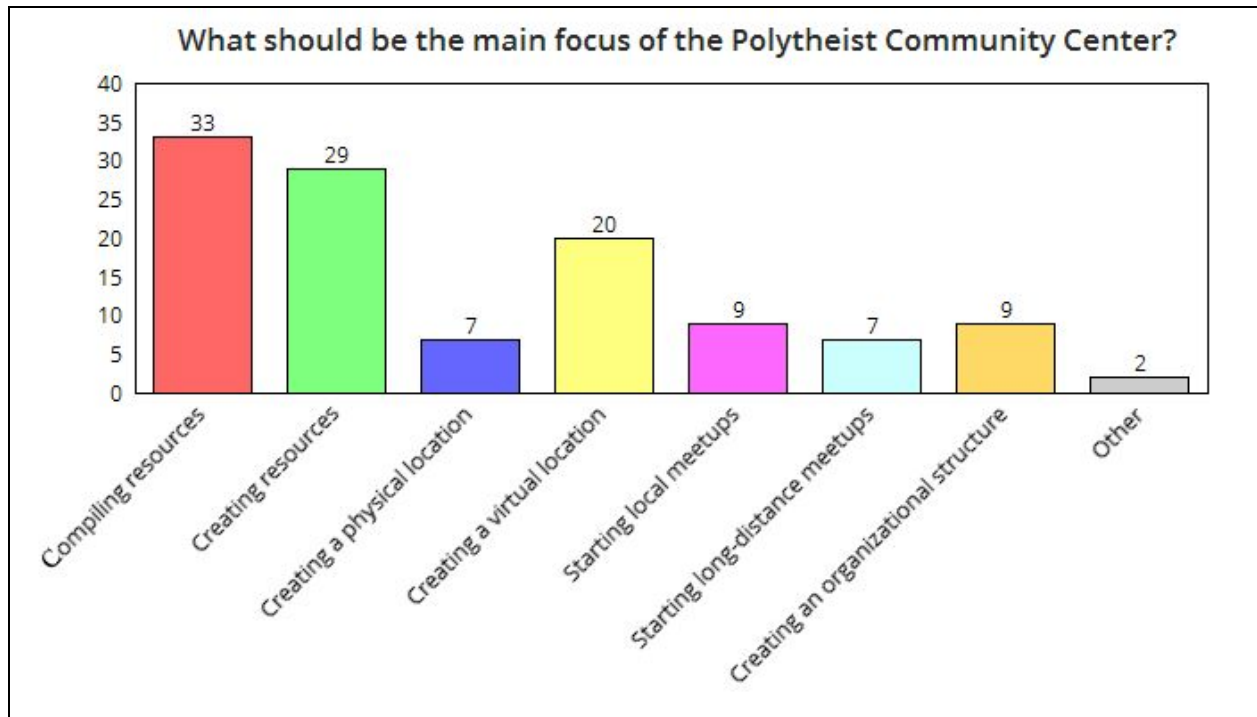
One thing these responses tell me is that the offline local community has failed several participants in various ways. The first way is how offline communities do not weed out racism

and racists, or do not do so effectively. The second way is how offline communities do not match the participants' religion or worldview. The third way is how offline communities do not build up a safe space. (One person did remark that online communities have these problems too.)

These responses also indicate that a lot of people find fulfillment and community online, so branching the Polytheist Community Center to create an online community is possible.

Center’s Overall Future Feedback

This section of the survey results addresses feedback about how to shape the Polytheist Community Center as it evolves.

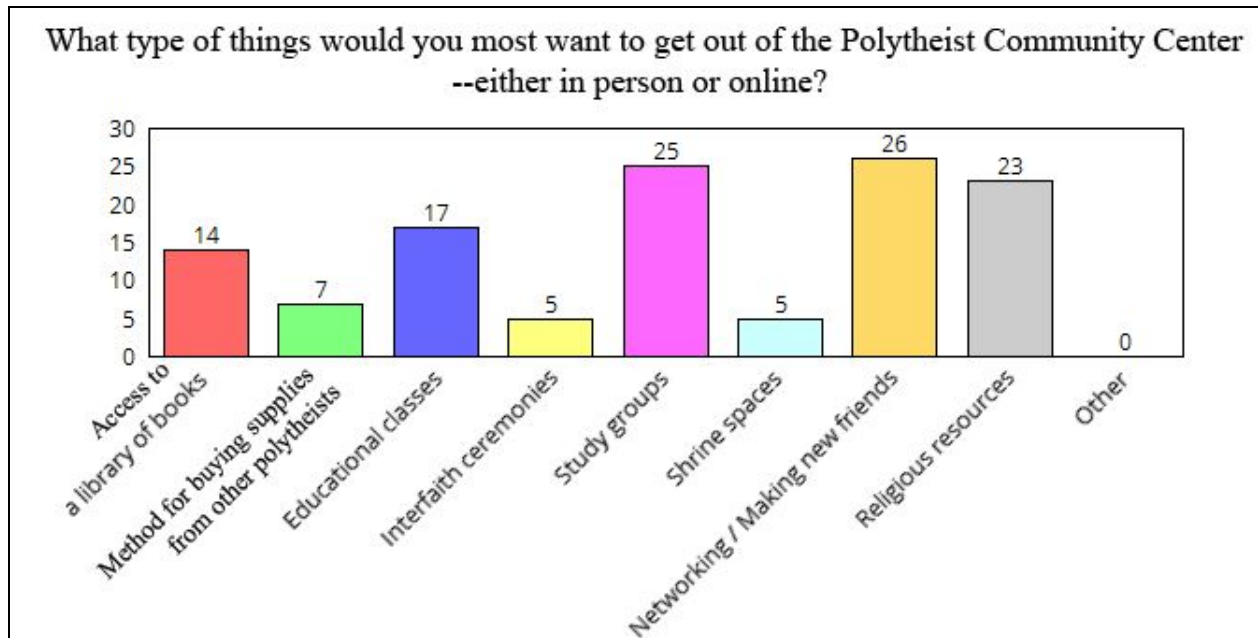


“Chart G”

In Chart G, participants were asked to select up to three choices for the focus of the Polytheist Community Center. Two participants wrote in “Other” and wrote: “... Idk?” and “sort of as like... a motivational gathering point for people to act off of. idk if that makes any sense.” (Note: “IDK” is an abbreviation for “I don’t know”.)

The two categories that received the most support both involve resources. This gives a clear demand and priority of compiling and creating resources. Yet the third most supported category is not far behind and asks for creating a virtual location. Exactly what this virtual location will look like is to be determined, but there is a need for virtual space.

There were still responses for the rest of the categories, which means that the Polytheist Community Center may still want to support them. After all, getting a response at all shows that people still want those categories around--even if it’s not the main focus of the center.



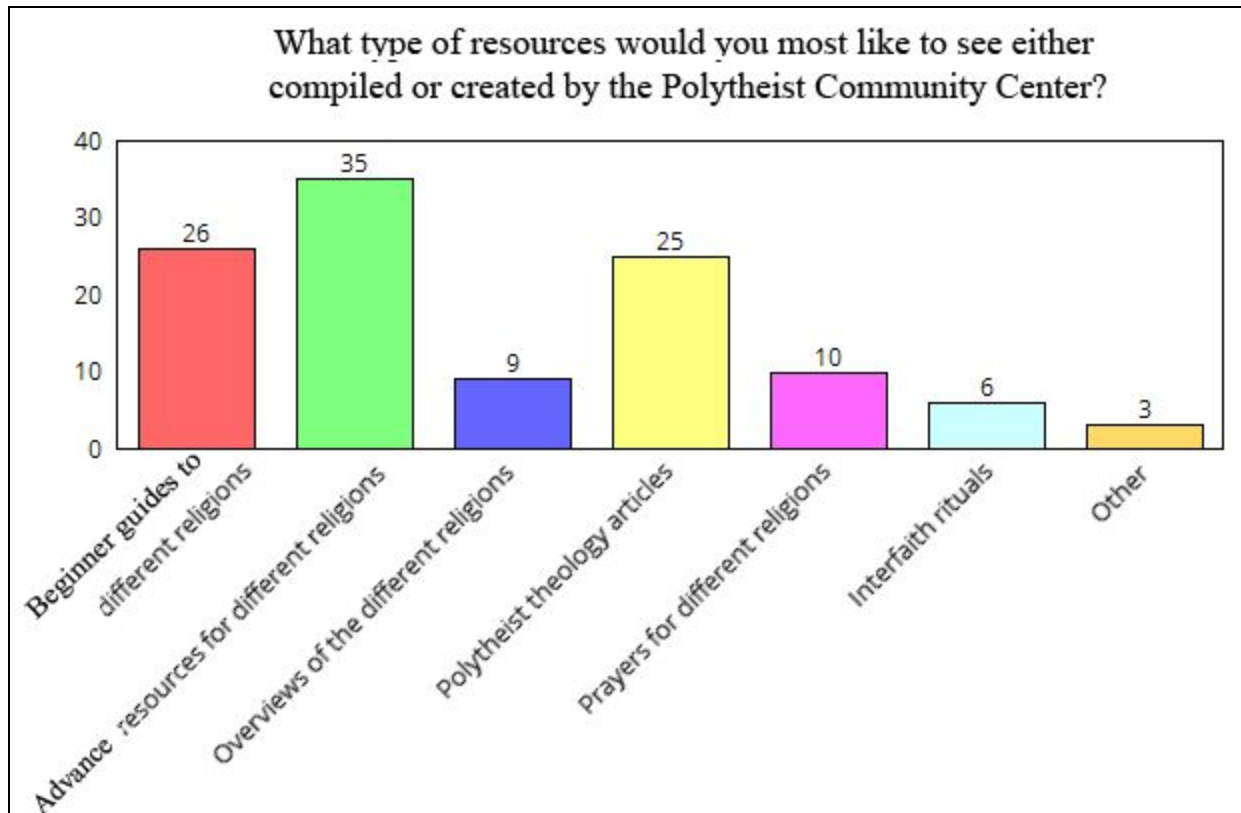
“Chart H”

In Chart H, participants were asked to select up to three choices for what they wanted to get out of the Polytheist Community Center. No one selected “Other.”

The category that just barely got the most votes is “Networking / Making new friends”, which is a clear indication that most participants wish to meet people through the Polytheist Community Center. The second place category that almost tied for first is “Study groups”, which once again shows a clear indication that participants value interacting with other people. The third place category was religious resources.

The other categories, except for “Other”, also have substantial votes. This again shows a want for these categories, so more than likely the Polytheist Community Center will pursue establishing them even though they did not make the top three.

Both Chart G and Chart H showcase a desire for resources, which I anticipated and thus included a section for people to voice what type of resources the Polytheist Community Center should work towards either compiling or creating.



“Chart I”

In Chart I, participants were asked to select up to three choices for what kind of resources they would want created or compiled. Three selected “Other”, writing the following:

- “more accessible materials”
- “Historic/archeology resouces”
- “Mid-level sources would be great... I feel like everything out there is either beginner OR advanced, there's not a whole lot of inbetweeny”

Almost all participants wanted advance resources for different religions. Exactly what an “advance” resource looks like is not clear and was not covered in the survey.

The next two results with the most votes are “Beginner guides to different religions” and “Polytheist theology articles.” Guides to different religions, be they beginners or advance, are desired. Even in the “Other” category had a request for mid-level resources. The theology articles speak to a need to know more about polytheism as a whole.

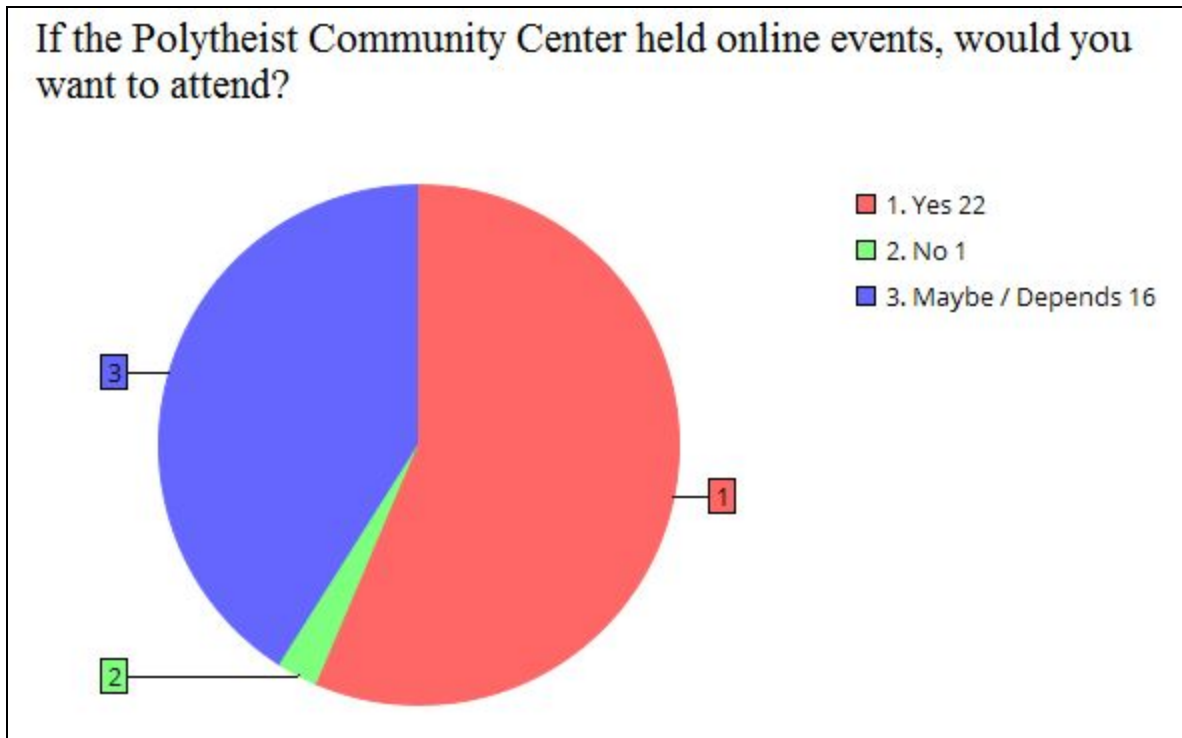
Interestingly enough, the categories that involve religious tools (eg. prayers) were not favored. There are indeed substantial votes in those categories that the Polytheist Community Center will most likely focus on collecting resources for prayers, rituals, and religion overviews. Yet the

applicable resources, or resources people could use to guide their religious growth, are the most wanted out of the Polytheist Community Center.

Lastly, I think the written-in “accessible materials” is very important. Having resources that are just written in dense academic language is inaccessible for many people. Also, having resources that are all dependent on visual reading means inaccessibility for many people. Making a variety of content on different platforms will help with this.

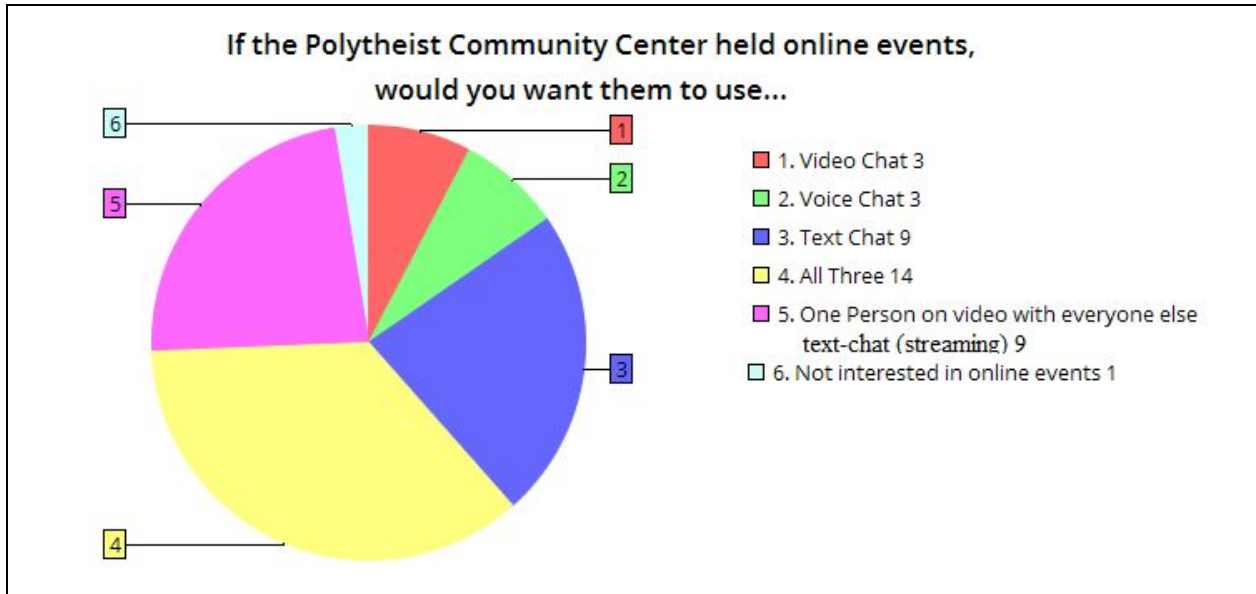
An Online Community Center Feedback

This section of the survey results addresses interest in having the Polytheist Community Center online.



“Chart J”

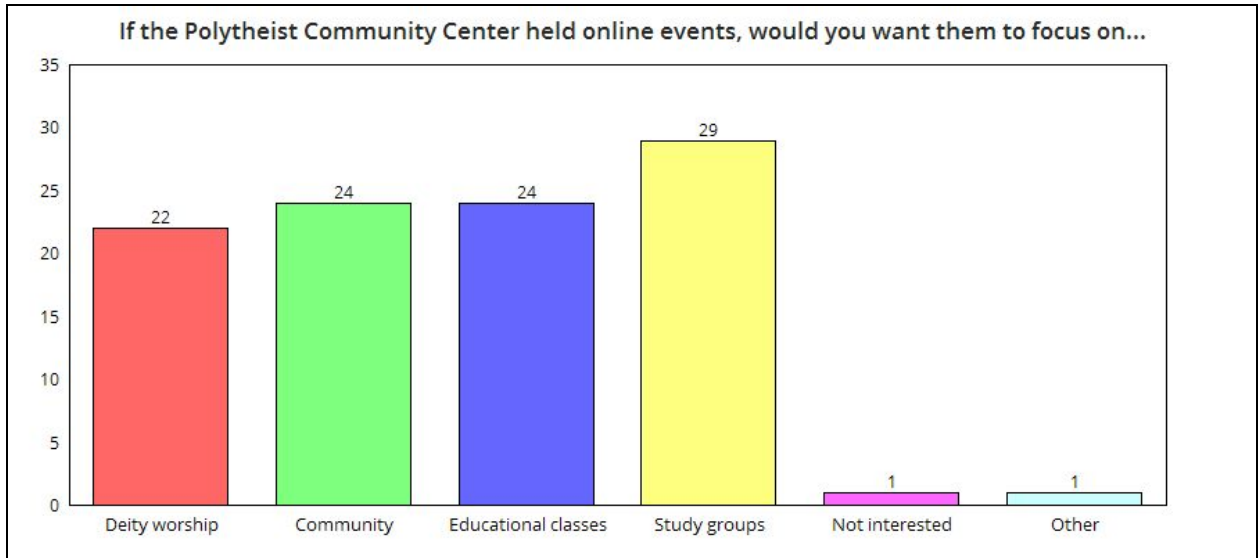
In Chart J, the majority of participants wanted the Polytheist Community Center to host online events. Sixteen participants voted that it would depend. Only one participant voted that they would not want to attend online events. This shows that the participants of this survey were at least interested in online events, though it depends on the type of event.



“Chart K”

In Chart K, fourteen participants voted for an online event using all three video, voice, and text. Then nine participants voted for just text chat and another nine participants voted for streaming. Next, three participants voted for video chat and three participants voted for voice chat. Lastly, one person voted that they were not interested in online events.

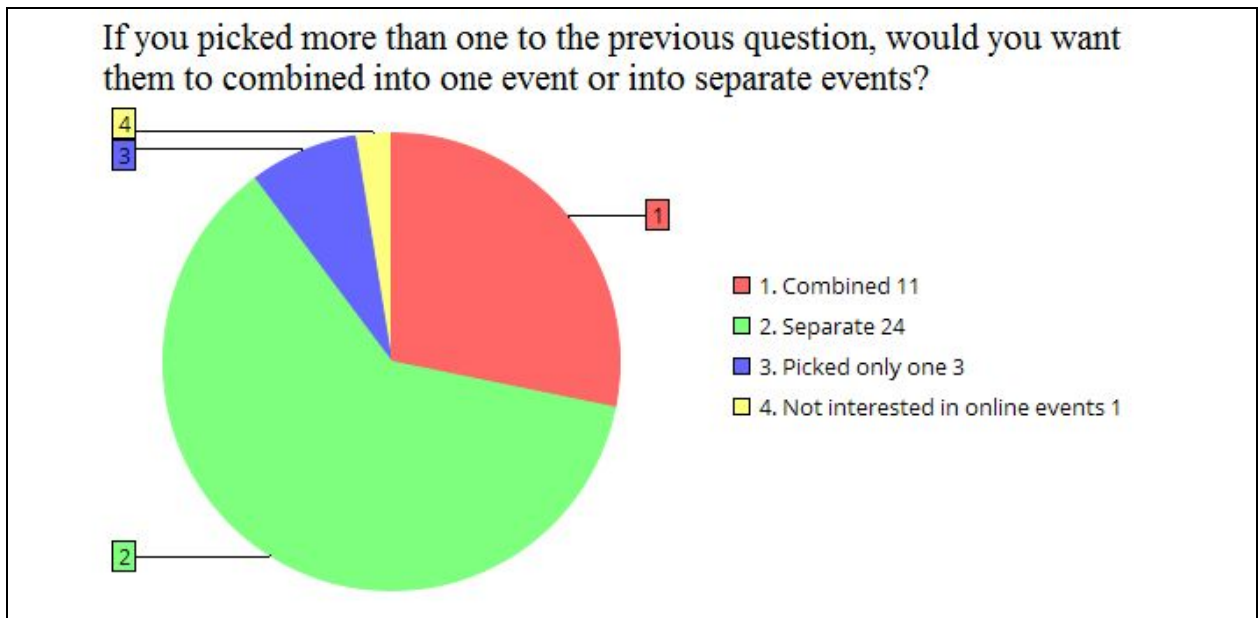
The variety of answers for this question show that the ultimate goal for the Polytheist Community Center should be to have a variety of ways for people to participate in an event. It may also depend on what type of event is being held, eg: a class may be streamed, whereas a study group may be text-chat.



“Chart L”

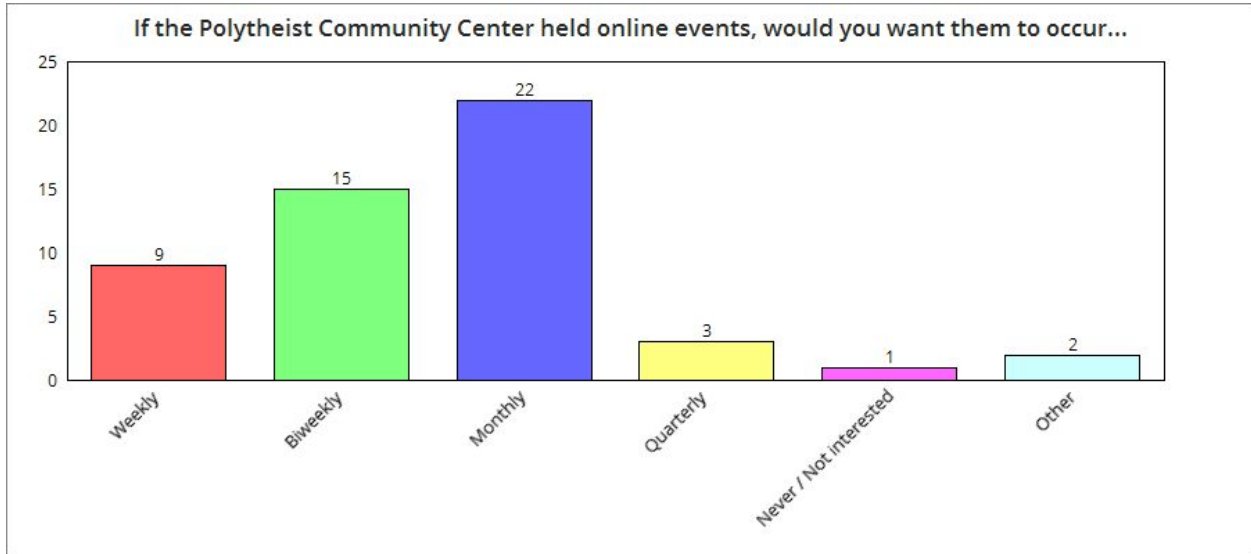
In Chart L, participants were asked to select what type of online events they’d be interested in. One participant wrote that they were not interested. One participant wrote in for Other: “Pooooossibly worship. I didn't check it off wholesale because I think it'd depend what that looked like. Group prayers I'd totally be into”.

While none of the categories got all the participants backing, all four of the choices are wanted almost equally. Each category had more than 50% of participants voting for it. Thus, all four categories will probably be implemented by the Polytheist Community Center.



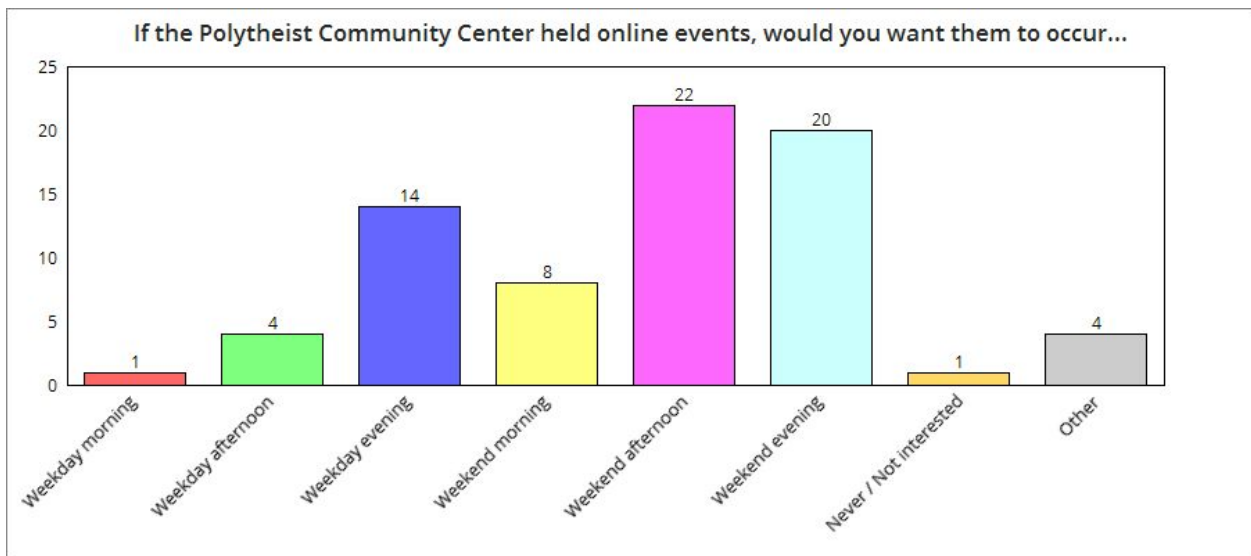
“Chart M”

Chart M is a follow-up to Chart L. In Chart M, we see that most participants want the different types of online events to be separately held. This is what I expected.



“Chart N”

In Chart N, most participants want events to happen monthly.

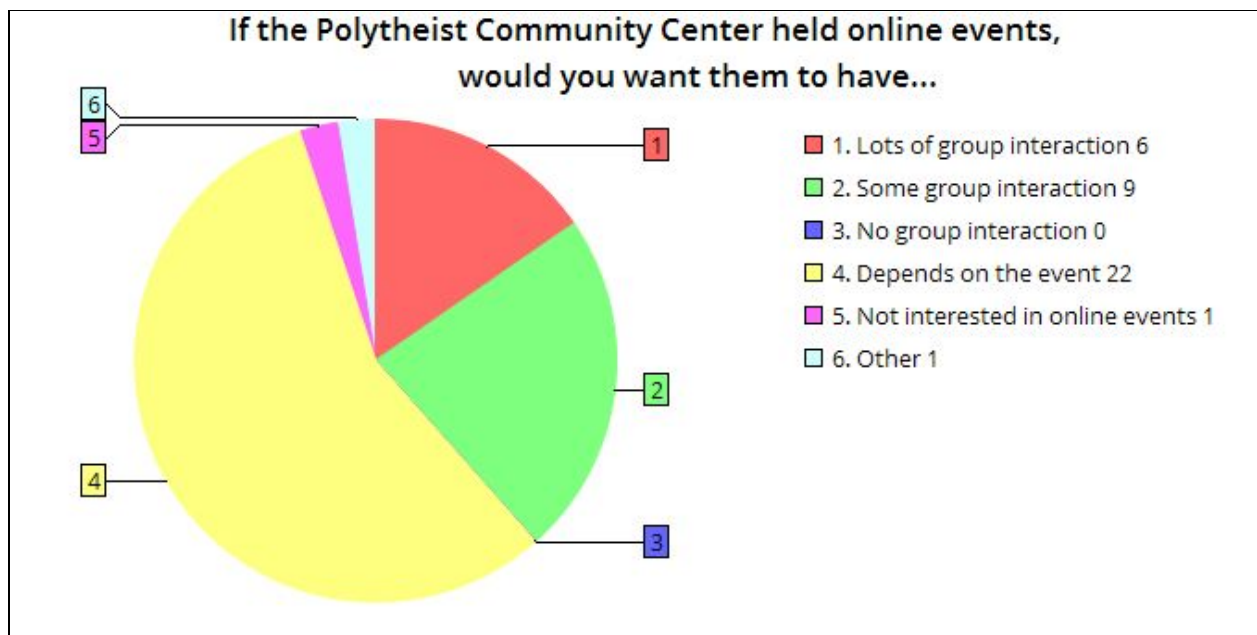


“Chart O”

In Chart O, most people want the events to happen during the weekend-- either the weekend afternoon or weekend evening. Four people added in the Other category:

- “Friday afternoons work best for me”
- “Whenever”
- “ Time differences could be very problematic here, so a good idea would be to hold events at different times - some on evenings, some during the day at weekends (when Europeans would also still be awake).”
- “Not sure, it depends on time zones because I'm not in the U.S”

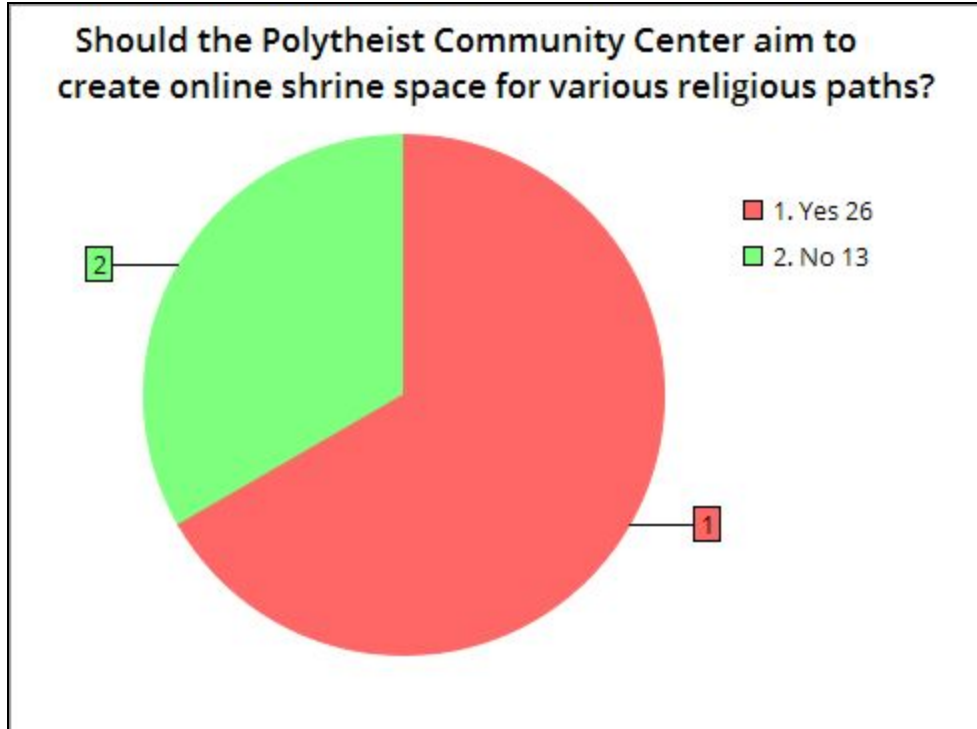
Two of these comments bring up the concern about time-zones, which is definitely something the Polytheist Community Center needs to be considerate about when making online events. This will probably be mitigated by having multiple events on the same topic or goal.



“Chart P”

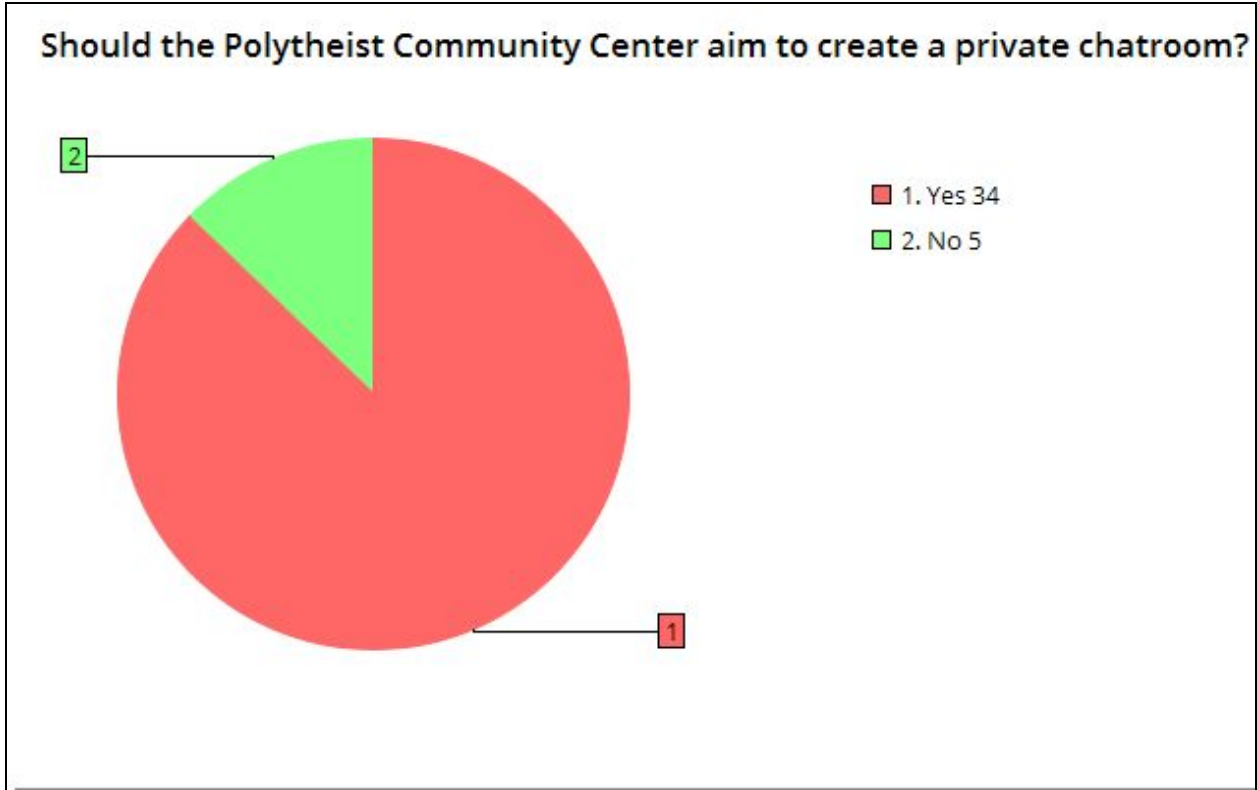
In Chart P, most people wrote that group interaction would depend on the event. Which makes logical sense. A class lecture may have some group interaction, whereas a study group would have lots of group interaction, whereas a prayer circle may have no group interaction.

One person wrote into the Other category: “Optional group interaction”, which is an excellent point. Not all events should force group interaction, but have it available. For example, a class lecture may have optional group interaction.



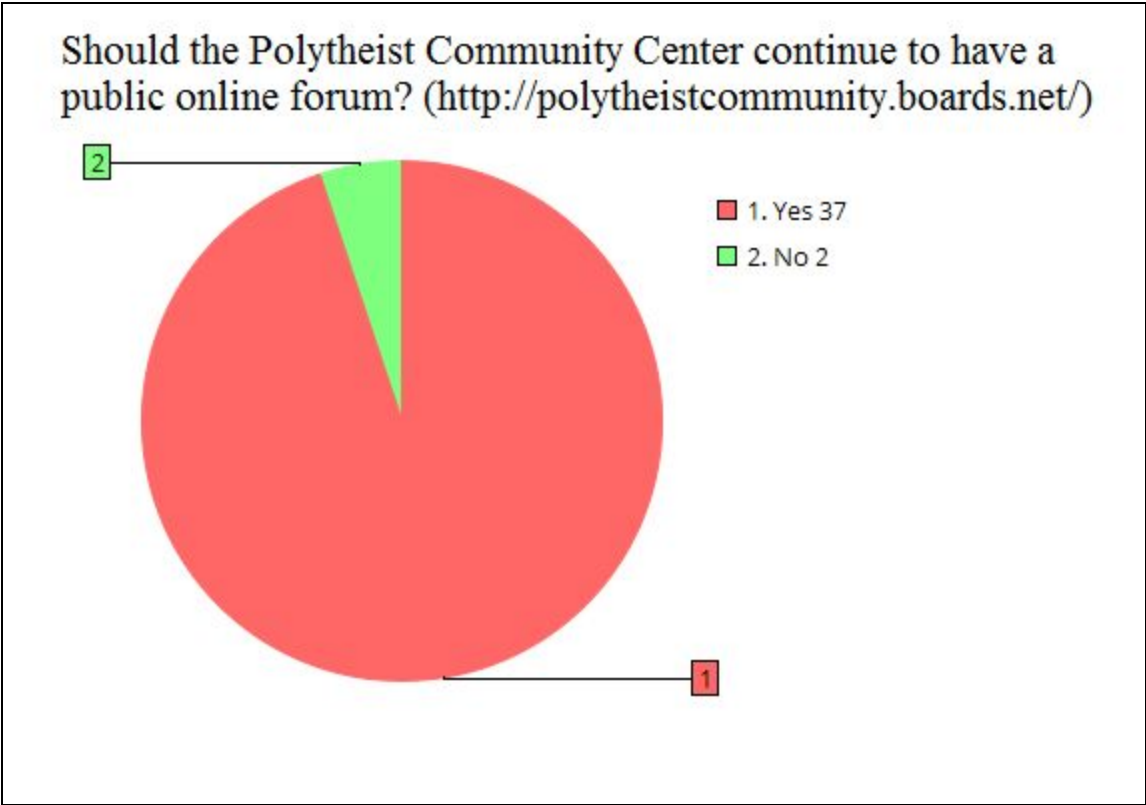
"Chart Q"

Chart Q shows that most participants would want an online shrine space for various religious paths.



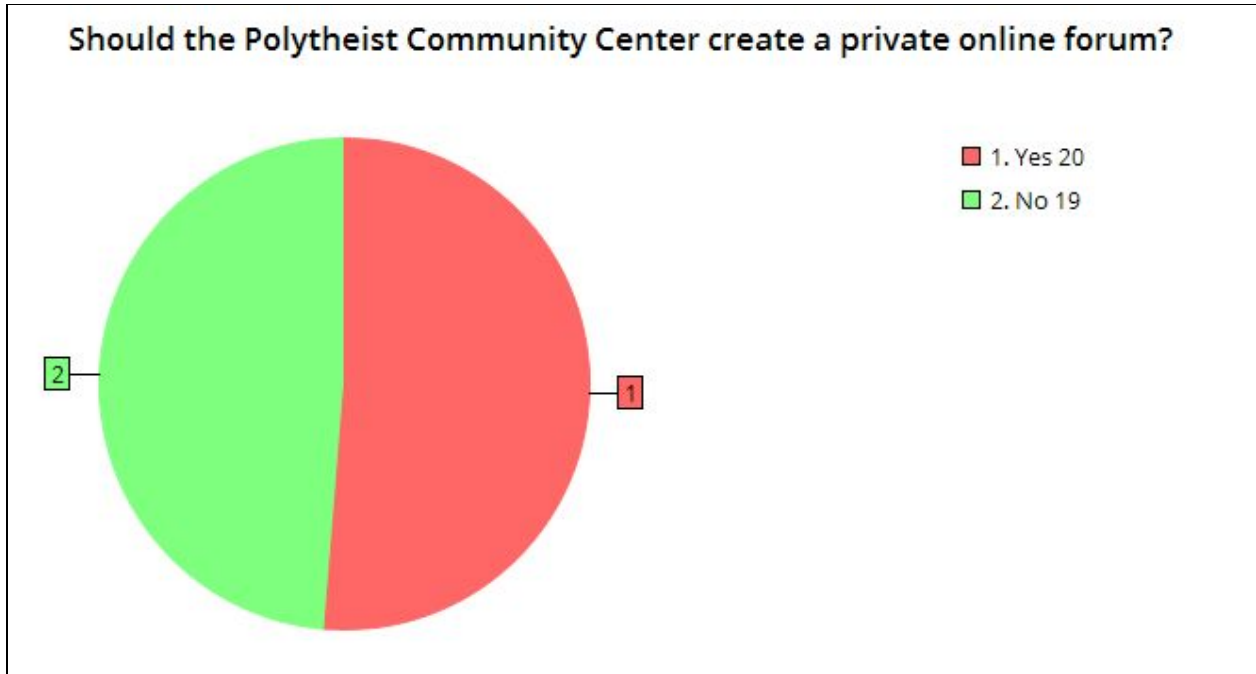
"Chart R"

Chart R shows that most participants want a private chatroom.



“Chart S”

Chart S shows that almost all participants want the Polytheist Community Forum to continue.



“Chart T”

Almost fifty-fifty, Chart T shows an almost equal divide between people who want the Polytheist Community Center to create a private online forum and those who do not want a private forum.

What will probably happen is that the original Polytheist Community Forum will remain open and visible to the public. Meanwhile, a private Facebook Group will be created that will be both private (only members can see) and a way to announce online events.

Online Community: Choice Opinions

The following are answers to the question, “How do you vision the Polytheist Community Center could exist as an online community center? If you can't see an online community existing, explain why?”

I tried to not include those who did not have an opinion. I also tried to limit the repetition that some comments had so that each comment brought something new. In random order, here are the comments:

“I see it as a support system and educational resource, a good location to meet others and learn about your own religion and others.”

“Active forums, chatroom, or at least a website with information on books/online events”

“It might work well as a way for people to meet--and then once they've met, to get together for worship or study within their particular faith or faiths.”

“For me, it has been a great way to learn more about gaelpol spirituality and grow in my own path. I would like to see it expanded, as it is a safer community than others I have considered.”

“An online library would be one of the big things, I'd imagine. Also sections with explanations on certain topics on the site itself. So, say, someone could read the on-site article about the basics of Gaelpol or they could go through the various links to books and articles related to Gaelpol. Links to particular helpful sites might be good too. Or recommendations of physical books. The library is probably the most important thing to me. Another thing I imagine would be something similar to temple directories? Like if there are groups or locations that want to put out their names, addresses, and the like so people can visit and contact them that would be lovely. Of course that would depend upon people setting up and maintaining such groups in the first place, which admittedly is very difficult. Beyond resources keeping the forums and having chatrooms around would be nice. Both for casual things and more formal things, like the suggested classes thing.”

“I really like the idea of finding a way to do group worship online though I'm not sure how it'll work”

“There needs to be more diversity”

“I don't know how the ritual/ceremonial aspects would work, but that's solely due to my inexperience. But I imagine it would be pretty similar to the way it is now, with a big public forum for all kinds of polytheists, and regular virtual meetups for a variety of purposes, a number of virtual shrines for people to show devotion to, and online databases filled with research and information on modern practice. If the virtual meetups are going to be video or voice chat, I might elect not to participate, due to my social anxiety, but I'd love to participate in a text chat of any kind, or any face-to-face contact, if possible. Another worry I have is that the sense of actual community may suffer because of the lack of IRL interaction, but maybe I'm underestimating the online experience.”

“This is a hard question? It'd be a nice place to talk about polytheism stuff and make friends, I suppose”

“Honestly not sure, I don't really do community based stuff but I enjoy having a place to go where I can find resources and I suppose other people to talk to about similar experiences that could eventually lead into friendships, but that's secondary to me.”

“Hm... the closest example I can think of is something similar to witchvox, but aimed primarily at polytheists rather than at wiccans”

“I'm waffling since I think my answer would have been more "maybe" to some of the above. I think forums are great but I rarely have spoons and I actually find chatrooms more my speed, usually. I'd love to see a forum that had sections you could only see once you were registered, I think I'd post more then. Even if registration was fully open, it'd just be like, a way for me to feel more secure I suppose.”

“I'd envision it existing and functioning much like any other online forum or community organized around a shared interest. As long as there are engaged members and a staff keeping things running, there's no reason for it not to work.”

“I envision the PCC as being a place where all polytheists no matter the religion can come and be welcomed to discuss all things ranging from beginner devotional practice to discussions on theology.”

“By compiling resources, coordinating events, and perhaps providing a place to communicate for polytheists.”

“I envision it as a source open to anyone curious providing accurate information about various religions and as a safe space for the community to discuss and share ideas, practices, and theories”

“I feel like it'd be kind of slow going, as many online communities are, but the future of an online community depends on the community leaders will to be active”

“I kind of feel like this will just repeat my answers to all previous questions, but I really think that having a private *safe* space on the internet dedicated to all the different Polytheistic paths, would be wonderful. It would ideally provide a resource for as many polytheistic paths as possibly, by compiling resources, creating resources, holding classes, and facilitating the creation of study groups. Also, ideally, it'd have a place to gather, like a chatroom (though, great thought will have to be put towards making sure the chat remains a safe space), and a forum. I view PCF as an invaluable resource in my walk, right now, and I hope it never goes down.”

“There is not many communities that are reliable, viable. Work as a beacon, one place for all, no more confusion.”

“I can see an online community center, but I take issue with online ritual/shrine space. I just don't see how it's possible.”

“An online community would be information-focused but have other things going on such as virtual meet-ups and opportunities for local meetings.”

“I think by combining forums, chatrooms, online events and resources the PCC could become a tight-knit community, but it will take effort from all parties. In order for a community to form, people need to actively participate in the community.”

“I see an online community being fundamentally very different than a meat-space community. It would need to be more resource oriented, in my opinion, and have VERY clear boundaries and rules governing behavior so that it doesn't just become yet another fucked up online space. Further, it would need to protect it's educators/elders/etc. from blowback as that has been one of the main downfalls of previous online spaces (polytheist and otherwise.)”

“I can see it as a resource center, hosting online events like webinars, streaming holiday services”

“I think real-time events would be really fun. I also think creating a digital library would be super helpful. For reasons of copyright, maybe they can't be saved as PDFs. Audio and video recordings of prayers and rituals, or just multimedia in general, could be fun too. Mostly, I think aspects of the PCC could move beyond text-only format.”

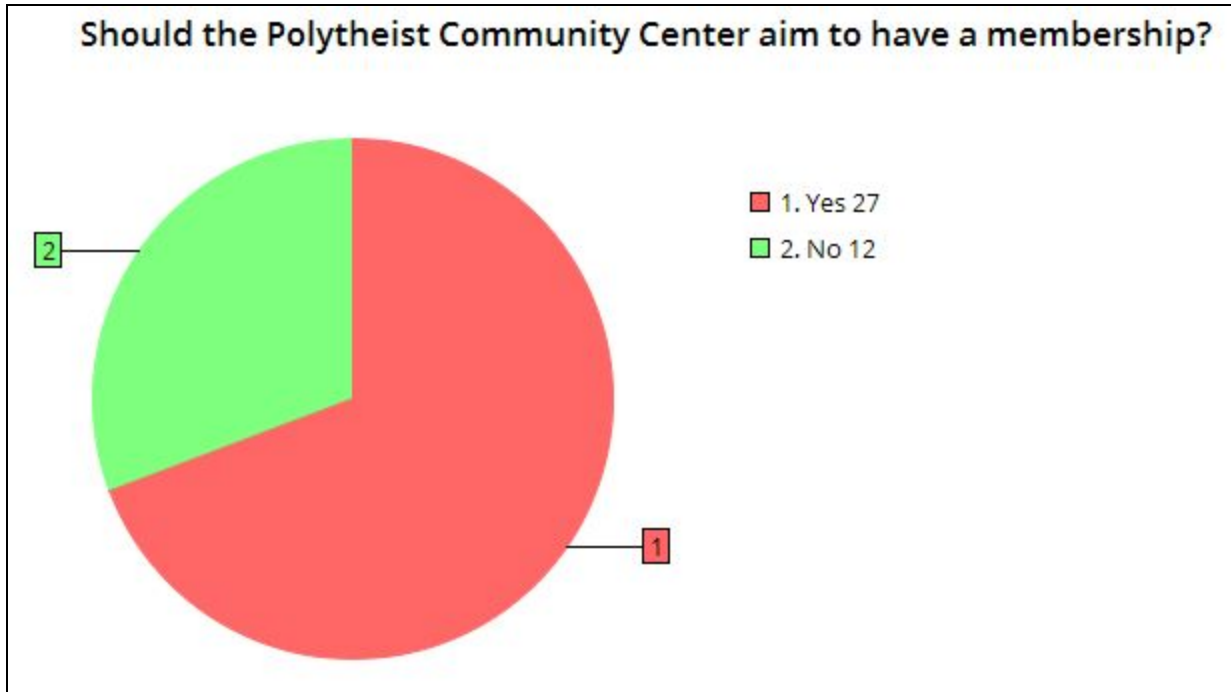
A general theme in these answers is that resources are very important for the Polytheist Community Center as an online presence. Another thing that was brought up in these answers was the importance of participation of those trying to build up this community.

Also, a lot of the responses point towards resources and information being the backbone of the online community. Things ranging from book recommendations to articles are something for the Polytheist Community Center to continue to work towards.

What I was not expecting was the number of people who feel that community is achievable on online spaces. There was quite a few people who admitted to preferring the community of online space over that of offline space.

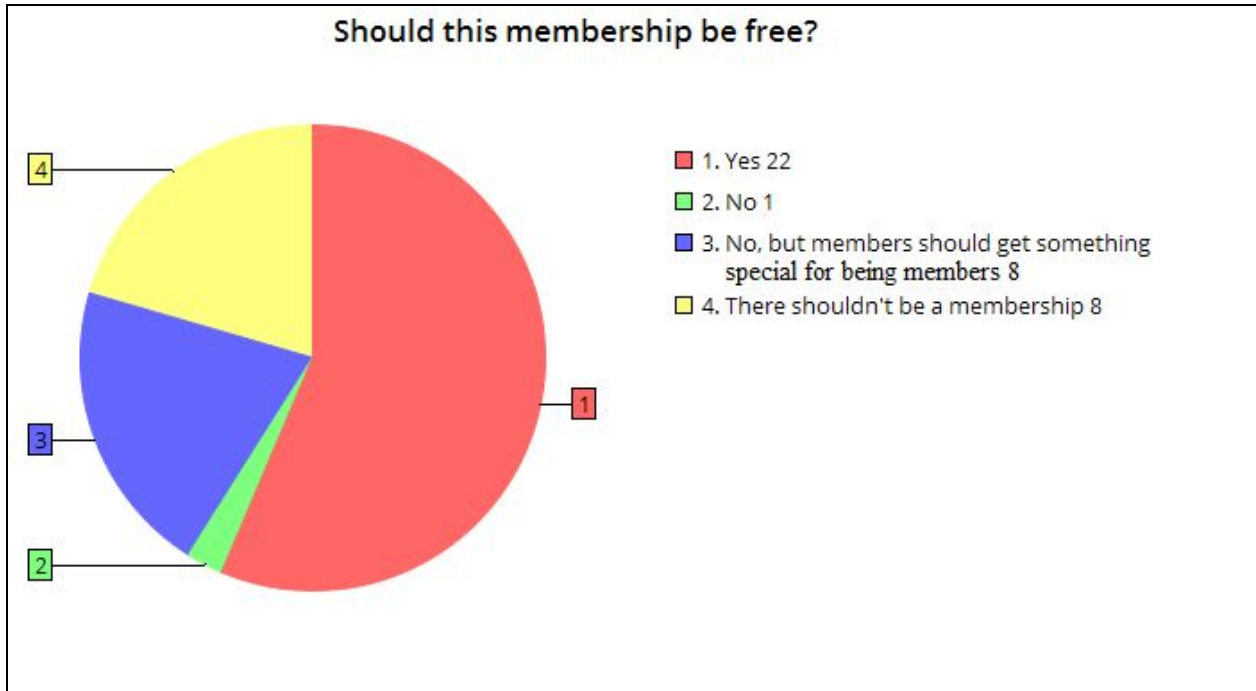
Polytheist Community Center Structure

The following are answers to how the Polytheist Community Center should be structured. Most of these answers revolve around membership.



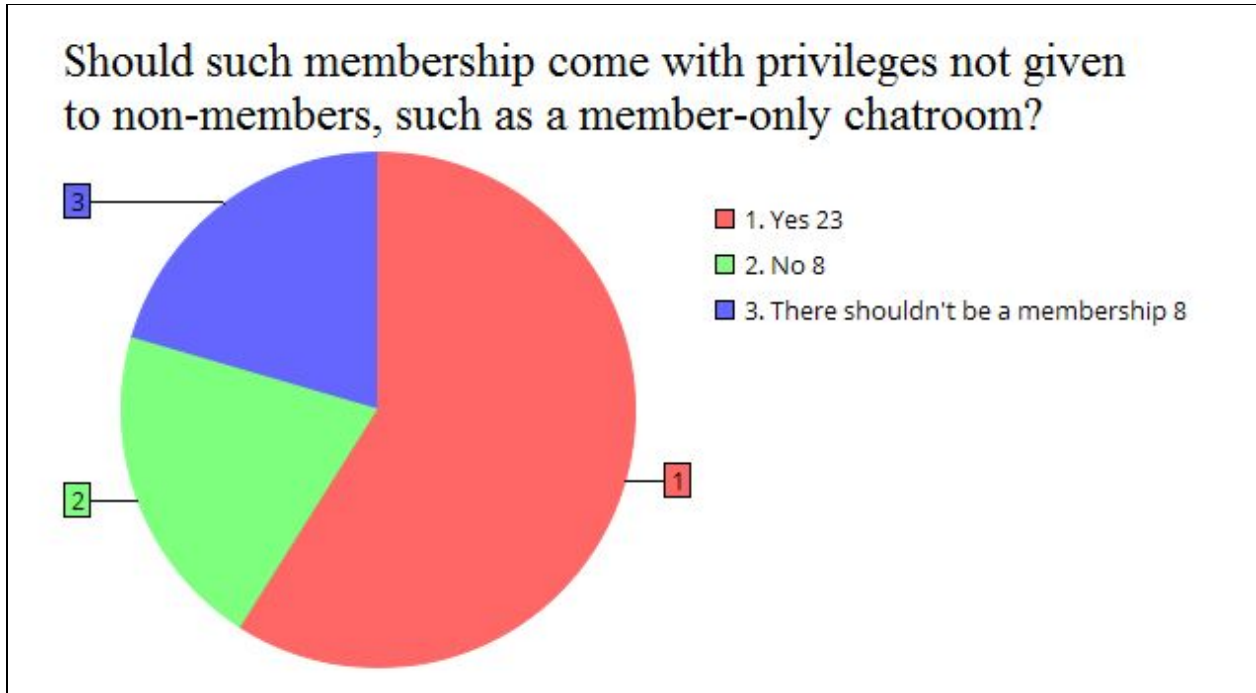
"Chart U"

Chart U shows that almost a third of participants did not want a membership system, while a healthy two-thirds do. Note that nowhere on the survey did I specify what membership would or could look like. Participants are then just responding to their perceptions of what the membership would or could entail.



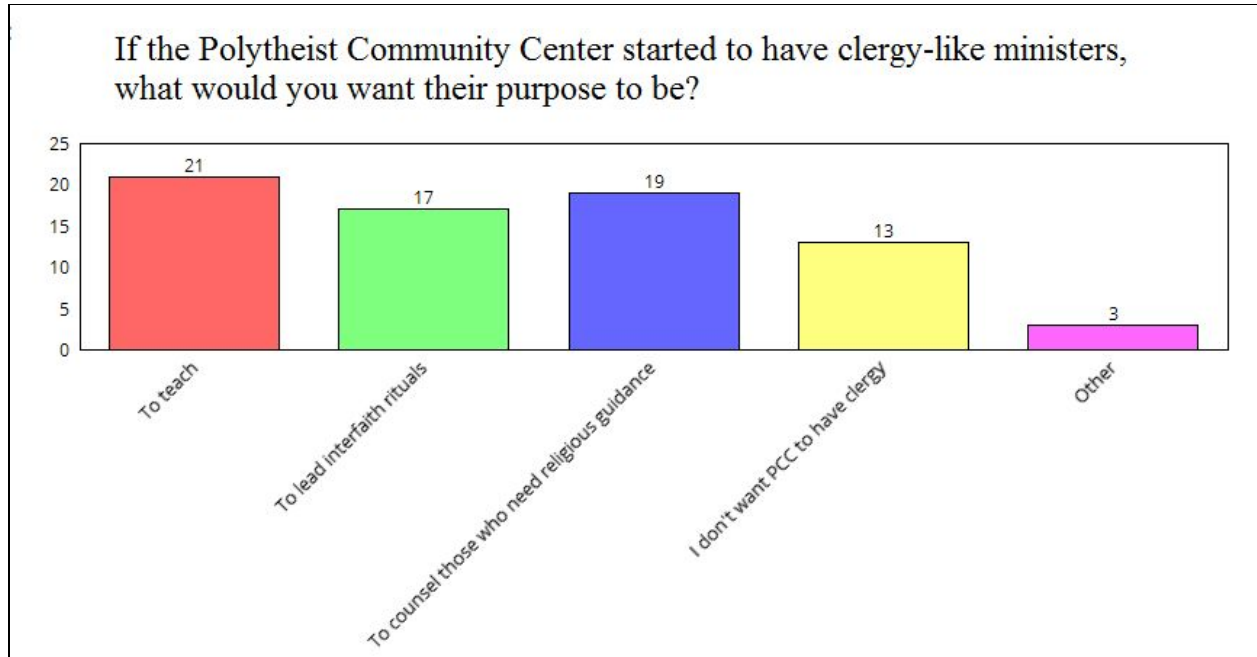
“Chart V”

In Chart V, more than half the participants wanted the membership to be free. Only nine participants would be okay with a paid membership, with eight specifying that they want something in return for that membership. Another eight maintained that there should not be a membership.



“Chart W”

In Chart W, more than half the participants want the membership to come with special privileges not awarded to non-members. Aside from the suggestion that these privileges could be as simple as a member-only chatroom, there was no details about what type of privileges membership could or would provide. Participants therefore responded to just the idea of having a privilege as a member.

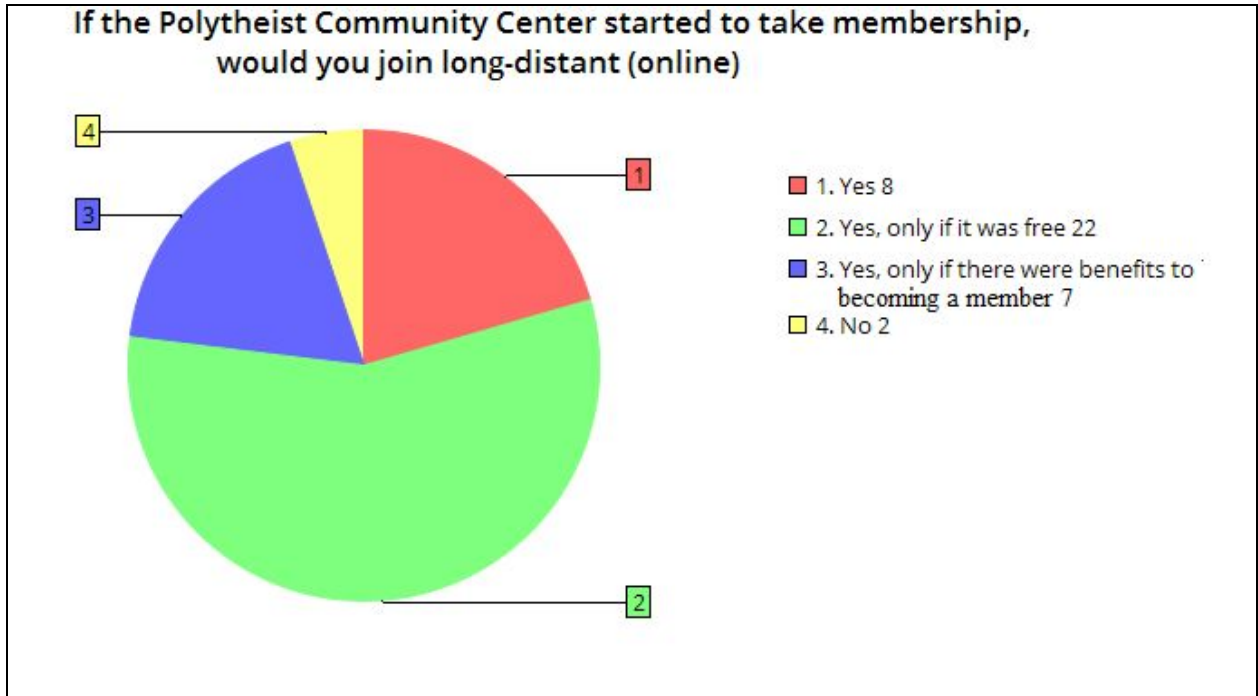


“Chart X”

In Chart X, one-third of the participants voiced that they did not want the Polytheist Community Center to have any type of clergy. More thoughts on what the term “clergy” meant to the participants in the next section of this report, as the survey was purposefully vague on what that would entail.

The “other” responses are thusly:

- “ It'd be cool to have someone do marriages”
- “That's probably a question better posed to the community that exists when clergy become a thing; clergy really should address existing members' needs first and foremost”
- “Different types of clergy have different roles and they should be kept SEPARATE. Leaders are not the best teachers are not the best ritualists, etc.”



“Chart Y”

Chart Y shows that an overwhelming majority would be willing to take on a membership if the Polytheist Community Center began a membership program. Of the people who would enter into the membership, over half the participants would want that membership to be free. Another seven participants stated they would only join if there were privileges for membership.

Clergy Feedback

The following are answers to the question, “What are your thoughts on the idea of the Polytheist Community Center having trained clergy?”

I tried to did not include those who did not have an opinion. I also tried to limit the repetition that some comments had so that each comment brought something new. In random order, here are the comments:

“I come from a religion that uses lay clergy, which has a lot of problems. Having seen the problems with that system, I'd be wary of trusting any clergy that don't have extensive training. This training process should be detailed to everyone so that we can decide for ourselves how we feel about it. Also, there would be additional difficulties based on the fact that polytheists can be any of a number of religions, so these clergy would either need to deal only with their own religion, or else be trained in helping religions other than their own. It's a nice idea, but I'm not sure how practical it would be.”

“I think it might be tricky, but it would be nice to have religious leaders who could give guidance.”

“I like it. I think the polytheist community needs more dedicated clergy. I'm not sure how it would work, since different polytheistic faiths would have different needs from their clergy, and trying to provide training for a wide range of different faiths would be impossible (groups that focus on a single faith have a hard enough time with it!). Perhaps if there were subgroups within the larger group that could work on resources (perhaps including clergy) within the subgroup?”

“I'd like to have one of these for personal reasons, but this is something that needs to be set up with care. Like we need defined standards and requirements and initiation processes for this on par with what bhikkhus go through. Not anyone should be allowed to be part of the clergy. It is a station that requires training.”

“I think it's important for polytheism to start having trained clergy and chaplaincy type roles and pcc seems as good a place as any to start that”

“This is a very bad idea”

“I think that's a really interesting idea. I never really thought about having clergy involved in my religious life, at least after becoming a polytheist, but I'm certainly not opposed to it, since I really appreciate having someone to come to for help and guidance.”

“I feel like we are a long way away from that, but someday maybe”

“I suppose I don't want it, because that would assume a LOT of clergy for various faiths, or an interfaith thing and I feel like that could just be a hassle and a half. You'd have to verify everybody, possibly pay them. Tres annoying.”

“I think it's a good idea, I would look into having them perhaps like a rabbi-like position - more a teacher than a preacher that gets up and talks at you. This is a community, not an audience.”

“I guess it's a little tough since polytheism is so wide-ranging, but I do like the idea of designated folks who take the time to dig into leading interfaith ceremonies. I feel like that's really intimidating for a lot of people and having folks who enjoyed doing it and we could rely on, would be totally awesome. Because then all other people have to do is show up!”

“Why not? It might be a good way to help create a new leadership and group of "elders" within our community.”

“No strong feelings either way, though it does raise the question of how PCC will go about determining who is qualified”

“I am not sure how that would be possible since one would have to have numerous trained clergy for all beliefs and someone would have to be the head of the 'church' to make sure things move smoothly and what not.”

“As someone coming from a polytheistic religion where all of the major organizations that provide such training have serious problems with racism, I'd really rather not deal with leadership from those organizations.”

“I think it would be really helpful! As someone who is a minor and in a small town it would be really nice to be able to talk to someone like that to get guidance and help”

“I don't see how that would work, considering you would have so many different faiths to sustain an effective clergy. You'd have to find representatives of each faith, verify that they are highly capable and knowledgeable of taking on the responsibility of being clergy, and set up some sort of training for future clergy members. None of which I think is practical or possible right now or in the near future.”

“Ify. The concept is good, but many times people, especially new people to these faiths, see clergy people as the Ultimate Know It All, and its very possible that this position of power could be abused.”

“I think the idea of *trained* clergy can be REALLY problematic, simply because that gives an undertone of "this way is the right way for this path cause they're CLERGY", and it could be a potential hindrance to the idea of Recovering Monotheists, in that it adds a bit of the undertone that a Catholic priest might have. While I think the general idea of clergy is good, I think it should be more of "These people have been in x path this long, and they are a wonderful resource to get advice/help with problems from a religious standpoint". This would require people who've been walking their path for some time, but I think that experience is a necessary element for a pagan based clergy.”

“Clergy leads to superiority, violence, injustice.”

“I think it could be a great community resource.”

“As a hellenic polytheist, we already have a clergy training program, and I am wary of any program with a highly eclectic focus.”

“I have a hard time with this because clergy does drastically different things pending on their religious affiliation. I'd need to know how you'd handle those differences before being able to co-sign the idea. I'd also need to know what functions those clergy members would be fulfilling.”

“With many polytheist revivalist religions, I feel there is no way to have trained priests since the religions were dead for so long. I feel there is no proper way to train them.”

“Seems exclusive, though I'm not against it in principle, just doubtful it could be implemented effectively.”

“I think that if there was a rigorous training program, that would be awesome!”

“It's an interesting idea. Historically, clergy of every religion have been effective when they maintain a physical presence in the community. Functions like a call to prayer/service, providing living essentials, speaking with people on an individual basis, and conducting festivals can be achieved by an online clergy with varying levels of success. The particulars need to be ironed out before it can be implemented.”

I don't like the idea of clergy, but I think having mentors would be cool.

Overall, there seems to be either resistance or doubt that the Polytheist Community Center could train and maintain clergy. The resistance comes from the idea that the clergy would lead to injustices and ego-trips. The doubt comes from the fact that there are so many different polytheistic religions, there is no way a member of clergy could fulfill them all.

There also were good suggestions about implementing mentors, instead of clergy. Having teachers instead of preachers. This may in fact be more the direction the Polytheist Community Center goes. However, as one participant pointed out, the Polytheist Community Center is a long way away from creating any sort of leadership. More about that in the concluding comments.

Final Comments from Participants

This last section of feedback involves the final comments made from participants. I did not include repeating comments, but focused on including comments that gave constructive criticism towards either the future of the Polytheist Community Center or the survey itself.

The prompt: “Any additional comments about the Polytheist Community Center and its future goals?” The comments in random order:

“I love the idea of an online community center for polytheists. It's an ambitious goal, but the steps that have been taken so far leave me confident in the future of the Polytheist Community Center.”

“I don't want you to give up the idea of a physical space, but I think building more of an online space would make that goal easier to achieve.”

“I think us polytheists need to support each other and work together, regardless of our specific religions. I think the polytheist community center may be a step in that direction.”

“I think it's a great idea, but then I am a multi-faith polytheist so I certainly see the appeal of having resources available for multiple faiths in one place.”

“My interest in having a membership is less about membership fees and what not and more for...Initiation I suppose? Conversion? Basically it is around to state yes I am a person who is definitely part of this community's atmosphere and culture. That sort of thing. If members do have "privileges" it's in setting up and maintaining things. Members are the ones working on setting up and maintaining the library for example. As well as being the ones to actually make the calls on how things change.”

“I'd be interested in learning more about how pcc plans on training clergy. And if pcc plans on doing interfaith work outside of polytheism, in the general religious community”

“I think no matter what comes of this, so long as polytheists are brought together in some capacity, PCC is a success. It's okay if we don't end up with a physical space to come to for community and such, but it's pretty nice to dream about.”

“If you end up charging for a membership, the money should be used for meetups and such. We could maybe do fundraisers for stuff too”

“I approve of the membership and fee because if you really want to do all these things, that's gonna cost funds and potentially require salaries. Gotta bankroll all that somehow.”

“Re: free/paid membership, if you go with the free membership model I don't think there's anything wrong with soliciting donations at a regular interval (monthly, maybe?) so folks who do want to give money can”

“I think you guys should have lots of resources even on more odd things such as God spouses and obscure astral things”

“I think as far as it is able, that the PCC should be free, and therefore accessible to everyone. I like the concept of a long distance library, especially for books that are difficult to obtain normally. And I don't think video conferencing with too many people at once is a good idea, especially given how unreliable the technology tends to be. I think a better way would be maximum three knowledgeable people having discussing a topic and answering questions by those watching live. I also think these video conferences should be recorded if possible and uploaded to a PCC youtube so others who couldn't watch/interact live may at least access the information given in the conference.”

“I'm in a difficult financial situation, and I know there are several other polytheists who're likely in the same position. Therefore, I would ideally want a free membership. If there had to be a fee, making it as cheap as possible, would also be ideal. I do think, that there should be some sort of guidelines for joining, however. I don't know how one would go about developing these guidelines though. Kinda floundering on my thoughts with that, to be honest.”

“If you decide to charge for membership, one way to be inclusive is to have a sliding scale, with a reduced/free rate for those who are unemployed or disabled.”

“I think the idea is great, but so far there seems to be little resources for people who can't visit in-person. I've seen you get books, which would be great for an in-person resource center, but wouldn't do much for online-only communities. Figuring out a way to bridge that gap would be helpful, though I'm not entirely

sure how to do it without a lot of resources (which is always the biggest problem amirite). I think that manpower and interaction are some of the biggest hurdles for PCC to still overcome.”

Prompt: “Any additional thoughts about the Polytheist Community Center as an online community?” The comments in random order:

“On the issue of membership, I listed that I would be interested if it was free, but there is one other thing worth considering: confidentiality. Many of us are not public about our beliefs, and I am one of them. I would not join if it required revealing my real name or address, and I'm sure I'm not alone in this.”

“It is a wonderful community and I love the forums.”

“Please try to include some text-only events/discussions for the sake of those who can't do voice/video.”

“PLEASE MAKE IT AN ONLINE COMMUNITY, PRETTY PLEASE? ^^ emphasis on how much I really want there to be an online community element.”

“Please don't forget those of us outside the US! Especially when organising virtual contact between members such as meet-ups.”

“I like the idea, but the forums are pretty dead as a whole, so I stopped showing up. Finding a way to keep people engaged is key to ensuring PCC lasts.”

“Anyone could access it as long as they had internet, which I think would be its best quality (though I do think in person spaces are direly needed)”

“If someone tries to instigate a conversation about personal experiences, telling someone to read a book is not a satisfactory answer. At the end of the day conversations with humans are needed, and can't be replaced by reading a book.”

Prompt: “Any additional thoughts about the Polytheist Community Center and its internal structure?” The comments in random order:

“I think instead of a membership thing you should just give things like library priority to paying members. I know that's like a membership, but I think a member's only chat room would call for it to be free.”

“I think the idea of a membership is great, but I'm thinking it would need to be something like... not something you apply for, but something you can just automatically have via paying dues in order to help cover any associated costs. Because that way it's not insular. And I think if there's a way to find something special for members that's not like.... gatekeepy about information (like YOU KNOW WHO) that'd be really cool. Like perhaps there was some community-created digital zine, and members could have a print copy.”

“If you start having a membership, you could start doing consultations with all members about some of the questions you ask above. I am committed to the idea of groups that have democratic structures and consult properly with members. This can be really empowering for all members and encourage people to take steps such as being more involved, helping to run the group, training as clergy etc.”

The prompt: “Any additional comments not covered?” The comments in random order:

“I could have answered differently to a lot of these questions, but the option wasn't there to select. I am open to a lot of different ideas, and I think that many different models would work for PCC. It really just depends on how you decide to implement said model as to whether it would be successful or not. .02 and all.”

The comments express a need for there to be an online component to the Polytheist Community Center, even if it is just keeping a database of articles and resources. There also seems to be a lot of ideas around how membership should work, how it could be paid for, and what it could entail.

Overall Conclusions

The survey helped me understand a variety of viewpoints about how to move the Polytheist Community Center forward. I was worried that most people would reject the idea of having an online community center, but the survey shows that most people are very supportive of the idea. While the exact nature of how to run an online community center is still not clear, what is clear is that there is a need for one.

A lot of what was written about in this survey are goals to shoot for, but not things that can be implemented right away. For example, any type of clergy or mentor program can only be created once the foundational community is established. As of writing this write-up, the Polytheist Community Center does not have substantial amount of a community to even begin discussing what religious leadership roles are desired.

But there is a lot that can be implemented. Things such as a private Facebook group, a private text-only chat, monthly study groups, and so forth. It will be slow going, but it will be possible.

What is clear is that the Polytheist Community Center needs help to achieve these goals. For example, we need to have people willing to step up to teach or lead a study group or to just participate in group chats.

I have big dreams for how the Polytheist Community Center can grow, but I will need help.