

St. Mark's Worship Satisfaction Survey Results

November 18, 2003

This report is respectfully submitted to St. Mark's Vestry.

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Table of Contents

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	3
<u>General Demographics</u>	4
<u>Executive Summary</u>	4
<u>8 a.m. Service</u>	6
<u>Demographics</u>	6
<u>General</u>	6
<u>Logistics</u>	6
<u>Liturgy</u>	7
<u>9 a.m. Service</u>	8
<u>Demographics</u>	8
<u>General</u>	8
<u>Location, Location, Location</u>	8
<u>Liturgy</u>	10
<u>Music</u>	11
<u>9:15 a.m. Beach Service</u>	13
<u>Demographics</u>	13
<u>General</u>	13
<u>10:45 a.m. Service</u>	14
<u>Logistics</u>	14
<u>Liturgy</u>	16
<u>Music</u>	17
<u>Evensong</u>	24
<u>Other Survey Items</u>	25
<u>Saturday 5 pm Service</u>	25
<u>Rector preaching</u>	25
<u>Appendix A</u>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<u>Appendix B</u>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<u>Appendix C</u>	Error! Bookmark not defined.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2002, the Vestry received a report from the Space Usage Committee. This report noted some issues with the location of the 9 a.m. service in Cunningham Hall. In February 2003, the Rector and the Vestry of St. Mark's Church asked the Worship and Spirituality Cluster to design and implement a survey that would attempt to determine satisfaction levels with various aspects of the St. Mark's worship experience. The scope of the survey was subsequently broadened to include all aspects of the worship experience, including logistics, liturgy, music, and overall satisfaction. A committee consisting of 10 representatives of the parish who regularly attend one of the 3 main services was given the task of designing the survey and summarizing the results. The Rector served as an advisor, and technical assistance was provided by David Gortner.

A separate survey was written for each service (including the 9:15 a.m. Beach Service and the monthly Evensong service) (see Appendix A). The surveys included statements and questions to be rated on a 5-point scale and questions which required written response. Each survey covered general demographics, logistics, liturgy and music. Parishioners were asked to fill out a survey for each service on which they wished to comment.

The survey was distributed at the end of April and collected by the beginning of June, 2003. 143 members of the parish completed survey forms out of an average weekly attendance of 135 (summer) – 220 (winter) for all three services. Over the summer, the results were tabulated and all of the comments transcribed. The results and comments have been published separately from this report. An article about the results appeared in the August *Lion*, and a letter with additional information was sent to each household (see Appendix B). The full copy of the survey results and written comments were made available to the parish during August. A generous donation was received which allowed us to copy, bind, and mail a copy of these results to each household.

In September, six discussion forums were held to go over the survey results with the congregation. Two forums were held for each of the three main Sunday services, with one focusing on Logistics and Liturgy, and one focusing on Music. Participants in the discussions were asked to break out into small random groupings by counting off. Each group discussed the survey results among themselves and then reported back to the larger group. This format worked extremely well. The tone of the groups was very positive and resulted in an increased appreciation and understanding of some opposing views. The rector and members of the committee were present at all meetings. There was interest in adding a third discussion for both the 9 a.m. service (held October 19) and the 10:45 a.m. service (scheduled for November 23). For notes on the discussions, see Appendix C.

The final task of the committee is to submit this report to the Vestry. In this report we have summarized and interpreted the survey results to the best of our abilities. We have provided some observations and recommendations for action. When possible, we

included some ways in which these suggestions might be implemented. For the most part, it will take some participation from the staff and parishioners, as well as some trial and error to find out what will work best.

Our worship is directed by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, which approves all of our official liturgies. At St. Mark's the Rector has the final say about details of how our worship is conducted.

General Demographics

- The vast majority of the respondents (66%) attends church 4-5 times a month, has attended St. Mark's for over 10 years (58%), and is over 40 years old (77%).
- Throughout the year, 13% most often attend the 8 a.m. service. In the summer months, 52% attend the 9:15 a.m. Beach Service and 34% attend the 10:45 a.m. service in the church. During the rest of the year, 64% attend the 10:45 service, while 21% attend the 9:00 service.
- 81% of respondents are pledging members of St. Mark's.
- 54% have served on a Vestry at St. Mark's or at another church.
- 43% attend most often by themselves.
- 39% attend most often with their spouse.

In general, there was a very low response from those who are under 25, those who are newer to St. Marks, those who attend less than twice a month, and those who attend with children. It is important to remember that the results speak about the people who are most committed to St. Mark's. The report and the recommendations will inform the Vestry and the Rector of ways to make our current dedicated members more satisfied. While increasing satisfaction of the congregation is essential to creating a happy and welcoming atmosphere, these results and recommendations will not tell us anything about what people outside the dominant demographic groups may be looking for.

Executive Summary

- Morning Prayer has been a service beloved by many at St. Mark's for a long time. We have become more of a Eucharist-based church, and the trend shows that newer and younger members find weekly Eucharist important. There is respect and appreciation for Morning Prayer being a very important to a group of long-time members. We need to provide them a Morning Prayer Service with integrity and still allow for the majority who find it important to have Holy Eucharist each week.
- Music preferences are highly individual. While the majority of respondents are satisfied with the music and enjoy the opportunity to listen to and contemplate the superb musical presentations of the organist and the choir, a significant segment of the population wishes to participate more actively in their worship than they feel able to do at present. We need to respect these different viewpoints by providing a greater variety of musical and liturgical experiences which would

allow more active participation by the congregation as a whole. This includes presenting the psalms in a variety of ways, so that they are sometimes spoken by the congregation and sometimes sung by the choir. It also includes giving a higher priority to selecting hymns that are familiar to, and singable by, the congregation as a whole.

- The 9 a.m. service can sometimes be viewed as a simpler version of the 10:45 service. If attendees of this service see themselves as more than this, they need to be proactive in establishing a liturgy and music program which allows this service to reach its full potential. This is especially true if the decision is made to permanently move this service to the nave, because some of the defining elements of this service include its circular arrangement and informal tone, both of which are difficult to achieve in a very formal space with fixed pews facing forward.
- The regular year-round 8 a.m. service and the 9:15 a.m. Summer Beach Service both received high marks. In general, our recommendation is to leave them as they are, and focus energy on other services which have more significant issues.
- The survey provided an opportunity for feelings to be aired which itself was healing in many ways. A greater appreciation and respect for both sides of some divisive questions was achieved through this process. There was much interest expressed in further opportunities for both education (such as instructed eucharists) and forums for discussion to continue the dialogue and address the evolving needs of the parish.

Overall Recommendation

The Survey Committee recommends that the Worship and Spirituality Cluster form Worship Committees for both the 9 a.m. and the 10:45 a.m. services. These committees would consist of representatives from the Worship and Spirituality Cluster, the congregation, the clergy, and the music staff. The purpose would be to address the ongoing needs of attendees at each service. Some of these needs have been clarified through the survey, while others may arise with changes in demographics or other trends. These committees would also allow more opportunities for participation and ownership of the worship by the congregation, and more communication and understanding about why things are done.

In deciding how to implement the specific recommendations that follow, our objective is primarily to “solidify our base.” Given that the survey has informed us about the needs and desires of our most committed members, we hope that these recommendations will increase their satisfaction. We hope that this approach will then allow us to reach out to others from a strong home base.

Note: Quantitative questions were rated the following 5-point scale

- 5 = “Very Satisfied” or “Very Much”
- 4 = “Somewhat satisfied” or “Somewhat”
- 3 = “Indifferent”
- 2 = “Somewhat dissatisfied” or “Not Much”
- 1 = “Dissatisfied” or “Not at all”

8 a.m. Service

Demographics

- 12% of all respondents most often attend this service in the winter months, 13% in summer.
- 32 questionnaires were completed with 17 respondents identifying themselves as regular attendees of the 8 a.m., or the 8 a.m. and another service.
- 59% of those who filled out a survey for the 8 a.m. service attend 4-5 times per month and 25% attend once a month.
- This group is coming less often than they were 5 years ago.
- 81% have been attending St. Mark’s for over 20 years.
- 100% are over 40 years old. 69% are over 60 years old.
- 94% are pledging members of St. Mark’s.
- 63% attend most often by themselves and 38% attend most often with their partner spouse or partner.

General

96% of all respondents for this service said they were satisfied with their worship experience. People seem to like the use of the Lady Chapel for a service this size. They like the use of Rite I and the quiet, contemplative nature of the service. While the comments expressed a sense of a community with those who attend this service, there was a sense that this group is less connected with the larger community and activities at St. Mark’s.

Logistics

The logistics section contained very high marks. 100% like the location of the service in the Lady Chapel. They like the starting time and length of the service. Most of the questions in the logistics section received over 85% positive responses. The fact that there is no order of service leaflet received relatively low scores - only 50% of regular attendees answered a 4 or 5, and 29% answered with 3 to that question. Although respondents are comfortable with the presence of children, about 60% are comfortable bringing their children to this service.

87% rated the fact that there is no music at this service with a 4 or 5, and 13% gave it a 3. Comments about the lack of music said something like it “adds to the feeling of simplicity. The basic nature of the service adds to its appeal.” Some come to this service because they don’t like the music at the 10:45. Others said the lack of music is ok, but would not mind some instrumental music at the beginning or end, or an anthem.

Liturgy

77% of regular attendees are happy with the use of Rite I for this service, while 8% responded with a 3, and 15% with a 1. Some people commented about their preference for Rite II. The question with the lowest score was about the sermon being preached by someone other than the rector. One person commented that they would like to see Morning Prayer at this service.

Recommendations:

- Consider adding an order of service leaflet.
- Explore finding opportunities to connect people who attend this service with the larger St. Mark’s Community.

Some ways to do this might be:

- Having educational opportunities during the 9 a.m. hour (this would also service the choir).
- Having some intergenerational activities or events.
- Inviting parishioners to play some instrumental music or have the children sing at the 8 a.m. service occasionally.

9 a.m. Service

Demographics

- 21% of all respondents most often attend this service in the winter months.
- 47 questionnaires were completed with 32 respondents identifying themselves as regular attendees of the 9 a.m., or the 9 a.m. and another service.
- 30% of those who filled out a survey for the 9 a.m. service attend 2-3 times per month; 60% attend 4-5 times per month
- This group is coming more often than they were 5 years ago.
- 47% attend with their children.
- 47% are between 40-60 years old. There is a broad age span at this service.
- 42% have been attending for 1-5 years.

General

This service has a unique identity which poses many challenges and opportunities for St. Mark's. It is the main choice for families yet fully half of those who responded do not bring children. A large percentage of attendees at this service have been attending St. Mark's for 5 years or less. While most who responded to the survey come 4-5 times a month, 30% come 2-3 times per month. 59% have served on the Vestry at St. Mark's or another church (vs. 52% of respondents from the 10:45 service and 43% from the 8 a.m. service). 67% pledge (vs. 81% of respondents from the 10:45 and 94% from the 8 a.m. service). People of all ages attend this service. Most express satisfaction with the circular arrangement, yet less than half rated the location of the service in Cunningham Hall with a 4 or 5.

The survey did not address the question of what makes this service unique, but understanding that issue is necessary in generating more enthusiasm for this service. Being comfortable with the presence of children and the length of the service being 45 minutes received more positive responses than any other questions. Worshiping in common language, facing the celebrant and those with whom they worship are other defining elements of this service.

Location, Location, Location

42% of all respondents said they were satisfied (4 or 5) with the location of the service in Cunningham Hall. 31% answered with a 3 and 21% answered with 2 or 1. In response to the question, "What location do you prefer for the 9 a.m. service?" 49% expressed no preference or did not answer. 38% said they prefer the nave and 13% preferred Cunningham Hall. There were not many comments from people who had no preference. Our sense is that this large group is more concerned with the overall worship experience and less its physical location. Those who prefer the nave like the more formal atmosphere, the sense of reverence that it provokes, the tradition passed on to children, and the ability to use Cunningham Hall for other social activities on Sunday mornings.

Those who prefer Cunningham Hall cite the circular arrangement, the awkwardness of the communion circle in the nave, and the church feeling too big for a service this size.

73% responded with a 4 or 5 on the location of the 9 a.m. service in the nave during Advent, Christmas, Easter and other Sundays, with 19% indifferent (3) and 5% not satisfied.

In response to the question “How pleased are you with the overall arrangement of the space in Cunningham Hall 57% of regular attendees answered with a 4 or 5, 39% answered 3 and 4% answered 1. The seating of the congregation in movable chairs arranged in an oval received 68% positive responses and 32% neutral responses (3). The method of communion distribution received 71% positive responses and 29% neutral responses. The position of the celebrant, piano and musicians also received mostly positive responses, with 21% of responses neutral.

Given the large group of people with no preference, we have taken information from other sources to inform our opinion on the location of this service in addition to the survey responses.

- The space usage report recommended that Cunningham Hall be a multi-use space. This does not preclude its use for worship, but does cause logistical issues impacting the availability of this space for other purposes on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings.
- The Worship & Spirituality Cluster is aware of concern around the location of the service changing from week to week which makes it difficult for those supporting the service to do so easily. The altar guild in particular has difficulty getting the materials up to Cunningham Hall, and knowing when to do so. Having the service permanently in the nave would make supporting this service is easier for the altar guild.
- The majority of those who were not neutral prefer the location for this service be in the nave.
- The satisfaction for the location of the service in the nave during Advent and various other Sundays is much higher than the satisfaction rate for the location in Cunningham Hall on most Sundays.
- Use of the “blue books” for the order of service and music received relatively low scores on the survey, and the church sanctuary makes the hymnals and prayer books available. Some commented that they often worship from memory because there is no place to put blue books and other handouts down while managing small children in Cunningham Hall.
- Having the service in the nave does cause some logistical issues. There is very small amount of time between the end of the 8 a.m. service and the beginning of the 9, the Prayer of Thanksgiving printed on the large board needs to be set up and put away, and the communion circle is very awkward. Also, the church is occasionally used for choir practice during the 9 a.m. service.
- Having the service in the nave in its current arrangement causes the loss of a worship circle used in Cunningham Hall. Approximately two-thirds of regular

- attendees are satisfied with the circle however approximately one-third of respondents don't seem to care.
- While many people cited beauty and sacredness of the nave as a reason that they prefer worshiping in that space, it is also a much more formal atmosphere which moves in a direction counter to the more informal approach to this service.
 - The most important elements of this service may simply be its accessibility for children and the time and length of the service.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that St. Mark's move toward celebrating the 9 a.m. service in the church sanctuary with a circular arrangement on a regular basis. This is consistent with the recommendations from the Space Usage Committee.
- Given that the present design of the church sanctuary does not easily allow for a circular arrangement, it is recommended that the service be moved to the sanctuary in its current form. We also recommend working with the Second Century Committee to explore options for a more flexible arrangement of the space. It is our hope that this will increase overall satisfaction at St. Mark's, by reducing the logistical issues in changing the location of the service from week to week, and freeing up Cunningham Hall for other uses. It is important that we remain true to the nature of the 9 a.m. service when implementing change.

Some ways to help achieve this goal might be to:

- see what kind of arrangement can be made with our current resources which include about 50 movable chairs.
- explore the use of the Bethlehem Chapel as an alternative if the service becomes too small for the nave.
- work on new ways to make the communion circle less awkward, either by having ushers indicate where to form the circle, or by marking a pew so that people know which pew to use to form the circle.
- explore changes to the liturgy which may help us remain true to the tone of the service without changing the physical space.
- continue to monitor satisfaction levels with different configurations.
- before spending significant amounts of money, make sure the majority attendees of this service feel committed to the need for this new configuration.

Liturgy

73% of all respondents rated the customized version of Rite II used at this service a 4 or 5. 80% are satisfied with the Eucharist being offered every week. The questions with the lowest scores in this section were about the use of the Baptismal Covenant instead of the Nicene Creed, and the appropriateness of this service for people new to the Episcopal Church. Compared to the 10:45 service, attendees of the 9 a.m. service were less

satisfied with the way reading of the scripture is handled (73% were satisfied, vs. 97% at the 10:45). The comments indicate that when people are asked to read right before the service begins, the quality of the readings is not as high as it could be.

Our sense from comments and discussions is that this service has room for improvement. Those who are most satisfied say things like “I feel a real sense of community and simplicity at this service – no grandiosity, just mutual support...” Other comments refer to the need for a bit more organization and direction. People being asked to participate in the service right before it begins are one aspect of this. Another aspect is showing up to a service, only to find the location has been changed. Although 92% of respondents are happy that children are allowed to participate in various aspects of this service, there were a few comments like “They do? When?” or “When does this happen?” There was a lot of praise for Tom’s ability to preach at this service, with recognition of the fact that it is difficult to keep the preaching simple and engaging for children without losing meaning for adults.

Recommendation

- Work on building the spirit of this service, the sense of community and sense of mutual support. Given the diverse population at this service, find ways to include what everyone has to offer, in the ways that they can offer it. Develop more of a sense of ownership from those who attend.

Some ways to achieve this might be:

- Recognizing that the rector has the final say in what is included in the liturgy; we recommend that the use of the Baptismal Covenant instead of the Nicene Creed be reviewed to make sure it is working the way it is intended.
- It is recommended that the Worship and Spirituality Cluster work on adding more structure to this service, minimizing the need for asking for people’s participation right before the service begins, making sure the service starts on time, and more advanced planning.
- Find more ways to facilitate the participation of children and families in the service.
- Continue exploring ways to use the liturgy to help define this service.

Music

In response to the question “How satisfied are you with the overall musical offerings?” 59% answered with a 4 or 5. 19% answered 3 and 22% answered with a 2 or 1. They also indicated that singing hymns is less important to their worship experience (68% of respondents for the 9 a.m. service said it is important) than their counterparts at the 10:45 (87% of respondents said it was important). The lowest marks were received for no music being played before or after the service and for the selection of hymns from *Wonder, Love and Praise*.

60% of all respondents but only 52% of regular attendees liked the congregational singing from memory during communion. One respondent said he or she did not feel

comfortable when singing from memory after communion. There were a few other more general comments such as “Music is not a major part of my worship needs.”

The discussion about music spent a good deal of time on the participation of children. People felt that the small numbers of children at St. Mark’s and very strong children’s music program at St. Luke’s makes setting up a music program difficult. However successful music programs are a good way to attract more families with children. At a minimum, people expressed a lot of interest in having children and youth participate in the music in various ways – either through instrumentals or small groups of children singing some simple songs.

The needs of worshippers at 9 a.m. are varied. Comments expressed a lot of satisfaction with the strong involvement from David Gortner in setting the tone, and were positive about the guest musicians and alternative instruments. There was also praise for last year’s 9 a.m. musician and her work with the children last year. People like the involvement from their fellow parishioners as well. This group likes music from a variety of styles and backgrounds, as well as traditional and familiar hymns. One person described it as “...usually readable and singable by non-musicians without being TOO simple and repetitive.” However only 53% of all respondents answered the question “How singable do you find the congregational music?” with a 4 or 5.

Observations and Recommendations:

- Although the majority of respondents are satisfied with the music, there is definitely room for improvement. This service needs strong musical leadership. With David Gortner’s diminishing role, this will have to be monitored closely.
- Try to use music in a way that enhances the sense of community and allows those who find it meaningful to participate in worship. Allow opportunities for people to participate by saying portions of the service that are usually sung when appropriate.

Some ways to accomplish this might be:

- the new musician for the 9 am should start a children’s singing program as soon as possible.
- consider adding preludes and postludes.
- actively solicit parishioners or other volunteers to play instruments or sing for the 9 am.
- select hymns that are easier to sing.
- continue to solicit feedback on satisfaction with the music.

9:15 a.m. Beach Service

Demographics

- 52% of all respondents regularly attend this service in the summer.
- 49 questionnaires were completed, 44 identified themselves as regular attendees of the beach service, or the beach and another service
- 68% attend 4-5 times per month
- There is a broad range of ages at this service.

General

Attendees of the Beach Service were among the most satisfied. 93% are happy with the overall worship experience. Virtually all respondents are happy with the location of the service at the Lakefront, the informal seating, the time and length of the service, the simple handout containing the order of service, the presence of children, the sermon and the welcoming atmosphere. Comments describe a love for worshipping in the outdoor setting which inspires a feeling of closeness to God. The service was also described as being a refreshing change for the summer, when the church can feel dark and hot. Finally, the comments indicated that the early start time and shorter length of the service allows people to enjoy other activities later in the day.

People also commented that the public setting of the park was good for welcoming newcomers and evangelism, however one suggested that the service be on the front lawn of the church instead.

The liturgy was described as “suited to the occasion in brevity and informality.” While 62% of all respondents were satisfied with the doxology being the only music provided, this is low relative to the other responses. 11% answered 3 and 27% answered 2 on this question. Many suggested either a few simple, well-known hymns or a guitar or other instrument for accompaniment. Others were very happy with the fact that there was no music.

Recommendation

- This is not a high priority, but when time and energy allows, explore adding some more music that does not add too much to the length or complexity of this service.

10:45 a.m. Service

Demographics

- There were 98 respondents to the 10:45 survey, 77 of whom are regular attendees at that service.
- 72% of all respondents have been at St. Mark's at least 5 years.
- 81% are pledging members.
- 75% are over 40 years old.
- 71% attend 4-5 times a month.

Logistics

Respondents at the 10:45 service express a high degree of satisfaction with many of the basic logistics. 93% of all respondents rated the seating of the congregation in fixed pews facing forward as a 4 or a 5; 92% gave a 4 or 5 to the distribution of communion during most of the year to people standing or kneeling at the communion rail. The regular attendees responses were even slightly higher, 95% and 94% respectively. Almost 3/4, 74%, of the regular attendees rated the usual length of the service a 4 or a 5; however, the percentage for all respondents was only 69. The usual time of the service also gained the enthusiasm of 78%. 90% expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the overall arrangement of space in the sanctuary.

78% of all respondents gave high marks to the choir facing each other across the chancel, with 18% giving it a 3. Only 4% gave it low ratings, although several people mentioned a problem hearing the singing with that arrangement.

The changes during Lent and Advent in the seating of the choir in the balcony (65%) drew a strong majority of 4 and 5 (65%), as did the change in distribution of communion (67% highest marks), but not the enthusiasm that the previously reported questions generated.

The layout of the order of service leaflet received 75% highest satisfaction ratings, with even higher percentages, 86% giving high grades to the ease of following the service using the leaflet.

Lowest ratings in the logistics portion of the survey for this service were given for the celebrant facing the altar and away from the congregation during the Eucharistic prayer. 64% of the regular attendees and 59% of all respondents gave that a rating of 4 or 5, with 21% and 26% respectively gave it a 1 or 2. At the discussions, several people thought it unifying to have the priest and the congregation all facing the same direction. Although

there is a majority very comfortable with the current arrangement, there is a significant minority which is very dissatisfied with it.

An interesting result is that 93% of the regular attendees of the 10:45 service who have children feel comfortable bringing them to that service, while only 65% of all respondents feel comfortable bringing their children to the 10:45 service. Of those without children, 84% were comfortable with the presence of children.

There was no question on the survey, and no written comments received on the position of the baptismal font. A significant number of people at the discussions were dissatisfied with the font being at the back of the church. They do not like turning around in the pews, straining to see what is going on, while the sacrament is performed in a back corner.

Seventy-four percent of respondents give a satisfaction level of 4 or 5 with the current length of the service. 16% give it a 1 or 2. Many comments, however, expressed concern about the length especially for the combined Morning Prayer/Holy Eucharist liturgy. Comments said that each lost some integrity by forcing 2 services into a set period of time, and the length of the combined service was too much for them. Some said too many canticles in the Morning Prayer service, too many hymns altogether, or too many hymns verses being sung, lengthen the service. Some people suggested that the offertory hymn and the hymn after communion are not necessary.

Another idea expressed both in the written comments and during the discussions was the perception that the quantity of music requires that the sermon be shorter than desired, in order to keep the entire service under a certain length.

Recommendations

- Given the high level of satisfaction with the forward-facing pews and receiving communion standing or kneeling at the altar rail, care must be given when addressing the needs of the 9 a.m. community for flexible space in which to sit and to organize the communion circle so that the ability for the 10:45 congregation to continue the current arrangement not be lost.
- Creative ideas should continue to be explored for an altar table which would provide the celebrant the ability to face the congregation, at least at some services. Remodeling the current high altar is cost-prohibitive, and there is still a majority of respondents satisfied with the current arrangement.
- Attention should be given to the position of the baptismal font, and the general logistics of the baptism service.
- See liturgy and music sections for recommendations regarding the length of the service.

Liturgy

High satisfaction levels, as measured by ratings of 4 or 5, were indicated for the regular use of Rite II (79% of all respondents), the reading of lessons by a rotating schedule of parishioners (97%), the reading of the gospel from the center aisle (76%), the gospel procession (79%), the Prayers of the People read by parishioners (82%), the sermon occasionally preached by someone other than the Rector (74%), the length of the sermon (83%), the content of the sermon (81%), and the opportunities for congregational participation (74%).

The major area of disagreement, with significant percentages of people with differing opinions, is the way we regularly provide both Morning Prayer and Holy Eucharist. 59% gave a 4 or 5 to the use of the Morning Prayer service twice a month, while 31% gave it a 1 or 2. Adding in the 3 to the lower ratings, there are 41% who are less than enthusiastic. In the General Satisfaction portion of the survey, 50% gave 4 or 5 to the importance of regularly scheduled Morning Prayer, with 32% giving it low ratings (1 and 2). Those who rated Morning Prayer most important have attended St. Mark's for over 20 years. 65% said it was important to receive Holy Communion each week, 15% said it was not. The group who rated Holy Communion most important are those under 40 years old and those who have attended for less than 10 years.

The inclusion of a Eucharist service following Morning Prayer received 57% 4 and 5, with 24% of responders giving it a 1 or 2, while the actual transition received only 35% 4 and 5, with 41% 1 and 2. The option for people to leave before Eucharist was given 61% positive rankings, and 21% negative.

Our interpretation of these numbers is that almost 2/3 of the congregation feels strongly that weekly Holy Eucharist is important, over half feel that regularly scheduled Morning Prayer is important, and almost 2/3 are comfortable with the *option* for people to leave. The actual transition receives significantly poorer marks; only 35% rate it highly.

Several comments indicated that the shortened, combined services lacked the integrity of the full liturgy for each provided in the *Book of Common Prayer*. One typical comment was "I would like us to move to Holy Communion every Sunday. If this is not possible, I would like to go back to pure Morning Prayer, followed by an optional communion afterwards that is short and sweet. The combination does not work for me; too long, awkward, divides the congregation, trying to serve too many masters."

A related matter covered under Logistics is the length of the service. 74% of regular attendees at 10:45 gave the length 4 and 5, with 67% of all respondents giving the length high marks. 12% of all parishioners gave the length 1 or 2, and 16% of the regular attendees.

Recommendations:

- While acknowledging that St. Mark's has become a Eucharistic-based church (celebrating each week at most services), we need to reaffirm that Morning Prayer is needed at St. Mark's because of its importance to many longtime members. Holy Eucharist is also very important to many people, including most newcomers, and we want to respect both ends of the continuum.

Some ways to achieve this might be to:

- form a Liturgy Committee that would work on hashing out the details of improving the transition between Holy Eucharist (HE) and Morning Prayer (MP).
- provide a complete Morning Prayer service, not a truncated compromise. This would include saying more than two collects.
- continue Morning Prayer twice a month.
- continue full communion service 2-3 times a month.
- continue to have a short communion service after Morning Prayer.
- delete redundancies, where possible. Where not possible (as in saying the Lord's Prayer at both MP and HE), explain why.
- have a vigorous hymn at end of Morning Prayer.
- continue with new practice of "traveling music" played on organ between MP and HE.
- announce from pulpit and in bulletin that at close of MP, a Holy Communion service will follow, and that some people will be leaving at the end of the Morning Prayer service.
- ask those wishing to receive communion to move to front of church.
- be mindful of length of service when choosing hymns and number of verses to be sung, and service music.
- try to find ways of preparing the table for communion in a speedier fashion.
- have an instructed Eucharist in the near future. Do this at least once a year, as a refresher to older members, a place to introduce new liturgical practices, and a welcome tutorial for newcomers.
- close the doors on the south side of nave and between parlor and hall outside nave, to cut noise from coffee hour.
- continue to reevaluate as changes in demographics occur.

Music

General Remarks

In response to the question "How satisfied are you overall with the musical offerings?" 37% of all respondents answered 5, 25% answered 4, 21% answered 3, and 18% answered with a 2 or 1. In further analysis of the numbers, the group most satisfied with the musical offerings are those who participate in the choir (85% answered 4 or 5). Those who are not in the choir showed less satisfaction with the music overall (52% answered 4 or 5).

The respondents care passionately about the music, even if they have differing opinions about how they prefer to experience music during worship. In both the written comments and the discussion people expressed appreciation and respect for the quality of the music and the work of the choir and the music director. Dissatisfaction derived from a desire for more active participation by those who found the hymns spiritually unfulfilling. Those who were most satisfied expressed appreciation for the “mix of old and familiar pieces and new and fresh pieces” and of the challenging nature and wide variety of the music program.

Several tensions appear to be in play here. One is the tension between the preference of some to actively participate in the singing of hymns and speaking or singing of prayers and the preference of others to participate passively through taking in the beautiful music or prayers performed by others. Another tension is between the preference for “familiar” music that is easy for the non-practicing musician to sight-read, and the preference for fully exploring the rich and diverse variety of music the Anglican tradition provides us. As with most of the other issues in this report, respect for all and compromise is called for.

Enthusiastic participation by the congregation and the choir is a worthy goal, and anything we can do to improve this will also increase most people’s satisfaction levels.

Hymns

The quantitative data tell us that singing hymns is an important part of the worship experience for nearly everyone: 87% of respondents answered 4 or 5 to this question. The sheer number of comments focusing on hymns and comments during the September discussions reveal that singing hymns is the primary way by which members of the congregation participate in the musical portion of worship, and that people very much want to be involved. (For example, only 61% find the balance between congregational and choir singing appropriate, and many respondents comment that while there is often one hymn they like to sing, they would prefer more than one.) Many parishioners mention enjoying the sense of community when the whole congregation sings hymns enthusiastically together. The recessional hymn is an important opportunity for participation by all. However, many respondents find many hymns difficult to sing, and only 50% of respondents report that the congregational music is “singable”. Many of the written comments also describe many hymn selections as difficult to sing.

What hymns are sung is also an area of much discussion. Sixty-seven percent gave a satisfaction level of 4 or 5 to the selection of hymns from *The Hymnal 1982*. Only 49% percent report a satisfaction level of 4 or 5 with the selections from *Wonder, Love and Praise*, while 34% give an answer of 3 and 20% answer with 2 or 1. (This question was the one with the lowest number of satisfied responses of all the music questions.)

The most frequent descriptions of the kinds of hymns people enjoy singing are “traditional,” “familiar,” and “joyful,” or “uplifting.” However, few respondents give specific examples of which hymns they consider to have these qualities. Some specific categories of hymns requested are Anglican, English or American hymns, those with four-part harmony, hymns from the 1940 hymnal, Gospel and African-American hymns, Southern Baptist hymns, and folk hymns. One respondent listed many hymns from the 1982 hymnal.

The texts of hymns are also important to 84% of respondents. 70% gave a rating of 4 or 5 to the selection of hymns whose texts correspond with the lectionary and the church calendar. Clearly it is not only the experience of singing that matters to people, but the words that are being prayed through the singing. There were also a few comments that the hymn selections should not be restricted to those that closely correspond to the lessons.

People were less than enthusiastic about the tempo and style of congregational music; 53% responded with a 4 or 5, 21% with a 3, and 24% with a 2 or 1. In the comments and the discussions, people expressed a preference for a faster pace and more uplifting tone. Recognizing that certain seasons call for more somber music, those who commented preferred more upbeat music when this is not the case.

There were a few comments (written and at the discussions) that there are simply too many hymns, or that too many verses are sung. There are several possible reasons for this. Even if one likes a particular hymn, singing 4-5 verses may be more than one wants. Singing 4 or 5 verses of a hymn that one finds difficult or that has a slow, dreary tempo can feel much too long. Also, too much music can dominate the service, to the detriment of spoken or silent prayer, liturgy and sermon. Finally, it may simply be a comment about the overall length of the service. It is likely that all of these reasons play a role.

While it is clear that people want hymns to be easy to sing enough for everyone to sing, and also want hymns to be familiar and traditional, the number of musical styles mentioned makes it clear that what is familiar or traditional to one may not be to another. Furthermore, many written comments expressed enjoyment of the wide variety of musical styles and traditions included in the present musical offerings.

Recommendations

- It should be recognized that hymns are the primary means by which the congregation participates in worship through music. For this reason, it should be possible for all members of the congregation to be able to sing the hymns.
- It should be recognized that the congregation of St. Mark’s, like other Episcopal and Anglican churches, is made up of people from a wide variety of faith backgrounds. For this reason, the selection of hymns should represent that variety, in addition to representing the Anglican tradition.

Some specific ways to accomplish these goals might be to:

- offer hymns with simple melodies.
- offer hymns from the canon of Anglican church music.
- offer hymns that are uplifting in tone when appropriate.
- play hymns at a faster tempo when appropriate.
- when a more difficult hymn is used, include other easier hymns in that service as well and consider singing fewer verses.
- when less familiar hymns are to be used, offer them several times within one season, so that they can become more familiar.
- offer workshops during which new or unfamiliar hymns can be taught to people who want to learn them.
- implement a means by which members of the congregation can introduce or share hymns from their own background.
- offer more opportunities for people to sing favorite hymns – special services or events where lots of easy to sing hymns are offered, or can be requested.
- be mindful of the overall length of the service.

Service Music

The findings about service music parallel those about the hymns in many ways. Sixty-five percent give a satisfaction level of 4 or 5 to the singing of service music. In the written comments, many of the same themes appear, namely, that people want to be able to participate but can't when the music is too difficult.

Several comments requested that the Eucharistic prayer be spoken rather than sung. As for other portions of the service music, written and spoken comments reflected a diversity of opinion within the parish. For example, some enjoy the canticles at Morning Prayer while others think there are too many of them; some report that the music sung during communion enhances their worship while others find it distracting; equal numbers of people request more chanting and less chanting.

An underlying theme in the written comments and in the discussions was the desire for consistency in the service music, both within a service and from week to week. The "Ordinary" texts (e.g., *Glory to God* and *Holy, Holy, Holy* at a Eucharistic service, and *Come let us sing*, and *Blessed art Thou* at Morning Prayer) that are the same in every service are no doubt part of the appeal of the Anglican liturgy. During the discussion, one person remarked, "It would be nice not to have to open the hymnal to sing the service music." This expresses a desire that the texts that stay the same be sung to music that stays the same. On the other hand, there are many comments about appreciation of variety, suggesting that it would be dull if the service music were always the same.

A repeated theme in the discussions was that changes in the liturgy can be surprising and distract from the worship experience. Repeated over and over was the desire that changes be explained as they are implemented, so that the congregation is not left wondering why things are different from the previous week or season. This same distraction or frustration can also occur when the music changes frequently. In fact,

several people indicated that they now attend the 8 am service specifically to avoid their frustrations with the music at 10:45.

The perception that service music changes frequently is likely to be exacerbated by the alternating liturgies at the 10:45 service. Because the Morning Prayer and Eucharist liturgies include different texts, and because the liturgies alternate with each other, the service music is never the same two weeks in a row, even when it is consistent across services.

Although the numerical part of the survey did not ask about music from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, many people commented on it. This issue is one of the greatest areas of zealous disagreement among parishioners. Those who enjoy singing Orthodox music like that it represents the most ancient tradition of the Christian Church. One respondent wrote that it “links us with centuries of saints.” Those who object to Orthodox music find it inappropriate for an American Episcopal church. One respondent commented that “this is not Moscow on Ridge.” Within the written comments, about equal numbers of comments expressed a like and a dislike of Orthodox music. Several people wrote that they enjoy it in moderation, but not when there is too much. In this area, as in all, it seems clear that compromise is called for.

Recommendations

- Service music should be singable by all members of the congregation.
- A means should be found to underscore the constancy of the portions of the service that remain the same from week to week. (This goal is made more difficult by the weekly alternating liturgies.)

Some specific ways to accomplish these goals might be to:

- avoid service music that is very difficult for congregational singing.
- keep service music the same within each liturgical season.
- minimize the need for alternating liturgies.
- at the beginning of each season, offer workshops for people to learn or practice the service music that will be sung during that season.
- when the liturgical season changes, offer short explanations during the service of the elements of the service that change with the season.

Psalms

The survey asked a question about the singing of psalms by the choir with a congregational refrain, as usual during the Eucharist service. Only half of the respondents gave a satisfaction level of 4 or 5, while 20% give a rating of 3, and 30% a rating of 2 or 1. This is the question in the music section with the greatest number of “dissatisfied” responses. The survey neglected to ask about the singing of psalms in Anglican chant by the choir and congregation, as usual during Morning Prayer, but there were a few comments requesting that more Anglican chant be used.

Dissatisfaction with the congregation singing only the psalm refrain appears to arise from a strong desire to participate actively in the worship, as with the hymns and service music. In the comments expressing a preference for spoken psalms, several people indicate that this is so that the entire congregation can participate. Some prefer that the entire congregation sing the psalms. One person asked that the psalm be eliminated and a hymn sung instead.

Recommendations

- The congregation should be able to participate fully in the psalm on most Sundays.

Some specific ways to accomplish this goal might be to:

- Alternate the way the psalm is included in the liturgy:
 - have the psalm spoken rather than sung.
 - have the psalm sung in Anglican chant by the congregation.
 - have the congregation sing a hymn setting of the text of the psalm.
 - have the congregation sing a musical setting of the psalm from a source other than the hymnal.
 - have the choir sing the psalm with a congregational refrain.

Choral and Organ Music

The survey results show a high level of satisfaction with the portions of the service that are not sung by the congregation. Ninety-one percent of respondents give a rating of 4 or 5 to the offertory anthem sung by the choir, and 92% to the organ preludes and postludes. In addition, 77% give a high rating to the music by the choir while people receive communion.

There were many very favorable comments about the quality of the choir and the organist. Several respondents also comment that they come to the 10:45 service because of the choir and organ.

There were a small number of comments about the choir music being a performance rather than an act of worship, and that there are “too many anthems.” It is unclear whether this perception applies to the offertory anthems specifically or to the service as a whole. In any case, these comments seem to reflect again the desire of the congregation to participate actively in worship.

Recommendations

- It should be clear to all that the choir’s offertory anthem and the organ preludes and postludes are acts of worship and not performances.

Some specific ways to accomplish this goal might be to:

- continue to provide the text of the offertory anthem in the bulletin, so that people can pray the text.
- continue to provide remarks in the bulletin about the offertory anthem and organ music, explaining how these fit with the rest of the worship service.
- explicitly identify the opportunities that are intended for congregational participation in the music.

The Way It Used to Be

Another theme that arose during the discussions was a deep grief on the part of some parishioners over the loss of the former music program, which included a Choir of Men and Boys, the St. Dunstan's Choir for girls, and a Women's Chorale. There is a perception that the former program was eliminated arbitrarily, without discussion or explanation. Some portion of the anger and frustration expressed about the current musical offerings may be symptoms of this unresolved grief.

One aspect of this issue is regret that children and youth are not currently involved in choral singing at the 10:45 service.

Recommendations

- It should be clear that high school students are welcome to join the choir.
- Offer those who are not in the choir more opportunities to sing songs they enjoy.

Some ways of achieving this might be:

- actively recruit high school students for the choir
- implement a children's singing program.
- see Hymns section.

Evangelism

Many people pointed out, both in the written comments and in the discussions, that music is a significant part of what attracts newcomers to a church and influences their decision to become active members. Of course, since the respondents to the survey were largely active, regular attendees of St. Mark's (only 14% of respondents attend less than twice a month), we do not have hard data representing the opinions of people who might be considering joining the congregation.

It may be possible, to hypothesize about what attracts newcomers by extrapolating from the responses of people who have joined the parish in the last five years. Twenty-six people answered that they regularly attend the 10:45 service and started attending St. Mark's in the last five years. Of these 26 respondents, 18 report an overall satisfaction level of 4 or 5 with the musical offerings, three give a level of 3, and only one a level of 2 or 1. In the course of the discussions, several active members of St. Mark's who have

joined within the last five years remarked that the reason they chose to become members of St. Mark's was because of the nature of the music program. It is, of course, impossible to tell how many visitors did not like the music and weighed that as a factor in not joining St. Mark's. In any case, the more enthusiasm we can generate around the music, the better we will be able to joyously welcome visitors and newcomers.

Evensong

30 people filled out a short survey for the Evensong Service. Approximately 75% responded positively to the questions regarding the variety of prayer formats, liturgies, and music, the balance between choral and congregational participation and how nourishing they find the liturgies. In response to the question "How often have you attended the monthly choral Evensong/Vespers this year?" 30% answered 5, 34% answered 4, 23% answered 3 and 13% answered 2. The comments indicated an appreciation for the chance to explore some different music and liturgies at this service.

Other Survey Items

Saturday 5 pm Service

20 people answered 4 or 5 to the question “How likely would you be to attend a Sat. 5 pm service? 14 of these attend the 10:45 most often. 13 attend 4-5 times per month. 11 attend most often by themselves. These people represent all ages and length of tenure at St. Mark’s.

While not knowing how much interest from existing members is needed to explore adding a service, it does seem that this issue warrents further study.

Recommendation

- This issue should be revisited at a later date after some of the more pressing issues identified by the survey have been addressed. We need to really explore who might be interested in a service like this, and whether it would be useful in attracting some of the people that the survey did not reach – namely those that are younger and newer to St. Mark’s and potentially those that have not yet found us.

Rector preaching

The rector’s preaching was praised through out the survey. In describing St. Mark’s, “A place where the word of God is preached” had the single highest response. In response to the question, “how meaningful and thought-provoking do you usually find the sermon?” attendees of the 8 a.m. were the most enthusiastic with 100% responding 4 or 5. Attendees of the 9 and the 10:45 had approximately 80% 4 and 5.

The statement “The sermon is occasionally preached by someone other than the rector” had a range of responses. Those who attend the 8 a.m. were least enthusiastic, with about half responding with 4 or 5. Those at the 10:45 gave it the highest rating; about three-quarters responded with 4 or 5.

Clearly the rector’s preaching is an important reason why people come to St. Mark’s. Our sense is that they come to church expecting a well-preached sermon, and are disappointed if they get something less than the high standard set by our Rector. It is particularly important on festival days, when people make a special effort to come to church. A typical comment was “Tom’s sermon’s are very topical and thought provoking. He is a gifted preacher.”

Comments regarding the length of the service may be referring to the fact that the sermon can feel “rushed” in order to keep the service a certain length. This was mentioned most often when talking about Morning Prayer. Part of the appeal of the Morning Prayer service seems to be more time for a good sermon, and people react when they feel this is cut short in order to include a Eucharist.