

January 15, 2012

Worship Survey Results

Remember the worship surveys that circulated last fall? The results were supposed to have been released earlier had it not been for your absent-minded secretary. If you are curious about the results, please read the following. The Worship & Pastoral Oversight Commission has looked through the results in detail and presented them to the Church Council, with the hope that our worship services can be made welcoming and nourishing for the spirit.

1. Does the format of the service free you to worship, to deeply reflect and to connect to others? Is anything missing?

All stated that the format of worship does allow for worship and reflection. Most stated nothing was missing; some thought we could do with more people, more frequent (weekly) communion and greater connection with St. Peter's Anglican.

2. Is the length, tone and flow of the service satisfactory?

For the most part, yes. Some stated the service was too long; others said that length didn't matter as long as the service flowed well. Some found the music or service in general to be disjointed, although less so recently.

3. How to you find the balance of music in worship? (eg. old vs new hymns, inclusion of lively or global songs)

The general consensus was that new hymns are welcome as long as they aren't introduced too quickly (one a week is sufficient). Some expressed discomfort at too much movement during hymns; others stated the emphasis should instead be on the meaning of words and strength of the music, rather than merely old vs. new. The organ is sometimes too loud and quieter music during the reflection after the sermon is preferred. The balance of music was deemed good in general.

4. Do you need/desire the general prayer of confession each week?

Generally (but not entirely), yes. The emphasis should be "at times we forget" rather than "we are bad all the time."

5. *What is the impact of the children's time for you?*

General words included “very good,” “delightful” and “long.” Some expressed less appreciation for the children’s time on the occasions when no children are present, or frustration at being unable to hear the children’s responses. The minister’s connection with children was viewed as genuine.

6. *Would you enjoy speakers from agencies that we serve in the city—eg the women's shelter, food bank, schools, immigrant association etc.—in order to better understand the issues and needs within Sherbrooke?*

This question generated the most varied responses in the survey. Some answered “yes,” most answered “no” – but of the latter, a majority clarified that they would be willing to hear such speakers as long as it didn’t take place during the worship service itself.

7. *Would you like to see the following more or less often in our worship?*

Here are the general trends:

Older hymns: more
New hymns: the same
Global music: more or the same
Silence: more or the same
Participation/response: the same
Consistent bulletin format: more or the same
Children’s time: less or the same
Formality: the same
French: the same (varied responses)
Longer sermons: less
New Creed: more

8. *How well do the prayers reflect your concerns and hopes? Is there enough silence in the service for your needs?*

All responses were positive. Several expressed a desire for more silence, as well as having concerns for prayer spoken before rather than during the service.

9. Tell us your response to the sermons. Do they seem relevant, uplifting and informative, with sufficient global and mission perspective? Do they affirm your being?

Very positive: Responses ranged from “good” to “excellent.” Many expressed particular appreciation for the connections made with current concerns, marginalized societies, social justice and First Nations wisdom and spirituality – rather than merely following the lectionary readings. The sermons are a tad too challenging at times. Some felt the notion of “affirming your being” to be a bit far-fetched.

10. We try to be inclusive in many ways in our service, through the use of hearing devices and our elevator for the less mobile; through the use of some French in our service, reflecting the wonderful cultural reality of our city; and with a warmth of welcome to anyone who may have been marginalized for any number of reasons: struggles with addiction or mental health, visible minorities and people of different sexual orientations or cultures.

In your mind, how do we succeed? What other ways can we make our Sunday time together truly welcoming for all people?

There was widespread appreciation for Plymouth-Trinity’s ability to be a welcoming community. Some suggested additional ways in which we can be more welcoming, such as by having coffee available at the back of the sanctuary or hot water available for tisane.

There are areas in which we can improve, such as by having all of us seek to welcome newcomers (rather than relying on others to do the welcoming). We are not always as good at following up after the initial welcome and need to make sure that we welcome the “non-marginalized,” or long-time members. Some expressed concern at why existing members may feel removed or alienated from the church.

In terms of worship, some appreciated being broken out of our routine. While many appreciated including French in worship, some felt it easier to have it in hymns and words of welcome, rather than in readings. Many preferred the service to start on time and to not be too long.

