

Overview

The vestry administered a survey during summer 2010 to guide us as we look forward to calling a new rector and to allow us to reflect as a community on where we are as a church. The response was quite robust. A total of 73 individuals submitted surveys – 57 adult members of St. John’s, 8 youth members, and 8 friends of the parish. Survey results are provided below. Section I offers a general summary of themes that emerged via the survey. Section II presents a profile of survey respondents, and Section III presents a detailed summary of findings for each survey question.

I. General Summary***Chapel of St. John the Divine: a vibrant and close-knit worshipping community***

It is clear that parishioners celebrate the vitality of community at St. John’s. We value a deeply-rooted warmth and connection in worship, our care for each other and those whom we serve in our outreach programs, and the dedication and energy of our parishioners. These themes are reflected in quite positive ratings for five survey items in particular. Using a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree), high percentages of respondents rated the parish at a “4” or “5” in the following areas:

- 92% feel that we support each other well in times of need
- 86% feel that being part of St. John’s satisfies their spiritual needs
- 83% of respondents believe that we have a strong sense of mission and responsibility for St. John’s
- 75% are satisfied with the level of outreach
- 75% feel that we are accepting of others’ differences

The above themes are echoed and amplified in parishioner responses to the questions of why we come to Sunday services at St. John’s and our greatest blessings at St. John’s.

Primary hopes for the next five years: A rector and sustained financial stability

The most frequently cited priorities for St. John’s over the next five years are a new rector and sustained financial stability. Parishioners often connect the latter to growth in membership, especially young families.

Importance of church school for sustained vitality

Comments suggest that expansion of church school for youth and adults is fundamental to the sustained dynamism of the St. John’s community. Church school is seen as an attraction for young families, which in turn will contribute to the financial stability cited above.

The majority of parishioners are satisfied with the music program

Survey ratings indicate that slightly more than half of parishioners agree or strongly agree that the music program satisfies their needs. Comments suggest that there are a range of musical tastes at St.

John's. Some parishioners favor more traditional hymns and "old favorites" while others would like to see more recent church music integrated into services.

Is God the center of our church community? Our lives outside of St. John's?

The majority of parishioners (61%) agrees or strongly agrees that God is the center of our church community, and, being part of St. John's community affects decisions at home, at work, and in the community (54%). A third of parishioners is ambivalent about or disagree with the statement that God is the center of the community. Such findings suggest a need for continued exploration of ways to bring God more to the forefront of our activities:

Continue to explore ways to improve communication

Two-thirds of the parish agrees that we communicate well at St. John's.

Continue to face the challenges of a diverse congregation

As a community, a large majority of parishioners feel that we are accepting of others' differences. At the same time, one-quarter of our congregation is ambivalent or disagrees with this statement, and about one-third is ambivalent or disagrees that we are welcoming to newcomers. This might be partly related to the fact that about half of respondents live in the immediate vicinity of St. John's and half live more than two miles away. Comments on survey items and other questions suggest that it may be valuable for us to reflect on our degree of inclusivity in worship, decision-making, and hospitality across age groups and the political spectrum.

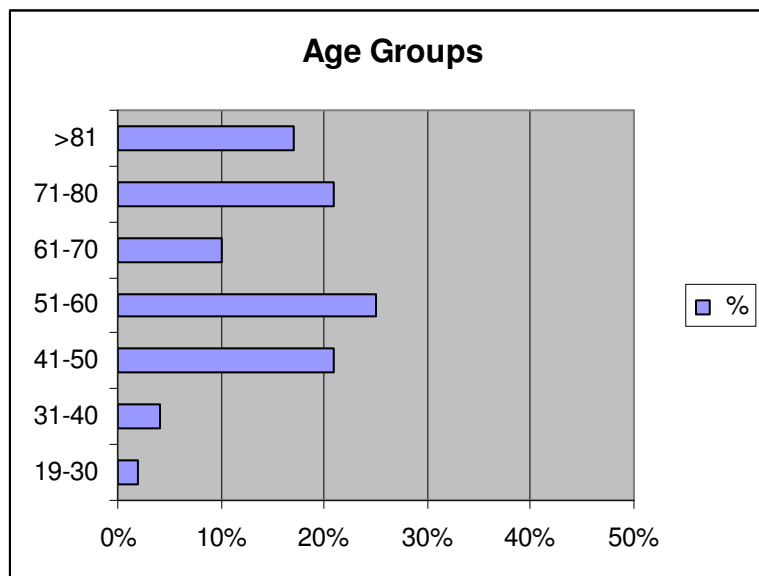
II. Who submitted surveys?

57 adult members and 8 youth of St. John's submitted surveys. Largely this is a group of very engaged parishioners who live fairly close to the church and come to services regularly, if not every week. The adult group represents all age categories.

- The majority of adult respondents (62%) live within 0-2 miles of the parish; 28% live 3-10 miles from the parish, while 4% live greater than ten.
- Over half (55%) have been members of the parish for over 16 years; six percent have been members for 11-15 years; a fifth of respondents have been members of St. John's for 6-10 years while 17% joined the parish in the last five years.
- 41 % of respondents are male; 59 % are female.
- The large majority of respondents (74%) are married; 16% self-reported as single, and 10% indicated that they are widowed.
- 59% of respondents attend services every week with another 20% attending twice a month. 12% indicated that they attend services once a month; 10% indicated a few times a year.
- A remarkable 78% of respondents indicated that they are engaged in St. John's ministries on a monthly basis.

39% 1-3 hours a month
18% 5-8 hours a month
6% 9-12 hours a month
14% > 12 hours a month

- The largest group of respondents was those between the ages of 51-60 (25%); twenty-one percent of respondents are ages 41-50 and 21% are in the 71-80 age category.



III. Survey Findings

Part A

Respondents were given fourteen declarative statements and asked to rate the extent to which they disagree/agree with each statement using a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). The chart below provides the mean rating for each survey item, as well as the percent of parishioners at a 2, 3, 4, and 5 rating. Separate analyses were done for the surveys submitted by friends of St. John’s. Non-member ratings largely echo parishioner responses.

Table 1. Ratings: Adult members of St. Johns (n=53)

Survey Item	Mean Rating	% at 2	% at 3	% at 4	% at 5
Being a part of St. John’s affects my decisions	3.78	6%	40%	24%	30%
We are accepting of others’ differences	3.88	6%	18%	51%	24%
We make decisions well	3.73	4%	31%	45%	18%
Communicate well among ourselves	3.66	2%	32%	49%	14%
Strong sense of mission	4.10	6%	12%	50%	33%
Support each other in times of need	4.42	----	8%	42%	50%
Strong sense of responsibility for the parish	4.29	4%	14%	33%	50%
Do well at recognizing others’ contributions to parish	3.88	6%	20%	47%	26%
Good at welcoming visitors and newcomers	3.77	2%	27%	48%	19%
Satisfied with level of outreach	3.96	10%	15%	44%	31%
God is the center of our parish life	3.63	14%	24%	41%	20%
Church school is adequate for our needs	3.48	9%	41%	25%	21%
Satisfied with the music at St. John’s	3.55	18%	29%	26%	26%
Being part of St. John’s satisfies my spiritual needs	4.27	4%	8%	37%	49%

Parishioner Explanations for Negative Ratings

Respondents were asked the question, “If you gave any of the survey items a “1” or a “2”, please tell us why.” In other words, this question allowed parishioners to explain why they disagree or strongly disagree with a survey item. The open-ended responses tell us a bit more about the range of agreement/disagreement within the parish, and help us understand the areas that merit further reflection as we move forward. Bulleted items represent parishioner comments.

We are accepting of others’ differences:

- Generations of parishioners from the neighborhood can be “cliquish.”
- Parishioners have left because of the issues of clergy gender and sexuality.

We make decisions well:

- The vestry needs to move faster towards the goal of getting a new rector.
- St. John’s youth have not been invited to engage in decision-making at St. John’s.

We communicate well among ourselves:

- There is a lack of communication on some topics.
- We need to communicate better about our spiritual needs.

We have a strong sense of mission at St. John’s:

A few parishioners are unclear about our mission -- one commented, “Mission: what is ours?”

God is the center of our parish life together:

- The survival of the parish and increased membership has been prioritized over God.

Church school is adequate for our needs:

- While church school is flourishing under the Edwards family leadership, an expanded church school for youth and adults may help attract new families.

Satisfaction with music at St. John’s:

- Some members choose to attend the service at 8 a.m. because they find a choir distracting.
- More recent music would help enliven the service.
- There is a need for more traditional music or “old favorites” that “bring a warm and comfortable feeling to all.”

Part C: Vital Skills

Part “C” of the survey offered a list of eleven desirable skills for a new rector. Parishioners were asked to choose five skills that are the most vital to the development of St. John’s during the next five years. The chart below provides the percentage of adult members of St. John’s who checked each skill. The skills that the highest percentage of parishioners checked most frequently are in bold.

Skill	Percent of congregants who checked this skill as one of the five most vital to the development of St. John's (n=53 adult respondents)
1. Preacher	87%
2. Pastor/Care for the Congregation	72%
3. Christian Education	58%
4. Liturgical Leader	57%
5. Crisis Minister/Counselor	53%
6. Spiritual Guide/leader	43%
7. Outreach Ministry	36%
8. Membership	28%
9. Worship	25%
10. Ecumenical Leader	17%
11. Administrative Leader	13%

The chart below provides the same information but from the perspective of the eight youth members of St. John's who completed the survey. Note that outreach and ecumenical ministry appear to be more of a concern to the youth than with the adults.

Skill	Percent of congregants who checked this skill as one of the five most vital to the development of St. John's (n=8 youth respondents)
1. Christian Education	88%
2. Preacher	88%
3. Outreach Ministry	63%
4. Ecumenical Leader	50%
5. Worship	50%
6. Pastor	50%
7. Administrative Leader	38%
8. Crisis Minister	13%
9. Membership	13%
10. Spiritual Guide	13%

Survey Question: Why do you come to Sunday services at St. John's?

Parishioners offered a wide variety of reasons for coming to Sunday services at St. John's. The reasons are loosely grouped together in terms of the following topics: community, connect to or reflect on God, worship, habit or family tradition, scripture, Eucharist, fulfillment from serving, peacefulness and serenity, close to home, participation with family, spiritual nourishment, and to become a better person. Each of the above "reasons" is explained below with direct quotes from parishioners. It should be noted that some parishioners offered several reasons for coming to St. John's services. For example, "To worship God, Give thanks for the blessings of this life. Be fed for the journey of life at communion. Be strengthened by the gospel's message and for the fellowship of the parish community."

Community The most frequently stated reason for coming to Sunday services is for fellowship or a sense of community that is found at St. John's. 40% of respondents mention the sense of community found in the parish. Parishioners describe community in terms of hospitality, friends, warmth of the people, and close relationships. These references do not include explicit mention of God or spirituality but tend to focus on the feeling of connection offered in community. Comments included:

"Close to home; like to know everyone in church; feel part of community."

"To maintain a sense of community which is sometimes diminished during the week."

"St. John's has become part of my family."

Worship This term includes all references to worshipping God in community as opposed to referring to community in terms of friendship and hospitality. Slightly over a quarter of respondents include worship as a reason for coming to Sunday services at St. John's. For example, "I always feel welcome and comfortable to come and worship Jesus here."

Connect to or Reflect on God A smaller group of parishioners explicitly mention a connection to God or need to reflect on God as a reason for coming to services:

As one parishioner commented, "I have grown up in the church and I feel as though it has been one of the important ways to stay connected to God and the community."

Spiritual growth/nurturing Another small group describes coming to Sunday services for spiritual nourishment or encouragement, such as, "I find a need for reflection. I find solace in the spiritual aspects."

Peacefulness or serenity Some parishioners note the peacefulness, serenity, intimacy of the small size of the congregation, and simplicity found in Sunday services at St. John's. One parishioner commented, "I appreciate the serenity and simplicity that St. John's provides and a lot of why I come to St. John's is the habit of church going – one of my better habits, I'm sure." Another parishioner observed, "I have a sense of peace and comfort participating in the service with others."

Scripture A handful of respondents cited the lessons and/or the gospel as a reason for coming to Sunday services.

Eucharist Five parishioners mentioned the Eucharist as a reason for coming to Sunday services.

Sermon Five parishioners included the sermon as a reason for coming to services at St. John's.

No longer can come to church Several parishioners commented that they are no longer able to come to church but remain connected to St. John's, a reminder that our church is larger than attendance at Sunday services.

Survey Question: What are your hopes for St. John’s for the next 5 years?

New members and financial stability Close to half of the respondents hope that St. John’s will grow its membership (particularly young families) and become financially stable or sustainable. This hope was also reflected in comments from the youth. For example, one parishioner responded, “That we are able to grow the size of our parish to end up with a more lively service which will attract younger families.”

New rector As with financial stability, a high priority for many parishioners (close to half) is a new rector. Parishioners offer different reasons for this critical need:

“Find a minister that has real knowledge. I feel a good preacher increased my desire to be there.”

“To find a rector who will help the parish thrive and grow while maintaining the compassionate family feeling.”

“We need an anchor – a person/rector to hold it all together and give us consistency. Someone to be a shepherd and pastor. We need more spirituality.”

Other Hopes The following “hopes” for St. John’s were articulated by one, two, or three parishioners:

- Evaluate the music program
- Install a handicapped bathroom
- Identify priorities
- Continued development of laity involvement
- More outreach
- Deepened spirituality within the St. John’s community
- More adult education
- Stay the same
- Continue working together for the good of the parish; continue the lay engagement and vitality demonstrated in this interim period

Survey Question: Comment on the greatest satisfactions you have been blessed with by being a member of St. John’s

This question elicited feedback that was similar to the question of why parishioners come to St. John’s for Sunday services. Parishioners feel blessed with the warmth of the community. This was expressed in many ways by 25 different respondents. Parishioners express a genuine love for the church community that crosses generations. The following are three comments that are reflective of the parish:

“Sense of community and integration of all – the very young and the elderly.”

“Many of the members of St. John’s have a long and deep spiritual story which they are willing to share with others for the growth of all. This has been a help and inspiration to me in my spiritual growth.”

“A special warmth one feels as you enter the church and to be greeted by friendly faces.”

Opportunity to Engage in Ministries A fifth of respondents feel blessed by engagement in St. John’s ministries.

Being with Family A smaller group of parishioners note that being with family (spouse and/or young or adult children) at St. John’s is a blessing.

Other (articulated by one or two parishioners)

- Unlocked doors; prayer and reflection during the week
- Pastoral care

Youth Comments: Greatest Satisfaction

- The small size of St. John’s and strong sense of community
- The opportunity to get to know people from other communities
- Summer activities such as the ice cream social, garden party, and fair
- Holiday services and extra activities such as the pancake supper
- Confirmation