

November 2020

Subject: Board of Worship Questionnaire Update

Greetings from your Board of Worship!

What an unusual year this has been! You might remember that we sent out a Worship Questionnaire last November to assess the level of satisfaction of our members and visitors. We accepted responses to the Questionnaire through the end of January, and we were very thankful that 148 people took the time to give us valuable feedback. With all that has occurred since January, the process of getting these results to you took much longer than expected. We are finally able to share these results in a user-friendly format which we encourage you to review via this link:

So, you might ask, "What's next?" You will have an opportunity to discuss these results during the **Congregational Assembly on Sunday, November 22 at 10:15am**, immediately following the worship service. The focus will be on key items mentioned that could be improved upon, and the board will offer some recommendations as we plan for the future. There will be ample time for questions and comments. Please feel free to contact the Board of Worship with any specific questions about the attached document, which provides an overview of the responses given to the original questionnaire.

Our goal is to build up the Body of Christ at St. John's through meaningful and joyful worship. To that end, we look forward to having you join the conversation on November 22. Thank you for your continuing commitment to our church and its efforts to minister effectively for the growth of God's Kingdom!

The Board of Worship

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Worship Questionnaire Summary

Demographics

The Board of Worship received responses from 148 people. The following is a breakdown of the demographics.

Members 96%

Non-members 4%

Male 36%

Female 64%

Age groups:

14-24 5%

25-40 5%

41-64 46%

65 and older 44%

Service attended most often (some chose more than one)

Sunday 8:00 50%

Sunday 10:45 50%

Saturday 505 10%

How often they attend

2-4 times/mo. 91%

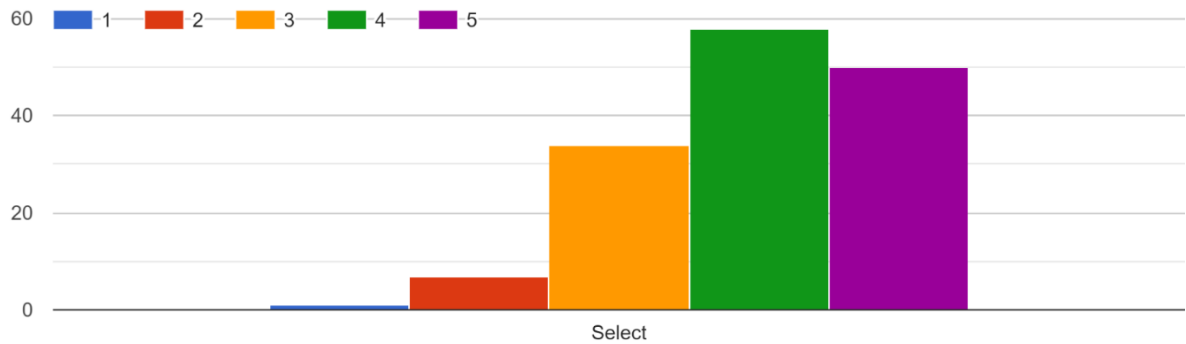
Once a month 7%

1-2 times/year 2%

Church practices/Decorum

Choose the number that most closely matches your opinion, with [1] being "Strongly Disagree" and [5] being "Strongly Agree".

Worship at St. John's is engaging and joyful for me:



Positives: Children's sermons, I like that there is a traditional service at 10:45, Use of acolytes, Crucifers and Gospel processions, Services done well

Negatives: Don't like Children's sermons, too many announcements, Communion services are too long, calls for applause not proper/not a performance, Attended church service elsewhere on Christmas Eve because of time change, Don't like the sharing of the peace, Not necessary to remind us to fill out attendance, Announcements shouldn't be at the end of services, Casual worship/not respectful (6), Quality of services has diminished

Suggestions: Prayer groups before or after services (3), Less "up and down", Fewer announcements/presentations, Don't strip the altar for 505, Change timing of Passing of Peace, Allow women to become deacons and serve communion, More members (youth, women, families) serving during services (acolytes, greeters, ushers, readers, bulletin design, etc.), Involve children at earlier age (communion), Improve nursery program, Begin early services at 8:15, Continue Advent dinners and services (2), Suspend sharing of Peace during flu season, No applause except for youngest children (6), Bring back 10:30 Christmas Eve service, Offer Communion at every service (2), Children's sermon once a month, Too many announcements repeated

from the Mission, Include second plate offering for school and church deficit, Keep traditional and contemporary worship separate (2), Keep Sunday service times as they are (2), Change times of service on Sunday (2), “Reverence” in services again (Pastor and congregation) (10), Encourage cry room for screamers, Be quiet during Prelude

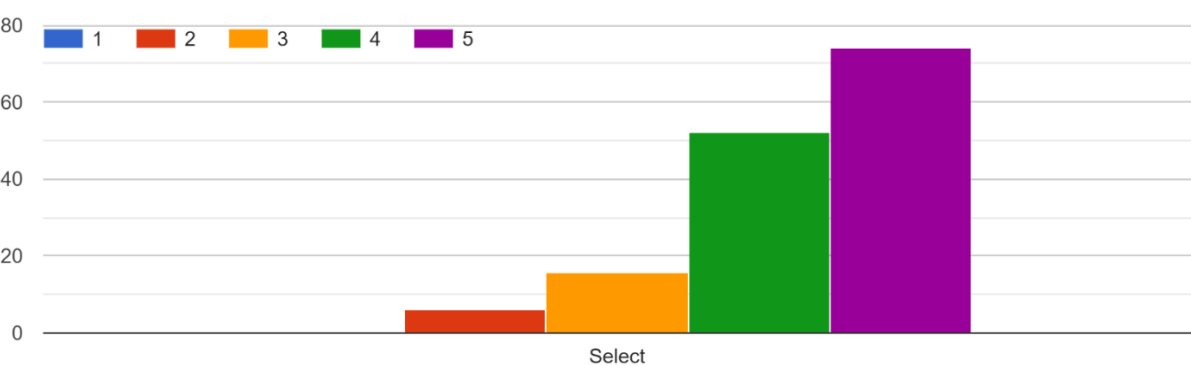
Basic summary of this section: Some feel traditional services are done well. Many don’t care for casual services/prefer reverence in services, don’t care for applause, and would like more lay members serving in worship.

Worship elements

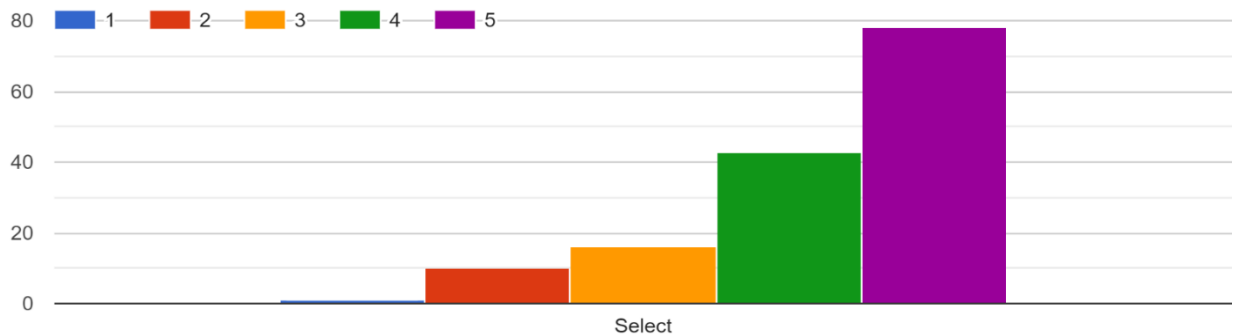
(Parts and Order/Flow, Liturgy)

Choose the number that most closely matches your opinion, with [1] being "Strongly Disagree" and [5] being "Strongly Agree".

The worship service at St. John's flows easily from one part to another:



The liturgy enhances and provides continuity to the worship service:



Positives: Satisfied with services (15), Strengthened in my faith, Flow/transitions are good (2), Traditional liturgy provides continuity and connects to historical church (3), When consistent order of service is used people know what to expect (2), Lutheran liturgy provides God's grace through Word and Sacrament (2), Feel connected to pastors during liturgy

Negatives: Flow is disrupted by inconsistency in service order (2), Too much up and down (3), Passing of the peace interrupts flow, Service lacks energy, Not inspiring, Don't feel joy, Often a mixed experience, Liturgy too rote/impersonal (3), Changing liturgy disrupts continuity (2), Want traditional Lutheran worship on Sundays (2), Don't understand why some parts follow after other parts, Traditional worship seems stiff and impersonal, Sometimes feels like a "ritual" and not "worship", Feels more mechanical than personal, Sometimes I get nothing out of the service, Services have moved significantly away from traditional LCMS liturgy, Too informal (2), Distracting when children sing, Unappealing services (3), Don't care for blended style of worship, If personal appeal of worship experience affected my decision to attend I would probably be looking at other churches for a better experience

Suggestions: Provide engaging worship, More dignified worship (2), Return to traditional services (2), Consistent order of worship/liturgy helps both children and adults (5), Occasionally use order of worship from TLH pages 5 and 15 (4), Include some contemporary liturgy (2), Explain purpose and order of Lutheran liturgy, Consider using variety of Lutheran Orders of Worship (2), Follow the lectionary (2), Use Order of Matins & Evening Prayer (2),

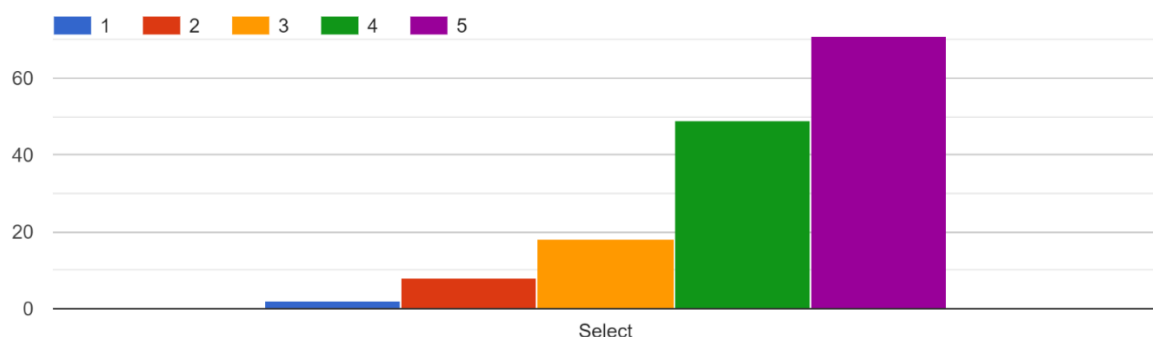
One service on Sunday (2), End the service with a hymn, not announcements (2), More variety in responsive words (2), Explain Biblical context of readings, Emphasize scripture-based liturgy more, Shorten services to one hour (2), Include singing of Psalm 95 and Post Communion Canticle, Change start time of late service to 10:30, pass the peace at end of service to stimulate conversation, Worship leader should introduce any new liturgy/music (2), Use more traditional hymns (8), Utilize high liturgical worship for festival services (2), Utilize traditional liturgy to the fullest extent (it is one of our greatest strengths) (8), Keep contemporary and traditional separate, Keep children in worship services, Use Bibles and hymnals

Basic summary of this section: Some are satisfied with services. Others prefer more traditional worship with consistent order of service and Lutheran liturgy. Some feel services lack energy, are uninspiring, they don't feel joy, and feel services are unappealing.

Prayer

Choose the number that most closely matches your opinion, with [1] being "Strongly Disagree" and [5] being "Strongly Agree".

The prayers including Confession, Intercession, and Thanksgiving - are meaningful in the way they are presented:



Positives: Prayer requests during services are meaningful (10), Associate Pastor does an excellent job, Like that they are posted weekly online (2), Like the variety each week

Negatives: Prayer requests often stated poorly/often hard to hear/read too fast/no depth of expression/too long/superficial/hard to understand - *not effective in the way they are formatted* (10), Prayers are sometimes too short, Sometimes wording is too fancy/don't know what I'm actually praying, Too much rote repetition, Some prayers and confessions have too much political bias, Some prayers are way too long

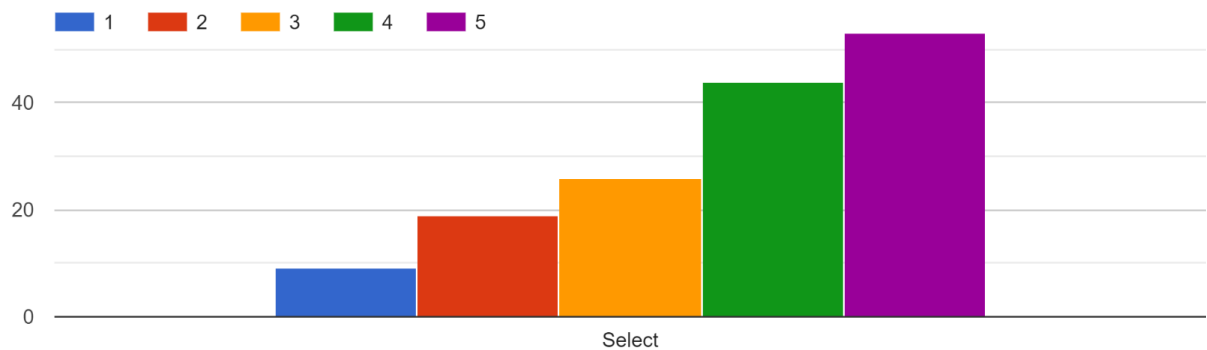
Suggestions: Include prayers for "bigger picture" beyond our doors, Include all special prayers in the bulletin/Mission (2), Keep prayers in everyday language, Prayers needed in homes so both pastors can connect with members (2), Repeat 8:00 special prayers in 10:45 service, Include thanksgiving for offerings (2), More time for prayer, Have special prayers sent online included in general prayers in church, Prefer traditional confession wording, Include more petitions

Basic summary of this section: Specific prayers for members are generally appreciated, however they are often poorly stated, hard to hear/understand, and not effective when the Pastor doesn't have time to prepare ahead of time.

Sermons

Choose the number that most closely matches your opinion, with [1] being "Strongly Disagree" and [5] being "Strongly Agree".

The sermon consistently instructs, inspires, and engages me:



Positives: Sound doctrine (2), Gospel (7), Law, Well-written, Engaging/inspiring (12), God's message delivered (5), Like sermon series, Both pastors bring energy, Relates to life (3), Enjoy stories/ historical background, Most of them are great, Content generally good, Personal connection w/pastors (2), Strengthen my faith

Senior Pastor: Length is fine (2), Captivating and challenging (2), Turning point takes us further, Lengthy enough to expound on scriptural theme, Warm, Inspiring (2), Relating to life, Message relayed (9), Like the way he "Preaches" to me, Latest sermons are stronger, Moving/Spiritually uplifting

Associate Pastor: Enthusiasm (2), More engaging (3), Keeps my attention, Connects with me (2), Empathetic, Solid structure/profound (8), Better sense of the Gospel, Feel the Holy Spirit

Negatives: Too long/wordy (27), Hard to follow (6), No connection (7), Too much repetition (8), Sermon series (6), Dark (3), Too much law/not enough Gospel (7), Sometimes too negative (4), Not related to life (4), Condescending, Too much introduction (3), Can't feel the Holy Spirit

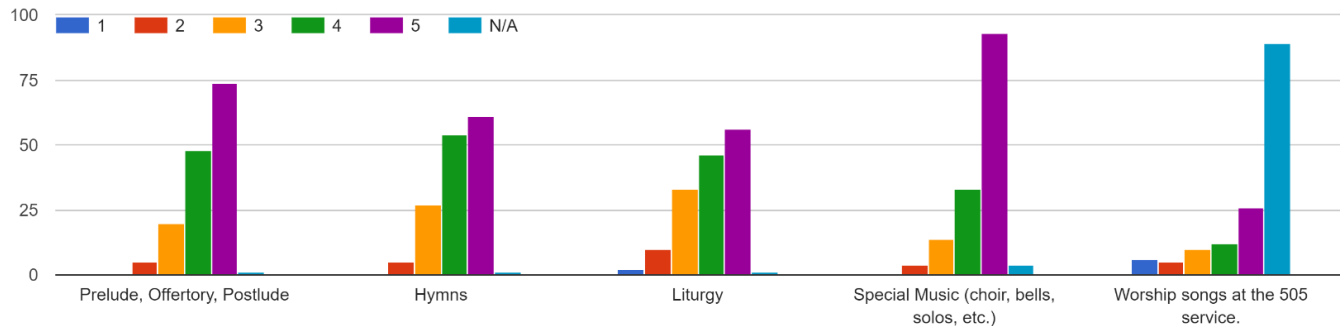
Suggestions: Preaching needs more depth, Concise sermons (7), Less time on setup/more time on Gospel, Less sarcasm (2), Fewer Sermon Series, Less law, more Gospel (2), Sermons that relate to everyday life/engaging (5), Biblical teaching in sermon (scriptures to look up) (2), Improve sermons (2), Better sound system/sometimes difficult to hear(2), Children's sermon should be geared to children (not adults), Have Associate Pastor preach more often (3), Would like more visuals

Basic summary of this section: Gospel is always preached, many sermons are engaging/inspiring. Many felt that sermons are too long/wordy, sometimes hard to follow, are repetitive, are heavy in law, and they don't care for "sermon series". Desire more sermons that relate to everyday life and are more engaging.

Music

Choose the number that most closely matches your opinion, with [1] being "Strongly Disagree" and [5] being "Strongly Agree".

The service music enriches my worship experience:



Positives: Music is inspirational/great quality (29), Uplifted by hymns (8), Excellence in music program continues, Appreciate Music Director (5), Choirs (2), Singing brings joy to my soul, Great organ/instruments (2), Mix of standard and less familiar hymns (2), Talented musicians/vocalists (3), Contemporary pieces (3), Choral music (3), Youth involvement (2), Special Service music (2), Like the Doxology

Negatives: Singing during offering, Modern hymns hard to follow, Not a concert, Musical selections not understood, Sunday service music too elite, Sometimes difficult to sing along when organ accompaniment doesn't match known hymns (4), Not using standard liturgy and hymns (4), Offertory too long (3), Choir and organ dominate congregation, Singers words not understood (3), Appropriate/typical hymns for special services not being used (Advent, Lent, etc.) (4), Singing too many verses (2), Don't like when some verses are done in harmony (not enough people in church to support), Organist stops playing (a Capella) or is too loud (3), Lose focus on message in new/unfamiliar songs (4), Don't care for contemporary music

Suggestions: Improve selection of music/songs, Occasional contemporary song in traditional service (3), Use familiar hymns from hymn book (14), Music should not overpower singing, Ask members for hymn suggestions, Leave out printed hymns in service folder, Skip some verses when hymns too long, Shorten offertory music,

Music Director should have better understanding of Lutheran Doctrine & practice, Use standard Preludes and Postludes (Not improvisations) (5), Teach new songs, Print words of singers (3), More handbells, Increase participation of variety of musicians (3), Adult choir sing more at late service (2), Use more hymns appropriate to church year (6), Use children's choir in both services (congregation supports the school) (3), Final hymn should be uplifting, No contemporary music in traditional services, Include patriotic hymns when appropriate

Basic summary of this section: Many feel the music is inspirational and of great quality, appreciate the music director, and are uplifted by the hymns. Others feel the selections are not always appropriate for the particular service, or they don't like the format (too many verses, a Capella, harmony, music too loud, etc.) Many desire more familiar hymns.

Draws to worship

Question: *"What draws you to worship at St. John's?"*

Positives: Church membership/"My Church" (31), Bible study (4), Commitment to worship (21), Fellowship (51), Location (11), Comfort received (3), Sacraments offered (3), Enjoy the services (4), Best church since Senior Pastor came, Family connection (3), Children involved (2), Feel uplifted (3), Activities (2), To worship God (8), Faith-based (6)

Negatives: Don't feel the Spirit during or after the service (2), Mixed experience, I get nothing out of services (2), Too informal (2), Quality of services has diminished, Services not pleasing (5), LCMS beliefs/teachings aren't always supported at St. John's

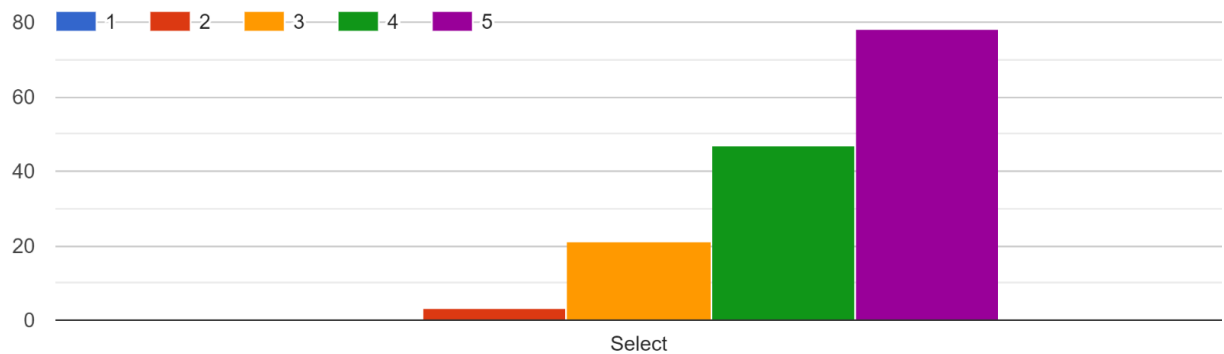
Suggestions: Have weekday evening service, Include faith and stewardship testimonials more often, Return to traditional services

Basic summary of this section: Most are drawn to worship by the fellowship of believers, a commitment to St. John's and their duty as a Christian. Some do not feel that our services are hitting the mark.

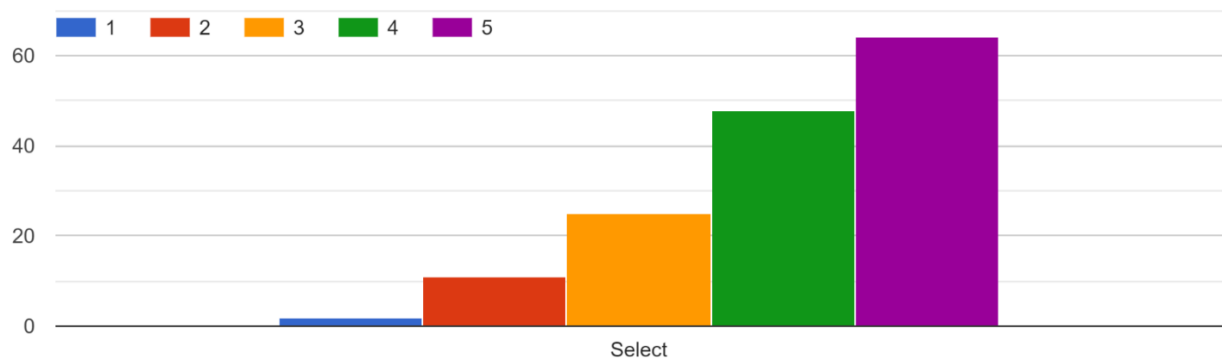
Welcoming/Relationships

Choose the number that most closely matches your opinion, with [1] being "Strongly Disagree" and [5] being "Strongly Agree".

To what extent do you feel welcomed when you attend?



I feel encouraged and renewed by attending worship:



Positives: Feel welcome/support/Christian atmosphere (9), Pastors are great

Negatives: Don't feel important, No connection to Pastor (4), Take it or leave it attitude (2), Senior Pastor has own agenda/not concerned with congregational preferences, Senior Pastor needs to connect to flock/not relational (4), Phone calls are not responded to in a timely manner, Need to develop deeper relationships other than "hello" at services (11), Addressing pastors with their given name presents deceiving picture of familiarity that doesn't exist, Elders not engaged (2)

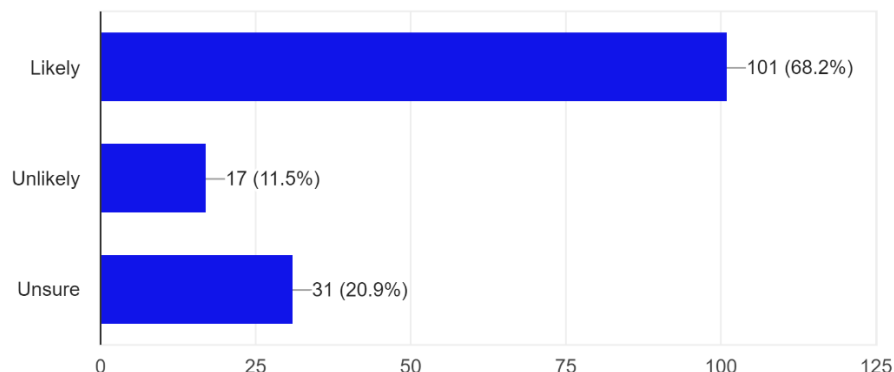
Suggestions: Be more welcoming (4), All members and staff need to be more friendly, Find ways to make newcomers feel more welcome, Building relationships will Improve attendance (3), Shepherds need to get to know members (home visits) (8), Need better follow up for those who are sick/in hospital/needing prayers (2), A pastor should always be available to take phone calls (post phone numbers for emergencies), Worship needs to be made personal

Basic summary of this section: Many feel welcomed and supported at St. John's. Others do not feel important, feel no connection to the Pastor, and desire more care from Pastors and Elders. All staff and members should be more welcoming.

Invite

How likely are you to invite family members, friends, or neighbors to worship at St. John's?

148 responses



Positives: Often invite family and friends (7), Invite people to Special events/concerts (3)

Negatives: Uninspiring services/won't invite (2)

Other: Difficult to invite in today's society (some have own church, some work, etc.) (5)

Opportunities for growth/Opportunities to serve

(Classes, acolytes, readers, children's sermons)

Question: *"What areas of the worship service could be improved in order for you to experience spiritual growth?"*

Positives: Like to go to Bible class after early service, Like Sunday Bible study and fellowship,

Opportunity to participate in worship services (3),

Negatives: Weak education program, Lack of opportunities besides services, Where are the acolytes?

Suggestions: Evening Bible Classes, Allow lay people to do the Children's sermon sometimes (3), Have families leading worship occasionally, Involve lay people for readings and prayers (5), Reestablish the Acolyte program (3), Share testimonies more frequently, Need more volunteers to serve in worship, Need more people to serve on Church Council and Boards

Basic summary of this section: Some feel there are ample opportunities, however others do not.

505 Service

Positives: Like 505 services (7), Love the laid-back feel, Hope this reaches more people for St. John's, Music is OK (3), Songs are well done (2)

Negatives: Music too repetitive/no melody, etc. (11), Music hard to sing along with

Suggestions More contemporary options/youth involvement (2), weekly 505 (3), Explain Lutheran communion doctrine to visitors, End promptly at 6:00, Provide music notes along with words for unfamiliar songs, Shorten songs that are too repetitive

Basic summary of this section: Most that attend like the 505.. Many find the music too repetitive and hard to follow.

Screen

Positives: Helpful for worshippers to follow along (2)

Negatives: Screen is distracting/takes eyes away from the altar/compromises beauty of sanctuary, Screen "dumbs-down" the service and is sometimes not coordinated correctly with the service, Slides for lyrics aren't always advanced soon enough

Suggestions: Poll congregation on use of screen (screen was never approved by congregation), Screen should not replace reading from a real Bible, Eliminate paper copies for most worshippers, Add another screen

Other

Statement: *"We value your opinion on any other aspect of worship that has not been addressed above."*

Positives: Coffee hour/treats, Angel, Community involvement for concerts, recitals, etc., Greeters

***School:** Mission of Lutheran School/Family attends/Supported by the congregation (10), Love attending school Chapel services.

Negatives: Senior Pastor not implementing changes identified by congregation, Feel disappointed sitting in a very empty church

Suggestions: Use videos, Better sound system, Challenge us to live sanctified lives (2), Improve the Nursery, Rehang Pastors' pictures in narthex, Narthex is dim/needs better lighting and could use an update (2), Changes should be judiciously applied, Include a "notes" section in the bulletin, Would like traditional worship service at 9:30 (2), Change is difficult but sometimes necessary for church growth, More opportunities for outreach