

Worship and Music Survey Summary

This summary is based on results of a survey created by Good Shepherd's Rector Search Committee and administered in late January 2010. Eighty responses were received over the 11 days the survey was available. In addition to various rating scales about aspects of worship and music, there were many opportunities for participants to add their own specific comments. The earlier parish survey (110 responses over a 3 week period) indicated a higher than expected level of dissatisfaction in the areas of worship and music but provided little information on specifics. The committee's hope was that a more detailed survey of these areas would help us identify both strengths and areas of concern so that we would have a better idea of the qualities needed in these areas by our future rector.

It was clear from the earlier survey and from the comments attached to this survey that for people at Good Shepherd a meaningful worship experience is central to their relationship with the church. For most this means a traditional service with an emphasis on the Eucharist, baptism, congregational singing, an offertory anthem by the choir, a sermon with a meaningful message and a dramatic processional/recessional by choir and worship leaders. Lay participation in worship, by the congregation and by lay worship leaders, is also very highly valued (95% rated this participation as important). Most members also appreciate those parts of the service that affirm their connection to the Good Shepherd family – an extended passing of the peace, prayers for birthdays and anniversaries and specific intercessions for those asking for prayer support.

Several themes were evident in the responses and comments

- It is clear that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' style of worship or music that meets everyone's needs or wishes. In many areas where a majority favored one style or aspect there was a significant minority who preferred the opposite.
- As a group we are anxious about change. We are not sure what it means, how it will impact us, if it is necessary, if it will help us grow. We agree that any change needs to be managed well. Despite our anxiety 84% of us are willing, comfortable or eager for change if it is necessary or will attract new members.
- Congregational singing is the most meaningful aspect of music in worship for a majority of respondents. This means primarily using traditional well-known hymns from the hymnal. However over half the respondents would also like to increase the use of other songs such as those from an alternative hymnal or from Cursillo, Peterkin or Faith Alive. (We will be giving to the Hymn selection committee a copy of

those songs identified by respondents as songs they would like to sing.)

- Our willingness to adapt has limits – for example 1/3 would prefer to have contemporary music in a separate service and most have no interest in adding a multi-media presentation or rock-style music to their worship experience.

There is a strong link between many members (especially the youth) of Good Shepherd and the diocesan camp (Peterkin). Many respondents want to see “the living under grace” that is a part of Peterkin reflected in worship at Good Shepherd, desiring to at least continue with one special annual ‘Peterkin-style’ service.

Many respondents feel that certain areas of the worship and music experience need attention.

- There is a difference between what we say we currently are experiencing in worship and what we wish for, especially related to being inspired, being spiritually renewed, growing in faith and being comforted.
- Concern was expressed that a highly valued atmosphere of holiness and reverence is being adversely affected by talking before and during services.
- Only 25% are really satisfied with the current way we present children’s sermons. Several comments were made offering suggestions that we will pass to the Worship Committee and Youth Ministries Council.
- Special services are important to most but comments suggest some variety in presentation is needed to keep them fresh while still inspiring.
- We need to find ways to affirm the needs and feelings of those in the minority so as many people as possible can have an opportunity for a fulfilling worship experience. In several areas the “minority” was a significant 30-40 %.

This survey has helped the Search Committee identify certain skills and strengths to look for in a new rector, such as someone who can help us understand, manage and implement change, someone who can adapt to our level of lay involvement in the service, someone who is comfortable with a traditional service but can help us explore a wider range of music. We will also forward specific suggestions from the comments to the Worship and/or Hymn Selection Committees.