

## St. Margaret's Church Long-Range Planning Surveys Summary

May 21, 2006

The Long-Range Planning Committee conducted two surveys in the first quarter of 2006. The goals of the surveys were to assess parishioners' perceptions and needs regarding worship and education at St. Margaret's and to learn more about parishioners' attendance patterns.

The first phase was conducted using on-line and paper surveys. More than 160 people responded to that survey. The second survey was a follow-up telephone survey to gather more information on parishioners' attendance patterns. More than 30 parishioners participated in the follow-up survey.

### Survey 1: Summary of Findings

Several questions focused on St. Margaret's music, ministry and education programs.

- Attention to youth was the highest priority at St. Margaret's. All segments of the membership were feeling the absence of a youth minister, including those without teens.
- Ministry for young adults (18-24 years old) is perceived to be a priority among respondents, even though no one in that age group responded to the survey
- The questions about adult education and more opportunities for mission work show room for St. Margaret's to expand its ministry to adults.
- Most parishioners like the direction of the music program and want to see (hear) more.

Respondents are more evenly split on crowding at St. Margaret's than on any other issue. Half of the respondents (53%) agreed with the statement that Sunday services get uncomfortably crowded at times. Those who feel services get uncomfortably crowded at times are:

- More likely to consider the 9:15 service their regular service
- More likely to attend church with two or more people
- Slightly less-likely to attend church every week
- Much more likely to agree with the statement that overcrowding make St. Margaret's less welcoming to visitors

Those who feel crowded also are slightly more likely to attend multiple services over time. This is part of a larger, important finding about attendance patterns:

*Fewer than half (42%) of the respondents who attended the 11:15 service in a 90-day period considered the 11:15 service to be their regular service. Most of the 11:15 respondents to this survey considered the 9:15 service to be the one they attended most often.*

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This came as a surprise given that average weekly attendance to the 11:15 service has been growing over the past several years and average weekly attendance to the 9:15 service has not.

It appears that the growth at 11:15 is reflective of overall growth in the church rather than the development of a distinct congregation for that service. It also suggests that there is an underlying pattern of “service-hopping” at St. Margaret’s. A similar pattern occurred with the 7:30 service.

- 37% of 7:30 attendees say it is the service they attend most often
- 79% of 9:15 attendees say it is the service they attend most often
- 42% of 11:15 attendees say it is the service they attend most often

The percentages add up to more than 100 because parishioners attend more than one service over a 90-day period.

Some of the service-hopping results from parishioners’ participation in worship activities (chalicists, lectors, choir, counting). Some of it was unexplained by the first survey results.

The second survey was designed to shed light on this idea of “service-hopping.” Was it real? Why was it happening?

A telephone study was designed to answer these questions. Patricia Sutton, Anne Sessions, Beth Knorr, David Boyce, and Jeff Conover contacted participants randomly and administered the survey. More than 30 parishioners participated.

Survey 2: Summary of Findings

Participants were again asked which services they sometimes attended and which service they attend most often. They were asked why they choose a particular service and why they might not attend that service. They were also asked the crowding question.

As far as attendance goes, respondents to Survey 2 were similar to respondents to the first survey. The majority attended the 9:15 service most often. This was true even of those respondents who sometimes attend the 11:15 service. The top reasons for attending the 9:15 service were:

- Convenience
- To start the day early
- Because of Sunday school
- Because is it child-oriented

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The majority of 9:15 attendees sometimes attend the 11:15 service. The reason, outside of participating in worship activities, appears to be convenience.

As with the first survey, respondents to Survey 2 who agree that Sunday services get uncomfortably crowded at times were more likely to consider 9:15 their primary service. They were also more likely to service hop.

In regards to service hopping, the general conclusion from both surveys is that the 11:15 service is the primary service for a smaller segment of the St. Margaret's community than previously thought. The number of core attendees probably is about half of the weekly 11:15 attendance. Even these core 11:15 attendees are fairly frequent visitors to the 9:15 service.