

Church of St. Cecilia
Needs Assessment Survey

There were 216 respondents to the Church of St. Cecilia Needs Assessment Survey conducted during October/November 2009. These respondents represented a higher proportion of women and a higher proportion of married persons than in our church population. The distribution of years in the parish for respondents was representative of the parish as a whole. This report will summarize some of the major findings from the survey and includes some suggestions for follow-up. The statistical report as well as summary comments from respondents will be available in the link at the church and on the parish web site.

A. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Strengths

The strongest statistical responses and the strongest statements in the comments to the questions highlighted the preaching, the music, the liturgical celebrations, sense of community and the welcoming character of the community. Since this is the essence of what we should be about as a church community this response is gratifying.

Respondents also noted and appreciated the strong lay involvement in the parish, the openness to a variety of perspectives, the emphasis on social justice and the smallness of the parish.

Concerns

The concerns identified by respondents tend to be more varied and less extensive than the strengths mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, they do highlight areas which merit our attention.

While noting that the community does a good job in welcoming new members, there were a number of comments and responses which indicate that we would do well to continue to focus on ways to improve in this area. Suggestions are made within the survey responses. Respondents were looking for ways for young adults, women, divorced persons, single persons, and others to be included more readily into the parish community. Making sure that there is follow-up to those who sign up during the stewardship survey received mention.

There was limited response to questions about children's faith formation programs but comments suggest ways that these programs might be improved. Questions were also raised about how extensively these programs should depend on parental involvement.

Concerns were expressed regarding the extent and character of the program for young people both during their preparation for Confirmation and beyond.

The adult faith formation activities in the parish brought mixed responses. The extent of participation varied, the interest in certain general topics or themes was mixed, and the challenge of scheduling and press of other responsibilities were noted.

There was concern about the lack of opportunities for young adults to gather.

B. CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Some general considerations

The survey contains some very favorable feedback on the Church of St. Cecilia and how we live our life as a parish. We should be pleased about that and do what we can to ensure that we continue to emphasize our strengths. At the same time, many of the survey responses indicate a less intense response to areas of interest and impact of the parish on one's life. This perhaps suggests that we need to focus some attention on how to develop a commitment to St. Cecilia as a parish (and not to St. Cecilia simply as a place with a certain pastor).

We should also pay attention to those issues and concerns that are identified in the survey which might make us a better place. These should be seen as a way for improvement rather than as simply a negative commentary on what we are currently doing. Having said this, we need to be aware that we are a small parish, with limited staff and resources. We may not be able to provide everything that is possible or that parishioners desire. This is an area where we might capitalize on our tradition of strong lay involvement. We should welcome and encourage parishioners to take the lead in addressing the issues and concerns raised in this survey.

Some specific considerations

The Needs Assessment Survey highlights some areas within the parish where we should focus some attention. These are listed below in no particular order.

1. We should make parishioners aware of what the parish does for those who are elderly, homebound or poor,
2. We should consider some discussion and/or formational activities around the Sacrament of Reconciliation for all parishioners.
3. We should find ways to engage young adults in the parish.
4. We should consider providing some programming related to Spiritual Direction.
5. Adult Faith Formation programs with an emphasis on the Bible and moral issues should be considered.
6. We should conduct a review of parish programs for youth. We might consider working with neighboring parishes in this regard.
7. We should consider expanding the parish bulletin and the parish web site.
8. We should explore the establishment of a women's group.

C. FOLLOW-UP SUGGESTIONS

The Needs Assessment Steering Committee (see membership below) commits itself to ensuring follow-up to this survey and the issues that it raises.

Initially this will involve submission of this report to the Parish Council and the parish as a whole. It will involve placing copies of the survey results in the link and on the parish web site for anyone to review. It will involve identifying responses and comments to certain survey questions that should be shared with parish staff and/or parish committee chairs.

We will assist others (e.g. the Pastor, Parish Council, Parish Staff and Committee Chairs) in establishing action steps that respond to survey directions.

After one year, we commit to coming together again to review what has occurred as a result of this survey and the suggestions made.

Respectfully Submitted,

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