

Report On Parish Calls at St John's – 2015

Background

Members of the Stewardship Committee and Parish Council undertook to call all members of St John's in January and February 2015. The purpose of the calls was to check in with members. Callers were given a list of possible questions but were told that they were simply suggestions—noting that the call was meant to be a conversation and not a checklist. The questions were:

- Why do you choose to be part of St John's?
- What do you think is the best thing about St John's?
- What do you think the community needs from St John's?
- Do you get all the information that you need about St John's?
- Do you receive the weekly e-letter?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Following each call, the caller was asked to summarize the key points of the call on a simple one-page form. At its February and March meetings, the Stewardship Committee reviewed each form. Issues that required individual follow-up were given to the Rector or to the Pastoral Care Committee as appropriate. Considering the number of calls completed, the number of follow-ups required – about a dozen – was relatively low.

The committee then divided comments into two groups:

- ✓ Areas where people appreciated what St John's is doing; and
- ✓ Suggestions for changes or improvements.

Given the individual nature of the calls, it is not possible to quantify responses; instead, this summary list is designed to show the various issues are on the minds of St John's members who were reached.

Areas where people appreciated what St John's is doing:

- space: new doors, ramp; appreciate that it is a multi-use facility
- leadership (lots of different leaders were mentioned: Rector, Music Director, Office Administrator, etc...)
- communications (a number of people mentioned *This Week at St John's* emailed message is a great source of information that they read weekly)
- choir and music
- liturgy and preaching (a few people specifically mentioned the 8am service)
- outward looking
- welcoming; the positive energy
- ecological
- community: cares for people, supportive, inclusive, open to diversity, social. (One comment summed up this sentiment by saying, "St John's = Family")
- Thursday fellowship
- blend of tradition and innovation

- ministry to the community, e.g. community shop, COSA, affordable housing, The Well. (As one person stated, they like that “St John’s is a working church”).
- a spiritual and intellectual home: spiritual, intellectually stimulating, serious and beautiful
- Christian education

Suggestions for changes or improvements:

- make finances sustainable
- connect with newcomers /welcoming others (one comment was “Convey inclusivity”)
- attract younger families/children/youth
- some people suggested changes to the liturgy and service patterns including: different timing, intergenerational service, and new music (some of these comments overlapped with ideas to attract younger families)
- other liturgy/service comments included: bring back Thursday morning Eucharist and St John’s Rite; altar cannot be seen when it is on same level as pews; wheelchairs should not be confined to side; more French in the liturgy; organize rides to church
- opportunities to connect and socialize: pub night, need to talk more (not on Sunday), Fall Supper lunches (possibly with speaker)
- blue and green bins in hall
- pastoral care – we need to place more resources and emphasis here
- address heat and air conditioning issues
- invite people to volunteer; we need to promote new leadership
- communications: some comments simply mentioned its importance; however, some provided suggestions, such as ensuring messages get to members without email (e.g. via *This Week at St John’s*) such as make signs more visible, post minutes of Parish Council meetings
- focus on a number of ministries (don’t spread resources too thin)
- enhance consensus decision-making
- support advocacy on homelessness issues
- Christian education

Next Steps include:

- 1) Present summary report to Parish Council at its April meeting
- 2) Share and promote report among parishioners with thanks for their time and ideas
- 3) Invite people who didn’t have a chance to provide input
- 4) Encourage all committees, working groups and ministries to consider taking action on the ideas, following in the lead of the Pastoral Committee