

ReVisioning Survey Results

General Impressions, Recommendations

If I had to come up with one word to summarize the results of this survey, I would have to say “VARIETY”. Members were generally satisfied with most aspects of Grace, but through their suggestions for improvement and comments I induced that many people would just like to see choices or alternatives to the way we have always done things. Some areas in which we could add some new life in Grace are the following:

Welcoming Church:

Grace members feel that the people of Grace Lutheran are very welcoming to visitors and new members. However, some suggestions that may improve how we continue to be welcoming once people enter the church are to reestablish the visitor call team, move the Greeter station to a more prominent site and update the facility. Some suggestions for updating the facility are: 1) use lighting in the sanctuary to create ambiance and set a mood (i.e., turn down the lights for prayers), 2) add more visual interest such as alternate the flowers on the altar and use other things besides flowers (i.e., quilts or layettes for Lutheran World Relief Sunday, cans of food for Feed the World Sunday, etc.), 3) update and clean up the facility—some members feel that the narthex (west entrance) is not welcoming with the grocery cart and the coat racks there and others mentioned they felt much of the building has a “dirty” and “cluttered” feel with lots of “junk” lying around, 4) install signs at the entrances and throughout the church to direct visitors to the office, sanctuary, gym, education rooms, etc.

Coffee:

A quick and easy change that would provide some additional nurturing to members is to serve coffee in the Gathering Hall so that members can chat with each other. If there is concern that members would not attend the adult forum because coffee is not served there, either serve it in the kitchen as well or provide adult forums that meet members’ needs. Some members felt that the adult forum educational opportunities were not meeting their needs.

It was also noted that members would prefer a better quality coffee and some healthier alternatives to donuts. Some suggestions were muffins, fruit, bagels, etc. And, it was noted by some members that they would like to have a whole donut, not two halves.

Outreach:

The results of the outreach section of the survey may be skewed due to the fact that many of the respondents have been members for more than 10 years, but I would venture to guess that they still ring true today. Friends and relatives had the most impact on getting people to visit and ultimately join Grace, while close location was also a factor. Those who have moved further away have stayed with Grace because of the personal relationships they have formed with the members.

Worship service:

In general, the sermon is the most meaningful part of the worship service to members who responded. The hymns/music, liturgy and communion are also highly valued. The parts of the worship service that members *enjoy* the most are the music and then the sermons. However, there were some suggestions for improving the worship service: 1) *ambiance*: use lighting to have more effect in the service. Turn the lights down during prayers, etc., use candles and decorations/flowers more effectively instead of always the same, 2) allow more variety in the worship service--people have responded positively to the changes that have been made so far--continue to incorporate these and new ideas, 3) *decor/physical building appearance*: banners are old and overused, sanctuary needs some new ideas for decoration; holiday services should be jazzed up a bit to enhance the season/holy day; church displays are too small in the sanctuary—compare our fall display to the Methodist church we share Thanksgiving with—their display is large and beautiful. Also, we tend to do the same thing year after year with the lilies for Easter and Christmas decorations, 4) serving the wine is very awkward for Pastor during communion—is there a better way?

Bible Studies

Members want some variety in the way Bible Studies are offered. Many people who would like to attend Bible studies can not attend the Tuesday morning session due to work schedules. Offering some opportunities in the evenings or weekends would allow more members to participate. Some members would like to see Bible studies offered that allow for good discussion and consist of short time periods (a study that lasts only 6-8 weeks, with a distinct beginning and end).

Lay leaders can and should lead the Bible studies—the Pastor does not always have to be present. In fact, in order to stir up more interest, more members of the church need to step forward to organize these, but in many cases, these leaders may only step up if it is understood that the study would require all members to take a session and lead it. There are many valuable resources available with guidebooks so that the leaders would not feel overwhelmed by taking one or two sessions. Perhaps if there are quite a few people willing to begin a Bible study, a variety of options would be available that would include age/life stage related studies as well as hymnody, parenting, etc. Augsburg Fortress and other publishers have studies that provide guide books so that the leaders do not have to “come up with” the discussion questions themselves. The church or church library should purchase a resource “stand” that contains a sampling of the available Bible studies for leaders to look through and choose. The “stand” can be placed in Grace Hall 1 or the Gathering Hall while people become familiar with it and then moved to the library. The Bible study books can be purchased by the group members or subsidized by the group members and the church and then if they aren’t too worn, can be placed back in the library for another groups’ use. Anyone wishing to join in a particular Bible study (must be advertised in bulletins and Friendly Visitor) can contact the leader. Bible studies can be held at times convenient to the group and do not necessarily need to be held at church—convenient places exist in the community or they can be held at people’s homes as well.

Youth Education:

The general impression by the members who responded is that the youth educational system is good. Some suggestions for improvement would be to incorporate the Education Committee so that the Sunday School Coordinator, Youth Coordinator and others are not providing services or developing ideas on their own. This education committee should meet and discuss the year's goals and coordinate the curriculum to better align Sunday school with first communion, 3rd grade Bible distribution, confirmation and events during the church year.

Prayer:

Members feel very strongly about prayer and ways in which they would like to participate in it more. Two of the strongest responses were the prayer chain and the e-mail prayer of the day, although communicating to the congregation those with prayer concerns was also high on many people's lists. The ELCA website has many ideas/recommendations on ways the church can inform the congregation about prayer concerns as well as begin an e-mail or phone tree. I have also collected a few bulletins from other churches to use as examples of how we can communicate to our congregation. There are many prayer websites that people can subscribe to for daily prayers; here are two: www.Beliefnet.com; www.sacredspace.ie.

A few members would like to begin prayer services or prayer vigils. Some have never attended these but would like to experience them. Others had attended them in the past and wondered why they were not offered anymore. However, when holding these, the lighting and general ambiance has to coincide with the service or it will not be effective.

Service Opportunities:

Members of Grace are happy with the number of service opportunities they have. We need to continue and expand these by allowing and empowering lay leaders to create more of these opportunities according to their interests (homeless, food banks, walks/runs for cures, etc.). These need to be publicized more than once so that members have opportunity to see it and participate.

The actual questions and the responses have been provided below for review.

Question 1: Think about your worship and other experiences at Grace (verbal, visual, auditory, tactile, etc.) In what ways have you felt welcomed? In what ways could Grace be more welcoming?

Positive responses, how Grace is welcoming to visitors:

Friendly people: 12
Welcoming church: 9
Pastor calling or stopping by visitors' house: 5
Greeter station: 2
Greetings from people we know: 2
Visitor call team (members stopping by): 2
A sense of being honestly and sincerely welcomed each week: 2
Full service printed in bulletin: 1
Supportive after death of loved one: 1
Mid-week services/suppers: 1
Sharing the peace: 1
Facility is inviting: 1
Updated colors in sanctuary: 1
Nametags: 1
Art on display at times has been nice: 1

Recommendations on how Grace could change:

Facility issues:
Sanctuary—visual—not welcoming: 5
Update and clean-up facility (especially narthex): 5
Lighting: 1
Decorate the bathrooms to make them more inviting
Make members aware of visitors: 5
Greeter station: 2 –greeter station is kindof “hidden” from people—move it to the narthex
Coffee:
Year-round coffee in Gathering Hall: 3
Really good coffee such as Starbucks or another high quality brand: 1
Better signage: 3
Members should move to middle of pew to allow visitors a place to sit: 2
Challenge members for a year to get to know a family or member that you don't already know: 2
Tips on being more welcoming given to members: 1
Update website for visitors: 1
Provide directions for after service activities: 1
Take more time to talk to each other instead of hurry off to do their own thing, even Pastors: 1
Wear nametags all morning: 1
Ensure everyone is asked to be on a committee or in an activity/group: 1

Question #2: Does Grace offer fellowship opportunities that meet your needs for Christian fellowship?

Yes: 53 No: 10

Recommendations for change:

Add Bible Studies: 9

In evening for working people

Like Tuesday morning Bible Study

Similar, age-related (or life-stage) Bible Study with homework and more intimate discussion.

Make it well done/well-planned so as not to be a waste of time

Age-related social groups: 6

Coffee Hour: 5

Time to drink coffee and just chat before or after both services

Allow coffee to remain "open" for more than just 15 minutes

Allow coffee to be served in Gathering Hall before and after both services, not just in the kitchen with the adult forum.

Coffee hour extended without being forced to go to adult forum would allow people to get to know one another

Stop cutting donuts in ½ and serve something besides donuts once in awhile such as fruit, muffins and good coffee!

Publicize information about fellowship groups: 2

When giving information about a group (i.e., quilters' group, always add their purpose, who can join, what age group, when they meet, skill level, etc.)

Update website with groups and activities

Keep repeating the invite for others to join a group, use personal contact (not e-mail)

Scrapbook group: 2

Hobbies: 2

Afternoon activities for Seniors: 1

Community efforts for which Grace might put a team together: 1

New empty-nesters: 1

Golf outing is fun: 1

Church bowling activity: 1

Activities serving divorced people: 1

Guess who's coming to dinner, need to mix young and old: 1

More frequent all congregation, large group, everyone together events (picnic,

Think Summer, potlucks, movies, etc.): 1

Age-related Sunday school: 1

Question #3: How did you first hear about Grace?

Friend/relative: 20
Attended a service: 8
Lived nearby/our neighborhood church: 9
Drove by/saw it in neighborhood: 8
Attended wedding/event: 4
Phone book: 2
Pastor: 2
Newspaper: 1
Workshop within the church: 1
ELCA website: 1
Home church recommended: 1
Newspaper ad: 1

Question #4: What prompted you to come to Grace?

Nearby location: 20
Friends: 6
Liked the church: 5
Children's activities/programs: 4
Friendly members: 3
Transferred from another church: 3
Attractive worship: 3
Member's follow-up visit: 3
Family: 3
Size: 2
Inviting and friendly Pastor: 2
Pastor's visit: 2
Marriage: 2
Strong woman's group: 1
Service to community: 1
Tuesday Bible Study: 1
Worshipful atmosphere: 1
Meets all needs: 1
Felt at home: 1
Music program: 1
Providence: 1

Question #5: If you have moved farther from church since joining, what has kept you coming to Grace?

Friendship with members: 8
Church home: 5
Pastors: 4
Long-time association: 3
Family feeling: 3
Never thought of worshipping elsewhere: 1
Moved closer during the years: 1
Fellowship: 1
Worship style: 1
Youth programming: 1
Music program: 1

Question #6: What parts of the worship service do you find most meaningful?

Sermon: 41
Hymns/Music: 26
Liturgy: 15
Communion: 11
Prayers: 7
Traditional-ness: 3
All of it: 2
Confession and Forgiveness: 2
Children's Sermon: 2
Baptisms: 1
Order of Service: 1
Holden Worship: 1
Bible Study: 1
Lessons: 1
Variety: 1

Question #7: What parts of the worship service do you enjoy the most?

Music: 29
Sermons: 18
Familiar Hymns: 8
All of it: 6
Gospel: 6
Communion: 5
Special music: 4
Children's sermon: 4
Choirs: 3
Bells: 2
Prayers: 2
Traditional-ness: 2
Lay leadership in service: 2
Anthems: 1
Children gathering for sermon: 1
Worship: 1
Liturgy: 1
Music during prayers: 1
Sharing of peace: 1
Content: 1
Community: 1
Quiet meditation before service: 1
Soft music: 1
Psalms: 1
Responsive singing: 1
Pastor looking at us: 1

Question #8: If you could make a change to the service, what would it be?

Sermon—take Gospel and lessons and relate it to real life with a call to action: 3
More familiar hymns: 2
Add worship songs at beginning: 2
More frequent communion: 2
Less structured: 2
Choir not have to process to sing on Sunday: 1
Some liturgy settings we should NOT use: 1
Traditional version of the Lord's Prayer: 1
Contemporary Lords Prayer: 1
Worship with La Vos: 1
More specific prayers: 1
Sit down during prayers: 1
Different settings/additional music during prayers: 1
Change lighting at night: 1
Physical environment: 1
More quiet time: 1
Music to enhance worship/not entertainment (no applause): 1
Upbeat modern liturgy: 1
Slow down communion: 1
Change bread: 1
Make sign of the cross at appropriate times: 1
Stay longer to socialize: 1
Variety in sanctuary: 1
Sing more Christmas carols during Advent: 1
Combine 1st and 2nd service: 1
Nursery with service piped in: 1
Keep using red books: 1

Question #9: When you have visited other churches, were there any aspects of their service that you would like to include at Grace?

Need new way to decorate church at Easter and Christmas: 3

Prayers listed in bulletin: 2

Sign of the cross: 1

Prayer at end of children's sermon; 1-line prayer that children can repeat and learn: 1

Christmas program was very much a complete play with musical instruments, singing and speaking parts: 1

Ambiance, physical environment was conducive to worship was beautiful and conducive to worship: 1

Overhead screens and projectors: 1

Children surround baptismal font during baptism: 1

More welcoming as people enter church: 1

Processional cross: 1

Gospel read within the congregation: 1

Many more Bible study opportunities: 1

Change the service up more often: 1

Make sermons more of a "call to action:" 1

Use Bible instead of bulletins for lessons and Gospel: 1

Turn toward each other (towards aisle) and sing song at end of service: 1

Question #10: Does Grace provide adult education opportunities that meet your needs ?

Yes: 43 No: 12 Don't Know: 1

Bible Study: 12

Hold in evening: 3

Hold on Sunday: 2

Age-related or life situation study (i.e., parenting study)

Group of people with similar ages or life stages: 2

Maybe some study in advance, a lesson or video, followed by discussion with each other.

Interactive Bible discussion between services or Wednesday nights but in such a way that 2-3 people don't do all of the discussion.

Study on the worship service—why liturgy and where does it come from in the Bible?

Bible study with a beginning and end with guiding materials

Lenten Bible Study—why don't we have these every year?

Adult Sunday School Classes similar to Pacesetters: 1

Any type of education: 1

Have more combined youth/adult activities: 1

Study on being Lutheran and differences to other religions: 1

Relate the lessons/Gospel to everyday lives in weekly study group: 1

Service opportunities in community/congregation: 1

Deeper discussion of social justice issues at work in our community: poverty, race relations etc.: 1

Educational opportunities must be well-done and justify spending the time.

Sometimes people just talk or lead a group discussion that seems to be more of a time filler than planned education: 2

Would like to forego some adult forum sessions just to have a social time between services: 1

Respect older members: 1

Would appreciate beneficial education interests of the community: 1

More choices: 1

Question 11: Do you have suggestions for enhancing our youth education with regard to Sunday School, Super Wednesday, Vacation Bible School, Confirmation or other?

- More contact with college kids: 3
- Would like a closer connection between grand-parent generation to youth: 1
- Not sure what takes places at most youth activities: 1
- Enjoyed the worship services the youth have done: 1
- I would like to know more about the content of curriculum used for confirmation and Sunday school: 1
- Not involved with youth education anymore: 1
- Children all grown-can't provide suggestions: 1
- Good job being done: 1
- All seems excellent at the present time: 1
- Make Sunday school less of a lecture and use more interactive or group/fun activities related to the lesson: 1
- Need to find some way to draw in the 20-30 yr. olds with youth education/activities
- Structure Sunday School and confirmation in such a way that makes kids feel joy in the experience: 1
- Confirmation-figure out a way to more directly involve parents in faith-building process. More time spent understanding what Bible is and isn't and how to read/understand it's contents: 1
- Confirmation youth should have a clearer understanding of what confirmation is. Eliminate the sermon notes :
- More volunteers, teachers!: 1
- Confused as to why we switched to first communion at such a young age: 1
- Church community needs to celebrate confirmation: 1
- 5th Sunday should be a family Sunday school hour which brings parents and children together for one hour during the month: 1
- We have a good youth program thanks to Beth: 1
- More inviting Sunday School—all classrooms are in the basement—dark and uninviting: 1
- More structured Wednesday program for kids younger than confirmation—a version of AWANAS: 1
- Teach moral guidelines more specific than “be loving” that enable Godly choices rather than waiting for poor choices saying we love and accept you: 1
- Work on establishing more basic Biblical knowledge so we have more to build on when we address current issues: 1

*Question #12: In what ways would you participate to enhance prayer life at Grace?
(prayer groups, prayer vigils, healing services, prayer chains, email “prayer of the day”, etc.)*

Prayer chains: 24 (e-mail would be better than phone)
E-mail prayer of the day: 12
Healing services: 10
Prayer vigils: 8
Prayer concerns in bulletin: 5
Prayer services: 4
Prayer groups: 2
Prayer month established –teach how to pray: 2
Any of the above: 1

Encourage more use of Upper Room for meditation
Would like to send cards to those in hospital or sick, but never hear about it. Put on website?
Daily devotions e-mailed or on website
Opportunities to understand others’ faith journeys
Ambiance is very important for prayer services/vigils (lights low or candles)

Question #13: Have you found service opportunities at Grace that meet your interests and abilities?

Yes: 53 No: 4

Homeless: 4
Food bank: 3
Yard work: 2
Grace Teams for Cures: 2
Home improvement: 1
Habitat for Humanity: 1
Heifer International: 1
Need men’s breakfast club: 1
Bible Study: 1
More emphasis on younger families: 1
Helping elderly: 1
Volunteering at nursing home: 1
Meals to parents of newborns: 1
Need to have congregation’s knowledge of opportunities before jumping in (i.e., Home Together):1