

Feedback from March 3, 2024

Religion in Life Conversation: Worship

It is clear in thinking about what brings vibrancy to worship that people are:

- passionate about worship being focused on the gospel and providing a liturgical framework
- relevant and thoughtful sermons
- gifts of music in worship
- being a community of learning,
- having children and youth present and engaged in worship.
- Utilizing gifts of lay leadership
- knowing others and being known,
- feeling a part of something bigger than themselves
- being welcoming, caring and engaged.
- There were comments that worshipping with a small number of people in the sanctuary can be challenging (less singing, spread out, “feels like worshipping in an empty barn.”)

Under insights that are emerging and what people find important we heard:

- a single Sunday service is an exciting possibility
- fellowship is important
- children’s sermon and having children in worship is important
- we need to keep on-line worship for those who can’t attend in-person
- music adds so much richness
- Monday nights in the summer are popular
- one service helps address lack of volunteers/aging volunteers
- one worship service could allow choir members to attend Religion in Life more regularly and for the whole time,
- need to address hearing issues in the sanctuary
- people do not want Sunday school at the same time as worship service
- there is a value to variety in worship services (piano, organ, new and different liturgies, different styles, etc.).
- People also noted that it doesn’t need to be a lot of people to be vibrant, or that not having people means it’s not a positive experience (Monday nights were a prime example).

As the group reflected on options that are open to us some thoughts surrounded

- the use of media to reach young and newer families
- options other than Sundays (Monday or Wednesday evenings for example)
- Sunday having a more traditional service and Monday being a different style (more contemporary—what liturgies/music is being written now, jazz, meditative, healing services, other);
- people appreciate the brass, horns, woodwinds, bells

- wanted to think about how any change impacts choir and music staff
- having one service that is in the courtyard room or smaller space and one in the sanctuary
- look at what engages youth, young adults, and young families
- allow for a space where people can be in silence/contemplative/maybe communion)
- people do not want anything that feels gimmicky or inauthentic.

From these conversations the church council members doing this work and the whole church council will be looking at some possible options to present to the congregation. These may include:

- No change
- Maintaining two worship services on Sunday as we do now, but differentiating the services significantly more
- Maintaining two worship services on Sunday, but moving one to the courtyard room or smaller space
- Having one worship service on Sunday, and one worship service on Monday night or Wednesday night year-round
- One Sunday worship service, but adding other seasonal worship experiences (Advent services, Epiphany service on Jan. 6, an Easter Vigil) and Mondays during the summer
- ...or other options that could still be dreamed up

Council is also clear any decision may be “for a season.” We are living in a time when not just St. Michael’s, but the larger Church and society are living amidst significant change. It will be important to be adaptable. Should any changes be made there would be evaluation over the course of the next year.