

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BRANFORD

November 22, 2009

REPORT ON THE PARISH SURVEY AND GROUP INTERVIEWS

Fall 2009

Overview

Following the retirement of our beloved Rector, Father Hank Burdick, we are faced with the task of searching for his replacement. This process begins with a period of introspection—ascertaining who we are as a parish, identifying our strengths and our needs, sensing our calling, and discerning the qualities required of a new Rector. The role of the Rector Search Committee is to lead this process, relying in part on a survey effort to generate sufficient information to craft a thoughtful and distinctive Parish Profile.

This document presents the results of that survey effort in a form easily digested by the parish membership. It is important to maintain the perspective that this research effort is not intended to be a product in and of itself, that is, a comprehensive and high fidelity description of our membership. Rather, it is a milestone in a longer journey, a tool which the Rector Search Committee will use to inform our judgments as we present the parish to potential candidates. The content of the survey and the design of the group interviews were driven by the Committee's need for the parish's perspectives on many issues.

Not surprisingly, the survey and interviews generated a great variety of perceptions, values, desires, and needs. With every item or question, general themes tended to emerge against a backdrop of obvious divergence of opinions. The Committee has painstakingly charted the results of our data, while gathering, identifying and considering every response, before moving forward to sifting the results in search of the important themes. In light of our task, this document focuses chiefly on the emergent themes that, when taken together, express the distinctive character and requirements of the parish.

Every known member of Trinity Church was encouraged to participate in this introspective effort. Through general announcements (email, bulletin and mailed announcements, personal overtures) and invitations to standing committees and to the general congregation, we invited all voices to be heard. Roughly one third of the full congregation participated in the anonymous survey and/or group interviews. There is no assurance that the resulting sampling of opinion reported here exactly represents the full membership; indeed, it would appear that the sample is somewhat skewed, at least in terms of its demographic profile.

Thus, the membership is cautioned against overinterpreting the results presented here. While the Committee is aware of the great variety of perceptions held by our members, as noted above, the presentation to follow concentrates on the clear commonalities, the most

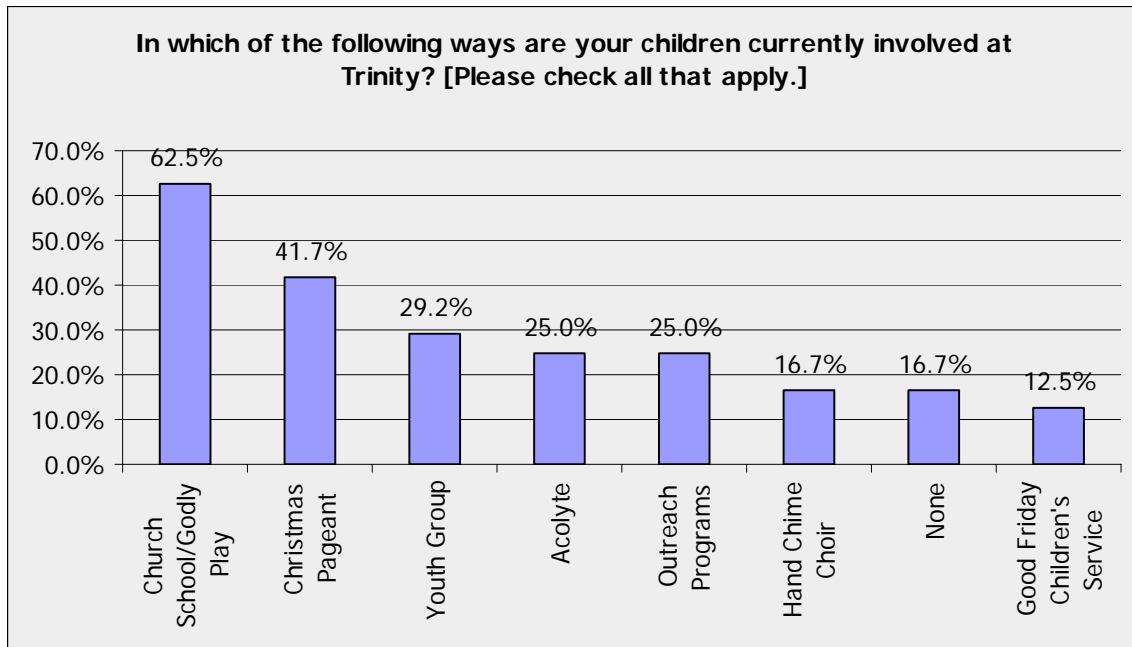
durable themes, noting significant exceptions as they are relevant to the ultimate task of guiding our search process.

In the sections to follow, we first present an overview of the methods we used and of the participating parishioners, a portrait of the significant perceptions and values we have identified, a summary of the parish's goals for its future, and the attributes of a suitable leader to inform the next steps in the search.

Demographics

Based on total survey results of 131 respondents:

- 90 percent of respondents are over the age of 40. Well over half are over 60.
- 66 percent are female.
- 66 percent are married.
- Well over 50 percent have at least some college education.
- 75 percent live within 15 minutes of Trinity.
- 50 percent have been Episcopalians from birth with the next largest group Roman Catholic.
- 75 percent of the respondents attend services once a week.
- 66 percent attend the 10:00 AM service.
- 75 percent do not have children living at home.
- Of the respondents with school-age children, the majority attend elementary school (grades 1 through 5) or high school. 63 percent reported attending Sunday school/Godly play/youth programs and 50 percent reported regular weekly program attendance. The balance reported occasional attendance.



Perceptions

Responses listed by greatest percentages reported.

Question 13: Since you started coming to Trinity Church, to what extent has your participation changed?

Majority has increased participation in ministries and activities.

Question 14: If your participation has increased, why?

Accepted responsibility to give back.

Others were personally invited by clergy or ministry chairs to become involved.

Question 15: If your participation has decreased, why?

Weak leadership

Personal spiritual needs were not being met.

Question 19: What are the three things you like most about Trinity Church?

Welcoming atmosphere

Fellowship/tolerance extended

Beauty of the church

Music program

Question 20: What are the biggest challenges facing Trinity Church?

Declining membership

Financial difficulties

Maintaining relevance in a changing world

Values

Responses listed by greatest number of “very important” ratings.

Question 1: Indicate the importance of each of the aspects of parish life.

Church leadership

Preaching/sermons

Pastoral Care

Questions 10, 11: Do you attend educational offerings? If not, why?

Half of respondents attend occasionally with slightly less than half saying they never attend.

Of those never attending, half of respondents cited time and conflicts as reasons why they do not attend.

Question 12: How important are stewardship concepts to you personally?

70 percent of respondents feel it is very important to make an annual pledge.

50 percent of respondents value giving time and talent to parish projects or programs.

Question 16: The greatest number of “Strongly Agree” and “Somewhat Agree” responses to the following statements.

“I regard the Bible as open to interpretation.”

“I prefer preaching with an informal, conversational delivery.”

“I prefer an emotionally uplifting worship experience.”

“I prefer traditional worship and music.”

“I prefer an intellectually challenging worship experience.”

Question 17: Top six areas of emphasis/focus for a new Rector.

Preaching/Public Speaking

Church Growth & Development

Counseling

Spiritual Guidance

Youth Work

Tolerance/Acceptance

Question 18: Qualities you would like to see in our new rector.

Warmth

Capable preacher

Administrator

Tolerant/supportive of diversity

Other items of emphasis

Outreach/Missions

“80/20” - Twenty percent of the people in the parish do eighty percent of the work.

These themes also reflect the input from the following focus group sessions with a total of 57 parishioners participating.

Mission’s

Choir

Vestry/Stewardship

Pastoral Care

8:00 service

10:00 service

Youth/Teens

Godly Play