



Worship Survey Report (2016)

[Summary collated and edited by Dr Dot Weeks and presented to the Kirk Session by the Worship Group, June 2016]

INTRODUCTION

The worship group of the Kirk Session were tasked with constructing a Survey Questionnaire to be distributed to the worshipping congregation at each of the four services of worship of the North Church on four consecutive weeks including 17th & 24th April and 1st & 8th May and on the Thursdays dated 21st & 28th April and 5th and 12th May. All questionnaires were to be completed and returned by Thursday 12th May however this was extended slightly to 16th to accommodate a few late returns. 350 questionnaires were printed and 137 have been returned. This return is running at just under 40%.

The purpose of the survey was to try to gauge the levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction of different aspects of worship within the North Church and invited participants to rate this on a scale of four points ranging from very satisfied to dissatisfied. Participants were also invited to add comments to their ratings and were invited to say what they would like to be different about the services and add any other comments that were not covered by the questionnaire. This report is shaped by the Survey Questions with additional themes presented from the comments section.

This table below reflects the collated responses from all questionnaires returned. As can be seen from the table the bulk of the responses came from the 60-80 year age group and people who attended the 11am service formed the majority of the responses. These factors have to be kept in mind when reading this report.

The statistics:

1. Returns					
Male	46	Female	91	Total	137
0-20	20-40	40-60	60-80	over 80	
2	6	16	93	28	
Length of time worshipping at PNC					
1-2yrs	3-9yrs	10-20yrs	20-30yrs	31+yrs	
7	16	17	26	70	
Service attended					
9.30a.m.	11.00am	6.30pm	Thurs 1pm		
29	119	20	12		
Frequency of attendance					
Weekly	Monthly	Other			
128	5	11			
2. Important aspects of worship					
	VIP	Important	Not VIP	Not Imprt	
Praise	91	55			
Preaching	105	40			
Teaching	82	56	3		
Fellowship	77	57	8		
Prayer	106	39	1		

3. Aspect that contribute most to Christian life				
Praise	Preaching	Teaching	Fellowship	Prayer
51	72	44	48	68
4. How satisfied with each aspect of worship at PNC				
	Very Sat.	Satisfied	Not V. Sat	Dissatisfied
Praise	38	76	24	4
Preaching	58	72	9	1
Teaching	40	69	15	1
Fellowship	51	72	13	3
Prayer	58	73	7	2

UNITY

By far the most significant theme that emerged from the data was the need for UNITY despite there being no direct question on this topic. Almost all of the participants who commented, believed that for worship to be a more meaningful experience the Church had to demonstrate the Scriptural Principal of Unity.

“We need to have unity in the body of Christ as expressed in Chapter 4 of Ephesians”

While spiritual unity may have been taken for granted the overwhelming call was for a structure that reflected a visible unity of Sunday morning worship.

The present structure of two services was seen as a two tier system, which was deemed to be divisive and lacking in parity

“Stop two services and two congregations, we are a family of one”

“We feel strongly that the 9.30am service should not be seen as a poor cousin to the 11am service”.

The benefits of a community worshipping together were seen to have the potential to improve fellowship, to create a ‘one family’ atmosphere, have better use of resources and have more parity. The cost of re-structuring was seen primarily as the need for individual members to sacrifice their own particular preferences in order to accommodate both traditional and contemporary styles into one service.

The risks of such change were acknowledged to be mainly that of losing even more members who may be resistant to change

“There seems to be a resistance to any changes being made and a feeling that things have to go on as they always have”.

PRAISE

Next in importance within the Worship service was the category of PRAISE which was considered to be almost synonymous with music.

A wide range of preferences emerged from traditional unaccompanied metric psalms to the most recent contemporary worship songs

“It would be nice if some modern songs were included (e.g. Chris Tomlin, The Getty’s, Rend Collective).

Music provided an emotional experience and was considered to be uplifting, spiritual and moving. Music which provided this experience was deemed to be valuable by many but from a different perspective; unaccompanied metric psalms were experienced as reverential and respectful while

there was a plea from some for worship to be livelier and more joyous too. It is the clash of styles within the provision of music that seemed to be the most challenging to reconcile.

There was a significant expression of unease with 'action oriented praise', and too much repetitive choruses. The use of the term 'songs' rather than the term 'hymns' was seen to be disrespectful. The tension between the call for more well-known traditional hymns, and more lively praise in worship may be difficult to reconcile but there was an acknowledgement of a need for personal sacrifice for the greater good of the Church.

PREACHING AND TEACHING

"What is the difference between preaching and teaching?"

For the purposes of this questionnaire we understood preaching to be the proclamation of the message of the Gospel and teaching to be the imparting of Scriptural Principles of how to live that Gospel message in everyday life.

Preaching

There was a wide range of evaluations on this topic and respondents rated the quality of the preaching from excellent and encouraging to lacking depth, disjointed and on some occasions to be ill prepared. Some commentators regarded the preaching as repetitive, superficial. The function of preaching was seen as providing a spiritual recharge.

There were calls for a more dynamic message, more challenging preaching, more specific sermons and one person called for more drama e.g. conversations between Peter and God.

Teaching

The data suggests that there is belief that there is deeper and more meaningful teaching to be experienced at the 6.30pm service. There would appear to be a high level of satisfaction with this structure. However, it is interesting to note that it was this category which generated more suggestions for potential additional areas of teaching to be covered.

A focus on discipleship, the ministry of all God's people and their relationship with God and with each other were areas of potential learning as were an understanding of Faith, responding to God's goodness, healing and caring and Christian commitment.

One participant called for more interest and involvement in mission but overall, it was considered that teaching needed to be relevant to everyday life.

Preaching and Teaching

"To me, preaching and teaching are quite difficult to disentangle".

Comments which may be applicable to both preaching and teaching related to the length of the services, the need for preparation, need for relevance and continuity. Comments were also made regarding the use of the most relevant translation of the Bible and for some the Good News version was the preferred option while for others the NIV or RSV were more acceptable. Respondents were of the opinion that whatever version was available in the Pews should be the one used by the person leading worship.

The Children's talk is difficult to categorize but it is important to include comments here. For some, the children's address is too complicated and lacked continuity. One respondent suggested that the content be appropriate for all ages

FELLOWSHIP

The purpose of fellowship was seen as strengthening the unity of the Church by providing an opportunity to come together as one family and enjoy a sense of Christian fellowship.

Comments highlighted a deficit in the provision of opportunities to come together, (especially for the 20-30's age group) and get to know people and make friendships.

An appreciation of House-groups as a vehicle for closer bonds to be formed was articulated and was seen by some as essential to provide help and support in difficult times.

More opportunities for meeting together informally to get to know others and to build relationships would be something that would be welcomed.

PRAYER

It is interesting to note that although prayer was seen by 106 to be very important, it was the category that generated the least comments.

Prayer was seen as satisfactory if said by the minister and there was an appreciation of the 'lay' intercessors although there was a request that they be taught to speak slowly and clearly. Sometimes prayer was seen as being incidental at one service. A need for the awareness of the value and importance of prayer was articulated, while there was a comment that there was insufficient time for silent prayer within the services and also a need for more prayer was highlighted.

In Summary:

A summary of these findings point to a call for unity as a basis for worship to become more meaningful. The challenges that this would bring were acknowledged by some respondents but the benefits were seen to outweigh the costs.

Praise was seen as the most significant element of worship and the wide range of views and positions held varied from ultra-traditional to ultra-contemporary. It was acknowledged that there was a need for personal sacrifice and respect for others preferences in order for these styles of worship to be accommodated within one worship service.

Preaching and Teaching were difficult to separate for some respondents with a perceived importance to both of these elements.

Fellowship, in that it contributed to unity and relationship- building, was an important part of Christian worship.

Prayer was viewed as very important by the majority of the respondents but the lack of comments in this category gives little opportunity to discerning meaning, practices and purpose given to this activity.

An opportunity for further conversation with members of the Worship Group was offered but to date this has not been taken up.

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