

# St. Andrew's Listening Sessions Summary

107 total participants over 5 sessions

October 20–November 9, 2019

## 1. Sense of Community, Social interactions, and Social Activities

- We have a sense of belonging. Everything we do strengthens community.
- Fellowship is important, encouraging participation.
- Each service group is a community and we have a diversity of services. Each has their own congregations but there is cross movement between them. They are supported by social groups.
- Small groups are important.
- Monthly fellowship activities are very important.
- Coffee hour fellowship is a key.
- Shrine Mont retreat is important to our fellowship.
- We have many families with young children and it's exciting to see the influx of young families.
- We are a welcoming and supportive community where young children are accepted. They have a chance to show leadership and learn.
- Our sense of community comes from our strong outreach with volunteers: Facets Hot meals and Hypothermia, Echo, ESOL etc.
- We are not just a Sunday church. Community that interacts with each other all week long.
- St. Andrew's is a church family.
- Rector should participate in and encourage our activities. Would like to see the Rector at activities to build personal relationships with parishioners and be open to all our community has to offer. Should want to "be there."
- Rector should continue to foster growth in social fabric and invite people to try one of the many ministries.
- We need a rector who is a team leader—everyone has certain skills they can contribute but knowing how to use those skills and combining them is important

## 2. Ministries Past, Present, and Future

### Outreach

- Outreach is a big part of our DNA here.
- We have always thrived and outreach is very important to many people here.
- We are a founding church with Samaritan Ministries, Facets, and almost with ECHO.
- Food first, then faith. If you believe, live it.
- Hypothermia Week is a key outreach that involves the whole parish.
- Previously outreach was 22% of our budget– would like to increase if possible.

- Prior overseas giving—was unique for St. Andrew’s.
- Individually all of us find the more you volunteer, the more you learn about your faith and yourself. Way to give back. E.g. volunteer for ESOL, work at ECHO, help with finances here, etc.

### **Adult Formation**

- Previously held adult mission trips to El Hogar. Would like to see again emphasis on adult mission trips.
- Sunday Adult Formation/ Forums is an important part of our experience. Currently missed.
- Would like to see a local retreat day for those that can’t do Shrine Mont. Taizé would be perfect.

### **Community Outreach/Evangelism**

- Reach out to the community and invite them to our events—invites for community and other faith communities to join events. Draw in outsiders when we have events.
- Looking at developing the adjacent property for community use to attract youth here.
- We need to invite our neighbors.
- Opened doors to scouts, FOMA concerts. Hopefully laity and clergy both get to point where someday we might have vans to pick up people. Develop space we have so we not only open doors, but include many here.
- Need for evangelism. How can we minister and reach out to the unchurched/nones?

### **Interfaith Engagement**

- Interfaith relationships including Peace Islamic Center make us stand out and important part of who we are now.
- Rector should speak among other denominations and in the community.
- Rector should be aware of “putting the wider community” ahead of parish.

### **Family Ministries and Preschool**

- What Family Ministry has been doing is working: parent’s night, preschool, messy church, etc. develops a sense of community and has increased number of active young families.
- PALS is a good community that meets once a month (Parents and Littles playgroup)
- Preschool—those kids are of many religions but many parents may end up coming here.
- How do we best integrate new families?

### **Youth Ministries**

- Need to relook at middle and high school. More focus on the youth. Local events and combined with other churches.
- New rector needs to help foster better relationship with teens. We have very small group of teens we serve. If groups are too small, they won't come.
- Youth is a big priority. Our new rector should be tech savvy to reach out to our youth who live with tech stuff. Rector should be able to do things online, with technology. Someone who can use social media effectively and engage youth.
- Know this is coming soon, but high school youth groups and restarting that would be incredibly important with more opportunities for teens.
- Work Camp and Pilgrimage are key.
- Rector should try to get Sunday school involved and be involved in formation to build parish.

### **Greenspring Retirement/Seniors**

- The ministry outreach to Greenspring is greatly appreciated.
- Connectedness to Greenspring is an important element. Should continue to grow this connection.
- Also, outreach to seniors here, with hearing devices, etc.

### **Worship Ministry**

- One thing that sets us apart is the number of varied opportunities for people to worship.
- Diversity of worshipping and intergenerational activities.
- Our worship services are excellent.
- Our worship is the focal point here and the main reason people come. The rest is supportive of expressing love for God and community.

### **Music Ministry**

- Music ministry says St. Andrew's.
- Our music is really good and important part of our worship service.
- I want someone who is very supportive of music here, maybe even a little music at 8 am where there is not currently music.
- FOMA is good for the community.

### **Welcome and Connecting Ministries**

- Greeters—welcome faces each week and see how we can integrate newcomers into the parish.
- Photo directory is helpful.
- Potential outreach to veterans, "stork delivery" to families with a new baby.

- Reaching young adults and single adults.

### 3. Diversity and Inclusion

- Reflects back on the diversity and different ministries—people have different faith backgrounds and preferences and we do a lot in that area.
- How do we get more diverse people?
- We are welcoming. How can we get better?
- Need to look at economic diversity as well. Need to do a better job at the blue collar, white collar gap.
- Rector should have skills and/or be open to improving our diversity.
- It's important that we're open and accepting of LGBTQ community.
- We have a high tolerance for diversity of politics, religion, etc. here. We're a good example to the rest of the world that we don't have to agree on everything. We can disagree without the other being a bad person. We want a rector who can encourage this diversity and inclusion in a rector's attitude.
- We want a rector who not only acknowledges diversity but welcomes it.
- Look for a priest who is open to embracing diversity, look for a diverse candidate.
- The transience of this area also means diversity in the form of new people coming in from other areas and bringing those experiences here.
- We have a paucity of Latinos here.
- We do not do much for those with disabilities or mental health issues. To my knowledge, we have never tackled that as a parish but many have those issues to deal with and may talk among themselves.
- Political diversity—are we politically diverse and open to other opinions?
- I heard an announcement this morning about another church having a program on race and kids. Would be great to advertise that here. Our congregation should discuss race relations more.
- Speakers on certain topics on diversity? We are an open community but we don't advertise it.
- We are an inclusive parish but are we celebrating diversity?
- We're a whiter church than I would like. One square mile from this church, is homogenous. Is it a product of our environment?
- We don't "care" about gender diversity or religious differences. We include info on Muslims, for example, in Sun school. It's not looked at as "different" so we just talk about it.
- Teens today are open and inclusive. Acceptance and teen issues can go together.
- We demonstrate inclusivity. As they move around, everyone sees him as the "Black Episcopalian" and everyone is surprised! Here it's not "a thing". There are different people and it doesn't stand out that one is Black, another is something else.
- We should make better use of our sign to welcome all.
- My sense is that we do a great deal in all those areas—we are a very open community—hopefully we are as welcoming as I feel we try to be.

- Felt also that we are doing a good job—something we always have to have in our forefront and we've made a big push in that area.
- We have to honor the fact that we say all are welcome here.
- As we look at younger people coming into the parish ways to communicate to them—for younger folks—how do they receive it and how do we talk to them? They see things differently than we do—some of those people in that generation—if they are struggling with not being hetero if they know they have people that support them it can make for an easier conversation for them—imagine if you are 13 and think you may be—how do we begin that conversation?

#### **4. Role of Scripture, Sermons, Traditions, Music, and Ritual in our Faith Journey**

##### **Sermons**

- Don't preach at us. Like a sermon that addresses today's issues and ties in with world events. I like preacher who can connect with what's happening here.
- Sermons should reach as many different groups as possible.
- Good sermon: relating it to our daily lives, as opposed to esoteric explanation. A sermon where it helps apply scripture to our lives today.
- Love some of the sermons in the past that referenced articles or books and authors they've read. Quoting theologians.
- Sometimes I like a priest who gets angry. Sometimes we need to be told. Passionate.
- The most important thing for me is the sermon. We take a reading from the Bible but I want it to apply to me in daily life. Also, when horrible things happen in the world, I would love to get a Christian slant on how to look at it.
- Sermons about reaching the audience and not about the speaker. Bad sermon: when whoever gives sermon spends more time talking about themselves.
- In particular, that means it has to be language that's understandable—some get too complex rather than speaking clearly and focusing on a particular issue.
- Trick to a good sermon is intellectually challenging on one hand but also one it has simple language and references to everyday circumstances.
- Length of sermon is important—if it goes too long can be difficult to focus—clear and concise.
- We're a church that professes God's love to the world, but more and more, clergy have to make a stance as to how God's love looks. Don't know how to do it without being political.

##### **Liturgy**

- Open to new liturgies, but also like the tradition.
- Have candidate look at our liturgy and team should look at theirs.
- Consistency of liturgy is what people like about the Episcopal church.
- The greatest strength of St. Andrew's is that we have multiple liturgies. Everyone can find their place.

- It's a fine balance. For example, if you go to 8, you expect Rite 1; 10am is Rite II. If it keeps changing, it unnerves people. They like consistency and helps them to be more contemplative. I know the prayers from childhood.
- We should use the prayer book more on Sundays—as Episcopalians we should know how to use the prayer books.
- We are not a smells and bells church. We are a low church.
- I like the formality of Episcopal services, but nice if Rector can also laugh if something goes awry.
- One thing about the service now lovely way of including the children who hear the gospel now.
- Our willingness to include kids is important. Used to have children not seen as much and now they are more integrated which is great.
- Good to use New Zealand prayer book.
- Tradition can be good but it can also be an anchor and drag one down.
- Rector is in charge of liturgy but should bring the parish along with decisions.
- Fluidity of people being able to express we like to try new things.

### **Music**

- We have a long history of music expertise. We have a wonderful caliber of people who come to be in the choir. A new musician has been hired to assist with the Saturday evening and Taizé services.
- Love the traditional music, but I love the others. I'm open to a little change but I love the traditional music.
- Like very much the actual liturgy is traditional but we have various musical styles/prayers – open and reaching everyone—differing styles
- This church has exceptional music and different from other churches in the area. Our music really engages me.
- Music matching the scripture—want to keep that.
- Having a priest who understands music and the time commitment of the choir.

## **5. Essential Priorities and Skills of a Rector**

- Collaborator not a micro manager.
- Someone who knows when to ask for help.
- Someone who understands children.
- Someone who is approachable.
- Sense of humor.
- Comfortable with all ages.
- Have a sweet disposition.
- Rector that is personable and sociable.
- Rector who is an excellent communicator.
- Rector should be accessible.

- Someone who wants to grow here, rather than someone who wants to stop here on the way to elsewhere. This parish is ready to grow and we need rector who will connect with all demographics of this congregation.
- Someone who can help with what we do not do well: Financial—giving enough money, encouraging people to become members—we have lost votes, evangelism, facility care, enough volunteers, need more people with full commitment.
- Someone adept at bringing in new members so we grow. We have a significant older population here. Many thinking of retirement or are retired.
- Someone business-oriented who can make use of our land and perhaps help the community. Experienced rector who understands business and has some administrative skills.
- It's important to talk about the property we own. Let the clergy know it's there and plans may be on hold pending funds.
- Finances may be more important now. We have a declining revenue.
- Know everyone by name. Relate to individuals.
- Someone who can assess the skills of the congregation and drawing them in to help and revitalize the people we have now and fire them up and get them more involved.
- Comfortably relate to people. That person hires staff to complement that. Assess the strengths of your parishioners.
- Should be an extrovert and comfortable in your skin. many are Episcopalians are introverts. But there are very successful introverts who can connect in extrovert style. Some people are "reserved."
- Servant ministry—lead us but was also with us in outreach. I would like to see someone who is with us and serves along with us. Rector who is with us and not above us.
- Pastoral care is essential and sets a priest apart more than anything else—when interviewing may ask about this that emphasis in seminaries now is that it is a 9–5 job and that is what new priests thing—older idea was a sense of vocation and more on-call—sense of being with people in their time of need. Feel we should look for someone without the 9–5 mentality.
- Someone flexible and needs to be available—also needs strong sense of personal boundaries—flexible, present but has boundaries for personal well-being.
- We need someone who can answer the last question about what God has in mind for us, regarding the land we own. We're already challenged financially.
- Looking at touchy feely skills and management skills. Sometimes rector and assistant rector can compliment each other but one can't do it all.
- We need someone with vision for the future.
- Someone who can delegate. Delegating does more than lightening the load—it gets more people involved.
- Biggest challenge is volunteers—people have great ideas. We could do more if we had more help.
- Has to be confident and secure in their own faith so they can teach and articulate it to us—Episcopalians are quiet by nature so rector could take lead in that.
- Be visibly part of outreach helps draw in volunteers as well.

- We need a rector who has had successful experience before—not a new priest.
- Someone who brings sense of enthusiasm for all aspects of the parish—and be involved with the Sunday school and pre-school.
- I'm open to a bright shining light and I'm not opposed to someone that may be new and is ready/willing/able and our discernment team can figure that out—male/female—new.
- Highlight spirituality and soulfulness should be apparent.
- We are unique in the country and they should understand Northern Virginia. High cost of living.
- If you have a rector with only one way of services and one way of interacting with people, that doesn't work well here. People are diverse.
- Rector who is encouraging of the lay leadership.
- Some of most dynamic rectors I have seen is one who has personality. Have personable side to them and understand families.
- Humble and knows their limitations—really gets into being a good team leader.
- Go for quality over potential longevity.
- Often when churches are discerning, you're looking for a perfect person who doesn't exist. I pray for a leader who is grounded in their own continuing faith, able to grow others along with them. One who can speak and live into what that would look like. Also, one who is very secure in themselves, sense of their own worth so they can share with community and congregation. Some of these things are good qualities – humility, sense of humor, forgiveness of self and others. Not thinking that rector has to do all of it but can bring others along to help. Rector can't be gifted in everything but needs to know our needs—in pastoral care, senior ministry, help parish vision, care for cradle to death needs.