

St. Jude Church

Journey Together

Parish Survey Summary

In the early fall last year, we distributed a survey to all St. Jude Parishioners asking your opinions about the state of the parish – spiritually and physically. With the changing of the guard from Fr. Brando to Fr. Charlie, the time seemed right to pause and take stock.

We are a parish in transition, which is typical with a change in pastor. New priests bring different spiritual emphases, different demeanors, different sermon styles, to say nothing of different football obsessions and parish mascots. As such, it is a time of adjustment for all in the parish family, just as it is an adjustment for the new priest(s). In that light, transition periods are good times to take a snapshot of where we stand as a parish in order to better understand how we best move ahead.

That was the purpose of this survey. Two hundred of you took the time to fill one out, and many added thoughtful comments and candid criticism. You applauded the aspects of parish life you love and you recommended constructive changes to others.

In spite of all those comments – or perhaps because of them – 79% percent of you said you would be “likely” or “very likely” to recommend St. Jude as “a good parish to join.”

Nine out of ten of you said the parish offers enough opportunities for prayer, meditation and adoration, 87% stating the church atmosphere is conducive to prayer and active participation in the liturgy. And you take advantage of that – 85% attend Mass at least once a week, 71% already volunteer time to support parish functions and ministries, and more than half the parish participates at least once a month in an activity, program or ministry other than Mass.

Many of you want to participate more. Well over half of those not yet volunteering state they would like to do so, and 49% say you have talents or expertise you would be willing to provide to the parish. Regrettably, many of you commented that your past expressions of interest in serving on parish ministries have gone unacknowledged.

Maintenance and upkeep need attention, you told us. More than one quarter of you think the appearance and upkeep of the church and grounds could be improved; 37% feel that way about the PLC (although improvements have been made since the survey was conducted); and 32% expressed dissatisfaction with the condition and appearance of the church.

In terms of how you get your information, most of you look to the weekly bulletin – 94% of you read the hard copy and 17% of you check it online; 73% read the newsletter; 59% say you get information via word of mouth from fellow parishioners. Sixty-nine percent of you rely on Mass announcements, although few subjects elicited such impassioned comments – most of them expressing displeasure with the practice.

More than 90% of you have computers and access to the internet, and many of you commented that you would like to see more parish information delivered electronically. When it comes to giving, though, you are traditionalists: 90% use envelopes, and only 28% expressed interest in giving online.

It is worth noting that the survey respondents tended to be our older and more established parishioners. More than half the respondents are over 55, another 21% between 45 and 54. Forty-eight percent of the respondents have been parishioners for more than 20 years.

St. Jude School is an important part of this parish, appearing as a prominent response when people stated what they liked about St. Jude.

But the school buildings need attention, too. Among those of you who have children enrolled in St. Jude School, no more than half find the physical structure and condition of your child's school building to be adequate.

You noted other areas needing improvement. Understandably, parish finances are on your list, along with communication and maintenance. Ironically, so was the challenge of forging a tighter connection between the church and school. Several noted the importance of helping people who do not have children enrolled in the school better understand the value of this ministry to the entire parish.

Although the individual comments are too numerous to list here, it suffices to say that they reflected a parish that cares deeply about its faith and community. They also reflected the diversity of our parish and our differences in preferred ways to worship, some looking for more traditional liturgies and others preferring the more relaxed feel of the folk music. As we think about these comments, it's good to remind ourselves that there is richness in diversity, and far more opportunity represented than challenge.

The quantitative results of the survey can be found on the parish website at

www.StJudeChattanooga.org .

Now that we have taken stock, it's time to address your concerns, particularly as they relate to our financial future. You will be hearing more about that in the coming weeks and months as we journey together to make our parish as alive and loving as it possibly can be.