

Overall Assessment of St. John Parish as a Welcoming Community

Executive Summary

The Church was easy to find, well maintained and generally made a good first impression. Parking was a problem around the church building proper, but adequate parking exists in the school lot on the next street.

The bulletin was easy to read and listed parish contact information. There was no welcome for newcomers and no means were provided by which the newcomers could make themselves known and obtain further information about church membership.

The acid test for any worshiping community which desires to welcome the newcomer is, "would a newcomer attend this church again after the first experience?" Those factors which determine whether a newcomer would return to a parish are admittedly subjective and may be unique to each individual. Based upon all the worship experiences, the observer would not attend this church again.

Assume for the moment that there are three possible experiences a newcomer can have when visiting a new church; made to feel welcome, made to feel invisible, or made to feel unwelcome. The observer would characterize his experience as generally made to feel invisible and on one occasion made to feel unwelcomed.

Respondents to the survey given in church personally attached high importance to welcoming the stranger. They rated the performance of the parish as falling short the importance they attached to welcoming the newcomer. Nevertheless, the observer would rate the performance of the parish significantly less than did parishioners. This is not uncommon. Most active parishioners perceive their parish as friendly, since they have established a circle of people with whom they are friendly, but have difficulty seeing the parish through the eyes of the newcomer.

Based upon the observations and the survey there is room for improvement in how this parish welcomes newcomers. Since parishioners reported that the importance they give to welcome exceeds how well the parish does welcoming, there is a well of good intentions and stated values here into which the pastor and parish team can tap. Ultimately, the success or failure of any parish welcoming effort rest with the actions and values of the parishioners, not the pastor, staff, or any small team entrusted with this responsibility.

Respondents to the phone surveys generally felt that the parish is currently doing a good job in welcoming newcomers. They were much more emphatic that welcoming the newcomer was important to them. This validated the findings of the parish survey in this regard.

Almost all the phone survey respondents placed responsibility for making St. John a more welcoming community squarely upon the shoulders of parishioners, while a few add with proper guidance from the pastor and staff. Half the respondents struggled when ask for Biblical examples of hospitality, indicating the need for catechesis in this regard. Respondents to both the survey and phone interviews offered many suggestions as to how St. John can become a more welcoming parish, which are contained in this report.

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Purpose

Creative tension is one of the necessary ingredients in any change initiative. A group will rarely find the motivation necessary to change without this essential element. The simplest way for church leaders to generate creative tension is to discern the ideal and compare it with an accurate assessment of reality. Therefore, this assessment seeks to discern the current reality of St. John parish in terms of how it welcomes newcomers. It is also designed to determine how the parishioners discern the welcoming of the parish as well as the importance they give to welcoming the newcomer. It was also hoped that we might get a glimpse of God's will for this community through this assessment, since God's will is revealed, in part, through the community of believers.

Methodology

There were three main components of this assessment. The first component was that an observer, new to the community, attended all the weekend Masses, albeit on different weekends, and reported on the experience he had as a newcomer. The second component was a 34 question survey that was administered to parishioners during the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Lastly, four active parishioners were interviewed by phone.

Observations

Overall Summary

All English weekend Masses were observed. The Church was easy to find and generally made a good first impression. Parking by the church entrances was a problem, but there was adequate parking in the school lot on the next street. There was, however, nothing directing newcomers to the school lot. There were two signs identifying the church, however, Mass times were not listed on these signs.

The bulletin was easy to read, but did not welcome newcomers nor provide a means by which the newcomer could make themselves known and obtain further information about church membership.

The acid test for any worshiping community which desires to welcome the newcomer is, "would the newcomer attend this church again after the first experience?" Those factors which determine whether a newcomer would return to a parish are admittedly subjective and may be unique to each individual. Beyond the welcoming the newcomer receives, other factors may include: the quality of the music, the quality of the entire liturgical experience, the quality of the preaching, the perceived vibrancy of the community, the extent to which people actively participate in the Mass, and the perceived long term viability of the community. Based upon all the worship experiences, a newcomer would not feel truly welcomed and would probably not attend this church again.

Purpose

The purpose of these observations was to place a stranger in the community and observe three key areas of welcoming: the facility, the bulletin, and specific worship experiences.

View to the World

Newcomers to this community can easily find out about the church through a listing in the Yellow Pages. After hours, a person answered the phone and gave the Mass times. The church does not advertise in the local newspaper, nor does it have brochures in the local motels.

There is a rudimentary one page web site for the church, however it needs updating. It still lists Msgr. Dunn as the pastor. The Sunday Mass schedule has a Mass listing for 10:00 AM which in fact starts at 9:45 AM. The parish's page on the Diocese of Brooklyn web site also list the Sunday 10:00 AM Mass.

The building is easy to find. The grounds are well maintained and it makes a good first impression. There are two prominent signs listing the church's name but Mass times are not listed. There is no mention of visitors being welcomed on these signs. There is no parking lot on the street adjoining the church's entrances (32nd St.), so church goers must compete with the neighborhood for on street parking. There is adequate parking in the school lot on the next street (31st St). Signage directing visitors to the school lot would prove helpful. The building has a handicap ramp for the physically handicapped. Bulletin boards or other displays inside the church are attractive and up to date. There is nothing posted in the narthex that welcomes newcomers and/or visitors, however there is a listing of Mass times there.

Bulletin Review

The bulletin is easy to read. It lists the church's name, address, and phone number. There is no mention of newcomers/visitors in the bulletin. Having metaphorical "side doors" to the church (non-liturgical entry points to the church community for newcomers) is important. There were none of these "side doors" mentioned in the bulletin. There was also no mention in the bulletin about special study groups or introductory classes (such as RCIA) for newer people.

Specific Worship Experiences

These observations were made using certain predetermined criteria meant to gauge and assess the welcoming nature of a parish community and its particular worship service(s). The observation worksheet is appended at the end of this report.

Saturday, 5:00 PM

Childcare was not available at this Mass. Children were not welcomed through special music or children's sermons, nor provided with a children's service. There were

no greeters welcoming people at the door. The church was sparsely filled and with people spread out. Many pews had people only sitting on the ends with large gaps in between. This type of seating arrangement presents an immediate barrier and is therefore unwelcoming to newcomers. The lector welcomed newcomers during the introductory comments, but beyond that newcomers were not recognized and/or identified during the course of the Mass. Newcomers were not personally greeted by parishioners during the course of the Mass.

The words to hymns were easy to read. The exchange at the Sign of Peace felt very perfunctory with little warmth or recognition of the observer as a newcomer. At this Mass, people from the rear of the church received Communion first. While it was easy to pick up on what was happening, it would have been nice for newcomers if someone had explained this unusual practice.

Newcomers were not explicitly invited to come back during the Mass. After the Mass the celebrant warmly greeted people as they left. After the Mass, there was no opportunity to meet other people during a social time.

Overall, a newcomer would not feel truly welcomed and would probably not attend this church again based upon the experience at this worship service.

Sunday, 8:30 AM

Childcare was not available at this Mass. Children were not welcomed through special music or children's sermons, nor provided with a children's service. There were no greeters welcoming people at the door. Many pews had people only sitting on the ends with large gaps in between. This type of seating arrangement presents an immediate barrier and is therefore unwelcoming to newcomers. The lector welcomed newcomers during the introductory comments, but beyond that newcomers were not recognized and/or identified during the course of the Mass. Newcomers were not personally greeted by parishioners during the course of the Mass.

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Overall, a newcomer would not feel truly welcomed and would probably not attend this church again based upon the experience at this worship service.

Sunday, 9:45 AM

Childcare was not available at this Mass. Children were not welcomed through special music or children's sermons, nor provided with a children's service. There were no greeters welcoming people at the door. Many pews had people only sitting on the ends with large gaps in between. This type of seating arrangement presents an immediate barrier and is therefore unwelcoming to newcomers. The observer approached one pew where a man was sitting at the end with a large gap next to him. When the observer asked to get by, the man was visibly indignant and put out that the observer would ask to get by him and sit next to him in the pew. The lector welcomed newcomers during the introductory comments, but beyond that newcomers were not recognized and/or identified during the course of the Mass. Newcomers were not

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Sunday, 12:15 PM

Childcare was not available at this Mass. Children were not welcomed through special music or children's sermons, nor provided with a children's service. There were no greeters welcoming people at the door. Many pews had people only sitting on the ends with large gaps in between. This type of seating arrangement presents an immediate barrier and is therefore unwelcoming to newcomers. The lector welcomed newcomers during the introductory comments, but beyond that newcomers were not recognized and/or identified during the course of the Mass. Newcomers were not personally greeted by parishioners during the course of the Mass.

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Summary of St. John Survey

Summary

Respondents attached higher importance to welcoming the stranger than they rated the actual performance of the parish in this regard. This is good news. Certainly there is always room for improvement in how a parish welcomes newcomers and this survey simply validates this notion. With parishioners saying that the importance they give to welcome exceeds how well the parish does welcoming, means that there is a reservoir of good intentions and stated values into which the pastor and parish team can tap.

There were five questions for which there was at least a half point difference between the rating for the parish and the importance attached to the item by the respondent, with the importance being greater than the rating of the parish. This could be thought of as the low hanging fruit; those items for which parishioners would be most motivated to bring into being. The following are those items listed from the greatest difference to the least:

1. Our church has a written program in place for welcoming newcomers. (Difference of .62)
2. Our church has an active welcoming committee. (Difference of .61)
3. Friendly church members greet people at each major entrance prior to and after the Mass. (Difference of .53)
4. Newcomers are linked with long standing church members with whom they have something in common. (Difference of .51)
5. Our church has an active evangelism program designed to reach out to the unchurched or inactive Catholics. (Difference of .51)

When asked, "Would you like to be part of a new effort to make new people feel welcomed to our church?" the vast majority answered no (146) with only a small number responding yes (34) and 53 responded that they needed more information. This points to the need for significant catechesis among the parishioners, for if the majority are not on board with a program for welcoming newcomers, the success of any such program is in serious doubt.

Survey Purpose

This survey was designed to learn two things: 1) the extent to which parishioners see this as a welcoming community and 2) the extent to which parishioner value a welcoming community. It was also hoped that we could get a glimpse of God's will for this parish, since one of the ways God speaks is through the community of believers.

Survey Design

This survey was administered during the Sunday celebration of the Mass. Respondents were asked to react to sixteen statements about how well the parish was doing welcoming and how important this aspect of welcoming was to them personally.

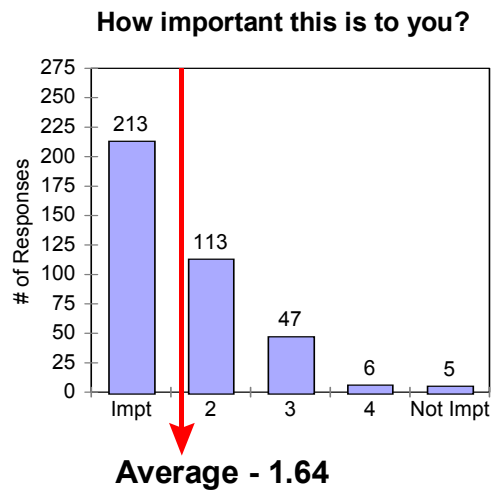
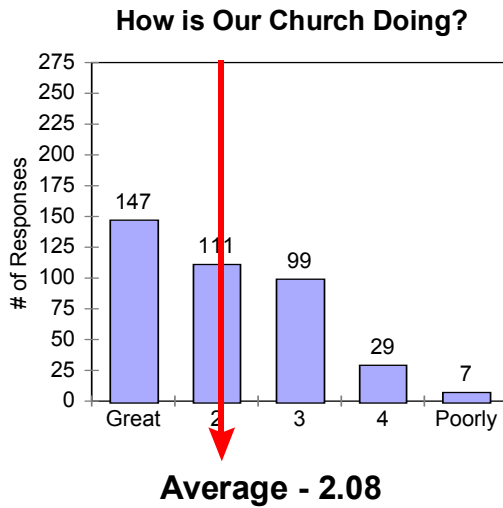
Respondents were asked to rate their response on a Likert scale with 1 being the highest possible score and 5 being the worst.

Sample Description

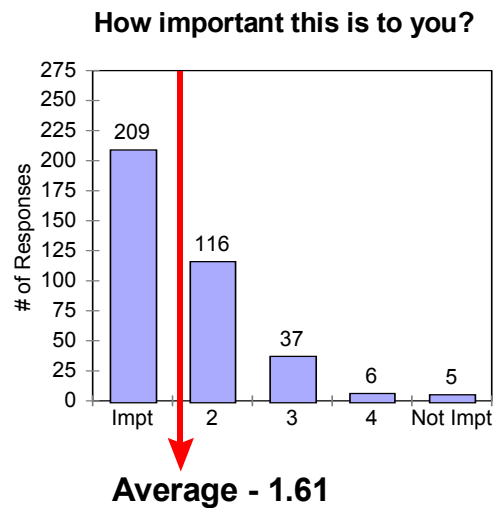
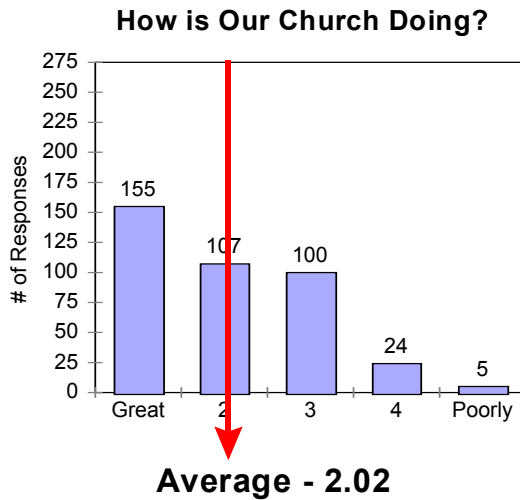
427 total surveys were submitted. Not all the surveys were completely filled out, so the following numbers may not add up to the total. 240 of the respondents identified themselves as female, while 149 of the respondents identified themselves as male. Respondents' years as a member of the parish ranged from 2 months to 75 years. 96 of the respondents identified their length of membership as 5 years or less. 237 of the respondents identified their length of membership as more than 5 years, with an overall average of 19 years. 112 of the respondents identified themselves as single, 200 as married, 32 as divorced and 33 as widowed. Respondents' ages ranged from 11 to 92 years, with the average age being 52. 47 of the respondent's were 30 years of age or less, while 299 were older than 30 years.

Specific Statement Response Graphs (begin on next page)

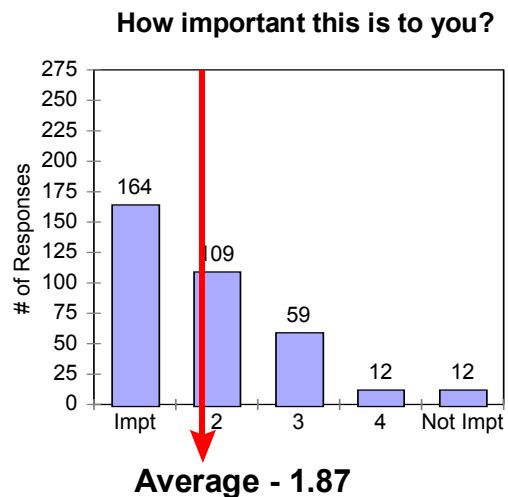
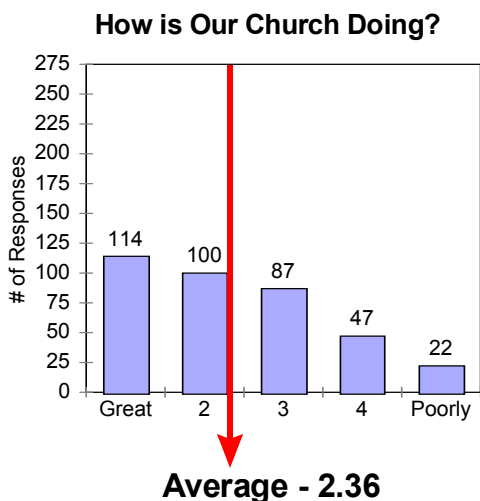
1. Parishioners welcome the new people and try to make them feel at home.



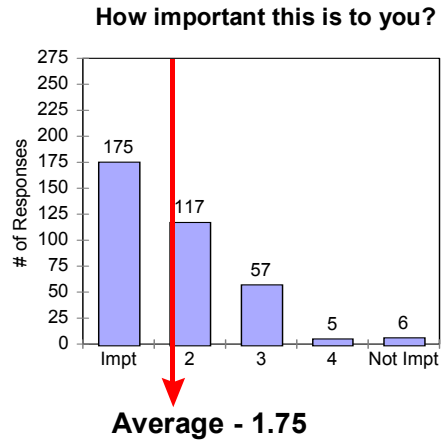
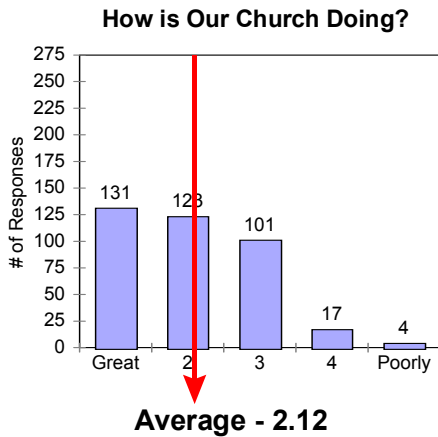
2. The staff welcomes new people and tries to make them feel at home.



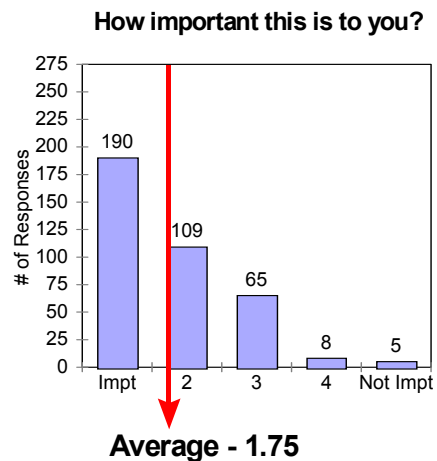
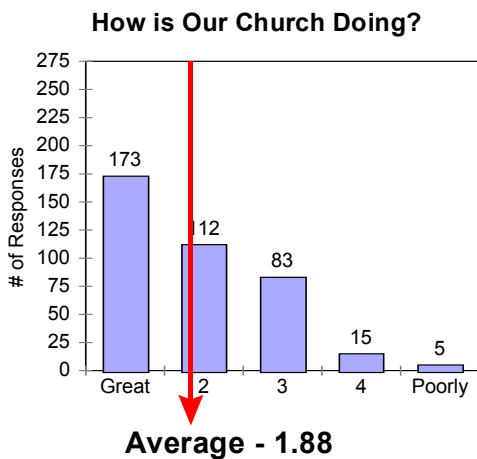
3. New people are acknowledged and/or addressed in some way during each liturgy.



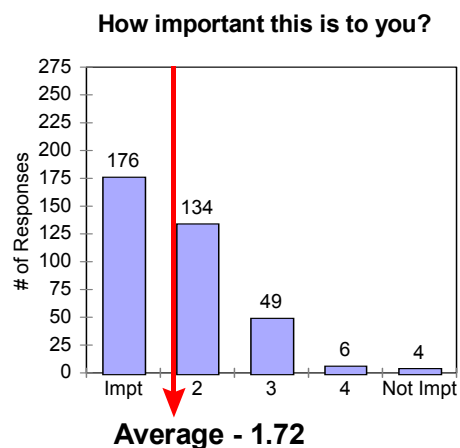
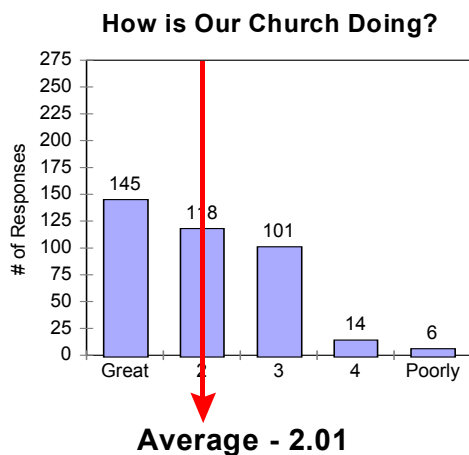
4. Welcoming new people requires some level of comfort with changing group dynamics. Our church is comfortable with this kind of change.



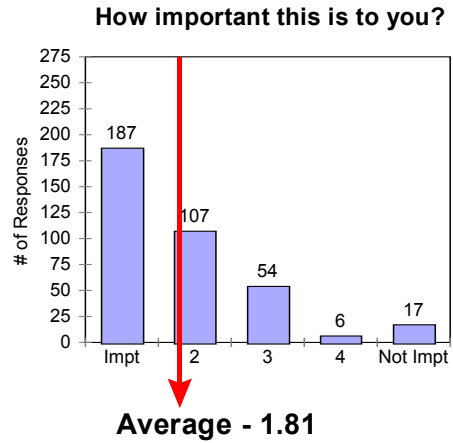
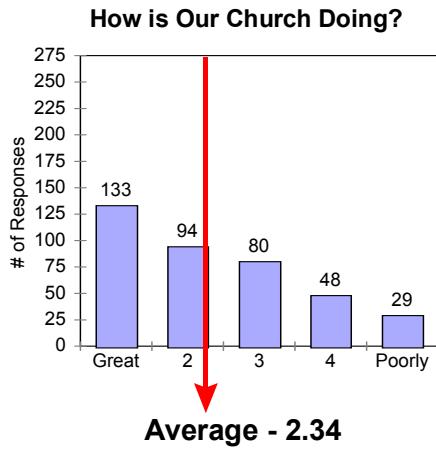
5. We are OK with the pastor and staff focusing their attention on new people, even if it means that they may have to be less attentive to long term members.



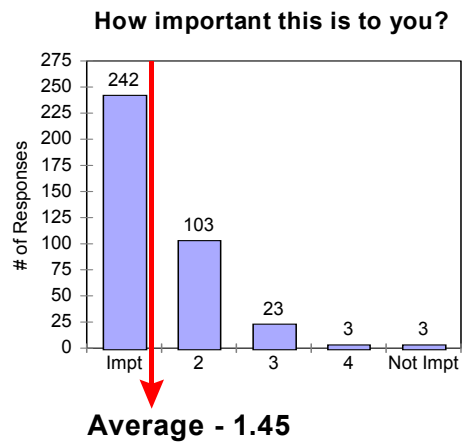
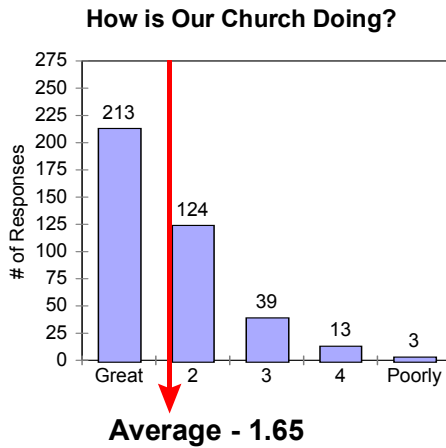
6. Welcoming the newcomer requires commitment. Our staff and parishioners are committed to making the stranger in our midst feel at home.



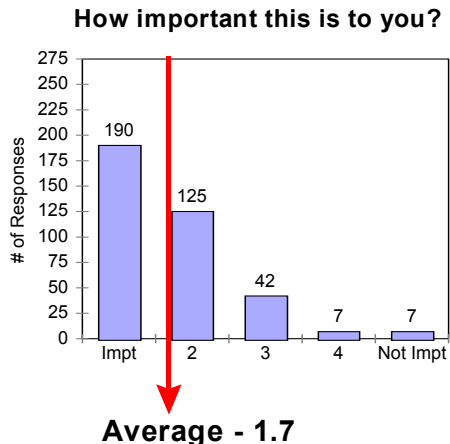
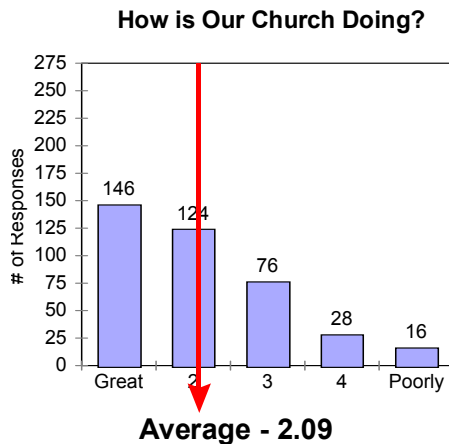
7. Friendly church members greet people at each major entrance prior and after the Mass.



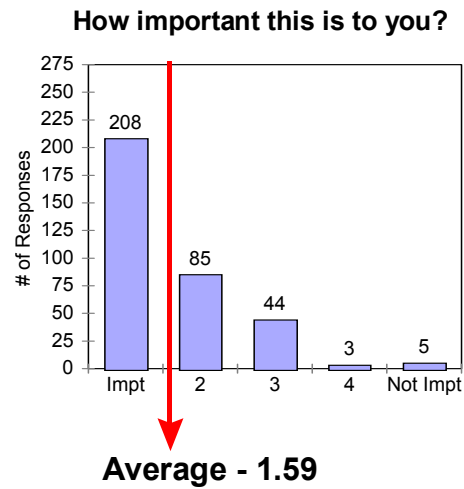
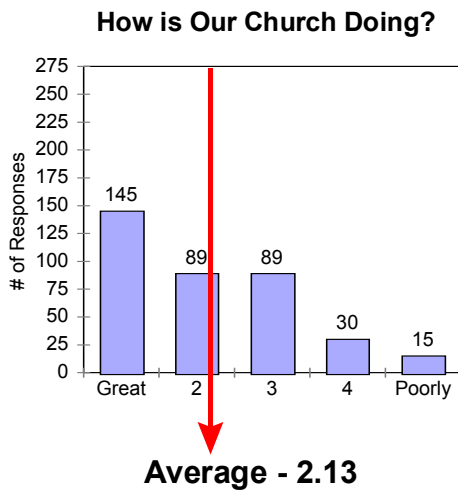
8. Our church makes a good first impression. The building and grounds are well maintained, bulletin boards are attractive with up to date information.



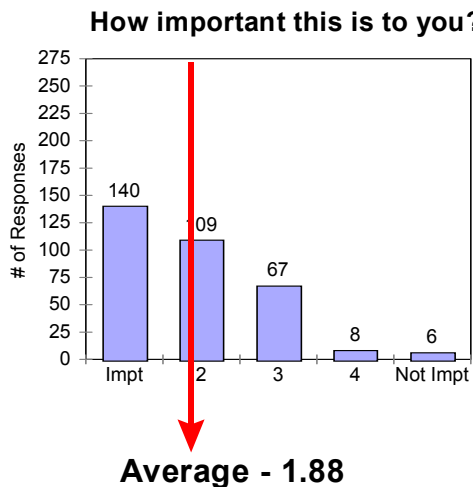
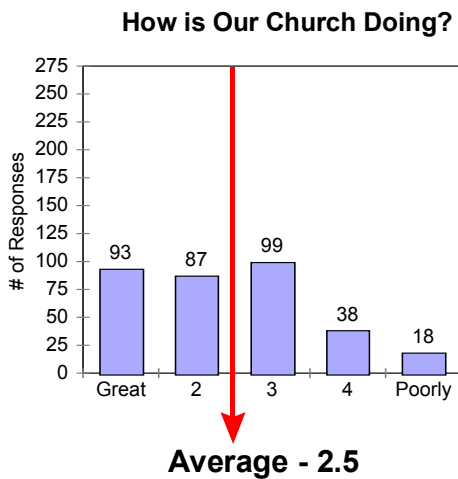
9. Our bulletin welcomes new people and directs them to someone for further information.



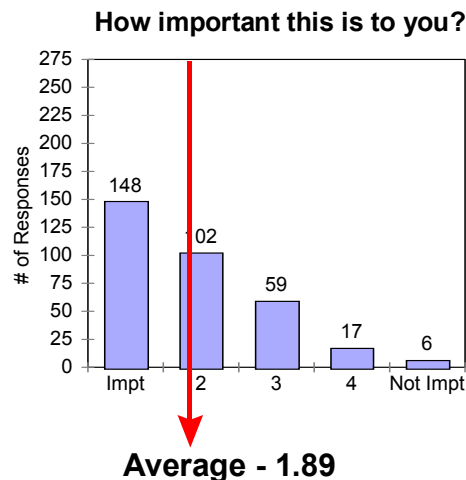
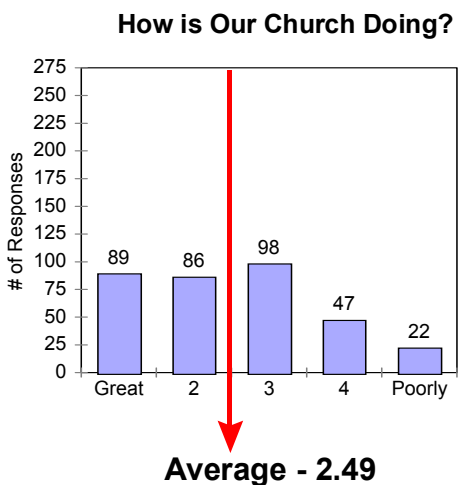
10. When I was a newcomer to this church, I was made to feel welcomed.



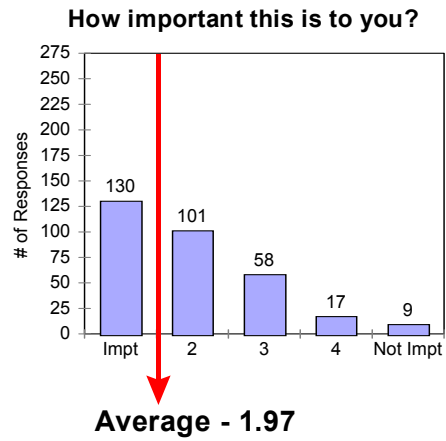
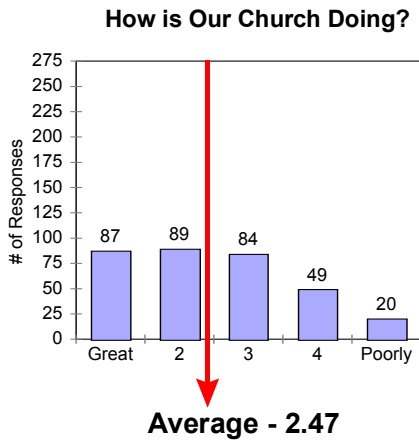
11. Our church has a written program in place for welcoming newcomers.



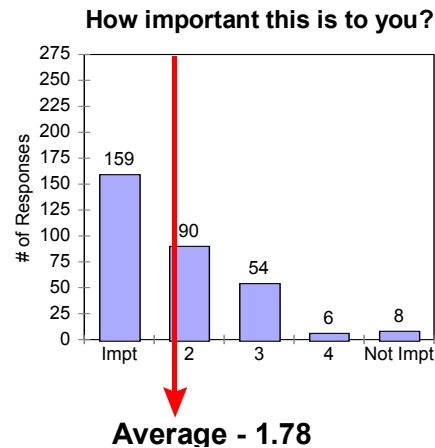
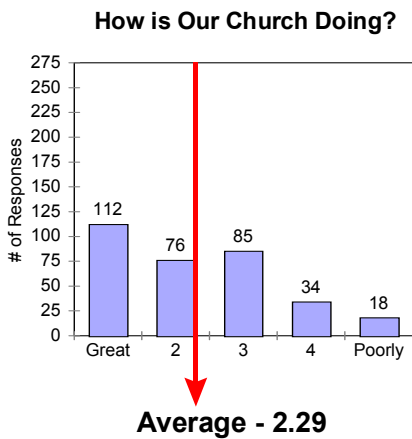
12. Our church has an active welcoming committee.



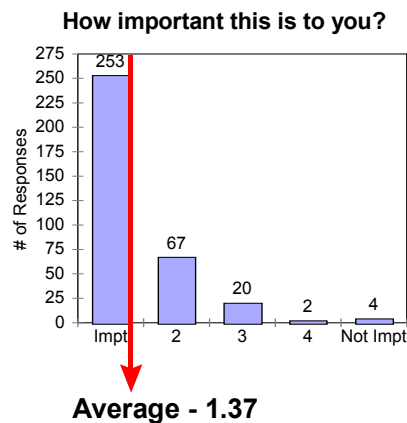
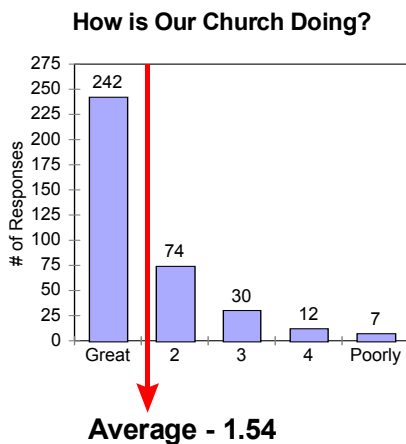
13. Newcomers are linked with long standing church members with whom they have something in common.



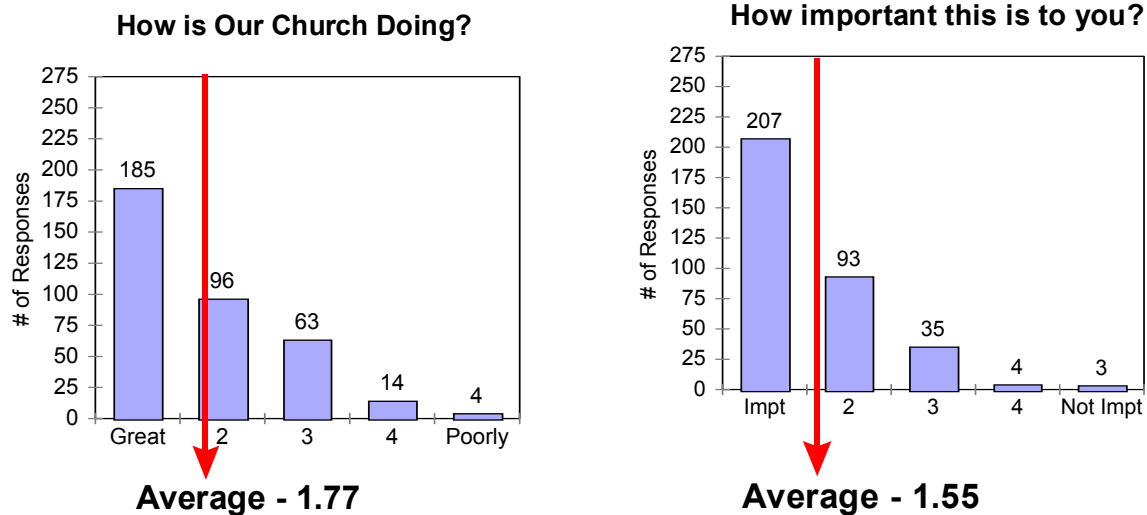
14. Our church has an active evangelism program designed to reach out to the unchurched or inactive Catholics.



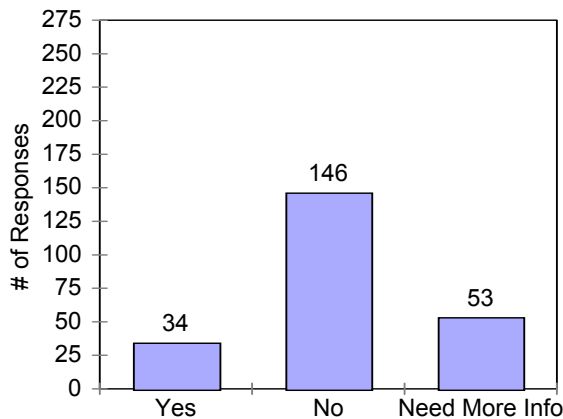
15. Our church is handicap accessible.



16. Our parish truly values new parishioners.



17. Would you like to be part of a new effort to make new people feel welcomed to our church?



Composite

The data was scrubbed by eliminating 46 surveys that were significantly incomplete (more than half the questions not answered). With the remaining 381 surveys a composite score was computed for each respondent by averaging the responses to all the statements regarding how the parish is doing, as well as averaging the responses to all the statements regarding how important it was to the parishioner. The composite score for how well the parish is doing in terms of welcoming was 2.03. The composite score for how important welcoming is to parishioners was 1.62. 252 respondents valued welcoming more than the parish's performance, while 64 reported that the parish's efforts matched the importance they gave welcoming, and 65 reported that the performance of the parish exceeded the value they give to welcoming the newcomer.

There did not appear to be any significant difference between those who had been a member of the parish for five years or less (2.04) and those over thirty years of age (2.13)

as far as how they viewed the parish's performance in terms of welcoming the stranger. Nor was there a difference in importance of welcoming the stranger between those in the parish for five years or less (1.64) or those members of the parish for more than five years (1.69).

There did, however, appear to be a significant difference between those less than thirty years of age (2.18) and those over thirty years of age (1.87) as far as how they viewed the parish's performance in terms of welcoming the stranger. This indicates that those under 30 years of age, presumably more likely to have been newcomers recently, rate the parish's performance of welcoming newcomers as less than those over 30 years of age. But there was no difference in the importance of welcoming the stranger for those less than thirty years of age (1.68) than for those over thirty years of age (1.69). Thirty years was chosen as the cut off since the presumption is that younger respondents were more likely to be newcomers. Their perspective is helpful in terms of how the newcomer views the welcoming of the parish and how important welcoming is to the newcomer.

New Member Demographics

The typical new member (defined as 5 years or less in the parish) was a 43 year old, married, female. 96 of the respondents reported that they had been members of the parish for five years or less. 56 were female and 40 were male. Ages ranged from 11 to 79, with the average age of 43. 33 were single, 53 reported they were married, 6 were divorced and 2 reported being widowed.

Comments

The following is a compilation of comments that were added to the surveys in response to the question, "What one change would you like to see our church make in order to welcome people better?"

1. a welcome sign outside that could be changed with church news/Mass times ect.
2. a bus to transport people
3. a welcoming sign on 31st ave on the side of school where the old bingo sign used to be cars/people constantly pass by
4. all of the ideas above would be welcome.
5. am not aware of specific program to welcome new members-
6. be faster with scheduling and committing to taking communion to disabled at their homes
7. be friendly and accommodating
8. been away from church for a very long time
9. Bible readings xmas church play bingo ? A dance class-valentine day gathering exercise?
10. Sunday evening Mass as in surrounding parishes. Having the church open more hrs for prayer
11. cannot think of one right now. Everything great and beautiful
12. child and young adults need attention
13. churches should have better bathroom facilities as part of the church
14. community night performances song, dance ect.
15. create greeters group to welcome all coming to Mass. Have them give out church bulletins at doors of our church

16. cushions for the seats more social activities
17. dances social
18. Distribute holy lit. and prayer books to all the neighbors catholic and no to get to know god and start coming to church. Go from door to door like the Jehova witnesses do and try to get the people come to church. Tell them we have a new pastor who welcomes newcomers
19. everything is fine
20. folk Mass (3 times)
21. food pantry improvement
22. for new immigrants a place to gather after say spanish Mass and then let Mass to eat and share experience. Works in other religion it assists in helping people find apt learn local customs tea/coffee .as far as I know this happens only periodically
23. form a welcome comm to greet parishioners before Mass at the entrance to church and after Mass to give weekly bulletins+info.
24. give credit to young people for coming to church on Sunday
25. go to the streets and reach out to them
26. greet at door (2 times)
27. greet with a smile at the entrance
28. have a father from the Mass before greet the new people coming to the next Mass or have music of some sort to relax people going in who are nervous
29. have a larger number of greeters
30. have a single dance for Catholics
31. have collections for national disasters hurricanes floods, fires, ect.
32. have more parish functions as well as welcoming committee. Parish functions dances bingo different societies weave the community together
33. have quarterly meet with newcomer to make feel at home
34. I am not a person that get involve or give 100 percent to the church. I come to serve my religious needs. Im grateful that the church is here . I enjoy coming here there is nothing wrong with this church, there is something wrong with me for not giving
35. I do not like when during Mass the priest talk about many ? Fees
36. if it is possible to have a registration of new member on any of the church on Sunday Mass
37. if Mass was said in English it would go a long way to coming together
38. if we can establish prayer group like bible study and rosary society, prayer outreach ministry as examples
39. im happy with the church is at now love fr gillen and herrera
40. improve Mass schedule -add another Mass sat or sun improve homilies-love fr.reid and fr.peter nice having music and good singers at Mass fr neill has to stop talking about being a teacher at every Mass
41. include all in every Mass not separate Masses and services for foreign lang. persons tends to divide parishioners by such separations
42. inform all new and old of changes made in church and property and why
43. informal gathering that could be held every 2-3 mos. And an update of their well being could be discussed and help given
44. introduce them to cc school the students are inspiring and certainly welcoming
45. it is important to welcome new people. I am angry with the catholic church for not doing enough for children sports programs community activities night centers after school programs

46. keep up the good work you're doing
47. Mass schedule
48. maybe warmer greeting than just an acknowledgment welcome at start of Mass, but on the other hand this might make others uncomfortable
49. month programs get involve to do welcoming
50. more attractive entrance from the basement
51. more Mass activities
52. more multiracial cultural events
53. more outreach in the Woodside houses an area of the parish that has been forever neglected I believe
54. more socials after Mass at the school it is a lovely parish and I look forward to seeing the changes in how we welcome new members
55. more spiritual less talking
56. no talking in church
57. none (6 times)
58. offer a later Mass on Sunday for those who work on sun.
59. ok (2 times)
60. parish events like socials, ect.
61. parish socials
62. people can be welcomed in the beginning of Mass shake the person at his sides hand
63. perhaps a weekly or monthly meeting for new comers to attend with long time parishioners so that they can meet us and be welcomed to our church
64. priests are usually very friendly when greeting parishioners after Mass, however some are not approachable for longer than 1 min. and can't wait to get to speak to the next person (or no person around)
65. reach out to new members introduce new members at the beginning of Mass to feel more welcome
66. set up committee that does that If there is one now I'm not aware of it
67. set up gathering programs on a separate day from Sunday to better incorporate new members to our church
68. shorter sermon
69. the church is doing more than enough in this aspect
70. the church is making every effort to welcome people. The parishioners must do more
71. the people who offer me peace walk past me in the neighborhood
72. there should be a group of people that take turn and welcome parishioners and visitors at Mass and learn to smile
73. try to combine the Spanish Mass and English Mass once a month so the parishioners can learn the new parish Mass
74. visit door to door and get people more involved with church activities
75. we are doing well
76. we need more activities for the youth to make them closer to the church
77. we need to become a parish not just attending Mass and homilies not focused on real/current issues and welcoming people to return
78. we should give other interested parishioners a chance to participate in the Sunday Mass offertory collection and readings
79. wear smiles sincerely and very friendly gestures with open mind and open heart
80. welcome them
81. well done already

82. with new pastor a big welcoming change has already occurred
83. work for new members cant? If don't know who they are
84. you mentioned about cookies and coffee after Mass at the rectory but I think its better to put it within the church as people my not go there all the way. People need to communicate with each other
85. you've already made changes there's more light coming in and I wish there's more fresh air circulating

St. John Parish Welcoming Parish Survey Summary

	How is Our Church Doing?	How Important this is to you?																																								
Parishioners welcome the new people and try to make them feel at home.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Great</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Poorly</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">37%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">28%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">25%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 2.08</td> </tr> </table>	Great				Poorly	1	2	3	4	5	37%	28%	25%	7%	2%	Average: 2.08					<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Important</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Not Important</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">55%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">29%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">12%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 1.64</td> </tr> </table>	Important				Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	55%	29%	12%	2%	1%	Average: 1.64				
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New people are acknowledged and/or addressed in some way during each liturgy.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Great</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Poorly</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">31%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">27%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">24%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">13%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 2.36</td> </tr> </table>	Great				Poorly	1	2	3	4	5	31%	27%	24%	13%	6%	Average: 2.36					<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Important</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Not Important</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">46%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">31%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">17%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 1.87</td> </tr> </table>	Important				Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	46%	31%	17%	3%	3%	Average: 1.87				
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Welcoming new people requires some level of comfort with changing group dynamics. Our church is comfortable with this kind of change.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Great</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Poorly</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">35%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">33%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">27%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 2.12</td> </tr> </table>	Great				Poorly	1	2	3	4	5	35%	33%	27%	5%	1%	Average: 2.12					<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Important</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Not Important</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">49%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">33%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">16%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 1.75</td> </tr> </table>	Important				Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	49%	33%	16%	1%	2%	Average: 1.75				
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We are OK with the pastor and staff focusing their attention on new people, even if it means that they may have to be less attentive to long term members.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Great</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Poorly</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">45%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">29%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">21%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 1.88</td> </tr> </table>	Great				Poorly	1	2	3	4	5	45%	29%	21%	4%	1%	Average: 1.88					<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Important</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Not Important</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">50%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">29%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">17%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 1.75</td> </tr> </table>	Important				Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	50%	29%	17%	2%	1%	Average: 1.75				
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Welcoming the newcomer requires commitment. Our staff and parishioners are committed to making the stranger in our midst feel at home.	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Great</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Poorly</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">38%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">31%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">26%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 2.01</td> </tr> </table>	Great				Poorly	1	2	3	4	5	38%	31%	26%	4%	2%	Average: 2.01					<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Important</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Not Important</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">48%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">36%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">13%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">Average: 1.72</td> </tr> </table>	Important				Not Important	1	2	3	4	5	48%	36%	13%	2%	1%	Average: 1.72				
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Phone Interview Summary

Summary

All respondents agreed that the parish is currently doing a good job of welcoming newcomers. While this was consistent with the parish survey it was not consistent with the independent observations done at the parish Masses. Respondents were much more emphatic that welcoming the newcomers was important to them. This validated the findings of the parish survey.

Almost all the respondents placed responsibility for making St. John a more welcoming community squarely upon the shoulders of parishioners, while a few add with proper guidance from the pastor and staff. Two of the respondents struggled when asked for Biblical examples of hospitality while two were able to offer some examples.

Respondents offered many suggestions as to how St. John can become a more welcoming parish. They are listed below.

Purpose

There were several reasons for conducting this phone survey. The first reason was as a consistency check on the results of the parish written survey. Also, to determine the extent to which catechesis relative to welcoming the stranger might be needed in the parish community. Additionally, to elicit suggestions for how the parish could become a more welcoming community. Finally, like the surveys, it was also hoped that we could get a glimpse of God's will for this parish in terms of welcoming the newcomer, since one of the ways God speaks is through the community of believers.

Description of Respondents

Four active parishioners were interviewed by telephone. They were given assurances of confidentiality, that their responses would be shared but not attributed to any one individual. They ranged in age from 30 to 72. Two were males and two were females. The number of years they were members of the parish ranged from 8 years to 63 years. Two respondents were married, one single, one engaged.

Questions Asked & Responses

1. How well does St. John welcome newcomers?
 - a. Hard to tell because I've never been a newcomer. I was baptized there. Over time it hasn't been as important to welcome newcomers as it is now.
 - b. I think they are doing a pretty good job now that Fr. Peter is there. Only know, not before then.
 - c. From my point of view I would say they did a very good job. I was made to feel very welcomed by the former pastor and by the present one as well.

 - d. Very well. My fiancé went through RCIA. Very quickly she got to feel

comfortable in the parish. She even invited her friends to the Easter Vigil and they felt comfortable.

2. How important is welcoming newcomers to you?
 - a. Very important. That is the life blood of the parish.
 - b. I'm a lifelong member and I want to see the parish survive. I have a strong commitment to my parish and my faith. I reach out to my neighbors and I feel it is a very important ministry.
 - c. I think it is very, very important.
 - d. From my experience it is very important, people come here with different languages and different cultures.

3. Can you think of a story in the Bible which features welcoming the stranger or extending hospitality to a newcomer?
 - a. God tells us that when we are welcoming the stranger we are welcoming God and not just the stranger.
 - b. The story of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal son.
 - c. Drawing a blank.
 - d. Can't think of one.

4. What would you see as the benefits, if any, of St. John becoming a more welcoming parish?
 - a. Bigger parish, more people contributing toward the parish. People getting more involved.
 - b. If parishioners knew other languages, that would help.
 - c. More parishioners, more people in the pews, more expertise available.
 - d. Increased membership, greater sense of community. More active practice of the faith and more social activism. More talents and abilities.

5. Ultimately who is responsible for St. John becoming a welcoming community?
 - a. The parishioners along with the leadership. Need to have staggered goals: immediate, intermediate, ultimate.
 - b. Fr. Peter.
 - c. The parishioners themselves who attend Mass and extend a welcoming hand to newcomers.
 - d. Begins with the leadership then trickles down to the parishioners.

6. Do you have any suggestions for how St. John can become a more welcoming community?
 - a. More informal gatherings after Mass, coffee & donuts.
 - b. Welcoming committee, a family Mass, afterward monthly cake and coffee. Welcoming committee then integrate newcomers with old timers. Continue CYO outreach to youth, outreach to parents of new student in the school. Engage CCD parents more. Address the problem of teens leaving the church after confirmation.
 - c. Only suggestion I have – I'm a convert – coffee & tea after Mass. Sometimes

Masses are very cold. Designate one Mass as having a social time after the Mass.

d. No suggestions. In a small parish it is easier to get to know everyone.

APPENDIX

Observation worksheet

View to the world outside the church's neighborhood

1. Newcomers to this community can easily find out about the church through:
 - a. a listing in the Yellow Pages
 - b. a weekly ad in the local newspaper
 - c. brochures in motels
 - d. a web site
 - e. a message on the church's answering machine that lists the times of Masses.
2. The building is easy to find.
3. Anything posted outside of the church that welcomes newcomers and/or visitors?
4. Anything posted in the narthex that welcomes newcomers and/or visitors?
5. There is a prominent sign listing the church's name and times of services; the information is up to date.

First Impressions

6. The grounds are well maintained.
7. There is adequate parking, and the lot does not have major problems.
8. The building is accessible to the physically handicapped.
9. Bulletin boards or other displays inside the church are attractive and up to date.
10. The bulletin is easy to read. It lists the church's name, address, and phone number.
11. The bulletin mention newcomers or visitors
12. Are there "side doors" (non-liturgical entry points to the church community for newcomers) to the church mentioned in the bulletin or during the Mass or posted on bulletin boards?
13. The bathroom is easy to find and well maintained.

Reinforcement

14. Each visitor is sent a letter (personally signed), called and/or visited as soon as possible after his/her first visit.
15. The church offers special study groups or discipleship classes for newer people.
16. The church offers several short-term groups or activities.

Worship Experience

17. Friendly members greet people at each major entrance.
18. I was welcomed through word or eye contact by the person next to me as I entered the pew
19. The priest or lector welcomed newcomers during their introductory comments
20. Newcomers were recognized and identified during the course of the Mass
21. Newcomers were personally greeted by other parishioners during the course of the Mass
22. At the Sign of Peace, I felt sincerely welcomed or greeted by the people near me
23. After Mass, there was an opportunity for me to meet other people - coffee and donuts, etc.
 - a. During this social time, I was welcomed and greeted by at least one parishioner
 - b. During this social time, I was included in at least one interesting conversation
 - c. During this social time, I was introduced to at least one other parishioner
24. I was invited to come back
25. I was invited to come to parish activities other than Mass
26. I was introduced to the pastor, an associate pastor, or another staff person
27. Childcare is available. Room numbers and directions are clearly visible.
28. The words to hymns, whether printed or displayed, are easy to read.
Directions are given for all portions of the service in which people participate, such as prayers and responsive readings.
29. During the service, traditions or approaches that might be unfamiliar to people, such as the way Communion is handled, are explained.
30. Children are welcomed through special music or children's sermons, or are provided with a children's service.
31. I felt truly welcomed and would look forward to attending this church again