

### **Recommendations from the Sunday Services Reinvention Team**

- Over 400 St. Mark's parishioners responded to a survey seeking feedback on Sunday worship services, and the results suggest that majority of respondents are happy with the current schedule of services. Based on the survey results and multiple group discussions, the Sunday Service Reinvention Team (SSRT) recommends that St. Mark's continue the existing four service schedule with some modifications to the individual services occurring in those time slots.
- The 8:45 service currently is the most attended service at St. Mark's, and the SSRT recommends devoting more resources to improving this service so that worshippers can better experience the presence of God. The survey results indicate that most parishioners are happy with the 8:45 start time, but may be open to moving the start time to 9:00 if the clergy feels this change would allow adequate time for worship and the transition to Sunday School.
- The SSRT recommends that the 8:45 service expand its mission as the family service with an emphasis on becoming more lively, fun, joyful, and upbeat. Children and youth should be encouraged to be more involved with the service, possibly ushering (with Dads' help), greeting, being trained to do occasional readings or Children's prayer requests, and incorporating a Youth and/or Children's Chapel offering.
- There is a strong consensus that the music at the 8:45 service needs to be improved. We suggest increasing the use of contemporary worship music to twice per month, but think it is critical to hire professional musicians and singers to lead the contemporary music. We suggest that the contemporary music offered should, at least initially, be familiar songs sung at Happening, Cursillo, and/or on the radio, or should be contemporary arrangements of traditional hymns.
- The SSRT also suggests that traditional hymns be sung at the 8:45 service twice per month. There also is a strong consensus that traditional music can be done better, and that more resources need to be devoted to all aspects of the St. Mark's music program. To achieve a lively, joyful atmosphere, we need professionals to sing and play their instruments each week. The traditional hymns selected should be more popular, familiar hymns that are relatively easy to sing. We suggest soliciting hymn ideas from the congregation to assist James and the choir in identifying hymns that the congregation most enjoys. The congregation should be encouraged to sing joyfully and to "sing it like you mean it."
- The SSRT also thinks that music can be used as an opportunity to involve children and youth in the 8:45 service. We recommended devoting more resources to the children's choir, considering starting a "cherub" choir, and having children from different Sunday School classes, Day School classes, and Children's Chapel sing anthems at the services.

- The 11:00 a.m. is considered the traditional service, and we recommend leaving the service in its current form, but working to make it even better. We suggest devoting more resources to the music at this service, and possibly incorporating an additional instrument, such as a trumpet, horns, bells, or some other instrument that would give the music a more joyful and lively sound. We also suggest that, one Sunday per month, the 11:00 a.m. service should be an even more traditional, “High Church” service that could include Rite One, fabulous music, and incense.
- The 5:30 service can be the opportunity for adventure and mission. This can include Evensong, Evening Prayer, non-traditional liturgy, and a variety of other opportunities in our congregation. This also may be a service that can be used to incorporate better incorporate Youth.
- Based on survey feedback, the SSRT recommends that sermons be used as an opportunity to delve deeper into scripture. We recommend emphasizing the Word, and applying the Word to modern day life in a meaningful, concrete manner. Survey feedback suggests that personal anecdotes should be used more sparingly, and only in a manner that illuminates the scripture.
- The consensus within the SSRT is that sermons can be used as a jumping off point for a lectionary based adult Sunday School offering in Leatherbury Hall. Whomever is preaching that Sunday would have the opportunity to delve deeper into the Scripture passages, to provide an opportunity for parishioners to ask questions and become more engaged in the teaching, and hopefully to provide enough food for thought that they still are thinking about the sermon and/or Sunday School during the week. As the numbers grow in this class, we recommend training lay table leaders to facilitate smaller discussions of the scripture during the Sunday School hour. We also suggest considering a new name, such as “Sunday Forum,” which currently is being used in other Episcopal churches.
- The children’s Sunday school should consider new curriculums, and should focus more resources on training teachers. The timing of Sunday School should coincide with the ending time of 8:45/9:00 service, allowing approximately 5 to 10 minutes to transition teachers from the service to Sunday school.
- St. Marks should devote more time and energy to parish fellowship. Greeters could benefit from more structured training, and we should improve upon the hospitality offered to newcomers. We need to gather people together after services for coffee and food. This could be volunteer led with food contributed from various families each Sunday.
- Our committee is concerned about the communication concerning the opportunities for healing services, such as unction, prayer, and confession. The overall communication needs to be evaluated for classes, events and resources.

We would like consistent communication and integration of what we are doing with our missions. Our church is doing many great things, let's talk about it!