

## **St. Peter Church and the U.S. Congregational Life Survey**

### **Background**

In 2008, St. Peter's accepted an invitation to participate in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey conducted by the international Presbyterian Church. This 2008 survey of approximately 1500 churches and synagogues was a follow-up to a study first conducted in 2001 in England, Australia and the United States. The U.S. portion of that first study consisted of a survey among 2,306 American Protestant and Catholic churches and Jewish synagogues.

The study was designed by theologians, sociologists, psychologists and other academics to better understand religious life as found in today's Christian and Jewish congregations. This national random sample of parishes and congregations completed a questionnaire addressing their members' personal involvement with religion through their parish or congregation ("personal faith journey") and the types of and participation in church activities relative to the faith journey.

### **Specific Study Objectives**

The study's purposes center on the study's design to help congregations:

- 1 Obtain a profile of congregation members' personal faith journeys
- 2 Identify congregational strengths that assist members in their faith journey
- 3 Provide a framework to build a more effective parish utilizing these strengths

### **St. Peter Parishioners' Personal Faith Journey**

The St. Peter Church study, conducted in October 2008, is based on 468 respondents' answers to the 10 questions specifically addressing their personal faith journey topic by describing

- the elements of the faith journey
- the parishioners' position on this journey - their involvement with St. Peter Church as part of this journey
- their assessment of this involvement

## St. Peter Parishioners' Personal Faith Journey Profile Summary

"Time spent in private prayer/meditation/devotion" is a measurement of the personal time willing to be spent on one's faith journey.

Everyday or most days	46%
A few times a week	21
Once a week/occasionally	23
Rarely/never	10

"Readiness to talk with others about my faith" is an indication of the comfort level with one's faith journey.

Feel at ease about sharing	76%
Hard or very difficult to share	9
I do not talk about my faith	14

An element of the journey is to personally experience a moment of "conversion" or "decisive faith commitment."

Yes	46%
Not sure	22
No	32

Amount of personal faith growth over the past 12 months and St. Peter's role in that growth.

Very much - attributed to St. Peter Church	20%
Very much – through my own activities, other churches or groups	20
Some growth – not attributed to any one source	49
No growth	11

"Always" or "Usually" experience the following during worship services at St. Peter's.

God's Presence	80%
Fulfilling my religious obligation	79
Inspired	75
Joy	66
Awe or Mystery	35
Spontaneity	18
Nothing	13

Currently a registered member of St. Peter Church

Yes	61%
No, but am becoming a member	3
No, but I regularly come here	18
No	8
No Answer	10

Involvement with group activities\*

Faith centered	28%
Socially centered	29
None	57

\* Multiple responses allowed

Actively take a role in parish activities\*

Liturgy (Music, EM, Lector, etc.)	17%
Parish leadership	10
Religious education	7
None	68

\*Multiple responses allowed

Extent worship services or other activities at St. Peter's help you with everyday living

A great extent	51%
Somewhat	36
Small extent	7
Not at all	6

My spiritual needs are being met by this parish

Strongly agree	32%
Agree	49
Neutral or unsure	15
Do not agree	4

**Parish Strength Profile: Comparing St. Peter's to all 67 participating Catholic parishes on 5 Strengths**

**Growing Spiritually  
(Strength)**

	St. Peter Church (N=468)	Catholic Churches (N=63,000)
<i><u>Strength Elements:</u></i>		
Growth in faith through participating in parish activities	20%	32%
Spend time at least a few times a week in private devotions	67	61
Feel their spiritual needs are being met in the parish	81	83
Report Bible study and prayer groups are one of three most valued aspects of the parish	6	9
Report prayer ministry is one of the three most valued aspects of the parish	4	5
Overall Scores	36	38

**Sense of Belonging  
(Strength)**

	St. Peter Church (N=468)	Catholic Churches (N=63,000)
<i><u>Strength Elements:</u></i>		
Have a sense of belonging to the parish that is strong and growing	34%	48%
Most of closest friends attend the same parish	3	15
Participated in parish activities more than two years ago	24	28
Overall Scores	20	30

**Participating in the Parish  
(Strength)**

	<u>St. Peter Church</u> (N=468)	<u>Catholic Churches</u> (N=63,000)
<i><u>Strength Elements:</u></i>		
Attend worship services usually every week or more often 80%	65%	
Involvement in one or more small groups (e.g., Sunday school, prayer or Bible study, discussion groups, etc.)	43	42
Hold one or more leadership roles in the parish (e.g., board member, teacher, leading worship)	32	42
Often participate in decision making in the parish	6	14
Gives 5% or more of net income to the parish	29	44
Overall Scores	35	44

**Focusing on the Community  
(Strength)**

	<u>St. Peter Church</u> (N=468)	<u>Catholic Churches</u> (N=63,000)
<i><u>Strength Elements:</u></i>		
Involvement in social service or advocacy groups through the parish	14%	20%
Involvement in social service or advocacy groups outside the parish	50	28
Contributed money to a charitable group other than the parish	80	65
Report the parish's wider community care and advocacy are among the three most valued aspects of the parish	26	14
Report the parish's openness to social diversity is one of the three most valued aspects of the parish	15	10
Work with others to try to solve a community problem in last year	28	23
Voted in the presidential election	89	70
Overall Scores	43	33

**Caring for Young People  
(Strength)**

	<u>St. Peter Church</u> (N=468)	<u>Catholic Churches</u> (N=63,000)
<i><u>Strength Elements:</u></i>		
Are satisfied with program offerings for children and youth	45%	54%
Report ministry for children and youth is one of the three most valued aspects of the parish	17	9
Percentage of children and youth living at home who worship  in the same parish	89	74
Overall Scores	50	46