

FINAL REPORT

SsAM SURVEY AND CONVERSATION CIRCLES

July 26, 2021

Submitted by:

SsAM 25th Anniversary PRESENT Subcommittee

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Table of Contents

Chapter One	<u>Introduction/Description of Survey Process</u>
Chapter Two	<u>Summary</u>
Chapter Three	<u>Survey Results/Analysis</u>
Chapter Four	<u>Conversation Circle Results</u>
Chapter Five	<u>Recommendations</u>
Chapter Six	<u>Conclusion/Next Steps</u>
Chapter Seven	<u>Addendum</u>

Chapter One

Introduction/Description of Survey Process

In the early 1990s, the parishioners of St. Andrew's, a predominantly white church, and of St. Matthew's, a predominantly black church, began to discuss partnership and, ultimately, consolidation. After several years of weighty discussion, the two churches came together as one. In April 1996, *The Episcopal Church of Saints Andrew and Matthew* was born in the Diocese of Delaware, forming a diverse and inclusive group of Episcopalians worshipping together at Eighth and Shipley Streets in Wilmington.

In celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the consolidation, a committee was formed to develop and implement recognition plans. The theme: "*Serving God's People: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE.*"

In December 2020, having been in pandemic mode for several months, the **PRESENT** Subcommittee of the 25th Anniversary Committee realized that many SsAM ministries and programs could not and were not operating, and might not for some time in the future.

SsAM **PRESENT** chose to assess where our parish community sees SsAM today, and present the findings to the FUTURE group for planning purposes. For this assessment, committee members agreed to survey members and friends of SsAM to obtain their feelings, thoughts, and opinions on the "current state of SsAM". In reviewing the parish's *Servant Keeper* and *Constant Contact* databases, the subcommittee gathered the names of those (291 individuals 18 and older) to be invited; we administered the survey (both by regular and electronic mail) the week of April 23, 2021. We achieved an outstanding response of 138 surveys (47% return rate) due to the efforts of all who responded as well as SsAM's Pastoral Care Committee members who reached out to congregants encouraging participation.

Included in the survey was the question: "Would you be willing to participate in a Zoom Conversation Circle or Conference Call to explore issues more fully?" Of the 138 respondents, 73 replied, "Yes". Three initial sessions were held on June 5th (one session) and June 9th (two sessions). Thirty-six people participated, while those unable to attend initially, have been invited to attend additional sessions later this summer. (*Please note that as of this date, a decision was made to postpone the remaining sessions and hopefully meeting in person in the fall.*)

Many respondents emphasized the importance of communicating the survey results and the agreed-upon actions to the entire parish. Some respondents felt that they had participated in many other surveys, may have even received results, but plans for implementation and evaluation were not included; thus, they were not confident this SsAM survey would be any different.

Chapter Two

Summary

The high level of survey response (47%) indicates the level of caring the SsAM community has for its spiritual home. It also indicates the need for our parishioners to share their voices.

The Present: Strengths that respondents noted included:

- caring, dedicated and committed congregation;
- caring for our mission as well as volunteers willing to do the work;
- our strong outreach;
- the people **are** the church, and that relationships and community are the reasons many have stayed engaged; several comments applauded the vestry for its hard work in addressing the challenges.

Concerns included:

- finances;
- being an aging congregation and the need to build the membership with more youth and young families (sometimes, but not always connected to SsAM's financial challenges);
- perception of discontent and internal power struggles;
- leadership not including more of the congregation in decisions, and, empowering members to contribute;
- SsAM's resiliency... we have come through tough times before, including a pandemic.

There was no clear consensus on two key matters: **Music:** for some, it is important to keep investing in the music program; but others feel the program has too much power, focus and resources. **Diversity:** many cited the welcoming, diverse aspect of the church as a strength and part of our

hope for the future; however, it was also noted that there are differences and misalignments, and that not everyone feels welcomed.

The Future: Ideas for moving forward towards a strong future included:

- make mission, faith, and ministries the priority;
- be more progressive in liturgy and theology, that we might re-imagine church, increase freedom of thought and witness on race;
- extend community engagement;
- apply lessons learned during COVID;
- obtain more spiritual leadership, inspiration and pastoral care from a priest as we call a new rector.

It was noted that much work is needed. Comments included the following:

- ensure opportunities to listen and learn from each other and build consensus. Make space to listen to one another in regards to age, gender, race and our entire community;
- review and communicate strategies for growth, ministry and leadership;
- external community engagement is a two-way street: not only do we have something to offer the community, but the community has something to offer us;
- SsAM's communications philosophy and practices need changing;
- SsAM's past was richer and stronger than our present because we are "resting on our laurels"; many of us rely on the strength of our past rather than look to the future.

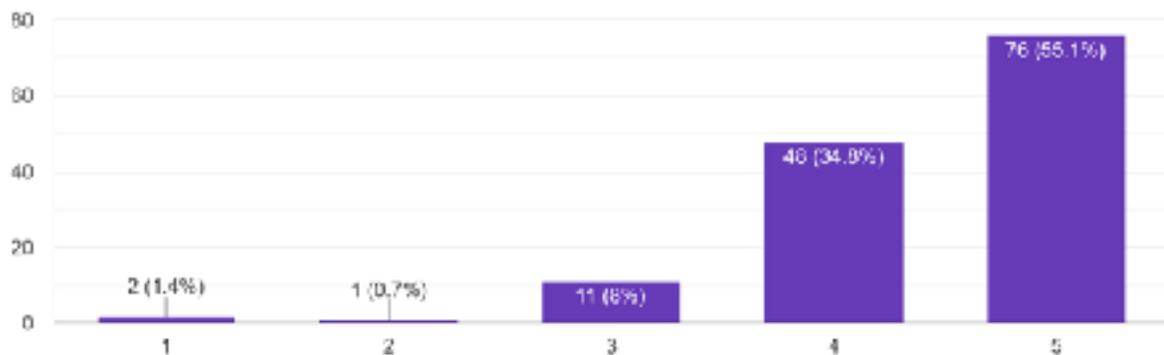
Chapter Three

Survey Results

Question 1A

Average Response 4.41

On a scale of 1-5, is SsAM an inspiring faith community where you feel comfortable and welcome?
 1= extremely uncomfortable/unwelcome, 2= uncomfortable, 3= neutral, 4= comfortable, 5= extremely comfortable/extremely welcome
 130 responses



Question 1B Why?

Average 3.25

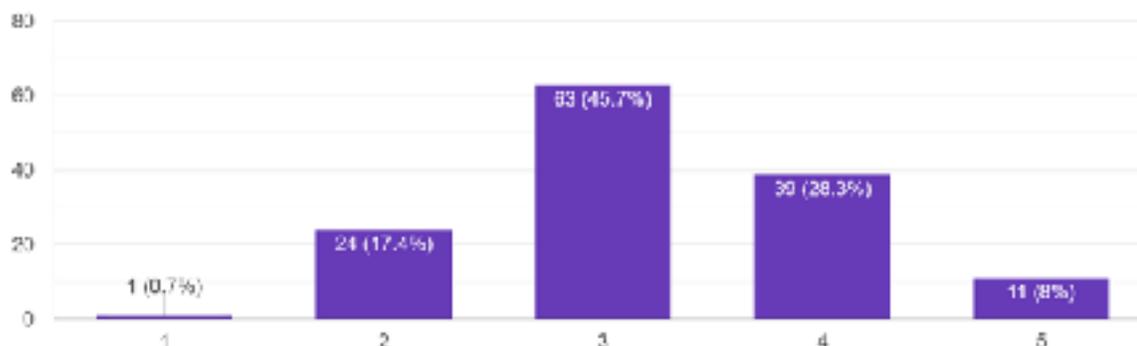
Positive comments were made about the music and the sermons. The majority of our parishioners (89.9%) believe that SsAM is a "comfortable and welcoming" or "extremely comfortable and extremely welcoming" faith community. Comments included: "people are warm and friendly; I have many friends there; we connect in and outside of church; you are welcomed by the worship and the people; the clergy is warm and sincere; the people of SsAM make it unique; the inspiring music touches my soul better than words do."

Other comments from respondents who felt SsAM was not as comfortable and welcoming included: “with the exception of personal relationships, the congregation is content to relate with people they have always known; sometimes the current parishioners do not make efforts to speak to the newer folks or learn who they are.” A few said they felt racial tensions. Some said they did not find the service or the sermons inspiring.

Question 2A **Average 3.25**

On a scale of 1-5, how do you envision SsAM's future? 1=not bright, 2=questionable, 3=positive, 4=bright, 5= very bright

138 responses



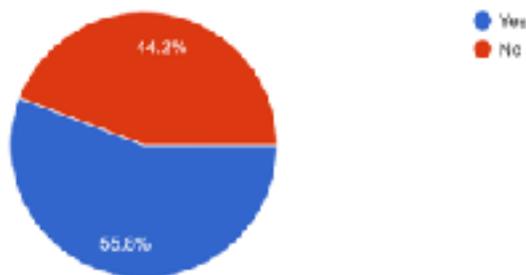
Question 2B Why? **Average 3.25**

While many responses were positive, citing good personal relationships and commitment to SsAM, others were hesitant about what lies ahead. The responses indicated “worries about finances, an aging population, members being happy watching the service online, and a lack of young families and programs to attract youth” may detract from a bright future. The feelings about the music program at SsAM show differences of feelings and opinions: some stated SsAM will not survive without a strong one; others worry that too much attention to professional singers/singing strangles our financial stability.

Question 3

Do you attend virtual worship services at SsAM?

138 responses

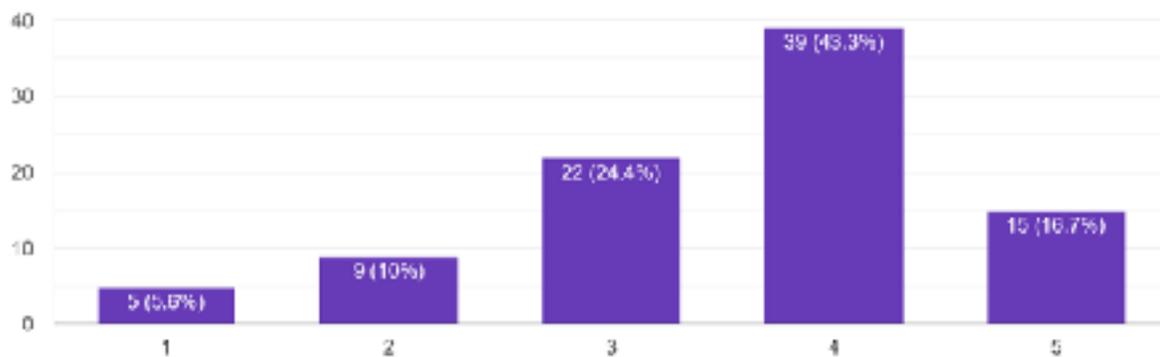


Question 4

Average 3.56

On a scale of 1-5, if you attend virtual worship services at SsAM, do you enjoy them? 1= do not enjoy greatly, 2 = do not enjoy, 3=neutral, 4=enjoy, 5= enjoy greatly

90 responses



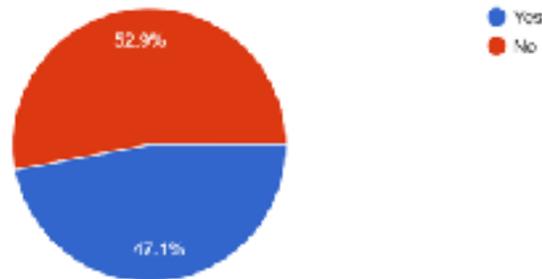
Question 5 Why not?

Some said they “tried, but could not connect”; others stated “their connections “cut off”. Responses included not liking the pre-recorded parts of the service “spliced together”. Others said “they tried it, but did not feel a connection online because they missed the people, the camaraderie of fellow parishioners”. Other responses included: “not feeling spiritually fed; found other things to do; “not actively engaged; prefer services on other websites”; do not tune in at all”.

Question 6

Do you attend other virtual programs, classes, events (e.g., anti-racism training, programs, financial updates, book club, etc.) at SsAM?

158 responses

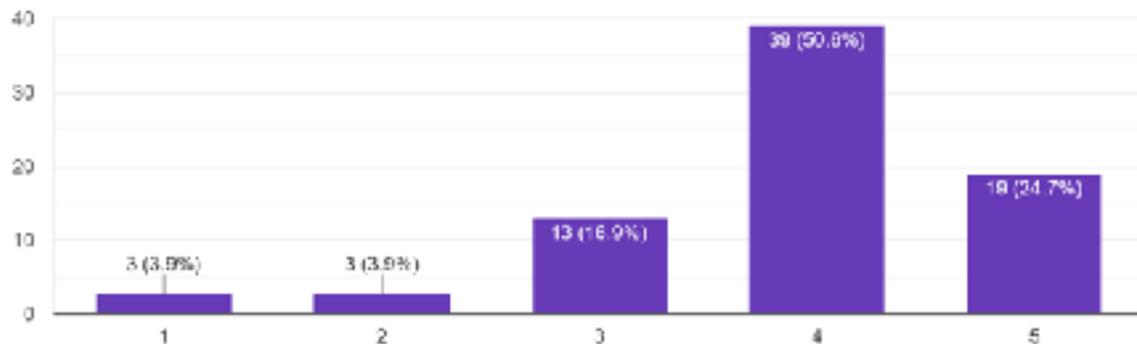


Question 7

Average 3.88

On a scale of 1-5, if you attend other virtual programs, classes, events at SsAM (e.g., anti-racism training, programs, financial updates, book club, etc.) do not enjoy, 3=neutral, 4=enjoy, 5= enjoy greatly

77 responses



Question 8

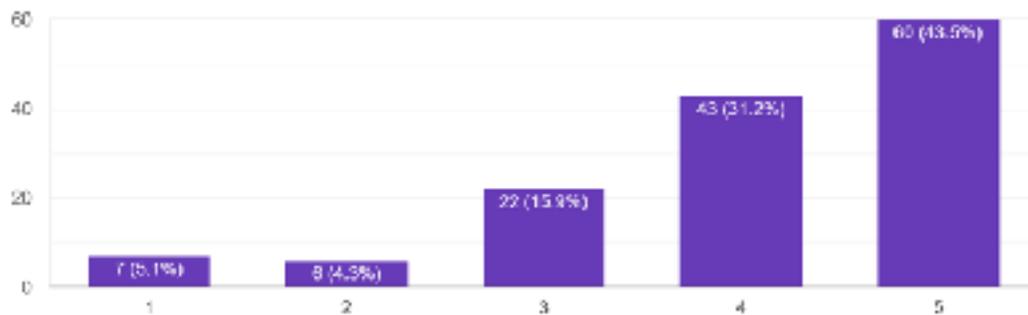
If you attend virtual program(s), which of these do you enjoy the most?

Most popular are anti-racism, financial updates/town halls, 25th Anniversary events and book clubs. (Others mentioned are bible study and meditation.)

Question 9
Average 4.04

On a scale of 1-5, how often do you plan to attend SaAM in person, post pandemic? 1=rarely, 2=occasionally, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=on a regular basis

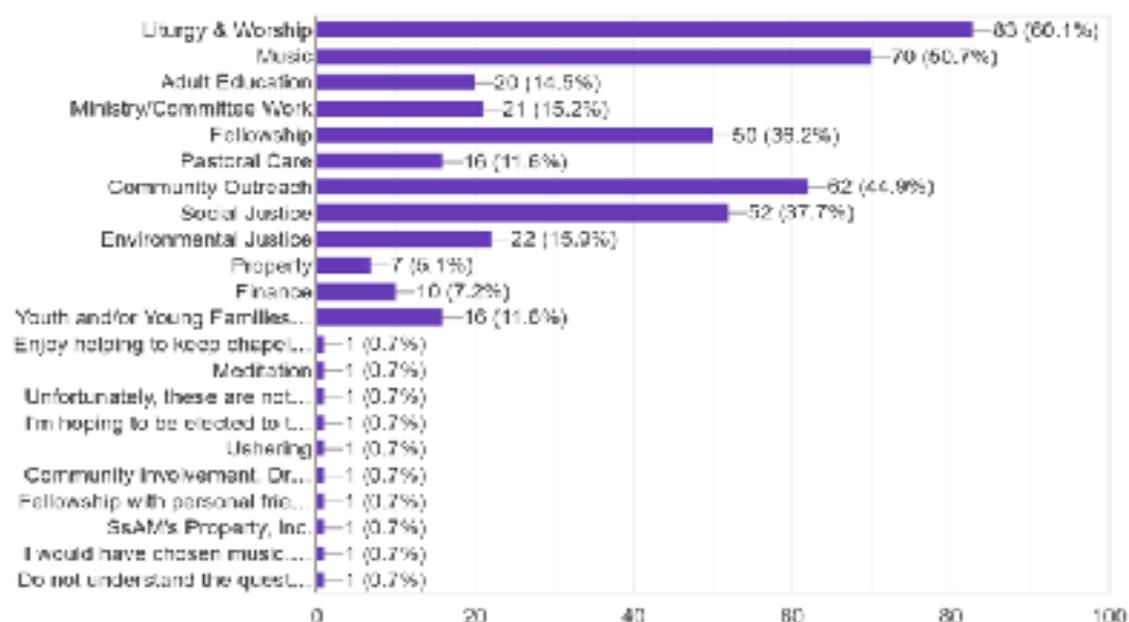
136 responses



Question 10

What areas of SsAM's Mission and Ministries excite you the most? (Please check top three)

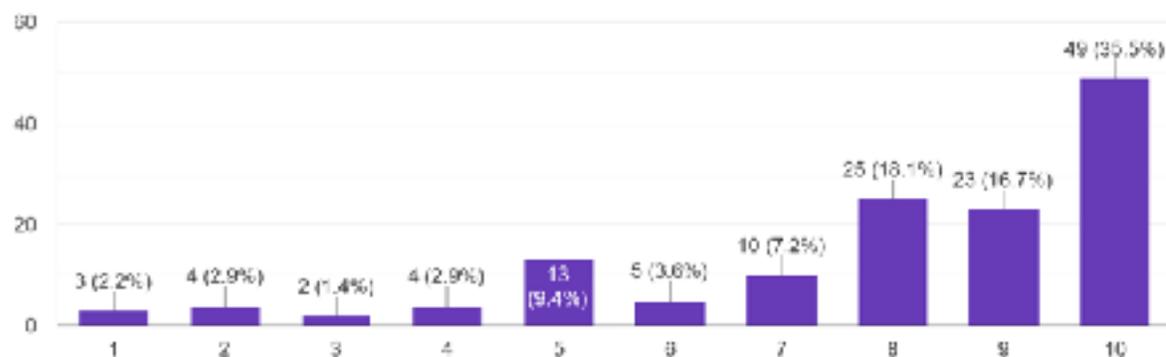
138 responses



Question 11
Average 7.93

On a scale of 1-10 how likely are you to refer a family member, friend, or associate to SsAM?

138 responses

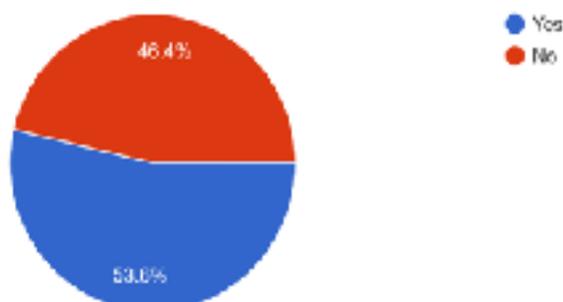


52.2% of respondents reported that they are very likely (selected nine or ten on the ten-point scale) to refer someone to join SsAM. This is a lower percentage of nines and tens than hoped for.

Question 12

Would you be willing to participate in a Zoom Congregation Circle or Conference Call to explore these issues more fully?

138 responses



Question 13 When will you be available? Please check all that apply and provide your name and contact information.

72 responses

Morning, 16 or 22.5%; Afternoon, 33 or 46.5%; Evening, 44 or 62%; Weekday, 36 or 50.7%; Weekend, 32 or 45.1%.

Question 14 What is your relationship with SsAM?

138 responses

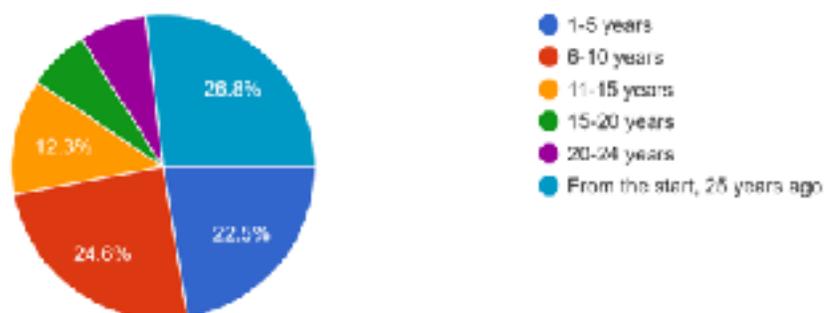
- 110 respondents, (79.7%), called themselves “pledging” vs. “voting” members; “inactive” members, 2 respondents (1.4%);
- volunteers, 33 respondents (23.9%);
- donors, 31 respondents (22.5%);
- friends, 27 respondents (19.6%);
- choristers, 10 respondents (7.2%);

- other--diocesan council representative, newish visitor, retired priest, "not sure," lector and committee member (2.8%).

Question 15

How long have you been affiliated with SsAM?

138 responses



- one to five years, 22.8%;
- six to ten years, 24.6%;
- 11 to 15 years, 12.3%;
- 15 – 20 years, 5.2%;
- 20 to 24 years, 10.4%;
- since consolidation, 26.8%.

Question 16: Other Thoughts or Comments (organized under SsAM Pillars where possible)

Provide Engaging Worship

- Music Program
 - Pro- current music program:
 - Before the Vestry decides to dismantle the music program at SsAM they need to consider the programs instituted that bring community into our services that allow people to know who we are and want to join us in our worship. Also, future new memberships and support of the Parish probably will be negatively impacted by the removal of Choir from budget. (Historically we have not been able with volunteers to sustain choral music at a level to which members and the public have been accustomed and there is no reason to believe that will change.)
 - If there starts to be a reduction in the music program, which the church has been noted for, I think it will hurt attendance and giving.

- Each of us connects to God differently. Although the written and spoken liturgy is important, music of all kinds is so important for me to feel close to the spirit. Gospel, formal church music, art, etc. is what drew me to SsAM...
- Liturgy and Worship
 - Questioning if current worship meets needs of parishioners:
 - I noted the descriptor "inspired faith community" in several questions. I wonder if the inspired part is true. Not sure how inspired is defined in this context but it might be worth exploring whether congregants actually feel inspired by our liturgy and, our worship.
 - I seldom feel spiritually fulfilled at SsAM and don't leave because of my age. I keep hoping that will change. It is my church; I support it but am not happy with it. My outside activities make up for what I miss in church.
 - Am very turned off by the liturgy and frequently also by the preaching. Feel the vestry has not been transparent.
 - We need new creativity and imagination around the Church service to engender some new energy . Cannot be business as usual.
 - I'll like the sermon to be more on point with the readings of the day. More relevant to our lives and times in which we live.
 - Virtual worship:
 - "(enjoy virtual worship) Yes - I'm just getting Zoom video fatigue.
 - I am not good at computers so zoom is a little intimidating to me.
 - Love how many more people seem to be participating in ministry now that we are using Zoom.
 - I would like to continue online services.

Continue Inclusive and Diverse Faith Community (that celebrates its relationships with each other and the larger community). *Note: we may want to separate these two into internal and external community.*

- Diversity/inclusion:
 - Concerns about current reality of diversity and inclusion:
 - SsAM is diverse but not integrated. I would want more emphasis on relationships and less on liturgy and professional videos.
 - SsAM congregation is more than black and white, it consists of different cultures, languages, sexual orientation, just to name a few. We don't do outreach in these communities in a meaningful way; we do not use different languages of the people in our "mission".
 - We'd love to participate in a Bible study specifically geared towards gender specific Bible study either men's or women's
 - Positive comments about diversity and inclusion:
 - SsAM's superb multicultural congregation blending, if it can be sustained, is a hope and hallmark for how things can be better in a post-racial America.
 - SsAM is located in an area with an unusual mixture of people... From penthouse dwellers to homeless... I like that we welcome, embrace and are a resource for all people!!!
 - Enhance Community Outreach and Social Justice
 - I love the congregation and the concern for the wider community I find.
 - I totally support the social justice elements of SsAM's outreach.

Strengthen and Grow Youth and Young Families

- We'd love to participate in a Bible study specifically geared towards younger adults (20s and or 20s/30s)

Create Sustainable Financial Picture

- Using income from endowment to support current operating expenses is essential for SsAM to maintain its identity.
- As was stated at the virtual meeting on May 16, the Parish is not a bank.

Other comment clusters not included in the Four Pillars but can be used in re-framing the Pillars:

- *Clergy/Lay Leadership/Partnership*
 - I have heard that there are a few people in quasi-leadership positions who do not support the staff and if true this is disturbing...
 - Leadership --clergy and lay—both are extremely important to SsAM in fostering and uplifting the spiritual/temporal needs of parishioners and our Wilmington community. Pre COVID and Post COVID, we must be ready to open and lead. The issues of SsAM must come first.
- *Need for new paradigm at SsAM*
 - Unless SsAM changes, it will become obsolete as aging population dies off. The church needs a paradigm shift and creativity - now.
 - *SsAM appears* to have lost some of its enthusiasm and dynamic response to the world.
- *Communications*
 - There was little communication during the pandemic, except written invites to Sunday services. Until recently, SsAM communications have been impersonal and detached information.
- *Other*
 - For me the three things I love most about SsAM are the intentional attention to diversity, the music, and the feeling that I am in the room with people who are doers.
 - We love SsAM (4).

Demographics

Question 17A

Optional – What race do you identify as? (Please choose one)

133 responses

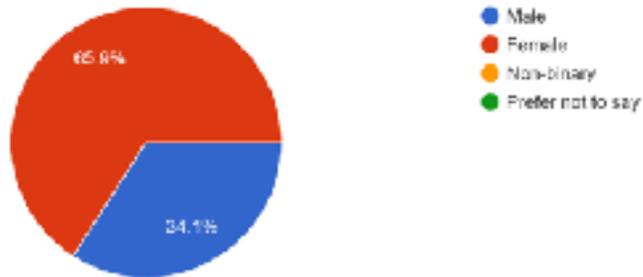


- Fifty-one% of respondents identified themselves as African American;
- 43.6% White/European American. The remaining identifications:
- 0.8 % (one person) Hispanic or Latin American;
- 0.8% Asian American;
- 0.8% “identify as all races”;
- 0.8% bi-racial;
- 0.8% “should be option for mixed race.”

Question 17B

Optional - What gender do you identify as? (Please choose one)

135 responses



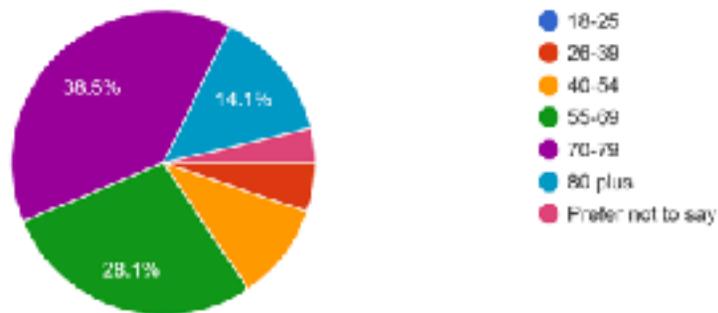
No one chose "Non-binary" or "Prefer not to say."

Question 17C

What is your age range? (Please choose one)

Optional - What is your age range? (Please choose one)

135 responses



- Prefer not to say (3.7%);
- 18-25 (0%);
- 26-39 (5.2%);
- 40-54 (10.4%);
- 55-69 (28.1%);
- 70-79 (38.5%);
- 80+ (14.1%).

Thus, 52.6% of respondents are from ages 70-80+; 38.5% are ages 40 – 69; 5.2% are 18-25.

Chapter Four

Conversation Circles—Recurring Themes

Participants were provided several documents for review in preparation for the Conversation Circle conversations. Among the documents were the *SsAM Mission Statement*, the *Vision Statement*, *The Guiding Principles*, and the *Four Pillars* adopted by the SsAM Vestry. Many of the comments, ideas and reflections that surfaced in the Conversation Circles reflected concepts contained in the Four Pillars.

Overarching Theme #1 – Updating Our Guiding Documents and Use of Them

The need to review, update, and expand our principles and pillars, making sure they are still relevant and alive in our parish. The further need to develop an action plan with goals to help us achieve the spirit of our congregation. Included in this review might be the addition of several new pillars, or adjusted pillars, and the inclusion of goals and objectives.

We should fold our guiding documents into our daily worship and new SsAM initiatives as we endeavor to grow the church.

Overarching Theme #2 – Attracting children and young families is a critical mission for the church.

We need to expand outreach, perhaps partner with other organizations. We need to ask young families what they need from SsAM and what they would like to contribute to SsAM, and design outreach around that.

Overarching Theme #3 – Transitioning is both a challenge and an opportunity to revisit our goals and how we manage them.

A wide variety of options are on the table. From marketing plans, including using the organ as a marketing vehicle with a focus on urban community, to advanced use of technology (pod casts, classes, continuing online worship).

Pillar #1: Providing engaging worship that is rich and meaningful and brings people back.

Thoughts:

Look at the music program and its impact internally and externally. Explore involving the congregation and community differently to ensure all who are interested can participate, including all skills, talents, and interests. Broaden access.

We need to engage to know our SsAM family deeply, finding ways to facilitate talking to each other and sharing our stories.

More emphasis on pastoral care is needed.

We do not actively connect the things we are doing to our mission, principles, and pillars. We don't know who we are because we are not anchored in the documents that ground us. What is the foundation holding us? The pandemic has brought us a little closer to the guiding principles - virtual has added access and inclusion to some people who would not have otherwise participated.

We should incorporate more opportunities that foster living up to our principles.

People should be encouraged to worship in their own way, i.e., clapping your hands, saying "hallelujah" without feeling uncomfortable.

We need to ask what our new members, potential members, and parishioners need, what they have to offer, what they want to offer, and how we can best communicate with them.

Pillar #2: Continuing the tradition of intentionally being an inclusive and diverse faith community that celebrates its relationships with each other and the larger community.

Thoughts:

Expanding on this pillar to assure we are adding to the definition of diversity and including different cultures, languages

Conduct outreach to determine what other faith communities are doing to reach out to congregations and communities.

We should reach out to partner with organizations who are working with families. Perhaps through those partnerships we can reach this goal.

Conversations need to be had with people of all different age groups to find out what they are looking for.

We need to have more opportunities for fellowship, and more diverse groups.

Pillar #3: Strengthening and growing youth and young families.

Thoughts:

We need to reach out to kids and young families; teach them something new; have arts and music programs. Find what young families need and work in those areas. Find what they have to offer us so it is a mutual relationship.

We should hire a youth minister to develop and lead new programs. What can we offer young families; what do they need?

Reinforce the sense of family for children who have been baptized and confirmed. Reach out to scholarship recipients and invite them back to SsAM. Perhaps in-person events are needed

Develop and provide service opportunities for youth and young adults.

Church school was very important for church teachings and possible expanding ethics.

Pillar #4: Creating a sustainable financial picture.

Thoughts: Alignment of principles, pillars, and a newly developed action plan focused on available resources and their management. Utilize more strategic planning.

We need a new financial model.

Our expenditures should match up with our principles.

Additional suggested pillars:

Community Building. There is a need to define community for SsAM. Is it local, regional, national, global, or all of the above?

Capturing community interests such as (but not limited to) BLM, criminal justice reform, environmental justice, voting rights, etc. Realizing that not all congregants would participate in these various community interests but making space for those who wish.

SsAM and The Arts. Located in the Art District, partnering with arts groups could be a natural for SsAM and the integration into the broader downtown community.

The Changing Church

We are embarking on a period of transition at SsAM, and it will bring challenges and opportunities. Leadership changes can change the course. Fresh eyes bring ways of looking at traditions and expanding our mission without losing the caring warmth that we have nurtured.

In a time of change we should look at ourselves and into the future, examine who we are and where we want to go. Principles give identity to the congregation. Please take time and care with the new transition.

While change might be thrust upon us, we should not pivot into something quickly. We need to be thoughtful as we transition into something better.

SsAM needs a new financial model; new ideas, but still focus on mission; brainstorming groups.

We have wonderful things, like several robust book clubs, but there are people within SsAM that don't know about them. We should spend some time thinking about marketing and communication.

The church should support all kinds of music: Men's choir, children's choir, gospel choir. Investment in music is important.

Possibly develop a SsAM podcast. There are people who knew Malcom X and others – they could speak to youth and share history.

Be present in the community.

Vary service locations: outside, parks, etc.

In addition to coffee hours, have monthly informational talks, focus group sessions and revive the dinner groups.

Chapter Five

Recommendations

The PRESENT Subcommittee's charge was to collect the data, i.e., the feelings, thoughts and opinions of current parishioners in an assessment of SsAM's present. Suggestions and recommendations are included in the last sections of this report. The 25th Anniversary FUTURE subcommittee (Yvonne Gordon, Bob Young, co-chairs, will determine what recommendations/plans are appropriate moving forward.

One often-mentioned recommendation is for SsAM's Four Pillars to be reviewed (as well as our mission, vision and guiding principles) to reflect where we are now and who we want to be in the future to be a viable, sustainable parish.

Also, it is felt that more research/data should be collected and reviewed on local/regional and national church trends to position us for our future. Suggestions of the type of data needed include:

- Greater Wilmington demographics— for membership development
- Community Needs Assessment data from Delaware Community Foundation, United Way of DE, University of Delaware, etc.
- Episcopal Church trends and statistics (locally, nationally); future of urban churches and congregations in general

Chapter Six

Conclusion/Next Steps

What survey results and conversation circles reflects varied opinions as to what it will take to make SsAM a vibrant faith community that serves the needs of a diverse community going forward. Our parishioners will have to listen and consider many different points of view if SsAM is to thrive and be the kind of community that most seem to desire.

This report will be submitted to the 25th Anniversary FUTURE Subcommittee for review and future planning.

A truncated version will be submitted to the congregation as promised.

Lastly, this will also be given to the new Vestry to be reviewed and used as a resource to the parish profile SsAM will be developing the next several months to call a new rector.

This is a critical time in the history of SsAM.

Chapter Seven

Addendum

SsAM Survey External Resources

- **25th Anniversary PRESENT Consultant/Survey Manager: Meetings by Design (MBD)**

We don't just work for customers, we partner with them, understanding their businesses, their needs, their people and their expectations. We produce innovative programs with flawless execution and a ferocious attention to detail. Clients rely on our creativity, our integrity, our expertise, as well as our good humor. *MBD managed the Quintin E. Primo, Jr. Lecture Series events in the early 2000's.*

Principals

Jan White is President of Meetings by Design. Founding Meetings by Design in 1992, she was employed as an Event Producer in the design and execution of corporate product launches, excellence award events, and town meetings. Prior experience included Technical Director for a national touring company, and various technical roles in theatrical and nightclub environments. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from the University of Delaware.

Michael White is Vice President and Production Manager of Meetings by Design. Joining the company in 1999, he was employed in a variety of event production roles including Event Producer, Production Manager, and Technical Director for corporate sales meetings, award celebrations, global conferencing events, and corporate seminars. Prior experience included various technical and

management roles in theatrical and nightclub environments. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre Design and Technology from the University of Delaware.

www.meetingsbydesign.net
302-545-0520

- **Facilitator for Conversation Circles: Dr. Janet Steinwedel**

As an Executive Coach, Leadership Consultant, and President of Leader's Insight, Dr. Janet Steinwedel assists leaders in clarifying their goals and objectives while becoming more self-aware in service to their aspirations and business goals. Janet has more than 25 years of experience working in a variety of industries with a broad range of leaders.

Janet works with individuals, teams, and groups on how to be high-functioning and fully engaged. Areas of focus include: authentic leadership, relationship building, enterprise-wide thinking, communication, collaboration, developing agility and resilience for success in today's work place, creating and sustaining a meaningful work/life approach, as well as incorporating issues of diversity and cross-cultural working. Along with corporate clients Janet supports leaders in a variety of faith-based organizations.

Janet held significant leadership roles prior to starting her own business in 2005 at AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, Delaware Investments, and Saks Fifth Avenue. She is a long-time member of the Philadelphia Society for People and Strategy and has played a variety of roles, currently leading their Executive Coaching group. Additionally, she was an adjunct professor in the HRD Master's program at Villanova University (5 years) and provides Leadership Lectures for Neumann University.

Janet earned her M.S. and PhD. in Human and Organizational Systems at Fielding Graduate University and an M.S. in Training and Development from St. Joseph's University. She has been a student of Jungian Psychology since 2005. She is a regular speaker on Leadership and Executive Coaching topics and is committed to continuous learning and raising consciousness. Janet is a credentialed coach and certified in a variety of assessments, with particular skill in the MBTI (personality assessment) and VAL (values assessment).

Dr. Steinwedel is the author of a three-book series written for Executive Coaches and published by Chiron Publications: *The Golden Key to Executive Coaching* (2015), *Authenticity as an Executive Coach: Waking up the Wounded Healer Archetype* (2017) and *Group Coaching: Raising Leadership Consciousness, Effectiveness and Engagement in Organizations* (2019).

www.leadershinsight.com
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