

SSCC Worship Survey

Before distributing this survey, several people asked, “Why do it? You’ll won’t be able to ‘please’ everyone. Disciples are so independent and have so many different opinions that they’ll never all agree on any topic.”

This is partly true. The people at SSCC are independent, and the responses to this survey show their rich diversity of thought. But the purpose of this survey isn’t to get people to agree. Its purpose is to teach us something.

This survey shows that though there is no unanimous preference for anything we do in worship, there is a clear consensus on nearly everything. On 17 of 21 questions asking for a worship preference of some kind the first choice answer is the same for people in both services.

The responses show some differences in degree when looked at by service or by age, but there is a consensus answer that applies to both services and almost all ages about 81% of the time.

We can’t “please” everyone, but the majority of people at SSCC are pleased by the same things. The survey reflects a church in general agreement about worship.

What follows are overviews of responses to the survey questions and, in some cases, additional details from the data.

In a few areas, similar questions have been grouped together. In the responses that follow, it’s particularly important to note where those preferences differ from current practices.

Service by Age

Overview: Overall, 58% of the respondents are older than 50 with the 11:15 service hosting more people 50 years old or older than 9:00 — 62% vs. 46%.

Detail: It may be worth noting that the responses include 10 people under the age of 20, and that more than half of those (based on ages given in Comments) are 14 or younger.

Primary Reason for Attending Worship at 9:00 or 11:15

Overview: The greatest percentage of people attend a particular service because of the time (37%) it is offered. A significant percentage (31%) also attend at 9:00 because of the style of communion. Style of communion is not a major factor in choosing 11:15 (18%) even though the highest preference for communion at that service is in the pews.

Detail: The least important reason for attending a particular service is the music. In fact, more people choose to go to 11:15 (15%) because of the music than go to 9:00 (7%) because of it.

Style of Communion

Overview: Among all the questions on the survey, the greatest difference between the services has to do with the preferred style of communion.

Detail: At 9:00, 68% prefer intinction. At 11:15, 38% prefer communion in the pew and 30% prefer a variety of styles. In fact, at 11:15 a higher percentage (49%) prefer variety or have no preference about the style of communion than prefer communion in the pew.

Leadership for Morning Prayer, Invitation to Communion, and Children's Sermon (3 Questions)

Overview: The clearest overall preferences spanning multiple questions is that lay people share responsibilities for leadership in the service with the staff.

Detail:

- 71% want the Invitation to Communion done by lay people and staff.
- 76% want the Morning Prayer given by lay people and staff.
- 75% want Children's Sermons given by lay people and staff.

These preferences are shared by 88% of age groups at both services.
The Monitors

Overview: People at both services find the monitors the most useful for displaying the words to hymns and choruses (27% of the mentions at 9:00 and 28% at 11:15. They are seen as least useful in displaying the sermon points — 9% at 9:00 and 12% at 11:15.

Detail: The 11:15 service shows a higher percentage of people seeing the monitors as enhancing worship for all categories except for the use of video clips which the 9:00 service sees a little more positively (19% of mentions vs. 17%) than the 11:15 service.

The monitors are seen as not enhancing worship in 2% of the responses from 9:00 and 4% of the responses from 11:15.

Passing of the Peace

Overview: Overall, 58% prefer that the Passing of the Peace not be done during the service.

Detail: A slight majority (54%) prefers the Passing of the Peace during the service at 9:00, but that is almost entirely due to overwhelming preferences by those under 20 and between 40 and 49.

The Communion Prayers for The Bread and The Cup and Thanksgiving

Overview: Majorities of people at 9:00 (79%) and 11:15 (93%) would like to have these prayers at least some of the time during communion.

Detail: A majority (53%) at 9:00 would like the Communion Prayers for the Bread and Cup/Thanksgiving every week.

About 22% at 9:00 do not want these Communion Prayers as part of the service.

Spontaneous Joys and Concerns

Overview: Nearly identical majorities (60% and 62%) prefer having the spontaneous sharing of Joys and Concerns during the Morning Prayer every week.

Detail: People seem to either love this element of worship or hate it. 30% at 11:15 and 22% at 9:00 do not want this as part of worship at all.

Overall, 13% prefer this once a month or only on special occasions.

Silent Meditation

Overview: 63% at 9:00 and 71% at 11:15 would like to see this every week. About 20% (same percentage at each service) would like to see this on special occasions or once a month.

More Variety in Worship

Overview: Majorities at both services (64% at 9:00 and 52% at 11:15) support the idea of more variety in worship services.

Detail: Those most opposed to more variety are those over 80 at 11:15 and those between 50 and 59 at 9:00.

Children's Sermon

Overview: A clear majority at both services does not want children's sermons. — 57% overall.

Detail: The 20-29 year old age group is the only one where a majority supports Children's Sermons.

Children and Communion

Overview: Those with a preference would like to see children take communion in the sanctuary with family and friends during the service (46%).

Nearly the same percentage has no preference in this area (44%).

Detail: There was no age group at either service preferring that children take communion during children's worship.

Song Leader

Overview: Nearly 60% of the people do not want to have a song leader.

Detail: The groups with a majority interest in a song leader are those under 40 at both services and those between 70 and 79 at 9:00.

The group most opposed to a song leader is composed of those between 40 and 49 at 9:00.

The Worship Band

Overview: About 70% of the respondents would like to hear the Worship Band every week, but there are differences by age and the service attended.

Detail: The 11:15 congregation is equally split between those who would like to hear from the Worship Band every week and those who would like to hear from them once a month or on

special occasions. 86% of the congregation at 9:00 would like to hear from the Worship Band every week.

It's interesting that the largest group of those at 9:00 who do not want a Worship Band are under 30. At 9:00, the largest number of people who want the Worship Band every week are between 70 and 79.

Choir Anthem

Overview: Overall, a majority of people would like to have a choir anthem every week.

Detail: 26% of the people at 11:15 and 54% at 9:00 are open to having a choir anthem once a month or on special occasions.

Special Music

Overview: Overall, the highest percentage of respondents would like to have special music once a month (45%). Special music does not include organ/piano or the Worship Band.

Detail: The preference for special music at 9:00 is relatively equally split among those preferring every week (32%), once a month (35%), and only on special occasions (31%).

Same Special Music at Both Services

Overview: A clear majority of respondents at both services (71%) want the same special music (solos, cantatas, children's choirs, instrumentalists, etc.) at both services when it is provided.

This is true for all age groups at 9:00 and all age groups but one (50-59 where 2 are in favor and 3 opposed) at 11:15.

Organ and Piano

Overview: Overwhelming majorities of people at 9:00 (75%) and 11:15 (86%) want to have the opportunity to enjoy the organ AND the piano as part of the service.

Detail: Of the small number of people (19%) with a preference for organ OR piano, (at both services) piano is preferred.

Traditional Hymns

Overview: The clear preference across almost all age groups is for more traditional hymns at both services — 89% at 11:15 and 61% at 9:00.

Chorus/Praise Songs

Overview: The predominant preference at both services (58% at 9:00 and 48% at 11:15) is for more praise songs.

Detail: These preferences for praise songs/choruses — though positive — are significantly lower than the preferences for more traditional hymns.

If the "Less Often" and "Not at All" categories are combined, a slight majority (51%) has this combined preference for fewer or no praise songs at 11:15.

Note that a higher percentage of people at 9:00 prefer more traditional hymns than prefer more praise songs/choruses.

Favorite Traditional Hymns

SSCC is a singing congregation. When asked for favorite hymns, there were 156 submissions. Here they are with the number of times each was listed in parenthesis.

- Amazing Grace (20)
- Here I Am Lord (12)
- How Great Thou Art (10)
- They'll Know We Are Christians (8)*
- Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee (7)
- Morning Has Broken (6)*
- It Is Well With My Soul (4)
- Holy, Holy, Holy (4)
- Be Thou My Vision (4)
- Great Is Thy Faithfulness (4)
- Just a Closer Walk With Thee (4)
- Just As I Am (4)
- Pass It On (4)*

*Total mentions both as a favorite hymn and as a favorite chorus.

Favorite Praise Songs/Choruses

Fifty-three favorite choruses/praise songs were listed. Here they are with the number of mentions in parenthesis.

- They'll Know We Are Christians (8)*
- Morning Has Broken (6)*
- Room At The Table (5)
- Pass It On (4)*
- Sanctuary (3)
- Shout To The Lord (3)
- One Spirit Of Love (2)
- To God Be The Glory (2)
- I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me (2)
- 10,000 Reasons (2)

* Total mentions both as a favorite hymn and favorite chorus.

It's clear from the smaller number mentioned and fewer mentions of the same songs that people are not as familiar with praise songs/choruses as they are with hymns.

These results show a great degree of openness to new music. For example, "Room At The Table" — the most mentioned song only on the praise songs/choruses list — was not introduced to the congregation until last October and it is already a favorite.

Things to Consider

- People at SSCC love music, but in what seems like a contradiction the music style is the factor least likely to cause people to attend at 9:00.
- It may be that people want to see changes in music and that those changes would make music a more likely reason to attend a particular service.
- Coupled with the information from the Comments, there are multiple areas to work on in the area of Music:
 - People want the same special music at both services.
 - People want organ AND piano at both services.
 - People want to hear more music from members of the congregation — both adults and youth.
 - People want more traditional hymns as well as more choruses.

4. Whether it's special music, organ and piano, anthems, traditional hymns, or praise songs/choruses people want more music as part of worship.

5. People's desire to share the same special music at both services may relate to a desire to share some common elements in worship. It provides a sense of being one congregation even though there are two services. This is the same dynamic that would likely be present if you asked people whether they wanted the same sermon at both services.

6. Majorities in excess of 70% want to see lay people share responsibilities for The Invitation to Communion, The Morning Prayer, and the Children's Sermon with the staff. Currently, Morning Prayer and Invitation to Communion are done almost exclusively by the staff.

7. When it comes to communion, there is more openness to variety among the older crowd at 11:15 than at 9:00.

8. A significant majority of people at 9:00 would like to have the communion prayers as done at 11:15. This is consistent with the desire expressed elsewhere to have more lay people in leadership roles during the service.

9. Though the numbers supporting more variety in worship services are low majorities, it is important to notice that majorities at both services support more variety. This degree of openness is not typical among churches.

Overview of Comments

Of the 119 surveys received, 68 — 57% included comments.

Demographics

The people providing comments were significantly younger and slightly more likely to attend at 11:15 than general respondents.

Content of Comments

There were about 127 separate comments. For the most part, they amplified the data received on the survey questions.

Ideas and concerns about music dominated the comments section. There were more than four times as many comments (43) about music as any other area.

Two other areas that generated a significant number of comments were involving more lay people — especially youth — in the worship service (10) and sermons (10).

There were also several comments about welcoming visitors (4) and the Passing of the Peace (4).

Use of Comments

Specific comments will be shared with the Leadership Council and forums as appropriate.