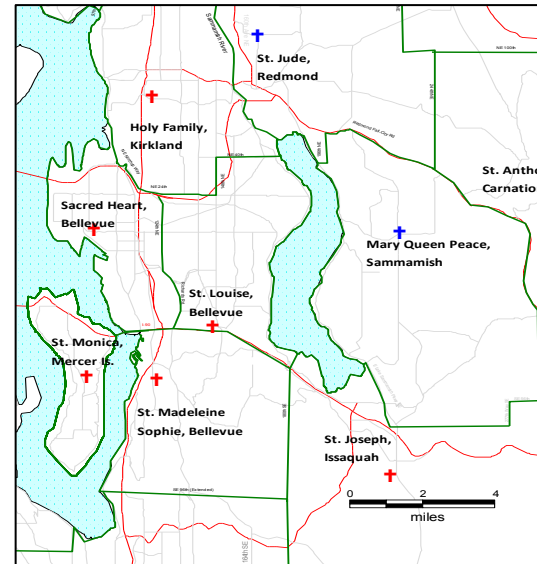




## Summary of Parish Life Survey: St. Louise, Bellevue

A survey of parishioners at St. Louise Parish, Bellevue, was conducted in winter 2014. This summary provides the highlights of the final report that is available upon request from the parish office.

- The 643 completed responses to the St. Louise survey can be considered representative of the experiences of at least 1,500 members of the St. Louise community, the sum both of those who responded and those living in the households of respondents who did not themselves complete a survey.
- The average age of responding parishioners was 53.5 years, but Hispanic parishioners were, on average, 13 years younger than non-Hispanic respondents (42.8 years old vs. 55.6 years old). This age difference has significant implications for ministry in the parish. Specifically, while the largest group of non-Hispanic respondents is between the ages of 44 and 65, the largest group of Hispanic respondents is between the ages of 22 and 43. Similarly, while 57% of those in non-Hispanic households are under the age of 21, the percentage in Hispanic households under 21 is 73%. There are at least 500 children between the ages of birth and 18 living in the households of those responding to the survey.
- Almost three-fourths (73%) of those responding to the survey are currently married, but again there is a difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic respondents. Hispanics are almost 2 ½ times more likely to be single (never married) than non-Hispanics and less likely to be married, widowed or separated/divorced. Some, but not all, of these differences are due to the younger average age of Hispanic parishioners.
- Parishioners responding to the survey are, on average, very well educated. Over 70% of those over 22 years of age claim at least a college degree, with more than half of the college graduates indicating they also have some graduate work or a graduate/professional degree. However, while almost 74% of non-Hispanic respondents over the age of 22 have a college degree or more, fewer than 24% of Hispanic respondents report that level of education. Because Hispanic respondents are considerably younger than non-Hispanic parishioners, it is possible that many will acquire more education with opportunity and support.
- Almost three-fourths of respondents to the survey live in one of four ZIP codes that fall wholly or in part within the parish boundaries, or in ZIP codes directly contiguous to the parish. Non-Hispanic respondents were more likely to live in these near-in areas than Hispanic respondents (80% vs. 61%).
- On average, non-Hispanics responding to the survey have been in the parish for an average of 19 years, while the Hispanic respondents have been in the parish for an average of 11 years.

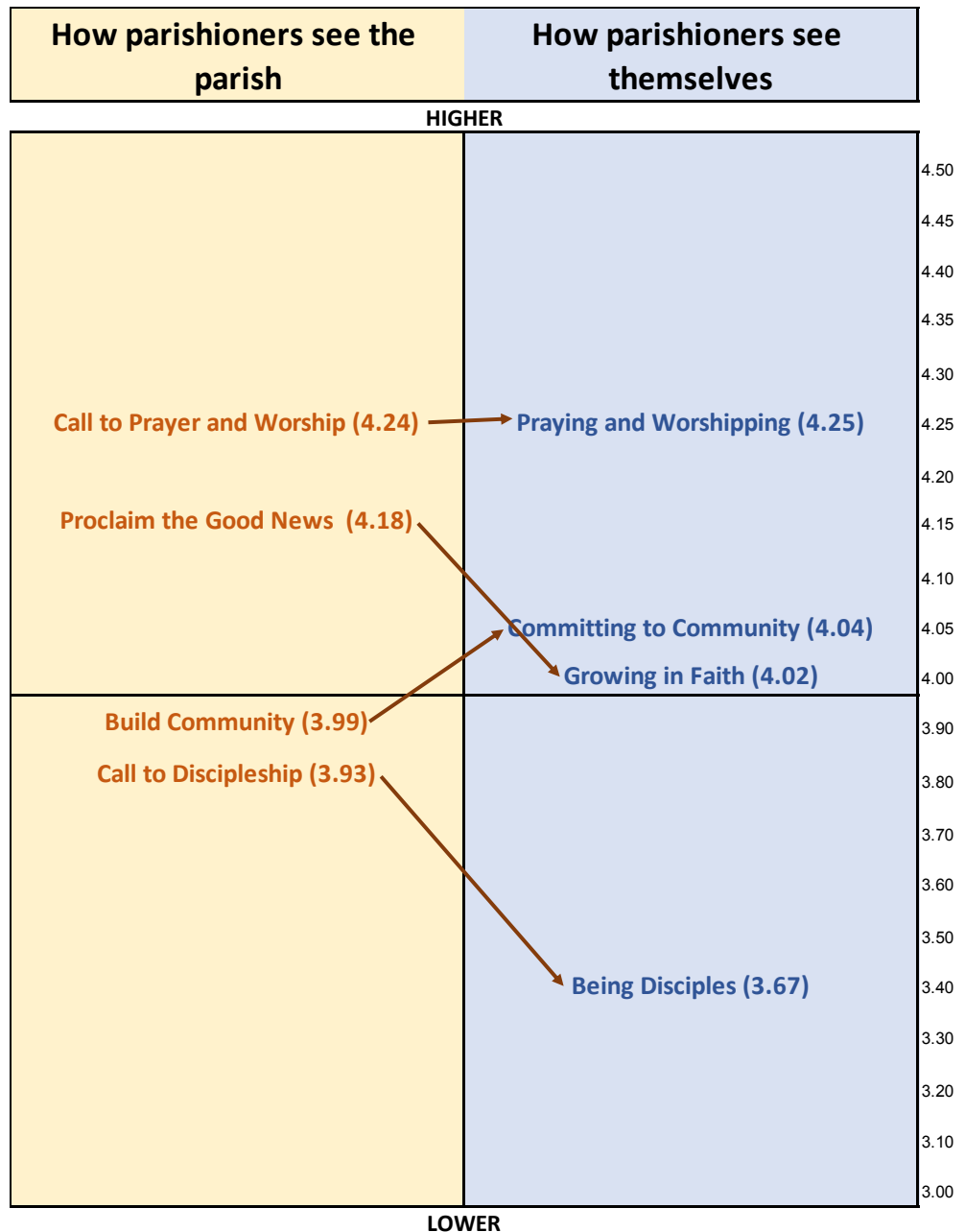


## Parishioner self-reflection and assessment of parish services

Parishioners responding to the survey provided information on how they see their own faith lives and how they view the parish in four areas: **Discipleship, Proclaiming the Good News, Prayer and Worship, and Building Community**. In addition, responding parishioners shared their **Priorities** for the future.

The chart summarizes the responses given by parishioners to a series of statements in each of these areas. The higher the average score (on a scale where “5” is the highest rating), the more positive the response.

- Prayer and Worship got the highest ratings in terms of both self and parish-assessment.
- The parish’s efforts to Proclaim the Good News received a higher average score than did the corresponding self-assessment, defined as Growing in Faith.
- In general, parishioners report that they do better on community building (here called “Committing to Community”) than the parish.
- The area with the lowest overall scores for both self and parish is Discipleship, where the parish is generally viewed more positively than parishioners view their own participation.



## Worship and Prayer

- Most of those responding to the survey are regular Mass goers; 75% say they attend Mass at St. Louise every weekend, and almost 90% of those responding have a “usual” Mass time. For this reason, the six Mass times create six distinct communities which, in some ways, experience the liturgies differently because of the community context. Specifically, the average age of those who usually attend the Saturday evening or early Sunday Masses is much higher than the average age of those who usually attend any other Mass and those attending have also been in the parish for the longest time and are the steadiest attenders. The Spanish Mass draws a much younger community,

most of whom have been in the parish for a relatively short time but 86% of those who usually attend that Mass report that they attend Mass almost every weekend.

- In general, those who usually attend the Spanish Mass give the highest ratings to all aspects of the liturgy, while those who attend the Sunday 7:30 a.m. Mass give the lowest ratings, especially with regard to the music and participation in the singing.
- Areas that might benefit from further reflection by liturgy and pastoral personnel include the music at some Masses (as indicated in the table), the lower-than-average feeling of community at the Saturday evening and Sunday 9:00 a.m. Masses, and the relatively low rating of homilies by those who usually attend the Sunday evening Teen Mass. None of the ratings are dangerously low (with the exception of the music at the first two weekend Masses), but the challenges of a very large parish can clearly be seen in the responses. It is difficult, but not impossible, to create a sense of community when the “community” numbers several hundred people and that should be something the planning process should address.

Usual Mass time	I feel part of the community at the weekend Mass I usually attend		The music at the weekend Mass I usually attend makes a positive contribution to my worship		The homilies help me to understand my faith better and live it more fully		I participate in the Mass by joining the spoken responses		I participate in the Mass by singing along with choir or cantor	
	Frequent / Very frequent	Average rating	Frequent / Very frequent	Average rating	Frequent / Very frequent	Average rating	Frequent / Very frequent	Average rating	Frequent / Very frequent	Average rating
Saturday, 5 PM	79%	4.23	76%	4.07	73%	4.03	98%	4.75	85%	4.45
Sunday, 7:30 AM	94%	4.58	56%	3.81	79%	4.13	96%	4.87	81%	4.42
Sunday, 9 AM	77%	4.08	67%	3.95	77%	4.06	98%	4.72	88%	4.47
Sunday, 11 AM	80%	4.32	72%	4.15	77%	4.16	95%	4.73	85%	4.49
Sunday, 5 PM (in Spanish)	89%	4.64	84%	4.47	93%	4.68	88%	4.56	89%	4.64
Sunday, 6 PM (LifeTeen)	85%	4.33	83%	4.37	73%	3.99	95%	4.72	86%	4.49

Note: rose shading=highest rating/score; blue shading=lowest rating/score on statement.

- One of the positive findings from the survey is the reported participation by respondents in parish groups that is higher at St. Louise than is usually found in parishes in this diocese. Almost 30% of those responding report that they belonged to a small faith group in the past year and about 20% took part in a retreat or mission.

## Proclaiming the Good News and Growing in Faith

- Although Two-thirds or more of the respondents strongly agreed that their faith guides important aspects of their lives and that they are committed to growing in their faith, most adults do not participate in religious education or formation events outside the weekend liturgies. Like almost all parishes, St. Louise struggles to find programs that will draw adult Catholics.
- A significant majority of respondents said they participated in some faith formation activity in the past year, but a majority of that participation has been passive: reading the parish bulletin, visiting the parish and/or other Catholic websites, reading the *Northwest Catholic Magazine* or some other

Catholic newspaper or magazine. Only about 32% of those responding have visited the parish website in the past year while over 44% have visited another Catholic website.

- Religious education/formation of children and youth is a high priority at St. Louise, as will be seen later in this summary. The data were broken out by non-Hispanic/Hispanic, revealing a pattern of enrollment that will need further consideration by the parish leadership.

Parent report on School/RE enrollment	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	All
Neither	8%	24%	12%
No RE but school	12%	4%	10%
No school but RE	16%	48%	23%
Both RE and school	63%	24%	55%

- As shown in the table, only 8% of non-Hispanic parents report no religious education classes or Catholic schooling for their children, while almost one-fourth of Hispanic parents report the same. A substantial majority of children of non-Hispanic parishioners have been enrolled in a Catholic school at some point (75%) and almost all have had Catholic schooling, religious education classes or both (92%). In contrast, 28% of the children of Hispanic respondents have had some Catholic schooling and 76% have had some form of religious training. This is something that should be explored by both the religious educators in the parish and the leadership of the school to find out the sources of these differences and to address any barriers to religious training for their children that might exist for Hispanic parents.

## Building Community

- On the whole, parishioners at St. Louise feel that the parish is a warm and welcoming place; that they feel a part of the community and agree that newcomers are welcomed to the parish. Since research has shown that the sense of warmth and welcome in the community is highly related to satisfaction with the parish and generosity toward it, this is an area that deserves continued attention.
- What brings down the parish community score is the smaller proportion of parishioners who agree that their voice is important in determining the parish’s mission and future. This is a continuing challenge in a vast majority of mid-sized to large Catholic parishes. Unlike small parishes and most non-Catholic congregations, the size of the community does not allow all-parish consultation on most issues. Sharing the results of this survey may help parishioners realize their importance in the planning process. In addition, transparency about parish finances and activities, and frequent reports on the activities of the parish pastoral council, will offer opportunities for parishioners to understand how the parish operates and the role they can play in its future.

## Discipleship: Invitation & Response

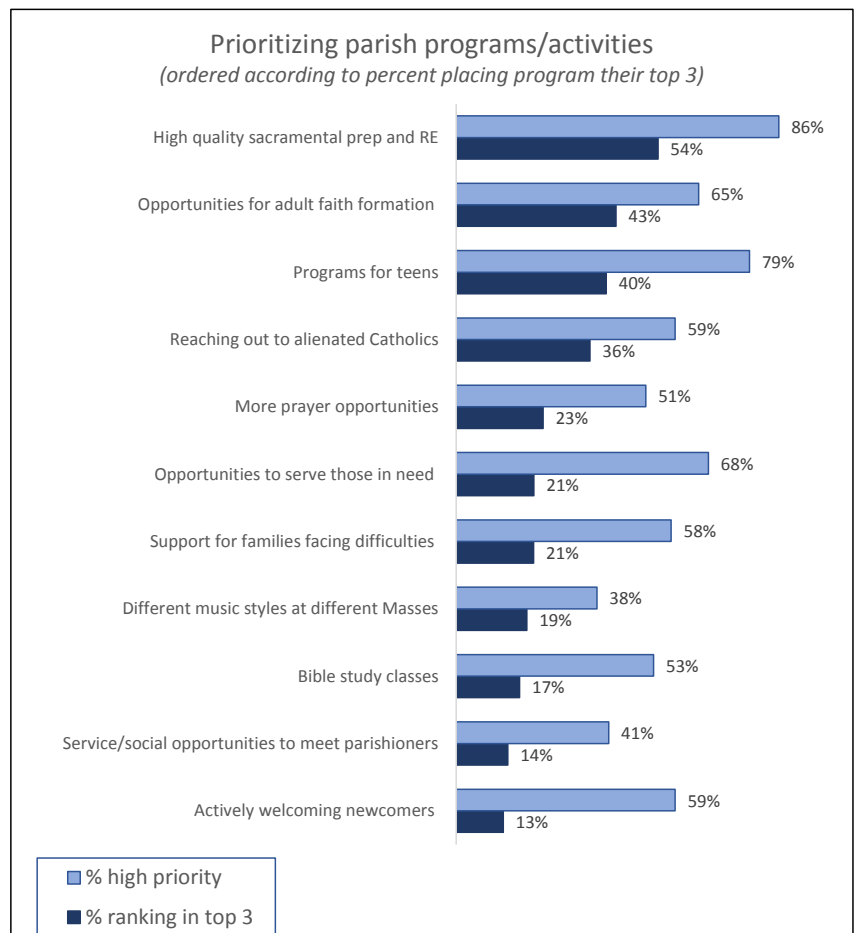
- A key element of discipleship on the part of parish leadership is the personal invitation of parishioners to participation in and service to the community. Slightly more than half of respondents reported that they had been invited to serve or give to the parish in the last six months. This is a stronger response than is typically seen in and suggests that the personal approach has been adopted at St. Louise. A goal might be to invite parishioners to discipleship even more clearly and personally.

- While invitation to discipleship is somewhat low, the parishioner evaluation of their own response to the invitation is even lower. Although almost two thirds of parishioners say their faith guides the way they act in their personal and public lives, fewer than half say they pledge financial support to the parish and fulfill that pledge. A somewhat larger percentage say they strongly agree that stewardship is important in their lives, suggesting that the message has been heard but not fully embraced.

## Priorities for the Future

Parishioners were offered the opportunity to respond to element statements covering several issues of faith formation, opportunity for prayer and outreach/service.

- The priority ratings support the conclusion that responding parishioners wish to prioritize growth in the faith for children, adults, teens and those alienated from the Church, with other priorities (although still important) gaining less support. The strong preference for high quality sacramental preparation and religious formation programs is particularly noteworthy: 86% of those responding judged this to be a high priority and over half of all those responding put it in their top three.
- Programs having to do with prayer, service or outreach were all judged to be high priority by at least half of all respondents. The only two areas with lesser percentages of support had to do with adding opportunities to meet/work with other parishioners, and music.
- Another item of note among priorities is that “reaching out to (inviting back) Catholics who no longer practice their faith” was ranked fourth, higher than is found in most parishes. This no doubt reflects the concern of the many parents who reported that their adult children, numbering close to 300, do not now practice their faith.



## Summary

Based on the summary ratings and the overall survey results, St. Louise Parish may wish to focus the following areas:

1. Explore ways in which the parish could identify and address the particular spiritual needs of those parishioners who say that the parish doesn't fully meet their spiritual needs. More specifically, strongly encourage prayer, worship and Bible reading as a part of daily life and growth in faith.
2. Review the current programs for sacramental preparation and faith formation at all ages (including the Sunday homilies) in light of the strong priority for growth in faith expressed by responding parishioners.
3. Reduce the gap between desire to grow in faith and actual participation in faith formation activities in the parish.
4. Consider ways to call parishioners more openly to discipleship, with emphasis on personal invitation. This might mean stewardship of resources, outreach to those in need, pledging /sacrificial giving to the parish or living their faith as disciples in their homes, jobs and communities.
5. Build the sense of welcome of newcomers/visitors, within "Mass communities" and across age groups within the parish.
6. Reach out to the large number of family members of parishioners who were raised Catholic but no longer go to Mass.
7. Improve catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation because less than one third of adult parishioners received the Sacrament in the past year. In light of Pope Francis' emphasis on reconciliation and the upcoming Year of Mercy, this may be an area for increased formation for all age groups within the parish.
8. Consider ways to encourage parishioners to participate in singing at all the different parish liturgies on the weekend by consulting with different groups of parishioners/Mass communities about musical styles, pitch, etc.