

Summary: DUMC Congregational Survey July 2010 Conducted by the Adult Faith Formation Task Force

Demographics

- 347 responses (approximately 10% of the total membership, possibly 10+% of the adult membership)
- 88% of responders are members
- Approximately 2/3 have been members for 5+ years; 1/4 have been members for 3 years or less
- 50% are age 50 or older; 20% are under age 40

Participation-worship

- 60% attend worship almost every Sunday
- They are attracted to attend church by
 1. the ministers
 2. Sunday worship
 3. opportunities to learn and grow in their faith

Participation – small groups

- *Over half are not now participating* in a small group. Yet over ¾ have participated in DUMC small groups in the past, and 2/3 have participated in small groups in other churches. Of those aged 20-40, 69% are not now participating in small groups.
- *Those who are participating in small groups do so because of:*
 1. fellowship/relationships/people
 2. faith development/learning/spiritual growth
 3. opportunities for service
 4. openness/acceptance/diversity of viewpoints/trust
- 39% at some point have stopped attending a group because:
 1. group was not a good fit
 2. poor facilitation/leadership
 3. lack of openness to diverse views
 4. lack of hospitality, welcome
 5. poor group dynamics
- Those who are not participating in small groups say it is because:
 1. other demands on their time
 2. scheduling difficulties (not at a convenient time)
 3. not comfortable expressing themselves in groups; feel their views would not be accepted
 4. haven't found the right "fit"

Respondents in the 20-30 age group say they don't attend because the topics don't grab their interest.
- Those who are not participating say they would if:
 1. offered at a day/time they could accommodate
 2. certain topics were offered that were interesting, pertinent, new/fresh

- 3. they found a group with a common interest (especially family-related)
- 4. groups were more open, inclusive, accepting
- More than half said they would give 1-2 hours per week to small group participation, and another 25% said they would give one hour.

Strengthening and Improving Groups and Group participation

- Those who attend small groups say the following has deepened their faith:
 1. a particular study topic
 2. group fellowship, support, and caring
 3. service projects
 4. a spiritual experience (prayer, retreats, etc.)
- Responders provided the following suggestions for improving small groups:
 1. stronger leadership and facilitators
 2. greater openness and inclusion
 3. stronger, more varied curriculum; help and guidance with curriculum
 4. changes in scheduling
 5. more opportunities for fellowship

Preferences about groups

- Responders said they would prefer to attend a small group:
 1. weekday evenings (28%)
 2. weekday mornings (25%)
 3. Sunday mornings (22%)

Note: some requested online study groups
 Respondents in the 20-30 age group also prefer weekday evenings, but those in the 30-40 age group prefer Sunday mornings.
- 20% prefer a group of similar age, but 64% said the topic was more important than age
- Preferred topics were
 1. Practical applications to living your faith (76%) [Note – Especially interested in Christian parenting]
 2. Bible study (64%)

Of those not now attending a small group, preference for practical applications was 77% and Bible study only 54%.
- Preferred format was leader-led discussion, or a combination of methods. Comments stressed the importance of having a good leader.
- When asked for suggestions for topics for groups, many specific books were listed. In addition, the following topics received significant mention:
 1. parenting
 2. Bible
 3. Christian life applications
 4. marriage
 5. world religions
 6. topical/social issues
 7. theology, Methodism
 8. doubt and faith

9. Christianity and the environment
10. religion and science
11. religion and politics

Facilitators

- Half of the responders found their facilitators extremely effective
- Responders said facilitators could improve in the following areas:
 1. asking thought-provoking questions to stimulate a deeper level of engagement
 2. keeping a few people from dominating
 3. engaging the group more (There were comments about the difference between "teaching" and "facilitating.")
 4. ensuring safety, openness, acceptance of different views

Summary questions

- When asked if they could "change one thing" about small groups at DUMC, what would it be, responders said:
 1. strong leadership
 2. improve hospitality, friendship; outreach to new members
 3. more openness to diversity of thought
 4. more options in scheduling
 5. greater clergy/staff involvement
 6. offer some short series, versus the longer Disciple series
 7. improve marketing/communication about what is offered, when, where
- When offered the chance to add any final comments, responders:
 1. said they were happy at DUMC
 2. thanked DUMC for asking their input
 3. made individual requests