

CALVARY CHURCH
Stonington, Connecticut

VESTRY REVIEW

Search Committee Progress:

Parish Survey and Focus Group Summaries

January 28, 2010

What You Are Going to Hear

- ◆ How the survey was generated and distributed
- ◆ Breakdown of the survey responses
- ◆ Summary of the Focus Group responses

How Survey Was Generated and Distributed

◆ Generating the Survey

- Reviewed examples of other surveys conducted
- Elected a subcommittee to generate the survey
- Reviewed the survey with the whole Search Committee to generate a consensus

◆ Distributing the Survey

- Survey was provided both electronically, using Survey Monkey, and hard copy for those without computer access
- Youth Survey distributed to those under 18 years old
- Survey available announcement made November 15, 2009
- 31 Paper copies were distributed by mail
- Survey closed Dec. 3, 2009

Current Search Status

- ◆ We have just completed the Parish Survey with 147 parish members responding out of a pool of 250 people
 - 134 used Survey Monkey
 - 13 paper copies received and entered into Survey Monkey for completeness
- ◆ 58.8% response rate
- ◆ 11 Youth responded to the Youth Survey
- ◆ A series of focus group sessions to expand our base of information have been completed.

Breakdown of Survey Responses

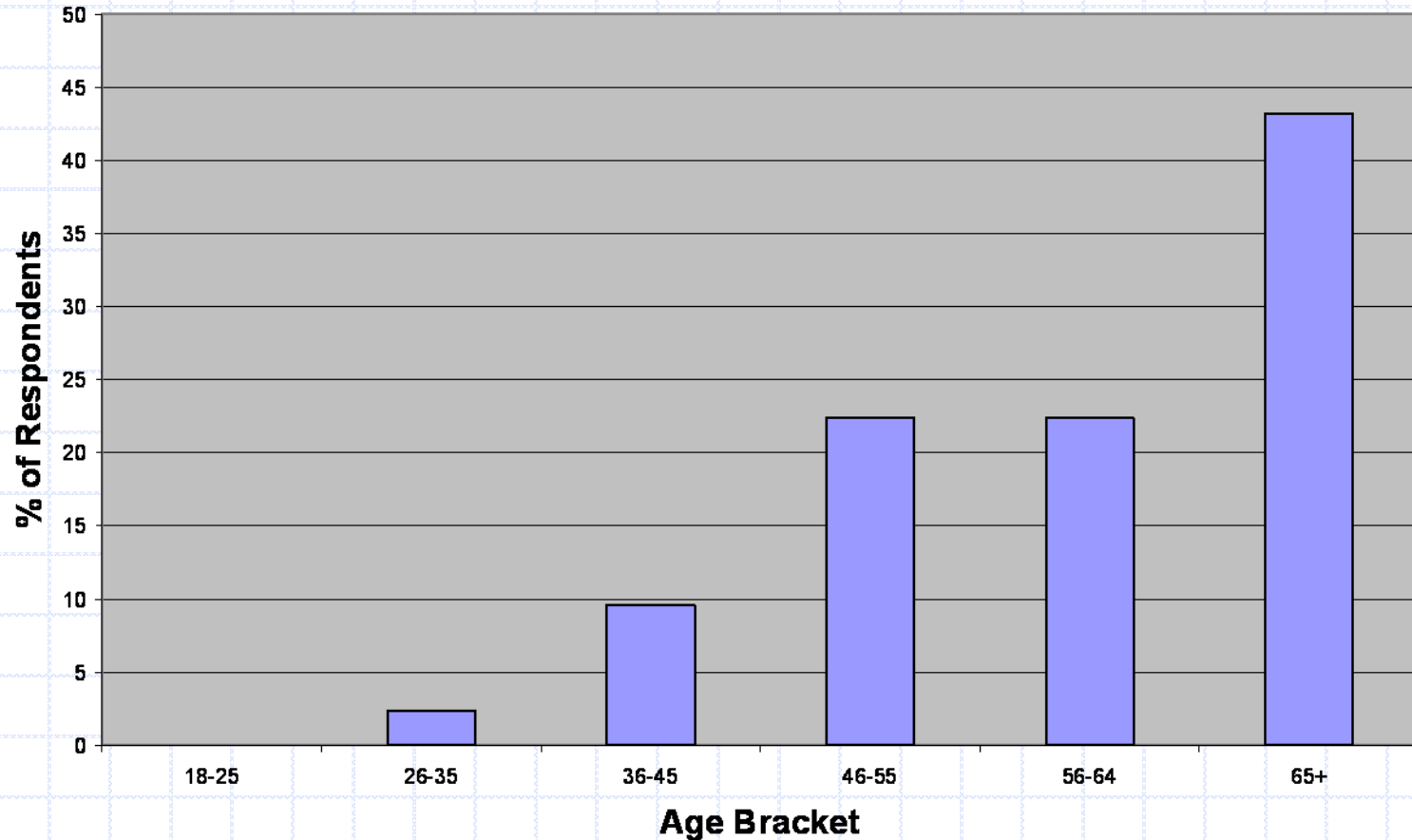
- ◆ Demographics
- ◆ Evaluation of Current Parish Practices
- ◆ Attributes for Potential Rector Candidates

DEMOGRAPHICS - The Numbers

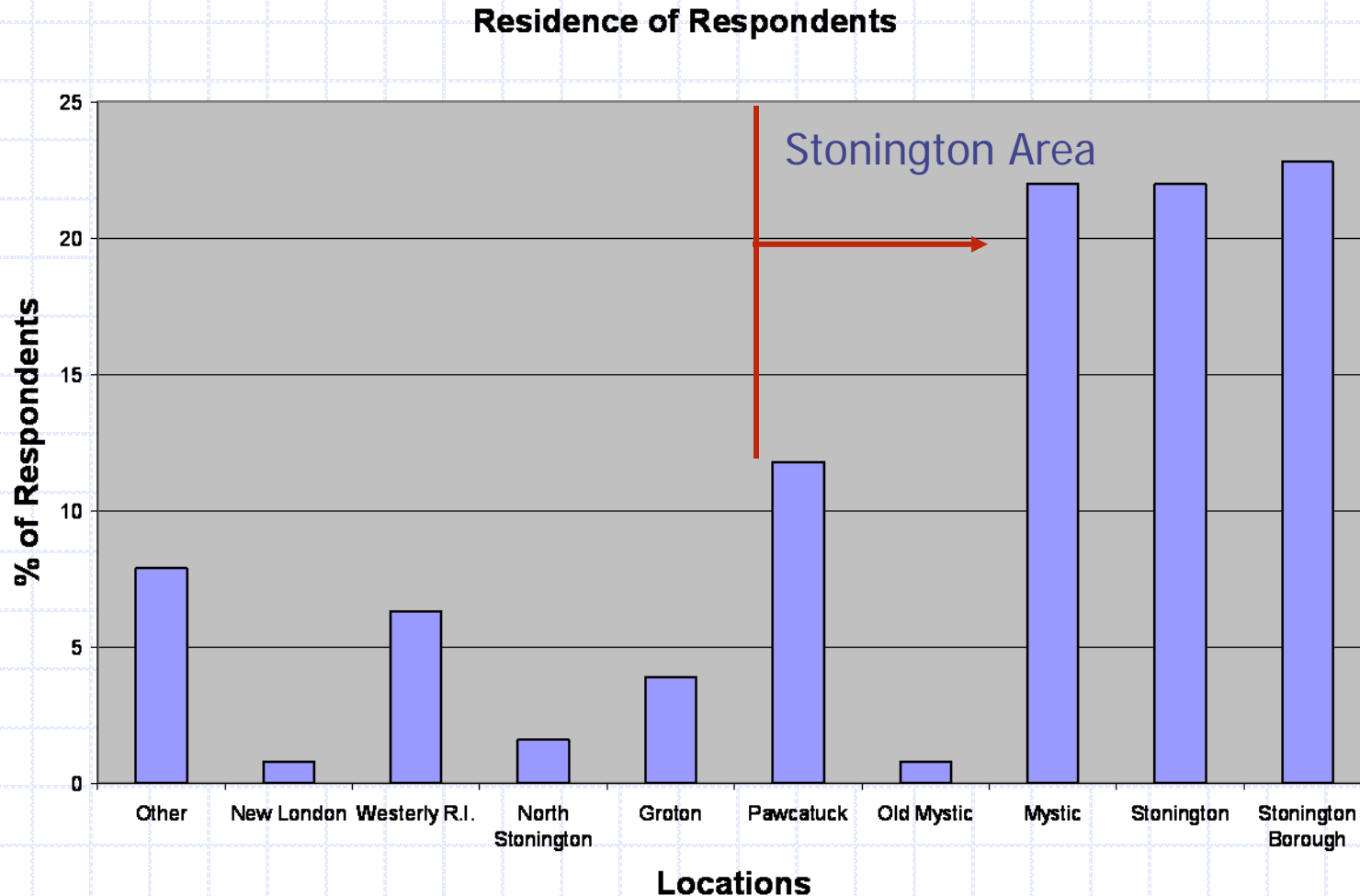
- ◆ 147 respondents
- ◆ 30% men, 70% women
- ◆ 87 respondents have children over 20
- ◆ 54% were raised in the Episcopal Church
 - Of those who were not, 43% came from a Catholic background, 25% from a Congregational background
- ◆ 58% participate in one or more church activities
- ◆ Of 147 respondents, there was relatively equal participation from both 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. service attendees

The Highest Percentage of the Respondents Are Over the Age of 65

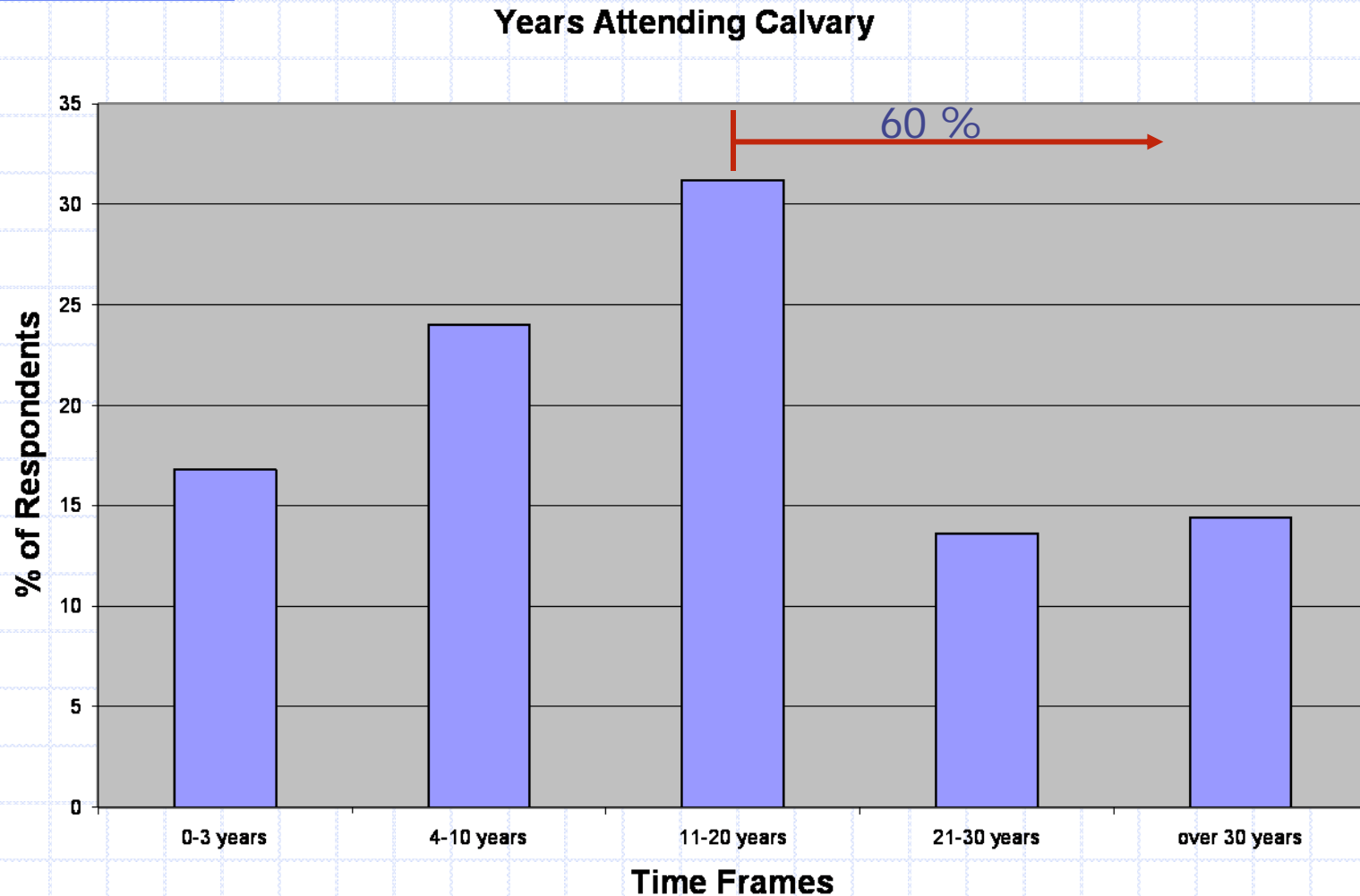
Distribution of Age of Respondents



79% of the Respondents Live in the Stonington Area



60% of the Respondents Have Been Members of Calvary for Over 10 Years



Strong participation from newer families in the church

DEMOGRAPHICS – An Analysis of the Essay Responses

- ◆ “What first brought you to Calvary Church?”, most responded:
 - Episcopal Liturgy/Location
 - Families and Friends
 - Rector
 - Programs
 - ◆ Music
 - ◆ Calvary Nursery School

- ◆ “What keeps you at Calvary Church?”, most responded:
 - The Community/People
 - Music
 - Spirituality
 - Outreach

EVALUATION OF CURRENT PRACTICES

(Breakdown of responses based on categories: *Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, and Not Important*)

◆ Worship

- Top 2 items listed as “Very Important” or “Important”
 - ◆ Preaching / Quality of Sermons
 - ◆ 10:00 Service
- Top 2 items listed as “Not Important”
 - ◆ Exploration of Alternative Service
 - ◆ Liturgical Style

◆ Music

- Top 2 items listed as “Very Important” or “Important”
 - ◆ Adult Choir
 - ◆ Music as Component of Worship
- Top 2 items listed as “Not Important”
 - ◆ Handbell Choir
 - ◆ Concerts

EVALUATION OF CURRENT PRACTICES

(Breakdown of Responses cont.)

◆ Christian Education

- Top 2 items listed as “Very Important” or “Important”
 - ◆ For Teens
 - ◆ Sunday School
- Top 2 items listed as “Not Important”
 - ◆ Retreats
 - ◆ Book Study

◆ Community Fellowship

- Top 2 items listed as “Very Important” or “Important”
 - ◆ Coffee Hour
 - ◆ Intergenerational events
- Top 2 items listed as “Not Important”
 - ◆ Hospitality
 - ◆ Calvary Men’s Group

EVALUATION OF CURRENT PRACTICES

(Breakdown of Responses cont.)

◆ Outreach

- Top 2 items listed as “Very Important” or “Important”
 - ◆ Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center
 - ◆ WARM Shelter
- Top 2 items listed as “Not Important”
 - ◆ Mission Trips
 - ◆ Prison Ministry

◆ Parish Governance

- Top 2 items listed as “Very Important” or “Important”
 - ◆ Financial Budget Management
 - ◆ Communication from Vestry
- Top 2 items listed as “Not Important”
 - ◆ Retention of Committee Leadership
 - ◆ Having a Good Relationship with the Diocese

EVALUATION OF CURRENT PRACTICES

(Breakdown of Responses cont.)

◆ Pastoral Care

- Top 2 items listed as “Very Important” or “Important”
 - ◆ Support in Bereavement
 - ◆ Rector Support in Time of Need

- Top 2 items listed as “Not Important”
 - ◆ Trained Parishioner Support in Time of Need
 - ◆ General Parish Visitation

Summary of Parish Life: *Of the aspects of "Parish Life" you rated as "very important", please pick the top 4 most important aspects, in order of importance. (N = 99)*

1. Spiritual guidance, Christian education, Christian formation (tied)
2. Rector support in time of need
3. Music
4. Worship/liturgy

Also mentioned frequently:

5. Budget and finance

Many thoughtful reflections and suggestions were offered in the open-ended survey questions. For more information, please refer to the full survey report, found online at http://calvary-stonington.org/?page_id=745

Summary of Parish Life: *How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how well Calvary delivers on 4 most important aspects? (N = 90)*

- Most respondents were generally satisfied, with only 1 or 2 aspects needing improvement
- 37% were completely satisfied with all 4 aspects that are most important to them
- Though no strong trends, most often mentioned as areas of satisfaction (in order):
 - ◆ Music ! → outstanding
 - ◆ Amjad ! → has improved pastoral care & Christian education
 - ◆ Christian Ed (but should maintain strong focus on youth programs)
 - ◆ Outreach
- Though no strong trends, most often mentioned as areas in need of improvement (in order):
 - ◆ Sermons
 - ◆ Spiritual guidance
 - ◆ Rector support
 - ◆ (also mentioned by a few: communication from Vestry; better budget explanations)

Summary of Parish Life: *If you are not satisfied with how Calvary delivers an aspect that is most important to you, we would welcome your suggestions for how we might improve. (N = 50)*

Only a third (34%) of respondents offered suggestions. No strong themes dominated, and suggestions echoed earlier comments. Most frequently cited suggestions included, in order:

- ◆ **Rector characteristics** – preaching, people skills, sincerity, a people-person who is there in time of need (N = 13)
- ◆ **Recruitment** – be more welcoming and inclusive; attract wider community (N = 7)
- ◆ **Better communication** on all fronts between all groups; include more of our parishioners in church activities (N = 7)
- ◆ **More church**, more spirituality, more Episcopalian traditions – less social club feel (N = 5)

Other Church Issues: *Going forward, what are the best features of Calvary you would like to see continue and grow? (N = 98)*

◆ Top Five:

- Excellent music and all its programs (N = 36)
- Christian education - adult, children, & youth (N = 30)
- Warm, welcoming community; sense of belonging; fellowship (N = 26)
- Outreach (N = 22)
- Energetic, community involved in many great active programs (N = 12)

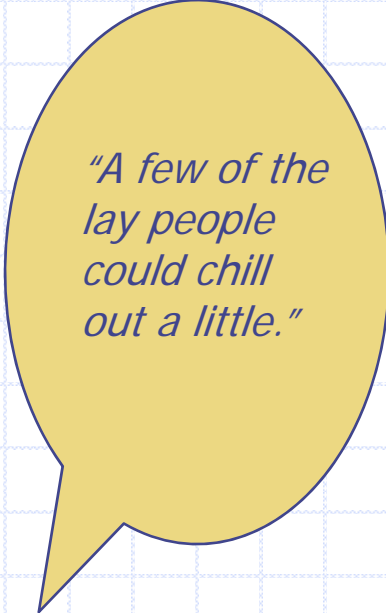
"Stick to the Episcopal tradition of not being extreme – try to keep as many as possible under one roof."

"Good sermons that one takes home to think about."

Other Church Issues: *Going forward, what aspects of Calvary do you believe should be changed? (N = 79)*

Of the 147 total respondents, only 54% (N=79) answered this question, and of those, 20% (N = 16) indicated no changes were needed. Of those who did offer suggestions, no major themes emerged, but the following were the most frequently cited, and echoed earlier statements:

- **Inclusiveness outside parish** – more welcoming to a broader community; less Borough-focused (n = 9)
- **Financial issues** – more realistic focus on financial needs and constraints, matching our budget to our physical/programmatic needs (N = 9)
- **Inclusiveness within parish** – more youth involvement, breaking down barriers, include whole parish, not just same few (N = 8)
- **Less social focus**, less “clubby,” more spiritually-focused (N = 6)
- **Sermons** (N = 6)



“A few of the lay people could chill out a little.”

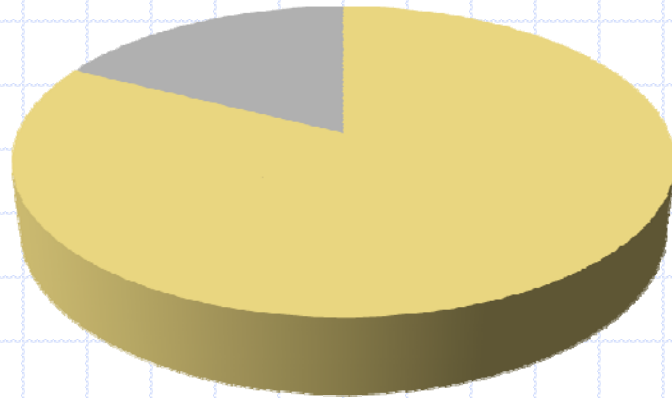
Other Church Issues: *What are the challenges facing our parish today and over the next five years? (N = 92)*

- ◆ **Finances !!** (N = 49)
- ◆ **Recruitment** - Attracting new families, especially young families (N = 21)
- ◆ **Retention** - keeping our church relevant & exciting; keeping programs alive and vibrant; keeping people here; ensuring spiritual growth; managing parish/program growth (N = 20)
- ◆ **New rector** – finding one, adjusting to the changes that will come (N = 10)



"Keeping young people engaged – being inclusive and open to all. Dismantling the stereotype of elitism."

*Do you want
Calvary Church to
grow? (N = 131)*



■ Yes ■ No

Yes: N=108 82.4%
 No: N= 23 17.6%
 Total N=131

*If yes, please choose the
ways you would like to see
Calvary grow. (N = 97)*

Types of growth	%	N
Number of parishioners	81.4%	79
Spirituality	71.1%	69
Amount of money going to outreach	33.0%	32
Size of the budget	29.9%	29
Number of programs	29.9%	29
Number of clergy	17.5%	17

RECTOR CANDIDATE ATTRIBUTES

(Breakdown of Responses) (N = 112)

- ◆ Top 6 items listed as “Very Important” or “Important” in order:
 - Spiritual Leadership
 - Trustworthiness
 - Approachability
 - Being an Inspirational Preacher
 - Intellectual Leadership
 - Effective Counselor

- ◆ Top 6 items listed as “Not Important” in order:
 - Use of Inclusive (non-sexist) Language in Worship
 - Formal Preaching Style
 - Ability as a Retreat Leader
 - Emphasis on More Global Outreach
 - Informal Preaching Style
 - Sermon Content: preaching on church ritual, history, etc.

Youth Survey – *Voices from Calvary Youth*

- ◆ 11 respondents, (8 girls, 3 unknown)
- ◆ Ages (1 unknown):
 - 6 were 11 years or younger
 - 1 was 12-14 years
 - 3 were 15-17 years
- ◆ Few answered all questions – many were skipped
- ◆ Most attend church regularly and are involved in 1 or more church activity (church school, bell ringer, acolyte, etc.)
- ◆ Rated as *very important* or *important* (7 out of 7 replies), in order:
 - *Relationship with rector*
 - *The people I've met there*
 - *Special events (pageant, etc.)*
 - *Youth outreach projects*

Voices from Calvary Youth

Responses to open-ended questions provide some anecdotal insights:

What are 3 things you like best about Calvary?

- Music, treble choir, Calvary Music School
- a youth group that is relevant to my life, the community of it and how close people are, friends, the church by the sea

If you could change Calvary in any way, what would you do?

- Have the youth more involved in planning

What would make the worship services of the church you attend more meaningful to you?

- Examples and stories relating to real life, my life; if I actually had a relationship with the rector

Important characteristics of a new rector:

- Kind, friendly, easy to talk to, young, involved with children, part of the community

What do you struggle with or have questions about that you would like to see addressed by your church?

- I think it's important, to teach people respect and tolerance, for kids in Youth Group to be educated about other religions as well. That increases our understanding of the world and of our own beliefs.

Several Focus Groups Were Interviewed

◆ 11 Interviews; 15 groups

Finance /Stewardship	Vestry
Altar Guild/Flower Guild	CMS
Choir/Handbell	CNS
Worship	ECW
Christian Formation	Staff
Pastoral Care/Liturgical Assistants	

◆ Questions asked

- *As you think about the major contributions your committee makes to the life of Calvary Church, can you tell us how the new rector could help to make your work even better? As far as your committee is concerned what would be the most important attribute of a new rector?*
- *Working as you do on the committee, what would you want to tell the new rector are your biggest challenges? What changes would you like him/her to make?*

Major Themes From the Focus Group Interviews

- ◆ **Communication** between and among all groups but especially with the rector
- ◆ **Spirituality** both in the rector and also an expressed longing in the parish for a more spiritual presence or depth
- ◆ **Finances** – living within our means
- ◆ **Involvement** of the rector in the activities of the parish
- ◆ **Vision/Mission** as set by the rector, in collaboration with the parish
- ◆ **Experienced leadership**, with a willingness to delegate

Next Steps in the Search Process

- ◆ Review the survey findings with the parish
- ◆ Develop a Parish Profile
- ◆ Develop Rector goals and objectives
- ◆ Vestry/Search Committee Retreat in the spring