

COMMUNION

A broad consensus agrees that Incarnation has a reputation as a warm and welcoming parish. An equally broad consensus agrees that things have broken down and that steps need to be taken to restore earlier conditions. People understand that significant staff changes followed immediately by COVID prompted some of the changes deemed negative and there is high confidence that traditional practices can be resumed. Parishioners identified specific changes that have diminished the parish's sense of community: Greeting each other before mass, name tags, having new parishioners and visitors stand up and introduce themselves, newcomer's dinners, Litniks, parish picnic, Valentine Party, fish fry, men's breakfasts, movie nights, ministry fairs.

The thriving Latino community prompted rejoicing and their listening sessions were positive. Both the Latino and Anglo communities regret that there is so little integration of the two communities. "We are two parishes" was a consistent refrain. Bi-lingual masses and the return of all-parish activities were recommended as remedies for the division—a division that is actual, not hostile. There is also a general regret that the parish lacks African-American members.

People are unclear about who is listened to. Some feel the priests listen attentively, some wonder if their questions and comments have any impact. A few feel that the priests will do what they want no matter what anyone says.

The matter of who is, or is not, listened to, leads directly to who is on the margin. Some groups appeared in one session after another: women, the LGBTQ community, the divorced, youth, seniors, singles, special needs, hearing impaired (the hearing loop is appreciated but not well known or understood). Various remedies were suggested even though some problems are structural and ecclesial, not specific to our parish. More women as lectors, eucharistic ministers, and ushers; sensitive ministry to the LGBTQ community—people have left the parish, even the church, because gay family members meet only condemnation; return of the 4:30 mass (youth are not attending mass), youth programming, better catechesis for youth; reach out to those alienated by the poorly addressed sexual abuse crisis; reach out to those who have not returned after they stopped attending mass because of COVID.

Parish worship elicited a variety of views and it is difficult to discern exactly what the impact of COVID has been. Too many changes too fast, say some. Good music say many. Chanted masses are both appreciated and disliked. Liturgy seems increasingly conservative, formal, and stiff. Youth don't like to come. There is broad agreement that homilies break open the word. People appreciate that our priests have different preaching styles probably attributable to differences in personality and experience. Many people feel that the homilies do a good job of explicating the readings but wish that preaching would relate the readings more closely to everyday life.