

# 2015 Worship Survey, Executive Summary

## Background:

Respondents were asked to rate various elements of worship on a 1 (low) to 5 (high) scale for “impact on spiritual experience”. These elements appear below. Respondents were also able to skip the question or select not applicable (n/a).

- Greeting/receiving bulletin
- Prelude (music played 5 minutes or so prior to the worship hour)
- Welcome and announcements
- Sharing of the peace, greeting those around you
- Call to Worship
- Opening Hymn
- Prayer of Confession or Gathering Prayer
- Time of silent Prayer
- Assurance of Pardon or Grace
- Gloria Patri ("Glory be to the Father")
- Children's Time
- Prayer before the sermon
- Sermon
- Hymn/song after sermon
- Sharing of our outreach work/Call for the offering
- Offertory Anthem/Music
- Doxology
- Prayer of dedication
- Spoken Lord's Prayer
- Sung Lord's Prayer
- Closing hymn
- Benediction
- Postlude (music played 5 min or so after the worship hour)
- Post-service time talking, getting coffee, etc.

## Highlights

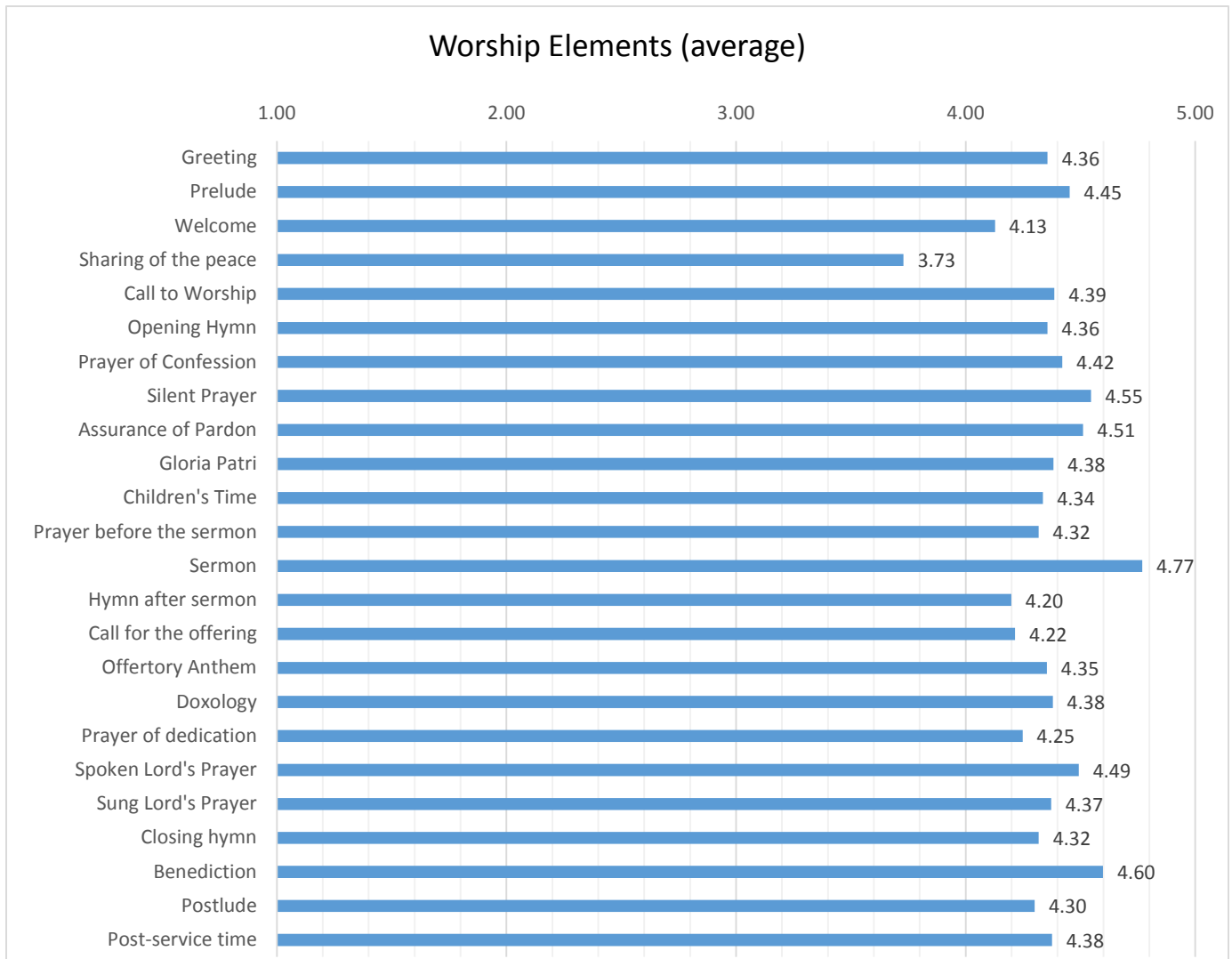
- Strong agreement about the centrality and quality of the sermon.
- Communion is meaningful.
- Regard for *Sharing the Peace* is nuanced. The more often one comes to worship, the higher the regard for this element. On the other hand, the longer one has been worshipping, the lower the regard.
- Discussion of traditional vs. contemporary elements continue to distract us.
- Considerations for improvements
  - Strengthen the music.
  - Make more time for contemplation and prayer perhaps by moving announcements and *Sharing the Peace*.
  - Personalize *Prayers for Others* at 10:15 service.

## The Survey

A total of 134 individuals responded. The responses were statistically representative of gender and age (those over age 25) when compared to the 2014 church census.

## Quantitative Results:

In trying to understand the responses, it is helpful to look for trends.



Overall respondents found the various elements important to their spiritual experience. (They were wildly happy about and strongly valued the sermon.) On the one hand, every element scored well about a neutral score of 3. Conversely, Second Presbyterian is a voluntary organization so it makes sense that members generally find the worship experience meaningful.

However *Sharing of the Peace* is significantly below the otherwise high averages. Generally, most people find *Sharing the Peace* meaningful but the average score of 3.73 falls outside one standard deviation, but just barely. Statistically with a +/-5% error one cannot claim this to be a statistically significant finding. Looking at this more closely, the value of *Sharing the Peace* is not correlated to gender, age or typical worship time. Interestingly, it is highly correlated (less than 1% error) with two other factors. The more often one comes to worship, the more highly that person regards *Sharing the Peace*. There is

a reverse correlation between years of attendance and *Sharing the Peace*. In other words, the longer one has been attending Second, the less likely they enjoy *Sharing the Peace*.

### **Qualitative Results:**

Numbers don't tell the entire story.

- Everyone seems to have an opinion on traditional vs. contemporary worship traditions. Many comments focused on the value/disregard for one vs. the other. Even those that enjoy both are compelled to comment. Perhaps this is to be expected of a "worship survey" but it is worth noting that the strong majority of the respondents weigh in on this topic.
- There is strong agreement about the centrality and quality of the sermon. Many compliments of the Senior Pastor.
- Strengthening the musical offerings would be well-received but the comments are equally divided between a stronger choir and more varied contemporary music.
- It was noticed by several that the survey did not probe the importance of communion. After the sermon, it is very important. Although of course, there are a variety of opinions about traditional vs. intinction and how often it should be served.
- Several of the comments regarding *Sharing the Peace* emphasized its place in the service and suggested moving it to the end.
  - *The handshaking/greeting, to me is so disruptive of getting into the mood of worship. If we can't cut it altogether, perhaps passing the peace could be moved to right before we are dismissed at the end of the service.*
- A similar theme emerged with announcements.
  - *Announcements can get lengthy. I realize that many people don't quite connect with the announcements written and publicized in other ways. However, a quieter and more reflective entry into worship has its beauty.*
- Overall, there was a fairly strong call for extended prayer and/or contemplation.
  - *Would like more prelude than 5 minutes. Welcome and announcements usually too long. Mixed feelings about sharing of the peace/greeting. Is intentional, but wonder about its placement at this point in worship. Preludes can set the mood, but that's all "broken" with announcements and peace passing with the requisite "how do you get them quiet again?"*
  - *The opening of service starts the transition from my everyday world, rush to get to church, to a focus on God and worship as well as prepares my heart and opens my "ears" to God's word.*
  - *Silent prayer needs more "attention" and "focus".*
  - *More, and longer, silent time for prayer/reflection/meditation*
- Comments that compare and contrast the 8:15 to the 10:15 service were uncommon but for those that did, a recommendation was made that the 10:15 service be made more personal by mentioning specific prayer requests of individuals.