

A Report on Parishioner Music Program Preferences
At St. Alban's Parish

FINAL

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The Music Advisory Group Charter

The Music Advisory Group (MAG) was established in the spring of 2016 as a temporary committee working under the direction of Laura Weiss, who was at that time serving as the Interim Music Director. The membership of the MAG was selected by Laura Weiss from among a list of nominees solicited from the parish at large. The MAG's immediate task was to solicit information on parishioner preferences for the parish's future music program in preparation for the search for a permanent Music Director. Upon Laura's departure from the parish to accept other employment, Richard Leland became the chair for the committee and confirmed with the Rector, Deborah Meister, that the MAG's charter remained unchanged. Upon Deborah Meister's resignation as Rector, the Wardens again confirmed that the MAG should continue to document and report on the music program preferences of the parishioners. The submission of this report fulfills the requirements of the MAG charter.

The MAG Process for Information Gathering

To begin the process of soliciting parishioner preferences for the Music Program, the MAG decided to host a series of group discussions attended by self-selected individuals interested in providing input to our preference gathering process. About forty parishioners contributed to these group discussions which varied significantly in size. These group discussions were structured around the following five open ended questions.

1. What aspects of music at St. Alban's do you like most?
2. What aspects of music at St. Alban's don't you like as much?
3. What are things you have seen elsewhere that you think would work here?
4. What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for music at St. Alban's?
5. What are important questions for the Music Advisory Group to be asking the congregation?

The results from these group discussions are included in Appendix A. Each of these questions solicited a wide range of opinions and there was no attempt in this process to capture a consensus on these questions. Nevertheless, certain key themes arose from these discussions which the MAG felt needed to be validated with a broader range of parishioners. We wanted to achieve this broader validation through a parish-wide survey. However, since the MAG lacked the expertise to formulate a valid survey on its own, it sought support from an outside consultant in survey methodology. Fortunately, we were able to obtain this support from Gretchen Pfau, a parishioner with graduate level credentials in statistics and a professional in the field of public surveys. Gretchen advised us that if we could clearly state what we are trying to learn via a survey, she could formulate survey questions to address these objectives. In response, the MAG provided Gretchen with the following broad questions suggested by the broad themes that emerged from the discussion groups.

1. To what extent do the parishioners of St. Alban's value the restoration of a prestigious music program characterized by professional level performance of traditional liturgical music and anthems?
2. To what extent do the parishioners of St. Alban's value increased emphasis on and support for congregational singing?
3. To what extent do the parishioners of St. Alban's desire a more eclectic selection of musical material for congregational singing beyond the hymnal?
4. To what extent do the parishioners of St. Alban's value the development of a comprehensive children's music program providing performance opportunities from preschoolers through high schoolers?

Gretchen responded with a list of survey questions under these four areas which were accepted by the MAG with only minor edits. The paper version of the resulting questionnaire is included as appendix B of this report. The survey questions are posed as affirmative statements to which a response was solicited on a five point scale ranging from fully disagree to fully agree. In addition two demographic questions were posed. The first demographic questions captures the service normally attended by the respondent and the second demographic questions asks if the respondent is the parent or grandparents of a child attending St. Alban's. The second demographic question was designed to be correlated with questions related to the children's music program. The survey also included an option to provide a narrative comment. Appendix C includes the comments received in response to the survey with the respondent's name redacted. Ten responses were received to the paper survey while the vast majority of the response came in from a Survey Monkey based electronic version of the survey which was distributed to the email list related to the distribution of "This Week at St. Alban's". The survey results shown in appendix D combine the results from the paper and electronic versions of the survey. For readability purposes, the content of appendix D is provided as a separate PDF file entitled "St. Albans Music Survey Visualization.pdf". The order of the questions in the electronic version of the survey were randomized.

The MAG's Interpretation of the Survey Results

The survey received an impressive 129 responses from parishioners representing a wide array of families and service attendance.

When asked about the primary service they attended, there were 7 members from the 8:00, 74 from the 9:15, 37 from the 11:30 (English), and 1 from the 11:30 (Spanish) (9 "not applicable," 1 no response). Charles Porter has determined that the average attendance in 2016 by service was: 8:00 (22), 9:15 (164), 11:30 English (69) and 11:30 Spanish (45). Using this measure of service size, the response rate per service was: 8:00 (32%), 9:15 (45%), 11:30 English (54%) and 11:30 Spanish (2%). Furthermore, there were 105 respondents who stated that they were not the parent or grandparent of a child

attending St. Alban's, and 23 stated that they were (1 no response). These numbers allow us to ascertain whether opinions on music differ based on these metrics.

1. To what extent do the parishioners of St. Alban's value the restoration of a prestigious music program specifically characterized by professional-level performance of traditional liturgical music and anthems?

Parishioners of St. Alban's articulated a strong sentiment that professional-quality music is important; at the same time, however, they do not seem to express a strong preference on how that vision is realized.

St. Alban's parishioners almost universally agree that professional-quality music is an important part of worship.

75.2% of respondents agreed partially or completely with that statement. Furthermore, 89.9% agree that the primary role of the music program is "to enhance and support the worship service for parishioners" and 76.0% agree that "it is important to maintain and restore" a program of "high-quality, traditional liturgical music."

In general there is a split opinion on both the presence and financing of a professional choir. The results on the whole skew against these ideas, with the important distinction that respondents from the 11:30 service break this pattern.

When asked whether "there are more important things to spend our money on than a professional choir, the full results are 41.9% agree/40.3% disagree, with those numbers splitting into 45.9% agree/31.1% disagree for the 9:15 and 15.8% agree/60.5% disagree for the 11:30 service.

While parishioners on the whole do not seem to desire the presence of or financing for a choir consisting entirely of paid members, these results indicate that expanding the model of a volunteer choir with paid section leaders could be successful.

This model of a choir has seen significant success at a number of Episcopal parishes in the diocese and elsewhere in the country. By including one or two paid members per part, the remaining volunteers can learn music faster and realize greater nuance and difficulty that might otherwise require much more time each week. This model could fulfill respondents' near-universal desire for both high-quality Anglican music and concern for finances. It is also important to note that this model already exists at St. Alban's in the form of the Canterbury Choir at the 9:15 service.

An important observation is that the wording for these questions likely introduced some confusion on whether "professional-quality" or "professional" refers more generally to a high quality of music or more specifically to paying some or all members of a choir. As such, the

results concerning paid choir members cannot be stated with the same degree of certainty as the rest of this survey.

The confusion in the survey about the meaning of the term “professional” caused ten parishioners to offer comments on the role of paid singers in our choirs. See the comments from respondents 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, and 16 in Appendix C. The overall message from these comments is that paid singers are most appreciated in the role of key supporting members within a largely volunteer choir. The MAG particularly appreciated comment 1 in Appendix C concerning the quality of a choir being largely a characteristic delivered through the ability of the choir director as opposed to the number of paid singers.

2. To what extent do the parishioners of St. Alban’s value increased emphasis on and support for congregational singing?

Respondents reaffirmed the continued importance of the congregational musical experience alongside choral performance. Respondents agreed with the idea that congregational singing should remain accessible, while the choir should use its experience to sing more challenging repertoire.

Almost no one feels pressured to sing during services more than they’re comfortable (74.4% vs. 7.0%).

It is also important to note that some of these questions seemed to present a false choice between prioritizing congregational singing above or below choral performance.

The rest of the answers in this survey indicate the continued importance of both of these traditions, and so respondents expressed some confusion with the questions asking whether it was “more important for music to be accessible for congregational singing than to showcase the choir” and whether the “primary role of the choir is to lead the music, not perform it.”

3. To what extent do the parishioners of St. Alban’s desire a more eclectic selection of musical material for congregational singing beyond the Hymnal 1982?

Concerning the selection of musical material for congregational singing, the parishioners of St. Alban’s strongly support music based in the Anglican choral tradition with measured flexibility to include music from different traditions and cultures. The difference in responses between services, while not great, reaffirms that St. Alban’s is a community with like-minded musical ideals that also enjoys having options in musical worship styles on each Sunday.

When asked whether “St. Alban’s continue to provide a service where [traditional hymns] are maintained,” 77.5% of respondents expressed partial or complete

agreement. Importantly, respondents from all services articulated this strong support (57.1%, 75.7%, and 81.1% for the 8:00, 9:15, and 11:30, respectively).

However, when it came to preferring “a variety of hymn styles in our service” over “the same sorts of hymns every week,” the results predictably reflected some variation between services.

While the respondents on the whole opted for a variety (44.2% agreement/32.6% disagreement), these numbers differed significantly based on the service, with 50.0%/27.0% for the 9:15 and 35.1%/37.8% for the 11:15. This difference in opinion suggests that St. Alban’s should continue to provide a variety of musical options on each Sunday.

When asked whether music at St. Alban’s should reflect our multicultural society, parishioners expressed support for the idea, while more evenly splitting on the idea to include more Spanish-language music.

48.8% agree/27.1% disagree on whether the music in our services should reflect “living in a multicultural society,” and 41.1% agree/34.9% disagree with needing “to incorporate [Spanish-language] music in our services more often.” When considered alongside the previous two questions, these answers indicate support for measured inclusion, while perhaps less so for something like a fully bilingual service. These responses did not differ significantly between the services.

Five parishioners offered comments related to this area of inquiry: respondent comments 2, 4, 7, 11, and 15 in Appendix C. The MAG particularly appreciated comment 4 about maintaining traditional music during key liturgical seasons and feast days, but utilizing some new lively hymns from other sources during the long season After Pentecost.

4. To what extent do the parishioners of St. Alban’s value the development of a comprehensive children’s music program providing performance opportunities from preschoolers through high schoolers?

There is no ambiguity concerning the development of a comprehensive children’s music program: St. Alban’s parishioners strongly support this venture.

69.0% of respondents expressing partial or complete agreement with the statement that “we should focus our music program on engaging parishioners of all ages, which means expanding the offerings we have for children and teens.” Tellingly, this sentiment is held regardless of whether parishioners were parents or grandparents of children currently in the parish, with 67.6% of non-(grand)parents and 73.9% of (grand)parents expressing agreement. Including musical offerings for children, pre-teens, and teenagers is clearly of great importance to the people of St. Alban’s.

Appendix A

Notes from Group Discussions held between
June 2016 and September 2016

Some observations on the June 12 Music Advisory Committee
Meeting with parents on ideas for a revitalized music program for youth and children
At St. Alban's

- Some wish to see a restoration of a challenging youth choir which would teach choral singing in harmony with traditional Anglican music including works in Latin.
 - There was acknowledgement that not all youth would be interested in advanced choral singing and achieving the critical mass of participation for such a program would be challenging.
 - The music program should also provide a means for kids to play instruments in the service where this skill has been acquired outside of church.
 - In regards to Children's Chapel, the music should be easy enough for all to participate. An example was provided from the past where Advent music was introduced that was too challenging for some of the kids who were younger.
 - Liturgical restriction on the seasonality of music and the limitation of the use of popular music should not apply to Children's Chapel.
 - Parents seek a comprehensive approach to children's music without age range gaps and with thought out paths for progression from one program to another as children grow older.
 - It is likely that the skills and focus to run a comprehensive children/youth music programs are not compatible with a single individual also running the adult choirs and organ performance aspects of the total music program.
 - The overarching goal being sought through a children/youth music program is to create a sense of belonging and participation for kids within the life of the parish which is a source of joy.
-

Comments Collected by MAG Members at the Post-Service Forum
Held on July 10, 2016

- Music Director is more than a one person job.
- When Norman Scribner was here, he subsidized the music program by allowing a significant part of his salary to be dedicated to hiring paid singers and additional staff (Sonya) instead of being paid directly to him.
- Two, full time positions (Director and Assistant/organist) needed to build and maintain an effective program.
- Should be a renewed emphasis on supporting and maintaining: a) children's choir and b) bell choir
- Music should be viewed as a ministry for involvement on the part of the entire parish.
- Music program overall can be somewhat eclectic in order to appeal to broader spectrum of the parish.
- Should be more soloist opportunities for unpaid members of the choir.
- More opportunities for youth of all ages to contribute (i.e. perform) within the framework of not only services but other church events.

- Important to maintain a cadre of paid singers and increase/reestablish the ratio of paid to volunteer singers in the adult choirs.
- Maintain the Alban (paid) Singers as a separate entity,
- Increase opportunities for participation in music programs for members outside of the standard multiple choir format.
- Tailor types of music to specific services (9:15 should again become more of a family service with greater emphasis on music designed to draw in the kids).
- Use hymns that are more tailored to congregational singing.
- Reestablish the Sunday 5 p.m. service to provide alternative music possibilities.
- Make sure that the Music Director has the widest possible latitude when working with the Rector in organizing and implementing the music program.
- Develop and emphasize opportunities for youth involvement (all ages – instrumental as well as vocal).
- Consider alternative times (i.e. other than just Sundays) for youth music program involvement.
- Dedicate the third week of each month to youth music involvement in both services; bringing in the children's chapel to sing an appropriate (but for them, much fun as well) piece or two.
- Bring in guest musicians not only to play but to provide workshop opportunities for parishioners.
- Preserve the tradition of choir trips – mechanism for team building among members as well as a form of outreach.
- Develop and execute music initiatives as a form of parish outreach to the larger community.
- Ensure that more extensive involvement by parishioners and improvements to service music do not further lengthen service times that already seem to last at least an hour and a quarter (but don't "shortchange" the music aspect of the service)
- Take thoughtful and calculated risks with how the program is designed and implemented.

MAG Focus Group Sunday 7/24/16

In attendance: Robin Rudd, Sandy Kolb, Deborah Potter, Gordon Avery, Penny Glass, Bob Witten, Laura Ingersoll, Marina Buler Miko, Sharon Whitehouse, Amy Vandersluis, Jane Shubert, Andy and Janice Molchin, Bob Worfolk

Committee: Paul Loether, Bruce, Rich Leland, Eliot Edgar

Rich Leland leading and introduced purpose and format.

1. Question: What aspect of the Music here at St. Albans do you most like?

Bruce: Canterbury choir

Deborah: **congregational singing**

Laura: singable hymns

—Question: who picks hymns

Sandy: Likes to hear the **children sing and children involved** in the services with the adults

Marina: thought: people struggle to sing parts—how can we help congregants sing parts

Penny: interns in the past conducted choir in a lower range; children can lead if pieces are right

Gordon: Congregational hymns have harmony—wants more of that at STA so not discouraged

Deborah: include piano

Marina: likes connection of hymns to the reading

good quality choir; approach to music (Amy); audience is crucial in the participating

Do not go to services with screens in the sanctuary(Laura)

2. What aspects do you not like as much or want changed;

Less chanting or less complicated ones

—different services would accommodate different service music

—teach new chants or new music

—9:15 family service music should appeal to children

—need for variety: Wonder love and praise, African American hymnbook: there is a lack of diversity currently; more joy, Spanish Language service music

—need for peppier music

—requests for hymns accepted especially for special services

—less latin sung

—need more diversity of music in different service

—service music is not for performance

—possible to have both performance and participatory- need a balance

—too much choir “choir creep”

3. Are there anythings you have seen elsewhere that you want here at STA?

—diversity of instruments: congregants, children and special services

—sign language, motion occasionally, streamers

4. What can you say about your hope, dreams and aspirations for STA?

—more singing hymns with gusto

—children involved at least 9:15

—music should contribute qualities that are more than words, emotion and integrating

—preludes and postludes are moving

—note in program bulletin to quiet congregation

—superb organist

—no dumbing down the music but other hymnals i.e. ***Life and praise; Lift every voice and sing***

—teaching voice and singing themselves

“corrupt the kids with good taste” —Andy

5. What else should we be asking?

—ask the younger folks, young parents

Amy responded parents want programs specifically for kids

Notes from MAG Discussion Group on September 11, 2016

Attendees: Rich Leland (MAG), Bruce Barrow (MAG), Marybeth Evans (MAG)
Margaret Easter and Gordon Avery

1. What aspects of music at St. Albans do you like most?
 - a. Excellent pipe organ so we need to retain an excellent organist
 - b. We welcome people of all ages to participate in the choir.
 - c. We should strive to restore a bell choir and children's choirs, but only to the extent that there is a demand for participation in these choirs.
 - d. Music is the heart of the worship service and is very important
2. What aspects of music at St. Albans don't you like as much
 - a. Would like the organist to play parts during the communion hymns rather than fancy accompaniments to help the congregation sing the harmony
 - b. Greater attention should be paid to identifying and playing hymns familiar to the congregation.
3. What are things you've seen elsewhere that you think would work here?
 - a. More use of alternative hymnals to go beyond the traditional hymns in the Episcopal hymnal.
 - b. Have children play percussion instruments during the recessional.
4. What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for music at St. Albans?
 - a. Need for harmonious and collaborative relationship between the new music director and the Rector.
 - b. Views the need for high quality musical performance as about an 8 on a scale of 10. However, seeks access to professional level musical performance in places outside of church.
5. What are important questions for the Music Advisory Committee to be asking the congregation?
 - a. The questions asked above provide avenues for providing all the needed congregational input.

MAG Focus group 9/18/16 Claggett Retreat Center
Led by Mary Beth Evans, notes by Eliot Edgar

Those in attendance: Rev. Jim Quigley, Gordon Avery, Penny Glass, Mary Beth Albright, Paul Brewster, Kate Bouve, Jan Grogan, Jane Shubert, Lacy Gude, Katie Wilson, Lois Stratton, Deborah Potter, Bob Witten, Jo Turner, Joe McClean, Kiki Mclean, Anton Vanterpool

Lively and opinionated group: Responses

Q 1: What aspects of the music at STA do you like the most:

- Congregational singing of hymns people know
- Commitment to a fine music program
- Children singing both at children's chapel and in "Big Church"
- Larger pieces periodically performed: "great music of the church" with traditional Anglican pieces
- Anglican hymns
- Variety some jazzy with the congregation joining
- Energy and movement
- Spirituals
- Other instruments, bells
- Spanish language service music

Q2: What aspects do you not like:

- Slow music
- Gospel music
- Silence without explanation
- Not knowing what is going on in the service music
- Absence of children's program and choirs
- Bilingual service music

Q3: What have you seen elsewhere that you'd like to see at STA?

- Use of "Lift every voice and sing" and "Wonder, love and praise"
- Postlude as part of the service so people do not get up and leave and talk—is it possible to get people to be quiet before service and during the postlude?
- Teaching the service music or new hymns so people know it before they have to sing it in the service
- Forums on music
- Quiet before the service

Q4: Hopes and dreams for music at STA?

- Can we incorporate the Spanish Language service music style sometimes in our regular services?
- Heal over Sonya leaving
- Recover love of music and build the music program
- Hymns arranged for children's voices
- Shorten the hymns if they are long
- Special music events outside of the service and during the service like Amal and the night visitors or Joseph and the amazing technicolor dream coat
- Outside music and musicians from the community brought in as part of a music ministry
- Promote and advertise our musical programs

- Messiah sing along (would bring in lots of people potentially)
- Community meals in combination with musical events-i.e. advent wreath making or Wednesday night meals
- Musical choirs supporting other ministries and events: a wedding choir?
- A music intern
- Simpler music that congregation can sing
- Children's anthems in appropriate range for children
- Singing psalms
- Traditional, Anglican fulltime music "minister" and not just a musician
- Someone who can play our organ

Q5: What other questions should we be asking?

- What should the program be? What are the styles of music we want
- Where should we invest our money- which service should have the most invested in it?
- How do we grow each service? What is the purpose of each service –now they seem the same (9:15 and 11:30)

Appendix B

Paper Version of the Parish-Wide Survey

**St. Alban's Parish
Music Program Preference Survey**

The Music Advisory Group has been commissioned to gather the desires and preferences of parishioners concerning the St. Alban's Music Program as a preparatory step in the search for a new Director of Music.

This survey is being administered both in this paper format and as an on-line survey which has been sent to the email addresses contained in the This Week at St. Alban's subscription list.

Please complete this survey and return it to the parish office no later than
Wednesday, November 30, 2016

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the following statements using a numeric scale from 1 to 5 for which 1 = Fully Disagree, 2 = Mostly Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Mostly Agree and 5 = Fully Agree.

1	Professional quality music is an important part of worship at St. Alban's.	
2	A strong music program is important, but there are more important things to spend our money on than a professional choir.	
3	The choir is often the first impression visitors have of St. Alban's, so it is important that we have a professional choir to represent us.	
4	The music program should serve both as a way for parishioners to engage with worship and for volunteer singers and instrumentalists to engage with the parish.	
5	The primary role of the music program should be to enhance and support the worship service for parishioners.	
6	St. Alban's has a long tradition of high quality, traditional liturgical music, and it is important to maintain and restore that music program.	
7	It is more important for music to be accessible for congregational singing than to showcase the choir.	
8	The primary role of the choir is to lead the music, not perform it.	

9	I feel pressured to sing during services, and I would prefer to listen to the choir without having to sing myself.	
10	While some parishes are moving away from the traditional hymns, it is important that St. Alban's continues to provide a service where those traditions are maintained.	
11	I would rather experience a variety of hymn styles in our service, than experience the same sorts of hymns every week.	
12	We live in a multicultural society, and the music in our services should reflect that.	
13	If we are going to integrate with our Spanish language parishioners, we need to incorporate their music in our services more often.	
14	I would prefer to sing hymns I know, and I do not want new ones introduced into the service.	
15	I would prefer to sing hymns that are more eclectic, instead of always singing the same, traditional hymns.	
16	We should focus our music program on engaging parishioners of all ages, which means expanding the offerings we have for children and teens.	

17 Which worship service do you primarily attend at St. Alban's?

Circle one value below.

8:00 a.m.

9:15 a.m.

11:30 a.m. English

11:30 a.m. Spanish

N/A

18 Are you the parent or grandparent of a child attending St. Alban's?

Circle one value below.

Yes

No

Optionally, you may provide your name and/or a narrative description of your aspirations for the Music Program at St. Alban's.

Name: _____

Aspirations for the Music Program at St. Alban's:

Appendix C

Comments submitted with Parish-wide Survey

Listed in Numeric Order

With the Names of the Respondents Redacted

Comment 1

Dear Rich,

The assumption in the survey questions is that professional singers are required to have high quality, liturgical music. I think that's inaccurate and I'll make three points:

1. There are many churches, including St. Alban's, where professional singers are engaged and yet the quality of the music varies widely. Choirs - even with professional singers - often find it difficult to blend as a group or sing on key. My experience - as both a singer and a congregational "consumer" of choir music in many settings, good quality liturgical music has much more to do with the quality of the choral director.
2. I sang in a non-professional choir for 15 years that still produced excellent, high quality music. The choral director happened to be a strong director, with significant experience in liturgical choral music and who had won awards in Canada for the singing of her choral groups. After moving to a small city where her new husband lived, she worked with what she had and focused on tone, tuning, and blending. I have not seen those elements prioritized in choirs - even with professional singers - if they are not understood and prioritized by the choral director.
3. Especially in an area such as DC, which has a strong number of amateur singers, a good choral director can help a choir make beautiful music. That said, I am not against St. Alban's having professional singers (as I have very close personal ties to a professional singer, I want to make that clear.) But I would encourage the MAG - and eventually a new rector and volunteer leadership - to focus on finding a music director who has great experience in getting a group of singers dedicated to choral excellence (and not solo opportunities) to sing together.

Comment 2

Hi Rich,

"Redacted name" here, hoping I'm getting this in before it's too late. First of all, thanks very much for taking on this task of heading up the music group. I'm sure it hasn't been easy. I do have a few comments to share and hope that you all will take them in the spirit they're offered.

I know surveys are hard to do, but I sort of feel as if this one was skewered so as to get responses you all wanted. Some of the wording of the questions made me feel as if my answering them honestly made me out to be politically incorrect.

I hope some consideration will be given to dumping the plainsong. The choir can't do it well, so why would anyone expect the congregation to be able to do it? Music should be an enhancement not a wince-making experience.

It's certainly fine to have a few new hymns or hymns from other traditions from time to time. I personally like the Hebrew ones and the African-American ones. But we are an Episcopal Church from an Anglican tradition with a very long, very fine tradition of music. There are many people who go to an Episcopal service for the music.

In general (and I speak from experience, coming from a Roman Catholic background), the music in the Roman Church and now in many Spanish language services is not of a character that complements the liturgy. For that reason, I would be opposed to having the music from the Spanish language service introduced, on a regular basis, to the English language services.

Finally, our services are poorly planned and ragged. They need to be better planned across the board, including the music. There is no earthly reason why we need to sing all the verses of a hymn in certain circumstances. For example, why do we have to sing all 8 verses of a processional hymn when the choir is in place, the clergy are where they are supposed to be, and we all stand there singing 3 or 4 more verses. Why do they never get it right as to how many communion hymns are needed. It's now either too many, with the organist insisting on doing all, or it's not enough and everyone winds up winging it. For a very long time, I've felt as if all the people involved in the services go sit in their office all week and sit alone. They then decide what they're going to do on Sunday without any consultation with one another; then they all show up on Sunday and there's this hodge podge of stuff.

Thanks for taking the time to read this. Again, good luck with your task.

Comment 3

I agree with St Augustine-- "S/He who sings prays twice!" Let us sing, let us pray, and let us hire a sufficient number of professional section leaders to allow as many people as possible to sing and pray.

I love the bell choir and the Orff instruments for worship. We have these wonderful resources and I would love to see us able to use them.

Comment 4

Hi Rich

Although I attend two churches, and tend to go back and forth between St. Alban's and St. Luke's, Bethesda, I appreciate some of the new music that St. Luke's has begun using. Also, the Music Director plays an equal # of hymns on the piano as the organ; it depends on the hymn. They also have a regular member who plays the Trumpet, very well! And kids play their violins occasionally during communion.

I saved some of the bulletins so that I can "try" to play them on our piano at home:

The Music Director often chooses hymns and service music from *Wonder, Love and Praise* (WLP) and hymns written by David Haas.

e.g. We are called, by David Haas; Blest are They, by David Haas

Wonder, Love and Praise # 757 - Will you come and follow me

O God beyond all praising - only two verses, and no reference in the bulletin

Christ, Be Our Light, by Bernadette Farrell

I love the traditional hymns for Advent, Christmas, Easter, All Saints, etc, but it is nice to have a new, lively hymn from another source when it suits the liturgical season. The hymns from David Haas are easy to sing, and often have a refrain that repeats, making it easier for children to learn and join in singing.

Comment 5

I am a former professional performer – theater and a financial supporter at present of three choral groups: Cathedral Choral, Men's Camarater and Master Chorale.

I would hope that the music program at St. Alban's will aspire to professionalism. Currently, I find the Music Director on a learning curve. The choir is decimated and it shows, however, the choir is trying. We have a long way to go to achieve a high quality music program. (Which existed at St. Alban's in the past.)

Comment 6

Save Money?

Comment 7

Rich --

I just wanted to comment on two questions that I marked 'neither agree nor disagree' in the on-line survey.

First, on making music accessible, as opposed to showcasing the choir, I would make a distinction between hymns and anthems. Because I believe that the congregation's participation in hymn-singing is important, the hymns need to be accessible. On the other hand, in the case of anthems (in which I'd include any choir-only piece), it would be fine to showcase the choir (though I would hope for selections that expand listeners' musical horizons while supporting worship).

On incorporating Spanish-language parishioners' music in our services more frequently, I'm at sea about the rationale. Because our Spanish-language liturgy follows the BCP (at least in my limited experience), we probably don't need this for purposes of fostering a sense of communal worship, but I'd be positively excited about it if it made our English-language parishioners more open to the prospect of bilingual worship. Also, if we introduce more multicultural music, I'd put Spanish-language music at the head off the queue.

Finally, thanks for asking, and for listening.

Comment 8

Hello Rich,

The Survey Monkey questions did not capture the concern of parishioners who were drawn to St. Alban's because it was the center for choral excellence in Washington D.C. Any church can provide sopranos who hurt one's ears, or sing to Spanish tunes with questionable theological messages.

Thank you,

Comment 9

The survey was frustrating because so many questions depended on qualitative conditions. Of course I would not mind some new thing but which?how? In what context? Would I be drawn to a multi-culti st. Alban's? No, I go, in part, because it reflects my history, culture, musical tradition and tastes. Sorry. Do I think a paid choir is appropriate? No, but some paid professional leaders may be. Do I think we can afford or should try to replicate the days of Norman Scribener? probably not and certainly NOT at the cost of excluding capable, yea talented, amateur singers from the congregation as Sonya did!! Do I want musical excellence and inspiration? yes! Is this impossible without full professionals? no. Any really good music director should be able to do both!!

Comment 10

Hello Rich!

Thanks so much for sending out the survey. I wanted to add:

1. Please include a "comments" section so parishioners may offer feedback anonymously.
2. As for me, I want you to know that I have experienced much joy being back in choir in these past months. I think our interium music director is very talented, and really appreciate that he is able to take a volunteer choir, add some leads, and make such fine music. I think we in choir have tried to sing for our community and to glorify God, so that even on days when we don't sing perfectly, I think the result is a beautiful offering. I would like to see St. Alban's stay with a mosly volunteer choir, yet strive for musical excellence, which is what I believe we have been doing.

Comment 11

Dear Music Advisory Group:

Thanks for the survey. I felt there was a need to explain a bit more my perspective on the questions. I think the balance between familiarity and new, diverse music is a tough one, and I am not sure I captured it well in filling it out. My own feeling is that the services should be about 80% familiar and 20% new, or even 90% familiar and 10% new. It is very important, I think, to have our traditional hymns as they really join us together. I don't mind at all having the same, beautiful things to sing. However, we should also allow to growth and inclusion of different cultures and traditions, musical and otherwise. But it needs to be gently balanced.

In terms of the professional choir issue, right now I am singing in the 9:15 Canterbury Choir, and as an alto, am critically dependent on the fabulous professional singer who joins us. We really, really need her (Jordan) and the bass singer (Robert), and they are really lovely additions with just the right attitude. But I do wonder whether we

need to pay professional singers for the 1130 service—is it so well attended that it makes sense? I never go, so am not the right person to answer that. But again, I think balancing our desire to worship with music with making sure we feel good about the sounds we are producing is key. In the past, it may have been that the performance aspect took over—now I do feel the choir and the wonderful Justin Boyer as our director, are focused more on making a joyful noise than on being professional. I would like to keep that spirit going!

Please feel free to reach out to me if I can explain any of this further.

Many thanks

Comment 12

Rich: This was not an easy survey—perhaps I found it hard to fit my comments into the answer format. I suppose I wanted to make a comment. Here it is:

Jason, our current leader, is FABULOUS. What I like about the rehearsals is that we review our parts and cadences until we in the choir are satisfied as is Jason.

Can you get him to stay?

Comment 13

I assume professional choir in questions 2 and 3 means paid to the writer of this survey. Professional can also mean skilled in this case. I don't sing very well personally, so I prefer following a professional quality singer, paid or not. Music (including song) is a powerful way to worship. Professionals at the organ, piano, or the choir help all of us, including the musically impaired, worship.

Comment 14

This is a ridiculous and biased survey. It is absolutely not professional and is designed to give the answers that a small, practically illiterate group of people want. We had a stellar, wonderful and exceptional music program under Sonya and Norman. What has been done to it is beyond tragic – it is ruined. We can only try to rebuild it.

Comment 15

2 – If we do not need to pay for a choir then why should we? Are there enough qualified singers to compose a volunteer choir? If so, then we would not need to hire singers.

3 – Yes, the choir is an important part of a “first impression”. Again, if enough great singers volunteer to compose the choir, we would not need to hire singers.

12 – As the Episcopal Church – the Anglican Church in America – I believe our music should reflect its great music traditions rather than something else. When people come to our church, I think they expect to hear music that reflects our Anglican/Episcopal traditions, and not anything else. Music is one of the elements of worship where we can and should uphold the great traditions of our faith. Singing it and teaching it should be our priorities. That does not mean that we should not hear occasional spirituals or hymns from another tradition, recognized as such, which helps our own education and tolerance; but let us do the best job possible to showcase our wonderful traditions and be the place where others know they can come to hear them! We have been there, and I hope we will be there again.

First Comment 16

I did not know how to address many questions, mostly relating to the type of hymns. What is "traditional?" If it is the sing-song variety, NO. If it has been within St. A's tradition...including many with complex dynamics, e.g., 1500, 1600'a, and later, then YES. So the question has assumptions not identified.

Further, I do not want to hear a concert...as we have had with the interim director, but I want a base of fine quality and a good range of choral music. Nothing tiddly.

Which service will get the better singers (Pros)? Let the kids sing more for the family service, but with a good foundation underneath, especially for choir-only stuff.

Right off the top of my head (had missed the survey....), I can't be more precise about which hymns I prefer but "quality" and good musicianship should be basic.

Second Comment 16

I think I wrote too superficially before, concerned about the deadline. In further reflection I add the comments below. They relate to my preferences, particularly for the Rite I service. Nonetheless I do think that having choirs involving children, and enthusiastic (decent-singing) parishioners is very, very important

Definition of "traditional" - someone said that meant composer was "dead." Besides the greats (e.g., Bach) I do like many, e.g., Wayne Dirksen and Raef Vaughan Williams.

I love the one we have by John Ireland; No.458 is among my very favorites (certain associations). I am, however, open to contemporary music. I think the modern pieces, more difficult musically, should be handled by the choir with professional members. They need to be done well.. A cappella certainly must be done very well.

-- -- Though I don't like sappy pieces, I do like some truly traditional (e.g. "Abide with Me"...more reflective type but also some rousers, e.g., No. 599).

-- -- I also like music in the minor key, especially when it shifts to major at the end. An example of one I don't like, not "interesting" to my ear, is "In Christ there is no East or West..." (Don't know why but I never liked it, even as a child....)

I do like the more complex rhythms, e.g., Elizabethan. I guess I am a bit eclectic. My ear has been trained in the Anglican music tradition. On the other hand, I do like some hymns from "Southern Harmony" as well as many spirituals.

Though musically done well, there has been a "concert" type of effect which has put me off, namely the very small group, the paid quintet (sextet?) alone. The early pieces per the interim director just did not seem to be integrated into the service, rather a display.

-- -- Further, having a very small group, without augmented by (decent) St. A singers, precludes doing some larger, richer pieces by great composers,

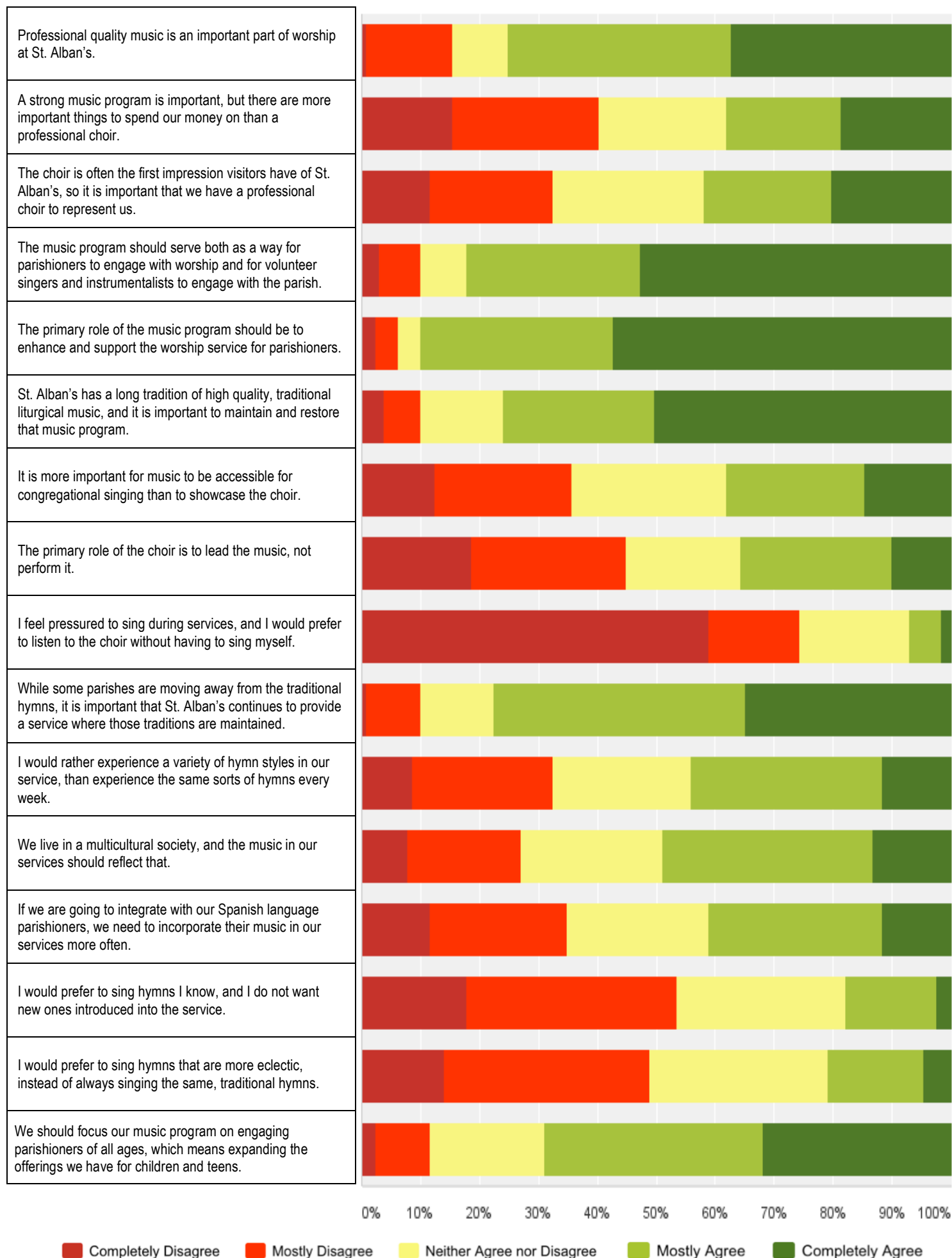
I guess I just liked Sonya's "repertoire," especially as she paid careful attention to text in relation to the service. The key overall for me is that music needs to be sung/played well.

PS The loss of good/professional St.A singers is sad.

Appendix D

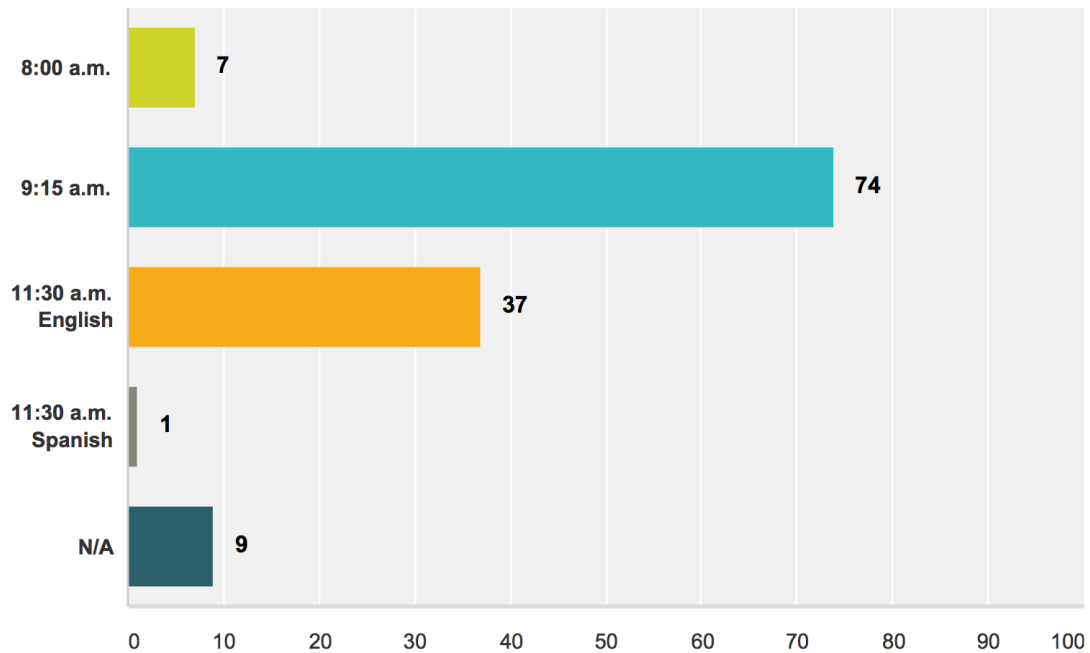
Detailed Survey Results
begin on the next page.

St. Alban's Music Survey: Data Visualizations



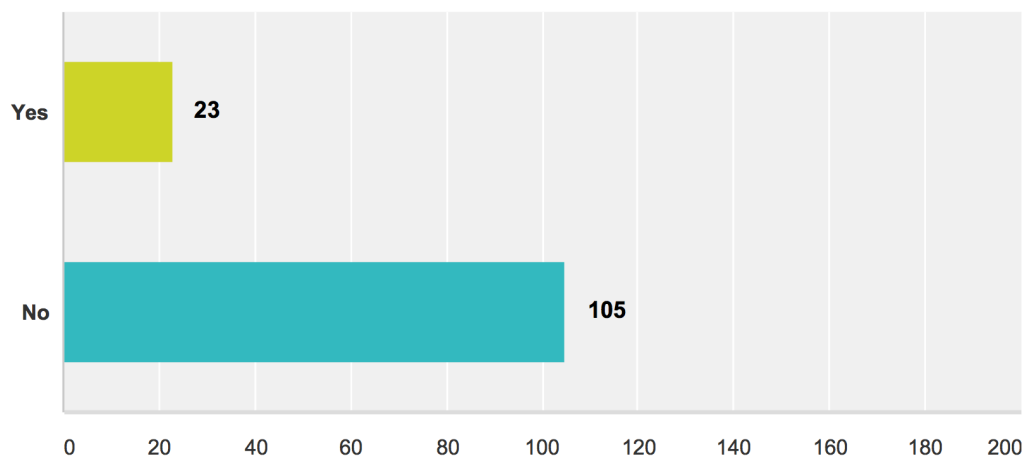
Q2 Which worship service do you primarily attend at St. Alban's?

Answered: 128 Skipped: 1



Q3 Are you the parent or grandparent of a child attending St. Alban's?

Answered: 128 Skipped: 1



Music Program Preference Survey

	Completely Disagree (1)	Mostly Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Mostly Agree (4)	Completely Agree (5)	Total
Professional quality music is an important part of worship at St. Alban's.	0.78% 1	14.73% 19	9.30% 12	37.98% 49	37.21% 48	129
A strong music program is important, but there are more important things to spend our money on than a professional choir.	15.50% 20	24.81% 32	21.71% 28	19.38% 25	18.60% 24	129
The choir is often the first impression visitors have of St. Alban's, so it is important that we have a professional choir to represent us.	11.63% 15	20.93% 27	25.58% 33	21.71% 28	20.16% 26	129
The music program should serve both as a way for parishioners to engage with worship and for volunteer singers and instrumentalists to engage with the parish.	3.10% 4	6.98% 9	7.75% 10	29.46% 38	52.71% 68	129
The primary role of the music program should be to enhance and support the worship service for parishioners.	2.33% 3	3.88% 5	3.88% 5	32.56% 42	57.36% 74	129
St. Alban's has a long tradition of high quality, traditional liturgical music, and it is important to maintain and restore that music program.	3.88% 5	6.20% 8	13.95% 18	25.58% 33	50.39% 65	129
It is more important for music to be accessible for congregational singing than to showcase the choir.	12.40% 16	23.26% 30	26.36% 34	23.26% 30	14.73% 19	129
The primary role of the choir is to lead the music, not perform it.	18.60% 24	26.36% 34	19.38% 25	25.58% 33	10.08% 13	129
I feel pressured to sing during services, and I would prefer to listen to the choir without having to sing myself.	58.91% 76	15.50% 20	18.60% 24	5.43% 7	1.55% 2	129
While some parishes are moving away from the traditional hymns, it is important that St. Alban's continues to provide a service where those traditions are maintained.	0.78% 1	9.30% 12	12.40% 16	42.64% 55	34.88% 45	129
I would rather experience a variety of hymn styles in our service, than experience the same sorts of hymns every week.	8.53% 11	24.03% 31	23.26% 30	32.56% 42	11.63% 15	129
We live in a multicultural society, and the music in our services should reflect that.	7.75% 10	19.38% 25	24.03% 31	35.66% 46	13.18% 17	129
If we are going to integrate with our Spanish language parishioners, we need to incorporate their music in our services more often.	11.63% 15	23.26% 30	24.03% 31	29.46% 38	11.63% 15	129
I would prefer to sing hymns I know, and I do not want new ones introduced into the service.	17.83% 23	35.66% 46	28.68% 37	15.50% 20	2.33% 3	129
I would prefer to sing hymns that are more eclectic, instead of always singing the same, traditional hymns.	13.95% 18	34.88% 45	30.23% 39	16.28% 21	4.65% 6	129
We should focus our music program on engaging parishioners of all ages, which means expanding the offerings we have for children and teens.	2.33% 3	9.30% 12	19.38% 25	37.21% 48	31.78% 41	129

Basic Statistics					
	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
Professional quality music is an important part of worship at St. Alban's.	1.00	5.00	4.00	3.96	1.06
A strong music program is important, but there are more important things to spend our money on than a professional choir.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.01	1.34
The choir is often the first impression visitors have of St. Alban's, so it is important that we have a professional choir to represent us.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.18	1.29
The music program should serve both as a way for parishioners to engage with worship and for volunteer singers and instrumentalists to engage with the parish.	1.00	5.00	5.00	4.22	1.06

Music Program Preference Survey

The primary role of the music program should be to enhance and support the worship service for parishioners.	1.00	5.00	5.00	4.39	0.91
St. Alban's has a long tradition of high quality, traditional liturgical music, and it is important to maintain and restore that music program.	1.00	5.00	5.00	4.12	1.11
It is more important for music to be accessible for congregational singing than to showcase the choir.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.05	1.24
The primary role of the choir is to lead the music, not perform it.	1.00	5.00	3.00	2.82	1.28
I feel pressured to sing during services, and I would prefer to listen to the choir without having to sing myself.	1.00	5.00	1.00	1.75	1.03
While some parishes are moving away from the traditional hymns, it is important that St. Alban's continues to provide a service where those traditions are maintained.	1.00	5.00	4.00	4.02	0.96
I would rather experience a variety of hymn styles in our service, than experience the same sorts of hymns every week.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.15	1.16
We live in a multicultural society, and the music in our services should reflect that.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.27	1.15
If we are going to integrate with our Spanish language parishioners, we need to incorporate their music in our services more often.	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.06	1.21
I would prefer to sing hymns I know, and I do not want new ones introduced into the service.	1.00	5.00	2.00	2.49	1.03
I would prefer to sing hymns that are more eclectic, instead of always singing the same, traditional hymns.	1.00	5.00	3.00	2.63	1.06
We should focus our music program on engaging parishioners of all ages, which means expanding the offerings we have for children and teens.	1.00	5.00	4.00	3.87	1.04