



Celebration  
The MPC  
Way

Marge Nicholson

## Celebration

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Intro: As noted in our Mission Study of 2006, Celebration is “the one time when we all gather to connect with one another, nurture our friendships, begin to create new relationships, and participate together in a time of celebration, reflection and fellowship.” Celebration is the weekly, central element in our web of connection to one another.

According to the congregational survey last fall, “Celebration is considered by MPCers “what we do best.”

### The Givens:

Throughout our current Mission Study process, we have heard the congregation validate findings about Celebration from the 2006 Mission Study.

- Celebration is “festive drama - our joyous response to Christ’s presence and life’s gifts.” That language is still printed in our bulletin. That theme continues to underlie how and why we worship.
- We appreciate strong, inspiring preaching.
- In Celebration, we want the whole person – heart, soul, and mind – engaged in the experience of the radical hospitality of God.
- Each Sunday provides “surprise elements;” Celebration is not boring or routinized.
- The congregation is highly participatory; is up for and responsive to whatever is happening.
- Current Survey
  - Our current survey results confirm strong satisfaction with the worship experience – the language used, the sermons, the music, the flow of the service. Over half of us attend Celebration two or three times a month; a quarter of us attend every Sunday.
  - 88% of us who took the survey said we were either very satisfied or generally satisfied with Celebration providing a meaningful experience of God and the Christian tradition.
  - What attracted people to MPC – and keeps us here? Key elements are the pastor, Celebration, filling a spiritual need, and the music program.

Here are some things we have heard and about which we are thinking:

- For a long time we have called ourselves “Traditionally untraditional.” Are we? In our “MPC contrariness” we delight in that expression. Yet some of us think we are getting to be “just like every other church,” with the implication that we may have lost that which used to make us special. Others of us would agree with the person who said at a World Café gathering, “It is safe now to be a Christian in this church. The words “faith community” are increasingly being used to

describe us. For a long time MPC has treasured its ability to “do church” differently. What does all this mean for us and how we celebrate in 2012 – and in the years to come?

- Many are hungry for and appreciative of the increased contemplative and meditative time in our Sunday Celebrations. Our spiritual activists started monthly Taize services.
- Frequently in Celebration, we pray Prayers of the People. Response is mixed. We value the community connection that comes from these Prayers. Knowing one another on a deeper level and what is on our hearts. Rejoicing with and comforting each other. Yet some people think prayer is “magical thinking” and are uncomfortable.
- We have a long and eclectic tradition of exemplary music-making, honoring all kinds of music: sacred, classical, folk, jazz, gospel, popular, and World music. In fact, 98.6% are very satisfied or satisfied with the choir, anthems, and instrumentals during Sunday Celebration. To encourage inter-generational singing, we now have a Family Choir for anyone who wants to show up and practice at 9:15 on designated Sunday mornings. Kim and Marcia work with our children who gift us with music several times a year. Yes, we have great satisfaction with our music program. Yet some would have us throw out the hymnal – and do away with the organ. Hm.....that’s something to think about.
- 13% of us would like Celebration at a time other than Sunday morning. Sunday morning is prime time for many, especially families. If the number of people wanting Celebration at another time were to increase, how do we accommodate this need? Change our one service to another time? Have two services? What would a change mean for a shared weekly central point of connection with one another?

And then there is the subject of how MPCers see Religion and Spirituality. David Siegenthaler will address that topic.