

Knox Presbyterian Church Congregation Survey

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Introduction

An email survey was sent to Knox members in order to obtain perceptions of the content and format of online worship and to assess comfort level and conditions necessary for returning to in-person worship. There were 247 completed surveys. The response rate was 50%.

Methods

The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey. Quantitative results were exported directly using analytic functions in Survey Monkey. Some respondents did not answer every question. The number of respondents for each question is noted with an "N."

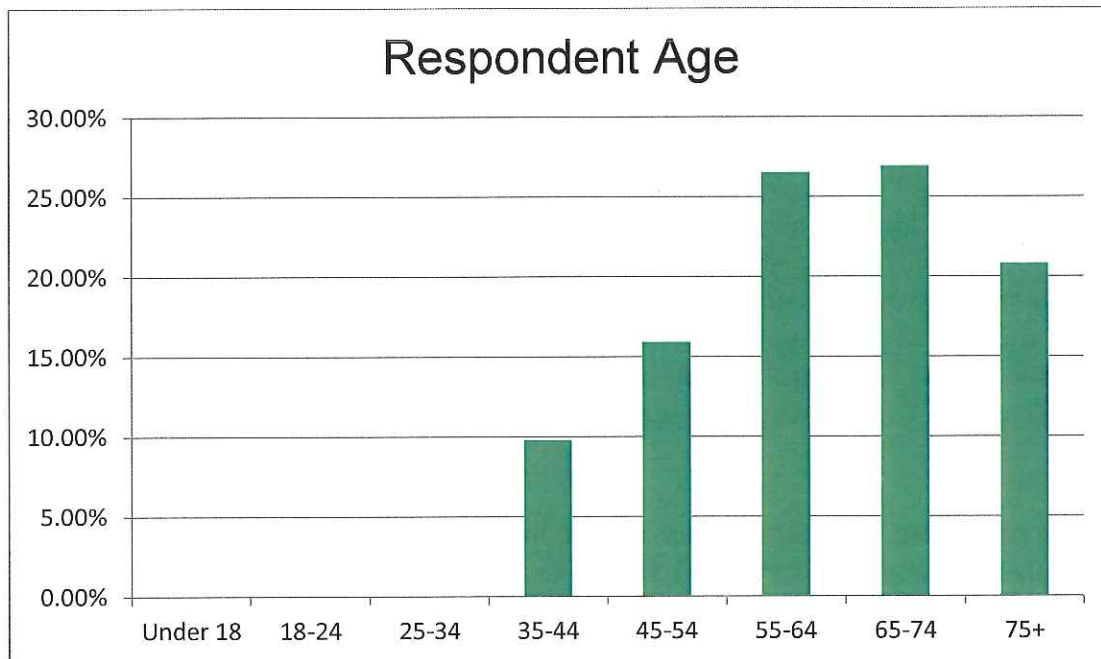
There were 11 questions with open text responses. These text responses were analyzed and themes were identified for each set of text responses for all 11 questions. Post-coded categories were developed based on the themes that emerged. Individual responses were placed under these categories for analytic purposes. Key trends, themes and ideas will be presented below for each open text "other" response.

Survey Results

The majority of survey respondents were older adults (Q4). Forty eight percent of survey respondents were over 65 years old and 21% were over 75 years old. The survey was not completed by anyone under 35 years old.

Q4. Respondent Age (N= 245)

Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	0.00%	0
25-34	0.00%	0
35-44	9.80%	24
45-54	15.92%	39
55-64	26.53%	65
65-74	26.94%	66
75+	20.82%	51

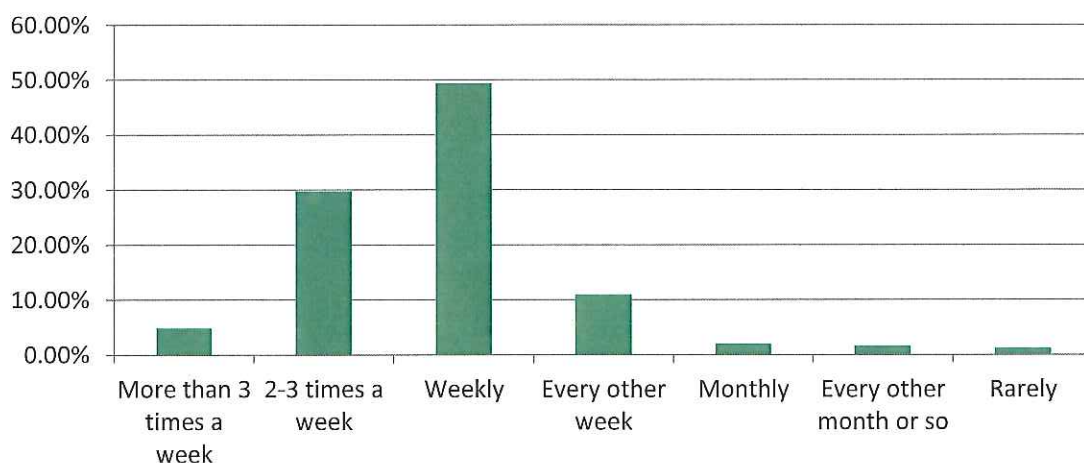


Respondents indicated that they attended Knox services regularly (prior to COVID-19) with approximately half indicating weekly attendance and one third attending 2-3 times per week (Q5).

Q5. Frequency of Attendance Prior to Online Worship (N= 245)

More than 3 times a week	4.90%	12
2-3 times a week	29.80%	73
Weekly	49.39%	121
Every other week	11.02%	27
Monthly	2.04%	5
Every other month or so	1.63%	4
Rarely	1.22%	3

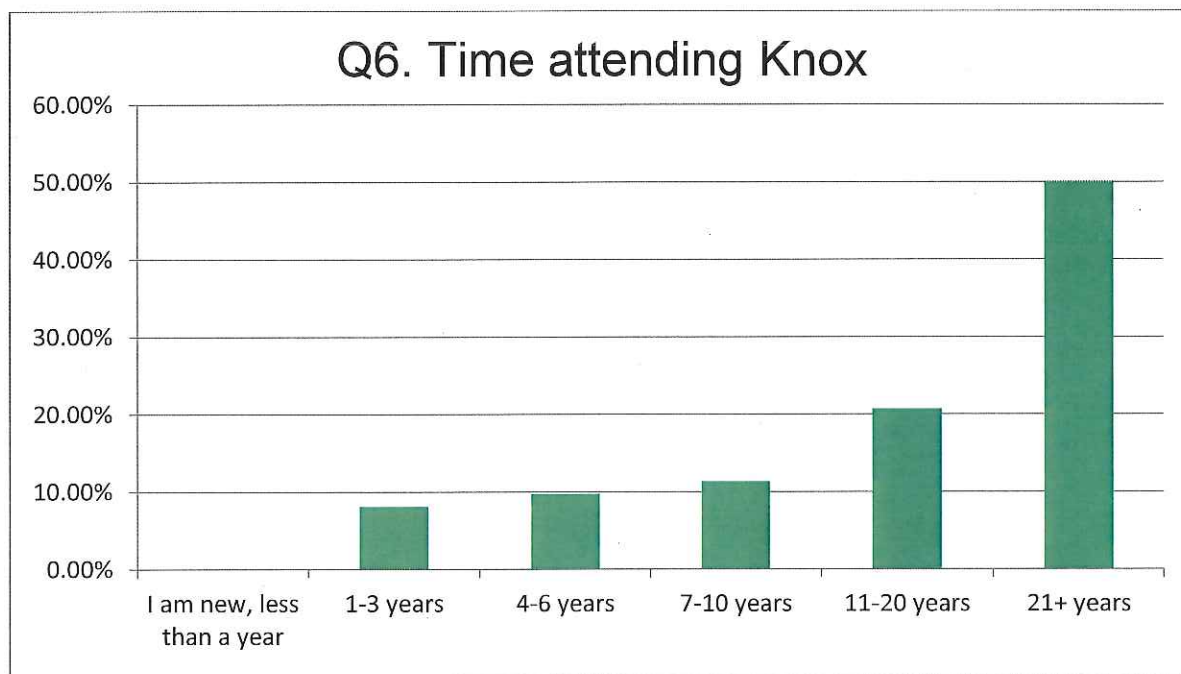
How often did you attend Knox for worship and/or events prior to our transition to e-ministry in March of 2020?



Half of the survey respondents have been attending Knox for over 21 years. Over 20% have been attending for 11-20 years.

Q6. How Long Have You Been Attending Knox

I am new, less than a year	0.00%	0
1-3 years	8.13%	20
4-6 years	9.76%	24
7-10 years	11.38%	28
11-20 years	20.73%	51
21+ years	50.00%	123



Almost all respondents (94%) report missing worshipping together in the sanctuary (Q7). Approximately half report missing fellowship, social activities, events and singing together. Approximately one third of respondents miss praying together, adult bible study/education and taking part in mission trips.

Several other things were noted by respondents when considering what they missed about worshipping together. A large number of respondents noted that **music** was very important to them. Several indicated missing the hand bell choir and singing in the choir. Others noted that they missed the praise team and the praise band (10:30 service). Some made suggestions that utilizing previous live music clips in the on-line services would help “give the feeling of being together in the sanctuary.”

Numerous respondents indicated that aspects of the **church service** itself were missed. They noted that there is nothing that compares to in-person **sermons** and partaking of **communion** together in the sanctuary.

Socialization was identified as something that many are missing. Respondents noted that the coffee hour fostered connection with their “church family” and online worship can feel isolating.

Others provided additional detail on the specific **educational, social and service events** that they miss most. They identified in-person bible study, Wednesday Nights and Sunday School as the main education events that are missed. Go and Serve and Sisseton were noted as mission opportunities that were missed.

Q7. What I miss about church is... (N=247)

Worshipping together in the Sanctuary	93.93%	232
In person Bible studies & Adult Education events	40.08%	99
Attending events at Knox	52.63%	130

Praying with other people	34.01%	84
Taking part in mission projects	27.53%	68
Fellowship & social activities	59.51%	147
Singing together	48.58%	120
Other (please specify)	15.79%	39

Q8. During our time apart, I have been... (N=246)

Watching Knox Sunday morning worship online	87.55%	211
Attending Knox Saturday Vespers	13.28%	32
Participating in a Knox Bible study	36.10%	87
Connecting with my fellowship group	24.90%	60
Watching other church services online	28.63%	69
Attending other church services in person	4.15%	10
Other (please specify)	16.60%	40

The majority of respondents indicate that they have been watching Knox Sunday morning worship online (88%). Just over one third of respondents participate in online bible study and one quarter connect with their fellowship group. Just under one third of respondents report watching other church services online.

Forty respondents indicated doing “other” things during our time apart. Many report engaging in personal **prayer** as well as accessing on-line **daily devotionals**. Other **online/zoom meetings** noted by respondents included Presbytery, Session and Council Meetings. Other respondents noted that they have **socialized distantly** by engaging in small gatherings with friends and family.

Q9. Which of the following has helped you feel connected to your church family? (N=241)

Small group Bible studies	36.10%	87
Pat's midweek meditations	56.02%	135
Livestream Sunday morning worship service	79.25%	191
Saturday evening Vespers service at Knox	12.03%	29
Contact with church staff	33.61%	81
Phone calls from church members	19.50%	47
Emails from church members	21.99%	53
A card from our card ministry team	12.86%	31
A postcard or letter from the church	16.60%	40
Deacons outreach by calls and cards	21.16%	51
Pat's Friday Village Smith	56.43%	136
Email blasts	40.66%	98

Facebook posts	22.82%	55
Instagram posts	4.15%	10
Website updates	13.28%	32
Sunday announcements and slides	25.31%	61
Other (please specify)	11.20%	27

Seventy nine percent of respondents reported that the livestream Sunday morning worship helps them feel connected to their church family. Over half of respondents indicated that Pat's Midweek Meditation and Friday Village Smith help them feel connected. Email blasts and small group bible studies fostered connections for over one third of respondents. Twenty seven respondents indicated that 'other' things helped them feel connected to their church family. Several reported that preparing meals for Hesus House helps them feel connected, others noted that Erin's Children's Ministry has been a blessing. Others noted that Zoom meetings (bible studies, WOW etc.) have been very helpful in keeping them connected to their church family.

Q10. What have you enjoyed most about online worship? (N= 190)

Overall, respondents noted that in-person worship cannot be replicated, but the majority of respondents indicated that they "still feel connected, even if virtual." Numerous respondents indicated that the **flexibility** afforded by an online service is greatly appreciated. The sermon can be watched any time from any location. Several respondents indicated that **families reading scripture** was something that they enjoyed about online worship. Others noted that the **sermons** were helpful – and specifically the fact that sermons focus on the challenging times that we are currently facing. Respondents note that they are "powerful" and "applicable to our life during COVID-19." Others noted that Pastor Cindy's **prayers** are helpful and encouraging. **Music** was also noted as something that respondents enjoyed about online worship. "Tim's organ playing" and Curt and Jan singing were mentioned several times as providing helpful connections to the church and pre-COVID life.

Q11. What would you like to see in online worship that you have not already seen yet? (N= 102)

Many respondents noted that they feel that the current online service is "great," "wonderful" and "as good as it can get." Several did suggest making some changes to the style and format of the **music** in the online services. Suggestions were made for more contemporary and "upbeat" music, more "praise team style" music and additional special music (e.g. solos). Others noted that in the absence of live music, it would be nice for online services to include pre-recorded choir, praise team, children's choir and special music performances.

Suggestions to change the **content of the service** were made by several respondents. Suggestions included more variety in the service and a less "formulaic" pre-recorded segments. Several requested "virtual communion." Others noted more engaging additions to the service for children (in addition to Erin's message). Also of note was the desire to hear regular updates from councils, session and on the progress of the church's mission work.

Online worship would be more meaningful to some respondents if **prayer requests** were more specific. Several respondents noted that putting prayers up on the screen and specifically mentioning names (as we have done in bulletins and in-person services) would promote connection and help target efforts for prayer.

Q12. If you aren't connecting with our online content, why not?

Wasn't aware of any	0.00%	0
Difficult to access	1.77%	2
Don't know how to access	0.00%	0
No time	4.42%	5
No interest	14.16%	16
No computer	0.00%	0
I am connecting online	66.37%	75
Other (please specify)	13.27%	15

Two thirds of respondents indicated that they are connected with online content. Very few survey respondents were not utilizing online content. Of the few respondents that report not connecting to online content, 14% had no interest, 4% had not time and 2% found it difficult to access. Fifteen respondents noted "other" reasons for not connecting with online content. The primary reason these 15 respondents did not connect with church online was due to "screen time fatigue." They noted that they were "overly connected online with work, family and friends" and some were actively seeking less screen time in their non-working/non-school time.

Q13. How comfortable are you with attending in-person worship? (N=246)

Eager, I am ready now	15.85%	39
Comfortable	20.73%	51
Somewhat cautious	34.96%	86
Very uncomfortable	9.76%	24
I do not plan on attending	4.07%	10
Other (please specify)	14.63%	36

Thirty five percent of respondents are somewhat cautious about attending in-person worship. Twenty percent feel comfortable and 14% feel very uncomfortable or don't plan to attend. Approximately 37% percent of respondents are comfortable or eager to begin in person worship. Thirty six respondents provided "other" explanations for their comfort level with attending in-person worship. The majority of these "other" comments were related to **discomfort** with in-person worship until an effective vaccine is widely available. Others noted that they are either taking care of elderly parents and/or immune compromised family members or they have **health issues**, themselves. They stressed the need for a

vaccine as well as **low community-wide infection rates** before considering returning to in-person worship.



Q14. Comments about precautions that would be taken for in-person worship? (N=34)

Of those who responded to this question, the overwhelming majority felt that the **precautions seemed "excellent," "thoughtful," "well planned" and "carefully thought out."** Some noted that they understood the absence of coffee hour, but that they would miss it. Comments were made about the **"logistics" of the service** including how people were seated (suggesting extra rows between people and careful ushering of people in and out to prevent 'bottlenecking' at the doors.) Others stressed that serious thought and planning should be given to how **"non-compliant" people** will be handled (e.g. those refusing to wear masks or taking masks off during the service).

Q15. What would you like to see happen before you are comfortable attending in-person worship? (N=241)

Local theaters and clubs are open	6.22%	15
Local restaurants indoor seating areas are open again without restrictions	10.37%	25
Schools are open for in person attendance	25.31%	61
The number of COVID cases near me is very few	41.08%	99
Most social distancing recommendations have been lifted	16.60%	40
An effective vaccine is available	42.32%	102
None of the above	4.98%	12

Not sure	9.54%	23
I am already comfortable	28.63%	69
Other (please specify)	9.54%	23

Over 40% of respondents indicated that they would not feel comfortable with in-person worship until an effective vaccine was available and there were very few COVID-19 cases in the area. One quarter indicated that they wouldn't feel comfortable until local schools were open. Approximately one third of respondents indicate that they are already comfortable with attending in-person worship. Twenty three respondents provided "other" responses related to their comfort level in attending in-person worship. Those responses closely mirrored the close ended responses. They echoed the need for a **widely available vaccine and low community virus rates** in order to feel comfortable attending in-person worship. Others stated that with **appropriate precautions** (masks, distancing) they felt that it was safe and they would feel comfortable attending. Several noted that there was still so much "unknown" and with that **"uncertainty"** they felt uncomfortable attending in-person services any time soon.

Q16. Do you have children that live with you that typically attend church? (N=247)

Yes	23.89%	59
No	76.11%	188

Over three quarters of respondents do not have children that live with them that typically attend church.

Q17. For those with children (YES to question above), what would make you comfortable to send them to Sunday School in the future? (N=56)

Of the 59 respondents that do have children who attend church with them, 56 provided information about what would make them feel comfortable to send their children to Sunday School. The overwhelming majority of these comments focused on the need for **adherence to COVID-19 guidelines**; specifically social distancing, small groups, masks and frequent sanitizer/handwashing. One respondent noted "it should look the same as things are in school for those that are attending school in person." Others commented that "kids are inherently bad social distancers" and that they did not feel comfortable sending their children to Sunday School any time soon.

Q18. What are your biggest concerns during this season and how can we pray for you? (N=159)

The majority of respondents indicated that they would like prayers for **peace, healing** in our world, and **end to violence** and **health**. Many noted concerns related to **mental health** including feelings of depression, anxiety and isolation. Prayers and concerns for **special groups/populations** included school aged children, college children, elderly, immune compromised, essential workers and working parents balancing the challenges of work and e-learning. Other concerns were raised regarding the **church**

family. Prayer requests included “staying strong,” feeling “together” and not losing members that have “disconnected and feel out of touch.” Concerns were raised about disengagement and the need to keep supporting the mission of our church. Others were concerned about the **economic impact** of the pandemic; specifically job loss, financial issues and for small businesses. Several prayer requests were noted for the leadership of our nation.

Key Findings and “Take-Away” Points

- The survey response rate was 50%. While this isn’t a very low response rate, it’s important not to generalize survey findings to the entire congregation. Half of the congregation did not respond and their feelings, beliefs and thoughts may not mirror the thoughts of those who chose to respond.
- Survey respondents were largely older – over the age of 65. There were no respondents under age 35.
- Respondents were long standing members of Knox with half reporting at least weekly attendance and over 21 years with Knox.
- The majority of survey respondents indicate that they have been watching Knox Sunday morning worship online (88%) and that the livestream Sunday morning worship helps them feel connected to their church family.
- Respondents report that the parts they enjoy most about online worship is the flexibility when they can view it, the music, prayer and seeing familiar faces.
- Purposed changes to the on-line service included more contemporary music, more pre-recorded past musical performances, less formulaic “clips” and segments and more updates on church committees and councils.
- Thirty five percent of respondents are somewhat cautious about attending in-person worship. Twenty percent feel comfortable and 14% feel very uncomfortable or don’t plan to attend. Approximately 37% percent of respondents are comfortable or eager to begin in person worship.
- Over 40% of respondents indicated that they would not feel comfortable with in-person worship until an effective vaccine was available and there were very few COVID-19 cases in the area.
- Approximately one third of respondents indicate that they are already comfortable with attending in-person worship.
- Over three quarters of respondents do not have children that live with them that typically attend church. For those that do have children living with them, their comments focused on the need for **adherence to COVID-19 guidelines**; specifically social distancing, small groups, masks and frequent sanitizer/handwashing.
- The majority of respondents indicated that they would like prayers for **peace, healing** in our world, and **end to violence** and **health**. They also noted concerns for **mental health** including isolation, depression, anxiety as well as for the **financial and economic impact** of the pandemic on families and small businesses.

Recommendations

- Continue to offer on-line worship services. Consider music and service format changes noted by survey respondents
- Offer in-person services strictly following CDC guidelines
- Consider 'live streaming' the in-person services for those watching online (simultaneously)
- Consider small group in-person bible studies, educational groups, Sunday school and other church committee meetings. Those who are willing to attend must comply with CDC guidelines. Keep Zoom open during those meetings so that remote participants can engage 'real-time' with those in the room.
- Ensure that there is a plan for those who are not compliant with the expectations of in-person gatherings

