

Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton Українська Католицька Едмонтонська Єпархія

Survey Results – St. Sophia Parish

The following is a summary of the results of the survey sent on March 10th, 2008 to the registered parishioners of St. Sophia Parish, Sherwood Park, Alberta.

Of the one-hundred (100) surveys sent out thirty-five (35) were returned to the Chancery Office as of April 15, 2008.

The survey comprised three questions:

1) How can we, as a Church, make the rich faith of our ancestors come alive in our neighbourhood?

Of the thirty-five (35) surveys returned some responded with several suggestions for this question while others chose not to answer at all.

- (11) We need a dedicated building where parish programming can occur unhindered. Build it and they will come.
- (8) Be friendly. Need for Christian charity to be the center of the parish.
- (8) Be open to newcomers by offering explanations about our traditions
- (8) Be visible in the Catholic school system
- (8) Continue to hold events like Malanka and Perohy Suppers to attract interest from the community
- (8) Develop a comprehensive outreach program to the community
- (5) Be visible to the greater community. E.g. events in malls/fairs featuring cultural displays/demonstrations
- (5) Keep our traditions alive. Lead by example.
- (4) Offer faith-based programs for all ages
- (3) Advertise to the surrounding community. We need exposure!

- (1) All parishioners need to be active in the life of the parish
- 3 respondents chose not to answer this question

Most respondents feel that the parish needs to be more visible in the community in one way or another. The best and perhaps most obvious way is to have a dedicated building that can easily be identified as ‘St. Sophia Parish’. It would serve as a center for many of the other suggestions listed above. Parish activity is hindered by the current facility.

Along with being more visible it is perhaps even more important to make St. Sophia Parish a place where all people feel welcome. It is critical for the survival of a parish, any parish, to practice genuine Christian charity with both newcomers and long-term members alike. All worshipers should be greeted with a smile, not just by those assigned as door greeters, but by all parishioners. The best way to attract people is to be friendly and to accept the other for who they are, ‘warts and all’. Parishioners need to be refocused on the common goal of building a parish for Strathcona County. There will always be differences of opinion on how to do this but these can be overcome if Christian charity is at the forefront. “United we stand ... divided we fall.”

2) What role should language and culture play in our mission to spread the Gospel message to the people around us?

Language is used by some to gauge the authenticity of one’s culture. Most respondents linked Ukrainian culture and language together. Others felt that the two could be separated.

- (20) We need to have a fair balance of English and Ukrainian in the Liturgy
- (11) The Liturgy needs to be celebrated in English so that all can understand
- 3 respondents recognized the importance that culture plays but did not directly address the language issue
- 1 respondent chose not to answer this question

Of the three questions asked in this survey number two is the one that solicited very intense and diverse feelings. The balance between language and culture, tradition and innovation is a very passionate subject to many of the respondents. Of the thirty-five (35) surveys returned almost two-thirds of them would like to have the Ukrainian language included in the liturgical life of the parish in one form or another.

Most of the respondents that wanted the use of Ukrainian cited either cultural identity or personal preference as the reason for its inclusion. Several identified the Ukrainian bilingual program in the Sherwood Park School System as a reason for the use of Ukrainian in order to support the families that are enrolled there.

Conversely, the respondents that preferred an English-only Liturgy cited both comprehension and inclusivity as reasons for limiting the use of Ukrainian. Several noted a feeling of being excluded from worship when the Ukrainian language is used on those last Sundays of the month. There is a fear that many newcomers may not feel welcome if they do not understand what is going on.

This issue needs to be handled with great care but at the same time the final choice must be decisive. It is clear that the majority of respondents desire the use of the Ukrainian language but the proportion and manner of its use needs to be carefully considered. It is likely true that most families involved in the school bilingual programs would prefer at least a bilingual format of worship, however, it is also important to note that, as in the city of Edmonton, only a small percentage of families with a Ukrainian ancestry feel that learning the Ukrainian language is important.

Only two of the thirty-five respondents noted that the current format of worship (English with Ukrainian included on the last Sunday of the month) is fair. Most respondents who preferred a bilingual format preferred to have some use of Ukrainian in all services. At the same time, those who preferred an English-only format noted that they do not feel included in the worship on that last Sunday of the month. Even though the priest-part of that Liturgy is being done in English, most of the people's responses are in Ukrainian. This forces the need to either memorize prayers on the part of some parishioners in order to actively participate in the service or the requirement for them to remain silent at that time.

The problem with the current format may not necessarily be the actual use of Ukrainian, but rather the proportion that it is being used in. An equitable balance of English and Ukrainian throughout the entire month may be more palatable to parishioners, new and existing, compared to the 'all-or-nothing' format that is currently used.

3) Real estate can be difficult to come by in the community of Sherwood Park. What are your feelings regarding your current parish home and what options do you foresee in the next year, 5 years, 10 years?

- (22) We need a multi-use facility as soon as possible. Any building that we can call our own will do
- (5) We cannot afford a place of our own right now but should work towards building in the future

- (3) We need to build a facility/church as soon as possible with help from the Eparchy
- (2) Buy Park Place and make it our spiritual home
- (2) Things are ok as they are as but am worried that we are extending our welcome in our current home
- (1) Perhaps we can share a church with another congregation until we can build our own
- (1) Current home is fine but we should combine with St. Nicholas Parish in Edmonton

It is quite obvious from this survey that all respondents are concerned with this issue. Of the thirty-five (35) respondents only three (3) are content with the current situation. The three, however, are worried that the option of staying at Park Place is not in the hands of the parish. Five (5) respondents are concerned with the current financial position of the parish and the feasibility of acquiring a new home.

The remaining twenty-eight (28) respondents feel that something has to be done immediately to address this issue. Although two (2) respondents felt that purchasing the current building was a good idea, most would prefer to look at other options.

Having a dedicated building to call ‘St. Sophia Parish’ is a matter of urgency for most. Buying land and building something new is a possibility but most would prefer to look at an existing building to see what can be done to transform it into a multi-use facility.

There are many recommendations and reflections within the received responses that are not summarized above. It is recommended that all responses be read over by the pastoral team before any course of action is entered into.

Submitted this 25th day of April in the year of our Lord 2008

Rev. Gregory Faryna
 Bishop’s Delegate
 St. Sophia Parish Survey