

**Survey and Study results of The Parish of the Resurrection
(part of a PHd study by The Venerable Geoff Peddle)
(<http://www.anglicanresurrection.com/>)**

The parish of the Resurrection in South River traces its origins back to the early 17th Century when one of the first settlements in Newfoundland was established at “Cuper’s Cove” (later Cupids) in 1613. During the 18th and 19th Centuries several churches were built in the adjacent towns and they later became part of a single parish, although the names of the communities included changed over time. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) provided both clergy and financial assistance throughout this period. By the 1990’s the parish was composed of four communities: Brigus, Cupids, Makinsons and South River with a church in each. In 2003 the parish was reconstituted as a single congregation and was renamed the Parish of the Resurrection. In 2006 the new parish moved into its New “House for the Church,” a key feature of which is the “Emmaus Room”, a coffee room to assist with their “Ministry of Hospitality”. Including the building fund, the parish budget has grown from \$71,000 in the mid 1990’s to about \$143,000 in 2008. The Annual Parish Statistical Report to the Diocese for 2006 provides the following statistics on the parish:

Population of parish: (Not provided, however, the U.S. Congregational Life

Survey profile lists 200 persons. The actual number is probably higher)

Number of Communicants in Easter Octave: 316

Number of regular givers: 281

Average attendance at Sunday services: 116

Baptisms: 8

Weddings: 2

Funerals: 8

The parish employs a fulltime staff of 1 priest with additional volunteers to assist with the running of the church. An examination of artefacts like parish bulletins and the parish website shows an emphasis upon communicating the dates and times of parish events as well as challenging parishioners to participate fully. In terms of worship, the Parish of the Resurrection leans toward more contemporary styles of worship. The Book of Alternative Services is used in the parish, with other worship resources frequently introduced.



The Parish of the Resurrection

The new “House for the Church” is located in a very visible part of the town of South River on the main road and the interior (above) is possibly the most distinctive worship space in the entire diocese. The attached coffee room is open daily and appears to be well utilized by members of the congregation as well as the general public. The changes brought about by the new Rector after he

came in the late 1990's seem to have taken root among the community and although some members of the parish left because of the loss of church buildings and the formation of a single worshipping community, it appears that most have remained with the parish and become part of the new vision. Of the four parishes considered for wider study in this thesis the Parish of the Resurrection has the largest number of new members and younger members, possibly making it more receptive to change and experiment. A prominent feature of the parish is the degree of friendliness and the sense of welcome that one receives when they visit. The modernday Parish of the Resurrection is a "new thing" in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador that the wider church is watching closely.

[provincial population, age, gender, education and income stats are omitted]

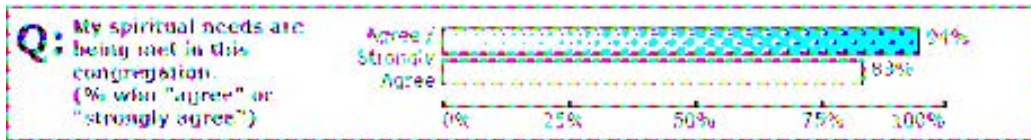
Parish of The Resurrection: U.S. Congregational Life Survey

The U.S. Congregational Life survey was completed by a total of 94 persons in the Parish of The Resurrection in February and March of 2008 (Appendix 13). The survey was distributed among the worshippers in church on a specific Sunday and taken to the homes of some who could not be in church at that time. In the graphs that follow the white areas represent the national averages for other similar Protestant congregations.

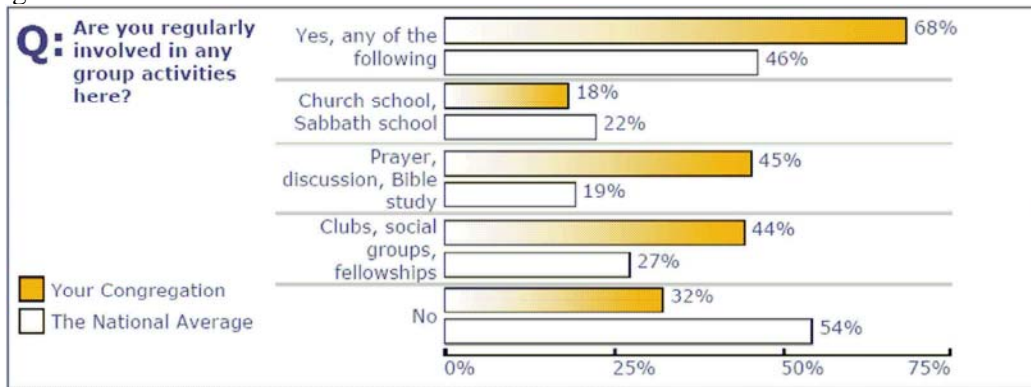
The overall picture that emerges of the Parish of the Resurrection is of a parish that is highly energized in terms of its goals and expectations with members scoring higher than the national average in most areas. They seem eager to try new things and are hopeful about their future.



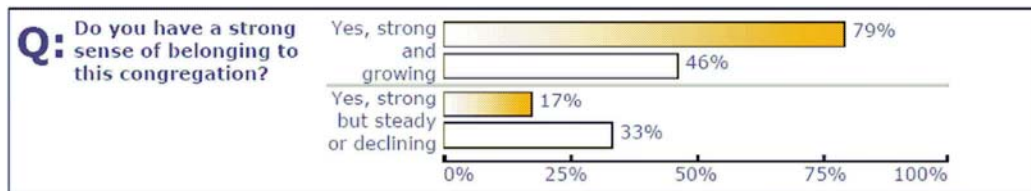
Fortythree percent of the members have belonged for more than ten years and 68% of the respondents were 45 years of age or older, a rate lower than that for either of the other three parishes considered in this study. Ninetyfour percent of the people reported that their spiritual needs were met in the congregation.



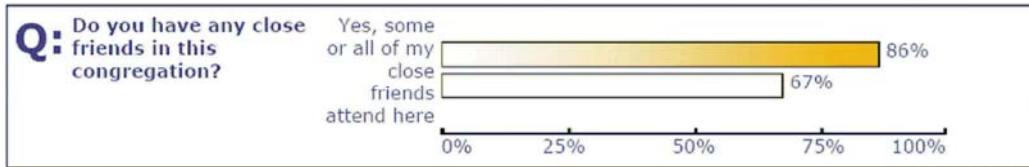
The rate of participation in group activities in the parish is also much higher than the national average.



There is also a strong sense of belonging to the community.



And 86% of members report having close friends in the congregation.



When it comes to “Spiritual Connection” the parish tends to score higher than the national average in contrast to all of the other parishes considered for this study.

	Growing Spiritually Questions: Percentage of Worshipers Who...	Your Congregation	Average for all congregations with less than 100 in worship	Average for Protestant Churches
A	Are growing in their faith through participation in activities of their congregation	66%	47%	45%
B	Spend time at least a few times a week in private devotional activities	66%	74%	74%
C	Feel their spiritual needs are being met in their congregation	94%	82%	84%
D	Report Bible study and prayer groups as one of the three most valued aspects of their congregation	34%	23%	23%
E	Report the prayer ministry of the congregation as one of the three most valued aspects of their congregation	5%	19%	18%
	Overall Growing Spiritually Scores:	53%	49%	49%

Notably, the members of the congregation valued worship experiences such as Holy Communion, music and preaching higher than other activities within the congregation they were engaged in, however, Bible Study groups were also rated highly, in contrast to the other parishes included in the survey.

Q: Which of the following aspects of this congregation do you personally most value? (Mark up to three responses.) Responses for your congregation:

Holy Communion.....	64%	Traditional worship or music.....	11%
Sermons, preaching, or Homilies.....	35%	Wider community care.....	9%
Contemporary worship or music.....	34%	Congregation's school/pre-school.....	7%
Bible study groups.....	34%	Prayer ministry.....	5%
Social activities.....	28%	Openness to diversity.....	5%
Ministry for youth.....	18%	Care for one another.....	4%
Reaching the unchurched.....	17%	Adult education.....	2%

Parish of The Resurrection: Interviews

A decade ago what is now known as the Parish of the Resurrection consisted of a group of four disparate congregations, each struggling to maintain various buildings and contribute centrally to

the maintenance of the Rector and rectory, and each seemingly more concerned with its own survival than with any sense of sharing a common life. This changed nine years ago with the appointment of the present Rector. Driven by a conviction that the Church is about people, not buildings, he began patiently but assiduously to convince the people of the four congregations to see themselves as one unit of the Body of Christ. Before long he had persuaded many parishioners to relax the inherent conservative congregationalism that was a mark of Church life in the area and reorganize the parish's worship and governance. Four vestries became one with membership from each of the congregations; worship in each of the four church buildings was seen as worship offered by the whole parish, with members of all of the congregations encouraged to attend. Eventually a vision was articulated that the parish divest itself of all of its buildings and erect one central House for the Church where the worship and service life of the entire parish would be centered. Not without opposition, controversy and some loss of membership, this vision materialized in 2006 with the opening of two phases of a three phase project – the Oratory and the Emmaus Room – with the parish hall (which will undoubtedly be given a less mundane name!) to be added as funding permits. The Oratory, which is the worship space, is of unique configuration in the diocese, with the altar and presider's chair on one end and the ambo and font on the other end, and several rounded rows of moveable chairs on either side of the space to allow the members of the congregation to face each other and to participate fully in worship. This design was deliberately chosen to emphasize the overriding theology of the Church as people. The Emmaus Room is a fairly large and well appointed gathering space that facilitates the strong and active concern of the parish to emphasize radical hospitality as foundational to its mission.

It is impossible to overstate the degree to which the Rector's vision and energy were instrumental

in the transformation of this parish, and continue to be a factor in its attracting new members. A dynamic and deeply spiritual person who was drawn to Anglicanism from the Roman Catholic Church by the joint influences of his wife and Anglican liturgy, he is more inclined to give credit to the work of the Holy Spirit and of the group of parishioners who have worked with him to bring this effort to fruition. He describes himself as a “people person,” greatly nourished by prayer and scripture, and this, with his openly warm friendliness and caring attitude, attracts people to him, and so to the life of the parish.

In addition to interviewing the Rector and the Vestry, seven parishioners were also interviewed. They ranged in age from their early 40’s to their late 60’s, with the majority on the younger end of that scale.

When interviewed, the members of the Vestry were more enthusiastic and eager to answer, and less dependant upon the Rector’s responses, than was the case with other Vestry interviews. They defined the mission of the parish to be engaging with the local community through hospitality, witness, spreading the Word, worship and outreach. They noted there were initial objections to the transformation of the parish, with some of the older parishioners in particular finding it difficult to relinquish their congregational buildings. As a result, some parishioners were lost – although it was noted some of these are returning to the parish. Only a few of the others go elsewhere for worship.

Of the individuals interviewed, about half have been lifelong members of the parish, a couple moved to the area and became parishioners ten to twelve years ago, and a couple of others joined within the past two years. The more recent members particularly identified the Rector as being a strong reason for their attraction to the parish. All listed the warmly welcoming and friendly

attitude of the people, the hospitality and the spiritual depth of the community as things they liked best about the parish. Few could identify anything they would say they liked least, although a couple did wish there would occasionally be some more traditional hymns in addition to the regular contemporary music of the worship. All were involved in aspects of ministry in the parish, some as worship leaders, some as Vestry and committee members, some as hospitality givers, some as pastoral care givers. They spoke of this work enthusiastically as opportunities to serve others. There are no fewer than five adult Christian education groups of various kinds in the parish, and the degree of biblical and doctrinal literacy appears to be higher than average. Many spoke of a time of wandering or disengagement with the Church at earlier points in their lives, but none recalled a time of unbelief.

When asked what it meant to be a Christian, almost all spoke of the connection of the human life with that of Jesus – “living in fellowship with Him,” “following His example,” “putting the self aside and serving others in Jesus’ Name.” In terms of becoming a Christian, most specified that baptism was essential, but more growth in faith was required until one could accept Jesus as Lord. A sense of conversion is an experience known to some people in the congregation and celebrated. Many spoke of the need for engagement with the community in service as an aspect of living out the Christian life. By community it was clear they meant both the Church and wider society.

Vestry members felt that parishioners took the Bible seriously, and pointed to several active Bible Study groups in the parish. One indicated that while in general there was not as much personal Bible reading in homes now as in previous generations, many members of the congregation find that in their daily relationships there seems to be “more talk about Jesus.” Individual respondents spoke reverently of the Bible as the Word of God, but emphasized that it was to be studied for

meaning, not taken literally. One of them pointed out how often Jesus used the term “like unto,” indicating the need to look beyond the surface of the words for the truth of God for life today. For all, the Eucharist was at the heart of their life as Church, and in almost every interview it was specifically identified as the means of entering into the sufferings of Jesus and receiving His Body and Blood, “...in order that we might move on in our Christian life.” There was general enthusiasm for the form of worship. One person indicated he initially had some trouble using The Book of Alternative Services, but he has since grown quite comfortable with it. Several spoke approvingly of the parish’s practice to print the entire service on a leaflet week by week so that people do not have to “fumble” with a book. The music, led by electronic piano, guitars and several singers, is upbeat and contemporary, is generally appreciated – with a couple wishing for the occasional inclusion of a more traditional hymn.

In response to the question of whether one had to go to Church to be a Christian, there was general agreement that one did, in order to grow in faith and understanding, and to live in fellowship with other disciples of Jesus. It was recognized that many “good” people do not go to Church, but a distinction was being made between being good and being Christian. One respondent said Churchgoing was necessary in order “to live as a Christian.” As an aside, it was noticeable how easily they used the word oratory for the place of worship – never the word church. Church was generally accepted to mean the people of God.

One distinctive aspect of the life of this parish is their exercise of hospitality. On six days of the week volunteer members of the parish operate what amounts to a café in the Emmaus Room, providing a light lunch with tea or coffee to any who stop in, along with friendly conversation. No charge is made for this service, although free will offerings are accepted. It was emphasized

that this was not designed to lure strangers into becoming parishioners: it was a service to the community, a practical offering of the love of God to those who stop on their way. However, it has in fact been the means of introducing some people to the parish, with a few of them becoming members.

The conversations about human sexuality are not a burning issue in the parish. The matter has been discussed in some of the study groups, and there is generally a sense of toleration expressed toward homosexual people, recognizing them as children of God. There were a couple of respondents, however, who expressed some caution, particularly with the concepts of same-sex blessings and ordination.

There is great enthusiasm and hope for the future of the parish. The people see growth, both in numbers and spiritual depth. While there is more concern for the welfare of the wider Church, there is also the conviction that God's love will prevail, no matter what.