

Feedback Summary – Section 1

DEVOTED TO GOD AND HIS WORD

How important is the sermon perceived to be in your weekly church services?

Average Score: **3.5**

Is there a passion for and a strong commitment to personal, daily Bible reading among your church family?

Average Score: **2.6**

Is there a passion for and a strong commitment to group Bible study among your church family?

Average Score: **2.4**

Further comments about your church's passion for and commitment to GOD'S WORD: (In your opinion, what are the challenges and what needs to be done?)

More people to become involved in a Bible Study group, more willingness to be accepting of diverse members of the congregation

Some of the ministers are lazy - Bible study and quality sermons are essential to understanding God's word - once understood then we need to become disciples ourselves and teach and enlighten others who have not received God's word. Some ministers think their vocation is just a 9 to 5 job - and they are lazy, they're in the wrong job!

Transitioning from culturally determined church attendance to vibrant personal commitment to Christ and the body of Christ as members one of another. Embracing with clarity the utter distinctives and uniqueness of the Christian faith as the only way to peace with GOD and salvation in Christ.

Commitment to group Bible study has been difficult to understand over the past couple of years, given Covid restrictions and related anxieties

I DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWERS TO THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS. I DON'T MIX WITH THE "CHURCH FAMILY" TO EVEN HAZARD A GUESS

Not enough people are engaged in the weekly service and study. However, this does not indicate that many participate in private day to day bible reading which does occur

Find some of these difficult to answer and some people do not share their daily habits re Bible reading. The numbers who attend Bible Study groups is small given the overall parish, but I know some people belong to online groups. Do we need to ask what people are seeking re study?

As in the parable of the seeds, the busyness of many people's lives means that they can't find time or can't be regular at Bible Study or even attending church.

Further comments:

Lots of positive response to the sermon videos.

Not sure who is doing personal or group Bible study. Definitely some.

Some attend ecumenical groups not hosted by us.

Lenten study was promoted, very well attended every week, great discussion during studies and a frequent topic of discussion at other times. Led by a different volunteer each week.

Challenges/what can be done:

Intentionally encouraging congregation to start or join groups.

Short bursts of commitment, e.g., a five week study every term, similar to this year's Lenten study.

For 10-15% of St John's congregation I would say '4' (all the time), for most of the other congregation, a mix of 1-2.

I don't know what level of personal Bible reading there is amongst other members of my church family. It is not usually mentioned. It can be assumed high for some. My answer to question two is "don't know".

Encouragement of groups of ALL ages and suitable times to accommodate the activities of each age group be it shift work or the many volunteer organisations. Mixture of ages should be acceptable and encouraged in all groups such as in families where we are a mixture of ages and maturity

Our church needs bringing into this century.

We also need to rid ourselves of the current redress scheme. Finite date set in stone.

People still have faith. Basically the 10 commandments guide all of us.

Not all Christians need church daily or every Sunday.

A lot of the older people say they retired and don't need to do bible study, or help at church get together

Apathy and a feeling that attendance is enough

For many years there were no Bible Studies within our church family. This has recently begun to change. Two main challenges:- suitable meeting times, and confident leaders.

better clearer preaching

members are committed to God's word in our weekly service but not necessarily to attending other bible studies run for the church - other than a core group of people

Too tied to the lectionary which reads God's word in tiny, disconnected bits so that most people don't get a clear idea of the whole story from creation to new creation.

In our fellowship there are a small number who have a strong commitment to personal (daily) Bible study and involvement in Bible study groups. The majority seem to believe that the Sunday sermon is sufficient for their Bible study needs.

The reason I entered 2 for answers is that I am aware that not a large percentage of our Church family follow through on the committed daily reading and study of God's word. The ones that do, it shows in their lives. Others are genuinely interested in the preaching of God's word and consider that their "measure" for the week.

Most of the congregation are committed to the centrality of God's Word in their lives and the life of the church, however some are not as committed.

Scripture is accessible now across so many mediums. We could these in church or share ideas with each other not just use Bible reading.

Historically there has not been strong teaching on personal daily Bible Reading (a la Scripture Union). Of recent years, however, there has been a lot of encouragement for group Bible study. And that has had good effect.

For many of the older folk, committed to traditional services, sermons are just part of what a service must include. For them, 20 minutes is the absolute maximum, and they need to be well presented, but the content may be forgotten within an hour or two.

Apathy is the main problem. Even LLM's are not interested in Bible Study. Until James Daymond arrived there had not been Bible Study encouraged for many years

I think that bible-based preaching has increased people's appetite for God's word, as people see its power and relevance in everyday life. My hope is that this will spill over into a desire for regular bible study groups as people see the transforming power of God's word, and the benefit of meeting and praying together.

A reformation of love for Gods word

In the context of a family service, sermons are best kept short and the use of "Kids Talks", cartoons etc. are enjoyable and add to the Word of God, usually in a more succinct/clearer way.

The leaders are committed to daily and group bible reading. I am. Don't know about everyone else but there is not yet a culture of home groups

Reconciliation/reflective communication between the country dioceses and the Sydney diocese, in terms of belief, theology, and growing rather than dividing the faith community.

Bible study has not been a strong feature at our church. I would like to attend a daytime one when we get it going, preferably led by the rector or someone with theological training. I don't find zoom studies as good as in-person meetings.

Hard to answer for all the church family but there is a group committed to daily Bible reading and to prayer. For the majority of members, I have no personal knowledge of their commitment in this regard. There has been no Bible study for the vast majority of members but a new one is planned to commence next month

excellent preaching is encouraging and fosters personal word-focus

There are a few passionate members who are committed to bible study and prayer. But the majority just come to church on a Sunday and don't see the need for further study or fellowship. I think there is a misunderstanding on what the church and the body of Christ is. Individualism ("what I can get out of it") has crept into the church.

Helping each person how to read the Bible. We have seen significant growth in people committed to Bible study, and leaders to take the group.

Varies from individual to individual. Frequent services and gatherings.
Live in an area where we are able to offer a variety of service styles. Need to recognise and respect that the Anglican Church is a broad church, and the provision of differing worship styles is a challenge in remoter areas.

The challenge is that we are few in number and are an aging congregation. Some of us juggle ministry on top of full-time work and other commitments
We see that to reach our community the way we do church needs to change at the moment most of our energy is on Sunday services Bible study groups have stopped apart from Lenten studies
Need to restart small Bible study groups.
Are thinking about doing a church in the park on 5th Sunday months

It is presumptuous to assume we know the personal devotional lives of others. We are often surprised!

There is a strong preference for the importance of the sacrament in the parish

With regard to question 1, I have answered on my own behalf, because for me the sermon is the most important part of the service.

With question 2, I am not able to comment on the commitment of personal Bible study of other members in the congregation as we don't discuss such things. At the moment we receive no encouragement to do so.

As for myself I have an alternate Bible study with members from my past congregation not in this region and we encourage one another and study the Bible through this.

However, our meetings have not been as regular since COVID.

I would like to see a renewed passion for teaching, serendipity/unexpected even. I have had excellent teaching in the past (from St Andrew's at Abbotsford and St Andrew's at Roseville) and would like to experience it again in the church I attend now.

I think some in the church are committed but we perhaps need a church-based bible study. There are a couple of studies attended by church folk, but they're not run by the church

Our church members are very interested in hearing God's word and having sermons that fully explain the words to them. The challenges we face is to keep everyone interested in hearing God's word and to be able to understand what we are being told.

There are some members of the church that do have a strong commitment to God's Word but there are a lot that you only see in church, that say that they aren't good at that sort of thing,

You assume church family to be the organised one. I have answered according. Personal interactive church family is much stronger.

Passion is not always shown by the members, it is necessary to engage them where they are and bring them along and encourage and support each other.

In a rural community getting people together is a challenge. They are often committed to other organisations as well, which makes them busy.

In my experience we have a bible study group that meets externally to the main church the enthusiasm is that we look forward to our zoom meeting, each week we get the passages that we need to study and then we meet via zoom to discuss, it's a voyage of discovery. Sometimes through discussion we get a new perspective and interpretation of things we may have glossed over so that's good, we also include people from other churches, it's reaching out to others in that way. The challenges are to me as always is getting others interested the competition from football cricket and other interests is a battle. The DNA youth group is great and attracting more and more young people all the time.

Personal point of view. Not necessarily from church family as this is not fully known.

The teaching of God's word is very important in the activities of our church. However, the passage from Acts alludes to evidence of the powerful workings of the Holy Spirit and the effective, balanced use of these divine giftings to strengthen, and grow Christ's Church on earth.

Never, in the 50 or so years of adult church going, have I ever heard a sermon on the correct identification and usage of these Holy giftings.

I believe that this is a mighty deficit, and in a sense, ignores and renders limited due to lack of solid teaching, the mighty empowering Christ promised and gave the early church, to bless and grow His church.

We are in effect, ignorant and denying Christ's gifting to the body of Christ by seeking to witness and minister to others with, as it were, with one hand tied behind our backs. Christ's ministry on earth was peppered with teaching, healing and miracles. Some people think, only Jesus had these giftings, but to me- it is very clear in scripture, that these gifting were given to the whole body of people in a given church location, to be strengthened and grown according to the needs of that location/church population.

Time and time again, people 'followed Jesus' after a miracle of healing or other, because those 'healings/ miracles showed divine love, by meeting human need, healings of demons, sight, cripples, the Centurion's daughter and so on and so on.

Is our God, Jesus, Holy Spirit so pedantic that if we as a church get something wrong occasionally, he will never forgive us or permanently damage His church or His plan for the humanity???

Some of the preaching does not give clear teaching from God's word and seems to be just something that makes us feel good. e.g., stories and we go to heaven and are saved because we believe in Jesus, not that we need to repent and believe and put God first in our lives. Sometimes the impression is given that everyone goes to heaven. Funerals sometimes imply this is so.

At my church my minister encourages all attendees to participate in Bible study each week or if unable to attend we are encouraged to read our Bible at home or with likeminded friends at a suitable time.

The faithful few are keen. For the majority however personal daily bible reading is not a priority. I believe the concept is foreign to most. E.g., You come to church week by week to get your regular dose of the bible. I think persistent and constant encouragement from leadership is required to create a new bible reading culture.

God's word is important to the church family, the challenge is to have more individuals commit to daily reading, study reflecting on God's word. To go beyond the weekly sermon.

We have 6 congregations & I have only answered for those I know personally who attend a few different services. Our leadership are very committed to prayer & bible study. What is needed is prayer, the spirit of God to direct individuals to welcome newcomers to their homes, to share our lives & stories - only God transforms people heart's & lives.... e.g., Pentecostal.

Reaching disadvantaged members of the community is always difficult & a challenge in relation to good gospel teaching.

Only Bible Study is during lent and this has been the case in the 20 years I have attended this church. There seems to be no perceived need to delve into Gods word together

I sense passion is the missing factor in some members. That only comes when we fall in love with Jesus and capture His heart for the lost. Many other pursuits distract, especially with some older parishioners who would consider their faith as private. The Holy Spirit is the only one who can change hearts and ignite passion, prayer for our people is essential, nothing changes without prayer

I feel the current sermon practice of working through a passage and explaining verse by verse leaves a lot to be desired. It doesn't leave room for the holy spirit to work by bringing in other passages of scripture and quite often feels to me like a lecture rather than a sermon

What happens now meets my needs

There needs to be built more community around the study of God's word at the moment there is no home or mid-week bible study. I don't think the general congregation realize the benefit or are committed to that type of activity as part of regular church commitment.

It is difficult to have Bible study at Coboco these days because we are so small in numbers. In years gone by it was quite important.

The preaching of a sermon, while an integral part of the Sunday service and valued as a teaching part of the service, is only part of the service. A good< Christ centred sermon, is far better than an exegesis of the bible. Sermons that unpack the bible verse by verse are dull and for the most part are uneducational during worship. We need to bring Christ to people, we need to tell of forgiveness through Christ, we need to speak those things in ways that encourage people to go out and tell with enthusiasm the things that we have heard. People need to be encouraged to live as Christian people not just to feel some form of righteousness by attending church. It is time to change the way we think about who we are as Christ's people. Yes, the bible is important but people in the street do not see the bible in our face and heart, they see Christ. Sermons should be Christ centred.

We have a weekly Bible Study during the day, which is frequently mentioned on Sunday. Many of our congregation are elderly and prefer not to drive at night. Bible readings for the week are also printed in the pew slip for those who wish to study at home.

The above 2 questions are hard to answer as I don't know what each person's personal commitment is. Our parish priest certainly encourages personal and group bible study.

The sermon is the ONLY Christian and Biblical input for the week for most parishioners. Therefore, it really is so important and must be well prepared and based on the weekly Bible passages and not just a few verses followed by pop psychology.

Regarding groups, for older members very little opportunity, and not much even in Lent. For the younger congregation they have several weekly groups.

We attend a service that caters more for the aged: some are deeply engaged with the bible thanks to the bible habits of their younger days. Some love the bible but have been fed poorly and have imbibed novel Christian fads. Others are preoccupied with health concerns. The bible is well used in sermons, this is a good start.

I believe that the commitment and passion for God's word is the highest priority. In my opinion the steps by which the new 10am ministry has commenced, and the teaching series program have been the major contributors to the healthy growth of the Church contributing to a loving and mature Church family

Important that we are all encouraged to turn to God's word to give us understanding and guidance for salvation and life

Our ministers do everything they can to promote the gospel, but it must be increasingly difficult with fewer numbers.

Passion for spreading God's word and commitment is demonstrated by going online each week and reaching more people than they could seat in Church. Our church always quotes bible passages and book/chapter/verse.

A diminishing number of congregants and a predominance of these congregants living out of town makes it harder for them to meet more than once per week, i.e., on Sundays. Online study proved to be very popular during Covid for those spread sparsely across the parish.

There remains a really strong focus on tradition and liturgy. I cannot distinguish between devoutness for Anglicanism and devoutness for Jesus. I think that the first is more important to many than the second. Hoping I am wrong.

This area has definitely seen wonderful growth in the past 18 months for which we thank God. Still a way to go....

I don't know the answers for the "church family" Number 2 are guesses

There is no coordinated encouragement from the leadership. Any bible studies, which are proportionally minimal are dependent upon a leader instigating the group and inviting their close contacts to be involved.

We don't talk about what is taught. Some individuals are committed to daily reading of their Bibles but no groups function except for funds raising. I attend Bible studies from other denominations in other towns. Your Lent studies done there.

There is not agreement on the authority of the Bible, even among those who preach. Some say it's the word of God others say it contains some words of God.

encouragement (which has been done at times) to use a plan; maybe use Scripture Union materials or equivalent, study bibles, commentaries to help explain and understand what's being read & give the context and relevance to the times in which passages were written. Encourage use of the Mudgee Christian Bookshop!

Continue to uphold the values of Love One Another as I have loved you.

I do not know if people have a daily Bible reading programme. I do. In the past we had regular group Bible studies, but not now as people age.

I believe we have at its core, a strong, committed, faithful congregation. I believe members of the Church family are in different places in their own faith - some are new Christians, and some have a mature faith. In I also believe there are members who think they are constrained by their age & find change difficult.

Don't know what people do about bible reading, it isn't spoken of. In our service bible studies are only held at Easter and advent. There bible studies held each week from the other service. Unfortunately, the times for these studies are not convenient for me

More teaching through preaching and example. Currently only 1 bible study to my knowledge of 4 to 6 people.

In the questions above, I am commenting on the service I attend, but think that the other services at the church would see the sermon as a 2 in importance, daily bible reading as a 1 and bible study as a 1 or 2.

I am not sure about everyone in my service regarding bible reading, but those I know about, they do think it is a 4. Challenges for the other services is false teaching, the lack of perceived authority of the Bible. False/Liberal/Unclear or confusing/weak teaching needs to be removed as a priority and replaced with faithful bible teaching.

Variety of studies in a choice of formats, and from differing perspectives would be valuable

There seems to be a tradition of coming to church but how much personal study and growth is happening is difficult to gauge certainly attendance at Bible study groups is very poor.

It has been wonderful to have the sermons prepared by Bishop Mark. You can rely on good teaching & it is a great help to our lay people taking the service.

The challenge is to encourage the church to relate to God outside of the weekly church service. This is changing as church members are encouraged to attend a weekly Bible Study however with an aging congregation attending mid-week activities especially in winter can be difficult. I don't know about daily bible reading as I haven't really discussed this with other members of my church.

Sermon is important but so is saying the Creed together also sharing Holy Communion.

I am committed. The ones in my bible study are. I'm not sure about all the others

Encouraging more church members to be committed to bible study personally and in groups

The congregation is largely elderly and not well educated. They are kind and well-meaning but not prayer based.

Need to encourage more to become involved and attend regularly.
For those in group to make it a priority
For members to live and care for one another and share their lives as we all seek to serve Christ and grow as Christians

I believe weekly sermon to be top priority, and, as long as it is kept interesting and to the point, it WILL be listened to and learnt from. Personal daily bible reading and group bible studies I believe very important also, and with an ageing congregation sometimes hard, but the younger folk appear to be doing both very well.

For the majority of parishioners, there is a genuine desire to read, hear and understand God's Word.

There are two church groups in our parish. They are separate and neither has anything do with the other. I attend both services and I find that none of the 10.00am service has any interest in talking to either myself, Graham or David Goldney. It may be a case of ageism. There have been Bible studies in the Cathedral for many years, but they were usually confined to Lent and Advent studies. What people do privately is private and not talked about. I have not gained any idea of just how important private Bible study is to anybody in the Cathedral, either the old congregation or the new. I suspect that it is not done with any rigour, but I am surmising from how I perceive them as individuals.

As for the art of preaching and the reception of that preaching it varies slightly from congregation to congregation. James' sermons have become a lot more relevant to where his hearers are. He is wanting his people to go deeper in their faith and many people are responding more affirmatively. Both Phil and Steven, however, are still preaching the basic gospel message. We all know that message. That is why we are all there. We need to go deeper. We need to grow stronger. It is almost as if they have been a basic framework from which to create a message for the day and they can't deviate from that. For an old man like me the message, which I believe, is becoming boring. I believe that too due in part to the fact that they, like most of us, can't engage with people. We talk to them, not share with them.

In the circle of friendships of which I am a part, I would say that there is a strong commitment. I think that these questions are not able to be answered accurately, for they imply that I have a close relationship with all church members. Otherwise, how would I really know what the commitment is?

The church value the service and generally participate wherever there is opportunity, but everything must fit within a succinct time schedule. There is a reluctance to be involved in extra studies. Anything that is done is more likely to be successful if it is done within the service time. We have audio-visual set up, so maybe the bishop could give an online exhortation message that is shown during the service. Linking of the wider body through shared meetings online, albeit once a month for all or part of the service. Maybe churches visiting each other's service and staying for lunch. Maybe sharing of testimonies by church members

Perhaps provide training in reading from the lectern, maybe create a list of difficult to pronounce names and place names and how to pronounce.

I've put No. 3 for most of the questions. But I don't really know how many members (e.g.) read scripture every day, or how many attend Bible Study groups. However, in regard to the latter I feel the number is rather small.

Survival
