



**Report for:
Westlake UMC
1460 Red Bud Trail
Austin, TX 78746**

8/25/2013

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Report Findings
2. Numerical Raw Data
3. Numerical Raw Data Averages
4. Graphs/Averages
5. Commentary by Question
6. Commentary by Service/Guest



About the Mystery Guest Program:

The Mystery Guest Program helps church leaders better understand what a first-time visitor thinks and feels when attending a church service. A person who returns is obviously available and usually willing to tell you why they returned. Visitors who do not return deny church leaders the opportunity to learn why they didn't come back and if by chance they are asked, they might not be as forthcoming with the answer for fear of offending.

A church participating in the Mystery Guest Program will have at least twelve of its services attended by our mystery guests with each service attended by a different individual. Our mystery guests are typically "unchurched" - a term we use to describe people who do not have a home church that they regularly attend. Each mystery guest rates their experience as a first time visitor in great detail with both numerical scores and written feedback. This study helps churches craft a better experience for future visitors resulting in growth and retention.

Findings for Westlake UMC:

Faith Perceptions was retained to conduct 12 mystery visits at Westlake UMC to better understand the first-time guest experience. To date, 12 visits have been realized. Each unique visit was performed by a separate mystery guest from May 5, 2013 – August 4, 2013. Mystery guests were all pre-screened by Faith Perceptions; 11 stated that they were "unchurched", meaning that they do not attend church on a regular basis. There were 4 male mystery guests and 8 females who contributed to this report. The average age of mystery guests in this report is 35.

Faith Perceptions has been measuring the visitor experience since early 2008. As of June 1, 2013, we have measured 2,538 worship services using identical questions and criteria, allowing us to create the Faith Perceptions Church Index. We have incorporated the relevant data from the Index in this report so that you can benchmark your numbers against the Consolidated Index (all churches measured to date) and against churches of similar size. You will likely find that the numbers in this report compare favorably in some categories and unfavorably in others. All numbers are on a 10-point scale with 10 being the most favorable score possible.

It is recommended that the church perform an additional survey if changes are made as a result of these findings to measure improvement or any unintended consequences of the changes made.

Areas of Relative Strength (3):

In order for a category to be considered an area of relative strength in a church, it must *at least* be rated a 7.51 or above, which is considered to be “good” or “very good” on the Index Scale (see legend below).

Category	Westlake UMC Rating	Index: Churches of Like Size - 2013 Large	Index: Consolidated – All Churches Included
Seating	8.91	7.81	7.82
Information	8.67	7.84	7.52
Pre Service Atmosphere	8.64	7.11	7.28

Areas for Improvement (3)

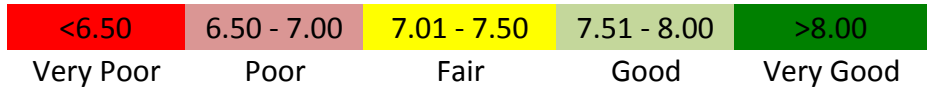
For a category to be considered an area for improvement in a church it must be rated a 7.50 or below, which would be “fair” or below on the Index Scale (see legend below).

Category	Westlake UMC Rating	Index: Churches of Like Size - 2013 Large	Index: Consolidated – All Churches Included
Diversity and Outreach	6.73	6.01	6.29
Return	6.50	6.90	6.85
Community Awareness	6.08	6.66	6.65

Overall Rating By Service(s) (highest to lowest)

9:00 AM	Sunday	CONT	MM	Rating: 7.33
11:15 AM	Sunday	BLEND	LM	Rating: 6.83

Legend



Westlake UMC

Mystery Guest Raw Data

Guest Identifier	26743	24706	22371	21721
Age	24	31	33	47
Gender	F	F	F	M
Title of Service	Sunday worship	At All Times and Places	Following One, Serving All	Following One, Serving All - Stephen Ministers
Date of Visit	6/16/2013	5/19/2013	5/26/2013	5/5/2013
Time of Visit	11:15 AM	11:15 AM	11:15 AM	11:15 AM
Type of Service	Traditional - only service at that time	N/A	Traditional	Sunday worship
First time visiting?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are you actively participating in church somewhere else?	No	No	No	Yes
Have you been to any church in the last 6 months?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
If yes, number of times you've been to church in the last 6 months	2	10	5	26
Do you believe in God or a higher power?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
If yes, what denomination do you identify most with?	Episcopal	Nondenominational	Christ	Nondenominational
Did you grow up in a family that was associated with a particular denomination?	Yes	No	Yes	No
If yes, which denomination?	Episcopal	0	Presbyterian	0
Did you have any pre-conceived ideas about the before you visited?	I am new to the area, so I had not heard anything good or bad about the church, just that it was in a nice, family-oriented part of town.	I didn't have any preconceived ideas about the church, but I do have preconceived ideas about the location of the church being in Westlake Hills. Being from Austin, I am aware that the Westlake Hills area is very affluent and mostly white, though knowing this did not influence my ideas about the church.	Yes. I know that many Methodist churches today (although not all) are liberal and unscriptural in their teachings and practices.	Based on the location of the church itself in that particular neighborhood, I presumed the members were financially well off.
Community Awareness	10	2	7	5
Signage	9	7	10	10
Greeting Upon Arrival	10	10	10	10
Pre-Service Atmosphere	10	10	9	10
Seating	10	9	10	10
Music	10	6	3	5
In Service Greeting	9	10	7	5
Message	8	7	2	7
Speaker	8	9	3	7
Post-Service Atmosphere	8	10	7	8
Information	9	10	8	10
Friendliness	10	10	8	8
Children's/Youth Ministry	8	7	6	6
Diversity and Outreach	6	7	7	10
Return	9	7	2	6
Overall Experience	9	8	2	6
AVERAGE	8.94	8.06	6.31	7.69

Westlake UMC

Mystery Guest Raw Data

Guest Identifier	23525	27239	23537	27271
Age	26	35	37	27
Gender	F	M	M	M
Title of Service	STAY AT MY HOME	Security System	Cat Juggling - Getting Ready for Fall	Communion Sunday
Date of Visit	5/12/2013	7/7/2013	8/4/2013	7/7/2013
Time of Visit	11:15 AM	11:15 AM	9:00 AM	9:00 AM
Type of Service	Blended Worship	Traditional	Traditional	"A Different Service Than Normal"
First time visiting?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are you actively participating in church somewhere else?	No	No	No	No
Have you been to any church in the last 6 months?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
If yes, number of times you've been to church in the last 6 months	0	1	3	1
Do you believe in God or a higher power?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
If yes, what denomination do you identify most with?	Christian	0	Nondenominational	none
Did you grow up in a family that was associated with a particular denomination?	No	Yes	Yes	No
If yes, which denomination?	0	Non denomination	Pentecostal	none
Did you have any pre-conceived ideas about the before you visited?	I had never heard of this church prior to visiting it. I had no preconceived ideas about this church.	I had no preconceived ideas about this church.	No, I strive to keep an open mind and be objective.	I had no preconceived ideas about the specific church my girlfriend and I visited. She was raised Methodist, as was my father, so the only inkling I had about the Methodists in general was that they seemed to be a mix of Baptists and Episcopalian.

Community Awareness	8	5	5	5
Signage	8	10	6	7
Greeting Upon Arrival	8	N/A	6	8
Pre-Service Atmosphere	9	N/A	7	9
Seating	7	N/A	8	9
Music	9	N/A	6	10
In Service Greeting	8	N/A	6	9
Message	8	N/A	5	6
Speaker	7	N/A	6	8
Post-Service Atmosphere	7	7	7	8
Information	9	10	8	7
Friendliness	9	8	7	10
Children's/Youth Ministry	9	8	7	8
Diversity and Outreach	8	N/A	4	5
Return	8	5	3	5
Overall Experience	8	8	6	9
AVERAGE	8.13	7.63	6.06	7.69

Westlake UMC

Mystery Guest Raw Data

Guest Identifier	26761	22374	22367	22374
Age	64	25	45	25
Gender	F	F	F	F
Title of Service	Youth Mission Trip	Following One, Serving All	Recognition of Graduates	Stay At My Home
Date of Visit	7/14/2013	6/30/2013	5/26/2013	5/12/2013
Time of Visit	9:00 AM	9:00 AM	9:00 AM	9:00 AM
Type of Service	Contemporary	Contemporary	Contemporary Service	Contemporary
First time visiting?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Are you actively participating in church somewhere else?	No	No	No	No
Have you been to any church in the last 6 months?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
If yes, number of times you've been to church in the last 6 months	0	2	2	3
Do you believe in God or a higher power?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
If yes, what denomination do you identify most with?	Unitarian Universalist	Catholic	Methodist	Catholic
Did you grow up in a family that was associated with a particular denomination?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
If yes, which denomination?	Episcopalian and Methodist	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic
Did you have any pre-conceived ideas about the before you visited?	I had no prior knowledge of this church other than a visit to the website.	I have done a visit to this church before for Faith Perceptions so I had a positive idea about the church.	I had heard in the past that this church was located in area where the view was peaceful. The positive thing I heard about the church it would be the welcoming.	No, I had never heard of or seen this church before I went. I did go to a United Methodist preschool though, so I had a positive view of the United Methodist Church from that experience.
Community Awareness	5	5	10	6
Signage	7	5	9	4
Greeting Upon Arrival	8	7	10	7
Pre-Service Atmosphere	8	7	10	6
Seating	10	8	10	7
Music	10	8	10	5
In Service Greeting	8	7	9	7
Message	10	8	9	7
Speaker	10	9	9	8
Post-Service Atmosphere	9	7	9	7
Information	8	8	8	9
Friendliness	8	6	9	7
Children's/Youth Ministry	10	6	9	7
Diversity and Outreach	6	4	9	8
Return	10	7	10	6
Overall Experience	7	6	10	6
AVERAGE	8.38	6.75	9.38	6.69

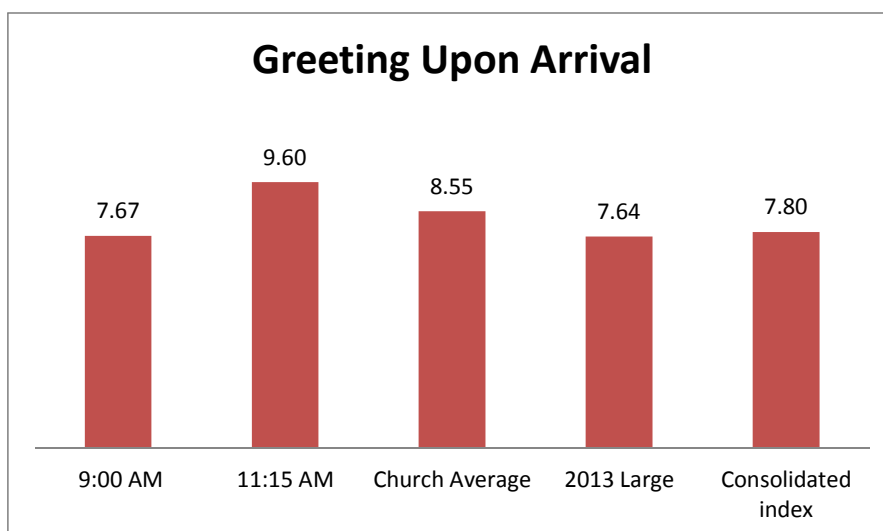
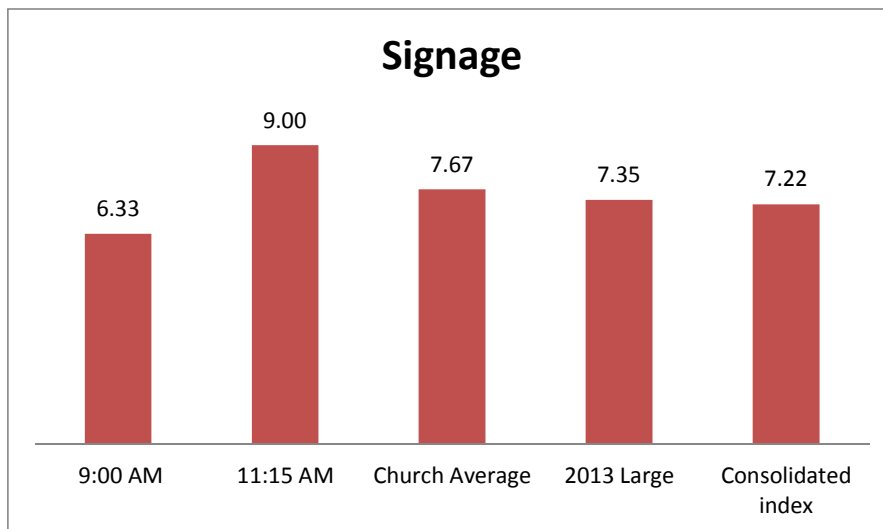
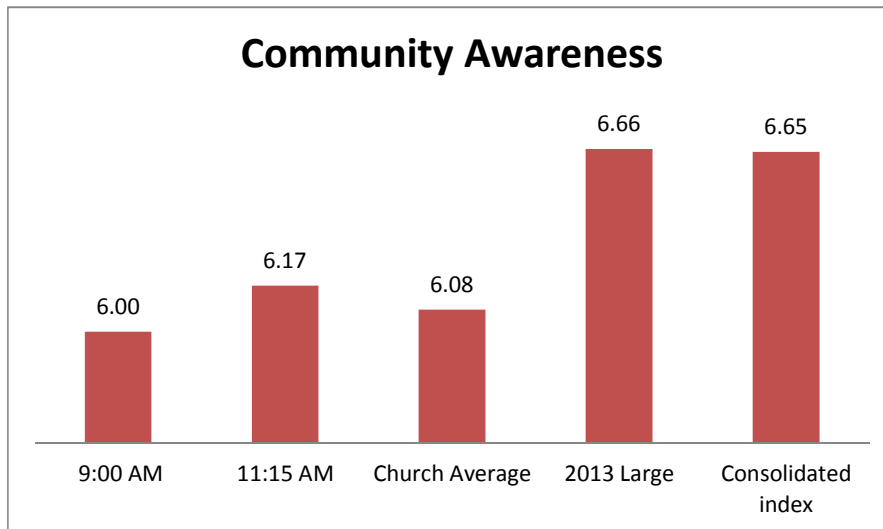
Westlake UMC

Mystery Guest Average Data

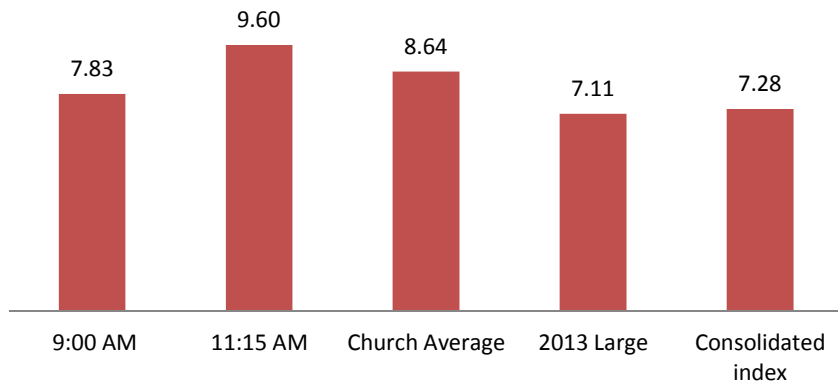
	9:00 AM	11:15 AM	Church Average	2013 Large	Consolidated index
Community Awareness	6.00	6.17	6.08	6.66	6.65
Signage	6.33	9.00	7.67	7.35	7.22
Greeting Upon Arrival	7.67	9.60	8.55	7.64	7.80
Pre-Service Atmosphere	7.83	9.60	8.64	7.11	7.28
Seating	8.67	9.20	8.91	7.81	7.82
Music	8.17	6.60	7.45	7.04	7.02
In Service Greeting	7.67	7.80	7.73	7.29	7.29
Message	7.50	6.40	7.00	7.41	7.45
Speaker	8.33	6.80	7.64	7.65	7.60
Post-Service Atmosphere	7.83	7.83	7.83	6.73	6.99
Information	8.00	9.33	8.67	7.84	7.52
Friendliness	7.83	8.83	8.33	7.52	7.69
Children's/Youth Ministry	7.83	7.33	7.58	6.47	6.51
Diversity and Outreach	6.00	7.60	6.73	6.01	6.29
Return	6.83	6.17	6.50	6.90	6.85
Overall Experience	7.33	6.83	7.08	7.20	7.15

<6.50	6.50 - 7.00	7.01 - 7.50	7.51 - 8.00	>8.00
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good

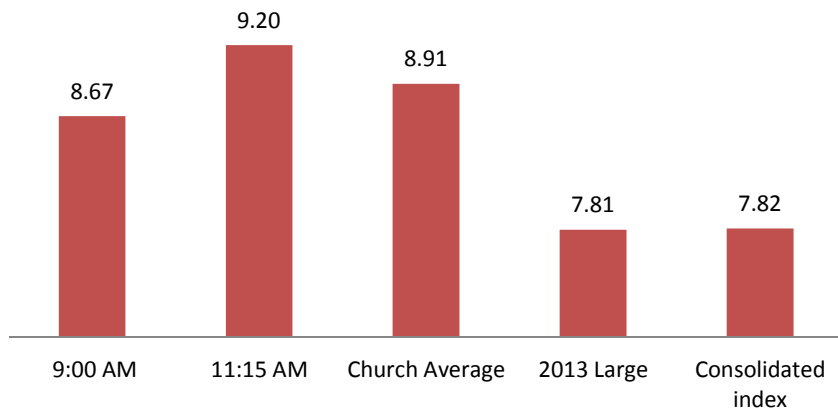
Graphs/Averages



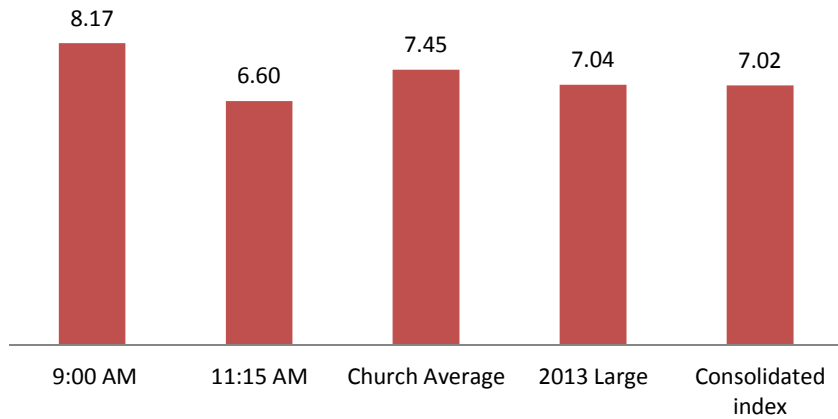
Pre-Service Atmosphere

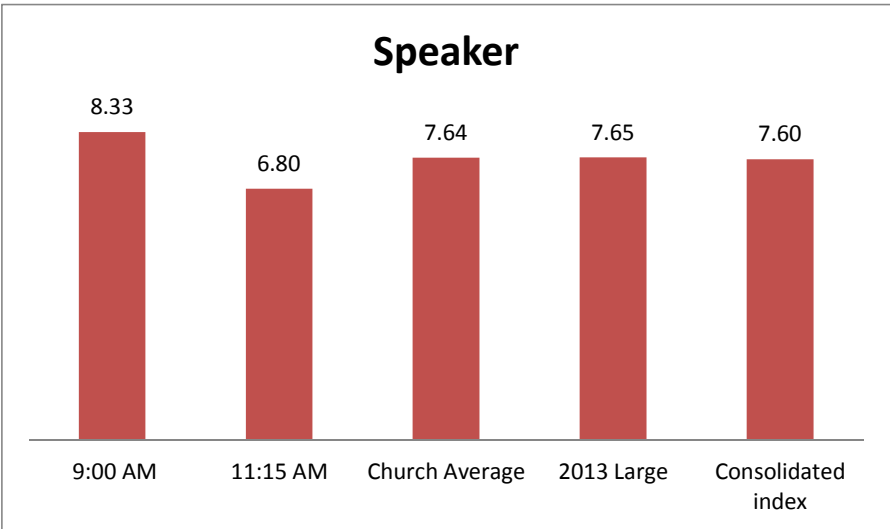
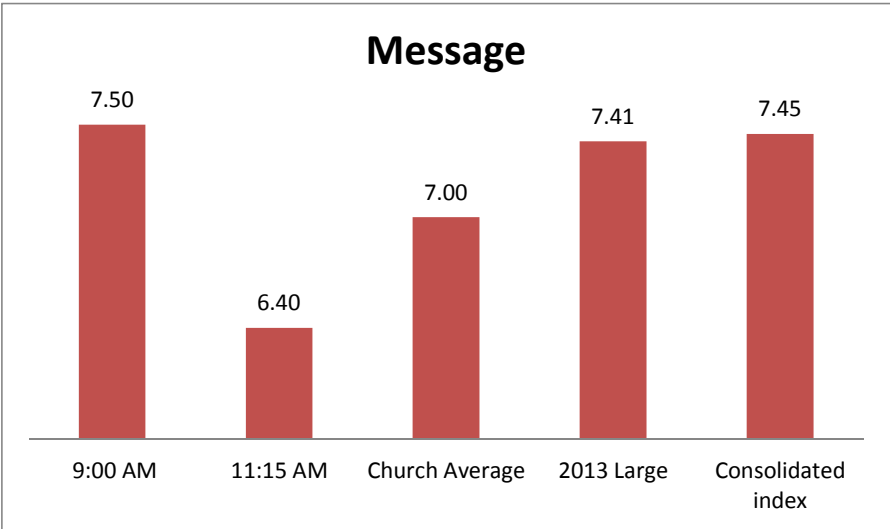
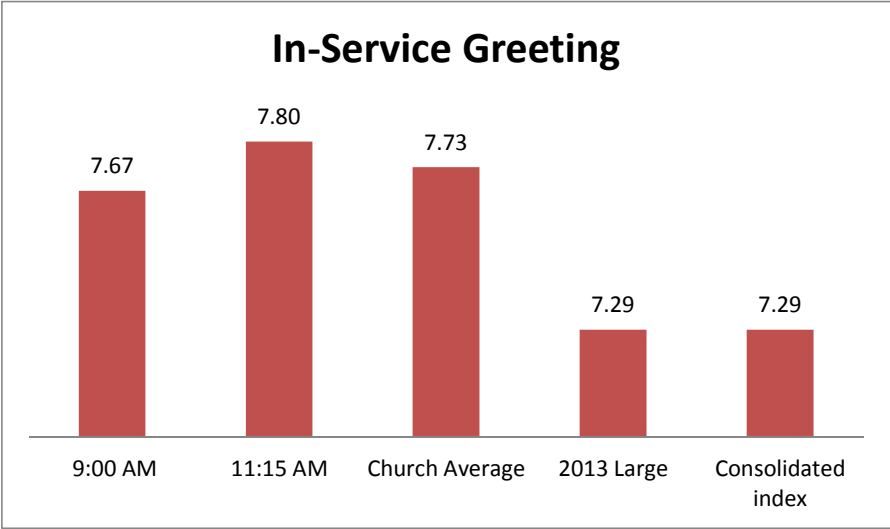


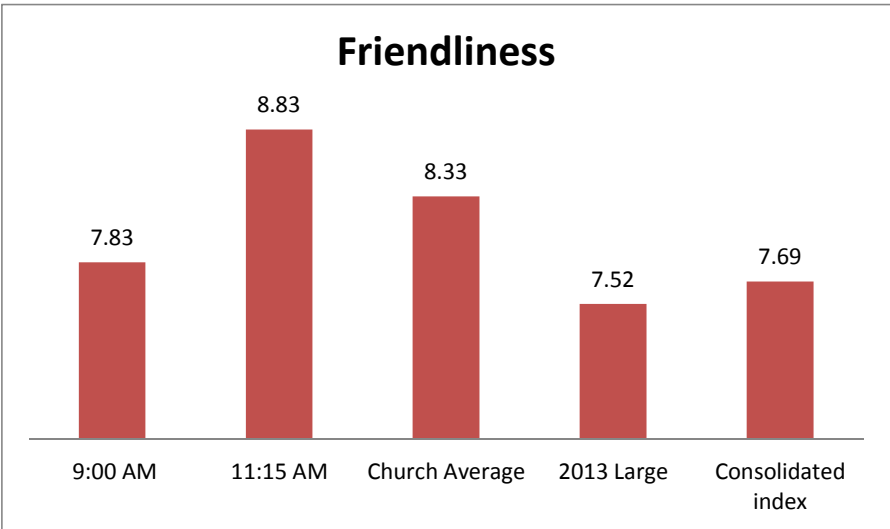
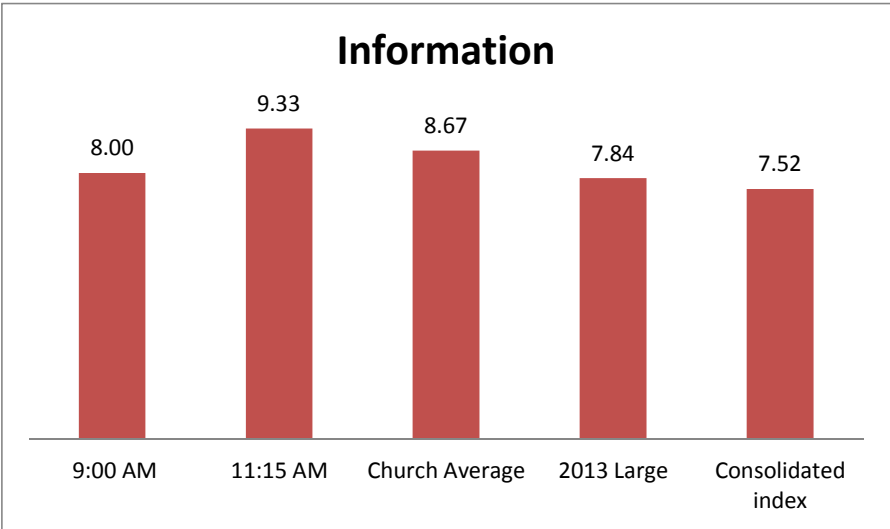
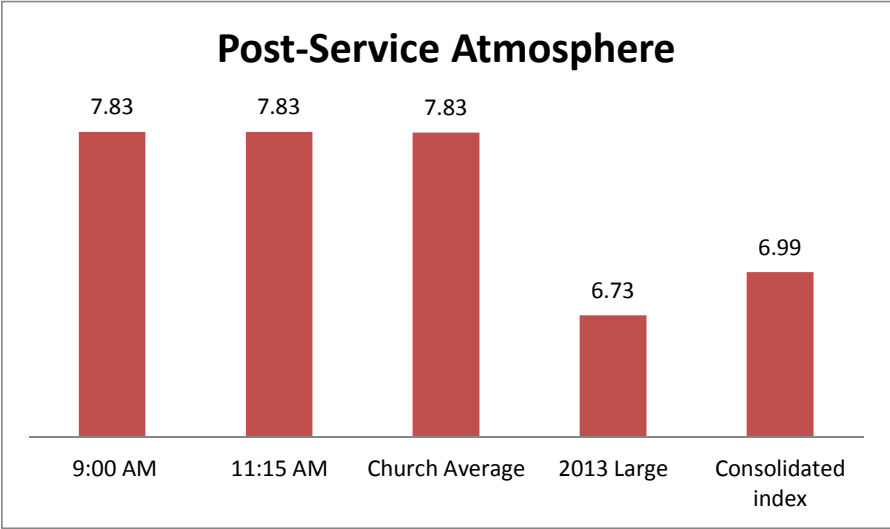
Seating



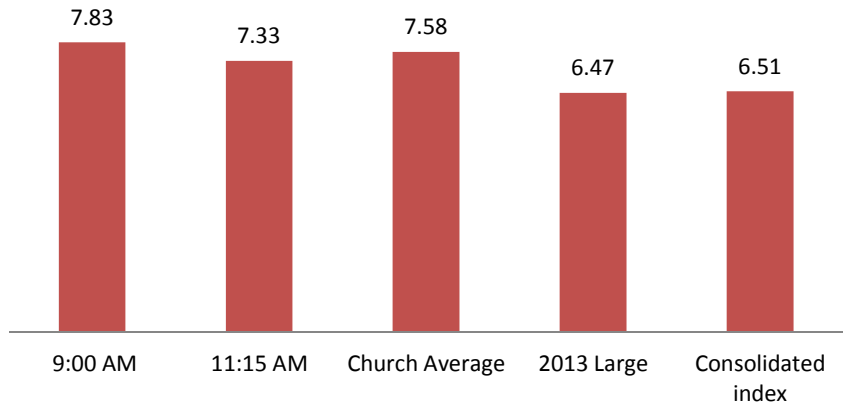
Music



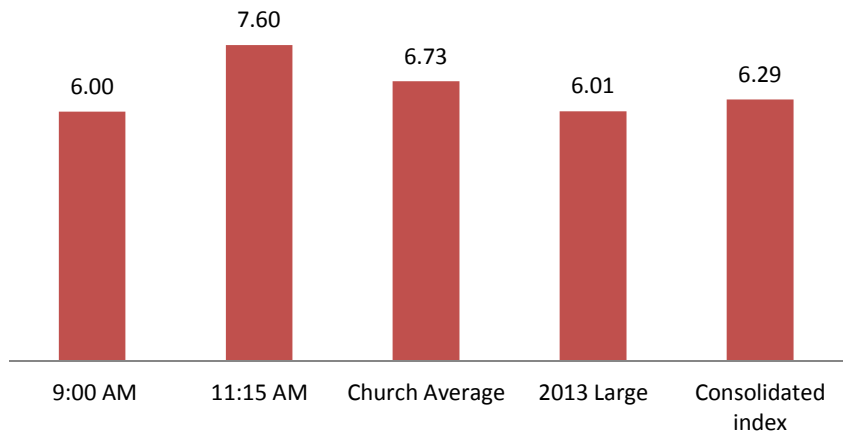




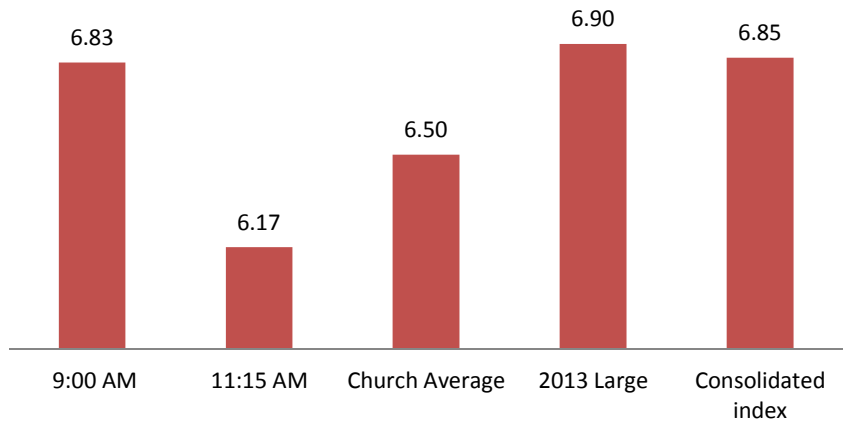
Children's/Youth Ministry



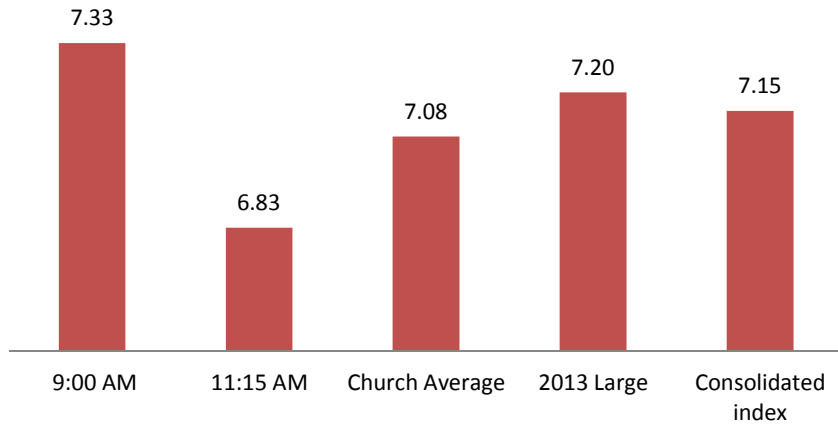
Diversity and Outreach



Return



Overall Experience



Westlake UMC
Commentary by Question

This section of the report groups the comments by category and service. It allows you to review the collective feedback from each mystery guest by question.

Community Awareness

Question: *Churches want to know how well-known they are in their community. Please stop at a local business before or after your visit to ask for directions to the church. Of the people you spoke with, rate how well they were able to tell you of the church’s location. What sort of information were they able to give you? How aware were they of the church’s existence/location?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	6.00
11:15 AM	6.17
Total	6.08

Time of Visit Community Awareness Comments

9:00 AM	I asked two different people at a gas station (just under a mile away) if they knew where the church was. One had no idea and the other thought (correctly) that it was close by and pointed in the general direction of where it actually was. However, they couldn't tell me specifically where it was.
9:00 AM	Before the service, my girlfriend and I stopped by a McDonalds. When we asked for directions, the employees pointed us in the general direction. To their credit, that little strip of road seemed to be littered with churches and one in particular had small yard sale-like signs stuck in the ground every 100 feet it seemed.
9:00 AM	I stopped at a Texaco Speed Shop at 3625 Bee Cave Road. A young man in the store (only one there) was new to town. He thought he may have heard of the church and had heard of Redbud Trail. He was able to point me in the right direction.
9:00 AM	I stopped at HEB to inquire about the church and how to get there. The first person I spoke with knew exactly how to get there and seemed to be familiar with the church.

9:00 AM	I stopped at the convenience store located on Lake Austin Blvd. in Austin. I did asked for the directions of the church. The clerk did know the church. He gave me the specific direction of the church. He was very impressive and very helpful to me.
9:00 AM	I stopped at the HEB which is across Bee Caves from the church. I asked one of the cashiers if they could tell me where the church was. She could not, but asked me to wait and see if someone else knew. Another cashier came over and explained to me how to get there.
11:15 AM	I stopped at a convenience store about half a mile away. I asked if they could give me directions to the church. They knew it right away and told me very quickly how to get there. They seemed to be very aware of it.
11:15 AM	I stopped in a nearby Starbucks. The girl I asked did not know where the church was, although the church is tucked away so it's not very visible even to the immediate area. Also, there were a lot of signs (maybe five or six) all along the highway for a nearby church called One Chapel meeting at a high school. I would suggest more signage, including the vision statement "Following One, Serving All," in the immediate area.
11:15 AM	The church is located on a clearly marked road, and easy to find. It is just nestled in a wooded area. I did not stop to ask for directions. I found the church using my GPS, which led me there easily.
11:15 AM	I stopped at Rudy's Barbecue on Loop 360. The person did not recognize the church itself by name, but knew where the street was when I told them the name of it.
11:15 AM	I used my GPS to get to the church, but stopped at Taco Cabana and asked the clerk there if she new where Westlake UMC was. She didn't know where that was. I am guessing this may be too far from the church.
11:15 AM	I stopped at a local gas station and the attendant sent me towards the general direction but was not sure of the church's exact location.

Signage

Question: *Rate how well the church's signage led you where you needed to go. Please comment on the church's exterior and interior signage. When you arrived, was there a sign outside? Were worship times listed and easy to read? Were there signs indicating where to park and which door you should use to enter? Upon entering the building, was there signage directing you to the service, restrooms, children's area, etc.?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	6.33
11:15 AM	9.00
Total	7.67

Time of Visit	Signage Comments
9:00 AM	Although the church is off a quiet two-lane road, there are a lot of trees around. I initially drove right past it and then quickly realized on my GPS that I had gone too far and turned around. I then found it rather quickly. The road signage is low and smallish - if someone isn't paying particular attention, they can pass it up. I didn't notice worship times on the main sign. The parking was well signed and there was ample parking space available. I didn't know what door to enter in immediately (but I did realize later there were posted signs), but I saw several people going in to a particular door (the correct one for the service), so I followed them. Upon entering, there is a small foyer before the main auditorium, so it was very easy to tell where the service was being held. Restrooms and other areas were well marked.

9:00 AM	<p>On the main road we did not notice any signs indicating the direction of Westlake UMC. Since we had Google Maps, this wasn't a problem. Once we turned onto the church's road, I think there was an official highway sign indicating that a church was nearby. As we went around a bend, however, we saw WUMC's ground-level marquee-sized sign very clearly. Parking was pretty self explanatory, although we were confused when we pulled in since there appeared to be no other cars in the parking lot. A kindly young woman came running out and explained that they were having a different kind of service that day -- one only at 10 a.m. rather than two, at 9 & 11, respectively. After apologizing, the kind young woman proffered directions to the nearest Starbucks and even offered to show us to the church's library, should we wish to stay there until service. Arriving just before service, there were two main entrances although it was not difficult to discern which was the correct door since there was an official greeting holding it open. All the doors and fire exits appeared to be properly marked. I found the bathroom quite easily.</p>
<hr/>	
9:00 AM	<p>There was very good signage from Bee Cave Road - not as much if approached from Redbud Trail, although once the church was in sight the street signage and arrows directing traffic were wonderful. There was plenty of guest parking and lots of signs to lead a newcomer into the main hall. There were good signs for the sanctuary and restrooms and classrooms. The only thing really missing was signs to coffee hour, but members led me there knowing it was hard to find.</p>
<hr/>	
9:00 AM	<p>There is an entrance sign but since you're coming around a bend in the road, it sneaks up on you quickly, especially if you don't know where you're going. Everything was clearly listed on the sign outside. There were signs for guest parking. Inside, everything was clearly marked, from restrooms to the children's area.</p>
<hr/>	
9:00 AM	<p>There was a sign at the entrance of the WestLake UMC church. This sign was clear I had arrived. Being new to the area, before I arrived, I was lost due to the fact it was out in wooded nature and mountains. The roads were winding and as soon as I saw the church sign I almost passed it. I recommend for them to put signs a few blocks from the main sign entrance so that the people will be able to make the turn in time comfortably. I did see the signs indicating the worship times and easy to read for me. There were no signs where to park. I did not see the sign where to enter. I did observe where the members were entering and followed them inside.</p>

9:00 AM	There was a sign at the road that had the church's name but no worship times. There were many marked guest spots in the parking lot and there was a large sign showing the entrance to the sanctuary. There were other signs that led to the gym, nursery, etc. When I walked in, the entrance room is very small and you can see the sanctuary as soon as you walk in.
11:15 AM	There were signs off the main road and then for the turn. There were great signs describing the buildings. My only feedback would be that if I had not seen the greeter standing at the door, it would have taken a moment to figure out the main entrance. The interior signage I saw was just the PowerPoint presentation during the service. I saw no other signage that stood out.
11:15 AM	Yes, the signs at the church were great. Even though there seemed to be a lot of buildings spaced out, the main entrance sign was very visible. There could be more signs before you get to the church alerting you that the church is nearby. For example, at the corner of Redbud Trail and Bee Caves there could be a sign with the name of the church pointing you in the right direction. I also think this would help with church visibility.
11:15 AM	All signs were clearly displayed and easy to read. I first saw the "Westlake UMC" sign leading to the parking lot of the church to my left as I was driving. It is very visible and well positioned just off the street. I was easily able to read the sign leading to the main sanctuary (main entrance).
11:15 AM	There was a sign at Bee Caves Road and Red Bud Trail as I made the turn stating that the church entrance was 300 yards ahead. It is a heavily wooded area, so the sign really helped.
11:15 AM	There was signage showing which way to turn to get to the church, and then there was a clear sign showing where the church was. The only thing that was confusing was the exit, unfortunately I exited out the "enter only" directions because I was uncertain as to where the exit was. The sign was easy to read and clearly showed the times of worship. I only saw a sign that said "main entrance," so I assumed this was where the service would be held.
11:15 AM	The exterior signage was easy to read, and directions to park were also easy to follow. The entrance was labeled as well as rooms inside the church. The rooms were easy to find due to proper signage. I did not see service times posted on outdoor signage.

Greeting Upon Arrival

Question: *Rate how satisfied you were with the pre-service greetings. Please comment on whether there was a designated greeter to welcome you as you entered the building or when you entered the sanctuary/service/room in which the service was held. How did they welcome you and did it feel sincere?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	7.67
11:15 AM	9.60
Total	8.55

Time of Visit Greeting Upon Arrival Comments

9:00 AM	There was a lady sitting down in the foyer at the entrance to the main auditorium who handed me the church bulletin with a smile and a simple hello greeting. I felt it was a warm and sincere greeting, but not personal. There were not a lot of people there, especially when I arrived (about 10 minutes early), so I think if she was standing and took a moment to be a bit more engaging (like asking my name and if it was my first time there, etc.) that I would have felt a bit more welcome. No one greeted me once I was in the sanctuary. I sat quietly by myself for a few minutes before the service began.
9:00 AM	There was a older gentleman greeting everyone at the church's main entrance. He quickly moved us through to the foyer, which was just fine since there were even more greeters inside. At the entrance of the chapel were a couple more greeters, a man and a woman, who were all smiles as they welcomed us and handed us the day's program. In the slight bottleneck to get into the service room, it was a little difficult to tell who was a greeter and who wasn't. There were a lot of them and many of us.
9:00 AM	They were very friendly and nice but not intrusive or pushy. There was someone to open the door and welcome me in as well as ushers at the door to lead me into the service.
9:00 AM	There was a greeter at the front of the sanctuary who was handing out programs for the service. He greeted me and handed me a program. He was very polite and warm.

9:00 AM	I was greeted by two of the greeters at the door. They shook my hand and welcomed me into the service. I felt it was sincere. The greeters did make eye contact. Afterwards one of the greeters came and sat with me in the pew. Moments later the greeter asked me if I was looking for a new church to worship. But she did make me feel comfortable and I did not feel alone. Of all the churches I visited in the past with Faith Perceptions, this is the only greeter that ever sat with me and I felt very welcomed. Being new, this is very important to me to feel welcomed and at the same time feel like I was a regular member of their church.
9:00 AM	There was a greeter at the entrance to the building who asked me how I was doing. There was also a greeter at the sanctuary entrance who handed me a program. The greeters did make eye contact with me and it felt very sincere when I arrived.
11:15 AM	The greeter at the door was wonderful. The greeter was polite and welcoming but did not overwhelm, since it was the start of the service.
11:15 AM	The greeter was great - eye contact, sincerity, everything.
11:15 AM	Yes. There were two greeter who welcomed me warmly. They made excellent eye contact and both greeters were quite sincere.
11:15 AM	A woman greeted me as soon as I entered the building, stating "Good morning and welcome; how are you this morning?" She made eye contact and seemed warm and sincere.
11:15 AM	There was a older gentleman greeting everyone, he shook my hand and welcomed me to Westlake UMC. He seemed very sincere. Upon entering the church, another gentleman handed me information about the church and smiled. Eye contact was made by both of them as well.
11:15 AM	The service time for this date had been changed to an earlier time by the church. I did not arrive before the service began because I was not aware of the time change.

Pre-Service Atmosphere

Question: *Rate the overall hospitality of the church before the service began. Please comment on the atmosphere/mood/vibe and whether it would make guests feel like a part of the group. Explain how this affected your expectations for the service to come.*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	7.83
11:15 AM	9.60
Total	8.64

Time of Visit	Pre Service Atmosphere Comments
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9:00 AM	I seated myself about halfway back and sat alone, about 10 minutes before the service officially began at 9 a.m. The musicians were on stage but not singing yet, so it was quiet. The pastor was visiting with a few patrons who were sitting in the front. I think if the music started a little early, it would be a bit more engaging and welcoming and I would feel more part of the group. I am used to walking into a church a few minutes early before the service and already hearing music playing, but that was not the case here. However, this did not affect my expectations for the service to come.
9:00 AM	Just moments after my girlfriend and I sat down, we were approached by a younger man who introduced himself as a member of the church, along with his wife who runs the children's program. He was exceedingly friendly, asking a few unobtrusive questions and generally making us feel welcome. Although we were clearly visitors from the beginning, this young gentleman was perfectly kind and put us at ease. A few minutes later his wife came over and introduced herself with similar pleasantries. After that, the older woman in front of us turned in our direction and begin chatting. We discussed our hometown in Arkansas, where her daughter also once lived. Like the other two WUMC members, this older woman was not imposing and the encounters as a whole put us in a relaxed, reasonably unguarded mood.
9:00 AM	It was quiet in the church - low attendance due to an early summer service. But the band was rehearsing and everyone in church was friendly, smiling and respectful. I felt welcomed from the beginning.
9:00 AM	Everyone in my pew greeted me like I was already part of the church community and they've seen me before. It made me feel like I was going to be highly included in the service. No, they did not recognize me from the last visit (and I did not recognize them). It just felt like they were trying to make me feel at home.

9:00 AM	There was Contemporary music as I walked in to the building. There were two members that said hello to me. One of the congregation members did hold my hand in prayer. I thought for not knowing me, she made me feel like I was a regular in her congregation. When the members passed the peace, it was short time, but many were greeting and welcoming me.
9:00 AM	There was no music, but there was chatter going on amongst some of the members. I could hear Pastor Lynn introducing himself to people he perceived as new members. He came over to me and introduced himself. He then introduced me to the family in front of me as well.
11:15 AM	Everyone was amazingly welcoming. I had several people come up to me during the peace and at the end of the ceremony. If anything, I would say it was a bit overwhelming. I would suggest spreading out the greeting. Don't all jump up at one time. But everyone was very open.
11:15 AM	There was a good atmosphere, although I am partial to the feel of the building - I'm a big fan of stone and wood. I don't remember if there was music being played, but it wasn't dead silent, either. Yes, people other than the greeters acknowledged me. People were friendly - it was casual and not too pushy.
11:15 AM	I could hear friendly and cheerful conversation as people were gathering for the service. A third greeter welcomed me and asked how I was as he handed me a copy of today's bulletin.
11:15 AM	It was quiet when I entered the building (11 a.m.) and I saw a sign for the bathroom, which I then used. As I entered the sanctuary, no one was at the doorway, so I picked up a brochure from the seat in the hallway. I went in and sat for about 10 minutes until a man came and greeted me with a "Hello how are you, what is your name?" He then motioned to another man seated in the row ahead of me and introduced us. The man then introduced himself and said that he had been attending the church for about six months and it was a nice church. The first man to greet me was the minister, Dr. Lynn Barton.
11:15 AM	The church had a very clean and organized front entrance. When we went in, we began looking for a seat. Once we found a seat, Pastor Lynn came by and introduced himself and asked us our names. He welcomed us to his church and said he hoped we enjoyed it here. Very compassionate and wonderful of him to reach out and personally welcome us. Everyone there seemed to be chatting a little, greeting one another, and it all seemed very friendly. No music was being played until the worship started.
11:15 AM	Same explanation as previous answer.

Seating

Question: *Rate the overall seating experience. Please describe how comfortable the seats were and whether there were plenty of seats to choose from or whether there were too few. How closely did the congregation sit to each other (e.g., was everyone spread out or did they sit close together)?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	8.67
11:15 AM	9.20
Total	8.91

Time of Visit Seating Comments

9:00 AM	I seated myself about halfway back and sat alone. The pews were typical and comfortable. The church was largely empty, so there was ample seating available. The congregation was spread out really well (on their own, no ushers), not too close and not too far. More and more people showed up after 9 a.m. I would say probably half the people that were there showed up five or 10 minutes after 9. People sat a pew in front of me and back of me, but not on the same pew. People were friendly but not engaging.
9:00 AM	The church pews were unexpectedly comfortable. The pews themselves were covered with plush, soft cushions on both the seat and backrest. There was plenty of leg room, too. The pews were in three sections. The middle section was relatively filled, with a majority of the attendees seated there. Each long row at least five people in it, but the overall effect was that the middle section looked packed, though each individual or group left a respectable space between themselves and others. The left section was less populated, with a few people sitting by themselves. The right section was slightly more packed with several groups of what were clearly families.
9:00 AM	The seating was wonderful. The church seems able to hold a large group and that everyone would have good visual and auditory access. Folks were close but filled up mainly the center area. It was a small turnout due to the summer and the early hour.
9:00 AM	The benches were very plush and comfortable. I noticed that there were plenty of seats to choose from when I arrived. Many of the people were seated on the left section of the sanctuary. People who showed up later were more inclined to sit toward the right side.

9:00 AM	There was a large crowd since it was graduation and three baptisms were included in this service. I felt comfortable in their seats. I did not feel crowded. The West Lake UMC sanctuary was large, so even though there was a lot of members, they were all seating evenly throughout the sanctuary. Some churches I visited in the past, they were in their own groups and sometimes all on one side of the sanctuary.
9:00 AM	I was quite surprised to see how empty the church looked. While it was quite small, there were not as many people when I arrived as I was expecting. Because I went in only 5 minutes before the service began, I was expecting it to be tough to find a seat. However, there was plenty of open space and there were lots of empty benches. I'd say the room was a little over half full and the congregation was dispersed evenly over the three sections of pews.
11:15 AM	The seats were great and comfortable. I did not feel overcrowded or like I was being pushed to sit in a particular place. It was very inviting.
11:15 AM	The seating was comfortable enough, and it wasn't too crowded. The room was about 80 percent full and the congregation was evenly distributed.
11:15 AM	The seating was very comfortable and clean. There were plenty of seats to choose from, and the congregants were dispersed evenly throughout the room.
11:15 AM	I sat in a row of chairs that were set up behind the last row of pews, a little more comfortable than the pews. There were only about 20 people seated at the time I arrived. In the next 10 minutes or so more people arrived and the sanctuary was about 3/4 full by the time the service started and people were dispersed around the room.
11:15 AM	The seating was comfortable, but it was pretty packed. It was not to the point that you felt uncomfortable. It did become a little stuffy and hot mid way thru the sermon, but it was not unbearable by any means. The congregation seemed to be evenly dispersed through out the room.
11:15 AM	Same explanation as answer #3.

Music

Question: *Rate how well the music appealed to you. Please comment on the following: Was the style of music contemporary, traditional, or blended? If the music was live, did the musicians/vocalists/choir seem sincere about their part of the service? Were the people in attendance engaged/paying attention? What age group(s) do you think would most enjoy the music?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	8.17
11:15 AM	6.60
Total	7.45

Time of Visit	Music Comments
9:00 AM	The music was played live and contemporary in style, with lyrics projected overhead of the band. The musicians sounded good but seemed more like they were going through the motions. The singer had a good voice but lacked energy and power. So, the songs felt a bit lethargic and monotonous. It was sincere, but because of the lack of passion and energy, felt a bit tired. People were engaged enough and stood during most of the songs and sang quietly. I do think the music in general was good for any age group - not too young and hip and not too traditional.
9:00 AM	The music was absolutely fantastic. Apparently, during the "normal" services there is a full band and a choir. Unfortunately, the choir was out of town, and the band was not accounted for, although there was an electric drum set and electric guitar plugged into a VOX amp that was pushed to the left side of the stage. The church had brought in the Austin Banjo club, an eight-strong banjo band accompanied by a tuba. Between sections in the service, the Austin Banjo Club played a medley of patriotic songs in keeping with the 4th of July Weekend. Everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy the band. Because the service's elements were slightly different than the normal progression, the reverend asked the audience to request some hymns. Several attendees called out hymns and the congregation took turns singing those fan hits. Those who made requested didn't seem too shy about their hymnal preference.
9:00 AM	The music was wonderful and contemporary. The musicians were all engaged and the leader was passionate and sincere. The young soloist was exceptional and adult members of the band were so very proud and supportive. Having words to hymns, etc., on screen was wonderful and made the service doubly inclusive.

9:00 AM	The music was very contemporary, with a band called The Foundation (I think). The band seemed very into the service. The people in the congregation were all singing along and I think it helped that there was a screen with the lyrics. Almost everyone around me was singing along. I think young parents would most appreciate the music, being that they're still interested in "new" music.
9:00 AM	The music was all Contemporary. I loved the vocals of each of the singers that performed. The members joined with them in chorus and it was beautiful music that did not put me to sleep or tire in anyway. Yes this music would appeal to younger generation but I did see a lot of the older generation singing along and enjoying it very much.
9:00 AM	The music was contemporary. Many of the church members seemed to know the words by heart. If they didn't, there was a screen that had the lyrics playing as well. I think the music would definitely appeal to a younger demographic, though it seemed sort of forced that they were a 'cool' worship group.
11:15 AM	Well, the service was very centered around music. The choir was outstanding and the breadth of diversity in the music was quite refreshing. There truly was something for everyone.
11:15 AM	I would characterize the music as traditional, with bells and all. I don't think I've been to a church with chamber bells before, so that was very interesting. There were also regular songs that the congregation participated in. The last song (closing hymn) was interactive. It was fun seeing adults being demonstrative; it made it a more casual experience. Also, the benediction was nice - everyone held hands, and it added to the feeling of togetherness. I have mixed feelings about the chamber bells. On one hand I like that they are old-school, traditional and bring a thoughtful, almost meditative feel to the service, but I also think that listening to them calms the mood, so having them in the middle of the service subdues the energy at a time when you probably want more energy. Maybe if they were just at the beginning and end of the service. The songs (other than the closing hymn) weren't very engaging. I think having a choir, even a small one (with microphones) would help raise the energy level. I don't think that music has to be only contemporary and upbeat to be engaging and appeal to young people. Adding more contemporary and upbeat music would be nice, but more soulful and melodic music with instruments would appeal to everyone.

11:15 AM The style of music was blended. I especially enjoyed the vocalist during the latter part of the worship service. I did find one secular song that was played at the suggestion of one of the high school graduates highly inappropriate. It was a Brad Paisley song titled, "A Letter to Me" One of the opening lyrics talks about Playboy magazines found under a bed. I was cringing in the pew as I continued to listen to more lyrics about how "that girl wasn't right for you" etc. The vocalist was young and she had a beautiful voice. The song she sang would appeal to a younger audience in my opinion. Most of the congregants were singing the hymns and doxology together. I noticed others who appeared uncomfortable during the Brad Paisley song though.

11:15 AM The music was traditional, with a choir and bell ringers that sang and performed while the congregation watched. The music was a little boring and unexciting and the congregation did not participate. It would not appeal to a younger crowd, in my opinion.

11:15 AM There was a blended style of music. Everyone seemed to enjoy joining in on the songs. It was very surprising to me that they sang one not very traditional at all, "Home on the Range." It put a smile on my face to hear everyone singing this song. I absolutely loved the hand bell choir, because so different than anything I have seen or heard before. My children enjoyed singing the songs that were played during church. They had a song that seemed like they probably sing at the end of every worship in which everyone holds hands. This was a special touch, and seemed like something that was special to Westlake UMC

11:15 AM Same explanation as answer #3.

In-Service Greeting

Question: *Please rate the in-service greeting. This can include a formal greeting from the pulpit, a recognition of visitors, shaking hands with one another, etc. Comment on the sincerity of the greeting and whether it felt like too little, too much, or just right. If there wasn't any form of greeting, please offer your thoughts on this.*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	7.67
11:15 AM	7.80
Total	7.73

Time of Visit	In Service Greeting Comments
9:00 AM	The pastor welcomed everyone but did not single out new faces in the crowd, which is fine. I don't recall the pastor specifically say anything like "please take a moment to welcome those around you," but the service outline was projected overhead and said "Passing the Peace of Christ and Welcome." When people saw this they automatically greeted those around them. It was nice but felt a bit too formulaic to me. I think it would have been nice if the pastor actually encouraged the greeting.
9:00 AM	While the reverend did quickly thank those visitors who came, there wasn't really a formal greeting from the pulpit. Nor was there a "recognition of visitors" or shaking of hands. The entire service was a bit casual and, as is the case with many summer activities, several formalities were put aside. All this suited me just fine. I think any more of a greeting would have been too much.
9:00 AM	I never like this part - but again, folks were very friendly and welcoming, but not intrusive on one's space. I felt very comfortable during this time.
9:00 AM	There was a recognition of visitors and a welcome. Then everyone was invited to greet the people around them. The people who were sitting around me were all very sweet and welcoming. It wasn't too much and I thought the people around me were genuine.
9:00 AM	There was not a greeting time during the service. The members did greet me during the passing of the peace. The church did not welcome the visitors at the pulpit. I was only welcomed at the beginning and in the passing of the peace. I felt the greeting was sincere. It was just right amount in the welcoming.

9:00 AM	I felt that the greeting was very welcoming. After Pastor Lynn introduced me to the family in front of me, they were very friendly as well. There were pads passed around for people to sign in and for new members to give information if they wanted to. There was a time for members to greet each other and the members around me introduced themselves to me. Then at the end of the service, Pastor Lynn welcomed new members again.
11:15 AM	It was wonderful. I was greeted two different times during the service. It was just right.
11:15 AM	Yes, I was greeted during the service and welcomed from the pulpit; it felt sincere. I appreciate that the greetings weren't too pushy. I feel like a lot of churches are way too pushy.
11:15 AM	I felt that the greeting during the service were scripted as we were instructed by the pastor to greet one another. But most of these types of greetings are scripted when prompted by the pastor no matter what church you attend. I did not feel overwhelmed by the number or type of greetings.
11:15 AM	There was a greeting time in which four people turned to me and shook my hand and said hello, but none of them asked me my name. The reverend did greet people from the pulpit himself. It felt a little scripted and insincere to me because no one asked my name or told me their name.
11:15 AM	There was a greeting time. It was short and brief, but this time is always uncomfortable to me anyways. It was just the right amount of meet and greet. The visitors were welcomed, not directly, but the whole sermon was basically welcoming anyone and everyone to visit the church whenever they wanted. The message felt sincere.
11:15 AM	Same explanation as #3.

Message

Question: *Rate how appealing the message (sermon/homily, etc.) was to you. What was the message about? Please note approximately how long the message was (in minutes). How easy was the concept to grasp? How relevant was it to you? How interesting/enjoyable was the message?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	7.50
11:15 AM	6.40
Total	7.00

Time of Visit Message Comments

9:00 AM	The message was about 20 minutes long and was about how life was soon to get a bit busier in the fall (I'm assuming for those with children going back to school), but I don't know specifically what makes life busier in the fall. With the increase in juggling daily activities, we often lose sight of the bigger picture and our spiritual walk. The pastor made the analogy with juggling cats and how it's difficult and scratches at us, but we need to take the time to step aside occasionally and focus on God. I think it was a good message in general and exceedingly easy to grasp, but I really felt like I didn't learn anything. The sermons that stick with me are the ones that challenge me and the ones that make me more curious to dig into God's word and grow in my relationship with the creator. I didn't feel any of this and felt the sermon was utterly forgettable.
9:00 AM	The title of the Sunday sermon was "Security Systems." The Reverend began with a light personal tale of how her home has a security system and that it provides her some comfort. The theme's general idea moved from there to things like financial "security systems" like 401K & insurance, to other more complex security systems like family, all of which pale in comparison with the "security system" that is the love from God & Jesus Christ. While the message's core point that God's security is the only real security in this life and the next was easy to understand, some of what the Reverend said was a little off, or contradictory. The way she used and interpreted the Bible passages she referenced and Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Less Taken" got me thinking, but not necessarily in the best or most complex ways. I disagreed with her interpretations.

9:00 AM	I love youth services, as I have been a director of youth programming. The three speakers spoke of recent missions with passion and humility. They brought tears to my eyes for their commitment to service and humanity. I loved the message - I wished my grandsons could be a part of this community and learn from them.
9:00 AM	The message was about 'growing up.' I liked that they had a former reverend there to give the message. It really helped to have the children's message first, which was a boiled down version of what Ms. Bentley was speaking about. I thought it was an especially easy concept to understand, being that there are many times in life when people aren't sure about 'how'/'when' to grow up. The message was sort of long, though it was more us reading out the scripture as a congregation that took up the time. I'd say it was approximately 20 minutes long, though the service ended earlier than 10:00.
9:00 AM	The service did not have any dead space. The service sermon lasted about 20 minutes. It was easy to understand. The sermon was over scriptures of Hebrews 12 1-2 and Matthew 18: 1-5. The Pastor's sermon was about Jesus' cleansing in each of us. This was in relation to the baptisms that were being witnessed as they were cleansed and accepted by the church congregation. I liked the service I was not bored in anyway. The Pastor did a great job.
9:00 AM	The service was great. The message was about welcoming people into your home, meaning your church home. Pastor Lynn did a great job of connecting these ideas, and I liked how he peppered his message with songs and that he wasn't just speaking to us the entire time. There was no dead space and everything was very easy for me to understand. I also liked that the PowerPoint had all of the music and the scripture, too.
11:15 AM	I assume that this service was different than the normal service. They had a message in music with the choir that was leaving on a trip. It was wonderful and seemed to speak of hope and spreading faith. I would have liked to hear an actual sermon, though.
11:15 AM	I liked the message but wanted it to be longer. It was easy to understand and clear, but I wanted the message to be expounded upon, i.e. maybe incorporating another scripture that related to the message and giving more examples about why the Holy Spirit is with us, everywhere, all the time. There was no dead space. I felt moved but wanted more.

11:15 AM	There was no sermon. Several high school graduates shared their individual testimonies which were sincere. The liturgy was dry and mechanical. I felt like I was in a room full of emotionless robots reciting words on a screen. Yes, there were some moments of dead space, (like when the designated group of people were coming forward to be baptized), but it wasn't too distracting.
11:15 AM	The reverend spoke for about 20 minutes on being ministers to the community and how we are all called to be ministers, but some people are called with special gifts to become Stephen Ministers, or missionaries. The message was very clear and he used humor, a video and scripture to catch and keep our attention. He seemed very passionate and sincere in his message and as a person himself, and he kept my attention throughout the message. There was no empty space or downtime during the message.
11:15 AM	The message was about 30 minutes long. I enjoyed that the pastor did not read straight from the bible. He quoted a few lines but nothing too detailed. The message was about coming home, meaning coming back to church, and living in God's name and doing the right thing, home is where the heart is and that everyone was welcome at church. It was fairly stimulating, but my son seemed bored until the hand bell choir performed
11:15 AM	Same explanation as #3.

Speaker

Question: *Rate how well the speaker communicated the message. How well prepared and comfortable was the speaker? Who was giving the message (list names if known) and were they easy to listen to and understand? Describe any visual aids used to support the message such as videos, drama, scripture, or props.*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	8.33
11:15 AM	6.80
Total	7.64

Time of Visit Speaker Comments

9:00 AM	The pastor, James Austin, was the only one speaking for the entire service besides on gentleman who read a brief quote of scripture before the pastor spoke. The pastor was pretty well spoken, easy to understand, sincere and had a very friendly demeanor. He did try to crack some jokes and throw a bit of humor in the message, which is nice, but seemed a little forced. During the sermon, there were no visual aids, no reading from scripture and no videos or props. I think it would have been nice to have the pastor read from scripture some, as it pertains to the sermon. There was communion after the sermon, and a lot of talk before the communion. I felt it was too much talk, as most of it did not make me more understanding of communion and why it was important. After communion there were a few more songs, which was nice, and then the pastor dismissed everyone.
9:00 AM	Visiting Reverend Sue Wells was quite good. With the normal Pastor out at the Annual Conference in Corpus Christi, Reverend Wells filled in admirably. She kept a nice pace, was engaging, and never tired or stumbled during the talk. A projector screen near the ceiling showed the Biblical verses she was referring to. Also, during one section of the anecdotal section in the sermon, the Reverend began describing the curious animal known as the Fainting Goat. We all had a nice chuckle during her anecdote and laugh aloud when she played a nature segment on the projector showing how the goats faint and lock up, physically, after being scared. It was a wonderful way to describe how people, sometimes react when faced with very difficult decisions. After the sermon ended roughly 20 minutes later, I was still ready and willing to hear more.
9:00 AM	There was a young adult, youth and adult speaker. They were all perfect for the message they conveyed and all spoke with passion about their service experience. They were each likable and inviting.

9:00 AM	Sarah was very good at speaking and she seemed very prepared. She had some remarks prepared and had us all read along for the scripture. I loved that she told us special anecdotes from her own life. She had the scripture up on the projection screen.
9:00 AM	The associate Pastor was leading the service. He did very well in his Sermon and was enjoyable to listen to. They did have visual aids during the service. They had videos and scriptures and music on screen at all times. This was very easy to read and helpful to me. I did not feel lost for one moment during the service.
9:00 AM	Pastor Lynn was the service leader. He was easy to listen to, and brought the message down to a level that everyone could understand, even children. I loved that he played guitar and sang during his talk as well. There was a PowerPoint presentation to go along with the message and there was also a scripture reader as well.
11:15 AM	As I said before, this was a message in music. It was done wonderfully, but there wasn't a sermon delivered.
11:15 AM	Besides the pastor, Lynn Barton, there was a woman with short dark hair who talked about the music and some other stuff, and a man who read the scripture (Acts 2:1-21). Everyone seemed prepared, was engaging and easy to listen to and the props were fine. Although the guy who read the scripture did a fine job, I think I would've liked for Pastor Barton to read the scripture; maybe the message would've felt more cohesive.

11:15 AM

The pastor (Pastor Lynn) was leading the service. There was no sermon, so it is difficult for me to judge him as a speaker. Having said this, I did not find him particularly sincere or engaging, because he mostly recited the creeds on the projector screen and didn't have much to add to the service. The service itself was well-organized and followed the program on the bulletin closely. Each of the high school graduate speakers gave a short testimony and two of them referenced specific verses. One showed a brief video clip, which supported his point well. I was uncomfortable during the service because it did not feel reverent toward God for two main reasons: 1. The Brad Paisley song which references "Playboy magazines" and teenage romantic relationships. I think it's important for me to qualify why I found the playing of this song offensive besides the lyrics. Sometimes, a good pastor will talk about tough subjects like infidelity, pornographic addiction or drug abuse, in his/her sermon. Or a secular movie clip might be shown to illustrate a point. For example, that point might be about how God can rescue us from sin and bad choices through His forgiveness, His grace and mercy. In fact, I believe it is important for churches to talk about difficult or uncomfortable subjects because we are faced with them every day! As Christian Believers, we must constantly be reminded of the importance of turning away from sin and its physical and spiritual consequences. We can't understand how to do that if we don't talk about it. But, this Brad Paisley song had no point. Before it was played, one of the graduate speakers simply stated that this song was important to him and his fellow classmates. I could only guess as to why. And to play the whole song? I was cringing. 2. In my opinion, most of the pastor's comments were superlative, which felt awkward. During the baptisms, he said something to the effect of, "Yep, it's wet, it's okay." He didn't say anything inappropriate, I just thought his overall demeanor was too casual during the baptism /child dedication.

11:15 AM

There were several speakers during the entire service leading different areas of the message. I would have been confused had the worship brochure not listed what was happening during the service. It was a map for what was going on. The service was very similar to a Catholic mass. There seemed to be a lot happening in the short time that the service lasted: scripture reading, recognizing the new Stephen Ministers, the bell ringers that were leaving, communion and a testimonial. It felt like too much all at once.

11:15 AM Dr. Diana Sanchez was a very good speaker. She started off speaking, said a prayer then introduced the choir. They sang a song and then she congratulated a few of them for "graduating" to the next level in choir. Then there was a blonde lady, she didn't give her name, she didn't introduce herself and she was hard to understand. I felt like she rushed through what she was doing up on stage. She may have been nervous, but since I was just a visitor, I didn't understand her purpose or what she was talking about. The pamphlet that was given to me explained that she was just mentioning certain people from the church community that needed prayers in their lives. There was a projector screen displaying the information, but it was hard to see. They need another screen somewhere in the building because there were tall people standing in front of me and in order to view it I had to continue looking around them. Pastor Lynn was very clear spoken and funny, and made everyone laugh a few times.

11:15 AM Same explanation as #3.

Post-Service Atmosphere

Question: *Rate the overall hospitality of the church after the service ended. Wait around a few minutes to see if anyone interacts with you. Please comment on the atmosphere/mood/vibe and whether it would make guests feel like a part of the group. Explain how this affected your overall impression of the church.*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	7.83
11:15 AM	7.83
Total	7.83

Time of Visit	Post Service Atmosphere Comments
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9:00 AM	After dismissing everyone, the pastor quickly made his way to the exit door and greeted everyone as they left. I felt this was a very nice gesture, refreshing and personable. No one else greeted me afterward or interacted with me, however. I felt the vibe was easygoing, sincere and friendly, but not particularly engaging. I feel like this describes the church in general pretty well - sincere and friendly, but not engaging.
9:00 AM	After the service ended, people quickly got up and left the chapel. I think everyone was headed toward the Independence Day lunch that had been planned, and to which we had been invited a couple of times. As we left the chapel, we were thanked by the greeters at the door. Everyone seemed to be in a very pleasant mood. Although we hung back for a brief period, we didn't wander too much. The feeling, however, was that any conversation we might wish to start would be quickly and cheerfully begin.
9:00 AM	Folks again were friendly and welcoming but not intrusive. I had a wonderful couple who basically adopted me and introduced me to folks and led me to coffee hour, as they knew the signage for that was nonexistent. They seemed genuinely interested in me as a person, as did the others I met. No one proselytized or preached, just welcomed me freely.
9:00 AM	There was a man sitting next to me who told me it was nice to see me when we were leaving the church. Reverend Sarah was greeting people on the way out of the service and she was very warm. I felt very positively about the church after this and would definitely return, based upon that.
9:00 AM	I did look around the room. There were only two people that said hello as members beside the two greeters. I did pray with them and hold hands. One of them had their child in the service. It was nice to see the young ones at the service.

9:00 AM	At the end, everyone held hands and said a prayer. I liked that Pastor Lynn invited everyone to hold hands, but still stressed that if people did not want to, they shouldn't feel out of place by not participating. I was looking around after the service, and the woman sitting next to me in my pew asked if I was going to enjoy coffee and juice after the service and if I would be coming back next week. As I was leaving, Pastor Lynn shook my hand, repeated my name, and told me it was wonderful to have me.
11:15 AM	Everyone was very nice, but after the service it would have been nice if someone had invited me to the coffee hour or introduced me to the pastor. That would be my only points of feedback.
11:15 AM	Pastor Barton greeted everyone at the door when leaving, so that's always nice. A couple of people said hello and asked how I enjoyed the service and said they hoped to see me again. It was a good amount of interacting. I'm somewhat shy, so I appreciate that I wasn't bombarded with people asking me questions. It was a nice, friendly atmosphere.
11:15 AM	Many people were friendly and smiled or nodded at me.
11:15 AM	I walked around the hallways looking like I was not sure what I was looking for, and Reverend Barton came and said it was very nice to meet me and used my name. I was impressed that he remembered it. No one else said anything to me, so I used the bathroom again and left.
11:15 AM	I did look around because we were searching for the restroom. No one must have noticed because we had to locate it on our own.
11:15 AM	I walked into the lobby after the service had ended. The atmosphere was positive, everyone was interacting with each other. I was not approached while in the lobby. My overall impression of the church was a good one.

Information

Question: *Rate your overall impression of the connect resources. These can include, but may not be limited to: the bulletin, brochures, gifts, website, social media, information table, welcome/visitor center, calendar of events, etc. Take time to look around. What types of information did they have? Comment on the resources the church uses to connect with people including whether, at any point, there was an opportunity for you to leave your contact information. If there is a website, browse through it, and comment on your overall impression. What information was available on the website to help first time guests? What else would you like to see on the website?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	8.00
11:15 AM	9.33
Total	8.67

Time of Visit	Information Comments
9:00 AM	The bulletin is well laid out and organized. It describes the outline of the service well, lists the names of the people running the service and has inserts regarding church activities, youth programs, etc. I was handed a form where I put down my contact information as a new visitor/guest. This was good. The website seems very well organized and full of good resources, including YouTube videos. After visiting the website, I was expecting a more engaged service and was surprised that this wasn't the case. I expected announcements during the service of youth programs, things the church was involved in, etc., but there was none of this. They have a lot of good resources but I felt the downfall is you have to dig for them yourself.
9:00 AM	As mentioned before, the foyer area was elegant and sparse, with very few brightly advertised pamphlet stations seen in many churches nowadays. At the beginning of service, however, we were given a visitors card and encouraged to fill it out. There was one mention of Facebook where the regular Pastor was keeping the congregation abreast of his vacationing with post updates. WUMC's website is pretty good. It's relatively simple and easy to navigate yet it also user-friendly in regard to layout & design. I particularly like the automatic scroll of announcements and stories on the homepage. The different sections and pages are also clearly labeled and seem very "clickable." The only thing I didn't see was a clear spot for visitors. With so much easily accessible information on the website, the lack of a section dedicated to curious non-members is a bit conspicuous.

9:00 AM	Newsletters, brochures and registration forms were readily available and easy to understand. I liked the method of getting guests to fill out information as well as for members to update information. The website, like the printed pieces, is welcoming, clean and precise. It's easy on the eyes and enjoyable to read.
9:00 AM	The brochure included the bulletin as well. I thought it was very well done and very informative. There was also an announcement about how everything is going digital and the database would be digital as well. I think it's very good for churches to 'get with the times' and go digital. During this announcement, we were all given a chance to put our contact information in so they'd get in contact with people. The website is user-friendly but it wasn't super clear where to find information for new or potential members.
9:00 AM	It was not clear if there was any more brochures of the church. I did view that their church bulletin had most of the upcoming information of their church news and website. I did see the table at the front desk to the right side of the entrance. Due to the entrance and many people coming in to the service, I was unable to view all that was at this location for me to read. I did visit their website before I attended the service. The website was easy to find what I needed about the service, music and their beliefs. There was information mentioned and in their bulletin about the children VBS registration and the camp offered to them. There is a Calendar of events included in their bulletin if anyone was interested to join. I did not find any dead links with any of their information.
9:00 AM	There was a ton of information regarding the church. There were brochures everywhere. In the bulletin, there was various information on the happenings going on in the church, the schedule, how to get in contact with the church as a new member, etc. The website is very helpful. It's always nice to have all of the contact information on the home page instead of having to go to a "Contact" page. The website is quite simple and easy to use. All of the pertinent info (worship times, children's info, contact info) is on the home page. I really like the Calendar page. It clearly lays out the month's activities/events. No dead links as far as I could tell.
11:15 AM	I was personally handed a welcome packet with resources after the service. They seem to be very family-driven with camps and outreach. As I said previously, maybe a coffee hour or meet-and-greet for visitors would be helpful. The website was helpful with resources about the church and staff and the service times. However, I could not find much as far as social media, which might be helpful for them, or link to them more directly through the website.

11:15 AM	Yes, there were multiple tables with info on them that I could've picked up if I were interested in knowing more. Also, the church bulletin is very informative itself. The website is great, with lots of info that's easy to find. The calendar is clear, and everything is set up very well. It seems like the church has lots of ways to get involved and makes an effort to appeal to every population in the congregation. I didn't see any dead links or inconsistencies.
11:15 AM	The bulletin had ample information on all of these things that a visitor could easily find. The website is easy to navigate and well-categorized. There was camp information for children found on the bulletin and an informative paragraph description about it.
11:15 AM	It was clear that the church offered a website that was easy to navigate and find information on. The brochure offered many different types of information for many events and venues. I especially like the Stephen Ministries that they have in place. The website is very informational and states their core values and beliefs, and their children's programs. There was a new visitor contact form to fill out, but there was not one in the brochure when I visited. It was in the hallway instead. I would have preferred that more information was offered by the members themselves during my visit. All events and information could be attained online easily, but it is impersonal.
11:15 AM	The pamphlet that was handed out had all there contact information on it as well as little place cards that were behind the pews for us to view and take with us. I didn't see an information table anywhere. The website is very well organized and easy to locate additional information regarding this church. There is a whole section geared towards the children's programs at their church. A calendar with the current and upcoming events is located on their website. No all of the links worked fine and there were not obvious inconsistencies on the website
11:15 AM	The resources were readily available and clearly visible inside the church. Brochures, calendars, and schedules were easily available. The website was very informative. The website contained information about schedules, upcoming events, current programs, and how to contact the church. The website did not have information specifically for visitors but the information was helpful for first time visitors. I could not recommend what else I would like to see on the website because the website contained sufficient information. There was information about the different service time on this date on the website.

Friendliness

Question: *Overall, rate how friendly the church was to you during your visit. Comment on how welcome you felt.*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	7.83
11:15 AM	8.83
Total	8.33

Time of Visit	Friendliness Comments
9:00 AM	The atmosphere was more quiet and polite, and people were all friendly. I felt welcome, but I did not feel like anyone really wanted to get to know me. I felt comfortable, but not like I was being engaged by anyone.
9:00 AM	The church was exceedingly friendly without being overbearing. The whole time, we felt welcome without feeling like we were imposing and left to explore on our own without being ignored. We couldn't have asked for a better balance.
9:00 AM	The church is lovely. I could see myself getting involved with the church, as the people were so welcoming. It was an hour filled with peaceful love.
9:00 AM	I thought the church did a very good job of welcoming me. The church-wide welcome was good and I liked that the people sitting around me were friendly. However, when we did personal prayers, I felt a bit pressured to share personal things with other members and it might be a bit too much for first time visitors.
9:00 AM	I felt very welcomed by the greeters. One of them gave me a hug and welcomed me back. I thanked her for sitting with me. As for the church members, only two were sincere but the families all seemed sincere but they were with their families and the graduates which this was important for them at this time I can sincerely understand. But I did not feel ignored in anyway.
9:00 AM	I definitely felt welcomed to this church. Because it was so small, I felt like it was a family. That can be overwhelming to some people.
11:15 AM	Overall I felt very welcomed and enjoyed the service. The visit would surely lead me to return.
11:15 AM	It was very friendly; I felt very welcomed.
11:15 AM	I felt welcomed and the congregants were very friendly toward me. Even though I was the only person sitting in my row, people went out of their way to greet me.

11:15 AM I did not feel extremely welcomed during my visit because of the lack of interaction and greetings. No one who did greet me offered their name or asked me any personal questions. I was impressed by the fact that Reverend Barton greeted me, asked my name and then directed me to a man who was seated in the pew in front of me, and that he greeted me again after the service by my name.

11:15 AM The church was pretty friendly and we felt welcome.

11:15 AM Everyone that was present while I was in the lobby appeared friendly and inviting.

Children's/Youth Ministry

Question: *Rate your impression of the children's/youth ministry at this church. Even if you don't have children, consider the issues (safety, cleanliness, easy to locate, staffing, etc.) from a parent's point of view. Based on your experience at the church, would you feel comfortable leaving a child in their care? What information (e.g. website, bulletin, signage, etc.) was available to help you make this decision? Do you think children/youth would enjoy their time there? Why? If this church does not appear to offer anything for children, how does that impact your impression of this church?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	7.83
11:15 AM	7.33
Total	7.58

Time of Visit Children's/Youth Ministry Comments

9:00 AM The only interaction I had with the youth ministry is what was on the website and the insert in the church bulletin. The pastor did not mention anything about it, and the only children I saw were the few in attendance in the main sanctuary with their parents. So, I don't feel like the youth program was showcased in any way. From the website and bulletin, it seems like they have an average amount of youth activities, but because nothing was mentioned in the main sermon, I question how much attendance there is in these programs. I would feel comfortable leaving a child in their care (seems safe), but I don't know if the child would have enough other children to interact with and have an enjoyable time. This may be the case, but I had no way to gauge this.

9:00 AM The young woman who approached us at the beginning was in charge of the youth program. Near the end of service, members of the teenage group were brought up to the front of the chapel as it was explained that they were about to spend a week doing service work in Austin. A couple high schoolers were apparently already on a plane to do service work away from town. All in all, the children's program looked to be of decent quality. All the kids looks alert, eager, and happy. If I had children I'd feel just fine leaving my child in their care, should it come to that. All of the children seemed happy to be there.

9:00 AM	I witnessed a youth service, so I saw firsthand the results of the work done with children. If this is any indication, the children's ministry is exceptional. The story for children during the service wasn't particularly that good, but I set high standards on that portion since I used to do that as a director of religious education. But it was done lovingly and well.
9:00 AM	I liked that they had a children's message in the beginning of the service and how they did it in front of the congregation. They didn't announce having an area for children otherwise but seeing as everyone seemed so welcoming, I probably would feel comfortable leaving my children in their care. If I had children and was a potential member of this church, I might want there to be a bit more focus on the children, maybe a Sunday school. The children sitting next to me seemed quite restless.
9:00 AM	I did see the sign of the where Children Ministry was located. It was clean and well staffed. I do not have a child so their service was not needed when I attended. Now yes, if I did have a child with me, I would feel confident that my child would be in great hands. It looks like the child would have fun if left at this area.
9:00 AM	I thought the children's ministry would be somewhere I'd leave my child, if I had one. Pastor Lynn told another first-time visitor family about their amenities there because they had a small child, and I felt like that would be somewhere good for children and babies.
11:15 AM	I was not personally aware of any children's services, but I did see children there who seemed quite comfortable. If I had children I would certainly trust them there.
11:15 AM	The church is kind of spread out with what seems like multiple buildings. It may just be two buildings, but it seems like more. So, I saw exterior signs for the children's area pointing away from the main entrance, but didn't go over there because I don't have kids. It seems like the children's area was in a separate building or at least disconnected from the main entrance. If I did have kids and I was visiting, I would want them closer to me. So if the children's area is closer to the main entrance, maybe making that more clear would be beneficial, or maybe have a nearby children's area just for visitors.
11:15 AM	I did see signage leading to the children's ministry, but I did not have a clear impression one way or another as to whether it would be a fun place for my child, whether it was well staffed or secure.

11:15 AM I did see a sign in the building when I entered that indicated a childcare room, but I did not see any particular information as to where the children had any kind of classroom or activities going on during the service. Like I said earlier, there were several children in the adult service, so maybe they do not offer children's services or activities during the second service that I attended? If I had children, I think I would have had to ask if there was something available for my children. I would have needed to go with them if there was and see it for myself in order to feel comfortable leaving them in it.

11:15 AM I didn't see any signs to show me where the children's ministries were located. I didn't arrive in enough time to take them to the classes either, because that started at 10:10am and we arrived at 11am. Based on the information on the website and based on the children's interactions with the music director Dr. Sanchez, I would feel comfortable leaving my children for the children's ministries and I feel that they would enjoy it very much.

11:15 AM Information about the children's ministry was easily visible on walls and easily available through brochures. I would feel comfortable leaving my children in their care because of cleanliness and location of the children's room. I believe my children would enjoy their time there because of the activities I was able to see.

Diversity and Outreach

Question: *Rate the strength of the church's diversity and outreach efforts. What did you observe, either before or during your visit, that leads you to believe that this church values diversity? "Diversity" means more than different races and backgrounds; it also includes people who are young and old, wealthy and poor, and male and female. What specifically did you observe that demonstrates the church's efforts to attract various groups from the surrounding community? Examples may include, but aren't limited to, offering a service in another language, showing diversity in pictures, using different styles of music, etc.*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	6.00
11:15 AM	7.60
Total	6.73

Time of Visit Diversity and Outreach Comments

9:00 AM	I had no impression of diversity at the church. All members were white and mostly older (45 to 50 years old and up). In fact, I don't think there was anyone in attendance (besides myself, the singer and some children) who was younger than 40. I didn't see anything on the website or bulletin regarding diversity besides some outreach programs to other countries and to poorer areas of Austin. I'm not sure what the church can do to attract diversity (the local demographics are mainly white, wealthy and older), but I really didn't see a strong effort. However, I still felt welcome and didn't feel like this really detracted from the service overall.
9:00 AM	I didn't notice a whole lot of diversity. Apart from the teenage children brought along by their parents, my girlfriend and I seemed to be the youngest people there by a number of years. The ethnic and social makeup of the church members was also monotonous. They all seemed to be white, upper-middle class. The gender makeup, however, seemed fairly even. In fact, most came in pairing groups or as couples. I don't think the lack of diversity is necessarily the fault of the church. WUMC is located just outside of central Austin, in a neighborhood that doesn't have a lot of variety. So none of this is to suggest that the church appeared in any way adverse to diversity. There was one younger man in the back who was in an advanced wheelchair. When it came time, the Reverend asked us to "stand, if you are able," which was thoughtful.

9:00 AM	I am impressed by the outreach done in this church and the care programs for folks of varying needs. There appears to be some diversity in ages and gender, but it's not clear from what I saw or have read how diverse they are in race/ethnicity and socioeconomically. But again, they are in an area of Austin that may be less diverse in these areas.
9:00 AM	While the message was that the church was very welcoming and inclusive, there were no other indicators that diversity was a main focus of this church in today's service. In the bulletin, there was more indication that other age groups had different services available to them.
9:00 AM	I did observe that in their bulletin they included the mobile loaves that is known for homeless hunger program that serves the Austin area. I did see other groups such as the Al Non and Weight Watchers program listed on their bulletin. These are all great programs to include in their church. This would lead me to believe they are involved with the poor.
9:00 AM	Tying in the message of having a welcoming church home, Pastor Lynn tried to stress that this church was very welcoming to people, especially what he called "people on the margins of society." I appreciated that he mentioned LGBTQ people and welcoming them in, especially because that seems to be such a hot topic with churches right now and Austin is such a diverse community.
11:15 AM	There was not a lot of diversity in race or age, but it appears they might be open to it. The music did try to provide a great bit of diversity for different people.
11:15 AM	As I stated before, I think there's only so much a church in Westlake Hills can do as far as diversity goes. The congregation did not have much diversity other than a good mix of gender. There weren't very many young/ youngish (20s to 30s) or non-white people there, but they can only do so much being in Westlake. The reality of the situation, based on how much it costs to live in that area, is that there are not many young/youngish non-white people who can afford or feel comfortable being in that area. The only thing I can think of would be to partner with other churches that are more diverse and maybe put on some Christian events together. There are a lot of Hispanic/ black/young churches with church vans that could go over there for special events. Maybe Westlake UMC could get together with a different church and offer to televise a special event with popcorn and drinks. Really, I think just inviting churches from different parts of Austin into the church and making people aware of its existence would help with diversity.

11:15 AM	I saw many people in different life stages, from the very young to elderly. It seemed to me that the congregation was comprised of both wealthy and poor individuals and families. I did see a small proportion of Hispanics, but most were white. Still, I was very comfortable and felt welcomed. I think the lack of diversity is mostly attributed to the neighborhood itself.
11:15 AM	They offer a vacation Bible School and a pre-school, as well as a high school Bible study. They also have a ministries network and therapy available, but it seems to be geared toward the members. I did not see any kind of neighborhood outreach or ministry that outsiders could learn about or access without getting on the church's website or coming to the church itself.
11:15 AM	I was a little nervous because my two step children are Hispanic and the majority of the church was Caucasian, but they were very nice to my children and welcomed them. The pastor did mention that everyone was welcome there no matter your sexual preference, ethnicity, age, etc., though. I don't recall that they offer any other sermons in different languages, but they do have a lot of other programs such as yoga, counseling, and different age group bible classes.
11:15 AM	I could not comment on outreach efforts before and during service because I was not present at that time. It appeared there was little racial and economical diversity.

Return

Question: *Based on your overall experience and what this church has to offer, please rate how willing you would be to return to this church. Comment on why you would or would not return. Would you encourage other people to attend church here? In your opinion, what groups (older/younger/families/college/teens/children) are more likely to be attracted to this church?*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	6.83
11:15 AM	6.17
Total	6.50

Time of Visit	Return Comments
9:00 AM	I like the church in that I felt it was sincere, but I did not feel engaged or challenged in any way. It is a nice church, well taken care of, and friendly people, but I don't feel like it offers me anything at all that any other church cannot provide. I would not encourage other people to attend for this same reason. I think older, more traditional people would be attracted to this church.
9:00 AM	The overall experience was pleasant and warm for both me and my girlfriend. The kindness of the younger gentleman and his wife who introduced themselves at the beginning was such that we felt bad for leaving without getting to know them more. Truthfully, I probably wouldn't return to this church on my own accord, if only because it is a little out of the way from my own house. That said, I certainly wouldn't dread or be adverse to returning and would feel a slight tinge of happiness to do so. The impression I got based on the advertised activities, sermon and general makeup of the crowd was that this church primarily serves older single adults and growing families. I did not see much obvious outreach toward young adults, nor trying to connect with high school age youth.
9:00 AM	I would definitely return (even drive the 45 minutes) and bring my family and friends if I were to join any Methodist community. I would love to see my grandsons involved with the youth group, but alas, they live in Colorado.
9:00 AM	I thought everyone was very friendly at this church and I would definitely return. I feel like churches are supposed to foster a sense of community and this church did a very good job of that. Based on today's service, I would imagine that many families with young children and also 'empty nesters' would enjoy this church.

9:00 AM	I would visit this church again one day. The travel from my home was beautiful with its peaceful settings in the mountain and the lake area. I would encourage all ages from older, young families to attend. I also recommend for the college age and teens to attend.
9:00 AM	I would return to this church. It was very welcoming. I would recommend families for this church, because it already has a homey feeling and many of the members knew each other already. I feel like that would be really good, especially for a family who recently moved.
11:15 AM	I would be willing to return. I think I would hope for more of an outreach to young adults/professionals. That would certainly bring me back. I would recommend this place to others. I think that young singles in their 20s is an area they need to improve on outreach or resources for before I would refer some of my friends in that group to attend.
11:15 AM	I would return to the church because I felt like they were a group of people with good intentions and a good formula for being more Christ-like and spreading the word of God. I like that they put so much attention on strengthening themselves with learning about God and Jesus evidenced by all of the classes they offer. I like that they have a therapy group and many social events also. I would recommend this church to anyone I knew who lived in that area. I would recommend this church to everyone regardless of age/race/kid count.
11:15 AM	I felt this church focuses more on ritual and tradition than it does teaching what it means to have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and how to live as a Christian. I don't think this church is very effective at showing what that looks like. Reciting poetic words on a screen may have some value, but I neither learned anything or felt spiritually nourished. Because of the overemphasis on religious ritual rather than on Christian truth, scriptural teaching, and fostering true discipleship, I will not be attending this church in the future. I would not encourage anyone of any age to attend this church. The pastor and many of its congregants may very well be true Christian believers. I'm not to be the judge of that. However, I didn't learn anything, and reciting a bunch of creeds and vague language about "spiritual centering" does little to strengthen my relationship with the Lord.

11:15 AM	I probably would not return to this church. It is more of an older crowd that I do not have a lot of in common with. There is a lack of sincere and unscripted communication. I like to sing and meditate on God while allowing the Holy Spirit to fill me and bring me to a place that I can receive the message more fully. I would like to see more enthusiasm in the members. I did really like the reverend and his enthusiasm, his humor and his sincerity. I especially like the Stephen Ministries program that they have in place. I would recommend an age group of about late 40s and older. I would not recommend any parents with children who lose attention easily or cannot sit still during an adult service.
11:15 AM	I may or may not return, I enjoyed the service and the people, but it is a little far from where we live. I would definitely attend at least once more to see how well I enjoy the second time and make a decision after that. I would probably refer families to this church.
11:15 AM	I would not likely return to this church because of my racial and economic background. I would encourage others to visit if they were of similar background to the church attendees. In my opinion, older and family groups would be attracted to this church.

Overall Commentary

Question: *Rate your overall perception of this church. Based on your experience, what suggestions do you have for them? Keep in mind that the purpose of Faith Perceptions' research is to help this church improve the experience for future guests. If you chose to fill out a visitors' card, the church may follow up by sending you a letter, email, etc. We track these communications, so please send us an email indicating when and how they contacted you. Please share with us any other observations you have about this church that may not have been explained earlier.*

Average Score:

9:00 AM	7.33
11:15 AM	6.83
Total	7.08

Time of Visit	Overall Comments
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9:00 AM	I feel like the general theme for this church is friendly, sincere but not challenging or engaging. Nothing felt engaging. The music didn't, the people didn't, the sermon didn't, there was no talk about what the church was involved in and what programs it offered. Because of this, the service and church, although pleasant, felt very forgettable. I think making efforts to be more challenging and engaging will breathe new life into this church. The pastor (or someone) should get up before or after the sermon and talk about what the church is involved in and what they are doing. Then challenge the congregation to be a part of it and not necessarily just with their wallets. Challenge them to become active in the church. Seek out sermons that offer new insight into God's word that make people think and make them want to open and study the Bible for themselves.
9:00 AM	Based on all that was said above, I think WUMC was a wonderful neighborhood church that was relaxed without being too casual and ceremonious without being stifling. Again, the members of the church was absolutely wonderful and made us feel comfortable right away. That said, the church may want to up its efforts in reaching young families and newlyweds, through connection, activities, etc. The young couple we spoke with seemed a bit starved for peers. Again, the neighborhood seemed more situated for established families, but the membership could use some younger blood. Young families are great because they'll help keep the church moving toward the future. Related to this suggestion, is actively seeking out Hispanic members, particularly younger Hispanic individuals, who are often starting families themselves.

9:00 AM	<p>I really liked this faith community. I loved all aspects of the space and spiritual experience and friendliness of the people. I do not know, however, how welcoming this congregation is to people of all races/cultures or to the GLBT community. If they are open to all races and lifestyles they need to make sure that folks in these diverse groups know it so they will feel comfortable visiting. I'm not sure, if I were not a older white woman, if I would have been treated as well as I was. I expect I would be as well embraced, but there was nothing obvious suggesting that that would have occurred. I truly enjoyed my visit. Thank you.</p>
9:00 AM	<p>Everyone was very welcoming and I felt like I was genuinely wanted as a part of this community today. My suggestion would be to have more of a focus on the children in a separate area. Besides that, it was a wonderful service.</p>
9:00 AM	<p>I would rate this church a 10. I felt very comfortable. I did filled out a visitor card with my information. The music is to be commended with their outstanding vocals and band members. The only suggestion I would make is the signs before coming to the main entrance due to the winding roads. I almost turned around and went back home thinking I was lost since it was a far distance from my home.</p>
9:00 AM	<p>While I felt very welcomed, that much welcoming can sometimes be overwhelming, especially to people coming back to a church home. It's important to remember that sometimes people like to come anonymously.</p>
11:15 AM	<p>The church was really welcoming. I would say a coffee hour and meet-and-greet for guests and some focused outreach on young adults/young professionals.</p>
11:15 AM	<p>It was a great experience overall. Like I said, I would've liked a longer, more intense message with more engaging music. More signage in the area guiding people to the church would be helpful. No one did or said anything to make me uncomfortable; everyone was great. I think asking the congregation to ponder how they can better implement the message in their daily lives (action steps) could be incorporated into the message. Also, giving the congregation more examples of people in the Bible being moved by the Holy Spirit would help the congregation know what it looks/feels like when the Holy Spirit moves within us.</p>

11:15 AM Suggestions for this church: Share a Christian message that is scripturally based during each service. It doesn't have to be long or complicated. Screen and advise your presenters. Ask your leaders and yourself if it is more important to please the Lord by sharing God's truth (sometimes hard truth) or to please the community. I would suggest that this church become more spiritually disciplined (with good theology!) and really reach out to the hearts of the people in the community. How? Share more of what God has to teach us in scripture and be authentic about it, not ritualistic or methodical. That Brad Paisley song was offensive to hear in church. I even have problems having my kids listen to lyrics like that on the radio. When people fall away from the truth of the Lord (which also means seeking righteousness), they find it more comfortable to turn to ritual.

11:15 AM I felt like the members were mostly an older crowd and the church is steeped in traditional values. This is good in that they do not sway in their core values and beliefs. As far as appealing to a younger generation, I think that they would encounter some issues. I did not feel completely welcome there because of the insincere greetings and lack of communication with me as a newcomer. I enjoy more music and worship and would like to see more of that as well as more member participation. There were children in the service, about 8 years old, and they were distracting to me. I do not understand why they were not in a class for themselves where they could learn with other children their age. While I like the fact that this church is traditional in values, offers many different activities and events to get involved in, and does not allow food and drink in the sanctuary during the service, I would encourage more of the Holy Spirit during the whole encounter and emotional connections.

11:15 AM I did fill out a visitors form and received an email within a few hours after leaving. Nothing made me feel uncomfortable or offended. I would say that if they do tend to get new visitors and guests at the church to take a few minutes to introduce themselves to the guests. I saw many people wearing name tags or badges. I am guessing they are part of the church, but no one explained that to us either. We arrived 15 minutes early so I feel that maybe some light music would be nice while we are waiting as well.

11:15 AM The church's appearance was very inviting. The lobby and worship area were also very inviting. The attendees appeared very friendly and the atmosphere felt positive.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 11:15 AM

Service Date: 6/16/2013

Service Title: Sunday worship

Guest Gender: F

Guest Age: 24

Guest ID: 26743

Overall Rating: 9

1. Community Awareness

I stopped at a convenience store about half a mile away. I asked if they could give me directions to the church. They knew it right away and told me very quickly how to get there. They seemed to be very aware of it.

2. Signage

There were signs off the main road and then for the turn. There were great signs describing the buildings. My only feedback would be that if I had not seen the greeter standing at the door, it would have taken a moment to figure out the main entrance. The interior signage I saw was just the PowerPoint presentation during the service. I saw no other signage that stood out.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

The greeter at the door was wonderful. The greeter was polite and welcoming but did not overwhelm, since it was the start of the service.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

Everyone was amazingly welcoming. I had several people come up to me during the peace and at the end of the ceremony. If anything, I would say it was a bit overwhelming. I would suggest spreading out the greeting. Don't all jump up at one time. But everyone was very open.

5. Seating

The seats were great and comfortable. I did not feel overcrowded or like I was being pushed to sit in a particular place. It was very inviting.

6. Music

Well, the service was very centered around music. The choir was outstanding and the breadth of diversity in the music was quite refreshing. There truly was something for everyone.

7. In-Service Greeting

It was wonderful. I was greeted two different times during the service. It was just right.

8. Message

I assume that this service was different than the normal service. They had a message in music with the choir that was leaving on a trip. It was wonderful and seemed to speak of hope and spreading faith. I would have liked to hear an actual sermon, though.

9. Speaker

As I said before, this was a message in music. It was done wonderfully, but there wasn't a sermon delivered.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

Everyone was very nice, but after the service it would have been nice if someone had invited me to the coffee hour or introduced me to the pastor. That would be my only points of feedback.

11. Information

I was personally handed a welcome packet with resources after the service. They seem to be very family-driven with camps and outreach. As I said previously, maybe a coffee hour or meet-and-greet for visitors would be helpful. The website was helpful with resources about the church and staff and the service times. However, I could not find much as far as social media, which might be helpful for them, or link to them more directly through the website.

12. Friendliness

Overall I felt very welcomed and enjoyed the service. The visit would surely lead me to return.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

I was not personally aware of any children's services, but I did see children there who seemed quite comfortable. If I had children I would certainly trust them there.

14. Diversity and Outreach

There was not a lot of diversity in race or age, but it appears they might be open to it. The music did try to provide a great bit of diversity for different people.

15. Return

I would be willing to return. I think I would hope for more of an outreach to young adults/professionals. That would certainly bring me back. I would recommend this place to others. I think that young singles in their 20s is an area they need to improve on outreach or resources for before I would refer some of my friends in that group to attend.

16. Overall Experience

The church was really welcoming. I would say a coffee hour and meet-and-greet for guests and some focused outreach on young adults/young professionals.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 11:15 AM
Service Date: 5/19/2013
Service Title: At All Times and Places
Guest Gender: F
Guest Age: 31
Guest ID: 24706
Overall Rating: 8

1. Community Awareness

I stopped in a nearby Starbucks. The girl I asked did not know where the church was, although the church is tucked away so it's not very visible even to the immediate area. Also, there were a lot of signs (maybe five or six) all along the highway for a nearby church called One Chapel meeting at a high school. I would suggest more signage, including the vision statement "Following One, Serving All," in the immediate area.

2. Signage

Yes, the signs at the church were great. Even though there seemed to be a lot of buildings spaced out, the main entrance sign was very visible. There could be more signs before you get to the church alerting you that the church is nearby. For example, at the corner of Redbud Trail and Bee Caves there could be a sign with the name of the church pointing you in the right direction. I also think this would help with church visibility.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

The greeter was great - eye contact, sincerity, everything.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

There was a good atmosphere, although I am partial to the feel of the building - I'm a big fan of stone and wood. I don't remember if there was music being played, but it wasn't dead silent, either. Yes, people other than the greeters acknowledged me. People were friendly - it was casual and not too pushy.

5. Seating

The seating was comfortable enough, and it wasn't too crowded. The room was about 80 percent full and the congregation was evenly distributed.

6. Music

I would characterize the music as traditional, with bells and all. I don't think I've been to a church with chamber bells before, so that was very interesting. There were also regular songs that the congregation participated in. The last song (closing hymn) was interactive. It was fun seeing adults being demonstrative; it made it a more casual experience. Also, the benediction was nice - everyone held hands, and it added to the feeling of togetherness. I have mixed feelings about the chamber bells. On one hand I like that they are old-school, traditional and bring a thoughtful, almost meditative feel to the service, but I also think that listening to them calms the mood, so having them in the middle of the service subdues the energy at a time when you probably want more energy. Maybe if they were just at the beginning and end of the service. The songs (other than the closing hymn) weren't very engaging. I think having a choir, even a small one (with microphones) would help raise the energy level. I don't think that music has to be only contemporary and upbeat to be engaging and appeal to young people. Adding more contemporary and upbeat music would be nice, but more soulful and melodic music with instruments would appeal to everyone.

7. In-Service Greeting

Yes, I was greeted during the service and welcomed from the pulpit; it felt sincere. I appreciate that the greetings weren't too pushy. I feel like a lot of churches are way too pushy.

8. Message

I liked the message but wanted it to be longer. It was easy to understand and clear, but I wanted the message to be expounded upon, i.e. maybe incorporating another scripture that related to the message and giving more examples about why the Holy Spirit is with us, everywhere, all the time. There was no dead space. I felt moved but wanted more.

9. Speaker

Besides the pastor, Lynn Barton, there was a woman with short dark hair who talked about the music and some other stuff, and a man who read the scripture (Acts 2:1-21). Everyone seemed prepared, was engaging and easy to listen to and the props were fine. Although the guy who read the scripture did a fine job, I think I would've liked for Pastor Barton to read the scripture; maybe the message would've felt more cohesive.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

Pastor Barton greeted everyone at the door when leaving, so that's always nice. A couple of people said hello and asked how I enjoyed the service and said they hoped to see me again. It was a good amount of interacting. I'm somewhat shy, so I appreciate that I wasn't bombarded with people asking me questions. It was a nice, friendly atmosphere.

11. Information

Yes, there were multiple tables with info on them that I could've picked up if I were interested in knowing more. Also, the church bulletin is very informative itself. The website is great, with lots of info that's easy to find. The calendar is clear, and everything is set up very well. It seems like the church has lots of ways to get involved and makes an effort to appeal to every population in the congregation. I didn't see any dead links or inconsistencies.

12. Friendliness

It was very friendly; I felt very welcomed.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

The church is kind of spread out with what seems like multiple buildings. It may just be two buildings, but it seems like more. So, I saw exterior signs for the children's area pointing away from the main entrance, but didn't go over there because I don't have kids. It seems like the children's area was in a separate building or at least disconnected from the main entrance. If I did have kids and I was visiting, I would want them closer to me. So if the children's area is closer to the main entrance, maybe making that more clear would be beneficial, or maybe have a nearby children's area just for visitors.

14. Diversity and Outreach

As I stated before, I think there's only so much a church in Westlake Hills can do as far as diversity goes. The congregation did not have much diversity other than a good mix of gender. There weren't very many young/ youngish (20s to 30s) or non-white people there, but they can only do so much being in Westlake. The reality of the situation, based on how much it costs to live in that area, is that there are not many young/youngish non-white people who can afford or feel comfortable being in that area. The only thing I can think of would be to partner with other churches that are more diverse and maybe put on some Christian events together. There are a lot of Hispanic/ black/young churches with church vans that could go over there for special events. Maybe Westlake UMC could get together with a different church and offer to televise a special event with popcorn and drinks. Really, I think just inviting churches from different parts of Austin into the church and making people aware of its existence would help with diversity.

15. Return

I would return to the church because I felt like they were a group of people with good intentions and a good formula for being more Christ-like and spreading the word of God. I like that they put so much attention on strengthening themselves with learning about God and Jesus evidenced by all of the classes they offer. I like that they have a therapy group and many social events also. I would recommend this church to anyone I knew who lived in that area. I would recommend this church to everyone regardless of age/race/kid count.

16. Overall Experience

It was a great experience overall. Like I said, I would've liked a longer, more intense message with more engaging music. More signage in the area guiding people to the church would be helpful. No one did or said anything to make me uncomfortable; everyone was great. I think asking the congregation to ponder how they can better implement the message in their daily lives (action steps) could be incorporated into the message. Also, giving the congregation more examples of people in the Bible being moved by the Holy Spirit would help the congregation know what it looks/feels like when the Holy Spirit moves within us.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 11:15 AM
Service Date: 5/26/2013
Service Title: Following One, Serving All
Guest Gender: F
Guest Age: 33
Guest ID: 22371
Overall Rating: 2

1. Community Awareness

The church is located on a clearly marked road, and easy to find. It is just nestled in a wooded area. I did not stop to ask for directions. I found the church using my GPS, which led me there easily.

2. Signage

All signs were clearly displayed and easy to read. I first saw the "Westlake UMC" sign leading to the parking lot of the church to my left as I was driving. It is very visible and well positioned just off the street. I was easily able to read the sign leading to the main sanctuary (main entrance).

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

Yes. There were two greeter who welcomed me warmly. They made excellent eye contact and both greeters were quite sincere.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

I could hear friendly and cheerful conversation as people were gathering for the service. A third greeter welcomed me and asked how I was as he handed me a copy of today's bulletin.

5. Seating

The seating was very comfortable and clean. There were plenty of seats to choose from, and the congregants were dispersed evenly throughout the room.

6. Music

The style of music was blended. I especially enjoyed the vocalist during the latter part of the worship service. I did find one secular song that was played at the suggestion of one of the high school graduates highly inappropriate. It was a Brad Paisley song titled, "A Letter to Me" One of the opening lyrics talks about Playboy magazines found under a bed. I was cringing in the pew as I continued to listen to more lyrics about how "that girl wasn't right for you" etc.

The vocalist was young and she had a beautiful voice. The song she sang would appeal to a younger audience in my opinion. Most of the congregants were singing the hymns and doxology together. I noticed others who appeared uncomfortable during the Brad Paisley song though.

7. In-Service Greeting

I felt that the greeting during the service were scripted as we were instructed by the pastor to greet one another. But most of these types of greetings are scripted when prompted by the pastor no matter what church you attend. I did not feel overwhelmed by the number or type of greetings.

8. Message

There was no sermon. Several high school graduates shared their individual testimonies which were sincere. The liturgy was dry and mechanical. I felt like I was in a room full of emotionless robots reciting words on a screen. Yes, there were some moments of dead space, (like when the designated group of people were coming forward to be baptized), but it wasn't too distracting.

9. Speaker

The pastor (Pastor Lynn) was leading the service. There was no sermon, so it is difficult for me to judge him as a speaker. Having said this, I did not find him particularly sincere or engaging, because he mostly recited the creeds on the projector screen and didn't have much to add to the service. The service itself was well-organized and followed the program on the bulletin closely. Each of the high school graduate speakers gave a short testimony and two of them referenced specific verses. One showed a brief video clip, which supported his point well. I was uncomfortable during the service because it did not feel reverent toward God for two main reasons: 1. The Brad Paisley song which references "Playboy magazines" and teenage romantic relationships. I think it's important for me to qualify why I found the playing of this song offensive besides the lyrics. Sometimes, a good pastor will talk about tough subjects like infidelity, pornographic addiction or drug abuse, in his/her sermon. Or a secular movie clip might be shown to illustrate a point. For example, that point might be about how God can rescue us from sin and bad choices through His forgiveness, His grace and mercy. In fact, I believe it is important for churches to talk about difficult or uncomfortable subjects because we are faced with them every day! As Christian Believers, we must constantly be reminded of the importance of turning away from sin and its physical and spiritual consequences. We can't understand how to do that if we don't talk about it. But, this Brad Paisley song had no point. Before it was played, one of the graduate speakers simply stated that this song was important to him and his fellow classmates. I could only guess as to why. And to play the whole song? I was cringing. 2. In my opinion, most of the pastor's comments were superlative, which felt awkward. During the baptisms, he said something to the effect of, "Yep, it's wet, it's okay." He didn't say anything inappropriate, I just thought his overall demeanor was too casual during the baptism /child dedication.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

Many people were friendly and smiled or nodded at me.

11. Information

The bulletin had ample information on all of these things that a visitor could easily find. The website is easy to navigate and well-categorized. There was camp information for children found on the bulletin and an informative paragraph description about it.

12. Friendliness

I felt welcomed and the congregants were very friendly toward me. Even though I was the only person sitting in my row, people went out of their way to greet me.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

I did see signage leading to the children's ministry, but I did not have a clear impression one way or another as to whether it would be a fun place for my child, whether it was well staffed or secure.

14. Diversity and Outreach

I saw many people in different life stages, from the very young to elderly. It seemed to me that the congregation was comprised of both wealthy and poor individuals and families. I did see a small proportion of Hispanics, but most were white. Still, I was very comfortable and felt welcomed. I think the lack of diversity is mostly attributed to the neighborhood itself.

15. Return

I felt this church focuses more on ritual and tradition than it does teaching what it means to have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and how to live as a Christian. I don't think this church is very effective at showing what that looks like. Reciting poetic words on a screen may have some value, but I neither learned anything or felt spiritually nourished. Because of the overemphasis on religious ritual rather than on Christian truth, scriptural teaching, and fostering true discipleship, I will not be attending this church in the future. I would not encourage anyone of any age to attend this church. The pastor and many of its congregants may very well be true Christian believers. I'm not to be the judge of that. However, I didn't learn anything, and reciting a bunch of creeds and vague language about "spiritual centering" does little to strengthen my relationship with the Lord.

16. Overall Experience

Suggestions for this church:

Share a Christian message that is scripturally based during each service. It doesn't have to be long or complicated. Screen and advise your presenters. Ask your leaders and yourself if it is more important to please the Lord by sharing God's truth (sometimes hard truth) or to please the community. I would suggest that this church become more spiritually disciplined (with good theology!) and really reach out to the hearts of the people in the community. How? Share more of what God has to teach us in scripture and be authentic about it, not ritualistic or methodical. That Brad Paisley song was offensive to hear in church. I even have problems having my kids listen to lyrics like that on the radio. When people fall away from the truth of the Lord (which also means seeking righteousness), they find it more comfortable to turn to ritual.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 11:15 AM

Service Date: 5/5/2013

Service Title: Following One, Serving All - Stephen Ministers

Guest Gender: M

Guest Age: 47

Guest ID: 21721

Overall Rating: 6

1. Community Awareness

I stopped at Rudy's Barbecue on Loop 360. The person did not recognize the church itself by name, but knew where the street was when I told them the name of it.

2. Signage

There was a sign at Bee Caves Road and Red Bud Trail as I made the turn stating that the church entrance was 300 yards ahead. It is a heavily wooded area, so the sign really helped.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

A woman greeted me as soon as I entered the building, stating "Good morning and welcome; how are you this morning?" She made eye contact and seemed warm and sincere.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

It was quiet when I entered the building (11 a.m.) and I saw a sign for the bathroom, which I then used. As I entered the sanctuary, no one was at the doorway, so I picked up a brochure from the seat in the hallway. I went in and sat for about 10 minutes until a man came and greeted me with a "Hello how are you, what is your name?" He then motioned to another man seated in the row ahead of me and introduced us. The man then introduced himself and said that he had been attending the church for about six months and it was a nice church. The first man to greet me was the minister, Dr. Lynn Barton.

5. Seating

I sat in a row of chairs that were set up behind the last row of pews, a little more comfortable than the pews. There were only about 20 people seated at the time I arrived. In the next 10 minutes or so more people arrived and the sanctuary was about 3/4 full by the time the service started and people were dispersed around the room.

6. Music

The music was traditional, with a choir and bell ringers that sang and performed while the congregation watched. The music was a little boring and unexciting and the congregation did not participate. It would not appeal to a younger crowd, in my opinion.

7. In-Service Greeting

There was a greeting time in which four people turned to me and shook my hand and said hello, but none of them asked me my name. The reverend did greet people from the pulpit himself. It felt a little scripted and insincere to me because no one asked my name or told me their name.

8. Message

The reverend spoke for about 20 minutes on being ministers to the community and how we are all called to be ministers, but some people are called with special gifts to become Stephen Ministers, or missionaries. The message was very clear and he used humor, a video and scripture to catch and keep our attention. He seemed very passionate and sincere in his message and as a person himself, and he kept my attention throughout the message. There was no empty space or downtime during the message.

9. Speaker

There were several speakers during the entire service leading different areas of the message. I would have been confused had the worship brochure not listed what was happening during the service. It was a map for what was going on. The service was very similar to a Catholic mass. There seemed to be a lot happening in the short time that the service lasted: scripture reading, recognizing the new Stephen Ministers, the bell ringers that were leaving, communion and a testimonial. It felt like too much all at once.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

I walked around the hallways looking like I was not sure what I was looking for, and Reverend Barton came and said it was very nice to meet me and used my name. I was impressed that he remembered it. No one else said anything to me, so I used the bathroom again and left.

11. Information

It was clear that the church offered a website that was easy to navigate and find information on. The brochure offered many different types of information for many events and venues. I especially like the Stephen Ministries that they have in place. The website is very informational and states their core values and beliefs, and their children's programs. There was a new visitor contact form to fill out, but there was not one in the brochure when I visited. It was in the hallway instead. I would have preferred that more information was offered by the members themselves during my visit. All events and information could be attained online easily, but it is impersonal.

12. Friendliness

I did not feel extremely welcomed during my visit because of the lack of interaction and greetings. No one who did greet me offered their name or asked me any personal questions. I was impressed by the fact that Reverend Barton greeted me, asked my name and then directed me to a man who was seated in the pew in front of me, and that he greeted me again after the service by my name.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

I did see a sign in the building when I entered that indicated a childcare room, but I did not see any particular information as to where the children had any kind of classroom or activities going on during the service. Like I said earlier, there were several children in the adult service, so maybe they do not offer children's services or activities during the second service that I attended? If I had children, I think I would have had to ask if there was something available for my children. I would have needed to go with them if there was and see it for myself in order to feel comfortable leaving them in it.

14. Diversity and Outreach

They offer a vacation Bible School and a pre-school, as well as a high school Bible study. They also have a ministries network and therapy available, but it seems to be geared toward the members. I did not see any kind of neighborhood outreach or ministry that outsiders could learn about or access without getting on the church's website or coming to the church itself.

15. Return

I probably would not return to this church. It is more of an older crowd that I do not have a lot of in common with. There is a lack of sincere and unscripted communication. I like to sing and meditate on God while allowing the Holy Spirit to fill me and bring me to a place that I can receive the message more fully. I would like to see more enthusiasm in the members. I did really like the reverend and his enthusiasm, his humor and his sincerity. I especially like the Stephen Ministries program that they have in place. I would recommend an age group of about late 40s and older. I would not recommend any parents with children who lose attention easily or cannot sit still during an adult service.

16. Overall Experience

I felt like the members were mostly an older crowd and the church is steeped in traditional values. This is good in that they do not sway in their core values and beliefs. As far as appealing to a younger generation, I think that they would encounter some issues. I did not feel completely welcome there because of the insincere greetings and lack of communication with me as a newcomer. I enjoy more music and worship and would like to see more of that as well as more member participation. There were children in the service, about 8 years old, and they were distracting to me. I do not understand why they were not in a class for themselves where they could learn with other children their age. While I like the fact that this church is traditional in values, offers many different activities and events to get involved in, and does not allow food and drink in the sanctuary during the service, I would encourage more of the Holy Spirit during the whole encounter and emotional connections.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 11:15 AM
Service Date: 5/12/2013
Service Title: STAY AT MY HOME
Guest Gender: F
Guest Age: 26
Guest ID: 23525
Overall Rating: 8

1. Community Awareness

I used my GPS to get to the church, but stopped at Taco Cabana and asked the clerk there if she new where Westlake UMC was. She didn't know where that was. I am guessing this may be too far from the church.

2. Signage

There was signage showing which way to turn to get to the church, and then there was a clear sign showing where the church was. The only thing that was confusing was the exit, unfortunately I exited out the "enter only" directions because I was uncertain as to where the exit was. The sign was easy to read and clearly showed the times of worship. I only saw a sign that said "main entrance," so I assumed this was where the service would be held.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

There was a older gentleman greeting everyone, he shook my hand and welcomed me to Westlake UMC. He seemed very sincere. Upon entering the church, another gentleman handed me information about the church and smiled. Eye contact was made by both of them as well.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

The church had a very clean and organized front entrance. When we went in, we began looking for a seat. Once we found a seat, Pastor Lynn came by and introduced himself and asked us our names. He welcomed us to his church and said he hoped we enjoyed it here. Very compassionate and wonderful of him to reach out and personally welcome us. Everyone there seemed to be chatting a little, greeting one another, and it all seemed very friendly. No music was being played until the worship started.

5. Seating

The seating was comfortable, but it was pretty packed. It was not to the point that you felt uncomfortable. It did become a little stuffy and hot mid way thru the sermon, but it was not unbearable by any means. The congregation seemed to be evenly dispersed through out the room.

6. Music

There was a blended style of music. Everyone seemed to enjoy joining in on the songs. It was very surprising to me that they sang one not very traditional at all, "Home on the Range." It put a smile on my face to hear everyone singing this song. I absolutely loved the hand bell choir, because so different than anything I have seen or heard before. My children enjoyed singing the songs that were played during church. They had a song that seemed like they probably sing at the end of every worship in which everyone holds hands. This was a special touch, and seemed like something that was special to Westlake UMC

7. In-Service Greeting

There was a greeting time. It was short and brief, but this time is always uncomfortable to me anyways. It was just the right amount of meet and greet. The visitors were welcomed, not directly, but the whole sermon was basically welcoming anyone and everyone to visit the church whenever they wanted. The message felt sincere.

8. Message

The message was about 30 minutes long. I enjoyed that the pastor did not read straight from the bible. He quoted a few lines but nothing too detailed. The message was about coming home, meaning coming back to church, and living in God's name and doing the right thing, home is where the heart is and that everyone was welcome at church. It was fairly stimulating, but my son seemed bored until the hand bell choir performed

9. Speaker

Dr. Diana Sanchez was a very good speaker. She started off speaking, said a prayer then introduced the choir. They sang a song and then she congratulated a few of them for "graduating" to the next level in choir. Then there was a blonde lady, she didn't give her name, she didn't introduce herself and she was hard to understand. I felt like she rushed through what she was doing up on stage. She may have been nervous, but since I was just a visitor, I didn't understand her purpose or what she was talking about. The pamphlet that was given to me explained that she was just mentioning certain people from the church community that needed prayers in their lives. There was a projector screen displaying the information, but it was hard to see. They need another screen somewhere in the building because there were tall people standing in front of me and in order to view it I had to continue looking around them. Pastor Lynn was very clear spoken and funny, and made everyone laugh a few times.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

I did look around because we were searching for the restroom. No one must have noticed because we had to locate it on our own.

11. Information

The pamphlet that was handed out had all there contact information on it as well as little place cards that were behind the pews for us to view and take with us. I didn't see an information table anywhere. The website is very well organized and easy to locate additional information regarding this church. There is a whole section geared towards the children's programs at their church. A calendar with the current and upcoming events is located on their website. No all of the links worked fine and there were not obvious inconsistencies on the website

12. Friendliness

The church was pretty friendly and we felt welcome.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

I didn't see any signs to show me where the children's ministries where located. I didn't arrive in enough time to take them to the classes either, because that started at 10:10am and we arrived at 11am. Based on the information on the website and based on the children's interactions with the music director Dr. Sanchez, I would feel comfortable leaving my children for the children's ministries and I feel that they would enjoy it very much.

14. Diversity and Outreach

I was a little nervous because my two step children are Hispanic and the majority of the church was Caucasian, but they were very nice to my children and welcomed them. The pastor did mention that everyone was welcome there no matter your sexual preference, ethnicity, age, etc., though. I don't recall that they offer any other sermons in different languages, but they do have a lot of other programs such as yoga, counseling, and different age group bible classes.

15. Return

I may or may not return, I enjoyed the service and the people, but it is a little far from where we live. I would definitely attend at least once more to see how well I enjoy the second time and make a decision after that. I would probably refer families to this church.

16. Overall Experience

I did fill out a visitors form and received an email within a few hours after leaving. Nothing made me feel uncomfortable or offended. I would say that if they do tend to get new visitors and guests at the church to take a few minutes to introduce themselves to the guests. I saw many people wearing name tags or badges. I am guessing they are part of the church, but no one explained that to us either. We arrived 15 minutes early so I feel that maybe some light music would be nice while we are waiting as well.

Westlake UMC
Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 11:15 AM
Service Date: 7/7/2013
Service Title: Security System
Guest Gender: M
Guest Age: 35
Guest ID: 27239
Overall Rating: 8

1. Community Awareness

I stopped at a local gas station and the attendant sent me towards the general direction but was not sure of the church's exact location.

2. Signage

The exterior signage was easy to read, and directions to park were also easy to follow. The entrance was labeled as well as rooms inside the church. The rooms were easy to find due to proper signage. I did not see service times posted on outdoor signage.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

The service time for this date had been changed to an earlier time by the church. I did not arrive before the service began because I was not aware of the time change.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

Same explanation as previous answer.

5. Seating

Same explanation as answer #3.

6. Music

Same explanation as answer #3.

7. In-Service Greeting

Same explanation as #3.

8. Message

Same explanation as #3.

9. Speaker

Same explanation as #3.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

I walked into the lobby after the service had ended. The atmosphere was positive, everyone was interacting with each other. I was not approached while in the lobby. My overall impression of the church was a good one.

11. Information

The resources were readily available and clearly visible inside the church. Brochures, calendars, and schedules were easily available. The website was very informative. The website contained information about schedules, upcoming events, current programs, and how to contact the church. The website did not have information specifically for visitors but the information was helpful for first time visitors. I could not recommend what else I would like to see on the website because the website contained sufficient information. There was information about the different service time on this date on the website.

12. Friendliness

Everyone that was present while I was in the lobby appeared friendly and inviting.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

Information about the children's ministry was easily visible on walls and easily available through brochures. I would feel comfortable leaving my children in their care because of cleanliness and location of the children's room. I believe my children would enjoy their time there because of the activities I was able to see.

14. Diversity and Outreach

I could not comment on outreach efforts before and during service because I was not present at that time. It appeared there was little racial and economical diversity.

15. Return

I would not likely return to this church because of my racial and economic background. I would encourage others to visit if they were of similar background to the church attendees. In my opinion, older and family groups would be attracted to this church.

16. Overall Experience

The church's appearance was very inviting. The lobby and worship area were also very inviting. The attendees appeared very friendly and the atmosphere felt positive.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 9:00 AM
Service Date: 8/4/2013
Service Title: Cat Juggling - Getting Ready for Fall
Guest Gender: M
Guest Age: 37
Guest ID: 23537
Overall Rating: 6

1. Community Awareness

I asked two different people at a gas station (just under a mile away) if they knew where the church was. One had no idea and the other thought (correctly) that it was close by and pointed in the general direction of where it actually was. However, they couldn't tell me specifically where it was.

2. Signage

Although the church is off a quiet two-lane road, there are a lot of trees around. I initially drove right past it and then quickly realized on my GPS that I had gone too far and turned around. I then found it rather quickly. The road signage is low and smallish - if someone isn't paying particular attention, they can pass it up. I didn't notice worship times on the main sign. The parking was well signed and there was ample parking space available. I didn't know what door to enter in immediately (but I did realize later there were posted signs), but I saw several people going in to a particular door (the correct one for the service), so I followed them. Upon entering, there is a small foyer before the main auditorium, so it was very easy to tell where the service was being held. Restrooms and other areas were well marked.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

There was a lady sitting down in the foyer at the entrance to the main auditorium who handed me the church bulletin with a smile and a simple hello greeting. I felt it was a warm and sincere greeting, but not personal. There were not a lot of people there, especially when I arrived (about 10 minutes early), so I think if she was standing and took a moment to be a bit more engaging (like asking my name and if it was my first time there, etc.) that I would have felt a bit more welcome. No one greeted me once I was in the sanctuary. I sat quietly by myself for a few minutes before the service began.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

I seated myself about halfway back and sat alone, about 10 minutes before the service officially began at 9 a.m. The musicians were on stage but not singing yet, so it was quiet. The pastor was visiting with a few patrons who were sitting in the front. I think if the music started a little early, it would be a bit more engaging and welcoming and I would feel more part of the group. I am used to walking into a church a few minutes early before the service and already hearing music playing, but that was not the case here. However, this did not affect my expectations for the service to come.

5. Seating

I seated myself about halfway back and sat alone. The pews were typical and comfortable. The church was largely empty, so there was ample seating available. The congregation was spread out really well (on their own, no ushers), not too close and not too far. More and more people showed up after 9 a.m. I would say probably half the people that were there showed up five or 10 minutes after 9. People sat a pew in front of me and back of me, but not on the same pew. People were friendly but not engaging.

6. Music

The music was played live and contemporary in style, with lyrics projected overhead of the band. The musicians sounded good but seemed more like they were going through the motions. The singer had a good voice but lacked energy and power. So, the songs felt a bit lethargic and monotonous. It was sincere, but because of the lack of passion and energy, felt a bit tired. People were engaged enough and stood during most of the songs and sang quietly. I do think the music in general was good for any age group - not too young and hip and not too traditional.

7. In-Service Greeting

The pastor welcomed everyone but did not single out new faces in the crowd, which is fine. I don't recall the pastor specifically say anything like "please take a moment to welcome those around you," but the service outline was projected overhead and said "Passing the Peace of Christ and Welcome." When people saw this they automatically greeted those around them. It was nice but felt a bit too formulaic to me. I think it would have been nice if the pastor actually encouraged the greeting.

8. Message

The message was about 20 minutes long and was about how life was soon to get a bit busier in the fall (I'm assuming for those with children going back to school), but I don't know specifically what makes life busier in the fall. With the increase in juggling daily activities, we often lose sight of the bigger picture and our spiritual walk. The pastor made the analogy with juggling cats and how it's difficult and scratches at us, but we need to take the time to step aside occasionally and focus on God. I think it was a good message in general and exceedingly easy to grasp, but I really felt like I didn't learn anything. The sermons that stick with me are the ones that challenge me and the ones that make me more curious to dig into God's word and grow in my relationship with the creator. I didn't feel any of this and felt the sermon was utterly forgettable.

9. Speaker

The pastor, James Austin, was the only one speaking for the entire service besides on gentleman who read a brief quote of scripture before the pastor spoke. The pastor was pretty well spoken, easy to understand, sincere and had a very friendly demeanor. He did try to crack some jokes and throw a bit of humor in the message, which is nice, but seemed a little forced. During the sermon, there were no visual aids, no reading from scripture and no videos or props. I think it would have been nice to have the pastor read from scripture some, as it pertains to the sermon. There was communion after the sermon, and a lot of talk before the communion. I felt it was too much talk, as most of it did not make me more understanding of communion and why it was important. After communion there were a few more songs, which was nice, and then the pastor dismissed everyone.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

After dismissing everyone, the pastor quickly made his way to the exit door and greeted everyone as they left. I felt this was a very nice gesture, refreshing and personable. No one else greeted me afterward or interacted with me, however. I felt the vibe was easygoing, sincere and friendly, but not particularly engaging. I feel like this describes the church in general pretty well - sincere and friendly, but not engaging.

11. Information

The bulletin is well laid out and organized. It describes the outline of the service well, lists the names of the people running the service and has inserts regarding church activities, youth programs, etc. I was handed a form where I put down my contact information as a new visitor/guest. This was good. The website seems very well organized and full of good resources, including YouTube videos. After visiting the website, I was expecting a more engaged service and was surprised that this wasn't the case. I expected announcements during the service of youth programs, things the church was involved in, etc., but there was none of this. They have a lot of good resources but I felt the downfall is you have to dig for them yourself.

12. Friendliness

The atmosphere was more quiet and polite, and people were all friendly. I felt welcome, but I did not feel like anyone really wanted to get to know me. I felt comfortable, but not like I was being engaged by anyone.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

The only interaction I had with the youth ministry is what was on the website and the insert in the church bulletin. The pastor did not mention anything about it, and the only children I saw were the few in attendance in the main sanctuary with their parents. So, I don't feel like the youth program was showcased in any way. From the website and bulletin, it seems like they have an average amount of youth activities, but because nothing was mentioned in the main sermon, I question how much attendance there is in these programs. I would feel comfortable leaving a child in their care (seems safe), but I don't know if the child would have enough other children to interact with and have an enjoyable time. This may be the case, but I had no way to gauge this.

14. Diversity and Outreach

I had no impression of diversity at the church. All members were white and mostly older (45 to 50 years old and up). In fact, I don't think there was anyone in attendance (besides myself, the singer and some children) who was younger than 40. I didn't see anything on the website or bulletin regarding diversity besides some outreach programs to other countries and to poorer areas of Austin. I'm not sure what the church can do to attract diversity (the local demographics are mainly white, wealthy and older), but I really didn't see a strong effort. However, I still felt welcome and didn't feel like this really detracted from the service overall.

15. Return

I like the church in that I felt it was sincere, but I did not feel engaged or challenged in any way. It is a nice church, well taken care of, and friendly people, but I don't feel like it offers me anything at all that any other church cannot provide. I would not encourage other people to attend for this same reason. I think older, more traditional people would be attracted to this church.

16. Overall Experience

I feel like the general theme for this church is friendly, sincere but not challenging or engaging. Nothing felt engaging. The music didn't, the people didn't, the sermon didn't, there was no talk about what the church was involved in and what programs it offered. Because of this, the service and church, although pleasant, felt very forgettable. I think making efforts to be more challenging and engaging will breathe new life into this church. The pastor (or someone) should get up before or after the sermon and talk about what the church is involved in and what they are doing. Then challenge the congregation to be a part of it and not necessarily just with their wallets. Challenge them to become active in the church. Seek out sermons that offer new insight into God's word that make people think and make them want to open and study the Bible for themselves.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 9:00 AM

Service Date: 7/7/2013

Service Title: Communion Sunday

Guest Gender: M

Guest Age: 27

Guest ID: 27271

Overall Rating: 9

1. Community Awareness

Before the service, my girlfriend and I stopped by a McDonalds. When we asked for directions, the employees pointed us in the general direction. To their credit, that little strip of road seemed to be littered with churches and one in particular had small yard sale-like signs stuck in the ground every 100 feet it seemed.

2. Signage

On the main road we did not notice any signs indicating the direction of Westlake UMC. Since we had Google Maps, this wasn't a problem. Once we turned onto the church's road, I think there was an official highway sign indicating that a church was nearby. As we went around a bend, however, we saw WUMC's ground-level marquee-sized sign very clearly. Parking was pretty self explanatory, although we were confused when we pulled in since there appeared to be no other cars in the parking lot. A kindly young woman came running out and explained that they were having a different kind of service that day -- one only at 10 a.m. rather than two, at 9 & 11, respectively. After apologizing, the kind young woman proffered directions to the nearest Starbucks and even offered to show us to the church's library, should we wish to stay there until service. Arriving just before service, there were two main entrances although it was not difficult to discern which was the correct door since there was an official greeting holding it open. All the doors and fire exits appeared to be properly marked. I found the bathroom quite easily.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

There was a older gentleman greeting everyone at the church's main entrance. He quickly moved us through to the foyer, which was just fine since there were even more greeters inside. At the entrance of the chapel were a couple more greeters, a man and a woman, who were all smiles as they welcomed us and handed us the day's program. In the slight bottleneck to get into the service room, it was a little difficult to tell who was a greeter and who wasn't. There were a lot of them and many of us.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

Just moments after my girlfriend and I sat down, we were approached by a younger man who introduced himself as a member of the church, along with his wife who runs the children's program. He was exceedingly friendly, asking a few unobtrusive questions and generally making us feel welcome. Although we were clearly visitors from the beginning, this young gentleman was perfectly kind and put us at ease. A few minutes later his wife came over and introduced herself with similar pleasantries. After that, the older woman in front of us turned in our direction and begin chatting. We discussed our hometown in Arkansas, where her daughter also once lived. Like the other two WUMC members, this older woman was not imposing and the encounters as a whole put us in a relaxed, reasonably unguarded mood.

5. Seating

The church pews were unexpectedly comfortable. The pews themselves were covered with plush, soft cushions on both the seat and backrest. There was plenty of leg room, too. The pews were in three sections. The middle section was relatively filled, with a majority of the attendees seated there. Each long row at least five people in it, but the overall effect was that the middle section looked packed, though each individual or group left a respectable space between themselves and others. The left section was less populated, with a few people sitting by themselves. The right section was slightly more packed with several groups of what were clearly families.

6. Music

The music was absolutely fantastic. Apparently, during the "normal" services there is a full band and a choir. Unfortunately, the choir was out of town, and the band was not accounted for, although there was an electric drum set and electric guitar plugged into a VOX amp that was pushed to the left side of the stage. The church had brought in the Austin Banjo club, an eight-strong banjo band accompanied by a tuba. Between sections in the service, the Austin Banjo Club played a medley of patriotic songs in keeping with the 4th of July Weekend. Everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy the band. Because the service's elements were slightly different than the normal progression, the reverend asked the audience to request some hymns. Several attendees called out hymns and the congregation took turns singing those fan hits. Those who made requested didn't seem too shy about their hymnal preference.

7. In-Service Greeting

While the reverend did quickly thank those visitors who came, there wasn't really a formal greeting from the pulpit. Nor was there a "recognition of visitors" or shaking of hands. The entire service was a bit casual and, as is the case with many summer activities, several formalities were put aside. All this suited me just fine. I think any more of a greeting would have been too much.

8. Message

The title of the Sunday sermon was "Security Systems." The Reverend began with a light personal tale of how her home has a security system and that it provides her some comfort. The theme's general idea moved from there to things like financial "security systems" like 401K & insurance, to other more complex security systems like family, all of which pale in comparison with the "security system" that is the love from God & Jesus Christ. While the message's core point that God's security is the only real security in this life and the next was easy to understand, some of what the Reverend said was a little off, or contradictory. The way she used and interpreted the Bible passages she referenced and Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Less Taken" got me thinking, but not necessarily in the best or most complex ways. I disagreed with her interpretations.

9. Speaker

Visiting Reverend Sue Wells was quite good. With the normal Pastor out at the Annual Conference in Corpus Christi, Reverend Wells filled in admirably. She kept a nice pace, was engaging, and never tired or stumbled during the talk. A projector screen near the ceiling showed the Biblical verses she was referring to. Also, during one section of the anecdotal section in the sermon, the Reverend began describing the curious animal known as the Fainting Goat. We all had a nice chuckle during her anecdote and laugh aloud when she played a nature segment on the projector showing how the goats faint and lock up, physically, after being scared. It was a wonderful way to describe how people, sometimes react when faced with very difficult decisions. After the sermon ended roughly 20 minutes later, I was still ready and willing to hear more.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

After the service ended, people quickly got up and left the chapel. I think everyone was headed toward the Independence Day lunch that had been planned, and to which we had been invited a couple of times. As we left the chapel, we were thanked by the greeters at the door. Everyone seemed to be in a very pleasant mood. Although we hung back for a brief period, we didn't wander too much. The feeling, however, was that any conversation we might wish to start would be quickly and cheerfully begin.

11. Information

As mentioned before, the foyer area was elegant and sparse, with very few brightly advertised pamphlet stations seen in many churches nowadays. At the beginning of service, however, we were given a visitors card and encouraged to fill it out. There was one mention of Facebook where the regular Pastor was keeping the congregation abreast of his vacationing with post updates. WUMC's website is pretty good. It's relatively simple and easy to navigate yet it also user-friendly in regard to layout & design. I particularly like the automatic scroll of announcements and stories on the homepage. The different sections and pages are also clearly labeled and seem very "clickable." The only thing I didn't see was a clear spot for visitors. With so much easily accessible information on the website, the lack of a section dedicated to curious non-members is a bit conspicuous.

12. Friendliness

The church was exceedingly friendly without being overbearing. The whole time, we felt welcome without feeling like we were imposing and left to explore on our own without being ignored. We couldn't have asked for a better balance.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

The young woman who approached us at the beginning was in charge of the youth program. Near the end of service, members of the teenage group were brought up to the front of the chapel as it was explained that they were about to spend a week doing service work in Austin. A couple high schoolers were apparently already on a plane to do service work away from town. All in all, the children's program looked to be of decent quality. All the kids looks alert, eager, and happy. If I had children I'd feel just fine leaving my child in their care, should it come to that. All of the children seemed happy to be there.

14. Diversity and Outreach

I didn't notice a whole lot of diversity. Apart from the teenage children brought along by their parents, my girlfriend and I seemed to be the youngest people there by a number of years. The ethnic and social makeup of the church members was also monotonous. They all seemed to be white, upper-middle class. The gender makeup, however, seemed fairly even. In fact, most came in pairing groups or as couples. I don't think the lack of diversity is necessarily the fault of the church. WUMC is located just outside of central Austin, in a neighborhood that doesn't have a lot of variety. So none of this is to suggest that the church appeared in any way adverse to diversity. There was one younger man in the back who was in an advanced wheelchair. When it came time, the Reverend asked us to "stand, if you are able," which was thoughtful.

15. Return

The overall experience was pleasant and warm for both me and my girlfriend. The kindness of the younger gentleman and his wife who introduced themselves at the beginning was such that we felt bad for leaving without getting to know them more. Truthfully, I probably wouldn't return to this church on my own accord, if only because it is a little out of the way from my own house. That said, I certainly wouldn't dread or be adverse to returning and would feel a slight tinge of happiness to do so. The impression I got based on the advertised activities, sermon and general makeup of the crowd was that this church primarily serves older single adults and growing families. I did not see much obvious outreach toward young adults, nor trying to connect with high school age youth.

16. Overall Experience

Based on all that was said above, I think WUMC was a wonderful neighborhood church that was relaxed without being too casual and ceremonious without being stifling. Again, the members of the church was absolutely wonderful and made us feel comfortable right away. That said, the church may want to up its efforts in reaching young families and newlyweds, through connection, activities, etc. The young couple we spoke with seemed a bit starved for peers. Again, the neighborhood seemed more situated for established families, but the membership could use some younger blood. Young families are great because they'll help keep the church moving toward the future. Related to this suggestion, is actively seeking out Hispanic members, particularly younger Hispanic individuals, who are often starting families themselves.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 9:00 AM
Service Date: 7/14/2013
Service Title: Youth Mission Trip
Guest Gender: F
Guest Age: 64
Guest ID: 26761
Overall Rating: 7

1. Community Awareness

I stopped at a Texaco Speed Shop at 3625 Bee Cave Road. A young man in the store (only one there) was new to town. He thought he may have heard of the church and had heard of Redbud Trail. He was able to point me in the right direction.

2. Signage

There was very good signage from Bee Cave Road - not as much if approached from Redbud Trail, although once the church was in sight the street signage and arrows directing traffic were wonderful. There was plenty of guest parking and lots of signs to lead a newcomer into the main hall. There were good signs for the sanctuary and restrooms and classrooms. The only thing really missing was signs to coffee hour, but members led me there knowing it was hard to find.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

They were very friendly and nice but not intrusive or pushy. There was someone to open the door and welcome me in as well as ushers at the door to lead me into the service.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

It was quiet in the church - low attendance due to an early summer service. But the band was rehearsing and everyone in church was friendly, smiling and respectful. I felt welcomed from the beginning.

5. Seating

The seating was wonderful. The church seems able to hold a large group and that everyone would have good visual and auditory access. Folks were close but filled up mainly the center area. It was a small turnout due to the summer and the early hour.

6. Music

The music was wonderful and contemporary. The musicians were all engaged and the leader was passionate and sincere. The young soloist was exceptional and adult members of the band were so very proud and supportive. Having words to hymns, etc., on screen was wonderful and made the service doubly inclusive.

7. In-Service Greeting

I never like this part - but again, folks were very friendly and welcoming, but not intrusive on one's space. I felt very comfortable during this time.

8. Message

I love youth services, as I have been a director of youth programming. The three speakers spoke of recent missions with passion and humility. They brought tears to my eyes for their commitment to service and humanity. I loved the message - I wished my grandsons could be a part of this community and learn from them.

9. Speaker

There was a young adult, youth and adult speaker. They were all perfect for the message they conveyed and all spoke with passion about their service experience. They were each likable and inviting.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

Folks again were friendly and welcoming but not intrusive. I had a wonderful couple who basically adopted me and introduced me to folks and led me to coffee hour, as they knew the signage for that was nonexistent. They seemed genuinely interested in me as a person, as did the others I met. No one proselytized or preached, just welcomed me freely.

11. Information

Newsletters, brochures and registration forms were readily available and easy to understand. I liked the method of getting guests to fill out information as well as for members to update information. The website, like the printed pieces, is welcoming, clean and precise. It's easy on the eyes and enjoyable to read.

12. Friendliness

The church is lovely. I could see myself getting involved with the church, as the people were so welcoming. It was an hour filled with peaceful love.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

I witnessed a youth service, so I saw firsthand the results of the work done with children. If this is any indication, the children's ministry is exceptional. The story for children during the service wasn't particularly that good, but I set high standards on that portion since I used to do that as a director of religious education. But it was done lovingly and well.

14. Diversity and Outreach

I am impressed by the outreach done in this church and the care programs for folks of varying needs. There appears to be some diversity in ages and gender, but it's not clear from what I saw or have read how diverse they are in race/ethnicity and socioeconomically. But again, they are in an area of Austin that may be less diverse in these areas.

15. Return

I would definitely return (even drive the 45 minutes) and bring my family and friends if I were to join any Methodist community. I would love to see my grandsons involved with the youth group, but alas, they live in Colorado.

16. Overall Experience

I really liked this faith community. I loved all aspects of the space and spiritual experience and friendliness of the people. I do not know, however, how welcoming this congregation is to people of all races/cultures or to the GLBT community. If they are open to all races and lifestyles they need to make sure that folks in these diverse groups know it so they will feel comfortable visiting. I'm not sure, if I were not a older white woman, if I would have been treated as well as I was. I expect I would be as well embraced, but there was nothing obvious suggesting that that would have occurred. I truly enjoyed my visit. Thank you.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 9:00 AM
Service Date: 6/30/2013
Service Title: Following One, Serving All
Guest Gender: F
Guest Age: 25
Guest ID: 22374
Overall Rating: 6

1. Community Awareness

I stopped at HEB to inquire about the church and how to get there. The first person I spoke with knew exactly how to get there and seemed to be familiar with the church.

2. Signage

There is an entrance sign but since you're coming around a bend in the road, it sneaks up on you quickly, especially if you don't know where you're going. Everything was clearly listed on the sign outside. There were signs for guest parking. Inside, everything was clearly marked, from restrooms to the children's area.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

There was a greeter at the front of the sanctuary who was handing out programs for the service. He greeted me and handed me a program. He was very polite and warm.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

Everyone in my pew greeted me like I was already part of the church community and they've seen me before. It made me feel like I was going to be highly included in the service. No, they did not recognize me from the last visit (and I did not recognize them). It just felt like they were trying to make me feel at home.

5. Seating

The benches were very plush and comfortable. I noticed that there were plenty of seats to choose from when I arrived. Many of the people were seated on the left section of the sanctuary. People who showed up later were more inclined to sit toward the right side.

6. Music

The music was very contemporary, with a band called The Foundation (I think). The band seemed very into the service. The people in the congregation were all singing along and I think it helped that there was a screen with the lyrics. Almost everyone around me was singing along. I think young parents would most appreciate the music, being that they're still interested in "new" music.

7. In-Service Greeting

There was a recognition of visitors and a welcome. Then everyone was invited to greet the people around them. The people who were sitting around me were all very sweet and welcoming. It wasn't too much and I thought the people around me were genuine.

8. Message

The message was about 'growing up.' I liked that they had a former reverend there to give the message. It really helped to have the children's message first, which was a boiled down version of what Ms. Bentley was speaking about. I thought it was an especially easy concept to understand, being that there are many times in life when people aren't sure about 'how'/'when' to grow up. The message was sort of long, though it was more us reading out the scripture as a congregation that took up the time. I'd say it was approximately 20 minutes long, though the service ended earlier than 10:00.

9. Speaker

Sarah was very good at speaking and she seemed very prepared. She had some remarks prepared and had us all read along for the scripture. I loved that she told us special anecdotes from her own life. She had the scripture up on the projection screen.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

There was a man sitting next to me who told me it was nice to see me when we were leaving the church. Reverend Sarah was greeting people on the way out of the service and she was very warm. I felt very positively about the church after this and would definitely return, based upon that.

11. Information

The brochure included the bulletin as well. I thought it was very well done and very informative. There was also an announcement about how everything is going digital and the database would be digital as well. I think it's very good for churches to 'get with the times' and go digital. During this announcement, we were all given a chance to put our contact information in so they'd get in contact with people. The website is user-friendly but it wasn't super clear where to find information for new or potential members.

12. Friendliness

I thought the church did a very good job of welcoming me. The church-wide welcome was good and I liked that the people sitting around me were friendly. However, when we did personal prayers, I felt a bit pressured to share personal things with other members and it might be a bit too much for first time visitors.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

I liked that they had a children's message in the beginning of the service and how they did it in front of the congregation. They didn't announce having an area for children otherwise but seeing as everyone seemed so welcoming, I probably would feel comfortable leaving my children in their care. If I had children and was a potential member of this church, I might want there to be a bit more focus on the children, maybe a Sunday school. The children sitting next to me seemed quite restless.

14. Diversity and Outreach

While the message was that the church was very welcoming and inclusive, there were no other indicators that diversity was a main focus of this church in today's service. In the bulletin, there was more indication that other age groups had different services available to them.

15. Return

I thought everyone was very friendly at this church and I would definitely return. I feel like churches are supposed to foster a sense of community and this church did a very good job of that. Based on today's service, I would imagine that many families with young children and also 'empty nesters' would enjoy this church.

16. Overall Experience

Everyone was very welcoming and I felt like I was genuinely wanted as a part of this community today. My suggestion would be to have more of a focus on the children in a separate area. Besides that, it was a wonderful service.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 9:00 AM
Service Date: 5/26/2013
Service Title: Recognition of Graduates
Guest Gender: F
Guest Age: 45
Guest ID: 22367
Overall Rating: 10

1. Community Awareness

I stopped at the convenience store located on Lake Austin Blvd. in Austin. I did ask for the directions of the church. The clerk did know the church. He gave me the specific direction of the church. He was very impressive and very helpful to me.

2. Signage

There was a sign at the entrance of the WestLake UMC church. This sign was clear I had arrived. Being new to the area, before I arrived, I was lost due to the fact it was out in wooded nature and mountains. The roads were winding and as soon as I saw the church sign I almost passed it. I recommend for them to put signs a few blocks from the main sign entrance so that the people will be able to make the turn in time comfortably. I did see the signs indicating the worship times and easy to read for me. There were no signs where to park. I did not see the sign where to enter. I did observe where the members where entering and followed them inside.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

I was greeted by two of the greeters at the door. They shook my hand and welcomed me into the service. I felt it was sincere. The greeters did make eye contact. Afterwards one of the greeters came and sat with me in the pew. Moments later the greeter asked me if I was looking for a new church to worship. But she did make me feel comfortable and I did not feel alone. Of all the churches I visited in the past with Faith Perceptions, this is the only greeter that ever sat with me and I felt very welcomed. Being new, this is very important to me to feel welcomed and at the same time feel like I was a regular member of their church.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

There was Contemporary music as I walked in to the building. There were two members that said hello to me. One of the congregation members did hold my hand in prayer. I thought for not knowing me, she made me feel like I was a regular in her congregation. When the members passed the peace, it was short time, but many were greeting and welcoming me.

5. Seating

There was a large crowd since it was graduation and three baptisms were included in this service. I felt comfortable in their seats. I did not feel crowded. The West Lake UMC sanctuary was large, so even though there was a lot of members, they were all seating evenly throughout the sanctuary. Some churches I visited in the past, they were in their own groups and sometimes all on one side of the sanctuary.

6. Music

The music was all Contemporary. I loved the vocals of each of the singers that performed. The members joined with them in chorus and it was beautiful music that did not put me to sleep or tire in anyway. Yes this music would appeal to younger generation but I did see a lot of the older generation singing along and enjoying it very much.

7. In-Service Greeting

There was not a greeting time during the service. The members did greet me during the passing of the peace. The church did not welcome the visitors at the pulpit. I was only welcomed at the beginning and in the passing of the peace. I felt the greeting was sincere. It was just right amount in the welcoming.

8. Message

The service did not have any dead space. The service sermon lasted about 20 minutes. It was easy to understand. The sermon was over scriptures of Hebrews 12 1-2 and Matthew 18: 1-5. The Pastor's sermon was about Jesus' cleansing in each of us. This was in relation to the baptisms that were being witnessed as they were cleansed and accepted by the church congregation. I liked the service I was not bored in anyway. The Pastor did a great job.

9. Speaker

The associate Pastor was leading the service. He did very well in his Sermon and was enjoyable to listen to. They did have visual aids during the service. They had videos and scriptures and music on screen at all times. This was very easy to read and helpful to me. I did not feel lost for one moment during the service.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

I did look around the room. There were only two people that said hello as members beside the two greeters. I did pray with them and hold hands. One of them had their child in the service. It was nice to see the young ones at the service.

11. Information

It was not clear if there was any more brochures of the church. I did view that their church bulletin had most of the upcoming information of their church news and website. I did see the table at the front desk to the right side of the entrance. Due to the entrance and many people coming in to the service, I was unable to view all that was at this location for me to read. I did visit their website before I attended the service. The website was easy to find what I needed about the service, music and their beliefs. There was information mentioned and in their bulletin about the children VBS registration and the camp offered to them. There is a Calendar of events included in their bulletin if anyone was interested to join. I did not find any dead links with any of their information.

12. Friendliness

I felt very welcomed by the greeters. One of them gave me a hug and welcomed me back. I thanked her for sitting with me. As for the church members, only two were sincere but the families all seemed sincere but they were with their families and the graduates which this was important for them at this time I can sincerely understand. But I did not feel ignored in anyway.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

I did see the sign of the where Children Ministry was located. It was clean and well staffed. I do not have a child so their service was not needed when I attended. Now yes, if I did have a child with me, I would feel confident that my child would be in great hands. It looks like the child would have fun if left at this area.

14. Diversity and Outreach

I did observe that in their bulletin they included the mobile loaves that is known for homeless hunger program that serves the Austin area. I did see other groups such as the Al Non and Weight Watchers program listed on their bulletin. These are all great programs to include in their church. This would lead me to believe they are involved with the poor.

15. Return

I would visit this church again one day. The travel from my home was beautiful with its peaceful settings in the mountain and the lake area. I would encourage all ages from older, young families to attend. I also recommend for the college age and teens to attend.

16. Overall Experience

I would rate this church a 10. I felt very comfortable. I did filled out a visitor card with my information. The music is to be commended with their outstanding vocals and band members. The only suggestion I would make is the signs before coming to the main entrance due to the winding roads. I almost turned around and went back home thinking I was lost since it was a far distance from my home.

Westlake UMC

Commentary by Service/Guest

This section of the report groups the comments by service and guest experience. It allows you to review the feedback from each individual mystery guest experience.

Service Time: 9:00 AM
Service Date: 5/12/2013
Service Title: Stay At My Home
Guest Gender: F
Guest Age: 25
Guest ID: 22374
Overall Rating: 6

1. Community Awareness

I stopped at the HEB which is across Bee Caves from the church. I asked one of the cashiers if they could tell me where the church was. She could not, but asked me to wait and see if someone else knew. Another cashier came over and explained to me how to get there.

2. Signage

There was a sign at the road that had the church's name but no worship times. There were many marked guest spots in the parking lot and there was a large sign showing the entrance to the sanctuary. There were other signs that led to the gym, nursery, etc. When I walked in, the entrance room is very small and you can see the sanctuary as soon as you walk in.

3. Greeting Upon Arrival

There was a greeter at the entrance to the building who asked me how I was doing. There was also a greeter at the sanctuary entrance who handed me a program. The greeters did make eye contact with me and it felt very sincere when I arrived.

4. Pre-Service Atmosphere

There was no music, but there was chatter going on amongst some of the members. I could hear Pastor Lynn introducing himself to people he perceived as new members. He came over to me and introduced himself. He then introduced me to the family in front of me as well.

5. Seating

I was quite surprised to see how empty the church looked. While it was quite small, there were not as many people when I arrived as I was expecting. Because I went in only 5 minutes before the service began, I was expecting it to be tough to find a seat. However, there was plenty of open space and there were lots of empty benches. I'd say the room was a little over half full and the congregation was dispersed evenly over the three sections of pews.

6. Music

The music was contemporary. Many of the church members seemed to know the words by heart. If they didn't, there was a screen that had the lyrics playing as well. I think the music would definitely appeal to a younger demographic, though it seemed sort of forced that they were a 'cool' worship group.

7. In-Service Greeting

I felt that the greeting was very welcoming. After Pastor Lynn introduced me to the family in front of me, they were very friendly as well. There were pads passed around for people to sign in and for new members to give information if they wanted to. There was a time for members to greet each other and the members around me introduced themselves to me. Then at the end of the service, Pastor Lynn welcomed new members again.

8. Message

The service was great. The message was about welcoming people into your home, meaning your church home. Pastor Lynn did a great job of connecting these ideas, and I liked how he peppered his message with songs and that he wasn't just speaking to us the entire time. There was no dead space and everything was very easy for me to understand. I also liked that the PowerPoint had all of the music and the scripture, too.

9. Speaker

Pastor Lynn was the service leader. He was easy to listen to, and brought the message down to a level that everyone could understand, even children. I loved that he played guitar and sang during his talk as well. There was a PowerPoint presentation to go along with the message and there was also a scripture reader as well.

10. Post-Service Atmosphere

At the end, everyone held hands and said a prayer. I liked that Pastor Lynn invited everyone to hold hands, but still stressed that if people did not want to, they shouldn't feel out of place by not participating. I was looking around after the service, and the woman sitting next to me in my pew asked if I was going to enjoy coffee and juice after the service and if I would be coming back next week. As I was leaving, Pastor Lynn shook my hand, repeated my name, and told me it was wonderful to have me.

11. Information

There was a ton of information regarding the church. There were brochures everywhere. In the bulletin, there was various information on the happenings going on in the church, the schedule, how to get in contact with the church as a new member, etc. The website is very helpful. It's always nice to have all of the contact information on the home page instead of having to go to a "Contact" page. The website is quite simple and easy to use. All of the pertinent info (worship times, children's info, contact info) is on the home page. I really like the Calendar page. It clearly lays out the month's activities/events. No dead links as far as I could tell.

12. Friendliness

I definitely felt welcomed to this church. Because it was so small, I felt like it was a family. That can be overwhelming to some people.

13. Children's/Youth Ministry

I thought the children's ministry would be somewhere I'd leave my child, if I had one. Pastor Lynn told another first-time visitor family about their amenities there because they had a small child, and I felt like that would be somewhere good for children and babies.

14. Diversity and Outreach

Tying in the message of having a welcoming church home, Pastor Lynn tried to stress that this church was very welcoming to people, especially what he called "people on the margins of society." I appreciated that he mentioned LGBTQ people and welcoming them in, especially because that seems to be such a hot topic with churches right now and Austin is such a diverse community.

15. Return

I would return to this church. It was very welcoming. I would recommend families for this church, because it already has a homey feeling and many of the members knew each other already. I feel like that would be really good, especially for a family who recently moved.

16. Overall Experience

While I felt very welcomed, that much welcoming can sometimes be overwhelming, especially to people coming back to a church home. It's important to remember that sometimes people like to come anonymously.