

Dear Luther Community,

Grace and peace to you. The community has embarked on a year of gathering information through pocket surveys. The work of the Office of Institutional research, and specifically Trina Smith and Ken Reynhout, has helped our community to better understand who we are and how we connect. It is a gift to have such resources on campus, and it is a gift to get feedback from the community to help us better understand our work together.

Thank you, also, to the students, for your time and input on the survey. 140 students provided responses to the survey. That's incredible! Thank you.

Theological education and experiences have been changing rapidly. Our hope in the survey was to gather information and feedback on our ever changing community. The snapshot it offered helps us adapt in ways that we hope will be meaningful.

During the pandemic, the percentage of the student body shifted to being primarily distributed rather than residential. This change was and is significant, and it calls us to consider how we shape our chapel life and offerings.

The number one response to the question "how often do you attend/stream chapel" is rarely, if ever. This is followed by (2) RFS Chapels and (2) Wednesday Communion Services. The second and third responses about chapel indicate a preference for in person vs. online experiences. What's more, from a survey in 2022 with the Action Learning Team, we learned that 82% of distributed students rarely or never attend online chapel. Online chapel isn't connecting with all of the Luther Community. What was once a technical change to stream worship hasn't made chapel that much more accessible.

This isn't news. We can see the stream number as we gather each week. Livestream participation tops out around 10, with usually 4-6 joining live. Numbers for watching online but later are around 50. In this school year (23-24) we worked with the Academic Dean's Office to run an experiment with having an online sacristan, someone who would gather and greet the online community. We have had online bible studies as well as regular livestreamed chapel services. Our online sacristan has also edited chapel videos to make sermon snippets. Engagement has not shifted upward, but it has been a worthwhile experiment.

From the survey we learned that chapel is valuable to this community, especially a diversity of experiences and expressions, strong preaching, and community participation. We also learned that time, work schedules, and other commitments are the largest barriers to chapel engagement. While online chapel isn't an effective tool, we did learn that it is important to the community to make chapel videos accessible.

Again, our hope with the survey was to gather feedback to help us take up the adaptive challenge set before us. With more and more of a footprint away from campus, regular patterns

and practices need to adapt. The information shared in the survey will help our chapel staff in the adaptive challenge process we are undertaking. Thank you for your help in this process.

Pastor Jeni Grangaard and the Sacristans