

Report to the Session and Congregation on the Deep Dive into Gratitude 2022

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Christ Presbyterian Church ECO

Executive Summary

Note: We wanted this to be easily understood and available soon after the 2022 Deep Dive into Gratitude ended. So feel free to read the executive summary. If you want to delve into more of the details, please read the portions of the Appendixes you are interested in.

Reason for this report. Christ Presbyterian Church undertook a Deep Dive into Gratitude for seven weeks during the approach to Advent of 2022 (October 9-November 20). At the request of the Session, the Discipleship Team was charged with collecting and analyzing feedback on the Deep Dive for both Session and Congregational use to inform future possible “deep dives.”

Method. This led to an electronic survey to the members. We received 34 responses, which was estimated to be about half of the adults engaged with and attending CPC during this post-COVID-19 year. These are all Christ Pres people. We did not survey non-CPC attendees, although some attended online.

Major findings. Considering the limited number of responses, the major findings were these. (1) Most people enjoyed, evaluated positively, and grew in understanding from the Deep Dive. (2) Most people evaluated their practice of gratitude as better post-Deep Dive than before. (3) The two most popular and likely helpful events were the community-talks and sermons, though the Sunday morning women’s group was also named as very helpful. (4) There was endorsement of having additional deep dives in the future (with about ½ recommending once yearly; about 1/3 mentioned twice yearly; a few said less frequently than a year). (5) The topics people would like to see are several and include Christian virtues. Those prominently mentioned (by more than one person) are joy (n=4), generosity (3), hope (2), kindness (2), justice (2), peace (2), self-control (2), faithfulness (2), prudence (2), patience (2), and courage (2). Those mentioned only once were spiritual formation in general (1), increased intimacy with God (1),

fortitude (1), fidelity (1), conviction (1), hospitality (1), and justice and peace together (1). (6) People made general suggestions about the deep dive and ways the events are carried out.

Recommended actions. We recommend that the Session approve a deep dive for 2023. They are to approve some topic based on the feedback provided in the present report. In the past, the two popular times were just after school starts in 2023 and perhaps Lent (2024).

Appendix

Report to the Session and Congregation on the Deep Dive into Gratitude 2022

During the approach to Advent (October 9 through November 20), 2022, Christ Presbyterian Church had a seven-week Deep Dive into Gratitude. We opened the feedback November 21 and closed it December 4. Responding to the feedback for program evaluation were 34 people. So that should introduce a note of caution in interpreting our findings. Between 40 and 55 adults attend on Sundays with at least 3 to 5 joining Facebook-Live. Our responses are based only on those adults who responded to the online surveys. Not everyone had access to online surveys. Sometimes it is likely that one member of a couple responded, but not the other even though both were attending. This report represents responses from *about 60* percent of the adult members of the congregation.

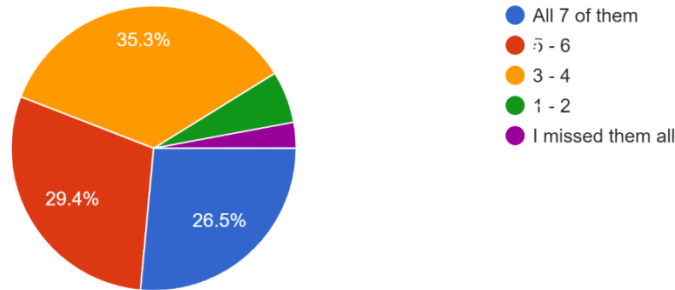
The major events of the Deep Dive into Gratitude were a seven-week topical sermon series on gratitude by Kevin (0.5 hours exposure per sermon, max 3.5 hours) and a six-week Wednesday-nights speaker series featuring 45-minute talks and 15-minute Q & A by Libby Germer, Mike McCullough, David Singh, Jonathan Worthington, Robert Emmons, and Nathan Walton, in weeks 1 through 6, respectively. Each talk + Q&A 1 hour, max 6 hours). Each talk was followed by an optional 30-minute small group interaction (0.5 hour per discussion; max 3 hours). A book was made available (without cost) to all in the congregation, and was used as a discussion starter in Sunday morning groups (max 3 hours) Two adult Sunday School classes—each lasting about an hour—discussed gratitude, including the books (1 hour each, max 7 hours).

What Events Did People Attend?

Our respondents tended to hear most of the sermons by Kevin. 56% heard at least 5 of the 7 either online or in person, 90% heard at least three, and 26.5% heard all seven.

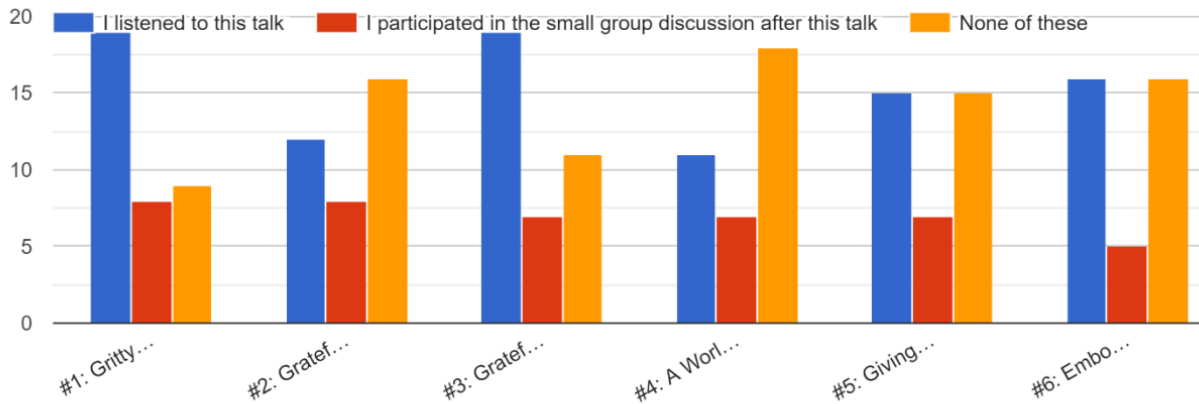
There were a total of seven Sunday sermons on the topic of gratitude. How many were you able to hear? (select one)

34 responses



Most of the respondents listened to the talks by our outside speakers. Of the 25 respondents, 19 heard Libby, 12 heard Mike, 19 heard David, 11 heard Jonathan, 15 heard Bob, and 16 heard Nathan. Participation in the after-talk discussions were less than half that of the talks, but the number of people who attended the small group discussions was generally constant ranging from 8 for the first two speakers, 7 for the third through fifth speakers, and 5 for the final speaker.

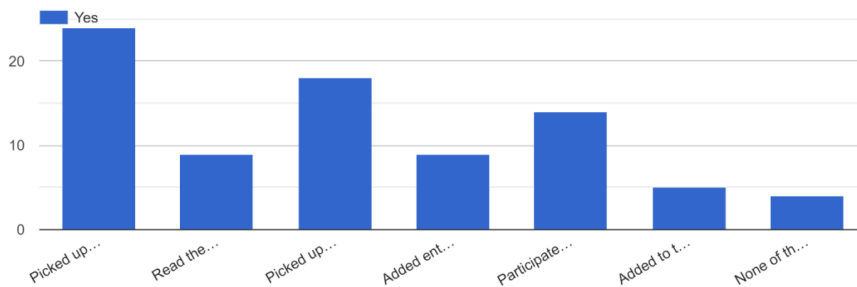
We had six Wednesday evening "Gratitude Talks" from different guest speakers. Check all the ways in which you participated:



Other Activities

People had the choice of participating in other activities: Picking up the book (n = 22), reading the book (9), picking up the gratitude journal (18), adding to the gratitude journal (9), participating in the gratitude tree (5) and none (4).

We had a number of other extras that supported our Deep Dive. Check all the ways in which you participated.



In a free response, participants were asked, “Of all the things you were able to participate in, which would you say were the most helpful or meaningful to you?” Of the 28 respondents, Three said “All” (and that was tabulated as one response). Five people said “Talks” and all talks had at least one (some two or three) individual call-out. Ten people mentioned Kevin sermons, but none were individually called out.

- Sermons (10)
- Talks (6-8 for individuals)
- Bible study book (4)—people did not specify if done alone or women’s group or Bob’s group; one additionally said “Sunday school group” without specifying which
- Women’s group specifically (4)
- Bob’s Sunday morning group specifically (1)
- Gratitude journal (3)
- Zoom small groups (1)

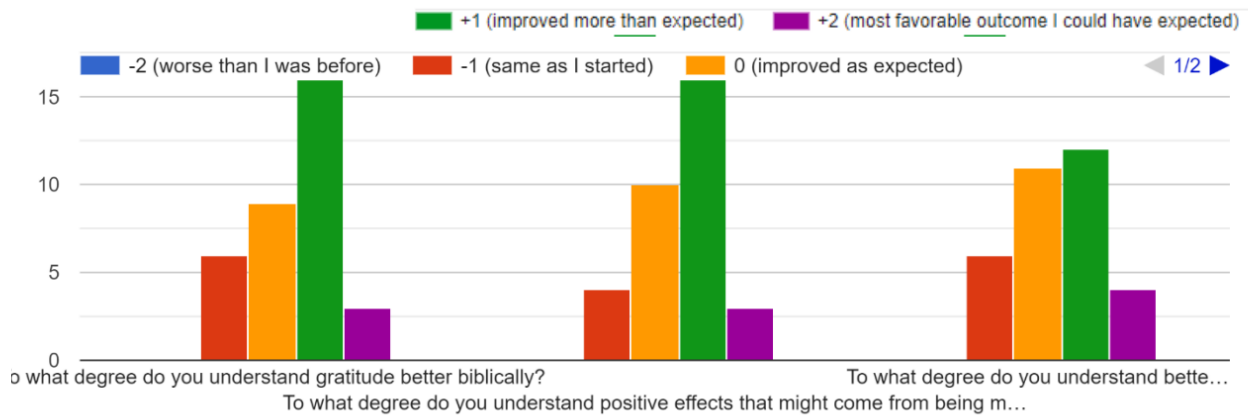
In summary, it’s fair to say that most people enjoyed the experience. When selecting favorites, many had more than one, but the big winners were Kevin’s sermons and talks, with substantial numbers endorsing group interactions in classes or Zoom meetings.

What Were the Outcomes of the Deep Dive into Gratitude?

To help you understand what is to come, here’s a word about Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS). This is unlike things we are used to seeing in which the midpoint of the rating, rated 0, means zero change. Rather, in GAS, the *-1 level indicates NO DIFFERENCE*. A 0 level indicates that the *person changed positively and got as much change as they expected*. If the person rated changes as +1 or +2, that means they changed positively AND got even more change than they originally expected.

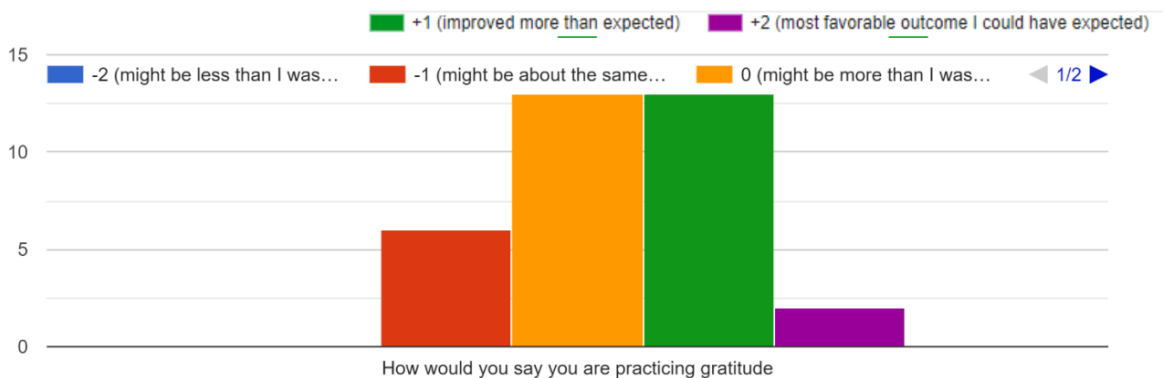
People rated three questions about knowledge (sorry the legends below the display of each’s results were displaced. The first was a rating of overall Biblical knowledge of gratitude³, the second overall psychological knowledge of gratitude, the third knowledge of benefits.

Now that the Deep Dive is over, please rate your degree of understanding based on each of the three statements below: (NOTE: The "-1 (same as I ... hastily just choose the zero point as no change.)



For the personal practice of gratitude, the scores were about the same, though fewer rated it as very helpful (Green = +1; Purple = +2; 13 on practice versus 16 or so for biblical and psychological knowledge) and a few more tended to rate it helpful (Orange = 0; 13 on practice versus around 10 or 11 for knowledge ratings).

Now that the Deep Dive is over, please rate your practice of gratitude: (NOTE: The "-1 (might be about the same as I was before)" would be checked ...hastily just choose the zero point as no change.)



Feedback about Future Deep Dives

If we do another deep dive series, what should we keep the same? What should we change? For example, should we do these deep dives once a year or consider twice a year? Are there any specific topics you would like to propose? What other feedback do you have for the discipleship Team and/or the Session? Altogether, we received 24 responses, but many had multiple recommendations. We included the verbatim responses on the following page.

Should We Do Other Deep Dives in the Future?

Looks like a definite yes for doing more of these. Some wanted them briefer (fewer weeks); others wanted twice a year; others wanted fewer.

What Topics?

Several were suggested, and some people suggested up to three (giving three endorsements for those people). There was not a groundswell of desire for a particular topic. We'll leave it to you to read individual comments. Here are the most endorsed by number of mentions.

Four: joy and generosity

Three: kindness, patience, and justice

Two: hope, peace, fidelity, prudence, and courage

One: intimacy with God, fortitude, spiritual formation in general, hospitality, and self-control
committee and/or the Session?

24 responses

Hope

Once a year feels seems good. Like the justice topic. Maybe combine with peace? Justice & Peace

Faithfulness as a disciple

2x year. Thanksgiving & pre Easter Hope! Speaker suggestion Josh Davis

Becoming more intimate with God.

Joy, generosity, hope, kindness

Thanks for doing these!

I think deep dives should only last one month

The deep dives have been great. We would love to have them twice a year. I think it would be great to think about some of the less fashionable virtues (fortitude. fidelitv. prudence).

Joy

Thanks for all the work that went into setting this Deep Dive up! It was a great opportunity to consider a very important topic!

I really enjoyed the sermon series. I enjoyed some of the Wed eve speakers but find the research oriented ones less interesting or helpful.

I would be glad for us to have a sermon series on Spiritual Formation in general - even a deep dive on SF itself. What does the Bible say about how/the means by which God intends to form us, how we are invited to participate in that work, what our focus should be, etc.

Wow - lots of topics. Justice is a challenge and I'd like to see that. Bringing in experts is a real gift for us.

Courage in our times, Conviction vs. belief, practicing hospitality

Once a year. Patience. Thanks for putting this together; I know it's a ton of work. It was really well done!

Faithfulness, generosity, patience

Once a year is sufficient! 1)Joy; 2)Justice; 3)Kindness

I think it was great; I just wish we'd have been in town more. Fidelity, kindness and peace are traits I would be interested in focus on

I always prefer sermon series that go through books or passages from scripture over topical series. I wouldn't do the deep dives more than once a year, if that. That being said, hospitality sounds great. Could we set up a sort of dinner club where we draw names of others from church to have over for dinner or something like that to go along with it?

I hope those who participates benefited. I was largely unable to be reached.

Patience, Prudence and Self control

Twice a year or three times a year. They're great!

Generosity, joy courage

Generosity.

Thank you so much for focusing on this particular topic.

Summary

In summary, the Deep Dive into Gratitude seemed helpful and provided enough stimulation and enjoyment and learning to use this as a basis for future Deep Dives. However, as with any church program, some people got cut out of specific activities for personal reasons, and there was a desire to make scheduling more convenient. People tend to have strong feelings about what kinds of activities appeal to them and what kinds they find spiritually useful (and useful in other ways as well). It is unlikely that any church program will result in universal approval, but these Deep Dives, especially if we are able to tweak them to consider feedback from the congregation, are something positive within the life of the congregation and are useful as an outreach to other churches in Richmond and people who have come into contact with Christ Presbyterian Church and with whom we still have a relationship.