

The Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT)
Executive Summary
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
March 2021

General Overview

We express our profound and sincere appreciation to all of our fellow members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church who, with prayer and reflection, took the time and made the effort to participate in The Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT). We had very good participation (93) – 51% of our average Sunday attendance. This response far surpasses the threshold needed for reliable and representative data, and enabled us to hear from a broad base of our congregation.

The CAT questionnaire is designed to measure the experience, perception, and aspirations of the congregation. In addition, the CAT provides data that helps us understand the climate and culture of our congregation and provides measures of various performance indexes related to congregational life and ministry.

St. Luke's measures are compared to those from the last 200 questionnaires of other mainline Protestant churches that have employed the CAT from around the country during this time of COVID. This allows us to understand how we are doing in relationship to other congregations at this moment in time - a benchmark comparison.

Member satisfaction and member energy reveal the most about a congregation's health, morale, and vitality.

This is understood as congregational climate. Satisfaction in this instance is defined as congregational well-being/sense of peace and joy. Energy is defined as the passionate, persuasive sense of mission.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of our congregation are satisfied with how things are in our church. Thirty percent (30%) are 'on the fence' – somewhat satisfied, perhaps somewhat dissatisfied. This finding is "high" as compared with other churches across the country. As for energy, the finding is average or typical in energy in relationship to other churches nationally. These findings place us in the category of 'transformational/transitional' congregations. This means that we have the potential to transform ourselves and those we serve in ministry outside the church. And yet, we are transitional in that we have some areas that merit conversation/attention.

Drivers of satisfaction and energy.

We learned that those aspects of our church that are most correlated to our satisfaction and energy are worship, governance, conflict, and the work of our Rector. Translated, this

means we are a more ‘ministry-centric’ congregation. This is neither positive nor negative. It is a description of an aspect of our culture.

Our drivers of satisfaction are:

- Persons who serve as leaders in our church are representative of the membership.
- The worship services at our church are exceptional in both quality and spiritual content.
- In important decisions in our church, adequate opportunity for consideration of different approaches is usually provided.
- Our former Rector made things happen.
- Members in our church have been prepared to personally welcome guests in worship services.

Our drivers of energy are:

- Lack of conflict.

Our strengths are revealed and explained through the Performance Dashboard and Performance Indices.

The CAT ranked the following 8 areas as indicated below: Hospitality, Morale, Conflict Management, Governance, Spiritual Vitality, Readiness for Ministry, Engagement in Education, and Worship and Music.

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- Readiness for Ministry
- Governance
- Hospitality
- Engagement in Education
- Morale
- Conflict Management
- Worship and Music
- Spiritual Vitality

The so-called “performance dashboard” that dealt with worship and music ranked St. Luke’s as higher than 64% of the other 200 Protestant congregations with which we were compared. And 71% of those responding tended to agree, agreed, or strongly agreed that the music of our church is outstanding and appropriate in style. Eighty-nine percent (89%) tended to agree, agreed, or strongly agreed that our worship services are exceptional in both quality and spiritual content.

Another area of particular interest is Spiritual Vitality. On this measure, we ranked in the 15th percentile in comparison to other congregations. This index measures the degree to which members believe that their faith is central to their lives rather than peripheral or episodic. It causes us to wonder: What makes us different from other not-for-profit organizations? Furthermore, this is the only measure in the CAT that usually correlates with

financial generosity – pledging/giving. Our members have been generous in their giving. We are a bit above the national average of percent of household income given. The national average is 2.5%. Ours is 2.95%. We have untapped potential, and it is worth imagining what would be possible with spiritual vitality, if we could tap that potential.

Our culture

- We have trust and high regard for our clergy and our lay leaders.
- We are theologically diverse, leaning a bit conservative compared to our benchmark congregations. Notably, we have a range of theological perspectives and hold this diversity together well under one roof. This is a key strength of St. Luke's.
- We are also fairly adaptive. We are more willing to make adjustments in the ways we operate. The more flexible a church, the more likely it is to adapt to the particular context in which we serve to meet either the needs of our members or those we serve out in the community. The less flexible a church, the more likely it is to believe that a particular style is central to its identity. Research indicates that the more adaptive a church, the healthier and more vital it becomes.

Priorities – where we want additional energy placed

We have subtle differences among age cohorts in where to place energy for our future. Our top six priorities are:

1. Make necessary changes to attract families with children.
2. Develop and implement strategies to reach new people.
3. Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation.
4. Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.
5. Develop the spiritual generosity of the people to financially support the ministry of the church.
6. Work to renew and revitalize the community around the church by building coalitions with partners.

(A notable indicator of a healthy and thriving congregation is its external focus. The prioritization as indicated above, demonstrates a degree of outward focus).

Critical Abilities of our next Rector

Our results indicate that the congregation is looking at these top four abilities:

- Preaching
- Strategic leadership
- Pastoral care
- Change management

Notable in this ranking as compared to our priorities: Our top two priorities are about growth with its accompanying change. We need to reflect on this ranking if we are to achieve our top goals. This is worthy of further conversation.

Miscellaneous findings

- Concerns coming from the pandemic are physical health (65%), mental health (40%), and spiritual connection (29%).
- Sixty-one percent (61%) of the congregation believe that we have done a good job dealing with the challenges presented by COVID.
- Forty-two percent (42%) of our congregation believe we will be stronger after the pandemic.
- Seventy-three percent (73%) believe that the church should continue in the same overall direction as in the recent past.
- Seventy-seven percent (77%) believe that our next Rector should have similar skills to our former Rector.
- We exhibit a wide variety of perspectives about what is most important about our worship experience (all of the following had ratings from the mid-teens to the mid-twenties: time of the service, hymnal music, day of the service, choral music, and location of the service). This may be worthy of some further conversation.
- Ninety-two percent (92%) of the congregation experience the entire communication system of the church (website, emails, print, etc.) as effective.
- The three top (and most effective) ways of receiving information from the church are: #1 email; #2 weekly bulletin; #3 phone.

Some Demographic Data Concerning Participants in the CAT

Age: Under 35: **0%**; 35-44: **1%**; 45-54: **0%**; 55-64: **11%**; 65+: **88%**

Years in Parish: Under one year: **2%**; 1-2: **7%**; 3-4: **17%**; 5-10: **21%**; 11-15: **17%**; 16-20 **14%**; over 20: **21%**;

Attendance: None: **8%**; 1-4 times: **6%**; Once a month: **5%**; Twice a month: **8%**; Three times a month: **16%**; All but 4 weeks: **9%**; Every week: **49%**

Persons in Household: One: **32%**; Two: **59%**; Three: **4%**; Four: **5%**; Five: **0%**; Six or more: **0%**

Overall, we are a strong, thriving congregation. We have much to celebrate in being a transformational congregation. But we cannot rest on our laurels, especially as we come out of this COVID time. We have a call to action based on the results of this CAT and we have a call to action based on the needs of our community. We look forward to on-going conversations, planning, and discernment about our mission, vision, and strategic actions for the future. And we ask God's blessing on our efforts to find the right Rector to lead us.