

Executive Summary of the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) Results

St. Thomas Episcopal Church April 2021

We had excellent participation (120) – representing 76% of our pre-COVID average Sunday attendance. The threshold for valid and reliable data is 33%.

In this assessment we also have conversation partners. Our responses were compared to responses from several hundred congregations that have taken the CAT from across the country over the past 1-2 years. This gives us an actual apples-to-apples perspective on how we are doing as compared with other mainline churches.

What did we learn?

Our strengths and challenges are revealed and explained through Performance Indices. Our congregation was assessed in the following 8 areas: **Hospitality, Morale, Conflict Management, Governance, Spiritual Vitality, Readiness for Ministry, Engagement in Education, Worship and Music.**

The areas that received the highest ratings as compared to all other congregations using this tool:

- Engagement in Education - we are committed life-long learners and welcome programming that is flexible to our lifestyles and excellent in quality.
- Conflict Management - the majority of our congregation perceives we manage conflict appropriately.
- Governance - the vast majority of our congregation perceives that our leaders show a genuine concern to know what people are thinking when decisions are being made, provide opportunity for different approaches to problem-solving and are representative of the membership.

When compared to other congregations, the follow areas require improvement:

- Morale
- Worship and music
- Readiness for Ministry
- Spiritual Vitality
- Hospitality

Morale. Morale is a critical measure of congregational vitality and health. Our scores demonstrate our morale is low.

Worship and Music. Worship is a primary source of congregation vitality and the number one factor in improving congregational satisfaction. The experience of our music program while positive, places us below the perceptions of 87% of comparable congregations. The remainder of the worship experience (such aspects as preaching, presiding, the pace, the panache, etc.) is also positive yet still leaves room for substantial improvement. Our results also demonstrate 50% of us are open to changes in worship.

Readiness for Ministry. This aspect measures our collective understanding and active participation in outreach and other ministries. Nationally, we rank in the bottom quarter compared with other congregations.

Spiritual Vitality. We have a strong sense of God in our lives, yet again we rank in the bottom quarter compared to other churches. Although spiritual vitality is important to our members, everyday life intrudes, and responsibilities sometimes takes precedence.

Unique to the CAT, Spiritual Vitality is the only measure that directly correlates to financial giving. Experience has demonstrated that the closer we personally feel to God, the more generous we are to our church. St. Thomas reports giving 1.87% of annual household income compared to the national average of 2.5%. There is ample opportunity to improve stewardship.

Hospitality. Members perceive we engage in warm hospitality, both internally and to those whom we welcome as guests. While it appears there is room for improvement, we offer ourselves and our resources to folks who are new, different or in need.

What else did we learn?

Our congregation's culture:

- We are theologically progressive. While predominantly progressive, we have about one-third of our congregation who are not. Notably, we hold our theological diversity together well under one roof. This is a strength!
- CAT indicators suggest we seek renewal and growth and indicate that moderate to substantial change is necessary. However, the CAT also suggests our willingness to make adjustments or changes is limited.

Our congregation's climate:

Church climate is measured by two traits: One is member Satisfaction (sense of well-being, peace, lack of discord) and the other is Energy (passion/action for mission). We learned that compared to other congregations like ourselves, Satisfaction and Energy are low. Our scores indicate that we are a "recovery/re-invention" church. Our work is to discern our identity, common mission and vision. The nature of our congregational climate now points to our hope that the new rector will arrive and 'fix' what needs to be fixed.

- What does this mean about our expectations of the next rector and ourselves?
- Who owns the work/ministries of this congregation?
- How can we work to bring joy back to our congregation?

We also learned about our congregation's desires and needs:

- Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth.
- Improve our corporate worship and music experiences.
- Create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships.
- Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation.
- Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.
- Expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society.

We learned a lot about our congregation and we appreciate your participation in this important exercise of self-study and planning for our future. This is an exciting opportunity for spiritual growth and renewal. We look forward to our next rector and all that we can accomplish together.