

Christ Episcopal Church Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) Executive Summary

Thank you for taking part in our church's CAT survey this fall. The results of this survey help us better understand ourselves, and will be key to telling our story and attracting the right applicants for our permanent rector. The full survey results are several pages long, including analysis, so we have prepared this summary for members. If you would like to view the full results, please contact Franz in the Front Office.

Participation and results presentation

Christ Church had excellent survey participation, with 120 members responding, representing 100 percent of our recent average Sunday/weekend attendance — far exceeding the 33-percent participation goal. Our responses measure eight performance areas, define our culture and climate, and identify our members' priorities.

Our CAT results are compared to survey results from 250 other US congregations, which have participated in the CAT in the last 24 months. Our strengths and challenges are presented in percentiles, comparing Christ Church to these other 250 congregations. A high percentile means we scored higher than other churches. These are strengths we can highlight when achieving our goals. A lower percentile means we scored low compared to other churches. These are areas where we have an opportunity to review and improve.

What are the strengths of Christ Church, compared to other churches?

- Worship and Music, 87th percentile. This was noted by our survey company as very positive, and important to our own vitality and crucial to growth.
- Morale, 57th percentile
- Conflict Management, 53th percentile
- Spiritual Vitality (related to financial giving), 51st percentile

Overall, Christ Church has strengths related to openness and to structure of religious practice.

What can Christ Church improve on, compared to other churches?

- Readiness for Ministry, 38th percentile
- Governance, 35th percentile
- Hospitality (defined as welcoming others from different backgrounds), 33rd percentile
- Engagement in Education, 30th percentile

Overall, Christ Church has a tendency to become tradition-bound and overwhelmed with needs.

What is our church culture like and how do we operate?

The survey shows Christ Church is **theologically progressive**, with a high theological diversity. More than a quarter of our congregation leans theologically conservative. Welcoming theological diversity is a hidden strength and allows our church to hold different perspectives together peacefully and respectfully. This helps us understand a particular quality we need in our next rector: someone comfortable with this diversity.

The survey also shows Christ Church has developed a **very settled culture**, meaning our congregation is very cautious about making adjustments in the way we go about our ministry. The more flexible a congregation is, the more likely it is to adapt to serve changing needs of members and the greater community. The less flexible a church is, the more likely it is to believe that a particular style is central to its identity. The more adaptable a church is, the healthier and more vital it becomes. Christ Church ranked in the 16th percentile in our flexibility. Addressing our flexibility is likely our most important challenge.

As progressive and settled, Christ Church is categorized as having a **Paraclete culture**, ultimately concerned with the development of a church that is intellectually open and reflective, but pays attention to structure, stability, and ritual. Paraclete-cultured churches commonly talk about hospitality, inclusiveness and spiritual practice, and are uniquely equipped to focus on ministries of healing. However, these churches may find it hard to adjust to internal challenges and external pressures, with a tendency to retreat into well-meaning habits that lack actual impact. Given our church's priorities for growth, coupled with more than 90 percent of survey respondents believing we need to engage in change to achieve our vision for the future, we must become more comfortable with experimenting in new ways to approach a number of our ministries.

What is our climate?

The survey shows Christ Church ranks high-average in both member satisfaction and energy, which reveal the most about a congregation's climate: its health, morale and vitality. Responses to questions about satisfaction and energy define us as a "**transitional - transformational**" church, with movement toward a transformational church. This is good news for us. Transformational churches are vibrant, healthy, purposeful and have a sense of well-being. Our challenge is not to see the need to adapt and change, to meet the needs of those we serve and those we want to reach in the community.

What drives the overall satisfaction of our members?

- Our church does a good job supporting persons in ministry reminding them that they are making a difference.
- In important decisions, adequate opportunity for consideration of different approaches is usually provided.
- Our church does a good job helping each member understand that they are called to ministry.
- A friendly atmosphere prevails among the members of our church.

- Persons who serve in leadership are representative of the membership.

What are our congregation's top priorities and our aspirations for the future?

- Make necessary changes to attract families and young people.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people.
- Create more opportunities to form meaningful relationships within the congregation.
- Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation.
- Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.
- Develop the spiritual generosity of the people to financially support the ministry of the church.
- Work to renew and revitalize the community around the church by building coalitions with partners.

Two of our top three priorities are related to congregational growth. Three of the top priorities are shared by all age groups in our congregation. Unique to our younger members is a desire to work as advocates for social and institutional change. In light of our congregation's top priority to attract families and young people, the survey notes social justice ministries as worthy of further conversation.

Our profile as a 'transitional - transformational' and 'Paraclete' church helps us understand the characteristics and skills needed in our permanent rector. We need a strong worship leader with skills to help us become more adaptive and nimble, and the ability to help us connect with the broader community. Our nature requires optimizing a large array of strategic resources – visionary, excellence in preaching and presiding and a developer of people.

Overall, the survey shows Christ Church is a strong congregation. We have important work to do, especially around flexibility, but we have a number of strengths to celebrate and build upon. The results give us a lot to prayerfully consider as we seek a permanent rector and envision Christ Church's future.