

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

April 2015

The Church Assessment Tool (CAT) was administered at Faith Lutheran Church (FLCVA) to provide information and organizational intelligence about the congregation’s culture, values and priorities. The survey instrument is designed to measure **four critical factors**:

1. Overall levels of satisfaction and energy (reliable indicators of health and vitality)
2. Theological perspectives and adaptability (helpful indicators of openness to change)
3. Performance in eight functional areas of ministry (important indicators of perceptions of current quality)
4. Level of energy for specific ministry priorities (useful indicators for planning and engagement)

General findings about Faith Lutheran Church

In times of pastoral transition, knowing something about the general health and vitality of a congregation is an important context for preparing call documents. Congregations using the succession plan model (evidence-based, vision-driven, comprehensive, transparent, customized and asset-focused) must have a clear sense of overall health and vitality to increase the likelihood for a successful transition and decrease the need for an interim pastor.

The results of the CAT indicate the FLCVA is a healthy congregation with many strengths on which to build, a retiring pastor who is willing to participate in the transition, dedicated leaders who have stepped forward to serve in the process, and a congregation that responded in large numbers to the survey, sharing how they feel and what they think about the future. Attendance is stable (54% attend worship the same as three years ago; 24% attend more; 22 % attend less).

CRITICAL FACTOR #1: SATISFACTION AND ENERGY

A total of 162 people responded to the survey, which represents 89% of the Average Sunday Worship Attendance. This is an excellent response rate yielding high reliability. The best way to understand the responses is to compare FLCVA responses with the responses from the other congregations in the database managed by Holy Cow. Survey results identified two Key Indicators that provide an overall glimpse into the vitality of the congregation: overall satisfaction and overall energy.

Finding	Response	Comments
Overall satisfaction	63% are clearly satisfied. 4% are clearly dissatisfied. 33% are unsure (tend to agree or tend to disagree)	Note: 24% in the unsure group are tending to satisfaction. The typical church satisfaction score is 52%. FLCVA score is HIGH AVERAGE

Overall energy	39% are energized. 11% are not. 50% are unsure.	31% in the unsure are tending to energy. The typical energy score is 45%. The FLCVA score is AVERAGE
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The FLCVA scores place the church marginally in the **Transformational** category of all congregations in the data base. This level of vitality generally offers the church a number of strategic options including growth, expansion of ministry, replication, or increased external impact. While this is a positive finding, it will be important during the transition to take concrete steps to increase energy and satisfaction.

CRITICAL FACTOR #2: THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND ADAPTABILITY

The survey includes two descriptive indices. The Theological Perspective Index is a measure of the degree to which members of the congregation hold more conservative or progressive views regarding such issues as the nature of the Scripture, the role of conversion in social change, and their relationship to the historic declarations of the church. The Flexible Style Index registers the degree to which the church is willing to make adjustments in the way it goes about its ministry. The more flexible a church, the more likely it is to adapt to the particular context in which it is serving to meet either the needs of its members or those of the community.

FLCVA results indicate that FLCVA is a moderately progressive congregation theologically and one that is generally adaptable. One way to look at this information is to think about the progressive-adaptable style as the “operating system” of the culture. Members of the churches with this culture are likely to embrace changes either because they enjoy variety or they know that change is necessary to reach a changing society. The combination of an adaptable approach to change and a more progressive theological perspective gives the church potential strengths that include curiosity, advocacy, and inclusiveness. On the other hand, the church may find it difficult to develop a clear and compelling vision for its future because people are passionate about different things. In the case of FLCVA, the scores show less flexibility when it comes to changes in worship (suggesting that people are generally happy with worship and music the way they are currently presented).

CRITICAL FACTOR #3: PERFORMANCE IN AREAS OF MINISTRY

The survey measured eight performance parameters that indicate how members perceive the ministries of the congregation. The explanations below give an overview of the performance areas and an indication of how the church performs in comparison to other churches.

Hospitality	This index measures how members perceive they offer themselves to themselves and others with openness and warmth. FLCVA score is LOW. A growth area.
Morale	This index measures how members are emotionally engaged and satisfied in the mission of the church. FLCVA score is HIGH AVERAGE, which is an important finding in a pastoral transition.
Conflict Management	This area measures how well members perceive the church manages conflict. In comparison to other churches, FLCVA score is HIGH AVERAGE.
Governance	How members believe that decision making processes are open and how leaders lead. FLCVA score is AVERAGE. A growth area.

Spiritual Vitality	This index measures the extent to which individuals express views that their faith is central to their lives. FLCVA Responses are AVERAGE for progressive churches but LOW compared to all churches in the data. Scores indicate that people feel “pressed” by other things in life.
Readiness for Ministry	This area measures how members understand their responsibilities for ministry. FLCVA score is AVERAGE. A growth area.
Educational Engagement	This area measures how members view education as enriching spiritual life and service in the world. FLCVA score is AVERAGE.
Worship and Music	This measures levels of satisfaction and appreciation for excellence in music and worship. FLCVA score is HIGH.

The data in all performance indices indicate that FLCVA is performing at a level that indicates fundamental strength with clear areas for growth. Notable strengths are worship and music, morale, and conflict management.

CRITICAL FACTOR #4: FUTURE PRIORITIES

FLCVA respondents were asked in the survey where they want to place additional energy. Here are the top five priorities identified by respondents in all age groups (an unusual degree of alignment):

- Develop the spiritual generosity of people to financially support the church
- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church.
- Strengthen the process by which members are called and equipped for ministry.
- Provide more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships (for example, small groups, nurtured friendships, shared meals, etc.)
- Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life’s circumstances

Looking for strategic opportunities to engage members in all age groups energizing activity is a positive strategy at any time, including times of transition. A careful review of priorities is important because respondents were asked where they wanted to spend “new energy.”

TRANSITION CONTEXT: Summary of Findings

People were asked eight questions about the transition in the Senior Pastor position. The summary of findings is as follows:

- 22% of the 162 respondents say they plan to be more involved during the transition; 78% about the same
- 32% say they are willing to accept additional responsibilities; 58% about the same
- 23% say they will increase their giving; 77% about the same; 0% decreasing.
- 2% say they will explore other churches during the transition; 80% definitely not

- 11% think the leadership needs to be more representative of the congregation in the transition time; 55% are unsure
- 33% are comfortable with the timing of the transition; 24% are uncomfortable
- 40% think the church should continue in the overall same direction in the future; 57% are unsure; 4% disagree.
- 54% think the next pastor should have approximately the same skills and responsibilities as the current pastor; 42% are unsure.

STEWARDSHIP PROFILE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The stewardship module of the CAT yields several findings:

- Developing the generosity of people to support the church financially is the top priority for all age groups
- 34% of respondents say they will give higher or much higher to the church in the next year
- 53% are in favor of an annual stewardship appeal; only 2 people clearly disagree
- While personal faith and an understanding of being generous in supporting God’s work in the world is the most important factor in making stewardship decisions, FLCVA people are also focused on how well the church manages its finances and the church is reaching out to serve others.
- 52% agree that the church does a good job providing stewardship information
- 3% are frustrated that the church spends too much time talking about money; 48% are clearly not frustrated.
- Based on self-reports of income, the survey concludes that respondents give 1.64% of their income to the church (about 1% below the mainline Protestant average). The data suggest capacity for growing giving is strong.

Conclusion

These are the basic findings of the congregational survey. The purpose of collecting this organizational intelligence is to have a clear “snapshot” of current vitality before the church charts a course for the future. Clearly, the results of this survey can help prepare for the pastoral search. They can also provide a framework for discussions about mission and ministry going forward. Developing clarity about the church at this point in time can help determine where to go, how far and how fast.

Members of the Transition Team will facilitate additional conversations about the CAT data. Copies of the full report will be available to people who are interested and willing to visit with members of the Team who will guide them through the information.

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