

Should we take the Congregational Vitality Survey?

Introduction

I'm glad you are considering taking the Congregational Vitality Survey.

The congregational vitality survey is a way to tell how vital your congregation is in three areas: your congregation's connections to God, each other and the world. Each area will receive a score on a scale from 1-5. Use this information in addition to information about your context, finances and attendance to get a well-rounded sense of your overall vitality.

What is the survey like?

The survey is available online or as a 1 page front/back paper form. The questions invite individuals to answer a number of questions about the congregation or the individual completing the survey. Most of the items ask for ratings along a scale from 1-5. The online version of the survey asks respondents to share the strengths and challenges they see as well as any bright spots that other congregations may want to emulate. It usually takes 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.

What happens after the survey?

Once you finish the survey the information will be sent to John Hessian in the Research and Evaluation department. John and Linda then analyze the data and write a 10-12 page PDF and/or Word report. The report includes descriptions of how people responded to each item as well as interpretation of what it all means and how you might use it.

How this information will be shared?

Within a few weeks of completing the survey, a written report with the results and an analysis of what it means will be shared with you and your synod's office of the Bishop.

The information you provide will also be included in a large database with the results from other congregations and used for further statistical analysis. Any reports on this analysis will remove all information that may identify individual congregations.

What is the experience of other congregations?

Since the summer of 2013 over 112 congregations from five synods have taken this survey. This survey provides leaders a way to understand how people are really feeling. The report has often acted as a catalyst for constructive conversation around issues that may be sensitive. For some this is a tool to develop a ministry plan, for others it is a pulse check and for others it is a way of deciding whether they should continue their ministry or end it with dignity.

After receiving the report congregations have used the information in a number of ways including:

- Identifying areas of strength and struggle
- Choosing an area of ministry to focus upon
- Understanding the interaction between spiritual growth and congregational conflict so that both can be improved
- Initiating a year of intentional discernment about next steps for a congregational renewal
- Teaching and preaching on what it means to be connected with God, each other and the world
- Finding commonalities and differences among congregations working to partner in new ways

Where did it come from?

What does it cost?

This survey was created out of the Living into the Future Together (LIFT) initiative and is part of an ongoing research project being conducted by the ELCA's Congregational and Synodical Mission unit in collaboration with the Research and Evaluation department. The research seeks to understand the critical factors affecting congregational vitality. Information about the development of the survey and its reliability and validity are available upon request. At this time there is no charge for the survey.

If you are interested in having your congregation take the survey, notify

Reverend Michael Keys, DEM Oregon Synod
mission@oregonsynod.org or

National contact

Linda Bobbitt (lobbitt2.0@gmail.com) to get signed up.