

# Sharing Congregational Vitality Survey Results

## Facilitator's guide

### Logistics

- Ideally you will have 1.5 hours to share this information.
- Share with small groups (e.g. council, planning teams) or larger groups (e.g. forum between services)
- Before you go, find out what are they hoping to learn. What decisions will be made with this information?
- You may want to have a pre-meeting with the pastor, especially if tension is high or leadership is described as “not sure”.
- Know their average worship attendance and rough age distribution. Compare that with responses. Be prepared to speak to how representative it is.
- Print out reports as booklet, or use a screen by creating PPT slides, or pulling up the report on computer focusing on bar graphs.
- Have bar chart report as back-up.

### Agenda

1. Opening prayer or devotional
2. Distribute debrief worksheet
3. About the survey and debriefing process
  - a. Remind them when they took the survey.
    - i. Ask how many people in the room participated.
    - ii. Note that the results represent only what the people who took the survey said. No one else's agenda is represented.
    - iii. Explain that different people have different experiences of the congregation. Some are not right/wrong. It is okay to disagree.
  - b. Explain the reveal process you will use. – The report is in sections. Before each section you will ask people to anticipate what it will say and then you will show them.
4. Page 1 – demographics.
  - a. View the first page of the report. Note the total number of people that took it and compare with average worship attendance. Note the age distributions.
    - i. There is no magic number that is “good enough”. A higher percentage is better but the most important thing is the representativeness of the sample in terms of age and ethnicity. If the percentages in the sample are about the same as the percentages on a regular Sunday then they are good. Some people don't understand that a sample can be used to understand a larger group because their responses aren't all that different.
    - ii. When there is tension within a congregation, the validity of the survey is often questioned. Be prepared, don't spend too much time here and move on.
5. Connecting with God
  - a. Ask respondents to use first section of debrief sheet. Allow only 1-2 minutes.
    - i. Remind participants that scores range from 1-5. Ask them to write the number they expect to see. Next have them write a sentence or two about why they expect that number. Invite people to share their predictions (raising hands) and ask a few to say why.

- b. Reveal Connecting with God section.
      - i. Point out mean scores. Note highs and lows.
      - ii. Go to next page and point out interesting features (e.g. spiritual growth, meaningful spiritual conversations, etc.). Note spiritual growth should not be all “5”. Expect a range but fewest in “stalled” category.
      - iii. Have respondents write what surprised them and what they wonder.
      - iv. Brief discussion about surprises and wonderings.
6. Connecting with each other
  - a. Same process as connecting with God.
  - b. Note level of tension and harmful conflict. If tension is over 20-25% ask folks to guess what that might be about. Note that tension is generally associated with lower scores and that it holds congregations back from positive movement.
7. Connecting with world
  - a. Same process as before.
  - b. Ask them to describe how they connect with the community. See if it is a mutual relationship.
8. Sustainability
  - a. Same process as before.
  - b. If there is lack of people willing to lead, ask whether that is because of a lack of capacity or something else. (Sometimes a lack of willingness to lead means that leadership positions are no longer relevant and need to change.)
  - c. If more than half of the people say the congregation is “losing ground” or “may not survive”, it means they are wondering whether they should remain open or not. This is a good way to enter that conversation because they have already brought it up.
9. Leadership & God’s active presence
  - a. This section describes things that contribute to vitality and sustainability. Talk briefly about leadership and whether it is inspiring, etc.
  - b. Talk about how people’s understanding of how God works within the congregation drives decisions.
10. Vitality and Sustainability
  - a. Note where they are in the matrix. Read the description below out loud.
  - b. Discuss Jenga blocks and the strength of their bottom blocks.
  - c. Ask them to complete last surprise/wonder blocks of sheet.
  - d. Discuss next steps.

### **Lessons Learned**

- All congregations go through good times and bad. Note that this survey reflects a point in time and is not a moral judgement on their “goodness” or health.
- This tool reveals strengths and opportunities. Make sure to highlight those.
- Anxious systems blame the report or go on a witch hunt for few low responders.
- It is rare for there to be differences in responses by age. Most differences are based on tension/conflict or spiritual growth.
- This tool often reveals hidden tension or dysfunction.
- Every congregation has an opportunity for a faithful response to God’s call – no matter how vital they are now.