

What the CAT told us about First Presbyterian Church – An Executive Summary

During August 2015, 421 members of the First Presbyterian Church (FPC) family (age 16 and older) participated in an assessment using the Church Assessment Tool (CAT) to assist us in planning for FPC's future in this time of transition as we seek how best to "serve Christ and neighbor in the heart of Winchester and beyond." The CAT, an independent organizational intelligence instrument, is a component of our transitional mission study process. For a more complete understanding of the results, please review the "Vital Signs" report, which has been placed on file in our church library and in the church office.

Overall, how satisfied are we with First Presbyterian Church?

Approximately 65% of our FPC family are clearly satisfied with how things are in our church (i.e., they answered "strongly agree" or "agree" to this item); only 5% are clearly dissatisfied ("strongly disagree" or "disagree").

What are the key measures used by our church members to decide how satisfied they are with our church?

According to our CAT results, the following issues correlate with our overall satisfaction level. The CAT results identified the following areas for our FPC family members as important to their overall satisfaction with the church:

- Persons who serve as leaders in our church are representative of the membership.
- The worship services at our church are exceptional in both quality and spiritual content.
- The leaders of our church show a genuine concern to know what people are thinking when decisions need to be made.
- In important decisions in our church, adequate opportunity for consideration of different approaches is usually provided.

What attributes best characterize our church?

- The CAT characterizes us as a "high energy/high satisfaction" or "transformational" church. Churches in this category are sources of new meaning and purpose for their church family. We are in a good position to move forward in fulfilling our mission as followers of Christ. However, churches in this category also may have a tendency to intellectualize issues and may have difficulty in establishing identity and vision.
- Our FPC family members have theologically diverse perspectives, but overall we are more "progressive" than "conservative" in outlook.
- Our FPC family members tend to be willing to make adjustments in the way the church goes about its ministry; thus, the church can be characterized as "adaptive" or "flexible" in its approach to ministry.
- Demographics of CAT respondents: Respondents are not racially or ethnically diverse; 48% are age 65 or older; 67% live in 1- or 2-person households; and 80% have at least a college degree (with 37% having a graduate degree).

What else did the CAT tell us about our church's life?

- The following areas in our church's life received very positive responses: (1) engagement in education, (2) church governance & decision making, (3) worship and music, (4) readiness for ministry, and (5) morale (defined as "the positive, passionate, and persuasive engagement of members in the mission of the church").
- The following areas in our church's life received less positive responses: (1) hospitality, (2) spiritual vitality, and (3) conflict management.

What are our priorities?

The FPC family identified the following as the top four priorities for our church as we look to the future:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church.

2. Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.
3. Strengthen the process by which members are called and equipped for ministry and leadership.
4. Expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society (i.e., homeless, immigrant, transient persons).

The third and fourth priorities listed above appear to be unusually strong in comparison to other churches taking the CAT. In addition, the following priority, though not one of the top four in our church, was unusually strong in comparison to other churches taking the CAT:

- Work as an advocate for social and institutional change so that society might better reflect the values of the kingdom of God.

What critical abilities do we want in our next pastor?

The top two critical abilities identified in the CAT are the following (showing the percentage of respondents citing them among their top three):

1. Preaching -- capacity to inspire and connect people to the word of God (95%)
2. Strategic leadership -- capacity to cast a vision and lead the church toward realization of the vision (63%)

How did we respond to our customized items?

- Our church should adopt a welcoming posture toward persons in our community of all ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds and all income levels.

Strongly agree/agree/tend to agree:	96% (53% strongly agree)
Strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree:	3%
Don't know	1%
- Our church should adopt a welcoming posture toward persons of all sexual identities in our community.

Strongly agree/agree/tend to agree:	84% (40% strongly agree)
Strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree:	13%
Don't know	3%
- Our church should allow for the possibility of same-gender marriage ceremonies for committed members of the church officiated by one of our pastors and held in our facilities.

Strongly agree/agree/tend to agree:	54% (27% strongly agree)
Strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree:	38% (22% strongly disagree)
Don't know	8%
- Overall, our congregation's connection to the larger church through the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) contributes positively to our church's mission to "serve Christ and neighbor in the heart of Winchester and beyond."

Strongly agree/agree/tend to agree:	69% (15% strongly agree)
Strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree:	15% (5% strongly disagree)
Don't know	16%
- I would be willing to consider possible changes in our current Sunday morning worship schedule (showing the number of respondents who said they attend each service):

7:30 am Chapel attendees (35):	57% strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree
8:30 am New Stone attendees (86):	19% strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree
8:30 am Sanctuary attendees (73):	30% strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree
11:00 am Sanctuary attendees (129):	29% strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree
Attend different services (38):	24% strongly disagree/disagree/tend to disagree