**Zion-Redeemer Parish Lutheran Church, Zion-Redeemer Parish**

**Post-Vital Signs presentation report**

**February 24, 2022**

The Congregation Assessment Tool was administered by Mustard Seed Consulting, LLC to all members of Zion-Redeemer Parish Lutheran Church in January 2023.

Your efforts now provide you with evidence-based insight for the purpose informing pastoral transition and much more. This is also reliable data to use in informing and taking steps to improve congregational health and vitality.

Your report offers extra insight beyond the raw percentages, because the data is benchmarked alongside over 2,800 churches across the country. The benchmarking is essential to understanding the data.

The measures in the Vital Signs report provide you a well-tested, reliable and accurate assessment of congregational vitality. It also has a long shelf-life, so plan to return to this report with your new pastoral leader and in the years to come.

***(Please have the Vital Signs report and the Transition Summary & Vital Leader Profile report in hand)***

**Facts about the Respondents**

* 106 persons completed the Congregation Assessment Tool (Zion 35, Redeemer 53, Did not indicate 18)
* This represents **180%** of average worship attendance Age 16 & up. The goal was **80%.**
* The data shows **26%** worship less than five times per year or never.
* One-third of members are energized by Zion-Redeemer Parish; 60% are unsure there is an engaging spirit. **VS p. 4**
* What this tells me is that your people were eager to lend their voices and appreciated the invitation by leadership. It also tells me that people who you are not seeing for whatever reason cared enough to complete the CAT so that they could express their interest, desires and concerns for informing decisions to come.

**Comparing and Contrasting Data for Each Congregation**

* There are clear similarities in data between Redeemer and Zion.
* There are areas where the data for each congregation diverge.
* In most cases, Redeemer scores are higher when there is divergence.

**Areas of Similarity in the Data (Zion and Redeemer)**

**Morale**

* Redeemer and Zion have nearly identical benchmarking (see last bar on graph labeled “Index”.) It is clear that low morale affects both congregations.
* Low energy and lack of excitement is evident; energy in both congregations is very low.
* *Value of* *involvement beyond worship* benchmarking is very low for both congregations, though Redeemer has 14% more people agreeing that there is meaning to involvement.
* Overall satisfaction is 18 points higher in benchmarking among Redeemer members.

What this tells me:

* Your people can envision a more vital church than they are currently experiencing.
* The data indicates that both congregations and your parish will be challenged to make the changes needed to increase satisfaction and energy without an influx of new people or a rejuvenation of energy among existing members.

**Theological Perspective**

* Redeemer and Zion are each theologically conservative.
* There is a slightly higher diversity amongst Zion members.
* What this means is that both congregations and your parish are generally of like mind when it comes to the authority of Scripture, the purpose of Christian education, etc. The shadow side of this is that newcomers who may not appreciate the conservative stance will have difficult finding a place amidst the low diversity.

**Hospitality**

* Redeemer and Zion have LOW benchmarks. This is due to the number of people on the fence and those who disagreed on questions regarding genuine care and concern in times of needs, friendliness and whether being part of the congregation has brought new meaning to their lives.
* What this means is that attention needs to be dedicated to reaching out to those who are not in relational networks in the congregation and investing in building caring ministries that provide tangible attention in times of need.

**Conflict Management**

* Redeemer has a higher AVERAGE benchmark. There is uncertainty about whether there is a disturbing amount of conflict. (Q 1)
* Zion has a lower AVERAGE benchmark. There is uncertainty about whether there is a disturbing amount of conflict.
* There is greater uncertainty in the minds of Zion members about a small group of members frequently opposing what the majority want to do. (Q4)

**Areas of Divergence in the Data between each congregaiton**

**Worship and Music**

* Redeemer has AVERAGE benchmark. Over 75% of members agree there is quality and appropriate music in worship.
* Zion has VERY LOW benchmark. 40% believe there is quality and appropriate music in worship.
* Combined Report has LOW benchmark. In this case Zion data has notably lowered the benchmarking.

**Governance**

* Redeemer has AVERAGE benchmark. The data supports a positive view of leaders, their openness to members’ views and how they give opportunity for consideration of different approaches.
* Zion has LOW benchmark. Members are less clear about feeling positive about governance.

**Flexibility Style**

* Redeemer has AVERAGE benchmark. Members clearly welcome changes in worship and are willing to adapt worship to the needs and circumstances of the people they want to reach in the community.
* Zion has LOW benchmark. One-quarter clearly do not welcome changes in worship, and an equal number have opposing views on willingness to adapt worship to the needs and circumstances of the people they want to reach in the community.

**Reinvention Church**

**(See the handout from 4/19/22 “Energy-Satisfaction”)**

With low satisfaction and energy, Zion-Redeemer is in the Reinvention Quadrant **(VS p. 6)** The goal is to begin taking steps that will raise satisfaction and energy.

Improvements made in the following areas might have the biggest impact on how members are feeling about the church overall: **(see combined report VS p. 7)**

1. Worship;
2. helping people discover and engage their God-given gifts;
3. offering some education opportunities for all ages are important to your members.

For Reinvention churches, there are some people who already realize that change is imperative. Yet, most people find it difficult to change familiar patterns of behavior.

In order to begin raising satisfaction and energy, the interim pastor or other dedicated leader(s) need to be the “line coach” enlisting the Council to:

1. Develop a clear sense of direction with concrete first steps.
2. Keep focused on doing a few things well.
3. Engage the willingness of all to contribute to the changes for the sake of raising satisfaction and energy.

In congregations like yours, change has a higher possibility of creating conflict because flexibility is low. Be sure to keep the above 3 points in the forefront and communicate clearly and often.

Know this, Low satisfaction can motivate people to come along with change as long they:

1. know there is a clear sense of direction,
2. understand concrete, first steps to be undertaken.
3. possess a willingness to contribute to the change (instead of simply waiting for others to change).

Leaders need to begin with their own willingness to change. Discuss this together. Then, agree that you will possess attitudes of optimism about Zion-Redeemer Parish.

**TRANSITION AND CALL PROCESS (Vital Signs page 29)**



The data from the Transition Profile **(VS pg. 29)** does not indicate holding off on the steps toward calling a new pastoral leader. However, there is work to do right now before you get too far down the road.

**Good news!**

* Your members indicate they do not intend to explore other churches during this time.
* They are generally comfortable with the timing of this pastoral transition.

**News of Note**

Your members indicate they are unlikely:

* to become more involved in general;
* increase their giving; they do not intend to lower their giving;
* take on additional responsibilities which naturally come with pastoral transition.

**Questions 7 and 8** go together. We want to see the benchmarking look similar between them. Your data for these questions benchmark AVERAGE.

* Half of members are on the fence regarding the direction of the parish as well as what people see as the basic responsibilities comprising the portfolio of the next pastoral leader.

What this tells me is that some intentional congregation-wide conversation is needed :

* regarding the overall direction of the parish;
* what responsibilities should comprise the portfolio of the next pastoral leader and what skills members believe will be necessary.

Review together the **“Transition Summary and Vital Leader Profile”** report.

**(See Vital Signs page 32)**



When your members were asked to rank 8 primary abilities for your next pastor, they chose these top 3:

* Preaching
* Pastoral care
* Strategic leadership

Use the Vital Signs data and the insights from the Transition Summary report to populate the **Ministry Site Profile** (ELCA form for calling a new pastor). The Transition Summary is also useful for developing interview questions.

**FINAL REMARKS**

**Keep the Faith**

Leadership in the church is more challenging than ever. You are doing important work on behalf of many who love and value Zion-Redeemer Parish Lutheran Church. You are investing in a mission that brings Jesus Christ to bear in this world.

**Hold to Hope**

I appreciate the opportunity to be involved with you in the work of transition and change.

The commitment you make toward the steps of reinvention hold the possibility of a revitalized ministry to the members of Zion-Redeemer Parish and your communities.

Remember, your people can envision a church more vital than they are currently experiencing. The change required to undertake reinvention occurs one conversation at a time, person to person, group to group, with continual prayer, patience and respect. I hope you will continue the conversation, return to the evidence often and explore many fronts during the interim period.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence-based discernment. I will continue my daily prayers for you all in the months ahead.

Pastor Kurt Jacobson, Interpretive Consultant

Mustard Seed Consulting, LLC

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*Should any of your people ask about the validity of the data in light of the pandemic, I include these remarks to assist you in responding to them*.

**What about Covid and the CAT**

**1 Did the Pandemic have bearing on our Data?**

In short, the pandemic has had very little bearing on the data.

To reach this conclusion, Holy Cow Consulting (the owner of the CAT) created a separate generator that specifically benchmarked congregations taking the CAT during Covid alongside the larger database. This allowed Holy Cow to keep an eye on any unusual trends or concerns.

**2 Have any change been seen?**

In reviewing the benchmarking in the COVID database, some churches have shown slight movement in the areas of Hospitality and Spiritual Vital indices.

In summary, Holy Cow found little in the data has changed because of the pandemic. They concluded that what congregations took with them into COVID, they still have. If they were conflicted before, they are still conflicted. If they had high satisfaction and energy, in more cases than not, that is still true.