

Vital Signs: the Church Assessment Tool Survey

In November, 2014, St. Andrew's and five other North County Episcopal churches participated in the Church Assessment Tool survey. 162 members of St Andrew's completed the survey online. In January the results were compiled and returned.

The timing of the survey coincides with the study being done in what is called Mission Area IV of the San Diego diocese. That study work is evaluating how to best support the needs of the six congregations, particularly the four smaller churches.

The purpose of the survey is to measure how each of the six parish congregations look at themselves when compared to the responses of more than 800 other (mostly Episcopal) churches across the country.

In meeting with the survey facilitator, we learned about how our parish looks at its own vitality, spirituality, educational needs, mission activities, theology, spirituality, and more. Then, representatives of each of the six parishes together reviewed the results for all six Area IV churches.

Interpreting all the results would make for a too-lengthy report to present here. However, some general themes in the Saint Andrew's survey results include:

A. St. Andrew's is a progressive, "transformational" church. Churches in that category are sources of meaning and purpose for the members. They also serve as mentors to other churches. On the spectrum of churches being in a range from most progressive theologically to most conservative, St Andrew's is considered to be a progressive theologically church while balanced between being adaptable and comfortably settled.

B. The top three priorities chosen by the St Andrew's respondents include:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church.
2. Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our church.

We were told these top two priorities are always the top two priorities in most every survey. Our third priority, however, was much higher than most other churches. And it was:

3. Create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships (for example, small groups, nurtured friendships, shared meals, etc).

C. Our third priority, which stood out from the norm, is also reflected, to a degree, in our ranking on the hospitality index, which, while positive, was only average in comparison with the 800 churches who have participated in the survey. Also, satisfaction with our Music Program, while positive, was ranked below average in comparison with the broader population of churches.

D. Statistically, our respondents to the survey were

1. 63% are 55 years or older. Significantly younger than the other parishes,
2. 80% of whom have been at St. Andrew's five years or longer
3. Drive less than 10 miles on Sunday from their homes to church
4. Are 65% female/35% male

E. Overall satisfaction with parish is quite high, particularly considering that we are at the end of a long rector transition period.

F. Overall energy is considered to be very high.