

## **Local Church Survey FAQs**

- 1. What is the purpose of the survey? How will it help my church?** The survey is a local church tool to help you assess the culture of your church. It will help you identify strengths and weaknesses, and can help guide your ministry and missions. Questions span a number of areas important to the life of the church including Internal Relationships/Values, External Focus, Discipleship Development, and Discipleship Deployment. By identifying opportunities for improvement and plans to address them, action steps can be taken and progress measured by repeating the survey annually.
  
- 2. Is the survey part of the Growth and Vitality Initiative?** Yes. The survey will help you keep the Initiative's Vision and Values at the fore of your church's Missions and Ministries. Questions relating to the Vision and Values appear throughout the survey.
  
- 3. Will results of the survey be confidential?** Yes. Contents of the report will remain in strict confidence unless you request help. David McPherson and your DS will be available to assist with interpretation of results and/or development of action plans should you choose to seek their advice.

Note that a consolidated report of total church scores will be forwarded to you as a frame of reference in evaluating your results, and your scores will be merged with those of other churches in future reports. However, combined Word Clouds will be included rather than full text comments so that individual church confidentiality is honored.

- 4. How can I achieve the greatest buy-in and response to the survey?** As mentioned in the Survey Guidelines, present the survey to your staff, Church Council members, and the congregation. Use Sunday services, classes, emails, newsletters, and personal invitations to introduce and explain the purpose of the survey to the congregation. Distribute hard copies of the survey PDF and have I-Pads available at services and classes. Let everyone know how important their opinions are to the future of the church and that results will be shared with all. Encourage participation and use reminders throughout the survey period.

Consider asking your staff, Council members and their teams to commit to taking the survey. Ideally, also identify a committed lay person to lead the survey effort by becoming the point person for questions, by driving personal invitations, and helping with reminders. The most successful test church had a lay person designated as Survey Leader to lead the survey effort, and more than two-thirds (69%) of worship attendees responded.

Explain that having the opinion of everyone in the congregation is important because results will help guide church strategies for Mission and Ministry in the coming year and beyond. Reinforce that the survey will replace assumptions with real information for decision-making and yield better results. By repeating the survey annually in years to come, progress can be measured and problem areas of church culture identified and improved. Results will help in development of strategies and plans best directed toward growth and vitality.

- 5. Should I set a goal for number of responses? What response rate should I assume?** Learning from test churches indicates that the number of responses you receive will be driven largely by the breadth and persistence of your efforts in soliciting them. Encouragement and reminders should be given at all services during the survey period, as well as bulletins, newsletters, and any published means. Test churches experienced response rates ranging from 22% to 69%. We suggest setting a goal of at least 30-40%. Feedback indicates that goals can be strong motivators for the congregation to rally around. A Survey Leader can help create energy and excitement about reaching the goal.
- 6. How should I share the information with my church?** You will receive reports that include bar charts and tables for multiple choice questions, along with full text responses and Word Clouds for comments. PDF, PowerPoint, and Excel formats will be provided as options for you to use in sharing information. PDF's can easily be shared electronically. PowerPoint would suit slide presentations, and Excel, which includes all raw data, can be used for further analysis.

You may prefer to show complete text responses with your leadership and Word Clouds (display of words most frequently appearing for each question) with a broader audience. How you share information is up to you, but our test learning indicates that congregations are eager to find out how their church responded. In fact, this was cited as a motivating factor in taking the survey.

- 7. How will I interpret results?** An analysis tool will be included with your reports to help you view your scores alongside consolidated church scores. The tool will guide you in understanding score differences within your church and relative to other churches. It will also include specific questions to assist you in analysis of results. Comments from open-ended questions will more uniquely relate to your church and its individual culture, but you will be able to compare your Word Clouds with those of the consolidated group of churches.

As you view information, please note that it is normal to receive some criticism in a survey such as this, especially when names are not required. Our advice is that you thoughtfully consider all input but keep in perspective overall comments and scores. In the Excel report, you will be able to view full surveys by respondent to gain better insight into what might be driving an individual's

opinions. You may choose to distribute information using documents containing Word Clouds rather than full comments.

- 8. Have other churches taken the survey?** Yes. Four churches agreed to take the lead in trying out the survey. Feedback indicates that congregations were eager to be asked for thoughts that would result in positive action by the church. Pastors appreciated being able to receive candid input from the congregation and the rare opportunity to better understand the culture of the church.
- 9. How do I determine a date for closing the survey?** A 3-4 week survey period should be sufficient. Be sure to publicize the closing date and encourage paper copies to be submitted a few days in advance of the date. Also send reminders as the closing date nears.
- 10. What should I do about people who aren't comfortable using an online survey?** Have hard copies of the survey PDF available at services and in the church office. A team of volunteers should be designated to enter responses into the Survey Monkey link.
- 11. What should I do if I'm entering responses from a paper survey into the link and questions have been skipped?** Skip over the questions left unanswered when you enter responses online. The survey will still submit as long as you press "Done" at the end.