

## “Conversations that will Change the World”

A summary of the FCCW Congregation Assessment Tool survey, May-June, 2018

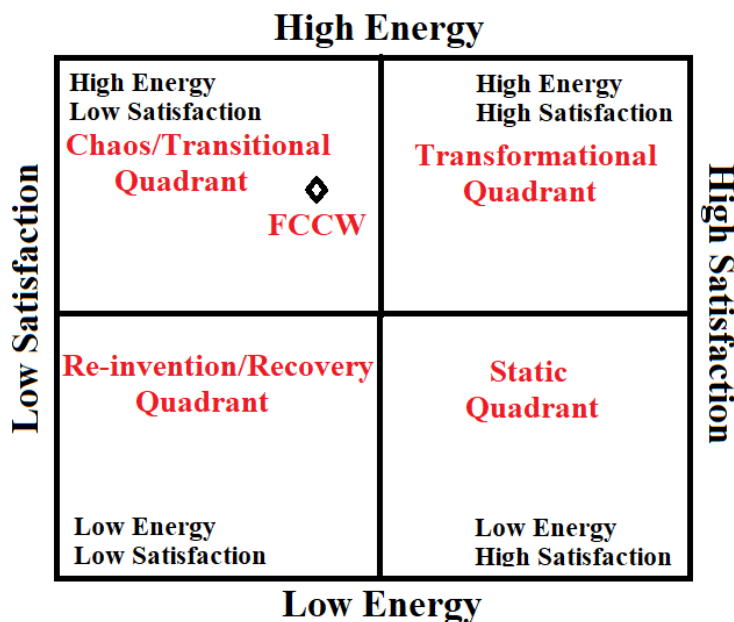


During May and June, we conducted a comprehensive survey of our congregation using the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) from Holy Cow! Consulting. Rev. Tom Clough, our now retired regional conference minister, interpreted the “Vital Signs” summary during an exciting second hour presentation on July 17<sup>th</sup>. All active members and friends of our church were asked to complete the survey, and 92 of you did so – a response rate that Tom said was truly extraordinary. To all of you who participated, thank you!

### Energy and Satisfaction

In their experience in surveying over 1,500 congregations, the folks at Holy Cow! Consulting find the levels of energy and satisfaction in a church to be reliable indicators of its health and vitality. It turns out that the energy in our church is high, driven by our friendly atmosphere, our spirit of making people want to get involved, our support of persons in ministry, our leaders’ concern to know what people are thinking, and the quality and spirituality of our worship services.

On the other hand, our satisfaction indicators are somewhat low, and the drivers of these factors revolve around the tolerance, or lack thereof, of differing opinions and beliefs among our members. We also value the quality and spirituality of worship services and our pastor’s preaching and vision for our church.



Churches such as ours, with high energy and lower than average satisfaction, are in what Holy Cow! calls the “chaos” quadrant, churches that may be struggling to structure and channel their energy in a direction they feel good about. On the other hand, churches like ours have a great deal of potential if we can tap into our members’ energy and desire for change.

Tom emphasized that issues can prove distracting and pull us away from the work of our faith. Listening to everyone is critically important, and yet we also need our leaders to feel confident in casting clear vision for our congregational life, and our members to feel confident in supporting that vision.

Collectively, we expressed a desire to put more energy into

- attracting families with children and youth
- reaching new people
- providing more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual growth
- developing the spiritual generosity of the congregation to financially support the church.

Compared with other churches, we indicated a high priority to

- renewing and building coalitions with partners within the community
- changing or improving the music of the church in order to deepen our worship experience.

The factors that appear critical to improving our level of satisfaction revolve around

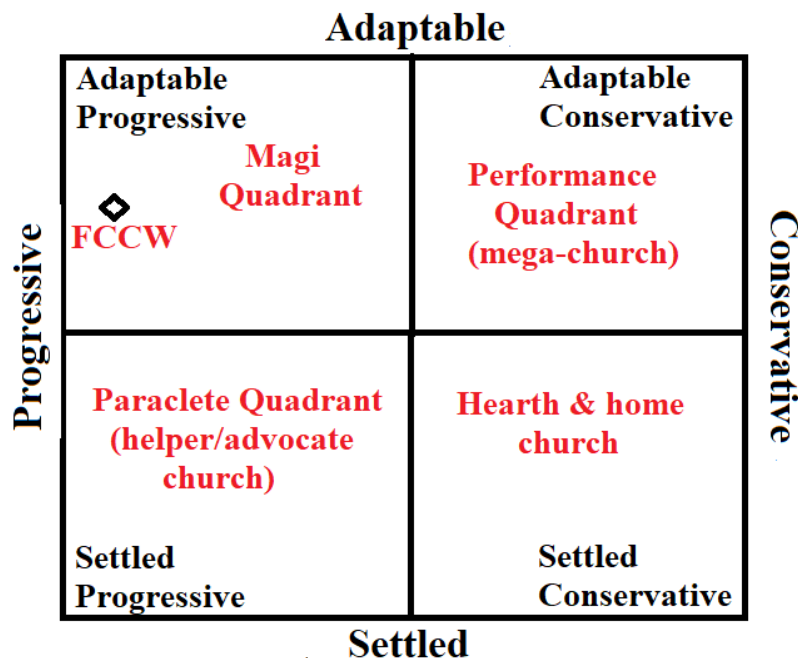
- our tolerance of differences
- the representation of our leaders
- excellence in worship
- our vision, as articulated by our pastor

### Theology and Flexibility

Another focus of the survey is to measure our theological perspective on a conservative—progressive scale, and to assess our flexibility on an adaptable—settled scale. Although a few of us express very conservative theological views, most of us are quite progressive. Overall, the level of theological diversity within our congregation is low.

Our measures of flexibility, however, are high, indicating that we are adaptable, receptive to new ideas.

This is very good news. In fact, this metric of flexibility is a strong predictor not only of church survival, but also for growth and future prospects.



Tom calls progressive-adaptable churches such as ours the Magi congregations. We have good ideas, but may find it tough to describe ourselves effectively. We may have a tendency to over-intellectualize issues and be less emotional in our ministries.

## Performance Indices

Finally, the CAT survey seeks to measure the degree to which we are engaged in certain areas.

- **Hospitality.** We feel that we are welcoming and friendly, and that being a part of this community of faith has given new meaning to our lives.
- **Morale.** We find the spirit within our congregation tends to make folks want to become involved.
- **Conflict Management.** Compared with other churches, we score only in the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile in agreeing with statements such as, “Problems between groups are usually resolved through mutual effort,” and, “Among most of our members there is a healthy tolerance of differing opinions and beliefs.” Clearly this is one area that we need to look at.
- **Governance.** Compared with other churches, we score in the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile overall on the degree to which members believe decision making procedures are open to their concerns and input. These findings, along with those about conflict management, are entirely consistent with being a “chaos” congregation.
- **Spiritual Vitality.** Questions here measure the degree to which we believe our faith is central to our lives. Tom finds that the level of spirituality within our congregation is “one of the highest” in his experience.

## Conclusions

This CAT survey is just one tool, albeit an important one, that we can use to chart our future.

We can celebrate being a smaller church – one where worship is the focus of meaning for us, where our pastor is central to our congregational life, where we care so deeply about one another, where we are adaptable, have the energy to change things, and find opportunities for growth.

We also need to make more room for the expression of differences in opinion, avoid distractions from the central mission of becoming disciples of Christ, and recognize the importance of listening to everyone, even as we come together in support of our common vision.

In short, we can embrace our “chaos,” learn from it, tap our energy, adapt, and find ways to have deep conversations that, in Tom’s words, will change the world. May it be so.

We start by coming to church.

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