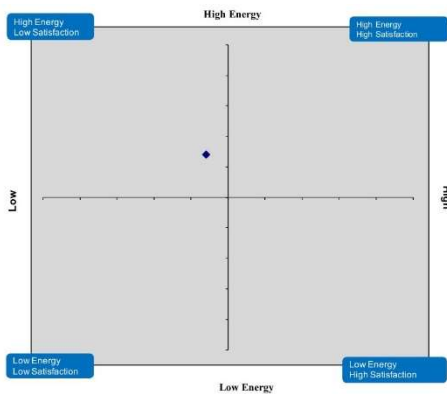


Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) Report Summary for St. Thomas Camden 2024

Where are we? Energy-Satisfaction Map



Knowing where you want to go without knowing where you are is the operational definition of being lost. You can't map a course to vitality and health unless you know where you are.

- St. Thomas is in the High Energy-Low Satisfaction quadrant, meaning members' experience of "shalom" (wholeness, fulfillment, peace) is lower compared to experiences at other churches, and members' experience of energy (purpose/passion with intention) is average.
- One thing this means is that parishioners have lots of energy to do ministry, but they may be unclear as to the overall mission of the church. Getting clear on who they are as a parish and aligning to a clear overarching purpose will help overcome obstacles to St. Thomas' ability to accomplish its strategic mission in the world, and will help overall satisfaction.

What Drives Member Satisfaction and Energy at St. Thomas?

When members think about their overall **satisfaction** (their experience of "shalom"/contentment/wholeness), they tend to focus on leadership/governance and the atmosphere/spirit of the place, such as: whether there is an atmosphere of care among members in times of need, whether leaders are representative of members, whether the congregation is willing to adapt in order to reach others, whether the clergy helps accomplish the mission, and whether the spirit of the congregation makes people want to get involved. These are the areas that are important to St. Thomas' respondents for having a satisfying experience of church.

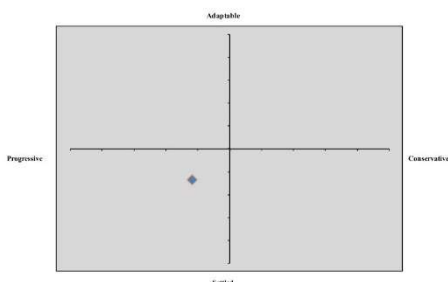
When members think about their overall **energy** (compelling sense of purpose), they tend to focus on whether or not there is frequently a small group of members that opposes what the majority want to do. If they viewed that as true, they rated their energy lower. If they viewed it as not true, they rated their energy/sense of purpose as higher.

There is high energy but low satisfaction at St. Thomas, which likely points to a lack of alignment around a common vision, and that the church may be doing lots of things, with lots of energy, but that there may not be clarity around how those things fit together to fulfill the overall purpose of the church. The tasks of churches who find themselves in the High Energy-Low Satisfaction quadrant have to do with identifying common values, developing a shared vision, and aligning to a central purpose. St. Thomas is nearing the high energy-high satisfaction quadrant, so working to get clarity around vision and purpose will be very helpful in helping the church move to the transformational quadrant (high energy-high satisfaction quadrant).

Where do we want to go? Priorities for the Future

St. Thomas says that **reaching and incorporating new people**, especially families with children and youth, developing the **spiritual generosity** of members, and providing more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual **formation** are top priorities where they would like to focus additional energy in the future. There was also a higher than average (compared to other churches) focus on improving the **physical facilities**. Additionally, the younger age demographic put much higher emphasis on creating opportunities to form **meaningful relationships**. Because of the overall emphasis on newcomers as well as the expressed desire for relational connection, especially among younger respondents, it might be worth exploring the practices St. Thomas employs for inviting, greeting, orienting, and incorporating those who attend, and then dreaming about additional ways to do that.

What is our Culture? Descriptive Map



St. Thomas is a progressive-settled church, a cultural style referred to as "**Paraclete**" which enjoys more structured faith practices. Paracletes often talk about faith in terms of spiritual and emotional growth, are compassionate, and emphasize the Gospel's power to transform, are warm and hospitable, and can be a haven for those who need healing. The shadow side of Paracletes is that they have a tendency to overcommit and can lose their missional focus (doing everything instead of a few things well). They also may need to be pushed to be more **flexible** in how they accomplish their mission.

Because the top priorities at St. Thomas had to do with making changes necessary for incorporating new attendees, flexibility in the culture will be necessary to support the changes needed for growth to happen. Churches who are growing tend to have high flexibility, and they focus on strategic leadership, empowering lay ministry and delegating much of the pastoral care to the church community, allowing the priest to focus on leadership. If growth is really the top priority, and the culture tends to be in the more settled quadrant, there may be some dissonance in St. Thomas' stated priorities (growth & newcomers) and the cultural context of wanting to be settled/remain the same. While St. Thomas is relatively high in the Paraclete quadrant (meaning higher in flexibility relative to that quadrant), there still could be some tension in the community when changes are attempted, and it's important to practice and maintain flexibility in order to grow and develop into your best self. You cannot remain the same and incorporate new people. New people will inevitably change the feeling of the place, and will have new ideas and new energy, which is wonderful AND it means the loss of how things used to be. Continuing to practice being flexible, with the idea that change will be necessary in order to truly welcome visitors and newcomers, will be key in reaching your stated priorities.

How's it Going? Performance Indices

Many indices measured were average. While there is always room for improvement, and while we continue to strive for excellence, many things were going fairly well overall, such as hospitality, morale, spiritual vitality, and worship. **St. Thomas has a solid foundation to build on.**

However, the clear consensus was that energy and attention needs to be paid to **governance** and **conflict management**. These were rated low. Governance is about how leaders exercise power, if leaders seek input and feedback from the congregation when making decisions, if there is transparency, and if leaders are representative of their views. Conflict management is about how conflict is addressed and if it is resolved mutually. Often, when governance improves, conflict management also improves. Additionally, continuing to build trust throughout the whole system helps improve governance and mitigates conflict. Trust can be built through relational connection of members and leaders, through open decision-making and transparency, through considering many options when making decisions, and allowing people to express their preferences.

The Transition Process

When respondents thought about where the church was when the former rector announced the resignation as opposed to now, there was a clear overall sense that things were much stronger. This is also a highly committed group; most are willing to give more time, take on more responsibility, and give more money to help with the transition period. However, there was not a strong or clear sense that the church should continue in the same overall direction as before, and that may also speak to the need for the work of discernment around revising the purpose and central mission in this new phase of the congregation's life together. This is also the work needed for most churches who find themselves in the High Energy-Low Satisfaction quadrant.

What's Next? Recommendations

- Shore up the Foundation.
 - Continue to practice flexibility
 - Continue to work on transparency in governance and decision-making and develop trust
 - Consider the need for conflict mediation
 - Continue to work on the mutual partnership of clergy and laity. A revising process will also bring clarity so that you can extend your best invitation to the next rector to join you in the work God is calling you to at this phase of your congregational life
- Turn to Exploration & Planning:
 - Explore WHY you want to grow... Who are you that is unique in all the world? How can you share that with others? Who are your neighbors and how can you be in relationship with them? What is God already doing in the neighborhood and how can you join?
 - Planning: Explore and address practices around inviting, greeting, orienting, and incorporating (especially relational opportunities for younger members). A robust process for getting people connected to the relational fabric of the parish will help deepen the newcomer's experience as well as that of those who are already present. Explore education as well.