



**GOOD SHEPHERD**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH & SCHOOL  
TEQUESTA, FLORIDA

# 2022 CAT Summary

## Congregational Assessment Tool Summary

### Good Shepherd Episcopal Church

#### Tequesta, FL

Compiled by Ian Anderson, Vestry liaison to the CAT

Earlier this summer, in the late June / early July timeframe, the members of Good Shepherd participated in a wide-ranging survey called the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) administered by Holy Cow! Consulting. The CAT is required by the Diocese of Southeast Florida for all congregations / parishes beginning a search process, first to discern whether the parish is able to support a full-time rector and second to discern whether there are issues within the congregation that might require a lengthy interim period and a dedicated interim rector. The CAT demonstrated that Good Shepherd is thriving as a parish community, and that the search should proceed immediately with the Associate Rector serving as Clergy during the search.

The CAT was designed to help parishes gain “organizational intelligence:” to determine the congregational culture and climate, to identify signature attributes that differentiate a given congregation from others, and to suggest areas where energy might be spent to improve the vitality of the congregation. In the present context, these factors help to devise a parish profile that allows prospective rector candidates to identify and discern a good match with our parish. It is also useful to suggest activities that might be pursued during the transition, a period in which major changes should be avoided (as the incoming rector may chart a different course), but experimentation might be helpful in strengthening a sense of common purpose.

## PARTICIPATION

Good Shepherd recorded strong participation in the CAT. A total of 234 responses were registered, which is 98% of the parish's 2021 average Sunday attendance of 239 and 68% of its pre-COVID high of 343.

## FINDINGS

The CAT revealed that Good Shepherd is in a very good place right now. High scores in the key indicators of **Satisfaction** (70%) and **Energy** (65%) indicate that Good Shepherd has a **Transformational Climate**. The survey also revealed that the congregation has a high degree (78%) of **Flexibility**; the sole weak point here is a perception that *“our church tends to stay close to the established way of doing things”* by a significant fraction (45% agreeing, with another 40% tending to agree) of respondents. Congregations that report 70+% Satisfaction, 85+% Energy and 90+% Flexibility typically exhibit strong growth; **thus, experimentation that improves the perception of Energy and demonstrates additional Flexibility are likely to promote growth, which, along with attracting young families, was listed as the highest priority for directing resources.**

A “performance dashboard” that measured satisfaction with different aspects of congregational was largely in keeping with a transformational climate such as ours. Relative to other congregations, most of our performance metrics were exceptional: conflict management (97%), morale (94%), engagement in education (93%), readiness for ministry (91%), hospitality (88%), governance (87%), spiritual vitality (72%) and music and worship (48%). Of the latter, worship in general ranked highly (92%); the music program in particular was the sole area where Good Shepherd underperformed (17%) relative to other congregations.

Across age groups, three of the top six priorities were common among respondents under 35 years of age, aged 35 to 64, and aged 65+: (1) **attracting young families**, (2) **small groups allowing deeper connections**, and (3) **outreach to those broken by life circumstances**. These three areas of engagement would therefore energize the

congregation as a whole. Conversely, each group had a priority unique to that group: for < 35, outreach involving direct services to marginalized groups; for 35-64, training for ministry and leadership; and for 65+, opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation for all ages.

The CAT also indicated characteristics of our congregation that differentiate it from the majority of churches.

- Good Shepherd exhibits unusual **theological diversity**; while a plurality of respondents identified as moderate, substantial fractions (~20+%) of the congregation identified as alternatively conservative- and liberal-leaning.
- Compared with most congregations, two priorities ranked “very high” at Good Shepherd: improving facilities (#8/17 Good Shepherd vs #17/17 typical) and improving the music program (#10/17 Good Shepherd vs #15/17 typical).
- In response to open-ended questions, respondents indicated that:
  - **signature strengths / points of pride** of Good Shepherd were its welcoming atmosphere, its mission outreach, and its excellent preaching;
  - **perceived weaknesses / areas needing improvement** (while a substantial fraction – 45% – responded “nothing” or equivalent), were the music program, programs for young families, and community outreach activities.

### Other features of Good Shepherd revealed by the CAT:

- Pledged income to Good Shepherd amounts to about 2.2% of household income, which is near the 50th percentile for Episcopal Churches (2.3%); a pledged income performance index at the 90th percentile (similar to most of our indices) would put pledged income at ~3.5%.
- Good Shepherd clearly has a regional draw, as a majority of respondents live 5+ miles from the church and 10% from 15+ miles. People are clearly driving past other churches to attend ours

The responses to Good Shepherd’s customized questions reinforced the good health of the parish. Only one of the 234 respondents indicated that

they would be church shopping during the interim, but 85% strongly aligned with the parish. The parish's mission and vision statements and motto resonated with the congregation, 80% agreeing that these reflect their church priorities. Fully 90% of respondents felt that Good Shepherd exists to be a beacon of faith, hope and love. A majority (60%) indicated that Good Shepherd Episcopal School was integral to the church's mission, with only 5% disagreeing. Regarding stewardship, respondents indicated that their giving was most influenced by their **personal faith**, followed by the **effectiveness of the church in making a real difference**: these priorities generally indicate a stable giving model. As regards to whether improving Good Shepherd's facilities would improve its ability to pursue its mission, half (50%) were "on the fence" while a substantial number (35%) agreed.

## SUMMARY

In summary, Good Shepherd is in a great place as we enter the search for our next Rector. We have a great congregational climate that sees our members happy and energized. The Vestry are challenged to sustain this positive attitude throughout the search process by concentrating on the priorities of our members as identified by the CAT, so that our next rector will feel this positive energy upon his or her arrival!

**If you have any questions, please contact a member of the Rector Search Committee.**

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