

THRIVING CHURCHES

...*helping churches transform lives,
empower people and grow.*

MINISTRY

Rev. Robert B. Ellsworth, Ph.D. and Rev. Janet B. Ellsworth,

UNITY IN GEORGETOWN TX

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Introduction

Church communities are amazing entities! Rarely recognized is the extent to which churches can impact emotional well-being, physical health and longevity. For example, people involved in church life:

- Live an average of *nine* years longer than those not involved. The results of this study are more believable because it controlled for differences in tobacco and alcohol use.
- Have less coronary-artery disease, less depression, lower suicide rates and emotional well-being.
- Also, study after study has confirmed that spirituality and health are strongly linked. Consequently, over 100 medical schools now offer courses on spirituality, up from only 17 in 1994.

Note: For more information, see CHURCHES THAT ENHANCE SPIRITUALITY AND WELLBEING by R. B. Ellsworth and J. B. Ellsworth, published in the *International Journal of applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, Vol. 7, #2, 2010.

Your survey results are compared with national norms. Every church has areas of strengths and areas needing further development. Without norms, it's very difficult to tell which aspects of ministry are clearly above normal and which fall below the "tipping point" that distinguishes between good and thriving congregations.

This report is customized for your ministry. We appreciate the opportunity to help you create a church community that transforms more lives and attracts more people.

The Church Life Survey measures 13 ministry essentials that, when strengthened, impact (1) emotional well-being, (2) spirituality, and (3) numerical growth. Over a period of several years, we surveyed 174 churches, searching for links between actions taken and outcomes. Recently, we turned our attention to 10,000 surveys from 37 ministries that *surveyed twice*. By comparing baseline and follow-up survey results, we were able to identify which aspects of ministry, when strengthened, actually improved one or more of the three outcomes mentioned above.

Your Strengths (actions that really make a difference)

The first 13 survey items measure those essentials of worship, spiritual teachings and leadership that really make a difference. These items represent things that clergy and leaders can do that impact *outcomes*. The next page lists the nine action essentials that are *clearly* above normal in your ministry.

Ministry Essential	<i>Ministry Action Essentials that are Clearly Above Normal</i> (four or more percentage points above normal)	% Points above normal
Worship #1	Congregational songs here are very uplifting, inspiring and easy to sing	+ 8%
#2	The special music is excellent and soul satisfying (solos, choir, etc.)	+4%
Teachings #6	From the sermons, I learn practical ways to handle everyday life.	+6%
#7	This church really shows people how to pray through sermons and classes.	+21%
#8	This church community helps me to identify and use my spiritual gifts.	#22%
#9	This ministry stresses the importance of applying spiritual teachings.	+7%
Leadership #11	Church Leaders (clergy, lay leaders, staff, etc.) support trying new things.	+10%
#12	Leaders are willing to evaluate, use what works, and put aside what doesn't.	+22%
#13	There is a lot of joy and laughter in this place.	+12%

As seen above, 9 of the 13 *action* essentials are clearly above normal! Four percentage points above normal is statistically significant. *Take time to celebrate your strengths!* Three of these ministry essentials were over twenty percentage points above normal, *very unusual!*

We encourage you to identify what your ministry did that had such a positive impact on prayer (item #7), spiritual gifts (#8), and leadership accountability (#12). We would love to learn *what* you did to reach this level of excellence in action items #7, #8 and #12. We will share with other ministries the kinds of actions that really make a difference.

Essentials that could use further developing.

As seen below, four *action* essentials could use some fine-tuning. Notice that these are not *below* normal. But edging them up to clearly above-normal levels will help transform more lives and attract more people.

Ministry Essential	<i>Action Essentials that are Not Clearly Above Normal</i>	% Points above or below normal
Worship #3	I find the sermons here almost always inspiring and interesting.	+3%
#4	Worship focuses on the mystery and wonder of God.	Normal %
#5	We are continually reminded here of God's love for us	+2%
Teachings #10	Spiritual teachings help me greatly to handle difficult times better.	Normal %

Notes:

Outcomes: Your impact on transforming more lives and reaching more people.

As can be seen below, your impact on emotional wellbeing ranges between -2 percentage points below to +15 points above normal! Spirituality ranges between +6 and +12 percentage points. Look carefully to see *which specific outcomes* have the strongest impact and which may need attention.

Ministry Outcomes	<i>Ministry Outcome Essentials</i>	% Points above or below normal
<i>Well-being #14</i>	I almost always leave worship feeling more uplifted than when I came.	-2%
<i>#15</i>	I am becoming a happier more joyful person.	+11%
<i>#16</i>	I feel enthusiastic when I talk to people about this church.	+15%
<i>#17</i>	There is something happening here that really matters.	+4%
<i>Spirituality #18</i>	This faith community plays a vital role in my spiritual growth.	+12%
<i>#19</i>	I frequently feel an emotional release during worship (tearful, choked up, laughter, goose bumps, etc.)	+6%
<i>Growing #20</i>	Your congregation perceives that more people have been coming.	Growing

As seen in the Table above, your ministry has a *strong* impact on five out of six outcomes that measure emotional well-being and spiritual development. Be sure to take time to discuss and celebrate your strongest outcomes.

If you would like to see item #14 improve, the question becomes: “*Which* action essentials, when strengthened, will improve “feeling uplifted?” From churches that surveyed twice, it became clear that *strengthening worship* had the strongest impact on increasing people’s experiences of “feeling uplifted.”

Recommended Next Steps

- Prioritize which of the 13 action essentials need most attention. It’s better to work with the most important areas and do well than trying to do too much and doing poorly. Also, identity the person(s) who will carry the energy for change over time.
- Provide feedback to your congregation, sharing your ministries’ strengths and areas needing attention. This helps congregants know that they have been heard and that their input will play an important role in upcoming changes.
- Measure progress made by surveying again in 18 or so months. Give leaders and your congregation time to settle in to changes made.
- *Sustaining the energy for change is crucial to success.* Consider a survey-response team composed of a minister, board member, a wise elder who can represent dwellers, and one or two congregants. Boards in large churches especially have too much on their plates without trying to plan and sustain changes.

Notes:

Thank you for inviting us to be part of your journey in ministering to God’s people.

Robert and Janet Ellsworth

Note: a Church Life survey and a scoring-norms sheet are attached.

CHURCH LIFE SURVEY

www.thrivingchurches.org.

Sharing your experiences in this church helps us evaluate how well we are meeting important spiritual and personal needs and to plan for the future. Thank you for your input.

How long have you been coming to this church? (Check ✓ one): ____ 1st, 2nd, or third time.
____ Between 1 and 3 months. ____ 3 to 11 months. ____ 1 to 3 years. ____ Over 3 years.

Instructions: Please check (✓) each statement that is TRUE for you.

- ____ (1) Congregational songs here are very uplifting, inspiring and easy to sing.
- ____ (2) The special music is excellent and soul satisfying (solos, choir, etc.)
- ____ (3) I find the sermons here almost always inspiring and interesting.
- ____ (4) Worship focuses on the mystery and wonder of God.

- ____ (5) We are continually reminded here of God's love for us.
- ____ (6) From the sermons, I learn practical ways to handle everyday life.
- ____ (7) This church really shows people how to pray through sermons and classes.
- ____ (8) This church community helps me to identify and use my spiritual gifts.

- ____ (9) This ministry stresses the importance of applying spiritual teachings.
- ____ (10) Spiritual teachings help me greatly to handle difficult times better.
- ____ (11) Church Leaders (clergy, lay leaders, staff, etc.) support trying new things.
- ____ (12) Leaders are willing to evaluate and use what works, and put aside what doesn't.

- (Fold) -----

- ____ (13) There is a lot of joy and laughter in this place.
- ____ (14) I almost always leave worship feeling more uplifted than when I came.
- ____ (15) I am becoming a happier more joyful person.
- ____ (16) I feel enthusiastic when I talk to people about this church.

- ____ (17) There is something happening here that really matters.
- ____ (18) This faith community plays a vital role in my spiritual growth.
- ____ (19) I frequently feel an emotional release during worship (tearful, choked up, laughter, goose bumps, etc.)
- ____ (20) Compared to a year ago, worship attendance has....

If you have been coming for several months, Please check ✓ one answer below.

(0) ____ Declined somewhat ____ (1) Remained about the same ____ (2) Increased

(25) **YOUR AGE RANGE:** (check ✓ one): ____ Under 18, ____ 18-39, ____ 40-54, ____ 55-64, ____ 65+

(26) **YOUR GENDER:** (mark one): ____ Female, ____ Male

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey

SURVEY SCORING AND NORMS

YOUR CHURCH: GEORGETOWN TX # Surveyed 48 Date: July 2011

INPUTS - ACTIONS

WORSHIP	Norm	Your %	Diff.	Notes
1 Cong. Songs	81%	<u>89</u>	<u>+8</u>	
2 Sp. Music	85%	<u>89</u>	<u>+4</u>	
3 Sermons Inspire	88%	<u>85</u>	<u>-3</u>	
4 Wonder & Mystery	77%	<u>77</u>	<u>0</u>	
5 God's Love	88%	<u>89</u>	<u>+2</u>	
Average	84%	86%	+3%	

Teachings

6 Sermons Help Life	77%	<u>83</u>	<u>+6</u>	
7 Show How to Pray	62%	<u>83</u>	<u>+21</u>	
8 Identify/use Sp Gifts	61%	<u>83</u>	<u>+22</u>	
9 Apply Teachings	84%	<u>91</u>	<u>+7</u>	
10 Difficult Times	83%	<u>83</u>	<u>+0</u>	
Aver.	73%	85%	+11%	

Leadership

11 Trying New Things	75%	<u>85</u>	<u>+10</u>	
12 Evaluate	65%	<u>87</u>	<u>+22</u>	
13 Joy and Laughter	88%	<u>100</u>	<u>+12</u>	
Aver.	76%	91%	+15%	

OUTCOMES

Emotional Well-Being

14 Feel Uplifted	87%	<u>85</u>	<u>-2</u>	
15 More Joyful	72%	<u>83</u>	<u>+11</u>	
16 Enthusiastic	72%	<u>87</u>	<u>+15</u>	
17 Some Sp. Happen	81%	<u>85</u>	<u>+4</u>	
Aver.	78%	85%	+7%	

Spiritual

18 Sp. Wellbeing	79%	<u>91</u>	<u>+12</u>	
19 Emot. Release	70%	<u>76</u>	<u>+6</u>	
Aver.	75%	84%	+9%	

20 Attendance Score 1.46 Key: Declining = 0.1 to 1.05 Growing = 1.4 to 1.9

<u>How long coming?</u>	Norm	Your %	<u>Age</u>	(Norm)	Your %	Norm	Your %
Less than 3 months	10%	<u>21%</u>	Under 18	4%	<u>0%</u>	Female	65% <u>64%</u>
3-11 months	10%	<u>67%</u>	18-39	17%	<u>7%</u>		
1-3 year	20%	<u>2%</u>	40-54	31%	<u>7%</u>		
3+ years	59%	<u>10%</u>	55-64	23%	<u>30%</u>		
			65+	25%	<u>57%</u>		