



EPISCOPAL CHURCH FOUNDATION

Memorandum

To: Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Diocese of Arkansas
From: Erin Weber-Johnson
Date: November 2, 2017
Re: Listening Results Overview

In the fall of 2017, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral engaged in a Strategic Thinking Process to determine, "What is God calling your congregation to be and to do?" The Strategic Thinking Process is based in core values (what brings life to your parish) and provides actionable, measurable goals on an annual basis.

As part of this Strategic Thinking Process, Trinity initiated a listening process, "Eat up/Speak up" to determine the congregation's core values. These core values are the foundation for creating measurable annual goals, a strategic filter, and proposed strategies for meeting annual goals. This becomes the framework that can be adapted as the Trinity Cathedral changes over time.

Over the course of 2.5 weeks, electronic and paper surveys were made available to all parishioners both at "Fried Chicken Listening Sunday" and the subsequent weeks following. Of these, 110 responses were received from the congregation.

In addition, an adapted electronic survey was sent to congregations and clergy by email to the diocese. 21 responses were received from outside the Trinity Episcopal Cathedral congregation.

The goal for the listening process was to ensure an opportunity for all voices of the parish to be heard. The standard for validity of a survey is a response rate of 17%. Trinity Episcopal Cathedral's internal response rate appropriately meets that standard. We can report with confidence that all cathedral members have been invited to participate in the Listening Process.

Unlike a SWOT analysis or diagnostic congregational assessment, the goal for the Strategic Thinking Process is to articulate the parish's core values, not organizational wellness. This methodology is used to create a framework for

decision-making which can be adapted and last over changes in the parish and/or the parish's leadership. While there were many comments about Dean Keller and the current clergy which included their impact on the Cathedral, responses were framed in the language of core values and were not individually identified as a category (For example, identifying a core value of Trinity Cathedral as Dean Keller or other specific clergy members). The lack of individualizing the leadership's positive/negative impact does not negate these comments, but seeks to focus them within the lens of the process.

Additionally, there were some responses that did not rise to the level of major emerging theme for the parish. All comments were included in the analysis, though some were edited for appropriateness.

Finally, the number of responses externally could not be used, with a high confidence of validity, as stand-alone results. However, they do provide affirmation to the results of the internal survey. To compare with the internal analysis, the same themes were used to determine points of intersection.

Internal Survey

Q.1 When thinking about Trinity Episcopal Cathedral at its best, please describe one or two moments that reflect this.

- 1.) When parishioners' significant moments happen: Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals (Life marker)
- 2.) High church days and seasons of preparation: Christmas/Easter, Advent/Lent
- 3.) Formation/Sermons
- 4.) Community Engagement/Outreach in the Community
- 5.) Inclusivity/welcome of diversity of thought
- 6.) Children
- 7.) Music
- 8.) Care of one another

Q.2 As Trinity Episcopal Cathedral makes decision about its future a ministry, what would you like to communicate to the leadership? What do you hope and dream for the cathedral in the next five years? Ten years?

There were some wonderful, life-giving ideas provided to this question. The small groups on "Fried Chicken Sunday" especially produced some terrific new programmatic suggestions. However, emerging themes centered primarily on interlocking themes of growth.

For this question, parishes often speak aspirationally. Specifically, data reflects "More_____". While some data points to hope for the future, many participants described Trinity Cathedral, in its current form, as thriving.

- 1.) Growing in members/Full pews

- 2.) Ethnic diversity
- 3.) Increased number of families/young people and programs to support growth
- 4.) Increased community engagement
- 5.) Effective Communication

Q.3 When thinking about visitors and newcomers to Trinity, what has kept you coming back to Trinity and its faith community?

Strikingly, these values were consistent with the themes emerging in Question 1.

- 1.) Liturgy/Worship/Traditions/Rituals
- 2.) Openness in dialogue/Welcoming of ideas
- 3.) The people/feeling of connection/acceptance of one another/care
- 4.) Life Marker (significant moments happen here)
- 5.) Formation/Sermons
- 6.) Music/Arts

Q. 4 What do you see as the role of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in the Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas?

- 1.) Participants needed more information/formation in this area
- 2.) Hosting ordinations/confirmations/high church Sundays
- 3.) To be a model/leader in a variety of areas
- 4.) Invite other parishes to Trinity/Go visit other parishes in the Diocese
- 5.) Hosting community-wide/diocese wide events.

There were a significant number of comments in addition regarding the transparency of the diocese in financial record keeping, keeping the diocese offices at the cathedral, and ongoing relationships dynamics.

Additionally, it was striking the number of participants who either did not answer this question or indicated they needed more information. This suggests an opportunity for formation after annual goals are articulated.

Q.5 What structural improvements and/or additions would you like to see done to the Trinity Cathedral Complex?

- 1.) Remodel restrooms
- 2.) Various suggestions for greater accessibility
- 3.) Updated classrooms/nursery space
- 4.) Audio/Loop System/Hearing concerns
- 5.) Parking

There were several additional ideas that, though individually widely ranging, fell under a consistent theme of updating the facilities.

Common Core Values for Consideration

When comparing the themes emerging from the questions, Common Core Values emerging include:

- 1.) Liturgy/Worship/Traditions/Rituals*
 - a. Christmas/Easter
 - b. Advent/Lent
 - c. Life Marker (Significant moments happen here)
 - d. Diocese-wide events**

*Participants did not indicate that the Cathedral was a place of innovation of liturgy, but rather noted its distinctiveness in significant moments of their lives. It is clear the Cathedral is a liturgical place of significance steeped in tradition. One question to consider, as this core value is framed, is how a funeral at Trinity Cathedral differs from other parishes in the diocese.

- 2.) Feeling of connection/acceptance of one another/care for one another
 - a. Openness in dialogue
 - b. Welcoming of ideas/people
 - c. Life Marker**
 - d. Events that gather/foster the internal community
- 3.) Formation
 - a. Children/Families
 - b. Sermons
- 4.) Music/Arts
 - a. Children**
 - b. Change Bells in Tower
- 5.) Community Engagement/Outreach
 - a. Insight
 - b. Bethel AME Relationships
 - c. Diocese-wide relationships**

**Repeated

External Survey

Information provided by participants in the wider diocese echoed the major themes found internally with one notable addition. For comparison, themes of the internal survey were utilized and resulted in the confirmation of the following external themes:

- 1.) Participants would like to see Trinity Cathedral function as a leader/model of excellent in a variety of ways: music, community engagement, social justice,

dialogue, liturgical practice, and implementation of the diocese initiatives/policies.

- 2.) There is a desire for greater connections made between the parishes of the diocese and the Cathedral and suggested various strategies. Some strategies include the Cathedral clergy visiting parishes throughout the diocese in measures that reflect a mutuality of relationship.
- 3.) Participants were grateful for the Cathedral's current role of host/gatherer and would like to see this continue.

Finally, an additional theme arose from the external data regarding structural improvements. Participants requested an updated welcome space as a structural change as well as signage to navigate.

Recommendations

The Episcopal Church Foundation thanks Trinity Episcopal Cathedral for the opportunity to engage in a Listening Process with your congregation. Next steps for completion of the Strategic Thinking Process include:

- 1.) Finalization of Core Values with descriptions
- 2.) Creation of Strategic Filter
- 3.) Creation of Annual Goals
- 4.) Creation of Strategies for completion of Annual Goals
- 5.) Implementation of Communication Plan for all new information

