

The Evidence is In: The CAT Speaks

A report to Joy Lutheran Church, Prescott, WI
December 7, 2022



Providing your church options that best fit your needs today for the sake of your mission tomorrow
Pastor Kurt Jacobson, Interpretive Consultant Mustard Seed Consulting, LLC

In October, the Council and Transition Team invited the people of Joy Lutheran to lend their voices to inform pastoral transition and the calling of a new pastor. The response was excellent.

On Tuesday, December 7, I met with leadership to present the data and my interpretation.

- 100 people responded to the CAT.
- This response is 143% of average worship attendance and assures the data is strong and statistically valid.
- Active and inactive members participated. 24% indicate they worship less than 5 times per year.

I found the leaders to be open, engaging and appreciative of the high participation. They are eager to have more members step into governance for the sake of greater involvement in decision-making.

Key Indicators about Joy Lutheran:

- There is a high level of flexibility/adaptability in the congregation. This is a significant asset.
- 66% of members feel Joy welcomes and is enriched by persons from many different walks of life.
- Your church has potential strengths related to inclusiveness and advocacy.
- Members are highly focused on the quality and content of worship as a factor in assessing satisfaction.
- 54% of members are satisfied with how things are in the church; 41% are unsure. This, along with other information, indicates that while members have a relatively high level of satisfaction, they may not be experiencing the level of energy and purpose necessary for a vital church.
- Three-quarters indicate spiritual experiences impact the way they look at life and faith is central, rather than peripheral.
- One-third of members feel a positive, passionate, and persuasive engagement in the mission of the church. One-half are unsure.
- 50% believe opportunities for engagement in active ministry within the church and to the world is a central focus of the congregation. 50% are looking for options to grow.

Key Transition Data

- In general, members believe the church should continue in the same direction it has taken in the recent past. However, 60% are unsure. Some intentional conversation about the overall direction of Joy for the next era will be important to have together.
- Most members believe the next pastor should have about the same skills and responsibilities as the former. Again, conversation together will be important.
- A leadership style of pastor that would best fit Joy include the characteristics of delegating authority, assigning responsibility and recognizing the contributions of others. The pastor should be able to provide programs with minimal support.
- Members indicate that their availability for transition tasks is high compared to other churches and they indicate their giving to Joy for the costs of transitions will be very high compared to other churches.

Members see these abilities as critical for the next pastor:

- Preaching that inspires and connects people to God's word.
- Strategic leadership – casting a vision and leading the church toward realization of the vision.
- An ability and interest to reshape the ministries of Joy to reach others and incorporate them.
- An ability in creating worship experiences that deepen people's relationship with God and each other.
- Interest in creating a family life ministry that effectively attracts parents, children and youth.

What Drives Satisfaction

When members are asked how they feel things are going for Joy, the data shows they think about particular areas of congregational life. These are called “Drivers of Satisfaction.” Joy members are highly focused on these five ranked areas:

- 1 The quality and spiritual content of worship services.
- 2 That Joy welcomes and is enriched by persons from many different walks of life.
- 3 That being part of Joy gives new meaning to their lives.
- 4 That Joy provides opportunities for members to engage in active ministries within the church and to the world.
- 5 That persons who serve as leaders are representative of the membership.

The data shows that improvements need to be made in #1, 3, 5 in order to increase satisfaction . Members are satisfied with #2 and 4.

Priorities

As members look to the future, the CAT ranks 17 areas. The top two areas where they want additional energy placed are:

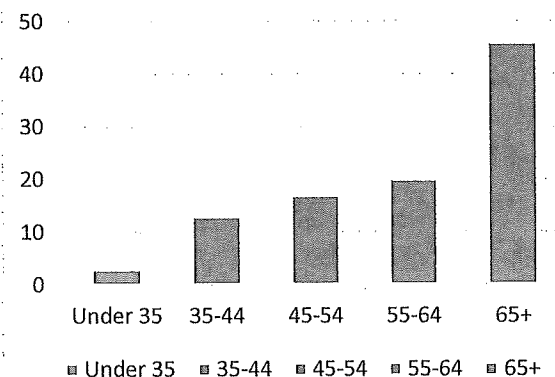
1. Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our church.
2. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach and incorporate new people into the church.

One priority which is unusually high for Joy compared to other churches is: *“Deepen our sense of connection to God and one another through stronger worship services.”*

Quick Facts about Who Participated in the CAT

- **Households:** 41% are 3+ persons; 48% are two-person; 10% are one-person
- **Tenure:** 48% have been members 20+years; 31% -10 yrs. and less.
- **Worship trend:** 45% indicate worshipping less than 3 years ago; 7% indicate more than 3 years ago.
- **Education attainment:** 8% high school diploma; 19% some college; 35% college graduate; 8% some post graduate work; 29% graduate degree.

Age of Respondents



About the Consultant

Pastor Kurt Jacobson is a Holy Cow! Consulting trained interpretive consultant. He is an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. For 28 years he served Trinity Lutheran Church, a transformational congregation of the ELCA in Eau Claire, WI. He retired as Lead Pastor in 2016. He has served as an interim pastor and consultant for congregations across the NW Synod of WI and beyond.

Jacobson holds a BA in Business/Hospital Administration and Organizational Communications from Concordia College, Moorhead, MN and a Master of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN. Additionally, he holds a certificate in Intentional Interim Ministry from the National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors.

He is the author of *“Welcoming Grace: Words of Love for All”* and *“Living Hope: Messages of Faith”*. In addition, the book *“The State of the ELCA”* by J. Russell Crabtree, founder of Holy Cow! Consulting, Inc. includes a chapter detailing the work Kurt did in making Trinity Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI a transformational congregation.

He lives near Cumberland, WI.