



## Summary of the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) Results February, 2024

Asbury UMC completed the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) in December, 2023 and early January, 2024 to 1) provide important input to Iowa Conference Bishop and Cabinet related to our next Pastoral appointment and 2) provide guidance to Asbury leadership and congregation regarding current and future direction and focus for our Church. Asbury had a good response rate—164 people representing 85% of Asbury’s recent average worship attendance. Church leadership received an in-depth interpretation of the results on January 22, 2024 from Ryan Christenson, Associate Director for Congregational Excellence of the Iowa Conference. This summary provides the main insights and takeaways of the comprehensive Congregational Assessment report.

**Our Unique Church.** Holy Cow Consulting, the company that produces this survey tool, indicates that the CAT makes it possible for leaders to “make better decisions in less time with greater confidence.” The CAT gives you clarity about where you are, so that you can take more informed next steps. Asbury survey results are benchmarked with more than 2,800 churches from the last 6 years.

With that, the report notes several unique qualities of Asbury United Methodist Church:

- ❖ 78% of survey respondents are over 55 years of age and 70% of respondents have been members of Asbury for more than 15 years. Both the average age and tenure with Asbury of those respondents is above the 70 percentile of churches taking the CAT survey.
- ❖ Nearly 70% of Respondents primarily attend 8:30 worship with 30% primarily attending 10:30 worship.
- ❖ There is generally high satisfaction within the Asbury Congregation. We are focused on worship and our overall attitude is contagious. We feel good about our Church when we feel good about our Pastoral leadership.
- ❖ Asbury survey respondents tend to focus most on the following areas:
  - The quality and spiritual content of worship services.
  - Creating a friendly atmosphere.
  - Communication between our Pastor and the Congregation in ways that keep us informed and connected.
  - Providing opportunities for education and spiritual growth formation in a variety of ways that can fit with our complex lifestyle.
  - Managing and addressing conflict as it arises in our Church.
- ❖ Survey respondents see our Church as significantly more flexible compared to other surveyed churches. (Note: Perhaps this reflects the way Asbury responded and adjusted during COVID times.)
- ❖ Asbury took the CAT survey in 2018. Important differences in results between the 2018 and 2023 survey results include:
  - There is a significantly higher level of satisfaction at Asbury in 2023 survey results than 2018.
  - There is also a significantly higher level of energy within our Church congregation with the 2023 CAT survey results than 2018.
  - According to Holy Cow Consulting, Churches in the “high energy-high satisfaction” quadrant of Churches are referred to as “Transformational” Churches. These churches are providing relevant sources for new meaning and purpose to members in their Christian “walk” on the Discipleship Pathway.

- Compared to 2018 CAT survey, our congregation views ourselves as more adaptable, yet we continue to see ourselves as a slightly more conservative Church than average.
- ❖ From a Theological perspective, compared to other Churches we are essentially a “Centrist” Church with fairly tight theological diversity. However, individually, there is a broad range of personal views on theological based matters.
- ❖ Regarding social justice related issues (LGBTQ rights, ordaining LGBGQ clergy, same-sex marriages, environmental, etc.); there is a broad spectrum of personal views. Of those surveyed who conveyed an opinion on how our congregation deals with these differing views, the majority believe it is important to create safe spaces for discussion of the differing opinions and to “love each other, even when we disagree.”
- ❖ None of the measures surveyed are “good” or “bad” in themselves, but rather they help everybody have a clearer sense of our current reality from which we, as a Congregation, can make better decisions.

**Priorities.** In comparison to other churches, the top goals that are unusually strong at Asbury are:

- ❖ Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our Church.
- ❖ Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church.
- ❖ Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.
- ❖ Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation at every age and stage of life.
- ❖ Expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society.

**High Performance Indicators:** Holy Cow Consulting benchmarks our Church relative to other Churches taking the survey and provides an overall performance index on key indicators. Indicators where Asbury scored above the 85% percentile (i.e. scored higher than 85% of Churches taking the survey) are as follows:

- **Morale (87<sup>th</sup> Percentile)** – Positive, passionate, and persuasive engagement of members in the mission of the Church.
- **Readiness for Ministry (97<sup>th</sup> Percentile)** – All members are called to ministry and the Church helps members understand their gifts and equip them for their own particular ministry.
- **Engagement in Education (91<sup>st</sup> Percentile)** – Measures the degree to which the church provides developmentally appropriate education to enrich a person’s spiritual life and prepares them for service.

**(Note:** Asbury is slightly below the average of churches surveyed on the Spiritual Vitality Index. This index measures the degree to which members believe their faith is central to their lives. An indication of this factor is household giving of which Asbury, at 1.88% of income given, is below the national avg. of 2.3%.

**Critical Abilities for the Next Pastor:** The survey respondents’ top three critical abilities for the next Pastor are as follows:

- ❖ Preaching – Capacity to inspire and connect people to God’s word.
- ❖ Strategic Leadership – Capacity to cast a vision and lead the Church toward realization of that vision.
- ❖ Pastoral Care – Capacity to engage people empathetically and care for persons in times of need.

