

Context ReVision 2004

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that we may know and understand what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Why we're here...

- Followup to surveys submitted by Christ Church.
- Requirement in order to qualify for the Congregational Support Plan in 2004.
- To look at our current reality (“What Is”) and compare it to “What Ought to Be”—and to close the gap.

- **Figure out what changes can we make to ensure progress toward growth and self-sufficiency.**
 - What is our vision for the 21st Century?
 - How should that vision influence our sense of mission?
 - What services are needed and which ones should we offer? Which ones should we *not* offer?
 - How should we make changes?
 - If we redirect our efforts, will our current structure facilitate effective mission?

What is “ReVision Context”?

- It’s a resource that presents information about our *community*, our *congregation*, and our *programs and ministries*.
- It can help us quickly (and accurately) grasp our current environment—critical for planning.

Where did the information come from?

- ***Community information*** is provided by the Percept Group, Inc.
 - National organization that specializes in gathering and distributing census and other religious-oriented research information for churches.
- ***Congregational information*** came from the survey that was administered before I got here.

How is the Context process organized?

Workshop Session 1

- ***Part 1—The Community.***
 - Data collected from our community.
- ***Part 2—The Congregation.***
 - Congregational survey data.
- ***Part 3—The Comparison.***
 - Compares the first two parts.

Workshop Session 2

- ***Part 4—Program ratings.***
 - Asks “How do we feel about our current programs and ministries?”
- ***Part 5—Program Preferences.***
 - Examines both community and congregation to address “What do people want from church?”
- ***Part 6—Life’s Satisfaction.***
 - Asks the question, “In what areas of our lives do we feel satisfaction or discontent?”
- ***Part 7—Health & Wholeness.***
 - Asks, “In what areas of our lives are we experiencing distress?”

When we're all done, here's what we have left to do—

- Report findings to the congregation (letter, report to congregational meeting, report during Sunday service or coffee hour).
 - Collect reactions from congregation.
- Two small groups meet.
 - One evaluates current outreach programs—both community service *and* evangelism.
 - One evaluates current “inreach” programs—those that nurture members.
 - The evaluations should include suggestions for changes and new programs.

- **Submit a final report to the CSP.**
 - What are the most significant discoveries made about our community?
 - What are the most significant opportunities we see for our congregation to be of service to the community?
 - What are the most significant opportunities we see for evangelism in our community?
 - What are the most significant discoveries we have made about our congregation?
 - What are the most significant opportunities we see for nurturing the members of our congregation?
 - How effective are our current inreach and outreach programs.
 - What changes should we make?
 - What new programs should we add?

Workshop Session 1

The Community: Who Is Out There?

- Briefly describe the community based on information in the report.
 - Population will grow.
 - Will increase by 5.3% in five years. (Our intuition tells us that the community is larger, the potential for growth is larger, and growth is occurring at a higher rate.)
 - Diversity: We have more of an influx of different generations populating the area. Influx of hispanic farm workers who are staying year-round. In our schools, we're seeing 6% African-American and 5% Hispanic. We think fewer native Americans than Asian.
 - *Generation*. Lots of families. Lots of children.

- *Family structure.* Most children live in homes that would be considered traditional, with 77% married couples. Other children live in homes that are called somewhat traditional because they live in homes with only one parent.
- *Education.* Most high school grads do not go on to a four-year program. Two-year college or trade school. (Recent influx of immigrants from Putnam and Westchester Counties would be changing these numbers, we think.)
- *Primary concerns.* Most families seem to be concerned with basics: food, day-to-day financial worries, dealing with stress, childcare, terror worries, traffic, taxes
- *Stress conditions.* Our stress level characterized as somewhat low, with most families concerned with “the basics.” However, because of the influx of new people,

- post 9/11, and other underlying factors, we see stress levels increasing.
- *Faith receptivity.* Two-thirds in our community are not affiliated with Christian churches.
 - *Financial support potential.* Potential for giving somewhat high based on annual household income average of \$64,546.
 - *Church style.* Households in our community prefer traditional architecture, but enjoy contemporary worship—and equally appreciate contemporary and traditional music.
 - *Church program.* People in our community are really interested in church programs providing community and social services and recreational opportunities.
 - *Potential resistance to change.* The area's potential resistance is probably somewhat low.

- **What community characteristics might have a significant impact on our future and our mission?**
 - Increasing new stresser: 9/11 terrorism, etc.
 - Population influx
 - People who aren't involved in churches
 - Need for social services: child care, food pantry, clothing, etc.
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(10-minute break)

The Congregation: Who Are We?

- **Based on our reported responses, describe our congregation.**
 - **1. *Projected membership change.*** There currently are about 122 members, 40-some family units. This should increase by 7.5%. We expect much faster results.
 - **2. *Diversity.*** We have a mixed population with regard to financial security. However, ethnically diversity is somewhat low.
 - **3. *Generation.*** Most of our population fall into the age 3–22 age bracket, 44% of the congregation.
 - **4. *Family structure.*** Somewhat nontraditional, due to single-parent families and single people.

- **5. *Education.*** Educational level somewhat low. Above average high school graduates. But fewer graduate from a four-year program.
- **6. *Primary concerns.*** Many of our people found spiritual teaching, finding a good church, finding fellowship/ companionship as greatest reasons for church attendance. Others site teen/child problems and finding life direction as focus of their spiritual journeys.
- **7. *Stress level.*** Relatively low because we have absence of “negatives”: poverty, high school dropouts. Rural community with fewer people.
- **8. *Faith receptivity.*** Extremely high faith involvement level, where many are receptive to Jesus.
- **9. *Financial support.*** Based on somewhat limited salary, people in our congregation are generous compared to the U.S. average.

- **10. *Church style.*** Congregation enjoys both traditional and contemporary music and worship.
- **11. *Church program preference.*** Programs related to spiritual development are the most significant, including Bible camps, Tres Dias, gospel concerts, Habitat for Humanity, and programs such as Alpha Course.
- **12. *Potential resistance to change.*** Somewhat low.

Turn to “Comparison: How Do We Differ from the Community.”

Review Gap Themes for significant findings.

To what extent are these two groups of people different? The more they differ, the higher the *divergence*. If the two groups are identical, this is *convergence*.

Where are the challenges?

- 1. Primary concerns: basics vs. spiritual/personal
- 2. Church program preference: recreation vs. spiritual development
- 3. Faith receptivity: somewhat low vs. somewhat high
- 4. Church style: somewhat traditional vs. very contemporary
- 5. Generation: boomers vs. millenials (3-22)

- 6. Diversity: somewhat low vs. somewhat high.
 - 7. Family structure: somewhat traditional vs. somewhat nontraditional
 - 8. Education: very low vs. somewhat low
 - 9. Projected population change: both moderate
 - 10. Financial support potential: somewhat high vs. average
 - 11. Potential resistance to change: both somewhat low
 - 12. Stress conditions: both somewhat low
- **What are the most significant findings?**
 - When people are trying to get the basics, they don't come to church.
 - People are so stressed out from work, money problems, etc.—the last thing you think of.

- How can we close the gap between "basics" and "spirituality"?
- How can we close the gap between "spirituality" programming and "reactional" programming?
- How can we close the gap between low and high faith receptivity.
- How can we narrow the gap between traditional and contemporary church style?
- Can we bring in the boomers?
- Diversity okay.
- We're more inclusive re: family structure—a good thing.
- Educational ranking is improving; more going to college.
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- **Which are significant for our future and mission?**
 - The high-divergence items offer opportunities for growth.
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- **Final thoughts or reactions?**
 - One person can't do it all. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and
for ever. Amen.

Workshop Session 2

Opening Prayer

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Any thoughts since the last session?

- We were just finding out where we thought we were, and now we're going to try to plan where we want to be in the future.
- We were just talking about the importance of advertising with the holiday season approaching.
- We have a large population of children. Programs that revolve around our children will be important.

Part 4, "Program Ratings: How Do We Feel About Our Programs?"

- Which programs have the greatest divergence?
 - Sunday School program. We think that if the survey were taken today, the divergence would be less.
 - Nursing Home program has moderate divergence.
- Which programs have the greatest convergence?
 - Music ministry and altar guild show up with very low divergence.
- Is this surprising? Why? Why not?

— Not surprising for the music.

Part 5, Program Preferences “What do people want from a church?”

- Which programs have the greatest divergence?
 - Youth social programs
 - Family activities and outings
 - Within the congregation, people are asking for adult theological discussion groups, which aren’t offered.
 - Same true for cultural programs.
 - Active retirement programs are important.
 - There’s a surprising interest in food and clothing resource programs in the community.
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- **Which programs have the greatest convergence?**
 - Only in the two areas where neither the community or the congregation thinks the programs are important: divorce recovery and church-sponsored day school.
 - **Are there gap themes where the congregation preferences differ greatly from those of the larger community?**
 - cultural programs, adult discussion, active retirement, sports and camping, spiritual retreats, food and clothing resources, counseling, care for the terminally ill.
 - **Is this surprising? Why?**
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- Not really. It's such a small town, that ...
- A lot of the adults need spiritual food; we don't take care of ourselves.

Part 6, Life's Satisfaction "How do we feel about our lives?"

- Which gap themes have the greatest divergence?
 - Personal bible study and prayer—but not a totally bad rating.
- Which gap themes have the greatest convergence?
 - Family life, relationship with children, and marriage relationships
- Is this surprising to you? Why? Why not?

Part 7, Health and Wholeness "Where are people distressed?"

- **What are the three to five most significant discoveries you have made?**
 - Serious distress in the community regarding physical health (not in the congregation)
 - Community somewhat distressed about current faith involvement
- **What three to five findings concern you the most?**
 - The personal physical health issues.

- **What are the three to five most significant opportunities you see for your congregation?**
 - Senior citizens are out there: programs, healthcare issues
 - Hang on to what we've got.
 - Ministry to people with healthcare needs
 - Assistance with basic needs: food, clothing, etc.
 - Religious education for adults
 - Influx of new residents into the area
 - Ex-RCs = fertile soil

(Ten-minute break)

Consider everything we've discussed so far.

These answers will be used in making our report to the congregation and in evaluating our inreach and outreach programs.

- **What are the most significant discoveries you have made about your community?**
 - Healthcare needs
 - Lots of spiritual neediness
 - Need for basic food, clothing, etc.
 - Really low family income level (\$36,000)
 - Pretty low educational level
 - Older population

- **What are the most significant opportunities you see for your congregation to be of service to the community?**
 - Senior citizens are out there: programs, healthcare issues
 - Ministry to people with healthcare needs
 - Assistance with basic needs: food, clothing, etc.
 - Religious education for adults

- **What are the most significant opportunities you see for evangelism in your community?**
 - Ex-RCs = fertile soil
 - Influx of new residents

- **What are the most significant discoveries you have made about your congregation?**
 - The data collected from the congregation is outdated or inaccurately gathered.
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 - **What are the most significant opportunities you see for nurturing the members of your congregation?**
 - Study, education, discussion
 - Nurturing families, children—keep them involved.
 - Variety of liturgical expressions
 - **Any final thoughts or reactions to this process?**
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- Kind of difficult to interpret the charts.
- Really good to discuss these things.
- The parish data was questionable.
- It's a good idea to do this from time to time: important to be able to set overarching goals.

Next steps...

- Report findings to the congregation as a whole.
- Appoint two small groups (consisting of vestry & congregational members)—
 - One to evaluate current outreach programs (both community service & evangelism)
 - One to evaluate current inreach programs
- Submit a record of the report to the congregation along with tonight's findings to Richard Sloan (Congregational Support).

