

Best Practices for Using the Church Assessment Tool (CAT Scan) during Congregational Transition

Prepared by CTC, National Capital Presbytery
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1) What is the CAT Scan?

The CAT Scan measures congregational health and vitality in terms of members' satisfaction and energy level, as well as other performance indices through an online questionnaire, with 85 questions, that members complete on their own. The results are compiled into a report by Holy Cow Consulting, and interpreted for the Session (and PNC) by interpreters trained by the Presbytery. The results can be used by the Session to strengthen the church's ministry and the search for a new pastor. There are also supplemental questions that Sessions can elect to add to the basic CAT Scan that directly address new leadership and the focus of the transition period.

2) How does the CAT Scan strengthen the ministry of the congregation in transition, the PNC, and the Interim Pastor?

A congregation in transition is at the end of one season and at the beginning of another. In times of significant change, reflection on values, energy, and satisfaction is vital for healthy movement into the next season of life. The CAT Scan is an objective, confidential, and proven tool for church-reflection that members can complete in their own homes. The invitation to participation in the questionnaire, open to all members of the church, brings everyone into the important conversations needed to find the best pastoral 'fit' for the church in its next season of life.

For the PNC, the CAT Scan is a tool for gathering information for the Ministry Information Form (MIF) and for selecting the pastor who is the best 'fit' for the church. The CAT Scan provides feedback in the following areas, which are helpful for inclusion on the MIF:

- **Members' interests and needs for future ministry.** Reflected in the MIF, so a church can seek a pastor with gifts and skills for those ministry areas.
- **Members' overall levels of energy and satisfaction.** Reflected in the MIF, so an applicant may get a sense of the "feel" of the congregation and not just the facts.
- **Unique driving factors for the congregation,** that is, a list of the issues/programs that most influence the satisfaction and energy of the congregation. Reflected in the MIF, so an applicant may understand what is uniquely important to the congregation.
- **Realistic look at the challenges of the church's ministry and possibilities for growth or change.** Reflected in the MIF, so a church can seek a pastor who is a good fit for the ministry the church needs to do together.
- **Members' reflections on what kind of leader the church needs.** Important in the MIF writing process, so that the perception gap is narrowed between members' priorities and leadership/PNC's priorities.
- **Members' theological convictions.** Important for finding a good pastoral 'fit,' especially in congregations that are extremely theologically diverse.

For the Interim Pastor, the CAT Scan is a tool for gathering information helpful to the Interim's tasks in ministry, including:

- **Helping the church come to terms with history**, by highlighting areas in which members disagree significantly.
- **Discovering a new identify or mission**, by identifying the ministry areas members are interested in pursuing in the future and by naming the ministries they currently love.
- **Strengthening patterns of lay leadership**, by identifying the energy of the members and the resources and interests of members, potentially untapped.
- **Preparing for new leadership**, by assessing willingness to change and grow and identifying areas of biggest impact for healthy change.

3) When should my church in transition use the CAT Scan?

The CAT Scan is best used at the relative beginning of the transition, 4 to 6 months after the Interim Pastor has begun her work. The Session leads the church in participating in the CAT Scan, and the results can guide the work of the Interim. The results will be helpful to the PNC, as they write the MIF. Session members will work closely with the PNC to interpret the results in more detail, focusing on types of pastoral leadership needed.

4) The CAT Scan has optional Supplemental Modules (extra questions) a church can elect to add to their survey. Which modules are best for use in a transition period?

The transition module measures members' commitment during the transition and asks general questions about ministry direction and the new leadership needed.

The interim module measures the members' energy and satisfaction during the interim period, including leadership, communication, lay leadership, and their readiness for the next installed pastor's arrival.

The critical abilities module asks members to rank the skills, in order of importance, the next pastor should have.

The strategic planning module measures members' satisfaction with the stated mission of the church, and how well the church is living up to it. This might be used in crafting a new mission statement or doing the mission study.

5) How much does it cost?

The CAT Scan is priced on a sliding scale, based on your average worship attendance. Cost information is found on the Holy Cow Consulting website (www.holycowconsulting.com/cat/). Matching grants are available through the Presbytery. The National Capital Presbytery has trained interpreters to guide you before and after you use the questionnaire, at no charge.

6) How does our church in transition get more information about the CAT Scan?

If your Session, PNC, or Interim Pastor would like more information about conducting the CAT Scan questionnaire during your congregational transition, please take a look at the National Capital Presbytery's website for churches in transition. It has more information

about the CAT Scan (www.ncptransforms.org). Or, the Holy Cow Consulting website, the makers of the CAT Scan (www.holycowconsulting.com/cat/).

Or, contact the Rev. Sarah Cairatti, member of CTC, (available by email at sarah.cairatti@gmail.com) who can answer your questions or find someone who can.

7) We've decided to conduct the CAT Scan, now what?

The next step is to contact the Rev. Karen Chamis (available by email at kchamis@thepresbytery.org), National Capital Presbytery's Director of Congregational Development and Mission, who schedules trained interpreters (1) to meet with Session to answer questions about the CAT before hand, and (2) to meet with Session to interpret the results of the assessment (the Vital Signs report).