

COMMITTEE ON  
CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT

# LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS TEAM HANDBOOK



Presbytery of Florida

(Rev. May 2023)



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**PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA**

**COMMITTEE ON**  
**CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT**

**RESPONSIBILITIES**  
**LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS TEAM**

The importance of this team cannot be overstated. The energy and effort this group puts into the congregational engagement of the Holy Cow! assessment tool is critical to its use in helping a congregation move forward in mission and ministry.

Those who serve on this team should include members of the congregation who are passionate about their church and its future, have organizational and communication skills, and can engender excitement among other members for connecting with this discernment process. Depending on the size of the congregation, 3 to 5 people are needed to serve.

After appointment by the Session, the Team will do the following:

- Commit to approximately 2-3 months of service on the Local Arrangements Team.
- Be trained by the Consultant in the Holy Cow! process and follow all guidelines.
- Clarify who can/should participate in the assessment.
- Develop presentations to inform and excite the congregation.
- Enthusiastically and continuously promote participation.
- Set a start date and a deadline for completing the assessment process.
- Work out ways for helping those without computer access or knowledge.
- Work with the Consultant to organize a plan and presentation for the congregation with Session approval.



**PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA**

**COMMITTEE ON CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT  
LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS TEAM**

**PROCESS FOR HOLY COW! ASSESSMENT**

Consultant Name	Consultant Contact Information	Congregation Assigned	Start Date	Completion Date

**LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS TEAM MEMBERS**

Name	Phone	Email
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**PROCESS**

Anticipated Date	Completed Date	Item
_____	_____	Session Introduction
_____	_____	Session Agreement to Engage the Holy Cow! process
_____	_____	Session approves Local Arrangements Team (See below)
_____	_____	Local Arrangements Team Trained
_____	_____	Holy Cow! survey ordered
_____	_____	Clarify who can/should participate in the Holy Cow! Assessment
_____	_____	Set start date and deadline for ending responses for Holy Cow! assessment Start _____ End _____
_____	_____	Establish method(s) for helping those without computer access/ knowledge

- \_\_\_\_\_ Promotional Ideas Brain–Stormed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Promotion begins
  - \_\_\_\_\_ First Bulletin/Newsletter/Email/Letter Announcements
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Second Bulletin/Newsletter/Email/Letter Announcements
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Third Bulletin/Newsletter/Email/Letter Announcements
- \_\_\_\_\_ Survey Begins
- \_\_\_\_\_ Follow–up Email/Letter Reminders
  - \_\_\_\_\_ First
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Second
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Third
- \_\_\_\_\_ Request MissionInsite demographic study
- \_\_\_\_\_ End date for questionnaire completion reached
- \_\_\_\_\_ Received results from Holy Cow! Consultants
- \_\_\_\_\_ Receive results from MissionInsite
- \_\_\_\_\_ Completed Interpretation of Results
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consultant presents interpretation of Holy Cow! and MissionInsite data to Session
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consultant presents Executive Summary and MissionInsite data to the Congregation

## SPECIFICS

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA**  
**CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE**

**LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS TEAM**

**PREPARING FOR THE HOLY COW! ASSESSMENT**

**IDENTIFY WHO** is going to take the assessment.

The list of participants is called the Assessment Roll.

The words to keep in mind when developing this list are “*invested and able.*”

A person demonstrates their investment in the future of the church through some combination of worship attendance, participation/leadership in ministry/education, and/or financial support.

An able person is someone with the maturity and experience in the church to understand the importance of the assessment and who can accurately interpret the questions. They must also possess the ability to complete the assessment in one sitting.

The Assessment Roll is typically a list of adult members and active non-members with the following categories removed:

- Those who live permanently out of town
- Those who have neither contributed nor attended in the last 12 months
- Those who are physically or emotionally unable to cope with the assessment
- Those under 16 years of age

**IDENTIFY WHEN** you will run the assessment, typically a 3-4 week window.

**IDENTIFY HOW** you are going to deliver the assessment. You will likely be using a combination of a unique web link distributed by email and paper copies.

Compile a list of members on the Assessment Roll that have current email addresses (it is unlikely that you will have one for everyone). Develop an email blast template with these addresses.

For those without email:

- You will need to make paper copies from the pdf provided for the few who cannot take the survey on-line.
- Decide how you are going to distribute these surveys.
- Consider making them available only in the church office.
- In addition, it will increase your return rate if you provide a self-addressed stamped envelope with the church’s address also in the return section.
- We strongly recommend that you **DO NOT** provide for general distribution of the paper copies. It is important that folks do not discuss questions before taking the survey.

- You may want to make arrangements for church computers to be available to those who do not have access to computers at home. If your church has wireless internet capabilities, some folks will be willing to share their laptops to set up “computer labs” at designated times.

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**CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE**

**LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS TEAM**

**SAMPLE PROMOTIONAL ITEMS**

It is important to prepare your congregation to take the CAT. To this end, you will want to announce the Session's decision to administer the CAT to the congregation and when it will be available.

Research shows that folks are more likely to comply with a request if they understand *why* they are being asked to do so. To this end, we strongly recommend that you introduce the CAT by sending an initial letter by snail mail to everyone on your Assessment Roll. The letter should reach each person by name, whether living in the same household or not. If your church regularly communicates with your congregation via email, this will work well, too. Please make sure that your non-computer users get a snail-mail letter.

The introduction should:

- Tell them that they have been selected to participate in the assessment
- Explain the specific purpose(s) of the assessment
- Emphasize the importance of their individual participation
- Detail the process of delivery (that an email link or web-page access will be provided and the availability of paper surveys).

**Preparation Letter**

*This letter should be sent approximately 1 week prior to launching the survey.*

*At the same time*, start verbally publicizing the upcoming assessment in worship, committee meetings, education classes, choir rehearsal, church bulletins, and any other time and place you can think of. These announcements should include the same information as above.

*Sample Letter*

**WE WANT TO KNOW YOUR STORY!**

As you know, we recently agreed to move forward with Holy Cow! Consulting to help us plan our future. You have been selected to participate in the first step which is to conduct a congregational assessment. This assessment will provide a clear picture of who we are as a church and what directions are most important for our future. The tool we'll use is the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT), which will provide key indicators of our congregational health along with areas of challenge and potential growth. It will help us to collect and understand the range of views that exist at insert your church name and the possibilities, willingness, capacity and energy for moving our ministry into the future.

If you have provided us with a current email address, within the next few days, you will receive a unique web link to complete the assessment online. If you would prefer to take the assessment using a paper copy, please stop by the office, and we will provide one for you along with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

NOTE: If there is only one email address for all members of your household, it may be tempting to have one person take the survey on behalf of the family. However, *please be sure your spouse and all young adults living in your home have an opportunity to complete the survey.*

**INDIVIDUAL INPUT** is key to our gaining insight into overall perceptions and experiences.

Please set aside enough time to answer all the questions. This will take about \_\_\_\_\_ minutes. All survey responses are strictly anonymous.

Thank you for your willingness to be a part of this congregational assessment and for helping to build your church name future.

If you have questions, please contact insert name(s) at insert email and phone contact information

### *Sample Bulletin Article*

#### **PLANNING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER!**

We are inviting you to complete the Church Assessment Tool (CAT), an on-line instrument that will help leaders gauge the strength, vitality, and trends in our church. The information gained from this assessment will be valuable in helping the leaders of insert name of church as they make decisions about the future of insert name of church.

In a few days, you will receive an email with a unique link to the CAT. Beginning insert date, we are asking you to go online by clicking on the link provided and tell us about your experiences in and priorities for our church. Please do not discuss the survey or your answers with others as this may influence their answers.

If you need a paper copy, please come to the office, and we will provide one for you along with a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

All answers are strictly anonymous. We have no way of matching any assessment to a particular person, so please feel free to candidly share your perceptions, opinions and experiences. Our future together is dependent on your participation and honest answers.

If you have questions, please contact insert name and contact information of team member who is available to answer questions

Many thanks,

Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.

## SENDING THE LINK

Launching your CAT is easy, and it is exciting to finally get it “out there.”

Email Launch:

The Local Arrangements Team will receive a unique web link that has been created using a service called Survey Monkey. When you click on this link, it takes you directly to your assessment. This link can be copied from your account and pasted directly into your email notification.

On the day you have designated to start, send an email blast to everyone on your Assessment Roll with the Survey Monkey link in the body of the email.

*Sample for First Email Announcement with the Link*

### **PLANNING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER!**

Our church has entered into a time of discernment during which we are gathering information to guide our decisions for our future. Recently, you have heard and read about one aspect of this process: *The Church Assessment Tool* (CAT). This tool will provide a clearer picture of who we are as a church and what directions might be important for our future. **Your response is very important to us.**

This email indicates that you have been selected to participate in the CAT. It is not transferable; please do not forward it. We ask that you take the on-line assessment as soon as possible, but before enter date.

All answers are strictly anonymous. We have no way of matching any assessment to a particular person, so please feel free to candidly share your perceptions, opinions and experiences. The assessment will take approximately enter # minutes to complete. Please set aside enough time to complete the survey all at one time. Our future together is dependent on your participation and honest answers.

When you are ready, click on this link and begin. Copy and paste the Survey Monkey link here.

If you have questions, please contact insert name and contact information of team member who is available to answer questions

Many thanks,

Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.



**PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA  
CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE**

**LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS TEAM**

**MAXIMIZE THE RETURN RATE**

Maximizing participation in the assessment requires continuous reminders. Some guidelines and templates are provided below.

**EMAIL BLASTS**

*After the initial launch, follow up with a reminder email blast every 3-4 days.*

*Sample First Email Reminder*

**DO WE KNOW YOUR STORY YET?**

A few days ago, you should have received the link to your CAT. If you haven't already, please set aside (fill in estimate of time) to complete the assessment. Your *personal story* is critical to your leaders as they plan for our future. ***Please make this a priority this week*** if you haven't already shared your experiences and perspectives by participating in this important process. For your convenience, the link to your CAT is provided again below.

[Insert CAT link]

Please remember - this link is not transferable. Please do not forward it.

If you have questions, please contact [insert name and contact information of team member] who is available to answer questions.

Many thanks,

[Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.]

*Sample Second Email Reminder*

**IT IS SAID THAT CATS CAN SEE IN THE DARK, BUT THIS CAT CAN'T**

To be honest, we don't know if you have completed the CAT or not because each person's answers are anonymous. BUT, if you haven't already, please shed some light on your experiences at insert name of church. It will only take fill in estimate of time. For your convenience, the link to your CAT is provided again below. *Please Don't Keep Us In The Dark!*

[Insert CAT link]

Please remember - this link is not transferable. Please do not forward it.

If you have questions, please contact [insert name and contact information of team member] who is available to answer questions

With our sincere gratitude,

[Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.]

### *Sample Third Email Reminder*

#### **ARE WE STILL IN THE DARK?**

Please do not underestimate the importance of your individual input into this process. If you have already shared your story – we know these reminders are getting tiresome – please know your contribution is greatly appreciated. BUT, we are still waiting to hear from some of you. Sharing your story will only take [fill in estimate of time], and no one can do it for you. Please shine the light on your experiences and opinions at fill in name of your church. Your input is absolutely anonymous. No light will shine on *you*, just your experiences as *only you* can tell them.

For your convenience, the link to your CAT is provided again below.

[Insert CAT link]

Remember - this link is not transferable so please do not forward it.

If you have questions, please contact [insert name and contact information of team member] who is available to answer questions

With our sincere gratitude,

[Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.]

### *Sample Last Email Reminder*

#### **WE CAN'T WAIT MUCH LONGER**

If you haven't taken the CAT yet, you may be thinking that, by now, other people have said the same things you would say in one way or another. Friends and family may share your thoughts in some areas and some folks may share your thoughts in yet other areas. But, the truth is that there is *only one you*, and your unique combination of experiences and perceptions are what we need. Even if your answers are very similar to someone else's, that is still important information for the church to have. The results from this assessment need to shed light on *what* our members are feeling, and *how many* share those feelings. This is critical to guiding us on our journey together. *Please don't make the mistake of letting others speak for you.* Sharing your story will only take [fill in estimate of time], and this is your last chance. The window on this opportunity closes at [fill in time] on [fill in date]!



For your convenience, the link to your CAT is provided again below.

[Insert CAT link]

Remember – this link is not transferable so please do not forward it.

If you have questions, please contact [insert name and contact information of team member] who is available to answer questions

With our sincere gratitude,  
[Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.]

### **SAMPLE BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS**

These are just samples. Please feel free to customize the style and theme, however, we strongly suggest that the basic content stays intact. These are follow-up articles, which is to say, they are used after the CAT is launched.

*Bulletin Follow-up #1*

#### **THE TRAIN HAS LEFT THE STATION!**

You have been hearing and reading about the Church Assessment Tool, and by now you should have received the link to the CAT. If you haven't already, please set aside [fill in estimate of time] to complete the assessment. The information gained from this tool will be critical to your leaders as they plan for our future. ***Please make this a priority this week*** if you haven't already shared your experiences and perspectives by participating in this important process.

If you need a paper copy, please stop by the office, and we will provide one for you along with a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

If you have questions, please contact [insert name and contact information of team member] who is available to answer questions

Many thanks,  
[Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.]

*Bulletin Follow-up #2*

#### **HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR SEAT YET?**

***Now is the time*** to share your story. We need to know how you think and feel about your experiences at [insert name of church]. We are asking for [fill in # minutes] of your time to help shape the future of our church. ***How about making it a priority today*** if you haven't already shared your perspectives by participating in this important process.

If you need a paper copy, please stop by the office, and we will provide one for you along with a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

If you have questions, please contact [insert name and contact information of team member] who is available to answer questions

Our sincere thanks,  
[Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.]

*Bulletin Follow-up #3*

### **OUR DESTINATION IS IN SIGHT**

So many of you have shared your thoughts and feelings by completing the Church Assessment Tool. You have our gratitude. Rest assured that your responses are 100% confidential. If by chance you have not completed the assessment yet, you have just one more week to make your voice heard. ***How about today!***

If you need a paper copy, please stop by the office, and we will provide one for you along with a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

If you have questions, please contact [insert name and contact information of team member who is available to answer questions]

Many thanks,  
[Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.]

*Final Bulletin Follow-up*

### **LAST STOP! HEAR THE WHISTLE BLOWING?**

We are coming to the end of the first step in shaping our future together. On [insert date] at [insert time], the window of opportunity to join us on this journey will close. You are probably one of many who have already shared their experiences and perspectives. If you have not, this is your last chance. Although our response rate has been great, if we don't have your input, we are still missing an important piece of the puzzle. PLEASE - share your opinions with us using this highly confidential assessment instrument.

If you need a paper copy, please stop by the office, and we will provide one for you along with a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

If you have questions, please contact [insert name and contact information of team member] who is available to answer questions

A very special thanks to everyone who has participated in this process,  
[Enter names of leadership team charged with the administration of the CAT.]

## **OTHER IDEAS**

- Appoint someone whenever people gather to make a short appeal. This includes worship, coffee hour, choir practice, committee meetings, education classes, pot luck dinners, and any other place and time you can think of.
- Try something fun and unique to encourage participation. Some churches have handed out small kit-kat bars, others cat or cow buttons/stickers. Some have built a CAT goal meter and placed in a prominent location displaying the number of folks who have participated. One church even had a member who collected CAT sweaters and wore a different one each Sunday when she made the appeal in worship.
- Have fun with it but be persistent!



**PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA  
CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE**

**LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS TEAM**

**GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING PAPER SURVEYS**

You will have already decided how to distribute the paper copies of the assessment and the return envelopes. At first, make only a few copies (unless you know you will have a need for many).

Once again, we encourage you to make it as easy as possible for people to take the assessment on-line. It is our experience that paper copies frequently contain skipped questions or entire pages. In addition, without the requirements that are enforced in the on-line version, many folks will misinterpret or not read instructions which often results in answers that cannot be used.

Paper surveys are frequently returned incomplete and/or filled out incorrectly. When this happens, the data that can be used from that survey is limited. Therefore, we suggest the following guidelines:

1. Before distributing a paper survey, it is helpful to make sure that all on-line options for taking the survey have been exhausted. For example: have you made use of “computer stations” at the church? This can be done by borrowing laptops from willing members and inviting folks to take the survey at an allotted time. Many folks who are mildly computer phobic can easily manage the survey with a little help.
2. When a paper survey must be used, a little coaching goes a long way. There are several ways to go about this.
  - Encourage folks to read the instructions!
  - Emphasize that incomplete surveys result in data that cannot be used.
  - Set up a coffee and cookies before/after worship and invite those that want to take the assessment this way to take it together. A person from the leadership team should be available to answer questions, guide respondents through questions with more complex formatting such as ranking questions, and, with the respondent’s permission, look over the survey to make sure it is complete.
  - Train the office staff in coaching those that come to pick up the survey. For example, show that only one answer can be filled in per question and that ranking questions must be filled out so that each ranking option is used only once.
  - If you anticipate that many folks will need to use this format, it may be helpful to utilize a simple PowerPoint presentation at an appropriate time during regularly scheduled services to demonstrate the correct and incorrect way to fill out the survey.
3. Data from paper surveys should be entered by a trusted person using the Survey Monkey link. The first set of consecutive questions from incomplete surveys can be entered, but data from the first skipped question and beyond cannot be used, as the system will not allow you to proceed without answering each question, as is the case on the on-line version.



# HOLY COW! CHURCH ASSESSMENT TOOL

## CHURCH DATA FORM

*This information is to be provided by the Local Arrangements Team.  
The Consultant is responsible for entering the data on the Holy Cow! website.*

1. What would you estimate has been the population trend during the past 3 years with in one mile of you church?

- Rapid Decline
- Slow Decline
- Static
- Slow Growth
- Rapid Growth
- Commercial Area

2. What would you estimate has been the trend in income level during the past 3 years within one mile of your church?

- Increased more rapidly than our larger community
- Increased the same as our larger community
- Increased but somewhat less than our larger community
- Some increase, but considerable less than our larger community
- Has remained about the same
- Has decreased
- Commercial area

3. Please enter the numerical size of your church based on the most recent time to count membership.
4. Please enter the numerical size of your church 1 year earlier (using the same criteria above).
5. Please enter the numerical size of your church 2 years earlier (using the same criteria in Q3).
6. Please enter the numerical size of your church 3 years earlier (using the same criteria in Q3).
7. Please enter the number of new members received by your church in the past 12 months.
8. Please enter the number of new members received by your church 1 year earlier.
9. Please enter the number of new members received by your church 2 years earlier.

10. Please enter the number of new members received by your church 3 years earlier.
11. Please enter the number of your average weekly worship attendance over the past 12 months.
12. Please enter the number of your average weekly worship attendance 1 year earlier.
13. Please enter the number of your average weekly worship attendance 2 years earlier.
14. Please enter the number of your average weekly worship attendance 3 years earlier.
15. How many persons were on the Church Assessment Roll you created before launching the assessment (the number of persons asked to take the survey)?
16. How many different households were represented by the person on the Church Assessment Roll? For example, a husband and wife would be 2 people on the church Assessment Roll, but count as only 1 household.
17. How many different households contributed financially to the church in the most recent year (those for whom you have a record of their contribution)?
18. Please enter the dollar amount of your total receipts in the past 12 months. Please INCLUDE income for capital campaigns, debt–reduction campaigns, and special mission offerings. (Please DO NOT INCLUDE income from endowments, income from facility rentals, preschool tuition, etc.)
19. Please enter the dollar amount of your total receipts 1 year earlier (same inclusions/exclusions apply).
20. Please enter the dollar amount of your total receipts 2 years earlier (same inclusions/exclusions apply).