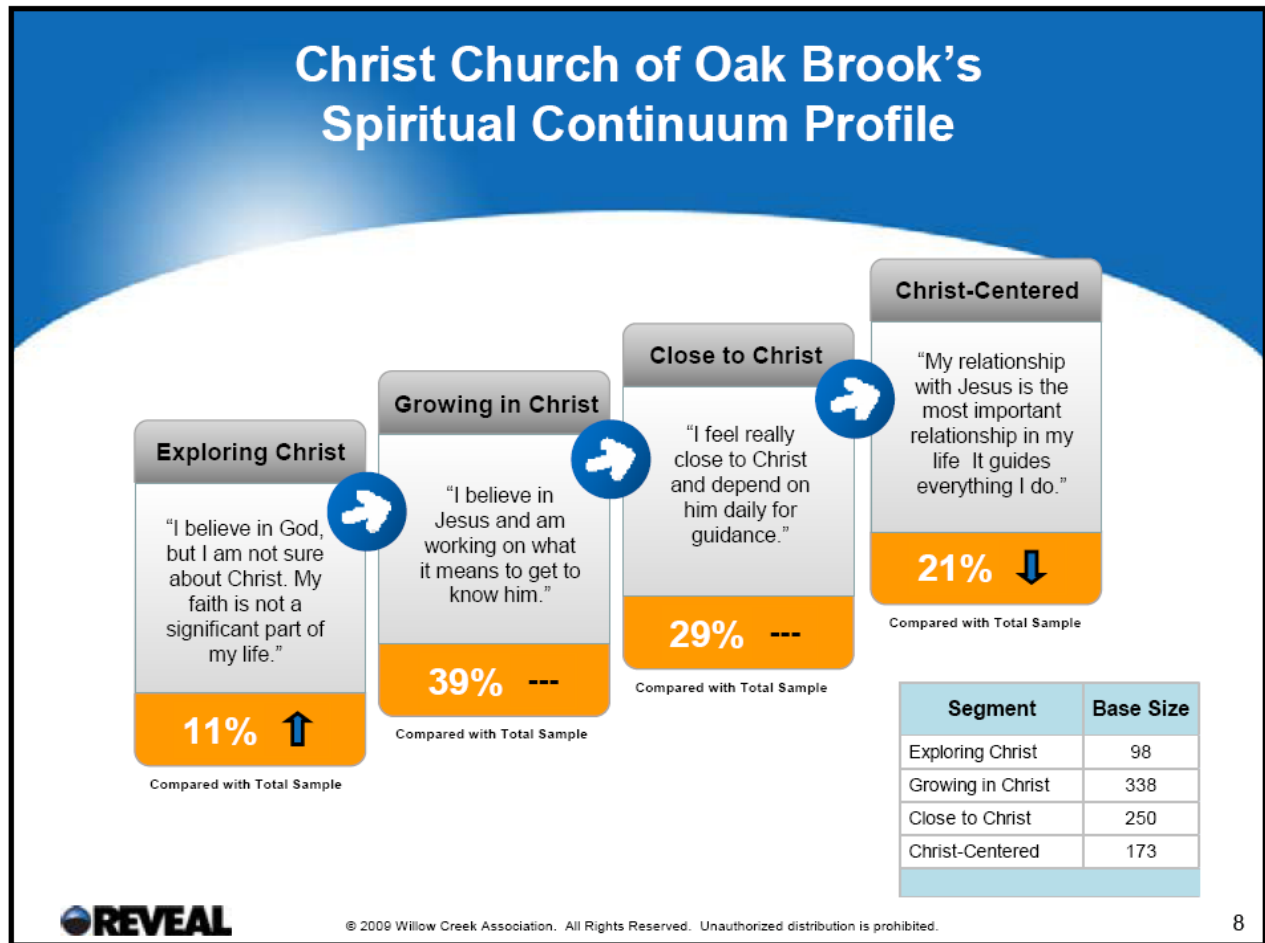


# **REVEAL**

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE SURVEY REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **2009**

Christ Church  
OF OAK BROOK



Complete survey results are available.  
Contact Debra Ross at [dross@cc-ob.org](mailto:dross@cc-ob.org) 630-321-3905



***Gathering in communities of disciples who  
worship, grow, and serve.  
Going into all the world as witnesses of  
the life-changing love of Jesus Christ.***

**Survey Dates: January 24-February 9, 2009**

**CCOB Respondents: 856**

(approximately 45% of our Sunday morning attendance)

**Comparative Database:** Our results were normed with 800 other congregations who have taken this survey. (Throughout this summary you will see comments referencing being higher and lower than other comparative congregations.)



## **INTRODUCTION**

Our Elder Council and Board of Trustees jointly commissioned the *Spiritual Life Survey* so that we might gauge the spiritual needs of our congregation as well as assess how well our ministry at Christ Church is addressing those needs. From a corporate leadership perspective, one of the greatest challenges is to arrive at a shared perspective. We tend to each have our own limited lens through which we see the congregation. What the *Spiritual Life Survey* has provided is aggregate data from which to draw a common set of conclusions about the needs of our congregation as we go forward.

Our Elders and Trustees in partnership with the Professional Staff take very seriously our responsibility to provide spiritual oversight to the congregation. We want to pay careful attention to what you are telling us are the needs. We have sifted through a massive amount of information to distill what we sense are the messages from the survey. What you will read in this document is the result of hours of prayerful conversation. In others words, the areas of identified opportunity for growth are the agreed upon vantage point of your leadership.

The summary of these results is divided into two major sections. First, we have identified the "strengths to build on". These are the areas of high satisfaction that serve as a solid foundation. You will find this section to be considerably shorter than the section we call "areas of future ministry development". We did not take this survey in order to pat ourselves on the back, but to identify those areas where we were struggling to live into our Lord's Kingdom agenda.

## **STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON**

### **1. High satisfaction level in the Senior Pastor's leadership**

After 12 years of consistent, Christ-like, servant leadership during an era of enormous challenges, Pastor Meyer has accrued considerable leadership capital to spend. He is highly trusted and respected by the congregation.

### **2. High satisfaction with Worship and Small Groups**

Two of our core ministries are in tune with our congregation. Approximately 70% of our congregation is "very or extremely satisfied" with worship; if you add the "satisfied" category, we approach 90%. Some 50% of those who took the survey said they were in a small group at least twice a month with 2/3 "very or extremely satisfied". People were attracted to small group life in order to make relational connections as well as to process their real life issues in the context of the study of the Word.

### **3. Higher than normal percentage of people who serve outside the church**

Though we have concerns about the percentage of people serving IN the church or people in need THROUGH the church, we have a higher percentage than the comparative churches who serve OUTSIDE the church on their own initiative. We need to celebrate these efforts, recognize them, and perhaps even survey the congregation as to the variety of places where people have invested themselves. We do want those who have stepped out in service to feel that they are visible to and appreciated by the leadership of the church.

### **4. There is a lower percentage than comparative churches of people who are STALLED in their faith.**

Ninety percent of the respondents said they are making at least steady progress in their faith development. We want to do all that we can to stimulate this growth at each individual's specific point of need. A major reason for adopting *The Stages of Faith* motif for *The Intentional Journey* is to individualize the growth process. The challenge for CCOB now is... how can we come alongside each one to provide appropriate resources for growth and the coaching needed to help along the way?

## **STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON (continued)**

5. The top five things that people most want from CCOB:

- Help develop personal relationship with Christ
- Help understand the Bible in-depth
- Provide strong programs for children
- Provide compelling worship
- Church leaders model how to grow

(We will want to probe more fully to understand what our congregation means by each of the above items.)

6. In addition to what people most want from CCOB, the five top priorities were identified. (The top priorities are determined by comparing the difference between the level of importance and satisfaction. The wider the gap there is between importance and the level of satisfaction, the higher the priority.)

- Help develop personal relationship with Christ.
- Helps me in time of emotional need
- Helps me develop my prayer life
- Provides a clear pathway to guide growth
- Helps me feel like I belong

(We will return to these items under the identified area of future ministry development.)

## **AREAS FOR FUTURE MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT<sup>1</sup>**

As a general summary, we could say that the congregation wants and has higher expectations for those ministries that serve them, and lower desires and expectations for those ministries that expect something of them. How did we come to this broad conclusion? We simply placed side by side the top five things that people most wanted from CCOB next to the five things that people least wanted from CCOB and asked the question, "What does this tell us?" How would you answer that question?

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<sup>1</sup> Except for some introductory comments and demographic reflections, we have organized our findings under the familiar headings of worship, grow, and serve. In addition, we have integrated the first three stages of The Intentional Journey with what we call our DNA: Worship (**D**iscovery); Grow (**N**urture); Serve (**A**cting)



Most Wanted from CCOB	Least Wanted from CCOB
Help develop a personal relationship with Christ	Inspires a sense of church ownership
Helps me understand the Bible in depth	Provides a strong serving culture
Provides strong program for children	Empowers me to go out "on my own"
Provides compelling worship	Encourages accountability
Church leaders model how to grow	Sets clear expectations

### DEMOGRAPHICS of those who took the survey

- Over 50 years old (68%)
- White (97%)
- Education level (79% college grad and up)
- Annual Income (59% earn more than \$100,000; 66% more than \$75,000)
- Tenure at CCOB: 53% more than 10 years; 26% 1-5 years; 88% 3 years or more
- 11% at the Exploring Christ phase ("believe in God but not sure about Christ") along the Spiritual Continuum: this is above the average of comparative congregations
- 31% have children in the home

### NARRATIVE CONCLUSIONS

We have an aging, white, highly educated, generally well-to-do congregation who have a longer than normal tenure of connection to Christ Church. We were underrepresented in our survey in the 20-40 year old category. (Only 7% of this age group participated in the survey, even though 29% of our new members over the last five years have come from this age category.) Our demographics would tell us that we have ministry challenges on polar opposite fronts. On the one hand we have an aging congregation in the demographic that will only get larger as the baby boomer bulge moves into the retirement (redeployment) zone (76 million people were born between 1946-1964). Of equal concern is the lack of participation in the survey of singles, couples, and families in the 20-40 year old category. This would argue for an increased emphasis in youth and family ministry. This emphasis is in concert with the fact that about 85% of Christ followers do so before the age of 18. It is obvious that our racial, ethnic demographic is not diverse nor in concert with the surrounding community.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Place high priority on staffing, programming, and personal ministry to those entering the retirement years and beyond.
2. Place future resources heavily in the areas of staffing, programming, and worship (i.e. 2HC) for young families and young adult population. Maximize the “wow” factor of our new Children’s Discovery Center.
3. Intentionally expand beyond the heavily Caucasian make-up of our congregation by raising the profile of our grassroots CommUNITY initiative in order to become more like the racial-ethnic make-up of the surrounding community.



## **WORSHIP (Discovery)**

In our mission statement, we generally think of worship as what we do corporately on Sunday morning and evening. But we can also view corporate worship through the lens of outreach. Worship is an event. What surrounds worship is our opportunity to practice HOSPITALITY (Belonging) and EVANGELISM. So it is appropriate to tie the Discovery Phase of the Intentional Journey to worship. This is the time when people feel welcomed into the family of God and have a safe place to discover and embrace the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Therefore we could define EVANGELISM the way the apostle Paul did when writing to the Thessalonians, “They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Evangelism is about turning unbelievers into worshippers of the true God. Two of our main fronts for growth in the years ahead will be HOSPITALITY and EVANGELISM.

## **CREATING AN ENGAGING AND ENGRAFTING ENVIRONMENT**

### **NARRATIVE CONCLUSIONS**

Twenty percent of our respondents were classified by this study as DISSATISFIED which was higher than the comparative congregations. The concern here is two fold: First, they are at a much higher risk of leaving the church. Secondly, their sense of where we were missing the mark squares with our sense of where we need to pay attention.

**CREATING AN ENGAGING AND ENGRAFTING ENVIRONMENT (continued)**

What the dissatisfied want from the church:

- Help me feel like I belong
- Provide a clear pathway to growth
- Help develop a personal relationship with Christ
- Help me in my time of emotional need
- Help me develop prayer life

**OPPORTUNITIES**

1. The leadership has been aware for some time of the need for a clear process of connecting people into the life of the church. The pathway of connection is not obvious to most. Therefore we need clear first steps (Start Here); and clear next steps based upon what the leadership think is vital for people to know in order to grow in the faith and what values define our culture.
2. There is a need for all of our groups (mid-size communities and small groups) to have overt welcoming strategies to connect people into their communities.
3. We need to probe more fully how we might be missing people at the time of their emotional need. When emotional need is heightened so is the disappointment if we have failed to do our part to know about and create ways to minister to the need.
4. We will attempt to address the need to develop a personal relationship with Christ and prayer life under the GROW (Nurture) dimension.

**EVANGELISM: Sharing the good news of Jesus in a compelling fashion**

- 11% of the respondents described themselves as Exploring Christ ("believe in God but not sure about Christ"); 35% of the Explorers have been here longer than 10 years
- 67% of our congregation have offered minimal (1-2) to no invitations to the church in the last year
- Approximately 75% feel ill-equipped to share their faith
- How did people come to faith? 50% from a Christian home; 37% as a result of something missing or searching for a higher purpose; 27-29% mentioned the influence of someone they knew.
- Only 58% of the total respondents could affirm *salvation by grace alone*. This may indicate a high percentage that come from "works-oriented" backgrounds.

## **EVANGELISM NARRATIVE CONCLUSIONS**

There appears to be either a general lack of zeal for evangelism, or the lack of confidence in one's ability to do so. For whatever reason, we are not making a concerted effort to invite people to Christ Church nor are we proactive in having spiritual conversations with people in order to introduce them to Christ. We have people from a highly church background, which may indicate that our relationships are formed within the church community.

The good news is that we have a great opportunity for evangelism right within our congregation since a higher than normal percentage are at the Exploring Christ phase. Yet 35% of the Explorers have been here longer than 10 years. What does this tell us?

## **EVANGELISM OPPORTUNITIES**

1. We need to provide increased opportunities consistent with our church personality for people to cross the line from Exploring Christ to Growing in Christ.
2. We will offer through our Equipping Center and/or through small group curriculum training on how to share our faith with others.
3. We need to consider how to create safe and winsome places within our church programming so that we can share the compelling message of Christ and so that our members are motivated to be inviters. This could include a recommitment to high quality, well promoted retreat opportunities for adult immersion experiences.



### **GROW (Nurture)**

Our discipleship pathway indicates that we *grow on an intentional journey with others*. The nurture stage of The Intentional Journey is the phase where the foundations of faith are laid. This consists of embracing core beliefs, exercising core practices, and engaging in a core group. The survey indicates that we have shoring up of our foundations to do especially in the area of core beliefs and practices.

## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

- 39% identified themselves in the “Growing in Christ” phase of the spiritual continuum: the largest group
- 22% read the Scripture daily; only 46% affirmed the absolute authority of the Bible
- 42% did not affirm salvation by grace alone
- Pace of Growth: slow and steady (47%), stalled (only 10%)
- Place of church as a necessity for growth (only 48% very strongly or strongly agreed)

## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH NARRATIVE CONCLUSIONS**

Reflection on Scripture has been identified as one of the key catalytic practices. People generally would rather learn the Bible from a teacher or in a small group and only secondarily through personal practices of biblical reflection. This is coupled with a troubling high percentage of people who lack confidence in the authority of inspired Scripture over their lives. In addition one of the core doctrines, salvation by grace in Christ alone, is either not embraced or sufficiently understood by a significant percentage of our congregation. It is at this foundational stage that people must affirm who and what is the authority in their life (Christ and Scripture), come to understand the fundamental beliefs, learn the basics habits of Scripture reading and prayer, as well as start to learn the value of service. If people are not well equipped at this stage, then it becomes almost impossible to move into the deeper life in Christ.

## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Strengthening the nurturing stage options in the Equipping Center.
2. Highly promote the Essentials small group option. This is where many of our Christ Centered people could be engaged in mentoring or discipling relationships as they guide others deeper into the faith.
3. Lay out a clear process of entry into the life of the community with a clear Starting Point (Basics of the Faith Class) on the way to Joining the Journey and New Members Process.
4. Enhance the confidence and competence for parents so that they become the primary spiritual mentors in their households.

**SERVE (Acting)**

We must remember that our three key words that we use to describe the discipleship journey are not worship, grow, *or* serve. Service is not an option but a destination. Service or deeds of love in the name of Christ could be considered the sign of a maturing congregation. If this is true, then we have considerable growth opportunities ahead.

**SERVICE**

- Only 44% serve weekly or 1-2 times per month. This leaves 56% who serve every few months to not at all.
- The value of living a sacrificial life: 59% very strongly or strongly agreed
- Stewardship: 28% say they tithe, though is lower than the sample churches; only 28% said that my first priority in spending my money is to support God's work
- "Christ is First" (lower than comparative congregations in "Exploring Christ" and "Growing in Christ" categories)
- The value of "Giving Life Away" (lower than comparative congregations across the board)
- Exception: those who serve outside the church: higher than average

**SERVICE NARRATIVE CONCLUSIONS**

When it comes to serving within the church or through the church there are a high percentage of those who do not serve at all. This is in concert with a pattern that says the more we move away from what the church can do for us to what we do for Christ, the value and practice drops off. When you connect the low commitment to the values of "giving my life away", "living a sacrificial life", the low priority of spending money on kingdom promotion, we have a heart issue. We largely don't believe that "losing our life for Christ's sake" leads to finding our life.

## **SERVICE NARRATIVE CONCLUSIONS (continued)**

On the positive side, we have a higher than average number of people who serve on their own outside the church. This may indicate the kind of initiative people take to get involved on their own.

## **SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES**

1. This is a major leadership challenge. What is the inertia here that we must address? How does service become fulfilling and appealing?
2. We need to celebrate the initiatives people are making to serve beyond the church on their own initiative.
3. We need to consider ways to help people know how God has designed them to make a difference through our Equipping Center, Kingdom Builders (for those in the redeployment years), etc.
4. Perhaps we need to open up a department of Volunteer Ministries that helps people find their place of service consistent with their motivated abilities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Reading between the lines of all the above observations, we seem to have a passion deficit when it comes to outward focus. Perhaps it is the nature of our community where we are so consumed with our busyness and activities that we come to our church as a place of respite and renewal. We need a place to be ministered to, rather than have further expectations heaped upon us. Life itself is full and challenging in so many aspects.

On the other hand, when we look at the biblical vision for the church, we see that we are God's instrument to embody and proclaim the redemptive message of Christ to the lost world. The church is to gather for worship, restoration, and renewal as well as equipping to fight the good fight. We go to our workplaces, families, neighborhoods, recreational activities to live out our lives as followers of Jesus.

How do we resolve this tension in the western suburbs of Chicago? This brings us to our knees before our God who alone can capture our hearts with the vision of Jesus and our desire to have our life submerged in Him.