



Living the Resurrection

Helping congregations thrive

How to take the temperature of your congregation.

Sometimes people express their disapproval with loud silence. They don't tell us anything, they just don't show up. We make up stories to explain the silence, because we don't have any real data, because we never asked them.

We can minimize the chance of this happening by creating opportunities for the congregation to express their hopes and concerns in ways that give everyone an equal say. Not a vote, but a chance to express how they feel.

The congregational engagement exercise below can significantly enhance the connection between the leadership and the congregation, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and understanding. So, next time you plan an event or address a situation, consider this practice to truly take the temperature of your congregation.

Tip!

A couple of ways to use this: If it fits the theme of the sermons, preach a shorter sermon, and add this activity. Or plan for worship to be a bit shorter and do this activity after the Benediction but before the Dismissal. It will be A LOT more difficult to get full participation if you let folks leave, get coffee, and come back. Of course, you should leave room for people to leave if they must.

Activity: Discover Your Hopes and Concerns

Preparations:

Decide on an event or situation that the council needs to address soon. Pick something that folks might have some concerns over the event itself, or an issue the event/situation includes, or congregations' history with this situation/event. For example: The roof needs repairing, we don't have enough to cover the costs in the budget. We struggle to pay our bills, and now we have this big expense. Plan how you'll present this situation including the council's plan for raising the money and getting the work done.

What you'll need:

- ❖ Enough green sticky notes for the congregation to each have a couple.
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- ❖ Two pieces of poster size (18 X24 or larger) paper.
- ❖ Painter's tape, or another way to attach the poster size papers to the wall.

Day of event:

- ❖ Tape two pieces of 18 X 24 paper to the wall. Write "Hopes" at the top of one piece and "Concerns" at the top of the other.
- ❖ Have blue and green sticky notes accessible to the congregation.

Event: Suggested time: 10 minutes.

Part 1: Hope

Step 1

Describe the situation the council wants the congregation to consider (see preparations).

Step 2

Pass out (or have already available) pads of green stick notes.

Step 3

Ask the congregation to respond to the following question on the green sticky notes.

What about this situation excites you?
What do you hope will happen?

Instruct folks NOT to put their names on the sticky notes.

Step 4

Ask folks to pass the green sticky notes to the center and have the ushers bring the notes up and add them to the Hope paper.

Step 5

Read the responses – not all but a few. Remind folks to come up and look at the response after the session.

Part 2: Concerns

Step 1

Repeat your description of the situation.

Step 2

Pass out (or have already available) pads of blue stick notes.

Step 3

Ask the congregation to put their response to the following question on the blue sticky notes.

What about this situation/plan is unsettling to you?
What are you afraid might happen?

Step 4

Ask folks to pass their blue sticky notes to the center and have the ushers pick them up and add them to the “Concerns” paper.

Step 5

Read the responses – not all but a few. Remind folks to come up and look at the response after the session.

Step 6

Lead the congregation in prayer about their hopes and concerns. In your prayer express your thankfulness for God’s promise of presence through difficult conversations.

Step 6

Encourage and thank the congregation for sharing their hopes and concerns and promise that the council will take them into consideration and report back to the congregation soon.

Step 7

At your next council meeting –consider the hopes and concerns. Discuss how to respond to them. Amend your plans accordingly. Report back to the congregation how your plans changed because of what you learned about their hopes and concerns.

Tip!

Click on the link to discover more resources to support healthy communication.

<https://www.livingtheresurrection.com/communication-skills-resources>