

## **Congregation Assessment Tools (CAT/Conversations) in Shenandoah Presbytery**

The Committee on Pastoral Transition (CPT) understands that congregations in transition need to go through a discernment process, determining their future and purpose. Starting in 2015, two professionally developed assessment tools (by Holy Cow! Consulting, Inc.) have been used in Shenandoah Presbytery for this purpose. They are the **Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT)**, for congregations with 35 or more persons in regular worship attendance, and **Conversations**, which is for congregations with fewer than 35 in worship attendance..

**The CAT** is the only reliable benchmarked instrument designed to provide an in-depth look at the experiences, perceptions and aspirations of a congregation. It is a customizable 100-item assessment instrument that can help leaders:

- Measure the level of satisfaction and energy in the congregation
- Identify the critical success factors for improving organizational climate
- Discover where members would like to go in the future
- Gauge readiness for change
- Uncover potential resources that could easily be missed
- Prepare for a search for the next pastor or other leadership

The cost of the CAT to a congregation is based on average worship attendance: \$415 for 35-149 persons; \$515 for 150-499 persons, \$620 for 500-749 persons and \$750 for 750-999 persons.

**Conversations**, for congregations with 35 or fewer persons in average worship attendance, costs \$115. While less detailed than the CAT assessment, Conversations offers the same benchmarked advantages.

Detailed information about the CAT and Conversations may be found on this website:

<https://holycowconsulting.com/>

Congregations may investigate and engage in these assessment tools through the Presbytery's Committee on Pastoral Transition, where a committee member serves as coordinator for Holy Cow products. The Presbytery has trained 20-plus volunteer consultants who are available to assist congregations in the development, management and interpretation of the CAT. The only cost to congregations for a consultant is paying his or her voluntary mileage to consult with the Session, train a team to conduct the assessment, interpret the final result, and advise as needed in the discernment process. Holy Cow Consulting also can provide interpretation of its tools, but at a considerable cost which our congregations avoid.

Following the CAT or Conversations process, the congregation's discernment is presented to the Committee along with two written documents, an Executive Summary and "State of the Congregation" worksheet. As it deems appropriate, the committee will respond with permission to call a congregational meeting to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee or guidance on temporary pastoral relationships.