



Congregational Assessment Big Canoe Chapel

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Purpose of the Congregational Assessment: To provide a congregational assessment for Big Canoe Chapel to assist them in preparing for the next chapter of their life as a congregation and for the calling of their next pastor.

Steps: The process has involved four steps.

- **Step One:** Preliminary telephone conversations were conducted with nine people – which included the interim pastor and the associate pastor – to begin learning about Big Canoe, and to gain information to prepare a survey for the membership of Big Canoe to complete.
- **Step Two:** The survey was prepared and made available to the membership. The survey was completed by 171 people.
- **Step Three:** George was present on-site Friday through Sunday, April 28-30, 2023. Friday night was a gathering open to the full congregation. Approximately 60 people attended, and engaged in several exercises to which allowed them to share their perspective on the congregation. The dialogue was very active.

Saturday involved four focus group interviews for which people could sign up. A total of 31 people participated in these interviews.

On Sunday George observed the Chapel at worship, in Sunday school groups, and met with the interim pastor, association pastor, and then the board of trustees.

- **Step Four:** This report and its recommendations constitute the fourth step.

The Big Canoe Cynthia (Based on the survey results)

The typical active member of the Chapel is characterized as a person we will call Cynthia (not patterned after any real person but reflective of the survey and conversations).

Cynthia is in her 70s and resides in Big Canoe full-time with her husband – except for extended trips they love to take. She and her husband have attended churches for more than 40 years. Generally, a Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian congregation. For the last approximately 15 years they have attended the Chapel.

They attend the Chapel in person. Cynthia participates in a Sunday School class and worship, connects with the Women's Fellowship, and serves on a committee.

She knows the Chapel has a vision regarding their spiritual and strategic direction, but she is not sure what it is.

While Cynthia enjoys some innovation and creativity in worship, she primarily likes the traditional worship of the denominational churches she has attended during her life. At the same time, she would like to see the Chapel attract more people and grow larger, and realizes incremental changes in the worship style may be needed for this to happen.

She believes the Chapel has a good balance of convictions and openness to various theological, doctrinal, and biblical perspectives, plus has a wonderful fellowship and relational life. Yet they must be proactive in assimilating new people who seek to connect with the Chapel by listening to their perspectives and then taking appropriate actions.

Part of what brings her joy in her relationship with the Chapel is how they care for and minister to one another as the church gathered. Also, as the church scattered, how they engage in ministry, missions, and compassionate outreach to the Big Canoe context and beyond to the world.

She appreciates the fact that through her years at the Chapel, she has continued to grow spiritually as a Christian disciple. The Chapel is not a place for long-term Christians to come and stop deepening their Christian faith.

Cynthia's only hesitation about the Chapel is that the governance system and accessing decision-making is somewhat confusing for her. Who leads the Chapel? The pastor, associate pastor, and other staff, or the trustees, or the committees?

Big Canoe Chapel Survey

(171 Responses)

1. What is your gender? **62.6%** Female. **37.4%** Male. (**Note:** Almost 63 of every 100 people are female.)
2. What is your age? **1.2%** Under 40. **8.2%** 40-60. **26.3%** 61-70. **48.0%** 71-80. **16.4%** Over 80. (**Note:** Almost 91 out of every 100 people are 61 or more years old. Almost 64 out of every 100 people are 71 or more years old.)
3. Number of adults in your household. **14.7%** One. **81.2%** Two. **4.1%** Three or More. (**Note:** 96 out of every 100 homes have two people or less.)
4. Number of children under 18 in your household. **98.2%** None. **0.6%** One. **0.6%** Two. **0.6%** Three or More. (**Note:** 98 out of every 100 homes have no children under age 18.)
5. Do you live in the Big Canoe community? **96.4%** Yes. **3.6%** No. (**Note:** Approximately 96 out of every 100 people live in Big Canoe.)
6. If you live *outside* the Big Canoe community, how long does it take you to travel to Big Canoe Chapel on Sunday mornings? (*If you live in Big Canoe, please skip this question.*)
18.2% 10 minutes or less. **27.3%** 11-20 minutes. **54.5%** More than 20 minutes.
7. What is your *primary* church/denominational background?
29.8% Methodist. **22.2%** Baptist. **17.5%** Presbyterian. **4.7%** Catholic. **4.7%** Lutheran. **5.8%** Episcopal/Anglican. **1.2%** Church of Christ. **8.8%** Non-Denominational/Independent. **0.0%** Other. **5.3%** None. (**Note:** Approximately 70 out of every 100 people are of Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian heritage.)
8. How long have you been *attending* Big Canoe Chapel?
16.5% 2 years or less. **30.0%** 3-9 Years. **28.8%** 10 – 19 years. **24.7%** 20 years of more. (**Note:** Approximately 54 out of every 100 people have attended the Chapel for ten years or more.)
9. Are you currently attending Sunday worship services and/or Sunday School at Big Canoe Chapel *primarily* in person or online? **87.8%** In Person. **12.2%** Online. (**Note:** Approximately 88 out of 100 people attend the Chapel in person.)
10. Consider your whole life (from childhood forward) and your attendance/participation in a Christian church of any denomination or non-denominational. How many total years of your life have you been attending/participating in a Christian church?
1.8% 20 years or less. **14.6%** 21-40 years. **83.6%** 41 years or more. (**Note:** Approximately 84 out of 100 people have attended a Christian church for more than 41 years of their life.)
11. In what activities are you involved at Big Canoe Chapel? (*Check all that apply.*)
50.9% Sunday School. **87.1%** Worship Services. **45.6%** Women's Fellowship. **18.1%** Men's Fellowship. **1.2%** Youth Group. **5.8%** Children's Department. **34.5%** Bible Study Group. **45.0%** Committee. **13.5%** Missions/Outreach. **7.0%** None.

12. Consider the spiritual vision of Big Canoe Chapel – that vision from God that captivates the imagination of the congregation, creates excitement, provides a unified purpose, and pulls the congregation forward into the future. (**Note:** 76 out of 100 people either cannot articulate the vision of the Chapel or are not sure the Chapel has a vision.)

23.7% I have a clear sense of the spiritual vision God has given Big Canoe Chapel. If I met someone new to the area, and they asked me about where the Chapel is headed under God’s leadership, I could articulate this vision in my own words.

49.1% I know we have a sense of spiritual strategic direction as a congregation, but I am not sure I could articulate it as clearly as I would like or point out evidence of where it is happening. **27.2%** I am not sure the Chapel has a clear vision from God that currently guides our spiritual strategic direction.

13. Consider the worship styles you have experienced throughout your life in congregations. What worship style listed is closest to your personal *sweet spot* or most like what you knew in previous churches? The one you love and is most meaningful to you as the worship of God. (**Note:** Almost 85 out of 100 people prefer worship traditional to their heritage, or prefer blended worship.)

4.1% Formal Liturgical Worship.

5.3% Lite Liturgical Worship.

40.0% “Traditional” Worship (By whatever definition you would use for “traditional”).

44.7% Blended Worship (blends some of liturgical, traditional, and contemporary elements). **5.9%**

Contemporary Worship (musical praise team, videos, and congregational responses). **0.0%**

Emergent Worship (rock concert atmosphere and expressive congregational response).

14. Concerning the size, attendance at Big Canoe Chapel. (**Note:** Almost 80 out of 100 people would like to see the Chapel grow larger.)

79.4% I would like to see the Chapel grow larger. **20.0%** I believe the Chapel is about the right size. **0.6%** I would like for the Chapel to be smaller.

15. Concerning the theological, doctrinal, biblical perspectives of the Chapel. (**Note:** Approximately 57 percent believe the Chapel has a good balance of convictions and openness to various theological, doctrinal, biblical perspectives.)

14.3% We should be more open to various theological, doctrinal, and biblical perspectives.

57.1% We have a good balance of convictions and openness to various perspectives.

28.6% We should more clearly define our theological, doctrinal, and biblical perspectives.

16. Anticipating potential transitions in the age demographics of Big Canoe, we should. . . (**Note:** Almost 66 out of 100 people believe the Chapel should willingly adjust its identity, style, and programming as more younger families move into Big Canoe.)

27.3% Reaffirm and communicate to new residents our current identity, style, and programming.

65.5% Make appropriate adjustments in our identity, style, and programming as more families where the heads of household are 55 and under – with children under 18 – move into our community.

7.3% Change our current identity, style, and programming to reach the larger community both inside and outside Big Canoe who have more adults 55 and under with children under 18 in their household.

17. How would you characterize the fellowship and relational life within Big Canoe Chapel? (**Note:** Almost 87 out of 100 people feel the Chapel has a wonderful fellowship, yet varying degrees of ease in assimilating into that fellowship.)

54.3% Big Canoe Chapel is a wonderful fellowship. It is easy to assimilate into the Chapel and build deep and meaningful relationships with people.

32.3% Big Canoe Chapel is a wonderful fellowship. Yet it can be difficult to assimilate into the Chapel and build new deep and meaningful relationships with people who already have so many other friends and relationships.

13.4% Big Canoe Chapel is a good fellowship. It gets better the longer I am here. It was at first difficult to assimilate into the Chapel and build deep and meaningful relationships with people.

18. How would you characterize the balance of congregational care ministry, and missions and/or outreach efforts by the Chapel in the two-county area around us and beyond? (**Note:** Almost 60 out of 100 people rate the care for one another and support of one another as wonderful.)

59.4% Big Canoe Chapel does many wonderful things to care for one another and support one another in dealing with family, health, and spiritual issues. In addition, it also does many great things in ministry, missions, and compassionate outreach to our community context and beyond to the world.

21.2% While the Chapel does good things in congregational care plus ministry, missions, and outreach, I would hope in the future we would do more to care for one another within the congregation.

19.4% While the Chapel does good things in congregational care plus ministry, missions, and outreach, I would hope in the future we would do even more in ministry, missions, and outreach.

19. In what way do you desire for the Chapel to help you grow spiritually, and deeper as a Christian disciple? (**Note:** 68 out of every 100 people want to continue growing in their faith, their knowledge of the Bible, and in service to others.)

8.4% I came to the Big Canoe area to retire. I have worked on my spirituality for many years. Now I want to relax, and do not feel the need to keep pressing on my spirituality but live a life of thanksgiving for my spiritual relationship as a Christian disciple.

68.1% I have lived a good and meaningful life as a Christian disciple and church member. Yet, I realize I can continue to grow in my faith, in my knowledge of the Bible, and in service to others. I like that the Chapel provides an opportunity for me to do this.

23.5% Moving to the Big Canoe area was a transition point in my life. Among the changes I want to or are making is to assertively grow deeper in my spirituality, faith, and Christian service. I want the Chapel to help me to continue to do this.

20. How would you characterize the governance, management, and leadership of the Chapel? (**Note:** 44 people out of 100 are confused about the governance systems of the Chapel.)

14.5% The Chapel has a great pattern of governance, management, and leadership. The pastor, staff, and trustees are the key to this, and they work well to produce effective governance. I feel I have access to information, decisions, and ongoing governance processes.

41.2% The Chapel as a congregation was developed with a unique governance system that placed a lot of responsibility on the trustees. They work well on the overall systems in partnership with the pastor and staff. A good number of committees allow members to work effectively on the programs, ministries, and activities of the Chapel.

44.2% The governance systems of the Chapel are somewhat confusing to me. I am not sure how to access decision-making. It may be present. It may be working well. I feel the need for more communication and broader congregational involvement in governance.

Ranking of Survey Responses

- 98 out of every 100 homes have no children under 18.
- 96 out of every 100 people live in Big Canoe.
- 96 out of every 100 homes have two people or less.
- 91 out of every 100 people are 61 or more years old.

- 88 out of every 100 people attend the Chapel in person.
- 87 out of every 100 people feel the Chapel has a wonderful fellowship.
- 85 out of every 100 people prefer “traditional” or blended worship.
- 84 out of every 100 people have attended church for 41 or more years.
- 80 out of every 100 people would like to see the Chapel grow larger.

- 76 out of every 100 people are unclear about God’s vision for the Chapel.
- 70 out of every 100 people are of Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian heritage.
- 68 out of every 100 people proactively want to grow deeper spiritually.
- 66 out of every 100 people would be willing to adjust to attract younger families.
- 64 out of every 100 are 71 or more years old.
- 63 out of every 100 persons are female.

- 60 out of every 100 people rate the care ministry and outreach ministry as high.
- 57 out of every 100 people indicate a good balance of convictions and openness.
- 54 out of every 100 people have attended the Chapel for ten years or more.
- 44 out of every 100 people are confused about the governance system.