



Mapping Change: Comparing Your Results Over Time

Begin with your congregation’s older Strengths Report. In the table below, list the overall percentile score for your congregation on each strength. The *overall percentile score* is shown in the bar chart in the middle of each page of the Strengths Report. It is the last number by the bottom bar in the graph. Next, take your newer Strengths Report and again list the overall percentile score for your congregation on each strength. Now, calculate the difference between the older and newer scores for each strength, and record that in the column to the right.

	Older Overall Percentile	Newer Overall Percentile	Difference
Strength 1: Growing Spiritually			
Strength 2: Meaningful Worship			
Strength 3: Participating in the Congregation			
Strength 4: Having a Sense of Belonging			
Strength 5: Caring for Young People			
Strength 6: Focusing on the Community			
Strength 7: Sharing Faith			
Strength 8: Welcoming New Worshipers			
Strength 9: Empowering Leadership			
Strength 10: Looking to the Future			

Questions for Discussion or Reflection:

What were the three highest overall percentile scores for your congregation the first time the survey was conducted? Circle these scores.

What are the three highest overall percentile scores for your congregation the most recent time the survey was conducted? Circle these scores.

Where are there differences? Circle the three strengths where the change shown in the difference column was the largest. Overall, have your congregation’s strengths shifted, grown, or declined? Does this surprise you? What insights or conclusions does this suggest? What areas should your congregation’s leaders explore in greater detail?

Exploring the Factors Behind Change

Your Congregation's Strengths. Choose three strengths that you'd like to investigate further. Looking at the ones that changed the most over time could be particularly helpful. Each strength is measured by several survey questions. Again using your two Strengths Reports, for each strength you've chosen list the individual questions and the percentage of worshipers who gave that response each time in the tables below (you might not need all of the rows for every strength). These percentages are listed in the *first* column (titled "Your Congregation") in the table at the top of each page of your Strengths Report. Calculate the difference for each measure and list those in the column to the right.

The first Congregational Strength we want to explore is: _____

	Older Percentage	Newer Percentage	Difference
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

The second Congregational Strength we want to explore is: _____

	Older Percentage	Newer Percentage	Difference
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

The third Congregational Strength we want to explore is: _____

	Older Percentage	Newer Percentage	Difference
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

Your Congregation's Strengths (continued). Work on one strength at a time. Circle the percentages where your worshipers' responses changed the most (at least 5% higher or lower).

What do you think these changes reflect? Discuss the factors that might account for these changes. For example, has there been any change in clergy leadership or staff? Has your congregation begun or eliminated any programs or strategies? Has a new worship service been started or has the format of worship changed? Has the congregation's budget, worship attendance, or educational programs changed?

The first Congregational Strength we're exploring is: _____

Conclusions and Insights about Change on This Strength:

The second Congregational Strength we're exploring is: _____

Conclusions and Insights about Change on This Strength:

The third Congregational Strength we're exploring is: _____

Conclusions and Insights about Change on This Strength:

Your Congregation’s Demographic Profile. Changes in your worshipers’ demographic profile can be one of many factors generating congregational change. To explore this possibility, compare your worshipers’ profile as shown in your two Connections Reports. Look at the results for “your congregation” (in the colored bars) on page 7 of each report and complete the table below.

	Older Percentage	Newer Percentage	Difference
Female worshipers			
Age groups:			
15 to 24 years of age			
25 to 44 years of age			
45 to 64 years of age			
65 years of age or older			
Education:			
College or advanced degree			
Some college			
High school or less			
Married			
Children at home			

Circle the percentages that changed the most (at least 5% higher or lower).

Questions for Discussion or Reflection:

How have your worshipers changed over this period?

How do demographic changes in your congregation influence congregational life? For example, does a change in the demographic profile of your worshipers suggest changes in the types of programs and classes that could be offered? Would changes influence the congregation’s giving patterns? Might they have an impact on the ability or availability of members to be involved in committees, leadership roles, and volunteer efforts?

What changes in your community are you aware of that might be linked to the changes you see in your worshipers? Are the changes for your worshipers similar to or different from those for the community?

What relationships do you see between changes in who your worshipers are and changes in your congregation’s strengths?

Types of New Worshipers. Look at the results on page 6 of the Connections Report from each time and complete the table below.

	Older Percentage	Newer Percentage	Difference
Worshippers attending 5 years or less			
New worshipers who are:			
First-timers			
Returnees			
Switchers			
Transfers			

Circle the percentages that changed the most (at least 5% higher or lower).

Questions for Discussion or Reflection:

Is your congregation attracting new worshipers at about the same rate now as when you first took the survey? If this percentage has dropped, what strategies could your congregation consider to attract more new worshipers? If this percentage has increased, what strategies is your congregation using to meet the needs of your new worshipers? How are long-term worshipers experiencing the increase in new people?

Has there been any change in the types of new worshipers in your congregation (for example, more returnees but fewer switchers)? Does this change indicate the need for a change in the methods your congregation uses to educate and assimilate new members?

What relationships do you see between (a) changes in the percentage and type of new worshipers and (b) changes in your congregation’s strengths?

Your Congregation's Size and Budget. Gather information about your congregation to complete as much of the table below as you can. You can compare the number of surveys completed each time as a rough measure of average worship attendance. If at all possible, obtain records of the congregation's total budget and total contributions for both years. Use total budget figures to calculate the average expenditures per attendee in both years (total budget divided by the average worship attendance). Use total contributions figures to calculate the average giving per attendee (total annual contributions divided by average worship attendance for each year).

	Time 1	Time 2	Difference
1. Average worship attendance (or number of surveys completed)			
2. Membership			
3. Congregation's total budget			
4. Average expenditures per attendee¹			
5. Total annual contributions			
6. Average giving per attendee²			

¹ Congregation's total budget divided by average worship attendance = average expenditures per attendee.

² Total annual contributions divided by average worship attendance = average giving per attendee.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection:

Has the size of your congregation remained about the same, increased, or decreased since first taking the survey? (Your congregation may have additional records of average worship attendance for each of the intervening years. If so, look at the trend over the full period.) How is this change affecting your congregation and its strengths?

Has your congregation's expenditures per attendee remained about the same, increased, or decreased over this period? Has giving per attendee remained about the same, increased, or decreased? What do you believe are the reasons for these changes?

How do the demographic changes you identified previously influence change in your average worship attendance, expenditures per attendee, and contributions per attendee?

How do changes in average worship attendance, expenditures, and contributions influence your congregation's strengths?

Putting it All Together. Here are some additional discussion questions and steps you can take to follow-up on the work you have done so far.

- Based on what you've learned, does it appear that your congregation has experienced considerable change over this period—in your strengths, in the demographic profile of your worshipers, in the percentages and types of new people coming to your congregation, or in details about the congregation's size and budget? If so, review the **Connecting Leader Guide** by Kenneth Byerly—particularly session four, which involves developing a new mission statement. Consider using this process during a congregational meeting to involve everyone in developing a new mission statement. (The **Connecting Leader Guide** is available at www.USCongregations.org/leaderguides)

- Based on what you've learned, what do you see as the most important changes in your congregation? Which strengths need attention? Which strengths can your congregation build on? Review the **Strengths Report Leader Guide** by Herb Miller (it was included with your Strengths Report), especially the sessions that address the strengths you wish to build on. Consider consulting Herb Miller's Nuggets—detailed, how-to tips that address the ten strengths and other aspects of congregational life. (Nuggets are available for free here: <http://www.theparishpaper.com/free-resources>)

- Do changes in the community seem to be related to what is happening in your congregation? Do you see changes in the community that you'd like to explore in more detail? Could your congregation be doing more to connect with the world outside its doors? Use the book, *Places of Promise: Finding Strength in Your Congregation's Location*, and companion study guide to investigate these issues. (The book is available from thethoughtfulchristian.com, Amazon.com, and most major booksellers; the **Places of Promise Study Guide** by Trey Hammond is available for free at www.USCongregations.org/leaderguides)