



**The Diocese  
of Southern Ohio**  
Episcopalians in Connection

## 2021 Diocese Wide Survey

# Objectives

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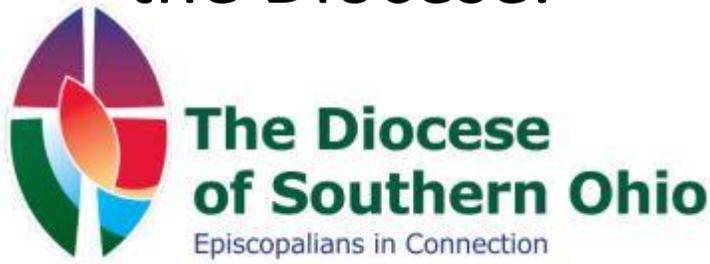
1. Assess the health, strength, and weaknesses of our Diocese.
2. Gauge our readiness to begin our work for searching for and electing a new bishop.
3. Consider what attributes in a future bishop could help us move ahead as a Diocese.

# Background

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To assist us in this exploration, we arranged for Holy Cow! Consulting to refine and distribute a detailed survey they have used with over 200 faith-based communities.

A total of 1303 diocesan members, including 735 parishioners from all of our congregations, responded to this survey, representing the various roles, regions, and types of parishes in the Diocese.



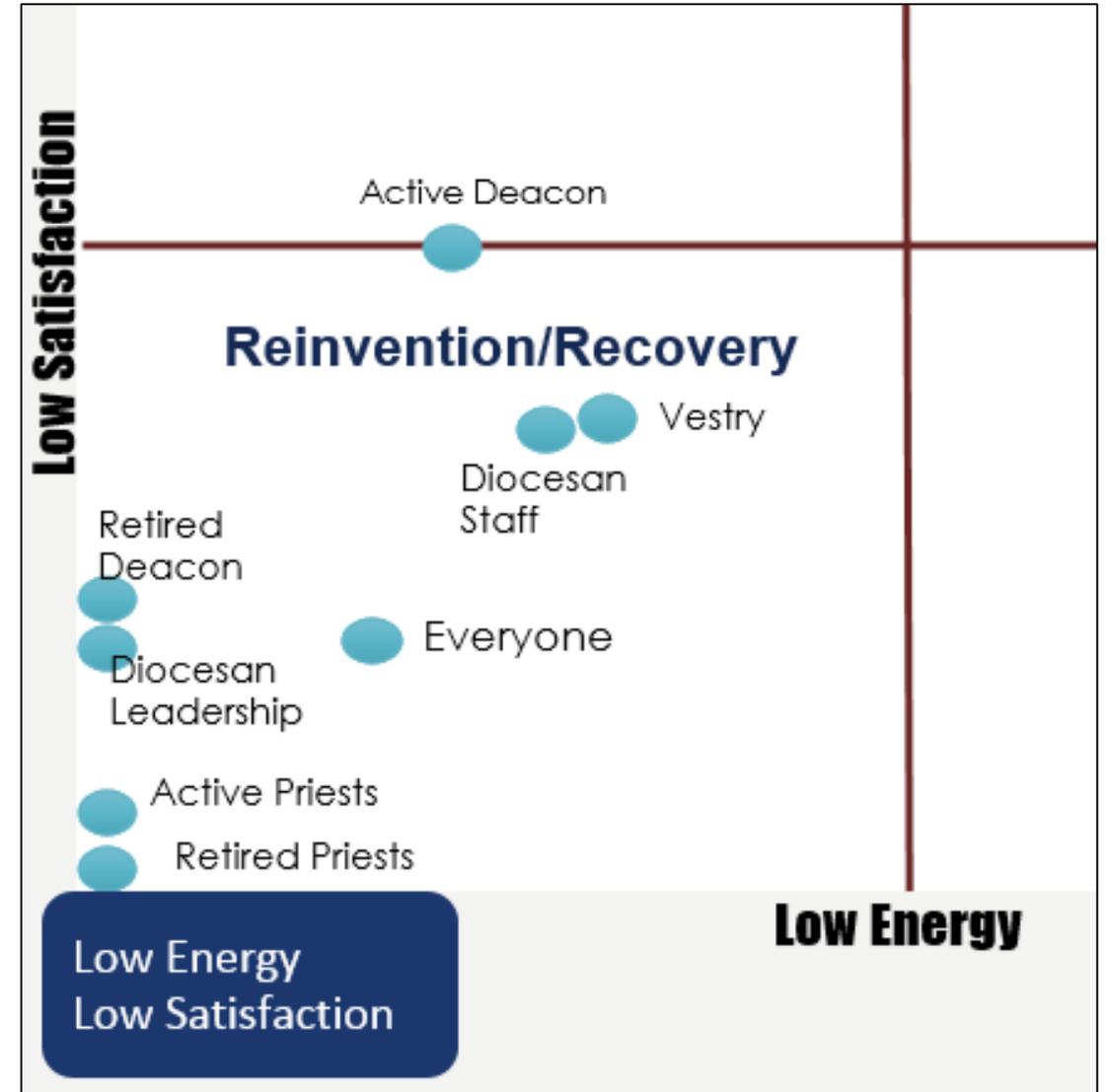
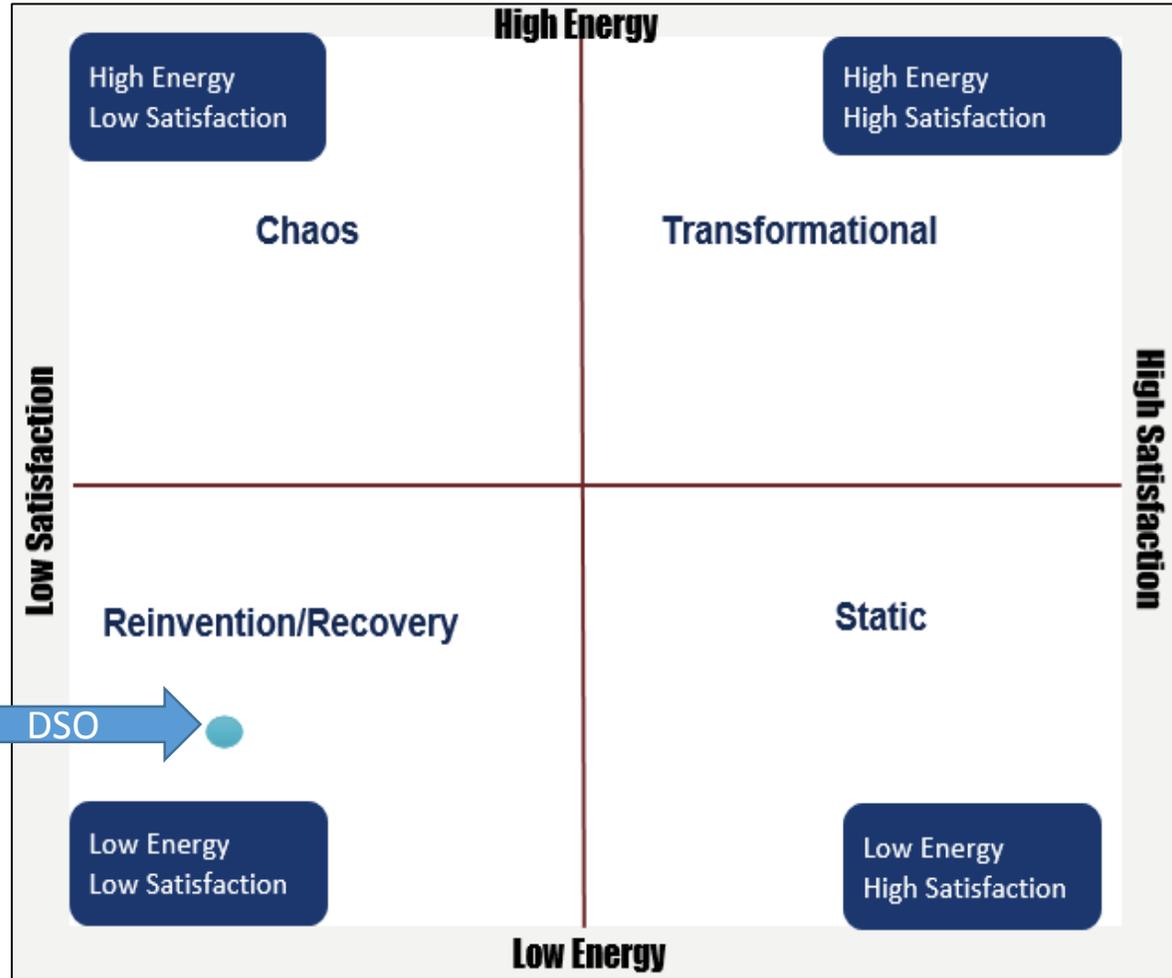
# Key Learning

Our levels of satisfaction and energy are low (among the subset of respondents given that portion of the survey). Among the groups giving the lowest overall ratings were priests and Diocesan leadership, and Diocesan staff had the most urgent critical success factor ratings.

Overall, In order to improve satisfaction and energy we focus on these key drivers:

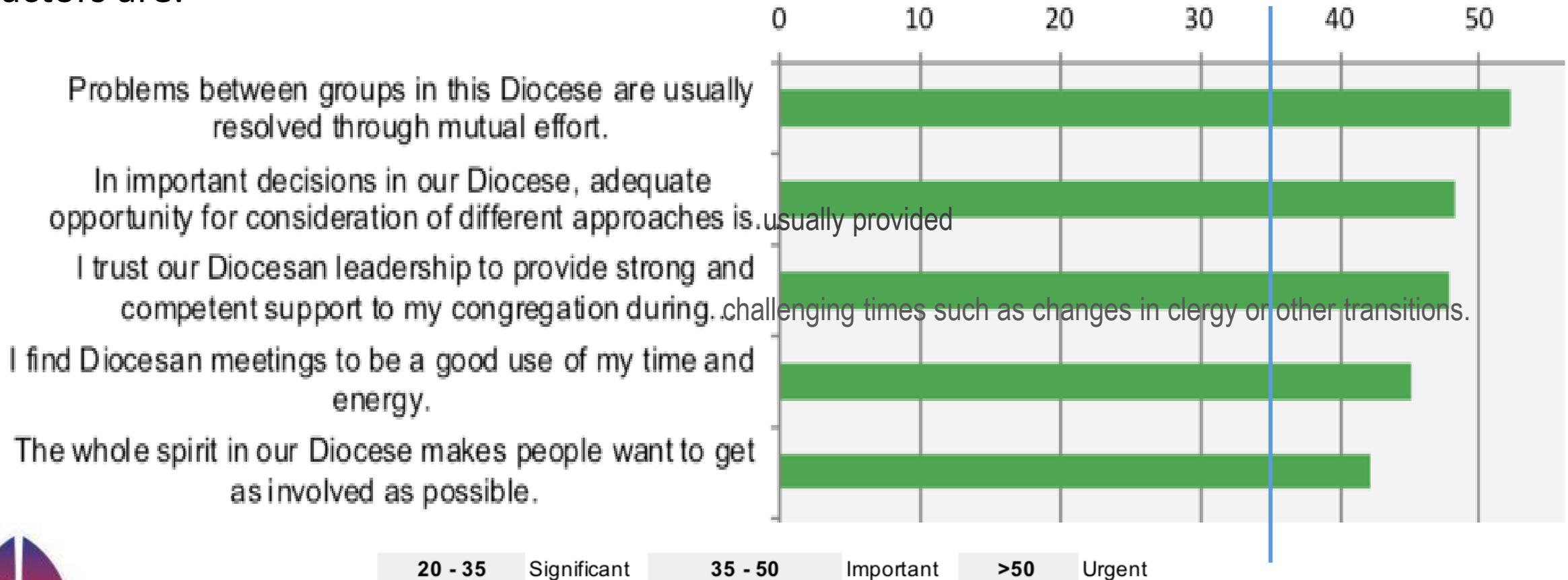
- building a positive spirit
- allowing for consideration of various points of view in decision making, and
- developing and sharing a uniting vision.

# Key Learning (continued)



# Satisfaction and Energy - Priests

Active and Retired Priests gave the lowest ratings for satisfaction and energy. Critical success factors are:



# Key Learning (continued)

Trust was the top theme for improvement across the survey. Trust is built on transparency and two way communication.

“Cultivate a higher level of trust in our Diocese” is a top 5 priority for:

- vestry/mission council members,
- diocesan leadership,
- diocesan staff,
- active and retired priests and bishops, and
- retired deacons

# Key Learning (continued)

## Top Priorities for Parishioners

Score  
(>3 = Important)

	Take a leadership role in working with churches that are struggling.	<b>3.76</b>
	Equip Rectors and other leaders in congregations with strategies that enable them to reach new members.	<b>3.71</b>
	Make our Diocese more responsive to requests for assistance in dealing with particular needs including pastoral transitions, financial issues, or other pressing concerns.	<b>3.48</b>
	Develop a discernment process to rethink how to be vital Episcopal churches in our specific region.	<b>3.42</b>
	Streamline our Diocese organizationally and administratively so that it makes better use of financial resources.	<b>3.37</b>

 Unique to Parishioners

 Unique to Parishioners and Deacons

# Key Learning (continued)

Two current issues, the Bishop's self disclosed "problem with alcohol" and COVID-19, have had minimal impact overall. Neither issue defines our reality, however, some intervention on both will be needed.

## Alcohol Problem

Bishop Breidenthal's problem with alcohol has been an issue for you or your congregation:

- 84.76% Disagree or Do Not Know

The Diocese has work to do to address the impacts of Bishop Breidenthal's problem with alcohol:

- 23.05% Clearly Disagree
- 23.91% On the fence
- **18.28% Clearly Agree**
- 34.73% Don't Know

## COVID-19

- The majority of respondents feel they have adapted well (85%) and have made them feel more grateful for their church life (82%) during the pandemic.
- A majority (62%) of people believe their church life will return to normal after the pandemic.

# Key Learning (continued)

Congregational development is a relative strength for our Diocese, suggesting it is an area upon which we can build. Some key areas such as help for struggling congregations and strategies for attracting new members can be improved.

## Top Priorities (All Respondents)

- Congregational leadership
- Congregational growth
- Congregational vitality

These are typical priorities for organizations such as ours,  
And a relative strength for our Diocese:

- “Support to Congregations” performance index (DSO highest score)
- “Congregational Engagement” (76<sup>th</sup> percentile vs. benchmarks)

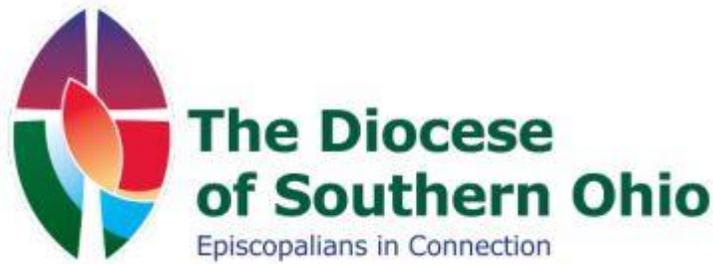
# What People Want in a Bishop

## ○ **Critical Abilities**

- Cultural Understanding: Ability to work effectively within our regional culture
- Leadership Development: Ability to build a team and work collaboratively
- Management Skills: Ability to manage the complexities of our Diocese

## ○ **Personal Qualities**

- Commitment to traditional Creeds of the Christian Church
- Strong theological background
- Sense of humor



# What the Data Say We Need in a Bishop

- The ability to **cultivate trust** through transparency and follow-through
  - Creativity and vision will be needed here in terms of how to bring about healing and leverage trust
- Good **leadership development**
  - Creating strong and effective leadership that accomplishes what is needed
  - Making leadership more representative of the whole Diocese with clear path for new leadership and mentoring for those leaders
- A track record of **creating opportunities for healthy engagement** and celebration

# Conclusions

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1. We have work to do. Energy and satisfaction are low and there are areas of clear opportunity to address. These issues are most likely chronic and systematic. Change can be difficult and our systems can be inflexible. It may take some time to get better.
2. Now is not the time to bring in a new bishop.
3. Covid 19 and the Bishop's alcohol use have not had large negative impacts, though we should keep an eye on these in the coming months. We should consider outreach to those closest to this issue.

# Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Start with scripture
2. Listening Sessions/Holy Conversations, for example with:
  - i. Staff (Present)
  - ii. Clergy (Active and Retired in the last 3 years)
  - iii. Diocesan Leadership (Present and Past over 5 year period)
  - iv. General Diocese membership
3. Determine best practices for leadership development in Diocesan system
4. Consistent and transparent feedback loop from Leadership
5. Core values evaluation



# Recommendations and Next Steps

7. Leverage the relative strength of congregational support across the Diocese as a basis on which to build.
8. Align to 3-5 areas of improvement on which to focus, e.g.,
  - Share broadly the diocesan vision/mission and revise if needed.
  - Understand the drivers of trust and focus attention on building trust.
  - Take a more active role in helping struggling churches
  - Enable church leaders with strategies to enable finding new members.
  - Look at our organizational structure and practices to see if there are opportunities to streamline.



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**THANK YOU!**

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**HolyCow!**  
consulting  
*Organizational Intelligence You Can Use*