

Worship and Church Growth among the FACT2010 Congregations

The following table lists the activities among the FACT2010 congregations related to congregational identity.

	% Who say this describes it well	Worship Growth Correlation	Church Health	Readiness for Growth	Fragility
Thought-provoking	83%	.09	.15	.38***	-.02
Inspirational	77%	.09	.31**	.15	-.26**
Joyful	75%	.21*	.23**	.24**	-.33***
Feel presence of God	74%	-.01	.33***	.16	-.18*
Reverent	55%	.09	.18	.17	.02
Innovative	33%	.10	.43***	.46***	-.19*

	% Who often Include this	Worship Growth	Church Health	Readiness for Growth	Fragility
Visual Projection Equipment	58%	.01	.08	.01	-.16*
Communion	57%	.13	.13	.15	-.20*
Organ	56%	-.06	-.05	-.13	.12
Choir	51%	.07	.05	.04	-.02
Youth participation	36%	.13	.20*	.25**	-.32***
Drums	30%	.20*	.39***	.32***	-.22**
Electric Guitar	27%	.19*	.24**	.25**	-.17*
Kneeling	8%	.25**	.12	.14	-.16*

KEY: * sig at $\alpha < .05$, ** sig at $\alpha < .01$, *** sig at $\alpha < .001$

--*Worship growth* is a measure of percentage growth over the last five years.

--The composite variable of *church health* includes sharing one's faith, welcoming newcomers, community ministry, use of gifts, trust, belonging, missional emphasis, caring for youth, spiritual growth, and presence of God in worship.

--*Readiness* includes a willingness and passion for change and ability to adapt

--The composite variable of *fragility* includes % lifelong members, % budget alloc. toward staff, financial uncertainty, and % of unused worship and parking space.

Worship and Readiness for Growth

Congregations who expressed a readiness for growth in the FACT2010 data set were characterized by joyful, innovative, and thought-provoking worship. It would seem that worship and sermons are tools for promoting readiness for change among these congregations. Readiness congregations in this survey were also more likely to involve youth in worship and use drums and guitars.

Worship and Church Health

Healthy congregations in the FACT2010 data set were characterized by joyful, innovative, inspirational, worship in which the participants could also feel the presence of God. The most unique worship factor among healthy congregations in this survey is that their participants feel the presence of God in worship. Healthy congregations in this survey were also more likely to involve youth in worship and use drums and guitars.

Worship and Church Growth

Growing congregations in the FACT2010 data set were characterized by joyful worship. Apparently, joy is the only distinguishing characteristic that is able to be maintained as congregations move from readiness to growth. It could also be that as the membership becomes more diverse, it is more difficult for all of the persons present in worship to agree that the worship is inspirational, innovative, or thought-provoking. Readiness congregations in this survey were also more likely to use drums and guitars in worship and practice kneeling in worship. Consistent with other findings, growing congregations tend to have more unique elements in their programming, focus, and even worship.

Worship and Fragile Congregations

Fragile congregations in the FACT2010 data set were characterized by worship that was less inspirational, less innovative, and less joyful than less fragile congregations. It is interesting to note that the worship style in more fragile congregations is not necessarily more reverent than worship in other congregations, it is simply less joyful. Perhaps one source of this is that these congregations are also less likely to involve youth in worship, use drums, guitars, and visual projection and even take communion.

Conclusions

Joy is a significant factor in worship among the growing, healthy, and readiness congregations in this survey. As churches begin to grow, the worship can no longer be all those things to the people who attend. The one thread maintained as it grows, is the thread of joy in worship. As a follow-up in regional assessments, it may be worth polling worship services on this one factor alone.