

## **1. How was the survey created?**

The USCVS is a heavily-revised wave 3 of the US Congregational Life Survey, which ran from 2001-2018. The motivation to substantially revise Wave 3 was twofold: first, we wanted to create question types that were more in alignment with current psychometric standards; and second, we wanted to shift focus from assessing congregational strengths to assessing marks of vitality. The third wave was a collaboration between sociologists, theologians.

The whole process took 2 and a half years and was kicked off in 2016 with a multi-agency PC(USA) summit, which had over 60 Presbyterians engaging in focus groups discussing what were measurable signs of congregational vitality. From this, and a review of existing research on the topic, a draft survey was created. This was alpha tested at a local congregation, where they took the survey and then met with the designers to give feedback on what they were thinking when they answered the questions. We revised based on that. Then the revised survey was beta test with an entire presbytery in early 2018. Then we ran statistical models like reliability analyses and principal components analyses to see if our hypotheses about what questions measure which vital mark were valid. We revised again. Then we did a second beta test with two more presbyteries in late 2018. Then more statistical modeling. We finally had an official release of the USCVS in 2019!

## **2. Talk to us about the overall process of the survey.**

After contacting Research Services to request the USCVS, you will work with our office to develop a timeline and work out exactly what services your church wants to procure, and how you want to go about it. We will

then send you a survey-in-a-box kit, containing the surveys, a cover letter, with instructions for giving the survey both online and in person (if you chose both these options). You will distribute the survey to your congregants, then collect them and mail them back to us. We will then scan the surveys, analyze the findings, and produce a report for you to review. We also offer to meet with you to go over your results, providing interpretation into key findings, and answering any questions you have about the report.

## **3. Can we take the survey online?**

Yes, absolutely. Although we do encourage congregations to complete the USCVS during a live worship service, the realities of COVID-19 have made that more challenging. It has even shifted our understanding of what a “live” worship service means. Alternately, even given the choice, some congregations would prefer not to take the survey during worship. We provide you with a link to the web version of the survey, which you advertise to your worshipers through whatever means you feel will reach them – email blasts, social media, bulletin inserts, sharing during online worship, including it in the church newsletter, etc.

#### **4. How is the survey scored?**

Each mark of vitality is measured with a combination of multiple questions on the survey; each question gets at different aspects of the mark. We combine these questions into what is called a summative scale. Summative scales are constructed by taking answers to a set of survey questions that tap a particular concept and computing a score for each individual that can be used as a representation of their position on the concept in question. We do this by calculating a simple average of the total responses. Then the church's score for each mark is an average of everybody's score on that mark.

#### **5. What will the report look like?**

The report compares your church with PC(USA) as a whole on each of the seven marks of vitality. It gives you an overview of how your church rates overall on each mark, and then there is a page dedicated to each mark. The pages for the mark show you the overall responses to each survey question that makes up the calculation for that mark of vitality. Finally, there are two pages of demographic questions related to your church. You can see a sample report at [uscongregations.pcusa.org](http://uscongregations.pcusa.org)

#### **6. How much does it cost?**

It depends. Thanks to funding from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denominational headquarters, all PC(USA) congregations pay a reduced fee. VCI congregations get an additional discount. For VCI churches, the current cost is a flat rate of \$175 plus \$25 shipping for paper surveys. However, you can always find the most current pricing information on our website at [uscongregations.pcusa.org](http://uscongregations.pcusa.org)

#### **7. When should my church take the survey?**

We recommend VCI congregations take the survey in Month Two of Year 1 of their process; barring that, we just recommend doing it as early in the process as possible. You do not need to have educated your congregation about the marks of vitality in order to have them take the survey. The survey itself does not refer specifically to the vital marks. The questions measure them indirectly. Outside of VCI, churches often take the USCVS when they are in times of pastoral transition or beginning to embark upon a large mission study project.