

**Timothy Lutheran Ministries  
Next Generation Survey Summary Report  
2019-2020**

**Data Compiled and Summarized by  
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**Presented to Congregation  
Town Hall Meeting  
July 29, 2020**

# Survey Responses and Observations

## I. The Typical Respondent

The total number of responses totaled 305. While everyone is unique, there are some commonalities that helps to paint a picture of these members. The “typical” respondent can be described as:

- Mature -- 94% over age 40; 58% over age 61
- A long-time member -- 64% over 16 years; 39% over 25 years
- A regular worshiper -- 74% weekly; 20% two-three times monthly
- Living in two-person or larger household -- 56% at two; 34% larger
- Attends RD Mize -- 54%
- Attend both campuses -- 27%
- Serious approach to Next Generation process -- 74% attended cottage meeting; 63% wrote comments on survey

### **Implications:**

With weekly attendance at or near 500, “realistic” Timothy membership ranges between 1500-1600. A response rate approaching 20% is strong for this type of survey.

Respondents represent the most involved members at Timothy. Their support of the decided direction to move forward is essential for its success.

While most responses (54%) come from members who primarily worship at RD Mize, a significant number (27%) indicate they worship at both campuses. Participation in the survey from primarily Wyatt worshipers is lower.

Not pursuing capital finances in the survey was intentional.

## II. Perceptions and Priorities

The initial questions of the survey were included to identify the congregation's perceived "top 5" strengths and weaknesses, resulting in significant agreement among the respondents.

The identified "top 5" strengths: 1) Variety of worship styles (checked by 81% of respondents); 2) Care Ministries – 63%; 3) Staff – 62%; 4) Timothy Lutheran School – 60%; and 5) Early Childhood Center -- 55%.

The identified "top 5" weaknesses: 1) Debt – 88%; 2) Operating two campuses – 82%; 3) Youth ministry – 46%; Timothy Lutheran School – 40%; and 5) Staff – 35%.

These perceptions are stable across many ways to view the data.

- It is unusual for more than 50% of all respondents to agree on the same five strengths.
- Debt and operating two campuses are far and away the most widely perceived weaknesses of the congregation.
- Timothy Lutheran School is perceived in two ways—both as a strength (60%) and a weakness (40%). Some hold one view or the other; others see it as both at the same time.
- Those who advocate consolidation at RD Mize remove TLS from the "top 5" strengths, replacing it with Senior Adult Ministries. This group also adds Children & Family ministries as a weakness, replacing staff. In verbal comments, this group is also most opposed to school ministry, primarily as a drain on finances.

Regarding setting ministry priorities, far less agreement surfaces for Timothy's priorities.

- Each of the eight ministry areas received every possible rank from some respondents--from 1 (highest priority) to 8 (lowest priority).
- The "average" rating (on an eight-point scale, a "1" rating gives an 8 weight, and an "8" rating gives a 1 weight) produces the following priority list:
  - Children's Ministries 5.3
  - Youth Ministry 5.2

- Variety of Worship Styles 4.8
  - Bible Studies 4.7
  - Care Ministries 4.6
  - Timothy Lutheran School 4.4
  - Early Childhood Center 3.8
  - Men's and Women's Ministries 3.5
- Children's Ministries clearly has more than one meaning to respondents. To some, it primarily means Early Childhood Center and Timothy Lutheran School; to others, it means increased opportunities for children/youth-oriented programs and services outside the school ministry. Both viewpoints join to achieve this top rank in this "average."
  - Variety of Worship Styles contains the largest group by far (36%) claiming it is the #1 priority, but it drops to third on this rating system because it also contains the most #8 ratings (24%).
  - Clearly, all ministries have strong supporters while others feel those same ministries are a lower priority. All "average" ratings lie between 3.5 and 5.2, with significant numbers of respondents choosing to rate every ministry in every way.
  - Determining which ministries will be congregational priorities in the future is a task for church leadership. This survey did not provide a clear picture of member priorities, probably because no clear priorities exist within the membership.

### **III. Core Questions**

The heart of the survey seeks to understand member support for the defined future options. Responses paint a clear picture, with a lot of devilry remaining in the details yet to be decided.

- 90% agree consolidation is necessary for financial reasons.
- 83% agree consolidation is necessary for ministry reasons.
- 66% support selling RD Mize and consolidating at Wyatt Rd as best option; 20% disagree.
- 18% support consolidation at RD Mize; 64% disagree.

- 6% support maintaining both campuses; 80% disagree.
- 65% respond positively to support for a capital campaign, if needed, to consolidate at Wyatt Rd; 15% would not support that campaign.
- 38% respond positively to support a capital campaign to consolidate at RD Mize; 34% would not support that campaign.
- 79% say that this process answers their questions.
- 81% say they had opportunity to share their opinions in this process.
- 79% say they will support the congregation even if final decision is not their preference.

Analyzing the data by a variety of demographic and specific responses show remarkable consistency. Some variation does exist, but areas supported in the overall data also are supported in most “slices” by demographic or individual question variables. While the degree of agreement varies, the overall direction of agreement or disagreement shows little meaningful difference. The picture revealed is real.

## **IV. Open End Comments**

Question 14 on the survey asked respondents to comment, and they did! Nearly 2/3 added a wide gamut of thoughts. Sorting the comments into meaningful categories is difficult, as individual comments often contain references to several topics. Splitting apart individual comments does not offer an attractive alternative, as taken together each gives a coherent concept of each respondent’s important feelings.

A few very general observations are possible:

- Advocacy for a certain solution is perhaps the most common theme—site preference and rationale—solutions to a certain problem or issue—advocacy for or against a certain ministry, etc.
- Many respondents express concern that a certain perceived benefit in the current situation should not be lost in whatever is

direction decided by the congregation (“be sure to continue XXX/build XXX soon, etc).

- Additional focus on youth is supported by many respondents, either in connection with current or perceived future ministries.
- Many respondents want to know if a certain issue has been/will be addressed—“Have you thought about/asked XXX”—sharing a real interest in contributing positively to the process.
- References to the importance of the debt issue are not rare. The costs of maintaining certain ministries and the sale of either property to reduce debt relate to this.
- Written comments are generally supportive of the process and the information shared in it.
- A few are frustrated that the plan does not yet contain implementation details, that this process will again “go nowhere,” and/or that this process will not produce the intended/promised result. This is not a prevalent opinion, but it is there.

## Recommendations

- Pray for unity and steadfastness for the Timothy family in the journey ahead.
- Review all of Timothy’s ministry areas to determine Timothy’s core focus.
- Determine a realistic and conservative financial plan.
- Build a plan to consolidate to the Wyatt Road Campus.
- Place the RD Mize Campus on the market.

Timothy’s leadership is ready to move forward with a plan to consolidate to Wyatt Road Campus. Task force groups will be formed immediately to plan for the various aspects of campus consolidation. The plan to move to Wyatt Road Campus will be presented at a Voters’ Assembly Meeting, tentatively in October.

Task force groups include, but are not limited to, Site and Space Planning (short- and long-term), Ministry Review, Budgeting, Capital Campaign, Site-to-Site Move, Real Estate, Construction, Security & Technology, Review of Timothy’s 2020 Vision, etc. If you have expertise and/or interest in serving on a specific Next Generation Task Force, please contact Diane Mayfield ([dianelmayfield@comcast.net](mailto:dianelmayfield@comcast.net)) or Louie Wilbers ([louis.wilbers@att.net](mailto:louis.wilbers@att.net)) by August 5, 2020. Thank you!

