



# CHAT

CHURCH HEALTH ASSESSMENT TOOL

## GUIDE TO *Church Assessment*

**OUR MISSION** is to cultivate vibrant spirituality and attentive discernment among Christian leaders and teams.

The CHAT Survey (Church Health Assessment Tool) is a resource born out of our mission to cultivate attentive discernment in church leaders. We have developed this tool as a “listening exercise” for pastors and leadership teams to better equip them to use on-going discernment in their church life and ministry. The bottom line is that leadership decisions are more easily made in the context of clarity. In other words, discernment is most fruitful when all the facts are gathered and clearly presented.

This guide contains the following:

How Leadership Transformations Defines Church Health	Pg. 2
A Holistic Integration of Church Health Principles	Pg. 3
Why Conduct a Church Survey?	Pg. 4
Tips for Getting the Most Out of Your CHAT Experience	Pg. 5
What Sets CHAT Apart?	Pg. 6
How CHAT Compares	Pg. 7
What Others Are Saying About CHAT	Pg. 8
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)	Pg. 9
How to Get Started	Pg. 10
Become a Certified CHAT Coach	Pg. 10
CHAT Partnership	Pg. 10

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## \$399 FOR UNLIMITED SURVEYS

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TRANSFORMATIONS INC.

FORMATION | DISCERNMENT | RENEWAL

# HOW WE DEFINE CHURCH HEALTH

At Leadership Transformations, we believe that every church is unique and yet all healthy churches share common biblical principles—though their expression may look very different from church to church. Our church health model is based on an extensive national research study involving over 2,000 churches and individuals. From this research study, the following “10 Traits of Vital Ministry” were distilled and outlined in the Baker Best-seller *Becoming a Healthy Church* (Dr. Stephen A. Macchia, 1999). A healthy church is prayerful in all of the following aspects of church life and ministry, is reliant upon God’s power and the authority of His word, and values...

## 1. **God’s Empowering Presence**

The healthy church actively seeks the Holy Spirit’s direction and empowerment for its daily life and ministry (Romans 8:16, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children”).

## 2. **God-Exalting Worship**

The healthy church gathers regularly as the local expression of the body of Christ to worship God in ways that engage the heart, mind, soul, and strength of the people (John 4:23, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks”).

## 3. **Spiritual Disciplines**

The healthy church provides training, models, and resources for members of all ages to develop their daily spiritual disciplines (James 3:17, “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere”).

## 4. **Learning and Growing in Community**

The healthy church encourages believers to grow in their walks with God and with one another in the context of a safe, affirming environment (Romans 14:19, “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification”).

## 5. **A Commitment to Loving and Caring Relationships**

The healthy church is intentional in its efforts to build loving, caring relationships within families, between members, and within the community they serve (I John 3:16, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers”).

## 6. **Servant-Leadership Development**

The healthy church identifies and develops individuals whom God has called and given the gift of leadership and challenges them to become servant-leaders (Ephesians 4:16, “From Him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”).

## 7. **An Outward Focus**

The healthy church places high priority on communicating the truth of Jesus and demonstrating the love of Jesus to those outside the faith (Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost”).

## 8. **Wise Administration and Accountability**

The healthy church utilizes appropriate facilities, equipment, and systems to provide maximum support for the growth and development of its ministries (Luke 16:11, “So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?”).

## 9. **Networking with the Body of Christ**

The healthy church reaches out to others in the body of Christ for collaboration, resource sharing, learning opportunities, and united celebrations of worship (John 17:23, “May they (the church) be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me”).

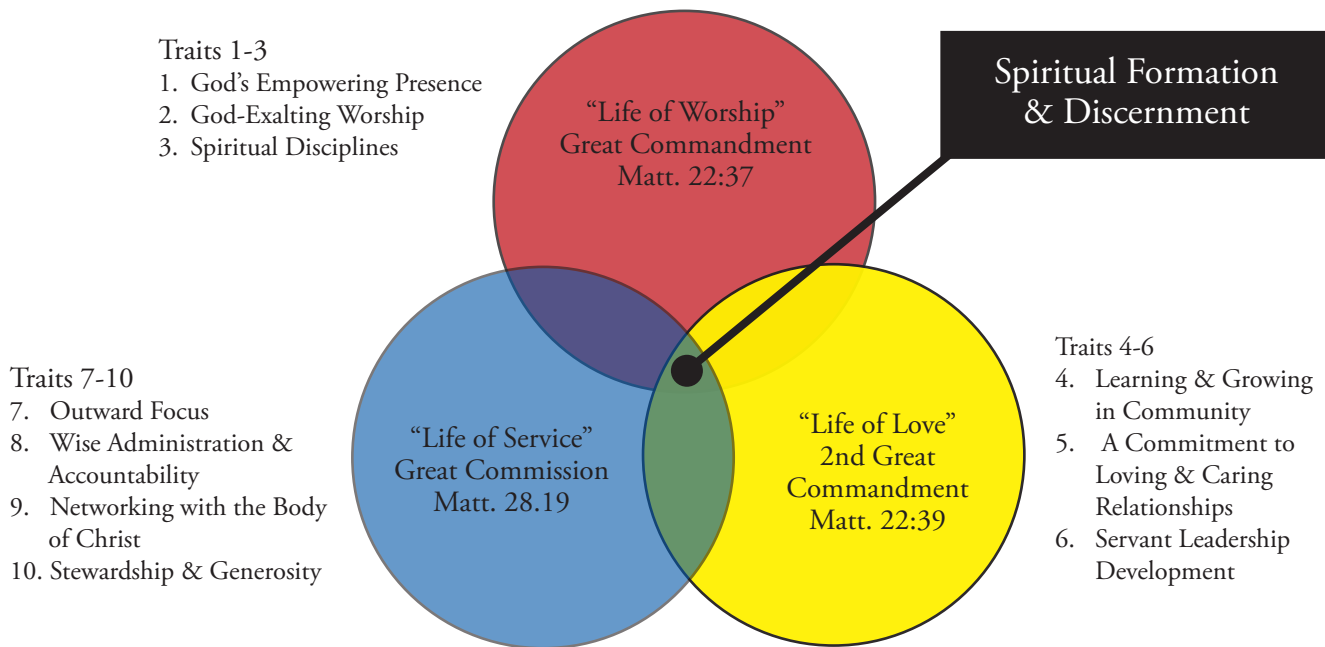
## 10. **Stewardship and Generosity**

The healthy church teaches its members that they are stewards of their God-given resources and challenges them to sacrificial generosity in sharing with others (2 Corinthians 9:6, “Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously”).

# A HOLISTIC INTEGRATION OF CHURCH HEALTH PRINCIPLES

CHAT is the only church survey which takes an *integrated approach* to the **Great Commandment** (loving God), the **2nd Great Commandment** (loving others), and the **Great Commission** (Evangelism & Discipleship). The Ten Traits of Vital Ministry (previous page) are categorized into these three spheres of Worship, Love, and Service held together at their core by Spiritual Formation and Discernment. Plus, CHAT's Stewardship & Generosity component (Trait #10) is essential for growing a congregation of givers.

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CHURCH HEALTH



The whole CHAT process can be completed in **30 days** or less—all online—and we can provide you with a Church Health Coach (optional) to help you unpack the key findings and implement what you've learned. Plus, the new and improved CHAT now allows you to add up to 12 custom questions specific to your church setting.

# WHY CONDUCT A CHURCH SURVEY/ASSESSMENT?

## A Discussion Guide for Your Leadership Team

### Why conduct an assessment?

For the same reason you look both ways before you cross the street ... to evaluate where you are, where you're headed, identify any danger, and make wise decisions going forward.

### Who has time for an assessment?

Assessment is one of those “good ideas” that you never feel like you have time for. It's easy to back burner the idea in light of more pressing issues. But consider this, how many decisions have you made in the past month alone? Without the discipline to gather objective information about your church climate, you can end up miles down a decision making path in the wrong direction. Periodic assessment is crucial to informed decision making and effective leadership.

### We already know what the issues are ...

Pause to consider if that's really true. Is there anything new you might learn by listening? Without conducting a church-wide listening exercise, most church leaders are making key decisions based upon on one or both of these faulting foundations:

- 1) *Anecdote*: Feedback from those in our inner circle of family/friends that we globalize as representing the whole church.
- 2) *Assumption*: Arriving at a conclusion based on what *feels* true rather than having factual data to back it up.

### We've got too much going on already ...

Don't think of assessment as an additional “project” to take on. That can make it feel overwhelming. In reality, CHAT is so automated that the process won't require any substantial time or energy from your team. Instead, think of assessment as a routine “check-up” to ensure that you're healthy and aware of any potential issues. This listening exercise will give you the awareness to be *proactive* instead of *reactive* in your leadership responsibilities.

In considering the use of an assessment, discuss these questions together with your elder board and/or leadership team:

- Do we have a current and accurate baseline of where we are for the purpose of accurate planning?
- Is listening (openness to feedback) something we genuinely value as part of our leadership model?
- What benefits could we foresee in conducting a church assessment like CHAT?
- What issues/fears cause us hesitation in considering the use of an assessment like CHAT?
- Based on our current calendar, when would be a strategic 30-day window to conduct a survey like this?
- If we could ask a handful of **custom questions** specific to our current church life and specific issues we'd like clarity on, what would those questions be?

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# TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CHAT EXPERIENCE

## 1. **It's all about listening.**

If you look at this process as a “listening exercise” rather than a “report card,” you’ll be in a better posture to receive objective feedback. Don’t think in terms of “score” but rather in terms of “awareness.” Every church will have things they are doing well and things that could use some attention—awareness of the issues is half the battle and you only gain awareness via listening to everybody (as opposed to limited feedback from friends, committees, other leaders, etc.).

## 2. **Swing the doors wide.**

Invite as many people as possible to participate—the more feedback the better. There’s no point in going to the effort of collecting data if there’s not enough of it to have confidence in the findings. You want to know that you’ve collected a solid percentage of the church population and that the data represents well the views of the church as a whole.

## 3. **Have a thick skin.**

Be prepared for the fact that some people will be overly critical and in some cases communicate their opinions with little or no tact. Consider it a leadership badge of honor to have a house stable enough not to be blown over by the occasional outspoken critic. Do your best to stay objective and not get defensive. Take it with a grain of salt and remember that the most important thing is that you remain open to receiving objective feedback for the purpose of arriving at a clear view of reality. Even if you disagree with the feedback, dig for the diamond rather than discarding it by using a question such as, “Assuming we’re dealing with a rational person who doesn’t critique without cause (albeit emotionally charged), is there a truth at the root of this critical remark that we should be aware of?”

## 4. **Be genuine in your invitation.**

The more enthusiastic the leader is in saying “we really care what you think and we want to hear from you,” the better participation you’ll have in the survey. If the communicator is not really on board, the people can sense that and you’ll get lackluster participation (after all, who wants to spend 20 minutes taking a survey if they don’t genuinely feel that their time and effort will be valued?)

## 5. **Use the data.**

This may seem obvious but the last thing we want is to have you go through this process to receive a report that you glance through and then stick on a shelf somewhere. Discuss the data together and set reasonable goals (think simple) about how you intend to act on the findings to improve your ministry. Some goals may be huge, others may be quite minor—the important thing is to have well defined target goals (ideally with a date attached) that give your whole team a sense of direction and accountability. It doesn’t need to get overly complicated and the fewer goals you have the more focused you’ll be. Keep it simple and well defined. A Church Health Coach will be an enormous help to you in this “now what” phase after you’ve completed the survey and received the report. There are advantages of having a trained coach come along side you on an hourly basis by phone to provide expertise, fresh ideas and outside perspective. Check out [http://www.healthychurch.net/telecom\\_pkgs.php](http://www.healthychurch.net/telecom_pkgs.php) for more info on coaching packages.

## 6. **Make listening part of your routine.**

Do this every 12-24 months to make sure you’ve got your finger on the pulse. So much can change in a year or two and awareness of the issues is critical to healthy leadership.

# WHAT SETS CHAT APART?

## **A Strengths-Based Approach**

We philosophically lean in the direction of playing to your strengths. Your church is unique. God has raised up your leadership, your unique team, your congregation, in this city, in this location, at this time in history – all for a purpose! We also believe he has uniquely provided you with the proper tools for the task at hand. What good will it do you to focus on what you're not? By the end of the CHAT process, we'll identify the areas that could use some improvement (and we're wise to be aware of those) but our focus will be on your God-given strengths and how you can further leverage them for greater ministry impact.

## **The Church is in the Driver's Seat**

Our Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup> provides you with the tools to make the whole survey process hassle-free. Via the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup> you can print pre-formatted bulletin inserts that make it easy to distribute participation instructions, monitor the number of completed surveys, print & input paper copies of the survey (for those without computer), monitor your running financial balance, and edit your profile.

## **Online and Automated**

The church can monitor the whole process via the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup>, but CHAT does all the work of collecting the responses over the Internet, allowing participants to take the survey from home or office at their convenience. CHAT collects and tabulates the data, then provides you with easy to understand results.

## **Add Custom Questions**

CHAT allows you the option to add up to 12 custom survey questions for a \$49 upgrade. While you're gathering feedback from your church body on the benchmarks of church health, why not add a few specifics of your own at the click of a button? Find out what percentage of the congregation is currently in a small group, their comfort level with bringing an unchurched friend to church, how far most people live from the church, the ease with which new attenders can get connected to the church, whether members are currently being disciplined/mentored by someone, etc.

## **Responses of Leaders and Congregants Compared**

The responses of these two groups are tracked separately, though they answer the exact same question. This allows us to provide you with direct comparison in their answers. You'll instantly see where the two groups are in agreement on church health issues and where there's a gap.

## **Compare Responses of Each Demographic Group**

Your CHAT report will give you the option to run sub reports that breakdown the data by: Age, Gender, Marital Status, Years at our Church, Education, or Ethnicity – Plus, if you utilize the custom questions in the paragraph above, you can run sub reports using an additional two custom demographics questions you create.

## **Follow Up Coaching**

If you'd like one of our trained Church Health Coaches to guide you and your team into next steps after you have received your CHAT report, we stand by ready to assist you. All coaching is done on an hourly basis by teleconference to keep the costs low for the church. Visit [http://www.healthychurch.net/telecom\\_pkgs.php](http://www.healthychurch.net/telecom_pkgs.php) to see what's included in the various coaching packages.

***Proactive leaders plan ahead and CHAT puts a powerful planning tool at your fingertips.  
Don't start your annual planning process without having the latest information at hand.  
When the time is right for a church survey, look no further than CHAT.***



## HOW DOES CHAT COMPARE TO OTHER CHURCH SURVEYS I'VE SEEN?

	CHAT	Natural Church Development	Church Central	REVEAL (WillowCreek)
Cost (with report)	<b>\$399, unlimited surveys</b>	Varies	Varies	\$375-\$2,250
Categories of measurement	<b>10</b>	8	6	5
How were these categories of measurement developed?	Research study involving over <b>2,000 churches &amp; individuals</b>	Research study involving 1,000 churches	Based on the six purposes of Acts 2:42-47	Research study involving 420 churches
Philosophy	<b>Play to your strengths</b> in pursuing God's unique will for your specific church. Lean into the area(s) where God has uniquely gifted your church to be exceptional while gradually working on areas that need improvement.	Identify and shore up your Minimum Factor (area of greatest weakness) for increased effectiveness.	Increase the health and effectiveness of your church by ensuring that the six purposes of Acts 2:42-47 are intentional, active and balanced.	Purpose of this survey is specifically aimed at measuring church members' spiritual depth and church involvement.
Survey participants	Invite as many people as possible from the <b>congregation and leadership team</b> to participate (anonymously via the Web) so that you gather as much candid feedback as possible (aiming for at least 25% of the church population). This will give you a very solid statistical sample. <b>No per survey cost.</b>	30 hand-chosen church members who are active in ministry, involved in some kind of small group life, and considered by the pastor to be at the center of church life.	Distribute the survey to a random sample which encompasses at least 15% of the congregation.	Open to the entire church online.
Survey method	<b>Online and Paper</b>	Paper	Paper	Online only
Add custom questions?	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	NO
Consultant required?	<b>NO</b>	YES	NO	NO
Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Delivered in less than 24 hrs</b></li> <li>• <b>Full color</b></li> <li>• <b>Easy to read</b> summary</li> <li>• <b>Demographics</b></li> <li>• <b>Detailed findings</b> and helpful insights</li> <li>• <b>Anonymous comments</b></li> <li>• <b>Custom sub-reports</b> compare responses by age, gender, etc.</li> </ul>	YES, after surveys are mailed in for processing	YES, after surveys are mailed in for processing	YES, report is sent by email 30-days after survey session has closed
Leaders & congregants compared?	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	NO
Follow up consultation available?	<b>YES</b>	YES	YES	YES

## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT CHAT ...



"We used CHAT while I was pastoring a church in Colorado Springs. What an encouragement! Not only did CHAT give us a clear picture of our church health but it also served as a catalyst for unity and innovation amongst our body. CHAT is so simple and accessible to use that any sized church can benefit from it on an annual basis for planning and dreaming purposes."

CODY BUSICK, PASTOR, VINEYARD NORTH CHURCH, OCEANSIDE, CA



"Of the many things that we learned when using CHAT at Grace Covenant, we saw several huge and significant 'take aways.' First, the church survey gave us realistic and pertinent demographic data about our congregation—it helped us better understand who our people are. Second, we got an objective analysis of our greatest strengths and areas in need of improvement. During a timely season as our church was discussing vision, ministry and 're-branding,' CHAT gave us a clear picture of our present situation and what we needed to work on for a healthy future."

DR. DAVID FLETCHER, FOUNDER AND HOST OF XPASTOR, EXECUTIVE PASTOR, GRACE COVENANT CHURCH OF AUSTIN, TX



"Serving as Pastor of Friendship Baptist Church for nearly fifteen years, I thought that I was aware of all the critical needs of the ministry. CHAT really opened my eyes to the stark reality that there is much more than I could see. The members who see the ministry from a different perspective were thrilled that they were afforded this opportunity for input. The leaders were able to share openly and honestly and the lay members were eager to share their thoughts. Moreover, CHAT allowed us to compare responses and to implement strategies that would serve all constituents. This church survey helped us to identify our strengths and strengthen areas where we were weak in every phase of our ministry. This internet dialogue re-created a new vision for our ministry and we eagerly anticipate the transformations that are already taking place in our church."

DR. PHILIP DUNSTON, SENIOR PASTOR/TEACHER, FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH, GA



"I would certainly recommend CHAT to other pastors as a tool to improve the way they do church. To be good stewards of what God had called us to do we need to have the right information to make the right changes as we lead. CHAT provides the right information from the right people, so we can make changes in the right perspective. One of the most important things people in churches need is to be listened to. CHAT gives an opportunity for everyone to give their feedback in a clear and concise way. This survey is a great way to show churches that leaders care, and want to listen to the needs of the people."

MATT PRATER, SENIOR PASTOR NEW HOPE BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA



"CHAT was well received by our people and leaders, providing us with objective feedback as to our progress in church health. Our people found it easy to use. As one has suggested, a big value of the exercise was the conversations it began along the way. It is providing a basis from which to work as we look to the Lord together for the future. I appreciated the emphasis on it being a "listening exercise," hearing God's voice through His people, which we will consider as leaders, together with His Word and our ministry context."

LEE NANFELT, ASSOCIATE PASTOR, ALLIANCE BIBLE CHURCH, WI



"CHAT is a fabulous tool! It is internet based, amazingly cost effective, and easy to use from both the church side and the respondent side. At the conclusion of the survey a very well written report was delivered to us in a matter of minutes! Before I was a pastor, I did market research—I was totally impressed with every aspect of this unique and powerful information collection tool. Our church has been blessed in many ways—including a significant growth in attendance. We learned a great deal about our church family and have made meaningful adjustments in our programming and information communication based on the survey results. We intend to do a follow up survey in the future. We highly recommend CHAT!!"

BOB GRABAU, CONGREGATIONAL LIFE PASTOR, THE CHAPEL AT CROSSPOINT, NY



"Steve Macchia (President of Leadership Transformations, Inc.) is a national leader in understanding and providing tools for local church health. LTi's online assessment tool, CHAT, is a breakthrough resource for church leaders to easily gain an objective assessment of their church's health. In addition, the CHAT report provides a valuable "Suggested Next Steps" section that is sure to keep any church moving on the pathway to health. Objective and constructive feedback is what all leaders of local churches need to do their work. Thank you LTi for being willing to help churches on their journey to health."

DENNIS BARIL, PASTOR, COMMUNITY COVENANT CHURCH, MA



"CHAT enabled our small church body to get a snap-shot of ourselves as a precursor to strategic planning for the future. Since using this church survey, we have consulted with one of our denominational leaders, also acquainted with CHAT, who used that information to help us plan a path forward for ministry and growth. We are now in the strategic planning phase, anticipating new opportunities for ministry and service that will lead to growth and renewal in this place."

MIKE SPINELLI, PASTOR, NORTH PARK COMMUNITY CHURCH, OR



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What will I get out of using the CHAT survey?

**Clarity** As a leader you know that decisions are more easily made in a context of clarity. The difficulty in decision making comes when we rely on a gut feeling or anecdotal feedback rather than a fully informed perspective. CHAT will cut through the fog and give you clear direction.

**Objectivity** Critics often have the loudest voices. CHAT levels the playing field and gives you sound affirmation of the areas where your ministry is excelling and clear insight into where your attention is needed the most. CHAT's third-party objectivity prevents any particular bias from influencing the results.

**Measurability** Progress can be difficult to gauge without some quantifiable categories that you can compare from year to year. CHAT will provide that framework for you through helpful charts, graphs, and specific feedback.

**Unity** As an added benefit, engaging in this process communicates that you value your people. Members of the church family will appreciate knowing that their feedback is important and necessary in order for the church to grow in healthy, life-transforming ways.

### What's the timeframe?

You'll choose your own survey dates, but many churches choose to complete the process in 30 days. You can modify the end date throughout the process to extend or shorten the active survey window.

### What is considered "good" participation?

We recommend you aim for 25%-35%.

### What is in the report?

The report contains four sections: Executive Summary, Additional Comments (open-ended feedback from participants), Suggested Next Steps and Detailed Finding (appendix). See a sample report at [www.HealthyChurch.net](http://www.HealthyChurch.net).

### How long does it take for the average person to complete the survey?

It takes the average person 20-25 minutes to participate in the survey.

### Can we add question to the survey?

Yes. Via the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup>, you can enable the Custom Questions Module for a \$49 upgrade and add up to ten survey questions and two demographic questions (your CHAT report will allow you to run comparative sub reports based on demographic questions).

### Is there a paper version of the survey for those without a computer?

Yes. Via the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup>, you can print paper copies of the survey for those who don't have a computer/Internet access. Once the completed paper survey has been filled out, it can be manually entered into the system by a church staff member (again, via the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup>). Another option is to place a computer with Internet access in a common area of the church for public use while the survey is open for participation.

### What will we receive at the end of the process?

You'll receive a comprehensive report containing four sections: Executive Summary, Additional Comments, Suggested Next Steps and Detailed Findings (appendix). All responses are kept anonymous. The report is full color and easy to read. Visit [www.HealthyChurch.net](http://www.HealthyChurch.net) to view a sample report.

### Is there a section of the report that displays demographic information?

Yes. The first piece of the assessment collects the following demographic information: Leadership/Congregation, Gender, Marital Status, Age, Years at our Church, Ethnicity, and Education. These demographics are kept anonymous and displayed in pie chart form in the first section of the end report.

### Is follow up coaching available?

Absolutely. Churches who enlist the help of one of our trained coaches are far more likely to take action on what they learned from CHAT. There are several packages to choose from—each kept affordable by conducting the coaching by phone, rather than putting the coach on an airplane. Visit [www.HealthyChurch.net](http://www.HealthyChurch.net) for descriptions of each of the follow up sessions that will serve as a basic road map in your telecom meetings together. Every church is different so your coach will advise you based on your specific church's gifts, challenges, opportunities, etc.

### What does CHAT cost?

\$399 for churches of all sizes with unlimited survey participation. This price includes the CHAT survey (both online & paper versions), use of the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup>, and your full-color CHAT report. Add 12 Custom Questions to the survey for an additional \$49.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

Visit [www.HealthyChurch.net](http://www.HealthyChurch.net) to view the survey questions, download a sample report, learn more about the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup>, look at custom question ideas, read testimonials, and more.

When you're ready to get started:

1. Go to [www.healthychurch.net](http://www.healthychurch.net) and click on the "Sign up for CHAT" button, fill out your church profile, choose your survey dates, and pay with a credit card. **This whole process will take 5 minutes or less.**
2. Think through any custom questions you might like to add to your CHAT Survey and add the custom questions module as needed (do this prior to inviting participation in the survey).
3. Explore the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup> to acquaint yourself with the features at your disposal throughout the survey process.
4. Use the pre-formatted bulletin inserts (MS Word) provided in the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup> to disseminate instructions to your congregation on how to participate.
5. Optional: On your church homepage, create a link to the CHAT survey login screen.
6. Monitor your progress via the Pastor's Console<sup>SM</sup>.
7. Receive your report by email, dialogue with your team, and consider enlisting the optional help of a Church Health Coach to help you unpack the findings and take next steps.

## DISCOUNTED PRICING?

Inquire with your denomination leaders to see if they are registered with us as a CHAT Partner. If they don't already have a promotional code established with us, it is very easy to set up with a single page fax and will allow you to sign up at a discounted rate. For more information, contact us at [chat@leadershiptransformations.org](mailto:chat@leadershiptransformations.org) or call 719-785-3600.

## BECOME A CERTIFIED CHAT COACH

Are you interested in becoming certified in the CHAT model? We periodically hold one-day certifications in various locations around the country. Email [chat@leadershiptransformations.org](mailto:chat@leadershiptransformations.org) and ask to be added to the notifications list for upcoming training opportunities.

## CHAT PARTNERSHIP

Do you represent a regional or national church network or denomination office? Partner with us! We offer a no-cost CHAT Partnership agreement that gives you the ability to add CHAT to your ministry toolbox and offer it to your churches at a discounted rate. Let's partner together in strengthening the Local Church! This simple one-page agreement is easy to put in place. Contact us at [chat@leadershiptransformations.org](mailto:chat@leadershiptransformations.org) or call 719-785-3600 to get a copy of the agreement.