

Harvest Community Church

Pastor David Merritt · Franklin, TN · March 2025

6,480 /9,000

Healthy

Top 28% of churches assessed nationwide

Formation

740

Attendance

680

Volunteers

790

Retention

610

Generosity

720

Outreach

650

Next Gen

760

Leadership

810

Pastor Health

720

A — Executive Summary

Harvest Community Church is operating in a position of genuine strength. With an overall Church Pulse score of 6,480 out of 9,000 — placing you in the top 28% of churches assessed nationwide — you are not merely maintaining; you are building something with real momentum.

The headline: your people are engaged, your leadership is healthy, and your discipleship culture is taking root. These are the conditions that precede sustained growth. The opportunity in front of you is not to fix what is broken, but to sharpen what is working and address the two areas where your score reveals meaningful friction.

Your two highest pillars — Staff & Leadership Health (810) and Volunteer Engagement (790) — tell a story of a church where people feel cared for, valued, and mobilized. That is rare. Guard it carefully as you grow.

Your two areas of greatest opportunity — First-Time Visitor Retention (610) and Weekend Attendance Health (680) — are not crises. They are thresholds. Crossing them will require focused attention over the next 12–18 months, and the recommendations in this report will show you exactly where to start.

B — What Your Church Is Doing Exceptionally Well

Volunteer Engagement — 790 (Thriving, Top 22% Nationwide)

Harvest Community has achieved something that eludes most churches of your size: a culture where serving is not a guilt-driven obligation but a genuine expression of belonging. Your 47% average active volunteer rate far exceeds the national average of 31% for churches in your attendance range.

The qualitative data reinforces this. When your congregation was asked why they serve, the most common responses centered on community and purpose — not duty. This is the fingerprint of a mobilization culture, and it is deeply connected to your discipleship infrastructure.

Staff & Leadership Health — 810 (Thriving, Top 18% Nationwide)

This score is a testament to the intentionality you have brought to leadership culture. Your team reports high trust, clear role definition, and consistent emotional safety in staff meetings. Pastoral burnout rates at churches your size hover near 40% within five years; your indicators suggest you are well below that risk curve.

The fact that you score this high while being in a growth season — when leadership stress typically spikes — suggests your rhythms are genuinely sustaining, not just cosmetically healthy.

Kids & Next Gen Ministry — 760 (Healthy, 71st Percentile)

Your children's and student ministry is punching above its weight. Families cite it as one of the top three reasons they chose Harvest, and your volunteer-to-kid ratio of 1:4.2 exceeds the 1:6 standard recommended by most safety and engagement researchers. The curriculum you adopted 18 months ago has produced measurable gains in Scripture retention among 4th–6th graders.

C — Where to Focus Your Energy in the Next 12 Months

First-Time Visitor Retention — 610 (Stable, Below Median)

This is your most important improvement opportunity. You are attracting visitors — your location, reputation, and facilities see to that — but approximately 68% of first-time visitors do not return for a second service. The national average for healthy churches is closer to 55% non-return.

The data points to three specific friction points:

- No structured follow-up within 48 hours. First-time visitors who receive a personal contact within 48 hours are 3.7x more likely to return. Currently, your process routes new visitor information to a volunteer team that often follows up at day 5–7.
- The "connection gap" between Sunday morning and community. Visitors report feeling genuinely welcomed during the service but uncertain about next steps. The pathway from "first visit" to "small group" has too many steps and too little guidance.
- Assimilation events are monthly, not weekly. For a church your size, a monthly "next steps" gathering creates a 3–4 week gap for many visitors — enough time for momentum to dissipate.

Weekend Attendance Health — 680 (Stable, Near Median)

Your attendance score reflects a pattern common among healthy growing churches: a core of highly engaged attenders surrounded by a broader group with inconsistent connection. Your average attendance consistency rate (the percentage of your congregation attending 3 or more services per month) sits at 42%, compared to a healthy benchmark of 55–60%.

This is not primarily a content or preaching issue — your message quality scores are high. It is a community density issue. People attend consistently when they feel they will be missed. The path forward runs through your small group infrastructure.

D — Your 90-Day Action Plan (Start Here)

These are the three highest-leverage actions you can take in the next 90 days. Each is specific, implementable, and directly tied to your score data.

Action 1: Launch a 48-Hour Visitor Follow-Up System (Week 1–2)

Assign one staff member or high-capacity volunteer as your "Connection Coordinator." Their sole responsibility on Sunday afternoons: send a personal text or handwritten note to every first-time visitor before Tuesday morning. The message should be warm, brief, and ask one question: "What brought you to Harvest?"

This is not a complicated system. It is a consistent one. Estimate: this alone can reduce your non-return rate by 15–20% within 90 days.

Action 2: Shift to Weekly "Next Steps" Gatherings (Week 3–4)

Replace your monthly newcomers' event with a weekly 30-minute gathering — Sunday after second service, in a living-room-style setting. Keep it to 8–12 people maximum. The goal is not information transfer; it is relationship initiation. One staff member, a few "Harvest veterans," and a clear on-ramp to a small group.

Action 3: Increase Small Group Entry Points (Week 4–12)

Your small group infrastructure is strong, but it is structured around semester launches (fall and spring). This means a visitor who shows up in February has a 6-week wait before a natural entry point. Identify 3–4 groups that will accept new members on a rolling basis and train their leaders to welcome and integrate newcomers mid-cycle.

E — Pillar-by-Pillar Analysis

Discipleship & Spiritual Formation — 740

Your formation culture is healthy and improving. The adoption of a clear discipleship pathway 18 months ago is showing measurable results: Scripture literacy scores among your regular attenders have increased, and the percentage of your congregation in intentional growth relationships has climbed from 31% to 44%.

The next threshold: your formation pathway is strong at the entry and middle levels, but thin at the advanced/leadership development level. Consider what "mature discipleship" looks like at Harvest and create a visible on-ramp to it.

Giving & Financial Health — 720

Your financial health is genuinely strong. Your giving-per-attender ratio (\$42.80/week) exceeds the national median by 18%, and your operating reserve of 4.2 months is above the 3-month recommended minimum. The percentage of your congregation giving at any level (37%) is slightly below the healthy benchmark of 40–45%, suggesting some runway for generosity culture growth through first-time giver pathways.

Outreach & Community Impact — 650

This pillar sits at the intersection of your greatest untapped potential. Your congregation has high service capacity (evidenced by your Volunteer Engagement score) but much of that energy is directed inward. Community-facing partnerships — with local schools, food banks, or civic organizations — score lower than your internal ministry activity.

One structural recommendation: designate one volunteer-led team specifically for external community engagement, separate from your existing ministry teams. Give them a budget, a mission, and visible recognition from the stage.

F — A Pastoral Word

Pastor Merritt, the data in this report reflects something that data rarely captures cleanly: you are building a church where people are genuinely becoming more like Jesus, and they are doing it together.

The metrics around volunteer culture, leadership health, and spiritual formation are not accidents. They are the fruit of years of patient, faithful leadership. The gaps this report identifies — visitor retention, attendance consistency — are not signs of failure. They are the natural growing edges of a church that has built something worth coming back to.

The 90-day plan in this report is not a program. It is a set of targeted investments in the systems that will allow more people to experience what your congregation has already built.

One personal note: your Pastor Personal Health score of 720 is encouraging. You are above average in the key indicators — rest rhythms, emotional support, sustainable pace. Guard these with as much intentionality as you guard the ministry. The church's long-term health runs through yours.

G — Appendix: Score Summary & Benchmarks

Pillar	Your Score	National Average	Percentile
Discipleship & Spiritual Formation	740	640	68th
Weekend Attendance Health	680	690	47th
Volunteer Engagement	790	620	78th
First-Time Visitor Retention	610	650	38th
Giving & Financial Health	720	610	64th
Outreach & Community Impact	650	630	52nd
Kids & Next Gen Ministry	760	640	71st
Staff & Leadership Health	810	590	82nd
Pastor Personal Health	720	660	66th
Overall	6,480	5,730	72nd

Tier Definitions

- Thriving (850–1,000): Among the healthiest churches in this area nationally
- Healthy (700–849): Above average, with strong foundations and clear strengths
- Stable (550–699): Functioning, but with meaningful opportunity for improvement
- Struggling (400–549): Significant friction in this area requiring focused attention
- Critical (below 400): Urgent intervention recommended

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