

## **Your Congregation's Transition Profile**

### **A Tool to Better Understand Who We Are and that from which We Came**

It is difficult for church leaders to see the big pictures when they are buried in the trenches of everyday work. Professional and volunteer leaders often focus on the crisis at hand and fail to step back to see their current ministry through a broader lens. This tool may help the congregation to assess its past and current identity in hopes of informing a promising future.

There are many applications for this tool.

**Individual reflection:** a religious professional or lay leader may wish to reflect and write on the answers to the following questions. As your reflection unfolds, watch for patterns. Are there questions or challenges that occur time and time again? Is there a unique identity about your congregation that affects its mission and vision? Are there triumphs that deserve special note? This exercise is best done in several sittings with periods of reflection in-between.

**Group reflection:** have a small group work on developing the profile together. Give the questions to the group ahead of time so that each person can come prepared. Talk through the questions and note where answers are different. How do answers differ and what does this diversity signal? After the discussion is complete, give the group time to reflect on the process. Come back at a later time to discuss the groups reflection and makes adjustments as necessary.

#### **Questions:**

1. What is the local context for your church?
  - small town, suburban, urban?
  - Is it a 'town' church or do people come from a number of communities?
  - Do people come from significant distances or do they live in the community?
  - Do you rent or own space?
  - And anything else you might tell yourself about where your church is situated and who comes.
2. What is the membership of your congregation?
3. How many members and friends does the church serve? How many visitors come to the church and church-sponsored events each year?

How do these numbers compare to three years ago? Five years ago? Ten years ago? What does the shift or lack of shift signal?

4. How many people are actively involved in particular program? How does this compare to the number on the rolls for this program? Religious education? Social Justice? Music? Etc... Please consider all age involvement when considering active involvement.
5. How do membership and attendance totals for your particular program area as named in compare to three years ago? Five years ago? Ten years ago?
6. What program(s) has the church seen grow in the past three years? (Here growth is defined by growth in interest, participation and/or funding)
7. What program(s) has the church seen shrink in the past three years? (Shrinkage is defined by a decrease in interest, participation and/or funding)
8. What program(s), traditions or people are considered unchangeable or untouchable? Some call these "sacred cows."
9. What professional staff positions are a part of the congregation's structure?
10. How long have each of the professional's been in their positions.

11. Have you had other staff departures in the 3-5 years? Who? What was the impetus for leaving?
12. In your congregation, who has the decision-making power? Please think of those who have explicit '**official**' power as well as those with community '**unofficial power**.'
13. If you were to describe your congregation in a word or a phrase what would that word or phrase be?
14. What does your congregation do well?
15. What is your congregation challenged by?

(only three more questions to go...)

16. What historical stories of the congregation are celebrated?
17. Are there past conflicts or issues that come up in contemporary discussions (for example: when we had to fire the minister, a fire or natural disaster, the fight over redoing the sanctuary or other). Please describe them briefly.
18. Are there current or recent conflicts in your church? Please describe them.