

THE CHURCH TRANSFORMATION WORKBOOK

A Manual for Growing Healthy, Vital Churches

Texas Conference Edition

The Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church has a mission to equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God.

Rev. Dr. Don Nations
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INTRODUCTION

What is a healthy, vital church? It is a faith community dedicated to helping people meet, know and serve God through a Holy Spirit empowered relationship with Jesus. It is a congregation that expresses care and compassion for both its members and its community. It has leaders that know, own and live out the clearly-stated mission, vision and values of the church. It experiences numerical and spiritual growth. It has worship services that both inspire long-term members and are meaningful to first-time guests. It has a warm, welcoming environment and numerous opportunities for people to develop deep personal friendships. The ministry of the church leads to new people coming into a personal relationship with Jesus. It is both rooted in the historic theology of the Church and willing to try new ways to share the good news of Jesus with those not involved in a church.

What is a healthy, vital church? It is your church – or at least it can be! God calls every church to be a healthy, vital church. Small, large or mid-size, every church can be filled with spiritual energy and life. New or celebrating its 100th birthday, every church can reach new people with the life-changing message of Jesus. Rural, suburban or urban, every church can be filled with joy, hope and peace.

What is a healthy, vital church? It is the destiny desired by God for every church. Being one should be the goal of every church. Anything less and the church is trading the power of the Spirit for mere existence.

This workbook is designed to assist you on the journey to becoming and remaining a healthy, vital church. It is divided into two major sections. The first is The Church Transformation Survey. It has been tailored to specifically address issues of transformation and the priorities of the Texas Annual Conference. It is a thirteen-item objective tool to help bring perspective and reality to the discussion about transformation. It measures elements of the life, ministry and experience of the church. After completing the survey, a score is calculated which leads to placing the church in one of three broad categories – Transforming, Maintaining or Declining. Completing the survey and acting on the results is more important than the actual score received by the church. This section also includes a guide for scoring the survey and some additional information about each of the thirteen items.

The second section is the Implementation Guide. It presents additional information related to each of the three categories, the foundational factors for church transformation, coaching tips for leading church transformation and ideas to improve the score of a church in each of the thirteen areas. The material in

this section can serve as a starting point for leading the church into greater health and vitality. The abundance of books on the market about church growth, health, and transformation (including my own), makes it clear that this workbook is not the last word on the subject. It is, instead, a helpful word to under gird the efforts of your church to fulfill its God-given mission.

CHURCH TRANSFORMATION SURVEY

(Please use the worksheets provided on the pages following the survey items.)

Worship Attendance – Look up the average worship attendance from five years ago and from last year. Compare the two worship averages. What percentage of change has the church experienced in average worship attendance over the past five years?

1. Decreased by more than 20%
2. Decreased less than 20%
3. Increased by less than 10%
4. Increased between 10% and 20%
5. Increased more than 20%

Professions of Faith – Divide last year's average worship attendance by the number of Professions of Faith for the past year. The result is the number of people in worship it takes to have one profession of faith. What is the result for your church?

1. More than 60
2. 50-59
3. 40-49
4. 30-39
5. Under 30

Apportionments – Determine the percentage of apportionments paid by your church for each of the past five (5) years. Add these percentages and divide by 5. The result is the average percent of apportionments paid by your church over this period of time. What is that percentage?

1. Less than 50%
2. 50-79%
3. 80-89%
4. 90-99%
5. 100%

Small Groups – Divide the average worship attendance by the number of small groups present in the church. For the purposes of this survey, a small group is a gathering of 5-15 people that meets at least twice per month and engages in some time of intentional Bible study and Christian prayer. This long-term group can contain youth, adults or both. The focus of the group is on intentional spiritual growth. The small group may also engage in acts of service, mission projects or other activities in addition to Bible study and prayer. Examples could include a ten-member Sunday School class, a women's Bible study, Disciple Bible Study, Companions in Christ, Christian Believer or a group that met for devotions and prayer and then engaged in a work project. What is the result for your church when you divide the average worship attendance for this year by the number of small groups?

1. More than 60
2. 50-60
3. 40-49
4. 30-39
5. Under 30

Advertising and Outreach – Add up all expenditures by the church on advertising, publicity and similar evangelistic efforts. Examples include advertising in the phone book, direct mail to invite people to church, evangelistic block parties, flyers handed out door-to-door, radio and/or television advertising and similar activities. What percentage of the total church budget does this total represent?

1. Less than 1%
2. Between 1-2%
3. Between 2-4%
4. Between 4-6%
5. More than 6%

Training and Leadership Development – What percentage of elected church leaders participated in at least four hours of leadership training during the last year? Leadership/training events could include team-building workshops, small group leadership skills, a seminar on conducting an effective meeting, a faith-sharing workshop, Lay Leadership Academy, Lay Speakers Training, Leadership Institute, Igniting Ministry Training, district or conference leadership education events or equipping events sponsored by the Centers for Congregational, Clergy or Missional Excellence and other leadership development programs. Such training would NOT include Bible studies, standard men's and women's gatherings, attending Annual Conference, watching a video summary of Annual Conference, etc.

1. Less than 25%
2. 25-40%
3. 41-60%
4. 61-80%
5. Over 80%

Rotation of Leadership – What percentage of the elected leaders of the church have been participating in the life of your local church for fewer than five years?

1. 0-20%
2. 21-30%
3. 31-40%
4. 41-50%
5. More than 50%

Hospitality – How many of the following items are currently a part of your intentional system of hospitality? ___greeters in the parking lot, ___greeters at the entry ways/doors, ___a welcome/information station, ___an area for

refreshments and conversation, ___ informational flyers/brochures/material about the church and its ministries that is available in the lobby/narthex, ___ a committee charged with the task of evaluating and improving the hospitality ministry of the church, ___ a time for greeting guests and others during the worship service, ___ a non-threatening, non-embarrassing method of collecting contact information from guests

1. 0-2
2. 3
3. 4
4. 5-6
5. 7-8

Guest Follow-Up – How many of the following items are currently part of your intentional system of guest follow-up AND occur within 30 days of the visit? ___ letter from the pastor sent within 3 days, ___ letter from other staff member sent within 3 weeks, ___ letter from a non-staff leader sent within 3 weeks, ___ the guest is added to the list of those who receive the newsletter, ___ a feedback card is sent to the guest on which they can record their impressions of the church, ___ a brief visit or phone call is made to the guest within 36 hours, ___ a thank you card is sent to the guest within 7 days, ___ an email address is requested from the guest and is then added to the email mailing list for church announcements

1. 0-2
2. 3
3. 4
4. 5-6
5. 7-8

First-time Guests – Determine the average number of local first-time guest family units per Sunday during the past year. A family unit of any size living in the same residence is considered to be one family unit. Divide the average worship attendance by the weekly average number of first-time guest family units. What is the result? [For example, a congregation with an average worship attendance of 100 which averages 2 guest families each week would divide 100 by 2 for a result of 50; that would give them a score of 4 on this item.]

1. Over 100
2. 80-100
3. 65-79
4. 50-64
5. Under 50

Mission Ministries – What percentage of the worshipping congregation regularly participates in hands-on mission and outreach projects? Divide the number of people regularly involved in hands-on mission and outreach projects by the average worship attendance. Regular participation means at least one time per month for ongoing outreach efforts and yearly for extensive mission trips or

projects located away from the community in which the church is located. Mission and outreach projects could include Partners in Mission trips, a mission trip sponsored by your congregation, UM Army, Habitat for Humanity or similar project, UMCOR disaster relief projects, working in a food pantry, serving in a clothes closet, serving meals at a homeless shelter, working in a rape/crisis counseling center, providing free medical care, reading to young children in a school, being a volunteer tutor in an after school program, providing GED, ESL or job skills training, etc.

- a. Less than 20%
- b. 21%-40%
- c. 41%-60%
- d. 61%-75%
- e. Over 75%

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5

Youth and Children's Ministries – How many of the following statements are true for your church?

- a. Children's Sunday School attendance has increased in the past year
- b. The church has a significant ongoing weekday ministry with children in the community
- c. Attendance at youth/student ministry settings (Sunday School, UMYF) has increased in the past year
- d. The number of youth in confirmation class is greater this year than last year
- e. Youth are involved in leadership positions with the life of the congregation

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5

Young Adults – How many of the following statements are true for your church?

- a. The number of young adults (18-35) attending worship has increased in the past year
- b. Men's ministry includes programming especially directed to the needs of young men
- c. Women's ministry includes programming especially directed to the needs of young women
- d. Your church offers programs related to the needs of young parents

e. Young adults (18-35) are involved in leadership positions in the life of your congregation

- 1. 1
- 2. 2
- 3. 3
- 4. 4
- 5. 5

SCORING – Add the numbers of your answers to the thirteen items above. A “1” is worth one point, a “2” is worth two points, a “3” is worth three points, a “4” is worth four points and a “5” is worth five points. The total will be a number between twelve (13) and sixty (65). Enter your total on the line below. Based upon your score on the survey, place an “X” by the category into which your church’s score falls. It is likely that your church is best described by the category indicated by your score on this survey.

THE SCORE OF MY CHURCH _____

CATEGORY OF CHURCH

CATEGORY OF MY CHURCH

Declining: 13-26 points

Maintaining: 27-51 points

Transforming: 52-65 points

Worksheet for the Church Transformation Survey

The Church Transformation Survey is a new tool to assist churches in their efforts towards transformation. The form is now a part of the required items included in the Charge Conference packets in some Annual Conferences. This worksheet will help churches gather the information needed to complete the thirteen-item survey. Almost all of the data used in the survey is available in the records of the church.

Item 1: Worship Attendance – The average worship attendance reported at the end of the year five years ago was _____. The average worship attendance reported at the end of last year was _____. If the second figure is higher, the church has experienced growth in its worship attendance. If the first figure is higher, the church has experienced a decline in its worship experience.

EXAMPLE: If the attendance figure from five years ago was 200 and the attendance figure from last year was 250, then the church has experienced a 25% growth in worship attendance ($250/200 = 1.25 = 25\%$ increase). If the figure from five years ago was 250 and the figure from last year was 200, then the church has experienced a 20% decrease in worship attendance ($200/250 = 0.8 = 20\%$ decrease).

Item 2: Professions of Faith – The number of professions of faith reported for last year was _____. The average worship attendance for last year was _____. Divide the average worship attendance by the number of professions of faith. The result is a ratio that indicates the number of people in worship that were needed to produce one profession of faith.

EXAMPLE: If the number of professions of faith for last year was 5 and the average worship attendance was 250, then the church's ratio would be 50 ($250/5 = 50$).

Item 3: Apportionments – Determine the percentage of apportionments paid by your church for each of the past five years. Add these five percentages and divide by five to obtain the average paid over the past five years.

Percentage of apportionments paid in:

Last year _____ two year ago _____ three years ago _____ four years ago _____ five years ago _____

EXAMPLE: If the percentage of apportionments paid for the five years were 100, 80, 60, 75 and 75, the average percentage would be 78% ($100+80+60+75+75=390$; $390/5=78\%$).

Item 4: Small Groups – The year-to-date average worship attendance of the church is _____. The total number of small groups is _____. For the

purposes of this survey, a small group is a gathering of 5-15 people that meets at least twice per month and engages in some time of intentional Bible study and Christian prayer. This group can contain youth, adults or both. The focus of the group is on intentional spiritual growth. Dividing the average worship attendance by the number of small groups produces a ratio that indicates the presence of one small group for every X number of people.

EXAMPLE: If the average worship attendance is 300 and the number of small groups is 6, the church's ratio would be 50 ($300/6 = 50$).

Item 5: Advertising and Outreach – The total amount of all expenditures by the church on advertising, publicity, marketing, direct mail, Servant Evangelism and similar evangelistic efforts last year was _____. The operating budget of the church for last year was _____. Divide the amount spent on advertising and publicity by the operating budget of the church to determine the percentage of the budget spent on advertising and marketing.

EXAMPLE: If \$4000 was spent on advertising and marketing and the operating budget was \$250,000, the percentage spent on advertising and marketing would be 1.6% ($\$4000/\$250,000 = 0.016 = 1.6\%$)

Item 6: Training and Leadership Development – Review the list of all elected leaders in the church (Church Council, Trustees, Finance, SPRC, UMM, UMW, etc.). The total number of elected leaders is _____. Determine the amount of time each leader spent in leadership training and skill building workshops during the past year. For the purposes of this survey, do not include time spent in Bible studies, attending Annual Conference, attending meetings (local church, District or Conference), planning events, participating in church workdays or similar events. Leadership training events and skill-building workshops could include Lay Leadership Academy, Lay Speakers Training, Leadership Institute, Igniting Ministry Training, small group leadership skills, leading an effective meeting, faith-sharing, district or conference leadership education events or equipping events sponsored by the Centers for Congregational, Clergy or Missional Excellence and similar events. The number of leaders who participated in at least four hours of training and leadership development in the last year is _____. What percentage of elected leaders participated in at least four hours of training and leadership development events last year? Dividing the number of leaders meeting this requirement by the total number of leaders will produce the percentage of leaders meeting this requirement.

EXAMPLE: If the church has 20 elected leaders and 5 participated in at least four hours of training and leadership development events last year, then the percentage would be 25% ($5/20 = 0.25 = 25\%$).

Item 7: Rotation of Leadership – Review the list of all elected leaders in the church. The total number of elected leaders is _____. Determine how long

each leader has participated in the life of your congregation. Count the number of leaders who have participated in the life of the church for less than 5 years. The number of leaders who have participated in the life of the congregation less than 5 years is _____. Divide the number of leaders who have participated in the life of the church for less than five years by the total number of leaders. The result will be the percentage of leaders who have participated in the life of the church for less than five years.

EXAMPLE: If the total number of leaders in the church is 20 and 4 of those leaders have participated in the life of the church for less than five years, then the percentage of leaders who have participated in the life of the church for less than five years would be 20% ($4/20 = 0.2 = 20\%$).

Item 8: Hospitality – Review the eight hospitality actions listed in the Church Transformation Survey. The number of those actions consistently and intentionally engaged in by the church is _____.

Item 9: Guest Follow-up – Review the eight guest follow-up actions listed in the Church Transformation Survey. The number of those actions consistently and intentionally engaged in by the church is _____.

Item 10: First-time Guests – Determine the average number of local first-time guest family units per Sunday during the last year. This is the average number of guest families attending each week, not the total number of guests during the course of the year. A family unit of any size living in the same residence is considered to be one family unit (so a single person or a family of four would both count as one guest family). The average number of local first-time guest family units *per Sunday* over the past year is _____. The average worship attendance is _____. Dividing the average worship attendance by the average number of local first-time guest family units produces a ratio that indicates the number of people in worship needed to result in one local first-time guest family visiting the church.

EXAMPLE: If the average worship attendance is 150 and the average number of first-time guest family units is 2, then the ratio for the church is 75 ($150/2 = 75$).

Item 11: Mission Ministries – The average worship attendance for last year was _____. The number of people who regularly participate in hands-on mission and outreach ministry projects is _____. Regular participation means at least one time per month for ongoing local mission outreach and yearly for extensive mission trips and projects at locations away from the community in which the church is located. Mission and outreach projects could include Partners in Mission trips, a mission trip sponsored by your congregation, UM Army, Habitat for Humanity or similar project, UMCOR disaster relief projects, working in a food pantry, serving in a clothes closet, serving meals at a homeless

shelter, working in a rape/crisis counseling center, providing free medical care, reading to young children in a school, being a volunteer tutor in an after school program, providing GED, ESL or job skills training, etc. Divide the number of people who regularly participate in hands-on mission and outreach ministry projects by the average worship attendance.

EXAMPLE: If the average worship attendance is 170 and 17 people regularly participate in hands-on mission and outreach ministry projects, then the percentage of people participating in these activities is 10% ($17/170=.10=10\%$).

Item 12: Youth and Children's Ministries – Review the five statements listed under this item in the survey. Determine how many of these are true for your church. Your responses need to be based on hard data (such as attendance figures). The involvement of youth in leadership positions needs to be more than simply having a youth representative on the Church Council, Administrative Council, Administrative Board, etc.

Item 13: Young Adults – Review the five statements listed under this item in the survey. Determine how many of these are true for your church.

INFORMATION AND A RATIONALE FOR THE SCORING OF THE SURVEY

This tool is designed to help churches accurately assess their health, vitality and strength and add a more objective perspective to the selection of a category appropriate for that congregation. The Church Transformation Survey is one element – a starting point – of a transformation process. The information and insight gained from the survey will, it is hoped, provide both additional motivation for change efforts and clarity as to steps that could be taken.

An instrument such as the Church Transformation Survey, while intended to assist churches, may also be viewed as a threat by those churches. With so many churches struggling with falling worship attendance and declining income, any tool that seeks to objectively measure the vitality of a congregation faces being met with resistance and skepticism. This section of the workbook will address the rationale for the scoring of the individual questions as well as the scoring of the overall survey. It is hoped that this information will assist leaders in both understanding and interpreting the survey.

Worship Attendance: Worship attendance is a more important factor than membership in terms of assessing the health and strength of a church. Worship attendance is a gauge of how many people are excited enough to participate in the weekly worship service of the church.

There are few measures of the health of a congregation more vital than worship attendance. It is hard to imagine that a church that is making disciples for Jesus and engaging in appropriate evangelism in its community would at the same time be declining in worship attendance. The scoring in this category reflects the association between growth in membership and congregational transformation. A church that is declining in attendance can only score a 1 or a 2 on this item. Any increase in worship attendance will result in a score of 3, 4 or 5. A church that increases at a rate of less than 2% per year can hardly be considered a transforming church so such a church will score a 3 on this item. Greater increases result in higher scores.

Professions of Faith: The mission of the Church is to help people meet, know and serve Jesus. A church embraced by this mission will find ways to share the message of Jesus in meaningful ways with those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.

The Great Commission requires faithful followers of Jesus to go into the world and make new disciples. Churches that have few (or no) professions of faith are not living out the Great Commission. The Church has no purpose for existence if it is not expanding the number of people who have a personal relationship with Jesus. This item is scored based on a ratio derived from the division of the average worship attendance by the number of professions of faith over the past year. The use of a ratio-based scoring system allows churches to be compared

in a fair and equal manner. A church with an average worship attendance of 100 could hardly be considered transforming if it recorded only 1 profession of faith during the course of 12 months. If the same church recorded 5 professions of faith in 12 months, however, it certainly could. The categories are based partially on national averages and partially on experience working with churches.

Apportionments: The Bible teaches that it is in giving that we receive. A church can not be healthy if it focuses only on itself. Transforming congregations invest in ministry beyond the walls of the local church. A United Methodist Church is not only a member of Christ's Universal Church but is also in a covenantal relationship with a specific denomination. The fair-share connectional giving system allows churches to be involved in missions and other service activities beyond the ability of almost any single church. Supporting this system is essential for those in covenant together.

A local church that participates within a larger denomination can not be considered to be transforming if it neglects the obligations and expectations of that system. This is an issue of integrity, faithfulness and mission. Fair-share Connectional Giving not only supports denominational staff and administrative costs but also mission and outreach ministry. While many churches do not pay 100% of their apportionments, almost all pay their power bill and pastor's salary. Transforming churches practice fiscal responsibility and do not treat their participation within the denomination as an optional activity.

Small Groups: The majority of life-transformation within a community of faith does not happen in the Sunday morning worship service (although some does). Instead, spiritual growth is significantly fostered in smaller gatherings of Christians focused on prayer, study, support and service. Small groups allow for people to find and make friends, develop trust and share struggles and both give and receive support and love.

The presence of small groups within a church is recognized by almost all church consultants as an important element in a healthy, growing church. Small groups provide many benefits to a church including (1) providing a place for spiritual growth, (2) nurturing relationships among members and attendees, (3) a vehicle for the assimilation of guests and new members and (4) another "bridge" by which new people enter into the life of a congregation. This item is scored based on a ratio derived from the division of the average worship attendance by the number of small groups present in the life of the church. Some consultants advocate the presence of one small group for every 10 or 20 people in worship. This survey takes a more "generous" perspective and the maximum score of 5 is obtained by a church with one small group for every 30 people in worship.

Advertising and Outreach: The typical declining church spends less than .5% of its budget on advertising and evangelistic outreach. The typical church

experiencing rapid growth spends at least 5% of its budget on advertising and evangelistic outreach. This is a key area for church health and transformation.

A church receives the maximum score of 5 if it invests more than 6% of its budget in these areas. The importance of advertising and its positive impact on the congregation is easy to grasp – more advertising results in more first-time guests which results in increased worship attendance which results in greater financial and people resources for the church.

Training and Leadership Development: Churches invest in those activities that they perceive as having value for themselves. The presence of good – and growing – leaders is an essential part of the transformation process. Investment in training leaders pays great dividends for the congregation.

Increasing the scope and quality of ministry in a church requires leaders. Christian leaders need to be formed. Churches have a responsibility to train people and develop their leadership skills. Four hours of training represents a very minimal investment in the leaders of a church. Transformation requires new skills and insights; it requires doing new things in new ways. Local church leaders must be equipped to lead this much-needed transformation. Churches whose leaders are unwilling to invest at least four hours in training can not be considered to be transforming.

Rotation of Leadership: Transforming churches benefit from a steady influx of new people and ideas into the church system. Involving newer members of the congregation in leadership roles helps a church to grow and try new things. A church system that is resistant to rotation and/or the involvement of newer members is shutting out the very resources God has sent to help the church.

Growing churches tend to intentionally include newer members in leadership. This provides new ideas, fresh perspectives and the opportunity for newer people to take ownership of the actions and future of the church. Declining churches tend to include few newer members in positions of real authority or leadership. Instead, a small group of people exchange jobs and swap committees every couple of years. Many churches use a three-year rotation format for membership on committees so a time-frame of five years is more than adequate for the inclusion of new leaders. Recognizing the need for - and the value of - some degree of continuity in the leadership of a church, a church can obtain the maximum score of 5 even if almost half of its leaders have participated in the church for more than five years.

Hospitality: Most guests form their basic decision about whether or not to return to a church within about ten minutes of entering the church campus. Hospitality is the extension of the welcome of God to all people – members, attenders and guests. A strong hospitality system significantly improves the first impression made on guests.

The Igniting Ministry effort of the UMC is based on the premise that hospitality is an essential ingredient for the growth of a church. The emphasis on training in hospitality – and the small number of congregations in the Texas Conference that have earned a “Welcoming Congregation” designation – point to the recognition that hospitality is often not a strong point of churches. The eight hospitality steps listed in this item represent actions that could be taken by all congregations and are by no means a comprehensive listing of all such possible actions. Churches tend to overestimate their friendliness, assuming they are more friendly than first-time guests perceive them to be. The hospitality steps listed in this item also provide steps that churches can take in their journey to transformation and more effective ministry. Growing churches take hospitality seriously.

Guest Follow-up: Contacting guests soon after the first visit and consistently over the next 30 days increases the probability that they will return to the congregation for another visit and, ultimately, become involved in the life of the congregation. Guest follow-up expresses the desire of the church to be in ministry with and to new people.

The Igniting Ministry effort of the UMC includes a strong emphasis on guest follow-up. It is part of the scoring process used by churches applying for the “Welcoming Congregation” designation. The eight guest follow-up steps listed in this item represent actions that could be taken by all congregations and are by no means a comprehensive listing of all such actions. The guest follow-up steps in this item also provide steps that churches can take in their journey to transformation and more effective ministry. Growing churches take guest follow-up seriously.

First-time Guests: The number of local first-time guests a church has is both an indication of its efforts at invitation and a sign of the growth potential of the congregation. The most effective way for a church to grow is for those currently attending the church to invite their friends, relatives, associates and neighbors.

The number of local first-time guests a church has is positively related to the growth and health of that church. Churches will not grow if they are not attracting first-time guests. These guests may come as a result of a personal invitation from someone in the church or from advertising and outreach efforts. This item is scored based on a ratio derived from dividing the average worship attendance by the average number of first-time guests per week. A church of 200 in worship that experiences two local first-time guests per week (scoring 1 point on this item) is much less likely to experience significant growth than if it attracts four local first-time guests per week (scoring 5 points on this item).

Mission Ministries: The Texas Annual Conference has made the determination that involvement in mission and outreach ministries will be part of its definition of a transforming church. This item measures the level of that involvement both

through the United Methodist Church and through other local agencies and organizations. A church that does not reach outside of its own walls is missing part of the mission of the Church. God in Christ invested heavily in humanity; local churches also must invest in humanity. This involvement needs to be “Christo-centric” and not just “Theo-centric”; that is to say, they are done in the name of Jesus with an eye towards introducing people to Jesus and not just in the name of God as an act of charity.

Youth and Children’s Ministries: The Texas Annual Conference has made the determination that involvement of children and youth in a local congregation will be part of its definition of a transforming church. This item measures the growth of the involvement of children and youth as well as whether or not youth are being deployed as leaders within the congregation.

Young Adults: The Texas Annual Conference has made the determination that the involvement of, and ministry to, young adults will be part of its definition of a transforming church. The average age of a member of The United Methodist Church is over 60. Many churches have few, if any, regular attendees under the age of 50 with many of the attendees being over the age of 70. Local churches must effectively reach younger people if they are going to fulfill the mission of Jesus in their community. In addition, local churches need to offer ministry that specifically targets the needs of young adults. The number of these ministries present in your congregation can be both an indication of your efforts at invitation and a sign of the growth potential of the congregation.

Scoring: A survey such as this requires an overall scoring system in order for it to be of maximal use. The score of a church will place it into one of three categories – Declining, Maintaining and Transforming. The scoring of each item is done on a five-point scale with 1 being low and 5 being high. A score of 1 on any item corresponds to a response characteristic of a church that would be considered to be “declining.” A score of 5 on any item corresponds to a response characteristic of a church that would be considered to be “transforming.” The lowest score possible on the survey is 13 and the highest score possible is 65. A church scoring an average of 1-2 points per item will fall in the “Declining” category. A church scoring 4-5 points per item will fall in the “Transforming” category. The remaining churches will, obviously, fall in the “Maintaining” category.

The category into which a church currently falls does not have to describe its future. It provides a snapshot of the church – a picture-in-time of the congregation. Churches have chosen the kind of church they are and they choose the kind of church they will become. The results of the survey are an important starting point for the congregation. It will also be important to determine the direction in which the congregation is moving on the continuum (Declining – Maintaining – Transforming).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHURCH TRANSFORMATION SURVEY WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

You have gathered information and completed the Church Transformation Survey. You may be asking, “Where do we go from here?” and “What is our next step?” Those are great questions. They are precisely the inquiries that will help your church help more people meet, know and serve Jesus.

The following pages walk with you through the survey to determine its meaning and implications for your church. In addition to providing more information about the category of the church, you will also explore how to determine the direction in which the church is moving. Ideas for strengthening each of the areas covered in the survey will be provided. With this information, your congregation can begin to prayerfully consider its future and make decisions consistent with its goals.

The importance of identifying the category of the church

1. Determining the category of the church helps the church see itself from a more objective point of view. It assists the church to understand the reality in which it finds itself. It moves the conversation beyond how people “feel” about the church.
2. Identifying the category of the church provides a starting point for making decisions about the future. Once it is clear where the church is, it becomes easier to both identify where the church wants to go and how to get there.

Churches do not simply exist nor are they completely defined by a category or a label. Churches are living systems of people interacting according to written and unwritten rules, guidelines, expectations and values. They are not static but dynamic in nature, that is, they are constantly in motion. Churches can be moving towards increased health and vitality or moving towards decreased health and vitality. The direction is determined by the choices made and the actions taken by the “leaders” of the church (both official and unofficial). Regardless of the category that best describes your church, it is important to also know in which direction it is moving.

In which direction is the church moving?

1. As important as identifying the proper category for the church is, it is only one part of the description of the church. The congregation must also determine in which direction it is moving. Are things getting better, staying the same or getting worse? Are there tangible, objective signs of improvement? If current trends continue, will the church be significantly stronger or weaker in ten years?

2. The direction in which the church is moving helps to inform the congregation about its probable future if no significant change is adopted. The direction also provides greater insight as to the meaning of the category of the church. For example, a score of 28 places a church in the low end of the Maintaining category. If the church had a score of 22 a year ago, then a score of 28 demonstrates progress. If a church had a score of 39, that would place it in the Maintaining category. If the church had a score of 44 a year ago, a score of 39 represents a probable decline in the vitality of the congregation.

The categories used to describe churches are descriptive, not prescriptive. That is to say, they describe what churches in that category are like but they do not describe what they have to be like in the future. The decisions of the past, combined with issues of leadership, demographics and economics, are responsible for the category that currently best describes the church. The decisions made today and in the coming months will be responsible for the category that best describes the church in five years.

Additional information related to each of the three primary categories of churches

1. Declining – Churches in this category were often much stronger at some point in their past. In many of these churches, the decline has been gradual but the cumulative effect is significant. These congregations face difficult decisions and often must make them in a relatively short period of time. The choices made in the next few years will, in great part, determine if these churches are open for more than five to ten years. Death is not inevitable for those churches willing to do what it takes to change.
2. Maintaining – Churches in this category sometimes feel they are holding their own. Some churches in this category are moving towards becoming transforming congregations. Others, sadly, are moving in the opposite direction. Maintaining churches, especially those at the lower end of the scale, face the very real possibility of slipping into the declining category unless action is taken to prevent this from happening. Maintaining churches have a degree of strength and vitality. By leveraging the resources they do have and investing them wisely, they can become transforming congregations.
3. Transforming – Churches in this category recognize that transformation is not something that is done once and is then effective forever. On the contrary, they understand that churches are living laboratories that are always engaged in experimentation and trying new things. Truly transforming congregations do not rest on their laurels. They are always listening for God's direction and looking for opportunities to be involved in new ministries. They share their knowledge and resources with other

churches in service of the greater goal of helping people meet, know and serve Jesus.

Almost all people in a local congregation want their church to survive, grow and thrive. Regardless of the score on the survey, people want their church to score higher in the future – not simply in order to have a better score but because they want others to experience the wonders of meeting, knowing and serving Jesus.

FOUNDATIONAL FACTORS FOR CHURCH TRANSFORMATION

Before addressing each of the thirteen areas covered in the survey, three foundational issues need to be discussed. Regardless of the score of the church or the areas that are in need of strengthening, certain issues need to have the focus and attention of the church. These three factors are:

1. **Context**
2. **Mission, Vision and Values**
3. **Leadership**

CONTEXT: All missionary outreach begins with the context. Churches are missionary outposts of the Kingdom of God and, thus, need to begin thinking like missionaries. The context is an essential factor that must take a primary place in the discussion of church transformation. A large number of churches are disconnected from their communities – few people in the immediate community attend the church and the make-up of the church is significantly different from that of the surrounding community. Church transformation is unlikely to happen unless the local church is reconnected with its community.

Understanding a community and the people in it can be a never-ending process, especially in areas of rapid growth and/or transient populations. Almost any church, however, can accomplish a basic understanding in thirty days or less. An action plan to do this appears below.

Day 1: Order a comprehensive demographic and psychographic (the values, attitudes, hopes, fears, dreams, major concerns and world view of a group of people) report on your ministry area. This can be obtained from Jack Steele at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (jack.steele@h-gac.com). The Council can direct you to sources for psychographic data. This data can also be obtained from Percept or other provider of similar information. The General Board of Global Ministries will also have access to similar material. Used appropriately, this will be one of the best investments in a ministry tool that a congregation can make. A note of caution about psychographic information is in order, however. The various organizations that offer psychographic information base their conclusions on differing factors. This information can be misleading if you are

not clear about the factors that are used in making psychographic descriptions of a population. Merely describing the tastes of a particular community or people as “traditional” or “contemporary” is rarely sufficient for making strategic decisions. Churches will also want to take advantage of the many sources of data that are available to them. These include the local Chamber of Commerce, local government records and promotional material, denominational resources and the US Census. Most of this information is available on-line or in print format at little or no cost.

When reviewing census, demographic and similar material and trying to draw conclusions from them, churches will want to zero in on those factors or statistics that are most relevant to their particular context. Some of these will vary from church to church depending on the target population, the make-up of the existing congregation, the current programming of the church and the vision of the faith community. Almost all churches will want to pay special attention to the following categories: population change over time, racial/ethnic composition of the community, education level, income level, number/percentage of children under age 5, number/percentage of children 12-18 years old, rate of turn-over within the community, dominant family structures, percentage of households in which all adults (one, two or more) are employed outside of the home, average distance driven to work, the locations in which particular racial/ethnic or sub-cultural groups are clustered, average age and political leanings. The church will also want to decide if there are additional categories that are specific to their target population that will be of special interest. Taken together, these factors in particular can have a significant impact both in understanding the community and in designing effective ways to minister to your target audience within the community.

Day 7: Gather a group of people from the church for a “View the Community” event. It is essential that those in decision-making positions (official leaders and staff) take part in this process. Divide the group into vans (if possible) or cars (if vans or large vehicles are not available). Drive through the residential areas of your target community. For churches in most settings, the “tour” can be completed in 30 minutes (or less). Return to the church and meet as a large group to discuss the questions listed below.

Who are the people living near the church or in our target community?
What are their levels of income and education? Do they have children?
What kind of vehicles do they drive? How old are they? What is the racial/ethnic make-up of the community? Are the people in our church similar to the people in that community?

Day 14: Survey the people in your community or target audience. The survey consists of going door-to-door in the neighborhood around the church (or in the target community) and asking a few simple questions. The survey is conducted on the door step and the visiting team does not enter the home. Select a time at which the residents of the community are likely to be home. A sample survey is

presented below. You may want to adjust the survey to meet the needs of your church and community. Some churches are opting to hold focus groups instead of taking door-to-door surveys. While these involve more work and planning (and risk), they can generate results that are more detailed than can be obtained in a sixty second doorstep visit.

“Hi, I’m from First Church. We are taking a brief community survey to help us get to know our neighbors better. Could I ask you a couple of quick questions?”

1. Are you actively involved in a church or faith community? [If “yes,” ask which one and then end the survey. The goal is not to recruit people actively involved in other congregations.]
 2. What issues or problems most concern you about our community?
 3. What could a church do to address these issues or problems?
 4. If you did decide to go to a church, what would you want it to be like?
- Thank you for your time. Have a great day!

Day 21: Gather a group of people from the church. It is essential that the key decision-makers (staff and official leaders) are present. Discuss the results of the survey. You will want to have the results of the survey compiled prior to the meeting and a summary sheet distributed to every person in attendance.

Day 28: Gather a group of people from the church. It is essential that the key decision-makers (staff and official leaders) are present. Discuss the information contained in the demographic/psychographic report. The provider of the report likely has a process for sharing this information with the congregation and extracting some of the implications of the report on the ministry activities of the church. This gathering differs from the previous one only in the material that is discussed. The conversation on Day 21 is to listen and learn from the results of the survey. The conversation on Day 28 is to listen and learn from the demographic information.

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES: Every church exists to do certain things. Sometimes these things are clear and known to all and sometimes they are less clear or assumed. Some churches exist to change the world for Jesus. Some churches exist just to exist. What is your church about? Why is it here? What does it want to do? Transformation is unlikely to happen if a congregation is unclear as to its purpose, focus and motivation for action.

Mission, as used in this workbook, is the broad statement that captures the primary purpose of the church. God has called all churches to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28.18-20); hence, the mission statement of almost all churches will be similar. The mission statement should be concise - like a bumper sticker. It should be easy to remember and known by everyone in the congregation. It is the primary orientation of the faith community, a brief

summary that encapsulates the primary focus and function of the congregation. An example would be “to help people meet, know and serve Jesus.”

Vision is a slightly longer statement or word picture that includes the core process (or processes) by which a church will accomplish the mission statement and encourages the congregation to both dream and act to make it a reality. It may sound specific but it is not a listing of tactics or programs. It includes one or more behaviors that both flow from the mission statement and support it but it is not a detailed planning guide. An example would be “to create a warm, welcoming environment in which people can hear, consider and respond to the message of Jesus.” In many cases, the vision of the church will be as accurately portrayed by an image or song or picture or story or metaphor as it is by a statement written on paper. The guidance for interpreting and embodying the vision – whether it is a statement or a metaphor – will come from the core values of the congregation.

Values are the behaviors and bedrock beliefs that are central to the heartbeat of the congregation. They are the core attitudes and actions of the church. They represent the heartbeat and heart cry of the congregation – who they are and how they act because of what they believe about themselves, the world, their place in God’s Kingdom and their role as part of God’s mission in and to the world. Values are not a systematic statement of theological beliefs, a set of rules, a list of desired outcomes or a delineation of who we wish we were. Examples of values are “ministry is strongest when done in teams,” “spiritual growth is best facilitated through small groups” and “leaders must be identified, trained and deployed.” These statements only qualify as true value statements, however, if the actions of the congregation are in alignment with them. Most congregations will need to limit themselves to 3-5 statements. It is difficult for most churches to focus and invest appropriately in more than five core values.

The true mission and vision of a congregation flow out of its core values. These values can only be identified and verified by looking at the actions and activities of a congregation. Discerning the values of a faith community is less rocket science and more observation, investigation and honesty.

The values of the church are the DNA of the congregation. The DNA is embraced by leaders, demonstrated in the programming and reproduced in new members. The staff and key leaders protect the DNA. All programs and investments of resources in the life of the congregation are measured against the DNA. Existing activities of the church that are not in alignment with the DNA are either changed to embody the DNA or are eliminated. Evaluations of staff, both paid and unpaid, are made in relation to the manner and extent to which the individual or team embodied the DNA and replicated it in others. Actions that are not reflective of the DNA, when identified in members, are confronted in a spirit of love and reconciliation with the goal of life transformation. The DNA of a faith community does not change frequently nor should it change without great

intentionality. As is true with human DNA, once it is established it takes both considerable effort and considerable skill to change it. The values of the congregation are lived out in a demonstrable manner – both inside the walls of the church and outside the walls in the community. These core values – these repeated behaviors – can serve to both draw people to the congregation and involve them more deeply in the life of the community of faith.

The following questions and activities can help a congregation discern their core values. It is very important that a cross-section of the church be present for this discussion. It may be a time in which perceived values are affirmed. More often than not, however, the congregation will discover that their actual activities do not support the values to which they aspire. This can be a painful experience, especially for those who have been long-time members of the church. This exercise is about more than just accurately discerning the true values of the congregation, however. After they have been discerned, they must be measured against the clear teaching of scripture, the life of Jesus and the call of God on the local church.

Clarifying Our Core Values By Examining Our Actions

- What are the five largest line items in the budget?
- What percentage of the budget is spent on advertising?
- List the nurture/care/in-reach programs of the church
- List the outreach/evangelism programs of the church
- List the leadership and stewardship development programs of the church
- If we could only offer five activities or programs, what would they be? (Ex. Sunday worship, choir, Bible study, fellowship dinners, food pantry)
- What is our congregation known for in the community?
- What kinds of people are not numerous in our church? (gender, age, income level, racial/ethnic persons, etc.)
- If we could add one staff member, what would we want them to do?
- Which activities take the largest portion of our pastor's time?
- What five words best describe our congregation?
- If we could add one program and do it well, what would it be?

The identification of the core values of the church is only one part of the process of transforming a community of faith. The congregation must also engage in spiritual discernment to measure their actual values against those taught by Jesus. It is likely that one or more of the current practices of the congregation are contrary to the values of the Kingdom of God. This situation must be addressed in an honest and open manner so that repentance and change are the result instead of stubbornness and resistance. Few people like to admit they are wrong. Even fewer churches are readily willing to do so. Substantive,

meaningful, long-term change will not happen without this conversion of mind and heart. Only once this hurdle has been cleared can a congregation begin moving in earnest towards becoming a reflective community.

LEADERSHIP: Church transformation requires wise, effective leadership. The clergy and lay leaders of a congregation will, almost always, determine whether authentic transformation occurs. The actions they take, when they take those actions and how those actions are taken are all important. The right thing must be done at the right time and in the right way. Sometimes the “right” thing, time and way are clear; other times they are less clear. Leadership is both science and art. Skillful leaders blend these two facets and facilitate change within their church.

The wisdom needed by effective leaders encompasses at least four distinct elements: (1) knowledge of the present state of the church, (2) awareness of the necessary steps of transformation, (3) a willingness to do what needs to be done and (4) a commitment to implementation in a God-honoring manner.

The coaching tips for leadership presented below just scratch the surface of the subject. They do, however, point leaders in the right direction. An essential part of leadership is the commitment to being a life-long learner. Leaders will begin with these ideas and then pursue additional knowledge and skills to help them help the church.

1. Do the right thing at the right time. Transformation is about making strategic, meaningful change that results in more people having an encounter with Jesus. It may be a worthy and proper goal for your church to start a new service, relocate or advertise more as part of the effort to increase worship attendance. If the people in the church are not friendly to guests and the follow-up and assimilation system is poor, then that is a more strategic (and prudent and logical) place to start than a direct mail campaign. Look for changes that can be made quickly, with little resistance or cost **and** that will make key future changes easier. The “right thing” will always lay the groundwork for additional transformation or remove an obstacle from the projected path.

2. Think before you speak. When a leader gets a vision, a sense of excitement usually comes with it. Excitement leads most people to want to talk - and that is where the problems often begin! A common temptation for those attempting to introduce and implement change is to share the entire plan in one grand speech. This speech may be made to the entire congregation or just to the leaders or elders of the faith community. Instead of generating excitement in all who hear, it may be just as likely to generate fear, worry, resistance and misunderstanding. **Briefly** sharing a **general** picture of the vision is a necessary part of leading a church towards health and growth.

3. *Buckle Up – this ride could get rough!* Change is not an easy road. It is filled with ups and downs, twists and turns, smooth spots and construction zones. The specifics are unpredictable but chaos, confusion and uncertainty are common companions on the journey. A roller coaster is a great image of the process. There is often a long wait while preparations are made and other people take their turn. You then enter a new place, step into a vehicle or car of some kind and begin preparing for the journey. Anxiety and uncertainty may begin to tug at the heart of the rider. The safety straps are pulled tight and you are committed to the journey. There is a long and noisy uphill climb followed by moments of pure joy and sheer terror. A sudden turn takes you by surprise and the sudden stop at the end takes your breath. Half of those on the ride want to go again and half kiss the solid ground and promise never to do that again! Leaders often experience a lot of frustration and anxiety because they do not anticipate obstacles, twists, turns or long lines. Creating a thriving, engaging, mission-oriented, reflective church is a wild adventure - buckle up!

4. *Rome was not built in a day but it was built.* Sudden, sweeping and comprehensive change is more likely to explode a church than lead it to explosive growth. Transitioning an existing church into a reflective, vital, vibrant community of faith takes time. A time-line of 3-7 years is more realistic than 3-7 months for creating fundamental change in a church. Creating, instilling and living out a new congregational DNA is rarely a quick process. The frustration of leaders is often created or heightened by unrealistic expectations regarding the rate at which the church is changing. It may be helpful to view the church in need of major change and transition as having a chronic disease or an addiction. Neither of these conditions is cured overnight. Healing is a process - sometimes a very long process. There is often progress followed by problems - steps forward and then steps backwards. The goal is healing but the journey to get there can be long, meandering and time-consuming. Rome must be built and it can't take a lifetime but neither can it be done in a day. Wise leaders avoid frustrating themselves and others by acknowledging up front that change will come but it will not come all at once.

5. *Even great players need a coach.* Natural talent and acquired knowledge are great tools for leaders who desire to lead a church towards growth, vitality and faithfulness. These tools alone, however, may not be sufficient. The missing element is often the presence of a coach. Just as great athletes with multi-million dollar contracts need great coaches for maximum performance, so do great leaders of reflective congregations. Retaining the services of a coach is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness. It is both recognizing that each person is unique and that no person knows everything. While spiritual friends help us develop our spiritual lives and mentors help us develop our personal and professional lives, coaches help us perform better. Coaches are part trainer, part behavior analyst, part motivator, part accountability partner, part reality detector and part resource provider. Coaches help leaders clarify their goals, better

define the context in which their decisions are made, explore possible options for reaching their desired outcomes and provide support and resources once tactics are decided upon. A coach can assist with defining reality and contemplating possible action plans but leaves the responsibility for decision-making with the person being coached. Coaching may be formal or informal, paid or free, involving a contract or just a verbal agreement. Since leadership requires a number of different skills, a leader may engage the services of more than one coach during the transformational process. With hard work and some natural talent, most leaders can be above average. With the assistance of a coach, leaders can become outstanding!

Having addressed three foundational factors for church transformation, the church is now ready to begin addressing issues raised in the church transformation survey. Congregations are often willing to introduce some level of change and to try some new things in order to strengthen their church. Sometimes a lack of new programs or initiatives is not due to resistance to change but simply due to a lack of exposure to new ideas. For each of the thirteen areas covered on the survey, a number of ideas and/or program options to strengthen that area of ministry are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list by any means. It is, rather, a starting place.

You will notice that some ideas/programs appear under more than one area. Since the survey measures those things that are most central to the purpose of the Church, the thirteen factors do not operate independently of each other. When a church strengthens one of these thirteen areas, it is actually strengthening other parts of the church system as well. There is a lot of overlap among the factors. For example, evangelism training is listed under more than one heading. A strong process of training people in how to share their faith can lead to increased worship attendance, a larger number of professions of faith and additional first-time guests. An additional benefit, though not the motivating factor, is that more people in church usually leads to additional financial and human resources for the support of ministry.

SOME IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE THE SCORE OF A CHURCH IN EACH OF THE THIRTEEN AREAS

1. Worship Attendance

- a. Improve hospitality. Addressing the eight items listed in the survey question related to hospitality can do this. Additional ideas are contained in the section under question eight below.
- b. Improve guest follow-up. Addressing the eight items listed in the survey question related to guest follow-up can do this. Additional ideas are contained in the section under question nine below.
- c. Engage in evangelism training. A copy of “Reclaiming the Vision”, an evangelism training DVD and program was prepared for every congregation in the Texas Conference. If you did not pick up your copy at the 2006 Annual Conference session, a copy is available in your district office. Other better-known evangelism training events/programs include “Becoming a Contagious Christian,” “Becoming a Contagious Church,” “Making Friends for Christ” and “Friendship Evangelism.” The main points to be conveyed in evangelism training are (a) evangelism is something for which all Christians are responsible, (b) you don’t have to be Billy Graham or a Bible scholar to share your faith and (c) the most natural people with whom to share your faith are those people who are closest to you.
- d. Have a FRAN day (Friends, Relatives, Associates and Neighbors).
 - i. “What is a FRAN day?” FRAN day is a coordinated effort within the congregation in which all participants are encouraged and motivated to bring at least one guest to church. It is similar in concept to an “Invite A Friend” campaign.
 - ii. How is a FRAN day organized?
 1. Six weeks prior to the FRAN day, an announcement is made to the congregation explaining FRAN day and encouraging everyone to be involved in it. It is most helpful if the elected leaders of the church can stand together in front of the congregation and vocally support the effort.
 2. Four weeks prior to the FRAN day, an insert is placed in the church bulletin describing the FRAN day.
 3. Three weeks prior to the FRAN day, an insert is placed in the church bulletin that requests the first name of the person who will be inviting people and the names and addresses of the people whom they will be inviting. This list is to be returned to the church within two weeks.

4. Two weeks prior to the FRAN day, the insert from the previous week is again placed into the bulletin. A strongly supportive announcement is also made from the pulpit/platform.
 5. One week prior to FRAN day, all of the completed bulletin inserts are collected. A prayer team or time of special prayer is held to pray both for those inviting guests and for those who will be invited. An invitation to the church is sent to those for whom addresses were received.
 6. On FRAN day, the church puts its best foot forward. Hospitality and guest follow-up should be wonderful. Every effort should be made to have the church as clean and neat as possible. Guests are coming! The church should be prepared!
- e. Increase advertising and outreach efforts. Specific ideas are contained below in the section on Advertising and Outreach. The primary point to this suggestion is that if the church wants more people to come to it, then more people must know about it. Advertising can be done spending a lot of money or almost no money. It is not a matter of money but of will and desire.
 - f. Distribute flyers about the church in the community. This is a very low cost way to help people become more aware of the church. It also has the advantage of helping to connect those who attend the church with those who do not. It requires an investment of time more than an investment of money and moves people beyond their seats and into the streets. The flyers should be well-designed, free of mistakes and printed with high quality.
 - g. Improve the worship service. Most worship services can be improved. Places to look for improvement include the following: review all written material to see if it is accurate, free from typographical errors, complete and understandable. Is the pace of the service too slow? Do announcements drag out or are announcements made that apply only to a small percentage of those present? Is the music good, average or dreadful? Does the service feel more like a celebration or a funeral? Is the service understandable to guests? Are the building(s) and worship space well lit, attractive, maintained and clean? Is the service participatory, experiential and based on scripture? Is there a sense of energy, expectancy and enthusiasm? Is there evidence that the service was carefully planned or does it seem disjointed and thrown together?
 - h. Contact the Center for Congregational Excellence in the conference office about the next Igniting Ministry training or other training event.

2. Professions of Faith

- a. Engage in evangelism training. Specific ideas are contained above in 1.c. The connection between a church experiencing professions of faith and it training its people in evangelism seems obvious.
- b. Preach in an evangelistic manner and invite people to follow Jesus. Clear teaching about the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is essential if people are going to enter into a personal relationship with God in the person of Jesus. An invitation to Christian discipleship provides an opportunity for people to respond to the sharing of that message.
- c. Start a Confirmation Class (not just limited to youth). If the church has any youth who have not joined the church, it may be appropriate to start a Confirmation Class. Confirmation is traditionally a time of instruction in the Christian faith. Many adults are not well-schooled in the Christian faith so starting a “Confirmation” or “New Member” or “Principles of the Christian Faith” class may lead both to church members/attendees becoming Christians and to them sharing their faith with others.
- d. Participate in a “Becoming a Contagious Church” training event or other events designed to help the church structure itself, make decisions and invest its funds in ways consistent with helping more people become Christians.

3. Apportionments

- a. Share stories of how apportionment dollars have changed lives. People rarely respond to statistics and requests for money for that which they do not understand. People do respond more readily when they can connect a face and a story to their giving.
- b. Be a positive leader in encouraging support for apportionment giving. If the pastor does not publicly support apportionment giving, the silence may be interpreted as tacit approval to not pay the fair share connectional giving at a 100% level. In many ways, churches follow the lead of the pastor.
- c. Treat paying apportionments as seriously as paying the pastor’s salary. Many churches do not fulfill 100% of their connectional giving responsibility but they pay 100% of the pastor’s salary and 100% of the electric bill. If apportionment giving – an investment in mission, education, health, training, relief and justice – is considered to be something that must be paid, then churches will find a way to send these funds and not deprive people of ministry.
- d. Enlist leaders in the church to learn about and promote apportionment giving. The pastor is not the only leader of a church. If the official and unofficial leaders of the church understand more about the ministry that is provided through their fair share connectional giving, they will be more supportive both personally and within the congregation.

- e. Decide to send one twelfth of your apportionment in each month instead of waiting until the end of the year. This helps your congregation to be successful in achievable monthly pieces, rather than feel overwhelmed by the total annual amount. This also helps your conference meet its monthly obligation to pay the retired pastors' pension and support the other missions and ministries on a timely basis. If you experience significant seasonal shifts in giving, consider paying 10% of your apportionments each month for ten months and not sending in any funds during the two months in which your church experiences the lowest offerings.
- f. It might help to personalize the apportionments if several of the line items were singled out for special fund raisers. Such as a rummage sale with proceeds to pay the line item for retiree pensions or a car wash to pay the line item for campus ministries.

4. Small Groups

- a. Host or participate in a small group leadership-training event. It is not realistic to expect new small groups to form if training is not provided. The participation of the leaders of the church in this event, whether or not they will be leading a small group, would send a strong message to the church about the importance of this kind of training event.
- b. Have the pastor form a small group to train leaders. Following the example of Jesus, pastors can both model the value of small groups and train leaders simultaneously. The expectation is that at the end of a specified time, those participating in the small group would begin two or more small groups. The pastor could then recruit more people to start the process over again.
- c. Transform committees into small groups that study and pray. Many committee meetings involve a lot of talking, a little disagreement, few decisions and almost no prayer. If all committee meetings began with a time of Bible study and prayer, they would begin to take on the character of a small group. In addition to helping people grow in the Christian faith, this might also lead to more and better decisions made with less disagreement.
- d. Start a new Sunday School class. Sunday School classes can function as small groups. They can be a great source of strength, learning and support for participants. Beginning new classes is most effective if those who are not currently participating in Sunday School or a small group are specifically and personally invited to take part in the new class. Offering a short-term class (3-6 weeks) may help people feel like attending does not commit them to going to Sunday School forever. A positive experience on their part will increase the likelihood of them choosing to participate over a longer period of time.

- e. Start Disciple Bible Study, Companions In Christ and Christian Believer Groups. These resources are excellent tools for spiritual formation and the study of scripture which help participants understand their spiritual gifts and how these gifts can be used in the ministry of the congregation. If your church is unable to start, run or manage one or more of these groups, you could partner with other congregations so that you have the monetary and human resources to offer the experience. Many larger congregations are more than happy to share their resources with smaller congregations.

5. Advertising and Outreach

- a. Purchase roadside “real estate” signs to put out on Sunday morning. These double-sided signs are usually inexpensive (\$15-\$30 each) and can be made by many printing shops. The purpose is to increase the community’s awareness of the church and help guests locate the church. The signs are usually placed at the major intersections closest to the church early on Sunday morning. They are removed immediately following the last worship service. The text on the sign should be simple and large. “First Methodist Church” and an arrow may be sufficient. They need to be readable by those passing them while driving at the speed limit.
- b. Engage in a direct mail campaign. These campaigns accomplish three primary tasks – increasing the awareness of the community about the church, creating an image of the church in the mind of the community and producing some first-time guests. Response rates vary significantly due to factors such as context, the layout of the piece, the target audience of the campaign and the time of year. In many communities, the response rate is approximately .3% (10,000 cards mailed to homes would produce 30 first-time guests).
- c. Place newspaper ads (not in the religion section). A newspaper ad in the religion section is read primarily by those already attending a church, those who are visiting the community and those who have recently moved to the community and are looking for a church. Placement of the ad in a different section of the paper tends to reach a different audience. Think who is most likely to read an ad in the sports section, in the local section or in the leisure section of the paper. The placement of the ad should be based upon the target audience the church is most trying to reach.
- d. Take part in Servant Evangelism projects. More information about these projects can be found at www.kindness.com. A free car wash (no donations accepted) is an all-but-free event that gets the church people out into the community. Distributing cold bottled water (on hot days) or hot coffee/chocolate (on cold days) is a relatively low cost way to meet people and share the love of Jesus in a practical way.

- e. Host an evangelistic block party (like Celebrate Jesus). Get the word out about this event with fun, games, free food and more and people will respond. Use this event to meet people, demonstrate the great hospitality of the church and obtain contact information (perhaps from a registration form) for follow-up.
- f. Distribute flyers door-to-door. This activity is covered in 1.f. above.
- g. Contact the Center for Congregational Excellence in the conference office about the next Igniting Ministry training or similar event available in your area.

6. Training and Leadership Development

- a. Take a group of leaders to a leadership-training event. A wide variety of these events are available across the country. Some training events are available via subscription satellite networks. Taking a team of leaders to such events will yield greater results than if just one person attends.
- b. Engage in the study of a video series about leadership. A tape series can be purchased for significantly less than taking a group to a workshop. It is probable that a church in the area has such a series in their library they would be willing to loan.
- c. Have all leaders read a book together and meet to discuss it. Reading a book together provides focus, common information around which productive conversation can occur and builds a sense of teamwork among the leadership. This process also introduces new ideas into the church system.
- d. Subscribe all leaders to electronic newsletters on leadership. These newsletters are free and can be very helpful. They can be printed out and provided to those who do not have email. The cumulative effect of reading this kind of material over a long period of time can positively impact the church in many ways.
- e. Participate in Lay Speaker training events that are sponsored in your district.
- f. Increase the amount of money invested in continuing education for laity.
- g. Participate in equipping events sponsored by the Centers for Congregational, Clergy and Missional Excellence.
- h. Contact the Center for Congregational Excellence to arrange leadership education workshops of various types for your congregation – staff development, strategic planning, team leadership, stewardship, teacher training, etc.

7. Rotation of Leadership

- a. Attempt to fill all committee vacancies with those not currently serving. While this may seem difficult, it does force the church to get to know more of its members and entrust them with leadership.

- The resources needed for transformation may be sitting in the pews of the church but undiscovered by the leadership of the church.
- b. Limit people to serving on one primary committee in the church. This practice will allow people to focus on an area of interest and not be pulled in five other directions by the other committees on which they serve. This practice will also dilute the influence of any one leader so that more voices are heard in the decision-making process.
 - c. Obtain information about the skills and interests of the entire congregation. It is hard to ask people to be involved in ministry if the church does not really know the people in the pews. This information may be gained through a survey, a church member information form or other process.
 - d. Have all members take part in spiritual gift inventories. Many people do not recognize the gifts they have been given. A spiritual gift inventory helps people acknowledge their gifts and find productive ways to use them in ministry.

8. Hospitality

- a. Implement more of the eight items listed in the survey. The eight items listed in the survey provide a helpful checklist for strengthening the hospitality ministry of the church.
- b. Participate in an Igniting Ministry hospitality training event. This event is presented in the Igniting Ministry Toolkit along with all material and videos needed to offer it to the church.
- c. Work on the “Welcoming Congregation” checklist from Igniting Ministry until the church qualifies to receive the award. While receiving the award does not mean that the church has done all it needs to do in the area of hospitality, it is a step in the right direction.
- d. Complete the “Secret Guest” survey as outlined in the Igniting Ministry Toolkit. Similar to a “secret shopper,” this involves someone visiting the church and completing an evaluation of their experience in order for the church to see themselves through the eyes of a first-time guest.

9. Guest Follow-up

- a. Implement more of the eight items listed in the survey. The eight items listed in the survey provide a helpful checklist for strengthening the guest follow-up ministry of the church.
- b. Survey all guests who returned for a second visit and find out what they liked and why they returned. This survey can be on the phone, through the mail, via email or done in person. Thank people for participating and share your excitement about their participation in the church.

- c. Survey all guests who did not return for a second visit and find out what they did not like and why they did not return. This survey can be on the phone, through the mail, via email or done in person. Thank people for participating and never argue with them or defend the church. They are sharing their perceptions of their experience and describing those things for which they were looking in a church.

10. First-time Guests

- a. Increase advertising and outreach efforts. This is covered in number 5 above.
- b. Have a FRAN day (Friends, Relatives, Associates and Neighbors). This is explained in 1.d. above.
- c. Increase evangelistic efforts and evangelism training. This is covered in 1.c. and 2.d. above.
- d. Begin new Sunday School classes and/or small groups. This is covered in number 4 above.
- e. Be sure your congregation is visibly present in all community events. Wear matching t-shirts to the 4th of July fireworks display or pass out free water with the church name on the label. Find a suitable site and host a community-wide sunrise Easter service. Provide water and wear matching t-shirts at the community fun run. Organize a mission project that benefits the community and invite the community to participate. For example, collect stuffed toys for the police department to use in situations involving traumatized children or put together health kits for the local abused women and children's center. Be sure to invite participants to your church and have literature available.

11. Mission Ministries

- a. The District Office or Center for Missional excellence are able to provide you with information about Partners in Mission, UM Army and other Conference mission efforts.
- b. More information about mission ministries is available through the general church can be found on the web at www.umc.org and www.gbqm-umc.org.
- c. Contact Habitat for Humanity and get a group of people from the church involved in a building project.
- d. Conduct a survey of the churches in the community to determine which outreach ministries are already in existence. Your church may want to become involved in an existing ministry instead of starting a new one or duplicating services already being provided.
- e. Contact the local governmental and not-for-profit social agencies. They can provide you with information both on services currently available and the most pressing needs in the community.

12. Youth and Children's Ministries

- a. Invite some youth to serve on committees in the church.
- b. Focus on finding effective ways to strengthen your youth ministry. If your church has a small youth group, contact a church with a larger youth group and ask to participate in some of their events. Another approach is to hold a joint youth program with one or more other churches which also have smaller youth groups.
- c. Send a volunteer youth leader to a Youth Specialties or other regional/national youth ministry training event.
- d. To reach and retain families with children, it is important that the nursery is high-quality, well-staffed and located near the sanctuary. If Sunday School is offered at your church, then dynamic classes also need to be available for children and youth. Take an objective view of your church. Does it look like young families attend? Is the church clean, well-kept and attractive to young families? Is the worship service attractive and relevant to young families who are not currently attending a church?
- e. Contact the Center for Congregational Excellence to schedule a workshop in children's or youth ministry for your congregation.

13. Young Adults

- a. Gather the demographic profile of your community to determine the prevalence of young adults (18-35). This information can be obtained from www.census.gov or a company that provides demographic information or the Center for Congregational Excellence.
- b. In order to have children and youth, the focus must be on families with children. The goal is to transform the family. A pure focus on children or youth usually requires a significant investment of time, energy and resources and rarely produces additional attendees or finances for a church. Therefore ministries for single parents, married couples with children living at home, men and women are essential.
- c. Young adults are attracted to programming that meets their needs. Think of sponsoring workshops on Christian money management, healthy relationship for those that are single as well as those who are married, parenting skills for young parents, career choice and mentoring opportunities, etc.
- d. Move outside the walls of the church to plan events for young adults. Think of places where they congregate like movie theaters, sports venues and coffee houses like Starbucks.
- e. Use technology. Young adults use the Internet for information, shopping and community. Your church needs a presence that is up to date and uses imagery that appeals to young adults. Get a young adult to help you design it.

- f. Young adults are attracted to hands-on mission opportunities. They want to be part of a church that speaks to life and has meaning. Be sure your congregation lives out its faith in concrete ways and invites young adults to join you in that.
- g. Provide mentoring relationships for young adults. Often young adults are far from their families in their first job experiences. They need and want friendship and guidance in life issues from more mature Christians.
- h. Let young adults be leaders in your congregation. Listen to their suggestions for ministry and do not assume that the way things have always been is the only, or even the best, way they can be done.

RESOURCES FOR CONTINUED LEARNING AND SUPPORT

WEB SITES

www.bama.org – Data from survey research related to churches
www.link2lead.com – Percept web site – demographic information
www.easumbandy.com – free forums, resource listing and training events
www.griffithcoaching.com – coaching for pastoral leaders and congregations
www.churchsmart.com – books for leadership development and transformation
www.smallgroups.com – small group ministry resources and free newsletter
www.dnacoaching.com – coaching services, free resources and more
www.txcumc.org – Texas Conference web site, follow the link to the Center for Congregational Excellence
www.congregationalresources.org – Internet guide prepared by the Alban Institute and the Indianapolis Center for Congregations designed to help congregational leaders connect with resources that will enable them to face challenges and foster vitality in their communities of faith.
www.albaninstitute.com – Leadership resources, books, seminars, other resources, all high quality

BOOKS

Charles Arn, [How To Start A New Service](#)

Tom Bandy, [Coaching Change](#)

Tom Bandy, [Kicking Habits, Welcome Relief for Addicted Churches](#)

George Barna, [A Step-By-Step Guide to Church Marketing](#)

Wayne Cordiero, [Doing Church As A Team](#)

Bill Easum and Tom Bandy, [Growing Spiritual Redwoods](#)

Bill Easum, [Dancing With Dinosaurs](#)

Bill Easum, [Unfreezing Moves: Following Jesus Into the Mission Field](#)

Ronald A. Heifetz [Leadership Without Easy Answers](#)

Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky [Leadership on the Line](#)

George Hunter, [The Celtic Way of Evangelism](#)

George Hunter, [How To Reach Secular People](#)

Sally Morgenthaler, [Worship Evangelism](#)

Don Nations, [Purposeful Pragmatic Church Growth](#)

Faith Popcorn, [Clicking](#)

Gil Rendle, Alice Mann [Holy Conversations](#)

Tex Sample, [The Spectacle of Worship in an Electronic Culture](#)

Cathy Townley, [Designing Worship Teams](#)

RESOURCES FROM THE TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FROM YOUR CONFERENCE OFFICE: 713-521-9383

Bishop - Janice Riggle Huie

Assistant to the Bishop and the Director of the Center for Missional Excellence –

Rev. Rick Goodrich – rvgoodrich@methodist.net

Conference Treasurer and Director of the Center for Connectional Resources –

Dr. Elijah Stansell – eli@swbell.net

Director of the Center for Congregational Excellence – Dr. Karen Dorris –

kdorris@txcumc.org

Church Planting Strategist – Rev. Don Smith – pastordon@sbcglobal.net

Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence – Rev. B. T. Williamson –

bt.williamson@txcumc.org

Associate Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence – Rev. Carol Bruse –

carol.bruse@txcumc.org

CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION SPECIALISTS:

Praxis With Grace – Rev. Susan Keim Kester skkester@praxiswithgrace.org

Rev. Mary Tumulty mtumulty@praxiswithgrace.org

RESOURCES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

Contact the Center for Congregational Excellence

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - Rev. Dr. Don Nations

Don is the President of DNA Coaching. Supported by specialists in education, research, statistics and analysis, he coordinates the ministry of DNA Coaching and serves as its Lead Coach.

Don is the Senior Pastor of Edgewater United Methodist Church and the Director of the South Sarasota Teaching Parish - a cooperative parish ministry focused on transforming two congregations and providing continuing education for the strengthening of ministry. Don has planted a church and led successful transformation efforts in previous appointments. He is a graduate of Florida Southern College (B.S.), Asbury Theological Seminary (M. Div.) and Columbia Theological Seminary (D. Min.). Don has extensive training in church consulting, church planting, assessment and coaching leaders. He has led seminars and workshops on church transformation, church planting, small group leadership, financial planning, advertising and marketing, reaching pre-Christian people, starting new worship services and many other subjects. Don has published devotional material in *The Upper Room* and on the Internet as well as writing a book on church transformation. His other publications range from articles on ministry with and to those infected/affected with HIV/AIDS to culture change and ethics. He has held numerous leadership positions in the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Don has completed Consultant I and II training and Vision Discernment and Mission Assessment training with Easum, Bandy and Associates and has interned with Bill Easum. He has served as a focus coach at CMTC's Church Planter's Boot Camp, is a certified Natural Church Development coach and has completed the National Coaching Certification process through both Inquest Ministries and CoachNet. He is a Certified Human Behavior Consultant with Personality Insights and uses the DISC profile to increase self-awareness and strengthen teams.

Don is married to Susan and they have four sons. Susan is an elementary literacy coach, author, speaker and national consultant in the field of early childhood literacy.

Don is available to consult with churches, coach pastors and congregations, assess ministry candidates, lead workshops, conduct self-understanding and team-building events and work with judicatories. Inquiries may be directed to don@dnacoaching.com.