

## MARKS OF A HEALTHY CONGREGATION

**An effective congregation is actively engaged in transforming lives** through the teachings of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. A faithful congregation accepts the challenge to regularly review how well it proclaims Christ to the world, asks whether it is accomplishing its stated goals, and is **willing to embrace new goals as dictated by new conditions and the call of God.**

### BUILDS STRONG DISCIPLES Nurtures Current Members

- For example:*
- Clarity of **purpose** (concise, dynamic, public)
  - Regular and enthusiastic **worship**
  - Strong Christian education program
  - Members **growing** - spiritually & numerically
  - Pastoral care (by pastors and elders) is evident
  - Fellowship and play are evident
  - Stewardship is a thankful response, not a duty
    - budget supported mainly by living donors
  - Clear lines of congregational communication

### SENDS OUT FAITHFUL APOSTLES Encourages Participation in Mission

- For example:*
- Can identify a **mission beyond survival**
  - Understands Christ's sacrificial **call to service**
  - Participates in the community**
    - in service of those in need
    - in leadership
  - Open to **new members and their ideas**
  - Exhibit **hospitality** toward those who are not already part of our fellowship

### FOSTERS FAITHFUL CONNECTIONS Ecclesiastical, Connectional Functions

- For example:*
- Fulfills **basic Presbyterian duties:**
    - Session meets regularly (at least quarterly)
    - There is a rotation of church officers
    - Makes a general mission pledge
    - Completes annual GA Statistical Report
    - Has Session minutes reviewed annually
    - Congregation reviews terms of call annually
    - Submits terms of call to presbytery annually
  - Participates in **connectional church:**
    - commissioners to presbytery meetings
    - members serve on presbytery committees
    - encourages pastors to participate
  - Understands & supports mission of **General Assembly & Synod**

### **Shared and effective models of leadership**

High priority on leadership development

**Decision-making** is public and accountable

### **Healthy means of conflict management**

- freedom of respectful dissent
- stay connected, despite differences
- mutual accountability
- respect for Presbyterian polity

### **A Healthy Congregation seeks BALANCE:**

- **nurturing its current members**
- **participating in mission beyond itself**
- **servicing in connection with others**

Seeks out additional **ministry networks:**

- joint ministries with other Presbyterians
- ecumenical ministries with other churches
- participate in ministerial associations

## WHAT WOULD A HEALTHY CONGREGATION LOOK LIKE?

### Clarity of Purpose (Mission Statement)

- clear, public, commonly held
- concise, can be recited on demand
- woven into the fabric of the congregation (Session, program, budget)
- honors the traditions of the past while looking forward to a new future
- never static - able to be reviewed/reshaped/reinvented in healthy, non-threatening ways

### Committed to Training Disciples

- the inward aspect of the congregation - building up
- study, fellowship, community are ours not to make us feel good, but to make us better disciples
- individuals are challenged to discover and grow in their spiritual gifts

### Engaged in Service

- the outward aspect of the congregation - reaching out
- we build up in order to send out (blessed to be a blessing to others)
- stewardship is seen as a joyful response, not a chore
- evangelism is everyone's calling; conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit

### Shared Model of Leadership

- traditional models of leadership stand between the dual tensions of anarchy and monarchy
- we reward ambition, often tolerating domination, exclusion and secrecy
- we try consensus, often losing patience with lack of progress (or being held hostage)
- we seek a balance between the need to move forward and the desire to wait for discernment
- beyond anarchy and monarchy - the priesthood of all believers
- a more spiritual model - subject to the Holy Spirit; subject to one another
- as we speak clearly the values we bring to the discussion, we can move forward
- as we accept the leading of the Holy Spirit through the body, we can move beyond differences
- assertive, not destructive, models allow leaders and followers alike to participate
- there are different ways of "seeing" and deciding; more than one might be valid at the same time
- shared responsibility for decisions of the body

### Healthy and Public Decision-Making Process

- how we make decisions is at least as important as the decisions we make
- transparent, public, and accountable
- conflict is inevitable; the standard is to fight fairly - speak for self, try to articulate the views of others, identify where you agree, identify the obstacles to agreement, is winning worth dying for

### Deep Spirituality Undergirding It All

- worship is central, not added on; involves all the senses; speaks to all people
- prayer is natural, not forced; pastor, leaders, and congregation pray for one another
- we are, above all else, the people of God - would observers know that?
- amid the business at hand, what value is placed on personal and corporate growth?
- a new paradigm for church boards: *The individual board member is no longer seen as a political representative but as a spiritual leader. The board or council is no longer seen as a group of corporate managers, but as the people of God in community. The meeting is no longer seen as a litany of reports and decisions held together by "book-end" prayers but as "worshipful work."* (Transforming Church Boards, Charles Olsen, Alban Institute, 1995, pp xii-xiii)

## A CONGREGATIONAL SELF-STUDY

Congregation & City \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Study \_\_\_\_\_

Church Membership:	today _____	5 years ago _____
Average Worship Attendance:	today _____	5 years ago _____
Average Sunday School Attendance:	today _____	5 years ago _____
Total Church Budget:	today _____	5 years ago _____
Percent of Budget devoted to Mission:	today _____	5 years ago _____

An effective congregation is actively engaged in transforming lives through the teachings of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit:

This congregation serves the community in which it resides	Yes	No
This congregation reflects the full diversity of its community	Yes	No
This congregation provides leadership to the community	Yes	No
This congregation embraces change in its community as opportunity for service	Yes	No
The majority of this congregation lives in the surrounding community	Yes	No

An effective congregation accepts Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's church, including participating in the governing responsibilities of the church:

Pastor(s) and Elder(s) regularly attend presbytery meetings	Yes	No
Pastor(s) and Member(s) serve on and participate in presbytery committees	Yes	No
Congregation gives a reasonable percentage of their income to Mission Giving	Yes	No
Congregation understands its relation to and participation in the larger church	Yes	No

An effective congregation participates in faithful stewardship as a joyful expression of thanksgiving for all of God's gifts:

This congregation has an effective stewardship program	Yes	No
There is a healthy balance within the budget (staff, mission, program, building)	Yes	No
The budget is supported primarily by pledges and gifts (rather than endowments)	Yes	No
This congregation has healthy, but not extravagant, reserves	Yes	No

An effective congregation exhibits healthy leadership, calling forth the spiritual gifts of its members:

The pastor is an energized, visionary leader	Yes	No
The Session understands and accepts its leadership role in the congregation	Yes	No
There is ongoing training and development of lay leaders	Yes	No
The congregation is focused on matters other than maintenance and survival	Yes	No
This congregation honors its traditions, but is not stuck in the past	Yes	No
There is hope in the future	Yes	No

An effective congregation understands its facilities as a gift from God and a resource for ministry:

The facilities are clean and attractive	Yes	No
The facilities are in good repair (little or no deferred maintenance)	Yes	No
There is adequate parking, including spaces clearly reserved for visitors	Yes	No
There is a clear and well-maintained sign, visible from the road	Yes	No
The facilities can accommodate all visitors	Yes	No
The congregation welcomes the use of its facilities by the community	Yes	No
The community knows that this congregation shares its facilities	Yes	No