

SECTION B: CONGREGATION MISSION AND MINISTRY ASSESSMENT

Past – Present – Future Ministry

Conduct a History of our Church Sunday (recommended)

Invite the congregation to a **History Event following Sunday morning worship**. Plan for a two-hour event. Invite everyone; provide drinks, food, and a comfortable space to gather.

What you'll need:

- Hospitality: food and drinks
- Cups, plates, napkins, utensils
- Tables, preferably circular, marked by decade, with three sheets of large poster paper at each table
- Large poster board (Post-its works really well), markers, dark bold colors

Welcome and devotions (10 minutes)

Sample:

Today we explore who we've been to better understand who God wants and needs us to be. We'll explore each decade from the perspective of the people who joined the congregation during that time. This is not an exercise in details or facts. It is an exercise in perspective and remembrance.

(Explanation)

Sample:

Please help yourself to the meal. When you return, you'll find that each table will have three sheets of paper (there will be more information about these later). Each table will explore a decade of time. Sit at the table marked by the decade when you joined the congregation. Please note, you will be sitting at the table marked with the period when you JOINED, not when you were born. If you are a child or a youth, please sit at the table marked by the time when your first memories begin.

Appoint a recorder to write, and a reporter to share your findings as you begin.

Discovering the Decades

- On the first sheet of paper, as a group, list: What, of significance, was happening in the WORLD?
- On the second sheet of paper, as a group, list: What was happening in RELIGION?
- On the third sheet of paper, as a group, list: What was happening with THIS CONGREGATION? For this particular question, consider building/construction dates, struggles, new leadership, neighborhood connections, etc.—all aspects of your story.

Sharing the Story

- Post each of the decades results around the room
- Share each of the decades with the whole group
- Questions to think about:
 - Are there any significant events missing?
 - What are common themes?
 - What strikes you?
 - Do you see any particular impact of leadership?
 - What influence did personalities have on the community?
 - What impact did the community needs or culture have on the congregation?
 - What impact did the congregation have on the community?
 - What role has the congregation taken on for the community and for individuals?

Introduce the **CONGREGATION ASSESSMENT SURVEY (CAS)**

The **Congregation Assessment Survey**, or CAS for short, is a congregation-wide survey that provides an in-depth look at the experiences, perceptions and aspirations of a congregation. The CAS will provide a meaningful picture of your congregation and is an assessment instrument that can help your congregation:

- Measure the level of satisfaction and energy in the church.
- Identify the critical success factors for improving organizational climate.
- Discover what the congregation hopes to do and accomplish in the future.
- Gauge readiness for change.
- Uncover potential resources you may be missing.
- Prepare for a search for your next pastor.

Sample:

Our history tells us a lot about ourselves. However, it is still viewed through story and perspective, influenced by hindsight, and missing voices of the past. Our congregation has an opportunity to gain insight into where we stand as a congregation today, using the CAS (Congregation Assessment Survey). We're asking that as many participants as possible complete this survey. Please help us encourage as many people as possible to take this survey in the next two weeks. (For the following two Sundays, provide computers and information about the survey, to enable you to fully participate).

Review the results of the CAS during a gathering of both the Council and the Transition Team. The CAS provides support for the team preparing the Ministry Site Profile, as well as providing invaluable perspective to your Call Committee as they seek your next pastor.

Give a **summary report** to the congregation on the results of the CAS.

CONGREGATION ASSESSMENT SURVEY (CAS)

HOLY
BIBLE

Define and Research the Demographics of the Community

There are numerous sources available to conduct this research. The ELCA provides the following resources, at no charge to you and included in your congregation's Mission Support. **This tool is designed to help ELCA congregations gain a general understanding of their community and to plan their mission using that information.**

The website link is: www.elca.org/research

There is a box "**Demographic Reports**" on the lower right side margin. Click on "**View Now.**"

You will need the synod code, which is **7C**, and your congregational ID number. This number can be obtained by finding your congregation's parochial report (Form A) in your church files. If you still cannot find it, call the Metropolitan New York Synod Office and ask for assistance.

Conduct a **COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROBE (CAP)**

Two members of the Transition Team or the Council make two separate appointments with two local town officials. In our experience, two of the following persons are best: a local school principal, a local chief of police, a local town mayor or supervisor, a council member, or the leader of the local chamber of commerce.

Call to ask for an appointment, indicating you are from a local church and are in the process of searching for a new pastor, and seeking their input about the greatest needs in the community. You would like 15 minutes of the person's time.

Two of you go to the meeting, and at least one of you takes notes. During the conversation, you ask the following questions:

- In your experience, what do you see as the top two or three problems in our community?
- Whom do you see working on those issues?
- Do you have any concerns about our community as you look into the future, and if so, what are they?
- What could our church do to help improve the quality of life in our community?
- When we call a new pastor to our church, could we bring them in to meet you?

Immediately following the conversation, do the following:

- Write and mail a handwritten note thanking the official for their time and input.
- Write up your notes of the conversation and review them with your partner, in order to determine if you both heard the same information.
- After you have conducted both conversations, provide a verbal update to the congregation on the following Sunday, and make your written notes available to the congregation, especially the MSP team.

In our experience, every congregation that has engaged in this kind of Community Assessment Probe, reports that it is one of the most eye-opening experiences. The rewards of this exercise cannot be adequately expressed.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROBE (CAP)

Conduct a “Play It Forward” Sunday (recommended)

Invite the congregation to a “**Play It Forward**” event following Sunday morning worship. Plan for a two- hour event. Invite everyone; provide drinks, food, and a comfortable space to gather.

What you’ll need:

- Hospitality: food and drinks
- Cups, plates, napkins, utensils
- Tables and chairs
- Large, open wall space
- Large pieces of paper
- Markers, dark/bold colors
- Half-sheet pieces of paper
- Pens for everyone
- Post-it flags

Welcome, Meal, and Devotions (10 minutes)

Sample:

Today we’ll begin to “Play It Forward.” We’ll think about what kind of congregation we are today and we’ll dream about what God wants and expects from this congregation in the future. In each exercise, we encourage you to consider what you’ve learned about our congregation from the CAS (Congregation Assessment Survey).

Share in devotions.

With God, All Things Are Possible

- Give each individual a half sheet of paper, with the words: *“If this congregation truly believes that with God, all things are possible, in the next three years I would see...”*
- Have each person write an answer, post their answers on a wall, and then share their vision with everyone gathered
- Give everyone five “post-it flags,” instructing them to choose their top five priorities or preferences
- Tally the responses and review the top five priorities that have emerged
- Reflect on these questions:
 - How do the priorities fit with critical success factors?
 - How do the priorities fit with the community needs assessment?
 - What kind of opportunities do these provide?
 - What threats are there to making these happen?

Wrap-Up/Draft of Mission Site Profile (MSP)

- Explain that the Transition Team will create the profile, based on the information gathered
- Establish the date of MSP draft review with congregation
- Thank everyone for their time. Close with Prayer.

Release the draft version of the MSP on a Sunday and seek feedback from the congregation.

Also, begin to collect suggestions for questions that the Call Committee might ask a potential candidate, based on the MSP.

The Transition Team will meet throughout the Transition process and will spend time filling out the MSP form. Following the “Play It Forward Event,” the team releases a first draft copy of the MSP to the entire congregation, requesting feedback. The congregation is given one week to respond with their suggestions, thoughts, or reflections.

After the week of input, the Transition Team can make revisions to the document. The final report should be submitted to the entire council for its review and possible revision, and also be made available to members of the Call Committee. After the MSP has been approved by the congregation council, a copy shall be sent to the Assistant to the Bishop and submitted to the ELCA database. The Assistant to the Bishop may consult with the Call Committee to review the completed MSP, discuss the hopes and vision of the congregation, and answer any remaining questions about the process.