

Definitions of Missional Church
Provided by the staff of the Center for Parish Development

Everything we do as Christian communities relates in some way to God's calling and sending of the church to participate in God's mission. If we once thought of the church as the sending agency – and missionaries were the people who the church sent – we now are thinking very differently. As we read Scripture afresh in a North American context that is itself mission territory, we realize that *God is a calling and sending God*, and the *church is the called and sent people*. What is God calling and sending the church to be and do? The answer is expressed by each local community as it discerns and designs its life and ministry in response to the sending God.

A missional church, then, is a community of faith where people are discerning and participating in God's mission together. As a dynamic process, the outcome of their discernment and participation will vary given their unique circumstances. At the center of their life and ministry missional congregations spend time together, opening their minds and hearts – and imaginations – to the movement of the Holy Spirit through prayer and worship, Bible study and conversation. At the same time, missional congregations engage in learning about their missional context, asking, “what are the forces and factors that are blocking the fulfillment of life as God created it?” As together they discern God's mission and discern the challenges of their context, missional congregations may shape their life and ministry in distinctive ways, utilizing their particular gifts.

A process of missional transformation is dynamic, participatory, and strategic. At heart it is a journey of formation – a faith community discerning God's call afresh in their time and place, and becoming equipped to participate more faithfully and fruitfully in that mission. Missional transformation is not merely a "tune-up" of existing programs and priorities. Rather, in a very constructive and faith-filled manner, it enables God's church to evaluate and define anew the nature, purpose, and practices of its life together in light of God's mission for God's world. It is an opportunity to make the changes discerned to be necessary in order to become more faithful to God's calling and purpose in your setting and situation.

Missional Transformation involves a *reorientation* that involves the entire church body in –

- Retrieving its historical grounding,
- Becoming clear about its current situation,
- Exploring its theological heritage and commitment,
- Envisioning a dynamic and creative future,
- Making the vision concrete in shared commitments that enable the vision to become a reality, developing more faithful and effective systems that help the church to embody the vision it proclaims,
- Being informed and challenged by the Gospel at every point along the way

A journey of missional renewal stimulates Christian hope and faithful imagination throughout your church by means of Bible study, dialogue, and prayer to discover together God's vision for your church's life and ministry. Its goal is the experience of Christian community where a diverse people discern one mind – the mind “which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil.2:5).
