

# Transforming Churches toward a Missional Posture

*As people who love the Lord Jesus Christ, we desperately need as North American people to view our culture from a missionary perspective... we need to be able to see what Jesus sees, to hear what Jesus hears, to touch what Jesus touches, and go where Jesus goes.*

-- Richard Mouw

## Resources for Judicatories who support Congregations

Offered by:



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## **The mission of the Center for Parish Development**

The Center for Parish Development is an ecumenical, missional, research, consulting, and teaching agency founded by a consortium of mission agencies, theological seminaries, and regional church bodies.

**The mission of the Center is to discover how the church in general and the local church in particular can learn to discern and participate in God's mission more faithfully and effectively, and to provide counsel and resources to facilitate that transformational process.**

The Center carries out this mission by forming dynamic learning partnerships in which the church's life and mission are brought into conversation with theological and organizational systems research, by sharing with others what we learn in these partnerships.

## The Challenge today

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The *mission* of the church is to discern, celebrate, and participate in God's redemptive mission in the world. The greatest challenge facing churches today is to live *missionally* – to develop missionary sensitivities, vision, and practices for engaging in God's mission. The many efforts churches are making to “keep up” or “survive” are futile if this fundamental challenge is not addressed. This missional reorientation represents a profound learning curve for most churches and a strategic challenge for most church leaders.

In light of this challenge, judicatory leaders seek to be a helpful resource to churches. But regional church budgets are being squeezed from many directions. Staff responsibilities and requests for service and support are on the rise. What is required are creative, cost effective and fruitful ways to leverage resources of time, staff experience and money for their most primary challenge of all – transforming churches toward a missional posture.

### *Underlying Assumptions about transforming churches into a missional posture*

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The mission of the church is to be found in God's mission. God who is always doing “a new thing” (Isaiah 43:19) calls the church to discern, celebrate, and participate in God's mission.

- The church, therefore, is called to bring the good news of the kingdom into engagement with the deep yearnings and concrete challenges of its worldly context.
- To engage today's context with the good news requires the formation of a disciple community – the faithful body of Jesus Christ – to be a sign, foretaste, and instrument of the reign of God.
- In many churches this requires a radically new vision, new ways of thinking, and new patterns of behavior.
- Church leaders must become equipped with skills, support, and resources for leading the journey.

### ***A Partner in Ministry:***

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The mission of the Center for Parish Development is to provide counsel and resources to facilitate the transformation of churches seeking to discern, celebrate, and participate more fully in God's mission. The Center Staff is eager to share its resources and experience to support regional leaders and teams who seek, who pray, and who work for the church's renewal as God's new creation community. *“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”* (2 Cor.5:17)

## **Transformation: What will we learn?**

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Churches being transformed into a missional posture are learning to:

**Pay attention to their missional context:**

They are developing skills for discovering, interpreting, and purposefully engaging their missionary context. They are moving beyond demographics to discern powerful cultural patterns, beliefs, and values that shape them and those with whom they live, work, and worship. They are responding to social and local realities (such as increased ethnic diversity, consumerism, nationalism, and variety of spiritualities) with the resources of the Gospel.

**Pay attention to the Spirit:**

They are cultivating the church as a community of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit – who calls, equips, and sends the church – empowers the faith community through biblical study to perceive, think, and behave as the People of God. As they learn about the world and about the Gospel, people are becoming knowledgeable and articulate. Evangelism grows naturally out of their commitment and excitement.

**Pay attention to one another:**

They are shaping anew the church's common life in ways that are a sign and foretaste of God's reign. They are developing and sustaining rich practices of "one-anothering" – joining and sharing, eating and drinking, listening and caring, testing and deciding, welcoming and befriending. They are drawing a critical mass of the congregation into study, prayer, conversation, discernment, and transformation as a disciple community.

**Pay attention to change:**

They are equipping leaders (lay and clergy together) to think, organize and lead frame-bending change toward a missional identity and vocation. They are creating readiness for significant spiritual renewal, building commitment to the major changes that are required. They are building and equipping leadership teams, thinking systemically, discerning God's vision for their church, inventing new ways to demonstrate their faith, and embedding innovation.

## What is the transformation journey like for congregations?

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The transformation journey toward a missional posture is –

- **Participatory:** The process involves the entire congregation in a variety of ways and times, in gatherings large and small, in study, prayer, conversation, discernment, planning and action.
- **Missional:** The process is not based on marketing surveys or focus groups. Rather, members and leaders engage one another in discerning God's calling, taking seriously the current cultural context, and discovering life together as a community formed by the Holy Spirit.
- **Strategic:** The congregation makes direction-setting decisions from a missional perspective. It makes decisions that will have long-term effects, impacting every aspect and segment of life in your congregation.
- **Engaging, exciting, and enriching.** Leaders and members together will discover this to be a learning journey of spiritual depth. Participants will experiment with and experience Christian community in new ways. They consistently report, "We are learning what it means to be the church and to live missionally." "There is new excitement and shared focus."

Missional transformation is not simply a new way to keep doing what is presently going on. It does not offer merely a "tune-up," or adaptations to existing programs and priorities. Rather, in a very constructive and faith-filled manner, it enables the congregation to evaluate and define anew the nature, purpose, and practices of its life together in light of God's mission. It offers the opportunity to make the changes discerned to be necessary in order to become more faithful to God's calling and purpose in their situation.

# MISSIONAL TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

*"Once you were no people but now you are God's people." 1 Peter 2:10*

## Phase Three: Discern God's Call

Define the future direction of the church.

- Study scripture, pray, learn together the nature and purpose of church.
- Discern a vision of God's calling.
- Craft a missional strategy to guide the church into the future.

## Phase Four: Design Congregational Life and Witness

Design the action plans, policies, and structures that express the missional strategy.

- Harness creative thinking to express concrete ministry plans.
- Craft a well-coordinated strategic plan to guide the church into the future.

## Phase Five: Live into a Missional Future

Embed the vision and missional strategy in practical and concrete ways that have been designed.

- Manage purposeful change.
- Form a transition plan to bring about endings and new beginnings.
- Implement the transition plan.

## Phase Two: Develop a Common View of Reality

Develop a consensus picture of the key issues facing us.

- Learn from the church's heritage, missional context, members' "habits of the heart," and organizational behavior.
- Embrace a clear set of "strategic issues" to be addressed.

## Phase One: Get Ready for the Journey

Key leaders and congregation as a whole develop commitment in advance of the process.

- Develop broad awareness and support.
- Build the case for taking the journey.
- Design the roadmap for the process.
- Get organized.

## Phases Along the Way

A journey of church transformation involves discerning and participating anew in God's mission in a changing context. It is a dynamic, faith-filled and renewing spiritual journey. A range of biblical and theological studies blended with practical steps and training are offered in each of the five phases illustrated here.

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## Missional Questions asked and answered in a Transformation Process

- Where are we?
- What is God doing here?
- Whose are we and how is God calling us?
- How is God sending us?
- How will we live as a called and sent people of God?

## **Some benefits churches can expect**

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1. Renewed spiritual life by discovering and experiencing anew what it means to be the church – God’s people of salt and light.
2. A community of Christ followers, learning to live as committed disciples.
3. People no longer content simply to be consumers of a church’s Sunday morning programs.
4. Increased excitement about and greater sharing of the Christian faith.
5. Increased clarity of purpose as a congregation.
6. A greater sense of trust and unity, pulling together toward common goals.
7. More responsive to new missional opportunities.
8. Developing leaders who are wise in both world and Word, offering sound and balanced guidance for the church’s ministry.
9. Broader participation in decision-making and ministries of the church.
10. Not just talk about God’s mission, but also organized to move concretely toward realizing that vision.
11. Savings in time and money by focusing congregation energies, asking the important questions, putting the spotlight on key results.
12. New measuring of congregational Fruitfulness: not by budgetary or membership goals, but by the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.



## A Regional Approach

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A regional approach to congregational transformation stewards the gifts, time, and energy of judicatory, congregation, and leaders alike in creative and fruitful partnerships.

A regional approach will include any or all of the following supports.

- Leadership:** To train clergy and lay leaders to create awareness and readiness, and to cultivate skills for leading a process of missional transformation.
- Theological grounding in a missional orientation.
  - Conceptual and practical skills for leading change.
- Congregations:** To enlist, train and guide congregations through a process of missional transformation.
- Discern God's vision for the congregation within a changed and changing context for ministry.
  - Organize the life of the church around God's vision and develop a forward looking plan of action to guide the congregation into the future.
- Consultants:** To enlist, train and support a network of consultants to assist congregations on a journey of missional transformation.
- Provide a range of practical and conceptual tools and skills.
  - Assist with curriculum resources and coaching.
- Connecting:** To strengthen relationships and leverage resources among congregations, across regions and within the judicatory for faithful and fruitful mission and ministry.
- Clusters of congregations and consultants supporting one another and learning from one another.
  - Mentoring congregations and leaders available to support on-going transformation.
- Strategy:** To develop a regional strategy and infrastructure to support on-going missional transformation.
- Build the regional team to coordinate and support congregational transformation.
  - Support for critical thinking on how to live and witness in a missionary setting.

## A Scenario for Supporting Missional Transformation in congregations

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A regional approach leverages the gifts, time, and energy of judicatory, congregations, and leaders alike in creative and fruitful partnerships. What follows is a “scenario” to stimulate conversation and imagination about the support to congregations for the challenging yet rewarding journey of missional transformation.

### Leadership Development for clergy and laity

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- ❑ Training to create awareness, readiness and commitment for transforming congregations toward a missional posture.
- ❑ Training for theological grounding in a missional orientation, skills for raising contextual attentiveness, practices of communal disciple formation.
- ❑ Conceptual and practical skills for leading change.

*Year One:           Introductory Workshop for all local church leaders (clergy and lay) focused to stimulate awareness and readiness for local church renewal.*

*Workshop for leaders (clergy and lay) focused to introduce, invite, and move into the local church process, followed by local church decision to opt in or opt out.*

*Year Two:           Workshops for pastors of local churches participating in the journey of transformation. (Other pastors and leaders are encouraged to attend as well)*

*Year Three:        Workshops for pastors of local churches participating in the journey of transformation. (Other pastors and leaders are encouraged to attend as well)*

### Clusters of congregations

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- ❑ Enlist, train and guide a group of churches through a process of missional transformation.
- ❑ Provide theologically-grounded curriculum resources to help congregations 1) get ready for the journey, 2) develop a common view of current realities, 3) discern God’s vision for their church, 4) design their ministry future and 5) embody their vision in practical strategies.
- ❑ Bible study processes that stimulate theological reflection, forming hearts and minds of disciples to discern and live God’s vision for their church.
- ❑ Evaluate and learn from experience in this transformation process to ensure assimilation of new skills and knowledge with additional groups or clusters of congregations.

- Year 1-3: Each local church's leadership team receives consistent support from a trained transformation consultant.  
Communication and collaboration occurs among congregations moving through the process linking arms.*
- Year One: Cluster workshops with a transformation team from each local church.  
Foci: Phase 1: Getting ready for the journey; Phase 2: Developing a common view of reality.*
- Year Two: Cluster workshops with a transformation team from each local church.  
Foci: Phase 3: Discerning God's Call; begin Phase 4: Designing congregational life and witness.*
- Year Three: Cluster workshops with a transformation team from each local church.  
Foci: Continue Phase 4; Phase 5: Living into a missional future.*

#### Consultants trained and supported

- ❑ Training and support for consultants identified and enlisted from across the regional body.
- ❑ Extensive consultant training resources that provide a range of practical and conceptual tools.
- ❑ Coaching for consultants to assist local churches on the journey of missional transformation.

*Year One: Initial consulting training seminar.  
Consultant training and support workshops*

*Year Two: Consultant training and support workshops.*

*Year Three: Consultant training and support workshops.*

*Consultants receive coaching and resources to design and facilitate cluster workshops with congregations and leadership development workshops.*

*The consultant component provides the means to support successive groups or clusters of congregations across the judicatory over time in a journey of renewal.*

#### Development of a regional strategy and infrastructure for supporting missional transformation in congregations

Consultation, training, and printed resources support with judicatory leaders and coordinating team to:

- ❑ Cultivate readiness, commitment and support for the development of a regional strategy of missional transformation.
- ❑ Encourage and sustain corporate critical thinking throughout the judicatory for determining how to live and witness in a missionary setting.

- ❑ Link churches with one another, helping them build relationships of mutual support and sharing of gifts.
- ❑ Support the Coordinating team to provide on-going leadership, coordination and support of a transformation “pilot” process.

## Costs

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Costs will vary according to the scope of a project and the length of the ministry partnership agreed to. It is recommended that the congregations and the regional body share the costs since financial ownership by the congregation helps committed participation. We would be glad to explore a more detailed scenario and how it might be structured for your situation.

## Example

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The initiating body is a middle judicatory church development, evangelism, or mission committee. That body together with its regional council contracts with the Center for first steps: to organize and equip a regional coordinating team, design the regional approach that fits their situation, cultivate broad awareness and support, and begin enlistment. The process begins with training, and unfolds as a powerful system of support to an initial cluster of churches, their clergy and lay leaders, supported by a cadre of consultants-in-training. The Center staff supports the regional coordinating team, trains the consultants and equips them to support the cluster of churches through their journey of missional transformation. Curriculum resources are provided to support all leadership and congregational participants in the process. As a result, powerful new learning and renewal takes place. Consultant training pays dividends for years to come, while training and resources become available to more and more congregations as successive “waves” of churches participate.

To learn more about a regional approach to missional transformation, contact:



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