

MISSION STUDY

A mission study is the telling of the congregation's story. It takes into account its history, the lives of its members, the community in which it is located, and the hopes for the future. The power of a good study is in narrative. Every study needs to include the following in some manner.

1. **MISSION STATEMENT:** A concise, specific statement generally supported by the whole congregation, which captures a vision of the faithful and calls the congregation to respond to God in the immediate future. A vague paragraph of religious platitudes of the “one size fits all Christian churches” sort is not helpful. This MISSION STATEMENT may be used to introduce the study or as a logical summation at the end.

2. **A word “picture” of the congregation** - an accurate description of the church should include:
 - a. ***How do we encounter Christ?*** Tell what you believe, where and how members experience Christ in their lives. Describe how the church helps people encounter Christ.

 - b. ***Who is our community?*** God calls us to minister in and to a community. How do you define community? Draw a narrative “picture” of the community in which the church is located. It is important that this “picture” not be drawn exclusively from the congregation’s point of view. Do not forget to investigate current trends in the congregation and community which will have an inevitable impact in the near future. Support this picture with information from demographic studies, maps, charts, or other documentation and one-on-one neighborhood contacts and interviews.

 - c. ***What are our gifts?*** God has given each church a variety of unique, definable gifts. (See I Cor. 12.) Congregational gifts may include financial assets, the physical plant, skills of members, opportunities and/or abundance in areas such as worship, education, or fellowship. Make a list of all of the gifts God has blessed the church with including those discovered in items a, b, and c above.

3. **What is the ministry of the church and what are the expectations for the future?** This may include:
 - a. **How Christ calls us to ministry.** A mission study must address specific needs of the congregation that are consistent with the mission statement. Give specific examples and programs that show how you minister to your community in the name of Jesus Christ. These may be in the nature of outreach (some form of proclamation), or an “in house” building up of the Body of Christ in some manner (e.g. a deacon’s plan to support elderly members through a transportation program).

 - b. **How can we use our gifts?** God has planted you in a particular context with gifts, people, assets and tools to do a specific work. How will God use the gifts that are already in your hands to do a new and mighty work? Examine your context, gifts, membership and other assets and ask how these gifts can be used for mission. Be creative.

- c. **Expectations for the future** - that is, a Vision Statement. What do you want to happen?"
What are your three to five year goals? How will you make it happen? (strategies)
- 4. Supporting documentation.** Maps, site plans, charts, budgets, lists of community services or attractions or schools, graphs, and statistics may all be used to validate and/or clarify the descriptions of the community and congregation.
- a) Good narrative prose, well edited and supported, is essential.
 - b) Items of humor and illustrations can enhance the study.
 - c) Painful honesty, combined with constant prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit by the Commission responsible for the study, and continual communication with the congregation and session, will make it a significant contribution to the life of the church.
 - d) A Mission Study is not a marketing document!

POSSIBLE EXPLORATIONS FOR WRITING A MISSION STUDY*

Because each church is unique, each church approaches the writing of a statement in its own way. Included here are some models and samples that may be helpful. These are not intended to be formulas but merely suggestions and stimulators for your own ideas. Any of these may work well for a first draft and then be developed.

BASIC MODEL *Begin writing phrases, sentences, and words which respond to the following:*

- Who have we been? Who are we now? How are we unique as a community of faith?
- How does our setting affect who we are?
- What are we doing now? Why do we do what we do? How do we do what we do?
- Where do we want to go from here? What is God calling us to?
- What are our hopes for congregational life and outreach into the community and world?
- How are we going to get there? What processes will we employ? Who will be involved?

Develop paragraphs. What themes seem to emerge that might shape the statement?

MODEL #2 *Respond to these questions. Some questions may require more than one sentence to answer. Arrange answers in paragraphs.*

- Who are we as a unique community of faith?
- How has God shown special care for us as a community of faith?
- What kind of community of faith do we feel God is calling us to be?
- What do we hope to do in order to fulfill our calling?

MODEL #3 *Complete each sentence with several words, phrases, or sentences.*

- We, the members of _____ are a people:
 - Passionate about...
 - Our passion is reflected in...
 - Whose spiritual gifts as a community are...
 - Our spiritual gifts are reflected in...
 - Surrounded by people who and needs that...
 - Our response to these needs is...
- As a unique expression of Christian community, we intend to honor this passion, use these gifts to serve these people and needs by...

MODEL #4 *Describe a COMPELLING CAUSE that is connected to a CONCRETE GOAL that will be fulfilled by focusing energy and effort, prayer and perseverance on the TWO VITAL BEHAVIORS that are most likely to create MOTIVATION and SKILL DEVELOPMENT that will lead the congregation to accomplish the goal and fulfill the cause.*

- Example 1 – Focus on Evangelism
 - *Compelling Cause:* People need to encounter Jesus Christ and a personal invitation to church is the most effective way for that to happen, as 50% of friends will say yes to a personal invitation.
 - *Concrete Goal:* (YES, this is concrete) FPC members will invite 100 friends to come to church with them during Lent; (NO, this is not concrete) We will begin to emphasize the importance of invitations.
 - *Vital Behaviors for Evangelism:* We will (a) print business cards that can be used when inviting a friend and (b) guide / teach / practice a script to build members' comfort level when inviting a friend.

- Example 2 – Focus on Adult Discipleship
 - *Compelling Cause:* People encounter Jesus Christ in the Word and experience deep, personal transformation; this is especially true in groups as adult learners go deeper when in community.
 - *Concrete Goal:* (Yes) We will have 75 new people participate in adult study groups between Labor Day and Thanksgiving; (NO) We will make a push for more adult education.
 - *Vital for Adult Discipleship:* We will create all of our adult Bible studies so that they (a) use a user friendly, completely intuitive format, and (b) are time limited groups that respect people's busy schedules.

- Example 3 – Focus on Missional Ministry
 - *Compelling Cause:* People encounter Jesus Christ through the faith community living as a reflection of God's light and love, while attractional models of church fail to engage our culture.
 - *Concrete Goal:* (YES) We will create six, new missional initiatives between Labor Day and Memorial Day; (NO) We will try to be more missional.
 - *Vital Behaviors for Missional:* We will (a) create operational clarity by defining the term "missional" and what is meant by "missional ministry" in sermons, lessons and printed material toward the goal of 95% comprehension among our members, and (b) encourage our members to create and initiate their own projects by redesigning

the way we budget for mission such that all missional projects that include three or more members will be funded by the church.

MODEL #5 *Describe your mission in terms of Identity in Christ, which inspires Motivation to understand why something is important, which leads to live a particular way.*

- We are...
 - Therefore we do Member Care BECAUSE...
 - Therefore we INTEND to do member care in this way...
- We are...
 - Therefore we Worship and Celebration BECAUSE...
 - Therefore we INTEND to worship in this way...
- We are...
 - Therefore we do Education BECAUSE...
 - Therefore we INTEND to educate in this way...
- Continue “We are...” for: outreach, mission, prayer, stewardship, leadership, etc.

MODEL #5A *Another congregation structured the statement by titling sections:*

- Who We Are
- Who We Are Becoming
- Why We Desire to Become Who We Are to Be

- What We Are to Do
- How We Are to Do It
- Why We Desire to Do What We Are to Do

MODEL #6 *Appreciative Inquiry*

- Appreciative inquiry seeks to discern a congregation’s call through conversation about their history and identity that focuses on strengths, blessings and hopes. For a review of the Appreciative Inquire process, please see pages 15-16.

*Models are stolen...errr, “borrowed” (and adapted) from the Presbytery of Genesee Valley, with thanks!

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PROCESS STEPS

Key to success is high participation in a positive, well-implemented church-wide event.

The Basic Process Is as Follows:

1. Send the Session the first two chapters of "Memories Hopes and Conversations" to read. It is important they have a good concept of what it is about.
2. Review and reinforce the concepts, and then led them through the exercise as a Session.
3. Having done the exercise, the Session should appoint a few of their number to form a team.
4. Those elders, formed as a team of sufficient number and strength, will:
 - a. Plan
 - b. Promote
 - c. Implement a church-wide event
5. If the team does a great job in all three of these tasks (this is crucial), the desired effects will be:
 - a. Clarity about themselves,
 - b. Be energized toward their shared future.
 - c. A background of confusion and malaise about future prospects will be replaced by a positive and hopeful outlook that continues into the next phases of transition.

A good process takes the needed time at each step. Solid work will reap commensurate rewards.

Implementation of Church-Wide Event

Tables: 6 – 8 people per table. Each table should have the following resources:

- Interview question sheets for each person
- Pens/pencils
- Colored crayons and markers (lots)
- A LARGE newsprint-size "Post-it"

Interviews: Use "Memories, Hopes and Conversations" sheet on the next page

"In front of you there is a sheet with three questions on it. Break into pairs for mutual interviews. You will take turns responding to each question, while the other listens and takes notes. Each person will have 8 minutes to respond to the first question, so the first question will take 16 minutes."

"Take a moment to think about the first question. Decide who will respond first, while the other person listens and takes notes. In 8 minutes, we will let you know it is time to trade places and let the other person respond while you take notes."

"In 8 minutes I will let you know when it is time to move on to the next question. The next two questions will take 6 minutes for each person – 12 minutes per question."

Appreciative Inquiry: Memories, Hopes & Conversations

Interviewee _____ Interviewer _____

Date _____

1. Remembering my entire experience at our church, when was I most alive, most motivated and excited about my involvement? What happened? What was my part? How did I feel?

2. What do I value most about our church? What activities or ingredients or ways of life are most important? What are the best features of our church?

3. Building on these experiences and strengths, what are three possibilities I prayerfully imagine that God might desire for the future of our church?