Our Church’s Renewal – Why and What?

*Getting Ready for Renewal* invites you to consider a time of congregational renewal as a journey – from somewhere and to somewhere, a journey for which you will be inviting your congregation to go along. This resource supports leaders together asking and answering, “Why a renewal journey?” and “What will a renewal journey be like for us?”

**Why a renewal journey?**

The primary reason renewal is needed in congregations is because of the ever-changing nature of the church’s ministry context. It is a major fact that the ministry context for ALL churches in North America has changed as we have been shifting away from a “churched” culture. In addition to this changing social climate, churches are facing demographic changes inside and in their wider community outside.

No church is immune from its changing ministry context. It probably never should be! While this is often experienced by congregations as a challenge or a threat, it is also more importantly an opportunity – to discover afresh what God is up to in our world, and how we can join in.

**Why are we going now?**

But, why is a renewal journey needed in YOUR church, and why is it needed now?

To answer this question, explore together with your leaders such questions as these:

- What is the situation that your church is facing today?
- What opportunities are opening right before your eyes, or will in the very near future?
- What challenges are you facing that you cannot ignore?
- What is the need for learning and being church in new and compelling ways?

Whether opportunity or challenge, crisis or danger, a picture can be painted that describes the compelling reasons for the renewal of your church in mission.

Take time as church leaders to paint this picture together – the compelling reasons why consideration of a renewal agenda is needed now.

List those reasons here:

1.
What will a renewal journey be like for us?

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 sending God, and the church is the 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.

If a time of renewal in the church is like a journey, then we will want to consider what a renewal journey will be like, where it will take us, and what will be involved. The statement above begins this conversation by proposing that the purpose of renewal in the broadest sense is this: To become clearer about how God is sending us into the world and living that mission fruitfully at every level and corner of our congregational life and ministry.

This resource provides support for a discussion with your leaders about what a time of renewal in YOUR church might be like, what it would accomplish in particular, and how your church would benefit.
What a time of renewal is like

At the outset we can say that a congregational journey of renewal is –

**Participatory:** Involving the entire congregation in a variety of ways and times, in gatherings large and small, in study, prayer, conversation, discernment, planning and action.

**Missional:** Not based on marketing surveys or focus groups. Rather, leaders and participants engage one another in discerning God’s calling, taking seriously the ministry setting, making decisions about your congregation’s future, and discovering life together as a community formed by the Holy Spirit,

**Engaging, exciting, and enriching.** Participants discover a time of renewal to be spiritually enriching and engaging, experimenting and experiencing Christian community in new ways. They consistently report, “We are learning what it means to be the church and to live missionally.” And, “I can’t imagine anything more exciting and more important in all the world than taking part in Jesus’ mission!”

Where will we be going?

A time of renewal helps your church think, perceive, and behave as a *missional* church.

A missional church is a community of faith where people are discerning and participating in God’s mission. 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 time of renewal can help you to achieve any or all of these goals:

a. Spiritual Formation and Renewal: To become more centered in Christ and receptive to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, thus cultivating the spiritual energy of this congregational community.

b. Context: To discover afresh what God is doing within our own ministry setting, decide how we are called to respond, and engage in fresh relationship and witness.

c. Vision: To discover a compelling and exciting shared vision of what God is calling us a congregation to be and do as we look to the future.
d. Direction: To make decisions that provide direction for our church’s future, such as clarifying our mission, goals, and values.

e. Navigation: With vision and goals in place engaging at all levels – congregation participants, ministry teams, and leadership council – for becoming vision-led and mission-driven in all we do.

f. Reflection: To provide opportunities, resources, and occasions for spiritual practices of Bible study, prayer and mutual conversation, cultivating fresh and compelling understandings and experience of church.

g. Assessment and alignment: To insure a reexamination of resources (leadership, finances, facilities), organizational structures and processes, ministries and programs, and to align these with the vision.

h. Communication: To cultivate an information-sharing network that not only informs but transforms our awareness, motivations and participation in relationship with one another as the body of Christ.

**Question for reflection and discussion**

Which of the goals for renewal capture your attention as you consider this moment in the life of your church?

**How our church will benefit**

As your renewal goals are achieved our congregation will benefit in particular ways:

- Renewed spiritual life by discovering and experiencing anew what it means to be the church.

- Learning to live as more aware and committed disciples – a community of Christ-followers.

- People no longer content simply to be consumers of a church’s Sunday morning programs.
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- Increased excitement about and greater sharing of the Christian faith.
- Increased clarity of purpose as a congregation.
- A greater sense of trust and unity, pulling together toward common goals.
- More responsive to new missional opportunities.
- Developing leaders who are wise in both world and Word, offering sound and balanced guidance for the church’s ministry.
- Broader participation in the decision-making and ministries of the church.
- Not just talk about God’s mission, but also organized to move concretely toward realizing that vision.
- Savings in time and money by focusing congregation energies, asking the important questions, putting the spotlight on key results.
- New measurements of congregational health: 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.

**Question for Reflection and Discussion**

Which of the benefits listed would you especially like for your church? What other benefits would you like to add?