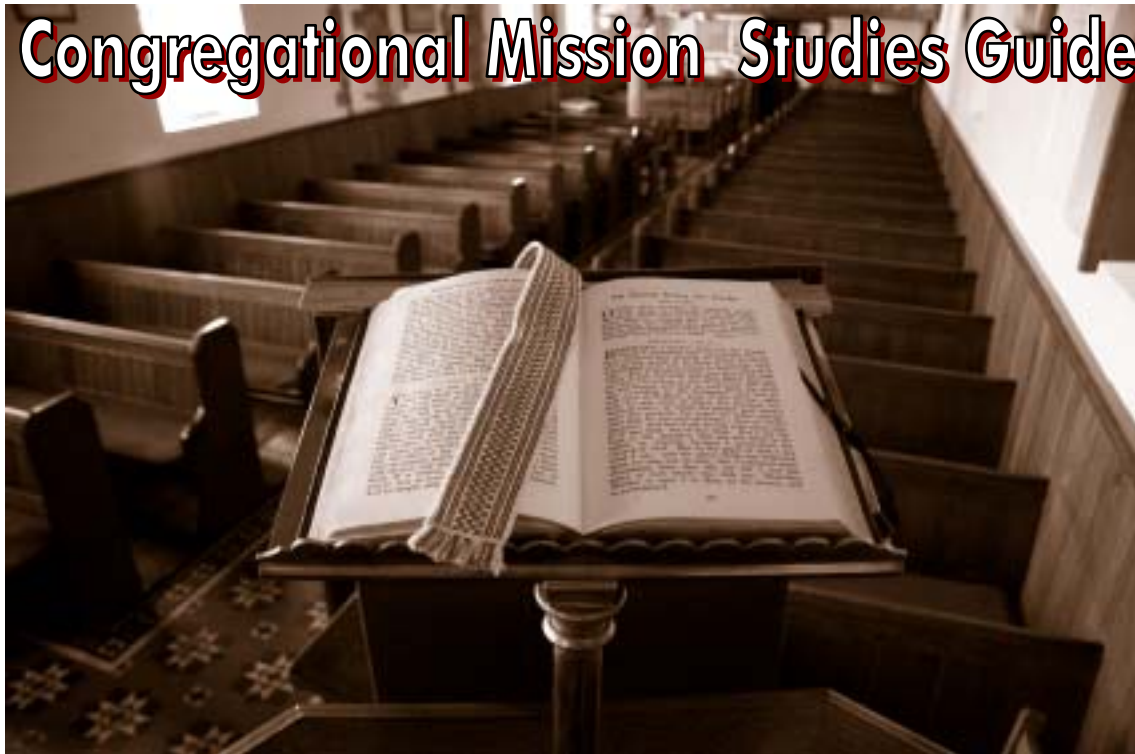


# Congregational Mission Studies Guide



**Committee on Ministry, February 2008  
Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area**

# Table of Contents



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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Study One: Washington Presbytery</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Study Two: Presbytery of Missouri River Valley</b>	<b>Page 43</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Study Three: Presbytery of North Central Iowa</b>	<b>Page 51</b>

## INTRODUCTION: CONGREGATIONAL MISSION STUDIES



An important part of the process for calling a new pastor for a church is the completion of a Church Information Form (CIF). This can be an intense and time consuming task especially if the church does not have an accurate, defined and well understood vision. If a church or the congregation doesn't know or can not articulate its vision, it is difficult to complete a CIF that will attract a pastor that is best suited to lead that congregation. Conducting and completing a mission study is an effective way in which to confirm the accuracy of a current vision or develop a new vision for the church.

The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area does not absolutely require that a mission study be conducted in a congregation when it is calling a pastor. It is highly recommended and in most situations very necessary. However, due to unique situations, some churches will not need a comprehensive study.

Mission Studies can be long and very intense or they can be quite brief and to the point. Some churches take weeks or months to conduct the study. Other churches have conducted the study in one day. A study that is appropriate for one church may not be for another. There are many factors, which should enter into the decision on which study fits a church. Some of these could be:

1. Does the church have a well-defined and understood vision and identity?
2. Do the members of the congregation agree on what type of pastor is needed?
3. Is there a need to consider a new strategy for pastoral leadership?
4. Has there been a major change in lay leadership or a conflict?
5. Has church membership either grown or declined significantly?
6. Has the congregational mix changed significantly over time?
7. Has the community in which the church is located changed significantly?

Interim Pastors are usually required to have completed special training, which includes how to help the congregation conduct a mission study.

Churches use many different types of mission studies. Some of the ones that are recommended in the Presbytery Calling a Pastor manual are:

- [Smaller Church Mission Study Guide](#) by Henry A. Blunk, (Presbytery Resource Center)
- [Congregational Mission Studies](#), James Cushman, Henry Snedeker-Meier, Bruce Tischler, David Wasserman, (PDS Louisville)
- [Congregational Survey and Mission Study](#), [www.pcusa.org/ministers/pdf/congre-survey.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/ministers/pdf/congre-survey.pdf)
- [Studying Congregations, a New Handbook](#), Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley and William McKinney (Abingdon Press 1998)

- Congregations in Transition, A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing and Adapting in Changing Communities, Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman (Jossey-Bass 2002)
- Another one recently used by at least one church is A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations by Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce (WKJ- Louisville, London)

When a church feels that it does not need a long, detailed study, a shorter process may be considered. This manual contains information from three different presbyteries on how relatively shortened vision development and mission studies have been conducted and used in completing a CIF. The process for each is very different from the others. One is very comprehensive and one is quite short. Details of the three abbreviated mission study processes are labeled Study One, Study Two and Study Three.

#### A NOTE OF CAUTION:

Before deciding to use a shortened mission study process, it would be wise to consider that many times a shorter, abbreviated process may not produce the best pastoral match. When that happens a church may find that it needs to go through the mission study process again to make a better selection.

To find out more about any of the subject mission studies, contact the appropriate presbytery for additional information and help.

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SPECIAL THANKS GO TO THE WASHINGTON PRESBYTERY, THE PRESBYTERY OF THE MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY AND THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTH CENTRAL IOWA FOR THEIR HELP AND CONTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS INCLUDED IN THIS PUBLICATION.

*The material in this guide was edited, organized and compiled by Ann Allen, Committee on Ministry, Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area and Dennis Sanders, IT/Communications Specialist for the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area.. Mrs. Allen can be reached at [akjallen@aol.com](mailto:akjallen@aol.com)*

# STUDY ONE -Washington Presbytery

WASHINGTON PRESBYTERY (Enclosure - Study 1) (Parts 1-5)

P.O. Box 146

Eighty Four, PA 15330 (This is about 30 miles south of Pittsburgh)

(724) 222-1500

E-mail: [washpresby@mlynk.com](mailto:washpresby@mlynk.com)

General presbyter – Rev. Dr. David L. Bleivik

Contact: Transition Councilman - John Alrutz 724-796-4471

E-mail [Alrutz@comcast.net](mailto:Alrutz@comcast.net)

This study was conducted with the help of the presbytery and completed in one day. It is a process used by all of the churches in the Washington Presbytery and is being used in the Redstone Presbytery. It allows flexibility in presentations, which permits churches to modify it somewhat to fit their congregations.

It is computerized and works very well for the Washington Presbytery. All results of the exercises are entered on site as soon as each section is completed, which allows all participants to obtain a printed copy of the results the day of the event.

Although, some churches can take long periods of time to complete a pastoral call, some have taken only a few weeks. Because this study/CIF procedure is so efficient, it expedites the process and the time taken for a pastoral call can be as short as 2 months. However, it can take as long as 2 years, although that is an exception, not the norm.

The study was created with the help of God by the Evangelism and Congregational Development Committee (ECD) of the Washington Presbytery.

A team of volunteer Presbytery pastors and laypersons work together to lead and facilitate the study. Each person, usually, is responsible for one part of the study with assistance from others. It is conducted on a Sunday and the Worship section of the study is the regular Sunday morning worship service lead by a team member. ECD, strongly, encourages all churches to permit participation of all individuals concerned with the current and future vision and direction of the church, members and non-members alike.

Another important part of the event day may be completed with help from a sister congregation, who may help with the noon meal (either a light lunch or complete dinner) and childcare. It is an intergenerational program, which ensures there is room for youth participation. For children too young to participate in the activities, there is childcare. These children, also, will be called to participate in the activities by preparing either a group or individual presentation.

In developing this program a need was identified for a person to work with the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). A position was created to fill this need. The person in this position works with the study team, ECD, Committee on Ministry (COM), Presbytery and the PNC through each step in the selection process.

Self-study Day – Consists of four periods of study and discernment and a worship time. (Part 1)

**Period 1 - 9:30 am – 10.45 am (Part 2)**

- Gathering Time
- Prayer
- Introduction and Overview of the day
- Listing Expectations
- The Eight Questions
- Wall of Wonder

What we do well that nurtures faith

Break 10:45-11:00 am

Worship 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Period 2 - Lunch and Overview of the morning sessions 12:00 – 1:30 pm (Part 3)**

- What we do well (if not done earlier)
- Bunch of Bests
- Survey Snapshots
- Pastoral Qualities
- Challenge to pray for future pastor and vision

**Period 3 - Charting the Future 1:45 – 3:15 pm (Part 4)**

- Identifying the Challenges
- Planning for Mission
- Symbol, Song and Story

**Period 4 - Where Do We Go from Here? 3:15 – 3:30 pm (Part 5)**

- Closing Plenary
- Children's Report
- Reports from Proposal - Writing Teams
- Celebrating the Symbol, Song and Story
- Outlining the Next Steps for the Search
- Evaluation
- Send Out

# CONGREGATIONAL VISION DAY



Created by the Evangelism and  
Congregational Development  
Committee  
Washington Presbytery  
2003

# ENGAGING THE CONGREGATION IN A MISSION STUDY

## WHY?

You may be asking the question "Why does the Presbyterian Church (USA) or the Washington Presbytery have a role in the mission of our church or in our search for a new pastor?"

The answer is simple "As Presbyterians we believe that pastors and congregations are brought together through a call from God." This call is confirmed as the pastor, the church, and the presbytery say "yes" to the relationship.

This three-way partnership is acted out throughout the pastoral selection process and follows the guidelines established for us by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order (G-14.0501b).

An understanding of the mission of a particular church, as desired by God and the congregation, is essential; likewise the Pastoral qualities desired of your next Pastor must be identified prior to the Pastoral search beginning.

In the past, in the Washington Presbytery, this written study has taken from 6 months to 3 years to complete and be approved. ECD of the Washington Presbytery found this time frame to be unacceptable and developed a voluntary one-day Self Study or "Vision Day" process in which your church may elect to participate.

With your participation we believe this one-day event will provide you with a clear understanding of the direction God and you want to see your church move toward in mission as well as identifying the Pastoral qualities you desire in a pastor.

This analysis of the church mission and desired pastor qualities is the foundation on which your Pastor search begins.

## Washington Presbytery Self-Study Day

Times: 9:00 – 10:45 am

Gather for coffee and rolls in social hall.

Open with prayer.

Introduction and overview of the day

List expectations

Use the Nine Questions

*(What do we need to answer to move forward with our search?)*

Wall of Wonder

*(Claiming the past and affirming our history.)*

What do we do well that nurtures faith?

*(So we can build on our strengths.)*

Morning Worship 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Lunch and More. 12:00 – 1:30 pm

What we do well (If not done earlier.)

Bunch of the Bests *(Setting the mission priorities.)*

Survey Snapshots *(What do the surveys tell us about our congregation and its style?)*

Pastoral Qualities *(What skills and attributes will be a good match for what we have said we are being led to do for God?)*

Challenge to pray for future pastor.

Charting the Future 1:45 – 3:15 pm

Identifying the Challenges *(What is standing between us and realizing our priorities?)*

Planning for Mission *(Writing proposals to address the challenges.)*

Symbol, Song and Story *(Simultaneously, a team will write a three-paragraph story about where we are now, create a symbol that holds our past, present and future and design a symbol for our vision.)*

Write a song, using the early images and material developed by the Story and Symbol teams.

Where Do We Go From Here? 3:15 – 3:30 pm

Closing Plenary.

Children's Report

Reports for the proposal writing teams

Celebrating the symbol, song and story

Outlining the next steps for the search

Congregational Mission Studies-Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area

Evaluation (*A brief reflection to help the team improve the process.*)

Send out.

### **Materials for Congregational Vision Day**

The local **church** will provide:

- Meeting space/eating space set with tables and chairs
- Child care for small children
- Newsprint pads (flip chart) with easels or newsprint/butcher paper and masking tape for walls
- Markers appropriate for pads or newsprint
- Pens and or pencils
- Note paper
- Index cards -any size
- Drawing paper and crayons or markers
- Copy machine with fresh cartridge and paper
- Staplers
- Light continental breakfast
- Lunch
- Beverages throughout the day
- Portable lectern for the social hall
- Copy and mail surveys to families and collect completed surveys.
- Reproduce participants' packets-enough for every person attending to have one.
- Name tags (to help the facilitators)

The **Facilitation Team** will provide:

- Tabulation of surveys-unless undertaken by congregation or PNC
- Originals of pages for participants' packets, surveys, and all handouts and forms to be completed
- The Nine Questions in display form
- Partially-completed Wall of Wonder on butcher paper
- Team of trained volunteers to facilitate the day
- Leadership for Sunday worship, including sermon-which has to do with the day

## The Nine Questions to be Answered by the Self Study

(Revised to fit CIF)

Washington Presbytery 2003

Put Nine Questions on wall in poster form and leaders review with CIF Questions.

CIF: PLEASE WRITE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR CHURCH/ORGANIZATION PROGRAMS OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

# 1. What of our history is valuable to our future?

# 4. What do we do well that nurtures faith and why we do it?

CIF: DESCRIBE WHAT GIFTS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES YOUR CONGREGATION POSSESSES TO FULFILL ITS MISSION

Snapshot of Surveys

CIF: WHAT ARE THE KEY THEOLOGICAL ISSUES OF YOUR CHURCH AND SOCIETY THAT ARE REFLECTED IN THE MINISTRY OF YOUR CONGREGATION/ORGANIZATION?

# 3. How do we describe our theological stance, and how will this guide our decision?

# 7. What is the "style" of our congregation? (From Wall of Wonder& Survey)

# 8. What are the practical challenges facing our congregation?

CIF: POSITION DESCRIPTION: MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES:  
FOR WHAT TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS AND PROGRAM AREAS WILL THIS PERSON HAVE RESPONSIBILITY?

# 5. What is God calling us to do in mission?

CIF: DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED IN A PERSON WHO WOULD FILL THIS POSITION

# 2. What is the personality of our congregation and how does that inform our choice of pastoral leadership?

# 9. What kind of leadership do we need to achieve our goals?

# 6. What qualities of our fellowship would attract the kind of leadership we seek?

## **Session 1. We Celebrate our Past and Present (Intergenerational Sunday School) 60 min.**

**Purpose Statement:** During this opening session, children, youth and adults will look at where they have come from as a church and where they are right now. They will work together to gain a better understanding of who they are as a unique part of the body of Christ. Childcare may be provided for infants and smaller children.

### **Room Setup and Pre-Arrangements:**

This portion of the event should be held in the fellowship hall or other large area. Tables and chairs should be set up, approximately 8 to a table. Participants need to be able to see the large sheet of paper on which the Wall of Wonder will emerge. Coffee, donuts, juice or any type of light continental breakfast can be set up at one end of the room. You will need a poster board on which you have written the nine questions. This will later be displayed on the wall or on a stand where all can see. You will also need either a newsprint pad and stand or an overhead projector and markers.

On the tables, you will need index cards, pencils, markers, drawing paper, copies of the Avery and Marsh song "We Are the Church" (or other appropriate song), pieces of construction paper cut into 5 inch squares (a different color for each table) and one whole sheet of the same color paper. You will also need to prepare ahead of time a construction paper puzzle for each table. To do that, cut a piece of construction paper into 8 sections. Again, use a different color for each table (to make this activity better, glue or scan a picture of the church onto each piece of construction paper before cutting it apart).

Have someone at the entrance to the room to welcome participants and to hand each person a puzzle piece. Instruct them to find the table with the same color construction paper and begin to work on putting the puzzle together. Also, invite participants to enjoy the refreshments provided.

Leader should place a long piece of newsprint on the wall (or floor or table if wall not able to be used). This newsprint should be approximately 10-20 feet long. Using a marker, place a horizontal line through the center of the newsprint running from end to end. Mark the founding date of the church at the left end and the present date near the right end (leave some extra space at the right end to indicate "the future"). Mark off periods of time with vertical lines, about 10 years apart. This will become your "Wall of Wonder".

### **Gathering Together (10 Minutes)**

Distribute Participating Packets or place on table. Welcome participants to this day of learning and sharing. Invite participants to use the 5x5 pieces of colored construction paper to *tear* something to represent what they like best about their church. For example, someone who really likes the music, might tear a musical note or a hymnbook. Someone who really likes the people, might tear an outline of a person or a face. After they have had a few minutes to do this, invite them to share their name and what they like best about their

Congregational Mission Studies-Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area

church using their torn symbol. If the group is over twenty, share only at your own table. If the group is under twenty, share with the whole group.

**Preview of the Day** (10 minutes)

**Open with prayer**

Briefly talk about the purpose of the day. Stress the excitement of beginning a new chapter in the life of the church with a new pastor.

Share the nine questions that will be addressed throughout the day. Explain that the answers to these questions will shape their search for a new pastor and a direction for their ministry.

Ask each person to take an index card on the table and on it write:

"Today, I hope to . . ."

Read them at the table and then have whole table group create one new card saying:

"Today, we hope to accomplish. . ."

Collect these and use them to create a spontaneous litany.

Read each card. Have group respond after each card is read: "Guide us, Holy Spirit."

Post these on the wall or on poster board.

### ***A Look at the Past- Wall of Wonder*** (30 minutes)

Explain that the newsprint on the wall is about to become our Wall of Wonder as we take a look at where we have been and marvel at all God has done. The space above the line will be used to represent people or events internal to the church. The space below the line will be for people or events external to the church, such as WWII (or a new local high school being built).

Begin by verbally getting some information from the participants. Questions might include "How many live within a 5 mile radius of the church?" or "How many were 'born and bred' in this congregation?" or "How many have ever been members of a church of another denomination?"

Then, go over some of the facts on the Wall of Wonder that have already been placed there, such as the date the church was founded, pivotal national events, etc. After that, invite participants to work together on the Wall of Wonder, putting on it when they were born, when they joined the church, significant events they remember, etc.

After putting their names and birthdays on the wall, children can be encouraged to draw pictures on another paper of the significant events folks have remembered. These can be displayed along with the Wall of Wonder.

After the Wall is complete, help folks reflect on the events and people displayed. Guide the conversation to answer:

#### **Question #1 "What of our history is valuable to our future?"**

Have someone write the answer on the appropriate form.

(For more information on the Wall of Wonder, see the following page.)

Ask: **"Looking at the Wall of Wonder, what did the church used to do that you wish you could do again?"**

Write responses on a separate sheet of big paper and pick top one or two. Leave paper up as a reminder.

Ask **"What does the Wall of Wonder tell us about this church?"**

Write this on big paper and leave up. Get scribe to write down on 8 1/2 x 11 paper for packet.

(This sheet can be put on a chart that is oriented in the Landscape format.)

# History Wall of Wonder

## What is Our Past is Valuable?

Early Times      1900                      1910                      1920                      1930  
Internal

External

1940                      1950                      1960                      1970                      1980  
Internal

External

1990                      2000                      2001                      2002                      2003  
Internal

External

2004                      2005                      2006  
Internal

External

**A Look at the Present** (10 minutes)

**Open with Silent Prayer**

On newsprint or overhead projector, quickly list all the things the church is doing in mission and ministry. Put a star beside those that the church is doing well. Use this information to answer

**Question #4 "What do we do well that nurtures faith?"**

Have someone record these answers on the forms provided.

**Brainstorm Lists at Tables**

Each person star best one. Each table pick top one. Then list on big paper by tables and lump/group into two or three day activities that nurture faith. If necessary, vote by show of hands on two or three.

**\*Option**

Give each person stick-on stars and have him/her put by top of one or two. (May put both stars on one choice.)

**Closing** (5 minutes)

Spend a few moments in prayer, thanking God for the joys and strengths of ministry. Sing an appropriate song from the song sheets provided.

**Reflection Question:**

Why do we value these things? What makes us want to do them?

Write the "whys" on big chart and make sure to scribe notes on worksheet for print shop.

(This sheet can be put into a format that is Landscape oriented.)

## What We Do Well

What are we already doing that nurtures faith?

Our top few activities that nurture faith.

Why do we feel called to these particular things?

### **Lunch and More** (90 mins.)

**Purpose Statement:** Besides being a time of refreshment and fellowship, lunch around the tables provides an opportunity to learn more about our mission as the church. As dessert is served, participants will work together to determine three ministry priorities.

### **Lunch** (60 mins.)

(During lunch, facilitator may want to review results of mailed surveys dealing with personality of the congregation and theological viewpoints.)

### **Dessert and More** (30 mins.)

While participants enjoy their dessert, each lunch table (can be the same or different tables as earlier) is to get the "**Our Future**" worksheet and a pen or pencil.

Very briefly review with group the strengths identified this morning and stress the importance of building on strengths. Give groups 10 minutes to complete the handout. They can put additional responses on the back.

Have each person in a table group select his/her top one or two and share them with the whole group. List these on newsprint or overhead. As a whole group, identify the top three priorities. Use these to record on the worksheet under Top Three (Priorities).

Reintroduce the two to three things the church used to do but people wish to do again, as possibilities. Ask each person to list his/her future wishes. Each person put a star on the best possibility.

Each table pick two to three best from all those starred, lumping those that combine naturally. Whole group use stick-on stars to identify top three.

\*Be flexible if the group insists that an item not be lumped.

(This sheet can be put in a Landscape orientation if needed.)

## Our Future

Best List:

Top Three (Priorities)

## **Pastoral Leadership Session (to follow Bunch of Bests)**

**Context:** "Every person has an image of the ideal pastor. These images differ, even among members of the same congregation. Thus, some members will give higher approval ratings of the pastor than will others."

"When PNCs list the qualities they seek in a pastor, the list can fall short of realistic. I saw one where they wanted a *man* in his 30s with 10 years experience-the person would have to have been a child prodigy."

"Every pastor has a different set of skills and motivations. We are not robots. Each of us has things she or he likes to do, and is good at. Each pastor has different things that motivate him or her - those things that make it fun to go to work."

"But, just as every pastor has different skills and aptitudes, every congregation has different expectations - the core things you imagine your pastor doing and being. Some of these expectations are obvious-like showing up on Sunday and visiting the hospital. Others are less obvious, but equally important." (Such as appearing at community events or having people to the manse or having a spouse who plays the piano, or dressing a certain way.) **(Tell a funny story from your own experience about such an expectation)**

"Now, here's the key. If the minister is doing what he/she likes to do and is good at, and that is what the congregation generally expects a pastor to be doing, AHA! made in heaven. You will have a pastor who stays a long time and is successful."

"Here's a way to give our PNC some things to look for."

### **On the board or flip chart list:**

1. What things did the last two or three pastors do that you appreciated?
2. What were the less-endearing qualities of the last two or three pastors?
3. What qualities did they have that you found helpful?

**Highlight the verbs with color. Get phrases about qualities they liked and suggest that this be a litmus test for looking at PIFs. Briefly review types of pastoral leadership and cost, if it is appropriate for the congregation to seek alternatives to a called pastor. Move quickly to Session Two.**

### **A BUNCH OF THE BEST**

Divide into groups. In three minutes, list as many answers to these questions as you can. Together, choose your top three answers to share with the group.

In the future:  
The best thing that could happen to/at our church is...

In the future:  
The best thing that could happen to/at our church is...

In the future:  
The best thing that could happen to/at our church is...

In the future:  
The best thing that could happen to/at our church is...

In the future:  
The best thing that could happen to/at our church is...

In the future:  
The best thing that could happen to/at our church is...

In the future:  
The best thing that could happen to/at our church is...

In the future:  
The best thing that could happen to/at our church is...

## Church Questionnaire

Please mark the column closest to the statement with which you most agree.

<u>Congregational Identity</u>	
Strongly Agree	Agree    No Opinion    Agree    Strongly Agree
Our church is more influenced by history and tradition.	Our church is more influenced by contemporary ideas and trends.
Members are similar in values and lifestyles to the people, who live immediately around church.	Members are very different in values and lifestyles from people who live immediately around the church.
Our church is very involved with the community around the church.	Our church is not at all involved with the community around the church.
Our church is primarily oriented to serving our members.	Our church is primarily oriented to serving the world beyond our membership.
Our congregation feels like one big family.	Our congregation feels like a loosely knit association of individuals and groups.
Our church is known as a prestigious one in the area.	Our strengths notwithstanding, our church is not considered one of the "status" churches in the area.
The church's approach to social issues is basically educational, leaving any action to individual conscience.	The church's approach to social issues is decidedly "activist." We have a proven history of taking a stand on social issues. as a congregation.
The congregation's approach to individual salvation emphasizes education, nurture, and gradual growth in the faith.	The congregation's approach to individual salvation stresses conversion and a born-again experience.
Our congregation gives strong expression to its denominational identity and heritage.	It would be difficult for a visitor to know to which denomination the congregation belongs.

## Congregational Identity

**Strongly Agree    Agree    No Opinion    Agree    Strongly Agree**

Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.

Christ is a way but there are other ways of salvation.

The Bible is the Word of God and Divine Authority.

The bible teaches us about God, but it is not the Word of God.

A personal relationship with Christ is necessary for salvation.

You need to believe in Christ and join a church.

The church must speak out on justice and mercy issues.

The church should not speak out on these issues.

It is important that the pastor visits me at my home.

It is not important to me that the pastor visits me.

Most important to me is that our new minister be a great preacher.

Most important to me is that our new minister be a caring pastor.

Most important to me is that our new minister have a vision for our church and communicate it.

Most important to me is that our new minister be a strong administrative leader.

Most important is that our new minister have a passion for Christian Education and youth.

Most important is that our new minister have a passion for mission.

Most important is that our new minister have a passion for foreign mission.

Most important is that our new pastor have a passion for local mission.

Most important is that he/she gets things done.

Most important is that our new pastor mobilize our lay leaders.

Most important is that he/she has a clear sense of what we must do.

Most important is that he or she listens to where the congregation wants to go.

## Worship Preferences

In each column, please mark which the congregation prefers and which you prefer.

<b><u>In worship, the congregation prefers:</u></b>	<b><u>I personally prefer:</u></b> .
a. Traditional hymns b. New hymns c. Praise choruses	a. Traditional hymns b. New hymns c. Praise choruses
<b><u>In worship, the congregation prefers:</u></b>	<b><u>I personally prefer:.</u></b> .
a. Traditional scripture and sermons b. Interactive sermons (some conversational involvement of worshippers ) c. Sermons involving drama, media, music, etc.	a. Traditional scripture and sermon s b. Interactive sermons (some conversational involvement of worshippers) c. Sermons involving drama, media, music, etc.
<b><u>In worship, the congregation prefers:</u></b>	<b><u>I personally prefer:</u></b> .
a. Total pastoral leadership b. Equal mix of pastor/lay leadership c. Minimal lay leadership	a. Total pastoral leadership b. Equal mix of pastor/lay leadership c. Minimal lay leadership
<b><u>For fellowship, the congregation prefers:</u></b>	<b><u>I personally prefer:</u></b> .
a. Family nights with intergenerational activities b. Family nights with separate age-group activities c. Separate activities for different age groups	a. Family nights with intergenerational activities b. Family nights with separate age-group activities c. Separate activities for different age groups
<b><u>For education, the congregation prefers:</u></b>	<b><u>I personally prefer:</u></b> .
a. Traditional Sunday morning Sunday School b. Mid-week education program c. Mix of Sunday morning and mid-week programs	a. Traditional Sunday morning Sunday School b. Mid-week education program c. Mix of Sunday morning and mid-week programs
<b><u>For education, the congregation prefers:</u></b>	<b><u>I personally prefer:</u></b> .
a. Traditional classroom settings with models b. Small-group activities c. Service groups with some study built in.	a. Traditional classroom settings with models b. Small-group activities c. Service groups with some study built in.
<b><u>For mission, the congregation prefers:</u></b>	<b><u>I personally prefer:</u></b> .
a. Hand-on mission projects b. Giving to Presbyterian mission projects c. Giving to local mission projects	a. Hand-on mission projects b. Giving to Presbyterian mission projects c. Giving to local mission projects

**Pastoral Qualities Worksheet**  
**Congregational Vision Day**

Activities of the last few pastors that were appreciated:

Qualities of previous pastors, which were helpful:

Activities previous pastors could have done more frequently:

Less than endearing qualities of the last two or three pastors:

## **Naming the Challenges**

**Context:** During this session, the congregation will look to the future, in light of the Mission Priorities they have already established through the Future Priorities workshop. They will identify the challenges or obstacles standing between them and the Mission Priorities they have set.

Following this, the group will break, write proposals to meet the challenges and create a symbol, song, and story for the day.

**Room set up:** Still in one plenary configuration, unless there is a very large group. (*If there is a large group, **breakout groups may be assigned to each Mission Priority** to name the challenges for the priority they have been assigned.*)

Large butcher paper or jumbo post-it notes and fresh markers are needed.

## **Naming the Blockages:**

For discussion, break into small groups and ask everyone to jot on his/her worksheet the challenges that are blocking the realization of the Future Priority in question. After a few minutes, ask them to star the most significant one.

List all the starred challenges on the butcher paper. Ask for additional "hot" ones.

Then lump the blocks into three (or four if need be) major blocks, by selecting the first one on the list and asking, "What's like this one?" Proceed until the entire list is included in three or four categories.

*\*Hint: Use a small circle for the first category, a check mark for the second, a triangle for the third and a four asterisks for the fourth category.*

## **Naming the One Block (for each Mission Priority)**

Push the group to look closely at the three challenges they have named and come up with one overall Challenge. This is what they will address in the proposal writing section.

Ask each small group what kind of pastor do is needed to overcome these blocks and to accomplish our future directions?

## Blockages Workshop Form

Blocks to our future priorities	Three or four major blocks
What kind of pastor do we need to remove these blocks and accomplish our future direction?	

The One Block:

## **Proposals Workshop Script**

### **Divide the Group**

***Pray: Lord, you divided the Red Sea, You took down the wall of Jericho, show us now how to overcome these blocks. . .silent prayer. Amen***

After the Challenges are named, break the congregation into small groups, if there are enough people to have three or more per group. Assign one group per block, not including the overall challenge. If a small group is present, they can operate together, taking one challenge at a time until they have addressed each one.

Also, select one group to do the symbol, song, and story team. Take a few people from each of the three table groups.

### **Send out Symbol, Song, and Story Team**

Send the groups to separate spaces, prepared ahead of time: one per block if there will be enough people for separate proposal groups. Also there will need to be space for the symbol, song, and story team in which they can sub-divide into three eventual smaller groups.

### **Review the Blocks**

Put the large butcher paper chart on the wall and write in the block assigned to the group (or the first challenge to be addressed if there is only one group). Ask for questions of clarity to make sure that everyone understands the challenge and understands it in the same way.

### **Appoint a Scribe**

Ask someone who writes neatly to record the whole workshop on a separate proposal workshop sheet for the print shop.

**Brainstorm Proposals** (*The product of this session will be a list of several proposals to the session and PNC to advance the mission of the congregation by dealing with the challenges previously named*)

Relative to the challenge your group is considering. Ask each person to jot down five or six things the congregation might do to address this challenge. Allow time for solitary thinking and writing - silence is not always bad. As people begin to look up for direction, ask them to star the one action that seems most promising.

Go around the room asking for each person's best action. This will assure that even the most retiring group member participates. After every person has at least one action on the list, ask for other ideas from the group at large. Add them to the list of actions.

## Decide on a Proposal for this Challenge

Spark creativity by asking the group what a "miracle" or a "victory" would look like in this arena. Ask them to look at the brainstorm list and choose one of the actions on the chart as a proposal that would most effectively deal with this challenge.

## Write the Proposal

On the wall chart, fill in the proposal statement: We the people of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, in order to meet the challenge of \_\_\_\_\_, propose to \_\_\_\_\_ so that \_\_\_\_\_.

Make sure that the scribe fills in the form that parallels the wall chart and gets it to the print shop.

**(STOP HERE IF TIME IS SHORT) -**

**ASK: "WHAT KIND OF PASTOR DO WE NEED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS?" MAKE A NOTE OF RESPONSES ON REPORT SHEETS.**

## Creating the Action Steps

### Explain Action Steps

Action steps are things that can be done by people already in place that might make the proposal become reality-or help the congregation reach a certain level of achievement. (Statements like "more love," "more commitment," or "an outpouring of the Holy Spirit," are not action steps because they are unspecific and are more in the realm of attitudes.

**Brainstorm Action Steps (to be done by the appropriate committee later - there has never been enough time to do this step on the day of the self study.)**

### Assign Reporter:

Ask one person to be the group's spokesperson in the plenary session and to take the completed wall chart into the social hall and tape it up for display.

### Write up the plan:

Send another group member to the print shop with a clear copy of the sub-group's report as soon as possible for the final report.

The Challenge:

Proposals Brainstorm:

The one Proposal for this Challenge:

The Action Steps:

Action Steps Brainstorm:

## Symbol, Song, and Story Workshops

### Overall Design and Objectives:

At this stage of the day, you will have one-half of the group. The other group will be writing proposals to address the challenges. Your group will be working on the symbolic part of the church's life.

As you go, the group will be subdivided into three:

- one to write the three-paragraph story,
- one to create the symbol (or coat of arms)
- one to write the song for the day

Everyone works together, at first, brainstorming elements of the three-paragraph story of the congregation's past, present, and future. The product of the **Story Team** is to be a poetic, or large-brushstroke story, not a "church history." This is to be a quick, but clear snapshot that will tell a prospective pastor-and prospective members, what this congregation is all about.

### Brainstorming Images:

Brainstorm a list of words or phrases that answer the following: *Ask people to write them down on scratch paper for when the group splits.*

- What are some words that describe the history of this congregation?
- What words describe our present mission?
- What words give hints of our future?
- What objects in nature could be symbols for our church (*a river, a tree, etc.*)
- What other symbols might stand for our congregation? (*a fortress, a rocket ship, a home, etc.*)

Make sure that you have images from past, present, and future. Decide which images and phrases hold the whole story best--keep it to a few.

### Divide the group-Send out Symbol and Song teams:

Count off by three and send the "ones" off to begin writing the three paragraphs. This group is the Story Team. Make sure that they have the worksheets prepared in advance. The story team can divide itself again into three smaller teams if there are enough people.

At the same time, send the "twos" and "threes" out to work on the Symbol and Song respectively.

*(Directions follow those for the Story Team.)*

### **Story Team** *(Writing the three paragraphs)*

If there are six or more participants, divide into three groups, one of which writes each paragraph—past, present, and future. The worksheets from the earlier Story brainstorm will help focus each paragraph and assure that it reflects the views of the congregation.

On the pad of newsprint, elicit the first paragraph working as a group. They will dictate while you write and correct. Do this for each of the three paragraphs—past, present, and future.

*Story starter: If group seems blocked, take on of the images from the earlier brainstorm and say: "If the church is like a -for example- river, what would a first line of the story be?"*

Assign a scribe in each group to write down the sentences as they reach final consensus.

After your initial writing, have the scribe read the paragraph aloud to the sub-group and make any changes that are needed.

Polish the paragraph by making helpful suggestions as to flow, images, and tone. Affirm the work of each sub-group:

### **The Whole Story:**

If the work was done by groups, gather as a group and read the entire story aloud to get the overall flow and images clear.

### **Run it:**

Send one member of the group to the print shop immediately with a clear, completed copy of the story.

### **Decide Best Presentation:**

Decide a dramatic way to present the story to the congregation at the plenary session. Assign parts—one person could read each paragraph and read the last in unison, etc.

**Relax:** Get some coffee and return to the social hall for the final plenary.

## Symbol Team

This group is comprised, at first, of the "twos" and "threes." The product of this team is to be a graphic symbol or coat of arms that holds the key elements of the congregation's life and vision.

As an example of a symbol, you could share a coat of arms or seal that has meaning for you—your family or the seal of your college or university. Explain the elements.



Example for group leader: the Waynesburg College Seal has the name of the College, its founding year 1850, the Lamp of Knowledge, the Latin motto "Let there be Light," and the hills and valleys of Greene County, Pennsylvania. Another good example is the symbol for the Presbyterian Church, (USA).

### Recall Images:

Look over your notes from the story writing exercise—past, present, and future.

**Brainstorm:** Make a short list of what visual images hold the past, present, and future for this congregation?

- Are there special ethnic groups in this congregation? What is the image for that?  
Example: A thistle for Scots, harp for the Irish, etc.?
- What does the congregation love to do together? Jot down notes for singing, a pot for cooking, tools for Habitat, etc.
- What is their story about the strengths of the congregation? Note clasped hands for strong fellowship, the globe for missions, a Bible for clarity on the Word, etc.
- How do they see the future for the congregation? Could be a rainbow for new beginnings, a mountain to climb, an open road for an undetermined future.

*\*These are meant to be examples if the group is stuck. Do not offer too many or the leader will have created the symbol for the group.*

Write the names of each image on the board or butcher paper as it is suggested

Challenge the group to add a motto to the symbol.

**Send out the Song Writing Team: (Directions for this team are found on page 32.)**

Send half of the remaining group (the "threes" or any other configuration that seems helpful-sometimes people will volunteer for one group or the other). *\*The church organist may or may not be a good member of the song writing team-local discretion is advised.*

Of the remaining group ask each person to sketch his or her own version of the symbol. They can do several impressions each, if there is time.

### **Get Group Consensus:**

Have the sketches held up so all can see and ask each person to talk about his/her effort.

Coax the group along and encourage those who are reticent. *(The best symbol may not be the one that is most artfully drawn!)* Have fun with this.

Choose the most adequate one as a group, or make a new one that is a composite of several individual sketches. *For a single, small group do this together on the big flip chart paper.*

### **Assign Artists:**

Ask some people to create a gorgeous copy of the symbol in color on a LARGE poster board or on a foam core panel.

Ask another person to make a good, crisp copy to send to the print shop for the final report.

## Song Writing Team

### Review images and ideas:

Briefly go over the images the group has worked with in the early stages of the story writing and symbol teams. *Emphasize past, present, and future.*

### Brainstorm Tunes:

Get a list of the group's favorite tunes on butcher paper. Pop, show tunes, folk songs, "old favorites," and spirituals have worked best in past workshops—they are easy to sing and people know them and can sing them with confidence and enjoyment. For some reason, hymns from the hymnbook do not work well, nor do difficult top ten numbers.

Tunes can be slow and majestic or light and peppy. Have a good time with this.

Let the group wander and digress and "remember when," but keep pressing for tunes.

Encourage people to sing some of the tunes to loosen up, and to see how they might sound when sung by the congregation. (If the group needs examples of tunes, these have worked well in the past: Seventy-six Trombones, Yellow Submarine, I'm on the Top of the World, Moon River, Three Blind Mice, Daisy, Let me Call you Sweetheart, Did you Ever have to Finally Decide, Tom Dooley.) The best tune for this group will be one that most of them already know.

### Pick a Tune:

Guide the group toward consensus, holding onto the values of familiarity, and being easy to sing. Choose a tune and sing through it once or twice to get the feel of it (and arrive at a common version).

### Start Writing Verses:

Either as a whole team, or in sub-groups depending on numbers, begin to put your own poetry to the tune. If your selected tune has a chorus, you might start with that and create it together. *A useful format is to create one verse for the past, one for the present, and one for the future.*

Switch verses and test for meter and singing ease. It is very important that the words fit the tune, or the song will be awkward to sing.

### Print the Song:

Make one clear copy, in BIG letters on poster of large butcher paper, big enough that the whole congregation can see it. Make a smaller correct copy and send that to the print shop with a runner right away. It is absolutely crucial to the success of the entire day that copies are ready for the plenary.

**Perform:**

Prepare to teach this great creation to the congregation at the plenary. Choose a reporter-song leader from the group to do this, though the whole group will need to be up front to sing.

***The Past***

***The Present***

**The Future**

**Song Writing Worksheet**

*Brainstorm Tunes:*

*Key Words for Past*

*Key Words for Present*

*Key Words for Future*

*Verse One*

*Verse Two*

Verse Three

Chorus, if indicated

### **Self Study Day**

#### **Final Plenary**

#### **Gather and Sing**

#### **Children's Report**

The groups will be tired and will have worked hard, facing serious issues. They will need to have this time be one of inspiration and reflection. There is a sense of urgency. People will be ready to go home, but this part is key, so make it "spirited."

Have people sing a few familiar songs and hymns as they come into the plenary. They will not all arrive at the same time and there will be scurrying to the print shop, the restrooms, and the coffeepot. Singing will call them together and will alert slow-moving teams that it is time to wrap up.

#### **Receive Reports:**

Have the **Proposal Writing Team** present their work, one proposal at a time. These should be on big paper for all to see. Each should read the Challenge, Proposal, and Action Steps they have created.

#### **Reflect on Reports:**

When all proposals and action steps have been shared, ask:

- What do you notice about these plans?
- Can we afford to do these things with the resources we think we have?
- How could we get people involved in doing these things?
- Are they do-able with the people we have?
- What effect would sharing these things with a potential pastor have?

#### **The New Story:**

Call for the report from the team assigned to write the congregational story. Have someone read the document dramatically-or do it as the team has practiced. Call for questions of clarity.

Receive the report on behalf of the Presbytery.

### **The New Symbol:**

With great suspense-ham it up here-introduce the team that created the symbol.

Have it turned to the wall or covered so there can be a grand unveiling. Elicit "ooohs and aaahs."

Ask, "How could we use this so that people will know what we accomplished here today?"

Receive the symbol on behalf of the Presbytery and on behalf of all the great Church artists and artisans in history, and as a sign of powerful things to come.

### **The New Song:**

Round up the songwriting team, and, if ready by then, pass out copies of the song.

Have the group sing the song, and elicit a round of applause. Have the whole plenary group sing the song once or twice; asking for comments as you go.

Reflect on the day:

Get a sense for the day by asking: *What are some things that you remember from today?*

- What stands out in your mind?
- What turned out about as you expected?
- What surprised you?
- What was new?
- What did you learn today?
- If someone asks you later what went on here today, what will your say?

- Name your PNC if you have not already done so. (You no longer have to wait.)
- The Clerk will fill out the CIF-have a blank copy ready (available online).
- Print up a copy of today's work to accompany it.
- Check your projected budget figures to determine what level of pastoral support you are prepared to fund long-range.
- Meet with your Transition Team or Transition Team representative (Name the person)
- With the Transition Team's assistance, proceed to send in your materials and start the search.

Introduce those who came from outside the congregation to help and point out that all of us, by name, are Washington Presbytery. (Presbytery is names and faces of people you know.)

Point out that the Presbytery has a new focus and structure all aimed at enabling and strengthening local congregations, of which this is only a small reflection.

Thank the group for being willing to help design a new, streamlined search process for small and mid-sized congregations and tell them that today's work will serve as a model for many churches to follow. They are pioneers.

### **Claim the Promises:**

Give a context for the last part of the day. "This has been a great day in the life of church. I think that it would be appropriate to close this day by claiming promises for the future of this church as it prepares to serve the community afresh. Think of a promise that you'd like to raise for this fellowship and say it out "real loud" so that we can all hear and follow it with an Amen."

We'll all add our Amens to each promise.

(Prime a leader to raise the first one, if things are slow. Example: "I raise the promise that this church will become active in mission in this time of change.")

### **Sing the New Song:**

Have the group sing the new song again as the documents holding the work-of-the day arrive and are distributed.

### **Send Out to Service:**

Use this or another form of benediction:

“The Church has always been sent out from the gathered to the scattered. I send you out now from this day of preparation and vision to be the Church of Jesus Christ in this time, in this place”

"Repeat after me: "THE WHOLE CREATION IS ON TIPTOE TO SEE THE WONDERFUL SIGHT... OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD COMING... INTO THEIR OWN."

# STUDY TWO -Presbytery of Missouri River Valley

## THE PRESBYTERY OF MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY

4412 Farnam Street  
Omaha, NE 6831-2726  
(402) 553-8300 (800) 603-8980  
Rev. Chaz Ruark, Interim Presbyter  
E-mail [chaz@pmrv.org](mailto:chaz@pmrv.org)  
Contact: Pam Otto

For several years this presbytery has been using a discernment process instead of a mission study. It is called *Faithful Listening* and can be completed in 2-3 weeks. Two of the churches in the presbytery that have used it successfully are the First Presbyterian and Benson Presbyterian, both in Omaha, Nebraska.

A letter, to the congregation 10 days before the process begins, informs the members of the overall plan and dates for the discernment. The Sunday worship service following the letter includes a short presentation on the process and the commissioning of all participants. This includes a packet of Bible verses and material to be used in the process. The congregation is asked to read the scriptural passages and makes notes such as:

1. What is God telling me?
2. What kind of church do we want to become?
3. What kind of pastor will we need to become that kind of church?

The actual discernment process begins two Sundays later. The congregation forms small groups. Each group puts in writing 3-5 key ideas answering the above questions. Then another group of volunteers formalize the written statements and it becomes a working document for the PNC. This process takes a couple of hours.

Sundays 2 – 4 consist of:

1. Faithful Listening
2. Personal Summarizing
3. Gleaning

The process documents are on the following pages.

## Discerning the Future of Our Church

### Listening for God's Call

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God --- what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2

#### **Prior to Sunday 1 -- Preparation**

- Letter to Congregation presenting overall plan and dates for Discernment Process

#### **Sunday 1 -- Presentation of Sunday morning**

*The Faithful Listening program is:*

- A two-week process
- Done as part of personal devotions
- Written outline and sample materials

#### **Sunday 2 -- Commissioning the Participants**

- Distribution of Participant, Packets
- Liturgical process for Commissioning the Participants

#### **Between Sundays 2 & 4 -- Faithful Listening**

- Reading a brief scripture lesson (10 days)
  - A different scripture each day
  - Each scripture will present a “picture of the church”
- Praying for openness to God's healing
- Reflecting/musing
  - What does this tell me about God? (2 to 3 descriptive phrases)
  - What does this tell me about God's desire for our church? (2 or 3 descriptive phrases or sentences)
  - What kind of pastoral leadership would be appropriate for our church, if we were to live into this image of the church? (2 or 3 descriptive words or phrases)
- Writing down briefly any other ideas that came during the time of reflection and musing

### **Last Saturday -- *Personal Summarizing***

- What are 3 – 5 **key** ideas about God’s desire for our church that I discerned as I prayerfully reflected on the scriptures of the past 2 weeks?
- What are the 3 – 5 strongest ideas or impressions which I thought/felt about the kind of pastoral leadership our church needs in order to be the kind of church God wants us to be?

### **Sunday 4 -- *Gleaning.***

- Each participant brings the results of his/her time of Faithful Listening  
Participants share their data
- Group identifies **key** ideas:  
Kind of church God is calling us to be .....  
King of pastoral leadership needed for us to be that kind of church.....
- Key ideas are written on newsprint

### **Next Steps:**

- Writing team selected from among the participants in the Gleaning process.
- Writing team drafts statement of the congregation’s discernment.
- Statement is presented to Session and communicated to entire congregation.

## Faithful Listening

### Some Basic Principles of Faithful Listening:

1. The church has a better opportunity to be faithful when focused on God's Word (Scripture) rather than when its members are operating primarily out of personal opinions.
2. When a church agrees to use a discernment process (such as Faithful Listening), the participants in the process should have greater voice in the church's discussion of its future than those who choose to withdraw from the process.
3. The decision to "*follow where God leads*" must be made before the discernment process begins, not after the results are in. (This is the *riskiness* of discernment ....God doesn't always lead where and how we desire.)
4. Discernment happens when we are indifferent to everything except the **Word** (leading of God.)

### The Gleaning Process

(Gathering, discussing, prioritizing the Key Ideas generated by individuals during the *Faithful Listening* process.):

1. Give participants the opportunity to share their **Key Ideas** in small group discussion. Each small group has a recorder, who writes down (and reports back to plenary) those **Key Ideas** that have higher-weighted support from group members.
2. Group discusses and prioritizes **Key Ideas**.
3. Go with the flow of **energy** in the group! Ideas that have been mentioned by many people without great enthusiasm probably are less important than an idea that only one person thought of prior to the meeting and which many in the group seem energized by.
4. **Important** ideas that are extraneous to the task are noted and sent on to the appropriate group for follow-up.

**Possible Scriptures  
For  
Faithful Listening**

**2 Corinthians 5: 17-20**

17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

**Ephesians 4: 1-3**

1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Ephesians 4: 11-13**

11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

**Philippians 2: 5-11**

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death –even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**1 Thessalonians 5:15-22**

15 See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise the words of prophets, 21 but test everything; hold fast to what is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.

### **Hebrews 13: 1-3**

1 Let mutual love continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourself were being tortured.

### **Colossians 3: 12-17**

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### **Mathew 5: 13-16**

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. 14 You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15 No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

### **Mathew 28: 18-20**

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### **Mathew 10: 38-39**

38 "Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life or my sake will find it. "

## Questions/Answers for Participants in Faithful Listening

### **Who Participates?**

- All members of the congregation willing to let God help them focus their concerns for the future of the church.

### **How do I become involved?**

- By receiving this packet of information....
- By agreeing to spend at least 15 minutes a day for the next two weeks reading Scripture, praying and reflecting on the future of our church.....

### **What am I expected to do?**

- Read a brief scripture lesson (10 days)  
A different scripture each day  
Each scripture will present a “picture” for the church’s life and mission.
- Pray for openness to God’s leading  
... such as: Dear God, open my heart and mind so that I might hear your desires for our congregation.
- Spend time prayerfully reflecting upon the scripture by asking three questions:  
What does this tell me about God? (2 or 3 descriptive words or phrases)  
What does this tell me about God’s desire for our church? (2 or 3 descriptive words or phrases)  
What kind of pastoral leadership would be appropriate for our church, if we were to live into this image of the church? (2 or 3 descriptive words or phrases)
- Write down the key ideas that came during this time of prayer and reflection.
- Prepare a Summary Sheet at the end of the process.
- Come to the meeting designed for the gathering and discussing of *Key ideas*.

### **What will happen to the *key ideas* that I have written down?**

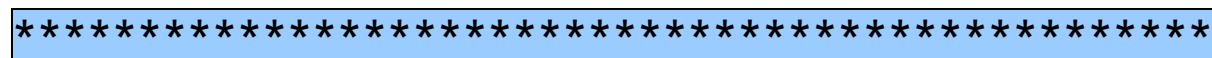
- They will be added to the key ideas from other members of the congregation. These ideas will become the basis for the Church Information Form (CIF) that is developed for the pastoral search process.
- The meeting for gathering and discussing these key ideas will be announced.

**What happens if I miss a day or two?**

- Start again tomorrow with the scripture lesson that is appointed for the day. This will keep you together with the rest of the congregation.
- If you want to go back and spend a little time with a scripture text that you missed, you can do that...just make sure that you have completed the regular work for today before going back to do one that you missed.
- Whatever you bring to the meeting for gathering and discussing the *key ideas* will be blessed by God for the good of the congregation.

**What if I'm not able to be at the meeting where the *key ideas* are gathered and discussed?**

- Ask another member of the congregation to bring your **Summary Sheet** to the meeting. That way your *key ideas* can be represented and included.



The purpose of the *Faithful Listening* discernment process is to find the congregation's center by listening through Scripture and prayer for God's call.

We approach Scripture not to master the text, but to allow the text to master us....to move from information to *transformation*.

We approach prayer as serious work, because we believe that each time we pray God can change us.

## STUDY THREE -Presbytery of North Central Iowa

(Note: This study would, probably, be most appropriate for churches in small or rural communities. Possibly, it could be modified for churches in urban neighborhoods.)

### THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTH CENTRAL IOWA

2302 Falls Avenue

Waterloo, IA 50701

(319) 233-1747N

Rev. David Feltman, general presbyter, **Presbytery of North Central Iowa**

E-mail: [dfeltman@presbynciowa.org](mailto:dfeltman@presbynciowa.org)

Contact: Elaine Bishop, Chair of Committee on Ministry

E-mail: [elbishop@gcmuni.net](mailto:elbishop@gcmuni.net)

This Presbytery has a process that begins with determining a Community Needs Assessment. It starts by suggesting the types of community offices to be contacted for this information as well, as what questions will provide the answers.

This information is given to the congregation to use in answering a few simple but important questions describing what strengths the congregation possesses to fill these needs.

This type of mission study can be conducted in a relatively short period of time, using any process that fits a congregation and produces desired results and accurate information.



**A. The Strength to Accompany**

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**How do you walk with and show love for the weak, the frail, the poor and the newcomers in your community?**

**B. The Strength to Convene**

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**How do you bring people together in your community to talk about difficult issues?**

**C. The Strength to Connect**

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**How do you create links in your community between people's needs and the community's resources?**

**D. The Strength to Tell the Story**

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**How do you tell the story of Jesus Christ, both within and outside of your congregation?**

**E. The Strength to Give Sanctuary**

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**In what ways do you offer your congregation's building(s) to the community?**

**F. The Strength to Bless**

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**How do you express love and forgiveness and forgiveness with the life of your community?**

**G. The Strength to Pray**

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**How do you bring the life of your community into your congregation's prayer life? How do your prayers change your community?**

**H. The Strength to Endure**

**0 1 2 3 4 5**

**What enduring contributions has your congregation made to the life of your community?**

**Presby/Community Needs:**

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*“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

*-Colossians 3:12-17*

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