

“For Your Consideration” (September 2014)

“*For Your Consideration*” is an occasional information piece about people in mission. Its purpose is to help connect people with other people as they fulfill their ministry. You have permission to reproduce and distribute this article as appropriate. The “*For Your Consideration*” questions are for your reflection only. Suggestions for future articles may be sent to: Bob.Dealey@csis-elca.org

A Missional Congregation

The following statements are from a tool (developed by the Rev. Judith Spindt, Director for Evangelical Mission, Southwestern Texas Synod) which is used to assess four key areas of mission behavior in congregations. As your congregation engages in mission, on a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your congregation on the basis of these statements: (1 = disagree; 5 = agree)

Biblical/Theological Vision

1. A large number of worshippers are engaged in regular Bible reading, prayer and holy conversation among the members.
2. Participants in the ministry clearly know the Vision Statement and have a strong sense of God’s purpose for the mission.
3. Participants feel sent to share Good News from God.
4. The pastor/developer regularly reminds people of the vision and how it flows from God’s purposes.
5. Sermons connect scripture to missional behaviors.

Takes Context Seriously

1. Pastor/developer spends bulk of his/her time in the community.
2. Pastor/developer and leaders are making and nurturing relationships with community leaders, business owners, public safety officials and others.
3. The learnings about the community are regularly communicated to the participants and people are talking about how to connect with the community.
4. The context is recognized as God’s place of activity and the mission seeks to be a part of it.
5. The mission targets the neighborhood and reflects its demographic composition.
6. New participants from the community have an impact on the shape of the ministry.

Leaders are identified, equipped and released

1. People’s gifts are recognized and they are invited to use them for mission.
2. Leaders participate in activities to promote their spiritual growth.
3. Participants are encouraged to try new things and give feedback about how their mission experiments have worked. Good ideas are incorporated into the ministry.
4. The pastor/developer is the primary leader for all activity of the mission.
5. The leaders worship regularly.
6. Leaders are growing in their generosity.

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Health of the growing community

1. Church is bigger than worship. There are a variety of discipleship activities.
2. All communication is designed to be of interest to new participants as well as long time participants. Little or no “insider language” is used.
3. Issues and differences are dealt with openly and in a spirit of growth.
4. Participants feel connected to a wider expression of the church, and know that they are supported and cared for.
5. People are working on passing on and deepening faith with all ages.
6. Worship is varied and intentionally seeks to meet the needs of visitors and the un-churched.
7. Welcome is radical. Participants look for ways to engage in new relationships.
8. Space is configured and used in ways that invite rather than constrict.
9. Participants give generously of their resources to advance the work of mission.
10. There is transparency about expectations and procedures.

For Your Consideration

1. On the basis of your ratings, what are the strengths and weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities that your congregation faces?
2. What could be done to help your congregation grow in its understanding of what it means to be a congregation in mission?
3. How can your congregation become more effective at living out God’s mission in the congregation’s particular context?