**Guidelines for Congregational Assessment**

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of a congregational assessment is to discover the opportunities that Jesus has given us to strengthen our members and to reach out to the lost in our community. By taking stock of what we have been doing and of the resources God has given us, we can move forward and plan how we will best carry out the mission Jesus gave us.

1. **Process**

By participating in this evaluation, you have the opportunity to help build up the body of Christ. It is important to remember that we have a variety of different kinds of people in our congregation with many different gifts. Every member is important. This process involves people and is about people – people whom Jesus redeemed to be members of his body. Paul said:

***12*** *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.* ***13*** *For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.* ***14*** *Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

***15*** *Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.* ***16*** *And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.* ***17*** *If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?* ***18*** *But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.* ***19*** *If they were all one part, where would the body be?* ***20*** *As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

***21*** *The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”* ***22*** *On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,* ***23*** *and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty,* ***24*** *while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it,* ***25*** *so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.* ***26*** *If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*

***27*** *Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.* ***28*** *And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.* ***29*** *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?* ***30*** *Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongue? Do all interpret?* ***31*** *Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.*

As you carry out an evaluation of your congregation and its work, remember that you are talking about your brothers and sisters in Christ. You are evaluating God’s Church, the body of Christ. Speak the truth in love. Be kind in your criticism. Be truthful in your evaluations. Be bold in your suggestions to carry out Christ’s mission.

The assessment process should invite comments from a broad spectrum of people in the congregation. A planning committee of selected leaders will analyze the comments and suggestions of the members and will work with the church council to develop a mission, a vision, and goals for reaching more people with the gospel. This will in turn be communicated to every committee and to every member so that everyone in the congregation can apply himself or herself to our congregation’s mission.

1. Select the planning team.
2. Set a time table for the assessment and planning process.
3. The evaluation team gathers input from others. This could be as simple as discussions with other council or congregation members. A preferred process would be to send a simple survey to a random group of congregation members seeking their written input. Honor the confidentiality of those who provide input unless you have permission to share the comment and source.
4. Ask the pastors and other staff to also complete an assessment form.
5. The planning team gathers all the input and formulates a mission, a vision, and goals for the congregation.
6. Every committee will respond to mission, vision and goals by incorporating them into their work.
7. It is suggested that this process be done every year.

Consider congregational assessment and planning an ongoing process. The plans we make initially may only be a beginning and the annual review will bring focus and definition to our plans. An annual review of the plan will also help the congregation to engage more and more of its members in its ministry.

1. **Summary**

Keep the assessment process positive. Conduct the evaluation in Christian love. Pray that the Lord will guide you and bless your work so that He will be praised and His Kingdom advanced.

**Suggested Timeline**

**Month 1** A planning committee is chosen and the committee plans its schedule and work. This should be written down and reported to the church council and / or congregation.

**Month 2** The planning committee gives surveys to a variety of members in the congregation. This may be done by direct mail, by surveying members of various committees, by using time in a Bible class, etc. You do not have to survey everyone in the congregation. However, it is important to survey a good cross section of the congregation.

**Month 3** The planning committee meets to organize the information received from congregational surveys. The congregational evaluation form can be used for this. The committee can begin to find consensus on what areas of ministry need attention, and what opportunities are there for the congregation to develop.

Everyone’s ideas are important! Sometimes the comment of one person can lead the congregation in a direction that God wants it to go!

If the congregation already has a mission and vision statement, the committee can work quickly to present the information to the church council. If not, then the committee may want to work on developing such a statement with the church council.

Depending on how the congregation is organized, the committee and council may want to present the mission, vision, and goals to the congregation for approval at a congregational meeting.

**Month 4-6** Every committee in the congregation studies the mission, vision, and goals and makes appropriate plans for its work. There may be ramifications of this planning process on the church budget. For that reason, it may be wise to begin the planning process six months before the annual budget is adopted.

**On-going** Once a plan is made, it is important that it not be lost in a folder. Committees and council should review the congregation’s plans briefly at every meeting. Someone in the congregation should be tasked with monitoring the calendar and starting the planning process at the appropriate time each year.

**1 / 5 / 10** There are three types of goals: short term (1 year), midterm (1-5 years), and long term (5-15 years). Short term goals tend to be specific and easily accomplished. Long term goals tend to be larger in scale and more challenging. It is important to include long term planning as well as short term planning in this process. For example, if a long term goal is to start a preschool, that may push a decision on whether or not to buy the lot next to your church when it is put on the market. It is surprising how God blesses our plans and gives us opportunities we would not have expected!

**Member Survey**

**In all of your responses to the questions posed below, please give prayerful consideration to your comments and please share your comments with a Christian spirit in mind.**

1. List three things which you believe are STRENGTHS of our congregation.
2. List two or three things which you believe our congregation can improve upon.
3. What opportunities does our congregation have for reaching out to the people of our community?
4. What obstacles are there which stand in the way of our reaching out with the gospel and growing?

We wish to express our appreciation for the time, thoughtfulness and prayerful consideration you have given to these questions. Please return the form in a sealed envelope addressed to:

May the Lord richly bless you!

May we use your comments? Yes □ No □

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Congregational Evaluation Form**

**1. Worship**

*Some questions to help you formulate your comments:*

Is the worship service planned well, does it fit the congregation’s needs, is there variety in hymns and orders of service, is it well led? Do the sermons present both law and gospel and apply to real life? Does the music engage our members? Are we using the gifts that God has given us? Do visitors feel welcomed? Is it easy for them to follow directions? Are our facilities adequate and presentable?

Please share a few sentences about your overall impression and thoughts regarding Worship services.

**2. Christian Education**

*Some questions to help you formulate your comments:*

Are there enough opportunities for adults to participate in Bible Class? What percentage of members do not attend any Bible class? Are the Bible classes engaging and interesting? Is there of subjects offered?

Is our Sunday school adequately staffed and trained? Do our children attend faithfully? Are our children engaged in our worship services? Do you have opportunities to use their abilities for service? Are we losing children in their mid to upper teens? Do we know why?

Do our members read their Bibles at home? Do they have devotions with their families?

Please share a few sentences about your overall impression and thoughts regarding our Christian education.

**3. Outreach**

*Some questions to help you formulate your comments:*

What is reputation of our congregation in our community? Do we identify the visitors to our congregation and follow up on them promptly? What do we do to advertize our congregation and its message to our community? Does every organization in our congregation see itself as an entry point to reach out to new members? Can our members confidently share their faith with their personal contacts? Is our congregation organized for outreach to our community?

Please share a few sentences about your overall impression and thoughts regarding Team Leadership/Skills:

**4. Member nurture and retention**

*Some questions to help you formulate your comments:*

How does our congregation identify those who are becoming lax in hearing God’s Word? What process have we developed to reach out to them? Does anyone besides our pastor visit members at risk?

Do our members understand how to apply Matthew 18? Do they see that they are called upon by Christ to encourage one another? What are we doing to make them aware of this responsibility

Please share a few sentences about your overall impression and thoughts regarding Social Skills/Personality:

**5. Facilities / Administrative**

*Some questions to help you formulate your comments:*

Are our facilities adequate to reflect our mission to save the lost? Does our yearly budget reflect our mission to reach the lost? Do our members “own” our mission and our efforts to accomplish it? Are we united in our efforts?

Do we have the administrative structure we need to support our pastors and teachers so that they are can give themselves to teaching the Word and to prayer? Does our staff work share a vision and work toward it?

Please share a few sentences about your overall impression and thoughts regarding Other:

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Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_