

# **THE W<sup>5</sup>H PROCESS**

**A WORKBOOK  
FOR CONGREGATIONS**

**TO**

**RECOVER AND DISCOVER**

**THE**

**WHY**

**WHERE**

**WHO**

**WHAT**

**WHEN**

**AND**

**HOW**

**OF GOD'S WORK FOR YOU**

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*to my husband who yearns with me for the days when  
congregations are truly transformational places where  
people are encountering Jesus, lives are changing,  
disciples are multiplying, and the inspired are going out on  
Jesus' behalf to do their part to introduce others to God  
and be part of transforming their communities*

*May we live to see the day.*

*And if not us,*

*then our children and grandchildren*

*and all those to come after them.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In January 2007, I began serving as the Area Minister for the Northeast Area of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America. Yet even before then, I was talking to ministers in the Area about the need for congregations to define their Missions and Visions so their congregations might become more effective. As 2007 progressed, I began talking in terms of a congregation's **WHY** (Mission), **WHERE** (the demographic and psychographic composition of a congregation and its community), and **WHO** (Vision) and offered tips for identifying these three vital components for congregational effectiveness. By 2008, pastors were asking for a more definite, workbook-type model and **The W<sup>5</sup>H Process** was born. Later that year, after sharing my first efforts with my husband, the Rev. Dr. Bill Tenny-Brittian, I further refined the process with some pieces he'd been using in congregational consultations around the U.S.; thus, **The Process** grew to include sessions on expected behaviors identification and values clarification.

**The W<sup>5</sup>H Process** is an intensive, intentional six-session study that takes approximately nine to twelve months to complete. While that may sound a bit daunting, particularly to those who are not too process-oriented or otherwise fear they will lose their congregation along the way, the process *is* processual and gradual, allowing the congregation to build some key skills that are critical for congregational transformation and sustainability: conversation, trust, lay leadership, consensus, unity, spiritual disciplines, and an increased congregational reliance on God.

All this leads to a congregation's ability to get clear about who they have been and who they are, *and* it facilitates that congregation's ability to identify who God is calling (i.e., wanting, expecting, needing) them to be for their communities: those inside the congregational walls and those outside, in the communities and neighborhoods and world beyond. But it doesn't end there; it then provides practical, tried-and-true tools for planning strategically for measurable effectiveness.

**The W<sup>5</sup>H Process** doesn't claim to be a "magic bullet" or "end-all-be-all." In fact, it is one more in a list of programs and curricula designed to help congregations become vital and vibrant. What sets it apart from others, though, is its reliance on prayer and group-process. In my years of study and extended firsthand experience with hundreds of congregations in a variety of settings across the United States, I have learned that congregational effectiveness and relevance is sustainable *only* when it is centered on God and owned by the congregation as a whole. In this

regard, ***The Process*** throughout incorporates the congregation and has been developed to help *congregational leaders* intentionally engage the congregation in ways that will allow all involved to

1. articulate the congregation's expected behaviours;
2. clarify the values under which they have been operating . . . and want to operate;
3. recover the reasons God created their congregation;
4. discover who, specifically, composes their congregation *and* their community;
5. discern how God wants to use their congregation;
6. plan strategically based on all the above; and
7. keep discerning and committing to being all God has created them to be and do.

## **OVERVIEW OF *THE PROCESS***

### **Session 1: *Expected Behaviors***

#### **– Articulating our Congregation's expected behaviours**

*Expected Behaviors* are the expectations and behaviors that guide the ways in which leaders, members, and guests of a congregation treat one another; they define the guidelines that manage our actions as a congregation. Some may wonder about the need for this work, figuring Christians already (we might say, *should*) know how to behave; but history and experience continually teach us that Christians have a tendency to forget how to treat one another lovingly or kindly when our congregations engage any kind of clarification or transformational process.

Session 1 serves as the basic introduction to the *W5H Process* and helps congregations both to articulate their expected behaviours and to engage the practices they will use throughout the following Sessions.

### **Session 2: *Values Clarification***

#### **– Clarifying what matters to our Congregation**

*Values* are the behaviors and ideas we value, not merely as individuals but as a *congregation*. *Congregational Values* reflect a congregation's actual behaviors; they articulate what we actually *do* (and don't do). They identify those traits and qualities we are willing to "go to the mat" for: the ministries and issues to which we are willing to devote our time, talent, treasure, and testimony.

Session 2 guides congregations through the process of values clarification with the intention of further cementing a congregation's ability to work together in collegial and healthy ways. This Session leaves congregations feeling good about the work they are accomplishing *together* and, with the work of Session 1, leaves the congregation ready to engage their Mission and Vision work.

### **Session 3: Recovering our WHY**

#### **– Reclaiming God's Mission for our Congregation**

*Mission* answers the question, "Why did God create this congregation?" . . . Why did God place your congregation where it is? God's Mission for a congregation doesn't change.

Congregations who have engaged "Mission Statement" work in the past, will note that this Session approaches mission work from a healing and holistic perspective that allows members of the congregation to remember, discover, uncover, and recover the original purpose of the congregation, the congregation's *raison d'être*. Session 3 encourages fellowship and fun opportunities that lead to congregation-building and the congregational unity that can only open possibilities for Session 4.

### **Session 4: WHERE and WHO**

#### **– Discovering God's Vision for our Congregation**

*Vision* defines WHO God is calling a congregation to be and describes how the congregation will live out its purpose. It answers the question, "God, WHO are You calling us to be?". *Vision* takes into account (1) whom God has brought into the congregation (to serve on Jesus' behalf as the *Body of Christ*) and (2) who currently lives in the congregation's community.

Session 4 is by far the longest Session of the **W<sup>5</sup>H Process**, as it depends in large part on a three-month *Prayer Series* that helps tune its participants' abilities to share and to "hear" from God. It also incorporates two demographic studies: one for the congregation and another of the congregation's community. The *Prayer Series* culminates in the congregation's members and friends offering their senses of WHO they understand God may want the congregation to be. The congregation's team guiding **The Process** and its leadership use these prayerful contributions and the demographic information to discern the *Vision* that will be affirmed by the congregation at the conclusion of Session 4.

## **Session 5: WHAT, WHEN, and HOW – Planning Strategically**

Once a congregation knows WHO God is calling it to be, it is prepared to engage ministry and mission in ways that are faithful to, and respectful of, WHO God expects them to be and whom God needs them to reach on Jesus' behalf. A congregation's ability to remain faithful to God's expectations is directly dependent on its ability to define, calendar, plan, prepare, carry out, and evaluate its ministries and mission efforts.

Session 5 walks congregations through the process of planning strategically and helps them maximize the effectiveness of their current programming.

## **Session 6: Afterword – Final Words**

Evaluations allow a congregation's leadership to reflect on the strengths and, yes, challenges of the congregation. Session 6 provides three models to engage evaluations that will help your congregation's leadership keep the congregation in-tune and on-target.

Session 6 provides practical methods that can keep the congregation on-track with God and effective for many years to come.

## **GETTING STARTED**

***Getting started*** on the ***W5H Process*** takes only four steps:

1. The congregation's leadership (*including* the pastor, *but not exclusively* the pastor!!) makes an official commitment to engage the entirety of ***The W<sup>5</sup>H Process*** and communicates this immediately to the congregation.
2. The congregation's leadership appoints a ***Transformation Team***, comprising a **minimum of three but no more than five members** (**plus** the pastor and the president/chair/moderator/lead officer of the congregation). This Team will be responsible for facilitating the entirety of this process over the coming months. Team members need to be people who
  - are dedicated to prayer and are known for their rich faith life;
  - know and love the congregation;
  - are respected by more than one facet (faction?) of the congregation;
  - are committed to confidentiality; and

- are positive and have a commitment to consensus (i.e., they have no particular agenda or personal statement to make).

If your congregation works with Spiritual Gifts, you'll want to consider people with the gifts of prayer, faith, discernment, generosity, creativity, and administration.

To be most effective, also make sure the Team has at least one:

- Process-oriented person who can coordinate fine details;
- Communicator who can accurately and effectively disseminate information;
- Numbers person who can crunch numbers; and
- Prayer Warrior who can activate a team of pray-ers.

In addition, Team Members must be able to make a **one-year commitment**, which includes a number of meetings (NOTE: each *Transformation Team* meeting is accounted for and outlined in each Session to maximize everyone's time and productivity).

3. Appoint a *Chair of the Transformation Team* who will report on the Team's behalf to the congregation's leadership team/committee/council/session/board.
4. Provide each member of the *Transformation Team* with a copy of **The W<sup>5</sup>H Process** and encourage them to begin with Session 1!



## SESSION 01

### EXPECTED BEHAVIORS

#### ARTICULATING HOW WE'RE GOING TO TREAT ONE ANOTHER

##### INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

The *Why, Where, Who, What, When, How Process* begins this month with our work on *Expected Behaviors*, the expectations and behaviors that guide the ways in which leaders, members, and guests of a congregation treat one another. While many people will say, "What do we need those for? We're a loving and kind congregation"; experience has taught us that there is a tendency to forget how to treat one another lovingly or kindly when congregations engage any kind of clarification or transformational process. Even if your congregation doesn't fit this category of forgetting how to love your neighbor (or fellow church members) as Jesus loves you, we're going to work toward stating the behaviors you as a congregation will be expecting over the next year . . . *just in case!* You will note that this is a *refining process* and may take two to four months to complete as a congregation . . . but once you've completed it, you will be well on your way!

##### SESSION OVERVIEW

This month we will concentrate on some of the "One-Anothers," the more than fifty One-Another statements in the New Testament that teach, and remind, us how we are to treat each other, specifically other Christians. In addition, we're going to review Matthew 18.15-17, the Church's *Conflict Code of Conduct* that we'll use if (okay, *when*) conflicts arise.

The Transformation Team will begin this month's process by reviewing the Handout *The One-Anothers for the Church*, trying to condense these scriptures into six to eight statements that will guide how members of the congregation will treat one another (in addition, Matthew 18.15-17 should be included in some way to set the standard for addressing differences). The Team will then begin to involve the congregation and leaders in the process, ultimately identifying six to eight statements that will form a *Congregation Covenant of Conduct*. This *Covenant* will need to be

approved by the congregation's official decision-making body (depending on your congregation's structure, this may be your Executive Committee, Board, Elders, or—in our smaller congregations—the congregation itself). You will then be ready to begin the hard work of living out the *Conduct* . . . probably the most difficult part of the *W<sup>6</sup>H Process*.

One congregation's *Covenant* reads:<sup>1</sup>

#### **Discipleship Behaviors**

1. We will treat each other with respect and compassion, speaking honestly and taking the time to listen to one another.
2. We will joyfully accept and embrace all people into our midst, practicing generosity of our time, our abilities, our financial gifts and our prayers for each other.
3. We will pursue agreement through honest interaction and then speak well of resulting decisions by the church and its leaders to build trust in fulfilling the united mission of the congregation.
4. We will practice peacemaking by following the teaching of Matthew 18:15-17.
5. We will be faithful in regular worship attendance, small groups, Bible study, and prayer, growing in spirit and grace, so that we experience the life transforming movement of God's Spirit within us.
6. Leaders will model these behaviors of discipleship, being of one heart and soul, by continuing to grow in spirit and grace, inspiring others to come alongside.

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<sup>1</sup> From "Developing Expected Behaviors" by Bill Tenny-Brittian (*Consulting, Coaching & Chatter*, July 22, 2008) at <http://www.billtennybrittian.com/got-a-foundation-lets-build/developing-expected-behaviors>.

## **THIS SESSION'S WORK**

### **TRANSFORMATION TEAM**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session.
2. This Session requires at least three extended Meetings lasting up to two hours each. You can meet as often as you wish, but note two cautions:
  - a. Don't short-change your Team time together. The depth of the work you're engaging depends on the depth of your relationships as a Team. It's okay if conversations take less than the time allotted, but don't rush through the time you'll spend in prayer or thought.
  - b. Each Session's work in this *Process* may take longer than a month. You'll want to leave sufficient time, but also guard against allowing the process to stall.

### **CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session to familiarize yourself with the work you're Team and you will be engaging as part of this Session.
2. Pray for an open mind and heart, particularly when the Transformation Team is ready to share the Expected Behavior drafts. Resolve to be constructive and kind in your considerations and offerings. For any negative reactions or thoughts you may have, be sure you have a helpful, hope-filled suggestion to make.
3. **Remember:** this Session is critical to engage the remainder of the *W<sup>δ</sup>H Process*. Do everything in your power to keep the process moving. Do not allow yourself to be a hindrance.

### **CONGREGATION**

1. Pray for the Team and the Processes you will be asked to participate in as a member of the congregation.
2. Pray for an open mind and heart throughout this Session.
3. Pray for your leaders and pastor/s.
4. If you don't already, begin to ask God to enlighten you:

God, what do You want us to be as a congregation? What do You want us to do as a congregation? What part do You want me to play? What do I need to do to be better prepared?

Open my heart and my mind, and strengthen me so I can be used by You. Please keep me from being a stumbling block for You and Your will and ways. Thank You. Amen.

### **SAMPLE NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN ARTICLE**

In [name the month], our [Board, Session, Vestry, Council, Executive Leadership Team, etc] decided to participate in the *Why-Where-Who-What-When-How (W<sup>6</sup>H) Process*. Our [*The Transformation Team*] was then secured, covenanting to meet on [*the second Tuesday*] of each month at [*the Hannibal First Christian Church*].

Over the coming year we'll be clarifying our Values, uncovering our Mission (the reason God created this congregation), discovering God's Vision for us, and preparing to live into what God has for us to be and do as we live into the coming years.

This month our Team [list names of Team members] is working on *Expected Behaviors*, those expectations that guide the way congregational leaders and members treat one another. This work is grounded in the *One-Anothers for the Congregation* that are recorded in the Bible's New Testament. We are working to articulate them in six to eight statements that are relevant for us as a congregation. Stay posted [or post here your process and dates for including the congregation] for more information as we seek to include you in this process.

We ask you to pray for our Team and the *W<sup>6</sup>H Process*. Pray for an open mind and heart throughout this Session. Pray for our leaders and pastor/s. And, perhaps, you could join us in praying this prayer:

God, what do You want us to be as a congregation? What do You want us to do as a congregation? What part do You want me to play? What do I need to do to be better prepared?

Open my heart and my mind, and strengthen me so I can be used by You. Please keep me from being a stumbling block for You and Your will and ways.

Thank You. Amen.

For more information about this or any other aspect of our *W<sup>6</sup>H* work, please contact [Team contact person] at [phone/s, email].

## SESSION 02

### VALUES

#### CLARIFYING WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR US AS A CONGREGATION

##### INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

Our first session focused on *Expected Behaviors*, the expectations and behaviors that guide the ways in which leaders, members, and guests of the congregation treat each other. In this session, we'll turn our attention to values, those behaviors and ideas we value not merely as individuals but as a *congregation*. For instance, social justice is very important for some congregations while discipleship is of greater value in others (just the way you think about those two statements may say something about what *you* value – smile); which you value will determine how you plan and budget.

Our *Expected Behaviors* create guidelines to manage our actions; our *Values* state what we do. They reflect our actual behaviors. They identify those traits and qualities we are willing to “go to the mat for”: the ministries and issues to which we are willing to devote our time, talent, treasure, and testimony. Values say to our friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors: “This is what’s important to us, this is what we do around here, this is what you’ll find here, this is what you can count on from us, this is what makes us different from other congregations.” Values touch our hearts and bring out emotion. When a congregation clarifies its values, you’ll see heads nodding and maybe a smile or two cross their faces.

Keep in mind that there is a difference between *values* and *ideals*. *Ideals* are those values to which we aspire but they likely are not evident in our congregation. Our *Values* are already in place (look at your congregation’s calendar, budget, and checkbook for clues as to what they are!).

Yet while they are already in place, few congregations take the time to clarify or articulate them. In congregations that fail to clarify their values, we tend to find disagreements, deferred decisions, and pressure to plan according to the “wants” or “likes” of individuals. Clarifying our values allows us to prioritize—and say “no” to some of—the many ideas, desires, and thoughts we comprise as congregations.

Values Clarification not only leads better, more focused planning; it is an integral part of the *Where-Why-Who-What-When-How* Process, an important part of the foundation that will help us to more easily and accurately recover *Why* we are.

While engaging the work of this session, remember that your work is to clarify your congregation's *Values*, not merely proclaim its ideals. You may choose to articulate an ideal among your values (particularly if you discover your Values are more negative than positive); however, if you concentrate on ideals rather than on your *Values*, you'll later encounter untold hours of trying to accomplish or be something God may not be calling you to be.

### **SESSION OVERVIEW**

The Transformation Team will begin this month's process with a bit of Bible study to consider what Jesus valued. Your Team will then try to narrow those values down to the four or five values evident in your congregation. After you've narrowed down your list, you'll want to share it with your Executive Committee or Elders for their input. Ultimately, you'll want to share and gather feedback from the Board and then the congregation. This process should only take a month or so, depending on how often your Board or other decision-making leaders meet.

The Values of one congregation are:

#### **Values of Second Church**

1. Diversity
2. Empowerment
3. Hospitality
4. Compassion
5. Spiritual growth
6. Community

## **THIS SESSION'S WORK**

### **TRANSFORMATION TEAM**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session, including the Transformation Team Outlines in APPENDIX A.
2. This Session requires at least one Team Meeting, a Bible study that shouldn't last more than ninety minutes. Again, we offer a caution:

Don't short-change your Team time together. The depth of the work you're engaging depends on the depth of your relationships as a Team. It's okay if conversations take less than the time allotted, but don't rush through the time you'll spend in prayer or thought.

### **CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session to familiarize yourself with the work your Team and you will be engaging as part of this Session.
2. Pray for an open mind and heart, particularly when the Transformation Team is ready to share the *Values* drafts. Resolve to be constructive and kind in your considerations and offerings. For any negative reactions or thoughts you may have, be sure you have a helpful, hope-filled suggestion to make.
3. Remember: this Session is also critical for engaging the remainder of the *Where-Why-Who-What-When-How Process*. Do everything in your power to keep the process moving. Do not allow yourself to be a hindrance.

### **CONGREGATION**

1. Pray for the Team and the Processes you will be asked to participate in as a member of the congregation.
2. Pray for an open mind and heart throughout this Session.
3. Pray for your leaders and pastor(s).
4. If you aren't already, ask God to enlighten you:

God, what do You want us to be as a congregation? What do You want us to do as a congregation? What part do You want me to play? What do I need to do to be better prepared?

Open my heart and my mind, and strengthen me so I can be used by You. Please keep me from being a stumbling block for You and Your will and ways.

Thank You. Amen.

## SAMPLE NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN ARTICLE

The work of your Transformation Team continues as we continue to meet and journey through the *Where-Why-Who-What-When-How (W<sup>5</sup>H) Process*. Throughout this year we'll be clarifying our values, uncovering our Mission (the reason God created this congregation), discovering God's Vision for us, and preparing to live into what God has for us to be and do as we live into the coming years.

This month our Team [*list names of Team members*] is working on *Values Clarification*, articulating the values that guide the way our congregation spends its time, talent, treasure, and testimony. We've begun this work by identifying some of Jesus' values and looking to see where those are evident in our congregation. Stay tuned as we share our findings with the Board and then with you!

It sure is an exciting time to be a member of [*name of your congregation here*], particularly as we get clearer about who God is calling us to be and what God wants us to do here, in our community, and beyond.

## SESSION 03

### WHY

## RECOVERING GOD'S MISSION FOR YOUR CONGREGATION

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

So far we've worked on *Expected Behaviors* and *Values Clarification*, now it's time for us to turn back to the beginning of our congregation's history to *Recover the Mission*, God's Mission, for your congregation. A congregation's *Mission* answers the question, "Why did God create this congregation in the first place?" Another way to ask that question is, "Why did God want this congregation here?"

God's Mission for a congregation doesn't appear to change. Think about God's Mission for Abraham in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. God repeatedly told Abraham and his descendants that Abraham would be the Father of a great nation (see Genesis 17, 26, 28, 32, 48, etc.). That Mission—that God's servant Abraham would be the father of many descendants who would comprise God's Chosen People—is still being fulfilled today . . . thousands of years after Abraham's death. In another session we'll talk about God's *Vision* for our congregation, how God wants us to live out the congregation's *Mission* in the present with an eye for the future. For now, however, we want to take a look back and *recover* God's reason for giving birth to this family of faith.

But first let us say that about ten or twenty years ago there was a move among congregations to "develop their mission statements." More often than not, these were contentious processes that alienate a lot of people. Often pastors will admit to having a mission statement "somewhere" but that it's long since been forgotten or hidden in a drawer somewhere to be forgotten, or for the pain associated with its development to be forgotten.

This is *not* the kind of Missioning we are about to engage. The process of mission *development* usually includes multiple opinions and ideas, many of which are selfish, that we try to compromise into a statement of activity . . . and far too often these statements are paragraphs long.

Again, what we're talking about here is mission *recovery*: uncovering, discovering, recovering our founders' original purpose, the congregation's *raison d'être* (*reason for being*). Our congregations' Missions are already in place and have been since our congregations were conceived; now we get to be detectives of sorts to uncover, or rediscover, what they are.

If we can approach this Session from this discovery perspective, not only will your congregation have the opportunity to learn something about itself, they may also get to have a bit of fun and grow closer together . . . who knows, you may all become more unified and united. Whew-HOOOOOOOO!

### **SESSION OVERVIEW**

You've covered a lot of important—and perhaps even difficult—work over the past couple of Sessions. While this Session is no less important (indeed, it will form the basis for all your congregation's future ministries!!!), it's an exciting one. You are going to get to “go back” to the beginning of your congregation, perhaps even to its conception. This Session will require a bit of sleuthing and, as such, can involve a number of folks . . . particularly the long-timers and those with a lot of investment in the way things “were.” This is one of the best opportunities you'll have to include them in this process in a way that can be compelling and beneficial to them. For history buffs or those who may have an attachment to the past, it's fun with a purpose!

Just as in the previous Sessions, we will again start with a bit of Bible study that you may or may not want to share with others as you talk about the work of *Mission Recovery*. During this Study, you're also going to take the time to decide who and when you want to pull into the process of discovery . . . and you'll want to plan some kind of a “fun” event (a scavenger hunt, a fill-in-the-blank contest, an actual or recreated interview . . . be creative) to communicate your founders' purpose for founding the congregation. Maybe you can combine an era-costume party with it. *Just have fun!!!*

In the end, you are going to offer a *Mission Statement* that should be no more than one sentence long and completes the sentence, “[*This congregation*] exists to. . . .

Let's say this again: ONE SENTENCE!!!!

And it should contain no more than four purposes, or reasons, for *your* congregation's existence. Ultimately, you want to be able to “reduce” it to four action words that will define what your congregation exists to be and/or do.

## **Two Sample Mission Statements**

The Rock exists to change to face of the  
Puget Sound corridor.



First Church exists to *Introduce, Equip, Care, and Go*: to introduce people to Jesus, to equip them to live as He teaches; to care for one another as Children of God, and to go into the world to invite more people to know Him.

## **THIS SESSION'S WORK**

### **TRANSFORMATION TEAM**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session.
2. This Session requires at least one Team Meeting, a Bible study that shouldn't last more than ninety minutes. Again, here's *the caution*:  

Don't short-change your Team time together. The depth of the work you're engaging depends on the depth of your relationships as a Team. It's okay if conversations take less than the time allotted, but don't rush through the time you'll spend in prayer or thought.

### **CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session to familiarize yourself with the work your Team and you will be engaging as part of this Session.
2. Pray for discernment for yourselves and your Transformation Team, so that you will be able to collectively recognize God's Mission for your congregation.
3. Plan to attend the *WHY Gathering* where you and the congregation will have an opportunity to play and discover together.

**Remember:** You cannot go to the *WHO* part of the *WHERE-WHY-WHO-WHAT-WHEN-HOW Process* until this Session is completed. Do everything in your power to keep the process moving and positive.

## CONGREGATION

1. Pray for the Team and the Processes you will be asked to participate in as a member of the congregation.
2. Pray for an open mind and heart throughout this Session.
3. Pray for your leaders and pastor(s).
4. If you aren't already, ask God to enlighten you:

God, what do You want us to be as a congregation? What do You want us to do as a congregation? What part do You want me to play? What do I need to do to be better prepared?

Open my heart and my mind, and strengthen me so I can be used by You. Please keep me from being a stumbling block for You and Your will and ways.

Thank You. Amen.

## **SAMPLE NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN ARTICLES**

1.

Your Transformation Team has begun their work on the third Session of our *WHERE-WHY-WHO-WHAT-WHEN-HOW (W5<sup>2</sup>H) Process*. So far, our congregation has established our Expected Behaviors and we have clarified our Values. Now we'll be working on recovering our congregation's Mission (the reason God created this congregation). Stay tuned for more information about how you can be part of this exciting process.

It's an exciting time to be in life and service as the *[name of your congregation]*, particularly as we get clearer about WHO God is calling us to be and what God is wanting us to do here in our community and beyond.

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2.

Coming Soon: Series of Prayer

Join *[your congregation's name here]* as we engage in a 13-week *Series of Prayer*, focusing our attention hearing and listening to what God is wanting to say to us in the coming months and beyond. This *Series of Prayer* is being sponsored by your Transformation Team but will give each of us a chance to learn and grow more in and through our prayer lives.

We will be distributing the *Prayer Guide* beginning *[date]* and the *Series* will begin on *[date]*, continuing through *[date]*. Stay tuned, too, for

how you can participate in a prayer or study group directly related to our prayer and the what's-next's of our life as a congregation. You won't want to miss the opportunities!

## SESSION 04

### WHERE AND WHO

#### DISCOVERING GOD'S VISION FOR YOUR CONGREGATION

##### INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

This Session will by far be the longest *W<sup>6</sup>H* Session you encounter in the WHY-WHERE-WHO-WHAT-HOW Process. The key reason for this is that it centers on a thirteen-week Prayer Series meant to engage the entirety of your congregation in praying for WHO God may be calling your congregation to be.

At this point we are over halfway through the Process: you've identified your congregation's *Expected Behaviors*, have clarified its *Values*, and have recovered God's original purpose, God's *Mission* for you. Now we're going to consider the WHERE of your congregation, your demographics: whom God has brought into your doors and who is living just beyond them. With that information in hand and with the concentrated time of prayer asking as a congregation, "God, who are You calling us to be?"; you will be better prepared to discover your congregation's WHO, or *Vision*.

A congregation's Vision describes the way God is calling a congregation to live out their Mission in light of where the congregation is today (as opposed to when the congregation was established). Another way of phrasing this is, "Given your congregation's purpose—the reason you were established—and whom God has called together to be your Body of Christ today *and* the people who comprise your community at this time, WHO is God calling you to be as a congregation? Our WHO answers the question, "What is our purpose today?"

You will note, please, we cannot establish today's purpose without considering our congregation's central purpose and its demographics. Too many congregations self-determine their purpose both without ever considering the reality of their current setting and without consulting God (hence, forgetting the congregation ultimately belongs to God and is meant to be used as *HE* pleases . . . or at least in a way that pleases HIM).

Repeatedly we find congregations trying to serve a population that long moved away. Take, for example, the declining, all-White, mainly upper-

income congregation located in a 97% non-White, now mostly lower-income neighborhood. More than one person might surmise that the declining congregation's WHO is to be a sanctuary for those White, affluent members; others might argue the congregation's WHO is to be a place of worship and/or a mission station for the under- and unemployed in the neighborhood. The question isn't WHO the existing congregation wishes to be, or even what folks in the neighborhood want the congregation to be (as though they might even be thinking about it!?!). Nor is the question necessarily about the sustainability of the existing congregation. Rather, the question is, "WHO does God want this congregation to be today?" or "WHO might God want this congregation to look like?" Once this is determined, the congregation will be able to determine more specifically WHAT their ministries will be and WHEN and HOW they will implement them (but those are for the next Session!).

Unlike the WHY of our congregation that doesn't appear to change, the WHO of a congregation will change with the congregation's demographics, dependent both on who lives and works in our communities and neighborhood and on who "lives" in our congregation. To turn to the Bible for a moment, we might take into consideration the early Church's story as it is told in the Newer Testament book of Acts.

In the beginning of Acts, it's apparent that the Mission, the WHY, of the Church is to worship, to engage ministry with one another, to reach out to not-yet-Christians, and to disciple people into an active life of faith. However, the work of the early Church is geared towards Jews. As such, we might provide a WHO Statement for them that reads something like this:

Our vision is to equip and encourage one another so we can disciple and be disciplined until the Jewish world knows Jesus' teachings and loves God with the whole of their very beings..

Okay, it's open to some theological quibbling . . . but you get the gist. The Mission/WHY of the Church is to worship, minister, mission, and disciple; and its initial Vision/WHO is to reach the Jewish community.

However, within a few short years of Jesus' Resurrection and Rising (His *Ascension*, His return to Heaven), the Church is confronted with the reality that there are a lot of Gentiles (non-Jews) in their community. In chapter ten of Acts we learn about a vision the disciple Peter had, a vision that tells Peter he is to expand the scope of his ministry to include Gentiles. In chapter 13, Barnabas and Saul (who will become known as the great apostle *Paul*) preach to Jews and the "Gentiles who worship God" (verse 16). Chapter 15 brings home the reality that the Church's WHO has changed to include "the Gentiles who are turning to God" (verse 19). The Mission/WHY of the Church is (to worship, minister, mission, and disciple) remains the same but the Vision/WHO has to shift to meet the needs of the community.

As with most congregations, transitions in a congregation's WHO can come with quite a bit of controversy and debate (Chapter 15 of Acts is a great read!). Can you see how that shift in WHO came both with the addition to the Body—with Paul and others “joining” the Church—and with the change in neighborhoods and communities where the growing Church was located?

What's happened in a lot of our more modern congregations today is that we've either confused our WHO with our WHY, or we're stuck in a previous WHO or two. Some of us have never taken time to think through our purpose in the light of today; we keep doing the same-old/same-old without looking at why we're still doing it, or whether or not “it” is effective or still faithful. Even in congregations who have at some point or points made shifts from our original purpose, we're not keeping up with the additions to, or subtractions from, our congregations and in no reflect the ministry and/or mission opportunities of our communities (those within and beyond our doors).

Just as at the end of *Session 3*, at the end of this *Session* you will be able to offer your leadership body and, ultimately, the congregation a statement, this time it's the *Vision Statement*, a statement of WHO you understand God is calling this congregation to be in ministry and mission. Once we know WHO God is calling us to be, we can plan to effectively be that congregation (but that planning work will come in the next *Session*).

### **Four Sample Vision Statements**

The Rock is changing the face of the Puget Sound Corridor.



The Blessing Church will bless everyone who walks through our doors.



The Oasis is a place for finding and fulfilling dreams.



First Church serves as the FACE of Jesus: a place where people will find forgiveness, affirmation, compassion, and encouragement in God's love.

As we said in the last *Session*, a movement began several years ago that encouraged congregations to develop their Mission and Vision statements. We said earlier that this movement was for many a divisive and detrimental process that was often more political and power-laden. Again, this is *not* what we're espousing or encouraging here. Indeed, that

is why we will be engaging this process of determining WHO God wants us to be by taking the time to develop and better develop our ability to talk to and “hear” from God.

### **SESSION OVERVIEW**

As we mentioned at the beginning of this Session, this *WHERE and WHO* Session will by far be the longest and most intricate of the *W<sup>6</sup>H* Session you encounter. The good news is that the next Session of the WHY-WHERE-WHO-WHAT-WHEN-HOW Process is the next-to-last and it’s going to be FUN! But we can’t get there until we complete this Session. While you may not consider this *WHERE and WHO* Session to be fun in the end, we think you will find it pretty amazing, particularly as you see people praying, hear about their experiences, and watch what God does for, in, and through them . . . and you! We promise, you won’t be disappointed. (At least that hasn’t happened yet!)

Basically, this Session comprises four parts:

- 1) A thirteen-week all-congregation *Prayer Series*;
- 2) Compiling the demographic information for your community and congregation;
- 3) Compiling the thoughts and prayers of the congregation as the *Prayer Series* comes to a close (we call this “harvesting the Fruits of the congregation’s prayer”); and
- 4) Discovering and affirming WHO God is calling your congregation to be in ministry.

Of course, there will be a bit of work to do for each of these parts, so we suggest you assign a different person to oversee the details of each. Whatever you do, *don’t get overwhelmed* and don’t lose momentum. You’ve done so much good work so far. Keep the momentum going! You’re closing in on the prize for all your work: a congregation effectively living out whom God is calling you to be! Whew-HOOOOOOO!

In terms of timing, we suggest a schedule similar to the one you’ll find on the following page (give or take a week or two).

WEEK	TRANSFORMATION TEAM (TT)	CONGREGATION	CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS	WEEK
1	<b>TT Meeting 1</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TT keeps staff and exec leadership informed and as up-to-date as possible.</li> <li>▪ TT secures support &amp; facilitators for weekly prayer groups from Sunday School teachers, small group facilitators, elders, pastor/s, etc.</li> </ul>	1
2	Engage work assignments from Meeting 1			2
3	<b>TT Meeting 2</b> (Don't put this meeting off – you need it for encouragement and accountability)			3
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pray</li> <li>▪ Publicity, publicity, publicity,</li> <li>▪ Team Check-ins</li> <li>▪ Pray</li> </ul>	Learn about Prayer Series		4
5		Begin sign-ups for Prayer groups	Distribute Prayer Booklets to Prayer Group Facilitators	5
6			Prayer Group Facilitators gathered & briefed	6
7	Place <i>Harvest Container</i> in the Sanctuary and begin congregational prayer for the Prayer Series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduced to the Harvest Container during Worship/s</li> <li>▪ Receive Prayer Booklets</li> </ul>	Prayer Group Facilitators gather for prayer	7

WEEK	TRANSFORMATION TEAM (TT)	CONGREGATION	CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS	WEEK
8	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prayer groups begin</li> <li>▪ Harvest Container prayed over in worship</li> </ul>	Prayer Group Facilitators meet with their prayer groups for the first time	8
9	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	Prayer groups		9
10	<b>TT Meeting 3</b> Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	Prayer groups		10
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If you haven't already, begin compiling demographic information</li> <li>▪ Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators &amp; Session Coordinators</li> </ul>	Prayer groups		11
12	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	Prayer groups		12
13	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	Prayer groups		13

WEEK	TRANSFORMATION TEAM (TT)	CONGREGATION	CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS	WEEK
	<b>Prayer Series: Week 7</b>			
14	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	Prayer groups		14
	<b>Prayer Series: Week 8</b>			
15	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	Prayer groups		15
	<b>Prayer Series: Week 9</b>			
16	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TT Meeting 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators &amp; Coordinators</li> <li>▪ Begin praying for the collection and processing of the demographic information</li> </ul>	Prayer groups	Consider how you will take advantage of all the groups that are meeting . . . what study or prayer group ministries might you add to your pre-Series line-up?	16
	<b>Prayer Series: Week 10</b>			
17	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	Prayer groups		17
	<b>Prayer Series: Week 11</b>			
18	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prayer groups</li> <li>▪ Harvest Container moved from Sanctuary to a convenient place to receive Fruits</li> <li>▪ Distribute Harvest Slips on which to write Fruits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pray the congregation will hear and listen to what God is trying to say in, for, and through each of you.</li> <li>▪ Begin praying for your openness to receiving the draft <i>WHO / Vision Statement</i> when it's ready to share.</li> </ul>	18

WEEK	TRANSFORMATION TEAM (TT)	CONGREGATION	CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS	WEEK
	<b>Prayer Series: Week 12</b>			
19	Encourage Prayer Group Facilitators & Session Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prayer groups</li> <li>▪ Collect Fruits in worship</li> </ul>		19
	<b>Last Week of Prayer Series</b>			
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prayer Series ends at close of this week</li> <li>▪ Thank Prayer Group Facilitators</li> <li>▪ Encourage Session Coordinators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prayer groups close</li> <li>▪ Collect Fruits in worship</li> </ul>		20
21	Prayer & Rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collect Fruits in worship</li> <li>▪ Harvest Dedication Service(s)</li> </ul>		21
22	<b>TT Meeting 5</b> <i>Vision Discovery Work Begins</i>	Breather		22
23	<i>Vision Discovery Work</i> draft of <i>WHO</i> Statement	Start new Groups out of Prayer Series Groups!		23
24	<b>TT Meeting 6</b> <i>Vision Discovery Work</i> finalize draft of <i>WHO</i> Statement		Continue praying for openness to the draft <i>WHO / Vision</i> Statement	24
25	Meet with congregational leadership to introduce the draft <i>WHO Statement</i>		Leadership refines draft <i>WHO Statement</i> and prepares to introduce it to the congregation	25

WEEK	TRANSFORMATION TEAM (TT)	CONGREGATION	CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS	WEEK
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pray</li> <li>▪ Publicize the proposed <i>WHO Statement</i> to the congregation</li> <li>▪ Check-ins with leaders for prayer and encouragement. . .</li> <li>▪ Pray</li> </ul>	Get ready for <b>Session 5</b> , Planning Strategically!		26
27		Congregation receives the proposed <i>WHO Statement</i>	Publicize the proposed <i>WHO Statement</i> to the congregation	27
28			Publicize and prepare for congregational affirmation	28
29				29
30	Celebrate!	Congregation affirms <i>WHO Statement</i>	Celebrate!	30
31	Rest, reflect, and CELEBRATE your work!!!!		Begin using <i>WHO STATEMENT</i>	31

Are you feeling a bit overwhelmed? Stop for a moment. . . .

Really . . . STOP.

Breathe.

Breathe in. . . . .

Breathe out. . . . .

Breathe in. . . . .

Breathe out. . . . .

We know this looks like A LOT!!!!!! But, the reality is the first six weeks are pre-work and the *Prayer Series* will pretty much run itself as long as you have Prayer Group Facilitators in place and you check-in with them regularly. And, don't forget, you're going to break all this work down into at least four parts, so it will be more than manageable!

What you'll find in the next sections is the breakdown of this work. We'll start with the overview for the Transformation Team; then the Congregational Leaders; and, then, the Congregation followed by the more specific responsibilities for those who will be heading up the four parts of this Session.

Have we said Whew-HOOOOOOOOOOO! yet?

## **THIS SESSION'S WORK**

### **TRANSFORMATION TEAM**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session.
2. This Session requires at least six Team Meetings:

Meeting 1 will focus on determining who will be responsible for the various parts of this Session; on choosing dates for the Prayer Series, the Prayer Harvest, the Dedication and future meetings.

Meeting 2 will bring the Team together for status reports and prayer. Whatever may tempt you, *do not put this meeting off too long!*

Meeting 3 will be a status check on the progress of the Prayer Series plans with finalization of your plans for collecting/harvesting and dedicating The Fruit of the congregation's prayers.

Meeting 4 will be the meeting in which your Team gets its first look at the demographic information for your community and your congregation. This meeting will allow the Team to begin to hold this information in prayer as you await the harvesting of the Prayer Fruits. It will also provide you with an intentional time of prayer for the congregation and leadership as The Fruits of your prayers are harvested, received, and considered.

Meeting 5 will begin with a review of the demographic information, particularly the needs of those living within a five/ten-mile radius of the congregation. It will also include the harvesting of the congregation's Prayer Fruits, learning what God has been speaking into and through the congregation. In the light of the Fruits, the demographic information, and the congregation's Mission and Values, the Team will begin the work of developing a WHO Statement for the congregation's eventual affirmation.

Meeting 6 will be spent refining the draft WHO Statement, in preparation for sharing it with your congregation's executive leadership.

#### **Again, don't forget The Caution:**

Make the most of your Team time together. The depth of the work you are engaging depends on the depth of your relationships as a Team. Don't rush the time you can—and need to—spend in prayer,

thought, and conversation. Push through discomforts and disagreements together.

## **TRANSFORMATION TEAM**

### **PART 1: PRAYER SERIES DETAILS**

#### **To Note**

As we've mentioned, this Session comprises a thirteen-week *Prayer Series* that has been developed with the expectation that everyone in the congregation will participate at some level. In addition to the Prayer Book—which should be reproduced for every member and guest of the congregation, you are encouraged to begin at least one Prayer Group . . . but more on that in a moment.

For now, let us note that this *Series* does not take for granted that everyone knows how to pray or is comfortable with prayer. It strives to not make commentary about where anyone is in their prayer journey but, rather, to cover some basics of prayer so that everyone in the congregation can begin at the same point. For some this “same point” will be a review. For others it will be a first introduction to prayer beyond the written or rote prayers we've heard or said in worship.

As you may know, prayer is often very personal and private. While initially we thought the Session on *Expected Behaviors* would be the most controversial, we're learning this Session can make some people very uncomfortable. Again, our purpose here is not to make commentary on anyone's ability or inability to pray. In response to those who might say something along the lines of, “Why are we having to do this? I already know how to pray”; we can gently affirm their ability and commend their devotion to prayer while reminding them that not everyone has had the opportunity to learn or become as devoted as they have.

We also recognize that some people may like some of the prayer techniques, or *spiritual disciplines*, we'll be introducing while detesting others. To those who express their dislikes (perhaps even strongly), we suggest you gently let them know that over the centuries people have used different forms of prayer and that some people like some prayer forms much more than others. Recognizing that, we're also aware that some folks will never get to try those types of prayer that work best for them if the Church doesn't give them opportunities to try them. That's why this study offers a variety of ways to pray: so people have a better chance of discovering what works best for them in prayer. We'd suggest you call upon people's one-anothering spirit and spirit of adventure, that they might engage the *Series* with the spirit that it's not merely an individual devotional but also a congregational one that's trying to offer a little something for everyone.

As well, we're aware that some people in the congregation may be uncomfortable with the belief that God continues to speak to us today, that we can "hear" from God. When we talk about "hearing" from God, we want to be sensitive to the reality that while some people do hear audibly from God, these are very rare occurrences these days. A valid risk when speaking to people about the "audible voice of God" is validating what may actually be a psychotic experience. This is why it's important (a) to use this *Prayer Series* in its entirety (it addresses these possibilities) and (b) to make sure you offer opportunities for folks to talk about what they are experiencing. Over the years, we've come to realize some of our parishioners have had psychotic episodes that we've been able to support them through with the help of their physician. Be careful, though, not to dismiss people's—even those who are mentally ill—experiences as psychotic rather than spiritual. One of the most spiritually in-touch persons we have known and loved is not able to function without a variety of psychotropic medications that at times need adjustment.

We also want to say here that this Prayer Series may seem like a huge and daunting task. In one sense it is. But more practically, it doesn't have to be . . . particularly if you break it into smaller pieces and ask others to share in its planning *and* implementation. APPENDIX E will help you to do that, as will the Transformation Team Meeting Outlines for this session. While they may seem *very* detailed to some, we hope they will provide just the right detail for those of us that like—nay, enjoy and need—details (smile)!

### *Weekly Scriptures and Themes*

WEEK	SCRIPTURE	THEME
1	Jeremiah 29.11-13 1st Corinthians 12.12-20	Conceiving what God can do
2	John 7.16-18	Perceiving what God is doing
3	Jeremiah 1.5 1st Samuel 3.1-10	Receiving what God wants to do for, in, and through us
4	John 17.1-26	Jesus' Prayer and the Power of God, Jesus, and praying
5	Matthew 6.9-13	The Lord's Prayer and its model for prayer
6	Romans 12.9-21	Praying for others
7	1st Chronicles 4.10	Praying for ourselves
8	Philippians 1.3-21	Praying for our congregation and the Church

9	Acts 4.23-31	Praying as a congregation
10	Colossians 1.9-12	Praying for who God wants us to be
11	Ephesians 3.14-21	Preparing to share the fruit of our prayers
12	Colossians 3.15-17	Harvesting the fruit of our prayers
13	Ephesians 5.18b-19	Reflecting on our prayers and praying, and anticipating the future

### Weekly Prayer Groups

Since we've mentioned weekly gatherings, let us address them here. It's important to offer each week at least one option for people to come together to discuss what they are experiencing (or not) in their praying. These are not intended to be "classes" or "teaching" sessions. Quite simply, they are a way for people to check-in on what they've read and are, hopefully, experiencing. A suggested format for these gatherings is

1. An opening prayer
2. An invitation to participants to share what they are thinking or feeling about prayer or what they have been experiencing in their praying.
3. A time for people to pray aloud as they are led.

If your congregation has had a bit of experience with praying, you might try something a little more "risky," such as closing with participants in groups of two to pray one-on-one. Just be sure you have no novices in the group when you try this. Of course, the easiest way to approach this weekly group component is to use this format in an adult Sunday School class.

Preferably, though, you'll find a way to offer a minimum of three groups: a Sunday morning option, a weekday morning or early afternoon option, and a weekday evening option. Try to target certain populations in your congregation: a group for parents with kids might offer childcare or at least be child-sensitive; an early early-morning, pre-breakfast group for busy working professionals or retirees who like to get up early; a lunch or afternoon tea option; an early Saturday option. These group gatherings should last no longer than sixty minutes: 10 minutes to gather and pray; 30-40 minutes to share; 10-20 minutes for closing prayer. You may have to time sharings so that everyone has an opportunity to share and remember to stay focused in the questions you offer to invite the sharing:

What stuck out for you this week?

What are you thinking and this week's experience with prayer?

How are you feeling?

What do you want to remember and carry forward with you?

What, if anything, do you think God might be trying to say to us as a congregation through today's sharings?

Since your first session will merely be an introduction to the *Prayer Series*, think about setting some ground rules in the first session: confidentiality, respect for one another's sharing, what we say here stays here, no trying to "fix" people or their theology or thoughts. Above all, refrain from teaching and do think about how you can launch at least one of your groups into an on-going small group offering.

### Prayer Group Facilitators

You no doubt are aware of the importance of having the "right" people to facilitate the Prayer Groups. You'll notice, we are using the term *facilitator* rather than *leader*. Since there is no teaching or real "leading" taking place in these groups, they merely need a facilitator, someone to facilitate the conversation. These people should be people of prayer themselves. The ideal facilitators have the gift of hospitality and have a way of making people feel comfortable. We also want to look for people who can encourage sharing and who won't dominate either the conversations or the group.

These people may be members of the Transformation Team, but think beyond yourselves. The more people we are able to involve, the more buy-in from the congregation; and we all know how much the W<sup>5</sup>H Process depends on congregational participation and ownership. For this reason, too, it may be best to not have the pastor lead a group, at least not more than one.

And do be sure to check-in weekly with your Prayer Group Facilitators. Ask them what they would like to share, if there's anything you can do for them, and how you can be holding them and their group in prayer.

APPENDICES F and G will help you with planning your prayer groups.

### Post-Prayer Series Groups

You might want to use one of your groups as a Prayer/Share Group where people can come to share each week about what they're experiencing through prayer. Or maybe one of your groups can become a Prayer Care Group wherein participants pray for one another and the congregation. Or maybe one of your groups might become a Prayer Experience Group that tries out different forms of praying. Or maybe one of your groups will become a Prayer Study Group, reading and studying and applying different prayers and other spiritual disciplines. Don't be

afraid to launch something new or on-going from this thirteen-week study. In fact, don't miss the opportunity!

## TRANSFORMATION TEAM

### PART 2: HARVESTING THE FRUIT OF YOUR CONGREGATION'S PRAYER

#### To Note

While it could be easy to get caught into the details of implementing this Session's *Prayer Series*, we want to keep sight that the key purpose of the *Prayer Series* is to provide God with an avenue to speak to us as a *congregation*. No doubt, our congregational praying will teach us more about prayer and give us chances to pray and share with one another, but in the end, each member of the congregation will an intentional opportunities both to ask God what God would like for His congregation and to share the responses to those asks. We are calling these responses *Prayer Fruit* and will "harvest" that Fruit—will give folks an opportunity to share the fruit of their prayers—by placing their thoughts, ideas, requests, answers—in a *Harvest Jar* (or basket or whatever creative container you make available).

Again, there are a number of details that go with this detail of *Harvesting*, so we break them down as follows:

- The Harvest Container;
- Harvesting the Fruit of the Congregation's Prayer; and
- Reaping the Rewards.

#### The Harvest Container

The Harvest Container can be any jar, basket, vase, or other vessel that will hold the Prayer Fruit *Cards* members and guests will be presenting during the last weeks of the *Prayer Series* (see the next section for a sample *Prayer Fruit Card*). Remember that some members may return more than one card and that each card will likely be about 4.25x5.5 inches. *Be sure to start with a large enough container to hold all the Cards that might be offered: think more than less!*

A good way to preview the *Prayer Series* and move it from advertisement and publicity to a ministry is to place the Harvest Container into the front of your Sanctuary or Worship space a week or two before the *Series* begins. You may or may not call attention to it, although doing so will allow people to get a deeper understanding of what is about to unfold.

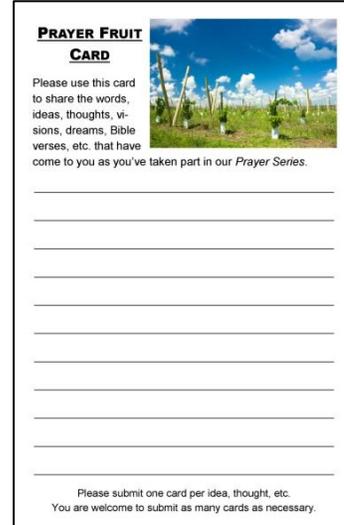
The weekend you kick-off the *Prayer Series*, be sure to dedicate the Harvest Container during worship(s) and note that it will be in the

sanctuary for the next eleven weeks, receiving the prayers and praises worship generates.

On the twelfth and thirteenth weeks of the *Prayer Series*, you will move the Container into a convenient place inside, or just outside, the Sanctuary so people will be able to unobtrusively place their *Prayer Fruit Cards* inside it. You may want to make moving the Harvest Container a part of the worship service(s) that week.

### *Harvesting the Congregation's Prayer Fruit*

During weeks 12 and 13 the congregation will turn in the Fruits of their Prayers. These are the words, ideas, thoughts, visions, hopes, dreams, etc. that people have been gleaned from their prayers. To facilitate this process, you will need to provide the congregation of the *Prayer Fruit Card* to which we have referred. To facilitate this process, you will need to provide the congregation of the *Prayer Fruit Card* to which we have referred. These can be as simple or as elaborate as you'd like, but we are fond of the one you'll find at the end of this *Session*, pictured here to the right (see APPENDIX D for a card you can copy and cut in half for use).



Place these *Cards* near the *Harvest Container*. Place them in the bulletin. Place them in the newsletter. Hand them to your Prayer Group facilitators on Week 11 and ask them to distribute to their Group participants each week. Make them downloadable from your website. Ask your pastor(s) to mention them during all worship services and gatherings during Weeks 11, 12, and 13 of the *Series*. Go out of your way to make sure everyone has multiple opportunities to return at least one Card.

At the final worship service(s) of the *Prayer Series*, dedicate the *Fruit* and let people know that the Transformation Team will be harvesting/reviewing all the *Fruit* with the intention of finding themes, repeat messages, and any other possibilities that God has been speaking to and through them.

**A CAUTIONARY NOTE:** Every time we talk about this part of the Session, we are aware that some folks are very uncomfortable with this. We've heard it referred to as "ridiculous," "stupid," "non-Christian," and as "pushing God too far." We can't encourage you enough to push through that push-back. Don't spend too much time trying to convince people or otherwise arguing with them: it will frustrate both them and you and almost never brings anyone along. You may want to think ahead and choose the most compassionate person on your Team to listen to any concerns and acknowledge any discomfort that's expressed (don't go looking for problems—most congregations don't have any pushback). Pray with and for those who react

negatively. Don't be patronizing. If you know of people in the congregation (perhaps it's you?) who have had similar reactions or concerns but have pushed through them, talk to one or two of these folks and ask them about their experiences. You may want to solicit their "positive" prayer support and may even ask if they might be available as someone to whom you may refer a nay-say-er.

### Reaping the Rewards

Whew-HOOOOOO! All that being said, it's now time to turn to the fun part of harvesting prayer. It's time for our Transformation Team to again come together as a Team to engage the final part of harvesting WHO God is calling our congregation, God's congregation, to be. This is the best part!!! (okay, maybe a congregation praying together and individuals growing in their prayer life and spiritual disciplines are better. . . .)

## **TRANSFORMATION TEAM**

### **PART 3: DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS**

#### To Note

By the fourth week of the Prayer Series, you will want to begin gathering your WHERE information. This demographic information, quite basically, provides basic information about our community. You may be thinking, "Duh We already know about our community." To which we respond, "Yes, you already know quite a few things about your community, but there are likely a number of things you don't know." Such as:

- The average age of those living in the community
- Your community's ethnic and racial composition
- The ratio of women to men and marital status
- The percentage of single-family homes
- Education levels and how many people make how much money
- How long people have lived there and what new residents will likely look like in terms of ethnicity, age, education, income, etc.
- Most popular radio and television stations
- Which magazines and news sources your neighbors are using
- How our community is expected to expand or decline, and in what ways.

Maybe you can see how this information might be helpful. First, it can serve as a real reality check about who are neighbors are. While many of us may think we know everything there is to know about our community,

we know that 95% of us are at least a little surprised and not above an “oh!” or an “ah-ha!” when we review the demographic information for those living in the area God has entrusted to our care.

More importantly, though, this information should be able to tell us what kind of mission is needed in our community . . . and even what kind of ministry people in, and coming into, our *congregation* need. Demographic information can alert us to the needs of our neighbors, can help us to hone our ministry and mission foci, can challenge our preconceived notions about why people don’t come to our churches (and how to attract and invite them!), and can be one more piece of the puzzle in discerning WHO God is calling us to be.

### *Finding Demographic Information for your Community*

Demographic information can be as detailed as we want it to be and can be obtained from a number of sources. If your congregation is part of a denomination, contact your “local” denominational office (also known as a *judicatory* office) to see if they can provide you with the demographic information for your community. Some middle judicatory offices (i.e., Conferences, Regions, Synods, Districts, etc.) maintain contracts with companies such as MissionInsite (on the web at <http://missioninsite.com>) and Percept (at <http://perceptnet.com> and <http://link2lead.com>). Your judicatory minister (i.e., Regional, Area, Conference Minister; General Presbyter) can provide either your demographic information or the login information for you to find it yourself. If you are not affiliated with a denomination or your judicatory has no such contract, you can still obtain information from church demographic services; but your congregation will be responsible for paying for them (*but they’re not that expensive!!!*).

Other sources of demographic information can be obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>) or a website such as Hometown Locator (<http://hometownlocator.com>). If your community has a Chamber of Commerce, they will more than likely have good information you should find helpful.

### *Compiling Demographic Information for your Congregation*

Once you’ve compiled the demographic information for your community, you’ll want to compile similar information about your congregation. APPENDIX H offers a format you may want to consider or adapt for compiling your congregation’s information.

## **TRANSFORMATION TEAM WORK**

### **PART 4: DISCOVERING YOUR CONGREGATION'S WHO**

Set a date for not less than three days after the final Harvest Dedication worship service when the entire Transformation Team can gather: you want your Team members to be well-rested and “prayed-up” as you begin to harvest God’s *Fruit*. If your congregation is familiar with fasting, your Transformation Team might want to pray and fast for twelve or so hours before the real work of harvesting begins. Whatever you do, make sure you spend a little time at the beginning of each harvesting Transformation Team gathering to debrief and pray, so that you can lay aside whatever worries, cares, or concerns you might unwittingly bring into the process. Indeed, this is Holy Work you are about to engage!

## CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS

1. Read through the entirety of this Session to familiarize yourself with the work your Team and you will be engaging as part of this Session.
2. Pray for discernment for yourselves and your Transformation Team, so that you will be able to collectively recognize God's Mission for your congregation.
3. Make time to spend 5-10 minutes a day with the *Prayer Series* devotional book and attend a Prayer Group each week for the thirteen weeks of the *Series*.
4. You are responsible for finalizing the draft *WHO / Vision Statement* and for sharing with the congregation in anticipation of its affirmation.

Remember: You cannot go to the *WHAT*, *WHEN*, or *HOW* of the *WHERE-WHY-WHO-WHAT-WHEN-HOW Process* until this Session is completed. Do everything in your power to keep the process moving and positive.

## CONGREGATION

1. Pray for the Team and the processes you will be asked to participate in as a member of the congregation.
2. Pray for an open mind and heart throughout this Session.
3. Pray for your leaders and pastor(s).
4. If you aren't already, ask God to enlighten you:

God, what do You want us to be as a congregation? What do You want us to do as a congregation? What part do You want me to play? What do I need to do to be better prepared?

Open my heart and my mind, and strengthen me so I can be used by You. Please keep me from being a stumbling block for You and Your will and ways.

Thank You. Amen.

5. Make time to spend 5-10 minutes a day with the *Prayer Series* devotional book and attend a Prayer Group each week for the thirteen weeks of the *Series*.

## SAMPLE NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN ARTICLES

Coming Soon: our *Series of Prayer*

Join *[name of your congregation]* as we engage in a *Series of Prayer*, focusing our attention hearing and listening to what God wants to say to us over the coming months and beyond. This *Series of Prayer* is being sponsored by your Transformation Team but will give each of us a chance to learn and grow more in and through our prayer lives. We will be distributing the *Prayer Guide* beginning *[date]* and the *Series* will begin on *[date]*, continuing through *[date]*. Stay tuned, too, for how you can participate in a prayer group directly related to our prayer and the what's-next's of our life as a congregation. You won't want to miss the opportunities!

It's an exciting time to be in life and service as the *[name of your congregation]*, particularly as we get clearer about who God is calling us to be and what God is wanting us to do here in our community and beyond.

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It's almost here, our *Series of Prayer!*

Our congregation is about to embark on a 13-week *Series of Prayer*, focusing our attention on prayer so we can hear and listen to how God is calling us to engage mission and ministry. Don't be left out: pick-up your *Prayer Guide* (*everyone* needs one!) and sign-up for a small group. The Prayer Guides and sign-ups are available *[where]* and *[where]*.

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Join us this weekend as we kick-off our 13-week *Series of Prayer*. We'll be handing out Prayer Guides, dedicating our Harvest Container, and providing other details! You don't want to miss out on this exciting time in the life of our congregation!

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This week we'll move our Harvest Container from the sanctuary to *[wherever it will be located]* and begin to place our Prayer Fruit cards into it. So, bring your Prayer Fruit card with you to worship this weekend!

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Don't forget to bring your Prayer Fruit card with you to worship this weekend! We'll collect them for the next *[how many]* weeks. If you need a card, or more cards, you can find them next to the Harvest Container *[where it's now located]*.

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This weekend is the last opportunity to bring our Prayer Fruit forward. We'll be dedicating the fruits of our prayer next weekend in *[each of]* our worship services. You won't want to miss this important time in the life of our congregation.

## SESSION 05

### WHAT . . . WHEN . . . HOW

#### PLANNING STRATEGICALLY

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

Wow! We're down to the last two Sessions of the W6H Process. Whew-HOOOOOOOO! And if the fun hasn't yet begun, we can tell you it's about to begin. Because now it's time for planning!!!

There was a time when many congregations engaged in "strategic planning," projecting goals for five, ten, even as far out as twenty years. Effective strategic planning calls us to identify our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (*SWOT*) and make the most of our assets and liabilities. Effective strategic planning depends on our ability to identify goals, strategies, and objectives. Effective strategic planning can be mind-boggling for those of us who are not detail- or process-oriented. And, alas, effective strategic planning too often never gets off the ground. Indeed, more churches than you might imagine have spent a lot of time in strategic planning without strategically implementing their plan. For all those churches who have Mission and Vision Statements hiding somewhere in desk drawers, there are at least as many with hidden strategic plans.

So let's add some more good news to this Session's mix: we are not talking about strategic planning here! We are talking about *planning strategically*. Planning strategically means we plan intentionally and effectively. It takes into account the importance of planning to maximize our congregation's abilities and capabilities.

Quite simply: now that we know WHO God is calling us to be, we can ask three simple but important questions:

**WHAT** will we do to live into WHO we are?

**WHEN** will we do it?

**HOW** will we do it?

By focusing on these three questions and adding ways to measure the effectiveness of our plans, are able to carry out God's Mission and Vision for, in, and through our congregation.

## **SESSION OVERVIEW**

Quite simply, this Session is about planning. We might even call it a *Planning Session*. There are basically two ways you might engage this planning and the one that “works” for you will likely depend on the way your congregation “does business.”

One way of approaching this Session will be to gather your ministry leaders together for planning (see APPENDIX C, *Planning Retreat Model for Ministry Leaders*). These leaders may be the “chairs” of committees, commissions, departments, whatever your congregation calls them. In some congregations, these leaders will be your elders or deacons. Think about who has most recently been responsible for planning ministries, programs, and events. These are the folks you want to pull together for a day of planning. The variation of this plan involves bringing together the entirety of your committees, commissions, departments, etc.—not just their leaders—for a planning day (see APPENDIX D, *Planning Retreat Model for Ministry Groups*).

During this day of planning, your congregation’s leaders will determine your WHAT (or, more accurately, your WHATs). Keep in mind this isn’t about asking, “What should we do?” In fact, before we ask “the” question, we need to put our Vision Statement in front of us and remember WHO God is calling us to be.

### **A For-Instance. . . .**

Say your Vision Statement is to be the FACE of Jesus, a place where people will find forgiveness, affirmation, compassion, and encouragement in God’s love:

Challenge each ministry to consider what part it plays to help foster and offer forgiveness, affirmation, compassion, and/or encouragement.

But determining WHAT we’ll be doing isn’t enough; we are going to have to figure out WHEN we’ll be doing it. And, to ensure its success, we will then need to ensure HOW we will make sure everything that needs to get done gets done.

## **THIS SESSION'S WORK**

### **TRANSFORMATION TEAM**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session.
2. Meet with your pastor and congregational leaders to share this Session and its suggested outlines for planning (see APPENDICES J and K. You may want to offer to facilitate the first Planning Retreat, particularly if planning strategically is not a regular exercise for your congregation). Even if planning strategically is part of the norm for your congregation, it will be good for Transformation Team members to listen into planning sessions to help ensure that your congregation's ministries are measured and planned in light of your Vision Statement . . . your WHO.
3. Finally, it will be a good first (and maybe even a second) year task for the Transformation Team to monitor and encourage the carrying out of plans that are made.

### **CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS**

1. Read through the entirety of this Session to familiarize yourself with the work of planning strategically.
2. Pray for discernment for yourselves and those who will join you in planning, so that you will be able to collectively the plans that will allow you to live into and out of WHO God is calling your congregation to be.
3. Plan to participate in the Planning Retreat . . . and in the plans you will lay.

### **CONGREGATION**

1. Pray for the Transformation Team and the planning and subsequent plans you will be asked to participate in as a member of the congregation.
2. Pray for an open mind and heart throughout this Session.
3. Pray for your leaders and pastor(s).
4. If you aren't already, ask God to make clear to you:

God, thank You for the ways You've been working in our congregation and for the clarity You have been providing. As you make it clear WHAT you want us to do to live into WHO you want us to be, please let me know WHAT part You want me to play and prepare me to serve You?

Open my heart and my mind, and strengthen me so I can be used by You. Please keep me from being a stumbling block for You and Your will and ways. Thank You. Amen.

## **AFTERWORD**

### **So WHAT'S NEXT?**

I can hear you thinking, “Now, what!?!?” Only a few more words, words we’ve ourselves heard and have found to be quite wise. Words and suggestions we hope you will take seriously and follow through on. Because, remember, this whole process of transformation and renewal is an ever on-going, never-ending process. Indeed, wherever your congregation now finds itself, you have not arrived. The good news is, though, you never will!

You’ve done a lot of good—no, GREAT, work; and we want to make sure it doesn’t go to waste. Indeed, don’t allow your congregation to get too busy, too caught up, too haughty, too anything that will get in the way of your being continuously transformational. To keep motivated and on-track, there are only a few tasks you will need to accomplish, some sooner and more continuously than others.

#### **STEP 1: READ YOUR CONGREGATION**

**READ**-ing your congregation will help ensure your congregation is becoming God is needing you to be and become.

**R**eview position/staff descriptions

Now, and then **annually**, review (or design) all paid and unpaid position descriptions, making sure each “staff” position (whether paid or volunteer) is (1) necessary and (2) helps to further the congregation’s Vision.

**E**valuate each “staff” person, whether paid or volunteer

Now, and then **annually**, evaluate all *staff* from minister/s to administrative staff and facilities staff, to elected servants (*volunteer staff*). Use a 360-Review (see APPENDICES M and N) to evaluate how well they are, or are not, meeting the congregation’s needs; these annual reviews can also identify unspoken and unmet expectations, needs for training and other resources, and whether or not a staff person is in the right place at the right time.

**Assess everything your congregation does, offers, and says for alignment with God's Mission and Vision for your congregation**

Continually assess how well your congregation—from your pastor to your worship services to your ministries to your signage to your announcements to your newsletter and programs—communicates and fulfills God's Mission and Vision for your congregation. While this is an on-going process (aided if you'll use the *Event Planning Sheet* in APPENDIX I), you want to put an annual date on your calendar—preferably before each congregational annual planning session to assess and reassess how your ministries, programs, services, and structures are supporting and/or hindering your congregation's ability to be all God is calling you to be.

**Demographic study**

**Five years** from now *unless* you're in a transitioning community, whether rapidly-growing, growth-promising, or declining (look for groceries, fast foods, retailers, and/or schools coming in, closing, or moving).

**Two years** if you are in a transitioning community

**READ** your congregation *annually* and you should find yourself in good stead when you prepare to do an abbreviated version of the *W<sup>5</sup>H Process* in another five years.

### **STEP 3: MEASURE YOUR CONGREGATION'S EFFECTIVENESS**

No, this isn't a mistake: we know that *two* comes before *three* and *four*, but the importance of Step 2 is so critical, we want to apply our final words to it.

It is critical for congregations to *measure* its *effectiveness*. Too few of us—far too few of us—engage this important discipline annually. Now before you begin to argue that there is more to effectiveness than merely size, please hear here that we *agree*! Size is not the only indicator of growth (although decline needs to serve as at least a *yellow* flag of caution). Instead, we choose to measure growth in as an accumulation of six variables:

- 1) **Spiritual Growth**. Measured by
  - a) an increase in the ratio between worship attendance and participating membership; and

- b) enrollment in classes and/or groups for discipleship and spiritual growth.
- 2) **Evangelism**. Measured by baptisms under 18 years old (biological evangelism) *and* over 18 years old.
- 3) **Stewardship**. Measured by
  - a) a per capita increase in financial giving (except when there's been a significant decrease in the congregation's worship or participating attendance); and
  - b) greater congregational participation, evidencing an increase in the sharing of
    - i) time,
    - ii) talent, and
    - iii) testimony.
- 4) **Mission**. Measured by
  - a) mission giving per capita; and
  - b) the percentage of people involved in hands-on mission through or beyond the local congregation.
- 5) **Unity**. Measured by the extent to which congregational members and participants know and are in agreement about the direction of the congregation.
- 6) **Reputation in the community**. Measured by
  - a) how well the congregation's neighborhood or community knows the congregation; and
  - b) whether or not the congregation's reputation is growing favorably.

Tools for assessing these variables are available from the author at [www.FlipYourChurch.com](http://www.FlipYourChurch.com).

I have also found it important to engage an annual review that I've been calling *Looking Back / Looking Forward*. Distribute the *Looking Back / Looking Forward* questions (see APPENDIX O) to each of your ministry team leaders at least a few weeks before your annual planning session. Ask them to complete it with their teams and return a copy of it to whomever is responsible for your congregation's annual planning session. This will help each ministry team to focus and the *staff* responsible for facilitating ministry effectiveness will be better prepared to encourage your leaders!

## **STEP 4: THE W<sup>4</sup>H PROCESS**

No, this isn't a mistake: we know that *two* comes before *three*, but the importance of Step 2 is so critical, we want to apply our final words to it.

In another five years, your congregation's Why, your Mission, will not have changed. You'll want to pull it back out, though, as you convene another small group (as charged by your congregation's administrative committee) to revisit your congregation's Expected Behaviours and Values. Don't miss another opportunity to work through an extended period of prayer together (it's possible to use the *PRAYING FOR WHO* again) to listen to, and share together, WHO God is calling your congregation to be.

## **STEP 2: CAST VISION OVER AND OVER AND OVER**

Again, this isn't a mistake: we know that *two* comes before *three*, but the importance of Step 2 is so critical, we want to apply our final words to it.

It's possible you've heard a paraphrase or two of the eighteenth verse of Proverb 29: without a vision, the people perish. We're rather fond of the translation rendered in *The Message* version of the Bible:

If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what He is doing, they are most blessed.<sup>3</sup>

Another favorite translation is found in the *New Living Translation* of the Bible:

When people do not accept Divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is joyful.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, if those of us in congregational leadership do not continually share and inspire our folks to follow God's Vision for our congregation, it will soon be forgotten, folks will start stumbling all over each other, joy will be lost, and we run the risk of confusion and dismay at the least and all the trappings of conflict, manipulation, and power-plays at their worst.

Beyond that, though, every good leader knows that one of the key tasks of leadership is to help people embrace the organization's Vision and be inspired to do their part to fulfill it. To bring that home to the Church, we can say that every good leader knows that one of the key tasks of congregational leadership—whether that be a lay leader or clergy leader—is to week-in and week-out keep God's Mission and Vision for our congregation before the congregation, helping every person in the pew to know what God is expecting from the congregation, to understand the

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<sup>3</sup> *The Message* © 2002 by Eugene Peterson.

<sup>4</sup> Holy Bible. New Living Translation © 2004 by Tyndale Charitable Trust.

respective parts they each have to play in fulfilling that Vision (as a part of the Body of Christ), and to inspire them to be part of that effort as they have been gifted, enabled, and impassioned.

How much clearer and stronger our congregations will be when we figure out how to remind ourselves of who we are in Whose we are. . . and of what you-know-Who is expecting us to do as both the Tangible Touch of Jesus and as good stewards of God's Kingdom in the communities in which we live and serve. For more information on how to cast Vision, see APPENDIX P.

### **THE FINAL WORDS – REALLY!**

Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you for caring enough about the effectiveness of your congregation that you have dedicated as much time and energy to the *W<sup>6</sup>H Process* as you have. Thank you for your faithfulness and partnership in working for God's Kingdom to come to Earth as it is in Heaven. Thank you for the privilege of journeying together.

If you ever have need for further resources, consulting, coaching, or other help, please contact me. You should be able to find me at [www.FlipYourChurch.com](http://www.FlipYourChurch.com) or via a "Google" or "Yahoo" search. In the meantime, know my prayers continue with you and for you. kt-b