



## Eight Essential Elements for Fruitful Revitalization

Keys for Developing a Conference Strategy for  
Congregational Transformation

1. Focus on the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.
2. Apostolic leadership from laity and clergy.
3. Conference alignment and support for missional focus
4. Continuous lay and clergy learning and collaboration
5. Independent assessment of the congregation
6. Ongoing coaching for missional performance.
7. Accountable action plan
8. Openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit

## Route 122 is the road to renewal described in ¶ 122 of the Book of Discipline

The Process for Carrying Out Our Mission - We make disciples as we:

- proclaim the gospel, seek, welcome and gather persons into the body of Christ
- lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the Spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
- nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley's Christian conferencing.
- send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel; and
- continue the mission of seeking, welcoming and gathering persons into the community of the body of Christ.

### KEY: Focus on the Transforming Grace of Jesus Christ

*John 1:1-4 "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."*

Revitalization occurs when laity and clergy are deeply engaged in a personal relationship with Jesus that so binds them with His life and mission that we behave like Jesus in the world.

We can make a personal assessment of our relationship with Jesus on several levels:

- How much quality time are we spending with Jesus? **Coaching questions:** *What was the scripture you read today in your devotional time? Who do you meet with to study the scriptures and pray? When did you meet with them last? How much time today did you spend in prayer?*
- How much do our behaviors reflect the life of Jesus in the gospels? **Coaching questions:** *What actions of Jesus are you learning to practice in your life? When were you last in a new place specifically to engage new people? How is the love of Jesus known in your community because your church is located there?*
- In what ways are we depending on Jesus for the revitalization of our church? **Coaching questions:** *How do you seek God when the needs of your community outstrip your available resources? What are the signs in your community that your church depends ultimately on God for all good things?*

### KEY: Apostolic Leadership

*Ephesians 4:11-13, The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.*

These gifts are all necessary for the church to achieve maturity and to rise to the stature of Christ. They are present in each believer and in every church in adequate measure for the body of Christ to be built up. Revitalization occurs when lay and clergy

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leaders embrace and exhibit not only the gifts of pastor and teacher, but also the gifts of apostle, prophet and evangelist.

- How is the apostolic gift exhibited in your life? in your church? Coaching questions: *What are you hearing from God about the needs of people in the community in which you live? In which your church is located? In the world? How are you responding to what you are hearing from God? Who are you inviting along with you into the community, into the world, to meet those needs? What is the vision for the sending of the church out of which you are living?*
- How is the prophetic gift exhibited in your life? in your church? in your community? **Coaching questions:** *When was the last time you visited a courtroom and watched people face the judge and jury? When did you last take a ride around the community where you live (your church is located) with the police or a social worker to see the places and meet the people who God loves in your community who are most neglected? What are the names of the people living in poverty that you are loving and caring for? Who did you last visit in prison? What are you hearing from God about how these beloved children of God are held down and oppressed by principalities and powers? What are you hearing from God about what you and your church should say and do about these beloved children of God?*
- How is the evangelistic gift exhibited in your life? in your church? **Coaching questions:** *What are the names of the people who God loves in your community but who have not yet been gathered into the body of Christ? Who are the people in your church who are praying for them by name?*

### **KEY: Conference Alignment and support for Missional Focus**

Acts 15: 22-29 *Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, with the following letter: 'The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.'*

Vital churches receive support, encouragement and blessing from Conference and District leaders as they explore new ways of being engaged with the mission field and as less fruitful habits are laid aside to embrace more fruitful and engaging behaviors. Conflict and resistance inevitably occurs when pastoral behavior changes and when the experience of church changes for participants. Change that is directed toward more fully engaging the people in the mission field outside the church receives encouragement, public support and blessing from Conference and District Leaders.

- What does the Pastor need from the DS or Conference Leaders as she or he cultivates new relationships in the mission field? **Coaching questions:** *What are you doing that is most resisted by people in the congregation? What are you doing in response to that*

*resistance? What venue can I provide public support for what you are doing? Who are the people that should hear from me that I support what you are doing?*

- What does the revitalization team need from the DS or Conference Leaders as they seek to lead the church toward revitalization?

### **KEY: Continuous lay and clergy learning and collaboration**

*Acts 15: 13-15 On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.*

Revitalizing churches are engaged in ongoing, continuous learning and collaboration with participation by both lay and clergy leaders. These churches place a high value on shared learning experiences with their revitalization team. Moving beyond seminars and books to creating accountable action plans and evaluating progress toward goals, their learning is based on a continuous loop of learning, action and evaluation.

- What learning experiences have the clergy and lay members of the revitalization team shared together? **Coaching questions:** *Who was at the last learning experience from your team? What key take away(s) did the team identify and embrace?*
- What action plans are currently in place? **Coaching questions:** *Would you send me a copy of your current revitalization action plan? What are the next steps that the team or leaders in the church intending to take? What steps have already been taken toward fulfilling your action plan? What are the blockages you are experiencing? What is the team doing in response to those obstacles?*
- What evaluations have been completed or are in process? **Coaching questions:** *Would you send me a copy of the action plan evaluations that have been completed? What did you learn in the evaluation process? What changes are you making in your action plan in response to the evaluation? What does the team need to learn or practice in response to the evaluation?*

### **KEY: Independent assessment of the congregation's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, including relationship with the mission field**

*1 Thessalonians 3:1-7 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we decided to be left alone in Athens; and we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith, so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for. In fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out, as you know. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labour had been in vain.*

*But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us—just as we long to see you. For this reason, brothers and sisters, during all our distress and persecution we have been encouraged about you through your faith.*

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Revitalizing churches seek out and welcome the insights of objective spiritually gifted observers from the outside. These churches seek out surveys and tools that help them identify their strengths and giftedness, as well as their weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. They also are constantly learning about and evaluating their relationships with people in the mission field to which they are called.

- Who have you invited to help you understand how other people might be experiencing your church? **Coaching questions:** *What process is being used to solicit the insights of people who've recently interacted with your church or its ministries? Who from outside the church is helping you evaluate this information?*
- What are the tools you are using to evaluate your church life and ministry? **Coaching questions:** *Please describe the process and tools you are using to do a self-evaluation? What stage of the process are you in? How long is the process projected to last? What have you learned so far? What response is your revitalization team making to what you've learned? Who is responsible for carrying out that response?*
- What are you learning about the lives, passions, needs and pain of the people your church is called to love (we're talking here about those who've not yet come to worship at your church)? **Coaching questions:** *Tell me the names of some of the people your revitalization team has met who represent the mission field you believe you are called to touch? How would describe a composite profile of a person or household in the mission field? (There may be several representative profiles of different segments of the mission field) What have you learned about the motivations and decision making of people in the mission field? How is that learning impacting your action plan?*

### **KEY: Ongoing coaching for missional performance**

1 Timothy 3:14-15 *I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.*

Revitalizing churches utilize coaching as a tool to refine their focus, avoid common mistakes, and improve their opportunity for fruitful outcomes.

- Who is walking alongside your revitalization team to encourage and coach you along the way? **Coaching questions:** *What do you hope that a coach can bring to your team that they cannot bring for themselves? What would be the best ways for a coach to interact with your team to help you stay focused, avoid common mistakes and be more fruitful? What resistance is there to having a coach to walk with you?*

### **KEY: Accountable Action Plan**

Acts 5:38-39 *So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God!*

Revitalizing churches operate from an accountable action plan that is not of human origin but which represents God's will for the life of the church.

- What is the action plan out of which the revitalization team is operating? **Coaching questions:** *How did the accountable action plan come to be? What role did God play in the development of the action plan? How was God's guidance and direction sought by the team? What insight came from seeking God's will in this process?*

- What are the accountability features of the plan? **Coaching questions:** *Who is the person or group responsible for each feature of the plan? How is the responsible person or group accountable for carrying out the plan? What measurable fruit will be seen as the responsible parties carry out their work? Who is responsible for measuring? When and how will the measurements be shared? Will you send me a routine report of the accountability reports?*

### **KEY: Openness to the Leading of the Holy Spirit**

*Acts 13:2-3 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

Leaders of revitalizing churches seek the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit of God through prayer and fasting.

- How is the revitalization team seeking the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit? **Coaching questions:** *How often are the members of the team coming together for prayer? How often are the members of the revitalization team seeking God's will through fasting and abstinence? What are you hearing from God's Holy Spirit in these times of prayer? What changes have you made in your action plan as a result of what the Holy Spirit has shown you?*