

The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development

V: VISION: Leadership, Mission, Purpose, Core Values
R: RELATIONSHIPS: Experiences, Discipleship
P: PROGRAMS: Events, Ministries, Services, Activities
M: MANAGEMENT: Accountability, Systems, Resources

- » The congregation displays an optimum of energy, openness to others, and responsiveness to members.
- » It has optimized its ability to integrate and coordinate its activities around a clearly articulated sense of mission within the limitations of its resources
- » It continually seeks to extend its boundaries by broadening its resource base
- » The congregation has learned creative use of the inherent conflicts between the visionary and the pragmatic, the emotional and the rational
- » It is characterized by a redemptive and creative oscillation between people concerns and program concerns, with a strong sense of mission as the fulcrum.

- » Management system inadequate to handle new range of programs and newly available resources
- » Discipleship and ministries well underway
- » Entire membership shares passion to fulfill strategic spiritual vision
- » Competition of concerns: Teaching adults to make a difference vs. meeting the spiritual needs of family

- » Urgency to create new programs to fulfill vision
- » Projects to setup education events & new ministries
- » Relationship-building processes supplant close fellowship and natural discipleship of founders
- » Growth pains: Resource tradeoffs between programs, staff & facilities

- » Close spiritual bonding through sacrifice and hard work
- » Vision guides decisions and the use of talents and resources; informal team/network management style
- » Focus on relationship-building processes: newcomer invitation and discipleship
- » Members share excitement in making the future "happen"

- » Inspirational and charismatic leader
- » Church is new vision and values
- » Members feel they will make a difference

- » Success supplants vision as criterion for planning
- » Processes for building spiritual relationships and leadership remain strong
- » Strong preference for proven programs and values
- » Pragmatism, not passion, runs the church

- » Vision sustained primarily by 60-40-20 people; no longer corporate
- » Decline in Sunday attendance: invitation and growth processes break down
- » Relationships remain strong in group-specific fellowship and ministries
- » Church offerings, activities, and ministries pared down to needs and interests of dominant groups
- » Congregation cycles through feelings of nostalgia, disappointment, and blame

- » Survival in the future replaces feelings of nostalgia over the past
- » Dwindling stewardship and membership
- » Few feel comfortable inviting newcomers to church
- » New programs, new ideas, and/or new rector sought to revitalize church
- » Stake holders fear that changes in focus, spiritual relationships, and worship style will weaken church further

- » Church is a preaching station. Habit drives Sunday attendance.
- » Vision is lost. Few programs: efforts to redevelop congregation are abandoned.
- » Ministry emphasis is on pastoral care & funerals
- » Management is struggling with either a shortfall or surplus of resources

- » Parish dies
- » Resources abandoned, or converted to other uses

