

CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY PLAN

I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

God desires the best for The United Methodist Church and its congregations. God has planned a future with hope for us. God's plans flow from the Holy Spirit and therefore all involved in this process are called to immerse planning in prayer, Bible study, Christian conferencing, and testimony.

Start with a time of prayer, praying for wisdom and discernment for the congregation and those preparing the Ministry Plan. Give time to developing the plan, gathering together on several evenings or other times which meet your congregation's needs. Look at the sections of the plan. It might be wise to set the meeting schedule in order to deal with a section at a time, allowing for prayer and discernment between meetings. When you meet, spend time worshiping, praying and studying Bible passages. The following are passages that may enrich your planning: Matthew 28:18-20, *The Great Commission*; Matthew 22:36-40, *The Great Commandment*; Acts 2, *the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church*; I Corinthians 12, *the healthy church is one body and it is the body of Christ*; Ephesians 4:10-13, *Christ has gifted the church through a variety of gifts*; Galatians 3:28, *all are welcome in the body of Christ*; Luke 10:25-37; *the parable of the Good Samaritan*; Micah 6:8, *righteousness and justice are the expectation for God's people*; Luke 4:17-21, *Jesus announces his ministry, which is a calling for the body of Christ today*. For examples of planning using the *means of grace* go to (*web page will be released with the official release of the document*).

In the midst of prayerful discernment, answer as honestly and candidly as possible in order to gain the fullest sense of where God is working in your midst and where God might be calling you in the future.

Church Name:

Annual Conference:

Date:

Address:

Country:

Pastor:

A. Context for Ministry – *The community and people God has called you to serve*

1. **Community** - Describe the community surrounding your church – the community your congregation is called to partner with and serve.

Who are the people (age, race, educational background, etc.)?

What are the current needs of your community?

What changes are occurring in your community that may impact your future ministry?

2. **Your Church – *the body of Christ God has formed you to be and is calling you to become***

Which *means of grace* is your congregation most attentive to?

Which *means of grace* does your congregation need to help disciples further engage in?

What are the strengths of your church?

What are your challenges and threats? (For example: loss of key givers, needed building repairs, declining worship attendance, no or only a few new professions of faith, changing community, etc.)

What are the opportunities for ministry with children, with youth, with adults?

What does your congregation currently value as its most important ministries? Would anyone miss these ministries if your church ceased to exist?

Vital signs should be seen in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Indicate on the chart below your signs related to numerical fruit. In addition, note testimonies of what God’s spirit has done in each of these areas. Attach these testimonies to your plan, pray, giving thanks for God’s activity through your congregation (I Thessalonians 5:16).

People and Ministry	2008	2009	2010
1. Disciples worship Average worship attendance			
2. Disciples make new disciples Number of people who joined by profession of faith			
3. Disciples engage in growing as a disciple Number of small groups, Sunday school classes and Bible studies.			
4. Disciples engage in mission Number of people from the congregation engaged in local, national and international mission/outreach activities			
5. Disciples give to mission The total amount given by local church to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries (this amount includes apportionments paid and support for all United Methodist and non-United Methodist organizations active in work such as advocacy, education, health, justice, mercy, outreach, and welfare anywhere in the world)			

Review what you have written so far, and summarize the emerging description of your church from this information.

Now write a 50-word or less description of what you feel God is leading your church to be in five years.

B. Building Blocks of a Vital Congregation – *spiritual commitments*

1. Purpose

Why does your church exist? What does Christ call you to be and do in your community at this time? Does your church have vision and mission statements? If so, what are they? When is the last time these statements were reviewed? Do they reflect your current reality?

2. Principles

What values guide your congregation’s decision making? You may want to turn to the 2008 Book of Discipline, pages 73-74, the General Rules. Take time to study and reflect on these. List the four to five key words or phrases that describe your values. Start each phrase with, *we value...*

3. Promise

If your congregation were to cease to exist tomorrow, what would be missed from the community where you are located? What can the community consistently trust or expect from you?

4. People

Who are we called by God to be passionate about reaching? Be specific for your community and your congregation.

C. Setting Vital Church Goals – *Spiritual Guideposts for your future*

Vital congregations engage disciples so that they 1) worship, 2) make new disciples, 3) grow as disciples, 4) serve in mission, and 5) give with a generous spirit, including giving to mission. Around the world, congregations will identify their commitment in each of these areas. These commitments will be gathered by your annual conference and presented to General Conference as an offering from your congregation. Reviewing the material above and identify a realistic target for each of the five areas for 2012-2015.

People and Ministry	2012	2013	2014	2015
1. Disciples worship Average worship attendance				
2. Disciples make new disciples Number of people who will join by profession of faith				
3. Disciples engage in growing as a disciple Number of small groups, Sunday school classes and Bible studies.				
4. Disciples engage in mission Number of people from the congregation engaged in local, national and international mission/outreach				
5. Disciples give to mission The total amount given by your congregation to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries (this amount includes apportionments paid and support for all United Methodist and non-United Methodist organizations active in work such as advocacy, education, health, justice, mercy, outreach, and welfare anywhere in the world)				

D. SMART Actions – *what actions will you take to glorify God*

SMART actions are activities and strategies that help congregations reach their five goals listed above. They are SMART because they are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant (to your purpose, mission and ministry plan), and **T**ime-framed. An example of a SMART action is: Start a new worship service so that we attract new disciples and grow worship attendance by September 1, 2012. This phrase begins with an action word (Start), describes the activity/strategy (a new worship service), a *so that* phrase that connects your activity to your purpose and goals (so that we attract new disciples and grow worship attendance), and it is time-framed (by September 1). After reviewing 16 ministry strategies on page 2, write 2-3 SMART actions following the model above for each of the vital areas of ministry. Most of your actions should relate to the 16 ministry strategies. (Be wise in your actions. It may be better to write one action for each of these areas and do it well than to write so many that it ends up being overwhelming).

1. *Disciples worship*

- a.
- b.
- c.

2. *Disciples make new disciples* (evangelism)

- a.
- b.
- c.

3. *Disciples engage in growing as a disciple* (small groups and children and youth ministry)

- a.
- b.
- c.

4. *Disciples engage in mission* (justice and mercy ministry)

- a.
- b.
- c.

5. *Disciples give to mission* (stewardship)

- a.
- b.
- c.

- 6. Lay Leadership** (What will you do to develop laity to be effective spiritual leaders?)
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 7. Clergy Leadership** (What will you do to support and encourage your pastor to be an effective spiritual leader? What will you do to help notice, name and nurture those in your congregation who have gifts for ordained ministry?)
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
- E. Actions, even SMART actions do not move forward unless the goals, action plans and change are linked to appropriate steps (sometimes small steps) and are connected to emotions and accomplishments (hope, aspirations, appropriate honoring of tradition, changed lives, and results).** Goals, “drivers,” and action plans move forward as they are connected to: 1) stories and testimonies of changed lives, 2) stories that link past traditions with present and future change and action, and 3) stories that communicate hope. Identify the ways you will intentionally listen for, solicit, collect, and tell the stories and hopeful signs seen as you carry out your plan.
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

See Goal completion form below along with how the measure will be used within the Church.

Complete the goal sheet and give it to your District Superintendent who will ensure your gift to God is presented at General Conference. You are welcome to share a synopsis of one or more testimonies to God's activity in your congregation.

People and Ministry	2008	2009	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
Disciples worship - Average worship attendance							
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Disciples engage in growing their faith - Number of small groups, Sunday school classes and Bible studies.							
Disciples engage in mission - Number of people from the congregation engaged in local, national and international mission/outreach activities							
Disciples give to mission - The total amount given by local church to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries (this amount includes apportionments paid and support for all United Methodist and non-United Methodist organizations active in work such as advocacy, education, health, justice, mercy, outreach, and welfare anywhere in the world)							

**HOW VITAL CONGREGATION PLANNING AND GOALS
WILL BE USED BY CONFERENCES AND THE GENERAL CHURCH**

The General Church and Annual Conferences exist to serve Jesus Christ by resourcing and supporting the local church. The General Church, Annual Conferences and local churches work together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The goals, planning processes, and strategic visioning for vital congregations exist to enable each local church to have a vital future in disciple making. Achieving goals is not an end in itself, but rather a tool to see if what we are doing is producing fruit. The actual process of disciple making, *the means of grace*, is our main priority. Through goals we are attempting to help each local church be as strong and as vital as they have been gifted, and to vision a future of hope.

The primary use of the goals is to provide opportunities for reflection and conversation for strengthening ministry. Appropriate questions by conferences and congregations include:

1. After working on your goals and seeing your results, what have you learned?
2. From your learnings, what will you continue to do?
3. From your learnings, what will you do differently during the next six months?
4. What training and/or encouragement can the conference provide to support you in meeting your goals?