

Some suggest that organizations grow in the direction of the questions asked by its leaders and members. It is important that congregations learn how to ask critical questions. Some of the following can be used to stimulate discussion and facilitate viewpoints about areas of transition.

Questions Concerning Congregational Development

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Purpose

What is the purpose, nature, mission of the church? How does this statement of purpose shape the congregation and affect the individual member? How consistent is the vision/mission of the congregation with biblical principles concerning the purpose and mission of the church? What are the most common concerns expressed about the church by the people and its leadership? Do these concerns indicate an adequate understanding of the nature of the church and its mission? What concerns are typically expressed when we meet to discuss the need for change or growth? What do our discussions about the church indicate about our priorities? Or about the way we view the church—its nature and mission? What is the relationship of effectiveness and purpose? What is it that provides motivation or direction to our church? Is the ministry of this church intentional and deliberately linked to our desire to understand the call or purpose of God for his people? To what extent is the mission of the church clearly shared by the people of the church?

Communication

What are the communication channels in this church? Are they obvious and functioning? What are the directions of communication in our church? What changes do we need to make in our communication style and procedures? To what degree is information shared within the organization? How are integration and coordination among ministries, committees, and other groups achieved? How do the leaders demonstrate their understanding of what is happening in the various ministries of the church? What communication channels exist that enable the leadership to both hear and provide guidance for the ministries?

Decision-Making

How close are people to the decision-making centers of the church? How accessible are the decision-making structures? How (on what basis) are decision-makers chosen? How does this organization decide to include input from those who would be considered non-decision makers? (Is it defensible in a congregation to have non-decision makers?) To what extent does the leadership encourage critical/creative thinking? What factors or procedures are evident when the congregation is called upon to make major decisions? How important are elements such as prayer, presentation, reflection, feedback, and discussion, in decision-making? What style of voting is used in decision-making? What are the effects of this style of voting? What happens when there is lack of consensus? What procedures are followed to implement a new ministry or program within the church? To what extent do we allow Scripture to inform our decision-making processes?

Equipping

How are people equipped for and initiated into leadership? How do the members of the congregation describe their spiritual growth? Their desire for ministry involvement? In what ways are the people of the church being equipped for ministry?

Spiritual Character of the Congregation

To what extent are the biblical qualities of humility, a broken and contrite spirit, love, and so on evident in this congregation? What would the phrase "speaking the truth in love" mean to this congregation? What indicators demonstrate the importance of prayer in the life of our church? What times and opportunities exist in our organizational structures for people to pray, to talk together about God's desires, to seek God's mind? To what extent are these activities encouraged prior to decision-making deadlines? How can we develop better structures for people to pray and talk together? What evidence is there that people are encouraging one another? What factors indicate a spirit of unity in the congregation? What factors demonstrate a tolerance for diversity? How is conflict dealt with? How are problems handled? What important distinctions are made between the values and character of this church and the values and character of society? What characteristics of our church are not consistent with the understanding of the church as the people of God? What will we do about that?

Leadership

How would you describe the most common leadership style in this church? What style of leadership should be characteristic of the people of God? How are leaders recognized? What actual qualifications are required for leadership in our church? How consistent are these with biblical principles? (Note that there is very little difference between the qualifications given for leadership and those mandated for all the people of God.) How are the leaders of the church regularly assessed in relation to their spiritual qualifications, aspirations, leadership style? Is there a 'pecking order', or order of who is more important, in this church? Do we have power blocks in our congregations? Name them.

Organizational Structure

To what extent do the structures of the church promote relationship, mutuality, fellowship? What structures could we develop to foster community? How would you describe the organizational culture of this church? How did our current structure evolve? In what ways has the congregation demonstrated their willingness to do away with structures that hinder or curtail growth and development? In what ways does this congregation evaluate its life and ministry? Are there scheduled times for evaluation? For brainstorming? What is in place that allows for the development of people and the possibility of change in the organization? What strategies are we now considering to accomplish the mission of the church? To what degree does our church's structure reflect a combination of organizational and biblical principles? What effect has this had on our church? What are the basic, essential functions of the church? What is the relationship between these functions (e.g., what is the relationship between worship, education, evangelism, fellowship . . .)? How do we make it possible for the Holy Spirit to give gifts to this church for its ministry?