

# **Congregational Self-Study**

**This study is intended  
to allow a congregation to collect  
information on its own health and  
history which can then best be understood  
and interpreted with the help of a trained coach.**

## Congregational Self-Study

*The staff and leaders should create this study and report. All of the data should be typed in Word and sent electronically to the coach. It is best to have as many of the staff and board as possible involved in compiling this information and discussing it.*

### HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

1. Write a brief history of your congregation (three to four pages). Include those events that led to the church being started as well as periods of growth or decline (include the numbers of people involved). Please write in a factual style. Avoid the temptation to puff the story for public relations and the temptation to inject personal commentary regarding past problems, simply describe the events without qualitative judgment.
2. Provide a list of all full and part-time program staff positions from the beginning of the church. List schools and degrees (if known) for full-time program staff. Give the dates for people's tenure and state the real reason why staff left.
3. Provide a list of all people who oversee specific areas of service. List the number of positions for which they are responsible in their oversight. State whether these people are full-time, part-time, volunteer staff or lay leaders.
4. List dates and provide descriptions for any building construction, major renovation, land acquisition, or leasing of facilities. List the amount of acreage you own, lease, or rent, the square footage of building(s), and number of parking spaces (distinguishing between off-street and street parking).
5. Write a summary of your congregational structure including the individuals or groups who are responsible for program decisions, budgeting and financial oversight, buildings and grounds, and any other major interests of the congregation. List committees, task forces, program teams, etc. and explain how these relate to boards or councils. Provide a chart that reflects your current organizational structure.
6. List how the church has related to the denomination in the past. Give the ways in which the denominational staff have been involved in the church and how those from the church have been involved in the denomination.

### DEMOGRAPHY

1. Prepare a chart and graph for each of the following items for each year over the last twenty years, or entire history if founded more recently.
  - a) Number of regular participants in the ministries of the church.
  - b) Average attendance of your weekly worship services
  - c) Number of Small groups/classes
  - d) Average weekly attendance of all your small groups and classes combined
  - e) Number of baptisms
  - f) Number of conversions

2. Estimate the average age of the people participating in the various activities of your congregation. State how this was determined.
3. State the percentage of people who attend your worship services who also attend some small group such as a bible study, prayer group, class, support group, or service team. Count each individual only once.
4. Prepare a list of the number of regular participants who were involved:
  - Prior to 1960
  - From 1961-70
  - From 1971-80
  - From 1981-90
  - From 1991-2000
  - From 2000-present
5. List the total receipts and total expenditures for each of the last 20 years or for your entire history if founded more recently.
6. Without listing names, state the amount given by each of the top ten contributors of record in the last fiscal year. Total these amounts and state the percentage of giving this total represents in relation to total contributions.
7. State the same information for the second ten contributors of record.
8. State the total number of contributors to the congregation during the last fiscal year and the average amount given per contributor during the last fiscal year.
9. For the last 10 years, give the amount given to missions, state/national ministries and other outside ministries of the church.
10. Please develop a “Pin Map” to show where all of the people to live relative to the location of the church. This may be done electronically or manually.

## **COMMUNITY STUDY**

1. Write a brief overview of the area and community in which the congregation is located or which the congregation serves.
2. This overview should include about one paragraph on each of the following features:
  - a) History
  - b) Population
  - c) Income levels (be specific with numbers/percentages within ranges)
  - d) Education levels (be specific within levels)
  - e) Social, ethnic and religious diversity (be specific with percentages within ethnicity)
  - f) Age distribution (be specific with percentages within age groupings)
  - g) Growth/decline trends
  - h) Retail development
  - i) Other characteristics you deem significant
3. Briefly describe the square mile that surrounds the primary location of the congregation using some of the same characteristics.

## **BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

1. List mission, vision and the core values as practiced by the congregation.
2. List other important commitments or practices that characterize the congregation (written or unwritten), such as:
  - a) Covenants or Codes of Conduct
  - b) Key Social Issues
  - c) Political Positions
  - d) Regular Activities
  - e) Significant Financial Commitments

## **DOCUMENTS**

1. Please send one copy of this self-study in typed form one month prior to the coach's visit.
2. Please send copies of the following documents (if you have them):
  - a) Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws (or "Constitution")
  - b) Doctrinal statement
  - c) Last two annual reports
  - d) Last two annual budgets and financial statements
  - e) Sample bulletin and/or newsletter
  - f) Any policy statements
  - g) Other printed documents you deem helpful in providing insight into your congregation
3. Is the church safety deeded?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, verify by including a copy of the deed in the self-study report.

## **SELF-STUDY GROUP**

1. After the self-study information has been compiled, the board and staff need to discuss the following questions as a group and complete an exercise pertaining to congregational conditions before printing the results in final form. (In smaller congregations gather 20-30 influential people, whether in official positions or not, to fulfill this requirement).
2. Please include the general consensus on each of these discussion questions in the report. If general consensus cannot be reached, please state such. Be sure to give the date when this discussion took place and list those involved in this meeting.
  - a. What are the three greatest strengths of this congregation, listed in priority order?
  - b. What are the three most significant weaknesses of your church, listed in order of the greatest need first?
  - c. What three changes would you like to see made in your church, listed in priority order?
  - d. Do the leaders want this congregation to grow significantly?
  - e. Are the leaders willing to make the difficult decisions required for change and growth?  
How do you know this?

3. Ask the board and staff to complete the congregational conditions exercise supplied by the coach in order to determine where they perceive the congregation to be at this time. (This exercise is found on the next page). Please have each person fill this out without discussion with others. Collect them and have an individual tally up how many checked each box.