

CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY PROJECT



Please have your leadership team discuss each area on this worksheet and mark the consensus response.

Show how each domain impacts your congregation. Mark levels for each domain in the Impact column.

- 5= **Strength**: This is such a strength that it will help the congregation through tough times
- 4= **Helpful**: this is helping or strengthening vitality. It is something you do well.
- 3= **Neutral**: this is not having a significant impact on vitality (positive or negative)
- 2= **Risk Factor**: this is hurting vitality but is not critical. It is something for which we compensate.
- 1= **Barrier**: this is keeping the congregation from vitality. It must be changed before meaningful progress can occur. A barrier might be a lack of something (e.g. vision, leadership, trust, resources) or the presence of something harmful (e.g. conflict, isolation, and dysfunction).

Place an X by the domains where you spend most of your time and energy working intentionally. Only mark areas where you can name concrete action being taken.

Domain	Definition	Impact	Intentional Activities
God's Presence	Leaders experience God's active presence in the congregation. Leaders can articulate how God shows up and works in and through the congregation and its people.		
Mission/Purpose	The congregation has a clear understanding of God's larger mission and the purpose for their church in this time and place. The congregation can articulate that purpose and has a specific plan to implement.		
Leadership	Pastor, lay leadership, and unofficial leaders- Their skills, personalities, overall health (physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, etc.) are strong and match the current mission.		
Relationships	Relationships among leadership, pastor & staff, and the congregation create loving community with good communication. People work together respectfully through disagreements.		
Attitudes/Culture	Mission orientation (Mission is the driving force behind everything the church does.), willingness to change to achieve mission, sense of ownership, belonging/ commitment, level of engagement, and interest in embracing local community		
Local Context	Congregation is an important part of and partner with the community where it is located.		
Resources	Money, facility, equipment, technology, and people power support missional activities		
Governance & Admin	Decision making, administration of finances, and personnel management support missional activities		
Programs	The things a congregation does, it does well. May include: worship, fellowship, faith formation, prayer, youth/ young adult ministries, evangelism, outreach, stewardship, etc.		

Write the number of barriers (1's) _____

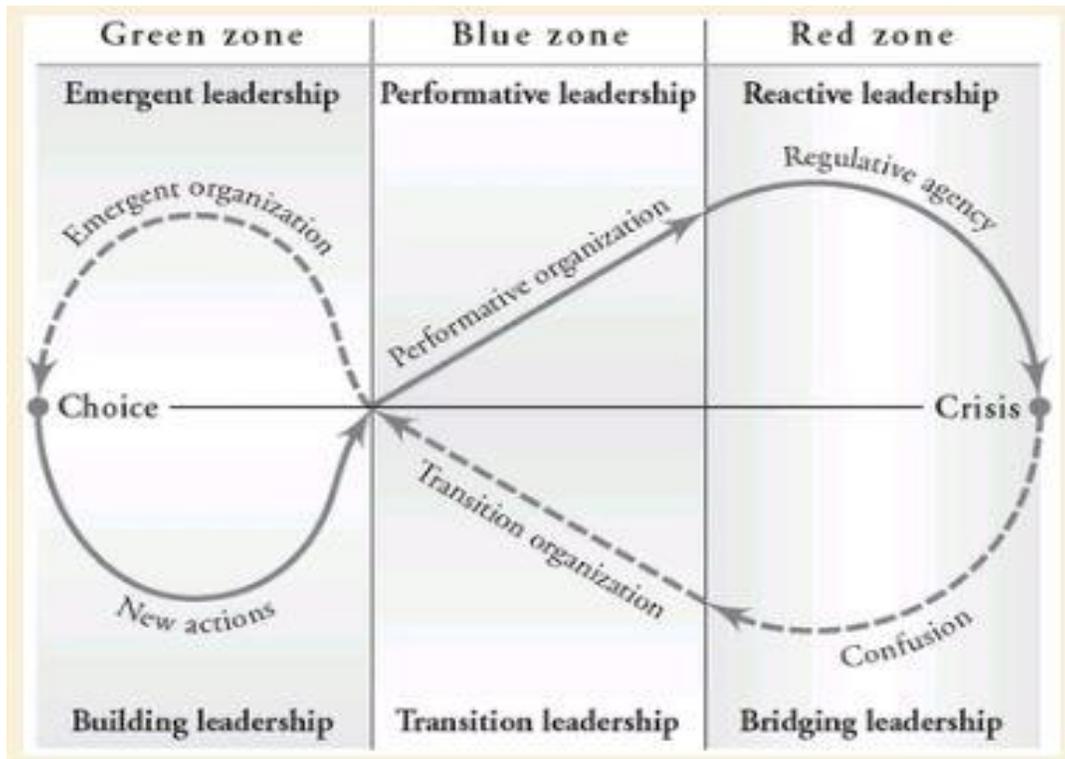
Write the number of Strengths (5's) _____

Write the number of domains with Intentional Activities. _____

Total Strengths + Activities _____

Congregational Change Cycle

FROM ROXBURGH, A. AND F. ROMANUK (2011).¹



All congregations are constantly moving through this cycle of change. Place an X in the place where you think your congregation is right now.

Emergent - Pioneering	Performing	Regulating- Reacting
Discover new ways to be church and expand imagination about what “success” means. Spirit lifts up a new vision for embodiment. Decide to live into a new or updated identity. (Adaptive change)	Develop and refine organizational structure and capacity to implement mission. Tweak current programs and process. Focus on efficiency and effectiveness. (Technical change)	Change beyond control occurred in congregation and/or community. Old way no longer work. Reach a crisis point. Decide whether or not to continue and why . (Technical changes fail, open to new ideas)
Emergent - Building	Transitioning	Confusion
New understandings of how to live into the updated identity are built into the church structure starting at the bottom of the Jenga blocks and moving up. Build in adaptive habits to remain agile. (Adaptive ⇌ Technical change)	Cycle of Listening, Experimenting and Reflecting. Confront your assumptions and expand imagination about what is possible. (Adaptive change in full swing)	Don’t know what to do next. Make intentional space for change. Begin listening to God, each other and the community. Identify immediate next steps without clear definition of ultimate vision. (Adaptive change begins)

¹ Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, vol. 17 (John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

Change Cycle Stage: Green Zone - Emerging

Description: New or renewing church clarifies identity and purpose, gets organized and works to become missional and self-sustaining.

Key Tasks: Establish core theology Mission/Purpose. Articulate God active presence in day to day life. Develop the expectation that God regularly shows up and works in and through the congregation. Create a supportive community. Create a sense of team and communal ownership where everyone’s gifts are known and used. Incorporate new members in leadership. Establish healthy mission focused culture that is eager to change to stay missional. Build relationships and partnerships within the local community for the sake of mission not just recruitment.

Common Threats: Fail to gain critical mass of resources or people, fail to create healthy community, Imprint a rigid culture focused on the needs of the founders rather than God’s mission.

Critical Barriers: Lack of mission, no sense of God’s presence, dysfunctional relationships, lack of partnerships with local community.

Critical Areas for focused attention: Mission & leadership. Moving toward sustainability is also critical. Programs, strong governance and administrative structures can come later.

Potential Outcomes:

Positive Outcome	Negative Outcome
Grow into maturity with strong foundations	Fail to become self-sustaining or imprint rigid or founder centered culture= fragile

How Healthy Growth Happens: Activities in bottom blocks drive development of upper blocks. Growth happens on two tracks:

Mission Track: Establishing common mission and God’s presence sets the tone for the congregation’s culture and attitudes about themselves and their neighbors. Those attitudes lead to programs/activities in the community and the congregation.

Leadership Track: Encouraging and developing leadership skills in lay and rostered leaders plus building strong relationships creates positive energy which leads to improvements in how resources are managed and improvements in the resources themselves.



List the areas you marked as barriers. _____

If you have a barrier in mission, relationships or leadership, focus here first.

List the areas you marked as current activities or strengths. _____

If Mission and God’s presence aren’t among them, they should be. Constant articulation of mission and God’s active presence is critical. Forming and renewing congregations need to work on both tracks at the same time to realize a positive outcome. How are you developing leadership and community? Consider where you are strong or working now. Are you working in the right areas?

Change Cycle Stage: Blue Zone - Performing

Description: Mature congregations constantly go through a pattern of redefinition (innovation), stability/plateau, tension (as programs/processes no longer fit new environments), evaluation and then begin again with redefinition. As long as congregations continue this pattern while focused on God’s mission within their community, the ministry can be healthy indefinitely. Congregations that don’t, slip into decline.

Key Tasks: Maintain sense of God’s active presence and mission as the focus of ministry by continually and intentionally discerning God’s will and listening to each other and the neighborhood. Tell the congregation’s story as part of God’s story. Focus on making disciples who live out their faith in daily life. Maintain strong lay leadership, cycling new people into/out of leadership regularly. Adapt to changing conditions through technical and sometimes adaptive changes.

Common Threats: Unaware of God’s active presence in the congregation and the world. Become rigid, bureaucratic, inwardly- focused, unwilling to change or don’t think you need to change and get comfortable. Internal conflicts fester creating tension or apathy. Sometimes conflict breaks out in harmful ways.

Critical Barriers: Address any barriers (especially relational) before they send the congregation into decline.

Critical Areas for focused attention: Thriving mature congregations typically work intentionally in 6 or more domains simultaneously. Maintaining a missional focused culture and renewing resources (finances, facility, and people) are most critical.

Potential Outcomes:

Positive Outcome	Negative Outcome
Remain stable and missional through generational and cultural transitions: Redefinition	Slip into decline

How Congregations Stay Healthy: Activities in bottom blocks drive development of upper blocks. This happens on two tracks:

Mission Track: Common mission and God’s presence sets the tone for the congregation’s culture and attitudes about themselves and their neighbors. Those attitudes lead to programs/activities in the community and the congregation.

Leadership Track: Encouraging and developing leadership skills in lay and rostered leaders plus strong relationships creates positive energy which influences resources and how they are managed.



List the areas you marked as barriers. _____

If you have barriers in the area of mission, God’s presence, relationships or leadership, removing them should be your top priority.

List the areas you marked as current activities or strengths. _____

Mature congregations need to constantly renew both tracks at the same time to continue having positive outcomes. If lower blocks are strong, focus can be on the upper blocks. Consider the areas where you are strong or working now. Are you working in the right areas?

Change Cycle Stage: Red Zone- Reactive & Confusion

Description: Losing members, money, energy, connection to community. Often a vague sense of mission.

Key Tasks: LISTEN! Reconnect with God’s active presence and call to mission through prayer and study. Listen to one another. Reconcile conflicts, and resolve immediate resource and administrative crisis. Listen to the community. Decide to move intentionally into adaptive change for the sake of God’s purpose in the community and make space for the process.

Common Threats: Congregation remains focused on survival rather than God’s mission. Congregation lacks sense of God’s presence and doesn’t trust God. Lack of clear vision and passion. Conflict tears it apart or apathy and low energy allows it to continue in decline. Loss of hope.

Critical Barriers: The presence of any barriers will likely lead to a negative outcome.

Critical Activities/Strengths: Declining congregations that had positive outcomes were usually intentionally working in at least 6 different domains at the same time. Most critical domains include relationships, culture, resources and administration/governance.

Potential Outcomes:

Positive Outcome	Negative Outcome
Renewal and/or redevelopment	Become unsustainable

How Change Happens: Adaptive changes made in bottom blocks lead to changes in upper blocks. Change happens on two tracks:

Mission Track: Clarifying mission and God’s presence through intentional spiritual discernment and listening leads to changes in the congregation’s culture and attitudes about themselves and their community. This leads to new activities and programs in the community and the congregation.

Leadership Track: Strengthening leadership skills and building relationships leads to improvements in how resources are managed and improvements in the resources themselves.



List the areas you marked as barriers. _____

Address barriers in the following areas first: Mission, God’s presence, Relationships, Leadership.

List the areas you marked as current activities or strengths.

Declining congregations need to work on both tracks at the same time to realize a positive outcome. Consider the areas where you are strong or working now. Are you working in the right areas?