

MISSION PLANNING FOR CONGREGATIONS IN TRANSITION

What is Mission Planning?

Mission planning is a process through which a congregation works out specific ways to discern its call by the Holy Spirit to bear witness to Jesus Christ in word and in action. Mission planning is grounded in prayer, Bible study, worship, and learning. Mission planning considers the gifts God has given to the congregation and the needs of the community around the congregation, asking, “What would God have us be?” and “What would God have us do?”

What are the resources for mission planning?

The basic resources are prayer and Bible study. There are various works which can assist a congregation, for example:

- Basic Tools for Congregational Planning, by Kirk Havel and Michael Rothaar, published by Augsburg Fortress. This is a clear and simple guide to planning.
- Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, by Kennon Callahan, available at Augsburg Fortress. This book defines one approach to assessing the life of a congregation and developing a mission plan.
- Discerning your Congregation’s Future, by Roy Oswald and Robert Friedrich, Jr., published by Alban Institute. This book deals with discernment through prayer and Bible study, along with visioning for the congregation’s future.

Other resources, including demographic studies, are also available. Information on resources for mission planning can be requested from the synod.

Why do mission planning as part of the transitional process?

An excellent time for beginning a mission planning process is when a congregation is in pastoral transition. Such a process can help a congregation identify the skills, experiences, and imagination it seeks in a pastor. At the same time, a mission planning process can help a candidate for ministry understand the mission challenges and opportunities facing a congregation. The process gives insight and understanding about the mission of the congregation to both congregation and candidate.

Mission planning helps a congregation focus energies and resources in the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through such planning, congregations come to greater knowledge of what needs to be done within the congregation’s life to strengthen its witness for Christ.