

## VITAL QUESTIONS FOR CORE GROUPS OF THE CHURCH

As your particular group looks at the statistics generated through the study of your church's activity, here are two general questions and other specific questions we would like you to answer through a time of conversation and discernment. Please record your group's findings so that it might become part of the larger discussion of what will help to create and further a vital congregation.

### General questions for all groups:

1. Imagine that the only things you could know about your church were found in the statistics presented. Based solely on those stats, what does your church look like? Where are the strengths? The weaknesses? Where is the hope for the future? What are the bottlenecks that appear to be keeping your church from growing?
2. What else would you like to measure in order to know more about your church's core values, direction and strength?

Specific questions for particular groups:

**Trustees:** what do the stats tell you about the use of your building? As you study them carefully, what changes/improvements/alterations might you see as helpful for the church's health and vitality? (e.g., is there need to enlarge the nursery?) If your board is responsible for providing office equipment or furniture, has anyone done an audit of what might be needed or useful to help that part of the church be more effective or welcoming?

**Finance:** Beyond having the money to meet the bills, are there special offerings received which seem to truly come from the heart of the congregation? When was the last time the Finance committee members or chairperson spoke in church about the reason they give and support the church's ministry? Are there ministries which appear to be growing, that might respond well to an increase of funding? Are all of your committee members tithers?

**Staff-Parish:** Have you had a conversation concerning staffing with your pastor or other members of the staff? Is there a need to consider a part-time person to help bring leadership to a particular area of the church? In cooperation with the Finance committee, have you done an audit of comparable salaries in your conference or district? How well are you able to encourage your pastor to grow in preaching skills, or to offer a vision for the church? What have you done to support and recognize your pastor this year?

**Church Council:** When was the last meeting in which you discussed your church's vision or mission? Do any members of the congregation know you are meeting, and what you are meeting about? Does your agenda consist of only receiving reports, or of honestly looking at the potential and bottlenecks for your congregation? Are the members of your church council tithers, or even regular givers to the congregation?

**UMW/UMM/Youth:** How well does your group search out new visitors and welcome them? How much time does your group spend in prayer for your church and its ministry? What outreach does your group do in the community? Do you cooperate with other groups in the church on a regular basis, or is your group a ‘lone wolf’ in terms of membership and ministry?

**Choir:** Do you pray for your worship on a weekly basis? Do you have a high expectation of persons to be in attendance and ready to sing the selections? Do you participate in worship, by listening to the sermon, sharing in the liturgy, and simply looking and acting engaged? How do the leaders of your group deal with critical remarks and conversations concerning the church and its leadership? When was the last time someone new joined your group? Do you sing a new song?

**Evangelism/Outreach:** What percentage of the homes in a ten block area surrounding your church know you exist? What have you done to capture the heart of your community? How well do you open the doors of your church building to the needs and ministry for your neighborhood? Do you believe your church shares good news about Jesus Christ?

**Missions:** What role do missions play in your worship and activities of the church? Do you have a wide range of mission opportunities, both giving and hands on, for your church members and friends? When was the last time someone in your church had the opportunity to make their witness of a mission trip or a mission activity? How well do you give to missions, especially UM missions?

**Sunday School Classes:** Does your SS class prepare you to live a faithful life each week? Do your class members regularly attend worship? Do they tithe? Do you talk about giving and support of the church and pastor in your class? Do you believe your class uplifts your church, or does it appear to either stand alone or to criticize the work of the congregation?

**Children’s Ministry:** Do you have a ministry for all ages, so that every person in the church of every age hears the Gospel? Do you encourage worship and giving and participation in the church on a regular basis? Have you done a survey of children in the neighborhood who might benefit from activities from your church? What new thing have you done with the children’s ministry this year?