

PRESBYTERY OF GENESEE VALLEY  
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

**Design for Congregational Self-Study**

The Congregational Self-Study is an alternative to the Mission and Ministry Study Process that the session may choose. In general, the Mission and Ministry Study is a more in-depth process, requiring more time and broader participation. The Congregational Self-Study is a simple design, engaging the congregation in an assessment of ministry which can lead to a sense of the vision and the selection of appropriate pastoral leadership. If the session chooses the Congregational Self-Study alternative, a Mission and Ministry Study must be begun within two years of the arrival of the pastor.

**Introduction to the Designs**

As soon as the pastor has left, the congregation's liaison from the COM will meet with the session. The liaison will facilitate the session's decision concerning doing a Mission and Ministry Study in the transition or delaying it until the new pastor is present. If the latter, this simpler design will be used. The session will decide which design (or one of their own) will work best for their setting:

Design A, for churches with fewer than 100 people in worship –  
*a one-day event involving much of the congregation*

Design B, for churches with more than 100 people in worship –  
*a one-month process, beginning with an orientation gathering, conversations in each ongoing small group in the congregation, and a concluding gathering*

The process will be facilitated by a member of the COM or another trained individual. It should not be facilitated by someone who is a member of the congregation.

The following material includes

- Details of Design A
- Details of Design B
- Worship Resources
- Reflection and Discussion Questions
- Next Steps

**DESIGN A: A One-Day Event (for congregations with less than 100 people in worship)**

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**Planning**

- With the facilitator, select a date for your event when you will have a large portion of the congregation present for a 6-hour block of time. This can be a morning through lunch or an afternoon through dinner.
- Advertise the event and distribute the questions in section A below for people to reflect upon in preparation.
- Recruit a group to provide food for the day in a simple way that enables them to participate fully with the group. Perhaps you will decide a brown-bag lunch is best – whatever is comfortable for your congregation.
- Have nametags available

**Agenda for the Event** (with sample times)

- 8:00 a.m. Gather around refreshments, welcome one another, make introductions
- 8:15 a.m. Worship\*
- Opening Responses\*\*

God of all grace;  
**Silence from whom our words come;**  
Questioner from whom our questions arise;  
**Lover of whom all our loves are hints;**  
Disturber in whom alone we find our rest;  
**Mystery in whose depths we find healing and our lives;**  
**Enfold us now in your presence; restore to us your peace;**  
**Renew us through your power; and ground us in your grace.**

Silence

Prayer

Lord, You who gave bread to Moses and the Israelites while they traveled in the desert, come now, and bless the gifts of food which You give to us this day. As our food gives up its life for us, may we follow that pattern of self-surrender for each other. May we be life to one another. With grateful hearts we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Scripture: Luke 9:18

Silence

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-15

Silence

Blessing

*\*from Preparing to Call a Pastor, by the Rev. Carson Mouser*

*\*\*The opening response was adapted from Ted Loder's*

*"Ground Me in Your Grace" from*

*Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle*

*(Philadelphia: Innisfree Press, Inc. 1984)*

9:00 a.m. Orientation to the day

Divide into conversation groups of 6 – 8 people. Diversify the groups by trying to mix ages and families. You may do this randomly based on birthdays or color of clothing, for instance.

9:15 a.m. **Conversation I:**

Each group will choose a "convener" and a "scribe."

Ask the group to make introductions sharing a response to one of the questions in GROUP A below (which they received ahead of time).

Half of the groups will then share their responses to the questions in GROUP B and half will share responses to GROUP C. The convener will ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and that every response is honored. The scribe will keep notes.

**GROUP A - Questions for personal reflection before the group meeting include**

1. What favorite scripture helps you to live out your faith?
2. When has the church best resembled the Body of Christ for you?
3. Describe a time when you felt spiritually fulfilled and excited.

**GROUP B - Questions about the past include**

1. What do you consider to be the highlights of the congregation during the last three years?
2. Did the pastor meet your expectations?

**GROUP C - Questions describing the present include**

1. What kind of leader has made you feel that your ministry was meaningful?
2. What difference does it make to the community that your church exists?\*

3. What contribution does your congregation make to the worldwide Christian church?\*
4. Is this what Christ died for?
5. What do you see as Christ's dream for the future of your ministry?
6. What concrete steps will you take to translate Christ's dream into reality?

\*from Justo Gonzalez

10:15 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. **Conversation 2:**

The groups will come together and each scribe will report the responses of the group, GROUP B questions and then GROUP C. Record the responses for all to see. Group thoughts when possible.

11:30 a.m. Break for a meal and table conversation about the responses that have been shared.

12:15 p.m. **Conversation 3:**

Process the information you have gleaned: Is your congregation comfortable in the current ministry? Are there growing places? Is there a call to new ministry?

Identify next steps: Would it be helpful to do a more in-depth congregational study? Are you ready to seek an interim pastor? Are you able to identify what you want the interim leadership to focus on? Can you identify particular issues to be addressed?

1:00 p.m. Worship\*

Opening responses

Jesus says, "I am the Way for you."

**And so we come to follow Christ.**

Jesus says, "I am the Truth for you."

**And so we come to dwell in the light.**

Jesus says, "I am the Life for you."

**And so we come, leaving behind all else to which we cling.**

Scripture: Joshua 24: 14 -18

Invitation to commitment

What commitment will you make to God in the silence that follows?

Silence

Affirmation of Commitment

We are not alone; we live in God's world

**We believe in God, who has created and is creating,**

**who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,**

**to reconcile and make new,**

**who works in us and others by the Holy Spirit.**

**We trust in God.**

**We are called to be the church,**

**to celebrate God's presence,**

**to live with respect in creation,**

**to love and serve others,**

**to seek justice and resist evil,**

**to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.**

**We are not alone. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Closing

Look at your hands; see the touch and the tenderness,  
**God's own for the world.**

Look at your feet; see the path and the direction,  
**God's own for the world.**

Look at your heart; see the fire and the love,  
**God's own for the world.**

Look at the cross; see God's Son and our Savior,  
**God's own for the world.**

This is God's world,  
**God's own for the world.**

Blessing

May Christ's peace be with you all. Amen.

*\*from *Preparing to Call a Pastor*, by the Rev. Carson Mouser*

### **DESIGN B: A One-Month Event (for congregations with more than 100 in worship and with ongoing small groups)**

#### **Planning**

- With the facilitator, select a date for your event when you will have a large portion of the congregation present for a 30-minute orientation to the process, such as a congregational gathering after worship. Also, select a date for the end-of-the-month gathering when you will have a block of two hours.
- Advertise the event and distribute the questions in section A below for people to reflect upon in preparation.

#### **Agenda for the Orientation Gathering**

Ask people to quickly group themselves into triads where they are seated. Choose one of the reflection questions from GROUP A below (which were distributed ahead of time) and share responses.

Explanation of the process: For the next month, each group that meets in the congregation will dedicate time to responding to the questions in GROUPS B and C below. Groups include committees, study groups, works groups, choirs, cooks – any group than regularly meets.

#### **GROUP A - *Questions for personal reflection before the group meeting include***

1. What favorite scripture helps you to live out your faith?
2. When has the church best resembled the Body of Christ for you?
3. Describe a time when you felt spiritually fulfilled and excited.

#### **GROUP B - *Questions about the past include***

1. What do you consider to be the highlights of the congregation during the last three years?
2. Did the pastor meet your expectations?

#### **GROUP C - *Questions describing the present include***

1. What kind of leader has made you feel that your ministry was meaningful?
2. What difference does it make to the community that your church exists?\*
3. What contribution does your congregation make to the worldwide Christian church?\*
4. Is this what Christ died for?
5. What do you see as Christ's dream for the future of your ministry?
6. What concrete steps will you take to translate Christ's dream into reality?

*\*from Justo Gonzalez*

Each group will select a scribe to keep notes of the responses. If a group meets more than once in a month, they may divide the conversation among their meeting times. If there are people present who do not regularly meet with another group, they may be invited to form their own group for this purpose.

At the end of the month, all the participants will gather again for a time of sharing information, drawing conclusions, and determining next steps.

### **Agenda for Group Meetings**

When the group meets, decide who will act as the convener. The convener's role is to be sure that everyone has a chance to speak, that all responses are honored, and that the conversation moves forward so that all the questions are discussed. If the group will meet more than one time in the month, the convener will decide which questions will be discussed at each gathering.

Decide who will act as the scribe to make notes on the discussion and to report later to the large group.

Open the discussion with this prayer\*:

God of all grace;

**Silence from whom our words come;**

Questioner from whom our questions arise;

**Lover of whom all our loves are hints;**

Disturber in whom alone we find our rest;

**Mystery in whose depths we find healing and our lives;**

Enfold us now in your presence; restore to us your peace;

**Renew us through your power; and ground us in your grace.**

\*adapted from Ted Loder's "Ground Me in Your Grace" from *Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle* (Philadelphia: Innisfree Press, Inc. 1984)

### **Agenda for End-of-Month Meeting** (sample times)

7:00 p.m. Gather for refreshments and introductions as necessary

7:15 p.m. Worship\*  
Prayer

Lord, You who gave bread to Moses and the Israelites while they traveled in the desert, come now, and bless the gifts of food which You give to us this day. As our food gives up its life for us, may we follow that pattern of self-surrender for each other. May we be life to one another. With grateful hearts we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Scripture: Luke 9:18

Silence

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-15

Silence

Blessing

\*from *Preparing to Call a Pastor*, by the Rev. Carson Mouser

7:30 p.m. ***Conversation 1:***  
The groups will come together and each scribe will report the responses of the participants, GROUP B questions and then GROUP C. The facilitator from the COM Transition Team will moderate the discussion. Record the responses for all to see. Group thoughts when possible.

8:15 p.m. ***Conversation 2:***

Process the information you have gleaned: Is your congregation comfortable in the current ministry? Are there growing places? Is there a call to new ministry?

Identify next steps: Would it be helpful to do a more in-depth congregational study? Are you ready to seek an interim pastor? Are you able to identify what you want the interim leadership to focus on? Can you identify particular issues to be addressed?

9:00 p.m.

Worship\*

Opening responses

Jesus says, "I am the Way for you."

**And so we come to follow Christ.**

Jesus says, "I am the Truth for you."

**And so we come to dwell in the light.**

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**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.**

**We are not alone. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Closing

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Look at your feet; see the path and the direction,

**God's own for the world.**

Look at your heart; see the fire and the love,

**God's own for the world.**

Look at the cross; see God's Son and our Savior,

**God's own for the world.**

This is God's world,

**God's own for the world.**

Blessing

May Christ's peace be with you all. Amen.

*\*from *Preparing to Call a Pastor*, by the Rev. Carson Mouser*

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

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The session, with the COM liaison, will decide

- if the congregation needs a more in-depth assessment
  - ➔ Choose a model for a Mission and Ministry Study. See [Models for Writing a Mission and Ministry Statement](#).
- if the congregation is prepared to write a vision statement at this time
  - ➔ Continue with the pastoral call process

The liaison will prepare a written report to share with the COM.

Adopted by COM August 2010