

PROVOKING CHURCH EXCELLENCE THROUGH WHOLE CHURCH REFLECTION

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Some churches operate as though:

The Pastor is the performer

The Congregation is the audience

God is the prompter

What should it be?

The Congregation is the performer

The Pastor is the prompter

God is the audience

The purpose of the church is to gather the Body of Christ to worship and serve God. Collectively we ‘love kindness, do justice and walk humbly with God’ (Micah 6:8). That responsibility for this lies with each church member, each church leader and each church staff. While each person has a unique role, the whole community of faith is at its best when they reflect with and support each other in becoming more faithful to God’s vision for the church.

Here is a process for whole church reflection, evaluation and discernment

1. The church would have a discerned identity and vision with several defined points. (3-7 for a 3-7 year period) (The Mass Conference and the UCC have resources to help with visioning)
2. *The God-Vision holds the power.*
3. The church would determine for each point/goal who would be responsible (some combination of specific staff, leadership, committee and congregation) Be aware of the balance so that no individual or group carries a disproportionate load.
4. The church would align (recreate) church structure and resources around the goals and vision. (Streamline the organizational structure to maximize people resources) (Be willing to reduce or let go of committees and boards that are not doing work essential to the vision)
5. Within each goal each segment (staff, leadership, committee, congregation) would have specific outcomes and tasks. (a clearly definable and quantifiable plan of action)
6. The church would ensure that each segment had sufficient resources (people, time, money) to accomplish the outcomes (eg. Assess and realign/recreate the budget)
7. The church would also ensure that any needed research, training, education, coaching, mentoring would also be part of the plan. *The focus is on fulfilling the God-Vision not your part in it.*
8. The church leadership would gather every 3 – 4 months (periodically in a retreat setting) to pray and review progress towards the goal with each segment reviewing, evaluating and reporting their perspectives and insights for themselves and with each other. (Ensuring safe and healthy conversations is crucial for this step in the process. Resources such as *Completing The Circle* by David McMahill, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* by Kerry Patterson et.al. or ‘Appreciative Inquiry’ may be helpful in facilitating this conversation. Check MACUCC.org or Conference staff for more information)
 - a. If goals are not being met the group would discern what resources and training are needed to help each segment make progress.
 - b. While competence, style and performance are part of this, if the focus is on meeting God’s goals for the church the conversation takes on a different tone than trying to meet often diverse, competing and rarely clearly expressed needs of individuals.
 - c. Within this model it is important for the whole group (staff, congregation and/or leadership) to own group responsibility for helping each segment thrive in its ministry.
9. Based on Einstein’s premise that ‘No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.’; periodically, the church could bring in outside perspective (Conference staff, a consultant, a reciprocity agreement with another church, and/or local community members and leaders) to get the input that the church can’t obtain by or within itself.