



# New Beginnings House Group Meeting Leader's Guide



*No part of this manual can be used without permission, except for use in House Group Meeting sessions.*

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## Introduction

### The Facilitator's Role:

Thank you for agreeing to be a New Beginnings House Group Meeting Facilitator. Helping people in your church to understand the complexity of your church situation AND to make a decision about the future is one of the greatest gifts any person can give to their church.

The fact that your church is engaged in this process indicates that your congregation has a readiness to enter into conversation; however, this is not likely the kind of conversation people are expecting. If we engage in the same conversations we have before, we will return our church back to its former condition. In many cases that is a church in decline.

We are living in a very different world than we did 20 years ago. The rules of the economy have changed. The rules for politics have changed. There is a high mistrust of institutions AND the position of the church in culture has shifted. We can no longer ask "how do we get more people to come to church?" or "how do we get more money?" The conversations have to be much deeper. When the rules change, the conversation has to become more focused if you are to sustain your church's witness in your community. The group you are about to lead is filled with insight. Your role as a facilitator is to help cultivate that insight into a form that helps lead the church to a bold decision for the future. You are not a teacher, even though you will teach, but you are the person who facilitates conversation so that even the quietest person in your group has had the chance to share their insight.

Great facilitators encourage good conversation. They affirm people when they speak, regardless of what they have to say. They treat people with respect, regardless of their viewpoint.

But most importantly, great facilitators talk less than 30% of the time. They keep the process moving. One of their hallmark phrases is "wow, this is great conversation, but I'm going to have to move us along."

Finally, you have the job of representing your group's conversation fairly with other House Group Facilitators. You will briefly connect with other facilitators throughout the process for quick updates. At the end of all the House Groups, though, you will meet with other leaders to discuss the insights you have learned from your group. You will have "listened" your way into insight as you have observed these conversations and do your best to share the wisdom of your group.

### Facilitators:

- Invite even the quietest person to participate.
- Keep others from dominating conversation
- Engage both/and thinking
- Move people from solving problems to naming conditions
- Move people away from being angry towards naming their feelings
- Move people from arguing about data towards looking at the big picture

## What Is New Beginnings?

New Beginnings is a service offered by Hope Partnership Services. Hope’s mission is to “empower courageous leadership in this new era of mission.” It has worked with hundreds of congregations in numerous denominational groups. More than 1,300 congregations in the U.S. and Canada have participated in the New Beginnings process.

New Beginnings is designed to be an intervention for a congregation that needs to make a decision about its future. It is NOT a problem solving process or consultative process in which you name a problem, seek options, and then fix it. That method merely returns the church to its previous state, which likely was failing anyway. Instead, New Beginnings is a non-synoptic process.

### New Beginnings Phases:

1. Assessment
2. Facilitator Training
3. House Meetings
4. Decision
5. Implementation

Non-synoptic processes help organizations adapt to new realities.

They accept the fact that things have changed, and we get to a new way of being by looking at everything at once, naming our observations without “fixing” anything. We hold off making any decisions until we’ve heard many voices, then move quickly toward a decision. It is a process of suspending.

Otto Scharmer in Theory U describes the process of transformation as a U. Transformation is the **process of letting go to become something new.**

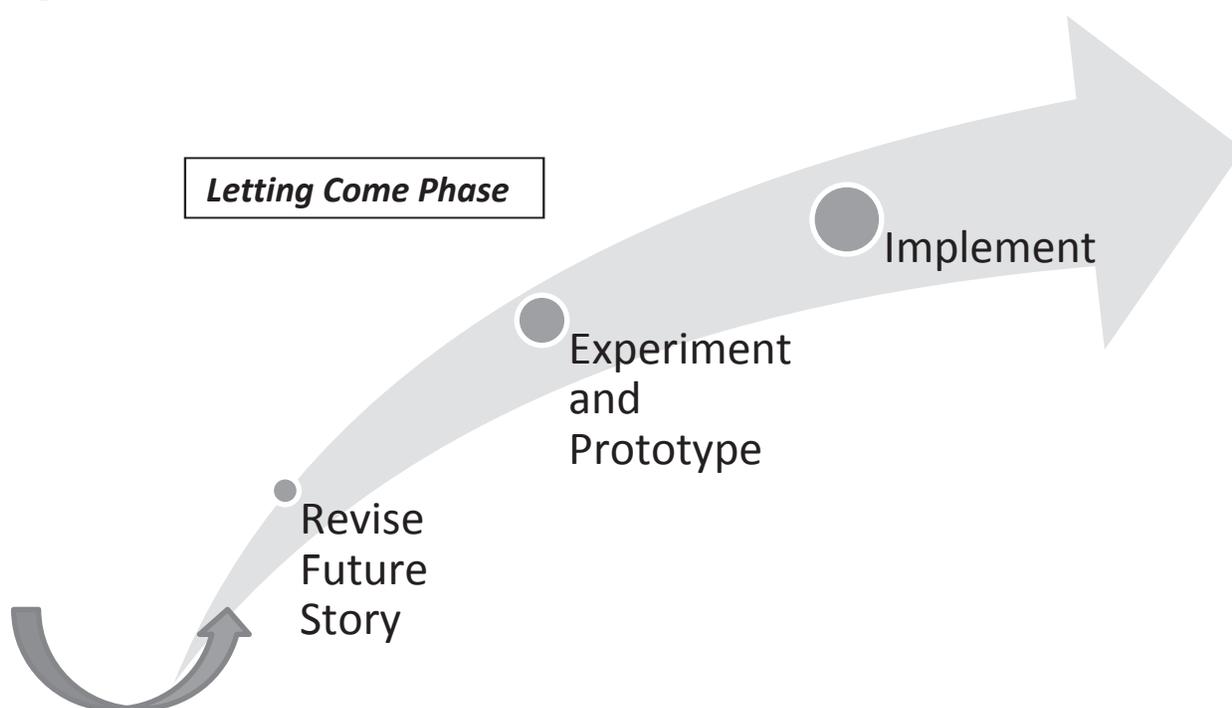


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This “letting go” phase is what you are doing in House Group Meetings. The New Beginnings assessment helps the congregation “name their conditions.” The House Group Meeting conversations help people suspend their judgment instead of rushing to solutions. These conversations also reorient the participants into new ways of thinking about the church and its role in your community.

After your group pauses, you will be asked to make a decision. You will be invited to consider one of the future stories offered by the assessor as a framework for writing your own contextually relevant future story. If your group doesn't like the options provided, then you may write another option that suits the group better (provided it is based on reality).

Once the decision is made, a small group of leaders in your church will enter into the implementation phase. Based on your decision, either Hope Partnership or other organizations can help you with further steps, like connecting with coaches. New Beginnings helps you get to the decision. Your success will depend on what you do with your decision.



## Who is Hope Partnership?

Hope Partnership Services, a part of Disciples Church Extension Fund, works in partnership with multiple denominations and with partners from multiple church organizations that work together to create courageous leaders for this new era of God's mission. Hope began within the Disciples of Christ denomination, which quickly brought other partners to the table to create, develop and deliver processes that would lead to the development of transformational leadership.

Hope serves congregations in the United States and Canada. It is not a consultative business, but a non-profit organization funded by contributions, grants and service fees. It has more than 50 facilitators that have written books and articles and had worked with hundreds of congregations each year.



## The Design of House Group Meetings

The GOAL of House Group Meetings is to engage at least 50% of your congregation's average worship attendance in meaningful conversation that will lead to a bold decision for the future of the church. If participants want to have input on the future of the church, they need to be at these meetings.

Because people have very different schedules, House Group Meetings will provide a variety of settings and times to accommodate the goal of at least 50% participation—many congregations report 80% participation. Consideration might be given toward the example below:

<b>Group 1</b>	Distant church members who drive more than 20 min. to church	Sundays after church At the church
<b>Group 2</b>	For elderly members—transportation included	Wednesday mornings 10-12 At a place with handicap access
<b>Group 3</b>	For those still working/living north	At a home on Wednesday nights
<b>Group 4</b>	A second group for those still working living south	At a home on Tuesday nights

Promotion of the House Group Meetings can be done simply. Usually, you can announce in worship that these meetings are taking place and pass around a clip board with 10 spaces on each for sign-ups. People select their groups for the one that fits their schedule best. Be sure to list the facilitator on each sheet. People will pick a group for which they feel the most comfort. It is expected that people will attend the same meeting each week to ensure the tenants of covenant are honored.

### Materials Needed for House Group Meetings

- Flip Chart (or newsprint) – Post-It/Sticky Flip Charts would be perfect and would not damage house walls when put up.
- 5 Colors of 3" x 3" stick-notes (post-its) – Have some extra of 2 of the colors
- Copies of all Handouts at the back of the Guide, except for the Bible verses
  - Have a couple of Bible verse handouts at each meeting in case someone forgets their devotional

### Preparing Attendees for House Group Meetings

- Receive devotional (with attached covenant) at least one week prior to the first meeting.
  - Each participant should engage with the devotional prior to each meeting and come prepared to share insights.

### Conducting House Group Meetings

It is suggested that the four House Group Meetings take place over a two-month period, with one meeting held every other week.

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## Setting the Room for Conversation

Holding meetings in a home rather than at the church can have some real advantages. People generally feel more relaxed sitting on a couch, sipping coffee and eating cookies and share more freely than if they are sitting behind a table in a church classroom.

You will want:

- Comfortable seating for everyone you expect (usually in a circle)
- Ability to show video content so people can see the video clips
- Flipchart or Newsprint (Sticky flipcharts are best for home settings)
- Refreshments — get other participants to bring them (Optional)

Each week you will remind people to read their devotional and do any homework assigned that week.

## Capturing the Conversations

- You will want to name a notetaker for all meetings. These notes are for the House Group Meeting Leader only and are not to be shared with anyone else.
- Take a moment after each session and jot your key findings in the Facilitator Notes section of each session.

## If You Are Conducting Online House Group Meetings

Due to Covid-19, if you need to conduct online House Group Meetings, we suggest using the Zoom platform. While this House Group Leader's Guide is still the main instructional guide for all House Group Meetings, please also read the attached document "Process for Online House Group Meetings" for instructions on areas where adaptation will be needed to create the same exercises with an online group.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What if I can't make every meeting?

Due to the hectic pace of some folk's lives, they may not be able to make it to every meeting. While we understand that "life" happens, mixing groups can create issues with group trust building—therefore, it is highly discouraged.

### 2. What is the Pastor's role in these groups?

We encourage Pastors NOT to participate in these groups. We DO encourage the pastor to be present at all of the House Group Meeting leader meetings. We encourage Pastors to consider using the scripture passages from the Devotional for preaching during the meeting period.

### 3. What if all our groups come up with different Future Story choices?

Believe it or not that rarely happens. Most congregations are fairly pragmatic. If this does happen, feel free to write down the "minority" report on the congregational report and on the evaluation form.

## Finally—Have Some Fun!

While these are heavy conversations—the reason you are having them at all is because you love the church. The people who are in your group are taking time out of their lives for this conversation because they value and love the church too. You have prayed for each other over the years, shared many laughs and tears. Think about the joy you have received from God placing you all in that space and this time together.

Our prayer is that even though these conversations are deep, you will always find your evenings filled with joy—and that what you decide as a group will help your congregation adapt to a new way of being.



## Session I: Marks of a Vital Congregation

### Outcomes:

- Participants will gain a common understanding about what vitality looks like in a church.
- Participants will gain clarity on defining their “Why” and understand the importance of churches working out of their “why.”
- Participants will discover the differences between focusing on “membership” as opposed to a “discipleship” model of being church.
- Participants will gain clarity on why churches need to be relevant to their context.
- Participants will begin to assess the church’s passion and energy.
- Participants will be able to name resources that could be leveraged for ministry.

### Background:

The foundation of New Beginnings is based on research by more than 38 different church development experts. Each of them offered marks about how to measure the “vitality” of a congregation. Nearly 80 values were named by the experts, and Hope found that almost all of those 80 marks could fall under 5 categories:

1. Common understanding of mission or “why” they exist (rather than focusing on “what” they should do next or again).
2. Foster discipleship through the practice of spiritual disciplines and engagement in God’s mission (rather than seeking institutional vitality).
3. Strong connection to the people in their context. Not trying to be all things to all people.
4. Passion and energy toward what they were doing.
5. And finally, they were able to mobilize their resources on mission and ministry rather than focusing on institutional needs.

### Purpose:

The purpose of this session is to help your participants explore what vitality looks like in general terms, and to begin thinking about where your church is on that vitality index.

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
10	<b>Group Building</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask people to name 3 things that church is really good at.</li> <li>• Can we reach consensus on the Top 3?</li> </ul>	Flip Chart (Optional if you want to list on the wall)
5 Every Session	<b>Making a Covenant</b> Share the Covenants of Presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask people to read the list. Invite them to read one out into the room that they like until all are read.</li> <li>• Ask if we can live by these covenants</li> </ul>	Handout #1-1 Covenants of Presence (Recycle this document for use again next week)

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
5 Every Session	<b>Bible Study</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Philippians 1:3-11</li> <li>• Ask: “What words or phrases stand out to you?”</li> </ul>	Handout #1-2
3	<b>Introduction to 5 Marks of a Vital Church</b> Say: “Tonight we are going to explore 5 Marks of a Vital Congregation. People have often confused large churches with successful churches. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where does it say churches should be big in the Bible?</li> <li>• Lots of people would say vital congregations have big buildings. Is that in the Bible?</li> <li>• Do vital churches have lots of money?</li> </ul> Tonight let’s explore what church development leaders identify as vital congregations.	Flip chart
7	<b>Introduction to Mark 1:</b> <b>A compelling sense of mission or “why” we exist</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the list we made at the beginning.</li> <li>• When we look at this list, what distinguishes us from a club or social organization?</li> </ul> Vital congregations have a strong sense of mission that is connected to the gospel.	
10	<b>Watch and discuss the video “THE WHY”</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we follow pretty much the same calendar every year?</li> <li>• Are there things we could stop doing?</li> <li>• Do we as a church work out our “why” or our “what”?</li> </ul>	Video – The Why <a href="http://www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/">www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/</a>  Homework Handout #1-3 What is Your “Why”?
3	<b>Introduction to Mark 2:</b> The 2nd mark of vitality is the church is focused on <b>Discipleship instead of Membership.</b> Discuss Together: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we become “members” of our church?</li> <li>• Membership says that we belong.                What do we call people who do not belong?</li> <li>• Is the concept of membership Biblical?</li> </ul>	

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
8	<p><b>Read and discuss “Membership” table</b>            (compare membership belonging to a health club to being a part of a church) Which of these models sounds most like our congregation?</p>	<p>Handout #1-4            Membership Table</p>
5	<p><b>Introduction to Mark 3:</b>            The 3rd mark of vitality is a <b>church that is contextually relevant to its community.</b>            Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we live in this community or do we drive in?</li> <li>• How well do we know our neighbors</li> </ul>	
15	<p><b>Sticky Note Project – Discussing our Community</b>            We are going to do a project tonight.            I'd like to invite all of you to describe our church in its community in words or pictures (whichever you prefer).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Population – how many people do you think live within 3 miles of your church?            (Leader: Choose Color 1 for this)</li> <li>2. Racial/Ethnic Groups – What percentage of each ethnic group is living within three miles of your church?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Black</li> <li>b. Hispanic</li> <li>c. Caucasian</li> <li>d. Asian</li> <li>e. Other _____                (Leader: Color 2 for this one)</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Household structures – Do you think the area around the church has mostly singles, families w/ children, empty nesters, etc.? (Color 3 here)</li> <li>4. Marital Status – What percentage do you think are married, never married, divorced, widowed? (Color 4)</li> <li>5. Choose which age group you think is most prevalent in people who live within three miles of the church?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 0-4 yrs</li> <li>b. 5-17 yrs</li> <li>c. 18-24 yrs</li> <li>d. 25-34 yrs</li> <li>e. 35-54 yrs</li> <li>f. 55-64 yrs</li> <li>g. 65+ yrs (Color 5)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Flipchart or Newsprint</p> <p>5 Colors of Sticky-Note Pads (2” x 2” or 3” x 3” are best)</p>

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the newsprint, create a “church” figure in the middle of the paper.</li> <li>• Around that create a 5-section pie chart (an easy way is to think of a headless stick figure with spread out arms and legs with the church as the body)</li> <li>• For each Demographic you will be discussing, choose one color of sticky note. Pass out 1 sticky note of each color to participants (so each person has 5 sticky notes, each one a different color).</li> <li>• Have people write down their answer to each of the 5 questions and choose a section for each color/demographic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Have them put the sticky notes on the pie chart in the corresponding section. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After all the answers are up, have someone take the sticky notes with the same answers in each section and put them on top of each other in a slightly overlapping manner so the number of the sticky notes can be easily noted (or put them directly on top of each other and write the number of sticky notes on the top one)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>(Save this for later sessions – you might want someone to take a photo of it with their smartphone as well)  Debrief your work—(Be sure to keep afterward for future sessions)</p>	
8	<p><b>Introduction to Mark 4:</b>  Our 4th mark of vitality is a church that <b>has passion and energy!</b>  How would you describe energy and passion?  Watch Video – Discuss how energy and passion shows up in video.  On a scale of 1-4, how energetic would you say our congregation is?</p>	<p>Video - Shawnee Community CC  <a href="http://www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/">www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/</a></p>

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
8	<p><b>Introduction to Mark 5:</b> The ability to <b>mobilize resources for mission.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask group: “Consider how Shawnee CC leveraged their resources for ministry. How could we leverage our resources? What resources do we have to leverage?”</li> </ul>	<p>Flip chart/pens (Hold list for future session)</p>
3	<p><b>Wrap up and Assignments:</b> Hand out Assessments (Collect email addresses and send to them the pdf by tomorrow) Make these introductory remarks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please note this is not an “evaluation” of the church, but an assessment of the congregation’s current condition.</li> <li>2. Remind the group not to rush to judgment about what the church needs to do in the future. “The Assessment Report should only be discussed in House group meetings.”</li> <li>3. Encourage group members to read their devotional before the next session and come prepared to share their personal “Why” and what you think may be the “Why” of the church.</li> <li>4. We are not solving problems.</li> </ol> <p><b>Are there any questions before closing in prayer?</b></p>	<p>Assessment PDF</p>

Total 90 minutes

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**Facilitator Notes for Session I:**

1. Was the group able to grasp what a vital congregation would look like?
2. In your judgment did they grasp the importance of living out of our “why”?
3. As the people participated in the “Sticky-Note” Project, did they seem to know our neighborhood?
4. How well did they engage with the material?
5. How did you feel about your role as facilitator?

## Session II: Interpreting the New Beginnings Assessment

### Outcomes:

- Participants will have processed their reading of the NB Assessment for the church.
- Participants will be able to identify the church's passion, name things the church should consider being "best at."
- Participants will talk about their church facility, specifically about its utilization towards mission.
- Participants will develop a common awareness of the condition of the church.

### Background:

One of the reasons most congregation have trouble with change is because everyone in the church has a different idea about the church's current condition. Some will believe the church is broke, when really there is \$300,000 in the savings account. Or some will think the building is just fine, when there are 2 of the 3 boilers down for repair. Some will think their church is growing when it has been in decline for 40 years.

Those of us who work with congregations see these divergent ideas as a significant barrier to change. By doing the assessment, your church will develop a common starting point for your conversation on the future. By now, the people in your group are developing a common vocabulary.

This session will look at the assessment through three lenses of inquiry that were developed by Jim Collins in his remarkable book *GOOD TO GREAT*. These lenses will help participants verbalize what they believe this church has to offer.



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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this session is to help participants name the condition of your church, honestly, succinctly, and with hope.

<b>Segment Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
3	<b>Remembering our Covenant of Presence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lift up 3 things that you would like to especially remember tonight<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) No Fixing</li><li>2) Possible to emerge...</li><li>3) Suspend judgment</li></ol></li></ul>	Covenants of Presence Handout #1-1 from Session I
7	<b>Bible Study</b> Read Micah 6:6-8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask about key words or phrases</li><li>• What does the Lord require of us as a church?</li><li>• Are we called to be faithful or successful?</li></ul>	Handout #2-1
7	<b>Group Building</b> Share your “Why” <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give each person a sticky-note of each color</li><li>• Have each person write down their personal “why” on Color 1</li><li>• Have each person write down what they think the church’s “why” is on Color 2</li><li>• Put on newsprint/flipchart</li></ul>	Flip-chart or Newsprint 2 Colors of Sticky-Notes Color 1: Personal Why Color 2: What you understand to be the “Why” of the church (Save this Project, take a photo)
5	<b>Review of Last Session</b> See if the group can name the 5 Marks of a vital congregation ( <i>They know “why” they exist, Focus on Discipleship, Contextual Relevance, Passion and Energy, and Resources Mobilized for Mission</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which is out strongest mark?</li><li>• Our weakest?</li></ul>	
5	<b>Introducing the 3 Lenses of Inquiry</b> Our goal tonight is to gain a realistic picture of our congregation’s current condition. We will be doing this through 3 lenses of Inquiry. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) What are we passionate about,</li><li>2) What does our context say we need to be best at, and</li><li>3) What resources do we have.</li></ol> This is based on <i>GOOD TO GREAT</i> by Jim Collins By the end of the evening, we will have crafted a “truth” for each of these three lenses.	Handout #2-2 Definitions

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
20	<p><b>Exploring Lens #1: Passion</b>            Have someone read the definition of passion from the handout 2-2 (#1).            Guide your group to looking at these components of the assessment that directly point to our congregation's passion and energy:            Draw attention to the Community Sticky-Note project from Session I. "We tried to show what we knew of our community. Let's see how we did in understanding our community by looking at the demographics."            • <b>Appendix A</b> (Appreciative Inquiry Notes)            Questions 1, 2, 4,7            • <b>Current Participation section</b> (age of participants, tenure, participant engagement)            • <b>Appendix D</b> (Insites #1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 10)            Facilitator should be prepared to give a brief "report out" on each of the above Insites (which are best explained in the body of the assessment report).            • <b>Top Three Mosaics</b> (Review Top 3 Mosaics from Appendix C)</p> <p><b>DISCUSSION:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) When we review the report, what does this seem to say we are passionate about?</li> <li>2) What factors contribute to our energy level?</li> <li>3) On a scale of 1-4 (with 4 being very energetic) how would you rate our energy level?</li> <li>4) Before we finish this conversation, let's write a short statement that describes what our group would say about our passion and energy, both positive and negative.</li> </ol> <p>Note: Write this statement at the bottom of the Community Sticky-Note Project</p>	<p>Assessment PDF</p> <p>Flip chart</p>

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
20	<p><b>Exploring Lens #2: “Best At”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite someone to read the definition for “Best at” from handout 2-2 (#2).</li> <li>• <b>Highlight that it is a combination of what we do well... and what the community needs us to do well.</b> Guide your group to look at these components of the assessment that impact what we need to be “best at.”</li> <li>• <b>Appendix A</b> (What does it seem to say we do well— what needs are crying out in our community)</li> <li>• <b>Current Participation Section</b> (Generation gaps, Racial/ethnic gaps, Pin map, do we live in our context?)</li> <li>• How on target or how far off were we on the Community Sticky-Note Project? Display the project from last week and invite the group to look at it through the lenses of “best at.”</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCUSSION:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Looking at “Current Participation” section and the Top 3 Mosaics, how “on target” or how far off were we on the Community Sticky-Note Project?</li> <li>2) What would you say we are BEST AT as a church. (Remember “best” means better than others.)</li> <li>3) What would you say <b>our community</b> needs us to be best at?</li> <li>4) On a scale of 1-4, how would you rate our readiness to be best at that? (4 means we were born ready)</li> <li>5) Let’s create a one sentence description of our work in this section. (Example: Our church is best at ____, but we really think we need to be best at ____.</li> </ol> <p>NOTE: Add a one-sentence description to the bottom of the Community Sticky-Note project.</p>	Community Sticky-Notes Project from Session I

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
20	<p><b>Exploring Lens #3: Resources</b>            Invite someone to read the “resources” definition from the handout 2-2 (#3).            Share these thoughts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review list of resources from last week’s session              Share: “Sometimes we have resources we don’t use (like surplus building space, or restricted money for something we no longer need, or we need so many board members we don’t have people to do mission). Sometimes we have all of our resources in one thing, and nothing left for the needs.”</li> </ul> <p>Guide your group to look at these components of the assessment that describe your resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilities Examination</b> (Facility Capacity and Space chart, Sanctuary Capacity chart, parking capacity, Building use charts)</li> <li>• <b>Financial Review</b> (Income sources, operating expenses, investments)</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Is our building fully utilized?</li> <li>2) Are we the right size congregation for our facility?</li> <li>3) As a congregation are we living off of the assets of a previous generation?</li> <li>4) Do we have enough leadership to operate our current programs as a church?</li> <li>5) Do we do anything to prepare people to be future leaders?</li> <li>6) On a scale of 1-4 (with 4 being we are STRONG with resources), how would you rate our current condition?</li> <li>7) Let’s write a single sentence about the resources of our church (Sample: Our church is living in a building built by a previous generation, that costs more than we can afford to spend and it has created a situation where we feel we have to fill a building rather than concentrate on God’s mission.)</li> </ol>	<p>Last week’s list of resources (flip chart)</p>

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
3	<p><b>WRAP UP</b></p> <p>Thank the group for their hard work tonight</p> <p>Invite the group into a time of prayer using the three sentences you crafted at this meeting.</p> <p><i>(Read the three sentences, place them in the center of the circle, invite people to lay their hands on them and dedicate this work to God that our eyes might be open to His calling.)</i></p>	

**Notes from Session II:**

1. Of the 5 Marks, which did they seem to think we were strongest at? Weakest?
2. PASSION: We rated it \_\_\_\_ (1-4)
  - a. The TRUTH we wrote about Passion:
  
  - b. My thoughts:
3. BEST AT: We rated it \_\_\_\_ (1-4)
  - a. The TRUTH we wrote about BEST AT:
  
  - b. My thoughts:
4. RESOURCES: We rated it \_\_\_\_ (1-4)
  - a. The TRUTH we wrote about our Resources:
  
  - b. My thoughts:
5. How did you feel about the way the group engaged the Assessment:
  - a. Skeptical or agreeing
  - b. Indifferent or engaged
  - c. Depressed or hopeful
6. Other notes:

## Session III: What it Means to be Missional

### Outcomes:

- Participants will gain clarity about being “Missional” and what that looks like.
- Participants will shift their thinking of context from congregation to community.
- Participants will acknowledge that mission is about going and not waiting.
- Participants will explore what it might look like for their church to become missional.

### Background:

For too long, congregations have been measuring their success by the number of people they draw into worship services and events. This kind of thinking has led church leaders to beat themselves up for not being successful institutions—but the reality is that the gospel doesn’t really call us into that kind of success.

Reggie McNeal, in his book *Missional Renaissance*, reminds us of a different kind of scorecard. One that calls us to measure lives that are transformed, communities that are changed, and peace that exists because the church was being the hands and feet of God’s mission. He reminds us that it is not “our church has a mission,” but that “God’s mission has a church.”

The following session explores what it might look like for your church to be missional.

### Purpose:

The purpose of this session is to look at your community through God’s eyes, and see if you can name ways that your church could join in God’s mission.

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
3	<p><b>Remembering our Covenant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand them out again</li> </ul> <p>How do you think we are doing as a group in following these covenants?</p>	Covenants of Presence Handout #1-1 from Session I
7	<p><b>Bible Study</b></p> <p>Read Matthew 28:18-20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note that this is a different version</li> <li>• Ask: “What were some of the key points that came out for you this time?”</li> <li>• Draw attention to verse 19 <i>...in this way of life...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o What does that mean to you?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Draw attention also to the word GO.           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o What would it look like if our church was to take vs. 18-20 seriously?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Handout #3-1 (Have a few copies on hand in case someone forgot their devotional)

<b>Segment Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
5	<p><b>Review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name the 5 marks of a vital congregation</li> <li>• Read aloud the three truths from our assessment review last week</li> </ul>	
15	<p><b>Introducing the Term Missional</b> Play the Video</p> <p>Discuss these questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name the scorecards from the video</li> <li>2. What would you say has been our scorecard for success?</li> <li>3. Given the ideas that the missional movement suggests, what are the strengths and weaknesses behind our answers to the previous question?</li> </ol>	<p>Missional Video (the triangle) <a href="http://www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/">www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/</a></p> <p>Flip Chart</p>
20	<p><b>Fill out and discuss the Missional Continuum</b></p> <p>Hand out the continuums Explain that they will need to go through each row and circle the statement that sounds like your church <b><i>“most of the time.”</i></b></p> <p>When ready:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compare scores on each row—come to consensus</li> <li>2. Name the fact that scores in 1 and 2 describe a “membership model church” and that scores in 3-4 category are attractional churches, while 5-6 are missional churches.</li> </ol> <p><b><i>NOTE TO FACILITATOR: Recall the Membership model of church from Session I.</i></b></p> <p>(Hand in their worksheets—you will use them in Session IV)</p>	<p>Missional Continuums (Be sure to keep these for Session IV) Handout #3-2</p>
10	<p><b>What does a missional church look like?</b> Watch Video JESUS SAID GO</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What images do you remember from the video?</li> <li>• What would we have to let go of to be that kind of church?</li> </ul>	<p>Youtube Video “Jesus Said Go” <a href="http://www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/">www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/</a> <b>NOTE:</b> This video is not inclusive in its language or imagery. You may want to stop it at the 43 sec mark.</p>

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
25	<p><b>Six-Word Stories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six-Word stories have the capacity to help you begin to see possible grouping among the areas we have discussed: passion, best at, financial resources and community needs.</li> <li>• The six-word story offers us the opportunity to develop a kernel based on our pairing of what could be developed into a future story.</li> <li>• The handout will give you some background to this exercise and share some examples of the work of another congregation.</li> <li>• Take about 10 minutes to let people create some 6-Word Stories about the possible future of your church. Have them bring up and put on flip chart/newsprint (put similar stories in groupings).</li> <li>• Take a moment to examine the groupings that have been developed and see what story could be crafted.</li> <li>• Have people take a few sticky notes home so they can create some new 6-Word Stories to bring back to the next session to add to the ones created today.</li> </ul> <p>Note: You will be using this flipchart/newsprint later.</p>	<p>Community Sticky-Note Project from Session I</p> <p>Handout #3-3</p>
5	<p><b>Closing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank the group for their participation; tell them that next week's session will be 2 hours</li> <li>• Ask them "What thoughts do you have about our time this evening?" Close in prayer.</li> </ul>	





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## Session IV: Discerning our Future (NOTE: this Session is 2 hours)

### Outcomes:

- Participants will become familiar with the Future Story choices from your assessment.
- Participants will know the criteria that can be used in choosing their Future Story.
- Participants will review what they have learned from the previous 3 sessions as a source for determining their Future Story.
- The group will select the Future Story option that they believe best fits their church.
- Participants will be informed of the next steps in the process.

### Background:

When New Beginnings was in its development phase, it was originally designed to be a process that would help congregations make the painful decision to close. As researchers got more involved, however, they kept discovering ways in which congregations had adapted to new realities without closing. The major discovery was that many churches failed to adapt to a new future because they could not envision any other way of being a congregation than the way they were.

This session may be the most important conversation in this whole process. The people in your group have clarity about the current condition of the church. They can see what the future is going to be if there is no change. Now is the time to “tickle” their imagination about what God can do in your situation.

**Facilitators please note:** Remember your Covenants of Presence. Gently remind people when they start saying things like “that will never work” that they really don’t know that. Help people let go of phrases like:

- We tried that once and it didn’t work (the Wright brothers tried flying once and it didn’t work either—glad they didn’t stop trying)
- We don’t have the money for that (perhaps you do...but it’s tied up in your building)
- We don’t know how to do that (perhaps you need to consider a strategic partnership)
- We don’t have volunteers for that (perhaps you don’t have volunteers because you are asking them to support an institution instead of a mission)

While we want to open people up with their imaginations...don’t let them spin stories that lack integrity. An English speaking congregation isn’t going to attract Spanish speaking members to their service just by teaching an ESL class. Working with new groups requires letting go of the ways we do a lot of things. Finally, remember this is a Holy conversation, that requires listening to God. We are not thinking about what we are going to do for God as a church, but we are listening to what God is calling us to do. This isn’t just a small group discussion, but one in which you invite God to be a part—after all it IS God’s mission!

### Before this session:

You will need to do the composite/average scores from last session’s Missional Continuums. You will need to fill out the scores on Handout #3-2 later in this session.

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this session is to prayerfully consider which Future Story option that God is calling your church to consider.

<b>Segment Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
5	<b>Review Covenants of Presence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask: Which of these covenants has been the most challenging for us?</li><li>• Say that “During this session we are going to prayerfully consider which Future Story option God is calling us to consider. Which covenant do you think is going to be most important for us tonight?”</li></ul>	Covenants of Presence Handout #1-1 from Session I
7	<b>Bible Study</b> <p>Read Habakkuk 2:2-3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note that this is God’s response to Habakkuk’s complaint about Israel’s current condition.</li><li>• What is God’s response to him?</li></ul> <p>Tonight, we hope to write our future in Big Letters, so people can see it when we run...</p> <p>PRAYER—Petition that we seek a future that enhances God’s mission, rather than something that makes us feel comfortable.</p>	Handout #4-1 (Have a few copies on hand in case someone forgot their devotional)
10	<b>Group Building</b> <p>Ask everyone to prayerfully “walk by” the Six-Word Story board. If they feel comfortable, they can offer up their (or another’s that moved them) six-word story to the group by saying it out loud.</p> <p>Without naming them, ask if, besides any stories that may have moved/inspired them, there were any stories that someone was uncomfortable with, that they felt might change things too much if it really happened, that they felt “judgmental” about.</p> <p>This session will be about change... and our comfort with it. Tonight, we take all we have learned from the first 3 sessions and ask God to help us choose a future that benefits God’s mission.</p>	

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
8	<p><b>Reviews:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 Vital Marks of a congregation (which stands out to you?) Session I</li> <li>• Our Three Statements: (Best at, Passion, Resources) Session II</li> <li>• Our Community Sticky-Notes Project and the real top three of each category.</li> <li>• Our Missional Continuums (score all from last week and show their composite score) Session III</li> </ul>	
10	<p><b>Looking at our church today:</b> Say: “We’ve asked you to suspend judgement the past 3 sessions...we’ve been assessing and evaluating ourselves, and now we begin to chart our future. Now that we’ve had all this material the past three weeks, let’s rescore:”</p> <p>Ask the group to score your congregation on the 5 Marks of a vital congregation:</p> <p>SCORING: (1-4 on each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity of Purpose</li> <li>• Discipleship or Membership</li> <li>• Contextual Relevance</li> <li>• Passion and Energy</li> <li>• Resources Mobilized for Mission</li> </ul> <p>“Has anything changed?” (Note: It’s okay if the answers are the same)</p>	Flip chart/pen
10	<p><b>Introduction to options for all congregations:</b> Review the 3 choices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do nothing/stay the same</li> <li>2. Redefine our Mission</li> <li>3. Redevelop the church</li> </ol> <p>From the handout, note the definitions of all the strategies (<i>you do not need to read the entire handout out loud, it is provided as a resource during the discussion</i>)</p> <p>Say: “We are going to now explore these options without evaluating them.”</p>	Handout #4-2

<b>Segment Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>
5	<p><b>Exploring Stay the Same:</b>            Watch the brief video defining “Staying the same”            If there is a story from the Assessment about staying the same have someone read that Future Story.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think our church will look like if we continue to operate as we have been?</li> <li>2. Can we just make minor changes and hope our condition changes?</li> </ol> <p>Direct the group to read the handout on Closure</p>	<p>Assessment Video:            Staying the Same  <a href="http://www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/">www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/</a></p>
10	<p><b>Exploring Mission Redefinition:</b>            Watch the brief video on “Mission Redefinition”</p> <p>If the assessment has a Mission Redefinition story, have someone in the group read that story.            Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would we have to let go of if we were to make this kind of story a reality?</li> <li>• What kind of skills would we need to develop to revise our mission?</li> </ul>	<p>Assessment Video:            Mission Redefinition  <a href="http://www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/">www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/</a></p>
15	<p><b>Exploring Redevelopment:</b>            Watch the brief video on “Redevelopment”</p> <p>If the assessment has a redevelopment Future Story, have someone in the group read it aloud.            Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were a lot of redevelopment options: Why do you suppose our assessor chose the redevelopment story they chose?</li> <li>• Was there another option that we should consider?</li> </ul> <p>If the assessment does not include a redevelopment Future Story            Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there redevelopment options we should be considering as a church?</li> <li>• Can you think of a combination of two of these options that might help?</li> </ul>	<p>Assessment Video:            Redevelopment  <a href="http://www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/">www.hopepmt.org/nbvideos/</a></p>

Segment Time	Activity	Resources Needed
20-30	<p><b>Processing Options:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the Future Story options in the assessment, is there one that you feel we should eliminate from our conversation at this time?</li> <li>• Based on all of our conversations leading to tonight—which story do we believe best fits our church?</li> <li>• Based on the Future Story we chose, is there one or several of these Six-Word Stories that could be offered up as seedlings for the development of the Future Story in our congregation?</li> </ul>	Six-Word Stories activity from Session III
5	<p><b>Next Steps:</b></p> <p>Say: Thank you for all your hard work as a group. I will be taking your decision to the House Group Facilitators meeting in a couple of weeks along with a report of our activity.</p> <p>We will be comparing your work to the other groups to see what kind of consensus we may have. There will be a report to the entire congregation in a month regarding what strategy we are going to pursue and how we might do it.</p> <p>Once the congregation receives the report, we will work towards implementing that strategy.</p>	
5	<p><b>Closing</b></p> <p>As we close this time, let us go around the circle one more time and share. “What are you taking with you from these gatherings as a result of our time together?”</p> <p>Close in Prayer of dedication for the work you have completed.</p>	



## Handout #1-1 - Covenants of Presence

We acknowledge that discussions about congregational transformation may be stressful. We would like this to be a “safe space” where we honor each other’s intentions and can have transparent conversation about hard issues even when we disagree with each other.

We want to covenant together to:

- Be fully present, setting aside distractions during this time.
- Respect each other as equals even if and as we disagree.
- Listen generously to one another’s perspectives as well as share our own.
- Listen to one another with respect and without judging one another.
- Agree to no “fixing.” Discernment, not debate, is our primary objective.
- Allow a person to complete their thought without interrupting.
- Make “space” for everyone that wishes to ask questions or make comments.
- Be mindful and respectful of time, including start time, end time, and sharing time.
- Practice confidentiality care – “What you hear here, what you see here, let it stay here.”
- Believe that this time can provide renewal, refreshment and possibilities; that seeds planted here will bloom in time to come.

Helpful Tip: If you find yourself becoming judgmental, cynical or certain about what you know, try turning to wonder: “I wonder why she shared that story or made those choices?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” “I wonder how my story connects to their stories?”

*Part of this covenant is adapted by the Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) from the Center for Courage and Renewal’s Circles of Trust retreats and Margaret Wheatley’s Turning to One Another.*

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## Handout #1-2 - Bible Study

### Philippians 1:3-11 The Message (MSG)

#### A Love That Will Grow

<sup>3-6</sup> Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to God. Each exclamation is a trigger to prayer. I find myself praying for you with a glad heart. I am so pleased that you have continued on in this with us, believing and proclaiming God's Message, from the day you heard it right up to the present. There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.

<sup>7-8</sup> It's not at all fanciful for me to think this way about you. My prayers and hopes have deep roots in reality. You have, after all, stuck with me all the way from the time I was thrown in jail, put on trial, and came out of it in one piece. All along you have experienced with me the most generous help from God. He knows how much I love and miss you these days. Sometimes I think I feel as strongly about you as Christ does!

<sup>9-11</sup> So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God.

The Message (MSG)

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## Handout #1-3 - “Why”

### To Read:

The “Why” within our context refers to:

“Those deep spiritual convictions we hold as individuals and as a congregation that guide all our actions, engagements, and pronouncements. They are born out of biblical imperatives and have, as a purpose, the affirmation of the value of all human beings and the commitment to the task of restoration and transformation of all of God’s creation.”

All churches have a purpose:

- Part of our ongoing task is to gain clarity of that purpose.
- That purpose will be fueled by a clear sense of our “Why”.
- The living out of that purpose should result in empowered, equipped believers and followers of Christ fully engaged in community transformation, as well as a community engaged with the church developing their full contextual potential.

### To Watch:

A video by Casa View Christian Church in Fort Worth, Texas taped two years into their transformational journey. What is possible?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Z8lhXaSLDw>

### To Do:

After reading above, watching the Casa View CC video, and remembering the video you watched about the “Why” in Session I, spend some time this week contemplating what your personal Why is and what you think your congregation’s Why might be. You will be asked to share these in Session II.

What do you think is your congregation’s Why?

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## Handout #1-4 - Membership vs. Discipleship

<b>Membership Model</b>	<b>Discipleship Model</b>
"I pay my tithe" therefore I should benefit	"I pay my tithe" to bless someone else
The church serves its members	The church serves its community
My pastor is responsible for my spiritual growth	I am responsible for my spiritual growth
Worship satisfies me	Worship stretches me
Majority rule decides	Prayer decides

## Handout #2-1 - Bible Study

### Micah 6:6-8 The Message (MSG)

- <sup>6-7</sup> How can I stand up before GOD  
and show proper respect to the high God?  
Should I bring an armload of offerings  
topped off with yearling calves?  
Would GOD be impressed with thousands of rams,  
with buckets and barrels of olive oil?  
Would he be moved if I sacrificed my firstborn child,  
my precious baby, to cancel my sin?
- <sup>8</sup> But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do,  
what GOD is looking for in men and women.  
It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor,  
be compassionate and loyal in your love,  
And don't take yourself too seriously—  
take God seriously.

The Message (MSG)

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## Handout #2-2 - Three Lenses of Inquiry



**1. What are the people in our congregation deeply passionate about?**

We LOVE to do this! Time flies when we do this. When we know we're doing this—we all anticipate it with great excitement! We believe in it and are willing to sacrifice other things in order to focus on it.

**2. What ministries or programs are we really good at? What does our community need us to be good at?**

Best means better than everyone else. These are the programs or ministries that we're known for. Our "best at" allows us to utilize our God-given talents and gifts and apply them in a rich and meaningful way to be and share the good news of Jesus Christ in our community. Ideally, our "best at" clearly matches the needs of the neighborhood or community in which we are located.

**3. What resources do we have available to use and are they ready to be mobilized?**

Many churches see a lack of resources (such as deficit budgets and dwindling savings accounts). In most cases they have lots of value, but it is all tied to the facilities. In this discussion, you are encouraged to see the abundance that God has provided to your congregation. We stand on the shoulders of previous generations who have given sacrificially to this congregation and its facilities. How are we doing as stewards of this resource?

Resources are more than just money and facilities. They also include Christians who give their time, trust, leadership, and the place in which we are located. Is our building fully utilized for its mission? Does the building cost too much to maintain? Do we spend all of our time going to meetings, or doing mission?



## Handout #3-1 - Bible Study

### Matthew 28:18-20 The Message (MSG)

<sup>18-20</sup> Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge:

“God authorized and commanded me to commission you:

Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life,

marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you.

I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.”

The Message (MSG)

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## Handout #3-2 — The Missional Continuum

Aspect of Congregational Life	<i>The Missional Continuum</i>	
	1	2
<b>Participation</b>	Church members care deeply for one another and almost everyone would say their closest friends are fellow church members. Meetings are spent planning activities for the church's members (meals, worship, programs). Personality conflicts may easily erupt over issues.	Church participants care for one another and are friendly to new people who visit the church. The church adds at least a few new people each year. The church intentionally plans one or two activities each year geared for people outside the church.
<b>Leadership</b>	People expect the pastor to be accessible to church members most of the time, exhibited through daily office hours and regular home/hospital visitation. The pastor is mostly responsible for executing church tasks (such as leading worship, preparing for meetings and overseeing use of the facility).	Some leadership tasks (in worship, meetings and programs) are shared between the laity and pastor. The pastor is viewed as the one primarily responsible for following up with visitors and making calls to homebound persons. The church has job descriptions for leadership roles, both lay and clergy.
<b>Church Budget</b>	95% or more of the church's budget is dedicated to administration, staff, facility and programs for the church. The church must supplement income with transfers from savings accounts and/or investments.	Between 90-95% of the church budget goes to internal expenses (building, staff, administration and programs). Less than 5% is given away beyond the church. Building rental income helps underwrite church expenses.
<b>Relationship to Community</b>	People in the church regard the people of the neighborhood as a threat to their security. There may be physical barriers between the church building and the surrounding area (fences, parking lot gates, "No Trespassing" signs, etc)	Security is a minor concern for church participants, and it doesn't get in the way of church activities. Most church people do not know the people who live within walking distance of the church, and they may regard the neighbors with suspicion.
<b>Use of Building</b>	The church building is used exclusively by the church's members, either for church activities or for family gatherings (parties, weddings, reunions, etc). There is little to no facility use by any groups beyond the church.	Community groups may use 1- 2 rooms for meetings (Scouts, etc). Groups may not be connected to the church's mission or governance & they pay a rental fee for their time in the facility. The church may also house a daycare, leading to conflict over scheduling & cleanliness.

## Handout #3-2 — The Missional Continuum (continued)

<b>The Missional Continuum</b>		
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
The church is growing by 10% each year and new people are frequently assuming leadership roles. There are at least a few opportunities for people to learn about discipleship as a way of daily life. People often speak about God’s activity in their life. Personality conflict is mostly absent.	Most church activities are organized around training people to follow Christ in daily life (discipleship). There are many opportunities for people to deepen their discipleship and lead ministries, whether or not they are regular attendees. Over 50% of the church has joined in the last 5 years.	The church expects its regular participants to be involved in ministry to the community. To this end, the church supports them with training, prayer and coaching. People spend very little time on institutional maintenance at the church. People take responsibility for their spiritual growth. Change is expected in the church.
Leadership responsibilities are shared between the pastor and lay leaders, determined by spiritual giftedness. Responsibility for program and worship leadership is evenly shared among many people, including the pastor. Church participants are intentionally trained for leadership roles in the church.	The pastor is viewed as a “coach” for church participants, training and encouraging people in their areas of giftedness in the church and in the community. About half of the pastor’s time is spent giving leadership and support to efforts in the wider community, and this is encouraged by the church.	Job descriptions for both lay and pastoral leaders are fluid and determined based on missional priorities from year to year. The church provides (or sponsors) leadership training to people in and outside the church, for the sake of community transformation. Less than 25% of the pastor’s time is spent on strictly “church” activities.
The church gives away at least 10% in outreach. Likewise, 5-10% is spent to launch new ministries or programs. Any money received from building use is dedicated for expenses related to the upkeep of the facility (and not used for church staff, programs, etc).	At least 10% is given away in outreach. At least 10% is used for starting new discipleship programs. Each year’s budget is based on the previous year’s budget, but with slight changes.	Each year’s budget is based not on the prior year’s budget, but on the mission priorities for the coming year. There is flexibility in budgeting, which allows for quick changes and frequent adaptation. Donors are regularly thanked and shown the fruits of their gifts.
People from the surrounding community frequently visit worship, dinners and/or other events sponsored by the church. These visitors are familiar faces to the people in the church, but most visitors do not become active in the church.	There is regular interaction between church participants and the church’s neighbors. Many people around the church attend activities (worship, meals, & programs) and are warmly received by people in the church. The “faces in the pews” match those of the surrounding community.	The interaction between people in the church and the community is high. Neighbors around the church consider this to be their “church home” even though they are not members. People from the church intentionally go into the neighborhood to build relationships and begin new ministries.
The church facility is used by many community groups. The church frequently chooses to waive the rental fee for groups with purposes similar to that of the church’s (for example, free rent is provided to another congregation, AA groups, etc)	The church facility is a bustle of activity most days of the week and church participants see the need for the church building to function as a “community center.” The church actively recruits community groups with whom they can share their facility & their mission in the city.	If the church owns/rents a building, the church views its facility users as partners in ministry, going “over and above” with hospitality (hanging signage, cleaning rooms, offering food). The church gets to know the people who use the facility and regularly prays for the many people who use the building.

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## Handout #3-3 - Six-Word Stories

**“For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”**

–Ernest Hemingway

“Six-word stories” is a writing technique that is known as flash fiction. Some attribute it to a bet Ernest Hemingway took on to write the shortest novel.

Out of that bet came the story “For Sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

Others attribute the technique to authors way before Hemingway, but the real focus is the opportunities this provides to create a seed story for what could be your congregation’s Future Story.

Six-word stories have the capacity to help you begin to see possible grouping among the areas we have discussed: Passion, Best At, Financial Resources and Community Needs.

Below are some examples of six-word stories from a church that did the exercise:

- FCC: Love and Inclusion in stock.
- Free meal. Come eat. Be loved.
- Feed. Teach. Demonstrate Jesus’ love.
- Meaningful conversations, purposeful lives—lived out loud.
- Spiritual growth, community spirit, grow with God.
- All means all—love is love.
- Find help here—food, clothing, services.
- Old smiles, young laughs, lives transformed.



## **Handout #4-1 - Bible Study**

### **Habakkuk 2:2-3 The Message (MSG) Full of Self, but Soul-Empty**

<sup>2-3</sup> And then GOD answered: “Write this.  
Write what you see.  
Write it out in big block letters  
so that it can be read on the run.  
This vision-message is a witness  
pointing to what’s coming.  
It aches for the coming—it can hardly wait!  
And it doesn’t lie.  
If it seems slow in coming, wait.  
It’s on its way. It will come right on time.

The Message (MSG)

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## Handout #4-2 - Possible Options

### Stay the Same/Do Nothing

It is always a choice to keep doing the same thing and not change. People have been choosing that direction for a long time. Congregations normally have a life-cycle of 80 years unless they adapt to the changes of the context around them. Churches are closing at a rate of 8,000-10,000 per year—so we can see that many churches are choosing to stay the same.

Most people genuinely do not want to spend generations of assets to maintain an operation that is in decline. Your church still has options no matter your condition, if your people have the will.

### Mission Redefinition:

You may be a good church, with good people, and resources for ministry, but you are in decline. Perhaps you have fulfilled your mission for a previous generation—but you are no longer answering the questions that people in your community are actually asking.

Mission redefinition is likely one of the most difficult choices a congregation can make. It means redefining itself to meet the needs of people in a changed context in which you do ministry. It means letting go of sacred cows to engage new ways of worship, new ministry programs, new missional connections to the community.

Mission redefinition is a spiritual, systematic and strategic process that would mean additional work for the leadership of the congregation if you make this choice. **It means writing a more detailed Future Story for your congregation, and intentionally developing new capacities to work into a new reality.** It means no longer doing business as usual, but looking creatively at how you manage resources to meet the new mission.

This option takes a while to achieve and may not be realistic for a church with urgent financial or building challenges. It can also be paired with other redevelopment options.

### Redevelopment Strategies:

Redevelopment recognizes that the congregation's ministry is not sustainable and that it would benefit from more radical change if it is going to continue its witness. There are numerous options available to congregations in this condition, which include:

#### 1. Relocation:

This strategy is great for congregations whose facilities are way too large and underutilized by the community and church. It works well when you have a great congregation, in the wrong part of your city, where your demographic gaps with the community are too large to overcome.

This option can move quickly or take a long time, as it involves selling your current facility and markets vary widely. Usually, relocation congregations move to a place of pause that they rent for a period of time or long term if they choose. A recent Hope study of 29 congregations that relocated shows:

- 59% reported their church grew in participation as a result of relocation.
- 41% reported that their average age actually grew younger.
- 72% reported growth in families with children attending worship.

## Handout #4-2 - Possible Options (continued)

Relocation requires good solid leadership, as there are hundreds of decisions that need to be made in the process. It also requires revising the congregation's mission (see Mission Redefinition). If you make this choice, Hope may have resources for your congregation to help you through this complex maze.

### 2. Restart:

Sometimes the heart and soul of a congregation is beating out of rhythm. Leaders may be disillusioned, the church cannot seem to let go of old ideas and programs, we are answering questions that nobody cares about. A restart is a way of getting a congregation's heart to beat again.

Simply put, the church sets a closing date and works through a letting go phase. Documents regarding the church history are boxed and sent to your denomination's historical society. Clergy is given time to relocate or retire. Church officers also prepare to resign their positions. An accountability board is recruited from neighboring churches from your denomination (with 2 members from your church), and a search for a new church planter is sought (you would work with your middle level judicatory). All assets from the church are to be assigned to this new church start.

The church then launches as a new congregation after a time of pause. The new church connects with the community in the most appropriate method. Former members are encouraged to attend and participate.

### 3. Parallel Start:

This strategy has the congregation utilizing 75% of its resources for starting a new congregation. The remaining 25% is used to provide service for the "faithful remnant" congregation. This is a great strategy for a congregation that is aging, and that wants to get out of the way of the next generation. It only works in communities where there are good demographics for this.

What happens is the church pastor is trained to be a planter. The congregation trains itself to take on more pastoral duties that they used to rely on the pastor to do. For example, the congregation becomes adept at providing pastoral care for the infirmed, or home bound. They provide their own leadership for Bible Studies, and do not require the pastor to attend lots of meetings. That allows the pastor to act like a planter, spending 75% of their time engaging new people in the community, and drawing them into a new faith community that is very different from the existing church.

The new start may or may not meet in the building, depending on the demographic you are trying to reach. Since church planting is an art, the church would commit resources to the plant, but would not micro-manage the project—giving the planter a lot of freedom to develop the congregation without interference.

### 4. Adoption:

If your church has low energy and few resources, it may be that a stronger neighboring church in your denomination would consider adopting your church. Adoption requires the church board to suspend its by-laws and empower the "mother" church to take control of their matters. The mother church would make decisions regarding the church staff, administration of funds and building, and worship. They may also choose to augment the church's program with their staff, and finances.

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## Handout #4-2 - Possible Options (continued)

Seeking adoption would require close work with your middle-level judicatory and the mother church. This process works well when the church would like to replicate the DNA of the mother church, and is willing to let that church govern them. It also works well when the mother church desires to have a satellite of its current mission and ministry.

### 5. Other Options:

- Sell the facility to another congregation or organization, and lease back space for minimal programming.
- Fill surplus portions of the building with other ministry partners. In some cases this means development of a Senior Center. One church turned an education wing into affordable senior housing. In another case a congregation brought in 11 other non-profits and created office space at a reduced rate that also provided income for facilities operation and maintenance.
- Develop other entrepreneurial ministries like a coffee house, adult day-care, etc.
- Morphing—when the racial-ethnic balance of the community has shifted dramatically. A church would revise its mission, and leadership and perhaps language to meet the changing demands.

### When is closure an option?

Churches close. About 25 churches close each day in the US. In fact, every church that the Apostle Paul planted has closed. Closure is not necessarily a sign of failure; sometimes it is a sign that a congregation has fulfilled its mission. Leaders often feel that the closure of a church is some sign of their weakness or competence. The reality is that in most cases, the circumstances that were handed to you were out of anyone's control.

Closure may be a good option if two or more of the following conditions exist:

- Lack of energy and vision on the part of the congregation and its leaders.
- The lack of resources (few people, low finances, too large a facility).
- The congregation has little to offer in program and/or ministry.
- When the congregation's mission is no longer relevant for the area in which it resides.

There are good ways to close a ministry, and bad ways. A poor closure is when the congregation spends all of its remaining assets to take care of itself. This is a selfish expenditure of generous gifts given by a previous generation. Another poor way to close is to give the assets to organizations outside of your denominational family. When a church gives its assets to another organization, it is redirecting donor intent of those who supported the values and mission of your church for so long.

A better way to close is to be intentional by engaging your larger denominational bodies in helping “write a will” for the church. You can then determine how the church's assets are distributed and create a legacy for the church. We would encourage you to give funds as an asset for the development of new congregations in the area, so that your witness may continue.

## House Group Meeting Leaders Follow-up Meeting

Once all groups have completed Session IV, the group leaders should gather to discuss next steps of the congregation. As a facilitator your role is to represent your group's discussions fairly. Your notes at the end of each session should help you remember the significant points of conversation that you had. You are also expected to bring your common sense to the meeting. If the group could not suspend judgment or came to some untenable Future Story, you may represent that at this meeting, too.

For the congregational report you might include copies of the posters and other visuals that came out of the work from the groups.

### Agenda for Discussion:

#### Sessions review:

1. Overall, how would you characterize your group's participation over 4 sessions?
2. How would you characterize the conversations in your group?
3. Of the 5 Marks of a vital congregation, which did your group rate as the weakest? Strongest?
  - o Clarity of Purpose
  - o Discipleship or Membership
  - o Contextual Relevance
  - o Passion and Energy
  - o Resources Mobilized for Mission
4. PASSION: We rated it \_\_\_\_ (1-4)
  - a. The TRUTH we wrote about Passion:
  
  - b. My thoughts:
5. BEST AT: We rated it \_\_\_\_ (1-4)
  - a. The TRUTH we wrote about BEST AT:
  
  - b. My thoughts:
6. RESOURCES: We rated it \_\_\_\_ (1-4)
  - a. The TRUTH we wrote about our Resources:
  
  - b. My thoughts:
7. How did you feel about the way the group engaged the Assessment:
  - a. Skeptical or agreeing
  - b. Indifferent or engaged
  - c. Depressed or hopeful

*(Continued next page)*

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## House Group Meeting Leaders Follow-up Meeting (continued)

8. Which model of church did your group feel represented our church?
  - a. Membership
  - b. Attractional
  - c. Missional
9. Which Future Story option did your group eliminate?
10. Which Future Story option did they gravitate toward?
11. Which Six-Word Stories did they choose to offer up?

### **Decision:**

1. Based on these conversations, what would you say were the points of agreement?
2. What seemed to be the greatest opportunity for ministry in our context?
3. What option did your group select as its best option for the future?
4. After listening to all the groups, which decision do YOU think is best for us?
5. Next steps and writing the report to the congregation.

### **Report to the Congregation (see next page for outline)**



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## Report to the Congregation Outline

- I. What we learned from this process about our congregation
  
- II. What we learned from this process about our community
  
- III. What consensus came from our Group Leaders meeting (Future Story)
  - a. (Was there a minority report?)
  
- IV. What next steps are implied by this decision?
  - a. Contact Hope Partnership of our decision to discover resources
  - b. Contact middle level judicatory leadership to discover resources
  - c. Begin building capacity for this decision.

***NOTE: This report should be “received” by the congregation, not adopted. We are only asking the congregation to acknowledge the conversation and what was learned from it. Any further action items (i.e. selling the building) will come up in later meetings using the appropriate decision making process.***

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## Next Steps for the Implementation Phase of your New Beginning

- **Missional Revisioning guide**
  - o A 4-module process for helping the congregation write their own Future Story and Capacity Building.
- **An Initial Consultation is available for Disciples of Christ congregations**
  - o For other denominations, reach out to your middle-level judicatory for resources.
- **Closure resources for different denominations**
  - o Talk with your middle-level judicatory office
- **Extended Coaching Services**
  - o Depending on your denomination a number of resources are available.

*For more information go to: [www.hopepmt.org](http://www.hopepmt.org)*





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## Process for Online New Beginnings House Group Meetings

In order to ensure accurate recollection of the conversations and insights from the house meetings, we strongly recommend recording the Zoom meetings. Please inform your group that the meetings will be recorded and remind them of the confidentiality that is spelled out in the Covenant that guides your time together. As you are setting up the meeting, be sure to start recording the session once it begins and that the chat is also recorded.

### Session I

For the **group building exercise**, you might have the participants share aloud things they feel the church is really good at. Because it is being recorded, you will have access to that list. Another option is to have participants enter their contributions into the chat, and you can read them aloud. A third option could be to share your screen and write or assign someone to capture the things they mention so everyone can see the list as it emerges. You might want to write up this list on a flip chart for future reference as the process unfolds. You will be looking at this list a bit later in the session when you are having your conversation around the “Why”.

The **Community Sticky Note Project** will require guided conversation and response. Go down the list and ask them to write their responses to the five questions on demographic and sociographic data. They can share their responses aloud or enter them in the chat. Lead a brief conversation on the range of the responses. Be sure all have a chance to participate. After the session, we recommend you follow the instructions in the Activity Box and create a pie chart (per the instructions in the Guide) with the responses clustered using the different sticky note colors so you can share this with the group in your next session (this could be a physical pie chart on newsprint with actual sticky notes or it could be a designed graphic if someone in your group is tech savvy). Stack sticky notes with the same answers so participants can see the ranges in their answers. Share the chart with the group prior to the next session so they can begin to reflect on how they see the reality of their community (if you create a physical chart, you might want to take a picture of it so it can be shared).

### Session II

**Sharing your “Why”:** Refer to the strategies from Session I to capture the results of your group’s personal Why statements, as well as the statements for what they perceive the congregation’s “Why” to be. Note that you are not trying to identify the owner of the Why statements. Capture the personal and congregational Why statements for later reference. Again, you might want to populate your flip chart with sticky notes of the personal and congregational Why statements (stacking those that are alike) and share them with the group prior to the next session (see Activity box). You will be referencing your Community Sticky Note project from Session I in this session, so be sure to have it on hand.

### Exploring Lens #1: Passion

**Appendix A:** Look briefly at the congregation’s responses to questions 1,2,4, and 7 in the Appreciative Inquiry session. Note similarities of responses.

**Current participation section:** Share with the group the data reported in this section.

**Appendix D:** Note facilitator should have examined this data prior to the meeting and be prepared to offer a brief report on each of the Insites.

### **Top Three Mosaics Review**

MOSAIC is a demographic segmentation system created by Experian. It seeks to provide a multidimensional view of a community taking into account multiple socioeconomic and life-stage factors. It classifies all U.S. households and neighborhoods into 60 unique segments (or types) and 12 groupings that share similar demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

The result is a classification that paints a rich picture of U.S. communities in terms of their sociodemographics, lifestyles, behaviors, and culture to provide the most accurate and comprehensive view of any community in the U.S.

Your assessment report indicates the top three mosaic groups in your community. Take a moment to look at the **Who we are** section in each Mosaic group in your assessment report. This will give you an overview of some of the most important characteristics of the people in your community.

**Discussion.** Allow enough time to engage the group in the exercise of writing a **Passion and Energy Statement** based on the work they have done in this section of the session. Be sure to capture it on a sticky note and add it to the Community Sticky Note poster.

### **Exploring Lens #2: Best At**

Create your “Best At” Statement and add to Community Sticky Note poster.

### **Exploring Lens #3: Resources**

Create your “Resources Statement” and add to the Community Sticky Note poster.

## **Session III**

**Missional Continuum.** You will need to ensure that your participants have a hard copy of the continuum for this exercise. Harvest all feedback and develop consensus on where the group feels the church is on the continuum in each category. Create a visual of these results for the next session.

**Six-Word Stories.** Use the same strategies to capture the six-word stories as they develop. At the end of the time segment, allow the group to read the stories written. Again, a shared screen with the stories would be very effective. Encourage the group to continue writing six-word stories to bring back for the next session.

## **Session IV**

No special instructions for online meetings for Session IV.



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