How to Complete a Mission Study

A Mission Study has three primary purposes:

● To review the church’s current position honestly and comprehensively (e.g., demographics, financials, etc.)

● To reflect thoughtfully and prayerfully on the nature of the church’s context (neighborhood / city /country), especially how it has changed in recent years

● To hear what the Spirit is saying to us today

In other words, 1) Who Are We? 2) Who is Our Neighbor? and 3) Why Are We Here?

Or, more precisely, Why has God chosen to position us in this place, at this time?

This process is intended to help the Session see the 10,000 foot historical view of the church, honestly rather than creating a document that is “prettied up” to recruit a pastor.

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

Write a brief history of your congregation (maximum five pages). Include those events that contributed to periods of growth or decline in the number of people participating. Write in a factual style. Avoid the temptation to puff the story for public relations and the temptation to inject personal commentary regarding past problems. The brief history may include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

1. a brief history of pastors and a brief summary of the significant congregational successes and challenges that occurred during each pastor’s tenure.
2. a narrative telling the story of a recent success.
3. a summary of your physical space and congregational structure including the individuals or groups who are responsible for program decisions, budgeting and financial oversight, buildings and grounds, and any other major interests of the congregation.
4. a description of the Pastor’s role and responsibilities as the Session understands it to be.
5. a list of all full and part-time program staff positions for the last ten years, including tenure
6. a list of all people who oversee specific areas of service. State whether these people are full-time, part-time, or volunteer staff.
7. any formal ties or major informal ties to other organizations or associations. State how the congregation views and interacts with such groups.

DEMOGRAPHY

1. Prepare a chart and graph for each of the following items for the last 10 years, or entire history if founded more recently.

a. Number of members or regular participants

b. Average attendance of your weekly worship services

c. Average weekly attendance of all your groups and classes combined

d. the total receipts and total expenditures for each of the last 10 years

2. State the total number of contributors to the congregation during the previous fiscal year and the average amount given per contributor during the last fiscal year. (Churches may define “contributor” as they choose; please indicate how you define your term.)

COMMUNITY STUDY

1. Write a brief overview of the area and community in which the congregation is located or which the congregation serves. This overview should include briefly review population, income levels, education levels, social, ethnic and religious diversity, age distribution, growth/decline trends and other characteristics you deem significant.
2. Answer the question: If your church ceased to exist tomorrow, what would your community be missing with your absence?

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

1. List the core values and/or basic beliefs of the congregation. How do people connect to Christ through your ministry?
   1. What are the three greatest strengths of this congregation, listed in priority order?
   2. What are the three most significant weaknesses of your church, listed in order of the greatest need first?
   3. What three changes would you like to see made in your church, listed in priority order?
   4. What is most needed for you to be prepared to receive, welcome, and embrace a new pastor’s ministry?
   5. What are the key qualities in a pastor that your church needs to achieve the future God is calling you to?
   6. What is the mission or vision statement of the church? When was it created? How is it currently being lived out? (This may be a time to refine or even re-write your church’s mission or vision statement.)
2. List any important commitments or practices that characterize the congregation, for example:

a. Covenants or Codes of Conduct

b. Key Social Issues

c. Political Positions

d. Regular Activities

e. Significant Voluntary Financial Commitments