

The Transforming and Transformed Church of the Emerging Era

CHARACTERISTICS OF A VITAL CHURCH

1. Relationally based; Networking and connecting with the community around them. Intentionally engaging equal time, resources and energy in developing relationships and networking within the local community beyond the walls of the church.
2. Flexible; able to adapt to changes around them. Resilient; able to overcome discouragement and failures. Patient, able to stay in the in-between place while waiting for things to become clearer, not rushing to quick or technical fixes and formulas.
3. Not about attracting people in. The church understands that their goal is not about getting more people into the pews and pledges into the plate. Rather, it is moving out of the church in service to God to develop, provoke and nurture God's realm of love, compassion, and justice.
4. Grounded in God: the experience of mystery and mysticism. A variety of worship experiences characterized by depth, joy, praise and silence.
5. Focused on Spiritual Practices to develop deeper connection to God in each individual's life. That connection will heal, transform, release and restore people.
6. Intentionally listening to the voices of and learning from those hungering for something spiritual that they don't see in the institutional church
7. Not focused on imposing dogma, doctrine and moral imperatives. Focus on an authority basis for faith that emerges from and respects tradition of the past, best practices of the present, God's continuing revelation and individual experience.
8. Open to incorporating perspectives (political, theological, etc) beyond their tradition
9. Focus on empowering ministries as a means of involvement rather than filling slots on committees. Helping each person in the community discover their gifts, calling and vocation.
10. Focused on conversation leading to faith formation rather than monologue passing along information
11. A focus on justice with hands on involvement in activities and activism that make a difference to 'the least of these' locally and globally particularly in the area of poverty, oppression, injustice, environment, discrimination.
12. Communication is open and transparent (including decision making and policy making) so that everyone knows and feels included.
13. A beloved community of authentic caring for each other; a safe place of belonging. People know they can share their perspectives and opinions without fear or repercussion and with a sense they will be heard and honored. This community may not be membership based and will have multiple points of connections and access.
14. Fluent in the use of social media as a means of networking, crowd sourcing, listening, influencing
15. A clear understanding of their identity and purpose based on their history, but founded in the current moment and flowing from the Will and guidance of God. A willingness to do honest and humble self reflection grounded in prayerfulness and discernment.
16. Just enough bib to be focused on aprons. Fed and nurtured by spiritual care and community as a means to the end of sacrificial service, giving and worship. Going deeper/going outward.
17. There will be a core sense of hope and optimism in what God can do in and through the Body of Christ. A sense of trust in God that is grounded in a deep relationship.
18. Willing to take risks and experiment, without fear of failure.

***The fundamental goal is to help our churches become
healthy, faithful and effective
in the Changing Landscape of Ministry.***

Healthy:

1. Clear, consistent and complete communication. People feel safe to share their perspective and opinion.
2. A genuine and authentic sense of community where all feel equally valued; a safe and compassionate place to belong.
3. Transparent and clear finances with a sustainable future
4. Transparent, inclusive and clear decision/policy making process
5. Self aware of historical patterns and family/congregational system dynamics
6. Ability to place limits on unhealthy or inappropriate behaviour
7. Physical plant in solid shape or clear plan for maintenance and improvement

Faithful:

1. Worship is nurturing, provoking and joyful. Silence and laughter are characteristic.
2. Worship is grounded in an experience of God
3. Decisions are made through a process of discernment.
4. Church as a whole (not relegated to a committee) is engaged in caring and advocacy for 'the least of these'
5. 'Members' move from 'volunteers' to 'disciples' (Plenty of access points to participate for those who are not interested in institutional membership.)
6. The whole congregation takes ownership of passing along faith formation to children as well as adults.
7. All members of the congregation engage in spiritual practice and faith formation. This will be lived out in an understanding and engaging of each person's call or vocation.
8. The church is willing to experiment and fail.
9. Individual stewardship of time, talent and treasure will increase

Effective:

1. Church is making a noticed difference in their community and world. It will be reflected in their reputation and brand as perceived by the community.
2. Church is exploring the demographics, values and faith styles of the community along with history, trends and projections.
3. Worship Attendance is increasing
 - a. Regular members come with greater frequency
 - b. Visitors are being drawn to try out the worship
4. Church is engaged in activities within the community that build relationships and networks
5. Church is actively and intentionally listening to the voices of those who have a spiritual hunger and foundation, but do not believe in institutional religion
6. The church has a system to notice, record and follow up on visitors/contacts within the church and networking beyond the church.
7. The church has a system to identify, encourage and support the ministry of 'member's beyond the walls of the church.
8. People will describe their lives as being transformed because of their connection to the church.