

# Church Self-Study

*This study and report should be created by a group of staff and leaders. All material should be stored on computer with widely-used software, and printed out in a notebook. It is preferable to have the entire staff and board involved in compiling this information and discussing it.*

## HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

1. Write a brief history of your congregation (maximum four 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.
2. Provide a list of all full and part-time program staff positions for the last ten years, or from the beginning if founded more recently. List schools and degrees for full-time program staff. Give the dates for people's tenure and state the real reason why individuals left. (Leave out the pertinent specifics only where required by law.)
3. Provide a list of all people who oversee specific areas of service. List the number of positions for which they are responsible in their oversight. State whether these people are full-time, part-time, or volunteer staff.
4. List dates and provide descriptions for any building construction, major renovation, land acquisition, or leasing of facilities. List the amount of acreage you own, lease, or rent, the square footage of building(s), and number of parking spaces (distinguishing between off-street and street parking).
5. Write a summary of your church 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. List committees, task forces, program teams, etc. and explain how these relate to boards or committees. Provide a chart that reflects your current organizational structure.

## DEMOGRAPHY

1. Prepare a chart and graph for each of the following items for each year over the last twenty years, or entire history if founded more recently.
  - a) Number of members (if applicable) or regular participants (if no members exist)
  - b) Average attendance of your weekly worship services
  - c) Average weekly attendance of all your groups and classes combined
  - d) Number of persons transferring in to membership or regular participation
  - e) Number of persons transferring out of membership or regular participation
  - f) Number of baptisms
2. Estimate the average age of the people participating in the regular activities of your congregation. State how this was determined.
3. State the percentage of people who attend your worship services who also attend some group meeting such as a class, support group, or service team. Count each individual only once.
4. Prepare a list of the number of current members or regular participants who got involved:
  - Prior to 1960

- From 1961-70
- From 1971-80
- From 1981-90
- From 1991-2000
- From 2000-present

5. Submit a copy of your current church budget. Briefly describe your financial situation over the past five years. What are you projecting?

6. Without listing names, state the amount given by each of the top ten contributors of record in the last fiscal year. Total these amounts and state the percentage of giving this total represents in relation to total contributions.

7. State the same information for the second ten contributors of record.

8. State the total number of contributors to the congregation during the last fiscal year and the average amount given per contributor during the last fiscal year.

### **COMMUNITY STUDY**

1. Write a brief overview of the area and community in which the congregation is located or which the congregation serves.

2. This overview should include about one paragraph on each of the following features:

- a) History
- b) Population
- c) Income levels
- d) Education levels
- e) Social, ethnic and religious diversity
- f) Age distribution
- g) Growth/decline trends
- h) Other characteristics you deem significant

3. Briefly describe the square mile that surrounds the primary location of the congregation.

### **BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

1. List the core values of the congregation.

2. List other important commitments or practices that characterize the congregation, such as:

- a) Significant Financial Commitments
- b) Key Social Issues
- c) Regular Activities

### **DOCUMENTS**

**1. Please send one copy of this self-study in typed form one month prior to the assessment visit.**

**2. Please send copies of the following documents (if you have them):**

- a) Any policy statements**
- b) Sample bulletin**
- c) Newsletter**
- d) Last two annual budgets and financial statements**
- e) Other printed documents you deem helpful in providing insight into your congregation**

## **SELF-STUDY GROUP**

**1. After the self-study information has been compiled, the board and staff need to discuss the following questions as a group and complete an exercise pertaining to congregational conditions before printing the results in final form. (In smaller congregations gather 20-30 leaders, whether in official positions or not, to fulfill this requirement).**

**2. Please include the general consensus on each of these discussion questions in the report. Be sure to give the date when this discussion took place and list those involved in this meeting.**

- a. What are the three greatest strengths of this congregation, listed in priority order?**
- b. What are the three most significant weaknesses of your church, listed in order of the greatest need first?**
- c. What three changes would you like to see made in your church, listed in priority order?**
- d. Do the leaders want this congregation to grow significantly?**
- e. Are the leaders willing to make the difficult decisions required for change and growth?**

**3. Ask the board and staff to complete the exercise on congregational conditions supplied by the consultant in order to determine where they perceive the congregation to be at this time. (This exercise is found at the end of this self-study).**