

Pastoral Ministries Department Church Consultation Pastor Information

One of the great benefits of doing a church assessment is that it gives you permission to make a number of significant changes in the church. Change is often resisted in the church. In the final analysis, when the assessment report is voted, you will be given authority by the church in business session to make some critical changes that will make a big difference in accomplishing God's Mission and Vision. Furthermore, you will not have to do it alone. Our assessment team and conference administration will all be there to support you.

I. The Invitation

- A. A Church Board action must be taken inviting the Potomac Conference Assessment Team to come and conduct an assessment.
- B. This voted Church Board action/invitation must be sent to the Pastoral Ministries Department.
- C. After the invitation is received, the Pastoral Ministries Department will contact the pastor and together an assessment date and a Pre-Assessment Meeting date will be selected.
- D. You will be sent three items by email: a Self-Study document, the Exercise, and a typical Church Assessment Week Schedule.

II. The Self-Study

- A. Involve several key local leaders to provide the requested information.
- B. This must be finished and sent to the Pastoral Ministries Department no later than one month before the first day of the assessment week. For example, if the Assessment is scheduled for February 1-3, than the Self-Study is due on January 1st.
- C. Try to supply all the requested information. However, it is more important to have it sent in on time, even if a part is missing. Then if possible, supply the missing piece before the actual assessment.
- D. This report is duplicated and copies are sent to everyone on the Assessment Team. We study it carefully because it provides the basis of a lot of the interview questions we will be asking during the assessment.

III. The Exercise

- A. All Church Board members as well as any other influential leaders should fill out this one page survey.
- B. It is a blind test, which reveals where these members perceive their church to be on the church life cycle. By blind test, I mean, your members do not understand that they are revealing their view of where the church is located on the church life cycle.
- C. The less you say or explain about it the better! Simply read the instructions printed on the top of the page and let them fill it in accordingly. Provide time during a church board meeting. It will take about ten minutes.
- D. Collect these and send them with the Self-Study to the Pastoral Ministries Department one month prior to the assessment.

IV. The Pre-Assessment Meeting

- A. This is scheduled 2-3 weeks before the actual church assessment week.
- B. Please invite all church board members and anyone else who would like to attend. The more the merrier!
- C. We will cover three main things in this 1.5-hour meeting: an overview of the assessment, the life cycle of the church, and change. This creates excitement, urgency and a desire to move positively forward on the assessment. Also it helps to break the ice on the reality that changes are coming. There is no growth without change. But people must be attracted to any changes rather than compelled. We will also answer questions.
- D. We need a screen set-up. We will bring a projector. Please have chairs set-up facing the screen.
- E. Before the meeting, if possible the assessment team leader will take the pastor and spouse out for a relaxed dinner.

V. The Team Orientation Meeting

- A. This is for the assessment team and will usually meet at 3:00pm on the day the assessment starts. We meet together in our hotel room. The assessment team is made up of the staff of the Pastoral Ministries Department and a few pastors who either have done or will soon be doing an assessment at their church.
- B. We cover the following items.

1. Prayer is vitally important. We need to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading!
2. Philosophy: We are here to help the pastor. Let us make our report helpful and doable.
3. Go over the schedule carefully.
4. Writing the Assessment Report is a collaborative endeavor.

VI. The Pastor

- A. Fill-out the Assessment Week Schedule. This needs to be sent to the Pastoral Ministries Department no later than three days prior to the Assessment Week.
- B. Regarding the schedule, the Church Board and the Focus Group Meetings are interchangeable. Schedule them according to whatever fits best for you and the members.
- C. The pastor must attend the Church Board. We want the pastor to hear all that is being said and to experience the excitement and momentum being created.
- D. The pastor must not attend the Focus Group meeting. This allows open dialogue.

VII. The Interviews

- A. We need to interview the key influential leaders of the church. Interviews are approximately 40 minutes long. We ask them to identify, according to their perceptions, what are the current *strengths* and *concerns* of the church.
- B. Your interview is most important to us as we seek to understand the leaders perspective of the church. We will take a little longer for it. This affords us an opportunity to dialogue and clarify what we are hearing from the other members.
- C. If there are any paid or volunteer staff members we need to interview them.
- D. Church Board members are usually good candidates to interview.

VIII. The Church Board Meeting

- A. We explore what are their expectations of the assessment.
- B. We cover what a healthy church looks and functions like:
 1. Outward vs. Inward focus. A passion for lost people!
 2. Breaking Church Barriers

3. Understanding the power of Mission and Vision.
4. The role of the pastor(s).
5. Friendly vs. a place where friends can be made.
6. Making disciples.

C. We give hope to the church leaders regarding the church's future.

IX. The Focus Group

- A. Usually 15-25 members. Have appropriate number of chairs set up in a circle.
- B. Give anyone an opportunity to participate. Have a good cross section.
- C. If someone is being interviewed do not have him or her also involved in the Focus Group. We ask the same questions and this is redundant for them.

X. The First Draft of the Assessment Report

- A. We meet with the pastor as soon as the initial assessment report is finished (usually early Friday afternoon). This gives you an opportunity for input. You must be available. We need to be on the same page. This gives you an opportunity for input. Remember we are here to come along side you and strengthen your leadership!
- B. Are these the most significant strengths and concerns?
- C. Are these *prescriptions* reasonable and doable?
- D. We need the pastor to select reasonable dates for the *prescription*. Give yourself as many early victories as possible!

XII. Sabbath Morning Sermon

- A. The sermon will be given by someone from the Assessment Team. The purpose of the sermon is to create a sense of urgency, cast vision and prepare the members for the report.

XII. The Assessment Report

- A. The Report usually consists of five strengths, five concerns and five prescriptions with deadlines for implementation.
- B. The Report needs to be duplicated. One for each person attending.

- C. The Report will be given to the church members directly following the fellowship dinner. Do not set a time. Watch and start the meeting when the majority of members are finished with lunch. The point is not to have any lag time between lunch and the meeting. We want as many members as possible to hear the report and its explanation.
- D. The Report must not be handed-out until the presenter asks for it.

XIII. The Business Meeting

- A. Schedule a Church Business Meeting approximately two weeks after the assessment report is presented. This gives everyone time to think, pray, and ask clarifying questions. We do not believe in force or emotional manipulation.
- B. If the Assessment Report is accepted by a majority vote, someone from the Assessment Team will then partner with you over the next year. The purpose of walking along side a pastor and congregation for a year is to help them create new habits of behavior, break old habits of behavior, (old habits die-hard) provide training and resources for new ministries, and hold the pastor and new lay leaders accountable.
- C. If the Assessment Week culminating on Sabbath afternoon is well done, it creates a large sense of momentum. However, if that momentum is not replenished with action in the next few months it is lost and almost impossible to regain.

XIV. The Pastors Exit Survey

- A. We evaluate the things we value. Please fill-out the pastor's survey immediately after the assessment. We need your honest input to enable the assessment team to grow and improve the assessment process.

XV. The Follow-Up

- A. Someone from the assessment team will be assigned to work with you on a monthly basis to coach you through the prescription process. This individual will be a source of encouragement as well as accountability. They will help provide you with resources and counsel from their experience. Occasionally it would be good to invite them to meet with your church board so together you can talk about the overall progress that is being made in fulfilling the voted prescriptions.