



Transforming Churches Network (TCN) The Mission Revitalization Process

TRANSFORMING CHURCHES NETWORK (TCN)

Mission Statement:

Turning Inwardly Focused Congregations Outward

(A heart for discipleship, with a passion for those not connected in faith to Jesus!)

Getting Started in the Congregation!

The **Ablaze!** movement of the LCMS in 2004 adopted a goal of revitalizing 2,000 congregations in the LCMS by the year 2017. Districts of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod have developed a process to assist congregations whose worship attendance has been declining or remained stagnant. That process, with the help of the Holy Spirit, leads congregations to become 'revitalized' with a sharper focus on being outreach-minded and mission-directed. We can no longer be content to see further decline in congregations. Built around Word and Sacrament, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we believe there can be a transformation!

Why Transformation? Since we are no longer in a 'churched' culture, we cannot continue to operate as we have in the past. In addition, we have a culture in the LCMS to overcome where we have depended on biological growth or immigration to maintain and grow congregations. The doctrines and teachings of the LCMS are grounded in the Word. That Word mandates our willingness to see ourselves as missionaries, commissioned in and through Baptism to be His witnesses.

What is a Revitalized Congregation? A revitalized congregation is one that is regularly and consistently "making new disciples who make new disciples." A revitalized congregation possesses many of the following characteristics:

- Growth through adult baptisms and confirmations
- Increase in worship attendance by five percent or more annually
- Rise in stewardship and financial commitments
- Increased number of hours invested in community service
- Holds regular outreach events
- Small group growth
- Participates in starting new ministries, even works to plant a new congregation

How can Revitalization be Accomplished? The Transforming Churches Network (TCN) was developed to provide training and resources to help congregations fulfill their role as "mission outposts." The Transforming Churches Network (TCN) is a non-profit partner organization of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod dedicated to revitalizing churches. The purpose of TCN is to assist the LCMS in reaching its **Ablaze!** goal of revitalizing 2,000 churches by 2017.

The Southern District has been involved in the training of consultants and coaches by TCN. Efforts are being made to initiate the TCN process in 2009. Currently, we are seeking to identify those congregations that are ready to move into the Transformation process. A determination as to the number of Southern District congregations to be involved in the TCN process is made in large part on the number of consultants and coaches available.

There are three components provided as support for the congregational transformation. They are:

Learning Communities: After a congregation is chosen to participate in the Transforming Churches Network, the pastor participates in a monthly cluster meeting with four to eight other pastors who are also part of TCN. These meetings offer leadership, outreach, and spiritual development training. Pastors taking part in a monthly learning community consists of about three hours of training and about two hours of spiritual development over a two-year period. The pastor is asked to initiate a Learning Community in his congregation.

Consultation: Following a self-study, the congregation undergoes a weekend consultation where the consultation team meets with members, leaders, and staff to assess the congregation's ministry. Congregations receive a report on their strengths, concerns and prescriptions to address each concern. The team's recommendations focus on the changes needed for the congregation to become outward focused.

Coaching: After the consultation, a trained coach works with the pastor regularly to help him grow as a leader. The coach holds the pastor accountable for the changes recommended by the consultation team. The coach also meets quarterly with the congregation to discuss their progress, answer questions, and assist the members in their commitment to becoming a mission-focused church.

Transforming Congregations – Revitalization – The following characteristics will hopefully emerge when a congregation participates in the Transformation/Revitalization process:

- People having a passion for the people who are not connected to Jesus in your community through sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- People are willing to learn and to change.

Because it has proven to be successful, TCN is the chosen tool to help congregations that want to capture or recapture a purposeful mission. The goal of revitalization is to help congregations see the ministry entrusted to them as following after Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost. Congregations that engage in the revitalization process will conduct an in-depth evaluation of their current ministry and be given the tools to reshape that ministry to one of faithful and fruitful discipleship. Is TCN a tool for your congregation? If you want to explore more about TCN, you can request a presentation be done for the pastor and church leaders of your congregation or you can host a circuit/area meeting presentation. Revitalization is not a "quick fix" for congregations. It requires a strong commitment of time, energy, and resources on the part of both the pastor and congregation, in order to be accomplished properly.

Congregations desiring to participate in TCN are asked to participate in a qualification process. The following qualifications are considered:

- Does the church have 60 or more average worship attendees?
- Will the pastor be retiring within the next 2-3 years?
- If there is a vacancy, is the vacancy pastor onboard, and is his circuit counselor onboard?
- Is the congregation financially viable?
- The pastor and leaders are asked to complete readiness surveys to determine suitability for the TCN process.
- Is there a Learning Community in which the pastor can participate?
- Is there a trained coach available?

Congregational Self-Study - The self-study includes:

- **Congregational History** - Someone in the congregation should write a brief history of the congregation, covering pastoral administrations, key events in the life of the congregation, description and history of properties, make-up of the congregation and other items that may be helpful to the consultation team in understanding the background of the congregation.
- **Twenty years of congregational metrics** - Financial reports over the past twenty years should be compiled. These need not be more detailed than total income and expenses for each year with graphs of the same. A full financial report for at least the past two years is requested. Data and graphs of church attendance and membership statistics over the past twenty years are also needed.
- **Worship life indicators** - In order to help the consultation team understand a typical worship service, sample bulletins and, if possible, a video tape of the service would be appreciated in advance of the consultation.
- **Publications** - Copies of a number of recent newsletters as well as minutes from the last two years of council and/or voters meetings should be included with the other pre-consultation documents.

The self-study documents are to be provided to the Consultation Team members at least three weeks prior to the consultation weekend.

Gather Prayer Support - Revitalization is a spiritual process, not a program. Its effectiveness depends upon the Holy Spirit's power and the congregation's desire to be faithful to the Great Commission. Therefore, making every effort to gather people in prayer and encouraging individuals to pray for this process is essential for positive results. Prayers for the TCN process as it affects congregations of the LCMS are also needed and appreciated.

Fees/Costs: The fees and costs for the Transformation/Revitalization process are set a reasonable cost. We believe that in addition to prayer and openness to participate in the process, it is important that congregations also make a financial investment to support the process. The costs for the "pilot" phase are detailed in the Overview document. The costs will be reviewed and adjusted as needed by the Southern District. Please know that the Southern District has already made a major investment in the TCN process.

Congregations interested in exploring the process should complete the TCN Interest Form. After hearing an overview presentation, interested congregations should complete the pastor's and leader's survey to help determine readiness for the process. Once a congregation has been selected for the process, a basic covenant is signed by the congregation and by the district.

Join us in seeing how God will work among us through transformation/revitalization! It's not about us! It's all about God's love in Christ and His desire that all should come to know Him. In His grace, He uses humble vessels such as you and me to be the bearers of His love! All glory to Him for what He has done and what He will accomplish!

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For more information, contact Gene Menzel at **504-495-7436** or by e-mail at **gene.menzel@southernlcms.org** We have the basic information at the Southern District website: **www.southernlcms.org** Click on the **Resources** Tab and scroll down to click on **Transforming Churches Network**. Additional documents will be posted as we move along into the process. You can also explore more about TCN by going to: **www.transformingchurchesnetwork.org**