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Congregations in transformation generally experience common elements in their journey: An initiating call to change, periods of disorientation, readiness work (including understanding the identity and mission of the church, spiritual practices, assessments, leadership, and external support), and Strategic steps for change (such as engaging with your mission field, experimentation, conflict management, and vision casting and realization), and listening for the next call to change.

Transformation will have unique characteristics among different ethnic groups, in various regions of the country, and demographic settings, while it moves us all toward the fullness of the Body of Christ. Therefore, each congregation must tailor the transformation process for its unique identity.

And, what more?

Please send your suggestions for further consensus points to:

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Developing Consensus on Congregational Transformation





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Transformation is the intentional spiritual journey that a congregation undertakes systemically in order to realize what God has called it to be as church and to do in mission in today's world.

- ▶ This journey is spiritual because transformation is the work of God. It is about listening to God, deepening our relationship with God, and acting upon what we discern is God's will.
- ▶ It is systemic because it is about everything a congregation is and does, not just one aspect of its program. It is connected denominationally and to the whole church.
- ▶ This is a strategic journey because it addresses change in an intentional process of action steps.
- ▶ Since communities of faith are an integral part of the entire web of God's ecology, the transformation of congregations is a piece of God's transformation of all creation, addressing the pressing needs for stewardship of the world.
- ▶ Transformation is a continuous process. One cannot point to a finally transformed congregation, but we can all be on the way. The journey is our home.

Every Christian and every congregation needs to be in a process of transformation. Consider scriptural references such as the prophets — Isaiah 43:19, "I am about to do a new thing" and Joel 2:28, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh ... your sons and daughters ... your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions," the teaching of Jesus — Luke 5:36-39 about new wine in new wineskins, and Paul's epistle — Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God." The transformation of individual persons and the transformation of congregations are inextricably linked.



Transformation is a process that requires leadership and may call on outside coaching or consulting, but it is mainly a gift of the Spirit of God arising within the committed followers of Jesus in a congregation.

A congregation in transformation requires a community of learners to discern the Spirit's guidance. While there are consultants, coaches, and programs that offer focus and perspective to a congregation, there are no "experts" to tell us exactly what to do.

Congregations progress through a natural series of life cycles, as suggested by the varying diagrams below, each with its own nuances.

- ▶ According to membership statistics, approximately 80 percent of Disciples congregations are in the plateaued or declining stages of vitality.
- ▶ Churches that are plateaued or declining in stages of vitality can faithfully choose to be transformed through fundamental change in their self-understanding and mission OR die with grace and hope, perhaps giving new life to other ministries.
- ▶ Churches that are declining in vitality can choose another path: to simply let things decline until death is imminent. This path is undesirable and not recommended. God's grace sustains the journey.

