**The Transforming and Transformed Church of the Emerging Era**

**CHARACTERISTICS OF A VITAL CHURCH**

**THAT IS CONNECTING WITH ALL GENERATIONS**

1. First and Foremost: A clear, compelling and passionate understanding of the church’s identity and purpose (WHY) based on their history (DNA), but founded in the current moment. This emerges from a willingness to do honest and humble self reflection grounded in prayerfulness and discernment. They can articulate it with clarity from their head. They are passionate about it from their heart (passionate enough to move outside their comfort zones) and the know in their soul it is what God has given them as a vocation.
2. Grounded communally in God: the experience of mystery and mysticism. A variety of worship experiences characterized by depth, joy, praise and silence.
3. Focused on Spiritual Practices to develop deeper connection to God in each individual’s life.
4. 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, peace, oppression, injustice, environment, discrimination.
5. A beloved community of authentic caring for each other; a safe place of belonging. People know they can share who they are and their perspectives, questions 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.
6. Intentionally listening to the voices of and learning from those hungering for and discovering something spiritual that they don’t see in the institutional church
7. 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.
8. 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. Living missionally in community partnerships.
9. Permission giving and risk taking: following the discerned guidance of God and willing to step out into the unknown and try new things to be more healthy, faithful and effective.
10. 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.
11. Not focused on imposing dogma, doctrine and moral imperatives. Focus on an authority basis for faith which emerges from and respects tradition of the past, best practices of the present, God’s continuing revelation and individual experience.
12. Open to incorporating perspectives (political, theological, etc) beyond their tradition. Able to blend the values and experiences of consistency and innovation.
13. Focus on empowering ministries as a means of involvement rather than just committees. Helping each person in the community discover their gifts, calling and vocation.
14. Focused on conversation leading to faith formation rather than monologue passing along information. Willing to engage in questions without giving easy rote answers.
15. Fluent in the use of social media as a means of networking, crowd sourcing, listening, influencing
16. Just enough bib (being fed) to be focused on aprons (serving others). Fed and nurtured by spiritual care and community as a means to the end of sacrificial service, giving and worship. Going deeper/going outward – a transformational experience.
17. There will be a core sense of hope and optimism in what God can do in and through the Body of Christ.

***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. Conflict resilient. Congregation has all the information it needs to make decisions and prayerfully discern God’s will and wisdom.
2. A genuine and authentic sense of community where all feel equally valued as they are; a safe and compassionate place to belong and discover their faith journey.
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. Physical plant in solid shape or clear plan for maintenance and improvement

Faithful:

1. Worship is nurturing, provoking, joyful and life giving.
2. Worship is grounded in an experience of God and is described as spiritually alive/vital
3. Decisions are made through a process of discernment. Everyone understands and enthusiastically supports the mission and purpose that God has given to the church.
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.
8. This will be lived out in an understanding and engaging of each person’s call or vocation.
9. The church is willing to experiment and fail.
10. 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 in and through a variety of worship experiences.
   1. Regular members come with greater frequency
   2. Visitors are being drawn to try out the worship experience.
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, celebrate and support the ministry of ‘member’s beyond the walls of the church.
8. People will describe (and tell stories of) their lives as being transformed because of their connection to the church. The church is life giving. These stories are shared.