

Congregational Self Assessment Tool: The Gizmo Introduction

This handy tool, or Gizmo (a term coined by the former Lakeridge Presbytery) will be helpful in so many ways. For Communities of Faith, it gives you a chance to look at who you are as a community. What things are you proud of? What are the highlights of your ministry? What are the things you do well? What are your dreams? It also gives a chance to look at areas where you hope you might do better. What are your learning curves? What obstacles do you see?

We'd ask that at a meeting of your governing body, you take some time each year to fill out the Gizmo. The Gizmo should take about an hour +/- to complete. Depending on the makeup of your church governance, it may be done by the whole governing body or by certain parts answered by certain committees of the church. Ideally this could be done just before your annual congregational meeting.

When you have completed the Gizmo, we ask that you keep one copy for yourself. When it comes time to fill out the Gizmo in the next year(s), you can do some comparisons about how you are doing.

We would also ask that you send a copy of the completed tool to Darren (Pastoral Relations Minister ECORC) at dliepold@united-church.ca. For the past year and a bit, six folks from ECORC have been looking at copies of your annual report. We do so to see if there are celebrations, areas of concern, and patterns that are developing. It allows us to keep up with congregations in this vast and diverse region.

Vitality and Viability Gizmo

(developed by the former Lakeridge Presbytery, and adapted for use in ECORC).

“How is your church doing?” Will your answer be about Vitality or Viability? Will your answer be about the 3B's or the 3C's?

Vital Congregations: Love God, Love People, and Love One Another (Mt 22: 37-39; Jn 13: 34). Vitality = Communion (God), Compassion (People), and Connection (One Another) = 3C's

Viable Congregations: have Sustainable Human and Physical Resources.

Viability = Building, Budgets, and Bodies = 3B's

Another way to express this is: (via Len Sweet)

MRI

Missional = what we do; **R**elational = how we relate; **I**ncarnational = who we are

ABC **A**ttendance; **B**uildings; **C**ash

This Gizmo is designed to help your congregation discern your general health in terms of vitality and viability. Answering these questions should open up areas of dialogue, create opportunities to celebrate the good things that are happening, and create awareness of things that need attention.

This Gizmo is NOT a graded assignment where you will be scored or ranked. This is not a report card. This Gizmo is meant to help you discern your own way forward for the next year by taking a snapshot of your congregational health and using it to discern your next steps as a Community of Faith.

The reality is that truly healthy churches ought to be both vital and viable. We need both the 3B's and 3C's. The picture is incomplete unless we consider both. Our primary job as the body of Christ is not to keep our buildings open – our primary job is to help one another grow as followers of Jesus and live the Way he taught. That being said, the body needs a place to live. It's about *Vitality and Viability*.

We suggest you take time at a Council/Official Board meeting in January or February each year to use this Gizmo. It should take about 60 minutes if you give the Gizmo as homework and folks come with it already filled in.

A Suggested Process:

1. Form small discussion groups of 2-4 people.
2. Quickly work through the Gizmo as a small group comparing your answers. Do not answer the 'Next Steps' questions yet. (15-20 min).

3. Reassemble into the full Council/Board and share your responses to create a single consensus response that can be used by your Council/Board and/or congregation as you choose. (15-20 min).
4. Go back and discuss the 'Next Steps' questions on each page and use them (along with the 'Conclusions' section) to set priorities for your Council/Board.
5. Attach one copy of the consensus response to the Annual Report that is sent to the ECORC region.

Vitality - Loving God (Communion – Incarnational)

Worship – (circle all the words that describe our worship):

Engaging	effective	head	heart
Spirit	inspiring	learning	awe
Reverence	tradition	moving	inclusive
Biblical	excellence	encouraging	empowering
Feel presence	boring	bland	exciting
Routine	transformational	musical	warm
Joyous			

Number of worship opportunities we have per month: _____

In worship, we have variety or diversity:

In liturgy: much / some / little

In music: much / some / little

In teaching: much / some / little

In hospitality: much / some / little

In worship, we try to be multi-generational: much / some / little

Lay persons participate in worship leadership: much / some / little

Who plans our worship gatherings?

Minister / musician / worship committee / lay people

How important would we say Worship is to our congregation?

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Generally, we discern our Worship to be:

Very vital / quite vital / somewhat vital / not very vital

NEXT STEPS Based on our responses above:

- a. Name and celebrate some areas of vitality in Worship in our congregation.

- b. Name one or two things that need attention.

Spiritual Formation/Nurture

We have a Sunday School program: Yes / No

Number of children: _____

Number of teachers: _____

We have an adult Christian formation program: Yes / No

Number of participants: _____

Number of facilitators: _____

We provide opportunities for:

Prayer: much / some / little

Bible study: much / some / little

Learning: much / some / little

Support groups: much / some / little

Discussion groups: much / some / little

Other programs: much / some / little

When and where are our adult formation programs done? (circle all that apply)

Weekdays / weeknights / weekends / Sunday mornings

at church / online / in homes / at other churches

We have strategies to develop, encourage, and support lay leaders: Yes / No

How important would we say Spiritual formation and Nurture through lifelong learning (children to adults) is to our congregation?

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Generally, we discern our Spiritual formation /nurture to be:

Very vital / quite vital / somewhat vital / not very vital

NEXT STEPS Based on our responses above:

- a. Name and celebrate some areas of vitality in Spiritual Formation / Nurture in our congregation.

- b. Name one or two things that need attention.

Vitality - Loving People (Compassion – Missional)

Outreach

Does our church support the Mission and Service Fund? Yes / No

If yes, did we meet our target last year? Yes / No

List our congregation’s identifiable outreach ministries (i.e. How does our church help the community?): Note the year the Outreach ministry began and the # of congregants involved:

Beyond our church, our members are involved in community volunteering:

Much / some / little

Our congregation actively seeks new members, shares faith stories with others, and lives out our faith (i.e. evangelism): much / some / little

How important would we say Outreach is to our congregation?

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Generally we discern out Outreach to be:

Very vital / quite vital / somewhat vital / not very vital

Hospitality

We are intentional about being a gracious host: much / some / little

Our building and our culture are inviting: much / some / little

We strategize about how to welcome new people: much / some / little

How important would we say Hospitality is to our congregation?

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Generally we discern out Hospitality to be:

Very vital / quite vital / somewhat vital / not very vital

NEXT STEPS Based on our responses above:

a. Name and celebrate some areas of vitality in Outreach and Hospitality in our congregation.

b. Name one or two things that need attention.

Vitality – Loving One Another (Connection – Relational)***Participation***

Lay people are involved and participate in our church: much / some / little

We strategize about how to integrate people into our life and work:

Much / some / little

We try to match people’s gifts with church tasks: much / some / little

We use tools like Spiritual Gifts Inventories: Yes / No

We are satisfied with our church committee structure: much / some / little

We rotate different people through committee participation/leadership:

Much / some / little

Our Board/Council strategizes about the next 10 – 15 years: much / some / little

How important would we say Participation is to our congregation:

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Generally we discern our Participation to be:

Very vital / quite vital / somewhat vital / not very vital

Relationships

We accept people's vulnerabilities and exceptionalities: much / some / little

We work at encouraging fellowship and building relationships: much / some / little

People stay after worship for refreshments: much / some / little

Some level of conflict is normal and expected within any group of people.

When conflicts arise we deal with them: well / middling / poorly

How important would we say Relationships are to our congregation?

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Generally we discern our Relationships to be:

Very vital / quite vital / somewhat vital / not very vital

Wider Church

We are engaged in cooperation or coordination with our neighbouring United Church congregations: much / some / little

We are connected with other churches in our Region: much / some / little

We are engaged in cooperation or coordination with our non-United Church neighbours: much / some / little

How important would we say Wider Church connections are to our congregation?

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Generally we discern our Wider Church connections to be:

Very vital / quite vital / somewhat vital / not very vital

NEXT STEPS Based on our responses above:

a. Name and celebrate some areas of vitality in Participation, Relationship, and the Wider Church in our congregation.

b. Name one or two things that need attention.

Viability The 3B's – Buildings, Budgets, and Bodies

Buildings

Roof – our roof is in good repair very / quite / somewhat / not very

Heating & Cooling – our heating/cooling systems are in good repair:

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Structure – our building is structurally sound (foundation, bricks, leaks, etc):

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

Space – our building is suitable for our ministry and programming needs (worship, learning, meeting, storage, etc): very / quite / somewhat / not very

Land – our parking/grounds meet our needs: very / quite / somewhat / not very

Accessibility – our building meets accessibility standards:

Very / quite / somewhat / not very

We are well aware of our upcoming major building costs/expenses: Yes / No

We have identifiable sources of funding for those costs: Yes / No

Generally we discern our Building to be:

Very viable / quite viable / somewhat viable / not very viable

Budgets

Last year our congregational budge was in: surplus / balance / deficit

This year we expect our congregational budge to be in: surplus / balance / deficit

Our financial projections for the next 3 – 5 years are: good / middling / poor

We run an annual financial stewardship program: Yes / No

We encourage contributors to use PAR: Yes / No

We have financial reserves: Yes / No

Based on recent trends, in 5 years those reserves will be: good / middling / poor

Our total income comes from these sources:

Offerings/PAR _____%; Fundraising _____%; Rentals _____%; Other _____%

Generally we discern our Budget to be:

Very viable / Quite viable / somewhat viable / not very viable

Bodies

Number of members/adherents on roll _____

Average attendance (over 5 Sundays) _____

Our congregation's age demographic is: 0-13 _____%; 14-29 _____%;
 30-49 _____%; 50-64 _____%; 65-74 _____%; 75-100 _____%

Given our current membership trend ('new' church members and adherents vs. departing members and adherents) we would describe our church as:

Growing / holding steady / declining

Generally we discern our People / Membership to be:

Very viable / quite viable / somewhat viable / not very viable

Conclusions

Remember, these pages are not intended as a report card, but to give you a snapshot of your congregation's health and to open discussion around your next steps.

Vitality

Overall, we discern our congregation's Vitality to be trending toward being:

Very vital / quite vital / somewhat vital / not very vital

Viability

Overall, we discern our congregation's Viability to be trending toward being:

Very viable / quite viable / somewhat viable / not very viable

Finally, having completed this process, open a conversation about what you've discerned. Go back and discuss the NEXT STEPS questions on each page and use them (along with this Conclusions section) to set priorities for your Council/Board. Thank you.

Community of Faith & Address: _____

Date Completed: _____

Contact information: _____