

BE THE CHURCH

A Mission Planning Guide
for Congregations

Protect the environment.
Care for the poor.
Forgive often.
Reject racism.
Fight for the powerless.
Share earthly and spiritual resources.
Embrace diversity.
Love God.
Enjoy this life.

Includes a Congregational Assessment Tool
and Planning Worksheets



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Introduction

But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

— Matthew 13:23 (NRSV)



Protect the environment. Care for the poor. Forgive often. Reject racism. Fight for the powerless. Share earthly and spiritual resources. Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life. These nine statements represent a collective call to action, a call to Be the Church.

In this age of somewhat limited resources within churches, it is more important than ever to ensure that our resources — time, talent, dollars, physical spaces, etc. — are being used to their fullest potential. The old saying of “build it and they will come” no longer applies when it comes to church activities or initiatives, unless they are part of a very intentional, larger process of discernment and strategic visioning. Gil Rendle, in his book *Doing the Math of Mission: Fruits, Faithfulness, and Metrics*, says that “more than faithfulness, it is about fruitfulness — about being wise and willingly accountable to make something different happen because of the Word of God.”¹ Faithfulness is equally important; but for far too long, congregations have focused solely on practicing faithfulness by sowing seeds (engaging in activity) without then working to bring those seeds to harvest (developing and achieving mission outcomes).

Above and beyond developing different programs and activities for the sake of attracting members or increasing tithes, congregations

¹ Gil Rendle, *Doing the Math of Mission: Fruits, Faithfulness, and Metrics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 9.

today are called into new ways of being and doing that must seek first to answer the question, “For what deeper purpose?” In other words,



what is the particular mission of your congregation, in this time and in this place? What role in God’s mission are you being called to enact and embody as a unique element of Christ’s beloved community? And how does this mission nurture your congregation’s relationships with God, one another, and the wider community?

This resource will help you to begin answering those questions using the “Be the Church” framework

as a guide, as well as provide some tools for you to assess your congregation’s progress toward accomplishing your specific mission. In many ways, this resource serves as a discernment tool for strategic planning and assessment and can be adopted for use in a variety of ways.

Part One invites you as leaders to complete a preliminary assessment of your church’s activities over the past five years. This will help you to identify where energies may exist that can be built upon within the congregation. Part Two provides a process for the development of specific outcomes/impacts and plans toward realizing those outcomes. Part Three offers tools and strategies for measuring progress toward achieving your stated outcomes/impacts as a congregation.



Before you begin, let's be clear: the process you are about to undertake is a new approach to doing ministry in the church. It's time to "do a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19). And with anything "new," there is bound to be anxiety and uncertainty. But this is what it means to chart a new course or explore a new path—there is a great amount of excitement and anticipation, and there is also some fear. Take the time to



name those fears and anxieties, as well as those places of excitement and possibility. Honor your leadership's courage for engaging this process, and develop strategies to work through the resistance you will most likely face — first within yourself, and then among others in the congregation. Most of all, remember that this is holy work and that God is present with you in this process!

Rendle articulates it in this way: "What is now needed are discerning conversations about purpose and clear outcomes of ministry in vital congregations which are conversations about what God calls us to make different in the mission field where we are placed."² May this resource serve as a catalyst for these conversations to take place, so that your congregation can serve as a harvester of God's fruitful bounty.

2 Ibid., 13.

Part One: Assessment

“One definition of leadership is the ability to draw an accurate and honest picture of the current reality,” states Rendle.³ If you don’t know where you are, there is little chance of developing a successful plan that will take you to another place. This section contains an assessment tool that will assist you as a leader in gauging the current state of ministry and activity in each of the “Be the Church” statement areas.

Think back on the practices and activities that congregants, and the congregation as a whole, have engaged in over the past five years. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 being Strongly Disagree, please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

- _____ **1.** Congregants have made tangible changes in their personal lives to reduce their environmental impact.
- _____ **2.** Congregants have individually engaged in actions around both charity (offering direct services like food, clothing, and shelter) and justice (promoting social and economic change in institutions or political structures).
- _____ **3.** Congregants have developed an understanding of forgiveness as a process and are engaging in individual and/or communal grace-filled actions, whether of others or oneself, in their daily lives.
- _____ **4.** Congregants have cultivated intentional relationships with people of similar racial/ethnic backgrounds in order to engage specifically around issues of race, racism, and privilege.
- _____ **5.** Congregants have developed nuanced self-understandings of their power and privilege (i.e. unearned benefits) and have used this knowledge to embrace and support communities experiencing hurt and harm.

3 Ibid., 10.

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- _____ **6.** Congregants have given generously of their time, talents, and finances to the mission and vision of the church.
 - _____ **7.** Congregants have developed trusted, equitable relationships across a spectrum of differences (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, race/ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, religion, culture, etc.) in their daily lives and/or have spent significant amounts of time listening to [the stories of] people with different backgrounds and experiences.
 - _____ **8.** Congregants have expressed trust in God's guidance not only in their personal lives, but also in the life of the congregation, being open to changes and new possibilities.
 - _____ **9.** Congregants have incorporated the spiritual practices of joy and play into their daily lives, being playful and laughing often.
 - _____ **10.** Our congregation has woven into our theology, worship, and education a concern for creation as well as environmental harms that often adversely impact poor communities, communities of color, and our global neighbors.
 - _____ **11.** Our congregation has talked about wealth, poverty, economic inequality, and the common good in intentionally theological ways through worship, Bible study, book groups, forums/lectures, or other efforts.
 - _____ **12.** We have developed a process for conflict transformation, mediation, and/or resolution and have articulated that process and put it into action.
 - _____ **13.** The congregation has openly confessed the sin of racism and the ongoing nature of that sin (individually, communally, and institutionally) and has created space(s) where people have named their conscious and unconscious biases.
 - _____ **14.** Our congregation has implemented models for shared power, as well as ensured equal access and development opportunities, for all individuals to fully participate and lead within the congregation regardless of status or power differences.

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- _____ **15.** Our congregation has engaged in study and reflection regarding faithful stewardship and giving, embracing the realities of our resources and nurturing narratives of abundance rather than scarcity in the process.
 - _____ **16.** We as a congregation have participated in, and completed, cultural competence training(s) and have utilized learned skills and approaches in our interactions with each other and the wider community.
 - _____ **17.** The congregation has treated one another with gentleness, kindness, and compassion, modeling sympathy and empathy in healthy, life-affirming ways.
 - _____ **18.** Our congregation has embraced the sharing of personal testimonies of God's movement in our lives as part of our regular worship and/or fellowship gatherings.
 - _____ **19.** Our congregation has participated in environmental activities in our local community such as clean-up days, recycling days, tree planting, climate marches, etc.
 - _____ **20.** As a congregation, we have worked alongside people in need to advocate for economic justice and increased social support (e.g., fair wages and employment practices, nutrition programs, health care services, affordable housing, accessible transportation, child care, etc.).
 - _____ **21.** Our congregation has built bridges with communities that have been harmed historically by the Church or by peoples who have traditionally held power within the Church/society.
 - _____ **22.** Our congregation has participated in direct action as a result of racial injustice in our community (e.g., marching, protesting, providing sanctuary, visiting politicians, speaking in a public forum, etc.).
 - _____ **23.** Our congregation has shared its collective power and privilege in order to participate in direct action supporting those in need of solidarity partners in our community and/or confronting unjust systems of power.

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- _____ **24.** The church has served as a space/place of safety, solace, healing, or restoration during times of civil unrest, injustice, violence and/or tragedy.
 - _____ **25.** Our congregation has hosted or co-sponsored community building activities or events in which a broad spectrum of people participated (e.g., movie nights, yoga classes, community meals, fairs, festivals, etc.).
 - _____ **26.** The congregation has engaged with the wider community in such a way that faith and action are inextricably connected and people outside the church are able to see/experience this connection.
 - _____ **27.** We have provided opportunity and space for the creative expression of people both within and beyond the congregation (e.g., art contests and shows, concerts, dance recitals, writing workshops, plays and musicals, building murals, etc.).
 - _____ **28.** Our congregation has engaged in efforts to “green” the programing of our church and consciously sought to consider and implement best practices such as installing solar panels, conducting an energy audit, planting a community garden, etc.
 - _____ **29.** We have assessed what, if any, financial barriers are in place to keep lower income people from being fully engaged in the life of the congregation and have worked to minimize or eliminate those barriers in order to provide equal access and opportunity.
 - _____ **30.** Our congregation’s worship and faith formation have provided frequent opportunities for acknowledging individual and corporate sin/culpability, as well as opportunities for forgiveness/grace.
 - _____ **31.** We have taken steps toward de-centering whiteness and Western values as the default modality of the church (e.g., singing hymns that are not in English or that have alternative rhythmic patterns, engaging in studies with books by people of color, using decision-making processes other than Robert’s Rules of Order, placing people of color in leadership positions, participating in a congregation-wide training on white privilege or institutional racism, etc.).

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- _____ **32.** Our congregation has continued to work through the complexities of power, power dynamics, and privilege in intentionally theological ways through worship, Bible study, book groups, forums/lectures, or other efforts.
 - _____ **33.** Our congregation has identified the spiritual gifts and talents of its people and has created a process by which these spiritual gifts are best employed within and beyond the congregation.
 - _____ **34.** The congregation has undertaken a faith-filled exploration, as well as cultivated celebrations, representing the diversity of its congregants through worship, Bible study, book groups, forums/lectures, activities, special events, etc.
 - _____ **35.** Our congregation has engaged in study, reflection, worship, and service that makes a clear connection between love of God and love of neighbor.
 - _____ **36.** We as a congregation have celebrated the milestones, holidays, and significant turning points of our congregants and our church through worship, special gatherings, and various other intentional gestures.
 - _____ **37.** Congregants have committed to engaging in individual actions around caring for creation and those impacted by environmental harms (e.g., calling their representatives regularly, writing environmental op-eds for the local newspaper, etc.).
 - _____ **38.** Congregants have developed meaningful relationships with individuals across a broad spectrum of economic situations both within and beyond the congregation.
 - _____ **39.** Congregants have related with one another in open, honest ways, dealing with individual conflicts in a direct and healthy manner and extending or accepting forgiveness when necessary.

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- _____ **40.** Congregants have developed trusting, equitable relationships across racial/ethnic differences in their daily lives and/or have spent significant amounts of time listening to [the stories of] people of color who are harmed by the realities of racism.
 - _____ **41.** Congregants have cultivated relationships with individuals holding varying amounts of power and privilege, maintaining awareness and sensitivity to power dynamics present within those relationships.
 - _____ **42.** Congregants have shared their personal resources with others (e.g., neighbors, co-workers, friends, family, acquaintances, etc.) in order to build and strengthen relationships.
 - _____ **43.** Congregants have cultivated intentional relationships with people of similar backgrounds and experiences in order to engage specifically around issues of diversity and inclusiveness.
 - _____ **44.** Congregants have intentionally integrated prayer and meditation into their daily lives.
 - _____ **45.** Congregants have accessed and utilized tools to manage the stresses of home, work, school, and church in healthy, faith-filled ways (e.g., developed supportive relationships, learned budgeting skills, worked through twelve step programs, etc.).
 - _____ **46.** Our congregation has partnered with other congregations or local non-profits on activities or initiatives around caring for creation and those impacted by environmental harms.
 - _____ **47.** Our congregation has collectively provided direct charitable services for individuals in need (e.g., food/clothing bank, meals, shelter, gas/food vouchers, school supplies, etc.).
 - _____ **48.** Our congregation has stood alongside those who seek restitution from institutions and powers that have perpetuated injustice, providing support and resources when needed.

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- _____ **49.** Our congregation has worked alongside, or at the direction of, community organizations led by people of color who are seeking to reform systems and institutions that perpetuate racial injustice.
 - _____ **50.** The congregation has faced resistance or experienced challenges (i.e., encountered a temporary or sustained loss of power and privilege) as a result of maintaining solidarity and relationship with those who work toward social justice and equality or as a result of confronting unjust systems of power.
 - _____ **51.** The congregation has deployed its physical resources (e.g., buildings, land, equipment, investments, etc.) for the flourishing of the wider community.
 - _____ **52.** The congregation has formed mutually supportive relationships with different organizations or groups (e.g., religious, racial, cultural, etc.) in the wider community and has held joint gatherings with these groups.
 - _____ **53.** The congregation has been clear about, and has shared publicly, its mission and purpose and has sought to live out this mission and purpose locally and globally.
 - _____ **54.** The congregation has partnered with local individuals or community organizations to give community awards or to plan civic events around major holidays or celebrations (e.g., MLK Day, cultural heritage months or festivals, town/city milestones, etc.).

Be the Church	A	B	C	D	E	F	ROW TOTAL
Protect the Environment	1.	10.	19.	28.	37.	46.	
Care for the Poor	2.	11.	20.	29.	38.	47.	
Forgive Often/ Live into Forgiveness	3.	12.	21.	30.	39.	48.	
Reject Racism/ Dismantle Racism	4.	13.	22.	31.	40.	49.	
Fight for the Powerless/ Fight with the Marginalized/ Confront the Powers	5.	14.	23.	32.	41.	50.	
Share Earthly and Spiritual Resources	6.	15.	24.	33.	42.	51.	
Embrace Diversity	7.	16.	25.	34.	43.	52.	
Love God	8.	17.	26.	35.	44.	53.	
Enjoy This Life	9.	18.	27.	36.	45.	54.	
COLUMN TOTAL							DO NOT USE

Assessment scoring: Place your scores in the boxes corresponding with each of the numbered statements. Once you have completed this, add the numbers in each column and row to determine overall scores.

COLUMN TOTALS — Focus of Practice/Activity

Individual — Add Columns A and E: _____

Congregation — Add Columns B and D: _____

Community — Add Columns C and F: _____

The column totals indicate the areas in which your congregation has/has not placed focus, energy, and activity over the past couple of years. "Individual" refers to congregants within the congregation. "Congregation" refers to the congregation as a whole. "Community" refers to the wider community beyond your congregation, whether local or global.

Minimal Focus (18-40): Our congregation has not nurtured practice or activity in this area in recent years, though there may have been one or two areas that have been fruitful.

Moderate Focus (41-65): Our congregation has nurtured some practice or activity in this area in recent years and progress has been made; however, there is more work to be done in the vineyard.

Dedicated Focus (66-90): Our congregation has spent a great deal of time and energy nurturing practice or activity in this area in recent years, and the fruits of our labors are evident.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Using your assessment scores as a guide, where have you placed more focus as a congregation in the last couple of years? Where have you placed less focus? Or, have you placed relatively equal focus to all three areas?
2. What circumstances have led to your congregation having more/less/equal focus in recent years in each area (i.e. individual, congregation, and community)? What is the nature

of those circumstances — are they temporary, longstanding, cultural, geographic, opportunistic, obstructive, etc.?

3. What are the needs of your congregation's surrounding community in this time and place (not the needs you think your community has, but the ones that have been verified as real needs by community members)? Where do you see "your deep gladness" meeting "the world's deep hunger?"
4. Where do you feel God is calling you as a congregation to focus moving forward? Is it in an area in which you are already focusing, or is it a new area of focus?
5. What opportunities and challenges do you foresee as you live into this call, and how might you strategize to build upon the opportunities and minimize the challenges?

ROW TOTALS — 'Be the Church' Statements

The row totals indicate the areas in which your congregation has/has not placed focus, energy, and activity over the past couple of years with regard to each of the "Be the Church" statements. While specific definitions are not provided, a guiding scripture for each statement is at the end of this resource. (*Note: Assessment items for each area were determined in conversation with individuals who possess expertise and experience in these respective ministries.*)

Minimal Focus (6-13): Our congregation has not nurtured practice or activity in this area in recent years, though there may have been one or two areas that have been fruitful.

Moderate Focus (14-22): Our congregation has nurtured some practice or activity in this area in recent years and progress has been made; however, there is more work to be done in the vineyard.

Dedicated Focus (23-30): Our congregation has spent a great deal of time and energy nurturing practice or activity in this area in recent years, and the fruits of our labors are evident.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Using your assessment scores as a guide, where have you placed more focus as a congregation in the last couple of years? Where have you placed less focus? Or, have you placed relatively equal focus to most of these areas?
2. What circumstances have led to your congregation having more/less/equal focus in recent years in each area? What is the nature of those circumstances — are they temporary, longstanding, cultural, geographic, opportunistic, obstructive, etc.?
3. What are the needs of your congregation's surrounding community in this time and place (not the needs you think your community has, but the ones that have been verified as real needs by community members)? Where do you see "your deep gladness" meeting "the world's deep hunger?"
4. Where do you feel God is calling you as a congregation to focus moving forward? Is it in an area in which you are already focusing, or is it a new area of focus?
5. What opportunities and challenges do you foresee as you live into this call, and how might you strategize to build upon the opportunities and minimize the challenges?

Note: As you meet to discuss and discern, it would be beneficial for the group to take notes and utilize whiteboards or large sheets of paper as you make connections between observations, ideas, etc. This will aid in the discernment process of where God might be calling you in this time and place.

Part Two: Strategic Planning

Now that you have gained some clarity regarding your congregation's current areas of focus and have begun the process of discernment around future focus area(s), it is time to come to a decision as



congregational leaders and/or as a congregation based on your discernment and discussions. How will your dreams, energies, and/or actions be transformed into your specific mission as a congregation?

To frame more concretely our understandings of mission,

we will be using the specific term **outcomes** to describe these new directions. An outcome is "the difference that you believe God has called you to make in this next chapter of your life."⁴ Sometimes, we also call this an **impact**. This difference/outcome/impact must be both measurable and describable. (We will get to the measuring details in Part Three.) As Rendle says, "The outcome of a congregation is not what we can think of to do next but about what God calls us to make different."⁵ Outcomes are also time-bound in that they are for a specific time and place, usually achievable in three to five years, though some take only one or two years and others take up to ten years to achieve.

Now, your outcomes/impacts may coincide with your congregation's overall mission statement; or they may just be more specific manifestations of your mission and purpose. Many congregations start with just one or two outcomes — in fact, this approach is encouraged, especially for smaller to mid-size congregations. Because outcomes take time and are meant to provide incremental steps toward measurable change, they will not be accomplished overnight.

4 Ibid., 23.

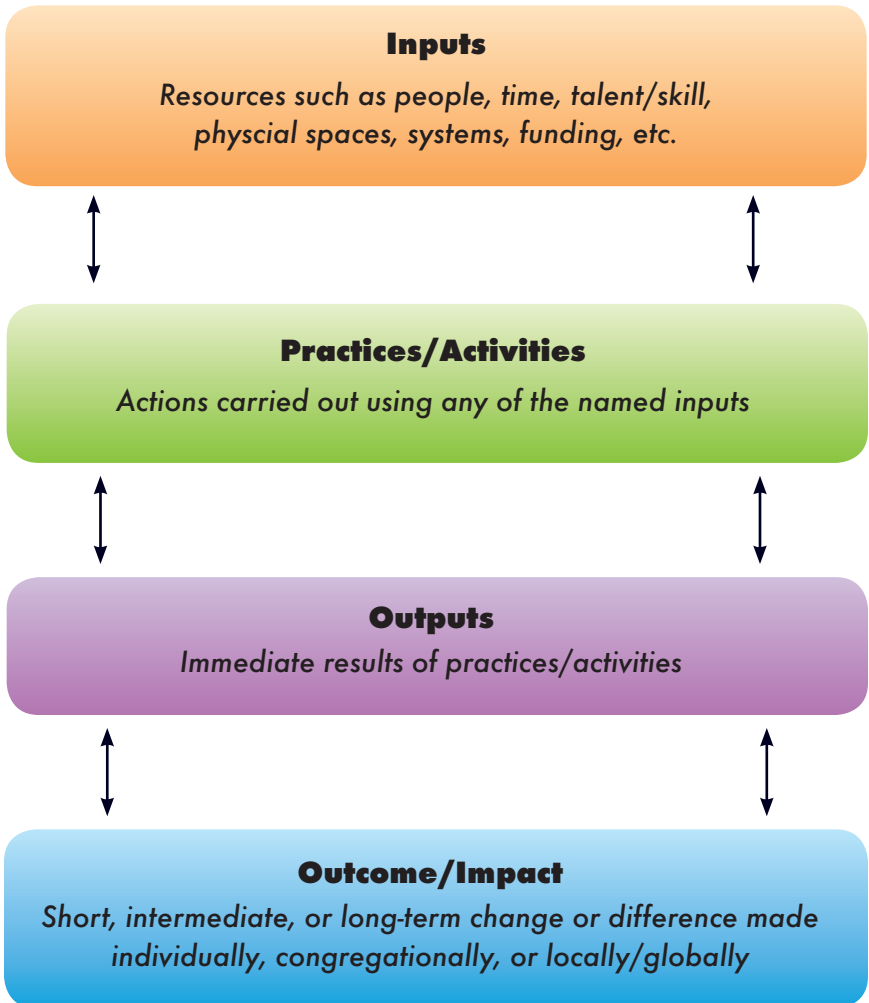
5 Ibid., 23.

Articulating Our Congregation’s Outcome(s)/Impact(s)

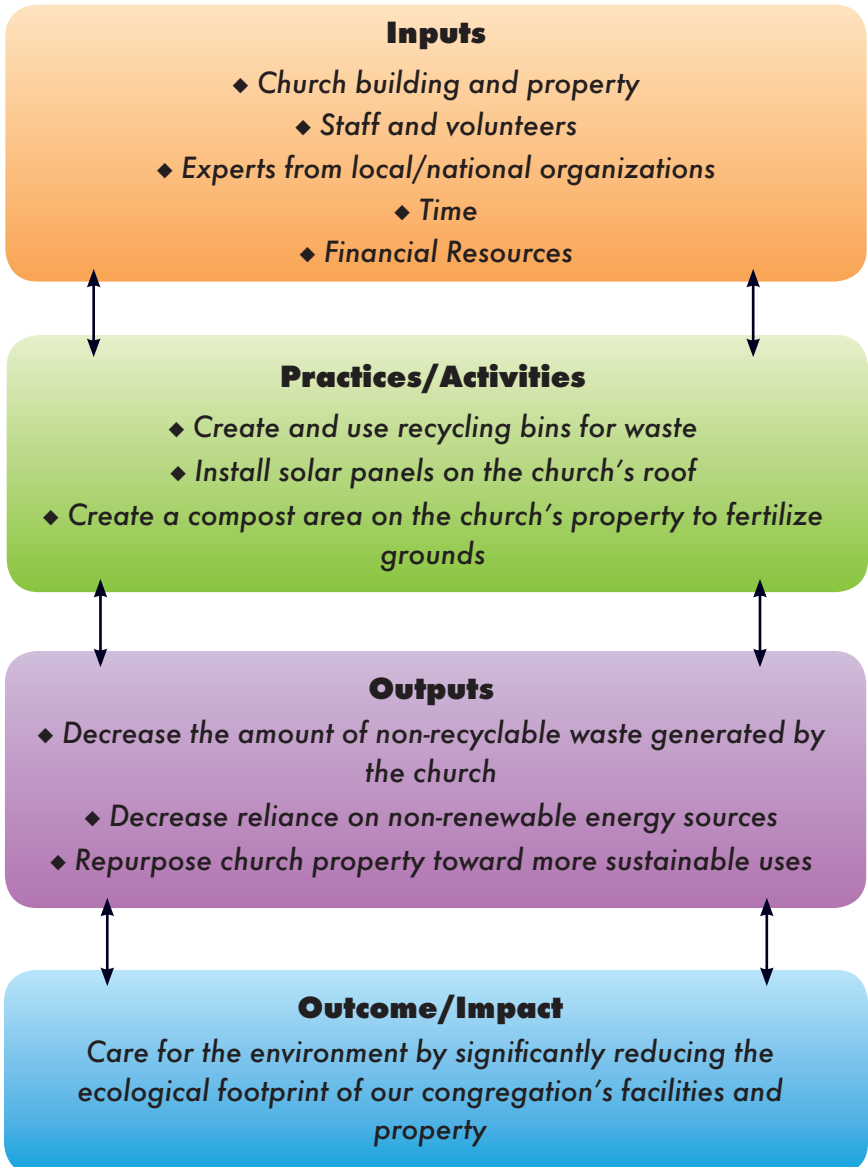
Based on the “Be the Church” statement framework, what is the difference you believe God has called you to make in this next chapter of your life?	In what spheres is God calling your to make an impact? (Individual, Congregation, and/or Community)

Once you have an articulated outcome/impact related to one of the “Be the Church” statements for a particular area of focus (individual, congregation, or community), the task will be to **work backward** in order to determine the resources and activities necessary to realize the outcome. The tool that is most utilized in organizations for such planning and evaluation is called the **logic model**. Just Google the term and you will discover hundreds of types of logic models! For our purposes, you will work through a logic model using the **intended impact/theory of change** framework, which begins with clear statements about the

specific impacts or outcomes a congregation wants to create and hold itself accountable to. The model then helps congregations to articulate the specific resources and practices/activities that will lead to the actualization of those intended impacts. A visualization of this process is found below.

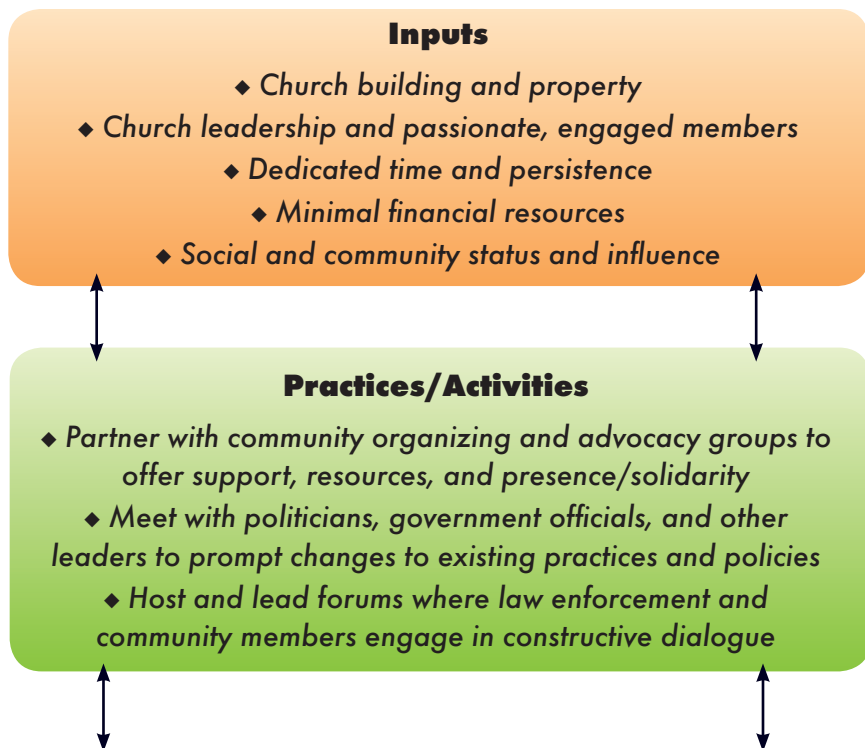


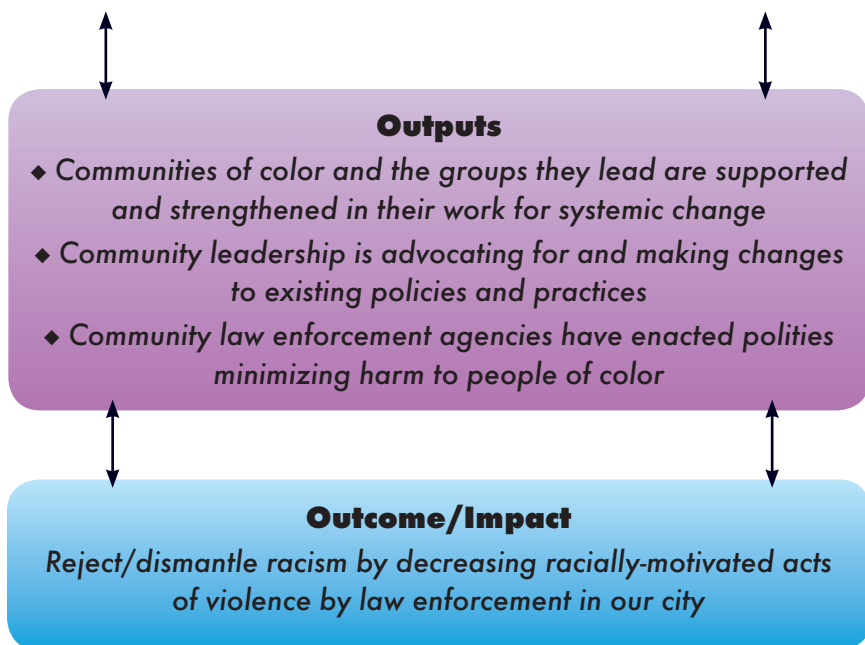
Here is one example of a logic model using the “Be the Church” statement on caring for the environment. This congregation discerned that their call was to significantly reduce the ecological footprint of their church’s facilities and property. This outcome is focused on the collective impact within the sphere of the **congregation**.



Of course, more specific plans than these would be required for engaging in the work of reducing the church's environmental footprint; and the final logic model included many additional inputs/resources, practices/activities, and outputs in order for them to arrive at their end goal. **But the congregation began their process using this simple model.**

Another example of a congregation's plan concerns the "Be the Church" statement on rejecting racism. In this case, the church wanted to focus on their impact in the **local community** and discerned that their call was to work toward decreasing the number of racially-motivated acts of violence by law enforcement in their city.





Again, this logic model provided a beginning template from which additional planning, activity, and process could be created. The congregation initially discerned that they wanted to make a community-wide impact, but they soon realized that they needed to engage the congregation in conversation and education around issues of institutional racism and white privilege in order for the church to truly achieve its call on a city-wide level. Therefore, they developed another outcome/impact around the congregation itself dismantling their own unconsciously racist and racially privileged practices, policies, and ways of being and doing.

It is important to be clear about timeframes for your outcomes/impacts. Keep in mind that short-term impacts are generally accomplished in about one to two years; intermediate impacts are commonly realized in around three to five years; and long-term impacts are usually attained in about six to ten years. **Sustainable, lasting change takes time!** Do not be discouraged if your congregation isn't ready to create

long-term outcomes/impacts. Again, this is a new way of viewing a congregation's mission; so allow yourself lots of grace in this process.



Logic models, which may appear very linear and too structured for some, are only one of many ways to engage in an intentional planning process. As you may guess, logic models are anything but linear — all of the different pieces are shifting continually, and the process often occurs in circular fashion rather than in a traditional line. However, what is important is that plans and strategies are being created and developed as a way of tracking progress toward outcomes/

impacts. Otherwise, how will you know if your actions or activities have made a difference and your congregation is achieving its mission?

As you can see, this work is not easy — but it is transformative. It is holy work, and it is messy. If it is not approached with a spirit of openness, fear and anxiety can quickly take over. Prayer, congregational communication, reliance on God's wisdom and direction, and an ethic of trial and error (this isn't meant to be perfect!) will be necessary tools for embarking upon this journey. You are not just sowing seeds; you are tending the vineyard with the hopes of one day harvesting the fruits of your labor!

Hint: You may want to review some of the practices and activities in Part One's assessment tool to gather ideas for how you might achieve your specific outcomes.

Our Congregation’s Outcome/Impact Plan

Inputs ↔	Practices/ Activities ↔	Outputs ↔	Outcome/ Impact

Part Three: Measuring Outcomes/Impacts

How do you know if you are making progress toward God's specific mission for your congregation? Are you really working toward your outcomes/impacts? This is where the holy task of measurement becomes crucial.

Before we talk specifically about ways to measure impact, I want to make a clear distinction between **counting** and **measuring**. Congregations that are focused solely on activities and practices without connecting them to specific outcomes/impacts often use counting as a way to demonstrate vitality — how many people attend worship or other activities, how many dollars were spent, how much income was generated, how many baked goods were sold, etc.



Counting serves a variety of purposes; but it is not as helpful when determining progress toward an outcome. Measuring, on the other hand, is defined as “giving attention to change.”⁶ Rendle argues that instead of asking “How many?” the question becomes “How far?” With a clear outcome/impact, measuring becomes a matter of asking, “How far have we come, and how much farther do we need to go?”

It's much easier to count things, which is why congregations and denominations have been counting for centuries. Measurement requires thoughtfulness and intentionality around how change should be chronicled; and there are many ways to measure activities, practices, and other actions, most of which are less exact and more complex than counting. At this point, it can become daunting to think about not only

6 Ibid., 14.

implementing a new mission through outcomes, but also measuring each action along the way!



Just remember that this is a process, and processes take time and intentionality. God's mission for your congregation is a sacred one, and knowing whether or not there is movement toward fulfillment of that mission is part of the ministry that you have been called to in this time and place. The sower is continually

testing the soil, measuring growth, and adjusting the amount of water necessary for an optimal harvest.

Methods of Measurement

There are many ways to measure impact, and it depends greatly on the nature of your intended impact. Change, growth, or progress can be measured **quantitatively** (with numbers), **qualitatively** (with words — including feelings, attitudes, perceptions, etc.), or both quantitatively and qualitatively. While some of this measurement may indeed involve counting, this counting is always conducted with an eye toward achieving the outcome.

In our previous examples of outcome/impact plans, both congregations wanted to decrease something — environmental impact or racially-motivated acts of violence. In both instances, these outcomes can be measured partially through gathering numerical data. The congregation dedicated to care for the environment may measure numerical decreases in waste over time (perhaps in number of trash bags), financial savings in energy bills, and the actual reduction in ecological footprint (there are lots of online tools for this). The number of racially-motivated acts of violence over periods of time can

easily be measured (though the congregation may want to engage in action toward ensuring the data is being recorded accurately).

However, these figures alone do not fully measure the progress toward, or achievement of, either of these outcomes. It is important for qualitative aspects of change to be measured as well. In the work to decrease racially-motivated acts of violence, questions arise that require qualitative measures. Have overall race relations of the community improved as a result of the congregation's work toward this outcome? What relationships have been formed over time? Finding ways to measure these things is equally important in obtaining a complete picture of change and progress.

Measuring one's progress may also change your practices and activities or outcome/impact along the way. Perhaps in your congregation's efforts to reduce waste, you are learning through periodic measurement that this activity is not having as large of an effect on



reducing ecological footprint as you had hoped. This may change your congregation's plans; and as a result, you may decide to reduce water use on church grounds by xeriscaping the property or installing low-flow toilets. **Your outcome/impact plan is never set in stone!** It is a continually evolving framework and will always change based on circumstances, intentional reflection and discernment, and measurement along the way.

Perhaps through working with a local community advocacy organization — one of your stated practices/activities in your plan to decrease racially-motivated violent acts — you learn that what would be helpful in realizing change is your congregation's organization of a

community-wide service of lament and healing. This was not explicitly in your original plans, but it would certainly be a positive step toward achieving the overall outcome. This is how the Spirit works in the midst of plans and activities in order for your congregation to fulfill its mission!



It is best to measure progress toward your outcome/impact as you go along, perhaps before and after each practice and activity in which you engage in order to make sure that your outputs are being achieved. Ways of measuring are highly contextual based on the activity, but it's important to

remember that you do not want to count just for the sake of counting; you want to gather data as a way of measuring progress toward fulfilling God's specific mission for your congregation.

The most common methods of qualitative measurement are **surveys, interviews, and focus groups** — you may want to consider one, two, or all three of these methods in order to gauge whether your outputs are being realized in the fulfillment of your overall outcome. In many ways, impacts/outcomes for individual congregants — such as instilling practices around play and celebration for the “Be the Church” statement regarding enjoying this life — are much easier to measure with surveys, interviews, and focus groups because they are internal to the congregation.

Whatever methods you use, be sure to articulate them when you are creating your plan — otherwise, measurement will become an afterthought that will most likely be forgotten amidst your activities. Also, be sure to consult with resources and experts as you craft your actual measurement tools to make sure that they are capturing the feedback and data that will help you determine progress toward outcomes. *(Some resources are provided at the end of this guide.)*

Our Congregation’s Plan for Measuring Outcome/Impact

Practices/ Activites	Outputs	Method(s) of Measurement	Resources Needed for Measurement

Intended Impact or Accidental Impact?

So, how do you really know if your inputs and activities are affecting your outcomes/impacts? It is often difficult to make a direct link between an outcome and what your congregation did to affect that outcome, especially if you are working toward change within your local community. For example, a community's environmental impact may have decreased over time; but the congregation's role in causing the decreased footprint may not be as clear. This is why it's so important to be clear about what inputs, activities, and outputs your congregation deployed in order to create this intended impact.

Your congregation may have not been solely responsible for a reduced environmental footprint in your local community, for example; but if you can articulate the ways you worked toward this outcome, it is difficult to discount your congregation's role in ensuring greater environmental sustainability within your area.



The End?

At the beginning of this guide, we said that this process would be a new way of doing ministry; and with anything new, there would be uncertainty, anxiety, and fear. If your congregation has begun this journey and is already seeing some of the fruits of your labors, then this alone may provide you with the courage to continue fulfilling God's mission for your collective life as the body of Christ. However, when challenges or obstacles arise (and they will), more may be needed to sustain you in this holy work. Remember to pray often, support one another, remain clear in God's call for your congregation, and continually seek the Spirit's discernment and guidance.

From the charts and boxes in this guide, it may appear that this work is structured, methodical, and has a clear beginning and end. That is the great irony in using human-made tools for spiritual kin-dom building — it may seem clear, concrete, and logical; but there really is no end to the tending of the vineyard because there are always fruits to cultivate and harvest. Every farmer needs a plan, however; and depending on the circumstances regarding weather, water, sun, insects, soil composition, and a hundred other factors, one's strategies and activities will change in order to ensure the most fruitful harvest.

Finally, when the fruits have been harvested and your outcomes have been achieved (though this may not be the end of your work), take time to celebrate what God has done through your congregation. Blessings and prayers as you discover and live into God's deeper purpose and mission for your shared life together!

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

Please take a few moments to tell us about how your congregation utilized this guide by completing a brief survey:

<https://www.research.net/r/BetheChurchGuide>. If you provide us with feedback before 2020, you will be entered in a drawing to win **one free year of coaching** for your congregation!

Appendix A: Biblical References

In order to spiritually ground this work, a biblical reference has been provided for each of the “Be the Church” statements. Please be encouraged to seek out additional scriptures and theological resources as you begin to focus on specific outcomes/impacts. It is critical that your work be guided by a solid biblical and theological foundation!

- ◆ Protect the Environment — Psalm 24:1
- ◆ Care for the Poor — Matthew 25:35-36
- ◆ Forgive Often (or Live into Forgiveness) — Matthew 6:12
- ◆ Reject Racism (or Dismantle Racism) — Romans 10:12
- ◆ Fight for the Powerless (or Fight with the Marginalized/
Confront the Powers) — Psalm 82:3-4
- ◆ Share Earthly and Spiritual Resources — Luke 3:11
- ◆ Embrace Diversity — Genesis 1:27
- ◆ Love God — Luke 10:27
- ◆ Enjoy This Life — Philippians 4:4

Appendix B: Additional Resources

General Resources

- ◆ Many of the themes for this guide were developed using Gil Rendle's *Doing the Math of Mission: Fruits, Faithfulness, and Metrics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014). We highly recommend that your congregation's leadership read this book together in order to delve more deeply into each step of the process. In particular, Rendle's chapters on measurement provide additional tools and examples that will assist congregations in working through Part Three of this guide.
- ◆ Additional resources can be found on www.ucc.org regarding most of the "Be the Church" statements. These include: an inventory, evaluation, and action plan for becoming a Green Church; a curriculum on white privilege along with other racial justice and multicultural resources; and various materials on stewardship and generosity. Take time to find the information and resources for your specific mission!
- ◆ Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003)
- ◆ Sarah B. Drummond, *Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009)

Resources on Logic Models

- ◆ The Logic Model for Planning and Evaluation from the University of Idaho:
<https://www.cals.uidaho.edu/edcomm/pdf/CIS/CIS1097.pdf>
- ◆ Logic Model Development Guide from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation: <https://www.wkcf.org/>
- ◆ Various logic model resources from Innovation Network:
<http://www.pointk.org/resources/>

Resources on Intended Impact/Theory of Change Framework

- ◆ Articles from the Bridgespan Group:
<https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/highlights>
- ◆ Intended Impact/Theory of Change
- ◆ Zeroing in on Impact
- ◆ Mapping Change from GrantCraft: <http://bit.ly/2qTSoVI>
- ◆ Theory of Change from BetterEvaluation: <http://bit.ly/2pxlqFG>

Congregational Process Resources

- ◆ Additional support and consultation is available from the United Church of Christ. Please feel free to contact staff from any of the following offices:
 - ◆ Congregational Assessment, Support and Advancement (CASA) — www.ucc.org/vitality
 - ◆ Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) — www.ucc.org/research
 - ◆ Church Building and Loan Fund (CB&LF) — <http://cblf.uccpages.org>
- ◆ Coaching Center at the Center for Progressive Renewal: <http://www.progressiverenewal.org/coaching/>
- ◆ Gil Rendle, *Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999)

The Purpose of the United Church of Christ:

To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength
and our neighbor as ourselves (Mt. 22)

The Vision of the United Church of Christ:

United in Christ's love, a just world for all

The Mission of the United Church of Christ:

United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all,
love all, and seek justice for all

The Core Values of the United Church of Christ:

Extravagant Welcome

Continuing Testament

Changing Lives

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