

## ***Grow More Effective as a Church: Participate in the Fruitful Congregations Process***

Achieving fruitfulness in ministry does not happen overnight. Becoming a fruitful congregation is an ongoing work of God, as the body of Christ works in the power of the Holy Spirit to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Statistics indicate that most congregations are not growing and are not currently fruitful in making disciples of Jesus Christ. How can a church move from its current state to greater effectiveness for God's kingdom?

Following signs of hope seen within IGRC and elsewhere, the IGRC Office of Congregational Development is offering the Fruitful Congregations Process. The goal of the process is to change plateaued or declining congregations into fruitful, growing congregations.

The evidence of a fruitful congregation is transformed lives. New people come to Christ, grow in faith, and are released into service. Because of the changed lives, the impact of a fruitful congregation leads to transformation in its community as well.

The Fruitful Congregations Process includes:

- **Advance Workshop for Church Leaders:** This workshop will introduce leaders of interested churches to the principles and strategy of the process. It outlines expectations and potential challenges churches will face, if they choose to engage in the process and seek to become a fruitful congregation. The pastor and as many leaders as possible should attend the Advance Workshop.
- **Church Leaders' Study:** Church leaders read and discuss *Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field*, by Paul Borden. The IGRC Fruitful Congregations Process is similar to the process suggested by Borden, and the book will help the leaders discern if this process is right for their church and if they are committed to engaging fully in the process. The Church Council must approve participation.
- **Fruitful Congregations Workshops:** This is a series of five workshops over a two and a half year period. A workshop will be held twice a year, each one covering a different Practice of Fruitful Congregations. The pastor and three to five lay people should attend each workshop. At least one of the lay people should attend all workshops (this person should be a key leader in the church, such as the Church Council Chairperson or the Lay Leader). At each workshop, the church team will develop an action plan related to that practice. They will report on the implementation of their plan on a regular basis to the District Superintendent and the Office of Congregational Development.
- **Learning Communities for Pastors:** Pastors will participate monthly in cluster groups with six to ten clergy led by a mentor. The groups will focus on leadership issues, further learning, and navigating change and transformation in the church. There will be monthly reading assignments for this group.
- **On-Site Consultation:** After the third Fruitful Congregations Workshop, churches that fully engage in all of the previous steps may request an on-site consultation. This consultation will be the basis of further recommendations for becoming a fruitful congregation. The on-site consultation includes:
  - Preparing advance documents and information.
  - Dedicating a weekend to the consultation.
  - Receiving a consultation report on Sunday afternoon of the weekend.

- Voting as a church to accept the report in its totality (four to six weeks after receiving the report). If a church does not accept the whole report and its action steps, they will not be assigned a coach nor given further support by the Office of Congregational Development.
- Implementing action steps based on the report.
- Being held accountable to the plan by the Coach (see below), the District Superintendent, and the Office of Congregational Development by submitting monthly updates for 18-24 months.
- **Coaching for Church and Pastor:** Each church that completes a consultation weekend and votes to accept the church's report and its actions steps will be assigned a coach who has served as an effective pastor of a growing church. The coach will meet monthly with the church leaders for twelve to eighteen months after the consultation. The coach will also have served as a part of the weekend consultation team.

*This sounds like a lot of work. Is it worth it?*

- Becoming a fruitful congregation is not easy, but the fruit of changed lives makes it worth all the time, energy, and prayer that is poured into it. Is the future of your congregation worth the effort?

*What is the cost?*

- In addition to purchase of *Direct Hit* for church leaders and other books for the pastor's learning community, the cost for attending the first Fruitful Congregations Workshop is \$250 for the church team (although \$100 can be saved by registering by the early deadline). The cost for additional workshops will be \$125 for the church (\$50 savings for early registration), mostly to cover the expenses for lunch and snacks.
- There will be an additional fee for churches that engage in the on-site consultation. Final cost has not yet been established.
- Costs beyond the registration and consultation participation fees (including costs related to mentors and coaches) will be covered by a grant from the Office of Congregational Development.