

Developmental Tasks and Focus Points Compared

Five Developmental Tasks

Coming to Terms with History

It is important for congregations to know their history so that they can appreciate their heritage and at the same time be aware of the issues and concerns that need to be resolved in order to move freely into the future.

Discovering a New Identity

Identity is the task of understanding "who we are now in our present context and what it is we understand God is calling us to be." It is the task of developing the vision to which a congregation is being called.

Shifts of Power/Leadership Changes

In most congregations over a period of time the leadership begins to take on much of the style and values of the previous pastor. When that pastor leaves, there is often a time when persons who have been in leadership rethink their commitment and determine if they want to continue in leadership positions. Other persons often find the interim time an opportunity to take leadership roles. This is an opportune time to empower those who are out of power and to welcome leadership gifts from all parts of the congregation.

Rethinking Denominational Linkages

Congregations often are not aware of the support and resources they receive from their middle judicatory and national denominational structures. That relationship is normally more visible while the structures of the church beyond the congregation are engaged in working with the congregation in moving through the interim period and seeking to find the right pastor to call. The transition time helps raise the awareness of a congregation to its denominational heritage, ministries and resources.

Commitment to New Leadership and to a New Future

When a congregation has developed a shared vision of its future and has sought to call a pastor to help lead it in moving into that future, there will probably be a new commitment both to that new leader and to that new future.

Five Focus Points

Heritage

Reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed - The congregation's heritage, both corporate and individual, is the foundation upon which the present rests. Paying attention to heritage means encouraging and hearing all of the stories about the congregation's past, and embracing the rich variety that makes up the congregation.

Mission

Defining and redefining the sense of purpose and direction - The primary work in this area involves clarifying the faith community's identity and core values, working to develop mission and vision statements, and working out short-term tactical plans.

Leadership

Reviewing the membership needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership - Transition time provides opportunity for individuals and the congregational organizations to examine the types of leadership needed. New leaders will emerge, while some seasoned leaders may re-commit or may decide to refocus their gifts.

Connections

Discovering all the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself - Sometimes congregational life is so busy that congregations and their leadership forget to attend to their connections both to their denomination and to the network of communities around them. Transition is an appropriate time to re-assess old links and to consider new ones.

Future

Developing congregational and pastoral profiles - Focusing on the future requires a healthy and honest assessment of the other focus points so that the congregation can turn its energy toward proactive decision-making for the future.