

A Presbytery-Wide Strategic Plan To Build Healthy Churches Presbytery of Charlotte

The Presbytery of Charlotte sought to design an effective means to encourage healthy congregations of transformed disciples who are willing to risk themselves for the Kingdom of God. The process for formulating this document, influenced, we believe, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has involved prayerful input by sessions, pastors, congregations, Presbyters, Presbytery staff, clusters of Presbytery gatherings, and consultants. The Church Development Committee and its writing teams are grateful to God for the willingness of so many to contribute to this process.

The Vision:

Therefore, first and foremost, the work of the Presbytery of Charlotte is to cultivate healthy and vibrant congregations of transformed disciples of Jesus Christ whose mission is to make other disciples, baptize and teach in the name of the triune God, thus transforming their communities through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 18:18-20). Christ's Great Commission compels the Church, his universal body, to be faithful stewards of and participate in his message to the world that God so loves and is at work to reconcile to God's self.

"In Christ, you are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God." (Ephesians.2:22) In faithful obedience, the Church directs every effort toward further embodying the presence of God in her midst. Institutional structures undergo continual transformation, seeking to follow the Holy Spirit's lead in the growth of disciples and cultivation of stewardship resources for the sake of the gospel. Congregations hold forth a clear vision of their sense of Christ's leading in the life of the Church.

"Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." (Acts 2:17) The Holy Spirit is pouring out gifts upon all ages in the Church to do the work of the Church. Gifts to do God's whole work abound – in fact, there is more than enough! The church values gifted ones as a visible indication of divine presence and with a joyful **"yes"**, the Church celebrates change brought through cultivating spiritual giftedness.

This vision builds on the essence of the Presbytery's vision statement as adopted on May 18, 2004, reads:

- We will encourage the development of Christian community through closer relationships among our churches based on our unity in Christ.

- We will be faithful to the transformation of our congregations through Church development and redevelopment as an evangelical expression of our commitment to the future of the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- We will passionately commit to the care and nurture of our church professionals, striving to equip and educate them with the intent to produce excellence in leadership for congregational life and Christian service.
- We will work for justice and the common good so that the poor hear good news, the captives find freedom, and the oppressed receive liberty.

Our interaction together as a beloved community of Christ has brought a new spiritual focus of where and who we are as a presbytery. To that end:

We Confess:

- That we, as a denomination, have for too long been anxiety-driven to save the institutional church from dwindling memberships by focusing on recruiting new members rather than on making disciples for Jesus Christ.
- That we for too long denied the Power of the Holy Spirit by our arrogant assumption that we are capable of energizing ourselves to do what we think is necessary to save ourselves.
- That we for too long regarded the Church as an organization to be structured, thereby limiting the Power of the Holy Spirit, rather than viewing it as a living organism through which the Holy Spirit is at work to empower congregations to be the Church.
- That we have, in fact, denied the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us from pre-resurrection discipleship to post-resurrection discipleship causing us to be inwardly focused rather than outwardly, thereby enabling us to neglect our call to participate in Christ's larger mission to the world.
- That we have, for too long perceived, the Church as being the only instrument of Christ's mission rather than as a participant in Christ's mission to the world, as though the salvation of the world depended only upon the Church.
- That we have not been good stewards with God's blessings of wealth and resources. We have not wisely used our time, talents and resources to lead others to Christ for the building up of the Kingdom of God nor have we held each other accountable.
- That we have underfunded many of our New Church Development starts and have burdened these congregations in their infancy stage with mortgages and other expenses far beyond their means, thus contributing significantly to the churches' struggles.
- That we have spent too much time focusing on the problems of conflicted churches rather than encouraging those churches that want to become healthy and vibrant.

We have learned:

- That it is time to experience Deep Change, made possible by the spiritual transformation of the mind, rather than Slow Death brought about by existing in conformity to the world.
- That our congregations and our Presbytery need to engage seriously in confession, repentance, prayerful meditation and discernment of God's Word in Jesus Christ, opening our minds and hearts to the transforming Power of the Holy Spirit, that we may become empowered to lead unbelievers to Christ.
- In order to grow in effectiveness, congregations need a healthy organic partnership with the Presbytery. The Presbytery is responsible to serve as a resource and relate to its congregations in a manner that helps them become healthy, faithful and vibrant. This is Presbytery's part in fulfilling its responsibility of making disciples for the Church of Jesus Christ.
- For church development to be successful, the whole Presbytery must engage in systemic self-evaluation affecting how we function as a Presbytery and as individual congregations. Committee structures and Stated Meetings must be re-evaluated and adapted to a vision of what transformed congregations look like.
- It is time for the Presbytery to develop a comprehensive approach to Stewardship Education aimed at helping church members develop spirits of generosity, enabling helping churches to embrace the transformed vision of the Presbytery, and helping the presbytery explore and create new funding streams to assist churches to become more missional-minded.
- The Presbytery must form partnerships with stakeholders for congregational vitality. Stakeholders might include congregational members, individual churches, clusters of congregations, the Committee on Ministry, Leadership Development, Church Development, Pastoral Care, Mission and Justice, the Latino Steering Committee, the Committee on Preparation of Ministry, Synod, General Assembly, etc.
- Congregations are willing to work in clusters, larger/smaller parishes, and new configurations, thus encouraging one another to engage in common mission/ministry opportunities that could not be accomplished by a single church working alone.

We celebrate:

- The Good News of the Gospel found in Jesus Christ and Christ, and for continually calling his Church into existence by using transformed and redeemed people such as you and me.
- God's giftedness found in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) made up of people who faithfully serve in every judicatory of the church with vision, energy, intelligence, excitement and love.
- The richness of multicultural communities and congregations who are called to be the visible witnesses of Christ in and to the world.

- Vibrant churches whose transformative leaders' impel the membership to follow Jesus' Great Commission.
- The witness of Jesus Christ found in our congregations that are scattered across the Presbytery: congregations small, medium, and large; rural, small town, urban, and suburban; and theologically moderate, conservative, and liberal and many degrees in between.
- The presence, the culture, the commitment and the participation found in churches and missions that are African American, Anglo, Haitian, Korean, Latino, and Vietnamese.
- The material resources throughout the Presbytery of Charlotte, and for its generosity of the past, which will be exceeded by the generosity of the presence and in the future.
- All those who say yes to being transformed by the Power of the Holy Spirit and have a passion for leading others to Christ.

Implementation Plan:

Congregational transformation is fundamentally spiritual and, without God transforming our hearts and minds by the power of the Holy Spirit, new techniques and any amount of money or other resources offered will be ineffective. It will take complete reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit, as well as time (perhaps as much as five (5) years), for this new strategy to become effective. While some activities in the strategy will take longer, many are already in effect. This strategy was designed to be an evolving document growing with our understanding of where God is leading us. Annually, there will be updates and deletions based on our faithfulness and learning as students of Christ.

We have identified three significant areas through which the Presbytery engages in church development. Each area will be evaluated in light of the Characteristics of a Healthy Church that are attached to the last pages of this document. They are Transformation, Immigrant Ministries and New Church Development.

Transformation:

Transformation comes about by the reorienting and renewal of the mind by the power of the Holy. It is about being open to the new life that God intends. It is about being willing to trust God to change our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that we may serve Him effectively. Transformation occurs when we enter into full participation in the purposes of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. It occurs as we take seriously, what Jesus took seriously. The transformed life is the Spirit-filled and empowered life that manifests the fruit of God's Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22, 23)

We believe:

- That all existing congregations in the Presbytery of Charlotte stand in need of congregational transformation as defined above; and that there are churches existing in survival mode, facing imminent death.
- That greater awareness of the demographics and cultural knowledge of the communities in which our congregations exist is a major factor in leading towards transformation and creation of multicultural congregations.
- That there is particular potential existing within our African American Congregations for transformation to occur if they are provided appropriate resources.
- That meetings of Presbytery provide the largest forum to address congregational transformation needs, and that the current meeting model should be changed to equip and inspire our churches toward transformation.
- That widespread transformation will happen as Presbytery committees, council, commissions and staff become themselves open to the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Presbytery, and that acknowledging their need and working together encourages such openness.
- That the right time has come to assist members, congregations and the presbytery in ways to increase their understanding and responses to Christian Stewardship aimed at cultivating spirits of generosity.

Therefore, we will educate congregations on the biblical mandate to make disciples.

- The Church Development Committee, Leadership Development Committee, and Mission and Justice Committee are invited to work together to insure that educational resources and events are available to Presbytery committees, pastors, educators and sessions and that those resources integrate with workings of Presbytery meetings and committees.
- Through its triennial visits, the Committee on Ministry, aided by a transformation team, will provide current educational resources for the purpose of engaging or continuing transformation efforts.

Therefore, we will systematically and qualitatively invite churches to enter or continue the processes of transformation.

- Through the Committee on Ministry triennial visit, an interdisciplinary transformation team will require an assessment of congregational health involving the stakeholders of the congregation, using the congregational life cycle or other assessment tools or methods. Each assessment may result in recommendations for transformation. As appropriated, an invitation to collaborate with the Church Development Committee may be offered.
- For those wishing to proceed, the Church Development Committee will help provide a pastor cluster, transformational cluster, or individualized help with preparing a plan of action including goals, timeline and means for evaluation.

Therefore, we will provide ongoing training in a transformational process.

- The Church Development Committee, the Leadership Development Committee, and Mission and Justice Committee are encouraged to work together to identify and/or train a cadre of leaders within the Presbytery who have great assessment skills, consultant/intervention skills, training/leadership skills, etc. As we identify, recruit, and train these leaders, we will then deploy them throughout the Presbytery to serve.
- The Church Development Committee will work with the Committee on Ministry and other committees to develop cluster groups around the Presbytery where pastors and church laity gather for training/mentoring. This allows us to establish long-term, intentional relationships and a basis for ongoing transformation training.

Therefore, we will educate and advocate for movement toward multicultural congregations.

- The Mission and Justice Committee assisted by the Church Development Committee's Immigrant Work Group are encouraged to provide a series of educational emphasis on Cultural Competency for the Presbytery and for churches interested in multicultural ministries.
- The Church Development Committee will work with the Latino Coordinator, the Latino Steering Committee, and the planning team for the Annual Multicultural Festivals. This collaboration will assist in hosting local, regional and national Multicultural Conferences and events.
- The Church Development Committee will provide congregations, per their request, with demographic data and train them on how best to interpret and use the data. We will help them understand how statistical data can be translated into going out into the world to making disciples for Christ.

Therefore, we will educate African American Congregations in transformational processes and advocate for their ongoing health and vitality.

- The Church Development Committee working with the Black Church Task Force will use the Characteristics of Healthy Churches and other assessment tools to appraise the health and vitality of the current African American Churches.
- The Church Development Committee in partnership with growing healthy African American Churches will explore opportunities to assist in establishing satellite campuses and/or planting new churches aimed at reaching the lost for Christ.
- The Church Development Committee, working with the Black Church Task Force and other appropriate committees and commissions, will identify African American Churches that have declared their mission complete and help nurture them to a point of celebrating that mission and bringing closure.
- The Church Development Committee will work with the Committee on Ministry and the Black Church Task Force to ensure that each congregation has appropriate pastoral leadership in order to move the

church towards becoming Christ's effective witness in the world.

Therefore, we will provide financial resources for the tools to be used in a process of transformation.

- The Church Development Committee, after identifying the church or cluster of churches as well as the kinds of resources needed, will endorse particular strategies, coaches, consultants and resources needed and fund them on a case-by-case basis.
- Opportunities for Presbytery-wide cluster groups and individual church training in transformation events will be held. With Presbytery Council, Ecclesiastical Affairs, and Church Development Committee working together, we will provide training during Stated Meetings of the Presbytery.

Therefore, we will encourage congregations to engage in spiritual renewal.

- The Church Development Committee and the Leadership Development Committee are urged to provide materials, processes, and human resources aimed at strengthening the spiritual health of members in our churches. Church leadership will be urged to use spiritual gift surveys for electing and aligning leadership.
- The Church Development Committee encourages the use of groups such as Presbyterians for Renewal Weekend, Camp Meetings, Revivals, The North Carolina Presbyterian Pilgrimage and other spiritually based resources aimed at renewing or strengthening member relationship with and in Christ.
- Church Development will provide small grants for congregations needing assistance for these kinds of resources.

Therefore, we will establish an Evangelism Network.

- The Church Development Committee, Presbytery's Communicators and the Leadership Development Committee will identify, recruit, and train both paid and volunteer church staff persons that have responsibilities for Evangelism Ministries in their ministry or job description.
- The Church Development Committee and the Presbytery's Communicators will share the effective nuts and bolts of Evangelism with churches through key contact persons in each congregation. We will provide workshops and training events that will allow each congregation to develop and implement a healthy and functional Evangelism Ministry.
- The Evangelism Network will assist congregations and the presbytery with tools to teach transformed disciples processes of leading the lost into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we will establish a Stewardship Workgroup to educate and advocate towards a holistic understanding of Christian Stewardship.

- Presbytery Council is urged to create a Stewardship Work Group for interdisciplinary work with Presbytery's committees to provide educational resources/events for congregations. In as much as possible, training and resources should be integrated to the workings of Presbytery meetings.
- Council is asked to staff the Work Group by hiring, contracting, or using current personnel to provide vision, inspiration and support to the work.
- The Stewardship Work Group is urged to thoroughly assess or survey sessions and pastors in order to ascertain particular needs so that energies and resources might address the critical needs first.
- The Stewardship Work Group is encouraged to engage in ideas such as:
 - i. Approaching churches with multi-acreage, antiquated buildings structures and under-utilized facilities to encourage them to consider leveraging property, selling portions of property, relocating, and demolishing physical plants in order to advance God's Kingdom.
 - ii. Urging multiple congregations to use the same space/facilities to worship and engage in common mission/ministry. This would involve developing covenants to share expenses and in some cases, significantly expand the use of church property.
 - iii. Utilizing groups such as Partners for Sacred Spaces that specializes in helping churches with older sanctuaries and facilities to envision how partnering can attract newer resources to help bring others to Christ.
 - iv. Urging churches to consider the "Tithe" as the starting point in responding to God's Grace.
 - v. Suggesting to churches the use of both denominational and non-denominational resources to teach year-around Stewardship planning that might include: *The Stewardship Manual (PCUSA)*, *The New Consecration Sunday, Called To Serve, Celebrate the Faith, Courage to Care*, etc.
 - vi. Encouraging each congregation to establish a Wills' Emphasis ministry in their churches
 - vii. Creating among congregational cluster a passion to fund and support common needs within a cluster.
 - viii. Exploring possibilities of conducting a presbytery-wide capital campaign to fund adequately all efforts for congregational transformation, immigrant ministries and new church development.

Immigrant Ministries:

Immigrants Ministries are outreach responses to first and second-generation populations new to the United States.

We believe:

Jesus Christ calls His church to welcome strangers among us, "I was a stranger and you invited me in," (Matthew 25:35b) and we believe that the gospel is universal and undergirds the mission of the church. Jesus Christ calls Christians to go out into the world in order to be among them and to be with our immigrant brothers and sisters.

Leadership in our churches must be willing learners in order to minister to Immigrants by listening, asking questions, and becoming culturally competent and willing to experience God through different lenses.

Presbyterians have faithfully supported missionaries directly, given generously to mission budgets of local, regional and the national church wherein missionaries have freely witnessed to the love of Christ to millions in foreign lands with great success. Now many new Immigrant Christians have sojourned to the United States seeking the PCUSA as their spiritual home.

The number of racial ethnic persons in the Presbyterian Church is less than it should be. In 1996, the PCUSA acknowledged that the racial ethnic membership in the denomination is only 4.7%, when racial ethnics are more than 20% of the population in the United States." It is predicted that by the year 2035, the white population in the United States will be in the minority. It is past time for congregations to reflect that multi-cultural make-up of the universal body of Christ.

Therefore, we will educate the Presbytery to act on the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and sojourner in our midst.

- The Church Development Committee, the Leadership Development Committee, the Mission and Justice Committee, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and Presbytery Council will join in identifying and producing educational resources and events for Presbytery committees, pastors, educators and sessions. We will integrate Immigrant Ministry awareness with workings of the Presbytery meetings and committees.

Therefore, we will initiate and develop Latino Missions.

- The Latino Coordinator in partnership with the Latino Steering Committee, under the auspices of the Immigrant Work Group of the Church Development Committee, will do community assessment, demographic research, establish goals, and create partnerships for Immigrant Ministry.
- The Latino Steering Committee will provide funding, leadership, training and support for these missions as they are nurtured toward becoming a fellowship. Funding is predicated on evaluations and meeting specific goals established by each mission. Each mission is accountable to the Latino Steering Committee, which is accountable to the Church

Development Committee.

- On-going funding will be generated from several sources, including individual missions, churches' designating funds for Latino Ministries, Church Development Committee budget and General Assembly Grants, when appropriate.
- The Presbytery will celebrate these missions/fellowships during meetings and are encouraged to pray for them regularly. Presbytery will designate particular times wherein congregations are encouraged to observe individual immigrant ministries. The Immigrant Ministry Work Group working with the Latino Steering Committee and others will make resources available as needed.

Therefore, we will respond to immigrant groups, immigrant churches and leaders desiring to establish a relationship with the Presbytery of Charlotte.

- Presbytery Staff, the Committee on Ministry and the Church Development Committee will work together to ensure that proper hearings are available when requested.
- We will form guidelines and policies informed by other presbyteries as we design our approach to building a strong and healthy Immigrant Ministry.
- Funding will be available from the Church Development Committee to support immigrant groups as they network with churches and develop leadership for the mission.

New Church Development

New Church Development is the intentional planting of a new Presbyterian congregation.

We believe:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1-8) Making disciples for Jesus Christ is the primary purpose of the church and planting and creating new churches is one effective way to fulfill our being witnesses for Christ to the utmost part of the world.

That churches filled with transformed Disciples of Christ plant healthy churches, and developing new churches is an integral part of our stewardship responsibility to the Lord.

That strong spiritual and visionary leadership is essential to the success of every new church development.

That accountability is essential and that those who are entrusted as the organizers of a new church development are held responsible for the part they have in helping the church to grow and become vital.

That significant insight can be gained from groups outside the PCUSA who have been and continue to be effective in planting new churches.

Therefore, we will educate Presbytery and congregations regarding the biblical mandate to plant churches.

- The Church Development Committee will make educational resources and events available to Presbytery committees, pastors, educators and sessions and integrate with workings of Presbytery meetings and committees.
- The Church Development Committee will lift up inspiring and successful stories of new plants in and outside of the Presbytery to share the variety of models from house-churches to mega-churches

Therefore, we will routinely invite congregations or clusters of congregations to plant a New Church Development.

- The Church Development Committee and the Committee on Ministry, through routine Presbytery interactions and general appeals, may issue an invitation to congregations to plant a church.
- If there is an affirmative yes, then a consultation with that church or cluster of churches will occur to determine funding for the NCD.
- The Presbytery will establish funding involving partnerships between a church, cluster of churches and the Presbytery for the sake of planting new churches.

Therefore, we will identify and provide the best possible leadership that fits the particular new church development model.

- Using a spiritual discernment process, the New Church Development Work Group of the Church Development Committee working with a congregation or cluster of congregations will provide an understanding of what needs will be addressed, the population to be ministered to and the type of leadership necessary to move the new church forward.
- From this collaboration among stakeholders, we will work with the Committee on Ministry to secure the appropriate leadership.
- We will establish with the pastoral leadership prior to its inception goals, timelines, and means to encourage and evaluate the new church.

Therefore, we will provide consultation for those seeking to plant churches within the bounds of Presbytery.

- The Church Development Committee in response to a particular request may provide leadership and resources for immigrant fellowships now ready to become a New Church Development
- The Church Development Committee through its New Church Work Group will implement a discerning process aimed at helping congregations and clusters discern whether God is leading them to partner in planting a new congregation.

Crafted by the Church Development Committee in collaboration with many faithful witnesses throughout the Presbytery of Charlotte - *Rev. Dr. Millie Snyder, Chair*

ATTACHMENT
Characteristics of Healthy Churches

The Church Development Committee has identified several “Characteristics or Results of Healthy Churches.” We recognize there are many more characteristics, yet these are necessary for any congregation working on its health. Each church in the Presbytery is asked to measure its health in relationship to this list and the questions that follow:

Passion for Making Disciples (of) for Jesus Christ

- A healthy church has fallen in love with the world (Great Commission) and has a clear call to evangelism and spiritual development. A healthy church embraces the Great Commission as the purpose of its ministry.
 1. How much of your pastor’s & lay leaders’ time is spent on evangelism and spiritual development?
 2. What is the congregational support for this?
 3. How is this communicated to the congregation?

Embrace(s) (of) God’s Vision for the World

- A healthy church exists for the world. A healthy church has an outward-focused vision and ministry.
 1. Whom do you consider your “neighbors” and what is your “community of calling”?
 2. What percentage of your program ministry is outwardly focused rather than inwardly focused?
 3. Does your pastor’s job description include time helping in the community?
 4. How far-reaching is your outreach ministry?
 5. What are the benchmarks that reflect the church’s vision or mission/mission statement?

Vital Christ-Centered Worship

- A healthy church gathers for inspiring (and renewing) worship that proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 1. What are some of the creative ways you use to make announcements; take care of “other” business that does not take away from your worship experience?
 2. Is your worship intelligible to the stranger who attends?
 3. What creative tools are you using in worship-use of the talents/spiritual gifts of the congregation: uplifting music, technology, scripture, and prayer?
 4. What other forms of communication are used by the

congregation - Emails; Phone Trees; PowerPoint; Blogging, etc?

Empowered Servant Leadership

- A healthy church is led by servants of Jesus Christ who understand that their primary ministry is 'equipping the saints' for mission. These leaders are accountable and open in their ministry.
 1. Does your church provide on-going training for all leadership of the church?
 2. How do you make leadership development a priority?
 3. Do your leaders understand the duties and responsibilities of the office?
 4. Does the session give leaders authority and funding to act freely in their ministry?
 5. Does your church have a requirement for a certain number of hours of leadership training for its officers?
 6. How does your congregation support the leadership of the church?
 7. How do you create/encourage enthusiasm for serving as church leaders? (Fitting passions/spiritual gifts with area of service)
 8. Are strong personalities allowed to prevent effective leadership in your church?

Responsible Stewardship

- A healthy church calls its members to be faithful stewards of resources, giving their gifts in response to the gospel. A healthy church uses its own resources wisely and with open accountability.
 1. How does your church interpret the biblical basis for stewardship?
 2. Can stewardship in your church be interpreted as "responding to God's grace"?
 3. What is your responsibility to God?
 4. How do you interpret your church, your presbytery, your denomination's mission in regards to stewardship?
 5. Is stewardship interpretation "on-going"?
 6. How are your resources used to carry out the mission/vision of your church?
 7. How is that communicated to the congregation on a regular basis?

Culture of Accountability

- A healthy church calls its members to accountability for their own spiritual growth and their own ministry. A healthy church consistently evaluates ministry in order to proclaim effectively the gospel and make disciples. A healthy church understands that it is responsible for its own future in fulfilling its mission to make disciples.
 1. What is the process you use to evaluate the effectiveness of your mission and ministry?
 2. How do you hold church leadership and members accountable for their spiritual growth?
 3. Are leaders held accountable to the vision of growing a healthy church?

Grace-Filled Relationships

- A healthy church is characterized by loving, forgiving relationships between its members. A healthy church has a culture of hospitality and acceptance toward those who are new and newcomers.
 1. How aware are your church leaders of the climate/culture of the church?
 2. How well do your leaders and members understand the concept of “hospitality”?
 3. How intentional is focus on hospitality?
 4. What questions do you ask to determine whether you are a “welcoming” church?
 5. Do you ask for feedback from new members and newcomers?

Spiritually Equipped Members

- A healthy church is one that places emphasis on helping every member to discern their spiritual gifts, nurtures them in the faith and **places them** (equips them to serve) in ministries where their gifts are fully utilized.
 1. How does your church leadership help the members to discern their spiritual gifts?
 2. How are members invited/encouraged/equipped to use their spiritual gifts in the mission and ministry of the church?