

Thriving Congregations: What Are They Doing Right?

Big Tent 2015 workshop

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Outline of Workshop

- Define “thriving” in this context
- Compare “thriving” to “growth”
- Share some examples of thriving congregations
- Identify characteristics of thriving congregations (your ideas + my ideas)
- Suggest some next steps
- Share some resources



Thriving: A Definition

A thriving congregation is:

- Transformational
- Sustainable
- Adaptable



How does the concept of “thriving” relate to the concept of “growth”?

- don't have to be growing exponentially
- don't have to be large
- in fact, smaller congregations have some advantages:
 - can be tight-knit and supportive
 - can be more nimble



Stories of Thriving Congregations



Your turn! Part 1

- Share: Nab a Neighbor and talk about a thriving congregation.

What would you say that this congregation does exceptionally well?

- Switch: repeat
- TOTAL time = 2 minutes!



Your turn! Part 2

- Let's hear from you:

What are some characteristics
of thriving congregations
that you heard
in that story?



Top 10 Characteristics of Thriving Congregations

10. Are not afraid to try something new
9. Understand and use systems thinking
8. Have a strong congregational identity
7. Have moved into the 21st Century
6. Support new worshiping communities or immigrant fellowships



Top 10 Characteristics of Thriving Congregations

5. Have leadership that fits and a healthy organizational structure
4. Help people become better disciples
3. Have inspiring worship
2. Friendliness

AND THE NUMBER 1 CHARACTERISTIC:

1. Looking outward, not inward



Next Steps: What do we do with this?

- TALK about it!
- Do an appreciative inquiry
- Help your congregation accept change
- Do a self-inventory of outreach activities
- Take our strengths inventory survey
- Partner with a new worshiping community
- Take advantage of Mission Agency resources!



Resources

- US Congregations (strengths survey):
www.uscongregations.org
- Research Services (get this presentation):
www.presbyterianmission.org/research
- New Beginnings (get unstuck):
www.whatisourfuturestory.com/
- 1001 Worshiping Communities (learn):
<http://www.onethousandone.org/home.aspx>



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