

Assessment - a diagnostic tool

A harp is made up of many different strings, each string having a unique and distinct sound. Yet when one string is played in harmony with other strings, that harp can produce beautiful music. In the same way, the church is comprised of members who each have unique gifts and abilities. As members put their talents to use in a united effort, the church becomes effective in doing the work God has asked it to do.

Likewise, as a tuning fork helps to keep a string of a harp on the right pitch and in tune with the other strings, so the church assessment helps to keep church members and departments moving harmoniously together toward the same goal.

The Empowered Church assessment considers three key areas: *evangelistic readiness*, *visitor responsiveness*, and *ministry effectiveness*. These areas of church health are closely connected and set the evangelistic climate in the church. Let's take a closer look at each of these key areas.

Evangelism Readiness

One of the most important aspects of a successful evangelistic series is getting a crowd. It is disheartening to spend time and financial resources to prepare and plan for an evangelistic event when few from the community attend. Indeed, some churches have given up evangelistic meetings because of this reason.

However, experience shows that having good attendance requires more than sending out handbills and hoping people will come. The church can take many more proactive steps to increase turnout during its evangelistic efforts.

This component of the assessment will look at what the church currently does to prepare for evangelistic series and whether the church is really ready to conduct one. This assessment will also help the church focus on areas that have the greatest potential of increasing community attendance.

There are five key areas that the assessment evaluates to determine the church's *evangelism readiness*:

1. The church's recent evangelistic activity and results
2. Community seminars and events offered by the church
3. Bible studies conducted by members
4. Evangelism training for members
5. Number of positive contacts the church has in the community.

Just as a farmer prepares for the harvest by plowing the field, planting seeds, and cultivating the crop, so the church must prepare for its evangelistic series by connecting with people in the community, planting seeds of truth in their hearts, and nurturing positive relationships with them.

In the book *Ministry of Healing*, Ellen White writes, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"

Likewise, the church's *evangelism readiness* depends on making friends with those in the community and winning their confidence. It was once said that people don't care how much you know—until they know how much you care. The church assessment will determine if your church needs to strengthen these areas.

Visitor Responsiveness

Every person attending a church for the first time has certain ideas of what a positive experience entails. If these positive expectations are met, there is a greater chance the person will return. If they aren't met, the person will not return. Thus knowing what these expectations are and then meeting or even exceeding them is one of the most effective ways to increase positive and lasting church membership.

This component of the assessment evaluates five key areas to help the church determine its *visitor responsiveness*. These areas are:

1. Visitor attendance
2. Visitor training for members
3. Visitor awareness during the services of the church
4. Number of members inviting friends to church
5. Church visitor follow-up program.

For a church to exceed the expectations of those visiting, it requires focused effort and planning. Many of these expectations can be easily met if a deliberate decision is made to meet them by the church. The assessment will help the church evaluate its current effectiveness in connecting with visitors, as well as what it can do to be more effective.

Ministry Effectiveness

Generally, the *ministry effectiveness* of the church is the extent to which the church endeavors to strengthen the spirituality of each believer, especially those who are new in the faith.

However, there are two parts to church ministry: “in-reach” and “out-reach.” Not only is the church to share the three angels’ messages with those who have never heard it, it should also be concerned with the nurturing and discipleship of existing members. Indeed, effective outreach begins with meaningful in-reach.

The goal of the church should be more than baptisms—it should help foster genuine conversions. How effective are the ministries of the church in leading a person to a clearer understanding of biblical truth and a deeper commitment to Christ?

There are five key areas that can be evaluated to determine the church’s *ministry effectiveness*:

1. Sabbath school
2. Worship service
3. Prayer meetings and small groups
4. Church socials
5. The discipleship of members.

Ellen White wrote, “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work” (*Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887). For the church to be an instrument used by God to share the truth with others, it must have a living connection with Christ. The church assessment will help the church evaluate its effectiveness in its spiritual nurture and discipleship of its members.