

## POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

The purpose of this comprehensive assessment is to provide objective observations related to the congregation using gathered data. This data was then placed alongside general data to show how your congregation is doing by comparison. The ultimate purpose behind this assessment is to provide a platform from which the congregation may write its “Future Story.” That is, for the congregation to decide what direction to go and what action to take in order to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in this time and place. When congregations engage in such an assessment and visioning process, there are, generally, five basic choices for the future:

1. **Do Nothing Different:** This is frankly the line of least resistance. It does not require extra energy, creativity or the pain associated with change. The trend lines of the last ten years indicate where this option will likely lead. Nevertheless, deciding to “do nothing different” or to make only minor adjustments is a decision. It communicates an important message to church participants, the current pastor and any future pastor or participants.
2. **Mission Redefinition:** There are congregations that could be the right church in the right place if a significant shift is made in missional focus. This option calls for making hard choices to break with certain structural and programmatic ways of “doing church.” This option requires high passion, high energy and spiritual maturity as well as a high level of resources both financial and human. It is often a years-long process.
3. **Redevelopment:** This direction acknowledges that the congregation’s ministry is not sustainable as it is. Redevelopment can take a variety of forms and strategies as well as hybrid forms.
  - a. Relocation would involve selling the current facilities and using those assets to move to a new location where the congregation has more affinity or to a new facility that is the right size.
  - b. Redo Your Physical Presence: In this strategy the congregation would remain in the same neighborhood, but make major changes in its physical plant in order to better reach the population(s) in that neighborhood. This might be about ‘right sizing’ the facility, making it more usable and adaptable for current and future forms of ministry, or making it affordable.
  - c. Restart is a strategy that would completely close down the current congregation and restart as a new and different congregation. This strategy might make sense when a congregation has substantial assets but few people with energy for a new form of ministry that fits the needs of the immediate community where the demographics have changed significantly.
  - d. Nesting is a strategy that would involve using the majority of its assets to start a new congregation within the same building that would be a better fit for the neighborhood while the remainder of the assets would sustain the existing congregation.

- e. Merger usually takes the form of two churches coming together, choosing one location and pooling human and financial resources for an agreed-upon direction for their ministry. Another possibility is that the smaller congregation might become a satellite location of a larger congregation.
  - f. Lease-back is a unique strategy where the congregation sells a facility that is much larger than they need to a tenant or another buyer and leases back only the space that the congregation needs.
4. **Closure:** Sometimes a congregation has neither the people power nor the resources to continue its ministry well. This option would allow such a church to celebrate the many years of its ministry, to end the ministry with dignity and to allow its remaining assets to be used in a new form of ministry by others.