

# TIME FOR A CHECK-UP

In the Reformed Church, we believe that God wants every congregation to be a healthy, missional church. By “healthy” we mean pursuing Christ. By “missional” we mean pursuing Christ’s priorities in the world.

Each church is unique. Not one size or style fits all. However, there does appear to be four types of established churches\* when it comes to degrees of missional health and vitality. These typologies transcend size, ethnicity, location and style.

This packet is designed to help pastors and leaders identify which "type" best describes their current reality. This is not a technical diagnostic tool. Rather it is designed to give people a "feel" about the health of their church and to start conversations that are civil, compassionate and Christ honoring.

We have a saying: "There is no vitality without reality." Discerning one’s current reality may be probing and painful, but is it critical to moving forward. Jesus said in John 8:32, You shall know the truth (that's reality) and the truth will set you free (that's vitality). As leaders, we confront the facts with faith, honesty, hope and graciousness.

As you process this material, please keep in mind the following questions:

Which "type" most closely describes your congregation now?

What are some reasons for your assessment?

What do you see, feel and hear in your congregation?

How would your congregation assess itself?

George Bullard writes, “One of the most important questions you can ask around your congregation on a regular basis is, ‘What are the current signs of health and strength in our congregation on which we can build an excellent, effective future?’ ”

Part of reaching your *full kingdom potential* is to affirm what is good, right, and loving about your congregation, and seek to build on these characteristics.

*\*Our definition of an established church is a church born before 1993*

## The Healthy Missional Church

Vital Signs: Strong  
Frequency of Exercise: Consistently (80-100%)  
Intensity of Exercise: High  
Stress Response: Rises with Reserves  
Stress Recovery: Rapid  
Level of Awareness: Conscious

### What do we see? We See People CONSISTENTLY...

- ... coming to Christ
- ... integrating scripture into life and ministry
- ... engaging God in worship
- ... growing in Christ
- ... serving with their gifts
- ... loving and caring for each other
- ... rallying around a compelling vision
- ... praying together
- ... working collaboratively with other ministries
- ... trusting one another and working in harmony
- ... living and giving generously and sacrificially
- ... helping hurting people
- ... living with a sense of hunger for God
- ... believing in the leaders and the leaders believing in the people
- ... working through conflict constructively
- ... embracing evaluation as normal and natural

### What do we feel?

Anticipation  
Gratitude  
Accomplishment  
Enthusiasm and energy  
Engaged  
Unity and love  
Chaotic at times

### What do we hear?

We sense the presence of God here.  
We are glad to be a part of something special.  
We are making a difference in this community  
and beyond.  
We will do whatever it takes.  
How can we keep moving forward with God?

### Spiritual Discernment Question:

Lord, how do you want us to excel even more?

## The Stable Church

Vital Signs: Steady

Frequency of Exercise: Occasionally (50-79%)

Intensity of Exercise: Moderate

Stress Response: Quickly Winded by Current Capacity

Stress Recovery: Slow

Level of Awareness: Semi-Conscious

### What do we see? We See People OCCASIONALLY...

- ... coming to Christ
- ... integrating scripture into life and ministry
- ... engaging God in worship
- ... growing in Christ
- ... serving with their gifts
- ... loving and caring for each other
- ... rallying around a compelling vision
- ... praying together
- ... working collaboratively with other ministries
- ... trusting one another and working in harmony
- ... living and giving generously and sacrificially
- ... helping hurting people
- ... living with a sense of hunger for God
- ... believing in the leaders and the leaders believing in the people
- ... working through conflict constructively
- ... embracing evaluation as normal and natural

### What do we feel?

Safe and comfortable for most  
Low level of frustration for others who want more  
Self sufficient  
All in order organizationally  
Satisfied

### What do we hear?

We're doing fine.  
Who wouldn't like our church?  
We're a warm-and-friendly church.  
Let's talk about it at the next meeting.

### Spiritual Discernment Question:

Lord, how do you want us to break out of stability into vitality?

## The Critical Moment Church

Vital Signs: Weak

Frequency of Exercise: Inconsistently (15-49%)

Intensity of Exercise: Low

Stress Response: Requires Outside Assistance

Stress Recovery: May not recover from stress

Level of Awareness: Conscious

### What do we see? We See People INCONSISTENTLY...

- ... coming to Christ
- ... integrating scripture into life and ministry
- ... engaging God in worship
- ... growing in Christ
- ... serving with their gifts
- ... loving and caring for each other
- ... rallying around a compelling vision
- ... praying together
- ... working collaboratively with other ministries
- ... trusting one another and working in harmony
- ... living and giving generously and sacrificially
- ... helping hurting people
- ... living with a sense of hunger for God
- ... believing in the leaders and the leaders believing in the people
- ... working through conflict constructively
- ... embracing evaluation as normal and natural

### What do we feel?

Anxious  
Inadequate  
Fearful  
Confused

### What do we hear?

We are on a trajectory that we do not feel good about.  
Why are people leaving?  
Something is wrong.  
When we look in the mirror we are not what we used to be.  
This is our moment of truth.

### Spiritual Discernment Question:

Lord, how do you want us to use this desperation to become a healthy missional church?

## The At Risk Church

Vital Signs: Faint/Unreadable  
Frequency of Exercise: Rarely or Never (0-14%)  
Intensity of Exercise: Feeble  
Stress Response: Overwhelmed & Paralyzed  
Stress Recovery: Can't recover from the stress  
Level of Awareness: Conscious/Unconscious

### What do we see? We See People RARELY...

... coming to Christ  
... integrating scripture into life and ministry  
... engaging God in worship  
... growing in Christ  
... serving with their gifts  
... loving and caring for each other  
... rallying around a compelling vision  
... praying together  
... working collaboratively with other ministries  
... trusting one another and working in harmony  
... living and giving generously and sacrificially  
... helping hurting people  
... living with a sense of hunger for God  
... believing in the leaders and the leaders believing in the people  
... working through conflict constructively  
... embracing evaluation as normal and natural

### What do we feel?

Angry and blaming  
Sullen  
Inferior  
Grief and loss  
Denial  
Betrayed  
Defeated  
Poor congregational self image

### What do we hear?

Why even bother?  
No one is going to take my church away from me.  
If we only had \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in whatever) we would grow again.  
All we have to do is hang on and God will help us.  
Remember the good old days?

### Spiritual Discernment Question:

Lord, do you want us to become a living legacy church or a life transformation church?



## Established Church Typology

| Church Type                                    | Healthy Missional                         | Stable                             | Critical Moment                 | At Risk                       |
|--|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Vital Missional Health Signs</b>            | Strong                                    | Steady                             | Weak                            | Faint/Unreadable              |
| <b>Frequency of Missional Exercise</b>         | Consistently (80-100%)                    | Occasionally (50-79%)              | Inconsistently (15-49%)         | Rarely/Never (0-14%)          |
| <b>Intensity of Missional Exercise</b>         | High                                      | Moderate                           | Low                             | Feeble                        |
| <b>Stress Response to Missional Threats*:</b>  | Rises with reserves to face the challenge | Quickly winded by current capacity | Requires outside assistance     | Overwhelmed and paralyzed     |
| <b>Stress Recovery from Missional Threats*</b> | Quickly returns to normal                 | Slowly returns to normal           | May not recover from the stress | Can't recover from the stress |
| <b>Level of Awareness</b>                      | Conscious                                 | Semi-conscious                     | Conscious                       | Conscious/unconscious         |

A missional threat is anything – external or internal – that stressed the church to the point of threatening their capacity to stay the course:

**External threats:**

- Persecution or opposition to the Gospel
- Loosing a lease and being forced to relocate
- A major employer leaves the area resulting in loss of jobs for church members
- Changing demographics that alter the relevance of existing ministry strategies

**Internal threats:**

- Leadership conflicts
- Moral failure of a leader
- Financial pressures/stewardship
- Facility limitations that hinder growth