

A2 Indicators

Assessing Congregational Wellness and Ministry Effectiveness

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

— Acts 2: 42-47

Life in the Light
Vital Congregations
Mississippi Annual Conference

Preparing for the Indicators: A Guide for Scripture and Reflection

What is a “Healthy Church”? Acts 2: 42-47 defines the healthy church as:

- Growing both numerically and spiritually
- Living in community and experiencing low levels of conflict
- Possessing adequate resources for ministry (people, spiritual gifts, financial contributions, etc.)
- Providing significant impact for the community and connection of the Body of Christ through service and mission

This **Scripture Guide** provides an opportunity for Biblical study and reflection concerning the overall health of a congregation. Each theme relates to congregational “wellness” as experienced in the first century church and described in Acts 2: 42-47. Each congregation is encouraged to use the daily Scriptures and focus questions as a means of preparing for the indicators.

Suggestions:

- Use the guide with small groups, leadership teams, and staff to spiritually prepare for the indicators.
- Include the daily passages, themes, and focus questions in newsletters, worship service bulletins, and other regular congregational communication.
- Schedule congregational “discussion” time or Q&A opportunities to gather reflection and guidance from the congregation as a whole.

WEEK ONE

Theme: Growth. *And the Lord added to their number daily, those who were being saved. Acts 2: 47b*

Principle: Healthy churches grow numerically and spiritually.

Focus Questions: Is our congregation leading people into new and deeper relationships with God?

Does our congregation place a high value on evangelism and spiritual formation?

How does our congregation express and live the richness of the Great Commission in our daily lives and through the work of our church?

Day	Scripture	Theme
Sunday	Matthew 28: 18-20	Making Disciples
Monday	Acts 1: 7-8	The Gift of the Spirit
Tuesday	Colossians 4: 2-6	Devotion to Prayer
Wednesday	Matthew 5: 13-16	Living as Salt and Light
Thursday	Romans 10: 14-17	Bringing the Good News
Friday	Ephesians 3: 14-19	Rooted in Love
Saturday	Galatians 5: 22-23	Fruits of the Spirit

WEEK TWO

Theme: Community. *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of the all the people... Acts 2: 46-47a*

Principle: Healthy churches “do life together” and live faithfully in “common union” as the family of God.

Focus Questions: Is our congregation “building up the Body” through faithful community? Does our congregation deal effectively with conflict, “meeting together regularly” and protecting unity in the faith? In what ways does our congregation “live in harmony”?

Day	Scripture	Theme
Sunday	Hebrews 10: 24-25	Meeting Together Regularly
Monday	Matthew 5: 1-12	Blessings of the Faithful Life
Tuesday	Romans 15: 1-7	Building Up Our Brothers and Sisters
Wednesday	Galatians 3: 26-28	All Equal in the Sight of God
Thursday	Ephesians 4: 2-3	Protecting Unity
Friday	Psalms 133: 1	Living Together in Unity
Saturday	1 Peter 3: 8-9	Living Together in Harmony

WEEK THREE

Theme: Resources. *All the believers were together and had everything in common. Acts 2: 44*

Principle: Healthy churches cultivate adequate resources for ministry.

Focus Questions: Is our congregation cultivating and developing the people, stewardship support and gifts needed for providing effective ministry? How does the use of our congregation's resources reflect our congregation's priorities? Does our congregation consider the sharing of our resources a privilege or burden?

Day	Scripture	Theme
Sunday	1 Corinthians 12	Spiritual Gifts
Monday	Ephesians 4: 16	Each Part for the Whole
Tuesday	James 1: 13-18	God Provides What is Best for Us
Wednesday	Matthew 4: 1-11	Discovering our Priorities
Thursday	1 Timothy 6: 17	God Provides What We Need
Friday	1 Peter 4: 10	Commanded to Share our Gifts
Saturday	2 Corinthians 8: 3-4	The Privilege of Giving

WEEK FOUR

Theme: Connection and Mission. *They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Acts 2: 45*

Principle: Healthy churches connect in ministry through service and mission within and beyond the Body of Christ.

Focus Questions: Is our congregation responding to the needs around us through faithful servanthood and mission? In what ways does our congregation practice hospitality? Does our congregation place a high value on loving others, even those unlike ourselves?

Day	Scripture	Theme
Sunday	Philippians 4: 10-19	Responding to the Needs of Others
Monday	Romans 12: 9-13, Isaiah 58:7	Practicing Hospitality
Tuesday	Matthew 16: 25	Finding True Life
Wednesday	John 13: 34-35	Loving Others as Christ Commands
Thursday	Matthew 20: 20-28	Becoming a Servant
Friday	Matthew 25: 14-30	Investing Ourselves Boldly
Saturday	Ephesians 5: 2	Living a Life of Love

Completing the A2 Indicators Assessment

1. Short for Acts 2, the A2 Indicators provide a snapshot of your congregation's overall health. It is not a complete assessment but, rather, a set of indicators that measure the general well-being of your congregation based on twelve categories for effective ministry.
2. The A2 Indicators utilize a "team" approach for collecting data and information, and it is encouraged that a team of church members participate in completing the assessment. Such a team must include, but is not limited to, the pastor, council chair, lay leader, and at least one "newer" member of the congregation.
3. The A2 Indicators use a rubric scale for providing a measurable response to each category. This scale provides descriptors which define each score. Not all descriptors will thoroughly describe the full scope of ministry or issue for each congregation. Thus, each congregation is asked to select scores based on the best possible information and relation to its specific situation.
4. The A2 Indicators also use the inclusion of supporting data in the form of statistics and ministry narratives that allow for a more thorough description of a congregation's ministry situation. Please include all supporting data and documents. The A2 Indicators utilize characteristics that promote general health among congregations. However, they do not, in all circumstances, provide the nuance for particular ministries within a congregation.
5. The A2 Indicators should begin as a spiritual endeavor, seeking to provide a "wellness" picture of the congregation, and so each congregation should begin by prayerfully and reflectively considering the work of God in this process.
6. The A2 Indicators raise the value of accountability while congregations thoughtfully reflect on their current ministry effectiveness. Thus, while the pastor, council chair, and lay leader are asked to sign the indicators affirmation page to verify the information provided, all members of the congregation are encouraged to also signify their participation in the process.

Please note: The A2 Indicators are based on a church of 50 or fewer in worship. You must adjust descriptors marked with (*) to account for worship attendance over 50. To do this, simply divide your average worship attendance by 50, round off, then multiply the result by the numbers stated in the descriptors. Example: Your attendance is 295, so you divide by 50 and get 5.9. Round off to 6. For every indicator with a (*), you will multiply all the descriptors by 6. In the first indicator, Servant Ministries, for instance, your church would need to have 18 or more (3x6=18) servant ministries for your church to score a 4. Indicators with no (*) do not change according to worship attendance.

A2 Indicators: Assessing Church Health

For each indicator, please select the description that most closely reflects your congregation.

***1. Servant Ministries:** Servant ministries are defined as *persons served in mission by ministries that impact the community, build up the Body and bring people into relationship with God.* These include care ministries within the local congregation as well as ministries *beyond the walls of the church* (i.e. Acts 2: 42-47) — *“The church living as the church on a regular basis.”*

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Effective Ministry	Church has 3 or more servant ministries that provide significant impact.	Church has 1 or 2 servant ministries that provide significant or moderate impact.	Church’s servant ministries provide moderate to low impact.	Church does not participate in any servant ministries.

Please list below your congregation’s servant ministries that impact the life of your community and beyond. (Attach additional information as needed.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

2. Core Values: Core values are defined as *nonnegotiable principles that define the meaning and practice of a congregation within a particular contextual framework for ministry* — i.e. your local congregation and surrounding community.

Please circle:	4	3	2	1
Vision/Values/Goals	A formal, clearly articulated list of core values are visible in the building and regularly shared with the congregation in various print/preaching opportunities.	A formal, clearly articulated list of core values has been developed.	A list of core values is evolving, but has not been clearly articulated.	There has been no discussion or articulation of core values for this congregation.

Please include any specific core values or vision/mission statements for the church developed in the last 5 years.

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***3. Baptisms/Professions of Faith:** Please provide the number of baptisms and adult professions of faith in the past 2 and 3 years.

3 years ago: _____ 2 years ago: _____

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Baptisms/ Professions of Faith/ Confirmation	Church has grown by at least 5 baptisms/professions of faith in the past year.	Church has grown by at least 3 baptism/professions of faith in the past year.	Church has grown by at least 1 baptism/profession of faith in the past year.	0 baptisms/professions of faith in the past year.

4. Internal Dialogue/Levels of Conflict: Please include a list of any ongoing conflicts that inhibit the work and effectiveness of the congregation.

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Levels of Conflict	Congregation has little conflict and addresses any conflict with constructive dialogue and an open process.	Congregation has moderate levels of conflict but addresses any conflict constructively.	Congregation has moderate levels of conflict but ignores or fails to address any conflict constructively.	Congregation is experiencing high levels of conflict.

Current ongoing conflicts (general descriptions):

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Please provide a narrative of historical conflicts important to understanding the life of the congregation. (You may attach a separate sheet if necessary.)

5. Pastoral Tenure: Please include a list of pastors for the past 10 years along with tenure dates.

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Pastoral Tenure	1 pastor in the past 10 years.	2 pastors in the past 10 years.	3 pastors in the past 10 years.	3+ pastors in the past 10 years.

List of pastors for the past 10 years:

-
-
-
-

6. Ministries to Children and Students: Ministries to children and students are defined as *age appropriate, ongoing ministries that nurture, grow, and lead young persons into meaningful relationships with God and with others.*

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Children and Students	Church provides an excellent, age appropriate ministry that significantly impacts the lives of young persons via multiple outreach ministries beyond Sunday School, UMYF, etc.	Church provides a strong age-appropriate ministry that impacts the lives of young people via Sunday School, UMYF, and at least one other outreach ministry.	Church provides age-appropriate ministry for young people via Sunday School and UMYF.	Church provides a poor or non-existent ministry.

Please provide a list of all ministries to children and students. Please be specific about attendance according to age groups.

***7. Average Worship Attendance:** Please include appropriate documentation to support the data (i.e. weekly attendance reports, etc.).

Please circle:	4	3	2	1
Average Worship	Average worship attendance has grown substantially (more than 25% cumulative) in the past five years.	Average worship attendance has grown (0-25% cumulative) in the past five years.	Average worship attendance has remained the same (with some fluctuation) in the past five years.	Average worship attendance has declined in the past five years.

Please include average worship attendance for the following:

20 years ago:	_____	10 years ago:	_____
5 years ago:	_____	1 year ago:	_____
Present:	_____	Five-year growth rate:	_____

***8. Giving Units:** A giving unit is defined as *a regular attendee or household who gives to the church on a consistent basis.*

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Giving Units	30 or more faithful giving units	20-29 faithful giving units	12-19 faithful giving units	Fewer than 11 faithful giving units

Please include your congregation's average number of faithful giving units below.

20 years ago:	_____
10 years ago:	_____
5 years ago:	_____
1 year ago:	_____
Present:	_____

9. Fiscal Development and Budget Analysis: Please include a percentage breakdown of the budget for the areas listed. You may need to combine local areas or line items to calculate percentages. Also, please attach an income/expense report for previous year.

% for Staff/Personnel: _____ % for Maintenance/Admin. Costs: _____
 % for Missions/Outreach: _____ % for Connectional Support: _____
 % for Debt Reduction: _____ % for Ministry Programs/Other: _____

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Budget Analysis	Our congregation over-funds its budget and actual operating expenses and provides significant "second mile" support for missions and ministry.	Our congregation funds its budget but has little available for "second mile" giving or projects.	Our congregation under-funds its budget projections, but funds its actual operating expenses (Congregation pays its current bills only).	Our congregation under-funds its actual operating expenses (Can't pay bills).

10. Connectional Stewardship: Please include the percentage of apportionments your congregation has paid in the past three years along with the percentage of your operating budget that apportionments represent.

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Connectional Stewardship	Congregation paid 100% of apportionments.	Congregation paid 75-99% of apportionments.	Congregation paid 50-74% of apportionments.	Congregation paid less than 49% of apportionments.

Apportionment % Paid

Apportionment % of Budget

3 years ago: _____
 2 years ago: _____

11. Average Attendee Tenure: Please include the average membership tenure of your congregation. This includes tenure of active worship attendees only.

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Membership Tenure	5 years of average attendee tenure	10 years of average attendee Tenure	15 years of average attendee tenure	20+ years of average attendee tenure

Please provide a demographic breakdown of membership ages, races, and membership tenures on separate sheet.

12. Condition of Facilities: Please rate (excellent, good, average, below average, poor) the quality of your facilities. Include any major projects or needs at this time.

Please Circle:	4	3	2	1
Facilities Analysis	Facilities are in excellent condition with appropriate and useful designated ministry space.	Facilities are in good condition with mostly appropriate and useful designated ministry space.	Facilities are in average condition with need for more appropriate and useful designated ministry space.	Facilities are in poor condition with little appropriate and useful designated ministry space.

Is your facility handicapped-accessible? Yes _____ No _____ If no, what plans do you have to make it accessible?

Major projects or facility needs:

-
-
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Church Health Category	Assessment	Comments
Servant Ministries		
Core Values		
Baptisms/Professions of Faith		
Internal Dialogue/Levels of Conflict		
Pastoral Tenure		
Ministries to Children and Students		
Average Worship Attendance		
Giving Units		
Fiscal Development/Budget		
Connectional Stewardship		
Average Attendee Tenure		
Condition of Facilities		
Total:		

Congregational Affirmation

Affirmation Question: Reflecting on your congregation's core values (stated in Indicator #2), how has this process affirmed or challenged your congregation's view of its purpose and ministry? How should you celebrate, change, or edit your core values to reflect this process?

Congregation: _____

Date: _____

After prayerful consideration, study, and reflection, we celebrate and affirm our congregation's assessment of our ministry effectiveness.

Pastor: _____

Lay Leader: _____

Chair of the Council: _____

Other Members:

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