

## PARADIGMS FOR MISSIONAL FORMATION

What if the biggest challenges we face in the work of God’s mission today are *adaptive* ones, not *technical* ones? What if we don’t need to figure out a better way to do what we’ve always done, we need to figure out a new way to be the people God is calling us to be? As congregations and ministries move forward, it is helpful to consider some of the paradigm shifts we face. This offers a concrete way of imagining the breadth and depth of faithfully living into God’s planned future for us.

FIXED PARADIGM	GROWING PARADIGM
<i>Church</i> is a place assumed to be an important part of people’s lives and the world. Therefore, we expect people to want to be part of a congregation.	<i>Church</i> is a community gathered by the Spirit and blessed to be a blessing. Church is less a noun, more a verb; less a place, more a way of life.
<i>The congregation</i> is an organization focused on serving its members. Membership is how one belongs to the congregation and how it belongs to you.	<i>The congregation</i> is a mission outpost and is therefore focused on reciprocal relationships in the neighbourhood, city, and world.
<i>Ministry</i> is done through programs which address perceived problems (e.g., “We don’t have youth; we need youth ministry.”) and are directed by the pastor.	<i>Ministry</i> is about vocation. Vocation is living out the spiritual gifts given to us in baptism. Vocation happens in relationships with all people.
<i>Outreach</i> is about doing nice things for others who are in need. We share something we have with those we perceive as our responsibility to serve.	<i>Outreach</i> is a combination of advocacy, relationship building and service.
<i>Evangelism</i> is about getting new members, because more members means more money to survive to keep doing what we’ve always done.	<i>Evangelism</i> is about sharing our faith stories in spiritual friendships trusting the Holy Spirit is at work ahead of us.
<i>Worship</i> is about expressing praise to God in a comfortable setting with people we know. Regular attendance fulfills the cultural expectation of religious life.	<i>Worship</i> shapes us into the kind of people God is calling us to become. Liturgy is the ‘work of the people’ and so it is diverse and contextual in each location.
<i>Christian Education</i> is focussed on gaining knowledge about the Bible and passing on the Lutheran confessional tradition. (But it’s optional.)	<i>Christian Education</i> is about making disciples of Jesus. It is centered on faith practices in the home, workplace, and together in the congregation.
<i>Congregational Life/Fellowship</i> really means social events. It looks like coffee hour, potluck dinners and saying good morning when passing the peace.	<i>Congregational Life</i> is about creating a culture of hospitality, service, discipleship, and prayer within the congregation. It’s our collective spirituality.
<i>Stewardship/Finance</i> are essentially the same thing; it’s about how we’re going to keep the pastor and the lights on.	<i>Stewardship</i> is about how we are using all the resources God has given us. <i>Finance</i> is about aligning our money with our mission priorities.
<i>Lay Leaders</i> serve out of duty; (e.g. “Whose turn is it to serve on council; there aren’t enough volunteers.”) <i>Pastors</i> work hard, trying to give people what they want. They are busy meeting needs, solving problems, answering questions and being the expert.	<i>Congregational Leadership</i> is a dynamic partnership between clergy and lay leaders that cultivates a new environment fostering missional creativity. Leaders work together asking questions, inviting others to serve, and loving people into a new way of being church.
<i>Decisions</i> are made by the leaders. Council delegates the management of day to day tasks and programs to staff. The congregation votes on major things once or twice per year.	<i>Decisions</i> are made through spiritual discernment. The more participants in a decision-making process, the wiser it will be. Council and staff are lead-learners.

This resource was developed for congregational use in the ELCA. It was adapted for use in the ABT Synod, ELCIC, 2015. For more information, contact Julianne Barlow, Assistant for Mission at [julianne@albertasynod.ca](mailto:julianne@albertasynod.ca) or 587-439-1937.

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