

## **Competency Exercise**

### **Leading the Church into Mission and Interpreting the Faith for the Church**

For the competency exercise joining *Leading the Church into Mission and Interpreting the Faith for the Church*, the student will design and test a hypothesis for adaptive change in her or his congregation. The student will demonstrate that she or he has met the LM competency goals by conducting a study, leading an exercise in the congregation, and writing a congregational analysis and brief proposal on the potential for adaptive change. See details, below.

The student will submit to the faculty members a portfolio of the following materials:

- a critically written credo (2,000 words) concerning the relation of theology (past and present) and congregational leadership today, which includes
  - a statement concerning the significance and value that theology should hold for contemporary congregational life;
  - a statement about the changing nature of the church and its mission today that shows why adaptive change is needed; this statement will be formulated by drawing both on theological resources and on contemporary discussions of congregational leadership.
  - a statement about the nature and purpose of pastoral leadership in a changing church; this statement will be formulated by drawing both on theological resources and on contemporary discussions of congregational leadership;
- A research paper (2,000 words) that focuses on the experience with and reflection on the issue chosen for adaptive change. In this paper the student will 1) use both primary theological resources (texts written by the theologians themselves) and secondary resources (scholarly work analyzing the doctrinal questions at the heart of the issue(s)) to develop a theological perspective on the issue(s) (seven eighths of the paper); 2) reflect on how the theological analysis deepens and/or changes the analysis of the ministry and options for responding to it (an eighth of the paper);
- A congregational analysis paper (1,500 words)
- A link to a video of the exercise led in the congregation
- A Proposal (500 words)
- Surveys from congregational participants in the exercise

Two faculty members (one from *Leading the Church into Mission* and one from *Interpreting the Faith for the Church*) will grade the competency exercise. Students will receive two grades for the exercise—one for each curricular area covered. Students will also receive a rubric evaluating their work.

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### **LM Competency Exercise Instruction Details**

#### General Explanation

The core of the LM curriculum at LTS is learning how to identify adaptive challenges in the church and learning to mobilize people to do adaptive change work.

The LM Competency is a longer version of the Congregational Analysis assignment that you did in LM520 plus a new piece of work. Now that you have completed the required core of the LM curriculum, you have learned more about leadership for adaptive change since taking that introductory course. This competency is therefore your second opportunity to demonstrate the competency goals you have met in this area. (Your capstone will be your third and final opportunity.)

For your LM520 congregational analysis, you chose one shift in congregational culture from Tony Robinson's book *Transforming Congregational Culture*, and correlated it with a specific issue in your congregation that you researched and interpreted for its potential for adaptive change. In this exercise, you will work the other way around: start with an issue in your congregation and correlate it with the deeper shift(s) in congregational culture that it represents. Your issue can be either a problem or an opportunity but it must be something that merits further study. Your issue can be the same or different from the issue you studied for LM520. Most important of all is that your issue be an issue that you are curious about and you do not already think you know the answers to!

You will engage in the same three modes of study that you did in LM520—direct observation, artifact review, and/or interview—and your reading will be the same texts, plus any other reading you have done since LM520 that is relevant to your issue.

The new piece of work will be an exercise in leadership in your congregation. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your skills in mobilizing people for adaptive change. You will use one of the methods you have learned in LM: the one-on-one, power analysis, time line, shield/award, Appreciative Inquiry, A-A-D interview, Chait exercises on governing, etc.

You will then produce two pieces of written work: a congregational analysis, and an essay that realistically assesses the potential for future congregational change on this issue and proposes future work.

### Step-by-Step Instructions

#### **I. (Re)read the following:**

- Robinson, *Transforming Congregational Culture*
- Thumma, "Methods for Congregational Study"
- Block, "Questions are More Transforming than Answers"
- other relevant reading in the LM curriculum and beyond (consult with me)

#### **II. Conduct your Study**

- A. Draft a hypothesis that you plan to study: "*My congregation is changing from \_\_\_\_\_ culture to \_\_\_\_\_ culture because \_\_\_\_\_ and will have the potential to do so if \_\_\_\_\_.*"

Note #1: See the examples, below. This statement should be a hypothesis, not a declaration such as “My congregation needs to get rid of committees.”

Note #2: There are three parts to this statement, all of which you need to test through study. 1. Is change really underway? 2. Is change happening because of the reason(s) you think? And perhaps most importantly (because most difficult to discern) 3. Is your hunch correct about what adaptive work needs to happen? The third part cannot be a technical change like “if people get properly trained” or “if we switch to a narrative budget.” It has to be adaptive work: a change in fundamental priorities, beliefs, or habits. That means it will almost certainly be controversial and difficult.

- B. Interview at least two people involved in or implicated by the change. Ahead of time, you will have prepared “powerful” questions (Block) that help people engage the adaptive change you have in mind. Your questions will test your hypothesis and they will at the same time start to “give the work back” to the people. Do not disguise your own agenda as questions but make them real questions about which you are curious. Listen carefully to the responses you receive and improvise as necessary to get more.
- C. Review any artifacts that your congregation has produced about the relevant ministry (“artifacts” can include data, documents, historical records—anything created by people).
- D. Observe the relevant ministry directly.

Note: The study techniques in B, C, and D (interview, reviewing artifacts, and direct observation) are the skills of congregational analysis and form the basis of your interpretation of the potential for a shift in congregational culture. They test your hypothesis. Not all issues are equally amenable to all techniques; you will have to use your discretion and imagination to find the right ways of studying the hypothesis you have chosen. The point of a study is this: it helps you to step away from your everyday, taken-for-granted perceptions and gives you “balcony” perspective.

Competency Goal being met:      *Student will study a congregational context.*

### **III. Lead an Exercise**

Convene a group or a series of individuals for an exercise in mobilizing adaptive change. You have already practiced several types of exercises in your LM courses (see above). Choose a method suitable for the issue at hand. Aim for an hour-long exercise. Videotape yourself leading it.

Competency Goal being met:      *Student will execute leadership.*

### **IV. Write an Analysis**

▪Write a 1,500 paper with your hypothesis statement as your opening thesis. The entire paper will support or refute that thesis. That means, on the one hand, that you will not simply “write





Study: attendance records  
past curricula used  
observing Sunday School

Possible Exercise: an Appreciate Inquiry on Sunday School with SS teachers

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“My congregation has an opportunity right now to begin changing its culture from democracy to discernment because we are trying to decide whether to launch a capital campaign, and will have the potential to do so if we base our choices on what we believe the Bible calls us to practice in terms of stewardship rather than on the bottom line.”

Study: past practices around decision-making  
Interviews with trustees

Possible Exercise: a bible study on stewardship with the trustees

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“My congregation is changing its culture from fellowship to hospitality because we just voted to be ONA and want to do more than take a vote but really become open and affirming, and we will have the potential to do so if we discern what inclusion really means to us—are we a congregation that believes more in equal acceptance of all or preferential option for some?”

Study: interviews  
Interpret the ONA statement adopted

Exercise: Timeline, Shield, and Award exercise on past inclusion efforts/practices

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“My congregation is being challenged to change its evangelism culture from getting people in to going out where people are, because we are dying, and we will have the potential to do so if we are willing to expand our notion of what living the gospel of Jesus Christ means.”

Study: windshield study or demographic study of the town or neighborhood

Exercise: a field trip to SoulCycle to learn why millennials are so “religious” about it