



READINESS 360

Multiply your impact.

Readiness 360 Executive Report

For Lancaster United Methodist Church

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Overview

Congratulations for being willing to engage in a serious conversation about your readiness to reach new people in new ways! The Christian movement in North America was strong for so many generations because churches planted new churches that planted new churches. Untold thousands of churches, decade after decade, state after state! Only a small percentage of today's churches still have multiplication of ministry on their radar. Your church does - and that sets you apart!

Lancaster United Methodist Church asked several of its leaders and participants to participate in the *Readiness 360* process. The survey many of you took assesses your church's spiritual and practical readiness for faithful and effective ministry in the 21st century. **59 persons** took the *Readiness 360*, a mix of staff, key leaders and active ministry participants.

Readiness 360 assesses four critical capacities for multiplying thriving ministries. In the rating system below, your church's level of multiplication energy is indicated by the number of rabbits (God's most adorable multipliers). The more multiplication energy your church has, the more ready you will be to start something new. Lancaster United is strongest in terms of **Spiritual Intensity** and is most challenged in terms of **Cultural Openness**.

Key:

 In Crisis  Not Ready  Ready In Many Respects  More Than Ready

Spiritual Intensity

In many respects, Lancaster United is on fire in its love for God, but there is also some hesitation to go the full mile. It is well worth exploring what is limiting you in the area of Spiritual Intensity. You are so close to having the fuel necessary to multiply ministry.

Dynamic Relationships

In some respects, your church has seen some amazing relationships and friendships across the years. However, the DNA of these relationships is not currently indicative of the church as a whole. You have some work to do in terms of cultivating trust within the church and relating effectively to folks who are different from the majority of the members.

Missional Alignment

Many folks at your church have a good sense of where God is calling you to go, but others are not aligned with this point of view. There is seldom enough personnel or financial resources to run in many directions at once. Now is a time for serious conversation about Lancaster United's priorities.

Cultural Openness

On one hand, many in the church want to reach diverse people, but many in the church still have great apprehension about what this might mean in terms of changing the face of Lancaster United. There may be some limitations in terms of how far the church is able to reach toward different kinds of people in the next few years. Open communication will be critical.

Spiritual Intensity - 83%

All great Christian movements are intense spiritually, marked by a deep love for God and a surrendering to what God is seeking to do through human beings. It is critical that a spiritual fire burns within the hearts and souls of those leading and participating in the life of the church. Without personal passion for Christ and robust imagination as to what is possible as we follow Christ, a church will lack an adequate source of spiritual energy for vital and multiplying ministry.

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In your church:

- Many people have an expectation of encountering the living Christ personally and/or in the congregation.
- Practicing spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, Christian works, etc.) is an important part of life together.
- People are willing to take risks as an expression of their faith and trust in God.
- Leaders - paid and unpaid - demonstrate spiritual vitality.

Areas of Relative Strength	Score	Areas of Potential Improvement	Score
1. People report meeting the living Christ at some point in their life.	90%	1. People report utilizing their spiritual gifts and talents.	70%
2. There is a spiritual expectancy in the air. People are watching and expecting God to do something amazing.	90%	2. At your church, sometimes God moves you beyond your fears, so that you speak, give and move boldly.	74%
3. People have found that hard work and financial sacrifice pays off richly in spiritual fruit.	90%	3. People practice good routines and habits in order to grow spiritually.	77%

Dynamic Relationships - 77%

Helping people to grow spiritually as disciples of Jesus depends in large part on our relational skills - our relationship with God and with others. A church's people must develop good habits for leading others into a transformative relationship with God through Christ.

In some respects, your church has seen some amazing relationships and friendships across the years. However, the DNA of these relationships is not currently indicative of the church as a whole. You have some work to do in terms of cultivating trust within the church and relating effectively to folks who are different from the majority of the members.

Your ability to form relationships with new people is colored by:

- The practice of strong welcoming behaviors.
- A strong track record of bringing people from the outside into participation in the community of faith.
- Positive experience partnering with other leaders and groups.
- A dependency on a few people to do a lot of the work. There is a need for greater teamwork and leader development.
- Leaders - paid and unpaid - who may be struggling to work together.

Areas of Relative Strength	Score	Areas of Potential Improvement	Score
1. People are okay with the idea that your church could grow.	91%	1. Your church is committed to team-based ministry.	51%
2. Over the past three years, it is common for people to come to new faith in Christ through an encounter with your church.	87%	2. Your church seems committed to doing things in a way that is oriented to guests and visitors.	57%
3. Your church has a healthy, trusting relationship with other churches and ministries in the community.	86%	3. People have the experience of inviting friends and neighbors who, in turn, become active participants in the church's life.	63%

Missional Alignment - 77%

Highly fruitful churches consistently prioritize the investment of their resources (time, talent, treasure) according to their biblical vision and mission. Plans and major initiatives must stem clearly from biblical mandates and a quest for fruitfulness, in sync with a church's distinctive callings that have unfolded across the years. There is a willingness to let go of strategies that aren't bearing as much fruit. The more churches do this the better they are aligned.

Many folks at your church have a good sense of where God is calling you to go, but others are not aligned with this point of view. There is seldom enough personnel or financial resources to run in many directions at once. Now is a time for serious conversation about Lancaster United's priorities.

To this end, your church has:

- A clear understanding of our mandate to reach new people.
- Alignment to a clear direction.
- The ability to make decisions about resources based on priority as opposed to pleasing people or maintaining status quo.
- A shared sense of competency about the church's ability to start new ministries.
- Clarity about the core principles of the church's faith.
- Passionate support for the church's direction.

Areas of Relative Strength	Score	Areas of Potential Improvement	Score
1. Your church focuses on God's abundance, not on your lack of resources.	90%	1. People believe that following correct procedure is sometimes more important than mission advancement.	46%
2. People think in terms of the church's mission more than "what's in it for them" personally.	90%	2. People accept the fact that expanding ministry makes it impossible to know everyone.	52%
3. Your church's mission helps connect people's compassion to others who are suffering or spiritually estranged from God.	89%	3. Your church is willing to invest for the long term and for major advance, even when the project will run in the red for a few years.	62%

Cultural Openness - 75%

Since the first century, effective churches have been reaching across cultural boundaries to share the Christian good news with diverse people, who begin with different experiences, perspectives, and stories. Churches that exhibit fortress behaviors or who spend excessive time mourning social change often have difficulty sharing life with new kinds of people.

On one hand, many in the church want to reach diverse people, but many in the church still have great apprehension about what this might mean in terms of changing the face of Lancaster United. There may be some limitations in terms of how far the church is able to reach toward different kinds of people in the next few years. Open communication will be critical.

Your congregation's capacity for embracing new cultures (e.g. socio-economic, racial/ethnic, generational, etc.) is marked by:

- Attitudes and behaviors that indicate some difficulties in crossing cultural boundaries, especially with your neighbors.
- A good ability to form meaningful community with people who puzzle and/or offend you in certain respects.
- Some anxiety about increasing diversity in your church.
- Energy for working with different kinds of people.
- Difficulty in sharing power with new people.
- Mixed experiences that may make it difficult to reach recent immigrant populations.
- Mixed experiences that may make it difficult to reach young people.

Areas of Relative Strength	Score	Areas of Potential Improvement	Score
1. People feel that they value the ideas of young people.	88%	1. You have a mix of newcomers and old-timers in leadership at your church.	51%
2. People report experiencing a sense of common humanity with people who are different than themselves.	87%	2. People commonly credit persons of other origins for having taught them things.	63%
3. People have a positive attitude toward their neighbors who have different instincts, tastes or points of view.	86%	3. People believe that your church is building relationships with young people (ages 18-30).	63%

Leader Tips

These tips were generated for leaders - paid and unpaid - at Lancaster United given specific patterns of response throughout the survey. After you have read through each tip discuss their priority as a team and implement one at a time. If you experience any difficulty in the prioritization process or if you have more than 3-5 tips, we recommend engaging an experienced facilitator or coach.

Leaders at Lancaster United display some readiness for leading the church on a robust ministry journey in the days ahead. There are also significant areas where leader growth is needed. The leader team that the church needs to multiply ministry is not yet fully in place. A good ministry coach could prove extremely helpful.

Tip 1: Invite the Holy Spirit to move you beyond your fears. Within the most dynamic movements of God, it has long been known that you can't "out-give God" not as individuals and not as faith communities. Churches and people who take financial risks to orient their lives toward God's work in the world invariably report that their needs are met, very often in ways that inspire awe and wonder. If there is push back in your congregation over ideas that would result in a financial risk it might let you know that a stewardship alignment check is needed. There are many resources available for prayer and study, including *The Heart That Gives: Seven Traits of Joyful Stewardship* by Fr. Thomas J. Connery. See also *Multiply Your Impact* by Paul Nixon and Christie Latona.

Tip 2: Rid your church of lone ranger ministry mentality (where a few people try to do too much of the work). When a particular project or ministry depends upon only one or two people, we fail to position the church or its people for growth. It is often difficult to break this habit! One of the first steps is for leaders to agree that they will let a particular project or initiative rest until a team can be rallied to lead it. A good rule of thumb is to wait to start (or stop) any ministry project until at least five passionate, committed people have enlisted to share in leadership. Those five should then recruit others from the margins of church life and from beyond! One of the classic books on this principle is *Doing Church as a Team* by Wayne Cordeiro. Another book, *Exponential*, by Dave and Jon Ferguson, shows how each leader and ministry team member can intentionally mentor at least one other person, so that the church's total ministry capacity is always expanding.

Tip 3: Simplify and concentrate on reaching people in your mission zone. You have the resources to do the most important things you need to do. Do you have the will? All over the world, many of the most rapidly multiplying church movements share this in common: the people are poor and the churches have very little money. In the west, we tend to create ministry with very high overhead, along with the illusion that we can't afford to do what it takes to grow ministry. In reality, churches always have the resources to do what they most need to do. Your church may need to seriously reassess its facility and staffing strategies in order to be nimble and effective in the 21st century. A competent ministry consultant may save you several years in sorting through these issues wisely. Printed resources that might assist in the conversation would include *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* by Andy Stanley and *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them* by Ed Stetzer, et al. *Multiply Your Impact* by Paul Nixon and Christie Latona is a Readiness 360 resource that could help your lead team start thinking like a ministry-multiplying church. See also Mike Breen's book, *Building a Discipling Culture*.

Tip 4: Empower and educate people to simplify decision-making. It may be that many groups in your church seek to function as gatekeepers. A mission group ideally exists to do good in the world, and to encourage others to do likewise. We get into trouble when one group becomes the clearinghouse that tells other groups what they can and cannot do. It is good for a church to have a clear mission statement and clear boundaries and values on what we do and what we don't do. Beyond that, we want to cultivate a community of trusting permission for any group that wishes to take positive initiative in line with our church's mission and values. Accountability systems must exist, but they should be minimal and simple. If the issue is empowering leaders and their teams to take initiative and make decisions without constantly waiting for approval from above, consider the book *A Team of Leaders* by Paul Gustavson. If your church is wrestling with structural issues, we recommend *Winning On Purpose: How To Organize Congregations to Succeed in Their Mission* by John Edmund Kaiser.

Tip 5: Get some new people on your most critical teams. Get some younger people and some more recent converts on the most critical teams! Every church needs a steady inflow of new people, new leaders and new ideas. This is critical to a church's health and readiness for risk-taking mission. In too many churches, it's the same people staring at each other across the conference table for many years, with diminishing energy and capacity for innovation. When the leader pool becomes disproportionately long-tenure church members, it is easy for the church to get stuck in terms of old ideas and paradigms. Occasionally we see stalwart lay leaders whose commitment to new ideas and ministry approaches helps keep their church from getting stuck, despite the fact that most of the leaders are old-timers. These leaders are somewhat rare and when they leave a church can freeze up, unless there is a steady and well-established inflow of new leaders. It is also helpful to establish term limits for lay leadership positions. In the book *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Peter Block outlines seven critical conversations that sequentially help to integrate new people into community. Each of the conversations can be applied to the process and art of meaning grafting new people into your church's leadership community.

Tip 6: Cultivate an environment where new ideas can be celebrated and developed. When there is resistance to new ideas, several factors may be at play: (1) a sense of threat: that in adapting new ideas, the old ways will pass away, (2) a case of the me-me-me's where the church's mission has become fuzzy and given way to personal preferences, or (3) domination of group life by a personality who just enjoys being in full control. At first, it may be easier to advance the ideas and ministry projects of new and younger people outside of official committee settings dominated by change-resistant folks. Once an idea has space to develop and even bear some fruit, it will be harder to oppose. It is wise to postpone the question of an idea until the answer is no longer in doubt. For as long as necessary, work the margins and create ministries that do not require a vote. The *Healthy Church Initiative* is a church-wide process that utilizes outside helpers, gets new ideas on the table, forces a church-wide conversation and vote, often getting churches unstuck. Many judicatories have HCI-like processes available to local churches. Paul Borden's work revitalizing American Baptist churches in northern California in the 1990s was foundational to the development of HCI. Borden's book *Hit the Bullseye* will give you a good taste of his approach. Bob Farr adapted Borden's work to a United Methodist (and more mainline) context. Read *Renovate or Die* to learn which new ideas

are most critical for congregations to embrace.