



## Tools to Sustain Our Missional Congregations

*A topical newsletter for Pilot Series teams*

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Know Christ ■ Live Christ ■ Share Christ

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*#7 in a series (November, 2018)*

## Listen Learn Change Grow

What is the current status of the series of workshops – **Activating Our Missional Congregation** – which our 5 pilot congregational Study Teams so diligently helped us nurture and refine!

*Here are some quick updates.*

- In July, 2018, the Study Team from the Dining Room Ministry of Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY, became the 6<sup>th</sup> Team to complete the series. (For 20+ years, the Ministry serves a free lunch every Saturday. It currently involves 170+ volunteers from the congregation and community. This was the first social mission project to participate.
- In September, 2018, Study Teams from First Presbyterian Church, LeRoy, NY, and Irondequoit Presbyterian Church, Irondequoit, NY, became the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Teams to start the **Activating Our Missional Congregation** series.
- We received a generous financial donation from a thoughtful donor who endorses this effort to better serve people through social mission in the name of Jesus Christ. This gift helps underwrite our expenses, allowing congregations to participate at no dollar cost. And now, a Team which complete the series will receive \$500 to apply to social mission!

Covington United Presbyterian Church  
*Pavilion*

First Presbyterian Church  
*Pittsford*

First Presbyterian Church  
*Batavia*

First Presbyterian Church  
*Chili*

Central Presbyterian Church  
*Geneseo*

“Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another.”

Proverbs 27:176 (NRSV)



## Update: Your evaluations have sharpened our Workshops!

Thank you + thank you + thank you for all the evaluation forms you completed! Thank you for the critiques, positive and negative. We always read every single one you submitted.

Appendix	Workshop Evaluation
Date: _____ Name (optional): _____	
<i>What was your experience with this workshop? Please describe for us in the spaces below!</i>	
01. What was <u>helpful</u> ? What was not <u>helpful</u> ?	
02. The workbook: Where was it <u>clear</u> ? <u>confusing</u> ? <u>relevant</u> ? <u>not relevant</u> ?	
03. Your suggestions for how to improve this workshop:	
04. Comments:	
<i>Thank you for helping us grow our missional seedling!</i>	
	

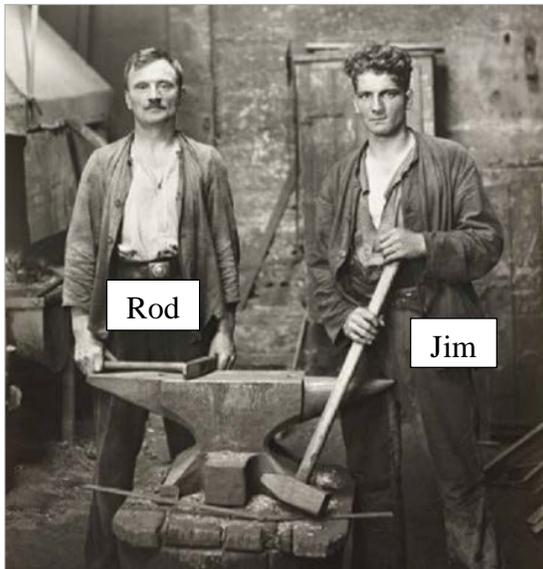
What are the results of your comments, complaints, kudos, questions, and quandries? Has anything changed? In a word, **YES!**

### Outcome: Changes to Workshop structure

- **The problem:** A major recurring theme from Pilot Study Teams was that the Workshops were not sufficiently practical. The connections between the Workbook text, the material Teams gathered in the research assignments, and the Team’s social mission projects were not clear on a consistent basis.
- **The problem’s impact:** Frustration!
- **The changes we made:** Rather than expect Teams to discover connections on their own, each workshop now is carefully organized to highlight the relevance of the components to the Study Team’s situation. Discussion and interaction are built-in. More direction is provided.
- **The results:** Much greater satisfaction! Evaluations have improved dramatically. We celebrate, while acknowledging we still have areas needing improvement. These results are simply part of our ongoing process of reviewing our project by listening to, and learning from, social mission volunteers. It’s Proverbs 27:17 in action. You have sharpened our effort.

## Update: Your evaluations have sharpened our Workbooks!

To make the needed changes to the Workshops, we also needed to hammer out changes to the Workbooks. Where the text was not obviously relevant, we reshaped and honed and sharpened what was dull!



### Outcome: Changes to Workbook text

- **The problem:** In too many places, the text read more like a book, and not like a workbook. It did not anticipate the questions which arose as a Team went through it together. The text depended too much on our oral explanations. It did not elicit the “aha” moment for the readers. The cutting edge was dull.
- **The problem’s impact:** The text did not strengthen the Team’s capacity to apply material to their social mission projects!
- **The changes we made:** Rather than expect Teams to discover the relevance on their own, we added interactive features which prompt reflection on the material in

advance of the Workshop. The prompts relate to the congregation, projects, and/or community. Here’s 3 examples...

In Workbook 1, *Missional Identity*, after the display of statistical data of what congregations actually do as social mission, the following appears:

**Think About It.** Write your response in the space below.

What is your heart-felt, gut reaction to 2/3rds of American congregations reporting that they do only 1 or 2 social mission projects?

In Workbook 3, *Missional Vitality*, after stories of Vitality as “a living, spiritual component” of a congregation, the following appears:

**connect** How does all this connect to our social mission projects?

Social mission projects... express the full potential of Missional Vitality when the projects are integrated with the other 4 New Testament functions of congregations.

In a number of the research directions, the following now appears:

**Tips from Teams which have completed this Workshop series.**

The information is based on the experiences of your Pilot Teams! (*Research directions are also clearer, sequential, and simpler!*)

- **The results:** Teams move more quickly to apply the text and integrate their research to their Contexts. They are more deeply engaged and aware. Again, these results are simply part of the ongoing process of our reviewing a project by listening to, and learning from, social mission volunteers. It’s Proverbs 27:17 in action.

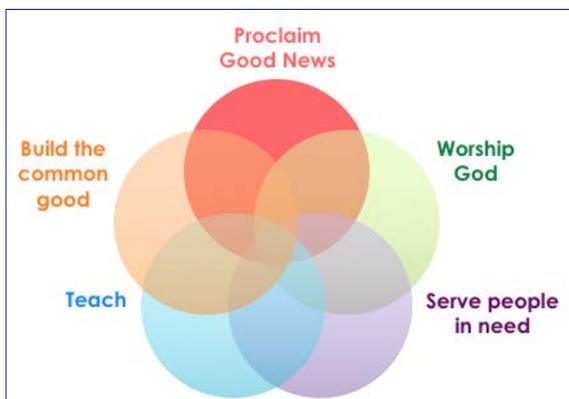
Pilot Team congregations continue to

Listen Learn Change Grow

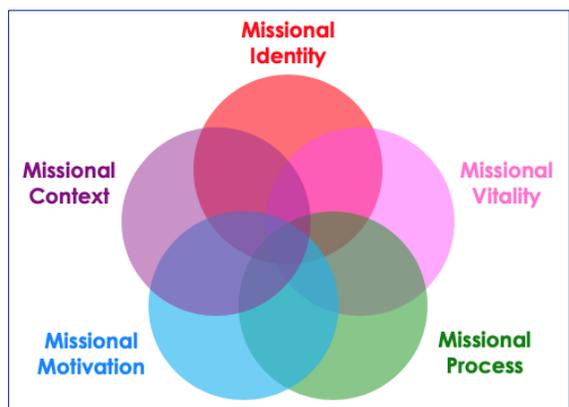
Signs (*missional*) of the Holy Spirit

We keep our eyes open for signs of the Spirit moving in our Pilot Team congregations – *missional signs* of the Spirit. We look for tangible acts and behaviors – *missional outcomes*.

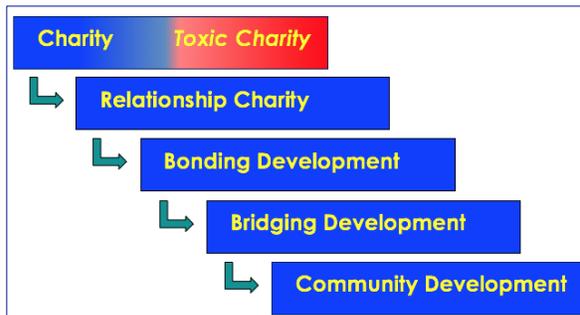
Using graphics from the revised Workbooks, here is an overview of what we’re looking for...



1. Is *Serving people in need*, 1 of the **5 New Testament functions** of a missional congregation, integrated with the other 4 functions?



2. Which of the **5 Dynamic Factors** of a missional congregation are being utilized?



3. Where are the social mission projects in relation to the **5-Step Missional Continuum (Charity to Development)**?

*Here’s what we found recently!*

Central Presbyterian Church, Geneseo, NY

Go to their on-line newsletter, October, 2018: <http://cpcgeneseo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/October-2018-Church-Mouse.pdf>

- Start with pg. 1, left hand column. They tie their social mission projects to the **Dynamic Factor** of **Missional Vitality** – the newsletter is a way to communicate with the congregation. And they tie their projects to stewardship, part of **Missional Process**.
- In the column on pg. 1, note they address the **Dynamic Factor** of **Missional Identity**.
- On pg. 2, note the correspondence between the pastor and one of the beneficiaries of their social mission. The condolences and assurances of prayer are part of **Missional Vitality**.
- Pg. 5 reports on a major fundraiser for social mission, again part of **Missional Vitality**.
- Pp. 8-9 connect a new social mission project, Community Garden, and their outreach to volunteers from the nearby college, a sign of the **Dynamic Factor** of **Missional Context** being applied.

### First Presbyterian Church, Batavia, NY

More than any other Pilot Study Team, Batavia was looking for guidance to the question of dealing with resistance to missional changes. How wonderfully ironic it is that the Batavia Team is becoming quite adept at answering their own question! God is providing manna as they keep faithfully moving through the wilderness. Here is our perspective on recent events.

#### Consultation on *Toxic Charity*

Batavia's Board of Deacons is large – the website lists 15 – and is active. A number of Deacons, after completing their term of service and rotating off for a year, are very willing to recommit to another term of service. This continuity provides stability in their recurring programs and activities.

In the spring of 2018, the Deacons reviewed a list of 19 of their responsibilities and assignments. As part of their process, they looked at the strong language in the *Book of Order*, G-2.0201. (If you've not read it in awhile, we highly commend it to you.)

By consensus, they labelled each assignment a color: **green** was for "Yes, this is a Deacon Duty," **yellow** was for "Is there another way to do this job?", and **red** was for "Why are the Deacons doing this?" There were 9 **greens**, 7 **yellows**, and 3 **reds**. (That in itself is a revealing and striking self-assessment.) A sticking point in moving ahead was the lack of a common understanding regarding *Toxic Charity*. Deacons who were on the Missional Study Team were quick to see the Deacons'

lack of a common vocabulary for discussing the 19 assignments in light of the missional concept of *Toxic Charity*.

On the other hand, the Session, which has 8 members, had a more comfortable working language for *Toxic Charity*. While a Session has the authority to direct the Deacons, Batavia's wise leaders realized the situation called for communication, and not an exercise of authority as a means of control.

And so we were invited to design and lead a consultation on the topic of *Toxic Charity*. The Session and Deacons scheduled a joint meeting on October 3, 2018, and gave us 90 minutes. (You can appreciate that 90 minutes for us is just a warm-up period...)

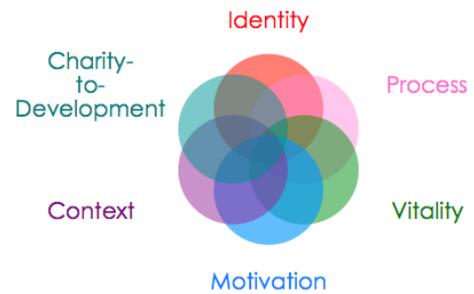
To make the best use of everyone's time, we asked people to read in advance: a document on the foundations for the ministry of Deacons, with material from Acts 6:1-4 and the *Book of Order*; the Deacons' colored self-assessment; our complete Workbook, "5-Step Missional Continuum: Charity to Development," which has material on *Toxic Charity*." (That is a lot of preparation!) And they prepare they did.

We put them in small discussion groups of both Deacons and Elders. The structured agenda focused on listening and learning. (We made it clear that no decisions were being made.) We closed by suggesting a process for making decisions about the Deacons' project. Give Batavia credit for using a **Missional Process** approach to deal with an impasse. The Spirit moves! And we make housecalls...

Connect this topic to your Team's study of:

- Workshop 4 – Missional Process

### Ecology of Missional Culture



Do you have a topic you would like to see explored?

Do you have a question other Pilot Teams are asking, too?

Let us know! [cityrevRochester@gmail.com](mailto:cityrevRochester@gmail.com) 727-2676 (cell)

Be looking ahead! (Proverbs 14:8)

Pilot Congregations Support Workshop # 4  
We're preparing for Covington's case report!  
January date & place to be arranged.

“...to **equip** the saints for the work of ministry,  
for **building up** the body of Christ...”

*Ephesians 4:12*