INTRODUCTION

Disciples Church Extension Fund's transformational services exist to inspire courageous leadership and to connect congregations to God's mission.

The precursor to DCEF's transformational services (Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation) developed the infrastructure to help establish nearly 1000 new congregations in the Disciples of Christ, and now DCEF has served more than 1000 congregations in transformation. Its list includes hundreds of Presbyterian, MSLC, Episcopal, and United Church of Christ congregations in the US and Canada.

DCEF does not rely on consultative methods; rather it focuses on experiential processes that redirect the focus of congregational leaders towards engaging people in God's mission. DCEF does not focus on institutional management with long range planning or developing mission statements; but focuses leaders on asking insightful questions that engage the church in mobilizing resources in such a way that it makes a difference in the lives of people it serves—and a marked difference in the community.

DCEF is unique in the fact that it engages non-synoptic planning processes that help leaders redirect their focus towards developing congregations that make a difference. DCEF probes deep demographics on your specific area of mission, does comprehensive reviews of the congregation's building and resources, and facilitates leaders in developing their future story with plans for implementation.

NEW BEGINNINGS

DCEF knows that if a church is not prepared to meet the neighbors and show them that this church has relevance for their lives, they will likely not connect. Ministry planning allows the church to develop around the needs of the community and provide programs and services that the community needs.

DCEF proposes to work with the congregation on a New Beginnings process in several phases:

1) Assessment of the current ministry of the church, discovery of church strengths and resources.
2) Leadership Development to help the congregation understand the changes in spiritual practices in this new era and why "mission-driven" churches are changing the landscape of Church today.
3) House Meetings to reorient to new ways to think about the church and its role in the community and to choose a bold decision.
4) Coaching to help develop the capacities to implement the Future Story.

ASSESSMENT

On a mutually determined date, DCEF will send an assessor to the church for ~6 hours to get to know the church and the setting firsthand.

During the assessment visit your DCEF Assessor will:

- Meet with pastor/moderator/clergy leadership
- Meet with your treasurer/financial officer and review financial statements
- Tour your building and property to learn how the building is used and maintained
- Tour your neighborhood
- Hold an open forum Appreciative Inquiry Session for church members to share the ways your church has excelled in meeting spiritual, missional, and relational needs.
- Identify the programmatic and missional strengths of your church
- Research the area demographics

Following the assessment visit, a report will be written that will name your congregation's current condition. It will include:

- Your congregation's demographics and membership tenure
- A pin map showing the location of your members in location to the church
- Your Community demographics and neighborhood trends, needs, and challenges
- Financial history and analysis
- Building condition and usage
- Ministry activities and metrics of your congregation's vitality
- Three examples of Future Stories to help discern a bold move for your congregation during your House Meetings

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

On a mutually determined date at least 6 weeks after the Assessment visit, DCEF will send a Facilitator to the church for a Friday evening-Saturday Leadership Training—designed to prepare the congregation for the House Meetings and to develop House Meeting "Facilitators" who will feel confident to lead the small groups in a healthy conversation about the future of their church.

Leader Training happens over a Friday evening and Saturday and includes:

- Friday evening: Any church participant interested in the future of the church is invited to learn more about how spirituality practices have changed in North America and why Mission-driven churches are "changing the scorecard."
- Saturday: Those selected as House Meeting Facilitators will understand their role as facilitators and discover how they can guide church participants through the House Meetings. To do this, the House Meeting Facilitators are trained on how to explain and interpret the Assessment Report and to lead a healthy discernment process using videos and prepared questions using a clear House Meeting Facilitator's Guide.

HOUSE MEETINGS

About one month after the Leadership Training, your church will have an opportunity to reflect on the Assessment Report in a series of 4 small group meetings held in members' homes (each group of ~10 people will each meet 4 times).

House Meetings are an opportunity for every member of your congregation to participate in a relaxed environment where they will be able to absorb each portion of the Assessment report in an intimate setting. During this four-week period, the House Meeting facilitators will lead your congregation through honest and exciting conversations about what God is calling you to do next in ministry.

After the House Meetings are complete, the Pastor/Vision Team and House Meeting Leaders will gather to consolidate House Meeting findings and decide on the bold decision for the congregation. They will write and present a Report to the Congregation to be received by the congregation (no voting on anything at this time).

If Mission Redefinition is the bold choice, the Vision Team and/or House Meeting Leaders will have another small group (4-5 people) process to go through to develop the congregation's own Future Story and develop a Capacity Building Report (templates are provided).

COACHING

Coaching will begin right after the House Group Meeting Leaders meet, make a decision, and write the Report to the Congregation. The first coaching session should be scheduled with the facilitator/coach as soon as House Group Meetings are scheduled.

This service will include six sessions of coaching over six months for the pastor (or vison team/leader) to help develop the right questions to aid in capacity building. If coaching does not begin within at least four months after the Leadership Training, it will be forfeited.

Extended coaching for 3, 6, or 12 months is available for an additional fee.

SERVICE FEE

$4000 plus travel expenses for two contractors (assessor and facilitator)

INCLUDED IN THE SERVICE

Congregational Assessment, Demographics, Leadership Training and Coaching for the Main Clergy Leader (Pastor, Rector, etc.) for 6 months.

NOT INCLUDED

- Travel Expenses for 2 trips (avg. $1000) per trip including airfare)
- Hospitality costs for gatherings

TIMELINE

Assessment: ~4-6 weeks after application received by Hope

Leadership Training: At Least 6 Weeks after Assessment

House Meetings: Will start 2 weeks to 1 month after Leadership Training and usually meet every 2 weeks

Coaching: For the Clergy Leader and/or Vision Team, one e-session per month for 6 months

Total Time: ~10 months