

Outline of Paragraph 213 Conversation Meetings

What is a ¶213 Crossroads Conversation?

Churches today are at a crossroads in how we fruitfully and effectively share the message and love of Jesus Christ to transform lives, communities and the world. Paragraph 213 of the *2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline* describes a foundational process of discovering a congregation's identity and mission field: "*Since every congregation is located in a community in some type of transition, every local church is encouraged to **study their congregation's potential**. Upon the request of the congregation the district superintendent shall appoint a study task force to assist in an extensive study of the past, present, and potential ministry of that local church.*"

Strategic Identification by DS

- ❖ District Mission Plan
- ❖ Referral or Circuit Elder Reporting/Request, OME Criteria, or Congregational request

Groundwork Meeting with Pastor and Lay Leader

- ❖ Clarify purpose of the ¶213 Conversations
- ❖ Discuss preparations for congregation as it enters the process
- ❖ Discuss the creation of a Crossroads Conversation Team for the ¶213 Conversation
- ❖ Assign homework: ¶213 Conversation Congregation and District Packets
- ❖ Schedule the three ¶213 Conversation Sessions
- ❖ Answer questions and clarify expectations

[A period of at least four weeks, but perhaps 6-8 weeks, should be scheduled between the groundwork meeting and Meeting One to provide enough time to gather preparatory documents]

*An option is to have a Churchwide Gathering for Discovery and Learning preceding Meeting One.
An alternate plan for a preliminary gathering is found in Appendix C.*

Meeting 1: Congregational Life Cycle

- ❖ Clarify purpose of the ¶213 Conversations with the Crossroads Team
- ❖ Looking at the church through the lens of the Congregational Life Cycle
- ❖ Assign homework for specific Church & Community information, and for the entire group

[A period of at least two weeks, but perhaps 3-4 weeks should be scheduled between Meetings One and Two to provide enough time to complete homework assignments]

Meeting 2: Church and Community

- ❖ Report Church and Community homework findings
- ❖ Discuss congregational ministry capacity and leadership
- ❖ Compare congregational capacity with the reality and future of the community
- ❖ Assign homework: Congregational Readiness Inventory

Meeting 3: Congregational Trajectory and Next Steps

- ❖ Report Congregational Readiness homework findings
- ❖ Discuss congregational trajectory
- ❖ Create recommendation for next steps

Agenda for Meeting One

Date: _____
Time: _____

OPENING (30 minutes)

- 1 min Welcome
- 15 min Introductions
- 2 min Prayer
- 10 min Purpose & Objectives of ¶213 Conversation
- 2 min Group Working Principles

DISCUSSION PART A (20 minutes)

- 20 min Questions on History
 - a) When the church was at its best, what were some things that were happening or what were the priorities?
 - b) When the church was at its best, what was going on in the wider community/neighborhood?

LEADERSHIP TEACHING (20 minutes)

- 15 min Life Cycle of a Congregation
- 5 min Group discussion about where congregation is on the life-cycle.

BREAK (5 minutes)

DISCUSSION PART B (20 Minutes)

- 20 min Questions about the Future
 - a) What are the concerns the laity have about their future?
 - b) What are the challenges the church will face in coming years?
 - c) What are the challenges that the community will face in coming years?

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS (10 minutes)

- 3 min Introduce homework assignments, due the week before next meeting.
- 7 min Leadership Team will assist Facilitator in making assignments to individuals
 - a) Facilities: What are upcoming significant facility needs that will need to be addressed?
 - b) Finances: What are upcoming significant fiscal issues?
 - c) Community Church Audit: What is the distance to other UM churches? What are the number and size of churches of other denominations in the community?
 - d) Leadership: How many people are active in the congregation? How many are in administrative leadership? How many are in programmatic leadership? In missions/outreach leadership?
 - e) Everyone: Identify the top two or three strengths of your church. What is your unique niche in the community?

CLOSING & REVIEW (10 minutes)

- 8 min Wrap-up: Personal Action Summaries
- 2 min Prayer for Discernment

*Be sure to also have a communications plan to update the congregation,
and distribute the MissionInsite Report to the Crossroads Conversation Team before the next meeting.*

Agenda for Meeting Two

Date: _____

Time: _____

OPENING (5 minutes)

5 min Welcome, prayer, and reminder of Group Working Principles

REPORTING & DISCUSSION (30 minutes)

- 20 min Group leaders will report on their findings (distributed before meeting)
- a) Facilities: What are upcoming significant facility needs that will need to be addressed?
 - b) Finances: What are upcoming significant fiscal issues?
 - c) Community Church Audit: What is the distance to other UMC churches? What are the number and size of churches of other denominations in the community?
 - d) Leadership: How many people are active in the congregation? How many are in administrative leadership? How many are in programmatic leadership? In missions/outreach leadership?
- 10 min Group discussion on homework assignments
- a) Did anything surprise you about the reports?
 - b) Share your answers on the homework assignment for everyone: Identify the top two or three strengths of your church. What is your unique niche in the community?

DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR CONGREGATION (20 Minutes)

- 20 min Discuss ministries and leadership of the congregation:
- a) How are the congregation's strengths used in the church's ministries?
 - b) Looking at the leadership/organizational chart, how are congregational decisions made on paper and in reality?
 - c) Considering the number and ministry gifts of your leadership, recent responses to any church conflict, and manner in which the congregation considers new ministry ideas, how would you describe the leadership style of the congregation?

BREAK (10 minutes)

LEADERSHIP TEACHING (20 minutes)

5 min The Great Commission & Reaching Beyond the Walls

15 min The congregation's MissionInsite report

DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY (20 Minutes)

- 20 min Discuss the needs of the particular mission field of the congregation, using the MissionInsite report as a guide.
- a) What are the needs of the surrounding community?
 - b) What is the growth potential of the community?
 - c) What are the potential opportunities we can identify to serve in and with our community?
 - d) What are the ways the local UM churches in the area may work together to better connect the ministry of this congregation to the mission field?

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT (5 minutes)

5 min Everyone should work on the assignment and bring the homework form back to church for tabulation a week before the next meeting. *(Adapted from "Does Your Church Have a Prayer?")*

CLOSING & REVIEW (10 minutes)

8 min Wrap-up: Personal Action Summaries

2 min Prayer for discernment

Agenda For Meeting Three

Date: _____
Time: _____

OPENING (5 minutes)

5 min Welcome, prayer, and reminder of Group Working Principles

REPORTING & DISCUSSION (25 minutes)

- 10 min Group reporting on homework assignment
(Questionnaire adapted from "Does Your Church Have a Prayer?")
- a) What joy did you find in your answers?
 - b) What sadness or difficulty did you discover in your answers?
 - c) Was there a particular question/answer that troubled you? Raised an opportunity?
- 15 min Group reflection on homework assignments
- a) What commonalities do we discover in our answers?

DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR CONGREGATION'S TRAJECTORY PART 1 (15 Minutes)

- 15 min Discuss our ¶213 Conversation findings thus far:
- a) Unique missional opportunities and needs of the community;
 - b) Growth potential of the surrounding community;
 - c) Distance from other United Methodist churches;
 - d) Number and size of churches of other denominations in the community;

BREAK (10 minutes)

DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR CONGREGATION'S TRAJECTORY PART 2 (20 Minutes)

- 25 min Discuss our ¶213 Conversation findings thus far:
- a) Present ministries of the congregation;
 - b) Number of leaders and style of leadership;
 - c) Fiscal and facilities needs;
 - d) Other items that may impact the church's ability to fulfill the mission of the Church as stated in Chapter One, Section I: "The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs."

DISCUSSION ABOUT CONGREGATION'S NEXT STEPS PART 1 (5 Minutes)

- 5 min Recommendation options presented:
- Goals/Visioning (*example: 3-5 goals for 3-5 years*),
 - Relaunch (*or alignment with another church*), Legacy Process
- Partners in the decision include the Congregation, Cabinet & Bishop, and District Board of Church Location and Building

PRAYER FOR DISCERNMENT (5 minutes)

5 min Guided meditative prayer based on Mark 4:1-9, Jesus' Parable of the Sower and the Seed

DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR CONGREGATION'S NEXT STEPS PART 2 (20 Minutes)

- 20 min Leadership Team must create a plan for decisions to be made on recommendations
- a) Does this leadership group yet have a recommendation?
 - b) What are the next steps this congregation will need to make over the next month(s)?
 - c) What are the next questions that the congregation needs to be asking?
 - d) What is the timeline for decisions, and who must be invited into the decisions?

CLOSING & REVIEW (10 minutes)

- 8 min Process next steps
2 min Prayer for the mission field