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Flourishing Congregations in Canada: Preliminary Observations
Introduction

• How do leaders in Catholic, mainline and conservative Protestant congregations conceptualize what a “flourishing congregation” looks like (or ought to look like) in a Canadian context?

  • Presenting leader perceptions

  • Discussing “ideal types” – does not actually exist in reality
Not Numbers … Or Is It?

Some stress decoupling flourishing from the size of a congregation - *Transformed lives and communities instead?*

Others unapologetically tie flourishing to numeric growth

Church planting essential for some (especially ethnic congregations)
Clear Self Identity

• Clear articulation of who they are and are not
  • Rooted, in part, in the spiritual life

• Is it possible to have a clear self identity and not flourish?
Vibrant Collective Spiritual Life

“Smell like Jesus...”

Vibrant collective spiritual life

Transformed lives

Meaningful religious experiences
Discipleship

- Disciples making disciples
- Clearly articulated pathway and process for discipleship
- Concern about how to define and implement discipleship (and processes) remain
Leadership

Organizational culture for leadership success

Lay leadership, collaborative leadership, and leadership development
- “Yes” culture; Hiring from within

Spirit-led leadership

Strategic leadership – “let leaders lead”
“Outside the Box”

Entrepreneurial initiatives, risk-taking endeavours, and dreams

• *Perhaps a response to secular context*…
Hospitable Community

- People are loved and cared for, and seem to enjoy one another’s company
- Clear processes for joining and remaining involved
- Pride in one’s congregation
Neighbourhood Presence and Involvement

• “Incarnational presence” or “Being the hands and feet of Jesus”

• Community would notice if they left
Evangelism

Embedded in broader discussion of discipleship

Alpha Program

…but no one wants to evangelize …
Diversity

Race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and age

DIVERSITY

Effective conflict resolution skills

Questioning and uncertainty welcome
Discussion and Conclusion

• Aware of highly secular context in Canada – contributes to a sense of urgency and action

• Alert to negative perceptions toward Christianity and congregations – striving to repair “brand image”

• Diversity
Looking Forward

PHASE 2
Case studies

PHASE 3
National survey with congregants
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