

Part 2a

THE LIFE AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH OF THE CONGREGATION:

These questions encourage reflection as a consistory and are intended for the use of the classis.

1. What signs of transformation have been visible in the life and ministry of your congregation this year?

Beechwood:

--We are in the process of restructuring all of our ministry (staff, leaders, volunteers) to be aligned with our mission and vision. This will be complete early in 2018.

--We have over 60 people involved in Kid's Hope at Woodside Elementary. We have developed great relationships with the teachers and staff. We began building a team for Hand to Hand and will launch it January 2018, serving over 150 kids.

--20+ professions of faith (young people and adults)

--Over 50 people serving for the first time

Calvary

Among key leaders we have seen an increasing commitment to the work and vision of Calvary on 8th. In the midst of a difficult transition with our worship ministry we had several people step up and lead our music well. We had several folks commit time and money to participate in the Christian Community Development Association's annual conference where we were challenged on the issues of race, poverty, and neighborhood ministry. About 10 people from Calvary committed to be part of the Circles (pathways out of poverty) program in our neighborhood. This will be an ongoing work, but relationships are being formed and lives are being changed through encouragement across racial and economic lines. Our Global Engagement Team has seen their vision come alive with the advent of a sister church relationship with a congregation in Becal, Mexico. We sent a team of youth there who forged the beginnings of a long-term, mutual relationship. The G.E.T. also led a class where about 30 people learned about the complexities and solutions to global poverty.

Central Park

1. Increase of visitors in worship and in our Wednesday night ministry, especially from the church neighborhood. Great response to a neighborhood invitation for the kick-off event for our 100 years in Central Park celebration.

2. Learning not to be afraid of big needs. Money raised within a few weeks to replace aging boiler. Came alongside a family to adopt a teenager from Ukraine with money and other support. Raised money to supply a well for a community in Congo with a ministry partner.

3. Used a creative workshop model to increase fellowship and the number of people making and selling items in our Holiday Shoppe (approximately 60 people).

4. Redesigned our custodial staff position into a Facilities Administrator following the retirement of a long-time custodian.

Christ Memorial

In 2017 we created four strategic objective teams around; volunteers, groups, evangelism, and Sunday mornings. Over 60 people are engaged in setting objectives and creating strategies in these areas. We also have a "big idea" group made up of people who were willing to serve on consistory but were not

chosen. In total, we have almost 200 people thinking and praying about the future of Christ Memorial church.

We began 13 new small groups in January (preparation was in 2017)

We began a group with the purpose of helping Christ Memorial becoming a church “ready to receive people of all abilities.” Four initiatives have come out of this group

Fellowship:

One of the more externally visible transformations has been the renovating of our former Sanctuary to be our new youth center. We also took time to paint and update many other areas of the church which included artwork for our children’s wing, created by Joel Schoon-Tanis, that documents the Chronicles of Narnia story. We believe that maintaining and updating these spaces supports the faith development of all ages.

Our lead pastor, Brian Keepers, took a call to another congregation. We decided to form a team of our 2 associate pastors, president (and president elect) of the congregation, and the Minister of Operations. This team meets each week to navigate this time of transition as we have moved from a time of lament, to dreaming about the future, and now starting a search process for our next lead pastor. Many in the congregation have actively taken roles to help lead and serve during this time.

The first 6 months of our fiscal year have also been a time for our congregation to grow in generosity. We have received above and beyond our budget and are giving thanks to God. We continue to look for ways to encourage generosity as an act of discipleship.

This year our church has been following a theme called, “The Journey.” This theme came out of the book called, “Leaving Egypt: Finding God in the Wilderness Places,” by Chuck DeGroat. Chuck DeGroat met with the staff in the Summer to talk through the themes in his book. He also led a church-wide retreat and preached on a Sunday. Out of the retreat, small groups were formed to read through the book and share life together. The staff and consistory are also having discussions throughout the year about the book. We are seeing staff and members of the congregation have deep and authentic conversations about their spiritual journey as a result of this theme. We give thanks that Chuck DeGroat is available to us as a faculty member at Western Theological Seminary.

First:

- a. Wednesday night programming significant growth and outreach
- b. Exceeded budget and gave more money away to ministry/needs than ever before
- c. Outreach programs significant and diversity significantly increased
- d. Worship and membership increase

Grace Community / Intersection Ministries:

- increased volunteerism in our citizenship class indicating a growing heart for the aliens and strangers among us
- passionate involvement in men’s Bible study
- community people becoming solidly involved in the fellowship of the church and being disciplined into publicly attesting to their faith
- a reformulated ministry with MS and HS students is vibrant and growing with focus around the students’ interest in spiritual matters
- Kid’s Hope mentors have doubled in number since the start of the school year from 7 to 14 people, each also having a prayer partner

Hope:

- Renovated facility

- *Full time assistant pastor*

Iglesia Alas de Aguila:

We have people being disciplined that are excited about the Word and they go out and share with others. It's a blessing to see people excited about the Lord, His Word and sharing the Gospel. We have seen families joining the congregation. There has been fruit from outreach ministries. People are maturing in their walk with the Lord. God has been moving in our midst and transforming us through fasting.

Life Tree Community:

Most notable changes occurring in people who previously did not attend church who now serve as ambassadors for our Lord Jesus. These changed lives are adding great diversity of talents and experience to our church congregation.

LifeQuest:

*Small group (Community Group) growth. People becoming more vulnerable and sharing life together.
New believers in Christ*

*Opportunity to walk with people from many different nations and do life together and disciple
Youth are growing and there is a hunger for the word and they are taking steps to "lead"; in their own communities*

Our pastor was on Sabbatical this summer and that gave opportunity for more people to "step up"; and provide leadership.

We worked through a process of discerning where are we now and where is God calling us into the future. We called it, Next Quest(s). This process has affirmed who we are and where we are headed. This process also opened up more opportunities for people to "own" leadership and new ministry areas.

We transitioned from a large group, English as a Second Language (ESL) class format, to a one on one mentor/mentee relationship with our focus on building up the mentors. This has been a great change as it has allowed the mentors to grow and develop the one

Maple Avenue Ministries:

New members, greater participation and commitment to the mission of the church.

Maplewood:

We were able to successfully combine our 2 worship services (1 classical, 1 contemporary) to one worship service to better live into our core value of being a family together. Both the process, and execution has led us to continue to grow while being able to live in creative tension. We continue to keep making something new out of bringing the 2 together. We also have not lost anyone due to the change, praise God!

We are also blessed to see the continued generosity of our congregation in the use of their time, talents, and tithes. There really is a generous spirit to go over and above what it asked.

New Community - 4th:

We have taken concrete steps toward the revitalization of New Community-Fourth and towards the planting of the Boulevard Church in the Westcore Neighborhood. For Fourth, we have gone through a process of identifying strategic priorities and developing metrics for achieving those priorities. For the Boulevard, Ben Aguilera has been with us part time to train and equip our members for discipleship and to begin to pull together a core group of his own under the banner of Boulevard Church.

Rose Park:

Our youth and children's midweek ministries continue to grow as we attract children and students from the surrounding community. Our worship services are vibrant and stable (better than declining, obviously not better than growth) with regular interest and visitors.

Third:

We are celebrating our 150th Anniversary this year which has been a remembrance of our past and then doing a process of discernment about new chapters in ministry in the midst of the changing American religious landscape.

Our congregation has been more tangibly committed to our community and neighborhood through Kids Hope, Wednesday Night midweek program incorporating children and families in the community; and embracing through the ministry of Angel and Janelle Lopez-Koolhaas a more multi-ethnic future.

The governing elders are leading the consistory and the congregation making use of the resource "Growing Young", by the Fuller Youth Institute. Key recommendations include involving children and youth more regularly in our worship rather than a once a year Youth Sunday.

The above illustrates that our congregation is shifting from a staff driven church to congregational leaderships and teams for ministry which has contributed to greater vitality in the life of our congregation.

Trinity:

We added an additional worship service on Sunday mornings and through it we are reaching more people with the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

2. How is your congregation actively ...

- a. developing passionate and reproducible disciples who live and love like Jesus?
- b. mobilizing emerging leaders for service in the church and in the world?
- c. embracing your mission to the world and sharing the good news of the gospel with everyone?

(Please share specific stories, experiences, and examples.)

Beechwood:

a. We are connecting discipleship to each of our ministries (developing people in faith). We are starting a new

comprehensive discipleship process with groups of 3-6 people meeting every week to grow in faith together.

b. We prepare young people for participation in annual mission trips each year. We are involving young people in many serving/volunteer roles across the church.

c. We focused on neighboring groups this fall and had over 10 groups of people who met in their neighborhoods. We continue to build Summer Serve, where we bring groups of people together each week to

serve people and organization all around Holland, MI.

Calvary

- a. *We have continued to refine the leadership program that our 7 teen summer staff work through. They gain skills, self-knowledge, and Christian leadership qualities as they serve children in our community. We created a video message where we highlighted interviews with several different young adults (ages 17-24). Each young adult shared how they are continuing to grow, how they live into their baptisms, and how the church can continue to reach the next generation. It was incredibly inspiring. They had ambitions and ministries that ranged from Young Life leader, to worship staff, to plans for cross-cultural ministry, to serving God in the medical field and more.*
- b. *We celebrated the ordination of our Youth Pastor, Mike Lamson and we are grateful to God for the gifts we see in him. We also celebrated the growth we've seen him experience. Through training, support, and simple acceptance he has grown into a leader with potential within the wider RCA. We are glad he could cultivate his voice among us. We also continue a 3 year program of training our consistory members in Bible study, spiritual disciplines, and leadership. Our youth have learned about worship and service as they continue to play a larger role in our weekly music.*
- c. *Our children also have gotten to see how their gifts can be used in the wider church as this past fall they learned about Christians doing work in many other countries. We want them to have a global imagination even as we focus on loving our immediate neighbors. We continue to have people who are interested in growing their global impact. One member is returning to Uganda this week to begin an English language school and do evangelism work. Another youth discerned a call to cross-cultural ministry while on our Mexico learning trip. While yet another college-age student is considering being trained by a global mission organization in January 2019.*

Central Park

1. *Using The Story as a church-wide, multi-ministry system approach to discipleship. People are reading, studying, and reflecting on the same passages in worship, FaithWalk classes, Youth Ministry and family life.*
2. *We are in the second generation of hosting a Young Men's Bible Study Holland High School students. The original leaders have passed on the leadership of the group to new leaders.*
3. *We have integrated mission and learning by the children and adults in our FaithWalk classes who have raised money to purchase chickens for the families of students supported through one of our mission.*
4. *Over the course of the year we had at least 16 Sundays where we had an Engaged in Mission opportunity in worship. This is up from once a month in 2016. In each report, people are presented with an opportunity to be engaged in mission, or hear the results of a mission activity we were engaged in.*
5. *We have moved to the next step with 70x7 Life Recovery by hosting women at our Serving Together site, by providing more mentors than we have in the past, and by becoming engaged in One Day with God. Volunteers in One Day with God go into the prison in Muskegon to assist in facilitating interaction between inmates and their children.*
6. *Our senior high youth held a spiritual retreat this summer instead of the traditional mission work trip.*
7. *As we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the move of Central Park Church from Graafschap to Central Park, we are being intentional about designing events which engage the community.*
8. *Through our Vision for Mission Fund Grants, we continue to engage mission opportunities around the world.*

Christ Memorial

Henry Cherry is our new director of engagement. He is working with Holland Public schools. The school district is referring 60 7th and 8th graders who are considered "at risk". We are recruiting, training, and placing mentors to build relationships with these students. We are also serving Holland West K-7. We have 2-4 people from CMC who are coming alongside each teacher to provide support and encouragement. Even the principal has a couple who are caring for her.

Fellowship:

In November 2017 we spontaneously formed a mission team, with some generous financial support from the RCA, to travel to St. Thomas and help with hurricane relief. Out of this time, we have seen members of that team desire to take on additional leadership roles for future trips.

We also continue to engage one of our focus mission partners in Bluefields, Nicaragua. We have sent multiple teams over the past years and intend to continue. We were even able to arrange for Adrián Bobb to join us during our VBS and help lead our children in worship. This partnership is allowing us to all grow in our knowledge of how God is at work in this world. One member of a past trip to Nicaragua is now taking a leadership role to help another team for the next trip.

We have seen our youth group students, who have graduated from high school, return in order to be youth leaders with our middle school students. We continue to encourage everyone in our congregation to Belong, Grow, Serve, and Share. We give thanks for the way God is at work.

First:

- a. Disciples
 - i. *Significantly strengthened education programs for all ages*
 - ii. *Increased number of members engaged ministries locally and globally*
 - iii. *Year long emphasis 'Deeper Word, Wider Reach'*
- b. Mobilizing leaders
 - i. *Increased number of members engaged in ministries locally and globally*
 - ii. *Teaching church with 4 interns from WTS*
 - iii. *Purposefully intergenerational in all ministries, all ages are involved in worship leadership, Young adults on Consistory and other leadership teams*
 - iv. *Generation Sparks through Hope College/Lilly Endowment*
- c. Embracing mission
 - i. *Numerous local and global mission projects*
 - ii. *Will resettle another refugee family this year*
 - iii. *Sponsoring Alpha and the potential nesting of an ethnic church.*

Grace Community / Intersection Ministries:

- a. *developing passionate and reproducible disciples who live and love like Jesus?*
 - *individual members are discipling adults from the community*
 - *our Ridder Team and pastors are working together on organically implementing a church-wide discipleship approach that we've called "The Path"*
- b. *mobilizing emerging leaders for service in the church and in the world?*
 - *We maintain a Missional Service Assistance Fund to provide financial support for those who are pursuing specific plans for mission / service.*
 - *We're building sister church relationships with a congregation in Costa Rica and a rural Michigan congregation. Our youth are exploring ways of partnering in mission with the youth of these sister churches, as well as serving in many ways right where we are.*
 - *We provide scholarships making it possible for nearly two dozen youth from our church and community to attend Christian summer camp where they are inspired to consider their God-given purpose.*
- c. *embracing your mission to the world and sharing the good news of the gospel with everyone?*
 - *We partner with community organizations that use our facilities and our volunteer resources. An example is Belay Youth Ministry that meets middle school students on their lunch breaks and provides after school hours at our facility.*

- *We build relationships with students from the community who come to our 10-week citizenship classes that are offered twice a year.*
- *We maintain a helping fund that provides material assistance along with loving support to people in our congregation and community.*
- *We preach the gospel weekly in our worship services and make it accessible in the languages of those who attend – English, Spanish, Korean.*

Hope:

- a) *developing passionate and reproducible disciples who live and love like Jesus?*
 - *widespread involvement of members in community service*
 - *formal & informal small groups structure*
 - *youth ministry (GIFT class; High Hopes service trips; Appalachian Trail) and Children in Worship program*
- b) *mobilizing emerging leaders for service in the church and in the world?*
 - *Pastor Beth's work with young adults, including the SPARK initiative and pub theology*
 - *WTS student interns*
- c) *embracing your mission to the world and sharing the good news of the gospel with everyone?*
 - *Development of community connections on interfaith and justice issues*
 - *Hosting of the Room for All conference*
 - *Work with Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates*

Iglesia Alas de Aguila:

- a. *Currently discipling as a part of Bible study. They can then go forth and teach what they are being taught.*
- b. *We use our gifts and help others who are gifted in that area grow in their giftedness. The desire is that we continue to invest in others. We are training our young people to play in the praise band.*
- c. *We are very much about evangelism and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a hurting world. We reach out through evangelism events such as giving away donuts and hot chocolate in the winter along with building relationships and sharing devotionals. We give ice cream in the summer, plants in the spring, and other various things throughout the year. We are always trying to do something to get a connection with those who are not connected to a church.*

Life Tree Community:

Preaching God's word from the Bible has motivated people in our congregation to invite family and friends to church, and also encouraged them to take part in mission trips.

LifeQuest:

- A.** *Through our Basic English Language Learners (BELL) structure we are developing people who are able to sit one on one with people from all over the world and empower them to build relationship and meet identified needs.*
- A.** *Through our Community Groups people are learning to do life together centered around the Gospel. They are in the word together, praying for each other and helping each other walk after Jesus.*
- A.** *Participation in weekly Bible studies and prayer gatherings*
- A.** *Older leaders taking on younger leaders and intentionally walking with them and discipling them. We are seeing these young people develop and take on active roles in leadership.*
- B.** *We have a ministry team that goes each summer to the Michigan International Speedway to serve as camp ground hosts. This ministry is developing into an opportunity to mobilize and SEND leaders to*

practice what they are learning in evangelism, discipleship and prayer. This team is growing with people outside of connection with LifeQuest to be equipped and sent.

B. *Our BELL mentors are being equipped and sent.*

C. *Our mission is to Connect people with Jesus on a journey to Transform lives and Send disciples. This idea of SENDING is a core value that is in the DNA of LifeQuest. We have missionaries that we support out of our congregation that range from Cambodia, Peru, Haiti, Pupa New Guinea, short term missionaries that travel all over and some local ministries. This invitation to be SENT has been an encouragement with LQ members to get involved in local ministries helping with immigration / refugees, biker ministry and others.*

Maple Avenue Ministries:

Every sermon has a challenge to love like Jesus, to reject the patterns of the world and to invite others into the same. Bible study is a time for mutual learning, sharing stories within the context of the biblical narrative and also learning the tools for a deeper relationship to scripture, God and others. We invite guests, workshops and experiential opportunities to embrace our faith in Christ, our call to our community and our commitment to reconciliation of all kinds,

Maplewood:

This year we have been able to embark on some changes in our adult discipleship. For the first year in many we have transitioned a long standing Sunday School class into becoming more of a small group with added conversation, instead of just being given information. Along with that we have started small groups for the youth and adults that engage the message more deeply allowing for discussion and further personal application and growth...along with deepening relationships.

We have continued to engage our youth in local mission opportunities as well as teach our children about the role of living Christ's mission in the world. It has been great to see the excitement from our youth around service in the community in very real and practical ways.

We continue to be heavily invested in Kids Hope USA. We currently have 20 mentors for 20 children at our local school. We also average anywhere from 2-3 prayer partners as well for these mentors and students. This has continued to bless and stretch us for Christ and His kingdom. We also are continuing to think about how we might bless the families of the children we work with more, as well as a nearby mobile home park (some of our Kids Hope families live there).

New Community - 4th:

Our mission or vision statement is, "growing into a new community in Christ together with all our neighbors".

Our strategic objectives or values are...

- 1) Growing relationships through outreach which includes several ongoing, need meeting ministries: Breakfast with Baby, Feeding America, hosting Catholic Social Services, NA and OA groups etc.*
- 2) Growing worshipers through Sunday morning worship services (English language and then a Casa Del Rey Spanish language service)*
- 3) Growing disciples through small groups: Women's "IF" tables, go and grow communities, one on one discipleship with two new believers*
- 4) Growing leaders in mission (seeking to involve more of our members in outreaches listed above, focusing on training young people to help with education of children etc.)*

Rose Park:

a. We are working hard to model Jesus to our young people, especially those entrusted to us by the local community. We are also partnering with a local school not just with Hand2Hand Ministry, but also

becoming a volunteer partner to make sure the administration, teachers, and students all receive the love and support they need.

b. Our senior high youth group continues to engage in missional ministry and service. Last year it was a trip to CIY for encouragement, but it was followed up by fund drives for the ministry in Ireland and service trips in Chicago and Detroit. We also sent students to SOS Leadership Academy in early winter. Two joined their summer staff in 2017.

c. We continue to support our missionaries both inside and outside the RCA who have ministries in Wisconsin, Alaska, Thailand, Japan, and Niger. We raise money for clean water and continue to support and encourage a refugee family.

Third:

Our congregation has embraced immigrant ministry and advocacy. We took up an offering in the summer to provide money to drive immigrants to Detroit for immigration hearings with the government. One family of a mother and three girls has been given a two year stay in the United States and we provide encouragement and support. This has also led to greater trust with Hispanic brothers and sisters in Christ. A third of our children are in bi-lingual schools, so we have developed greater relationships with our Hispanic neighbors and children.

We are working with families through our housing ministry with various degrees of success. Pastor Kent has represented a member of the congregation who is constantly in and out of homelessness with advocacy through the court system. Pastor Kama has returned from a Sabbatical in which she worked on telling of faith stories and the technology to transmit the faith stories. Our congregation has developed much closer relationships with the community through our summer VBS and our Wednesday midweek program in which a number of people in the community continue to be with us for ministry events.

Trinity:

A. Developing passionate and reproducible disciples who live and love like Jesus?

-By pointing people to follow God's Word and live like Jesus Christ as presented through the written word.

B. Mobilizing emerging leaders for service in the church and in the world?

-Through connecting each person with God's Word. Through the word and Spirit God is developing leaders for the church.

C. Embracing your mission to the world and sharing the good news of the gospel with everyone?

-Through consistent and passionate preaching of the gospel message to our community so loved by God.

3. In what ways can your congregation more intentionally live out the call to cultivate transformation in Christ, equip emerging leaders of today and tomorrow, and engage in Christ's kingdom mission in the coming year?

Beechwood:

We are building a more comprehensive strategy--our goal is to see 20% more people involved in discipleship groups and ongoing serving opportunities. The focus will be to become more and more integrated with our local community, loving and serving people right where they are.

Calvary

We will continue to provide better opportunities for loving our immediate neighbors in the many programs we have available. We are working to hand over responsibility for our neighborhood yard sale to lay leadership with the hope of new life and ideas being added to that event. We will return to Mexico to awaken our members minds to the global church. We will grow our opportunities for discipleship through a Lenten study on deep theology and relational work. And we will host the Church Between Borders workshop to bring together global awareness and the immigration stories that make America.

Central Park

- 1. We intend to engage a process to become more specific about our mission and to develop goals to address that mission over the next several years.*
- 2. Continue to provide encouragement and tools for people to move from thinking about mission as a church to seeing and addressing mission personally in their own neighborhoods, workplaces and other places of involvement.*
- 3. We have committed to participating in Module 2 of the Ridder Church Renewal Process.*

Christ Memorial

We began a class on leadership. Some of our members who have led in a variety of ways in the community presented. The format was presentation one week followed by Q & A the following week. Some mentoring relationships have developed from this class.

We recognize the need to develop younger leaders in the church. We have very few people under the age of 40 serving as elders and deacons.

We have realigned our structure to create a Missional Living department. Rather than having an engagement department stand alone, we are including children and youth ministry as part of the missional living dept. We want to have an outward focus from the very beginning.

Fellowship:

Our congregation has felt a deep desire to help meet the needs of under-resourced children and also look for ways to help them move out of a cycle of poverty. We continue to celebrate the ministry of Hand2Hand. There are many ways our congregation participates in this program: bringing food, giving monetary donations, packing bags, and delivering bags. We are starting to sense a call to take on additional students at the High Schools this coming year. Ultimately, we would also like to develop relationships with the people we serve and also with other organizations in order to help alleviate poverty.

We are planning, in the coming year, to form an intergenerational mission trip to our focus mission partners in Bluefields, Nicaragua. We expect that this will only deepen our connections and open the eyes of more people in our congregation to the ways God is at work in this world. This is also a tangible way of seeing how our financial support is making a difference.

Over the past 2 years we have participated in the Colossian Forum. This group has offered training for leaders to facilitate a curriculum around human sexuality. We intentionally place people with diverse beliefs in these groups in order to learn how to listen to each other without being in a posture of love. Our belief is that this is a way for us to demonstrate to the world that Jesus Christ holds all things together. We continue to be equipping and expanding leaders in this way of being as we live out our mission of "Loving God and others as an accepting community, centered in Christ, and focused on developing faithful followers of Jesus".

First:

- a. Potential ministries projects
 - i. Resettle refugee family
 - ii. Nest a church

- iii. Sponsor a church planting couples from Venezuela
- iv. Develop (in partnership with Faith Dyer) a satellite marriage retreat crisis center
- b. Continue
 - i. Teaching church at WTS
 - ii. Continues intergenerational emphasis (develops emerging leaders)
 - iii. Will hire a youth director
 - iv. Will focus on young adults through Generation Sparks and Associate Pastor focus for the next year
 - v. Continue "side door" ministries and bridging into First Family
 - vi. Redevelopment of block parties as outreach

Grace Community / Intersection Ministries:

- Our stated ministry concept of pursuing what is both vibrant and essential keeps us alert in an ongoing way to opportunities that have fruitful prospect.

Hope:

- Focus on young adults, and connecting intergenerationally
- Discerning Our Future work on structure better serving ministry

Iglesia Alas de Aguila:

Intentionally seeking out spiritual growth through leadership study

Life Tree Community:

We are currently focusing on understanding and mobilizing the Millennials in our congregation (which are the largest number of our people by generation count)

LifeQuest:

We have worked through the initial process of Next Quest(s) looking at where we currently are and where is God calling us into the future. We are now actively putting the ACTIVATION process into place. One way is that we are seeking more "on ramps"; for the LQ family to engage the IFR employees either through English classes, Citizenship classes, Bible study, Financial literacy classes, leadership empowerment, diversity training etc..... The on ramps are endless as to the gifting of our LQ members. We are also then working on EQUIPPING our people to know how to better engage our culture (both the IFR employees and our neighbors). Intentional discipleship through our Community Groups through inviting new people to gather with us in our homes and model how to live a life after Jesus. We are walking through a preaching theme in 2018 on the Commands of Christ (If you love me you will keep my commands). The over all theme is obedience to truly know and hear God's voice and follow him.

Maple Avenue Ministries:

Create a leadership development path of young adults and those who are young in the faith regardless of age. Challenge the short sighted mores of tradition for a biblical commitment to human flourishing as image bearers of God.

Maplewood:

One thing that we are aware of is developing a better connection between our leadership and young people. In this we want to grow in prayer for them, helping to identify their gifts along with those who are ministering directly too them, and just fostering better relationships with our children.

Another thing that we are doing and will continue to do is acting as a teaching church for a seminary student (in our case a student from our congregation). This summer we will have him on full time which will be something new for us, but hope that it will be a rich experience all around.

Now that we have completed the Ridder Church Renewal process, we are trying to figure out how to keep what we have learned and are learning alive. We will explore and hopefully implement something to try and do this.

New Community - 4th:

We hope to be able to see God both revitalize our congregation and also be able to help in the planting of a new church in our neighborhood. We are utilizing the "U-Turn" book and process for our own revitalization and working closely with Ben Aguilera in the planting of the Boulevard Church.

Rose Park:

We need to develop our leaders to become more prominent models of discipleship in our congregation. We also need to reach out to the community and not be content where we are at. The Governing Board is working through "Autopsy of a Deceased Church", to help us identify potentially bad habits we have fallen into so that we can repent and better reflect the image of God in our community and world.

Third:

The elders of Third Reformed Church have been studying "Growing Young", by the Fuller Youth Institute. We believe that we should not have one Youth Sunday a year, but begin to implement children and youth as a regular part of our worship service making use of the principle of "key chain" leadership. This means giving children and youth appropriate levels of responsibility to lead as they are ready and able. We do need to make Third Church more accessible and responsive to the younger families in our congregation. This is a first step to encouraging our congregation to be more inviting to others. We are working on making our liturgical worship more creative and winsome to younger families. We are listening to God's Spirit for ways that Angel and Janelle can help us reach our neighbors who are different from many of us ethnically. We are making beginning steps in living into a multi-racial future.

Trinity:

By focusing on the foundational elements of the Christian faith that have guided the true church of Jesus Christ throughout the ages. By standing against theologies and ideologies that dishonor God by dishonoring his Word.

4. What challenges, concerns, or celebrations does your congregation have right now?

Beechwood:

We have just developed a 2 worship service format, with each service being distinct. We need to build momentum moving forward helping people see how worship is connected to mission each week. There are always challenges, but the more clearly we can connect everything we do to mission, the greater unity we can have moving forward.

Calvary

We continue to have (slightly) dropping attendance. We continue to find momentum through staff changes and a smaller budget than we've had in a few years. We continue to struggle to find meaningful ways to interact with the many different relationships we have in our community across racial and economic lines. We have to find deeper and more meaningful ways to be part of each other's' lives through pray, fellowship, and study. We have a lot of room to grow in the area of mutual friendship and small groups.

Central Park

- 1. We are celebrating 100 years in the Central Park Community (170 years overall). As we celebrate the past, we want to be intentional about looking to the future for new fruitful ministry.*
- 2. We still have a significant debt on the ARC (gym). During 2018, we want to challenge the people to give in preparation for a scheduled refinancing in April 2019.*
- 3. Portions of our facility are aging. It is always a challenge to stay ahead of those needs.*
- 4. Differences of preference for music in worship have come to the surface over the past few months. We want to engage these differences with listening and creativity,*
- 5. We want to be a body that is able to identify the things God is calling us to do or be and then to engage the opportunities God presents. We want to respond with faith and anticipation.*
- 6. We want to become more transparent in our relationships with one another.*

Christ Memorial

We have been, and currently are, an aging congregation. A significant percentage of our congregation is over the age of 65. While we still have a critical mass of members and attendance, we have declined nearly every year for nearly 20 years. We need to reach younger people. We need to reach people in our community who do not know Jesus Christ.

We have seen an increase in young families attending Christ Memorial this past year. In January we saw a sudden 15% increase in children's ministry attendance.

Fellowship:

Our current leadership transition is a time where we are challenged to grow closer to God and one another as we trust in His plans for us. We have had 3 pastors leave in the past 3 years and wonder what God is doing. Many are hearing from the Spirit that God is doing a new thing in this place. We pray that we can lean into God during this time.

Each year we have been celebrating a number of young people who are making profession of faith and also seeing a number of new families join our body.

First:

- a. Continue Generosity team work to expand finances for ministry, including Endowment and vision fund work. (Goal Endowment Fund to \$2 million)*
- b. While we are growing, our growth edge is families with young children*

Grace Community / Intersection Ministries:

We face the common challenges of being a resourceful and effective presence in a culture where younger generations are increasingly spiritual but not religious. We celebrate being a church that has bridged the strain, pain and losses of merging two congregations. There is a positive spirit among us and a growing unity that welcomes diversity. We have talented paid and volunteer leaders who function well in complementary and supportive leadership roles.

Hope:

- Our facility is both a celebration and an ongoing challenge*

- *Our finances are both healthy and in need of long-term attention*
- *The conflict and uncertainty in the RCA is concerning*
- *Political and global turmoil challenges us on how to be faithful*

Iglesia Alas de Aguila:

We celebrate God's faithfulness to us in growing our congregation.

We celebrate that people are growing spiritually. we celebrate goodness as we reach out to our community with the love of Christ.

We are challenged to always go deeper in the Word and mature as we seek His will together.

Life Tree Community:

Challenge: For the first time in 7 years our attendance dropped 4.5%, so we're focusing on inviting more people. Celebration: We completed an addition last year which finally gives us enough space to hold more people!

LifeQuest:

Celebrating diversity - it is a joy but we are living in a steep learning curve walking in cross-cultural ministry.

Being a recently organized church we have attracted many who did not know Jesus Christ and His Word. Therefore, we have many who lack a strong Biblical foundation and knowledge.

Maple Avenue Ministries:

Our members like most continue to be stretched in their schedules and capacities to give time and talent to the mission of the church. WE celebrate energized families who come with a commitment to be in relationship with our multi-dimensional community. WE celebrate our partnership with other churches in our communities. Churches we worship, serve and do life with beyond Sunday mornings. We celebrate the rich diversity if our congregation from Consistory to children's church, our songs, our illustrations our faces all reflect the kingdom of God.

Maplewood:

We are debt free! Not only are we debt free, but we have been doing significant work to remain so. We are doing a better job at future planning around the topics of financial planning and future property needs, as well as putting money away to do so.

We are also blessed to say that we have been able to come together deeper as a family in the combining of both services.

A significant concern, as has been in the past, is the constant losses to death. We have not been able to keep up with new members. With this we recognize the need to share the gospel more and more...to change and adapt...so that we can see growth in the kingdom, not just the church.

New Community - 4th:

We are challenged to turn around the gradual decline of our worshipping congregation while also celebrating the extraordinary ways we continue to be able to engage with the neighborhood in a growing number of ways: Nuestra Casa Community Center, Westcore Neighbors community development etc.

Rose Park:

We are celebrating our youth and children's ministries, and also welcoming the challenge for what it means to "Grow Young". That is the "concern/opportunity", we are working on in 2018.

Third:

The main challenge that we have as a congregation is slow numerical decline that is much more evident than a few years ago. This is in the context of a predominantly older member congregation. The first way to respond to this is through awareness and naming our current reality, and then strategies to correct this trend. Key ways identified is by bringing more vitality to our worship using examples from the Calvin Worship Symposium and a new hymnbook; implementing Growing Young; and highlighting the ministries of compassion and justice that we are doing in the community. Worship Committee has led in adapting some innovation and creativity in our worship service each week. Outreach Committee has directed our neighborhood and multi-ethnic initiatives in partnership with the consistory.

We are celebrating our 150th anniversary; we have a group of ten people on a mission trip this winter to Oaxaca, Mexico; a group from the church traveling to Palestine with the Reformed Church this coming summer; and Third Church has facilitated a relationship between the United Church of Pakistan and the Reformed Church in America and our new missionary partner Lubna Younas at the St. Thomas Theological College.

Trinity:

Our congregation is concerned for the those in our community and world who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

5. How does your congregation reflect the racial and cultural context in which you conduct your ministry? What are you doing to build bridges that develop and deepen mutual ministry that is multiracial and multicultural?

Beechwood:

Our 2nd vision point at Beechwood Church is that we will; reflect the diversity of our local community. Our involvement at Woodside Elementary, the Boys and Girls Club, West Ottawa MS and HS are keys to developing relationships with our diverse community in Holland. We hired Worship leaders/directors that are ethnically diverse and will continue to add staff with backgrounds that reflect our community.

Calvary

The Circles program builds bridges across racial and economic lines. We took a trip with Maple Avenue Ministries to the Jim Crow museum this fall and we are planning a larger trip to Indiana and Ohio to learn about the Underground Railroad. These activities guide discussion and get us talking together and learning our history. We also gained deep challenge in this area for the small group that went to the CCDA conference. We continue to incorporate these learning into our teaching and worship in various ways throughout the week.

Central Park

- 1. We do reflect the makeup of our immediate neighborhood. Both the congregation and community are predominately white. However, the Holland community at large is very diverse. We do not match that at all. Most of our diversity comes from children adopted internationally.*
- 2. In our 70x7 Serving Together Ministry, we experience a great deal of diversity. We seek to be intentional about connecting well with each person who participates in the ministry regardless of race.*

3. Many of our mission engagements cross boundaries of race and culture.
4. One of the questions we need to address is how well the children adopted internationally are integrated into the life of the church. Do they really feel at home here? Can we do this better?

Christ Memorial

We are focusing on the one mile radius from our building. We have begun strategic partnerships with Holland West K-7 in a variety of ways; Kids Hope, mentoring, teacher advocates, after school program.

We also initiated a lunch and reading program at two apartment complexes; Harbor Village and Meadow Lanes. This met two days each week during the summer.

We changed our Thanksgiving basket program serving 150 families to align with the vision of reaching the one mile radius. We then built on this by inviting these families to a Christmas dinner where parents chose presents to take home for their children. We have seen four families begin attending Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings. We are excited to relationally connect with our service. We are leading with relationship rather than programs.

Fellowship:

Our congregation is made up of people from a variety of religious and political backgrounds with a wide range of views. We celebrate that we are able to be held together in Christ without needing to take sides. At the same time we recognize that we are not as culturally diverse as we would like to be. Our area of Park Township is growing in diversity and we would like to see that happen at Fellowship as well.

We continue to seek diversity in all of our leadership groups and desire to be a place that gives all people opportunities to belong, grow, serve, and share.

This past year we had a group called, Faith in Action, that formed after a visit by Lisa Sharon-Harper. This group sought to look for ways to bring reconciliation to our community.

We also continue to seek ways to build relationships with all cultures by serving in places with diversity. This might be by being mentors with students in our schools through Kid's Hope or by going to local migrant housing in the Summer to help serve food, organize games, and plan crafts. We have found that all of these experiences cause our congregation to grow closer with those who are not like them and to see how we are all made in God's image.

First:

- a. Our Wednesday night programs have a significant participation of people of color.
- b. Our Sunday worship service are starting to add people of color
- c. We are exploring nesting a 2nd and 3rd generation Hispanic church plant.

Grace Community / Intersection Ministries:

We are a multicultural church that deliberately strives to reflect the racial and cultural context of our ministry. We have realized the importance of having diverse pastoral and volunteer leadership. We provide worship experiences in English, Spanish and Korean. We also offer a citizenship class at least twice a year with up to 25 students from the community representing a variety of national backgrounds. We partner with legal services and advocacy organizations to create a safe, supportive context for people with the special challenges that often come with being part of an immigrant or minority population. Through Kids Hope and our youth volunteering in the local elementary school, as well as a connection with others in the community who serve those who are English Learning families, we continue to build bridges of connection among people in our diverse community.

Hope:

- Our congregation does not reflect the racial diversity of our community, but as a primarily

Caucasian congregation we focus on partnerships with and emphasis on:

- o Maple Ave Ministries*
- o Washington School Neighbors*
- o Hispanic leadership*
- o LEDA*
- o Guest preachers*
- o Global music*

Iglesia Alas de Aguila:

The congregation reflects the community. We have Hispanic, Caucasian, Bengali and African American people that attend our congregation. We serve both English and Spanish-speaking constituents. We have united services and sing bilingually. We eat together after services sometimes. We have a Reciprocal Language Class to help bridge language and cultural gaps in the community.

Life Tree Community:

Our congregation mirrors our community's racial and cultural diversity (or lack of). We are a great representation of people in Robinson township and surrounding areas.

LifeQuest:

As already stated we are actively engaged with the IFR employees through BELL, Citizenship, and immigration assistance. We have earned the trust of the employees which has offered the opportunity to engage them in normal day to day living which puts us into contact with families and neighbors.

Maple Avenue Ministries:

In every way we represent the rich diversity of the RCA. Our consistory is multi-ethnic, multigenerational. Our Worship experiences, study materials, staff and members cover a wide cross section of races and ethnicity. We continue to work to deepen our commitment to racial justice by engaging national experts to visit and teach us.

Maplewood:

We shared earlier about our ministry with Kids Hope USA. While we are a predominantly white congregation; the children and families we are developing relationships with and ministering to/with are not. The families in our local mobile home park are also quite diverse. We understand that crossing racial boundaries and building bridges has hurdles, but we are willing to face those because we believe deeply our mission as a church to love God AND our neighbors as ourselves. We hope that over time our love for our neighbors and "going out to be with them" will bring about more diversity within the congregation.

New Community - 4th:

We are most diverse in the places where we are most need meeting in the neighborhood (i.e. Feeding America and Breakfast with Baby). We also are seeking to do more ministry with rather than for by hosting a ministry called Circles USA in our building. We are much more diverse during the week than on Sunday but hope by also hosting a Spanish language congregation that we can de-segregate our Sundays as well...

Rose Park:

We do not adequately reflect the community in Sunday morning worship, but we do better in our midweek programming. We are constantly endeavoring to make these midweek families feel welcome and offer them "on ramps" to become a more consistent presence in our midst. We also held a series of

Justice events in 2017 making our congregation more aware of the needs of a diverse group of folks.

Third:

This is the area that we have made some initial beginnings in 2017 which we see as part of at least a ten year process. We are working with Angel and Janelle Lopez-Koolhaas as our missionaries to the neighborhood and welcoming Hispanic families to a Prayer and Share Group and Wednesday night church dinners and program. We hope and pray that this can grow in terms of Hispanic Ministry as well as welcoming people of a more multi-cultural background.

Trinity:

Trinity's ministry reflects and continues to grow in ethnic diversity. Our community members continue to more and more shape the life of who we are as God's people.

Question 5 was added by the General Synod in 2017 and responses to this question only are collected for the benefit of the General Synod and will be shared with the Commission on Race and Ethnicity.