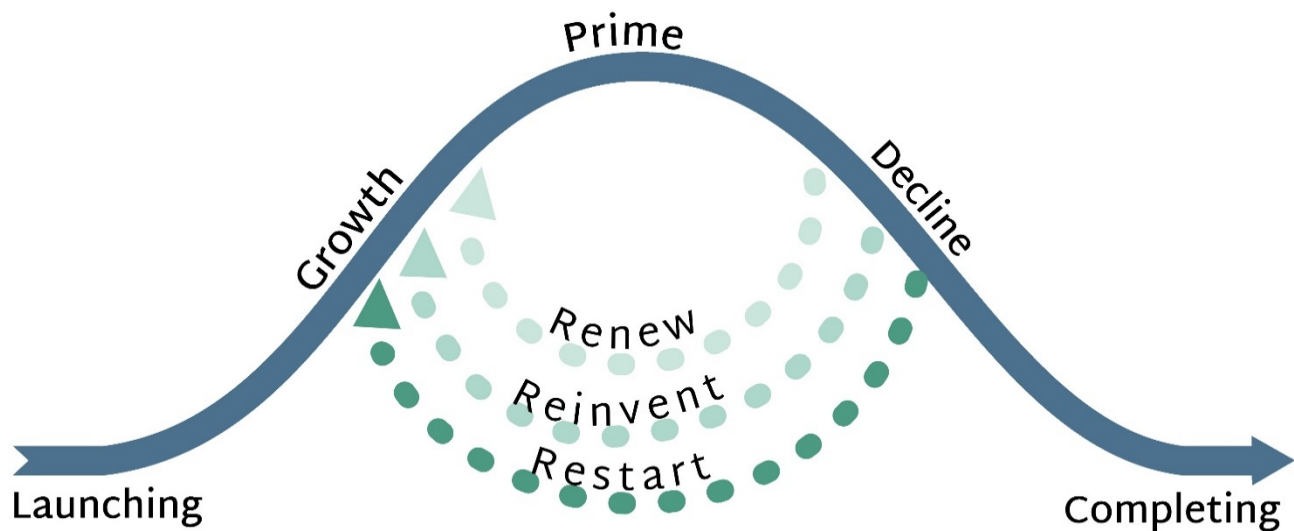


Congregational Assessment Tool



Where Is Your Church in its Life-Cycle?

Everywhere in God's good creation is evidence of his universal life-cycle design. Life-cycles include birth, growth, maturity, aging, death and rebirth. The author of Ecclesiastes observed there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity including: "A Time to be born and a time to die..."

That life-cycle is also apparent in the life of most congregations. The majority of churches are born out of vision, grow organizationally as they live into that vision and mature into the full expression of that vision. Typically, they then begin demonstrating signs of institutional aging as passion for the founding vision fades and resources necessary to sustain the vision diminish. In time most congregations complete their journey while others begin theirs.

It should be noted that these congregational life-cycles are normal but *not entirely inevitable*. Some congregations that show signs of early institutional aging have reinvented themselves and responded to a fresh calling as they embrace a new God-preferred future. Where would you place yourself on the congregational life-cycle bell curve?

This Congregational Assessment Tool is designed to encourage beginning conversations about where you are in your congregation's life-cycle and to name best options for your future as well as provide helpful resources in pursuit of a God-preferred future. The accompanying Congregational Assessment Questionnaire is provided to give you a general sense of the congregation's life stage so you can discern potential paths for future ministry.

What Options Are Available to Us?

Congregations have a range of options for next step investments as they pursue a God-preferred future. Below is a continuum of those options from the least to most challenging. Each congregation must determine which option allows them to best live into the calling of becoming intentional missional congregations that make more and better disciples who transform lives and communities for Christ.

Less Challenging  More Challenging

Complete & Bless Options
(path 1)

Renew & Reinvest Options
(path 2)



1	2	3	4	5	6
Continue	Complete	Collaborate	Renew	Reinvent	Restart
Will we remain committed to past ministry practices for better or for worst?	Will we complete our ministry and bless other ministries with our assets?	Will we merge or network with a ministry partner to create new missional DNA?	Will we refresh, revise or re-imagine our vision so that we are more intentionally missional?	Will we significantly redefine our vision and identity so that we become a ministry of a different type?	Will we stop all activities and allow a new ministry to emerge in this location?

Discerning a Path for Church Renewal

A helpful way to discern your best path forward is asking congregational leaders to take and discuss a free Congregational Assessment Questionnaire available on-line at churchrenew.org. This easy to take 35 question survey assesses key congregational life-stage indicators. The assessment concludes by suggesting one of three paths for initial consideration:

Path 1: Complete & bless

Path 2: Renew & reinvest

Path 3: Continue & expand

Path 1 - COMPLETE AND BLESS

To complete and bless is choosing to finish your congregation's journey and use your assets to bless other ministries. Asset distribution can happen in multiple ways but a good rule of thumb is to invest 1/3 in church planting, 1/3 in church revitalization and 1/3 in ministries dear to the heart of the congregation. Other congregations choose to merge with a mission focused congregation while still others will use their assets to plant a new church either in their location or another.

Path 2 - RENEW AND REINVEST

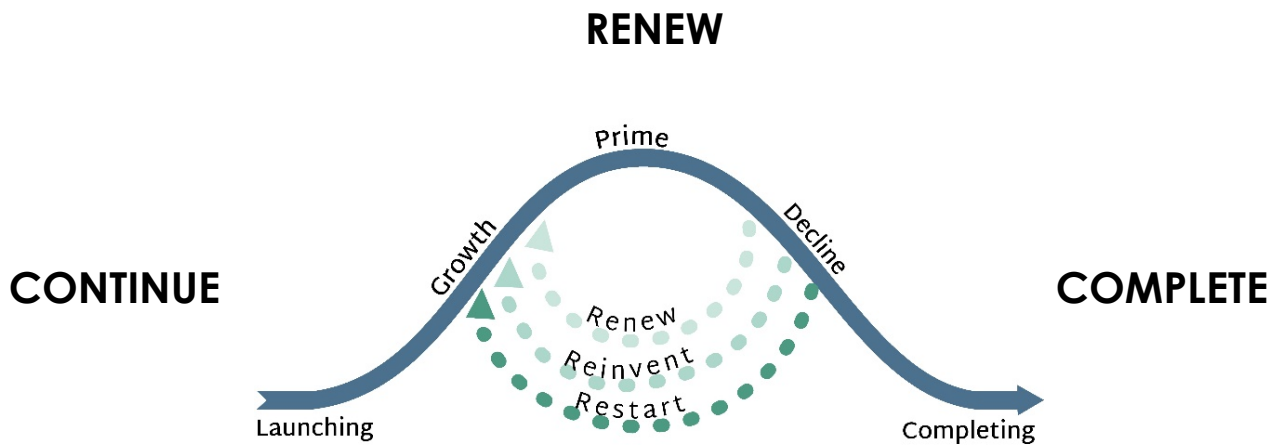
To renew and reinvest demands rethinking a congregation's mission/vision to increase ministry impact given your present resources and ministry context. Reinvesting demands creating fresh plans for outreach and discipleship. It often demands empowering new leadership. Always it demands significant change to the way you've always done things.

Occasionally renewal congregations will choose to restart. In the right conditions, this can be an effective way to revitalize a ministry, the fruit of which is an entirely new church with a new identity, culture and kingdom vision.

Path 3 - CONTINUE AND EXPAND

Some churches are in a season of high Kingdom impact. They are reaching and discipling many persons and are living as God's salt and light within the context of their local community. These churches should continue doing what they are already doing and look for new doors the Lord is opening to them as they continue their faithful work.

The three options tend to line up with the following life cycle stages...



Leadership Discussion Guide

Have 5-10 leaders complete the "Congregational Assessment Questionnaire."
On average which path did your questionnaires indicate?

- Complete and Bless
- Renew and Reinvest
- Continue and Expand

You can use the following questions to guide a deeper conversation.

1. What score did each leader's survey receive? How are they similar/different? What does this say about your differing perspectives?
2. What realities emerged from the questionnaire?
3. Does the path indicated seem to fit our present circumstances?
4. What would be the advantage/disadvantage of pursuing this path?
5. What challenges are related to pursuing this path?
6. What top 3-5 areas of concern are identified in the survey?
7. What top 3-5 areas of celebration are identified in the survey?
8. What should be our next steps in pursuit of a God-preferred future?

Next-Step Resources

CONTINUE AND EXPAND

✓ Books to read:

- GROWING THE CHURCH IN THE POWER OF THE H.S. by Brad Long

- MOVE by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson
- CENTER CHURCH by Tim Keller
- GATHERED AND SCATTERED by Hugh Halter

RENEW AND REINVEST

✓ Books to Read:

- CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS by Tod Bolsinger
- U-TURN CHURCH by Kevin Harney and Bob Bouwer
- DEEP AND WIDE by Andy Stanley
- COMEBACK CHURCHES by Ed Stetzer

COMPLETE AND BLESS

✓ Books to read:

- LEGACY CHURCHES by Stephen Gray and Franklin Dumond
- IN DYING WE ARE BORN by Peter Bush

Consultation services are available for all phases of a church's lifecycle through the Center for Church Renewal. For more information contact...

Dr. Keith Doornbos—*executive director of the Center for Church Renewal*