



ColumbiaMetro.org

## Redirection

### ***Changing the Focus of Your Congregation***

*One of the Ten "R" s for Plotting a New Congregational Course*

**Redirection** is one of at least ten choices available to congregations who need to engage in transitions and changes that could lead to transformation as they plot a new course for their congregation. This is when a congregation significantly changes the focus of the congregation. It begins with a "clean sheet of paper" and redirects the congregation as if they were starting over. **Redirection** happens when a congregation willingly does this without giving authority over to an outside leader or organization.

**Redirection** is like a Macedonian call. It is when a congregation is seeking to be on a **Re-envision**, **Revitalize** or **Renew** journey of their own, and God shows them a more perfect way that fits into God's empowering vision for them as a faithful congregation who desires to also be effective and innovative.

The way **Redirection** works is for a congregation to begin with the assumption they have a group of people who want to be a vital and vibrant congregation. They have a facility. They have a pastor and perhaps other staff. They have some financial and other resources that can be used. But, all of these are focused in a direction that is not working for them.

They get to a point they realize that must stop pushing and trying to move beyond survival, and let God pull them forward to a new purpose for them as a congregation. Often this new purpose involves focusing on a geographic community, or a target or affinity group they have not historically been trying to reach.

One example is a congregation made up of empty nesters, retirees, and assisted living residents. They have declared for years that what they need to do is to reach young adults with children and they will be fine. But, they do not have the resources to reach these households. However, they do know a lot about empty nesters, retirees, and assisted living residents. In response to the call of God, they change direction to intentionally become a 50+ *Church* who focuses on these age groups.

### **Why Change the Focus of Your Congregation?**

Here are seven reasons for changing the focus of your congregation. Perhaps you can think of more.

1. Because your congregation keeps pushing hard to move forward and yet keeps moving backwards. It keeps trying harder but is not making any progress. It is insanity to keep investing resources in a direction that is not taking you forward but is causing you to go backwards.
2. Because out of frustration your congregation decides it is time to seek some outside advice to investigate different spiritual and strategic directions than it has been willing to look at previously. Yet, it wants to lead the new direction itself.
3. Because the resources available to your congregation to turnaround its situation appear to diminish each year, and you have a limited number of years left to respond.
4. Because there may be new opportunities you have previously been unwilling to embrace because they involve transitions and changes you would rather not make. Now you realize you must do something different.
5. Because you realize that what you have been doing is not working, so you are willing to try some new things and focus on some efforts you have rejected in the past.
6. Because you feel God is confronting you with the need to transition and change, and this may be a spiritual moment when you are ready to listen anew to the voice of God.
7. Because people of positive spiritual passion in your congregation have successfully challenged the congregation to consider a redirection.

## How to Change the Focus of Your Congregation?

Changing the focus of your congregation is hard work. It is not easy. Here are seven things you need to do. Perhaps you can think of others.

1. As with all the choices available to congregations who need to plot a new course, **Redirection** must be both a spiritual and strategic decision. Start with spiritual discernment concerning what your congregation believes God is saying to it about its future.
2. Begin the journey of transition and change knowing it is not a short-term fix, but a long-term solution. It may take 18 to 36 months before you have strong traction concerning a **Redirection**.
3. At least 21 people connected with your congregation must be able to step up and provide leadership for the **Redirection**. If you do not have 21 spiritual and strategic leaders who can fuel the transitions and changes, then another choice needs to be considered.
4. At least the 21 people must engage in a period of strategic planning to explore a minimum of three possible scenarios for the focus of the **Redirection**. Address the question, to whom has God gifted, skilled, and given you a preference to reach in the next season of ministry.
5. The congregation—with the leadership of the 21 people—should ultimately discern God's empowering vision for the next season of ministry.
6. The 21 people need to conduct an audit of all the programs, ministries, and activities of the congregation to see which ones will empower the fulfillment of God's empowering vision, and which ones will not.
7. The congregation needs to move forward using only the existing and new programs, ministries, and activities that will empower the fulfillment of God's empowering vision. While there will be some "low hanging fruit" actions that can be accomplished quickly, the congregation should stay focused on its new direction for at least 18 to 36 months until its gets traction.

## What is the Impact of Changing the Focus of Your Congregation?

Here are seven possible impacts. There will be others you can name.

1. The level of excitement with the creation of new things will increase the sense of community for the congregation, and their satisfaction people feel about being part of this congregation. They will begin to believe their congregation has a hopeful future.
2. A new understanding of God's empowering vision for the new congregation will provide focus and meaning to each Sunday and each season of the year. The new vision should be continually cast to where it creates new memories.
3. People will move outside their old patterns and their comfort zones as they engage new people and new activities. It will be a learning season for many people who have been doing the same things the same ways for many years.
4. It is essential that the congregation engage in a rebranding and relaunching of the congregation. This will bring new excitement, and likely new people into the fellowship. Worship will be different. Welcoming will be different. The opportunity to practice radical hospitality and assimilation will present itself.
5. New relationships will be established with God and with new friends in the congregation that will allow for a dynamic spiritual formation, leadership development, and missional engagement. A spiritually maturing congregation will be a hallmark of the success of the changed focus. Without new spiritual maturity the redirected congregation will face significant challenges for a longer time.
6. Not everyone will go forward with the new direction of the congregation. Some people will take this as an opportunity to go to a different congregation. They cannot handle all the transitions and changes, or they were holding on with the congregation and now that it is going to be fine, they feel free to leave.
7. One impact is that no congregational participants can go back to functioning like they formerly did. "Going back" is a negative emotion for a redirected congregation. It is hoped that early in the redirection there will be fewer and fewer conversations about how things were formerly done. Words and deeds should focus on going forward toward the new thing God is in the process of doing within the redirected congregation.