

**GOALS/PRIORITY IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS  
FOR THE SPECIALIZED TRANSITIONAL MINISTER  
AND CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

**A. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT**

The STM and congregational leadership will use this document as a starting point for identifying goals/priorities for their time together. It is advised that the number of goals/priorities be both sustainable *and* effective for gaining greater congregational health. At the intervals described below the progress toward them will be evaluated, and when the contract is completed the totality of the STM work will be evaluated using the goals/priorities.

**B. POTENTIAL GOALS/PRIORITIES**

**1. MAINTAIN THE REGULAR PASTORAL MINISTRY**

Goal: Ministry to the members of the congregation, primarily including preaching, shaping and leading worship, and providing pastoral care, will be the main priority.

Process: The preaching of the STM is an effective dimension of helping us through our transitional time. The pastoral care of the STM brings encouragement and healing to members of our congregation.

**2. EMPHASIZE FELLOWSHIP AND RECONCILIATION**

Goal: The congregation will experience authentic fellowship, and the quality of the relationships within the congregation will be strengthened.

Process: The STM and leadership will utilize methods to foster the congregation's ability to have honest and graceful conversations. Such methods might include council training and the formation of a Transition Team.

**3. PREPARE THE WAY FOR FRUITFUL MINISTRY**

Goal: The congregation will come to understand its history with grace and clarity.

Process: The STM and leadership will objectively mediate issues in a way that will help the congregation move on and prepare the way for fruitful ministry in the future.

**4. CLARIFY THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

Goal: The vision for future ministry will be clarified with a deeper understanding of the identity of the congregation.

Process: The STM will employ the skills and training needed to guide the church in discovering or rediscovering its identity and purpose.

**5. MAINTAIN THE REGULAR MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

Goal: The ministries and programs already underway will be effectively continued, or revised/re-created, if needed.

Process: The STM and leadership will evaluate existing operations, and if needed, create and implement an organizational structure that will serve us well into the future.

**6. ADDRESS FEELINGS OF GRIEF**

Goal: The members of the congregation will make progress toward emotional healing.

Process: The STM and the church's leadership will help the congregation to address congregational grief as well as individual experiences of grief related to the transition by helping people to normalize the experience of grief, name the causes of their grief, and start the process of moving through their grief.

7. RESOLVE CONFLICTS INVOLVING PEOPLE OR ISSUES  
Goal: Areas of conflict, if identified, will be dealt with in a way that demonstrates effective conflict management and resolution processes.  
Process: The STM will work with the leadership to identify concerns in the church, using the STM's training in congregational dynamics.
8. STRENGTHEN THE LEADERSHIP BASE OF THE CONGREGATION  
Goal: The leadership base of the congregation will be strengthened.  
Process: the STM and leadership encouraged the participation of the people in leadership and service opportunities knowing that the transitional period is a particularly good time to address these priorities.
9. INCREASE THE POTENTIAL FOR THE NEXT PASTOR'S MINISTRY  
Goal: The importance of the coming of a new pastor will be recognized and preparations will be made for that time.  
Process: The STM and leadership will demonstrate a love for God and his church that will contribute to the health of our congregation going forward.
10. IMPROVE THE CONGREGATION'S COMMUNICATION SYSTEM  
Goal: Changes will be made that will positively influence the congregation's communication system in the future.  
Process: The STM and leadership listened well and adapted to the needs of the congregation in the areas of structures, processes, and procedures.
11. STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS  
Goal: Our connections with other congregations, the classis and the ministries of the denomination will be affirmed and bolstered.  
Process: The STM will model a good relationship with such entities and will encourage the congregation in its participation with them.
12. INCREASE THE FINANCIAL HEALTH OF THE CONGREGATION  
Goal: Our passion and support for vital ministries that will further the work of the congregation will be invigorated.  
Process: The STM and leadership will offer and encourage basic stewardship training.
13. INCREASE THE LEADERSHIP'S SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT  
Goal: Our capacity to intentionally discern and pursue the Lord's will be enhanced.  
Process: The leadership will engage in developing basic spiritual practices for leaders such as described in Ruth Haley Barton's book, *Pursuing God's Will Together*.
14. FOSTER THE PRAYER LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION  
Goal: Opportunities for corporate prayer will be expanded and enhanced.  
Process: Since prayer for the church's ministry, her community and her next called pastor is vital, the STM will work with the leadership to encourage frequent and regular corporate prayer, both within and apart from worship services.

## C. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

The staff of Thrive will describe for all parties this identification and evaluation process each time an STM begins a new assignment. Reports are requested from the STM to key Thrive staff, in the context of the following milestones:

1. IDENTIFY: Within the first three months the STM and congregational leaders will identify *together* the goals/priorities to focus on. It is recommended that 3-4 priorities be identified initially (more is fine), with others being added later, if needed. These will be reported to key Thrive staff.
2. EVALUATE: At the 9 month mark, the STM and congregational leaders will review the progress made toward the identified goals/priorities, and make adjustments as needed. For example, some of the original goals/priorities might have been accomplished or set aside and new objectives added. In other words, this process is marked by some degree of fluidity, all in the service of deepening the health of the congregation. It also may be that sufficient progress is noted that the contract can be concluded at the 12-month interval.  
  
At the 12 month mark (and subsequent 3-month intervals, if further contract extensions are agreed upon), the same will happen.
3. REPORT: At the end of the STM's time with the congregation, regardless of how long the contract has been, a final review will be conducted and a full report will be created and sent by congregational leadership to key Thrive staff.
4. Thrive does not maintain a template for churches to follow when it comes time to write the final STM evaluation. It seems important to leave such process decisions to councils themselves. That being said, the following might serve as a possible protocol. A council could:
  1. Strike a 2-3 person committee to lead the evaluation process, with a clear mandate.
    - a. To provide the council with a proposed assessment of the STM experience.
    - b. The proposed assessment should include a certain number of voices from the congregation, the voices of the transitional leaders, as well as input from the council members. It would be up to the committee to determine how best to obtain these input items, how to weight the data, and how to summarize it into a coherent report.
    - c. The proposed assessment should be given to the STMs as an information item, and the STMs should be given the opportunity to offer comments on the draft.
    - d. The committee could be authorized to determine if the input is to be incorporated into the draft or simply received for information. Council could then adopt or tweak the proposal, and send its final form to Thrive.
  2. The assessment could describe how well transitional goals/priorities have been met, the level of the STM's capacity to help the church meet its transitional goals, and it could paint a picture of how well the church has responded to the STM's leadership. Finally, it could provide a statement regarding the church's readiness (or lack thereof) to call its next pastor.