

DISCERNING THE FUTURE—ACTIVITY

If you've made it this far in the process, you've laid a solid foundation of earnest prayer, grateful remembering, honest confessing and curious listening. You are building on the trust in God and the trust one another that will help you consider what decision(s) your church must make about the future.

This activity is designed to help your group gather, refine and clarify your options. The goal of this activity is not to make a final recommendation. The goal is not even to gather enough information to know every next step of every possible option. Rather, the goal is to gather *sufficient* information so that everyone in your group knows enough to meaningfully consider the options.

Time needed for activity

Two Hour

Group size

your Crossroads team, plus guests (see Steps 1-3, below)

Steps for Activity

1. Whenever you're having a conversation about your options, it's important to remember two of the great gifts of being a part of a denomination:
 - You're not in this alone
 - You have many reminders that the Kingdom of God is bigger than any one congregation
2. If you have not already done so, contact your [Resonate Regional Mission Leader](#) and invite them to attend your meeting to gather and clarify your options. Resonate Global Mission can introduce your group to the denominational resources available to help a church like yours renew, restart, or close in order to help support the planting of a new ministry or congregation in your region. Resonate will first take the time to listen to what you've learned about your church so far in this process. They will then use their experience and expertise to help your group understand their mission-oriented options.
3. If you have not already done so, contact your classis Stated Clerk to see if a church visitor or two could join your group as you gather and clarify your options. Church visitors can provide prayer support, encouragement and, often, insight into how your church's discernment may intersect with ministry resources and opportunities in your classis.
4. Take 30 minutes to share with your guests (from Resonate and Classis) about the highlights of the process so far. Share the fruit of [Review the Evidence](#).
5. Take 30 minutes to hear from Resonate and Classis what options they might see for the church in light of your discernment and their wider perspective.
6. With the help of a white board or large blank pages, take turns inviting team members to name the main options your church could consider at this Crossroads moment. Supplement your list, as appropriate, with items from the list below of Most Common Crossroads Options. If you need even more inspiration, consider the activity [Discover What Other Churches Have Done](#).

7. Once all the main options are named, invite the group to ask questions and make comments that help clarify, refine or combine options. Invite your guests to speak.
8. Review your notes from earlier activities and presentations and name the ways those insights might favor some options more than others.
9. Separately and together, take time to pray. Invite the Lord to lead your discernment.
10. Consider the following questions: Is your list of options as complete as you'd like it to be? What options might be missing?
11. Upon returning, see if there is any further clarification or information needed before you proceed to [Narrowing and Recommending Your Options](#).

Most Common Crossroads Options

The following is a list of options other "Crossroads" churches have explored at this point in their discernment.

- 1. Remain in place, mostly in current form:** Having done all the work that you've completed so far, it might be disappointing if you hear God call you to remain in place. However, this is an option that you should consider if you sense no guidance from God on an alternative vision for your congregation.
- 2. Remain in place but renew/modify:** You may be hearing God call you to remain open but to make intentional and focused adjustments to your ministry—its mission, its location, or its relationship to other churches.
- 3. Remain in place but with a renewed focus on using your resources to bless your community:** God may be calling you to redeploy your building and your ministries so that they become instruments to bless the community. Perhaps your building could be offered to the community as a youth center, a senior citizens center, a hub for neighborhood nonprofit organizations, a community food pantry, or a homeless shelter. Perhaps your mentoring programs could be refocused to engage the people in your neighborhood who need mentors. Perhaps your members could form a neighborhood development ministry that seeks the flourishing of the people and places in your community.
- 4. Remain in place but engage in new partnerships that bless your community:** God may be summoning you to develop ministry relationships with other churches or with community and regional organizations. Together you might provide leadership, but your church's unique contribution might be the space and the volunteers.
- 5. Remain open and merge with another congregation:** God may be calling you and another congregation to a similar vision—one that's best pursued together. Be careful here: the best mergers are built on a common vision for ministry rather than merely a common hope for survival. Even common-vision mergers are challenging.
- 6. Close and restart:** Sometimes the best option is to bring the current ministry to a close, wait for a season, and then restart in the same location with a new and different ministry. Of course, closing anything is difficult. Dreams, traditions, and memories will be affected. Some of the people from the old ministry will be part of the new ministry. Some won't. All of that's okay—especially if something significant is allowed to remain: your ongoing participation with God through the new ministry that emerges from the old. If you decide to close and restart, contact your Regional Mission Leader. Resonate Global Missions is a key partner to help you with next steps.
- 7. Close and hold your building in trust for the blessing of your community:** Sometimes the best gift you can give to the kingdom of God in your neighborhood is the gift of your building combined with people who are gathered into a formal team to ensure that it blesses the neighborhood. Sometimes death gives way to a wonderful new life in this way.
- 8. Close, sell all assets, and strategically invest proceeds:** God may be calling you to finish your life well together. In such a case, your legacy can be marked by the sale of assets and the wonderful work of thinking through how proceeds that are raised can bless others.