

Events Inspire, Processes Transform  
By Doug Ruffle

Each year at this time I highlight the upcoming School of Congregational Development as a worthy event to attend. I do so again this year with the added remark that such events, while extremely important, are not enough to get the job done regarding congregational revitalization.

Events, such as the School of Congregational Development, inspire. The School of Congregational Development will expose you to new ideas and it will inspire you to do new things for your church. This year's school will be held in Dallas, Texas, August 3-8. You can download registration material at <http://www.gbod.org/evangelism/programs/congregation/congdev05/>. Take a *team* of people from your church. One person attending an inspirational event often has a difficult time sharing the enthusiasm with others who have not participated themselves. However, when two or more people give testimony to the same inspiring event, the good news seems to carry more weight and have more of a chance of making an impact in the local church.

While it is a good and excellent thing to attend inspiring events, more is needed. To take advantage of the enthusiasm an event such as the School of Congregational Development offers, the local church team needs to follow up with a *process*. Events inspire. Processes transform.

A process requires patience and persistence to discern where God is leading the church into the future. It engages the church over a period of time in prayerful examination of its mission. Here are key ingredients to a process for congregational revitalization: 1) **Pray**. Engage the entire church in prayer for God's direction on how they can be led by the Spirit to make disciples of Jesus Christ. 2) **Form a Team**. Gather together a representative group of the church that will navigate the process for the entire congregation. Team members need to make a commitment of time and energy to see the process through. It won't work if team members miss meetings or fail to follow through with assignments. 3) **Listen to the community**. We need to get out of the habit of only talking among ourselves. A process should include intentional ways we engage in conversation with persons who are not yet part of our congregation. Resources such as *The Discovery Church Journey: An Invitation to Congregational Transformation* outline ways to engage in such listening. 4) **Attend an inspiring event**. The entire team should go together, if possible. Attend the School of Congregational Development held each year in August or The Church of the Resurrection's *Leadership Institute* or some other inspiring event geared toward congregational development. 5) **Do some benchmarking**. Again, as a *team*, visit a church in your region where significant, vital ministry is taking place. Go with the idea of bringing back transferable principles and discerning how implementing such principles in your context would help you achieve your mission. 6) **Formulate a M.A.P.** Draft a "Ministry Action Plan" for your church, drawing upon the data you have gathered in the community through listening and the new ideas gleaned through events and benchmarking. 7) **Implement and monitor your MAP**. Make sure your plan is acted upon and evaluate its effectiveness, making necessary adjustments as you go along.

Events inspire. Processes transform. Engage your church team in both as you seek God's call for your mission and ministry. For more information, contact your conference's office of

congregational development at 732-359-1046 or send an e-mail to [Druffle@gnjumc.org](mailto:Druffle@gnjumc.org).