

SIX MARKS OF VIBRANT CONGREGATIONS (Luther Seminary Project):

1. God is “real” to people – their communal experience of God in worship leads them to talk about and act like God is living and active in their lives and the world (biblical preaching and worship).
2. The Bible matters to people – interpretation issues aside, people know the biblical stories and go to them for help, guidance, and decision making in their congregations and lives (biblical fluency).
3. People have a sense of personal and communal purpose and calling that is connected to what God is up to in the world, and they expect their congregations to equip them to respond to that calling (vocation).
4. People have a sense of mission – they understand that the larger church and their local congregation exist for their neighbors and the world, they believe that God loves the world, and they feel called to extend this love through witness and service (congregational mission).
5. People expect transformation at all stages of their lives – they know and have experienced something of the abundant life possible when you are met by Jesus, and they know how important it is to share faith in Jesus with people of all ages (children, youth, and family ministry).
6. People recognize that all that they have and are come as gifts from God to be developed and used to further God’s intention to love, save, and bless the world (stewardship).¹

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL CONGREGATIONS*:

1. Flexibility—capacity to be adaptive
2. Quality of worship experience (corporate spirituality)
3. People believe church gives new meaning to their lives
4. Sense of openness in governance (transparency and broad ownership)
5. Quality of inter-personal relationships with one another (sense of community)

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¹ This list is informed by a number of sources, including ongoing listening and more formal research conducted by Luther Seminary in the development of its current and previous strategic plans (“A Bold and Faithful Witness,” 2007; “Serving the Promise of Our Mission,” 2000); the research of Kelly Fryer and Kenneth Inskeep in preparation for Fryer’s book, *Reclaiming the “E” Word: Waking Up to Our Evangelical Identity* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008); the results of the Exemplary Youth Ministry Study (www.exemplarym.com); and the research of Diana Butler Bass (see, for instance, *The Practicing Congregation* [Alban Institute, 2004]).