

As of 2015 over 170 churches have been involved in some aspect of the Healthy Church Initiative process. Forty-five churches have gone through consultation weekends, and two dozen congregations are currently working with a coach to implement their ministry goals.

The United Methodist Church derives its mission statement from the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:16-20. Our purpose is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (*The Book of Discipline*, ¶ 120). To fulfill this mission, the Healthy Church Initiative focuses on the following skills:

1. *Change Leadership* that maintains flexibility and patience in ambiguous situations, responds positively to new demands and challenges, addresses resistance through clear communication, leads with careful attention to the impact change has on people, and understands the difference between technical and adaptive changes.
2. *Communication* that encourages an active and open exchange of ideas, openly shares information, creates an inclusive environment, maintains high visibility, and listens actively to all perspectives.
3. *Outreach* that focuses attention and resources beyond the church and understands the needs of the community.
4. *Evangelism* that reaches out to others with or without experience in the church in a positive way and prays for persons who are not connected to the church.



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The Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) is an intentional leadership development process designed to enhance the skills of pastors and laity to lead growing, vibrant, spirit-filled churches.

Through prayerful action and reflection together, participants become equipped to transform their congregations to reach new people for Jesus Christ and become the churches that God wants them to be in their communities.

Three Main Components



Continuous Learning

Church leaders need to be in some form of continuous learning environment to support and encourage one another. The HCI process offers leadership development workshops for groups of pastors and laity throughout the experience.



Consultation

Upon request, trained consultants visit churches to identify strengths and concerns and to provide prescriptions to address ministry opportunities. These consultations involve such elements as a community study, analysis of key data of the church, interviews with leaders, congregational training, visits from mystery guest worshipers, and more.



Coaching

Churches who accept the prescriptions are assigned a trained coach to work with them over the next two years to identify resources and to hold leaders accountable to one another as they complete their ministry goals.

Each congregation that is involved in the Healthy Church Initiative can expect to discover particular ways that God is calling them into ministry based on their gifts and graces. Initial themes for the HCI workshops include:

- Twenty-First Century Ministry
- Mission-Centered Ministry
- Ministry of Transformation
- Outwardly Focused Ministry
- Leadership Practices
- Clarity of Purpose
- Communication Skills
- Real Life Evangelism

Additional study related to the particular context of a congregation's ministry could cover such topics as:

- Coping with Conflict
- Managing Transitions
- Mission and Vision
- Multi-Ethnic Ministry
- Nurturing Discipleship
- Preaching
- Reaching New People
- Rural Ministry
- Self-Care for Leaders
- Setting Goals
- Stewardship
- Team Leadership
- Worship

and more



Process Steps

FORMAL APPROVAL

vote → Initially, the church council with the support of the pastor and the superintendent votes to enter into the Healthy Church Initiative process.

WORKSHOPS

All church leaders, both pastors and laity, participate in workshops in continuous learning opportunities that last throughout the process. Each session contains time for prayer, peer mentoring, discussion of leadership topics, and identification of personal action plans to be completed between meetings.

CHURCH CONSULTATION

vote → With the approval of the church council and the pastor, the congregation may apply for an on-site church consultation. Local church preparation for the weekend includes a self-study of the congregation and the community as well as the formation of a prayer team and a vision team.

COACHING

vote → At the close of the consultation, the congregation receives up to five prescriptions, which outline areas of ministry to address for the future growth and development of the church. If the church council votes to accept the prescriptions in full, they will receive up to two years of coaching support to pursue goals related to the prescriptions. As before, all leaders meet in continuous learning communities to study topics related to their prescriptions.