



READINESS 360

Multiply your impact.

Readiness 360 Executive Report

For Lake Harbor United Methodist Church

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Prepared by:



West Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church

A living connection of disciples of Jesus Christ transforming the world through vital and fruitful congregations.

www.westmichiganconference.org

Overview

Congratulations for being willing to engage in a serious conversation about your readiness to reach new people in new ways! The Christian movement in North America was strong for so many generations because churches planted new churches that planted new churches. Untold thousands of churches, decade after decade, state after state! Only a small percentage of today's churches still have multiplication of ministry on their radar. Your church does - and that sets you apart!

Lake Harbor United Methodist Church asked several of its leaders and participants to participate in the **Readiness 360** process. The survey many of you took assesses your church's spiritual and practical readiness for faithful and effective ministry in the 21st century. **117** persons took the **Readiness 360**, a mix of staff, key leaders and active ministry participants.

The **Readiness 360** assesses four critical capacities for multiplying thriving ministries. In the rating system below, your church's level of multiplication energy is indicated by the number of rabbits (God's most adorable multipliers). The more multiplication energy your church has, the more ready you will be to start something new. Lake Harbor is strongest in terms of **Spiritual Intensity** and is most challenged in terms of **Cultural Openness**.

KEY:  =not ready —————  =more than ready

Spiritual Intensity:

There is some fire in people's hearts at Lake Harbor, but it isn't burning as brightly as it should. Lake Harbor has some work to do in strengthening the personal connection between your people and God and God's mission for you in the world. It would be wise to spend some time reconnecting with God through renewing spiritual practices both personally and as a church body.

Missional Alignment:

Many folks at your church have a good sense of where God is calling you to go, but others are not aligned with this point of view. There is seldom enough personnel or financial resources to run in many directions at once. Now is a time for serious conversation about Lake Harbor's priorities.

Cultural Openness:

On one hand, many in the church want to reach diverse people, but many in the church still have great apprehension about what this might mean in terms of changing the face of Lake Harbor. There may be some limitations in terms of how far the church is able to reach toward different kinds of people in the next few years. Open communication will be critical.

Dynamic Relationships:

In some respects, your church has seen some amazing relationships and friendships across the years. However, the DNA of these relationships is not currently indicative of the church as a whole. You have some work to do in terms of cultivating trust within the church and relating effectively to folks who are different from the majority of the members.

SPIRITUAL INTENSITY: 80.5

All great Christian movements are intense spiritually, marked by a deep love for God and a surrendering to what God is seeking to do through human beings. It is critical that a spiritual fire burns within the hearts and souls of those leading and participating in the life of the church. Without personal passion for Christ, we lack an adequate source of spiritual energy for vital and multiplying ministry.

There is some fire in people's hearts at Lake Harbor, but it isn't burning as brightly as it should. Lake Harbor has some work to do in strengthening the personal connection between your people and God and God's mission for you in the world. It would be wise to spend some time reconnecting with God through renewing spiritual practices both personally and as a church body. In your church:

- Many people have an expectation of encountering the living Christ personally and/or in the congregation.
- Practicing spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, Christian works, etc.) is not a major part of life together.
- People are a bit risk-averse and not likely to take bold steps of faith.
- Leaders - paid and unpaid - demonstrate spiritual vitality.

Areas of Relative Strength	Score	Areas of Potential Improvement	Score
1. People have found that hard work and sacrifice pays off richly in spiritual fruit.	89.67	1. People report utilizing their spiritual gifts and talents.	58.78
2. There is a spiritual expectancy in the air. People are watching and expecting God to do something amazing.	88.28	2. People practice good routines and habits in order to grow spiritually.	70.92
3. Your church moves with a sense that it is sent to share something of eternal value with the world.	85.99	3. At your church, sometimes the Holy Spirit moves you beyond your fears, so that you speak, give and move boldly with God.	72.26

DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIPS: 76.25

Disciple making depends in large part on our relational skills our relationship with God and with others. A church's people must develop good habits for leading others into a transformative relationship with God through Christ.

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- A lack of welcoming behaviors.
- A struggle to incorporate new people into the life of your church.
- Positive experience partnering with other leaders and groups.
- A dependency on a few people to do a lot of the work. There is a need for greater teamwork and leader development.
- Leaders - paid and unpaid - who may be struggling to work together.

Areas of Relative Strength	Score
1. People are okay with the idea that your church could grow.	91.22
2. Staff and laity team well together to advance ministry.	86.68
3. People are happy to open the church's facilities for community use.	85.31

Areas of Potential Improvement	Score
1. Your church seems committed to doing things in a way that is oriented to guests and visitors.	50.87
2. Your church is committed to team-based ministry.	56.16
3. People have the experience of inviting friends and neighbors who, in turn, become active participants in the church's life.	60.38

MISSIONAL ALIGNMENT: 76

Highly fruitful churches consistently prioritize the investment of their resources (time, talent, treasure) according to their Biblical vision and mission. Plans and major initiatives must stem clearly from Biblical mandates and a quest for fruitfulness. There is a willingness to let go of strategies that aren't bearing as much fruit. The more churches do this the better they are aligned.

Many folks at your church have a good sense of where God is calling you to go, but others are not aligned with this point of view. There is seldom enough personnel or financial resources to run in many directions at once. Now is a time for serious conversation about Lake Harbor 's priorities. To this end, your church has:

- A clear understanding of our mandate to reach new people.
- A disconnect between its stated mission and its core practices and activities.
- Fear of backlash if the church makes decisions that are in line with its mission as opposed to pleasing people or maintaining status quo.
- A shared sense of competency about the church's ability to start new ministries.
- Clarity about the core principles of the church's faith.
- Passionate support for the church's direction.

Areas of Relative Strength	Score	Areas of Potential Improvement	Score
1. People think in terms of the church's mission more than what's in it for them personally.	91.58	1. People believe that procedure should never be used to shut down mission advancement.	45.48
2. Your church focuses on God's abundance, not on your lack of resources.	89.78	2. People are comfortable with the fact that expanding ministry makes it impossible to know everyone.	53.57
3. Your church's mission connects with people's compassion for others who are suffering or spiritually estranged from God.	86.54	3. Your church is willing to invest for the long term and for major advance, even when the project will run in the red for a few years.	59.38

CULTURAL OPENNESS: 74

Since the first century, effective churches have been reaching across cultural boundaries to share the Christian good news with diverse people, who begin with different experiences, perspectives, and stories. Churches that exhibit fortress behaviors or who spend excessive time mourning social change often have difficulty sharing life with new kinds of people.

On one hand, many in the church want to reach diverse people, but many in the church still have great apprehension about what this might mean in terms of changing the face of Lake Harbor. There may be some limitations in terms of how far the church is able to reach toward different kinds of people in the next few years. Open communication will be critical.

Your congregation's capacity for embracing new cultures (e.g., socio-economic, racial/ethnic, generational, etc.) is marked by:

- Attitudes and behaviors that indicate some difficulties in crossing cultural boundaries, especially with your neighbors.
- A good ability to form meaningful community with people who puzzle and/or offend you in certain respects.
- Some anxiety about increasing diversity in your church.
- Energy for working with different kinds of people.
- Difficulty in sharing power with new people.
- Valuable experiences that will help you reach younger people.
- Mixed experiences that may make it difficult to reach different racial/ethnic groups.
- Mixed experiences that may make it difficult to reach people in different socio-economic groups.

Areas of Relative Strength	Score	Areas of Potential Improvement	Score
1. The ideas of young people are valued.	91.84	1. Once oriented, your church trusts people to lead.	50.90
2. People have a positive attitude toward their neighbors who have different instincts, tastes or points of view.	91.41	2. You have a mix of newcomers and old-timers in leadership at your church.	51.22
3. People report experiencing a sense of common humanity with people who are different than themselves.	88.40	3. People seem to have valuable experiences that will help you reach those of a different socio-economic group.	61.30

Leader Tips

Leaders at Lake Harbor display some readiness for leading the church on a robust ministry journey in the days ahead. There are also significant areas where leader growth is needed. The leader team that the church needs to multiply ministry is not yet fully in place. A good ministry coach could prove extremely helpful.

These tips were generated for leaders - paid and unpaid - at Lake Harbor given specific patterns of response throughout the survey. After you have read through each tip discuss their priority as a team and implement one at a time. If you experience any difficulty in the prioritization process or if you have more than 3-5 tips, we recommend engaging an experienced facilitator or coach.

Tip 1: Let your church know it is time for an alignment. A church will seldom function in a way that is aligned with its stated mission and purpose unless leaders walk the talk, are willing to lift up that mission and ask how each activity helps us to live out that mission. The mission must be rooted in the Gospel of Jesus, framed in ways that are relevant to the community, restated regularly and used consistently. If folks don't hear about it for a month, many will forget it! Be sure you have a simple mission that is easy for folks to understand and remember. If a church's mission doesn't fit on a t-shirt, it isn't simple enough. Regularly point people back to your collective purpose in the preached moment. Ask each group, each program and ministry area to frame their work in terms of the church's core mission. A couple of great reads related to realigning churches to the mission of Jesus in the world would be ***The Permanent Revolution*** by Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, ***Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*** by Alan Roxburgh and ***Missional Renaissance*** by Reggie McNeal.

Tip 2: Commit to your own personal spiritual journey and living out God's call on your life. In order to lead, we have to get in front of the parade. If we are not prayerful personally, it will be impossible for us to competently lead a prayerful church. If we are not robust givers to support the church's mission on the lead team, our church will almost certainly have a lack of robust giving across the ranks. Your leaders would help your church immensely by covenanting together as leaders to a short list of core discipleship behaviors, and then holding yourselves accountable to this covenant on a regular basis. Spend a part of your leadership gathering time tending to this covenant and to your lives as a community of faith, first and foremost. When nominating persons for leadership, begin to insist on certain key indicators in their lives. Are they obviously and passionately committed to living out God's call on their life? Are they actively engaged in practices that deepen their faith journey. Are they giving? Are they engaged in a small group or a ministry team? Whatever you find non-negotiable in terms of the life of faith, make it non-negotiable for your leaders. Also, in churches with high spiritual intensity, it is normal and natural for the senior leader to take work time to go on prayer retreats, where she/he does no work other than to listen and talk to God. Encourage your pastor to take the time to stay spiritually fresh and sharp. A good read for leaders would be ***Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders*** by Reggie McNeal and Ken Blanchard.

Tip 3 : Rid your church of lone ranger ministry mentality and commit to team-based ministry. It is common to find ministries or churches where one or two people are expected to do all the work on behalf of the whole body, but this is not positioning the church or its people for growth. It is often difficult to break this habit! One of the first steps is for leaders to agree that they will let a particular project or ministry rest until a team can be rallied to lead it. A good rule of thumb is to wait to start (or stop) any ministry project until at least five passionate, committed people have enlisted to share in leadership. Those five should then recruit others from the margins of church life and from beyond! Learn more through a study of ***The Teaming Church: Ministry in the Age of Collaboration*** by Robert Crosby.

Tip 4: Lift up and model habits of cultural openness. When a church is isolated socially from its mission zone, the pastor and a few leaders can break the ice and get involved personally in service projects, community organizations or other intentional experiences where they build relationships with folks who reflect aspects of the community's diversity. A couple good resources for networking in your neighborhood: ***Make Your Contacts Count*** by Lynne Waymon and ***Networking for People who Hate Networking*** by Devora Zack. Talking about our experiences building relationships in the community openly and with good humor will help the church begin dealing with issues of how to connect with neighbors and/or younger people who are different.

Tip 5: Simplify and concentrate your purpose to help your people keep their eye and hearts on reaching your mission zone. All over the world, many of the most rapidly multiplying church movements share this in common: the people are poor and the churches have very little in the way of financial resources. In the west, we tend to create ministry with very high overhead, along with the illusion that we can't afford to do what it takes to grow ministry. In reality, churches always have the resources to do what they really need to do. Your church may need to seriously re-assess its facility and staffing strategies in order to be nimble and effective in the 21st century. A competent ministry consultant may save you several years in sorting through these issues wisely. Printed resources that might assist in the conversation would include ***Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*** by Andy Stanley and ***Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them*** by Ed Stetzer, et al.

Tip 6 : Invest time and energy in developing your skills in teamwork. When leaders begin teaming, it makes it easier for everyone! Great teaming is essential at multiple levels in a church: within the staff group, between pastor/staff and unpaid leadership, and among unpaid people in the church who come together to accomplish ministry tasks. Pastors may wish to identify aspects of their work where they can reflect and plan with others (other staff, laity, a coach/mentor or ministry peers in other churches) in order to model teaming, offer high quality experiences and to make really smart decisions. Some teaming possibilities include: Bible reflection in preparation for sermons, planning special events that offer a "wow" factor for participants, prayer walking the neighborhood and group discernment about ministry opportunities. It is very important that we always include persons in our planning who represent the community that a ministry is to be designed for. Non-members and young persons are often left off the team, and this is a mistake! (And then we wonder why the project bombed.) Some resources worthy of group study are: ***Sticky Teams*** by Larry Osborne and ***Five Dysfunctions of a Team*** by Patrick Lencioni.

Tip 7: Step back often to read and to freshen up your thinking! Pastoral leaders who are effective across multiple decades often discover the need to occasionally re-learn and even un-learn some of their most fundamental ministry practices and assumptions. Pastoral leaders who read a certain set of titles along with laity in their churches enable the church to also re-learn critical skills and renew effectiveness. Reading the insights of other excellent ministry practitioners is one good way to stay ahead of the curve. Even if a pastor serves the same congregation and community for forty years, that place and people will change enough each decade, that eventually the most basic principles and strategies will need to be revisited, and often reformed. In fact, there is probably no church that needs its leaders reading about new practices more than the church where most of the leaders have been working together for more than two decades! Church systems that are able to hear, tolerate and sometimes even appreciate minority opinions and voices may have an easier time trying new things and holding ministries accountable.

Tip 8: Get some new people on your most critical teams. Get some younger people and some more recent converts on the most critical teams! Every church needs a steady inflow of new people, new leaders and new ideas. This is critical to a church's health and readiness for risk-taking mission. In too many churches, it's the same people staring at each other across the conference table for many years, with diminishing energy and capacity for innovation. When the leader pool becomes disproportionately long-tenure church members, it is easy for the church to get stuck in terms of old ideas and paradigms. Occasionally we see stalwart lay leaders whose commitment to new ideas and ministry approaches helps keep their church from getting stuck, despite the fact that most of the leaders are old-timers. These leaders are somewhat rare and when they leave a church can freeze up, unless there is a steady and well-established inflow of new leaders. It is also helpful to establish term limits for lay leadership positions.

Tip 9: Connect people to their place in the mission. People in a church need to feel a sense of belonging. A big part of this belonging relates to knowing what role they play in the larger cast of characters that enable great ministry to happen. People need to understand their gifts. They need to be invited onto competent teams, and often apprenticed in a particular job and understand how that role fits in with the bigger picture. Expectations need to be lifted that everyone in the church will find their way onto the ministry playing field according to how they are wired. No benchwarmers! It may take 3-5 years of constant work cultivating high mission/ministry participation before you reach the tipping point. Church leaders can create systems for helping people discern their spiritual gifts and for connecting them to ministry teams as fast as possible. There is good evidence to suggest that the faster a church can connect new people to teams, the higher the chances that those people will become and remain regular participants in the life of the church. An excellent resource is **Connect: How to Double Your Number of Volunteers** by Nelson Searcy. And, by all means, protect your newest volunteers from those who would be critical and complain about their creative endeavors!

Tip 10: Sharpen your church's conflict management approach. A church's conflict management skill is directly related to its ability to practice grace and forgiveness and talk through difficult subjects in love. It always takes work and may require a neutral facilitator. Often it helps for leaders to develop a covenant around how disagreement is handled in the church. Typically there will be a few who choose to leave the church rather than to live within the covenants established. This is okay. Leaders are wise to develop their skills in listening and conversation around sensitive topics. Leaders should go together to any sister or brother who is fanning conflict, to hold them accountable in love (Matthew 18). In very high conflict situations (e.g., past leader misconduct or significant breach of trust) or in churches with history of conflict, a specialized coaching team may be required so that the whole church system moves toward more constructive and redemptive behaviors. Other helpful resources include ***Promise and Peril*** by David Brubaker, ***Behavioral Covenants in Congregations*** by Gil Rendle and ***Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High*** by Kerry Patterson, et.al.