

Strengthen the Church 2013

Each day, visions and dreams are created in the hearts of many in the United Church of Christ. Through the Strengthen the Church offering, they can become a reality. As God calls our congregations to be “church” in new ways, your gift will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop spiritual life in our youth and young adults. Because of this offering, many more will hear the good news that “God is still speaking.” Read on for more ways that the Wisconsin Conference is using Strengthen the Church contributions to promote these visions and dreams.



Church Renewal Programs

Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations and the Turnaround Church Program

“We began the process expecting to find ways to improve and enhance what we were already doing. We expected that the process would point out changes that we needed to make. It did. It also did more. The *Five Practices* conversations became the catalyst for new ideas. Church members felt they now had permission not only to surface new ideas but to try them. We tapped into people’s passions and they got excited about their projects. Some are now part of our ongoing ministry. We have much work to do in the future, but the conversation continues.”

—Pastor, Wisconsin Conference

Renewal is a spiritual discipline, and an essential characteristic of congregational life. Renewal is the name of the game for Christian people: “Be transformed by the renewing of your minds,” brothers and sisters, urges the apostle Paul (Romans 12:2).

Through the Turnaround Church and *Five Practices* programs, we help each other along the path toward renewal. Church leadership teams work together to determine how best to apply renewal principles within their congregations. Coaches and leaders share best practices of church revitalization. Pastors have the opportunity to talk with each other about the challenge of renewal from their unique perspective. Lay leaders learn how other congregations have responded to the challenges of renewal in their settings.



Turnaround Church 2013



Turnaround Church 2013

In both programs, churches send teams made up of lay folks and the pastor to attend an initial workshop, and then work back home on finding ways to help their congregation implement what’s been learned. The *Five Practices* program is useful for any congregation that wants to learn more about how it can provide more meaningful ministry in five key areas of church life. The Turnaround Church program focuses on outreach to potential new members, and is designed for churches that are ready to change how they relate to the community beyond the church walls.

We’ve had 37 churches participate in the *Five Practices* program, and 31 churches in the Turnaround program since we began to offer these in 2010. The programs are offered in alternate years, and in January 2014, we’ll launch the next session of *Five Practices*.

When we checked back with churches that have participated in *Five Practices* over the past three years to learn what kind of lasting impact the program has had, we heard things like this:

“I think the best impact was on our collective attitude. There is now more of a sense that our church can continue to worship and serve Christ...and to even thrive. Thanks for your work.”



Turnaround Church 2013