

# SURFACE TO SOUL

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## Preparing to Host a Congregational Forum

After a visioning retreat with leaders, it's important to share information from the retreat with members. An effective way to do so is by hosting one or more congregational forums where members have the opportunity to receive new information about the visioning process, and also offer feedback and ideas about next steps in the planning process. Listed below are a few ideas for hosting a congregational forum.

### 1 | PROMOTION

- Set dates and times for the forum(s) that allow the greatest number of people to participate.
- Use all available communication platforms to get the word out, including announcements, postcards, emails, newsletter articles, text messages, and social media postings.
- Begin promoting the forum(s) 4-6 weeks before the scheduled gatherings. Inform participants that information and potential action steps will be shared based on demographics studies, member interviews and congregation-wide surveys.
- Mention that participants will have opportunities to share ideas about ways to improve the plan.

### 2 | MEETING ROOM SET-UP

- Select a well-lit, sufficiently large room to host the forum.
- Ideally, have people around tables. Place information packets, pens, and index cards at each table.
- Decide if you will be sharing information via a screen or monitor.
- Consider using vision team members as table hosts to extend hospitality and record comments.
- Consider asking people to sign up for forums to assist with room set-up logistics.
- If you emailed/mailed information to members beforehand, print 5-10 copies for people that may not have brought this information with them to the forum.

### 3 | ITEMS NEEDED FOR THE EVENT

- Information packets
- Pens, paper index cards
- Monitor or screen/projector
- Newsprint or whiteboard and markers
- Speaker system (if you are in a large room)
- Refreshments (keep it simple)

### 4 | QUESTIONS TO ASK PARTICIPANTS ABOUT RESEARCH DATA

- What do you celebrate related to the information we've shared about our congregation?
- Was there anything in the information we shared that surprised you?
- What "wonderings" do you have based on the information we've shared?
- Is there additional information you feel that we still need to gather?

NOTE: it may be helpful to give 1 or 2 sample responses for each question that is raised.

### 5 | QUESTIONS TO ASK PARTICIPANTS ABOUT INITIATIVES AND ACTION STEPS

- Do you feel that we're on the right track and addressing our church's greatest opportunities & challenges?
- Are there initiatives you feel are missing that need to be included in our planning?
- Which initiatives and action steps are you most energized by?
- Are there ways you could see yourself helping us fulfill these initiatives?



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