

# *GUIDING DOCUMENTS FOR CLUSTERS*

*The United Methodist Church  
West Ohio Conference  
2011-2012*

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## ***20 Reasons to Cluster***

(From the Atlanta Retreat 2010)

- The sense of belonging to a community of colleagues
- Support and encouragement
- Not being alone
- We get better together
- Helps me be a different leader next year
- We sharpen each other
- My colleagues are praying for me and I them
- A place for caring to be displayed
- Reminds us to care for colleagues instead of competing with them
- A place to practice, a laboratory
- A place to laugh a lot and be reminded to not take self so seriously
- Partnering and doing ministry together within our geography
- It is kingdom-like, it helps you get excited
- A place to inspire
- Share life's transitions together
- Friendships
- Insights from other points of view
- Jesus did it with the 12
- The Kingdom of God it too important not to
- It safeguards us from isolation and incarnates Christ in community

What can you add?

## ***The Role of the Cluster Leader***

(What those in the Cluster can expect from their Leader)

### **Goal of Clusters**

*To Renew, energize and strengthen our Pastors*

*To Revitalize our Covenant Communities*

*To Rebuild our UM Connection*

*To align resources with Jesus' Vision & Mission for the Church*

### **5 Key Principles to Reach Our Goal**

1. ***Love First***-Loving God and loving one another informs all else
2. No one is alone in ministry- All are connected to a ***covenant community***
3. Trained in ***leadership practices*** that are integrated to the local setting
4. ***Accountable*** to God and to one another for personal/ministry growth
5. ***Abundant fruit*** is seen in making healthy disciples of Christ

### **Cluster Leader's Role within Each Principle**

1. Live "***love first***" as you lead, modeling a healthy pastor leading a healthy congregation making healthy disciples
2. Lead/Facilitate the "***covenant community***"  
Process- includes: Personal Plan, Ministry Plan, Structure of cluster gatherings, Call to covenant living, Cluster gathering
3. Train "***leadership practices***", using curriculum/best practices on healthy pastors/healthy congregations/healthy disciples
4. Set the climate to balance love, learning and leading while being "***accountable***" to God and one another
5. Celebrate the results of clustering, the "***abundant fruit***" of God's design

## Cluster Leaders Covenant Agreed to at September 2011 Day Apart

***A covenant is always rooted in God's covenant with us.*** With this as our foundation, we covenant with God and with each other in faith that our clusters will allow us to learn and grow with miraculous expectations; remind us that we are utterly dependent upon God and fully gifted by the Holy Spirit; help us align with the vision that Jesus gave us to love with joy and unity; measure the fruits of Christ's mission to go make disciples for the transformation of this world.

**Goal of Clusters:** To renew, energize and strengthen the pastors of our district; to revitalize the churches of our district and to rebuild and strengthen the Connection of local church, district & conference so that we might be about Christ's vision & mission of transformation. *Remember: "God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply & gently within us." (Ephesians 3: Peterson's The Message)*

The following structure has been agreed to during the September 2011 Day Apart:

Location:

Time:

Lunch:

The Format: The format will be L3- Love\Learn\Lead (Love for God & one another; Learn leadership content\Lead-integration of love & learning with action).

The District Superintendent will be responsible to lead the gathering but be intentional about incorporating participation in leadership when appropriate

2012 Retreat: (attendance mandatory)

The following are the dates for our Cluster Leaders Gathering for the remainder of 2011 & throughout spring of 2012:

Tuesday Nov 8<sup>th</sup> 2011

Tuesday Jan 10<sup>th</sup> 2012

Tuesday Feb 14<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday March 6<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday April 10<sup>th</sup>

Thursday May 10<sup>th</sup>

## ***A Year Overview of Cluster Gatherings***

**July:** Recruitment of new participants (**Jubilee**) allow you to invite anyone into your cluster and allows them to seek out a different cluster if they choose-Each Cluster Leader has agreed to not allow their feelings to be hurt so that we can have the best possible match for growing a Learning-Leadership Culture. Jubilee allows for a distinct beginning and end to each year.

**August:** Cluster Leaders will attend an annual Cluster Leaders retreat with Cluster Leaders from across the Annual Conference.

**September:** The Covenant is developed/reviewed and then agreed upon together. This sets the parameter for the upcoming year together and gives an official start.

**October-May:** The Personal and Ministry Plans are reviewed once a year with one or two participants sharing at each gathering.

### **L3 Format:**

- Love-The gathering begins with some fashion of love for one another and love for God (Worship, Sharing, Accountability, Personal Plan, Prayer and Bible study)
- Learn-Leadership curriculum (Books, Papers, Webpage)
- Lead-Integrating the content with practice (Best practices conversations, Ministry Plan, Group actions for combined ministry, Encouragement)
- *Leisure (L4 additional option)*
- **Covenant:** This does not need to be zero based each year. You can begin with what you did the previous year adding enhancements agreed upon.
- Monthly or bi-monthly
- What is the length of our gathering (2-3 hours long)
- Is there a meal option
- How will you review the Personal Plans and Ministry Plans over the year
- What is the format, values, etc. for the gathering
- How lack of attendance will be handled, etc.

## ***Questionnaire Option to Begin the Cluster Year***

These can be written out and then shared with the entire group at the beginning of the Cluster or simply shared verbally as each question is asked of the group. Feel free to use some or all of these. They could be reused the next year.

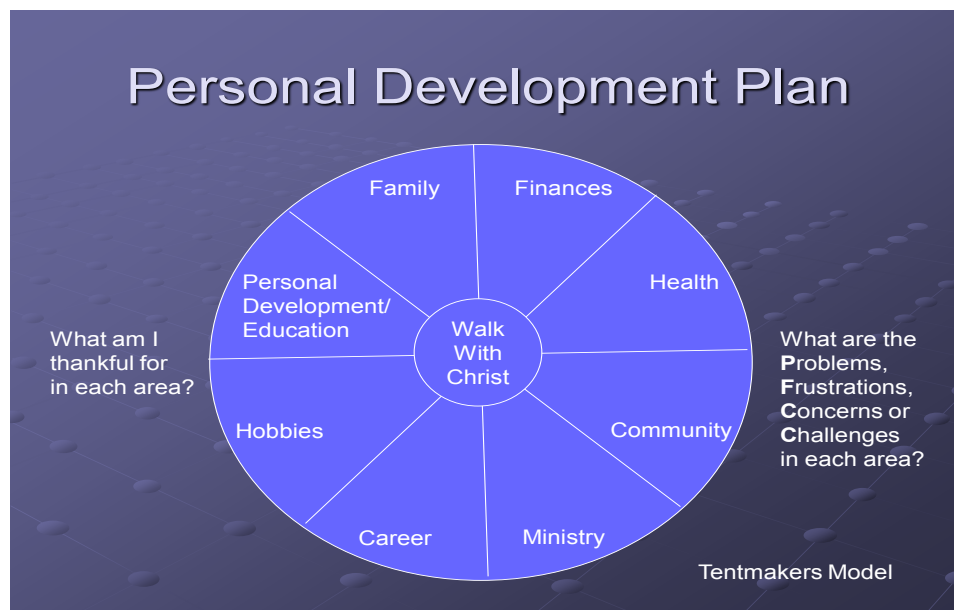
- What I want most from this Cluster is  
\_\_\_\_\_
- The one thing I would most want to be able to say at our final meeting of the year is \_\_\_\_\_
- Thinking about being in this Cluster for the next year, I  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A fear I have about being a member of this Cluster is  
\_\_\_\_\_
- One personal concern I would hope to bring up is  
\_\_\_\_\_
- The one aspect I would most like to change about myself is  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Something I particularly like about myself is  
\_\_\_\_\_
- One of the ways I would like to grow in the group is  
\_\_\_\_\_

Note: These were shared by Dr. Anthony Headley at our Atlanta Retreat 2010. They are from Corey et al. *Group Techniques* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition).

## ***Personal Develop Plan Options***

*(To Renew, energize and strengthen our Pastors ...)*

1. **The Tentmaker Model:** The questions to the side of the circle are answered for each area. This could be simple with a primary goal for each or it could be more complex. One approach would be to pick three specific goals from the circle, that if reached would have significant impact on the pastor's health. These three would be the items prayer partners could ask about each month.

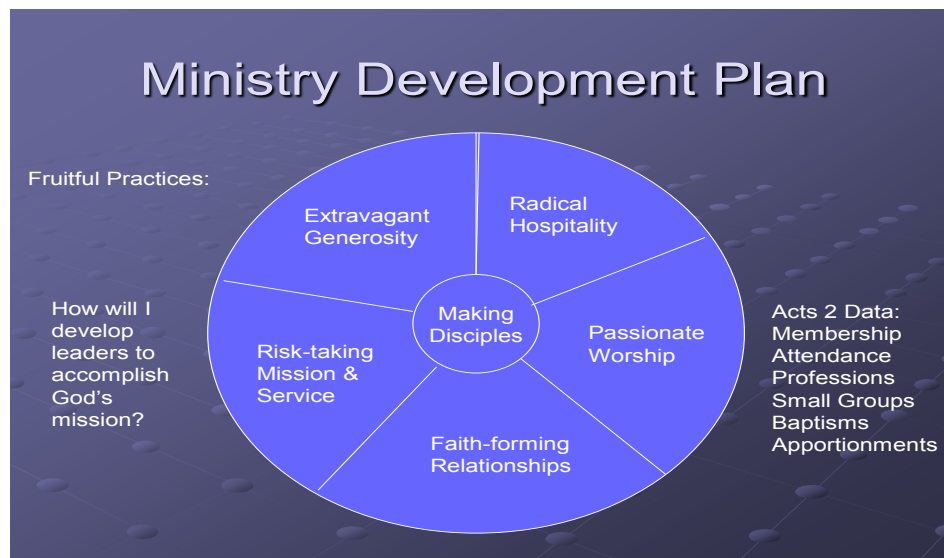


2. **3 Simple Rules Model:** The three rules are Do No Harm-Do Good-Stay in Love with God. Goals would be set under each of the three rules. Reading Bishop Job's book by the same name would be important if this framework is used.
3. **Leadership Network Model:** My Ministry Life-List my three strengths, my role in the church, my one to three goals for the next 6 months and what needs to happen for them to be accomplished. My Family Life-List what is awesome and what sucks, what is coming up in the next 6 months, and what has to happen to make life good. My Life-List what is awesome and what sucks, what is coming up in the next 6 months, and what has to happen to make life good.

## **Ministry Development Plan Options**

*(To Revitalize our Covenant Communities)*

1. **5 Fruitful Practices Model:** The one to three significant goals for each. Bishop Schnase has multiple resources available through Cokesbury. The webpage is [fivepractices.org](http://fivepractices.org) and can also serve as a resource.



2. **6 Month Model:** List my three strengths, my role in the church, my one to three goals for the next 6 months and what needs to happen for them to be accomplished. Did I accomplish the goals from the last 6 months that I set? What do I celebrate? What were the challenges? What would I do different?
3. **Church Model:** If the church I serve already has a process that is used then that document could be my Ministry Development Plan.

Note: MDP's that a pastor can accomplish by themselves is not a good plan. Please be sure to share the plan with your congregation to build momentum. The best case scenario is to develop the plan with them.

## ***Value of the District Superintendent visiting the Clusters***

(Developed at the ORV Cluster leader Gathering Nov. 2010)

1. It validates the Clustering process
2. It brings encouragement and relationship with the superintendent
3. Jesus was among his disciples
4. It keeps a sense of the connection
5. It allows the uniqueness of each Cluster to be understood

What would you add?

## ***Trust Building Exercise-12 Stepping Stones***

Write a list of numbers from 1 to 12 on the left hand side of your paper.

List 12 very brief phrases, events, turning points that have led you to being here today. Number one can be "I was born."

This is built upon the premise that there is a story before today's story. This helps give a broader context to each one's life.

Ask the group to now go through their list and

1. Place a check mark by what they find to be the most interesting or intriguing item listed.
2. Place an "x" by the significant turning points that are listed.
3. Circle the one or two that were filled with emotional conflict.
4. Allow time to reflect upon "How do you see God's story in your story?"

This can now be shared in small groups of three or four.

Note: exercise was shared by Dr. Ruth Anne Reese at the 2011 Mohican Retreat

## ***(Re)Formational Stages of Group Life***

Whenever a new person or Cluster leader enters the Cluster, the group has a re-forming of sorts. Understanding this process can be helpful to walking through these times. Also note that healthy departures from a group increase the ability of the group to assimilate new members.

1. FORMING: The Cluster comes together and gets to initially know one another and form as a group.
2. STORMING: A chaotic vying for leadership and challenging group process
3. NORMING: Eventually agreement is reached on how the group operates- rules guiding its operation.
4. PERFORMING: The Cluster practices its craft and becomes effective in meeting its objectives.
5. ADJOURNING: The process of “un-forming” the group, that is, letting go of the group structure and moving on.

-Bruce Tuckman, 1965

(Note: This was shared by Dr. Anthony Headley at the 2010 Atlanta Retreat)