

Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits

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*And Jesus stopped and called (the two blind men), saying, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’
They said to him, ‘Lord, let our eyes be opened.’ And Jesus in pity touched their eyes and
immediately they received their sight and followed him. Matthew 20:32-34*

The goal of the Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits:

- + Involve an appropriate facilitator from the NALC
- + Invites congregational leaders, formal and informal to participate
- + First we pray, “Lord, let our eyes be opened!”
- + Trust the Lord will give participants fresh eyes to receive new insight and understanding, all aimed at new or renewed direction for mission and ministry as the congregation seeks to follow Jesus firmly and faithfully!

*The Holy Spirit is now renewing the NALC and the Church of Jesus Christ—
one congregation at a time, with one-on-one, life-to-life facilitation!*

Steps in the Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit Process:

1. Schedule a ZOOM conversation with church council
2. Council action to move forward
3. Pre-work begins by congregation
4. NALC provides MapDash for Faith Communities demographic profile
5. ZOOM conversation to introduce MapDash profile and information
6. On-site Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit: Friday through Sunday worship
7. Six-eight month ZOOM follow-up conversation

Strengths and Benefits of Fresh Eyes summits:

- + Highlights and addresses current reality, not assumptions or narratives
- + Provides actual demographic data regarding population, generational breakdown, etc.
- + Includes congregational data re worship attendance, finances, membership
- + Is truly congregationally focused—not one-size-fits-all approach
- + Involves formal and informal leadership of the congregation
- + Invites and encourages mission and discipleship, with excitement and energy
- + Congregational leaders develop vision, plan and action steps, increasing “ownership” and commitment locally
- + Models visioning and goal-setting for congregational leaders
- + Includes six-eight month follow-up
- + Connection and support from the NALC and Executive Staff—at no cost to the congregation

What Impact are Fresh Eyes Summits having in congregations?

1. Congregational leaders realizing need for greater communication.
2. Congregations often hold onto false assumptions and narratives.
3. Congregations are stronger when they acknowledge and deal with reality.
4. Forward movement happens when based on realistic view of present.
5. Congregations are refusing to accept decline and/or stagnation-plateau.
6. Congregations are developing clear, specific vision for mission.
7. Congregations are developing practical, do-able meaningful action steps.
8. Inward-focus being expanded to include outward focus.
9. Renewed vision for mission creates renewed energy and enthusiasm!

Additional notes:

1. Many congregations are focused inwardly. This was true prior to COVID but was heightened by the pandemic. Inwardly focused congregations are often “best-kept secrets” within their communities.
2. Most congregations were experiencing decline in worship attendance and sometimes income prior to the pandemic. Many congregations were seeing 10% decline in worship attendance prior to the pandemic. Now many report 20% decline in worship attendance.
3. In spite of the decline in worship attendance and participation, few congregations have a plan to connect/communicate with members post-pandemic, to stimulate attendance and involvement. Many are forming “Connection Committees,” to call all members once a quarter to check-in and simply ask, “How are you doing?”
4. Many congregations are not visible in the community. They desire to grow the congregation but have no real strategy to do so. If your congregation was a business having no new customers, you would have two options—close or get the word out about your business to attract new customers.
5. Congregations which participate in Fresh Eyes summits develop several vision points to get them moving, with several actions steps to put the vision into practice. These often include—becoming more involved in the community meeting real-life needs of people who are not members; assessing current activities to determine whether these are still worthy of time and energy; increase signage and outward-facing appearance of the church to attract attention.
6. Many congregations develop a strategy of helping members to share simply, how God has been active in their lives. We live in a day and age when we can’t be silent! We are called to share Christ’s light with those living in darkness, isolation and unbelief.
7. Growing out of the Missional Capacity Assessment on Saturday mornings during the summit, many congregations have discovered that they’re trying to keep a model of “church” going now that was developed post-World War II, during the baby boom when churches were filled to overflowing. Congregations with smaller membership and fewer people involved are reading the book, “Simple Church” by Thom Rainer, asking, “How can we simplify our congregational life so that our members are not so over-worked, burned-out and distracted by many things, so that we are free to focus on the main thing—Jesus’ presence!”