

# Working With a Compass: Congregational Identity and “True North”

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It helps to surface our assumptions and implicit answers when considering:

“What is *The Church*?” And then - “What is your congregation’s identity and purpose today?”

*“The church is a community defined by its unique relationships to God, one another, and the world, relationships that are characterized by love and expressed in robust practices of worship, fellowship and mission, respectively.”* (Rev. Dr. Christopher B. James, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary)

Working a compass that anchors us in the “true north” of identity, sketch thoughts in the spaces below:

**North:** Who are you – what is your identity and for what do you exist?

In particular consider which of the *Great Ends of the Church* are your congregation’s heartbeat? This is about your substance, your DNA, your spiritual gift(s).

**South:** What competing answers to “what is the church” may need to be moved behind “true north” so that they do not eclipse your more transcendent identity? Often these include temporary *forms* of church that get confused with the more enduring *substance* of being the church. They can be unspoken and assumed while holding much sway.

For example: The church “...of Rev. Smith,” “...without a pastor,” “that is historic,” “...of the fall bazaar,” “...of community pillar members,” “with the early service...” “...that is shrinking”

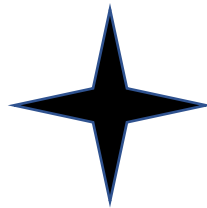
**West:** What needs to sunset in order to free up resources and energy to be who you are now?

Are there things literally gathering dust or requiring maintenance (in the building, or the building!), cluttering your calendar, built on old staffing patterns, reflecting the gifts and interests of those who are gone, irrelevant to your town now?

**East:** What new might is needed to be faithfully the church you are for 2024 and beyond?

Think broadly – equipping in particular areas, new or repurposed resources, fresh blueprint, new leadership patterns, different schedule or routines, neighborhood relationships...

**North**



**West**

**East**

**South**