Post-Covid Criteria for identifying and prioritizing Vulnerable and Ethnic Congregations

The following criteria serves as an aide in creating the 2021 list of Vulnerable and Ethnic Churches best Strategically Placed to Respond. The criteria is not a checklist. We believe that many churches in marginalized areas who have shown resilience through the Covid-19 pandemic may already have roots in some of these criteria. Or, simply stated, these criteria are for including churches, not for ruling out any church. Churches and New Starts can be included if they meet any of these criteria, and are not required to meet all criteria. These criteria just are a starting point.

1. Ministry is strong in leadership and service among their community.
2. Ministry has many assets, connections and partnerships with the surrounding community, however, they may be lacking in physical resources.
3. Ministry and community continue to respond to post-Covid effects.
4. Ministry is growing and reflects the diversity of the community.
5. Ministry works in a holistic manner to break cycles of poverty and injustice.

Criteria: Further Description

1. Ministry is strong in leadership and service among their community.
   - Ministry has clarity of purpose
   - Ministry gives priority to discipleship and leadership development
   - Ministry partners with ecumenical and inter-religious ministries
   - Ministry has depth of relationship to make lifesaving differences

2. Ministry has many assets, connections and partnerships with the surrounding community, however, they may be lacking in physical resources.
   - Ministry is closely connected to the community and has community partners, including social ministry organizations
   - Ministry collaborates with other congregations and with their synod
   - Evidence of financial need necessary to support ministry and leadership staff
   - Ministries may have limited technological support
   - Ministries may have pastoral leaders who are not supported with full-time compensation nor quality of call support
3. Ministry and community continue to respond to Post Covid-19 effects.
   • Community may suffer from slow vaccination rates
   • Access to medical care may be scarce and complex
   • Added economic hardship

4. Ministry is growing and reflects the diversity of the community.
   • Ministries producing new and diverse leaders and expanding resources (money, food, clothing etc...).
   • Expanding the network of connections with new people
   • New “net promoters”, new leaders promoting the ministry and invite others to be leaders

Ministry works in a holistic manner to break cycles of poverty and injustice
a. Understand data and reality of the context of the community
   • Poverty index in the community shows need
   • Property Debt to Income ratio shows need
   • Churches are in communities with high population of essential workers.

b. Congregational initiatives
   • Churches may be used as sites for vaccinations
   • Advocacy
   • Connected to community organizing/ community development networks
   • Churches that address the roots of poverty and injustice in the area for example, local/national advocacy efforts

PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING OUR MOST VULNERABLE CONGREGATIONS:
Vulnerable congregations will be identified by DEMs, Synod Bishops, Ethnic Program Directors and networks of ministries serving among people experiencing poverty.

Three main categories of vulnerable congregations will be identified:
• Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities (SAWCs), known also as New Starts
• Existing congregations currently receiving churchwide and/or synod grants
• Other vulnerable congregations not receiving grants