



CONNECTION EVALUATION MANUAL

Determining the Compatibility
and Viability of a Potential
Church Affiliation

PREPARED BY
Church Extension Ministries of
the Bible Fellowship Church



The purpose of this manual is to ascertain if connection with the Bible Fellowship Church is the best fit for both the church and the denomination and, if so, to determine what type of connection is the best fit.

Churches who connect with the Bible Fellowship Church fit into one of the following categories:

- Healthy connection
- Revitalization
- Restart
- Church merger

Before Using This Manual

The first step for connection evaluation is for the church to fill out the Compatibility Test Form. The form can be found at BFC.org/Connection.

Once the online form is filled out and received, then a member of the Church Extension Team will contact the church and use this manual to determine if connection is compatible and viable.



Developed by the Vision and Strategy Committee of Church Extension Ministries

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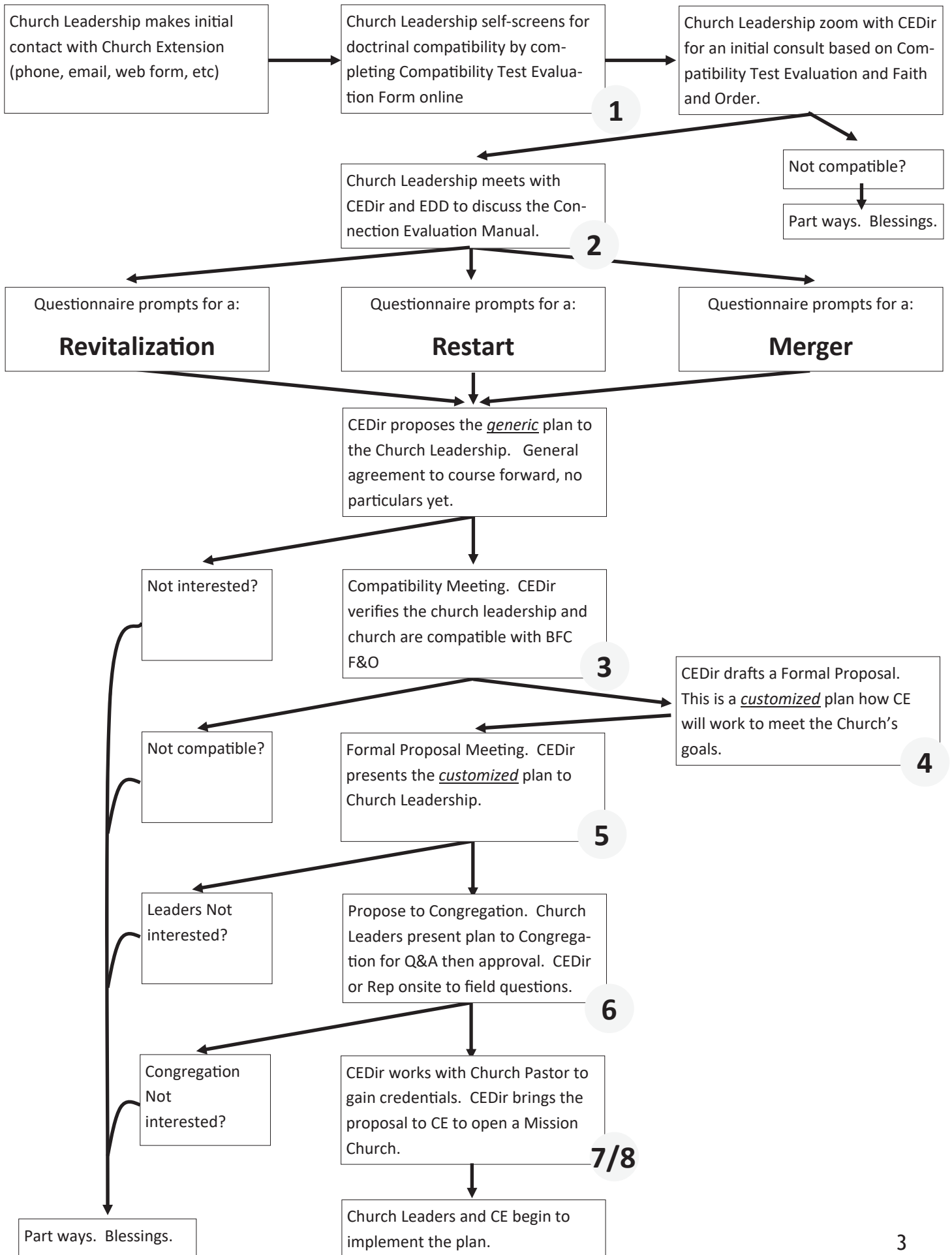
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Steps to Investigating Church Connection

1. Connecting church fills out Compatibility Test at BFC.org/Connection.
2. Church Extension Director (CED) and/or Director of Expansion and Development (DED) meets with church's leadership team to go through the Compatibility Test Evaluation Form and to further discuss BFC materials including:
 - Pastor's willingness to seek BFC credentials and/or
 - Pastor/congregation's willingness to have current church leadership step aside in order to call a man with BFC credentials
 - Articles of Faith
 - Principles of Order
3. If church is willing to proceed, the CED and/or DED meets with the church to ask the questions found in the Connection Evaluation Manual.
4. If church connection is still found to be compatible and viable, CED and DED decide the type of connection, develop a corresponding connection plan, and presents the connection plan to the church leadership. The connection could be:
 - Healthy connection
 - Revitalization
 - Restart
 - Church merger
5. The church leadership approves moving forward and presents the connection plan to the congregation for approval to move forward. Church Extension customizes the connection plan.
6. CED and DED meet with church congregation for a Q & A session.
7. If necessary, Church Extension works with the pastor to gain credentials and/or arranges BFC pulpit supply.
8. CED and DED bring the connection to the Board of Church Extension to open the connecting church as a Mission Church and appoint the Transitional Leadership Team for the church. The Mission Church works through the connection plan.

Flowchart for Investigating Connection



Connection Evaluation Questions

The following questionnaire will evaluate whether a church is to be a:

- healthy connection
- revitalization
- restart
- church merger

The evaluation may also reveal that connection discussions should end based on non-compatibility or lack of viability.

The questions may be shared with the church before the meeting with the directors. The CEM evaluators will use these evaluation questions to guide the evaluation discussion.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are the most important questions.

Leadership Evaluation

1. *Is the current pastor willing to be evaluated, trained, or step down?
2. If necessary, is the current leadership willing to resign and relinquish authority to the BFC?
3. *Who is the leader? Who does the church look to for leadership?
4. Who are the patriarchs or matriarchs in the church (if any)?
5. Is there a current man qualified to move the church forward? Are there people in the congregation and/or leadership with an entrepreneurial mindset?
6. If there have been leadership conflicts in the past or present, how were the problems resolved or attempted to be resolved?

Culture and Congregation

1. Is there a maintenance mentality or a growth mentality within the people of the congregation? How do you know?
2. *Are there unresolved current or past conflicts among the people in the congregation?
3. Is the church man-focused rather than Jesus-focused?
4. What are the church's values, mission, and vision?
5. What is the church doing to reach people with the Gospel?
6. What does shepherding and church discipline look like in the church?
7. Are the congregants well-taught in the Bible and living out the gospel?
8. *Is there a discipleship plan in place? What does it look like?

9. *How many people were baptized in the past two years?
10. How many people were taken into membership in the past two years?
11. *Has the church experienced conversion growth in the past five years?
12. Describe what worship and fellowship look like in the church.
13. Is the church willing to change systems or people in leadership positions if they have hindered growth?
14. Is the church willing to move on from traditions if they hinder growth?
15. Is there disunity, bitter factions, disrespect, or disorderly polity in the church?

Legal/Historical/Financial/Facility

1. *Is the church willing to submit the church's bylaws, constitution, and articles of incorporation to Church Extension for review?
2. *How old is the church?
3. How many people are currently attending?
4. Is the church growing, plateauing, or declining? If declining, what is the reason for the decline?
5. *Is the church willing to disclose financial records for the last five years including any restricted or designated funds?
6. How prudent has the church been with their financial decisions?
7. Is the church willing to place the BFC Trust Clause in their incorporation papers? (see Article 408 of the Principles of Order)

Reflection: Considerations for Churches in Decline

*This section to be filled out only for churches plateaued or in decline. This section will be completed by the CEM evaluator **after** the compatibility discussion as a means of reflecting on the discussion.*

1. *What are the reasons for this church to continue?
2. What are the reasons for this church to close?
3. Is it more effective to revitalize this church or simply start a new one? Why?
4. Is the location suitable to accomplish the mission?
5. Does the church admit their need for help? Is the church willing to receive help, if needed?

6. Are the leaders honest with a proper assessment of what issues are going on at the church, if problems are present?
7. What other gospel-preaching churches are nearby? Are they growing?
8. Are there interested churches willing to assist with revitalization or restart or willing to merge with the church?
9. What is the reputation of the church in the community?
10. Is it the proper time to enact change? Is it too late?
11. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most energetic, what is the energy level of the remnant group to continue to do ministry?

Recommendation

Based on the Compatibility Test Evaluation and the Connection Evaluation Discussion by the evaluators, I recommend that the connection discussions will:

(circle one) continue or end

If connection discussions continue, the evaluators recommend that the connection be:

(circle one)

- Healthy connection
- Revitalization
- Restart
- Church merger

Here is the brief reasoning behind the recommendation:

Signed,

(Name of Director of Church Extension)

(Date)