Strategic Strengths of Congregations relevant to community transformation

Note: this is a way of describing congregational strengths for a particular purpose. Asking about strengths for personal transformation might produce a slightly different list.

Strengths of Congregations

Strength to Convene
- Real humans in real rooms across boundaries
- beyond tribe and too-small family
- integration of knowledge at human level
- small and big meetings

Strength to Bless
- blessing experienced as forgiveness
- key to deep change, reversal, metanoia
- can’t bless one’s self
- social strength, not words
- key to ministry with marginalized people
- profound links with health, healing, change

Strength to Endure
- Different clock calibrated to life cycles
- elections fiscal cycles grant cycles
- rejection of silly time frames
- intergenerational context is unique
- no success or failure is ultimate
- minimum = half-generation

Strength to Frame, Story
- Rewrite shared narrative
- Draw new frame around event
- Place little stories in Big Story
- Put immediate in context of ultimate
- Not just words, but the whole frame of meaning

Strength to Pray
- The whole menu
- prayer
- Dance, music, silence, presence, art
- questions, inspired hopes, protest, candles, old and new symbols
- an inconvenient strength
- Mark the paths
- Ritual
- Physical/sensory triggers, beyond (not beneath) logic
- Patterns of participation
- Pot Luck suppers, too
- Safe space for work
- Safe for dispute, question, risk
- Physical space - access, refuge
- Can bless space beyond its walls

Strength to Connect
- Tangible flows across intangible relationships
- makes resources visible, accessible
- knowledgable referral rationalizes systems
- depends on transparency of members

Strength to Accompany
- Be present physically
- Congregations congregate
- Being present precedes everything else
- deacon coach visitor fellowship roles
- All that moves us to the boundary of holy and human
- Opens was for others to find boundary
- prayer
- Dance, music, silence, presence, art
- questions, inspired hopes, protest, candles, old and new symbols
- an inconvenient strength
- Mark the paths
- Ritual
- Physical/sensory triggers, beyond (not beneath) logic
- Patterns of participation
- Pot Luck suppers, too
- Safe space for work
- Safe for dispute, question, risk
- Physical space - access, refuge
- Can bless space beyond its walls

Note: these are not clergy strengths, but strengths that live in the social structure of faith-forming-things (FFT) called congregations

Note 2: FFT’s are what Faith Based Organizations (FBO) are based on, grow from, depend on for both genesis and sustanance. For many reasons it is awkward and sometimes dangerous for government to relate directly to the FFT, but it is important to remember the FFT is primary and FBO is derivative.