

PART ONE—CURRENT STATE ANALYSIS: SCOUT THE GNARLY RAPIDS

In part one of the book, gaining an understanding for the lay of the land is priority: where are things located and what does this mean for congregations rafting downriver? Whenever I enter a new ministry assignment, my goal is to listen, observe, and begin to understand the ministry challenges and opportunities. Some pastors refer to this as getting into the balcony. For our purposes, and in keeping with our rafting metaphor, we will call this scouting the current state. A river scout will survey the river from land, from a less intense position, with good vantage points to examine rapids and obstructions: rocks or fallen trees, maybe even a waterfall or a smoker (an extremely violent and dangerous rapid).

In **Chapter 1** we will *scout* the current state of the world that the church is rafting through and suggest that it takes the whole life of the whole congregation, using all the means (or instruments) to address the challenges: God’s Word, people, and things. In **Chapter 2** we will scout the current state of the congregation’s spiritual rubber (gospel impact) and discuss four criteria to monitor and improve a congregation’s river rafting experience. In **Chapter 3** we will scout the congregation’s financial rigging (viability/sustainability) and have a “safety talk” that should take place prior to departing on any river rafting trip.