A Planning and Training Resource for Growing Vital Congregations

OVERVIEW

We believe God’s love heals and transforms lives. God’s love is encountered in disciples of Jesus who passionately share faith, hope and justice in the community. Vital congregations form and shape passionate disciples. We equip spiritual leaders to grow vital congregations and make disciples so that God’s love heals and transforms the world.
# Table of Contents

**Team Vital Introduction** ............................................................................................................................... 4
  What is our vision? .................................................................................................................................... 4
  What is a disciple? .................................................................................................................................... 4
  What is a turnaround spiritual leader? ..................................................................................................... 4
  What is a vital congregation? ................................................................................................................... 4
  What are the five markers of vitality? ...................................................................................................... 4
  What can a congregation expect as an outcome to participation in Team Vital? .................................... 5

**Team Vital Experience and Steps** ................................................................................................................. 6
  How, Where and How Often Will Team Vital Meet? ................................................................................ 7
    Initial 4-5 Months of Resourcing ........................................................................................................... 7
    Ongoing 18 Month Resourcing and Technical Assistance .................................................................... 7
    Central Follow-Up Sessions ................................................................................................................... 8

**Other Key Components** ................................................................................................................................ 9
  Prayer and Bible Study .............................................................................................................................. 9
  Facilitators ................................................................................................................................................. 9
  Resourcing and Supporting Team Vital Congregations ............................................................................ 9
  Required Local Church Commitment ........................................................................................................ 9

**Local Team Vital Selection Process Guide** .............................................................................................. 10
  Who chooses Team Vital? ....................................................................................................................... 10
  What is the size of Team Vital? ............................................................................................................. 10
  What role does the pastor and staff play? ............................................................................................. 10

**How to Become a Part of Team Vital?** ....................................................................................................... 11
  3 Easy Steps ............................................................................................................................................. 11
  Team Vital Application Process ............................................................................................................... 11
  Team Vital Application ............................................................................................................................ 11
Team Vital Introduction

What is our vision?
We see a church like Jesus Christ—radical spirit and humble, teaching and healing, soul saving and soul tending, leader and servant, unbound and outbound. We also see a Wesleyan Church—personal holiness and social holiness, connectional and risk taking, thoughtful and inspirational, small groups and large vision, welcoming all and respect for diversity of thought.

What is a disciple?
We seek disciples that will sit at the feet of Jesus and become life-long learners and followers of Jesus Christ, leaving behind safety and complacency to serve like Christ to save souls, end poverty, be graceful with those at the margins, connect with people who are different from us, and magnify God’s presence in the world. This type of discipleship is encouraged and supported through vital congregations.

What is a turnaround spiritual leader?
Turnaround spiritual leaders assess the gifts and needs of the congregation to make new disciples, grow worship, grow faith through small groups, engage in life-changing mission and increase giving to mission and ministry.

What is a vital congregation?
Vital Congregations are inwardly transformed and missionally outbound. Vital congregations are Spirit-filled, forward-leaning communities of believers that grow over time, welcome all people (Galatians 3:28); make disciples of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20); and serve like Christ through justice and mercy ministries (Micah 6:8 and Luke 4:17-21).

What are the five markers of vitality?
What is Team Vital?

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. If either should fall, one can pick up the other. But how miserable are those who fall and don’t have a companion to help them up! Also, if two lie down together, they can stay warm. But how can anyone stay warm alone? Also, one can be overpowered, but two together can put up resistance. A three-ply cord doesn’t easily snap. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (CEB)

Team Vital is a tool for congregations to use to create and employ an action plan to make their congregation highly vital. Team Vital creates a synergy among congregations that fosters learning from one another, collaboration, mutual accountability and support. Team Vital follows scriptural wisdom: the more cords in a rope, the stronger the rope. A congregation’s team should consist of 8-12 congregational leaders, including the senior pastor. Smaller churches might have 5-8 participants. Each team will be participating with 3-8 other congregations.

During the course of Team Vital, congregational teams will engage in a dynamic process that will identify the assets that form ministry, the challenges facing the congregation and a path for engaging in the community and growing vitality. At the end of the training, each team will have a ministry plan that will guide their growth and development.

What can a congregation expect as an outcome to participation in Team Vital?

- Well-defined understanding of the assets in the local church
- Clear view of the community and the mission field
- A Holy Spirit inspired vision for the congregation
- Enhanced knowledge for ministry in the 5 markers of vitality
- An achieved ministry action plan
- A fully-functioning ministry process-improvement strategy
- Stronger connection to other churches
- Increased church vitality.
# Team Vital Experience and Steps

Vitality is a spiritual process of assessing where you are, identifying where God is calling you to be, equipping leaders to grow vitality, and developing a ministry plan to help the congregation grow vitality so that we make disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world. There are five steps in the Team Vital experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1 Preparation</th>
<th>Prepare spiritually and work with the local Team Vital to review the materials and complete the preparation work</th>
<th>Introduce the team to the congregation on a Sunday morning and pray for the team. Meet together as a team and go over the Team Vital materials.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Complete:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>• Preparation Bible Study</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• The QuickInsight Report and the Quad Report from MissionInsite</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• The 4x4 Neighborhood Walking Survey</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Section 1: Vital Congregations/Assets and Gifts for Ministry</strong></td>
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<td><strong>STEP 2 Team Vital Session 1</strong></td>
<td>Meet together for a full day at a central location with peer Team Vital congregations and a Team Vital facilitator</td>
<td>Complete:&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Group Bible Study</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Section 2: Claiming Our Purpose and Envisioning a New Future</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Section 3: Vital Worship</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Section 4: Reaching and Making New Disciples</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Section 5: Moving Mission from Deficit to Asset to Transformed Community</strong></td>
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<td><strong>STEP 3 Homework</strong></td>
<td>Local Team Vital members work as a group at home to continue to explore vitality markers</td>
<td>Share with the congregation your experience in Team Vital Session 1 and invite the congregation to pray for the ministry of the team and the congregation. Complete:&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Section 6: Growing Vitality through Small Groups</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Section 7: Generosity and Growing Vitality in the Congregation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>STEP 4 Team Vital Session 2</strong></td>
<td>Meet together for a half day at a central location with peer Team Vital congregations and a Team Vital facilitator</td>
<td>Share plans with peer Team Vital congregations. Identify steps for communicating the plan to the congregation. Identify how to involve other people and carry out the plan. Complete:&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Group Bible Study</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>• Section 8: Finish the Plan/Move into Action</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 5 Technical Assistance and Continued Resourcing</strong></td>
<td>Receive 18 months of resourcing and technical assistance</td>
<td>Monthly phone check-in conversations by your Team with your Team Vital Facilitator/Coach. Two gatherings of the Team Vital congregations to share and celebrate progress, shared learnings and additional equipping. Small grant of $500 to $2000 to begin implementing your plan. PaCE group (cohort learning group) for Team Vital pastors. Coaching for Team Vital pastors.</td>
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How, Where and How Often Will Team Vital Meet?
There are three phases of Team Vital: the initial four-five months of resourcing, 18 months of follow up resourcing and two follow up sessions that are scheduled in six month intervals.

Initial 4-5 Months of Resourcing
During the initial four-five months of resourcing, local team vital participants will meet both centrally and locally including: one or more local preparation sessions, two central working sessions and one local working session.

Ongoing 18 Month Resourcing and Technical Assistance
After the initial training and planning sessions, there will be other resource opportunities provided for 18 months. These will include gatherings of cohort groups, spiritual retreats, training events and more. These opportunities will take place in varied ways and locations, some being local church, district or regional gatherings, others provided through webinars and other electronic options such as a virtual library. Resourcing and technical assistance will include:
- Monthly phone check-in conversations with your team and your Team Vital Facilitator/Coach
- Two gatherings of the Team Vital congregations to share and celebrate progress, shared learnings and additional equipping
- Small grants of $500 to $1,500 to begin implementing your plan
- PaCE group (Pursuing Clergy Excellence cohort learning group) for Team Vital pastors
- Coaching for Team Vital pastors
Central Follow-Up Sessions

During the 18 months of follow-up resourcing, there will be two additional central sessions scheduled with the Team Vital peer groups. In these sessions, teams will develop and employ a fully-functioning ministry process-improvement strategy. These sessions also will offer opportunities for local Team Vitals to share their experiences with the broader groups.

Team Vital Participation Timeline

1. Bring together key leaders to discern if the congregation is ready for Team Vital
2. Present Team Vital to the congregation
3. Select the Team Vital members through Church Council
4. Apply for Team Vital with the District Superintendent
5. Receive the dates of participation
6. Complete the preparation work
7. Assess where the congregation is and where it wants to be
8. Equip the congregation with the right resources to become vital
9. Develop a plan for vitality.
10. Receive 18 months of resourcing and technical assistance.
Other Key Components

Prayer and Bible Study
Prayer and Bible study* are essential to the planning and learning process. Each planning and training session will begin with prayer and a guided Bible study. The central sessions will use Bible study to center each day and the topics that will be discussed that day. The Bible study should help congregations gain clarity of the church’s purpose, mission and ministries. It should also help clarify who the church is called to reach and serve.

*A recommended resource to use when considering participation in Team Vital is Remember the Future: Praying for the Church and Change by Bishop Robert Schnase (Abingdon Press, 2010). This study calls teams to discuss “the ‘why’ of congregational ministry and the internal resistances and external challenges to the mission of the church.”

Facilitators
Each Team Vital working session will have two consistent facilitators to lead the Bible studies, teach about vital congregations, guide asset-based planning and goal setting and facilitate full group conversation on training modules.

Resourcing and Supporting Team Vital Congregations
Participating congregations that complete the training and a ministry plan will be provided conference resourcing for 18 months following the training. Resourcing may include coaching, involvement by pastors in cohort groups, additional training on the five areas of vitality, spiritual and leadership development support and consultation from Connectional Ministry staff and/or the district superintendent. Congregations can apply for seed grants ($500 to $1,500) that will be awarded at the discretion of the Team Vital conference resource team.*

*Churches seeking seed grants are required to use the VitalSigns Dashboard. The VitalSigns Dashboard allows churches to track their weekly worship attendance, professions of faith, small group participation, missional participation and financial giving. This tool is designed to help congregations follow their progress on the goals that they set for each year. To learn more about the VitalSigns Dashboard, visit: http://vitalsigns.gcfa.org.

Required Local Church Commitment

- Motivation to become a highly vital congregation as defined by the GNJ Strategic Plan.
- Completion of an application (see info at the end of this document).
- Prayerful selection of Team Vital members and a team leader who will be committed to all planning and training workshop gatherings (see section entitled Team Vital Selection Process in this document and on-line).
- Hearts and minds open to the leading of the Holy Spirit!
Local Team Vital Selection Process Guide

Who chooses Team Vital?
It is highly recommended that the Church Council select Team Vital membership. The Church Council must clearly understand that they are commissioning a planning process that is accountable to them. Team Vital will report findings and recommendations to the Church Council. The Church Council should own the planning process. However the Church Council itself probably should not serve as Team Vital. For more information regarding these recommendations, please refer to the Team Vital pages of the GNJ website (www.gnjumc.org).

What is the size of Team Vital?
The ideal size for a local church team is eight to twelve people, including the senior pastor. The maximum size recommended is fifteen persons, including the senior pastor. Smaller churches might have five to eight participants. A team with fewer than five members often does not provide a sufficiently rich conversation and may not be enough people to do the needed work.

What role does the pastor and staff play?
The senior pastor will be an integral member of team vital. However, we recommend that the pastor not be the Team Vital leader. When there are multiple people, ordained and/or lay, on staff in a congregation, we recommend that the senior clergy be the only staff assigned to Team Vital. To have more than the senior clergy is to invite the planning process to be staff-driven. Keeping the staff connected to the planning process and making sure that the appropriate staff information is available to Team Vital is one of the responsibilities of the senior clergy as a Team Vital member.
How to Become a Part of Team Vital?

3 Easy Steps

1. Pray for Holy Spirit guidance
2. Discuss with Church Council and obtain their approval to participate
3. Submit an application to your District Superintendent.

Team Vital Application Process
The District Superintendent will present the application to the Cabinet and Connectional Ministries Team for Team Vital resourcing. Once approved, the Team Vital conference resource team will contact the local church, solicit names of the local church Team Vital members and coordinate scheduling the church team into an upcoming Team Vital workshop series.

Team Vital Application
This application is designed to be completed electronically. It can be found online at the GNJ website www.gnjumc.org.