



TEAM VITAL
The United Methodist Church
of Greater New Jersey

Step 1: Preparation Work

To be completed before Team Vital Session 1

Goals

1. Assess your congregation's context for ministry.
2. Assess your congregation's assets for ministry.
3. Develop an initial vision for your congregation's ministry

Section 1 Understanding your Context for Ministry

As you prepare to begin your Team Vital journey we invite you prepare for the process, explore who you are as a congregation, and gain a deeper understanding of your context for ministry. This work should be done both individually and together as a part of your local Team Vital.

Bible Study

Read *Acts 2: 41-47* and use the questions below for reflection and conversation.

Those who accepted Peter's message were baptized. God brought about three thousand people into the community on that day. The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved. Acts 2:41-47 (CEB)

Questions for Conversation:

1. This passage provides one of the earliest descriptions of the church. As you read these verses, what was the church doing so that God would be adding to their number day by day?
2. In what ways do you see your congregation living as an "Acts 2" church?
3. Name one or two areas where you believe your congregation could grow its ministry to more closely resemble the early church as described in Acts 2.

MissionInsite

Register for MissionInsite* and create two reports:

- QuickInsite Report
- Quad Report.

Read and review the Quad and QuickInsite Reports, and discuss together the questions below to get a quick snap-shot of your community and church.

QuickInsite Report:

Use the information from the QuickInsite Report to complete the following chart on your community's population, diversity and income:

*If you have not previously registered for MissionInsite, you will find the instructions at www.gnjumc.org/team-vital/missioninsite. Register and create two reports: the QuickInsite and Quad Reports. Instruction are on the MissionInsite web-site: www.missioninsite.com. If you need assistance how to use the site, contact your district office.

| | Community | Church |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Population | | |
| What is the projected population change (percentage) for your community for the next five years? | | |
| In what age groups will you find the greatest shift (either up or down)? | | |
| Diversity Indicate the breakdown by age group by percentages (note the four categories should equal 100%) | | |
| What is the current average age of your community and church? | | |
| Children and youth ages 0-17 | | |
| Young adults ages 18-34 | | |
| Adults ages 35 to 64 | | |
| Senior adults ages 65 and over | | |
| Ethnicity Indicate the breakdown of the ethnic groups in your community and church by percentages (note the five categories should equal 100%) | | |
| Asian (Non-Hispanic) | | |
| Black/African American (Non-Hispanic) | | |
| White | | |
| Hispanic or Latino | | |
| Pacific Island/American Indian/Other (Non-Hispanic) | | |
| Income | | |
| Average per capita income | | |
| Average household income | | |
| Anticipated change in the next five years indicated by percentage. | | |

Question for Conversation:

As you review the religiosity theme page, how does this inform the challenge that you face as a congregation in doing ministry in the next 2 – 5 years?

Quad Report:

Review the Quad Report together and discuss the following questions as a team.

Local Church Landscape (pages 7-9)

1. What do the statistics on Faith and Religious Involvement tell you about your community?
2. What does this tell you about the challenges for reaching new people for Jesus Christ?

Program or Ministry Preferences (p. 11).

1. Where are you doing significant ministry that you need to celebrate?
2. What interests and assets are already available to meet new areas of ministry in your congregation?

4x4 Neighborhood Walking/Windshield Survey

This activity will generate a fresh, first-hand impression of the neighborhood surrounding the church.

1. Select a day when all the members of your Team Vital are available.
2. Organize the team in pairs and assign each pair a small section of the neighborhood that they will observe for one hour while they walk, drive or sit.
3. Ask each pair to consider:
 - a. What has changed over the last five-ten years?
 - b. Are they seeing anything that surprises them?
 - c. Were they able to notice anything while walking or sitting that they might have missed if they were driving?
4. Have the pairs return to the church to debrief, record and discuss what they learned and what it tells them about the future ministry of the church.

Complete the following chart based on your 4x4 Neighborhood Walking experience:

| | |
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| Housing | |
| What is the age and condition of housing in the neighborhoods you're surveying? | |
| Are yards neat or overgrown? | |
| Parks and public spaces | |
| Are there public spaces where people can gather? | |
| Are public spaces well kept? | |
| Who uses these spaces? | |
| Is there diversity? | |
| Street use | |
| Are there people on the streets at most times of day? | |
| In the evening? How late? | |
| Do they interact with one another? | |
| Are streets and sidewalks well lit at night? | |
| Commercial activity | |
| What kinds of businesses are there? | |
| Are there boarded-up or vacant storefronts? | |
| Are there grocery stores, pharmacies, and other stores that provide necessities in all parts of the community? | |
| Traffic | |
| How heavy is traffic in the community? | |
| Is it mostly commercial and industrial – vans, trucks, etc. – or mostly private cars? | |
| Race/ethnicity | |
| Who lives in the community? | |
| Are there identifiable racial and ethnic groups? | |
| Do particular groups seem to live in particular areas? | |
| | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Faith communities | |
| What kinds of religious institutions are there? | |
| Health services | |
| How many hospitals and clinics are there in the community? | |
| Community and public services | |
| Are there identifiable community service providers and organizations in the community – mental health centers, food banks, homeless shelters, welfare offices, etc.? | |
| Overall impressions | |
| What is your overall impression of the community? | |
| What are the community's outstanding assets? | |
| What seem to be the community's biggest challenges? | |
| What is the most striking thing about the community? | |
| What is the most unexpected? | |

What Are You Learning?

Discuss with you Team Vital the following questions:

1. What have you learned about your mission field?
 - a. What surprised you?
 - b. What was confirmed?
2. How are your current mission ministries reaching the people and places you discovered through MissionInsite and the 4x4 Neighborhood Walking/Windshield Survey?
3. What mission ministries are not translating and why?
4. Who is moving into your community?
5. What are the interests, beats and rhythms of the people in your community?
6. Is it reflected in your worship and ministries?
7. What are the people in your community looking for from the church

Congregational Assessment Worksheets

As a team, complete the following four worksheets:

Worksheet 1: Assets for Ministry

List the assets and the strengths that God has given your congregation that can be used to grow vitality in your church. Be specific and include the people, places, resources, programs, space and other strengths of your congregation and community.

Worksheet 2: Community Connection

How well does your ministry connect with the people in your community? Do the people in the pews look like the people in your community? Please provide examples.

Worksheet 3: Challenges for Ministry

What challenges does your congregation face to make new disciples and grow worship, small groups, community mission and giving?

Worksheet 4: Reality

What will happen to the congregation if you do not grow in the five markers of vitality in the next 3, 5 and 10 years?

Section 2 Claiming Our Purpose and Envisioning a New Future

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8 (NSRV)

Questions for Conversation:

1. How has your congregation been living out Jesus' commission as recorded in Acts?
2. Where is your Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth?
3. How could you more fully embrace Jesus' commission to make disciples of all nations, and not just those who are near to us or comfortable to embrace?

Vision:

The vision of the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey:

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, practicing the means of grace.

Vision defines a preferred outcome for a congregation.

A preferred outcome means:

- resources and energy for fruitful ministry are aligned behind the same purpose,
- congregations give themselves permission to let go of activities and ministries that no longer meet the needs of the congregation or community, and
- leadership energy is focused and clear.

Thought for Reflection:

The church continues to move ahead when there are church leaders out in front dreaming dreams and casting a vision of the future for their members. . . A church without a clear vision is one without purpose or direction. Yet many churches don't take the time to articulate a clear vision for their church.

Archie Luper
certified leadership coach

Vision inspires a congregation to dream God-sized dreams.

God-sized dreams can:

- deepen a church's faith,
- be accomplished with the help of God,
- empower a congregation to ministry that might seem out of reach,
- stretch the imagination while providing direction and clarity,
- inform direction and set priorities, and
- challenge people to grow in ways that are exciting.

Guidelines for visioning:

- Project 5 to 10 years in the future.
- Dream big, and focus on success.
- Use the present tense.
- Use clear, concise language.
- Infuse your vision statement with passion and emotion.
- Paint a mental picture of you want.
- Have a plan to communicate your vision . . . to all
- Be prepared to commit time and resources to the vision you establish.”

(adapted from Business New Daily)

Questions for conversation on visioning:

1. What is the purpose of your congregation?
2. What would you like your congregation to become or look like in the future?
3. How do you envision sharing this God-sized vision with the congregation and community?

Action Steps

Please bring the following to Team Vital Session 1 so that you can discuss your findings with your peers:

1. QuickInsite Report
2. Quad Report
3. 4X4 Neighborhood Walking/Windshield Results
4. Congregational Assessment Worksheets
5. An initial draft of page ii of the *Vital Ministry Action Plan*. You will be building the plan throughout the Team Vital process