**Participant Workbook**

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**WELCOME TO TEAM VITAL**

We believe you will find Team Vital to be a rich and rewarding journey that will empower your congregation to engage and achieve its unique call for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Team Vital is designed to engage spiritual leaders in creating and implementing a plan to grow a congregation’s vitality. It is a process that is designed to help you assess the strengths of your congregation, explore God’s purpose for you as a church, and carefully look at your context for ministry. By the end of the Team Vital process you will have produced a ministry action plan which will promote vitality and fruitfulness in your congregation and guide your work long into the future.

This workbook will guide you on your journey. Please read it carefully and prayerfully as you prepare for your work. In addition to the manual, each session will have time for guided conversation and sharing with other churches on presentations centered on the five areas of vitality:



As your team embarks on the Team Vital journey together, you will want to use resources on the Team Vital private webpage:

<https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/>

Also the Team Vital overview webpages at [www.gnjumc.org/team-vital/](http://www.gnjumc.org/team-vital/) . Finally, you should not hesitate to contact your Team Vital facilitators if you have questions and/or need more information.

Group facilitator(s): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Steps in the Team Vital Process**



**An Introduction to Team Vital**

Vital congregations are those that grow over time, are inwardly transformed and missionally outbound. These are congregations where life-full stories are being told, where fruitfulness is evidenced, and life-changing ministries are happening. Creating vital congregations is an exciting yet challenging journey that requires ongoing planning for mission and ministry, especially in a time when the resources of time, energy and finances are limited.

**Expected Outcomes of Team Vital**

* Well-defined understanding of your church ministry assets
* Clear view of your community/mission field
* A Holy-Spirit inspired vision for your church
* Enhanced expertise for doing ministry for the 5 markers of vitality
* An achieved ministry action plan
* A fully-functioning ministry process-improvement strategy
* Stronger connection to other churches in Team Vital
* Increased church vitality!

**The Team Vital Process**

Planning for ministry is a spiritual process that engages both the leadership of the church and the congregation in prayer, biblical reflection and conversation to discern God’s vision for the church at this particular time and place. The goal of the Team Vital process is to create a guide for ministry that will move a congregation to action in these five areas of vitality:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| cid:D13816B2-CDB0-4C71-9358-BBF4BC590A97 | Inspiring worship that invites people into a deeper faith |
| cid:1C50D22C-C091-4501-B48F-2AC2A0A6DC45 | Reaching and making new disciples |
| cid:CB5D3F70-AD6D-4168-B89C-9400D738C7E7 | Engaging people to grow their faith through small groups |
| cid:51D87704-D4E9-431F-8F32-302BC3901FC5 | Engaging people in missions |
| cid:AFC8568D-3665-4134-85DA-906A08762AA0 | Encouraging generosity |

**Ground Rules**

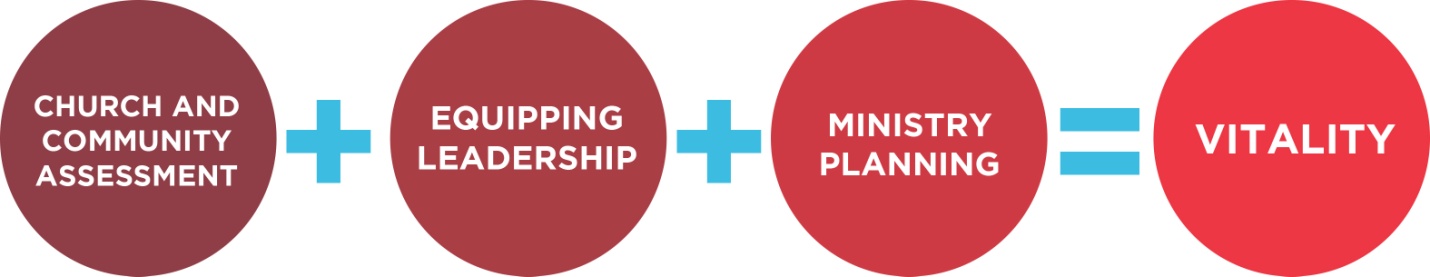
* Be OPEN to the guidance of the Holy Spirit
* Think creatively
* LISTEN
* Respect other view points
* Participate actively
* Understand that silence equals agreement
* Stay with the agenda
* Come up with solutions…not problems
* Push beyond the first right answer

**Operating Principles**

* Be prayerful
* Expect great things
* Attend all sessions
* Engage in working sessions
* Commit to follow-up
* Agree to personal and team accountability
* Keep it simple
* Keep it moving

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Words to Use** | **Words to Avoid** |
| Action | Talk |
| Results | Reports |
| Concrete | Theoretical |
| Solutions | Problems |
| Accountability | Arbitrary |
| Can/Will | Might |
| Opportunities | Obstacles |

**Summary**



The goal of Team Vital is to enable local churches to assess who they are as a congregation and the community around them, equip their leadership in understanding the five markers of vitality and create a ministry plan that will lead to vitality. All of which will lead to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



**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 you are invited to 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.

If you have not previously registered for MissionInsite, you will find the instructions at [www.gnjumc.org/team-vital/missioninsite](http://www.gnjumc.org/team-vital/missioninsite). Additional instructions are on the MissionInsite web-site: [www.missioninsite.com](http://www.missioninsite.com). Read and review the Quad and QuickInsite Reports, and discuss together the questions below to get a snap-shot of your community and church.

**QuickInsite Report:**

Use the information from the QuickInsite Report to complete the following chart on your community:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **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 of the Quad Report)

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 (page 11 of the Quad Report).

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:
   1. What has changed over the last five-ten years?
   2. Are they seeing anything that surprises them?
   3. 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:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Housing** |  |
| What is the age and condition of housing in the neighborhood you’re surveying? |  |
| Are yards neat or overgrown? |  |
| **Parks and public spaces** |  |
| [Are there public spaces where people can gather](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/phsyical-social-environment/places-for-interaction/main)? |  |
| 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 your Team Vital the following questions:

1. What have you learned about your mission field?
   1. What surprised you?
   2. 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 Your 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)

**Question for Conversation:**

1. How has your congregation been living out Jesus’ commission as recorded in Acts 1:8?
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 you or comfortable to embrace?

**Vision:**

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

We see a church like Jesus Christ – taking risks and being humble, teaching and healing, saving and tending souls, [leading and serving](http://www.gnjumc.org/pages/detail/704), unbound and outbound. We also see a Wesleyan Church – pursuing personal and social holiness, being connectional and bold, being thoughtful and inspirational, working in small groups and having a [large](http://www.gnjumc.org/pages/detail/704) vision, welcoming all and respecting 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 News 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 A of the Vital Ministry Action Plan found in the back of this workbook. **You will be building the plan throughout the Team Vital process**



**Step 2: Team Vital Session 1**

**Goals**

1. Assess the congregation’s worship ministries
2. Develop initial goals for increasing vital worship ministries in the congregation
3. Learn key characteristics of congregations that are making new disciples
4. Assess the congregation’s ministries of welcoming disciples
5. Develop initial goals for disciple making
6. Learn about asset based ministry as a means of engaging in mission in the community
7. Review the assets of the church and community for doing mission
8. Assess the congregation’s ministry of engaging in mission
9. Develop initial goals for mission ministry

**STEP 2: TEAM VITAL SESSION 1**

**Schedule**

*Congregations sit at a table together for each training to facilitate conversation among team members*

8:30 a.m. Gathering

8:50 Opening worship/Bible study

9:15 Orientation and schedule for the day

9:25 Congregational sharing: (**5 minutes per congregation**)

10:05 Break

10:15 Section 3 Vital Worship

10:30 Conversation among teams about setting goals for vital worship

11:15 Congregational sharing: (2 minutes per congregation)

11:30 Section 4 Reaching and Making New Disciples

11:50 Working Lunch – Conversation among teams about setting goals for reaching and making new disciples

1:00 p.m. Congregational sharing (2 minutes per congregation)

1:15 Section 5 Moving Mission from Deficit to Asset to Transformed Community

1:30 Conversation among teams about setting goals for mission engagement

2:30 Congregational sharing (2 minutes per congregation)

2:50 Review of homework and sending forth

3:00 Adjourn for the day

**Bible Study and Worship**

*Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,*

*Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,*

*Open the eyes of my heart  
I want to see You, I want to see You.*

*To see You high and lifted up,*

*Shining in the light of Your glory  
Pour out Your power and love*

*As we sing, "Holy, holy, holy"[[1]](#footnote-1)*

*Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me;*

*place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.*

*Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see.*

*Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine![[2]](#footnote-2)*

**Spiritual Reflection**

*When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”*

*He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

Matthew 22:34-40 (NSRV)

**Wesleyan Means of Grace**

Courageous and forward-moving congregations practice spiritual disciplines. John Wesley taught that God’s grace is unearned and that we were not to be idle . . . but we are to engage in the means of grace. The *means of grace* are ways God works in disciples. They can be divided into *works of piety* and the *works of mercy*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Works of Piety** | **Works of Mercy** |
| Reading | Doing good works |
| Meditating | Visiting the sick |
| Studying the scriptures | Visiting those in prison |
| Prayer | Feeding the hungry |
| Fasting | Giving generously to the needs of others |
| Regularly attending worship | Seeking justice |
| Healthy living | Ending oppression and discrimination |
| Sharing in the sacraments  Sharing y  our faith with others | Addressing the needs of the poor |
| Sharing our faith with others  ring in the sacraments |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Questions for conversation:**

1. What does Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees tell you about his vision for faithful living?
2. How are you personally practicing works of piety and mercy?
3. How is your congregation practicing the means of grace together?

**Congregational sharing: (5 minutes per congregation)**

Review the work you have done on your*Vital Ministry Action Plan.* As a team, prepare to introduce your congregation to the other gathered teams by responding to the following three questions:

1. In two to three sentences, describe your congregation’s context for ministry
2. What are three things that you learned about your community from your pre-work?
3. What phrases have you come up with that describe your church’s vision for what it would like to become?

**Section 3 Vital Worship**



**Thought for Reflection**

How Christians ritualize their life together shapes how they live and serve in the world. If they do it well, their living and serving will mirror the love and power of the God they have enjoyed in worship. If they do it poorly, their living and serving will reflect the opaqueness of their encounter with God.

Daniel T. Benedict, Jr.  
General Board of Discipleship, the United Methodist Church

**Worship is the heart of the life and ministry of a congregation.**

The United Methodist Book of Worship says that worship is an *encounter* with the living God through the risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Every time you gather as the people of God in worship you have a unique opportunity to give thanks for all God has done in your lives, proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and join God in mission in the world.

Christian worship nurtures your relationship with God and others. The essence of worship is people glorifying God. It's important that it is *culturally relevant*, so people can truly and *actively participate* with head and heart.

When worship is alive, God's story in Christ is shared. Jesus Christ is proclaimed through passionate singing, inspiring preaching, sharing the sacraments, and transforming lives.

**Inspiring and life-transforming worship is:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Genuine** | a true response to God's grace, in Jesus Christ - a time of surrender |
| **Inclusive** | a place where all people are welcomed and included (all cultures, ages, and walks of life) |
| **Celebratory** | a new and fresh encounter with Christ |
| **Inspiring** | a way to speak to the needs of people by addressing real life issues with relevance and context within the community |
| **Indigenous** | a reflection of the best gifts of a particular people gathered in a particular time and place. |
| **Transformative** | hope awakened where wounds are heal, sins are forgiven, reconciliation is experienced, and people are empowered to witness the love of God in the world. |

**Use the space below for notes on worship presentation**

**Churches that display vitality in worship often implement the following strategies:**

* a mix of contemporary and traditional style of service
* more topical sermons, including sermon series in all of their services
* more contemporary music (less blended music that includes traditional tunes)
* more multi-media
* a team approach to worship development.

**Questions for conversation on vital worship:**

1. What makes worship vital and life transforming?
2. How is your church’s worship life vital?
3. Who are you reaching, and who are you not reaching, in worship experiences?

**List three key learnings for you about vital worship**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assess your congregation’s ministry in worship** |  |
|  |  |

****In the chart below, each team member should individually rate the five statements on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest. The first column rates how important the statement is to you individually, and the second rates how well you feel your congregation is doing.

In the group average column, average your team’s score for each of the five statements, and record them in the two halves of the column. The gap is arrived at by subtracting the second averaged number from the first, and should be recorded in the far right column.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Importance** | **How well is the congregation doing?** | **Group Average** | **Gap** |
|  | *Rate 1 - 5* | *Rate 1 - 5* |  |  |
| People regularly experience God’s presence in worship |  |  |  |  |
| Worship gatherings are inclusive and celebratory |  |  |  |  |
| Worship inspires people to a deeper faith |  |  |  |  |
| Worship effectively connects with younger generations |  |  |  |  |
| In your worship, people testify about God’s transformation in their lives |  |  |  |  |

**Below is a sample of an action plan for worship:**

****

**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church: First United Methodist Church**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | Children welcomed, valued and celebrated in worship and growing in their faith. Enhanced worship experience for people of all ages. |
| **Goal** | Include a children’s moment in the 8:30 am worship service |
| **Responsibility** | 1. Pastor John 2. Carole (Christian Ed.) 3. Judith (Children Coordinator). |
| **Action Steps** | 1. Secure time during service 2. Explore and choose curriculum 3. Set working budget 4. Order curriculum 5. Recruit and train teachers 6. Schedule volunteers 7. Advertise 8. Launch |
| **Needed resources** | 1. Children sermon ideas or curricula 2. Volunteer teachers 3. Schedule for volunteers 4. Budget for curricula and materials 5. Advertising in church and community newsletter |
| **Deadline** | 9/5/2016 |
| **Assessment Plan** | 1. Measure the # of children participating in worship 2. Focus group conversations with children/parents 3. Evaluation survey every 3 months during the first year |

**Use this sheet to begin recording your ideas for worship plan.**

****

**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** |  |
| **Goal** |  |
| **Responsibility** |  |
| **Action Steps** |  |
| **Needed resources** |  |
| **Deadline** |  |
| **Assessment Plan** |  |

**Section 4 Reaching and Making New Disciples**



**Did you know?**

An average church will lose about 10% of their members annually, and make disciples of 15% of visitors? A congregation therefore needs to attract the equivalent of 75% of their church size in different visitors each year just to maintain their current size.

**The real issue for most churches isn’t the process of joining the church. The challenge is being able to answer the question *why*.**

* Why should someone come to your church?
* What does your church offer that is unique and valuable so that people will give their time, their talents, and their treasures to be a part?
* Why would a visitor choose to make a confession of faith and join your congregation?

**A vital congregation is reaching and making new disciples by**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Taking risks** | Recognizing failure as a positive indicator of vitality |
| **Being flexible** | Removing rigid policies and rules because they are barriers to growth |
| **Showing sensitivity** | Welcoming to people by being sensitive to context, language and culture |
| **Knowing its value** | Understanding of what makes them unique in the community |
| **Having a clear vision** | Keeping the momentum for and a focus on ministry |
| **Having visionary leaders** | Understanding that gifts need to be nourished |
| **Focusing outwardly** | Moving from “come and see” to “go and be” |
| **Being irresistible** | Creating an environment in the church, the pew and the parking lot that attracts people |
| **Self-assessing** | Improves and grow by assessing strengths and weaknesses |

**Key factors for reaching new disciples**

* Exploring and talking about faith enables people to be more comfortable with “faith talk.”
* Following up with visitors in ways that are appropriate with culture, age and experience.
* Recognizing that milestone events in life open up opportunities for people to become involved.
* Identifying and cultivating different ways for connecting with people including small groups and community service.

**Check list for welcoming and engaging people**

* Do you have a welcome and warm atmosphere?
* Is your atmosphere authentic?
* Are visitors welcomed as friends and not treated as non-believers?
* Do you pay attention to communication vehicles by maintaining a website, being active on social media, printing well-designed bulletins or worship screens?
* Do you introduce new people to others in the congregation?
* Do you offer mid-week small group meetings to engage people?
* Do you start your worship service on time?
* Is worship thoughtful and prepared?
* Is worship inclusive for all ages?

**Thought for Reflection:**

Jesus laid the foundation for the church through relationships. His influence was (and is) indelible because he changed people.

David Kinnaman  
author of *You Lost Me* and *unChristian*

**Use the space below to make notes on the making new disciples presentation**

**Questions for conversation on reaching and making new disciples:**

1. What characteristics for reaching and making disciples by vital congregations do your church embody?
2. What are the challenges you face for reaching and making new disciples?

1. What is compelling about your congregation that encourages people to participate and attracts new people?

**List three key learnings for you about reaching and making new disciples.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assess your congregation’s ministry in reaching and making new disciples** |  |

****In the chart below, below, each team member should individually rate the five statements on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest. The first column rates how important the statement is to you individually, and the second rates how well you feel your congregation is doing.

In the group average column, average your team’s score for each of the five statements, and record them in the two halves of the column. The gap is arrived at by subtracting the second averaged number from the first, and should be recorded in the far right column.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Importance** | **How well is the congregation doing?** | **Group Average** | **Gap** |
|  | *Rate 1 - 5* | *Rate 1 - 5* |  |  |
| The congregation is trained on how to share their faith with others |  |  |  |  |
| The ministry is designed to invite and reach new people |  |  |  |  |
| The congregation regularly invites new people to worship |  |  |  |  |
| The congregation regularly invites new people to small group ministry and mission projects |  |  |  |  |
| There is a process for discipling new believers |  |  |  |  |

**Use this sheet to begin recording your ideas for making new disciples.**

**Below is a sample of an action plan for making new disciples:**



**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church: First United Methodist Church**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | We will have a system of discipleship that is overseen by trained, attentive and intentional leaders which will result in increased numbers of professions of faith in a year. |
| **Goal** | Create a fully functioning discipleship leadership team. |
| **Responsibility** | Pastor Cooper  Karen (Lay Leader) |
| **Action Steps** | 1. Identify/create discipleship design team members 2. Train leaders 3. Create process of discipling 4. Implement discipleship program 5. Continue to develop, refine and assess the program |
| **Needed resources** | 1. Committed leadership 2. Disciple program training materials/books/curricula 3. Regular meeting space |
| **Deadline** | 9/1/2016 |
| **Assessment Plan** | 1. 6 month assessment of team progress 2. 1 year comparison of the number of professions of faith to previous year 3. Survey of new professions of faith about the process |

**Use this sheet to begin recording your ideas for making new disciples.**



**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** |  |
| **Goal** |  |
| **Responsibility** |  |
| **Action Steps** |  |
| **Needed resources** |  |
| **Deadline** |  |
| **Assessment Plan** |  |

**Section 5 Moving Mission from Asset to Answer**



**Thought for Reflection:**

I think indifference to the mainline church results from a failure to connect the Great Commission to the Great Commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.” Christians who embody these two directives will more fully embody a discipleship in Christ open to new ways of thinking, seeing and doing.

Harold J. Recinos

Professor of Church and Society  
Perkins School of Theology at SMU

**Understanding Asset-Based Ministry: A Case Study**

First UMC has a predominantly African-American congregation and is located in an urban area. Over the years the neighborhood’s demographics have shifted and the community is now comprised mainly of native Spanish-speakers. First UMC finds their mission ministries waning, their worship attendance declining and their congregation no longer representing the people in the neighborhood.

In an effort to reconnect with the community, First UMC began to ask, “Who is my neighbor?” As they rediscovered their community, they also began to inquire, “What assets are present within the congregation?”

As they answered these questions, First UMC identified that they had 12 teachers within the congregation. As quality elementary education was a critical concern of their neighbors, First UMC began to offer an after-school program. Yet, unlike other after-school programs in the area, they also offered adult English as a second language classes concurrently. The mission ministries birthed small groups that eventually led to a second Spanish-speaking service on Sunday mornings.

In the story above, First UMC asked the *next* right questions:

* Who is your neighbor?
* What are your neighbors’ needs?
* What assets are present within your congregation?
* How might these assets be used to address the needs of your neighbors?

**Use the space below to make notes on the mission presentation.**

**Questions for conversation on mission:**

In your preparation for Team Vital, your team gathered several pieces of data, including the MissionInsite reports, the 4 x 4 Neighborhood Walking exercise, and congregational assessment sheets. Use the information from this data to help guide your conversation with the following questions:

1. What have you learned about asset-based mission ministry?
2. What assets did you identify within your congregation? Would you add any others?
3. What assets are within your community? How can assets within your congregation and community work in partnership?

1. How can you leverage those assets to fill gaps within your community in a *fresh* way?
2. How can the assets in your congregation and community become the “answers” to your community’s deep questions or needs?

**List three key learnings for you about asset-based ministry.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assess your congregation’s mission ministry** |  |

****In the chart below, below, each team member should individually rate the five statements on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest. The first column rates how important the statement is to you individually, and the second rates how well you feel your congregation is doing.

In the group average column, average your team’s score for each of the five statements, and record them in the two halves of the column. The gap is arrived at by subtracting the second averaged number from the first, and should be recorded in the far right column.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Importance** | **How well is the congregation doing?** | **Group Average** | **Gap** |
|  | *Rate 1 - 5* | *Rate 1 - 5* |  |  |
| Ten percent of your worshippers lead teams of people and mission projects in the community or the world. |  |  |  |  |
| At least four times a year, you introduce hands-on mission projects to the congregation. |  |  |  |  |
| You have enough outreach projects in the community or world to engage 50% of your worshippers. |  |  |  |  |
| Monthly during worship, a testimony is shared by someone who has participated in mission focusing on how mission has changed their life. |  |  |  |  |

**Below is a sample of an action plan for mission:**



**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church: First United Methodist Church**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | Be recognized in the community as a child centered church offering value added programs for families. |
| **Goal** | Start an aftercare program for local community that offers a safe, loving, fun Christian environment for elementary school age community. |
| **Responsibility** | 1. Lisa Davies (Mission Team Leader) 2. Kelly Claiborne (Youth Director) |
| **Action Steps** | 1. Cultivate relationships with elementary school administration 2. Recruit teachers/tutors and aides 3. Train leaders 4. Develop curriculum 5. Advertise program 6. Launch program |
| **Needed resources** | 1. Teachers and tutors 2. School supplies 3. Snacks 4. Curricula 5. Classroom and recreation space 6. Promotional materials |
| **Deadline** | 8/1/2016 |
| **Assessment Plan** | 1. Semester review/evaluation by parents and educators 2. Measure the number of registered students, student academic progress and church involvement |

**Use this sheet to begin recording your ideas for mission.**



**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** |  |
| **Goal** |  |
| **Responsibility** |  |
| **Action Steps** |  |
| **Needed resources** |  |
| **Deadline** |  |
| **Assessment Plan** |  |



**Step 3: Team Vital Homework**

[**https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/**](https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/)

**Step 3: Team Vital Homework**

**Goals**

1. Assess the congregations small group ministries
2. Develop initial goals for small group ministries in the congregation
3. Assess the congregation’s ministry of generosity
4. Develop initial goals for ministries of generosity particularly for mission
5. Share with the congregation the experiences thus far in the Team Vital process

**Section 6 Growing Vitality through Small Groups**



**Thought for Reflection**

John Wesley wasn’t persuaded that someone had made a decision for Christ until that person became involved in a small group.

Joel Comiskey

internationally recognized cell church coach

**Small groups deepen faith, create community and grow vital congregations.**

Small groups are comprised of people who gather together on a regular basis with the goal of becoming more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ through a process of learning, support, accountability and service to the world.

**People in small groups:**

* experience deeper connection with other disciples
* engage in intimate faith conversations
* learn about the scriptures and faith
* help people to test ideas as they grow in their faith
* give people an opportunity to be supported through prayer and other caring activities.

**Key components of small groups include:**

* Limiting the number of participants to 15
* Rooting the groups in prayer
* Meeting twice a month or more
* Facilitating sharing
* Planning for growing faith, spirituality and engagement in the world.

These components help build relationships among people and grow relationships with God. Groups of people meeting in your church that do not incorporate these components should not be considered a part of your small group ministry.

**Steps to creating a small group ministry**

* Read resources and books about starting and launching small group ministry.
* Recruit and train small group leaders. Well-equipped, well-trained small group leaders improve the experience that leads participants toward discipleship maturity and involvement.
* Plan a one-month emphasis on small groups and encourage every worshipper to participate in a four-week small group experience.
* Keep starting new small groups until more of your worshippers participate regularly in a small group.

**A balanced mix of small groups**

Each congregation should consider a mix of small groups that appeal to the demographics of their congregation and vision of the congregation. Every congregation should use their own context when creating small groups. For instance, if you are in a community where there are a number of people in recovery, the number of support groups may be higher. If you have a justice-focused congregation, the number of your mission groups may be a little higher. But a healthy mix is critical for shaping and maturing disciples in their faith.

The following chart outlines an example for a healthy mix of small groups to grow depth and spiritual maturity:

**Watch the video: Vitality through Small Groups**

[**https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/**](https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/)

**Use the space below for notes on the small group video presentation**

**Questions for conversation about small groups:**

1. As you look at your current ministry of small groups, what are the joys and strengths your congregation experiences?

1. What is one challenge that you face in growing small groups?
2. What would you like to see your small group ministry look like in three to five years?
3. What would need to happen for this vision to be realized?

**List three key learnings for you about small group ministries**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assess your congregation’s ministry in small groups** |  |

In the chart below, each team member should individually rate the five statements on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest. The first column rates how important the statement is to you individually, and the second rates how well you feel your congregation is doing.

In the group average column, average your team’s score for each of the five statements, and record them in the two halves of the column. The gap is arrived at by subtracting the second averaged number from the first, and should be recorded in the far right column.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Importance** | **How well is the congregation doing?** | **Group Average** | **Gap** |
|  | *Rate 1 - 5* | *Rate 1 - 5* |  |  |
| We have one or more small faith development groups for every 10 worshippers |  |  |  |  |
| We have small groups that meet the needs of a variety of age levels. |  |  |  |  |
| We have a program to recruit, train and support small group leaders |  |  |  |  |
| We have a sufficient number of committed and effective small group leaders |  |  |  |  |
| We have one or more small faith development group for every 10 worshippers |  |  |  |  |

**Below is a sample of an action plan for small groups:**

**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church: First United Methodist Church**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | Newcomers have access to ways to connect with one another and grow in discipleship  Connections with the congregation and Christ are increased and deepened. |
| **Goal** | Welcome group for newcomers |
| **Responsibility** | 1. Sharon Smith (Welcoming Committee) 2. John Alvo (Small Groups Coordinator) |
| **Action Steps** | 1. Develop process for forming groups 2. Identify leaders 3. Train leaders 4. Identify curricula 5. Identify meeting places/dates 6. Promotion 7. Develop group assessment survey |
| **Needed resources** | 1. Leaders 2. Training 3. Curriculum 4. Meeting Places |
| **Deadline** | Launch September 2016 – Rally Day |
| **Assessment Plan** | 1. Assessment survey to group leaders and attendees 2. Quarterly review by small groups coordinator with leaders to look at group:  * Size * Attendance * Feedback |

**Use this sheet to begin recording your ideas about small groups.**

**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** |  |
| **Goal** |  |
| **Responsibility** |  |
| **Action Steps** |  |
| **Needed resources** |  |
| **Deadline** |  |
| **Assessment Plan** |  |

**Section 7 Generosity and Growing Vitality in the Congregation**



**Thought for Reflection**

Earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.

From John Wesley’s sermon *The Use of Money*

Wesley made note in 1789 that the Methodists of his day were ignoring the third part of his sermon. In fact, Wesley argued that the primary reason for the ineffectiveness of the Methodist movement was due to their failure to give all they could. Wesley concluded that “If Methodists would give all they can, then all would have enough.”

Wesley’s admonition for Methodists to give all they could was not pious rhetoric designed to increase contributions to the church budget. It was a plea for generosity and a plea for compassion for the poor and needy. For Wesley, “money is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of his children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked.”

**Ten Ways to Increase Giving**

1. **Invite God into the mix:** You are God’s people doing God’s work. Giving is not about the church budget or paying bills. Giving is about mission, ministry and changing lives in the name of Christ.
2. **Be willing to talk about money:** Jesus talked about money and possessions 95 times in the gospels; more than any other single topic. You need to talk about the spiritual dangers of living a consumer-driven lifestyle and the joy and freedom that comes through generosity.
3. **Set leadership expectations:** The success and vitality of a congregation’s ministry depends upon the vitality of leadership. The commitment of your leaders to excellence in their service to God, including giving, will motivate others.
4. **Teach, preach, and model tithing:**  Tithing is a spiritual discipline that honors God and instills in the giver a spirit of generosity. Teaching, preaching and modeling help people to either begin or continue their journey toward tithing.
5. **Stop the insanity:** One of the leading reasons people give to an organization is the organization’s financial stability and fiscal responsibility. Publishing the giving numbers each week in the bulletin, which are almost always negative numbers, undermines the financial stability and fiscal responsibility of the church in the minds of your donors.
6. **Thank. Ask. Repeat:** Creating a cycle of thanking and asking is key to increasing giving in your church.
7. **Give a word of witness:** One of the most powerful tools for growing generosity in the church is telling the story of how the church is transforming lives through its ministry.
8. **Ask the right question:** Take a step back and ask the most important money-raising question: “Why would someone want to support your ministry?”
9. **Make stewardship year round:** For hearts to change, connect giving with mission and ministry all year. Preach and teach stewardship the entire year.
10. **Prepare to soar:** Unless you believe everyone was created by God to give, then everything about stewardship is simply manipulation, pressure, or gimmicks designed to separate people from their money. The most powerful stewardship scripture in the entire Bible is, “For God so loved the world that God gave…”

**Watch the video: Generosity and Growing Vitality in the Congregation** [**https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/**](https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/)

**Use the space below for notes on the generosity video presentation**

**Questions for conversation on generosity**

1. In what ways does your congregation encourage generosity and giving through its ministries?
2. How can your congregation grow its ministry of giving, especially in the area of missions?
3. What are the challenges in growing a ministry of giving, and how might you address these challenges?

**List three key learnings for you about generosity**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assess your congregation’s stewardship** | cid:AFC8568D-3665-4134-85DA-906A08762AA0 |

In the chart below, each team member should individually rate the five statements on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest. The first column rates how important the statement is to you individually, and the second rates how well you feel your congregation is doing.

In the group average column, average your team’s score for each of the five statements, and record them in the two halves of the column. The gap is arrived at by subtracting the second averaged number from the first, and should be recorded in the far right column.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Importance** | **How well is the congregation doing?** | **Group Average** | **Gap** |
|  | *Rate 1 - 5* | *Rate 1 - 5* |  |  |
| Our pastor and key leaders at different times during the year share with the congregation why they give. |  |  |  |  |
| Each week prior to the offering, your congregation hears how their giving changed a life and/or makes a difference in a ministry. |  |  |  |  |
| Our pastor and key leaders are preaching and/or teaching on stewardship and generosity at least 2-3 times per year. |  |  |  |  |
| We conduct every year a stewardship campaign in which the congregation learns about giving and is offered the opportunity to make a financial commitment for the coming year. |  |  |  |  |

**Below is a sample of an action plan for stewardship:**

**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church: First United Methodist Church**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | A culture of extravagant generosity is developed where people give to the church:   * out of a genuine desire to make a positive difference for the purposes of Christ * because they want to align their lives with higher purposes. |
| **Goal** | Hold an annual stewardship campaign |
| **Responsibility** | Finance and Stewardship Committee |
| **Action Steps** | 1. Research various approaches and types of stewardship campaigns 2. Decide which campaign to use along with an appropriate timeline 3. Recruit and train a stewardship campaign team 4. Run the campaign |
| **Needed resources** | 1. Campaign materials for review 2. Conference stewardship coordinator |
| **Deadline** | 1. Accomplish steps 1-3 in the spring 2. Run the campaign in the fall |
| **Assessment Plan** | 1. Did we run a campaign? 2. Was it successful? 3. What did we learn from our process and action s |

**Use this sheet to begin recording your ideas about stewardship.**

**Steps to Vitality  
Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**Name of Church:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome** |  |
| **Goal** |  |
| **Responsibility** |  |
| **Action Steps** |  |
| **Needed resources** |  |
| **Deadline** |  |
| **Assessment Plan** |  |

**Action Steps**

* Using the Vital Ministry Action Plan sheets you have been drafting on worship, reaching and making new disciples, mission, small groups and giving continue to work on the Vital Ministry Action Plan.
* Complete a draft of the sections on “Our Community,” “Our Church” and “Our Vision” on the first page of the Vital Ministry Action Plan.
* Come to Team Vital Session 2 prepared to share what you have recorded in the steps above.

An electronic version of this form is located at: <https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/> .



**Step 4: Team Vital Session 2**

**Step 4: Team Vital Session 2**

**Goals**

1. Complete Vital Ministry Action Plan for growing vitality
2. Share plans with other Team Vital groups
3. Learn about next steps for moving the plan forward
4. Plan to create buy-in, develop partners, and use resources
5. Develop list of needs for follow-up resourcing including grant funding
6. Make a presentation of the plan that can be also shared with the congregation and church leaders

**STEP 4: TEAM VITAL SESSION 2  
Schedule**

Congregations sit at a table together for each training to facilitate conversation among team members.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 8:30 a.m. | Gathering and Bible study |
| 9:10 | General conversation and report. Share findings from homework on small groups and generous giving. |
| 9:25 | Congregational discussion. Share within your congregation new information to incorporate in your own plan. |
| 9:40 | Break |
| 9:55 | Congregational discussion. Finalize ministry/gifts/fruit worksheets with attention to preferred outcomes. Work on Vital Ministry Action Plan. |
| 11:10 | Share with other congregations on Vital Ministry Action Plan. |
| 11:55 | Lunch |
| 12:30 p.m. | Section #8: Finish the Plan = Move into Action |
| 12:55 | Finalize Vital Ministry Action Plan |
| 1:30 | Present the plan |
| 1:50 | Celebrate and send forth |

**Bible Study**

*Just then a scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures tried to trap Jesus.*

***Scholar:****Teacher, what must I do to experience the eternal life?*

***Jesus****(answering with a question)****:****What is written in the Hebrew Scriptures? How do you interpret their answer to your question?*

***Scholar:*** *You shall love—“love the Eternal One your God with everything you have: all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind”—and “love your neighbor as yourself.”*

***Jesus:*** *Perfect. Your answer is correct. Follow these commands and you will live.*

*The scholar was frustrated by this response because he was hoping to make himself appear smarter than Jesus.*

***Scholar:****Ah, but who is my neighbor?*

***Jesus:****This fellow was traveling down from Jerusalem to Jericho when some robbers mugged him. They took his clothes, beat him to a pulp, and left him naked and bleeding and in critical condition. By chance, a priest was going down that same road, and when he saw the wounded man, he crossed over to the other side and passed by.* *Then a Levite who was on his way to assist in the temple also came and saw the victim lying there, and he too kept his distance.**Then a despised Samaritan journeyed by. When he saw the fellow, he felt compassion for him.**The Samaritan went over to him, stopped the bleeding, applied some first aid, and put the poor fellow on his donkey. He brought the man to an inn and cared for him through the night. The next day, the Samaritan took out some money—two days’ wages to be exact—and paid the innkeeper, saying, “Please take care of this fellow, and if this isn’t enough, I’ll repay you next time I pass through” Which of these three proved himself a neighbor to the man who had been mugged by the robbers?*

***Scholar:*** *The one who showed mercy to him.*

***Jesus:****Well then, go and behave like that Samaritan.*

Luke 10: 25-37, The Voice



**Questions for conversation:**

1. If you were to rewrite this parable according to your local church’s context, who would be the scholar, the traveler, the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan?
2. If you were the traveler beaten up along the road, from whom would it be most difficult to receive help? Who do you think God is calling you and your congregation to reach out to in your community or around the world?

*I'm gonna live so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I'm gonna live so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I'm gonna work so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I'm gonna work so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I'm gonna pray so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I'm gonna pray so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I'm gonna sing so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I'm gonna sing so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

**Thought for Reflection:**

The holiest moment of the church service is the moment when Gods people – strengthened by preaching and sacrament – go out of the church door in to the world to be the church. We don’t go to church; we are the church.

*Canon Ernest Southcott  
founder of the home church movement in England*

**Section 8 Finish the Plan – Move into Action**

**Create buy-in**

Over the past few months, your team has been actively involved in developing a Vital Ministry Action Plan for your congregation. The next step is to bring your plan to your full church leadership and then to your whole congregation. This creates buy-in, and with buy-in, the ministry can expand and engage more people.

Hopefully, the plan that you have been developing will suggest some changes that need to be made in your congregation. These kinds of changes may actually be shifting your church’s culture.

**Significant change requires a shift in culture.**

A fatal mistake in culture change processes happens when a small group of people tries to force a new culture on to a larger group of people.

*Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak blog*

**Examples of culture shift:**

* A church becomes more outwardly focused, looking to the mission field to guide its ministry plans.
* A congregation makes significant shifts in how it does ministry to welcome more families with young children.
* A church begins to do ministry with persons whose first language is different from the majority of current participants.
* A shift is made from scarcity to abundance, from fearfulness to generosity.
* Worship becomes an experience where worshippers give themselves to God instead of expecting to receive.
* A church moves from “filling station” to “mission station”.

**Buy-in develops among people through:**

* Interaction: Talk with leadership, your congregation, your community.
* Illustration: Tell stories that illustrate the changes you seek to make with your plan and why they will make a difference.
* Inclusion: Ask people in leadership and the congregation to be involved in the process of implementing your plans.
  + Listen to their ideas.
  + Be prepared to implement some of the suggestions that will move you toward a greater vision.
* Active participation: Give people in the congregation parts of the plan to work on themselves.

**Questions for conversation:**

* 1. What other church leaders (elected or not) do you need to be sharing the plan with?
  2. What do you need to be asking others to do to carry out the plan that you have been creating?
  3. What plan for accountability needs to be put in place so that the plan can move forward?
  4. What stories do you already have to tell about how your renewed ministries are making a difference, and how will you incorporate these stories into the on-going life of the church so that the entire congregation is informed and involved?

**Carrying out your plan**

**Filter your plan:**

1. Do all aspects of the plan help you to move toward the vision for your congregation?
2. When your Vital Ministry Action Plan is carried out what do you envision your congregation will be like?
3. Is your preferred outcome something that is measurable?
4. Will the congregation recognize that there is something new and different?
5. Are the fruits and outcomes clearly stated and understood by the team in such a way that they can be interpreted to the entire congregation?

**Reexamine the steps:**

1. Does your plan include clear, measurable steps that will get you from where you are to where you want to be?
2. What resources and assistance will be needed to fulfill your plan?
3. What is the time-line for fulfilling your plans? Is this reasonable?
4. Who will be responsible for each part of the plan?
5. How will you hold yourselves accountable for carrying out the plan?
6. How will you know you have fulfilled your goals?

**Follow up and resource:**

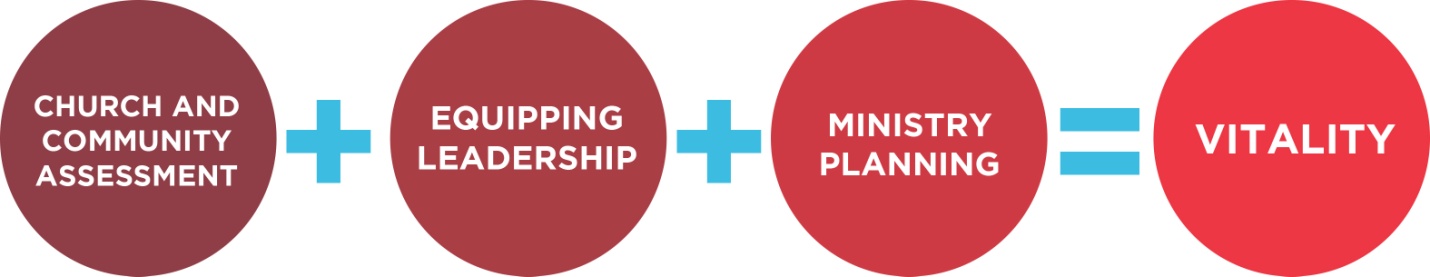
1. What part of your plan could be supported with the seed grant available to your congregation?
2. How would you use this grant money?
3. Who will take responsibility for filling out the grant application and submitting it for approval? By when?
4. What other assistance and resourcing will help you to move your plan forward?

Complete the roll-out and buy-in plans of the Vital Ministry Action Plan.

**Presenting your plan**

You will be sharing your plan with another team in the Team Vital gathering as a way of practicing and clarifying your presentation. As a team, take a few minutes to outline how you will present your plan and what you will include in your presentation. The feedback and questions you receive will encourage further clarity and focus so that you can have a concise, hope-filled presentation of your Vital Ministry Action Plan for your congregation.

Following your sharing with another team, you will be given several minutes to make a presentation to the entire group as a prelude to your sharing your work with the congregation. It is important to remember that everyone is here together to learn from one another, to encourage each other and to support each other in ministry. Your presentation will not be judged or graded. This is a time of celebration that God has brought you this far. There is no telling where God will lead you as you move forward!



*As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience . . . Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful . . .And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

*Colossians 3: 12, 14-15, 17, NRSV*

**Section 9 - Next Steps**

* Formalize Action Plan
* Apply for Team Vital Grant
  + <https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/team-vital-grant-application/>

**18 months of Technical Assistance:**

* Monthly coaching for pastors and Team Vital Leaders with Team Vital Facilitators
* Coaching for pastors
* Two, six month follow up sessions with all Team Vital churches
* Preferred resourcing to PACE groups and from Connectional Ministries Team
* Spiritual development opportunities



**Step 5: Follow-Up Meetings**

**6 Month Follow-Up Discussion Questions**



1. What are the successes from your plan that you have to celebrate today, and how will you celebrate your accomplishments moving forward as a team and as a congregation?
2. What are you learning about your church through the Team Vital process?
3. What are your challenges for continuing to move forward in your plan, and what resources do you need to overcome them? Where can you find these resources?
4. As you live into your plan, what changes are you seeing in your church, in your leaders, and in your community?

**1 Year Follow-Up Discussion Questions**



1. What has gone well from your Team Vital plan in this past year?
2. What progress toward Vitality have you seen in your congregation and how have you measured this? What did you learn from the Vital Signs Dashboard report and what would make this report more useful?
3. What parts of your plan have you completed, and how are you envisioning following up to continue to build on these?
4. Where do you still need resourcing and help in moving forward?



**Vital Ministry Action Plan**

**An online version of this document is available at:**<https://www.gnjumc.org/participant-resources/>

*(To submit the online version, please save it as a word document and send to your facilitator for approval*

1. Michael W. Smith - Open The Eyes Of My Heart Lyrics | MetroLyrics [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Clara H. Scott, 1841-1897 As [↑](#footnote-ref-2)