

WHAT IS CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY?



The Rev. Sammie Evans and congregation members are getting to know one another at a deeper level thanks to their participation in the Vital Congregations Revitalization Initiative. [Read more](#). Courtesy of Stone Church of Willow Glen

A community's vitality is primarily its spiritual strength and its capacity for purposeful mission. Congregational vitality is evident in a worshiping community when its structural systems, finances and discipleship practices are aligned in such a way that the community is actively engaged in the mission of God in their local community and the world, and they are powerfully focused on growing as disciples in the way of Jesus Christ. Faith comes alive when we boldly engage God's mission and share the hope we have in Christ.

We propose that there are seven marks to help you determine your current level of vitality — and then various processes for self-assessment, discernment and renewed commitment to the habits that foster an energetic engagement with the Spirit's work in the world.



Here are the 7 marks:

1. A commitment to forming disciples over every member's lifetime. This leads first to personal transformation, as people put on the heart of Christ, and then to social transformation, as people joyfully go forth into the community and tackle the issues facing today's culture.
2. Embracing the call to evangelism. We show forth the love of Christ by our actions and our lives even more than by our words. Our relationships are genuine and caring. People know we are Christians by our love.
3. An outward focus. Our church is not a place to escape from the world, but rather our gateway to our community where we may be the hands, feet, heart and mouth of Jesus Christ for people who are suffering or marginalized.
4. Empowering every member to discover their individual calling and the gifts God has given them so they can go forth and serve.
5. Spirit-inspired worship that challenges, teaches, transforms, convicts and energizes us so when we are sent out, we have experienced the wonder of God and are changed for the better from when we arrived.
6. Caring relationships modeled on God's love. We open our doors and hearts to all people, and we build relationships modeled on God's love, which leads to genuine reconciliation and peace.
7. Congregations with healthy systems. Our mission focuses are clear. There is fiscal responsibility and accountability. We have thoughtful decision-making structures. Our leaders and staff enjoy a sustainable balance of work/rest time.



WHAT DOES OUR FAITH DEMAND?

God's gifts of Word and Sacrament establish and equip the church as the body of Christ in the world. The mission of the church flows from baptism, is nourished at the Lord's Supper, and serves to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all.

Vital communities follow Jesus into places of injustice and struggle. They bear the light of hope, demonstrating love and mercy, and working faithfully for justice and peace. Their efforts will be sustained by personal and congregational patterns and practices of prayer and worship, learning and reflection. They will be stewards of God's abundant gifts in service to God's children here and everywhere. They will demonstrate to the world God's promises and life-giving power in this age and the world to come.

How do we build congregational vitality?



In our worship, learning, relationships, actions and sharing, we work to build congregational vitality. Some suggested resources are below:

Worship:

Use components of the Matthew 25 worship resource for Building Congregational Vitality presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/M25-Vitality.pdf

Use the lectionary resources for A Year with Matthew 25 presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/yearmatthew2324.pdf

Find other worship resources to create a vibrant and spirit-filled worship experience in your community: presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/

Learn:

Explore the 8 Habits of Evangelism to consider what evangelism means in your congregational or community context presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theology-formation-and-evangelism/evangelism/8-habits-of-evangelism-resources/

Consider joining the Vital Congregations initiative or use some of its resources and suggestions to revitalize your congregational life <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theology-formation-and-evangelism/vital-congregations/>

Use the Engage curriculum to become relevant, share your faith, and attract people to your community pcusa.org/engage/welcome/

Read or offer book studies on these suggested books: *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry* by Holly Catterton Allen and Jason Brian Santos. *Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* by Michael W. Goheen. *Shift: Three Big Moves for the 21st Century Church* by Mark E. Tidsworth.

Relate:

Learn about and form a relationship with one of the new worshipping communities in your area. Find a map of communities and resources to explore at presbyterianmission.org/ministries/1001-2/.

Host an Exploring Missional Leadership event with facilitation from 1001 New Worshipping Communities (presbyterianmission.org/ministries/1001-2/assessment/#tab-3 or email facilitator Michael.gerling@pcusa.org)

Connect with non-profit organizations, other churches, ecumenical and interfaith organizations to build relationships and discern common ministries to pursue

Act:

Learn about your own congregation's strengths by taking the U.S. Congregational Vitality Survey (<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/u-s-congregational-vitality-survey-website-launched/>),

Assess your neighborhood to discern your action and involvement in the community. Use the Starting New Worshipping Communities: A Comprehensive Guide: presbyterianmission.org/resource/starting-new-worshipping-communities-a-comprehensive-guide-to-discerning-and-starting-new-worshipping-communities/

Consider God's call for your global involvement presbyterianmission.org/resource/called-mission-finding-place-gods-mission/

Share:

Consider a Collaboration Agreement to support an immigrant New Worshiping Community presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Accents-Final.pdf

Share video stories and connect with other worshipping communities: [Ebenezer Church](#), [New Creation Church](#), [Hope Presbyterian Church](#), [Light of Hope Presbyterian Church – Building Congregation Vitality](#)

Use your building space or grounds to partner with community groups

Volunteer in the community with the skills and wisdom of your worshipping community members

WHO DO WE CONTACT AT THE PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY, TO LEARN MORE, TO INVITE SPEAKERS, AND TO BRAINSTORM FURTHER?

To learn more, contact Rev. Carlton Johnson, Coordinator for Vital Congregations at carlton.johnson@pcusa.org, or connect with your region's Mission Engagement Advisor who can connect you to Rev. Johnson and other PC(USA) staff and denominational resources (presbyterianmission.org/ministries/mission-engagement-support/mes/our-team/).