

Pastor & The People of God Guidelines

Revitalization Initiative

Overview:

- I. Calendar
- II. Year 1: Relational – Intentional Relationships & Honest Assessment of Congregations
- III. Year 2: Incarnational – Revitalizing Churches in 3-Actions: Re-forming, Missional Clustering, Death & Resurrection
- IV. Resources & Future Resources
- V. 7 Marks of Congregational Vitality

Revitalization Calendar

Year I Relational: Authentic Relationships & The Honest Assessment & Discernment of Congregations

January – *Initial Visit*: Presbytery Leadership & PC(USA) Staff

February – Prayer & Planning Meetings & Introductions of Pastor Cohorts & Opening Celebration

March-May – (3 Months): *Checking Our Marks* – 3 Session Congregation & Presbytery Assessment

- March – Opening Kick-off Worship (Presbytery & Churches)

June & July – Break for Summer

August – Planning & Training for Fall

September-November – (7 week church-wide study after Labor Day): *Exploring 7 Marks of Vital Congregations*

November & December – *Show Your Marks* – Report/Capturing Congregational Stories.

Year II Incarnational: Revitalizing Church in 3-Actions: Re-forming, Clustering, Death & Resurrection

January – Prayer & Planning for Vital Congregations

February – March – (2 months): *Plotting the Course Think-Tanks & 8 Week Study of Rethinking 7 Marks of Vitality*

April – *Pray* (1 Week)

April – October – (6 months): *Changing Our Marks* – 3-Actions of Revitalizing Churches

November-December – (2 months): *Final Vital Congregations Assessment & Report: Show Your Marks*

Year I Exploration

Building Intentional Relationships and Honest Assessment of Congregations

Year I is about genuine relationships where existing congregations engage in confessional assessment and faithful discernment in where the Spirit is leading them to follow. It will explore congregational life story of who they have been, in order to discern who they are called to be moving forward. Finally, it will explore beyond the walls in a Neighborhood Analysis.

I. Pastors & People of God

- A. Congregational Revitalization Initiative – (January & February)** Like Presbyteries ritualizing and preparing pastors to walk through this process, pastors will walk with church leadership to envision, imagine, and plan how best to walk through the Revitalization Initiative.
- The Revitalization Initiative should include an opening & closing worship service; this allows for the entire initiative to be framed in worship, prayer, and renewing sacred rituals. It also enables congregations to make this commitment to one another to take part in assessing and faithfully seeking vitality together. *Note: The same worship/liturgy used by the presbytery could also be used within congregations.*
 - Pastor should meet with Session elders and deacons to plan how they might best walk through the initiative gathering members, including shut-ins, children, youth, college students, and any others on the margin of participation. *(Note: Revitalization Facilitators should be introduced to congregations at this time).*
 - Pastors may choose to hold a Session Retreat in order to: covenant build, outline Initiative, set goals, plan.
 - Pastor(s) & Session should engage in a Neighborhood Exegesis experience & debrief findings.
- B. Checking Our Marks – 3 month (March-May) –** Church assessment is both quantitative and qualitative research. It includes data/stats, surveys, labels, and charting a congregation, but is also honest reflection and prayerful discernment. This is an opportunity for members and leadership to share, to address conflict, to name vitality, to look at history, to explore practices, to focus on mission and ministry in life together.
- 1) *Telling Our Story – (Month 1) –* Focuses on Historical Mapping of particular churches
 - 2) *PC(USA) Marks of Vitality Survey – (Month 2) –* Survey taken by congregations & Session members. Based upon the 7 Marks of Vital Congregations. Scored by PC(USA) and returned to Presbyteries & Pastors/Session. Engage in a Neighborhood Analysis and plotting the Life-cycle of the church.
 - 3) *Revitalization Assessment – (Month 3) –* With survey results in hand, Neighborhood Analysis experience, and presbytery reports – congregations will explore who they have been and the necessary discernment of who they are being called to be.
- Pastors, in consultation with the session, should prayerfully determine the best method in which to walk congregations through these assessment sessions. *For example, you might break the congregation up into home groups, and determine that a pastor not attend, so that members feel free to share more openly.*
 - Trained & specialized PC(USA) Revitalization Facilitators will be offered in the 3rd Session to help congregations do the honest Confession and necessary discernment of the journey ahead: 1) Legacy in death in Witness to the resurrection 2) Missional Clustering of small church communities 3) Re-envision & Re-form how we are called to be church.
 - PC(USA) will provide *Mission Insite* information to compare findings of Neighborhood Analysis
- C. Congregational 7 Marks of Congregational Vitality Church-wide Study – (September-November)-** This is a 7-week Bible Study and Prayer around each of the 7 Marks of Congregational Vitality. As congregations study the Word of God around these 7 Marks of Vitality, the hope is that the Spirit of God will lead them to wonder that transforms and courage to faithfully change and follow as disciples of Jesus Christ. *Note: Resources provided by PC(USA)*

D. Show Your Marks Campaign – (November & December) – After initial Congregational Assessment, pastors should work with the session in capturing their story, reporting their assessment, reporting findings of Neighborhood Analysis, and sharing their hope in journeying forward. Through video testimony, photographs, storytelling, and more, the congregation should gather together to give witness to vitality and life in Christ.

- Reports should be handed in by the new year to presbytery, who will share them with the PC(USA) office. These stories will be used to report on churches beyond membership numbers and budgets. They will serve as future case studies, and testimony to the denomination of God’s vitality and life given to the people of God. They will bear witness to all who have not seen or heard.
- These reports should be turned in every 2 years. *The Session in consultation with the pastor, should develop a plan for continual ongoing assessment of the congregation. For example: this may look like continued congregational cohorts during monthly meals, or a ritual time and space in worship, or an annual congregation meeting, or quarterly open town hall forums, etc.*

II. Year I Resources:

1. Revitalization Liturgy
2. 3 Session Congregation Assessment
3. 3 Session Presbytery Assessment
4. 12 Session Pastor Cohort Gathering
5. 8 Marks of Congregational Vitality Church-wide Study
6. Show Your Marks Campaign Report
7. Community Exegesis Exercise
8. Mission Insite – Community Data

III. Year I Revitalization Facilitators Team:

In consultation with Presbytery leadership, PC(USA) Revitalization Facilitator teams can be consulted and/or deployed however they contractually determine and plan. The PC(USA) encourages the use of the Revitalization Facilitators during the 3rd Session of Congregational Assessment. Facilitators will administer gifts for:

1. Asking difficult questions for Confessional Discernment
2. Pastoral support & compassion in change
3. Conflict Resolution within the church

Year II Exploration
Incarnational: Revitalizing Church in 3-Acts

The objective of Year II is Incarnational: Re-envisioning how we are called to be church. Re-forming the 7 marks of congregational vitality, and living the Good News with all people. After Year I assessment and discernment, Year II is about living into a new discipleship – open to the transforming wonder God longs to reveal, and boldly following the Holy Spirit into the new things God is doing. In courageous faith and hope, churches will live into: 1) *Re-forming church – revitalizing the 7 Marks of Congregational Vitality*, 2) *Clustering churches – revitalizing by clustering congregations into new communities of worship & ministry*, 3) *Re-envisioning church – revitalizing by grace and gratitude in the death and legacy of a congregation, in witness to the resurrection*

I. Pastors & People of God

A. Prayers & Planning for Vital Congregations – (January)

- Pastors in consultation with elders & deacons should envision and plan how to implement the 2-Month Plotting the Course Think Tank (below), and all other aspects of the Year II Revitalization Initiative. *For example: a church-wide study; worship series focus; continue house gatherings from Year I.*
- Pastors and Session should also be exploring and planning the way forward, gathering input from the Neighborhood Analysis, Mission Insite, Show Our Marks report, Presbytery report, and congregation think-tanks. Clear goals and hopes should be adopted by church leaders in consultation with presbytery leadership and Revitalization Facilitators Teams (as necessary).

B. Plotting the Course to Revitalizing Actions –2-Months (February & March) – Based upon churches “Show Your Marks” report & discernment (Year I), this time is intended to re-envision and plot the practical ways to live into one of the 3-Actions of revitalizing: re-forming, missional clustering communities, or death and resurrection in its various forms. Congregational think-tanks should allow for every idea to be heard, every voice represented, every opportunity shared.

- PC(USA) Revitalization Facilitator Teams specializing in the 3-Actions of Revitalizing will assist in walking congregations through the next steps planning. Presbyteries will have a Toolkit of resources for 3-Actions.
- The end of 7 weeks – the congregation should decide through guidance of the Session which initiatives to try; goals should be set; a plan made for how & when these *new Revitalization Initiatives* will be launched!
- *Please note: this time should be highly engaged and faithful as we re-turn our focus to how God is working and showing us wonder that transforms us more and more into who we are called to be and how we are joining Christ in the work of redemption in our communities and throughout the world. Do not be afraid to dream!*

C. Re-Envisioning Our Marks – 2 months (February& March) – 7-week church-wide study on revitalizing the 7 Marks of Vital Congregations.

- The PC(USA) will provide a 7-week resource to re-think 7 Marks, to re-envision how a congregation is being called to change or implement these 7 marks of vitality, and to strategize how to practically implement these ideas. This is preparation for intentional experiential praxis; ideas leading to action.

D. Prayer for Revitalization – 1 Week of Prayer - The end of the 2-month series, after the 7-week study – Pray for the initiatives your congregation will embark upon. Pray for the leaders and all people who will offer gifts to bring about the efforts of vitality. Pray for the people God will send you forth to meet, the plans God has for Christ’s church, and the ways in which you will experience the wonder of God that transforms you. Pray!

- *Examples: Set up a week-long prayer visual at your church; have members' sign-up for hours to come in and pray. Plan intentional worship opportunities to pray. Have children, youth, families, elder-adults, shut-ins, college students, all members responsible for praying throughout the week for a particular revitalization initiative.*

E. *Changing Our Marks* – (*After 8 Week Series & Week of Prayer – 6-Months of Revitalizing*) – Pastor(s) and church leaders should walk with congregation in 3-Actions: Re-forming, Missional Clustering, Death & Resurrection. The courage to believe the living God of wonder is calling us to transform in faithful discipleship; to join the Spirit at work; and to live into the new thing Christ is doing. The goal is to do the necessary, hope-filled, and difficult things to reform the ways we are church together, boldly act in new practices in mission & ministry. *Note: This is not merely new programs or ministries to impact membership numbers...this is a new beginning, a new chapter of God transforming church. Transformation is for individuals, churches, communities, neighbors, and all who we are called to share the love of God.*

- Pastor(s) and Session should inform and pray with Presbytery Leaders of all actions moving forward. Presbytery leaders will plan site visits and a Prayer Tour over these initiatives with each congregation.
- Churches should creatively record/document/capture the story of Changing Marks & Vital Congregations.
- Pastor(s) & Session should ensure that all new initiatives at the forefront, transparency and updates on how things are going, and opportunities for storytelling and congregational input.
- Pastor(s) and Presbytery Leaders should call upon Revitalization Facilitators when necessary.
- *Note: All things should be centered on prayer. All new initiative joys and successes should be celebrated; fellowship and play are vital parts of the body of Christ. All failures and struggles confessed and documented; this is life together.*

F. *Final Assessment & Show Your Marks Report*– (*2 months, Year II*) – This is an opportunity for churches to share their re-envisioned Marks of Vitality, assess the process, set goals for the future, and plan for sustainability. These reports will be collected during the Final Assessment of the Revitalization Initiative, and turned in to Presbyteries & the PC(USA) staff to mark a new measurement of vital congregations.

- ***Session Vitality Assessment*** – (*1 month, Year II*) – Leadership of the church, operating in healthy systems and fueled by the input and stories of the people, should be ready to debrief and assess, plan and set goals, for sustainable vitality.
 - The PC(USA) will provide final assessment tool and resources for ongoing vitality.
 - The Final Show Your Marks Reports should be shared in the final worship celebration of the Presbytery. Presbytery Leaders will share Final Reports with the PC(USA) staff to measure congregational vitality in new ways beyond membership trends and budgets.
 - *Note: This assessment will mark standards of measurement such as: How have we been transformed? How have we experienced God's wonder? How will we ensure vitality moving forward? Do we have a clear vision moving forward? How will we work to continue to discern the will of God? How and when will we know if it is time to begin new worshiping communities? Going forward, how will we continue to gather congregational input? Where do we go from here? How will we remain faithful in our following of Christ and be open to the wonder of God?*
- ***Congregation Vitality Assessment*** – (*1 month, Year II*) – This will be an intentional time of reflecting, engaging in important conversations and assessments of the Revitalization Initiatives. Instead of a time of conclusion, this time should be centered around how we continue the initiatives that brought about vitality, and how to continue prayerful discernment of new visions of faithful discipleship. Yet, it should also be a time of joy-filled celebration, storytelling, gratitude and play as we delight in all the Lord is doing in our midst!
 - Pastor(s) and Session determine how to go about Revitalization Debriefing. *For example: offer reflection assessment surveys and plan a special worship where revitalization stories can be shared and surveys/assessments can*

be offered. Home groups plan presentations, story sharing of revitalization and experiences of wonder, while offering a prayer to paths of sustainability moving forward, and center it around a family fun night of celebration.

- From this debriefing, should come tangible ways forward, covenant promises to be kept, envisioning plan that will continue to discern and seek the Spirit's leading into new vital mission and ministries.
 - Plan ways to allow your congregation and hopefully new "strangers now friends" to share their stories of hospitality, yes, but namely, of how God showed up in the person or people of this church and revealed God's amazing wonder and love. These are the faithful stories that make vital congregations.
 - *Note: Pastors and churches should be sure to invite Presbytery leaders to see, and to hear, and to be a part of debriefing and assessment, and concluding rituals/celebration of the Revitalization Initiative.*
- **Show Your Marks Report** – (Final Month, Year II) – The Show Your Marks Report is to help congregations capture a new and transforming story of vital congregations for the Presbytery. This Report will be shared with the PC(USA) Staff.
- The Final Show Your Marks Report should be submitted during the Closing Revitalization Celebration.
 - A Guide to Creatively sharing these reports can be found in the Revitalization workbook.

II. Year II Resources:

1. 12 Sessions Pastor Cohort Gatherings
2. Rethinking 7 Marks of Vital Congregations Church-wide study
3. Final Session & Congregation Assessment
4. Final Presbytery Assessment
5. Show Your Marks Campaign Report

III. Year II Revitalization Facilitators Team:

In consultation with Presbytery leadership, Revitalization Facilitators team can be consulted and/or deployed however they contractually determine and plan. The PC(USA) encourages the use of the Revitalization Coaches during the 3rd Session of Congregational Assessment. Facilitators will have gifts for:

1. Re-forming – Helping congregations to re-think and re-envision how to carry out vital marks in new ways.
2. Missional Clustering – Helping congregations live into new community clusters in ministries, resources, and staff.
3. Death & Resurrection – Helping congregations live into death with gratitude and memorial, while preparing for resurrection and new life in various forms – through new life as a new worshipping community or thriving without a building.

IV. Looking Ahead

Remember, the end of the Revitalization Initiative is hopefully a new beginning. In faith and hope, churches will witness 7 marks of vitality coming to life, in a faithful new way of being church, and following as disciples in every aspect of our lives, communities, and the world. The people of God will see re-commitment to who Christ is in our life, how God is on the move in this world, and how the Spirit beckons for us to join, and the denomination will have new reports containing new measurements and stories of our life together in Christ. *Remember, God brings about Revitalization, as we remain open and expectant to the wonder God longs to reveal to all.* If we pray and faithfully walk in relationships together, if we seek the will of God together, and rely upon the image of Christ we share, then we believe that the Spirit of God will revitalize the hearts and lives of existing congregations to new vitality and life forevermore. Revitalization is witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ! And we look forward to being in relationship with you.

- **The PC(USA) will continue to walk with presbyteries by:**

- Creating continuing Revitalization Resources (*outlined below*)
- Offering Continued Presbytery Leaders Gatherings (*UPN or Evangelism Conference time*)
- Offering Revitalization Coaches to continue to assist congregations as needed
- Continuing to Pray with and for you.
- Continue to highlight congregational vitality through the sharing of Show Your Marks Reports

- **Future Resources:** After the 2-year Revitalization Initiative

- Resources for ongoing congregational revitalization;
- Christian Formation – particularly daily spiritual practices;
- Curriculum for ongoing faith matters and discipleship equipping;
- resources for empowering congregational leaders, particularly those called to ministry;
- resources to celebrate diversity – sex, gender, age, race, etc.; curriculum that engages cultural issues in making faith applicable;
- ongoing book studies for pastors & continuing education opportunities
- Revitalization Conference to gather all pastors who've been through the Revitalization Initiative to share stories and debrief together.
- Resources to help existing congregations looking to create new worshiping communities

7 Marks of Congregational Vitality

- 1. LIFELONG Discipleship Formation** *VS. Complacent “Christian” piety, simply teaching good morals, or offering the latest programs.*
 - “The righteousness that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God based on faith.” Phil. 3:9b
 - From the cradle to the grave seeking to be formed for right living with God and with all people.
 - Faith – seeking understanding, cultivating wisdom, and actively following Christ; not an extra-curricular or merely head-knowledge.
 - Discipleship awakened and engaged in issues facing today’s culture: injustice, inequality, divisive diversity, oppression, suffering, abuse of creation.
 - Discipleship formed and strengthened in the community of Christ and permeates daily practices and daily living.
- 2. Intentional Authentic Evangelism** *VS. “Jesus freaks”; “Christian” Hypocrisy; A committee.*
 - “We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God.” 2 Cor. 4:7
 - Intentionally sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, not just acts of kindness.
 - Authentically sharing Christ because it is intrinsic to self-identity; overflow of Christ in our life.
 - Relational, not programmatic or systematic
- 3. Outward Incarnational Focus** *VS. Inward Institutional Survival; Closed communities of assimilation/exclusion.*
 - “The gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matt. 7:14
 - Outward exploration, awareness, and focus on neighbors and neighborhood.
 - Beyond relationship with those of similar existence, the incarnate Christ dwells among the lowly & least, the stranger & the suffering, the marginalized & majority.
 - Missional focus on where Christ is already living and present, and calling us to dwell.
- 4. Empower Servant Leadership** *VS. the Pastor’s job; monopolized leadership; hiring the young energetic pastor*
 - “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.” Matt. 9:37-38.
 - Identify, nurture, support the use of spiritual gifts of all people to serve; not monopolized cliques of power.
 - All voices and people are necessary, and it is noticeable when people are absent/missing.
 - Nurture and encourage those specifically called and gifted for pastoral ministry.
- 5. Spirit-Inspired Worship** *VS. Self-gratifying worship, stale ritual divorced of meaning, or consumer entertainment worship*
 - “These people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote.” Isaiah 29:13
 - Worship is about God. We get to come on holy ground, encounter God, and experience wonder.
 - Worship is active participation in the living relationship of the triune God, thus *all* should feel welcome just as they are to come.
 - Worship challenges, teaches, transforms, encounters, convicts, and sends people out different.
- 6. Caring Relationships** *VS. Any other Social Club; façades, hypocrisy, and judgment of “church” and “religion.”*
 - “By this everyone will know that you are disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35
 - Sharing in God’s true agape moves us beyond half-hearted programmatic participation, lukewarm faith, and pretending.
 - Instead of a closed, judgmental community, people find freedom to share stories, encounter the Savior, and ask for help.
 - Welcome and hospitality are not left to a committee, but, imperfectly, we strive for *all* people find identity, purpose, and belonging in the household of God.
 - Confront conflict, seek reconciliation in all divisions, find ways to embrace all diversity, seek to be peace-makers and bridge builders together.
- 7. Ecclesial Health** *VS. Unhealthy dysfunction; toxic environments; obsolete and irrelevant buildings*

- “The body does not consist of one member but of many. God has so arranged the body that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.” 1 Cor. 12: 14, 24b-25
- Understanding of: Why we are a church community? How are we a church community in practice? Prayer permeates all life together.
- Clarity in mission, core-values to ministry, passion and joy in being the church. Our budget reflects these values, vision, and ministries.
- Fiscally responsible– Stewardship and tithing are taught, transparency in spending, continual assessment/discernment of a sustainable budget.
- All are aware of how decisions are made, stake-holders in the process and procedures, valued voices in the envisioning, open to changes, continual assessment of the “why” and “how” we are church together.
- Nurturing and supporting the health of pastor(s), staff, and all called to lead; fighting against burnout.