

Presbytery Guidelines

Revitalization Initiative

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The Journey Together

I. Initial Covenant Visit

An intentional visit will establish a prayerful covenant relationship between presbytery leadership and PC(USA) staff. The objective of this visit will be to review, brainstorm, and plan for the two-year Revitalization Initiative. The goal is to empower mid-council leadership to walk with pastors, with the support and resources of the PC(USA) staff, so that pastors are equipped to lead congregations to faithful discernment and vitality.

- *Daylong Planning in 2 Sessions. Time should be offered for pastors to gather to ask questions and pray together.*

2 Sessions:

1. Morning Session: *Pray, Listen, Learn, Pray Some More*

- Opening Devotion: Issues & Struggles, Vitality & Hope for Context. Revitalization Vision.
- Discuss Revitalization Initiative, 8 Marks, & Revitalization Coaching Team
- Covenant Building

2. Afternoon Session: *Prayerful Imagination, Living In Hope*

- Pastor Cohort Planning: Groups & monthly meetings. Retreat.
- Plan Initiative through Presbytery & with Pastors.
- Resources, Surveys, Toolkit
- “Show Your Marks” Campaign
- Q & A with Presbytery Leaders

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 & 7 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. Presbytery & Pastors

- A. Pastor Cohorts** – Presbytery leaders will form pastor cohorts to meet monthly for prayer, biblical and theological reflection, support and fellowship, case study and brainstorming for revitalization initiative in their particular church.
- Presbyteries should consider geographical location of pastors, as well as similarities in church communities. *(Later these pastor cohorts may consider adding ecumenical voices from the community.)*
 - Presbyteries may consider a retreat in order to form groups and create trust.
 - PC(USA) Resource: 12 sessions will focus on assessment of particular congregations & 8 vital marks. *(See Resource Information)*
- B. Presbytery Meetings** – Presbytery leaders should plan time for debriefing, dialogue, checking in during regular scheduled presbytery meetings. Worship and prayer should invite time for reflection of pastors’ contexts.
- Presbyteries may choose to plan workshops/seminars on the 7 Vital Marks at each Presbytery Meetings
 - Presbyteries practice & train pastors in conducting a Neighborhood Exegesis, and walking congregations through assessment and discernment *(described in II)*.
- C. Presbytery Site Visits** – Presbytery leaders should plan a site visit to each congregation in Year I. An intentional time of prayer should be offered with each congregation. Time for reflection, assessment, questions and sharing needs should be encouraged.
- D. Presbytery Prayer** – A time of prayer should be incorporated in the daily practices of presbytery leaders. Presbytery leadership should offer prayers for the pastors and congregations & walk through the 7 Marks Devotional.
- This can be a ritualized practice in a particular time and space, or leaders can be assigned a list of congregations in which to pray for on their own each day.
- E. Presbytery Leaders Cohort** – Presbytery Leaders are invited to attend the Evangelism Conference where time will be devoted to dialogue with other presbytery leaders & PC(USA) staff.
- F. Checking Our Marks** – *(March-May)* Presbytery leaders should walk through an assessment of: 1) Historical Mapping 2) Exploring our Mission & Ministry 3) Identifying our congregations. Congregational Assessment should be cross-referenced with congregations’ own assessment from the “Show Your Marks” Campaign.
- G. Show Your Marks Campaign** – *(November & December)* This Campaign offers an opportunity for congregations to report their assessments, report findings of Neighborhood Analysis, and share their particular stories. Congregations will be asked to capture the vitality of the 7 Marks of Vital Congregations. Stories, videos, photos of existing congregations turned in to presbyteries every 2 years, should mark a new type of denominational reporting. Beyond membership attendance, the vitality of life together should be highlighted throughout the denomination. The PC(USA) should share the stories of congregations who exist in joy and hope, in love and

justice for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This message needs to be reported louder than anxiety and fear over numbers and budgets.

- Presbyteries may choose to ritualize receiving these reports in some way. For example, an Advent/Christmas Worship Service might invite the whole presbytery to bring their reports as offering to God.

II. Year I Resources:

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

III. Year I Revitalization Facilitators Team:

In consultation with Presbytery leadership, PC(USA) 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. Coaches with 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 8 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) *Missional 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. Presbytery & Pastors

- A. **Pastor Cohorts** – Pastor cohorts will continue to meet monthly.
- A 12 Session Resource will be provided by the PC(USA). This will be further biblical/theological discussion centered on helping pastors re-envision and re-form church in today’s context and culture.
 - Pastor cohorts will take turns sharing Neighborhood Analysis of their particular context. The PC(USA) with the help of Revitalization Facilitators will offer data analysis of contextual neighborhoods. (*Mission Insite*)
- B. **Presbytery Meeting** – Presbyteries should allow time for pastors to share and pray for revitalization efforts. Seminars/Workshops should be offered to help pastors move congregations into action of: 1) *Re-forming church – revitalizing the 7 Marks of Congregational Vitality*, 2) *Missional 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*
- The PC(USA) will provide a ToolKit with resources for all 3 actions moving forward. Facilitators who specialize in one or more of the 3 actions will be available for video/phone conferences and site visits.
 - The conclusion of Year II will allow presbyteries and pastors to ritualize their revitalization experience in celebration and thanksgiving to God. This might be a worship service together, a time of festival sharing, story-telling, or some other gathering event.
- C. **Presbytery Prayer Tour** – Presbytery leaders should support and pray with each congregation as they embark on new revitalization efforts and experiences. Leaders may choose to be present to witness new initiatives, or to pray with Session as they work on mission and ministry statements.
- D. **Presbytery Envisioning** – Presbytery Leaders gather to discern how they will continue to faithfully support congregations in their vitality. How will the presbytery continue to equip and inspire pastoral leadership? How will they continue to empower and encourage congregations? A practical way forward should be outlined and adopted by the presbytery and pastors.
- Presbytery leaders will have the opportunity to envision and share ideas with other Presbytery leaders & PC(USA) staff at the annual Evangelism Conference.
- E. **Show Your Marks Campaign** – Through joy and sorrow, success and failures, the Spirit of God will bring forth revitalization as we faithfully walk together. As Christ brings us into the story of faith, we are called to capture and tell others the story. Presbyteries should plan a way in which to share their story of the

Revitalization Initiative. In this way, the denominational narrative shifts from anxiety to hope, from fear to faithfulness.

- For Example: Presbyteries may choose to assemble a video of congregational vitality highlighting the 7 vital marks in different congregations. They may choose to offer a pastor retreat where pastors can share stories of vitality to be compiled and turned into a resource. Presbyteries may want to put together a digital slide show of congregational vitality and revitalized mission and ministries throughout their presbytery to share with people who are seeking.

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, PC(USA) Revitalization Facilitators team 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. Coaches with 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 for ongoing assistance for congregations when necessary
 - 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.