

Five Frequently Asked Questions about Vital Congregations

1. **What would you expect a Vital Congregation to look like?** In a vital congregation, you would experience inviting and inspired worship services and observe members who authentically share the good news of Jesus Christ with others as a result of the overflow of Christ in their own lives. In a vital congregation, you would observe children, youth, young adults and older adults participating in activities in which they learn what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and encountering an awakened discipleship by engaging in issues facing today's culture: injustice, inequality, divisive segregation, oppression, suffering, and abuse of creation. In a vital congregation, you would find an empowered servant leadership in which the spiritual gifts of all disciples are identified, nurtured, and supported in their use in service to God and others. In a vital congregation, you would see people who genuinely love God and are engaged in caring relationships with each other and if you walked around the community you would hear and see evidences that the church is actively identifying and addressing the needs of the community in partnership with those who live in the community in a way that welcomes their service and values their relationship. In a vital congregation, you would observe that leaders and members have clarity in mission and are passionate and joyful in being the church because they have discerned together specifically what it is God wants them to be and do in transforming the world for God's glory.
2. **What are the costs of being a vital congregation?** The costs of starting a vital congregation are a desire, a commitment, and an investment of time---time to pray, time to plan collaboratively, regular times to pray - and study the scriptures together so that your work will be guided by the Holy Spirit. God has a powerful way of financing work that is done for kingdom building, equipping workers for kingdom building and bringing visions, missions and values together as you seek to minister and assist others. As the world is changing before our eyes, we see numerous opportunities to open and enter doors to reach and teach people about the power of God's love, the faithfulness of God's Son and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Will the Session of the church have to do all of the work to become a vital congregation?** No. The Session will approve the decision to participate in the vital congregation revitalization initiative, but the work to become a vital congregation is an inclusive process. Lay leaders, youth and children are active participants in praying together, studying together and growing together as creative ideas are shared, needs of the church and community are expressed and addressed and the rich history of the church is told. The congregation will have the opportunity to reflect on the current state of their church through the results of a congregational survey that will help to develop a starting point for identifying strengths as well as areas that the church would desire to strengthen.
4. **Are there any essential questions that congregations can begin to examine in the life of their congregation now?** Yes. A). In what ways are we reaching beyond ourselves to serve, teach and spread the Good News of Jesus Christ? B). How well do we share our stories about what God has done for us; such as, answering prayers for healing or how God made a way when it seemed like there was not a way? C). What are the signs in our church that give homage to a God who calls us to love all? D). When do the leaders and members of our congregation get together to discern what God is calling our congregation to be and do in our community at this time?
5. **Will there be someone to guide the process if we choose to participate?** Yes. You will be assigned two trained facilitators who will devote regularly scheduled times to meet with you.

“One never knows where you will land when God is your pilot, Jesus is your co-pilot and the Holy Spirit navigates your life” (Dr. Phyllis W. Sanders, 2018).