

## Signs of Congregational Vitality

### Ray Jones – Evangelism and Congregational Vitality – PCUSA

#### 1. Lifelong Christian formation

- intentional plan for discipleship at all age levels
- regular Bible study, prayer and other spiritual disciplines are taught and used
- teaches and practices stewardship throughout the year
- identifies potential leaders and nurtures them into those roles (see item 5)

##### *outcomes:*

- people learn and use their gifts, become and remain involved in ministry
- members see that ministry is more than attending a committee meeting---don't have the "what's in it for me" attitude
- general sense of joy, energy, commitment to sharing the gospel and to service

#### 2. Healthy systems

- vision or mission statement is re-evaluated periodically
- worshiping community and leaders are open to self-assessment and evaluation
- leadership manages change and conflict in a healthy manner
- asks for help from leaders and/or presbytery when appropriate
- doesn't allow cliques to control worshiping community
- staff are regularly evaluated using best practices
- provides appropriate levels of nurture and support of worshiping community members and staff
- has a sustainable, appropriate budget

##### *outcomes:*

- all or most members can articulate the worshiping community's sense of mission/purpose
- members share excitement about worshiping community's future
- culture of accountability and risk-taking, openness to new things

#### 3. Intentional evangelism

- members AND leaders are equipped for and engaged in evangelism and mission
- makes effort to evangelize everyone---not just those of the prevailing age group or culture found in the worshiping community
- recognizes that evangelism should be need-based (meets needs of unchurched/dechurched)

##### *outcomes:*

- hospitality is not viewed as a substitute for evangelism
- evangelism is viewed as a way of life, not as a program
- supportive of new worshiping communities in some way

#### 4. Outward incarnational focus

- addresses social justice and compassion needs of the world and community
  - practices radical hospitality (more than being warm and friendly---attempting to anticipate the needs of others; practice inclusion; step out of the comfort zone; love and nurture others; it's about them, not you) examples:
    - i. A worshiping community that is intentional about welcoming a certain demographic who are present in the community (people with disabilities, immigrants, those in recovery, etc.)
    - ii. A worshiping community that ministers to and with college students
    - iii. A worshiping community that shares Jesus with local prison inmates
- outcomes:*
- is a noted presence in the community
  - the community is viewed as being more important than the church

#### 5. Empowering servant leadership

- encourages members, when appropriate, to be “ministers” {priesthood of all believers}
  - provides tools and a healthy environment to build up leaders
  - staff and other leaders model servant leadership principles
- outcomes:*
- planning the activities of the worshiping community and decisions are shared, not staff/program-driven
  - worshiping community has healthy expectations of leadership

#### 6. Inspiring worship

- regardless of style, it's done well and members actively participate in all aspects: planning, leading, and worshiping
  - excellent biblical preaching
- outcomes:*
- helps people deepen their relationship with God and nurtures faith
  - worship is understood by worshiping community as an attitude more than as an act

#### 7. Caring Relationships Happen

- encourages connectional relationships within the church through small groups and fellowship opportunities
  - connects to other churches, community, presbytery
- outcomes:*
- provides nurture and support of staff/leaders, newcomers, one another
  - faith is strengthened
  - collaboration with other worshiping communities/organizations becomes easier

**Some outcomes I'd like to see:**

- Developing a set of questions we can ask congregations that will measure these characteristics of healthy worshiping communities easily and effectively, and that can result in a set of numbers (an overall score and a composite score on each of the seven items) that would give presbytery leaders some starting off point for pursuing renewal, revitalization and redevelopment where needed. (We can tentatively call this a “vitality scale.”)
- Developing a “sustainability scale” to be able to score congregations on how sustainable they are at the present moment in time (a composite score based on a few questions and on trend data)
- Developing a way to visually/graphically place a congregation (based on the vitality and sustainability scales) on the life cycle graph; to be used as an additional tool for presbytery leaders or consultants who work with congregations
- Working with presbytery leaders and possibly OGA to discern the best process for involving as many congregations as possible
- Putting these three tools together into one package and getting it distributed to every presbytery
- Refine the list of ways that Presbyterian agencies currently resource presbyteries and congregations (info that we gathered at the September summit meeting), resulting in either a single resource (brochure? flyer?) and/or a website that can point mid-council leaders and congregational leaders in the right direction to get help with nurturing, supporting, and revitalizing congregations
- Producing a unified website that links to other PMA websites (including the office of congregational vitality and Research Services) so that mid-council leaders, congregational leaders, and the consultants who have been hired to help them, can find and use these and other resources easily