

**VITAL CONGREGATIONS INITIATIVE**  
**New Brunswick Presbytery**  
**June 9, 2020**

We're officially getting ready! It's our Time of Preparation.

**PREPARATION - 2020:**

- Pastors and congregations learn about the Initiative and get their questions answered.
- National Conference (online) – July 21-22. All encouraged to participate, even if unsure about taking part in VCI. Info forthcoming.
- Sessions consider the Covenant of Commitment. Facilitators visit at Sessions' invitations to interpret Initiative and answer questions.
- Congregations that decide to participate are placed in two cohorts – one for pastors and one for congregational leaders- to begin preliminary work (fall); congregations have until end of 2021 to determine whether or not to participate.
- Presbytery determines its budget for the Initiative for 2021 and 2022.
- Presbytery undergirds all with prayer that we may grow in vitality as follow the Spirit lead in bearing witness to the gospel in our place, day, and time.

**Year 1 – RELATIONAL (2021):**

- January Kickoff Event – Celebration
- Cohorts officially begin
- Congregations work toward “Showing Our Marks” event (end of year): Learning 7 Marks, assessing our strengths, prayer, Bible study, other activities.
- Annual conference; other national conference opportunities.

**Year 2 – INCARNATIONAL (2022):**

- Cohorts continue.
- Learning to grow in vitality: focus on one mark; revisiting “Showing Our Marks;” prayer, worship, Bible study, other activities.
- Annual conference; other national conference opportunities.
- Congregations discern future direction/next steps.

For reference, see below:

Introduction to Vital Congregations

Covenant Agreement of Ministries and Churches

Your facilitators are here to talk things over.

Contact Nina Reeder at [ninareeder@gmail.com](mailto:ninareeder@gmail.com) or Molly Dykstra at [mollymdykstra@gmail.com](mailto:mollymdykstra@gmail.com).

We look forward to walking with you!

# Vision Statement for Vital Congregations Initiative

*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

ISAIAH 43:19

*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

*See, the home of God is among mortals...See, I am making all things new.*

REVELATION 21:3,5

***Vision:*** By the power of the Holy Spirit, and in authentic relationships with mid councils, we seek to equip, nurture and support church leaders to empower their congregations to renew, recover and live more fully into faithful discipleship to Jesus Christ.

***Purpose:*** The purpose of the Vital Congregations Initiative is to work alongside mid council leadership, and leaders of existing congregations, in a process that seeks to help assess, discern and live into transformative actions that increase vitality. Through intentional spiritual practices and relational connections, this two-year process takes us deeper into following Jesus Christ, making disciples and being the vital community of Christ throughout particular communities and the world.

***Values:***

- Courage, conviction, and commitment to faithful discipleship
- Prayerful discernment
- Reliance upon Scripture
- Persistence — emboldened/enacted faith
- Honest assessment
- Resilience
- Intentional pursuits of reconciliation
- Hopefulness in change

***What we believe:***

- This is a necessary re-turn to God and re-forming of God's people
- This is a crucial time of awakening throughout our neighborhoods, nation and world
- The Holy Spirit's power is changing, re-forming, revitalizing the Church
- This is necessary to rediscover faithful discipleship in 21st century context
- God is calling the Church to transform and transcend cultures and contexts
- We must move from inward institutions to neighborhood relationships and mission

***What this initiative is:*** We hope that this is the beginning of intentional, authentic relationships between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Mission Agency and mid council leaders and pastors to:

- Come together as the people of God
- Pray: re-turn to faithfulness in God
- Inspire openness to the Holy Spirit's transformation/change
- Honestly assess, discern and act
- Resource, equip and support leaders and pastors
- Practice missional evangelism and faithful discipleship
- Equip vital congregations and develop a praxis of sustainability and ongoing assessment
- Capture congregational stories and develop new measurements of vitality

- What this is NOT:**
- A universal program instructing churches and assuring vitality and sustainable life
  - Another plan that promises an immediate fix
  - A guarantee of revitalization for every congregation
  - An attempt for the PC(USA) to tell churches what to do
  - An institutional survival guide for membership, numbers and buildings
  - An encouragement to tweak, yet remain the same
  - A return to glory days gone by, nor a guidebook on calling the young pastor

**Overview :** The Vital Congregations Initiative is a two-year covenant relationship between presbyteries and the PC(USA) to prayerfully walk with pastors and existing congregations in intentional efforts of revitalization.

Year 1 seeks to (re)build authentic relationships of faith. Churches will embark on an honest assessment, capturing their unique stories, confessing their realities, and discerning the Spirit's call to action. From Seven Marks of Vital Congregations, churches will determine a course within Three Actions:

- 1 Re-forming churches** —re-envision and change how we are church together through the Seven Marks of Congregational Vitality
- 2 Missional Clustering of churches** —revitalize by clustering congregations into new communities of worship and ministry
- 3 Death and Resurrection of churches** —revitalize by grace and gratitude in the death and legacy of a congregation, in witness to the resurrection

Year 2 is about joining Christ in the new thing taking place, allowing the wonder of God to transform, and faithfully living into change. Through Seven Marks and Three Actions, we pray God will revitalize the church in missional action and faithful discipleship in Jesus Christ throughout our neighborhoods, our nation and the world.

• **Year 1: Relational**

• **Year 2: Incarnational**

*Revitalizing Churches in Three Actions: Re-forming, Missional Clustering, Death and Resurrection*

# Covenant Agreement of Ministries and Churches

## The Presbytery

We, the Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby agree fully with the vision and purpose of The Vital Congregations Initiative of the PC(USA). We have reviewed the Vision and the Seven Marks of Vital Congregations, and shared the information about the Vital Congregations Initiative with the pastors and church leaders of the presbytery. Together, with the Office of Vital Congregations and the Presbyterian Mission Agency, PC(USA), we will strive to uphold the values of: courage, conviction and commitment to faithful discipleship; prayerful discernment; reliance upon Scripture; persistence that leads to an emboldened faith; honest assessment; resilience; intentional pursuits of reconciliation; and hopefulness in change. We will work toward the initiative objectives to: come together as the people of God; to pray — (re)turning to faithfulness in God; to inspire openness to the Holy Spirit’s transformation and change; to honestly assess, discern and act; to resource, equip and support leaders and pastors; to practice missional evangelism and faithful discipleship; to equip vital congregations and develop a praxis of sustainability and ongoing assessment; and to capture congregational stories and develop new measurements of vitality as the people of God and disciples of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, we agree to participate to the best of our ability in the two-year initiative guidelines for presbyteries. We will show up in relationship to all pastors and congregations participating in this process of faithfulness. We will pray, support, equip and walk with these churches. We have prayerfully discerned

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_,
  - (b) \_\_\_\_\_,
  - (c) \_\_\_\_\_,
  - (d) \_\_\_\_\_,
  - (e) \_\_\_\_\_,
  - (f) \_\_\_\_\_, to serve as Vital Congregations facilitators.
- We will support, encourage and respect the voice and recommendations of these facilitators. We agree to budget \$ \_\_\_\_\_ as a presbytery for the purpose of the Vital Congregations Initiative.

## The Pastor or Church Leader

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby agree fully with the vision and purpose of (b) the Vital Congregations Initiative of the PC(USA). I have reviewed the Seven Marks of Vital Congregations and the guidelines for churches within the two-year initiative. To the best of my abilities, I will work alongside the people of God at \_\_\_\_\_ Church. Together, with the presbytery leadership of \_\_\_\_\_ and the Vital Congregations facilitators, I will strive to work toward the values and vision the Vital Congregations Initiative sets forth. With the grace of God, I will help lead people through honest discernment and assessment rooted in Scripture and prayer. Furthermore, I will seek the Holy Spirit’s will in actions that lead to (re)vitalized life together in Christ Jesus, who is the head of the Church. I will accept the assistance and support of the presbytery, and will seek to be connected and committed to my pastor cohort and colleagues in ministry.

**The Clerk of Session**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, in full support and representation of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, do hereby express our consent and intent to fully engage and participate in the Vital Congregations Initiative. We agree to actively live into the guideline set forth for churches. With God’s grace and guidance, we will seek to live into the purpose of the Vital Congregations Initiative to: “work alongside mid council leadership, and leaders of existing congregations, in a process that seeks to help assess, discern and live into transformative actions that increase vitality. Through intentional spiritual practices and relational connections, this two-year process takes us deeper into following Jesus Christ, making disciples and being the vital community of Christ throughout particular communities and the world.”

Presbytery Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Stated Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor/Church Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk of Session: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Office of Vital Congregations: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_