

Implementing the 16 Drivers of Vital Congregations

The following resource will assist congregational leaders in understanding and implementing the 16 drivers of vitality. Regardless of your church size, location or ethnicity, all 16 drivers are critical to the vitality of every congregation. A congregation will diminish its opportunity for vitality by only implementing a portion of the 16 drivers. This is because spiritual and biblical principles stand behind each of the drivers.

Throughout this resource, with each driver, there will be clues to what is appropriate to your congregation. Let's begin by reviewing how these 16 drivers of vitality were identified.

The Call to Action

The United Methodist Church continues to be a spiritual influence in the world for the Gospel. Essential to its ministry are healthy, vital congregations. But what makes a congregation vital and what do vital congregations do? While the testimony of a congregation lies in the stories told by those whose lives have been transformed, there is also other information that demonstrates the movement of the Spirit in vital congregations around the world. The United Methodist Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table commissioned a study to better identify the key activities of vital congregations.

The study reviewed the statistics of 32,328 United Methodist churches in the United States and found that nearly **4,961 (15%) over a five-year period were:**

- 1) Growing,
- 2) Involving a greater percentage of their people in ministry,
- 3) Engaging the congregation in the community, and
- 4) Giving generously to mission and ministry.

These signs of vitality were not only occurring – they were evident at a significantly higher rate than in other less vital churches.

Vital congregations, the study quantitatively showed, are engaging disciples in worship, making new disciples, growing the faith of disciples, engaging disciples in ministry and mission, and inspiring disciples to give generously. These congregations were highly vital, regardless of their size, location, or ethnicity. Isn't this the example of Jesus and the Scriptures? This is what we seek for all of our congregations.

The study further examined these churches and found they shared at least 16 characteristics in common. The study called these common traits "drivers of vitality," and indicated that if churches worked on all 16 drivers of vitality, they would move toward vitality or become more vital. The 16 drivers of vitality are grouped into four areas:

1. Engagement of disciples in small groups and the number of ministries for children *and* youth,
2. Lay leadership,
3. Pastoral leadership, and
4. Worship.

The Principles Behind the Drivers

The following resource will help you better understand the drivers and provide insights for how to implement the drivers.

Implementing the drivers

Generally, churches do not have the capacity to implement all 16 drivers at the same time and should not try to do so. Disciples will have a hard time adjusting to the amount and pace of change required to implement the 16 drivers all at once. Also, you will want to implement activities or programs that move towards each driver with excellence, which will require beginning with a few and building on your successes.

It is recommended that you first evaluate which drivers you are already doing well. Are they being done with the full intensity required to create vitality? For instance, you may already have small groups, but do you have an adequate number to increase vitality within the congregation?

With each driver, you need to assess the principles of the driver, how to evaluate what is the right activity level for the driver for your size church and how to implement the driver within your congregation.

Begin by studying the drivers of vitality with your church council or other leadership group. After reading the material below, ask the following questions:

1. Which drivers are being done well? How are they helping to grow worship, engage more people in ministry, engage the congregation in community mission and ministry or increase giving? If you do not find that the driver is moving your congregation to becoming more vital, what might you do to strengthen it?
2. Which drivers are you not doing or are you not doing with sufficient intensity?
3. Which two drivers will you begin with and why?
4. Who has the skills, experience and passion to lead the implementation of one of the identified drivers? Empower this person to lead a strategy team to implement the driver. Provide the individual with adequate direction, time and any financial resources needed to implement the driver. You will find that the drivers take little or no money to implement.

Once you have fully implemented ministries associated with one of the drivers, work on two or three more. Once you have implemented these, implement three to four more. It will take several years to implement all 16 drivers well. Do not worry. Health and vitality takes time. The most important thing is to start and follow through with all 16 drivers.

Overall Principles

Listed with each driver are some principles about why the driver creates vitality but below are a few general principles worth following in all your work to create vitality.

- The 16 drivers are *spiritual in nature* and are built on biblical foundations of growing disciples deeper in their faith, practicing spiritual disciplines (the Wesleyan Means of Grace), developing disciples in their ability to lead ministry, involving more disciples in ministry, and engaging more disciples in community ministry.
- Doing half, or even most, of the drivers will not lead to greater vitality (growing over time, involving more disciples in ministries, engaging the congregation in the community, and increasing giving to mission and ministry). Implementing *all* 16 drivers is essential.
- Start with one or two and implement all of them over time.

16 Drivers

Their principles, what is right for your church, and some clues for implementing them

Engagement of disciples in small groups and the number of ministries for children and youth

Driver 1. Vital churches have more small groups for all ages appropriate to each congregation.

- a. *Principles of small group ministry leading to deeper spiritual formation*
Small groups organize people into groupings where they experience deeper connection with other disciples, engage in intimate faith conversations, learn about the Scriptures and faith, help people to test ideas as they grow in their faith, and give people an opportunity to be supported through prayer and other caring activities. These are essential for maturing disciples' faith and for disciples to feel connected to the body of Christ.
- b. *How do you evaluate your congregation's small group ministry?*
 - i. Identify the number of small groups (4-15 people) that meet at least twice a month for a period of six months or more.
 - ii. Categorize your small groups into different types of groups. Identify their primary purpose and categorize them as 1) fellowship, 2) ministry (choir, money counters, hospitality team, etc.), 3) mission/outreach, 4) support

(mom's day out, AA, recovery, etc.), and 5) study or growth groups (Sunday school classes, Bible studies, thematic studies, book studies, etc.)

A good mix of small groups to grow the depth and spiritual maturity of a congregation might be divided like this: fellowship 10%, ministry 20%, mission/outreach 30%, support groups 10%, study groups 30%. The mix may be different because of the context of your congregation. For instance, if you are in a community where there are a number of people in recovery, the number of support groups may be higher. If you have a justice-focused congregation, the number of your mission groups may be a little higher. But a healthy mix is critical for shaping and maturing disciples in their faith.

- iii. Identify the number of people who regularly participate in a small group. Vitality will increase and be sustained as more of your worshippers are in a small group. You may set a goal of having 60% or more of your worshippers in a small group within a certain number of years. You will see vitality increase as you establish more small groups and engage a greater percentage of your worshippers in small groups.

- c. *How do you increase the number of small groups?*

Begin by recruiting and training new small group leaders. Well-equipped, well-trained small group leaders improve the experience that leads participants toward discipleship maturity and involvement. Throughout the year, plan a one-month emphasis on small groups and encourage every worshipper to participate in a four-week small group experience. Keep starting new small groups until more of your worshippers participate regularly in a small group. Read resources and books about starting and launching small group ministry.

There are a number of resources for small group studies that may be found through Cokesbury. www.cokesbury.com.

We will look at drivers 2 and 3 together because of their similarity.

Driver 2. Vital churches have more programs for children (under 12 years old).

Driver 3. Vital churches have more programs for youth (age 12-18).

- a. *Children and Youth Ministry Principles*

Involving and serving children and youth in the life of the church brings vitality because young people bring energy, life and enthusiasm and create a sense of urgency for ministry. Increasing vitality occurs when adults experience the vitality of young people and intentionally pass on a vibrant relationship with Christ to children and young people. Some churches may not have many or even any young people as members of the congregation, but the church can go out to the young people. There are children in every community across the country gathering at community centers, parks, soccer games and attending area

schools. Churches can go to the children in these places and provide ministry and share God's grace and love.

b. How do you evaluate young people's ministry?

There is an expression, "You get more of what you promote." How do you engage and involve young people in your church? Do you have children and youth reading Scripture or leading liturgy twice a month? Do you have a young person ushering three or four times a month? Do you have young people greeting worshippers each week? Being an acolyte and singing in a young people's choir is important and encouraged, but doing other important ministries, like reading the Scriptures, also regularly increases spiritual vitality and gives the young people opportunities to practice the faith.

Also, are there pictures of young people on your walls in your church building? When young people see themselves and hear themselves, they feel included and are more likely to want to participate. What ministries does your congregation have for young people? Are young people helping to plan ministry with and for other young people? Do young people have opportunities to be in conversation with adults (not just Sunday school teachers) about faith or participate with adults in service? Can intergenerational ministries increase ministry with young people in your congregation?

c. How do you increase the number of children and youth ministries?

Start small and grow. Begin by being intentional about building relationships with adults, children and youth, allowing for spaces and conversations to happen across the generations. (One example might be cookie decorating for all during Christmas, or potlucks that encourage intentional interaction. The possibilities are endless.) Invite children and youth to be actively engaged in worship leadership or service. (They can read Scripture or assist in greeting and ushering during the service.) This will have an immediate impact for the young people in the congregation as they come to recognize their value as a part of the community of faith. Look at some of your existing children and youth ministry. For congregations that already have ministry with young people, can you build on what you are already doing? As you start new ministries, identify disciples in your congregation who have a love and skills for working with children and youth. Ask them to lead a team of people to develop a new ministry.

Lay leadership

Driver 4. Vital churches focus on increasing the effectiveness of lay leaders by equipping them to understand their role and carry out their roles effectively.

a. Principles for increasing the effectiveness of laity

The effectiveness of lay leadership is critical to becoming more vital. The early growth of the Wesleyan movement was led and inspired by courageous and effective laity who led small groups, taught Bible study, provided outreach ministry and led the administrative life of the church. When a church or small group is led well, it creates a better spiritual experience for others. When it is not led well, people become discouraged and critical. Discouragement and ineffectiveness diminish congregational vitality.

b. How do you evaluate lay effectiveness?

Sometimes the church evaluates effort rather than results. Effort is important but results, or the fruit that efforts bear, are the important signs of vitality and demonstrate Christ's activity in the congregation. Can you imagine if Jesus put in a good effort but he could not do miracles? Can you imagine if David put in a good effort but Goliath got the better of him? Can you imagine if Paul put in a good effort but no church was ever started? Effort is important but results are essential. The ministry of God cannot afford to have people leading ministries who cannot bear fruit.

c. How do you increase lay effectiveness?

- i. Pray regularly for your church leaders.
- ii. Be forthright with leaders and share what you expect and the fruit or outcome you are looking for through their leadership and ministry. In addition to sharing the activities you want a lay person to lead, share the fruit or results you anticipate.
- iii. Send leaders to workshops and provide printed materials for leaders to read to help them improve their skills.
- iv. Support leaders by ensuring they have good people to work with and by providing positive and constructive feedback.
- v. When you ask a new person to lead a group or ministry, invite them to do it for a year and indicate that together you will evaluate progress and if it is a good idea to continue in leadership. Ask your leaders twice a year to answer the following questions:
 - What went well?
 - What did not go as planned and why?
 - What did you learn?
 - What will you do differently in the future?

These questions will continue to shape the leaders' faith and actions. If a leader does not follow through it may mean that you will need to call a different leader to the role.

Driver 5. Vital churches have lay leaders who demonstrate a vital personal faith (regular worship, intentional spiritual growth, personal devotional life, and giving of financial resources).

a. *Principles for demonstrating a vital personal faith*

If people are not walking the talk, everyone will see through them. Many people draw an impression of your congregation within minutes of engaging people from the church. They see through the initial facade and are able to see if the people are real in their faith, or are they just talking the talk. This is especially true for people who are coming to church and are searching for deeper insight and understanding of Christ. If the laity do not demonstrate a deep and abiding faith in God, then vitality will be limited.

b. *How do you evaluate the vital faith of laity?*

It is not easy to evaluate the faith and depth of faith of an individual. We have often said faith is personal, and it is! But faith also comes through the outward attitudes and the visible actions of an individual. It emerges into the public and community, often manifesting itself in actions, if it is deep.

Dottie, a fifth-grade Sunday school teacher had a deep and visible faith. She wasn't better than anyone else, but her heart was in everything she did for Jesus. Rudy didn't know more than everyone else about the Bible, but he knew the deep needs and hunger of the senior high youth he led. It wasn't that Frazier did not have problems of his own, but in the midst of the greatest challenges he was a steady rock. What did Dottie, Rudy and Frazier all have in common? A faith that was deep and wide. We knew it because they were not embarrassed to pray for others, they had a servant's heart, and they loved others regardless of how many sins any person had committed, the color of their skin or their educational attainment. And they always thanked God in everything. This is not easily measured, but because of their faithfulness to God, they were also active in worship, involved in doing ministry, and engaged in serving others in the community. They not only believed, but they made believers of others.

These are the type of people that the children of God who do not have a relationship with God long for to guide them into a relationship with Christ. The fruits of the Spirit are evident in laity who demonstrate a vital and faithful relationship with Jesus Christ. The fruits are: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:21-23).

c. *How do you increase vital faith in the laity?*

What we want to see more of is Christ coming to life in people's lives and in Christian community. Do not make someone the chair of the finance committee unless the disciple understands finances, is a good leader, and has a deep and vital faith. If the individual only has the first two, pray that God will raise up

someone else with a deep faith. **Do not assume the individual will become more faith-filled by serving in the position.** In addition to offering worship, Bible study and mission experiences, make sure your key leaders all have a deep faith. Also spend time with the church council discussing faith – how to live it and how to share it. Invite people to share their testimony in meetings, practicing the language of faith and exercising their gifts for God’s mission. Spend more time in prayer and faith reflection in your administrative meetings. The people of the congregation will not grow deeper in their faith unless the leaders demonstrate a vital faith.

John and Charles Wesley gave the early Methodists a means for increasing faithfulness and moving towards a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Christ. In our traditional Wesleyan roots, we must organize and invite our laity to be actively engaged in the Wesleyan Means of Grace. The *means of grace* are ways God works invisibly in disciples, hastening, strengthening and confirming faith so that God’s grace pervades in and through disciples. The *means of grace* are both works of piety and works of mercy. Organize the life of your congregation to engage disciples in the following means of grace.

Works of Piety – These include prayer, fasting, reading, meditating and studying the Scriptures, regularly attending worship and healthy living, regularly receiving the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study.

Works of Mercy - These include doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned, sharing faith, feeding the hungry, giving generously to the needs of others, seeking justice, ending oppression and discrimination (for instance Wesley implored Methodists to end slavery), and serving with the poor.

Drivers six and seven are similar and will be looked at together.

Driver 6. Vital churches place an emphasis on rotating lay leadership in order to involve more people over time.

Driver 7. Vital churches call, equip, use and support more lay leaders than non-vital churches. (20 percent or more of their worship attendees describe themselves as current or past leaders in their church.)

- a. *Principles for leadership development and rotating lay leadership*
According to the *Call to Action Vital Congregations* research, the effectiveness and rotation of lay leadership have a strong impact on vitality. Highly vital congregations have lay leaders who:
 - i. Support rotating leadership responsibilities so that new laity have the opportunity to serve in leadership and the number of laity in the congregation who have served in leadership can be increased.

- ii. Encourage other laity to lead so that 25-50% of the worshippers are serving or have served in church leadership.

The more people who have served in leadership, the stronger and more vital the congregation becomes. Leaders who are responsible for ministries and people become more engaged and committed to serving Christ through the congregation. It means that more people learn and begin to see the larger picture of the church's mission and ministry. It also means the congregation focuses on calling, equipping and sending more leaders. Leadership rotation fosters new ideas from new people.

b. *How do you evaluate if you are developing and rotating leaders?*

Ask leaders the following questions mentioned earlier:

- 1) What went well?
- 2) What did not go as planned and why?
- 3) What did you learn?
- 4) What will you do differently in the future?
- 5) How has your faith grown in the last six months?

This will help you and your church's leaders see if they are developing as disciples of Jesus Christ and growing in their leadership.

Review the length of service leaders have been serving in the same position and rotate leaders that have been serving too long in the same position. Rotate by engaging people in terms of office (two to three years) and ensure that people rotate off a committee after serving up to six years. As you implement this type of policy, communicate that the changes are to strengthen the vitality of the congregation and the changes are not a reflection of a person's leadership.

c. *How do you increase leadership development and rotation?*

Take a team of leaders to workshops or similar learning opportunities. Give your leaders books to read and ask them how they will apply what they learned to their ministry. Require leaders to be actively engaged in their faith formation through regular worship attendance and participating in Bible study. Expect leaders to serve in missions that are offered through your church. Give leaders a God-sized challenge. Leaders grow when they are appropriately challenged with a ministry project.

As you work on a system of rotating leaders, explain to the leadership of the church why rotation is important to the health and vitality of the church and together set appropriate policies and practices for calling and rotating leadership.

Pastor

Driver 8. Vital pastors give attention to developing, coaching, and mentoring lay leadership to enable laity to increase their ability to carry out ministry.

- a. *The principles for pastors developing, coaching and mentoring lay leadership*
Feedback and direction is critical to anyone's growth. This growth is enhanced for leaders when the pastor is intentionally fulfilling the role of coach and mentor. Mentoring and coaching is discipling leadership to grow in faith and leadership skills. It is important for the pastor to identify key leaders to coach and mentor. Like Jesus who mentored/coached/discipled the 12, so a pastor should set a limit of 12. Therefore, like Jesus, the pastor should identify 12 leaders so that those leaders will go and disciple others. Ideally, the pastor should identify up to six administrative leaders (chairpeople of key administrative ministries) and the remaining leaders should be leaders who oversee program ministries of the congregation.
- b. *How do you evaluate whether you are mentoring/coaching/discipling?*
Pastors should ask themselves if they have identified 12 key leaders that they work with on a regular basis. Do you meet with the leaders individually once a month, or at a minimum once every other month, to find out how they are doing and to give them feedback about their progress or leadership style and abilities? Are your leaders serving effectively? If you cannot answer yes to all of these questions, you probably can improve the coaching/mentoring/ discipling of lay leadership.
- c. *How do you increase your coaching/mentoring/discipling?*
Stop doing things that will have less impact on the mission and ministry of the congregation and support and coach your leaders who will help multiply the spiritual growth, mission and disciple-making through your congregation. The key is balance. Identifying time to spend with key leaders is an essential part of a pastor's ministry. It may be a cup of coffee with them or breakfast. It may be a 20-minute check-in phone call, or it may be a more formal conversation in your office. A good mix of these kind of meetings throughout the year is recommended. There are good books and workshops on coaching, but essentially it is a process of asking good and consistent questions over a period of time. Good questions include:
 - What is going well and why? What progress have you made?
 - What did not go as planned and why?
 - What have you learned?
 - What will you do differently in the future?
 - How has your faith grown in the last six months?
 - How will you lead and what will you do during the next three months to help the congregation implement its mission/vision?

These basic questions will help your leaders process how they are leading and help to focus them on leading toward the vision and mission. Respond with affirmation, support and, as appropriate, challenge your leaders to new levels of understanding and competency. Challenge leaders to read a book, watch a video, try something new or go to a workshop. As your leaders grow, the entire church grows.

Driver 9. Vital pastors use their influence to increase the participation of others in order to accomplish changes in the church.

a. Principles for influence, participation and change

Pastors have a lot of influence with the disciples of their church. Pastors are the key leader and people live out their discipleship in conversation and other interactions with the pastor. Whether pastors realize it or not, sermons are a conversation with those in the pews. In people's minds, they are questioning, learning, growing, resisting and challenging. The same is true of meetings. Pastors do not always use their influence or use it well. Influence is making the case for something. Successful influence is positively:

- Stating the vision and mission and why it is important;
- What needs to be done to accomplish the vision and mission;
- How the church will accomplish the vision; and
- Most importantly, inviting individuals to work with you to accomplish the vision and mission.

It may go something like this: We are called to reach new disciples because a relationship with God through Jesus Christ not only transforms lives, but families and even the world. We have small groups and Bible studies to disciple people but we need you to invite new people to worship and to our small groups. We are going to do this by having special Sundays once a month with a special coffee hour following worship, which will have small group leaders available to talk with people about our small group opportunities. I need you to invite new people once a month. Next Sunday will be our first special Sunday. Who will commit to invite one new person to worship next Sunday? Please raise your hand.

It could also go something like this: Hi Cynthia, we have committed to serving the community to demonstrate God's love for others. We do this by starting new ministries with people in the community. A school teacher shared with me that students in the local school are struggling with their homework. They are often not getting the help they need at home. I would like our congregation to start an after school homework club/tutorial ministry twice a week during the school year. I have seen in you someone who is a good organizer and someone who loves children. I would like you to pray about helping our church organize such a

ministry. Will you commit to pray about this over the next seven days and let me know if God is calling you to this ministry?

In each of these examples there is the why, what, how and an invitation to be a part of the church's vision and mission. This same approach can be done with important votes at the church council, engaging the congregation in a new ministry, inviting people into leadership. All four elements are important: 1) Why, because the why lets people know why this is important; 2) What is going to be done so that people understand concretely the actions of the church; 3) How it is going to be done so people know what is expected; and 4) concrete invitations so that people are challenged to take a step and are required to make a response.

b. How do you evaluate your influence?

Your influence is directly measured by results/fruit toward the spiritual vision/mission/goals of the church and if more people are getting involved. If you are not making progress and more people are not getting involved, this, in part, is a reflection on your spiritual influence.

c. How do you increase your spiritual influence?

Practice, practice, practice. Influence is an art. It is speaking with people in a group or individually to influence them to take a step forward with you. Don't be afraid of rejection. In fact, if you are not receiving a number of rejections each week you are not working to influence others enough. Also, follow the paradigm of the why, what, how and invitation that every spiritual and visionary pastor uses regularly.

To further increase your spiritual influence, read articles on how to influence people. Read the Gospels and study how Jesus influenced people. Talk with someone you know who is an influencer and ask her how she influences and persuades people to follow a spiritual vision and mission.

Driver 10. Vital pastors motivate the congregation to set and achieve significant goals through effective leadership.

There is an article on the Achieving Your Goals tab of www.umVitalCongregations.org. It outlines the principles of setting goals and how to help the congregation achieve their goals. This article will provide the information for setting and achieving significant goals.

Driver 11. Vital pastors inspire the congregation through preaching.

a. Principles for inspirational preaching

It is not possible to provide sufficient information about inspirational preaching in this brief paragraph. You are encouraged to read books and articles and listen to podcasts of strong preachers. There are a couple of things you can keep in mind. Inspirational preaching is not about the volume of the preacher, but the heart of the preacher. It is not about the turn of a phrase, but the authenticity of the preacher's life and ministry and how that authenticity comes through the preacher. Some preachers draw a crowd and yet fail to make disciples through their preaching. Some preachers give worshippers the sense that God, the Scriptures and Jesus are boring because their message fails to connect with their hearers.

Inspirational preaching connects with people's daily lives, projects hope in the midst of life, and invites people to make a commitment to a new way of living. An inspirational preacher uses stories that come from the congregation and community and tell stories of courage and transformation. The content is strong and the message has strong elements of teaching. The message gives people something to ponder. An inspirational preacher reaches the head and the heart.

b. How do you evaluate if your preaching is inspirational?

Is there regular evidence of changed lives in the congregation? Do people dedicate their lives to God through Christ and do they show up, not just on Sunday but for ministry and mission throughout the week?

c. How do you increase your effectiveness and inspiration through your preaching?

Inspiration literally means *God breathed into us*. Preaching is a holy act and is improved through prayer, study and practice. Ask your Staff-Parish Relations Committee and trusted leaders what you do well and how you can improve your preaching. Ask them if people are experiencing God and what more you could do so that people experience God through your preaching. Create a discipline of asking this at least four times a year. Also ask about themes that will connect with people. Vital pastors are always looking to improve their preaching.

Driver 12. Vital pastors, when they are serving effectively, stay for a longer period of time. (Short-term appointments of effective pastors decrease the vitality of a congregation.)

a. What are the principles for staying longer?

As United Methodists, we have a history and tradition of moving frequently. Clergy generally spend part of the year wondering if they will be moved and another part of the year wondering why the Cabinet didn't move them. Changing the expectation from moving to staying will be hard in our tradition but necessary. We are finding that that when clergy are serving effectively, serving longer helps congregations to become more vital. It will take the entire connectional system - cabinets, clergy and congregations - to begin with an

expectation that a pastor when serving effectively will stay seven to 10 or more years.

b. How do you evaluate tenure?

Clergy are encouraged to review their appointment tenures and see if they tend to stay for longer or shorter periods of time. If they are shorter, this is an appropriate conversation to have with the district superintendent to understand what can be done to increase the number of years you serve in an appointment. Staff-Parish Relations Committees should review the tenure of their last five pastors. Is there a pattern of short-term appointments? It would be appropriate to talk with your district superintendent about how to increase the number of years a pastor serves your congregation. Cabinets might also review the average tenure of clergy within their conference and ask what can be done to increase the tenure of clergy.

c. How do you increase longer appointments?

Clergy can begin and continue in an appointment with the attitude that you will grow the congregation to be vital rather than looking to be appointed to a vital congregation. Congregations can identify the support systems that will enable clergy to stay longer. Cabinets can ask what they can do to support clergy to stay longer. It will take all of us working together.

Worship

Driver 13. Vital churches offer a mix of contemporary (newer forms of worship style) and traditional services.

1. What are the principles for a mix of worship?

Choices. People like choices. Our communities and society is becoming more diverse and a one-size-fits-all approach no longer applies. Congregations that are offering different worship experiences are increasing their opportunity to be vital.

2. How do you evaluate if you are offering a good mix of worship?

Look out across the congregation. Are you reaching people in your community? Do you have a mix of people, a mix of ages, a mix of cultures? If not, this might be a clue that you may need to start another worship service that offers a different experience.

3. How do you increase a mix of worship?

Adding a new worship experience can be one of the hardest challenges a congregation will undertake. Present worshippers can experience this as a rejection of their values and worship style. As you explore a new worship service, it is important to honor and value existing worshippers. It is also important to

know why you want to start a new worship service. Generally there are two good reasons: 1) the sanctuary is about 80% full, or 2) the congregation wants to reach new people. The following is an article that will give you tips on starting a new worship service.

http://www.bwcumc.org/news/new_worship_gatherings_grow_congregations

Driver 14. Vital churches have preachers who tend to use more topical sermon series in traditional services.

a. *Principles for topical sermon series*

Those leading contemporary worship began to understand the need for topical sermon series a while ago. People like a series and practical insights because it provides continuity, gives people something to look forward to, and it provides concrete insights for daily living. Today people not only want to know the why and the what of faith, but they also want to know how to live out their faith.

b. *How do you evaluate if the sermons are connecting with people?*

Are you seeing more people in the pews? Are people inviting friends to come to worship? Are people asking you questions about the sermon? While people may disagree with your theology or sociology, are they also disagreeing with the practical insights? For instance, is a parent saying, I tried that with my children but it does not seem to work? Or, I tried loving my sister-in-law like you have been teaching but we still are not connecting. It is worth considering adding more practical examples of how to live the faith if you are not receiving questions like these. These are examples are connecting and helping people to wrestle with the how of faith.

c. *How do you become more topical in your preaching?*

For many lectionary preachers, this is frightening. The passages have always been chosen for the preacher through the lectionary. How do you come up with a series? The best way is to start with your congregation and ask them to write on a slip of paper topics they would like to hear in a sermon series and place it in the offering plate. You will learn firsthand what is important to your congregation. You are also encouraged to use three different types of series: 1) a book or portion of a book of the Bible; 2) a theological insight like grace, unity, gifts/calling, the Lord's Prayer, or fasting; and 3) a practical theme where faith and life meet such as loving the people in my life (spouse, family, children, neighbor, co-worker, and friend), a disciples approach to conflict, friendship or how to be good stewards of the environment. There are lots of resources through Cokesbury and online to learn about series preaching and to find practical series that includes worship, sermon and small group resources.

Driver 15. Vital churches use more contemporary music (less blended music that includes traditional tunes) in contemporary services.

- a. *Principles for using more contemporary music*
People who like contemporary worship want contemporary music. We do not have a good definition for contemporary music and worship. What was contemporary in the 80's and early 90's is now "old school." Connecting with people is key and to connect you need to understand what reaches their heart – jazz, gospel, soft rock, hard rock, rap – every community is different. Music helps to soften and open people up for the message and how the Spirit will work in their hearts and minds.
- b. *How do you evaluate if the music is connecting with the congregation?*
When the music is done well, you can understand how it is connecting by how people react. Do their feet tap, bodies sway, hands clap, or eyes well up with tears? Do they smile or stand up? These are clues that people are connecting.
- c. *How do you develop more contemporary music?*
Nobody does this perfectly "right out of the box." Trial and error, constant reflection and a commitment to stay with it for a long period of time are key to finding the right blend and key to finding if you have talented, gifted, open and passionate musicians.

Driver 16. Vital churches use more multi-media in contemporary services (some congregations in other parts of the world may have limited access or do not use multi-media to the same extent and therefore it may not be as important as it is in some cultures).

- a. *Principles for multi-media*
Contemporary people are multi-sensory. Sight, sound, touch and smell are all important to engaging for contemporary people. Using multimedia helps to connect with people who prefer contemporary worship. This is not as true for people who prefer traditional worship. In fact, traditionalists see less as more.

Jesus used multi-sensory elements in his ministry. He used stories, put children into the middle of the crowd, asked a woman to draw water for him, overturned tables in the temple, rubbed mud on a blind man's eyes, walked on the water, sent pigs into the lake, all to help his hearers understand and believe. The ultimate goal of multi-media is to help the believers understand and believe.

Multi-media includes projection screens, art, visuals on the stage, visuals with music, drama, dance and more.

b. *How do you evaluate your multi-media ministry?*

Ask. Ask people if the images are connecting with them. Ask them which worship service or series' visuals spoke to them. Ask local art school students to come to your worship and give you tips on how to improve. Listen to what people are saying.

c. *How do you increase the use of multi-media?*

Organize a worship team with gifted and open team members who are multi-sensory. Give them permission. Some may have people right within their congregation; others may need to look to an area high school or college. Do not expect perfection or for it to be what you ultimately hope for initially. It will take time. There are books through Cokesbury and articles online to help your team with multi-sensory worship.