

# Church Mission and Vitality Progress Reflection

As a part of our commitment to being 100% vital disciples, local churches across the Baltimore-Washington Conference are invited to engage in an annual rhythm of reflection and goal setting at a time other than church conference season.

**Why:** This reflection process replaces a part of Discipleship Ministries Report and seeks to accomplish the following:

1. Keep us focused on developing disciples for the transformation of the world.
2. Record progress and set intentions around measures of vitality beyond participation measurements (e.g., number of people in worship, at events, etc.).
3. Support local church annual goal setting and connect churches with district and conference resources to improve vitality.

**Who:** This reflection document is to be completed by the church leadership and decision making body focused on vision, mission and ministry (e.g., Church Council, unified board, leadership team, etc.) Some in the pilot group reported the benefits of including people beyond those in leadership for a more generative, holistic look at congregational life.

**When:** While you may complete it at any time in the year, it needs to be submitted by the end of June.

**What:** An annual congregational evaluation and intention setting tool in support of churches becoming 100% vital. Vital churches deepen discipleship, see/value all the people, live & love like Jesus and multiply their impact for the good of the community.

**How:** Convene a 2.5 hour meeting with the church leadership and decision making body (to include the pastor(s)). The pilot group affirmed the value of having an external facilitator that allows pastors to fully participate in the process. Contact the Congregational Development Coordinator to schedule the time. Hubs may arrange to do this together as a part of their collaborative work.

## Preparation

- Team members go through orientation to familiarize themselves with the framework.
- Team members bring their individual scores to the team meeting.

## Agenda

Welcome (2 minutes)

Video Reflection (5 minutes)

Pray (2 minutes)

- Prayer Focus: to use this time to bring about more awareness, commitment and focus on cultivating world-transforming disciples of Jesus Christ and, ultimately, vitality of the church and community (2 minutes)

Reflect on discipleship and update the [Deepen Discipleship](#) section (30 minutes)

Pray (2 minutes)

Read the definition and complete the [Live & Love Like Jesus](#) section (10 minutes)

Pray (2 minutes)

Read the definitions and update [See All the People](#) section (20 minutes)

Pray (2 minutes)

Read the definition and complete the [Multiply Impact](#) section (15 minutes)

Review the [Assets](#) section (10 minutes)

Complete the [Cultivate Organizational Health](#) section (10 minutes)

Provide feedback on the Church Mission and Vitality Progress Reflection process (10 minutes)

Closing (3 minutes)

## DEEPEN DISCIPLESHIP

As United Methodists we understand that a disciple is one who “witnesses to Jesus Christ and follows His teachings through acts of justice, compassion, devotion and worship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” practicing works of piety and mercy.

As disciples of Jesus Christ we are to be ever growing in love of God, self and one another while going to make more disciples. Each expression of the United Methodist Church is enjoined by the same mission: “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” As a connectional, grace-filled people, we invite you to reflect on how you are loving justly.



1. John Wesley's [General Rule of Discipleship](#) provides a holistic understanding of discipleship: “witness to Jesus Christ in the world and to follow His teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

Rate each dimension based on the degree to which members or the congregation:

- a. WITNESS to Jesus Christ (Witness is a public act of word and/or deed that tells others what you have personally experienced of Jesus.) [Learn more.](#)

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

- b. Engages in acts of COMPASSION (Acts of compassion are personal works of mercy. They are what is done with a person who needs help; e.g., doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, and giving generously to the needs of others.)

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

- c. Engages in acts of JUSTICE (Acts of justice are communal spiritual disciplines practiced by congregations united with the other institutions working for the common good; e.g., addressing poverty, ending oppression and discrimination in all forms (for instance Wesley challenged Methodists to end slavery):

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

- d. Participates in acts of WORSHIP (Acts of worship are the corporate works of piety. They are what Christians do together when they gather in Christ's name like regularly

share in the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study, etc.):

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

- e. Engages in acts of DEVOTION (Acts of devotion keep the heart open to grace that centers individuals in Christ and what He is up to in their lives. These include: reading, meditating and studying the scriptures, prayer, fasting, regularly attending worship, healthy living, and sharing our faith with others):

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

2. A Congregational Discipleship Plan (CDP) is a clear process for inviting, maturing and sending out world transforming disciples that supports deepening discipleship in all aspects of the above definition. Learn more about what a CDP is here: <https://www.seeallthepeople.org/>

a. What is the current state of the CDP?

- ☐ We have a Congregational Discipleship Plan.  
○ If you check this box, please upload a copy of your discipleship plan.
- ☐ We are actively working on developing a CDP.  
○ If you check the box above, do you need help developing a CDP? Yes or No
- ☐ We do not have a CDP.  
○ If you check the box above, do you need help developing a CDP? Yes or No

b. If you have a CDP, could the congregation serve as a teaching congregation on how to develop and use a CDP?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

3. **Given the responses in questions 1 and 2, what is one thing leadership is committed to implement in the coming year that would increase the congregation's effectiveness in deepening discipleship? (Provide the answer as a CLEAR goal).**

## LIVE & LOVE LIKE JESUS

*Living and Loving Like Jesus causes servant leaders to put themselves on the line as they proclaim good news to the poor, heal the heartbroken, set the oppressed free and comfort all who mourn. Living and loving like Jesus moves us from the seats to the streets as we take the gospel beyond the walls of our buildings.*

4. We intentionally seek to build relationships in and beyond our culture and faith tradition.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

5. Join God in mission among the most vulnerable, using our God-given gifts, talents and passions.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

6. We support others in discovering where they may be called to serve.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

7. Join God and others to repair broken systems and structures that oppress, marginalize and devalue God's creation, and engage in this sacred work as a means of grace.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

8. Honor God in the ways we work, plan and engage others in relationships.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

9. Tithe and consciously reorder our lives to honor God and bless others.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

10. Leaders take responsibility for their own growth through the daily practice of spiritual disciplines and partnering with God to help others grow in openness and obedience to Christ.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

## SEE ALL THE PEOPLE

*Seeing all the people drives us to build authentic relationships that create belonging as everyone feels known and valued as Children of God.*

Since its inclusion in the UMC Constitution in 1968, “The United Methodist Church proclaims the value of each person as a unique child of God and **commits itself to the healing and wholeness of all persons**. The United Methodist Church recognizes that the sin of racism has been destructive to its unity throughout its history. Racism continues to cause painful division and marginalization. The United Methodist Church **shall confront and seek to eliminate racism**, whether in organizations or in individuals, in every facet of its life and in society at large. The United Methodist Church shall work collaboratively with others to address concerns that threaten the cause of racial justice at all times and in all places.” (§ 5. Article V. Racial Justice, Book of Discipline). We are called to live this out through our [baptismal vows](#): “to resist evil, injustice and oppression, in whatever form they present themselves.”

11. We invite you to describe how the congregation has confronted and sought to eliminate racism toward racial justice.

1. The congregation is in agreement that we should be working toward racial justice as described above.

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. This congregation has made a public commitment to work toward/advance racial justice?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. The congregation is actively working to bring about racial justice in their community(s).

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

4. This congregation respects full humanity and promotes racial equity in word and practice.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

5. This congregation understands their biases (implicit and explicit) and are working to reduce/interrupt them.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

6. This congregation uses photos, images, symbols and iconography which counter negative stereotypes.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

7. There are regular and diverse opportunities for congregants to engage in ongoing learning and dialogue around racial justice (e.g., book discussions, talks, local events, Bible studies, conversations).

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

8. This congregation effectively engages and addresses conflicts related to race and othering.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

9. Is this congregation regularly stepping out of its comfort zone to build relationships with others who may not live, look, move, love, and or think like we do OR those we may perceive as “the other?”

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

10. Is this congregation actively promoting racial equity by embracing ideas, practices, policies, and protocols that affirm all groups are equally valued, with none considered inferior or superior to another?

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

11. In accordance with BOD Paragraph 5, Article 5 on Racial Justice, how did this congregation seek to eliminate racism this year?

12. Please share the ways that the congregation is creating spaces of belonging and Beloved Community through inclusion, diversity and equity (11 a-d). Read below to better understand the definition of each of these terms from the American Psychological Association’s [Inclusive Language Guide](#), Second Edition,

**Diverse/Diversity:** “Involving the representation or composition of various social identity groups in a work group, organization, or community. The focus is on social identities that correspond to societal differences in power and privilege and thus to the marginalization of some groups based on specific attributes—for example, age, gender, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, immigration status, language, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. There is a recognition that people have multiple identities and that social identities are [intersectional](#) and have different salience and impact in different contexts.”

**Inclusion:** “An environment that offers affirmation, celebration, and appreciation of different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences, thus allowing all individuals to express their whole selves (and all their identities) and to demonstrate their strengths and capacity.”

**Equity:** “An ongoing process of assessing needs, correcting historical inequalities, and creating conditions for optimal outcomes by members of all social identity groups” (APA, p. 12). Equity also consists of providing resources according to the need to help diverse populations achieve their highest state of health and other functioning and identifying and breaking down barriers to achievement of fair outcomes.

- a. Our congregation is shaped by the community and honors the full spectrum of diversity, including age, race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, ability, economic background, immigration status, intellectual differences, and national origin.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

- b. We are working with participants, members and persons who use the space to create accommodations that enable them to fully engage in the life of the congregation.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

- c. If we have multiple languages and/or nations represented in our congregation, congregational services are respectfully shaped by these and cultures/languages are respected.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

- d. What ministries and accommodations do you offer so that it reflects an increased diversity (visible and invisible) and inclusion of people in the community and congregation?

13. **Given the responses in questions 10 and 11, what is one thing leadership is committed to implement in the coming year that would increase the building of beloved community? (Provide the answer as a [CLEAR](#) goal or experiment you want to try)**

## MULTIPLY IMPACT

*Multiplying Impact aligns our mission to God’s call by listening and discerning with the broader community how we might reshape ministry and repurpose resources for the greatest good.*

14. We are serving as a life changing resource for people by using the time, talents and treasure within the congregation and the community in which it resides to join with Jesus in creating abundant life.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

15. Our current leaders are inviting and cultivating new people into disciple-making leaders.

0 (none/never) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 (almost always)

16. If the congregation ceased to exist, what would the external community miss? Why does it matter to the community and how do you know?

17. How has this congregation used its resources (e.g., vehicle(s), property, networks, etc.) this year for the benefit of the community in mission (or for the furtherance of the gospel)?

## ASSETS

This next section of questions helps us collectively understand and map relational and programmatic assets (church-based physical assets are accounted for in the Trustees Report). Note:

- There is an expectation that congregations build relationships with their communities and out of those relationships and mutuality, at least one primary, outward facing, collaborative ministry is created that meets a felt need and grows. If it grows deep and wide enough, this is the primary thing the community would miss (question 16 above).
- There is NO expectation that every church has all of the programmatic assets contained below.

18. How many names are in your non-church-participant database<sup>1</sup>? How many of those were new this year?

19. Please share ways this congregation participates in community association meetings and the planning/coordination of community events toward the common good in the past two years. Name any community leaders or entities within the Community, County or Ward with whom the church is deeply engaged. (one entity at a time with type). Please list how the congregation has participated in community meetings or events for the common good over the past two years. For each activity, name one community leader or organization involved, along with their role or type.

21. Does the church have a Summer Camp for children and/or youth? ☐ Yes; ☐ No (if no, skip to question 22.)

- a. We host the ministry at our church. ☐ Yes; ☐ No
- b. We lead/participate at another BWC site: ☐ Yes; ☐ No  
If yes, BWC site where we lead/participate.  
☐ Harmison (Camp Joy)  
☐ Manidokan  
☐ West River  
☐ Other (please name) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. We send our campers to a BWC site? ☐ Yes; ☐ No  
If yes, BWC site where we send our campers.  
☐ Harmison (Camp Joy)  
☐ Manidokan  
☐ West River  
☐ Other (please name) \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Our pastor volunteers at a BWC site. ☐ Yes; ☐ No  
If yes, BWC site where pastor volunteers.  
☐ Harmison (Camp Joy)  
☐ Manidokan  
☐ West River  
☐ Other (please name) \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Neighborhood-focused VBS \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> We ask this question because it is a way of measuring new relationships and understanding the degree to which a church is outward facing.

☐ Yes; ☐ No

- f. If you provide other types of Summer Camp ministry for children and/or youth not described above, please describe below.

22. Does the church have an outward-facing ministry for children and youth?

☐ Yes; ☐ No If no, skip to question 23.

- a. After-school programs (please describe). \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Before and after school care (please describe). \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Pre-school (please describe and indicate whether it is owned by the church or a community partner). \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Other types of ministry not described above (please name) \_\_\_\_\_

23. Approximately how many children under the age of 12 years old are involved in the life of the congregation?

- ☐ 0 children
- ☐ 1-4 children
- ☐ 5-14 children
- ☐ 15-29 children
- ☐ 30-49 children
- ☐ 50-99 children
- ☐ 100-149 children
- ☐ 150 & up

24. Approximately how many 12-18 year old's are involved in the life of the congregation?

- ☐ 0 youth
- ☐ 1-4 youth
- ☐ 5-14 youth
- ☐ 15-29 youth
- ☐ 30-49 youth
- ☐ 50-99 youth
- ☐ 100-149 youth
- ☐ 150 & up

25. Approximately how many 19-30 year old's are involved in the life of the congregation.

- ☐ 0 young adults
- ☐ 1-4 young adults
- ☐ 5-14 young adults
- ☐ 15-29 young adults
- ☐ 30-49 young adults
- ☐ 50-99 young adults
- ☐ 100-149 young adults
- ☐ 150 & up

26. Describe all the ways you are seeking to re-engage young people.

- ☐ Collaborative youth ministry
- ☐ Sharing specialized staff to work with young people
- ☐ Experimenting with something different

- ☐ Intergenerational ministry focus
- ☐ Strategic relationship building/presence at a school near the church building
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Does the church provide ministries for people who are unhoused?

- ☐ Yes; ☐ No (If no, please skip to question 28.)
- a. If yes, briefly describe this ministry in 100 words or less:
- b. Approximately how many people do you serve each month?
- c. Approximately how many of these people are active in the church due to this ministry?
- d. List any ministry partnerships:

28. Does the church provide ministries for immigration advocacy and support?

- ☐ Yes; ☐ No (If no, please skip to question 31.)
- a. If yes, briefly describe this ministry in 100 words or less:
- b. Approximately how many people are served by this ministry?
- c. Approximately how many of these people are active in the church due to this ministry?
- d. List any ministry partnerships in this area:

29. Does the church provide ministries with Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence?

- ☐ Yes; ☐ No (If no, please skip to question 30.)
- a. If yes, briefly describe this ministry in 100 words or less:
- b. Approximately how many people are served by this ministry?
- c. How many people are impacted by Domestic/Intimate Partner violence in your church?
- d. List any ministry partnerships in this area:

30. Does the church provide Feeding ministries?

- ☐ Yes; ☐ No (If no, please skip to question 31.)
- a. If yes, briefly describe this ministry in 100 words or less:
- b. Approximately how many people are served by this ministry?
- c. How many times per month do you feed people?
- d. How many people who are food insecure are active in your church?
- e. List any ministry partnerships in this area:

31. Please share any other specialized ministries your congregation has developed to meet any other recurrent, chronic or emergent need in your community (other than those mentioned above).

32. Please name any other partners you work with on a consistent basis that you haven't already mentioned in questions 18-29 (e.g., other UM congregations, businesses, schools, law enforcement, city/county government, ecumenical or interfaith partnerships, etc.)?

## CULTIVATE ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

While there is no perfect organization, churches and leaders who are focused on survival may not have the energy required to think beyond the immediate crisis nor to engage in missional action planning to reach 100% vitality. The following set of questions are offered to help a church check in on its health.

33. Gauge the focus of church leadership's efforts (time/energy/resources/people power) to achieve the work of the church. Provide a percentage of effort for each of the four areas below. The combined total of the four should add up to 100%.

- ☐ Defining/refining, sharing, aligning and evaluating everything we do toward our purpose/vision.  
\_\_\_\_%
- ☐ Building relationships with new people who are not members or participants.  
\_\_\_\_%
- ☐ Developing fellowship and relationship building opportunities for current members and participants.  
\_\_\_\_%
- ☐ Creating, maintaining and improving programs (e.g., sunday school, outreach, etc.).  
\_\_\_\_%
- ☐ Improving, maintaining and/or managing the building, budget, and/or staff.  
\_\_\_\_%

34. A profession of faith is counted the first time a person professes/claims their faith in God, claims a desire to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ and makes a commitment to join with a church community to keep the vows of their Baptismal Covenant. The church has had at least one profession of faith for at least 2 of the past 3 years. ☐ Yes; ☐ No

35. We are able to pay our bills without stress.

0 (none/never) ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5 (almost always)

36. We have the energy to maintain ministry.

0 (none/never) ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5 (almost always)

37. We have the capacity to create and lead a community focused ministry.

0 (none/never) ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5 (almost always)

38. We demonstrate the ability to resolve conflict and disagreement in healthy ways.

0 (none/never) ---- 1 ---- 2 ---- 3 ---- 4 ---- 5 (almost always)

39. If you have rated anything below a 2 for questions 23-28, please share how you have sought to address this.

40. We have issues we need support to navigate. ☐ Yes; ☐ No

41. Just as an annual physical is essential to monitor an individual's health, organizations benefit from an objective assessment of their health and vitality every 2-3 years.

a. When was the last time the church underwent an objective, thorough assessment?

- ☐ This year
- ☐ Last year
- ☐ Two years ago
- ☐ Three years ago
- ☐ More than three years ago

b. Name or describe the assessment process used:

42. After reviewing the two CLEAR goals you set (questions 3 and 13), is there another [CLEAR](#) goal needed to improve the health and vitality – including missional impact – of the congregation?

43. Please list the names and roles of those who participated in completing this reflection—including the facilitator.