



An Overview of the Vitality Ministry of Pacific Northwest Conference and the Evangelical Covenant Church

Staff

In 2006, Dr. John S. Wenrich was called by Starting and Strengthening Churches (SSC) for the Evangelical Covenant Church to serve as Director of Congregational Vitality. His first year in that role was spent in research and development of systems that could be used in establishing a ministry of revitalization for ECC churches. Two primary workshops were developed, Veritas and EPIC. Since 2007 approximately 400 churches have attended a Veritas workshop. These workshops have been taught by John, conference staff and have been produced on DVD as well.

A Director of Congregational Vitality (DCP) now serves in the Great Lakes, Midwest, Pacific Northwest, Central, Southeast and Northwest conferences. These persons are employed by the conference and are responsible for the ministry of vitality for established congregations. This team gets together for two meetings a year, (May and December) and participates in other training events for the conferences and denomination.

“Congregation Vitality Pathway”

A process for leading a congregation to increased health and vitality is being developed. An order for the pathway may vary from church to church. The core components of that process include:

- A conversation between the conference staff, Lead Pastor, and church leaders to discern whether the Congregational Vitality Pathway process is an appropriate resource for them.
- **“Veritas”** workshop, usually conducted by a regional conference Director of Congregational Vitality. Don Robinson, David Wells and Brad Hill are the trained Veritas presenters in the Pacific Northwest Conference (PacNWC). There is no charge for the workshop or materials. The NPC contributes toward snack and food costs.
- Establishment of a **“Vitality Team,”** for the purpose of assisting the pastoral staff and church leaders in implementing a vitality pathway in the local church. The PacNW and SSC, provide for two follow-up visits with a trained Vitality Facilitator. The cost of these visits is \$250 for each visit plus expenses. These costs are shared 50/50 between the conference and denomination.

After the initial visits, the church is encouraged to retain a facilitator at their own expense of \$250 per visit plus expenses. The number of visits a church needs will vary between 4-6, although in some situations a church has retained a facilitator once a month for a year.

- **“Behavioral/Relational Covenant”** The establishment of a “Behavioral/Relational Covenant,” or “Holy Manners,” for helping congregations to put in place expectations for governing their conversations, behavior and honoring their differences is an initial task of the local church Vitality Team. A first step in the “Congregational Vitality Pathway” is to put in place the rules for the “conversation before the conversation.” Before the hard issues of addressing conflict and implementing change, a congregation needs to adopt the standards of conduct they will hold each other to during the process of revitalization. This is often adopted by the congregation at worship service following a season of preparation that may include testimonies and sermons on elements of the “Behavioral Covenant.”
- **“EPIC”-** (Empowering People Implementing Change) EPIC is another workshop offered to the entire congregation, although it can be used with just the pastoral staff and church leaders. Veritas provided the language. EPIC provides the how-to. As a follow-up workshop to Veritas, EPIC talks about the spirituality, chemistry and strategy of leading healthy missional change, and equips leaders with the necessary tools. EPIC also explores the inner life of the leader and how to be a non-anxious presence while leading through the turbulent waters of change. Many pastors and lay leaders lead change from the seat of their pants. EPIC helps us to think through the process of change sequentially from beginning to end. EPIC does not tell churches *what* to change, but *how* to change... and how to change in a way that is civil, compassionate, and Christ-honoring.
- **“WORSHIP SERVICE OF CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE”** Another element of the “Vitality Pathway” is a worship service of confession and repentance. The intent is both personal and corporate renewal. Often times there are personal grievances and sins to be confessed and congregational behaviors that need to be confessed prior to the commitment to move ahead in revitalization. Without brokenness, it is unlikely that deep, meaningful change can occur in a congregation. Sometimes this service is preceded by a month of personal preparation as the congregation is encouraged “listen to God” and “look at their community.”
- **“PULSE”** Is a vitality assessment tool written around the “*10 Missional Markers*” for Covenant Churches. It also measures the vision, intention, and means of the local church by providing an analysis of attendance and financial records of the church. The survey can be taken by every attender of the church online or a paper form. The results are tabulated by age of respondents, role at church, and how long a person has attended the church. Prior to the written results being shared with the congregation a 3-way conversation is conducted with the Lead Pastor, conference and denominational staff. PULSE is offered at no charge and can be conducted annually.
- **“PASTORAL AND CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT AND FACILITATION”** For a period of 12-18 months a CO-OP coach is available to the call the Lead Pastor once a week for a one hour conversation. The purpose of CO-OP is to assist Covenant pastors in developing the skills necessary to lead their church to its full kingdom potential through pastor coaching. CO-OP helps the pastor lead strategically and organizationally. Through coaching, the pastor receives guidance

on how to turn vision into reality. The cost is \$195 to enroll, \$150 a month, plus \$50 for two follow-up events. Transportation costs are additional.

This approach utilizes the combined synergy of customized coaching, pre-designed ministry systems, and two strategy workshops conducted annually by highly accomplished church leaders.

CO-OP does not compete with the core training of pastoral arts in preaching, teaching, and caring. Rather it focuses on leadership areas that pastors often seek for supplemental training. The seven “macro” areas (with multiple chapters under each topic) are: Strategic Planning and Implementation; Leading Change; Organizing and Delegating; Maximizing Key Leadership Positions; Systems for Outreach and Assimilation; Maturing Your Church Financially; Developing Leaders and Teams.

For the church, a “Vitality Facilitator” is available to continue to work with the church at \$250 per visit plus expenses.

- **“NAVIGATE”** The purpose of NAVIGATE is to help established churches navigate their way to becoming healthy and missional in a post modern, post Christian world. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit empowering congregations as they walk the Congregational Vitality Pathway. NAVIGATE accelerates the process by catalyzing resources on the denominational, conference and local levels. NAVIGATE is a “one-two-three” strategy consisting of one national gathering, two conference cluster gatherings and three local church follow up visits.

SSC pays for the national gathering. Conferences pay for the two cluster gatherings and local church follow up visits. Costs include travel, lodging, food, transportation, PR and materials. Pastors pay for peer group expenses through their own discretionary account. If helpful to the pastor, the church also finances CO-OP.

- **“ONE”** A workshop focusing on a unifying approach to Strategic Ministry Planning and implementation. Ruth Haley Barton notes, “It is one thing to inspire people to visions of what the Promised land is like; it is quite another to understand the stages of the journey between here and there so that we can guide folks through them and actually arrive at our destination.” “ONE,” is not only lays a Biblical foundation for Strategic Ministry Planning, but it also offers several practical exercises and resources for a congregation to implement its ministry plan.
- **MissionInsite** provides access to community information for your church. Provided free to PacNWC churches, you will receive web-based access to demographic data for a variety of geographic levels. Beyond the reports you order is a powerful “discovery tool” for exploration and “out of the box” thinking for church ministry, church planting, church growth and outreach. The system also provides the ability for local churches to locate their church members and others affiliated with their church on your map.