



Matthew 25 in Blackhawk Presbytery

7 Marks of Congregational Vitality



7 Marks of Vital Congregations

- 1. Lifelong Discipleship Formation
 - 2. Intentional, Authentic Evangelism
 - 3. Outward Incarnational Focus
 - 4. Empower Servant Leadership
 - 5. Spirit-Inspired Worship
 - 6. Caring Relationships
 - 7. Ecclesial Health
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7 Marks of Vital Congregations

➤ 1. Lifelong Discipleship Formation

- vs. complacent “Christian” piety, simply teaching good morals, or offering the latest programs
- From the cradle to the grave seeking to be formed for right living with God and with all people.
- Faith — seeking understanding, cultivating wisdom, and actively following Christ. It is not an extra-curricular activity nor merely head-knowledge.
- Discipleship awakened and engaged in issues facing today’s culture: injustice, inequality, divisive segregation, oppression, suffering, abuse of creation.
- Discipleship formed and strengthened in the community of Christ and permeates daily practices and daily living.



7 Marks of Vital Congregations

➤ 2. Intentional, Authentic Evangelism

- vs. “Jesus freaks;” “Christian” hypocrisy; a committee
- Intentionally sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, not just acts of kindness.
- Authentically sharing Christ because it is intrinsic to self-identity; overflow of Christ in our life.
- Relational, not programmatic or systematic. From the cradle to the grave seeking to be formed for right living with God and with all people.



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▶ 3. Outward Incarnational Focus

- ▶ vs. inward institutional survival; closed communities of assimilation/exclusion
- ▶ Outward exploration, awareness, and focus on neighbors and neighborhood.
- ▶ Beyond relationship with those of similar existence, the incarnate Christ dwells among the lowly and least, the stranger and the suffering, the marginalized and majority.
- ▶ Missional focus on where Christ is already living and present and calling us to dwell.



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▶ 4. Empower Servant Leadership

- ▶ vs. the Pastor's job; monopolized leadership; hiring the young, energetic pastor
- ▶ Identify, nurture, support the use of spiritual gifts of all people to serve; not monopolized cliques of power.
- ▶ All voices and people are necessary, and it is noticeable when people are absent/missing.
- ▶ Nurture and encourage those specifically called and gifted for pastoral ministry.



7 Marks of Vital Congregations

➤ 5. Spirit-Inspired Worship

- vs. self-gratifying worship, stale ritual divorced of meaning, or consumer entertainment worship
- Worship is about God. We get to come on holy ground, encounter God, and experience wonder.
- Worship is active participation in the living relationship of the triune God, thus all should feel welcome just as they are to come.
- Worship challenges, teaches, transforms, encounters, convicts, and sends people out different.



7 Marks of Vital Congregations

➤ 6. Caring Relationships

- vs. any other social club; façades, hypocrisy, and judgment of “church” and “religion.”
- Sharing in God’s true agape moves us beyond half-hearted programmatic participation, lukewarm faith, and pretending.
- Instead of a closed, judgmental community, people find freedom to share stories, encounter the Savior, and ask for help.
- Welcome and hospitality are not left to a committee, but, imperfectly, we strive for all people find identity, purpose, and belonging in the household of God.
- Confront conflict, seek reconciliation in all divisions, find ways to embrace all diversity, seek to be peace-makers and bridge-builders together.



7 Marks of Vital Congregations

➤ 7. Ecclesial Health

- vs. unhealthy dysfunction; toxic environments; obsolete and irrelevant buildings
- Understanding of: Why we are a church community? How are we a church community in practice? Prayer permeates all life together.
- Clarity in mission, core values to ministry, passion and joy in being the church. Our budget reflects these values, vision, and ministries.
- Fiscally responsible — stewardship and tithing are taught, transparency in spending, continual assessment/discernment of a sustainable budget.
- All are aware of how decisions are made, stake-holders in the process and procedures, valued voices in the envisioning, open to changes, continual assessment of the “why” and “how” we are church together.
- Nurturing and supporting the health of pastor(s), staff, and all called to lead; fighting against burnout.