

Dear

At the Annual Conference session we adopted the recommendation

That every local church shall complete an assessment of its own vitality no later than December 15, 2008 using the assessment tools provided in *Vital Signs: A Pathway to Congregational Wholeness*, by Dan R. Dick (Discipleship Resources, 2007). These assessments shall be returned to the District Superintendents and Council on Congregational Development, for analysis and development of resources to assist in revitalizing congregations.

As you may remember from the Conference a new Council on Congregational Development (whose work will parallel the Council on Clergy Development) has been created and has had their first meeting. One of the main tools the Council will use to begin its work is the congregational assessments. We would like to "take a picture" of where we are today in terms of congregational vitality as a means of focusing our work in support of church revitalization and new church development. These assessments will give us a conference baseline from which we will be able to evaluate in future years if our efforts are making any difference.

Dan Dick states that "the assessment tool not only locates the congregation in a 'current reality' but offers helpful information to use to move towards vitality. Individual factors may invite a congregational leadership team to focus on internal ministries, leadership practice, financial processes, attendance numbers, service numbers, hospitality issues, or pastoral practices and expectations."

The Vital Signs assessment does not ask for impressions or opinions. There are 24 measures that are fairly distinct. It can be completed with four or five people (e.g. the pastor, lay leader, membership chair, financial secretary and council chair). Once the survey is completed, a leadership group has the opportunity to discuss together what to do. The purpose of the survey is to gain insight into your current reality that offers a starting point for improvement. A qualitative value judgment is not intended.

The assessment is scheduled to be released online (at the conference website, www.cnumc.org) by October 1st. By taking it online, all the calculations will be done automatically and you will get immediate feedback and suggested ideas about next steps. The assessment is also included in the book, *Vital Signs*. The book, of course, also can be a tool to expand the conversation about your current reality with the leadership of the church and your District Superintendent.

If you have any questions or concerns feel free to send me an email (BlakeBusick@prodigy.net) or give me a call (408-253-0751). I am looking forward to working with you toward greater health and vitality for all of our congregations.

Grace and Peace

Blake Busick

Chairperson, Committee on Congregational Revitalization

On behalf of the Council on Congregational Development