

Vitality Check-Up

by Pastor Helga Jansons Director for Evangelical Mission

Most of us have an Annual Physical to see if we are healthy. We may think we are doing fine but our test results may reveal otherwise. We cannot know our cholesterol levels until the test results tell us. Once we know how we are doing, we can find out how to increase our vitality.

The Vitality Project in the ELCA has developed a way to measure the vitality of a congregation. It focuses on causes, not the symptoms of the lack of vitality. “Frustrated by traditional measures of butts and bucks, in 2009, Linda Bobbitt in consultation with the ELCA Research and Evaluation department began work to develop a simple, statistically reliable and valid survey that looks at the outcomes of ministry in terms of how it connects with God, each other and the world. The project continues by working to understand what factors contribute to or distract from vitality and how those factors might be intentionally addressed to improve vitality... It adds tremendously to the diagnosis and measures progress in ways the former measures cannot.”

Tools to check your congregation’s vitality are available on: www.congregationalvitalitysurvey.com

Once you click on this link you will find a **vitality survey online** for your entire congregation take using the Congregational ID # and the password provided to complete the annual report. The results will be sent back to your congregation.

When using the Resources tab you will find the **Quick-Check** to see how your congregation balances vitality and sustainability. The first page includes congregational life questions and the second page asks you to rate sustainability and then consider the relationship between sustainability and vitality. (A copy is included in this Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Newsletter.)

Also under Resources is a longer and more thorough **Check-up** with a workbook. It has fabulous information and a way to check vitality, life stage, strengths and barriers. It helps to identify where to focus your congregation’s energy.

On the Resources page is a **Parochial Report Discussion Guide**. This is because the 2016 ELCA annual Parochial Report will include the congregational vitality measurements. This discussion guide is designed to help congregations talk about the new vitality items on Parochial Report. Leaders should complete the worksheet independently before discussing their answers with a group.

Also worthwhile is to read the articles on the Shared Learning tab. I commend to you the one called **Vitality & Clergy Competencies**.

The key to congregational vitality is that people experience God’s active presence in everyday life and they live as disciples of Christ.

It is a new year. It is a good time to have a check-up and to set goals for the year so as to develop focus and direction, and thereby increase the health and vitality of your congregation. Parochial Reports are a way to assess your current status and your vitality. Research and Evaluation of the ELCA is a resource for you and can keep track of information about your congregation over time.

