

Vital Signs



CONTINUUM A Brethren in Christ resource in support of healthy congregations

The aim of the church health initiative is to offer every Brethren in Christ congregation the opportunity to realize the Spirit empowered functioning of church life as God intended it to be—alive, dynamic, and fruitful.

Optional demographic information

Please place a check mark in the boxes that describe you.

- Pastoral staff
 Volunteer ministry leader
 18–34 50–64 Male
 35–49 65 or above Female

Name of congregation: _____

Name of individual completing form: _____

Date: _____

The Vital Signs Continuum is designed to provide a big-picture overview of your church's health at this particular moment in history. It comes as a resource for pastors and congregational leaders to discern the general health of their churches.

Directions for completing the Vital Signs Continuum

In each of the following categories, identify your sense of the health of your congregation at this time by circling a number on the continuum that best represents your church, with 10 being very healthy and 1 being unhealthy. The sentence descriptors give you something to go by in terms of what is meant by health. Don't be concerned that candor will make your church look bad. This is not a pass/fail test. Rather, the Vital Signs Continuum is a simple, straightforward way for you to begin a dialogue with congregation leaders about your church's health.

Unhealthy		LOVING GOD								Healthy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

There is a stronger emphasis on tradition and rules than on loving God. People are living out their faith almost by rote. There is an empty feeling within the gathered community.

The emphasis is on the Great Commandment. People are passionate about following God in obedience to Christ. The church's environment of love, evident through a variety of expressions, is quite compelling.

Unhealthy		LOVING PEOPLE								Healthy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Tension and anxiety exists within the fellowship. Relationships are either stagnant or controlling. There is a tendency toward self-centeredness vs. other-centeredness, and conflict is not handled well.

Serving others at their point of need is a high value, as is supporting and building one another up in the faith. Interpersonal relationships are positive and conflicts are addressed with maturity. In this church, people like being together.

Unhealthy		EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP								Healthy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Leaders are viewed with suspicion and judgment and congregational life is dominated by a handful of people. The majority of the congregation is disengaged and reluctant to take on new challenges. It is a struggle to motivate people to serve within the church.

Leaders are viewed with trust and respect and there is an open invitation to participation in congregational life. The majority of people feel empowered to take on new challenges and test their leadership abilities. It is easy to motivate people to serve within the church.

Unhealthy		COMPELLING MISSION								Healthy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

The church's focus is primarily on its own needs, and getting people on board to reach out beyond its own walls is difficult. There is little evidence of changed lives.

The church's focus is on reaching out and seeking ways to do so. There is a spirit of creativity, consistency, and effectiveness within the congregation, as more and more people are impacted by the gospel.

LIFE-GIVING WORSHIP

Unhealthy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Healthy

Worship times seem automatic and bland. The congregation is divided over worship style. Preaching is superficial and not perceived to be relevant to the members' daily lives.

Worship is life-giving, energetic and moves people to follow Christ. Faith is nurtured with preaching that is biblically-based and relevant to the times.

JOYFUL GENEROSITY

Unhealthy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Healthy

There is a stingy spirit within the congregation, giving is viewed as an obligation, and budget decisions are guided by a scarcity mindset. Money is treated as a purely personal issue. Not many people tithe, and even fewer have experienced the joy of sacrificial giving.

There is a generous spirit within the congregation, giving is viewed as worship, and budget decisions are guided by an abundance mindset. Talk about money comes easily, and tithing and sacrificial giving are considered a privilege rather than an obligation.

EFFECTIVE APPROACHES

Unhealthy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Healthy

Organizational systems are in disarray, and decision-making is hampered by distrust and unhealthy politicking. The role of the pastor is disrespected, and people are frustrated by the lack of organization. The purpose and mission of the church are not clearly stated.

The church has adequate systems in place to assure smooth operations. Leaders are affirmed and provided with the resources needed to advance the ministries of the congregation. The purpose and mission of the church is clearly stated and widely embraced.

Discussion Questions

1. As you've checked your church's vital signs, what are the two or three areas of greatest health? Discuss with other leaders what past strategies and activities have contributed to the congregation's current healthy condition in these areas?

2. As you consider your church's longer-term health, toward which two or three of the vital signs should you direct the congregation's attention? Who needs to be involved in planning new approaches or strategies in these areas? What are the anticipated outcomes of focusing the congregation's attention on the identified vital signs?

Upon completion of the Vital Signs Continuum, please forward a copy of the results to your Bishop's office.

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