

## ***Prayer Helps* for the Vital Congregations Project—V.C.P. ...a response to A Call to Action...**

In 2011 each church is being asked to develop a *Vital Congregations Project Congregational Ministry Plan* to be presented at Charge Conference. Many leaders will use the *V.C.P.* process as an opportunity for the Church to become transformed into a greater likeness of Christ.

With the goal of transforming the Church in mind, *Prayer Helps* is an invitation to involve the whole congregation in prayer as an integral part of the process. You will find prayers the committees tasked with specific questions can use when they meet as well as prayers for the worshipping community to use in the beginning and end of the process. Pages 7 & 8 are for you to use after the Congregational Ministry Plan is written and approved at your Charge Conference. After all, the purpose of V.C.P. isn't simply to approve a plan for ministry, it is to become vital congregation while doing the Ministry Plan.

The United Methodist Church is changing – often without specific awareness or intention. This process can help the church you serve to be about change - intentionally. You are invited to take the *V.C.P.* process and these *Prayer Helps* to the heart of your church. *Prayer Helps* are simply what the name implies – helps. Use them as your context requires and the Spirit leads.

May the Holy Spirit move powerfully in you and the church that you serve.

*Prayer Helps*

### **A. Beginning – Praying for the Intention of the Congregational Ministry Plan and the people who will lead the process....**

*(Write your own prayers: Lay out purpose; be open ended; ask the Holy Spirit to fill up those doing the work and guide the whole process; acknowledge difficult questions; pray for transformation of the church into a greater likeness of Christ.)*

These prayers printed in *Prayer Helps* can be used as a starting point for your own prayers or used as is.....

***The following is a Responsive Prayer suitable for printing in bulletins. You might combine it with a pastoral prayer....***

*New every morning is your love great God of light.*

**We know your love in each sun rise...each new beginning.**

*And all day long you are working for good in the world.*

**You bring the day out of the night...beginnings out of endings.**

*Stir up in us a desire to serve you,*

**May we—your church—be your hands and feet in this community...in this time.**

*To live peacefully with our neighbors,*

**May we—your church—respect, honor and serve our neighbors.**

*And to devote each day*

**May we—your church—be risk takers on your behalf.**

*To your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord.*

**May we—your church—walk in your grace for ever more.**

**Amen.**

*Italicized, The Worshipbook—Services and Hymns pg 57*

## Beginning ...

(Pastoral Prayers...)

***If you wish, adapt these prayers from The United Methodist Book of Worship to your setting.***

No. 722

No. 725

No. 514

Holy and Gracious God,

You have called \_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church into being and given us the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The task is so large that sometimes we are bewildered and overwhelmed. Sometimes it is as if we were lost as we spend more energy on ourselves rather than others.

We ask for your forgiveness.

We pray for your guidance.

We desire for your Spirit to fill us up anew.

We yearn to set our feet on the right path.

We thank you, Wonderful Counselor, for this process called *Vital Congregations Project* and ask that you might use it to keep our feet on the right path.

We thank you for the leaders who have been set apart on our behalf to begin the work of the *Vital Congregations Project*.

We pray that you will give them the energy, desire, willingness, sustenance to see the process through. Help them gather the data, work through the assigned tasks, develop the SMART Actions and lead the whole church into a transformation that anyone who hears of \_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church will know that Jesus is the head of this Church.

We pray, O Compassionate One, that as the hands and feet of Jesus, we will grow into a greater likeness of Him as we work in this time and in this place that we are appointed.

Guide us, Lead us, change us, make us new.

Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Jesus went out of his way to show his love for people others wouldn't give the time of day. Can we do anything else?

**He healed the lepers...he cured the lame...he gave sight to the blind...he ate with sinners...he forgave sins.**

We are his disciples. Can we do anything else but do the same?

**O God, fill us up. Change us from the inside out. Make us new.**

**We pray to be more like Jesus—making those outside your church the heart of what we do.**

**In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen.**

**A Responsive  
Prayer for  
congregations  
yearning to  
become vital  
congregations**  
-worship  
-mission & outreach  
-lay leadership  
-clergy leadership  
-small groups, chil-  
dren & youth  
ministries

Let us pray,

**Gracious and holy God, we yearn to be a vital congregation for you.**

Jesus, deepen our worship as we give ourselves to you

**Gracious and holy God, we yearn to be a vital congregation for you.**

Spirit, guide our hearts as we make those outside your church the heart of what we do

**Gracious and holy God, we yearn to be a vital congregation for you.**

Jesus, grow us as your disciples as we work for you

**Gracious and holy God, we yearn to be a vital congregation for you.**

Spirit, strengthen our pastor(s) as he/she/they lead(s) us in our journey in you

**Gracious and holy God, we yearn to be a vital congregation for you.**

Spirit, nurture our children, youth, and adults as they come together in fellowship and study of you

**Gracious and holy God, we yearn to be a vital congregation for you.**

Jesus, help us to trust you when you say, "I will be with you always." May we trust you so much that we live anticipating the new beginnings you are bringing to us and through us your transformation of the world

**Gracious and holy God, we yearn to be a vital congregation for you.**

**Prayers of  
commitment  
and blessing for  
people called to  
specific tasks  
within the  
process.**

Brothers and Sisters,

today we recognize these persons  
who have responded to God's call to serve  
by leading the church through the  
transformation that the Vital Congregations Project brings.

(Or)

Dear friends, today we recognize the ministry of *names*

And consecrate them to a special task in the service of Jesus Christ.

*Names*, in the name of this congregation I/we dedicate you to the work of the *Vital Congregations Project* and pledge to you our prayers, encouragement, and support.

May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you,

that in this and in all things  
you may do God's will in the service of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray,

Almighty God, look with favor upon these persons who have committed themselves to follow Christ and to serve in his name.

Strengthen all of us in our Christian vocation of witness to the world  
and service to others;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Page 591, The United Methodist Book of Worship adapted

**B. Middle – Prayer for the workers to use as they develop the Congregational Ministry Plan....**

*(Write your own prayers: affirm workers; note specific tasks; anticipate discovering new ways of thinking and doing....)*

**Psalm 1:1-3**

*Blessed are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of cynicism; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they mediate day and night.*

*They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.*

**Prayer**

Almighty God, we pray  
that this work that we do  
will be a blessing for  
\_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church  
and for your work in our midst.

Keep us focused.

Guide our energies.

Sustain us in this work

that we might be like a fruit tree  
planted by streams of water  
and yield good fruit in season.

It is through Jesus the Christ we pray,  
Amen.

**C. Celebrate –  
Prayers to celebrate  
the writing and an-  
ticipate the fruits of  
doing the Congrega-  
tional Ministry  
Plan....**

*(Write your own prayers:  
thank workers; re-call pur-  
pose; praise God for the  
hard work done; acknowl-  
edge the difficult ques-  
tions faced; pray that the  
process is transforming  
the church into a greater  
likeness of Christ; antici-  
pate the harvest to  
come....)*

*Adapt and re-use any of  
the prayers from section  
A. An example is the pas-  
toral prayer on right.*

Adapt a prayer for use at  
the Charge Conference  
when the Congregational  
Ministry Plan is pre-  
sented.

Holy and Gracious God,

You have called \_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church into being  
and given us the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for  
the transformation of the world.

The task is so large that sometimes we are bewildered and over-  
whelmed. Sometimes it is as if we were lost as we spend more  
energy on ourselves rather than others.

We ask for your forgiveness.

We pray for your guidance.

We desire for your Spirit to fill us up anew.

We yearn to set our feet on the right path.

We thank you, O Wonderful Counselor, for this process called *Vital  
Congregations Project* and ask that you might use it to keep our  
feet on the right path.

We thank you for these leaders who did the work of the *Vital Con-  
gregations Project* and developed our Congregational Ministry  
Plan.

We thank you for their energy, desire, willingness, and persever-  
ance that saw the process through. They gathered the data,  
worked through the assigned tasks, developed the SMART Ac-  
tions and are leading the whole church into a transformation  
that anyone who hears of \_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist  
Church will know that Jesus is the head of this Church.

We pray, O Compassionate One, that as the hands and feet of Je-  
sus, we are growing into a greater likeness of Him as we work  
in this time and in this place that we are appointed.

Guide us, Lead us, change us, make us new.  
Through Jesus Christ we pray.

**C. Celebrate in  
Worship the  
Congregational  
Ministry Plan  
approved by  
the Charge  
Conference...**

Jesus, in your name as the body of Christ in this place and time we have set vital church goals, developed SMART Actions, and completed the Congregational Ministry Plan.

We celebrate the leadership that struggled with this task to its conclusion.

We thank you for the hard work, perseverance, and insight as they worked on our behalf.

We pray your blessings upon this plan.

We know that our mission as \_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church is to make disciples for you for the transformation of the world.

May your Spirit infuse us as we set about accomplishing the components of this plan never forgetting its goal is to become a Vital Congregation for you.

All:

**Jesus, we commit ourselves to accomplishing this  
Congregational Ministry Plan for you and for your purposes.  
We yearn to be more than ever a vital congregation for you.  
Amen.**

Awesome God,

You have given your church the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We have your mission. And we have now completed our *Congregational Mission Plan*. This is our plan, O God. We did the work. We put the numbers together. We set the *Vital Church Goals* as guideposts to the future. We developed the *SMART Actions*. We have set ambitious and tangible goals for the next five years. We did this fully in the expectation that you were in the process and that you have filled this plan with your Spirit.

We thank you for your love. We thank you for your gift of Jesus Christ and for the redemption that he brings to us and to all of your creation. And we thank you that you have made a place for us as his disciples. We ask that you hold us accountable. We pray that your Spirit will challenge us, engage us, sustain us as we work to grow into a greater likeness of Jesus Christ—where we make those outside your church the heart of all that we do.

It is in your Spirit that we pray. Amen.

## **D. Going Forward and Fulfilling the Congregational Ministry Plan**

### ***Prayer Helps for the Journey***

#### **The UMC Vital Congregations Project—V.C.P.**

**...a response to  
A Call to Action...**

Many church leaders have discovered that it is easier to develop a vision plan than it is to implement it. Many have anticipated the results of focusing the church's energy in a coherent fashion only to discover that the old wine skins are difficult to discard. Too often church leaders have been through visioning processes that led to papers filed away rather than behavior changes. Will that be true for your church's *VCP Congregational Ministry Plan*...or will the plan lead to new wine being poured into new wine skins?

Much effort and much prayer is needed for a church to follow through with its SMART GOALS and hold itself accountable for what the Holy Spirit is asking of it in the *Congregational Ministry Plan*. You may already know how best to keep the plan and its aspects before your congregation. In case you don't the *Prayer Helps for the Journey* is for you to use as you plan how you will lead your church in the journey of following Jesus in this day and time. *Prayer Helps for the Journey* is specifically for the time after the Charge Conference in which the Congregational Ministry Plan is adopted.

May the Holy Spirit move powerfully in you and the church that you serve.

*Prayer Helps*

**Fulfilling the Congregational Ministry Plan requires keeping the SMART ACTIONS and other aspects of the Plan before the church leadership and worshipping community. We will need to find ways to hold ourselves accountable for what we say we do....**

#### ***A Way to Go Forward with Accountability:***

***Develop a Quarterly Report including data, analysis and prayer; and deliver it to both:***

- ***Church Administrative Board or Council***
- ***Sunday Morning Worship***

***Each quarter summarize one aspect of the Congregational Ministry Plan and present in both venues. This will mean that in one year four aspects of the plan will be reported. Report data and implications/conclusions of what the data demonstrates.***

***Each time conclude the presentation with prayer. A suggested order with prayers is printed on the next page. Use this as your context requires and the Spirit leads.***

## D. Going Forward...

A suggested order with prayers for receiving a quarterly report of one aspect of the Congregational Ministry Plan in worship and in the Church Administrative Board or Council.

***Read Matthew 28: 18-20—The Great Commission***

***Receive the Quarterly Report on One Aspect of the Congregational Ministry Plan***

***Responsive prayer***

Jesus told us that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him.

**We know. We believe. Help our unbelief.**

He then said to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**We know. That is why our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**

He gave us the task of teaching his commandments to all who would follow him.

**We know. That is why we aspire to be a vital congregation for Jesus.**

He even said that no matter what we are to remember that he is with us always, to the end of the age.

**We know. We have not been left alone. Thanks be to God!**

***Pastoral prayer***

We thank you with all our hearts, O Lord, that we have not been left alone. We know that not only are you with us, but your Holy Spirit is working in and through us to make us one of your many vital congregations. We have heard the report of \_\_\_\_\_ aspect of the Congregational Ministry Plan. We thank you for those reporting and for those who are working to bring fruit for your harvest in this endeavor. Hold us accountable, O Lord, as we make those outside your church, the heart of what we do.

It is in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.