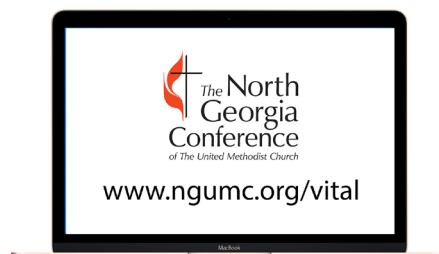
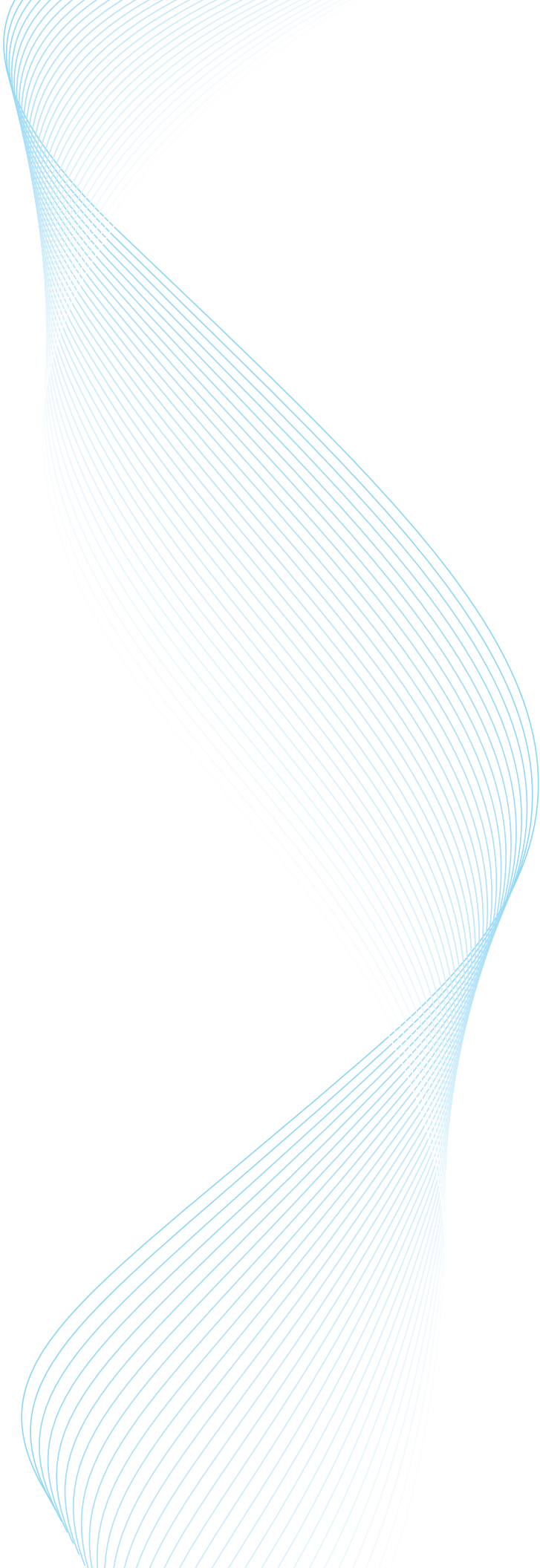




# VITALCONGREGATIONS INITIATIVE2016

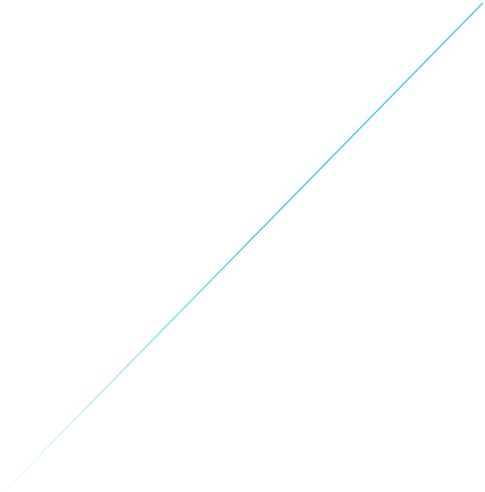






# Content

Vital Congregations	5
Overview & Getting Started	6
Setting Goals Online	8
Intro to VitalSigns	10
Available Resources	12
Moving Preparation	14
Transition Worksheet	15



Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

- Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19 CEB)



## Vital Congregations

The Vital Congregations Initiative is a ten year initiative of the United Methodist Church born out of a desire to help congregations intentionally increase their effectiveness in equipping and empowering people to be disciples of Jesus Christ that transform communities and churches around the world!

Through strategic planning, goal setting and intentionally tracking ministry participation, congregations are asking themselves: “are we doing the best we can do, with what we have, where we are, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?”

You are invited to join the journey! The next few pages will guide you through the process! May the Lord bless you and your congregation as you seek a new level of vitality!

The NGUMC Vital Congregations Team  
[vitalcongregations@ngumc.org](mailto:vitalcongregations@ngumc.org)

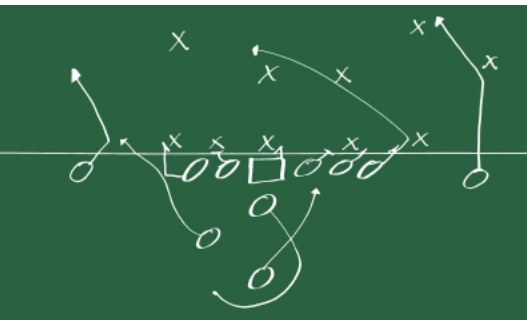
## Overview

The Vital Congregations Initiative is a multi-phase, ten year initiative of the United Methodist Church. The following chart provides a brief overview of each phase.

**Resources are available online or through the Office of Connectional Ministries:**

web:: [www.ngumc.org/vitalcongregations](http://www.ngumc.org/vitalcongregations) email:: [vitalcongregations@ngumc.org](mailto:vitalcongregations@ngumc.org)

phone:: [678.533.1446](tel:678.533.1446)



### Setting Annual Goals

Each congregation is invited to engage in strategic planning and annual goal setting. Each church is asked to set five goals each year: Average Worship Attendance; Professions of Faith; Small Groups; People Serving in Mission; and Dollars Given in Mission.

Set Goals Here: [www.umvitalcongregations.org](http://www.umvitalcongregations.org)



### VitalSigns Dashboard

In order to track progress toward the set goals, congregations are invited to use the VitalSigns dashboard - a weekly database to record actual event and narratives in the life of the church. VitalSigns provides real time data that provides indicators and trends toward reaching a goal. View VitalSigns Here: [vitalsigns.trendsendapp.com](http://vitalsigns.trendsendapp.com)



### Team Vital

Providing resources & training for local congregations, Team Vital seeks to support local congregations through the Vital Congregations Initiative. Each District and the Connectional Ministries Office have trained people who can assist churches, one-on-one, in goal setting and technology support related Vital Congregations.

**Contact your District Office or Connectional Ministries to schedule.**

### The Next Faithful Step

The Next Faithful Step Initiative partners with congregations through a team-based journey. Through a time of shared learning, congregational and community discovery, discernment, action planning, and coaching - congregations develop and implement their next faithful steps effectively fulfilling the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

[www.ngumc.org/nextsteps](http://www.ngumc.org/nextsteps) or [www.ngumc.org/firststeps](http://www.ngumc.org/firststeps)



# Getting Started



## Step One: Pray

Pray as a congregation, pray as a leadership team, pray in small groups and pray individually. Pray that God will reveal how to move forward in the Vital Congregations Initiative. Pray that God will speak to the hearts and minds of the congregation so that everyone will be on one accord. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as your congregation seeks to be the best it can be and have the greatest impact possible for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

## Step Two: Form a Team

Form a team of laity and clergy leadership that can lead the congregation through the Vital Congregations Initiative. This team might include congregational leaders such as Lay Leaders; the Church Council Chairperson; Christian Education or Discipleship representative; Mission Ministries representative; the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Chairperson; Finance Committee representative; Age Level Ministries representative; Trustee Board representative; Worship Committee representative; someone who has a history with and love for the church and community; and clergy.

## Step Three: Strategic Planning & Goal Setting

Start asking the question: **“Are we doing the best we can do, with what we have, where we are, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?”**

With a team in place, start asking the question: “Are we doing the best we can do, with what we have, where we are, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?” Ask the question for each of the following areas: Worship Attendance; Professions of Faith; Small Groups; People Serving in Mission; and Money Spent in Mission. Use a strategic planning process like SWOT Analysis\* and SMART Goals\* to begin to answer the question (\*these processes are available at [www.ngumc.org/vitalcongregations](http://www.ngumc.org/vitalcongregations)).



# Setting Goals Online

1 Start Here: [www.umvitalcongregations.org](http://www.umvitalcongregations.org)

- Four Areas of Focus
- Improving Global Health
- Ministering With the Poor
- Growing Vital Churches**
- Path 1
- Vital Congregations**
- Our Story
- Vital Signs
- Setting Goals
- Best Practices
- Stories of Vital Congregations
- Rethink Church
- Developing Leaders
- Advocating for Justice
- Responding to Disaster
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Giving Opportunities

## Vital Congregations

Like Share 62 Tweet G+ Share 1.1k

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20; Matt. 22:36-40). This mission is achieved through vital congregations that equip and empower people to be disciples of Jesus Christ in their homes and communities around the world.

### Vital congregations are:

- Spirit-filled, forward-leaning communities of believers that welcome all people (Gal.3:28)
- Places where disciples of Jesus Christ are made through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20)
- Communities that serve like Christ through justice and mercy ministries (Micah 6:8, Luke 4:17-21)

### Vital congregations have:

- Inviting and inspiring worship
- Engaged disciples in mission and outreach
- Gifted, empowered and equipped lay leadership
- Effective, equipped and inspired clergy leadership
- Small Group ministries
- Strong children's & youth ministries

2

### Our Story

Understanding our history is essential to our current faith and necessary to a fruitful and vital future. [Read More](#)

### Vital Signs

The VitalSigns Dashboard is a tool designed to help congregations follow their progress on the goals that they set for each year. [Read More](#)

### Setting Goals

These tools will help your congregation set goals and measure them. [Read More](#)

### Stories of Vital Congregations




[Read More](#)

### Contact Us

For assistance or questions, please contact [Sara Thomas](#), Chief Strategist for Vital Congregations/Deputy General Secretary

### Best Practices

Find resources for increasing the vitality of your congregation. [Read More](#)

-  FIND-A-CHURCH
-  ASK A QUESTION
-  GENERAL CONFERENCE 2016

ADVERTISEMENT





## VitalSigns

VitalSigns is an online metric tool that supports the Vital Congregations effort to engage congregations in a movement toward greater vitality. VitalSigns helps congregations identify trends early and often use the trends as benchmarks toward meeting congregational annual goals.



### **Tip: Start Small!**

Start with entering Worship Attendance. Then Baptisms, Professions of Faith, and Offering. Finally, add Missions and Small Groups.

### **How Do I Start?**

On Sunday Night, your pastor will receive an email at her/his ngumc.net email address. This email allows them to access the web page through which you input your data. All of the boxes do not have to be filled in for your data to “submit.” The data week is Monday-Sunday.

Pastors can change their email addresses, add additional email addresses and create a log in through the “My Profile” link on the input page. Some District Superintendents require input by a certain day of the week. Check with your District Office for details.

## What Data Gets Collected - The metrics our conferences values are:

### Total worship attendance at all regularly-held weekly services

- Combined attendance at all worship services held on a weekly basis; include special worship service attendance when held; Count all persons (including children) who participate in part of any of these services.
- If the church has worship services attended primarily by persons who do not attend on Sunday morning, attendance at those services should be reported

### Total number of persons received into the church by profession of faith

- The number of persons who joined the church this week who have not previously been a member of a church or professed faith in Christ - including Confirmation Classes
- Do not include persons received into the congregation by transfer; Do not include baptisms

### Baptisms – infants, children, youth and adults

- The number of people baptized this week; Include infants, youth and adults

### Total number of small groups

- Small groups: people who gather together on a regular basis with the goal of becoming more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, through an intentional process of learning, mutual support and accountability, and/or service to the world; Include short and long term groups

### Total number of persons actively engaged in small groups

- Count persons only once
- The number of persons currently engaged in a small group that is part of the congregation's ministries

### Total number of persons from the congregation engaged in local, national and international mission/outreach

- People engaged in mission this week on behalf of the church

### Persons outside of your congregation to whom congregation was in outreach

- People not currently a part of your church served by your congregation
- Examples: Food Pantries, Utility/Housing Assistance, Homeless Ministries, Scouting Ministries, Mission Trips, Disaster Response, Community Childcare, AA, Recreation Leagues, etc.

### Total amount given by local church to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries

- Any money spent by the church to support missions and ministries outside of the church
- Include: giving to **apportionments**, District Work Fund, Special Sundays, the Advance, and other United Methodist and non-United Methodist ministries engaged in work to transform the world

### Total offering received this week through pledges and offerings

- Total offerings and pledges received this week to support the ministries of the church
- Include: offerings for the regular operating budget of the church, special offerings for particular ministries, capital campaigns, and other forms of designated giving
- Do not include receipts from investments, fees for programs such as daycares or after school programs, or fundraisers

**Please note, some of these items differ slightly from the annual goals congregations have been invited to set.**

As VitalSigns is a weekly reporting system,  
the metrics are designed to collect actionable data for churches on a week-to-week basis.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR DISTRICT OFFICE OR CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES:**

Rev. Jasmine Smothers: [jasmine.smothers@ngumc.net](mailto:jasmine.smothers@ngumc.net)

VitalSigns Home Page: [vitalsigns.trendsendapp.com](http://vitalsigns.trendsendapp.com)

NGUMC VitalSigns Home Page: [www.ngumc.org/vitalsigns](http://www.ngumc.org/vitalsigns)

# Available Resources

For more information and additional resources, visit: [www.ngumc.org/vitalcongregations](http://www.ngumc.org/vitalcongregations)  
Call or email the Office of Connectional Ministries: [678.533.1446](tel:678.533.1446) or [vitalcongregations@ngumc.org](mailto:vitalcongregations@ngumc.org)

On-Site Training and Development is available to local congregations at no or low charge through District Vital Congregations teams, the Office of Connectional Ministries, the Office of Congregational Development and the Connectional Cafe.

Expanded resources for starting the Vital Congregations Initiative, strategic planning, Goal Setting, inputting goals online, shortcuts and strategies for acquiring data, and more are available online.

[www.ngumc.org/cafe](http://www.ngumc.org/cafe)

The Connectional Cafe is made up of local “experts” on a variety of topics. If your congregation has a specific training need (i.e. small groups, children’s ministry, evangelism, stewardship and so much more!), start with the cafe!

**Annual Goals are due to be set by your congregation’s Charge Conference meeting.** The Goal Report can be printed when you set your goals and included in your Charge Conference package. Some District Superintendents require narrative reports to accompany the goals reports. Check with your District Office for details.

Annual Goals are:

- Holy Spirit Guided
- Educated
- Long Term
- Big Picture
- Vision-Led
- Projections

Goals can be changed at anytime throughout the year but must be validated by the District Superintendent. Frequent evaluation of goals is recommended and encouraged.

At the end of the day, the Vital Congregations Initiative is about inviting congregations into a time of intentional reflection around the congregation's mission: Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the World!



Are we doing the best we can do,  
with what we have, where we are, to  
make disciples of Jesus Christ for the  
transformation of the world?

The Bottom Line

# Transition Worksheet

Are you moving? Or just getting started with VitalSigns?

Use this worksheet (also available at [www.ngumc.org/vitalsigns](http://www.ngumc.org/vitalsigns)) to keep up with how you are reporting.

Within the provided definitions, each congregation will count in the way that is most helpful to their context.

Consistency is key!



## Transitioning VitalSigns and Vital Congregations

### Vital Congregations Transition Notes

FYI: Annual Goal updates will be due at Charge Conference
Ensure that transition notes are compiled and complete

**Reminder:** Vital Congregations Annual Goals are input and reviewed at [www.umvitalcongregations.org](http://www.umvitalcongregations.org). Click on the “Setting Goals” tab. Click: “Congregations” Locate your church by Conference, General Church Number or City/State.

### VitalSigns Transition Checklist

Make sure all VitalSigns records are up-to-date online; At the very least, input worship attendance for the last few weeks
Ensure that transition notes are compiled and complete
DO NOT change email addresses in the system; we will do that for you. If it appears that the email goes to a church staff person, we will not change the email address.

If you cannot login to the VitalSigns system or if you not receiving your weekly email, contact: [vitalsigns@ngumc.org](mailto:vitalsigns@ngumc.org) or 678.533.1446 or your District Office.

For help with your ngumc.net email account, call: 678.533.1363.

### VitalSigns Transition Document:

- Use the attached document to provide the new pastor with a history of how you’ve been capturing the data for VitalSigns
- Be as detailed as possible
- Be sure the include the who, what, when, where and how of each category
- If you have not been participating in VitalSigns, please provide some helpful thoughts on who could be helpful in getting this ministry started
- This document can be filled out online and printed or emailed to all interested parties
- Visit [www.ngumc.org/vitalsigns](http://www.ngumc.org/vitalsigns) for VitalSigns and Vital Congregations resources



[www.ngumc.org/vitalsigns](http://www.ngumc.org/vitalsigns)



VitalSigns Transition Document

<b>VitalSigns Transition Doc:</b>	<b>Church</b>		<b>Date</b>	
	In each box, provide the appropriate details of how you arrive at your VitalSigns numbers. Include who/what is counted in each category, who is responsible for counting, and who reports the numbers each week. When you are finished, please print/save this and give/email it to your new pastor and/or staff.			

15

**Total Worship Attendance** at all weekly worship services

Total number of persons received into the church by **Profession of Faith**

**Baptisms** – infants, children, youth and adults

**Total number of small groups**

**Total number of persons** actively engaged in **small groups**

Total number of **persons from the congregation** engaged in local, national and international **mission/outreach**

**VitalSigns Data Collection**  
p2

Add any helpful notes here:

Persons outside of your congregation to whom the congregation was in **outreach**

Total amount given by local church to other organizations for **support of benevolent and charitable ministries**

**Total offering received** this week through pledges and offerings

**Worship Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Small Group Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Outreach/Missions Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Vital Congregations

---

North Georgia UMC  
Connectional Ministries  
Ph. 678.533.1446

email: [vitalcongregations@ngumc.org](mailto:vitalcongregations@ngumc.org)  
[www.ngumc.org/vitalcongregations](http://www.ngumc.org/vitalcongregations)



MAKE VITAL  
HAPPEN.