



## Storying Congregational Vitality: A Liturgical Practice of Revitalization

As a part of the Vital Congregations pilgrimage within the Presbytery of Philadelphia, we are inviting our participating congregations to story their past and present witness as a part of the confessional rhythms noted in the VCI manual. The intention is to lean into the congregational history, present realities, and the intersections with their neighborhood contexts as each church discerns where the Spirit has led them in their past and where the Spirit is leading them in the days ahead. Our intent is to share these congregational narratives as a part of an early 2022 gathering of our eleven participating churches. In doing so, consider the following:

- Utilizing the recommended surveys from Vital Congregations for [assessment](#) (Showing Your Marks Campaign). The US Congregational Vitality Survey (USCVS) is a new discernment tool for congregations, designed to help uncover ways in which the Holy Spirit is moving through your congregation.
- Convene a story team in the congregation to help narrate what you are learning over the course of the next 3-5 months
- Consider a theological and liturgical framework for this storying and work. For each element, create a relevant and contextualized writing or image that could be used in a worship setting.
  - **Call to Worship and Work:** Look at the original charter of your congregation, reminded that all congregations were at one time a new church start-up. What resonates? What about this initial vision remains true? What has changed?
  - **Prayer of Confession:** Where and how has the congregation missed the mark in its call to bear witness to the gospel in the church and community? Be intentional here, especially as the church acknowledges hard truths about its recent and distant past. As each church offers open and honest reflection, they cultivate the opportunity to receive and/or work towards forgiveness.
  - **Hearing the Word:** Discern a guiding biblical text or story that can be a guidepost for this work of revitalization.
  - **Proclaiming the Word:** Gather images, videos, digital stories, etc. that convey how your church is embodying the discerned Scripture and other components of this revitalizing liturgy.
  - **Affirmation of Faith:** Where and how has the congregation faithfully reflected what it believes to be true about who God is and the invitation to follow Jesus as a collection of disciples. This is a space to celebrate the current call of the congregation and the way good news is proclaimed and lived out, especially in ways relevant to its local context.
  - **Benediction:** Blessings are often relegated to the congregation. However, this would also be an opportunity to consider how the church can bless its neighborhood and neighbors. Consider a creative way to affirm the belovedness not only of the congregation, but also and especially the community.
- Each church will share a snapshot of the above liturgy at the spring 2022 gathering and also explore how this content could be implemented into a real service of worship with members of their congregation.