

## **Why are we doing this?**

Phase Two continues the work that began with visitations and assessments in 2017-2018. This process was deeply rooted in listening to the people of the Oregon Synod and finding commonalities of our people across the state. The response to the Visitation process was overwhelmingly positive and indicated a strong desire to not have that work reside in a vacuum, never to be thought of again. In our efforts to not let you down on this, the Mission Table dreamed up the possibilities of “what next?”.

We are responding directly to what we heard in the nearly 600 one to one conversations that took place during the Phase One Visitation work. The people in our congregations long for more connection to each other and those in their wider communities. They desire to work collaboratively in learning how to develop and deepen relationships that will reduce feelings of isolation in their congregations and communities. They want to find new ways of doing and being that empower people to be leaders in their congregations and communities and begin having deeper and more intentional conversations around what it means to be the church in the world.

The people of the Oregon Synod have a deep desire for new tools to help them discern the futures of their congregations in the contexts of their communities and regions. We believe that Phase Two will provide these tools and give congregations a renewed sense of Vitality to engage in God’s work in the world around us.

## **How long is this process?**

Phase Two will take nine months to a year, depending on the pace of your work. The time between meetings one, two, and three will be approximately 50 days, fitting with a “Pentecost time window” that allows enough time for assigned work to be completed but not too much time to lose momentum. The estimated time range for Meetings One is January-March 2019, for Meetings Two April-June 2019, and Meetings Three July-September 2019.

Here is a brief summary of the planned content for each meeting:

1. Examine your congregation’s results from Vitality Survey and Visitation report summaries in location and/or affinity-based cohorts. Be equipped to bring this information back to your congregation. Begin and continue building relationships with each other. Involve 3-5 people from each participating congregation.
2. Bring a recruited team of listeners to be trained in conducting a listening season within your cohort. Listeners can come from your congregation, other Lutheran congregations, ecumenical partners, and/or non-faith-based community partners. Find out how to choose who to listen to, what kinds of questions you should ask, the difference between relational listening and casual listening, and tips for actually getting this done. We will also talk about the Organizing Cycle, a tool we can use to move us from all of this good listening to action.

3. Return after you have conducted your listening season. Find out how to synthesize all that you have heard. Make a strategy to move into action based on this. Share your learnings, hopes, fears, failures, successes, all of the good stuff!

### **What is Vitality?**

The ELCA sums this up well with this description:

*Vital congregations exude a certain kind of vibrancy, a friendly welcoming manner, and God's presence is tangible. Those who attend regularly have a sense of purpose. They support each other by nurturing one another's faith and helping each other identify their spiritual gifts and use those gifts in the congregation and in the world. When they disagree, they do so in a respectful manner, ultimately strengthening the congregation. The people in these vital congregations understand God's mission goes beyond their walls. They intentionally connect with the wider Christian community and within their local context to share the good news in word and deed by striving to be God's hands in the world.*

*Vital congregations may be large or small. They may be growing, shrinking or holding steady. The key to their vitality is that they experience God's active presence in everyday life and live as disciples of Christ. This way of describing vitality points to the relationships between the congregation's members and God, each other, and the world.*

### **But how does this apply to Oregon? How do we in Oregon become vital congregations?**

The Oregon Synod is fortunate to have surfaced some answers to this through the Visitation work. When looking at the combined assessment work and listenings, we found some characteristics that are typical of congregations in Oregon who score as vital. They are:

- Strong relationships with each other as well as non-members and community
- Ability to talk about difficult or controversial topics
- Lack of hatred, hypocrisy, or judgement; RIC is long past
- Lived out spirituality vs being religious
- Ability to have FUN together
- Empowered laity
- Advocates for justice and peace rather than being purely service based, utilizes community organizing tools
- Engages in deep listening to build relationships

How do we achieve these in our congregations, in our context? We look forward to walking with you as we find this out together during Phase Two.

## How does Vitality affect my congregation's sustainability?

The Vitality of a congregation can have a significant impact on its sustainability as well. The questions we must ask ourselves when considering sustainability - finances, people capacity, property, etc. - require a congregation to have the energy, leadership, interest, sense of call, and strong relationships to tackle questions together in a healthy, productive manner that moves them to action rather than paralyzes them. Phase Two will not be able to answer your congregation's specific sustainability questions but can give you a path toward Vitality that will lead you to a place of being able to address these in the context of your communities. Our work does not answer the question of 'how do we get more people and young families into our doors on Sunday?', but instead gives you the tools to listen to your communities and find out how the church can become a vital part of the conversations that are already happening whether its voice is there or not. The question we want to help you engage is, "who is God calling us to be now, in this time and place?"

## When and where are the first meetings?

The first round of meetings for Phase Two are as follows:

Region	Location	Date	Time
East Portland (PLUM, Mt. Tabor, Mt. Hood, Oregon Trail clusters)	West Linn Lutheran Church – 20390 Willamette Dr, West Linn, 97068	February 2 <sup>nd</sup>	9:00am-12:00pm
West Portland (Rose, Sunset, Columbia Coast clusters)	St. Andrew's Lutheran Church – 12405 SW Butner Rd, Beaverton 97005	February 2 <sup>nd</sup>	1:00pm-4:00pm
Willamette Valley (Vineyard, Emerald clusters)	Grace Lutheran – 435 NW 21 <sup>st</sup> St, Corvallis, 97330	February 16 <sup>th</sup>	1:00pm-4:00pm
Blue Mountain (Blue Mt cluster)	Peace Lutheran – 210 NW 9 <sup>th</sup> St, Pendleton, 97801	March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	TBD
High Desert (High Desert cluster)	Grace First Lutheran – 2265 NW Shevlin Park Rd, Bend, 97701	March 9 <sup>th</sup>	9:00am-12:00pm
Crater Lake (Crater Lake cluster)	TBD	March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	TBD

Meetings two and three are yet to be scheduled and will be determined by congregations who choose to participate. We hope it will be all of you!

## Who do I contact if I have a question about my regional meeting?

Our list of primary contacts for each region are as follows. They will be the ones who will have the best information about a region's meeting:

East Portland:	Pr. Donna Herzfeldt-Kamprath	<a href="mailto:pastor.donnalhk@gmail.com">pastor.donnalhk@gmail.com</a>
West Portland:	Pr. David Eppelsheimer	<a href="mailto:pastordavid@comchristchurch.org">pastordavid@comchristchurch.org</a>
Willamette Valley:	Pr. Wendell Hendershott	<a href="mailto:wendell@grace97330.org">wendell@grace97330.org</a>
Blue Mountain:	Pr. Travis Larsen	<a href="mailto:pastor.travis@outlook.com">pastor.travis@outlook.com</a>
High Desert:	Pr. Chris Kramer	<a href="mailto:chris@nativityinbend.com">chris@nativityinbend.com</a>
Crater Lake:	Pr. Lou Schneider	<a href="mailto:louschneider@aol.com">louschneider@aol.com</a>

If they are unable to answer your questions, they will direct you to Katy Rustvold or Bonnie Beadles-Bohling for more information.

## Why do we need three meetings? Can't I just go to one?

All of the meetings in Phase Two are optional and invitational, and your congregation can choose to opt-out at any time. The first meeting is the most technical of them, interpreting your assessment results with you, but the other two will require asks of your time, talents, and energy. We anticipate that some congregations will wish to stop after they have received their assessment information in Meeting One, but we sincerely hope that the majority of you will be interested in going further and finding out how to put this information to work!

## What if my congregation didn't take the Vitality Survey during Phase One?

At this point it is not too late to do it! Except for the Portland area meetings - sorry guys. If you would like your congregation to take the ELCA's Vitality Survey so you have data to examine for Meeting One, contact Katy Rustvold – [katyrustvold@me.com](mailto:katyrustvold@me.com), to get one ordered asap. The process for this is as follows:

1. Order Survey – This can be done as soon as I get your email with information on how many people in your congregation you estimate will take the survey (including those who will take the online rather than paper version), when you plan to administer the survey, and who the contact person will be.
2. Receive Survey – The ELCA now sends the survey by email as a PDF, so you can print how many copies you will need. This should only take a day or two. I will send you the link for the online version as soon as I order it. The cost range of the survey is \$50-\$450 depending on how many they anticipate to process for your congregation, and will be billed to you.
3. Administer the Survey – We recommend administering the survey over the course of two consecutive Sundays, which gives you the week in between to reach anyone who might not be there on a Sunday. The most effective way to get the highest participation numbers is to take ten minutes or so in worship to have people do this, but we

understand this isn't always a good option. During fellowship time, or an annual meeting can also be effective. We encourage you to have non-members complete this survey as well! Anyone who is invested in the life of your church in some way should be invited.

4. Mail the survey results – Information will be included with your surveys on how and where to mail them once completed. It takes at least 7-10 days for the results to be processed.

Because of all of the work in those steps, we need congregations to have ordered their surveys at least 5-6 weeks before their regional meeting.

### **What if my congregation didn't participate in the Phase One Visitation work at all?**

In order to fully participate in Meeting One your congregation needs to have at least participated in the congregational visits that took place in Phase One, simply because if you participated in neither you will not have any data to examine. However, we do invite you to attend as a visitor, to see the information we are working with, meet and start building relationships with your neighboring and/or regional Lutheran congregations, and hear the next steps for participating in Meeting Two.

### **What is required of me in Phase Two?**

If you are a pastor, we ask that you share information about Phase Two with your congregation as it is given, and that you are an advocate for your congregation's participation. We ask that you find areas in the life and rhythms of your congregation to incorporate the activities and learnings of this work in a way that weaves them into what is already going on, rather than as an "add-on". We ask that you accompany your lay people to the meetings of Phase One and be willing to engage in this as their partner rather than the sole leader.

If you are a lay person we ask for your commitment to attending the meetings of Phase Two, and to come with an open heart to what the spirit is saying through this work. We ask that you do the homework that needs to take place between meetings, and to have your eyes open for new leaders in this, even ones that may surprise you. And we ask prayers from both our clergy and lay people throughout.

### **What if my congregation doesn't currently have a pastor?**

Not having a pastor while engaging in this process is just fine! Often times when a congregation is between pastors a discernment process takes place, and Phase Two is definitely a time where we will be asking for your discernment and the work that comes with that. It is possible that this will better position you to know which direction you want to go in finding your next pastor, or even the next lay leaders in your congregation. If you are a church who currently does not have a called pastor at all you can still engage in this as well. We would ask that you put

together a small team of lay people to be the primary leaders for this in your congregation. Leadership can and does take many forms.

### **Our congregation just recently went through another assessment process. Why should we now participate in this one?**

We get this question a lot. We completely understand that each time we choose to undertake some sort of process that has us entering into the work of discerning where we are as a congregation and what our next steps should be, it can be mentally and emotionally draining. The difference between other processes and this one is that we are intentionally asking participants to break away from the model of only doing this work internally in your own congregation and break out into working with your neighbors beyond your church walls. We are asking you to think of what it would mean to enter into relationships with others outside of ourselves that could result in a shared self-interest in each other's well-being and survival. The transformation that occurs when we realize that our churches are not alone and do not have to work in isolation can be profound and life changing. That is what makes this stand apart from other processes you may have engaged in in the recent past, and why we hope you would still consider joining us in this work.

### **When it comes down to it, what's in this for me?**

That question is hard to answer for someone else. I can tell you however, what engaging in this work has meant for me (Katy). In the last eight years since my own congregation began working on what we can now look back on as Phase Two-type work. I have experienced a continued renewal and reenergizing sense of call as to what it means to be a person of faith and a follower of Jesus in the world. I, and my congregation, have become more aware of opportunities for connection and relationships with people and entities outside of ourselves that draw us deeper into the work of loving our neighbors as God loves us. I feel continually equipped and ready to do the work and have a clearer understanding of why the survival of the church is more important than ever in the world. We invite you to dream the possibilities that unfold as we walk through the work of Phase Two with you.

### **Who is this "Bonnie and Katy" I keep hearing about?**

Good question! We wonder why you would want to hear so much about us too! Bonnie Beadles-Bohling and Katy Rustvold are two lay women who are members of congregations in the Oregon Synod. We began working together around six or seven years ago on an area ministry strategy in the Portland area that we called Portland Eastside Ministries. The purpose of this AMS was to develop relationships among the Oregon Synod congregations in north, northeast, and southeast Portland to begin discerning our futures together rather than individually and in isolation. Throughout the five-year span of that project we learned many things on how to do, and most importantly, how NOT to do this work, which resulted in the development of tools and techniques that were shown to have had a marked increase in the vitality of the congregations who participated with us. Our next project together, funded by the

ELCA and Oregon Synod, was the Southeast Organizing Project, a not at all fancy name for our work with three Lutheran congregations in southeast Portland to develop their capacities internally and externally to engage with each other and the communities around them. We were able to apply our learnings from PEM to this work and had some strong successes in our objectives. And truth be told, some more failures too. But, what good is a learning process if you're not able to boldly fail sometimes? Now that we have also wrapped up our funding for Southeast Organizing, we turn our attention to all of the Oregon Synod, and are really excited to see what we can all learn together as we humbly share with you our tools and processes that have proven successful with the congregations we have been fortunate enough to be invited into shared work with.