



June 2017

Dear North East District Family,

It's no secret that the world around us has changed. Those changes mean the methods that we use to reach people for Jesus must also change. Let me be clear, the message of Jesus is the same: that God so loved the world that God sent Jesus to proclaim the Good News that by choosing to follow Him, we are saved from sin and death and brought into the mission of sharing that same hope with others. The main problem is that most of us are still doing church in a way that engaged people from several decades ago. That method is causing our churches to be in serious decline because those methods no longer reach our communities. We have many "nones" in our cities that claim no religious affiliation; they have no interaction with the church. Similarly, we have many "dones" in our neighborhoods who have been hurt by the church for various reasons.

I write today to share with you a new system of metrics that our North East District Operations Team is implementing to help us determine which churches are vital and which need help and in what areas. Most of this information you're already tracking for us through your year-end report and missional vital signs. As you read on, you'll notice that we are going to start tracking two new measurements to help in our work.

Our district's goal is to double the number of vital congregations we have. To set a baseline, we had to determine what makes a vital congregation. We decided to look at a variety of metrics that measure various parts of a vital congregation, and I want to share them with you now. (You'll be hearing much more about this in the coming months, too.)

1. Average worship attendance: growth in three of the last five years.
2. Professions of faith: 1% of average worship attendance or one, whichever is greater.
3. Reaffirmations of faith: 1% of average worship attendance or one, whichever is greater.
4. Children and youth: 20% of average worship attendance. (This metric comes from Ministry Architects and demonstrates their experience that a viable children's ministry should be 10% of the worshipping congregation. Likewise, a viable youth ministry should be the same.)
5. Average giving per worshiper: 1.85% or greater of the average household income of the homes in an eight-minutes-drive-time around your church. (Our New Church Development area uses this metric to measure healthy churches for adopting or starting second campuses. We've already drawn your eight-minutes-drive-time in MissionInsight.)
6. Community Impact: average worship attendance equals 1% or more of the population in an eight-minutes-drive-time around your church. (This metric also comes from our New Church Development area.)

7. First-time guests: First time guests in a year should equal your average worship attendance. (This metric comes from Tony Morgan's Unstuck Group that helps churches to get unstuck and moving forward in mission.)
8. Gospel Invitation: The saving, Good News of Jesus is shared at least once a month in worship AND an invitation to follow Jesus is made. (Each church has a different context and your invitations should be appropriate to your context. It won't be the same in all churches.)
9. Discipleship: Adults in spiritual formation (Sunday school classes, small groups, Bible studies) equals 50% of average worship attendance.
10. Apportionments and Insurance Premiums: Apportionments and insurance premiums are paid at 100%.

**The DS can raise a church into vital status for subjective reasons. Typically this will only be done if a church is close to reaching the vitality threshold and is doing excellent ministry.

There are several things I want to share about our new metrics for measuring vitality:

- To be considered vital, a church must reach seven of the ten criteria.
- Our initial baseline includes churches reaching six of eight of the criteria as we don't currently measure first-time guests and Gospel invitations.
- We will begin a beta test of collecting data for first-time guests and Gospel invitations beginning on July 1, 2017. You will receive an email each month with a link. The link will take you to the district webpages where you can input your monthly data for the new criteria. We will officially begin measuring these criteria on January 1, 2018.
- Our new metric for first time guests means that all churches will need to begin devising a system for tracking guests and doing follow-up. Our January district training will help with that.
- Our new metric for having a monthly Gospel invitational is Wesleyan to the core and will require that clergy are actively inviting people to follow Jesus. Our January district training event will also focus on evangelism and help churches to do it well in the 21st century.
- 24 of our churches had ZERO professions of faith in 2016 and so the metric for professions of faith is intentionally low because we have a lot of work to do in that area.
- Of the 72 churches that will make up the North East district as of July 1 (after redistricting occurs), 20 are vital.
- We are already working on a number of ways to help churches that are not vital to increase their vitality.
- I will share with a church their metrics for vitality, but I will not share other churches' metrics for reasons of confidentiality. We're not competing with each other, but only trying to increase our own missional effectiveness of making disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world.
- Metrics matter because those numbers represent souls that we are reaching.
- We will evaluate the metrics after the first full year and make needed adjustments.
- My office is putting together several instructional videos for some of the metrics to help you better understand what they mean. They will be ready soon and we'll email them to you when they're completed. Those videos will specifically cover reaffirmations of faith, first-time guests, and Gospel invitations.

Friends, we're all in this together! John Wesley famously said to his Methodists
You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent
in this work. And go not only to those that need you, but to those that
need you most. It is not your business to preach so many times, and to
take care of this or that [church]; but to save as many souls as you can;
to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance.

We have a lot of work, but I am convinced that we can do it! As Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:20-21,
"Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work
within us; glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always.
Amen." Our Operations Team looks forward to working beside you!

All God's love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jay Thumell".

Jay