

Self – Study & Consultation Information



The Center for Congregational Excellence

Consultation Information

Revised 09/14/18

Steps Toward Consultation

- 1) A vote of Administrative Council/Board/Church Leadership to enter the Vibrant Church Initiative. Once this has happened the Pastor will receive the ADKAR Readiness Test to be given to Church Council or other leadership body. The averages will then be calculated and sent to the Director of VCI and the VCI Coordinator
- 2) Once voted and approved, contact the VCI Director in the office of Congregational Excellence to begin the process.
- 3) The VCI Coordinator, in the office of Congregational Excellence, will contact the church to set dates required for the Consultation process.
 - schedule the pre-weekend consultation workshop – **4-6 weeks prior to the consultation weekend**
 - schedule a Church Consultation Date that is at a minimum **three/four** months in the future (this gives the church plenty of time to gather the information and the Mystery Worshiper program takes at least 90 days to get people to visit and write a report)
- 4) Creation of **Prayer Team** – This team will commit to pray regularly for changes. *For further description of team duties see section on Teams*
- 5) Creation of **Leadership Team** – This team consists of the church's Board/Council or a smaller group of leaders whom the pastor recruits to shepherd the VCI process. This team is responsible for the Self-Study material preparation and the complete VCI process through the follow-up coaching stage. *For further description of team duties see section on Teams*
- 6) The fee for a church to participate in VCI is as follows:
 - a. Worship Attendance 149 or less \$700
 - b. Worship Attendance 150-349 \$1000
 - c. Worship Attendance 350-599 \$1500
 - d. Worship Attendance 600 and above \$2500

Churches will be responsible for books and a portion of Prescription Specialists fees (if required). Scholarships may be available for churches with worship attendance of 149 or less. *Make checks payable to Texas Annual Conference* and are due upon adoption of the Consultation Report.

Remit to:

Center for Congregational Excellence
Attn: VCI Director
5215 Main
Houston, TX 77002

Pastor Requirements The Senior Pastor will need to complete the following two requirements and include the results with the Self-Study prior to the weekend consultation:

Birkman Lifestyle report only

Purchase the book Strengths Finder 2.0 by Tom Rath. Complete the online survey to get your top five strengths.

Four to Six Weeks Prior to Consultation **Pre-Consultation meeting-** A meeting will be set up through the Center of Congregational Excellence for the Coach or Lead Consultant (or another VCI team member on occasion). The entire VCI leadership team and church staff should attend. The meeting takes no more than two hours and its purpose is for the church VCI leadership team to know what to expect with the Consultation Weekend.

One Month Prior to Consultation

- Pastor and congregation continue praying about the upcoming church consultation.
- All self-study materials for consulting team should be uploaded to the church's specific "Self-Study" folder on the church's SharePoint site as indicate on page 9 and 10 of this document.
- Recruit the people for the focus group and inform staff and leaders of their expected participation in the weekend (see below for specifics).
- Set time and dates for Town Meetings (smaller church should have 2 or 3, larger church should have 4 to 5). Begin advertising time, date and location of Town Hall meetings.

Two Weeks
Prior to
Consultation

Submit the following to the lead consultant and VCI Coordinator electronically:

- The Friday interview schedule including names and times of interviews.
- The list of all who will attend the Friday night Focus Group.
- The list of all who will attend the all-day Saturday session (since this is open to members of the congregation NOT in leadership, it is understandable if all of the names are not known. Give as many as you can confirm.)
- The schedule for Sunday morning worship and Consultation report presentation following the last service.
- Dates for your town hall meetings after the weekend (usually three) and your Church Conference Date must be confirmed with your District Superintendent

Consultation
Weekend –
Friday

The Consultation Team will arrive 30 to 45 minutes prior to the first interview on Friday to set up for the weekend. The consultation team will need a separate, PRIVATE room where they can meet throughout the weekend. If possible the room needs to have a blank wall for projection capability and a projector. Please provide the login information for WiFi access to the lead consultant. If there is no WiFi available please let the lead consultant know *prior* to the weekend. The first interview will be with the Pastor. It will begin with a tour of the facilities and end with an approximate 45 minute interview. Followed by interviews with staff and or key lay leaders.

Interviews:

Interviews

Set up 45-minute interview times with each of the paid staff people (the actual interview is about 30-35 minutes with a short break included). Include unpaid staff if they are responsible for a ministry area. If you have a preschool or day care program, the director should be included in the

interview schedule. The first interview will be one and a half hours with the pastor. All interviews will conclude by 5:00 p.m. The schedule should be backed up from 5:00, beginning in the morning with the pastor's interview. Be sure to include a 45 minute lunch break.

***IMPORTANT:** Please do not fill up the time with staff members who have no direct responsibility (i.e. – nursery worker, part time receptionist, etc). If you do not have more than 3 staff members, please get 3-4 more lay leaders, like the Lay Leader, Ad Council chair, PPR chair, Trustees chair, UMW, or UMM presidents, or other key leaders, children's area or hospitality, even if they are unpaid. We want at least six interviews plus the pastor, but no more than eight. If your church worships more than 275, it might be necessary to increase the number of interviews. Please speak with your Lead Consultant at least 3 weeks prior to the Consultation Weekend to discuss additional interviews.*

Please write up a schedule for the interviews and forward a copy to the VCI Project Coordinator and Lead Consultant, at least two weeks before the church consultation.

Supper with Pastor, spouse and the Lead Consultant 5:00 pm

Supper with
Pastor,
Spouse &
Lead
Consultant

This is an opportunity to hear from the pastor's spouse how things are going in the congregation. The consultation team will be back at church by 7:00 for the focus group. The dinner is provided by the Center for Congregational Excellence at a restaurant of the pastor's choosing and may include the Directive Coach and or Scribe, as well.

Focus Group 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Focus Group

This is a group of members which represent a cross-section of the congregation. They should **not** be staff or relatives of staff or members in leadership roles. Very simply, these are people who are faithful in worship but do not have staff or leadership responsibilities. The pastor is not a member of the Focus Group. The Focus Group will begin at 7:00 and end by 8:30 p.m. Be sure to have someone assigned to lock up after the meeting. In some cases the Consultation Team will be staying in the building until late that evening or they may retire to a room at the Motel in which they are staying.

Please submit the names of the individuals in the focus group to the lead consultant at least two weeks prior to the church consultation. It is good for the pastor to introduce the consultant who will lead the focus group and then leave for the evening. It is key to have a good turnout for the focus group.

Consultation
Weekend –
Saturday

Staff and Leadership Sessions

Flipchart & markers – plus a screen and projector

A large sheet of paper from flipchart and pens for each table

9:00 – 10:00 Ad. Council/Ad. Board meets with the coach

10:15 – 3:00 All church workshop

All church members are invited to the workshop. Staff (paid and volunteer) and the leadership of the church are required to attend the entire workshop. The consultant team will be providing teaching designed to move people from maintenance to missional thinking. This is a “must meeting” for as many of your church staff, leaders, and members as possible, in order that attitudes and commitment to mission can be developed.

Please arrange for a lunch to be provided for all participants and the consultation team. Submit a list of all participants in this session to the consultant at least two weeks before the consultation weekend. As all of the congregation is invited to attend, it is understandable that the pastor will not know all of the names ahead of time.

From 3-6 p.m. (or later), the consultation team will write the consultation report to be presented directly after the last service on Sunday morning. As each report is written based on information gathered over the weekend and is unique to each congregation, this can take anywhere from 3 to 6 hours depending on the size of the congregation and specifics or research needed.

At the completion of the report, the Pastor will be called and invited to come and read the report, ask questions and help to finalize for the reading the next day. The pastor will make copies of the final version of the report to be distributed after the presentation on Sunday morning directly after the last service.

Worship and Presentation of the Consultation Report

Consultation

Sunday morning schedule needs to be coordinated with the Lead

Consultation Information

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Weekend –

Sunday

Consultant prior to the weekend. One worship service is preferable in order to insure a good turnout for the presentation of the Consultation report.

The reading of the Consultation Report will take place directly after the last service. Copies of the report need to be available for distribution **after** the presentation. The Consultation Team will not answer questions after the presentation. Any questions about the report or prescriptions will be addressed at scheduled Town Hall meetings. It is encouraged that your VCI leadership team help conduct the town hall meeting in conjunction with the pastor. The point of the town hall meeting is three fold 1) to answer any questions 2) to clarify any misperceptions 3) to show clergy and lay leadership championing the VCI process and the findings of the Consultation Report. It is important to advertise the dates for upcoming Town Hall meetings to discuss the report and the date of the Church Conference for the vote on the prescriptions.

This is an extremely busy Sunday for the Pastor and laity, therefore the Lead Consultant (in most cases) will preach the sermon on Sunday.

4 to 6 weeks

Post

Weekend

Consultation

During this period of time, the pastor and congregation will decide whether to accept or reject the prescriptions offered by the consultation team. **No church can move forward without a $\frac{3}{4}$ affirmative vote of a Church Conference.**

VCI Team is to electronically submit the report and prescriptions to the VCI Director. If you have any questions on the church consultation, please contact the lead consultant for the weekend, the VCI Coordinator, or the VCI Director

SELF-STUDY



BEFORE Upload the Self-Study packet described in the following pages, please ensure you have included all of the elements listed below:

- Pastor's Birkman Lifestyle Report (see pages 4 and 29)
- Pastor's StrengthsFinder® survey (see pages 4 and 29)
- Completed Readiness Survey (see page 23)
- Communication Questionnaire (see page 20-22)
- History & Description (see page 11)
- Demography & Statistics (see page 12)
- Community Study, MissionInsite, and Self-Study Group results (see page 14-15)
- Self-Study Questionnaire (see pages 16-19)

Delivery of Information to VCI Office: The Pastor (or designee) will be given access (via email invitation, this invitation is only good for twenty-four hours so click on it soon after you receive it) to your church's newly created SharePoint VCI Site. Please upload all documents to the Self Study folder on the church's SharePoint Site. Please have all documents uploaded three weeks prior to Consultation Weekend. *Your email must be associated with a free Microsoft Account. To get one follow this link and use whatever email address you want associated with your Microsoft Account.

<https://login.live.com/login.srf?wa=wsignin1.0&rpsnv=12&ct=1457362281&rver=6.5.6509.0&wp=MBI&wreply=https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/account/default.aspx&lc=1033&id=74335>

VCI@txcumc.org

At least two weeks before your consultation, email vci@txcumc.org with the following information:

- Interview schedule
- Names of people attending the Friday and Saturday focus group and the Saturday training workshop
- Dates, location and times for town hall meetings after the consultation
- Date for the church conference 30-45 days post consultation

Instructions

1. It is best to gather a team to complete this Self-Study, made up of lay members as well as staff. The pastor needs to be involved and on this team but should not be chasing down the bulk of this information.
2. Please complete ALL aspects of the Self-Study and be sure to share this information with the Council/Board, and have them fill out the questions that are for them around the strengths and weaknesses and areas to change. Also, it is very important for them to have some time for discussion and for those results of their discussion to be included in the Self-Study material that is sent in.
3. You probably need to allow for 3-4 months to do all the parts of the study, including the leaders' discussion and opinions. The full final report needs to be in by about 3 weeks before your weekend Consultation.
4. Please digitize and upload all documents to the church's SharePoint Site as indicated on page 9. This Site will be set up and maintained by the VCI office, only the VCI team members and those working with your church, the pastor and other designees from the church can access the church's SharePoint site.
5. Any questions, or difficulties please call the office of Congregational Excellence.

History and Description

1. Write a brief history of your congregation (maximum four pages). Include those events that contributed to periods of growth or decline in the number of people participating. Write in a factual style. Avoid the temptation to puff the story for public relations and the temptation to inject personal commentary regarding past problems.
2. Provide a list of all full and part-time program staff positions for the last twenty years, or from the beginning if founded more recently. List schools and degrees for full-time program staff. Give the dates for people's tenure and state the real reason why individuals left. (Leave out the pertinent specifics only where required by law.)
3. Provide a list of all people who oversee specific areas of service. List the number of positions for which they are responsible in their oversight. State whether these people are full-time, part-time, or volunteer staff.
4. List dates and provide descriptions for any building construction, major renovation, land acquisition, or leasing of facilities. List the amount of acreage you own, lease or rent, the square footage of building(s), and number of parking spaces (distinguishing between off-street and street parking).
5. Write a summary of your congregational structure including the individuals or groups who are responsible for program decisions, budgeting, and financial oversight, buildings and grounds, and any other major interests of the congregation. List committees, task forces, program teams, etc. and explain how these relate to boards or councils. Provide an organizational chart that reflects your current structure.
6. List any formal ties or major ties to other organizations or associations. State how the congregation views and interacts with these groups.

Demography and Statistics Request the historical statistics for your church (name, location, and pastor's name) from the Congregational Excellence office.
Be sure to include an email to receive this report to include in your self-study.

Contact Information Center for Congregational Excellence
 email: VCI@txcumc.org
 phone: (713) 521-9383

You will
 receive stats
 for these
 categories

- Professions of Faith
- Faith Restored
- Removed by Death
- Professing Membership
- Average Attendance
- Baptisms
- Preparatory Members
- Constituent Members
- Confirmation Class
- Leaders in Christian Formation
- Children in Christian Formation
- Youth in Christian Formation
- Young Adults in Christian Formation
- Adults in Christian Formation
- Total Persons in Christian Formation
- Average Sunday School Attendance
- Covenant Discipleship Group
- Vacation Bible School
- Ongoing Classes other than Sunday School
- Short Term Classes
- Average Attendance – ongoing classes
- Total Expenditures

Demography
and
Statistics

Estimate the average age of the people participating in the regular activities of your congregation. State how this was determined.

State the percentage of people who attend your worship services who also attend some group meeting such as a class, small group, support group, or service team. Count each individual only once.

Prepare a list of the number of current members or regular participants who got involved:

- a. Prior to 1960
- b. From 1961-70
- c. From 1971-80
- d. From 1981-90
- e. From 1991-2000
- f. From 2001- Present

List the total receipts and total expenditures for each of the last 10 years or for the entire history if founded more recently.

Without listing names, state the amount given by each of the top ten contributors of record in the last fiscal year. Total these amounts and state the percentage of giving this total represents in relation to total contributions.

State the same information for the second ten contributors of record.

State the total number of contributors to the congregation during the last fiscal year and the average amount given per contributor during the last fiscal year.

**Community
Study**

1. Write a brief overview of the area and community in which the congregation is located and which the congregation primarily serves.
2. Secure the MissionInsite report for your church (your area). Get an Executive Report (1-2 mile radius) and if you have any trouble contact the office of Congregational Excellence for help.
3. Briefly describe the square mile that surrounds the primary location of the congregation.

Conduct interviews and gather data in regards to the needs of your community. Conducted by a subgroup of the Leadership Team (board).

Door to door surveys of neighbors. Share that you have an interest in the people in your church's neighborhood and wonder if there is anything you can do for them. Do they have needs that they might have you can help with? Do they have a church home? If not, what kind of church would they like? Just get to know them and share that you want to serve them in the future. (They may not believe you since you may not have served them in the past.)

Interviews with Community Officials. Interview the following: police chief, school superintendent or principal, mayor or alderpersons, etc. Ask, what can the church do to help this community most. They will usually be delighted to tell you and talk with you about the community. Bring back the results of your surveys after interviewing four or five community officials. Share the surveys with the rest of the Leadership Team.

Don't forget about other sources of information like the Chamber of Commerce. Any community surveys done recently would be helpful information to obtain. It would also be helpful to talk to any groups that are service oriented to gain insight on community needs.

Documents

- Please send copies of the following :
- Last two charge conference reports
- Last two annual budgets and full financial statements, for past two fiscal years, as well as the most recent financial report for this current year (YTD). Be sure to include budget versus actual and balance sheets.
- Sample bulletins, for past four Sundays, and newsletters, past four editions.
- Any policy statements, or policy manuals
- Other printed documents you deem helpful in providing insight into your congregation.

Self-Study
Group

After all the self-study information has been compiled, the board/council, and staff need to discuss the following questions:

Give the general consensus of the group; be sure to include the date.

- What are the three greatest strengths of this congregation, listed in priority order?
- What are the three most significant weaknesses of your church?
- What three changes would you most like to see made in your church, listed in priority order?
- Do the leaders want this congregation to grow significantly?
- Are the leaders willing to make the difficult decisions required for change and growth?

Questionnaire

Please fill out the following questionnaire so that the consulting team might know more about your congregation. The material comes from a survey by Bill Easum.

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1. Parking

- _____ a. Average attendance of largest service. (If Sunday school and worship occur at the same hour—count the total number at that time.)
- _____ b. Paved off-street parking spaces available (please count)
- _____ c. 80% of total parking spaces
- _____ d. Number of parking spaces needed. [Divide (a) by 2 and compare to (c).]

2. Small Groups (15 or less people) These groups need to meet at least twice a month—Do not count Sunday School classes.

- _____ a. Number of support / recovery groups.
- _____ b. Nurture groups.
- _____ c. Ministry teams.
- _____ d. Others.
- _____ e. Number needed if you had one group for each 15 or so in worship.

3. Sanctuary (Do not estimate or take data from architect's work – measure actual pew lengths and divide by 22 inches.)

- _____ a. Sanctuary total capacity
- _____ b. 80% of capacity
- _____ c. Average main service attendance

4. Nursery

- _____ a. Nursery capacity (30 sq. ft. per child)
- _____ b. 80% of capacity
- _____ c. Average main service attendance
- _____ d. Number needed for 80%
- _____ e. How many personnel in the nursery at main attendance?
- _____ f. Is there a nursery for all events?
- _____ g. Are infants and toddlers separated?
- _____ h. Are nursery policies given to parents?
- _____ i. Are you currently using Safe Sanctuary guidelines?
- _____ j. Do you have a plan to keep the nursery safe from harm or kidnapping?
- _____ k. What type of check-in system are you using?

5. Sunday Worship

- _____ a. What hours? _____
 - _____ b. Do you offer worship other than Sunday morning?
 - _____ a. If so, what day and time? _____
 - _____ c. Do you offer worship on another site? If so, where? What day and time?
 - _____ _____
-

6. Music (What type of music are you using?)

- a. Service time: _____ Choir / Praise band / Other _____
- b. Service time: _____ Choir / Praise band / Other _____
- c. Service time: _____ Choir / Praise band / Other _____

7. Sunday School

- a. Number of adult Sunday School classes.
- b. Average number of youth in Sunday School.
- c. Average number of children in Sunday School.
- d. How often do you start a new adult Sunday School class?
- e. When was the last time you started a new adult class?

8. Are the area public schools growing, stable or declining?**9. What is the percentage of the present debt service (annual mortgage payment) to the annual budget?****10. Signing**

- a. Adequate/attractive sign perpendicular to street with worship times to guide first-time visitors?
- b. Clear/attractive signing inside the building to help people find their way? (focused on: nursery, rest rooms, and worship)

11. Are at least 10% of parking spaces designated for first-time guests?**12. Number of pastors over the past 20 years.****13. Estimate the number of adults in worship who are 60 years of age or older. (percentage of total average attendance)**

14. Paid Staff

- _____ a. Number of full-time staff.
- _____ b. Number of part-time staff.
- _____ c. Number of meetings the pastors attends in a month.

15. First-time Guests

- _____ a. Average number of first-time guest families each week.
- _____ b. Are these families added to church mailing list?
- _____ c. Number of hours between attending service and contact from church.

16. How many spiritual leaders does the church have?**17. How many new leaders are raised up each year?**

- a. Is there an intentional plan in place to do this?

18. How many people are involved in hands-on ministry each week?

19. Has the church had any major conflicts in the past 20 years?

- a. If so, is the conflict resolved?
- b. Please comment briefly:

QUESTIONNAIRE

COMMUNICATION PREP

Describe your CURRENT communications landscape: *s-staff *v-volunteer

TOOL (gather samples to bring)	Description/Frequency	Coordinator(s or v)
Website		
Newsletter (print)		
e-communications (church wide emails, targeted emails, e- newsletter etc.)		
A/V (video or screens)		
Bulletin		
Guest materials		
Favorite apps or resources		
Social media (*what, how often? How many followers)		
Staff meetings		
Group texting		
Phone tree		
Mailings (postcards etc.?)		

With COMMUNICATIONS: Where is your church strongest?

What are your 5 biggest communication challenges?

1

2

3

4

5

Who on staff helps with communication? (part time/fulltime)

What topics do you wish you knew more about?

How do you find/use communication Volunteers?

How current/consistent would you describe your vision or brand identity?

(logo, description of church, use of colors etc.)

What is your Guest prep/follow up process?

Do you have a VCI communication strategy?

What is the contact info for your local media? How often do you access this opportunity?

Decide how you FEEL about the following statements and circle the appropriate number under each statement. Rate yourself on a scale of one to ten. One means that you totally agree with the statement. Ten means that you totally disagree with the statement and have no desire to change your attitude.

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

1. The nursery should be extra clean and neat, staffed with paid help, and open every time there is a church function.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Turf issues are harmful to the growth of a church.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. I am willing for the facilities to be used even if they get dirty.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Reaching out to new members is just as important as taking care of the present members.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. I am comfortable with radical change if it will help my church reach more people for Christ.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. I am seldom concerned about procedure.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Paying off the debt is not a major concern for me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. I support the idea of spending some of the church's savings in order to hire more staff or start new programs/ministries.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. Several worship services are fine with me because I am more interested in meeting the needs of all the people than I am in knowing everyone at church.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. I am not at all offended when my pastor does not give me regular, personal attention.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. I realize that more staff are needed today than in the past.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. I always trust and affirm my pastor's efforts to reach more people for Christ.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

TEAMS

Prayer Team Start now. Gather 3-5 people who can get together regularly. It's ok to have a shut-in or two if you want. Call them first to explain what the VCI team will be doing.

Select people who have a spiritual gift for prayer and/or are spiritually developed. The meetings should be times of "prayer" and only a little chatting. Meeting regularly will be best.

These areas need to make up the prayers of this team:

1. Pray for the community needs and officials. Be specific if there are clear issues that are part of the community conversation or agenda. Pray for the community leaders by name (i.e. Fire Chief so and so, Chief of Police so and so, etc.). List as many officials as possible. You don't have to pray for each person each time unless you so desire. Remember school principals, superintendents, teachers, and local elected officials whether of your party or not. ☺ So you might highlight certain groups each week.
2. Pray for unchurched, unchristian friends you know by name (maybe just the first name). For example you might pray, "Lord I pray for my longtime friend Tom that he might feel the importance of coming to our church or any church for the first time to get to know Jesus. Help him to say 'yes' to my next invitation to him to come with me." Use names of people that are outside the faith and the church. And pray that you will find ways to invite them and to make it comfortable for them to explore what Jesus and God and church are all about.
3. Pray for the Consultation coming up at your church, for the people who will come and lead the weekend. Get their names from your pastor. Pray for our church leaders and all of us, that we will be open to the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us this weekend to have a great vision for what God can do through our church. Pray for the Consultation to be the event that begins a true transformation in the lives of your members, your leaders/pastors, your friends and guests, and your community. Pray extensively as often as you can for the Consultation and be sure to have the dates when that is going to take place.

4. Following the Consultation weekend, pray for the understanding of the prescriptions and the acceptance of the full report, and thus the desire to fulfill the prescriptions as a church. Pray for the coach, by name, and for the leaders and teams that will lead the whole “follow up process.” Pray for the changes that are needed, that we might “embrace” them and be willing and able to make these changes. Pray for the community to be impacted by the church like never before and thus for the church to desire and to achieve a significant impact for the Lord throughout the community. Pray consistently for the people who will be doing so much in the follow up process to lead your church and for the church to capture a Vision of God’s calling for your church and to live into that Vision with “faithfulness and fruitfulness.”
5. Keep the Prayer Team going for at least 18 months or as long as the coach is working with the church. Keep the group going even beyond will be much better since we know that prayer is so important and can be life-changing as well as help the church to change and grow in God’s will.

Leadership Team

The Leadership.

Choose the leadership team for VCI wisely. Include in your leadership team key influencers in the church whether they are serving in an elected leadership capacity or not. It should also include key elected leaders (i.e. Lay Leader, SPRC Chair etc.) One can also use a portion or all of a Church Council or a Strategic Planning Team. Each church leadership situation is unique. There needs to be one or two key lay leaders that understand the need for revitalization and are willing to co-sponsor the need for VCI in conjunction with the Pastor. Choosing the right leadership team is essential. These leaders need to be influencers and see the need for being willing to hear an outside voice and be willing to do things differently if called to do so.

While completing the Self Study materials the VCI Leadership team will do the following:

One person among the leadership team will purchase, read and understand the book *Start With Why* by Simon Sinek. That person will lead the VCI Leadership Team in viewing a Ted Talk by the author of the book.

The Ted Talk is located at this URL:

https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video;_ylt=AwrSbnEgITFWurQAfZdXNyoA;_ylu=X3oDMTEybHRncHM5BGNvbG8DZ3ExBHBvcwMxBHZ0aWQDQjA5MzRfMQRzZWMDc2M-?p=Start+With+Why+Ted+Talk&fr=mcafee#id=5&vid=867f142a497ed006ed2eb867c7bf2c81&action=view

Or Google “Ted Talk Start With Why”. The one who read the book will then lead the team in a discussion about what they learned and how this applies to the VCI process. Be forewarned, this is a “secular” book, but the concept is key to the success of VCI.

After *Start With Why* has been thoroughly discussed the Leadership Team will acquire and read and discuss the book, *Renovate or Die* by Bob Farr and also read and discuss at least one of the following books, *Simple Church* by Thom S. Rainer, or *Church Unique* by Will Mancini, or *The Externally Focused Church* by Rick Rusaw.

While the Pastor need not lead these discussion groups she/he should be a part of the group as they discuss what they have read and understand. The purpose of reading and discussing these books are to 1) relay some key concepts to the VCI Leadership team 2) to give them a common vocabulary from which to discuss these concepts going forward. **Please do not neglect this key component, without doing this with intentionality and integrity the odds of the VCI process being successful are reduced meaningfully.**

The Leadership team should teach and talk within their spheres of influence about the principles and concepts that they have learned. Some other ideas are below:

1. Lead a “leadership development” time at your monthly Board/Council Meeting of about 25-30 minutes lifting up one key principle. This is really the best time to get the basic important principles to your leaders. The Ad Board Chair or others may not like you doing this since we just have not done this before at the Board Meetings, but be courageous and make it an interesting time of leadership training instead of just committee reporting.
2. Use a sermon series to teach on the values of our church (what is more important, serving ourselves, others or both)
3. Use a sermon series to lift scriptural examples of change, perseverance, and being faithful to one’s calling.
4. What was Jesus’ style in working with the disciples as he equipped them to go out “two by two,” and serve and lead?
5. Another idea is to have leaders read Direct Hit and plan a time to

discuss. This might be difficult to handle since it presents principles and ideas that are new and different to most church leaders.

6. Teach about the principles in small ways in meetings, sermons, and newsletter articles. Write and teach about being “outwardly focused,” “what does it mean to be transformed,” “what’s God’s Vision for our church”. In other words take small bites of teaching time.
7. Write newsletter articles, emails or blogs on leadership principles and send out to leaders and others as much as possible.
8. Add to this list, but make it a priority to have your leaders reading and learning what it takes to do church in God’s will while intentionally “making disciples,” (which is the mission of every church in the world), how things have changed and why the church must change, too, if we are to reach people for Christ.

Bottom Line: Communicate, communicate, and then communicate some more.

- Communicate to your leadership (and everyone else) what you are learning through the VCI process.
- They need to know what are the reasons for making changes, why things don’t work the way they used to, what you all can do to change and make things better in your church and community, and the importance of doing what God wants (like the GREAT COMMISSION) and not just what we want.

A lot of this is a new way we have to learn to do Church since we have not been doing these things much up to this point. So it is different and needs to be out in the open and shared proactively as widely as possible. That will build ownership and interest as you move toward the consultation weekend.

Pastor Profile Birkman

The pastor for each church participating in the consultation process is required to have completed the Birkman. Most everyone in the TAC has taken the Birkman for the Conference. If that is not your case and you have not taken the Birkman please contact The VCI Director at the conference office or Peter Cammarano

petercammarano@gmail.com to make arrangements to take the Birkman. By using the Birkman Lifestyle Grid we will also have the flexibility to use any of the other Birkman products. Peter Cammarano will contact you by email regarding the particulars of the transfer and how you will obtain your Lifestyle Grid.

The Center for Congregational Excellence [CCE] will pick up the cost of your Birkman Lifestyle Grid. Your Grid will be made available to you, your coach and or your consultation team. The goal of this is to help your coach/consultation team serve you and thus your church in the best and most relatable way given your Lifestyle Grid.

Once the pastor has completed the Birkman they are to forward the results to the VCI Coordinator. The results are to be included in the Self Study materials.

Gallup Strengths Finder®

The Gallup organization along with several authors has created an online assessment system for identifying a person's top five areas of strength. It is their belief that by that focusing more on our areas of strength and less on our areas of weakness more we can be more productive and fulfilled. More information along with the online assessment codes can be found in the following books:

Now, Discover Your Strengths; How Full is Your Bucket?; Strengths Finder 2.0. Finder 2.0.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAYBOOK

Communication Tips for Maximizing the VCI Experience

Every church ends up somewhere, but only a few end up somewhere on purpose!

Congratulations on being one of the congregations actively taking your church from GOOD TO GREAT through the Vibrant Church Initiative. This communication guide provides a roadmap to navigate the entire congregation to your **destination**—*a more vibrant church that is growing spiritually, numerically, and financially*. VCI involvement facilitates the “new and improved” direction and focus for the church, and is therefore an *essential message* to give to members and visitors consistently—BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER the VCI consultation weekend. This transparency will help with recruiting the onsite leadership teams and will boost “buy in” which will accelerate momentum for the new priorities.

Why is communication planning essential?

Communication is possibly the most critical component of vision casting and leading change. In other words, church members can't support what they don't know about or understand. Without a communication plan, the congregation is likely to hear a jumble of VCI-related messages that either get lost and *muddled in the clutter* **or** *misunderstood*.

Communication helps members and leaders to be in sync, so they can lead forward **together** in ministry. *Imagine a high school band going onto the field with an assortment of dull, outdated instruments and stumbling in all directions versus one that slides into an organized formation having practiced, having a game plan and the same goal in mind.*

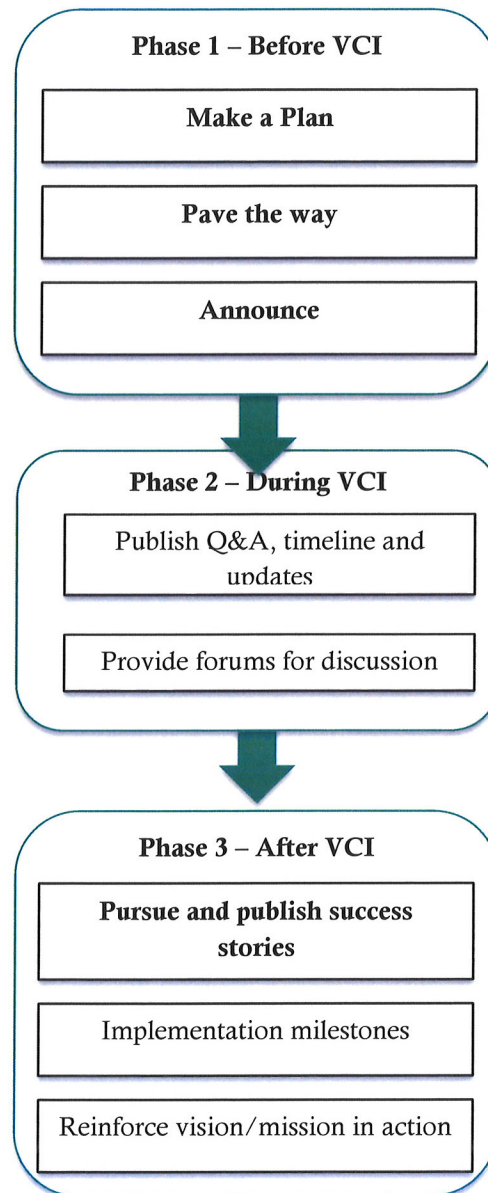
The more members are “in the know” and heading in the same direction, the faster you will get there. That's where VCI comes in.

VCI provides a strategic framework because it:

1. Sets a direction that will guide future decisions,
2. Helps each congregation become a more outwardly-focused church,
3. Provides a structure for describing your “preferred future” that is tailored to your unique community,
4. Succeeds when pastors find champions of change who can adopt the prescriptions and initiatives and be empowered to run with them, and
5. **Requires constant communication** in multiple ways, using consistent messages to generate collaboration, unity and momentum.

Getting started

The following pages provide an overview of some suggested communication planning steps, including checklists and templates that might be helpful.



Phase 1: BEFORE VCI

When your church leadership team has researched the VCI process and decides to pursue a church vote, the leadership team should begin educating the membership about the opportunity. Explain the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY SHOULD I CARE as often and as clearly as possible.

Strategies to “pave the way” for change might include:

1. Preaching a sermon series highlighting the need for openness to change,
2. Showing a video from Bishop Huie encouraging vibrancy,
3. Writing a series of articles/announcements/explanations on the proposed changes and expert coaches available, and
4. Identifying a champion of change that can use all media and channels of influence to express excitement and reinforce the payoff for being open to change.

To successfully lead change, the best environment relates to:

- being discontent with current state/status quo and understanding the negative consequences of *not changing*,
- trust and respect for leadership and spokespersons’ transparency,
- ready access to information (i.e.: the more resistance you anticipate, the more communication will be needed – more frequently and via more communication channels),
- coaching/mentoring/real life examples and success stories, and
- incentives: hope, desire to please God, and success celebrations.

Begin by building an Intentional Communication Plan:

Consider recruiting volunteers to help communicate. Are there members with journalistic experience, English teachers or marketing training?

Consider your audiences. While everyone will need to have access to the basic information, some of your audiences will need more specific information, more frequent information, or information in a more interactive forum. The Communication team can use the TEMPLATE on the following page to develop a plan. *(NOTE: a chart with specific communication ideas follows the empty template – in PHASE 2 section.)*

- **Leaders** - *will need to know the big picture, their role,/job description and detailed logistic*
- **Members**- *will need to know the purpose of VCI, when key meetings and votes will be held, what this means for them and the church in general, and frequent updates as the process unfolds*
- **Prospective Members**- *will need to know that this congregation cares about its future enough to look closely at its vision and purpose and make improvements to get stronger individually and collectively. This is a positive message for those looking to find a church home.*

Communications Plan: Sample Template

Targeted audiences (chairmen/leaders; members; community and prospective members

Key messages and schedule and frequency will depend on the various audiences and environment/attitude toward change.

Timing	Message content and objective	Delivery mechanism and audience	Sender	Date and time
First indications that VCI is likely	<i>Q&A – review of the basics</i>	<i>Face to face at leadership team meeting</i>	<i>Pastor</i>	
	Introductory articles	Newsletter or eblast to all members	Communication team	
	<i>Pursuing God's unique purpose for the church</i>	<i>Sermon series for all members</i>	<i>Pastor</i>	
Early stages of VCI				
During the prescription design				
Before implementation				
During implementation				
Post-implementation				

Tools for your Toolkit:

- **Face to Face meetings:** Town Hall Q&A, focus groups, presentations, word of mouth
- **Print:** FAQ, handouts, posters, brochures, bulletin boards, worship bulletin, newsletter
- **Digital/Online:** VCI explanation on “About Us” page and VCI updates, e-newsletter, social media, blogs, video explanations and testimonials, status reports

MAKING THE INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Pastor or designee can verbally describe what VCI is, how it works and why it is being considered. NOTE:(Comprehensive coverage in announcements, in the bulletin, flyers, website, in a meeting, video newsletter and/or social media can help members from saying they do not know what is taking place.) Other resources include links or copies of the VCI Success Stories in former issues of the Texas Conference *Cross Connection*, and videos on the VCI page of the Conference website.

Carefully consider what messages to send and when

The communication team should devote considerable time to deciding what messages to send to each audience and when. It is not a matter of just presenting the entire content and dumping this information on the target audience. The size of the change, the potential impact on staff and members and the readiness of the organization to change are all factors that will influence how much information is shared and at what time.

List the **audiences** with whom you will be communicating during the change.

Consider the **objective** you are trying to achieve with each communication effort.

What do you want them to do?

For example, if your congregation is change resistant, then be more **deliberate** about what messages you are sending. Try to empathize with what the members are experiencing and adapt your communications as necessary.

Church council leaders and committee chairs are **key to successful change** and you may need to develop specific strategies for ensuring their support in delivering key messages.

Here is a Q&A you can use or adapt for your unique community for use in educating congregation and generating buzz and participation in the workshops and events. Content could be featured in church newsletter, bulletin, website, as a meeting handout etc.)

Q&A

What is VCI?

Vibrant Church Initiative is an ongoing coaching type of process (not a program) that strengthens pastoral and laity effectiveness that is customized to fit each congregation and mission field, and structured in such a way that it can provide new ways year after year to strengthen your church, regardless of the size. VCI includes a peer-mentoring component for the pastor and leadership development opportunities for laity and clergy that provide healthy growth strategies and renewed unity and accountability.

Cost?

Each congregation pays a portion of the cost on a sliding scale according to church size, the balance being paid by the Texas Annual Conference. Participant churches pay for their books and materials for leadership development and for the coach that helps them during the leadership development process. Leaders serving on the VCI team at their respective churches will receive an information guide, workbook and materials for leading training sessions.

Who does it involve?

Participating churches might recruit laity teams for prayer, vision and leadership that will work with the pastor and the TAC Center for Congregational Excellence. Ultimately, the process will involve the entire congregation in submitting input and ideas, revisiting the mission and vision of the church and dreaming about the future of the church. The church completes the “self study” which gives the VCI consulting team information about the history; key financial statistics, pastor DiscProfile and leadership style and other statistics that help the team provide targeted recommendations. MissionInsite demographics are also obtained to better understand the mission field, and about a dozen “mystery guests” are recruited to visit the church and provide feedback on their experience that is useful in determining a congregation’s strengths and weaknesses.

Why participate?

All churches can benefit from focusing and pursuing their “potential” and preferred future. The first dozen churches in the TX. Annual Conference to start this unique process have been quick to report back that VCI has been nothing but a positive force within their congregations. They consistently testify that the process provides a unifying and clarifying pathway to growth, strength and greater impact in their communities.

What happens during the Consultation weekend?

One of the biggest catalysts of the VCI process is called the Consultation weekend. It involves a consultation team of 4-6 clergy and lay consultants coming to learn more about your church through a series of discussions, workshops and interviews over a Friday/Saturday. The team interviews 8-10 leaders and staff members on Friday and conducts workshops and focus groups to get more insight about the church's past, present and future. These meetings yield a VCI Report that is customized to your church, and read to the congregation that Sunday. Members are given a printed copy to review prior to a follow up meeting where the church will vote whether or not to adopt the "prescriptions" that the consultation team has provided to help your church go from good to great.

What do the prescriptions typically relate to?

The VCI reports, for example, might suggest ways to strengthen the hospitality system, connect more relationally with the community, clarify the church's discipleship pathway or strategies for a particular ministry area.

What happens after the Consultation weekend?

Each church holds several town hall meetings to discuss the findings and ideas expressed in the report. The congregation votes at a Charge/Church Conference about a month after receiving the report whether or not to accept or decline the prescribed VCI action plan.

What happens if the report is accepted?

The church is provided access to a coach that works with the congregation and pastor for the next 18 months of implementation to help the church grow healthier and more vibrant by focusing on 3-5 specific priorities. The leadership team and others are invited to read and discuss books and resources that are targeted to their areas of focus.

What is the role of the District Superintendent?

The DS serves as a "cheerleader" for VCI, aiding and encouraging congregations to participate and thrive in the experience.

If you still have questions or want to be a part of this exciting process, call the Director of VCI Rev, Mike Tyson at 713-521-9383.

Basic VCI Timeline

PUBLISH A GENERAL TIMELINE TO KEEP MEMBERS IN THE LOOP

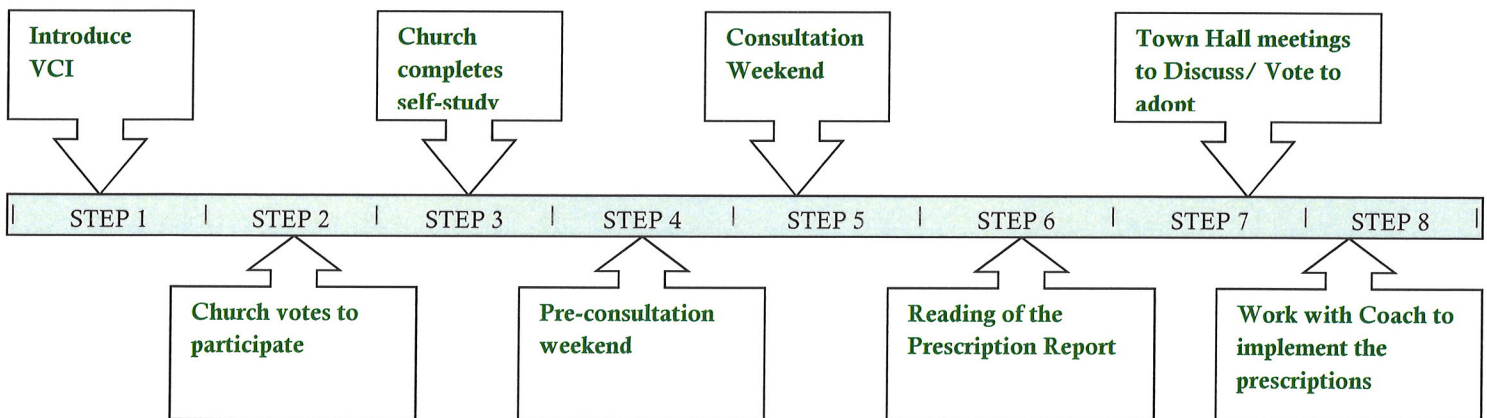
(Insert dates; you might not have exact dates but perhaps a month could be designated or only the confirmed dates can be inserted):

(date) – introduction

(date) - church votes on participation

(date) - self study completed by church

(date) - selection of pre-consultation weekend date *(for the leaders and all interested congregants of the congregation. It is basically an information workshop to prepare the church for the consultation weekend)*



Phase 2: DURING VCI: Plan to Over-Communicate

VCI - STAGES	Communication Forums	Communication messages
Introduction of VCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pulpit /bulletin announcement Bishop and testimonial videos VCI brochure Q&A handout and on web or email Post info on bulletin boards 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Could do a teaser campaign..."Find out Sunday" What it is Why this is being <i>considered</i> Overview of the key steps/timeline Invite congregation to read selected books Link to Conference VCI page from web and social media
Charge Conference: church votes on participation	Full court press: Print, email, social media, personal invitation, announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save the date reminders: don't miss this, be a part of history your vote counts be in prayer
Consultation Wkd	Full court press: use all media available to get as many leaders and members there <ul style="list-style-type: none"> take pictures of church members working together toward the future and get comments from participants for stories or testimonials to share with others 	SATURDAY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be a part of focus groups attend the trainings enjoy meal together leaders: give us your input, get in on the ground floor SUNDAY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hear the Consultant preach/read the Prescription Report (reading and copies provided; discussion to follow at town hall meetings)
Town Hall meetings	Use all communication forums available to get a big showing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several dates are available for you to come hear more, ask questions
Vote to accept report	Use all media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> don't miss this, be a part of history as we go from good to great your vote counts
Implementation (VCI provides an ongoing opportunity for engaging members and prospective members for several years)	Use all media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> include prescriptions and action plan on the web under ABOUT US to show internal/external audiences of your vision in action seek stories about Prayer walks or findings with community leaders, increased visitors or giving etc Encourage questions and provide easy access to information and leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announce news of the vote Recap the prescriptions: Here is what we are working on to reach our potential as the church God wants us to be Introduce the coach Publish team member names and key milestones Publicize SPECIAL EVENTS: Day of Repentance, Visioning, Prayer walks, any VCI related coaching or workshops Communicate personal stories of ministry success related to the prescriptions being addressed
Announcing New Vision/Mission (if your church clarifies its vision and mission, give this high visibility on all materials, signage etc)	Use all media to communicate this directional shift <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider a color template for the church and consistently use it going forward to improve uniformity and draw attention if you can illustrate your key words with a simple icon, it will aid in recognition and adoption 	An effectively worded vision statement is graphic, directional, focused, compelling and easy to communicate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Vision is the intersection of where community needs, church leadership, passion and unique aspects and giftedness of the congregation meet. ✓ In communication outlets, bring the vision to life through stories and examples of what God is calling you to be.

Phase 3: AFTER VCI—Reinforcing Change

The beauty of the VCI process is that it is a **continuum of assessment and improvement**. As the initial prescriptions are addressed and the culture changes to be more outwardly-focused, more discipleship-focused and more future-focused, congregations can continue to revisit their priorities and find additional areas to strengthen and tweak. Perhaps it is time to solicit your own mystery worshipers for a second time. Maybe it is time to call the Conference Center for Congregational Excellence and access free consulting on worship, stewardship, lay leadership development, communications, capital campaigns, or facility assessments.

By this time, members are usually accustomed to the new ideas and processes and see the benefits of continuous improvement. But communications can still be effective to:

- Gather feedback
- Address resistance

Use this phase to gather and discuss, share, publish, and videotape **success stories** that 1) demonstrate the *vision in action* and 2) reinforce the benefits of changing.

Build on your foundation.

- What are you doing to accomplish your *mission*?
- What are you doing to communicate your *message*?
- What are you doing to reinforce your *identity*?

Powerful questions to help evaluate any communication effort:

1. ***Is it necessary?*** (is it influenced by tradition or popularity or is it vital for the present?)
2. ***Is it innovative?*** (are there newer/better ways?)
3. ***Is it relevant*** (does it connect with the audience according to where they are and their preferences?)
4. ***Is it consistent?*** (does it fit our mission, principles, identity and work in unison with other communications?)
5. ***Is it clear?*** (easily understood?)
6. ***Is it powerful?*** (stand out and grab attention?)

SEE VCI communication **SAMPLES** on the following pages to get an idea of wording and presentation.

Bellaire United Methodist Church

Connecting People to People



Connecting People to Service

Connecting People to God

Upcoming Events

March 30, 2014

VCI R #2

Come take part in one of our two visioning meetings.

The purpose of this day is to dream of how God might want to work through the congregation both individually and collectively to reach the local community.

Childcare will be available.

**April 26, 9:30am-11:30am
in the Fellowship Hall**

**April 30, 6:15pm-8:15pm
in Chapel and Fellowship Hall**

Easter Lily Orders

Lilies may be given "In Memory" or "In Honor" of loved ones. Checks are payable to Bellaire UMC with "Lilies" in the memo section. Order forms are due by Monday, April 14.

The cost is \$7 each.

Purchaser's Name: _____

Number of Lilies: _____

Total Cost: _____ Check #: _____

In Memory of: _____



The Captain's Log

A Chronicle: "Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" on the seas of faith and ministry.

Volume 59, Issue 2

May 27, 2014



June Is A Critical and Exciting Month!

In June the Vibrant Church Initiative will really take off at Fair Haven.

The Workshop

To begin with, there will be a three-day workshop on June 6-8. On Friday, June 6 the Vibrant Church Consultation Team from the Texas Annual Conference will spend the day interviewing staff members.

Administrative Council

On Saturday, June 7 they will meet with the Administrative Council from 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m.

The Retreat

Then they will lead a church retreat from 10:15 a.m. -3:00 p.m. This special retreat will be for the entire church. All Church members are invited. YOU are invited!

Sunday Worship

Then on Sunday morning June 8, the two main consultants, **Paul Whitlach** (the lead Consultant) will preach in the (combined) English-speaking service. Preaching at the Spanish-speaking service will be **Daniel Hernaez**.

The Prescriptions

After worship, there will be a brief time in which the Five Prescriptions for Fair Haven will be read out to our entire congregation.

Discussion Meetings

In the coming weeks we will have 3 major discussion meetings in which we will all together thoroughly explore and assimilate the Five Prescriptions the Consultation Team has prepared for Fair Haven. Those special discussion group times are:

Group Times

- **Mon. June 9, 7 p.m.**
- **Wed. June 18, 10 a.m.**
- **Thurs. June 26, 7 p.m.**

(There will be one more in Spanish for our Congregation Hispana)

The Vote

Then, on Sunday, June 29 we will worship and then vote on whether or not we accept the Five Prescriptions prepared for us. The two English-speaking congregations will be worshipping together because it will be a Gospel Sunday. Our Spanish-speaking congregation will also be voting. The last thing will be that the results of the vote will be announced.

Inside this issue:

A sacrificial gift of time 2

Easter musical drama inspires 2

Angel Wall sparks conversation 3

Youth skit shows appreciation 3

Factually speaking 3

Say "Hi" to our newest! 4

Next Issue: UMW Officers, Sager-Brown

Dates to Remember



- "Workshop of Wonders" VBS June 16-19, 6-8 p.m.
- Gospel Sunday June 29 11am in Fellowship Hall
- Patriotic Band Concert July 4, 3 p.m. in the CLC
- Promotion Sunday Aug. 24

*turning strangers into friends,
friends into family,
and family into saints of God*



Sunday, May 26, 2013

WORSHIP	Traditional	8:15am
	Contemporary	9:40am
	Traditional	11:00am

Family News

By the way . . .

Here is my shocking statistic for you: the average United Methodist member invites one person to worship every 38 years. Not 38 days... not 3838 months... not 3.8 years. Every 38 years!

Bear Creek UMC is participating in the Vibrant Church Initiative because we will not settle for being average or stagnant or declining. We are studying our surrounding area and studying ourselves to figure out how we can better love our neighbors as ourselves by sharing the love of Christ. We are considering how to be a transforming presence in the community. We are looking for revival by the Spirit that motivates us to invite others into this church family—and not wait 38 years.

You will notice at the top of the page that we are unveiling a new church logo that uniquely identifies us. At the center of the church is the cross and the creek of the Water of Life flows out of the cross. In the near future, you will have the opportunity to get a shirt or a sticker for your car with the logo on it. Then, when people ask about it, you can tell them about your church and invite them to join you some Sunday—and not wait 38 years.

Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is a hope. Today is all we have to turn strangers into friends, friends into family, and family into saints of God. So invite someone to church with you next Sunday—and not wait 38 years.

This week several of the staff and our two lay delegates will be at the Texas Annual Conference. Geographically the Conference stretches from Texarkana to Lexington to Matagorda. That includes over 700 United Methodist churches divided into nine districts.

Once a year, clergy and laity representing these churches gather to worship, share reports of past and ongoing work, adopt future goals, ordain new clergy and participate in workshops. Beginning Sunday evening and concluding midday Wednesday, a lot of church business must be conducted. Ultimately, the work of the Conference is to equip churches to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Grace and peace,

Lead Pastor

Parents' Night Out

Ages: Birth - 5th Grade

Time: 6:00 - 11:00pm **Date:** Friday, May 31

Cost: 1 child \$15, 2 children \$25, 3+ children \$30

Please bring a sack dinner! Reservations are required by Tuesday, May 28. No drop offs will be allowed. Children will need to have a Church (KidZone) registration on file. No refunds will be given after the Tuesday before PNO. Please contact Gaylynn Brewer at 281.463.2330 or gaylynnb@bearcreekumc.org.



Calendar Reminder

The Bear Creek UMC office will be closed on Monday, May 27, in observance of Memorial Day.



All aboard for Summer Blast next Sunday

Parents and kids, stop by the Family Life Center next Sunday, June 2, noon to 2:00pm and find out what Bear Creek UMC has in store for summer! Grab a sno-cone, hot dog or bag of popcorn and stock up on information about camps, reading programs, and Vacation Bible School. By the way, Summer Blast is the perfect time to register for camps!

Entertainment for children will include games, train rides and inflatables. Children must be accompanied by an adult throughout the event.



UMM First Monday:

Coach to speak about life challenges and faith

Due to the Memorial Day holiday, UMM will host First Monday, June 3, instead of the usual Last Monday. All Bear Creek men are invited to bring a friend to the Fellowship Hall, savor Jamie Aman's prize-winning chili and cornbread, and be inspired by baseball coach and author David Vince. The kitchen opens at 6:45pm in the Fellowship Hall and the gathering will conclude by 8:00pm.

A Louisiana native and a graduate of McNeese State University, Coach Vince has a truly unique story of overcoming hardship, living life to the fullest and motivating young men and women to achieve their full potential in sports and in life. As a baseball coach in the collegiate and high school ranks for 29 years, Coach Vince earned 470 victories – despite the fact that he walks with two prosthetic legs and never played the game of baseball himself.

For additional information, call or text Rob Meyer at 281.467.0102.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT BCUMC

PART-TIME FINANCE MANAGER Responsibilities include payroll and benefits administration, accounting (payables/receivables), and maintaining employee records and vendor information. Prefer experience in Shelby Church Management Systems. Please send resume and cover letter to Reverend Will Knuckols at willk@bearcreekumc.org or 281.463.2330.

PART-TIME ASSISTANT CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR This enthusiastic, vibrant and creative individual must have a love for Jesus and a love for children. Creating an environment that is hospitable for children and their parents is essential. Reporting to Children's and Youth Director Meredith Buchman and working with Assistant Children's Director Larry Tyree, this person will be responsible for developing and leading children's Sunday School teachers and volunteers. This new position will be integral to Bear Creek UMC's renewed focus on our children's ministry. Interested? Please contact Reverend Will Knuckols at 281.463.2330 or willk@bearcreekumc.org.

16000 Rippling Water Drive

Houston, TX 77084

281.463.2330

bearcreekumc.org

*turning strangers into friends,
friends into family,
and family into saints of God*



Sunday, November 10, 2013

WORSHIP	Traditional	8:15am
	Contemporary	9:40am
	Traditional	11:00am

Family News



Our appreciation to those who served

Veterans Day, a federal holiday which honors those who have served in the U. S. Armed Forces, is Monday, November 11. Please take a moment today to thank the veterans among us, whose service helped to make our freedom possible.

Church Conference TODAY!

November 10

12:15pm in the Sanctuary

Please attend to cast your ballot on Vibrant Church Initiative prescriptions.



Last Sunday to pluck a turkey's tail feathers

Have you plucked a turkey's tail feather? If not, please pluck generously! Today, November 10, is the last Sunday this year that paper turkeys are on display in the Bear Creek UMC Courtyard. Each tail feather lists items to purchase for Thanksgiving food baskets, which will be distributed to families in need. Please deposit your food donations in the red bins around the church campus by next Sunday, November 17.

The Missions Committee will also add fresh produce and turkey gift cards to each food box. If you would like to make a monetary donation to help with these costs, please make your check payable to BCUMC with "Missions" in the memo line and place in the offering plate.

The baskets will be packed on A Day of "Thanks & Giving" on Saturday, November 23, 10:30am to 1:30pm, in the Family Life Center Gym. The Missions Committee sponsors this special day for our church members to come together, celebrate, and give "thanks" for our many blessings by "giving" to others.

Additional activities for A Day of "Thanks & Giving" include assembling Christmas gift bags for senior citizens and Christmas stockings for needy children. United Methodist Men will fire up their pit and provide lunch for all volunteers.

New Ladies' Bible Study starts November 13



Ladies, make plans to attend a fascinating new six-week Bible study, *Namesake: When God Rewrites Your Story*, by Jessica LaGrone from The Woodlands United Methodist Church. Facilitated by Amber Woodman, the study is slated for 7:00-8:30pm in FLC, Room 102, Wednesdays, November 13 and 20; December 4 and 11; and January 8 and 15.

Explore the transformational power of God through the stories of Biblical characters who met God and whose lives and names were changed forever. Discover that God wants to be just as intimately involved in your story, offering you an identity that shines with the purpose for which you were created.

To register, call 281.463.2330. A workbook is available for \$15 in the Bear Creek UMC office or in class. Childcare is available by reservation.

Outwear collection deadline only a week away

As part of Bear Creek UMC's Day of "Thanks & Giving", the Missions Committee is collecting gently-used sweaters, sweats, jackets and coats in infant through adult sizes. Please place outerwear in the red bins around the Bear Creek UMC campus by Sunday, November 17.

The committee will offer its "clients" a chance to select a coat or jacket for their children and themselves when they claim a Thanksgiving food box. Please check your closets and make someone's winter more comfortable.



Fellowship Breakfast next Sunday

Why not let the Seekers Class prepare your breakfast Sunday, November 17? Served from 8:00 to 11:00am in the Family Life Center Gym, the hot buffet includes pancakes, biscuits, gravy, hash brown potatoes, sausage, bacon and scrambled eggs as well as coffee, milk and juices.

No RSVP is required. The cost of breakfast is covered by love offerings of whatever you can afford; however, a donation of \$4 per adult or \$2 per child (12 years and younger) is suggested.



Helping hands welcomed

The physical task of hanging garland to decorate BCUMC for Christmas begins at 9:00am in the Sanctuary on Saturday, November 23. Between 10 and 15 individuals are needed for this undertaking, which is expected to take one to two hours. If you are available to assist, please contact Bill Clark at 281.855.4515 or 713.939.3418.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHRISTMAS BLOCK PARTY

Sunday, December 1
2:30-5:00 pm

Walmart Neighborhood Market (parking lot)
4810 Highway 6 North



PLEASE NOTE:

Last Sunday, November 3, was Commitment Sunday at Bear Creek UMC. If you did not turn in your Commitment Card, please ask an usher for one. You may place your card in the offering plate, give it to an usher, or mail it to the church office. Thank you for your commitment to the ministries of Bear Creek UMC.

VIBRANT CHURCH

vi·brant *adjective* \-brənt\ **(a): pulsating with life, vigor, or activity (b): responsive, sensitive**

On Sunday morning, October 20, our church will host a meeting to hear the report regarding the work that we have been doing as a part of our Vibrant Church Initiative (chances are you participated in one of our discussions regarding strengths and weakness of our church).

This should be very interesting and I encourage you to make plans to be in church on October 20!

In the days following the report there will be several "Town Hall" meetings to discuss the findings of the Vibrant Church Initiative report; I would encourage you to attend these discussions.

These meetings will be:

Wednesday, 10/30 at 10:00am (Clarewood House)

Sunday, 11/3 4:00pm (Bellaire UMC)

Monday, 11/4, at a time in the evening TBD (Bellaire UMC)

Sunday, 11/10 at 4:00pm (Bellaire UMC)

You've heard it said that we reap what we sow? That thinking applies in our work at the church. Each of us brings separate gifts to our church. I pray that you would faithfully and sincerely share the gifts of your heart and mind as we explore our wonderful church.

I know Bellaire UMC is already vibrant in so many ways. I love the feeling of "life" here and it would be amazing to see our church move even further beyond our walls and reach into our community like it has never done before as it shares God's love and grace through our service to others.



Stewardship packets have been mailed! Please bring your response back to the church on Celebration Sunday, September 29.

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“Pray that we
all will have
our hearts
moved to be
who God
desires us to
be. Pray
that we will
have the
strength to
do what is
required of
us as a
church to be
the vibrant
church that
God calls us
to be.”

Dear Family in Faith,

Over the last several months you have read and heard about Bellaire United Methodist's involvement in VCI (**Vibrant Church Initiative**). We've spent over a year preparing to have our consultation weekend. That time has nearly arrived!

We have been told who our consultant will be. His name is **Ken Willard**. He is one of the originators of Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) in Missouri, from which our VCI was born. He has worked with Bob Farr and Kay Kotan, (authors of *Renovate or Die*), and has recently completed a companion workbook to Farr and Kotan's book on evangelism, *Get Their Name*.

Ken is going over all our submitted materials, creating a portrait of BUMC over the last 20 years. He will also be meeting with some staff and a few lay leaders on Friday, October 18. That evening, a select focus group of about 20 will also be meeting with Ken. Then on Saturday, October 19, the Administrative Council will meet from 9:00am - 10:00am with Ken Willard. Following the Ad Council meeting, there will be a workshop held in the Family Life Center (FLC). **This workshop is open to everyone who desires to come.** Apparently there has been some confusion on this. So let me write that again, **you are invited to the Saturday workshop!** The workshop will start at 10:15am (which allows 15 minutes after the end of the Ad Council meeting for a transition) and end at 3:00pm. There will be lunch and nursery care available.

On Sunday, October 20, Ken will preach at the 9:00am Contemporary service and Combined 11:11am service. There will be no Sunday School for adults that day because in its place, from 10:05am - 10:55am, **Ken will present our strengths, areas of growth and five prescriptions this church needs to undertake to be more vibrant.** At the meeting he will hand out to every person present a copy of these strengths, areas of growth and prescriptions. This will also include a list of times and places for our Town Hall meetings where these items will be discussed. A lay person, designated by Ken, will be the moderator for these Town Hall meetings. After the consultation weekend and the Town Hall meetings we will gather in a special Unified/Unity Sunday on November 17 at 11:11am. This is special because this service will also serve as a Church Conference. Our District Superintendent, Rev. Lawrence Young, will be present that Sunday. At the end of service, just before the Benediction, the five prescriptions will read. And with no further discussion, (as that is what the Town Hall meetings are for), **we will take a written ballot vote to either accept the prescriptions or reject them: it is all or nothing.**

We will have our usual potluck lunch following the worship service. **During lunch the vote count will be announced.** If we accept the prescriptions, we will have a coach working with us for 18 months to implement the prescriptions. If we reject the prescriptions we will no longer be a part of the Vibrant Church Initiative.

Right now I need two things from each of you. First, if you are going to be at the Saturday meeting, please call the church office or email Becki Flores, (bflores@bellaireumc.org), and **let us know how many people are in your reservation** and if you will need childcare. We want to make sure we plan appropriately! Second, I ask you to pray for our church and our leadership as we move forward. Pray that we all will have our hearts moved to be who God desires us to be. Pray that we will have the strength to do what is required of us as a church to be the vibrant church that God calls us to be.

In Christ's Love, *Pastor Jim Allsopp*

