



A Process for Goal-Setting at Charge Conference For The UMC

This is a guide for congregations to use as they set goals and envision their future as a healthy and vital church achieving the mission of “Making Disciples for the transformation of the world.” By utilizing this process or similar processes, you join in the movement of the United Methodist denomination to develop, nurture and grow more vital congregations throughout the world.

¶ 242 (Book of Discipline) reminds us that *the local church shall be organized so that it can pursue its primary task and mission in the context of its own community-reaching out and receiving with joy all who will respond; encouraging people in their relationship with God and inviting them to commitment to God’s love in Jesus Christ; providing opportunities for them to seek strengthening and growth in spiritual formation; and supporting them to live lovingly and justly in the power of the Holy Spirit as faithful disciples.*

The charge conference is the basic unit in the connectional system that meets annually and serves as the connecting link between the local church and the general Church. According to ¶ 246.3, *The primary responsibilities of the charge conference in the annual meeting shall be to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church, receive reports and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of The United Methodist Church.*

As a way of aligning objectives and goals throughout the denomination, every congregation is invited to set reasonable and achievable goals around the five quantifiable measures identified by the denomination. Therefore, as a process for beginning to assess the congregations health and set reasonable and achievable goals, we invite congregations to use this format for goal-setting at charge conference.

The Process

1) SET A DATE:

Work with the District Superintendent of your area to set a date for charge conference.

2) Prayer filled approach:

Begin by inviting a team of key leaders to begin praying for the health and vitality of the congregation. Prayerfully consider where you have been over the past five years and where God is leading you to be effective in the community over the next five years. You might even consider having a prayer team whose whole purpose is to pray for the church over the next few weeks or months prior to charge conference.

3) Begin the process of evaluation:

There are several tools provided for evaluating the current health of your congregation. On the UMVitalCongregations.org website there are several tools available to the leadership of your church. There are also conference staff resources that can help you evaluate your congregation. The key contact persons for your conference are also located on the website. Here is one suggestion for a process of evaluation:

- a) Print and share the historical data report of your congregation from the UMVitalCongregations.org website under the tab “Our Story.”
- b) Share this report with your Trustees, SPRC (or equivalent), Prayer Team, and Church Council leadership (or equivalent).
- c) Ask key questions regarding the historical data as a group and uncover the answers from multiple sources about your congregation’s history. (IE: Can we account for why there is a dip in the worship attendance statistics between 2002 and 2004?) You can use the **Key Questions Resource** provided on the website for the various committees in leadership.
- d) Again, pray for the responses and answers that have been brought to light for the congregation. In some cases, there may need to be a time of reflection, confession and healing before moving forward in the visioning process. (There may be a need for further steps in prayerful confession and healing. Resources will be available online for this part of the process, if needed.)
- e) As a congregation, celebrate the stories of success that have been a part of the history of your church and take time for confession and healing for all fall short of God’s purpose for our lives. (Romans 3:22-24)

4) Begin the process of visioning:

Again, there are a multitude of resources available to congregations for the process of planning and visioning. The UMVitalCongregations.org website offers key tools that will support this process. The **Vital Congregations Planning Guide** walks the leadership through a process of visioning and planning on becoming a healthier and more vital congregation. The **Measures and Evaluation** companion to the Vital Congregations Planning guide gives you more resources and tools to utilize in moving forward in the visioning process. There are also several key conference staff resources that are readily available to work with the congregation in the process of visioning.

- a) Pray for the leadership as they discern God’s vision for this congregation’s future. (It might be helpful to have the team utilize a prayer devotional that everyone would covenant to practicing daily until the next meeting.)
- b) Go online to the UMVitalCongregations.org website and print the report with the congregations future projections on the “Goal-Setting” tab of the website. This tool will help the leadership as they discern the path that they are currently on and what might need to change in order to change the projection of the congregation.

5) Set the goals that help achieve the Vision:

Take time as to prayerfully consider the goals that will help the congregation achieve the Vision. Each congregation is invited to becoming a healthy and more vital congregation. According to the Call to Action research, there are **16 Drivers/Ministries/Strategies** (available in the Planning Guide and online) that more healthy and vital congregations have in common. As a leadership group, make a covenant to set the goals and do all things possible to achieve these goals. (IE: There will be a number of resources, modules, and tools, etc. available for your congregation to assist in reaching these goals. UMVitalCongregations.org)

6) Plan and Prepare

Take time to assemble and plan the details of charge conference. For charge conference you will need to be sure to have these things in order:

- o Leadership for worship (and any worship elements needed. You may want to use your prayer team for this role. There is a **Charge Conference Worship Guide** available at UMVitalCongregations.org)
- o Charge Conference Forms – for the Annual Conference
- o Charge Conference Forms – for GCFA
- o Prepare an agenda in coordination with the District Superintendent

The Day of Charge Conference

1) Prayer

Take time to continue to pray for direction and vision for your congregation. The more people praying for God's vision for this congregation, the stronger and healthier your congregation will continue to become.

2) Worship

It is important to remember that in our Wesleyan tradition, we gather in worship and use the means of grace as our path towards righteousness. As leaders of the church, the charge conference should always be conducted in a spirit of worship, reminding us of God's presence, God's purpose and God's vision for our lives. (**Charge Conference Worship Guide** is another resource available online.)

3) Stories of Success and Challenge

Traditionally, a congregation has received reports for charge conference. In our history, the stories of our faith gave inspiration to hope for vitality and possibilities in the church. Take time to share the stories of success and acknowledge the challenges that this congregation faces.

4) Cast the Vision and Set the Goals

Invite every charge conference participant to receive the vision for this congregation. Share the goals that will get lead them to fulfilling the vision and mission of the church. Celebrate this vision as a gift to God for the glory of God. Allow everyone to accept and participate in being a part of the covenant to achieving the goals that lead the congregation to the Mission of the church.

The Day(s) After Charge Conference

Go to the UMVitalCongregations.org website and plug in the goals that were set by the congregation at Charge Conference. The goals will be collected by each district, conference and then presented at General Conference 2012.

OR

Print the Form Below and submit to your District Superintendent:

CHURCH NAME: _____ **DISTRICT:** _____

CLERGY LEADERSHIP: _____

A. SETTING VITAL CHURCH GOALS – SPIRITUAL GUIDEPOSTS FOR YOUR FUTURE

These commitments will be gathered by your annual conference and presented to General Conference as an offering from your congregation. Reviewing the material above and identify a realistic target for each of the five areas for 2012-2015.

People and Ministry	2012	2013	2014	2015
1. Disciples worship Average worship attendance				
2. Disciples make new disciples Number of people who will join by profession of faith				
3. Disciples engage in growing as a disciple Number of small groups, Sunday school classes and Bible studies.				
4. Disciples engage in mission Number of people from the congregation engaged in local, national and international mission/outreach				
5. Disciples give to mission The total amount given by your congregation to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries (this amount includes apportionments paid and support for all United Methodist and non-United Methodist organizations active in work such as advocacy, education, health, justice, mercy, outreach, and welfare anywhere in the world)				

