

Creation of Cross-Conference Vitality Commission

Whereas we recognize that God’s people have been called throughout history to the ongoing work of innovation and vital ministry development, as our faithful response to God’s continuous restorative movement in the world; and

Whereas we assert that our collective response to the decline of the institutional church must be a redoubled commitment to embedding the practices of vitality (namely, inclusion, innovation, and multiplication) in the culture of every church and faith community; and

Whereas we recognize that focused institutional support and clear processes are essential to the ongoing cultivation of innovation and vitality across the episcopal area; and

Whereas the annual conferences in the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area have the same bishop, share a joint cabinet, have one Innovation Vitality Team (IV Team), and are moving toward increased financial collaboration; and

Whereas the report *A Plain Account of the Strategy, Work, and Processes of the Innovation Vitality Team* (published in March 2021) calls for the creation of a single area-wide governance structure, called the Greater Northwest Vitality Council, to “begin the next phase of more productive planning, oversight, ownership, and strategic development”; and

Whereas significant research and preparation is required if an area-wide governance structure is to come into being; and

Whereas an optimal approach to supporting innovation and vitality – whether in a new church start or an existing congregation — must be flexible, contextual, responsive, accessible, and include the following elements:

- Emphasize a decolonized and anti-racist approach to the work of innovation & vitality
- Uplift the leadership of BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) and other traditionally marginalized persons
- Have a clear point of entry for new projects and leaders
- Prioritize context and thorough site vetting
- Recruit, assess, and train leaders for vitality work
- Emphasize contextually appropriate “goalposts”: what are we working toward?
- Support innovative leadership with ongoing coaching, funding, and other resources
- Include a dynamic strategic planning and evaluation process
- Extend mutual accountability and ensure wise stewardship of resources
- Embrace and celebrate failure as a worthy part of innovation
- Capture and share learnings across the episcopal area; and

Whereas an independent area-wide commission with a mandate to clarify, support, and champion innovation & vitality practices in the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area is critically important if we are to uplift and address these themes in a robust fashion;

Therefore Be it Resolved: The bishop will appoint a cross-conference working group called the Vitality Commission, comprised of no more than twelve persons (six laity and six clergy), with no less than seven members representing historically marginalized people groups (particularly BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities), and to include at least two planters/innovators, to focus on the following tasks for a period of one year:

1. Research the de facto roles and responsibilities of the Innovation Vitality Team, bishop, Greater Northwest Area Cabinet, funding/governance bodies, and planters/innovators;
 - a. clarify roles and responsibilities and develop options for a workable support & accountability framework;
 - b. communicate quarterly progress and make recommendations to the bishop, cabinet, and conference-level governance bodies (Alaska Vitality Team, Oregon-Idaho Congregational Development Team, and Pacific Northwest Board of Congregational Development) as appropriate.
2. Review the flow of existing vitality processes and communication patterns to identify institutional roadblocks, holes, and redundancies;
 - a. develop innovative solutions that clarify workflow, streamline communication, and release creativity;
 - b. communicate quarterly progress and make recommendations to the bishop, cabinet, and conference-level governance bodies.
3. Based on the outcomes of task two (2) above, explore the institutional and legal requirements for merging existing conference-level governance bodies into a single Greater Northwest Vitality Council;
 - a. communicate findings to the bishop, cabinet, and conference-level governance structures;
 - b. activate existing conference-level governance structures to cultivate broad-based support for an area-wide governance body;
 - c. as appropriate, direct a subgroup or separate working group to draft the necessary legislation for the formation of the Greater Northwest Vitality Council at each annual conference session in 2022.

Be it further resolved, that the Vitality Commission will make a full report of its work and associated recommendations available at each annual conference's session in 2022.

Be it further resolved, that the work of the Vitality Commission may be extended for one (1) additional year by action of the annual conferences in 2022.

Submitted June 2021

David Reinholz
Chair, Board of Congregational Development
Pacific Northwest Annual Conference

Keren Rodriguez
Chair, Congregational Development Team

Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference

Erin Baldwin Day

Chair, Vitality Team

Alaska Annual Conference