

EPIC Training Event - Mission Table Workshop
Congregational Vitality

I. Reflection on Psalm 145

1. How does this text call you to grow deeper with God?

II. Congregational Vitality: What is it?

1. ELCA definition: *“As the ELCA looks ahead to the future, we aspire to have congregations whose faith shines in their relationships with God, each other, and their community. Vital congregations experience heightened worship, prayer, study of scripture, and sharing of testimony as they discern the presence and will of God in their midst.”*¹

2. Focusing in three different areas our faith and ministry the goal is help create environments where vitality can take root. Vitality is NOT about numbers or some of the usual metrics for rating success.

III. Growing Deeper with God:

1. Leadership articulates how God shows up in and through the congregation and its people.
2. The congregation has a clear understanding of God’s larger mission and members know their purpose in this time and place.
3. The congregation can articulate that purpose and create a plan for implementation.

IV. Growing Deeper with One Another:

1. Relationships among leadership, pastor(s) and staff, and members create a loving community with good communication.
2. People work together respectfully through successes and challenges.
3. There is a sense of ownership and belonging that drives the commitment and engagement in the mission of the church.

V. Growing Deeper with Your Community:

1. The congregation opens its doors to welcome the stranger and goes beyond its doors to share the love of Jesus Christ.
2. Creates and nurtures partnerships within the community to make a positive impact on the strength of the community.

VI. Want to Learn More? Renew 145!

1. see handout

¹ <https://www.elca.org/Future-Directions/CongVitality>

EPIC Training Event - Congregational Vitality Workshop Effective Practices

1. Ideas that foster “Growing Deeper with God.”

- i.** Introduce questions in large group congregational activities asking: How is God speaking to you in the text? This enables people to think concretely about God’s activity in their lives.
- ii.** Spontaneous Prayer! Most people are used to the pastor or worship leader taking charge with the prayers. In a few chosen places begin to ask someone (be sure they are someone confident and comfortable with speaking in a group.) to lead a spontaneous prayer. Other ideas are the “Popcorn Prayer” where someone opens and lets others add any specific prayer before closing.
- iii.** Reflection Time in Sermons: This can be awkward at first, but giving the congregation time to reflect on the sermon by asking them to answer questions with a partner, or by having the preacher field questions on the fly can be a great way to introduce this.

2. Ideas that foster “Growing Deeper with One Another.”

- These are best done in smaller group settings, but some are possible in large ones.

- i.** What were your highs/lows, God sightings.
- ii.** Try having a “Birthday Coffee Hour.”
- iii.** Introduce prayer partners during specific seasons, like Lent.
- iv.** Support one another by attending each other’s events!

3. Ideas that foster “Growing Deeper with Community:

- i.** Easter handout of ministry opportunities
- ii.** Canvassing the neighborhood! It’s back again! (but different!)
- iii.** Play tic-tac toe! Find out your local groups like homeowners associations, school principals, local feeding programs, nearby business!