



Unity. Charity. Jesus Christ.

Church Vitality Assessment



Evangelical Free Church of Canada
Church Vitality Assessment
10 Key Focus Areas

Healthy organizations and organisms are in a constant state of evaluation to determine effectiveness and health given the continuously changing context of ministry and needs of people both inside and outside the church. Measuring the health of church ministry has always been difficult, but there are activities and priorities that are clearly important to the life of a healthy church, and can thus serve as indicators of a vital church. This assessment tool has identified 10 of the most significant priorities, in order to provide local churches with an accessible resource to help them assess their own strength and health, based on the vibrancy of these priorities in their church.

These are ten key areas of church life that we understand to be essential, and strategic, for healthy churches. While neither exhaustive nor exclusive, we believe that these are key to the vitality of a local church. The ten focus areas are (somewhat) naturally divided as “organic” or “organizational,” as per below.

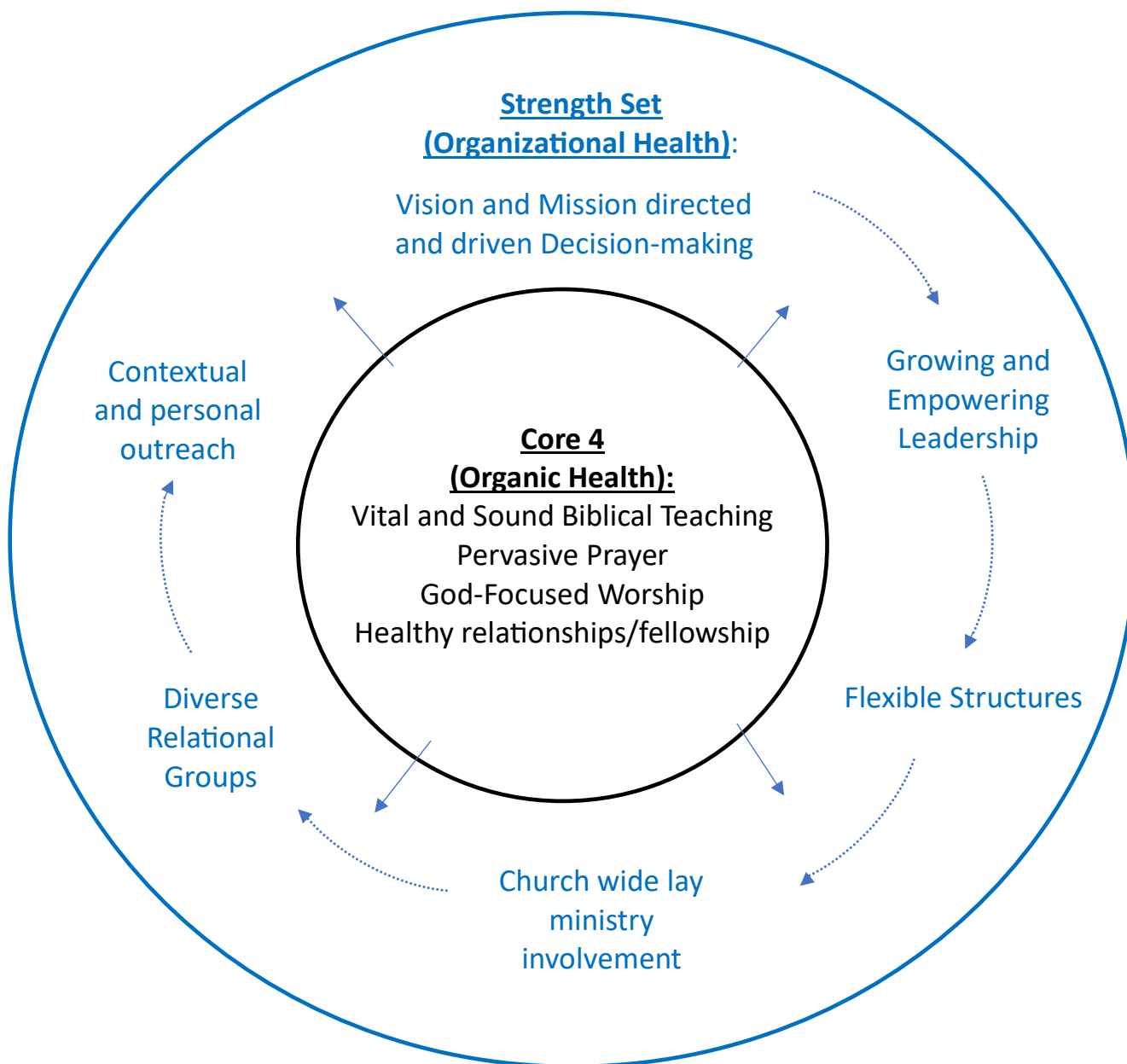
The Model:

- **Organic Health Priorities (THE CORE FOUR):**
 - Vital (connected to the world) and Sound (connected to the Word) Biblical Teaching
 - Pervasive Prayer
 - God-Exalting Worship
 - Healthy relationships/fellowship

- **Organizational Health Priorities (THE STRENGTH SET):**
 - Growing and Empowering Leadership
 - Vision and Mission directed and driven Decision-making
 - Diverse Relational Groups
 - Church wide lay ministry involvement
 - Flexible Structures
 - Contextual and personal outreach

The “organic” focus areas (*the CORE FOUR*) are the primary building blocks of a vital church ministry. It is out of them that the other focus areas grow and are nurtured. The “*strength set*” are the focus areas that build organizational health for a church. And while these 10 priorities are not strictly linear, there is a natural flow one can follow that could be beneficial in leveraging some priorities to the benefit of others by following this natural directional flow. This is illustrated in the circular directional flow in the diagram below. It is not recommended that any church attempt to focus on all 10 of these at once, but rather identify which area(s) would provide the greatest “return on investment” at this time in the life of the Church.

Church Vitality “Key Focus Areas” Diagram



The Assessment:

The description of each of the priority areas, along with the attached questions, are provided to help churches do a self-analysis to determine where they would most benefit from some strategic attention. There is a score sheet at the end of this document to aid in this self-analysis. To be even more productive, it is suggested (though not required) that a church send their responses to these questions to their District Superintendent for an objective appraisal, verifying the most strategic areas for the church to work on.

You will note that the questions are formed as a self-diagnosis. It is recognized that the questions are quite “general” in nature. The intention is not to measure any church against other church, or even a collection of other churches, but rather to get the church leadership thinking about these issues and potentially highlight where they should be spending some time. We believe that a prayerful and honest consideration of these key areas by those who know the church best is a great forward step for any church. The questions are simply meant to wave flags at the right things for future and further discussion. Some of these questions may seem

trivial and superficial, but remember that these questions are simply a guide to help identify areas for further discussion in an effort to see what areas of church ministry might benefit most from focussed attention.

10 Key Focus Areas:

1. Vital and Sound Bible Teaching

1.1. Markers:

- 1.1.1. Messages are clearly based on Scripture (sound)
- 1.1.2. There are numerous delivery methods used by the church to teach
- 1.1.3. Teaching is accessible and applicable
- 1.1.4. Biblical teaching is provided for all demographics
- 1.1.5. Teaching is about transformation – life change (vital) not simply information
- 1.1.6. Teaching is robust and wholistic, in other words, it digs deep at appropriate times and covers the whole spectrum of God’s story as revealed in Scripture

1.2. Questions:

- 1.2.1. *How many different teaching environments do you have?*
- 1.2.2. *Do you have teaching environments for each age group?*
- 1.2.3. *Do you provide any teaching for seekers? New Christians?*
- 1.2.4. *What percentage of messages include action steps of some kind?*
- 1.2.5. *How much time is your pastor provided for message preparation?*
- 1.2.6. *When was the last time you heard a testimony of how someone’s life and/or thinking was transformed, encouraged, or changed by the sermon or Bible teaching?*
- 1.2.7. *How long since your church had teaching/preaching from the Old Testament history books? From the Old Testament Wisdom books? From the Old Testament Prophetic books? From the Gospels? From the Epistles?*

2. Growing and Empowering Leadership

2.1. Markers:

- 2.1.1. There is a plan for and practise of leadership development
- 2.1.2. There is a diversity in leadership teams
- 2.1.3. Board structures and relationships are healthy and united (not unanimous)
- 2.1.4. Youth are invited into leadership experiences

2.2. Questions:

- 2.2.1. *Do you have any plan for leadership development?*
- 2.2.2. *Do you involve young people in a meaningful way in Sunday services?*
- 2.2.3. *Do you have men, women, and different ethnic backgrounds involved in ministry decision-making at some level?*
- 2.2.4. *Does your board spend time together for personal connection and prayer?*
- 2.2.5. *Do you have a regular board retreat?*
- 2.2.6. *What percentage of your board members regularly speak into any issue?*
- 2.2.7. *Does your church have a way of identifying individuals of any age who have pastoral leadership gifts and encourage them towards a possible call to ministry?*
- 2.2.8. *Does your church have an intentional plan/method of engaging people in mentorship that invests in them as leaders?*

3. “Vision and mission” Directed and Driven Decision-making

3.1. Markers:

- 3.1.1. The vision and mission of the church are clear and well known and inspiring

- 3.1.2. The vision and mission of the church are clearly used to direct decisions and programs
- 3.1.3. The church has a clear discipleship pathway, and it is taken into account in ministry decisions
- 3.1.4. Assessments and evaluations are based on mission and vision outcomes
- 3.2. Questions:
 - 3.2.1. *How many board members can recite the mission and vision statement without any prompts?*
 - 3.2.2. *How many staff and/or ministry leaders can recite the mission and vision statement without prompts?*
 - 3.2.3. *How long has it been since the board “reviewed” your mission, vision, and values documents?*
 - 3.2.4. *Do you have a discipleship pathway developed and communicated?*
 - 3.2.5. *Do you regularly assess the effectiveness of ministries?*
 - 3.2.5.1. *Do you assess ministries based on vision and values?*
 - 3.2.6. *How are you mission/vision/values kept in front of the church family?*

4. Pervasive Prayer

- 4.1. Markers:
 - 4.1.1. Regular prayer is modeled by pastors and leadership
 - 4.1.2. Prayer is practised publicly in the church
 - 4.1.3. Intergenerational prayer is encouraged and empowered
 - 4.1.4. Prayer is embedded in all activities in some way
 - 4.1.5. There is regular teaching on prayer, and celebration/stories about the power of prayer
 - 4.1.6. Church gives attention to hearing from God
- 4.2. Questions:
 - 4.2.1. *Do you have some form of pastoral prayer regularly in your services, modeling prayer for others?*
 - 4.2.2. *How long since you had a sermon series on prayer?*
 - 4.2.3. *Do you (and how do you) connect different generations through prayer?*
 - 4.2.4. *How often do people call the elders to pray over the sick?*
 - 4.2.5. *How long since a story of answered prayer has been told in the church?*
 - 4.2.6. *Do you have a ministry committed solely to prayer?*
 - 4.2.7. *Does your leadership meet, or set aside time, to pray regularly together?*

5. Healthy relationships and fellowship

- 5.1. Markers:
 - 5.1.1. A church will be unable to accomplish much mission together without relationships that are healthy.
 - 5.1.2. Fellowship in the church may take many forms, but it is a necessary component of what it means to be a part of the family of God.
- 5.2. Questions:
 - 5.2.1. *What events have you regularly hosted to build fellowship among the church family?*
 - 5.2.2. *What percentage of people stay longer than 10 minutes after any given service?*
 - 5.2.3. *How often do people from your church engage in spontaneous (not planned by the church) social interactions?*
 - 5.2.4. *How many people would identify your church family as their primary social group outside of their family?*
 - 5.2.5. *Are you presently doing anything intentional to connect differing generations?*

6. God-Exalting Worship

- 6.1. Markers:
 - 6.1.1. The church’s worship times are focused on God, not self
 - 6.1.2. The church’s expressions of worship are appropriate to the local context

- 6.1.3. Worship is participatory for the entire church, not simply stage performance
- 6.1.4. Worship services are visitor friendly
- 6.1.5. Worship services are Word centered, and the sermon is seldom sacrificed or short changed
- 6.1.6. Worship includes celebration stories

6.2. Questions:

- 6.2.1. *How many different people are involved in serving in worship services? (and how many people are there in your church family?)*
- 6.2.2. *What percentage of your Sunday service time is given over to teaching/preaching?*
- 6.2.3. *Are songs picked independently of sermon topics, or aligned with the sermon?*
- 6.2.4. *What do you do to welcome newcomers to church on Sundays?*
- 6.2.5. *Who is allowed to park closest to the door (besides handicapped)?*
- 6.2.6. *What percentage of your songs would be considered contemporary? What percentage would be considered traditional?*
- 6.2.7. *How many non-musical worship elements are regularly included in your worship service (e.g., communion, prayer, liturgies, readings, art, other spiritual practices, etc.)?*
- 6.2.8. *How well do the people in your congregation engage with non-musical worship elements of your worship?*
- 6.2.9. *How does teaching on worship help your congregation see all of life as an act of worship?*
- 6.2.10. *How often are there testimonies or celebration stories shared during your worship service?*

7. Diverse Relational Groups

7.1. Markers:

- 7.1.1. The church has various sizes and demographics of “small” and “medium sized” groups
- 7.1.2. Groups are active in pastoral care
- 7.1.3. Groups are focused on discipleship
- 7.1.4. Groups have multiplication in their DNA
- 7.1.5. There is space in groups (or actual groups) for all demographics (age, marital status, etc.)

7.2. Questions:

- 7.2.1. *Do you have a strategic small groups ministry plan?*
- 7.2.2. *What percentage of church adults are active in a small group?*
- 7.2.3. *What percentage of youth/young adults are active in a small group?*
- 7.2.4. *What is the average tenure of your small groups? (i.e. how long has that group been functioning with those same people?)*
- 7.2.5. *How many empty spaces do you have in small groups?*
- 7.2.6. *How many of your small groups use mainly topical video material?*
- 7.2.7. *Are small groups ever asked to take care of a pastoral need (either within their group or outside it)?*
- 7.2.8. *Do you train small group leaders?*
- 7.2.9. *How can someone get into a small group?*

8. Contextual and Personal Outreach

8.1. Markers:

- 8.1.1. The church budgets significant resources to ministry outside of their own walls and church family, including mission support
- 8.1.2. The church is involved in local community ministries
- 8.1.3. The church is involved in some justice issues
- 8.1.4. The church practises outreach that is relevant to their context
- 8.1.5. The Church family are encouraged to serve in their community, not just in the church

8.2. Questions:

- 8.2.1. *What percentage of your church budget goes to ministries outside the church?*
- 8.2.2. *What local ministries does your church participate in?*
- 8.2.3. *How long has it been since you had any training, or preaching, on how to share the gospel?*
- 8.2.4. *Does your church celebrate in the church context ministry that its members do outside of the church?*
- 8.2.5. *Does your support of international missions include support that goes beyond just sending money? (prayer, communication, visits, live stream updates.....)*
- 8.2.6. *How many people can identify by name and place of service the missionaries you support?*

9. Church-Wide Lay Ministry involvement

9.1. Markers:

- 9.1.1. All levels of leadership and all church ministries include the possibility of lay involvement
- 9.1.2. The younger generation is given meaningful opportunities to serve
- 9.1.3. The church includes training (and internships) for lay leaders
- 9.1.4. Opportunities to testify/share with the church family what God is teaching and doing in his/her life.

9.2. Questions:

- 9.2.1. *What is age must someone be before they can become voting members of the church?*
- 9.2.2. *What is the age requirement for someone to be on an elected church committee or team?*
- 9.2.3. *Do you have intentional training for leaders?*
- 9.2.4. *Do you have budget allowance for professional development for staff, but also for elected leaders?*
- 9.2.5. *How often do people share their stories of ministry and Christian life in a church service?*
- 9.2.6. *Who determines the budget for specific ministries?*
- 9.2.7. *How many of your leaders (every level) are currently mentoring someone to replace themselves?*
- 9.2.8. *How many lay preachers are known, trained/equipped and given pulpit time?*
- 9.2.9. *Is there a pathway for individuals other than the pastor to learn to preach and teach effectively?*

10. Flexible Structures

10.1. Markers:

- 10.1.1. Structures are regularly reviewed and updated
- 10.1.2. Structures or ministries that no longer are effective for the mission and vision are suspended
- 10.1.3. Job descriptions are revisited and sometimes changed by leadership as needs arise
- 10.1.4. Leadership structures that embrace recruitment of younger men and women, giving them responsibility and authority

10.2. Questions:

- 10.2.1. *How long since a review of your constitutional and committee structure has been done?*
- 10.2.2. *How many committees are in your constitution that no longer function?*
- 10.2.3. *How many pages long is your constitution?*
- 10.2.4. *Do you have any official statements on marriage or sexuality?*

Implementation: This model is designed to provide a tool that a local church can work through on their own. It can be as simple as walking through the questions, and from the responses to the questions prayerfully determining which priority area needs the most immediate attention as a church. Which area has the least number of satisfactory responses to the questions? It is likely that one or two areas will be exposed as soft spots for the church, which then the leadership can push into in a more intentional way.

While this can be done as a self-study, there is benefit in engaging your District Superintendent to give an objective overview of the responses to determine the areas which would be most strategically valuable. You can engage your District Superintendent at any point in the process, right from the very beginning if you wish. Your District Superintendent will likely be able to direct your leadership to resources to help invest in any area of vitality needed by your church. Thus, you are encouraged to keep your D.S. up to date on your progress and results as you consider this.

This is not an onerous or difficult process. The hard work comes in giving attention to one or two key areas of vitality for your church. We trust this will be helpful for your leadership and your church.



**Church Vitality
Self Assessment Score Sheet**

Instructions: After reviewing the questions for each of the Focus Areas collectively determine a score out of 10 for each area, and include a statement or two explaining your score decision.

<u>Church Vitality Key Focus Area</u>	<u>“Self-assigned Score</u>	<u>Comments</u>
<u>The Core Four (Organic Health Priorities):</u>		
Vital and Sound Teaching		
Pervasive Prayer		
Healthy Relationships and fellowship		
God-Exalting Worship		
<u>The Strength Set (Organizational Health Priorities):</u>		
Growing and Empowering Leadership		
Vision and Mission Directed and Driven Decision-making		
Diverse Relational Groups		
Contextual and Personal Outreach		
Church-Wide Lay Ministry Involvement		
Flexible Structures		