

**Questions and Answers Regarding the Revitalization Process:
Communities of Practice**

The Committee on Church Revitalization and Transformation
Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

1. **Q: Do we need to pay any money when applying?**

A: No. Once the churches selected for the first cohort are notified, they will arrange their payment with the Presbytery, in consultation with the CCRT. The actual application is sent to Evan Harrison of the CCRT.

2. **Q: How do we know if our church is READY to apply?**

A: See if a core group of people in the church is interested in discovering how to use your hidden energy to live into a fresh vision—God’s preferred future. Your pastor (if you have one right now) needs to be on board. Session must agree to support the project financially. Session also is responsible for selecting the Balcony Team, working with it regularly, and encouraging the congregation to be involved. That’s all it takes!

3. **Q: If we apply, does this mean that there is something “wrong” with us?**

A: Not at all--your readiness to be part of this process means that you are beginning to be aware of changes that affect the life and witness of your church. Your awareness is leading you to a prayerful discovery of possibility and promise rather than despair.

4. **Q: What are we actually committing to? What will this look like if we’re chosen?**

A: You will be told if your church been accepted and then given instructions on how to select 4-8 people for your “Balcony Team”. CCRT will figure out the best meeting location, based on which churches are participating. The Balcony Teams from each congregation will meet together once a month. Each Team will decide how to engage its own congregation with the spiritual practices, communication, and other activities. The Thompsons will give tips on how to do this. Each Balcony Team checks in with the Thompsons at least once between meetings, to share how things are going, to talk about any challenges they are facing, and to get help on what to do--so the process doesn’t lose momentum.

5. **Q: We have a copy of Grace for the Journey, so can’t we do this on our own?**

A: Grace for the Journey is not a “how-to” book; instead, it provides models and metaphors that are designed for congregational self-discovery and spiritual nurture. In the Thompsons’ experience, churches have a hard time going through a renewal process without coaching. We live in a quick-fix, instant-answers world that leaves churches frustrated and discouraged. Traveling on a journey with others provides safe space for reflection, insight, encouragement, and new ideas.

6. **Q: This is only for small churches or churches on the brink of failure, right?**

A: No; a church with over 200 and 300 people in worship still can lose sight of God’s call for today, especially as its community changes around them. This is a great process even for large churches to use for discovering what God’s fresh call on their lives might be.

7. Q: **What if our church is so small that we can't even afford to pay a Commissioned Ruling Elder?**

A: The Thompsons are willing to set up a modified version of this renewal process for very small congregations who are highly motivated to seek God's future.

8. Q: **This process is mainly for churches with pastors, right?**

A: Communities of Practice can be *perfect* for congregations in transition or preparing to search for a pastor! Imagine what it would feel like to call a pastor if you truly know who your congregation is, who are the people around you, and what God is calling *your* congregation to do. Intentional interim pastors are perfect shepherds for such a process! Most pastors want to know what they're getting into, so your having worked on identity and purpose will make your CIF more attractive to the best candidates.

9. Q: **What are the results of churches who have worked through this process before?**

A: Congregations who previously have worked with the Thompsons report how they continue using the tools years later when dealing with all kinds of new issues. They also say that their churches have developed some of the strongest and healthiest session leadership that their churches have experienced. That said, our Presbytery is doing something NEW and exciting! We are allowing the Thompsons to serve as *coaches* instead of *consultants*, to work with congregations in a more consistent, intensive way.

10. Q: **What's the difference between *consultants* and *coaches*?**

A: *Consultants* typically are hired to solve the *one technical* problem you ask them to address. They do research, report their findings, make recommendations, and usually provide little if any follow-up services. Churches who hire consultants often discover later that "the issue" addressed did not resolve the problem. *Coaching*, however, approaches the opportunity differently. Coaches do not offer answers as much as the right kinds of questions and processes that help the congregation discover their own answers.

In particular, church coaching centers on learning to hear God's call in a new day, to follow that call with new insight, and to anticipate the bumps along the way. This means that the coaches work on developing trust, asking the right questions, and shepherding the congregation through two years of spiritual exercises, deeper levels of conversation and exciting new experiences.

11. Q: **It sounds like a good opportunity, but how could we afford it?**

A: It's free to apply. You only pay if you are chosen and decide to participate. The churches who have talked to Evan Harrison (CCRT Chair) about their financial concerns come away encouraged to apply, having found a reasonable arrangement should they be chosen. We won't let money be the reason to stop you from participating...so don't let it stop *you*!

12. Q: **We know we should be doing something, but are not sure the timing is right. Understand?**

A: We know that churches were not just sitting around twiddling their thumbs before the Thompsons came, but we also know that the world around us is changing much more quickly than most of even the largest congregations can respond. If you want to wait, that's your call. But perhaps, down the road, your church might wish it knew more about who it is, and what you are being called to do...

13. Q: **We're a larger congregation who doesn't need this, but would love to help a smaller church that does. Can we partner with them?**

A: That is very generous! We can take you up on that--but read answer #6, too. ☺ We can help motivated smaller churches with financial arrangements, but it has been more challenging for us to motivate larger churches who could benefit from this process. It is easy for comfortable churches to dismiss changes in the community that will affect their life and witness.

14. Q: **What happens to us if we are not selected?**

A: The plan is that new cohorts of Communities of Practice will begin, depending on the number of churches in "waiting" and scheduling details. The Thompsons encourage all interested congregations to read and discuss Grace for the Journey. They also would be in touch with those churches who applied, suggesting things to do to help the church get more "ready" for the next selection round.