

Mountain Sky Conference of the United Methodist Church CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY INNOVATION GRANT APPLICATION

The following priorities are deemed critical to shifting local church culture toward greater vitality in the Mountain Sky Conference (MSC): intentional discipleship, invitational evangelism, missional engagement, worship excellence, simple and effective local church governance, stewardship & finance, and leadership development. Grants will be awarded based on the evidence-based and mission shaped content of proposals. Strong proposals will promote the best practices of spiritual formation, collaborative learning and ministry, and innovative experimentation. Applicants may refer to the document “Supporting Vital Congregations,” included with this application, for a more detailed exploration of the processes, priorities, and strategies involved in intentionally making disciples and increasing local church vitality.

Vitality Innovation Grants are awarded by the Congregational Vitality Committee (CVC) from budgeted MSC funds and/or designated MSC funds. These grants are intended to encourage one-time experimental or entrepreneurial projects which may require more financial support than is currently available in existing ministry settings (or among ministry settings where collaboration is involved). While the CVC encourages creativity, applicants will be expected to provide documentation of research supporting the project. Vitality Resource Grants are available to assist in compiling this documentation. A Congregational Resource Minister (CRM), where available, should be involved in identifying resources most pertinent to a particular setting and/or project. Applications will require the approval of a District Superintendent (DS).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VITALITY INNOVATION GRANT APPLICATIONS:

1. **A team should be involved** in applying for the grant. Priority will be given to applications made on behalf of an invested group or collaborative effort between ministry settings, in contrast to an individual in the ministry setting(s) involved.
2. **Applications for Vitality Innovation Grants are received prior to one of two annual due dates—January 31st and July 31st.** An applicant may request one grant every calendar year, and only one grant will be awarded per project. Grant request will be considered within 30 days of receipt of a complete application.
3. **Awards up to \$5000 per project will be made.** Applications should include local methods of support, with preference given to projects not wholly dependent on this grant funding. The CVC acknowledges that funds available for these grants are contributed sacrificially by the congregations of the MSC through their wider mission shares giving, thus responsible disbursement should require demonstrated investment by the applicant.
4. As a condition of receiving a Vitality Innovation Grant, the applicant is expected to provide **written and video reports** documenting the learning/awareness/growth achieved in the course of the project, as well as expected next steps in the ministry setting. Helpful reports will revisit the SMART goals outlined in the proposal (keeping in mind that failures and unexpected obstacles encountered can be vital steps in the learning process necessary to achieving eventual successes!). These reports should be received by the CVC **within six months of receipt of grant funds**. Timely receipt of these reports will be considered in the awarding of future grants. They should be sent to the Vitality Office at vitality@mtnskyumc.org.

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APPLICANT (Church or Ministry Name):

Committee/Group/Team submitting request:			
Name of project:			
<u>Contact Persons (two required):</u>			
Name:			
Phone#:		Email:	
Address:			
Name:			
Phone#:		Email:	
Address:			

FINANCIAL SUPPORT REQUESTED:

Cost of Resource:	\$
Total Amount Requested:	\$
Amount raised and/or committed by Applicant from local sources:	\$

Include a detailed description and schedule of how the funds are to be spent once received (including documentation supporting particular expenses over \$250).

RATIONALE AND PROCESS:

Please respond in detail to the following statements and questions. Responses may be included within the application document or attached on separate pages.

- 1. DESCRIBE HOW THIS GRANT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO MAKING DISCIPLES AND TRANSFORMING YOUR COMMUNITY (including consideration of the following):**
 - a. Describe the “big picture” of your ministry setting and how you envision impacting your surrounding community through this project.**
 - b. How was the need for this particular new ministry project determined (including documentation of sources and resources utilized)?**
 - c. Who are the new people and where are the new places being reached?**
 - d. With whom might your team work to maximize the effectiveness of your project (for example: a CRM, coach, or other resource specialist), and how will you access them?**
 - e. Which of the seven priorities listed above (in the first page’s first paragraph, and fleshed out in the document appended to this application) are in view as you apply for this grant?**
 - f. How does the project prioritize discipleship over membership and mission over attraction?**
 - g. Describe the ministry team overseeing this project.**
 - h. How will the strategies of “Pray, Partner, and Practice” (as described in the document appended to this application) be incorporated in your plan?**

- 2. WHAT ARE THE GOAL(S) AND ANTICIPATED OUTCOME(S) OF UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT (thinking in terms of the elements of SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented, and Timely)? How will these goals and outcomes be measured through methods such as surveys, interviews, and/or other feedback methods?**

- 3. DESCRIBE THE ANTICIPATED TIMELINE—START TO FINISH—FOR UTILIZING THE RESOURCE (including who will be responsible for submitting the concluding reports—written and video—within six months of receipt of grant funds):**

APPLICATION REVIEW:

Signatures below signify that the undersigned have **reviewed the completed application and support the proposal as presented.** Comments, suggestions, or reservations should be included in the space provided or in a separate email. Document may be signed electronically if an email stating review and support is received from undersigned by the Vitality Office.

Administrative Council, Church Council or governing body Chair	Name:
Comments:	Signed: Date:
Senior Pastor	Name:
Comments:	Signed: Date:
Congregational Resource Minister or District Superintendent	Name:
Comments:	Signed: Date:

Completed applications should be submitted to:

Vitality Office, c/o Mountain Sky Conference, 6110 Greenwood Plaza Blvd. Greenwood Village, CO 80111-4803	
Phone: 303-389-9496 (metro) 1-800-536-3736 (elsewhere)	Email: vitality@mtnskyumc.org
Questions prior to submission should be directed to Jeff Rainwater at jrainwater@mtnskyumc.org or Nathan Adams at nathan@phumc.org	

RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTIONS OF CVC (to be completed by CVC):

Date of Application Consideration:		
<input type="checkbox"/> REQUEST APPROVED	Amount Approved:	\$
Condition(s) of Approval (if any) Recommended:		
<input type="checkbox"/> REQUEST DECLINED		
Reason(s) for Denial that are to be communicated with applicant:		
CVC member responsible for Follow-up:		

SUPPORTING VITAL CONGREGATIONS

CULTURE

Acts 2:42-47

“The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God’s goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.”

As the churches that make up the Mountain Sky Conference (MSC) we will move from seeking safety, security, and survival to living as holy, risk-taking, transformational communities. We will offer hope, healing, and nourishment for abundant life. Laity and clergy will partner as we attend to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our context. We will name where God is at work and invite others to join in what God is doing.

DEFINITIONS

A disciple is someone whose life is being transformed by the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit as they practice the ways of Jesus Christ.

A vital church is one that invites new people into a life of discipleship and deepens the discipleship of those who are part of their community in an intentional way.

MAKING AND STRENGTHENING DISCIPLES

Jesus told his followers, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given to you,” (Matthew 28:19 -20).

And those commands were,

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength. The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandments are greater than these,” (Mark 12:30-31).

To make new disciples, we must first **be** disciples. We must show by example that we love one another – by respecting differing views and offering kindness and respect to each other. Disciples, in turn, will inspire a renewed movement towards greater disciple making by living out the foundational Christian practices found in the Wesleyan Cross of discipleship (see below). The cross focuses on two axes. The first is the call to love God and love neighbor. The

second axis embodies John Wesley’s focus on personal and social (communal) holiness. These two axes combine to give us four distinct areas: devotion, worship, mercy and justice.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, embedded into the movement a focus on deepening the discipleship of fellow Methodists as well as inviting new people into a life of faith. In many cases, however, the modern church has done a better job creating members than disciples. We have cultivated an environment where our congregants understand the obligations of church involvement but are not as able to experience the movement of the Holy Spirit.

As we acknowledge and come to understand this situation, we must boldly claim the truth that the living God is still at work around the world, in our neighborhoods, and in our own lives. **This recognition is key to any congregation’s future health.**

Building on the Wesleyan Cross of discipleship we will develop a shared language consistent across conference, district, circuit and local church levels. This will be a language that will unite our efforts and will be flexible enough to allow for contextualization across our area.



Devotion: These are acts where an individual’s focus is oriented toward God. This could take the form of a daily prayer practice before bed or when you rise. It could be reading a book or devotional resource, or a practice of gratitude or self-reflection. It could be a form of physical prayer through movement, meditation, or dance.

Worship: is much more than what happens on Sunday mornings. It is any corporate activity that orients a group toward God. It could be through singing, communal prayer, discussion of scripture, communion, or deep sharing in small groups drawing on a Wesleyan or other model.

Mercy: These are acts where the attention of individuals or faith communities is directed toward other individuals or groups to meet immediate needs. These include participating in local missions like food banks, community meals, recovery groups, and free stores, as well as global efforts to alleviate suffering from environmental or human-induced catastrophes.

Justice: These are acts where the attention of the individual or faith community is aimed at correcting larger systems that devalue the God-given dignity of people. This could be advocating for the rights of the poor, the abolishment of the death penalty, or other social justice causes. We strive to engage in ministry and action *with*, as opposed to merely for, those on the margins.

The overall goal of living out these elements is to shift the culture of local churches to a hopeful and positive understanding of what God is doing. Inherent in this is Wesley's prescribed movement toward intentional disciple making that focuses on local engagement.

RESOURCING LOCAL CHURCHES

The following are priorities deemed critical to shifting local church culture toward greater vitality. Resources targeting these priorities must be proven to provide opportunities for helping the local church to thrive. They also need to be available to enhance ministry with children, youth, families, and older adults.

- **Intentional Discipleship.** Providing practical tools to assist local churches in purposefully making disciples while recognizing devotion, worship, mercy, and justice—all four—as key to disciple-making.
- **Invitational Evangelism.** Enlisting disciples to move beyond our fear—and four walls—to share the good news with new people in new ways.
- **Missional Engagement.** Making God's love tangible to our local communities and beyond by listening deeply so we might authentically and humbly engage in works of mercy and advocate for justice.
- **Worship Excellence.** Supporting our churches in providing high quality, Spirit-filled worship experiences that inspire and shape lives to be relevant to the gospel throughout the week.
- **Simple & Effective Local Church Governance.** Encouraging bold administrative alternatives to more faithfully and effectively align church structure with ministry.
- **Stewardship & Finance.** Creating a culture of grateful generosity and cheerful giving amongst children and adults of all ages.
- **Cultivating Call.** Lifting up and supporting disciples—laity and clergy—in discerning and developing gifts for leadership in the local church and beyond.

STRATEGY

Our strategy to resource local faith communities around the priorities listed above must become more holistic and focus on more than delivering content for congregations to assimilate. Instead, we need to take a more complete approach that focuses on delivering important information paired with spiritual and communal connections that bring us to life.

To ensure that any initiative focused on the health and vitality of our local congregations and communities has a holistic approach it needs to include opportunities to “Pray, Partner, & Practice.”

Pray: Practicing prayer and spiritual formation. These practices connect us to one another and, more broadly, to God’s good purposes for us and our communities. Congregational work must be first and foremost rooted in spiritual practice that opens us up to the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Congregations will need tools to better equip them to ground their teams and committees in spiritual discernment.

Partner: Inviting collaborative learning and ministry. Congregations need to look both inside themselves and outside to the wider community to learn what God is up to. Teams, not individuals, will lead the transformational work needed in our congregations and communities. These teams will partner with others through circuits and districts. They will also partner with people of peace in their communities to better understand the needs and resources around them, enabling asset-based approaches to community development. The conference must partner with these teams, making relevant assistance available when needed and requested.

Practice: Exploring possibilities for ministry with an attitude of innovation and spiritual entrepreneurship. Every local church will need to conduct ministry experiments aimed at making an impact. By identifying coaches, mentors, and partner congregations the conference can help equip local congregations to get out into their communities and embody the good news of Jesus Christ with new people. Useful and practical metrics will also be developed to help congregations know if they are reaching their goals.