



# Congregational Connections

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## THRIVE TEAM DISCUSSES CHURCH VITALITY

Since January, our church has been working with Marquette University on a project called, "The Examen(ed) Church". We formed a Thrive Team of Terry McManus, Louise Mollinger, Karl Pradel, Scott Symes, Gary and Meg Tackes, and myself which meets monthly. We hope to help the whole congregation begin discerning where God is leading us - to come to a closer understanding of what God's vision might be for our church. I thought I would share some of the Thrive Team materials with you. This past month we reflected on our experience of "Church Vitality". We began with a wonderful prayer adapted from Thomas a' Kempis:

*Grant us, O Lord, to know what we ought to know, to love what we ought to love, to praise what delights you most, to value what is precious in your sight, to hate what is offensive to you. Do not allow us to judge according to the sight of our eyes, nor to pass sentence according to the hearing of the ears; but to discern with a true judgment between things visible and spiritual and above all things, always to inquire what is the good pleasure of your will. Amen.*

The word "vitality" as we used it, describes the continuum of health and vibrancy along which a church moves during its lifetime. Dictionaries define "vitality" as "the state of being strong and active" or "lively and animated in character," which is probably the typical sense in which we use the word. But "vitality" can also refer to something deeper, "the power giving continuity to life" or "the peculiarity distinguishing the living from the nonliving." For the church, this understanding leads us to reflect on our true source of life, the Spirit of God. We had a great discussion about different examples of how our church had demonstrated vitality and how that has changed positively or negatively over time. I'm excited to bring these conversations to the whole church soon!

Courage and Peace,  
Pastor Scott