



# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

## PROCESS FOR REFERRAL TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY COMMITTEE

**Finalized and approved February 23, 2022**

The ministry of the Congregational Vitality Committee (CVC) is to help congregations in the Diocese of Maryland live out their commitment to the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The CVC assists churches by developing criteria for discernment and providing clarity to their mission. The CVC has a relationship with the Standing Committee in which the CVC is charged to refer congregations that it has identified through clergy transition, Episcopal visitation, and/or the annual parochial report review as needing additional support and canonical oversight. Typically these are congregations that meet more than one pre-imperilment criteria. (Canon citation 2-190).

### **The role of the Congregational Vitality Committee**

The Congregational Vitality Committee provides consultant assistance from within its own members at no, or low, cost to congregations. This assistance is to help a congregation discover new ways of serving members and communities, equipping the leaders and members to embrace change by holding up a mirror that reveals the reality of their mission and ministry. The CVC works in partnership with the College for Congregational Development to ensure that congregations are given every opportunity to be trained in models of self-reflection and outward focus so that the mission to preach the gospel can be fulfilled. While the CVC members are often called upon in crisis, the greatest help is most often provided when the congregation identifies its own need for assistance to respond to a changing environment in ways that magnify its hope to thrive as the beloved community in Christ. At its best, the Congregational Vitality Committee works with congregations that are exploring strategic means to transform their mission and ministry in disciplined ways.

### **When referrals to Standing Committee are made specifically**

When the Congregational Vitality Committee refers congregations to the Standing Committee one or more of these factors are at work:

- There is an observed pattern of denial or avoidance of difficult issues such as conflict in their history or conflict among members. This is a principal focus of the vestry's work.
- There is substantial resistance to recommended strategies for change and/or help from the CVC members assigned to work with the congregation;
- After 9 months of consultation there is inadequate movement toward goals set together by the vestry and consultant;
- The primary focus of the congregational leadership is on survival, rather than thriving in mission and ministry;
- The property needs exceed the capacity of the congregation financially to maintain it as viable;
- The congregation is at a point in its life cycle where only an intervention of the Standing Committee will allow the congregation to redevelop or conclude its ministry. Often this means a congregation is at the point of pre-imperilment or imperilment.

The Bishop may refer congregations directly to the Standing Committee. Referrals made by the CVC will include a history of interaction and work, and the support of individual members of the committee who can provide information to the Standing Committee.

### **The role of the Standing Committee**

When a congregation is referred to the Standing Committee, a summary report on the congregation is created and sent by the diocesan staff with the consultants assigned. This report will be reviewed by the Congregational Vitality Committee as part of the referral process.

In accepting the referral, the Standing Committee will normally assign a team of up to two people to meet with the congregational leadership prior to any meeting with the Standing Committee.

Representative leaders from the congregation then meet with the Standing Committee.

The Congregational Vitality Committee and the staff follow-up with the congregation's representative leaders to assist in implementing any actions suggested or imposed by the Standing Committee.