

Report to
The United Methodists
of Eastern Pennsylvania
and Greater New Jersey

From
The Cabinets of EPA and GNJ

Priorities for Mission Engagement in the World
Deepen Faith • Develop Transformational Leaders • Grow Vital Congregations

In August, the Cabinets of Eastern Pennsylvania and Greater New Jersey invited laity and clergy to complete a survey to identify the characteristics of passionate disciples, transformational leaders, and vital Wesleyan congregations.

More than 500 people engaged in the multiple-choice and short-answer survey questions. The Cabinets of both conferences analyzed the results. The survey's findings were consistent, regardless of the respondents' self-identified conference membership, local church size, demographic, or role as laity or clergy. Below are the survey's top five characteristics of a passionate disciple, a transformational leader, and a vital Wesleyan congregation.

Survey's Top 5 Characteristics

Passionate Disciple	Transformational Leader	Vital Wesleyan Congregation
Servant	Excellent communicator	Welcomes All People As They Are
Life-Long Learner	Positive and hopeful	Engages People in Hands-On Mission
Humble	Visionary	Inspiring & Uplifting Worship
Compassionate	Connects and Engages Well with People	Trains People to Share Their Faith with Others and Invites Them to Worship
Prayerful	Delegates and Supports Others in Their Ministry	Offers Small Groups for Study and/or Service

The more than 450 short answer responses provided a narrative about each of these key areas.

Passionate Disciples are completely in love with God and have a deep love for all people. Their personal relationship with Jesus Christ directs all that they do. The Holy Spirit works through them. Passionate disciples are committed to spiritual disciplines. They prioritize service to the community and justice ministries. Compassion and generosity characterize these persons, as well as a commitment to risk-taking for the sake of Christ.

Transformational Leaders are spiritually grounded and Spirit-led. They operate out of a servant mindset with a genuine desire for others to become passionate disciples. Personal integrity is critical, and they are seen as reliable role models. These leaders cast a compelling vision for the congregation and communicate it often and effectively to create momentum for ministry. For such leaders, mobilizing the people for action is as important as the action itself. One way this is achieved is through employing the gifts of the congregation and the development of teams.

Vital Wesleyan Congregations demonstrate a commitment to welcoming all of God's people. Inspirational worship centers all that they do, which is enhanced by opportunities for spiritual formation in small groups. These congregations look to the holy scriptures for guidance and comfort. Community ministry and service to others are at the heart of the people.

The survey identified areas of growth:

- A renewed focus on individuals sharing their faith and inviting people into a faith journey with Christ. We live as disciples but need to grow in inviting others into a life of discipleship.
- We value personal holiness and social holiness, as seen through the emphasis on the means of grace, spiritual disciplines, hands-on mission, and service. It is essential to continue developing and strengthening congregational systems that multiply ministries and leadership to support congregational growth.
- Many congregations focus on an attractional model of ministry where we welcome people at the church door. A challenge is moving to an outward missional model that meets people where they are out in the world and invites them into a life of faith.

Using the chart above and the questions below, you are invited to reflect personally and/or during several small group sessions and/or during several church council meetings to continue to foster passionate discipleship, transformational leadership, and vital Wesleyan congregations.

1. Which category are you the most passionate about: making disciples, developing leaders, or growing vital congregations? Why?
2. What characteristics do you see reflected in your life or the leadership of the congregation? What can you do to help more of this to occur in your life or the congregation? What can you do to encourage further development of these characteristics in your pastor and church leadership?
3. What will you do in the next six months to strengthen one of these categories in your own life? What is the one step your church will take that will lead to life-changing ministry?

Cabinets' Commitments

The Cabinets committed to doing three things over the next year:

1. Ensure at each charge/church conference a powerful question is asked that engages people in their purpose as a congregation or their growth and development in one of the three areas.
2. Publish the survey results and invite individuals and congregations into deeper reflections on passionate discipleship, transformational leadership, and vital Wesleyan congregations.
3. Lead so that the church inspires people to a deeper faith in God through Jesus Christ and equips United Methodists to share their faith and invite others into faith in God through Jesus Christ.