Module 1: Covenant

Background reading:
None

Handouts:
What Are We Doing Here?
PowerPoint slides
Two Great Commandments
Wesley’s Means of Grace
“Finding the Means” Discussion Questions
Leadership Interaction Styles
Deep Dive Discussion Questions
Team Worksheet

Goals:
1. By the end of Module 1, participants will have:
2. Examined the purpose of the Vital Congregations Incubators
3. Identified key aspects of our role as spiritual leaders in our congregation/district
4. Reflected on the role of congregational teams in developing and implementing SMART goals for the Vital Congregations Planning Guide
5. Developed a covenant for this learning community (pastors, or pastors and local church leaders)

Selected Bibliography:
New York Annual Conference
Vital Congregations Incubator
Module 1: Covenantal Living

I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm to give you a future with hope.
Jeremiah 29:11

Incubator Modules

- Module 1: Orientation and Covenantal Living
- Module 2: Worship
- Module 3: Evangelism
- Module 4: Small Groups (for adults), Children’s & Youth Ministry
- Module 5: Mission
- Module 6: Stewardship
- Module 7: Effective Lay Leadership
- Module 8: Effective Pastoral Leadership
Module 1: Covenantal Living, Participant

Formation Questions:

1. Since we last met, how have you experienced the presence of God?
2. Who have you met with in your congregational setting to work on goals?
3. What are you learning about being a spiritual leader?
Module 1: Covenantal Living, Participant

**Goals for This Module**

1. Examine the purpose of the Call to Action incubators.
2. Identify key aspects of our role as spiritual leaders in our congregations/districts.
3. Reflect on the role of congregational teams in developing and implementing SMART goals for the Call to Action.
4. Develop a covenant for this learning community (pastors).

**For Reflection**

1. What expectations do you bring to this experience?
2. What hopes do you bring?
3. Which of the goals for this module are most important for you?
Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them shall bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:4, 5)

They shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me. (Jeremiah 32:38, 40)

They shall come and join themselves to the Lord by an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten. (Jeremiah 50:5b)
Module 1: Covenantal Living, Participant

For Reflection

1. What are some of the biblical examples of covenant?

2. How do the biblical examples of covenant and our Wesleyan heritage inform the covenant we will make together?

Learning

Spiritual Leadership

- Grounded in our baptism
- Demonstrated through our call
- Focused on what’s important
- Involves all of us—our thoughts, our emotions, our experiences, our behavior
- Results in authenticity and integrity
- Transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit
Module 1: Covenantal Living, Participant

For Reflection on “Finding the Means”

1. The presentation defines the means of grace as “those basic practices given to us by God as the ways we live out our relationship with God and those whom God loves.” How could you put this definition into your own words? What are some other ways of saying this?

2. How do you seek to connect with God throughout your day?

3. What helps you connect with God?

4. What hinders you from connecting with God?

5. How does your relationship with God inform your leadership?

Leadership and Interaction Styles

Qualities of Effective Teams

- Build trust
- Handle conflict appropriately
- Pay attention to desired results
- Work for commitment
- Build structures for accountability
Module 1: Covenantal Living, Participant

Team Foci
1. Build a shared vision for discipleship.
2. Create and sustain a congregational culture.
3. Develop practices that help team members love God and neighbor.
4. Learn together.
5. Implement plans.
6. Evaluate progress.

For Reflection on “The Deep Dive”
1. What important insights into working as a team did you glean from “Deep Dive?”
2. In the team in which you work, how are members selected?
3. How are wild ideas received and what happens to them (and/or to the person who offered them)?
4. What behaviors and processes are encouraged or discouraged by the team you lead? By the teams of which you are a member?
5. For what and how are team members rewarded or recognized?
6. How does working with a team connect with your understanding of spiritual leadership?
Module 1: Covenantal Living, Participant

Building a Team

1. Draw circle and identify major boundaries.
2. Draw cross hairs and identify the team’s purpose (or target). Be clear about how the
   purpose of this team will help the congregation fulfill its mission of making
disciples for the transformation of the world.
3. Name “big chunks” of work included in the team’s responsibilities.
4. Fill in gifts needed for each “big chunk”
5. Develop list of people who have the needed gifts.
   Ask people to serve on the team.

Guidelines for Covenant

• Guides our relationships during our Incubator.
• Includes “non-negotiables” related to participation.
• Any changes will be agreed upon by all participants.
• Review the covenant at each meeting.
• Provides accountability.
Module 1: Covenantal Living, Participant

Build the Covenant

What do you include to grow as spiritual leaders, accomplish the goal, and lead others?

- Participation
  - Attendance
  - Preparation
- Prayer
- Other spiritual practices

Confidentiality

Accountability

- When will we check with each other?
- What are the consequences?

Evaluation

1. What went well?
2. What did you learn?
3. What needs improvement?

Closing

Left: For all that has been, we give you thanks, Loving God.
Right: For all that will be, we give you thanks, Creating God.

Left: For faith and courage to pursue your purposes, help us, Sustaining God.
Right: For the work that is before us, bless us and use us, Sustaining God.

All: We go in the peace and power of God.
Amen.
Handouts: Module 1, Covenantal Living
Desired Result:

- Clergy and lay leadership effectively leading and equipping their congregations for intentional disciple-making related to the Call to Action
- Congregations developing and achieving SMART goals related to the Call to Action
- Individuals of all ages experiencing God’s love and grace and committing their lives to following Jesus Christ
- Our world is transformed as it experiences the mercy, justice, compassion, and peace of God

Strategy:

Participants in the Call to Action Incubators grow and learn together as they:

- Deepen their relationship with God (Love)
- Increase knowledge and skills related to faith development (Learn)
- Practice spiritual leadership in their congregations (Lead)

Tactics:

- Preparation for and participation in each session
- Formation Questions
- Community Covenant
- SMART Goals

Characteristics:

- Attentive
- Exploratory
- Risk-taking
- Innovative
- Reflective
- Trustworthy
- Respectful
Writing

Read John 15:4, 5. Consider what God is saying to you through this passage.

Respond to the passage through writing. You might write:

- A devotional
- A prayer
- A letter to God
- A poem
- A paraphrase of the passage
- A newsletter/website article
- A journal entry
Music

Read John 15:4, 5. Consider what God is saying to you through this passage.

Respond to the passage through music. You might:

- Write a song to an existing tune
- Write an original song and tune
- Find hymns that relate to the passage and read or sing them
- Create movement to a song or hymn that illustrates an aspect of this passage
Read John 15:4, 5. Consider what God is saying to you through this passage.

Respond to the passage through art. You might:

- Draw a picture that illustrates some aspect of this passage.
- Use colors to depict feelings that arise as you read the passage.
- Illustrate your hopes for community through this Incubator.
Conversation

Read John 15:4, 5. Consider what God is saying to you through this passage.

Respond to the passage through conversation. Find a partner and talk about what this passage means to you. You might talk about:

- Abiding in Christ
- Bearing fruit
- The image of a vine and branches
- Something of your choosing
Two Great Commandments

When asked what was the greatest commandment (Mark 12:30-31, NRSV), Jesus summarized his teachings in two commandments:

The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.

In the Wesleyan tradition, these two great commandments are applied through a General Rule of Discipleship:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The General Rule of Discipleship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To witness to Jesus Christ in the world, and to follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Works of Piety
  - Acts of Devotion
  - Acts of Worship
- Works of Mercy
  - Acts of Compassion
  - Acts of Justice

Private

Public
Wesley’s Means of Grace

Prayer
- Key to maintaining a relationship with God
- Creates a rhythm of encounter and response
- Involves both speaking and listening

Study of the Word
- Intentional/consistent
- Focused on knowing God’s will
- Applicable to daily life--put into practice what you are learning

The Lord’s Supper
- Serves as a sign of our central Story
- Invites us into the presence of Christ
- Reminds us of the heavenly banquet in which we can expect to participate

Fasting
- Keeps the material and spiritual in balance
- Related to prayer as tool for spiritual discipline and discernment
- Emphasizes self-denial in order to focus on God

Christian Conferencing
- Groups provide nurture, encouragement, support, practice in witnessing, stewardship, study
- Setting for spiritual discernment

Acts of Mercy
- Holiness of heart and life--both essential for vital spirituality
- Doing good; doing no harm; participating in “ordinances of God”
- Compassion and justice
“Finding the Means”
*Opening Ourselves to Grace*

Reflection Questions for Use in Small Groups

1. The presentation defines the means of grace as “those basic practices given to us by God as the ways we live out our relationship with God and those whom God loves.” How could you put this definition into your own words? What are some other ways of saying this?

2. How do you seek to connect with God throughout your day?

3. What helps you connect with God?

4. What hinders you from connecting with God?

5. How does your relationship with God inform your leadership?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>Tend to disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I tend to take my time before making a decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tend to make decisions quickly</td>
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<tr>
<td>At a meeting, I like to get right to work</td>
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<tr>
<td>At a meeting, I like to spend time socializing first</td>
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<td>When I speak, I generally use very few gestures</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I speak, I generally use many gestures</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am most comfortable when groups stay focused on the task</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am most comfortable when groups take unexpected turns</td>
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<tr>
<td>In a group setting, I generally allow others to speak first</td>
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<tr>
<td>In a group setting, I am generally one of the first people to speak</td>
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<tr>
<td>The best part of working in groups is the sharing of responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>The best part of working in groups is the sharing of ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like to gather as much information as possible before making decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like to have just the most pertinent information before making decisions</td>
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<td>I am most comfortable sticking closely to a plan, agenda, or schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am most comfortable allowing a plan, agenda, or schedule to emerge naturally</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tend to have strong opinions that I will share when asked</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tend to have strong opinions that I share freely with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>For the most part, interruptions, distractions, and losing focus are highly annoying</td>
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<tr>
<td>For the most part, interruptions, distractions, and losing focus are not a problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe it is very important that everyone speaks and is heard</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe it is very important that those with relevant input speak and are heard</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think it is most important for groups to get results quickly and efficiently</td>
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<td>I think it is most important for groups that members work well together</td>
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<td>I tend to review decisions and make changes when necessary</td>
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<td>I tend to stand behind decisions and move on</td>
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<tr>
<td>I prefer making decisions based on facts, figures, and solid information</td>
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<tr>
<td>I prefer making decisions based on experience, intuition, and consensus</td>
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<td>I work best in a quiet, peaceful environment, free of noise, tension and conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>I work best in an energetic, creative environment, with lots of discussion and debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tend to get focused on end results and meeting deadlines when working in groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tend to get focused on relationships and interpersonal dynamics when working in groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would rather err on the side of caution than risk failure</td>
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<td>I would rather take risks and learn from mistakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>I judge success based mostly on how well a group completes its task</td>
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<tr>
<td>I judge success based mostly on how effectively a group of people work together</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>When upset, I tend to hide my feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>When upset, I tend to let others know exactly how I feel</td>
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<tr>
<td>In a group, I prefer making decisions by voting</td>
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<tr>
<td>In a group, I prefer making decisions by coming to consensus</td>
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<td>When I'm in charge of a project, I tend to ask for volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I'm in charge of a project, I tend to make assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe that effective and successful work makes people happy</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe that happy people produce effective and successful work</td>
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<tr>
<td>In a group setting, silence makes me wonder what people are thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>In a group setting, I assume silence indicates agreement or consensus</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think people should adjust their efforts to fit a plan or schedule and to meet deadlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think plans, schedules, and deadlines should be flexible to meet the needs of people</td>
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<tr>
<td>I prefer allowing problems to work themselves out without interference</td>
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<tr>
<td>I prefer addressing problems as soon as they arise</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I give someone a task, I assume they will do it</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I give someone a task, I like to check in for a progress report</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe everyone on a team should have access to all information</td>
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<td>I believe information should only be given to team members when necessary</td>
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<td>Following a disagreement, I tend to put it behind me quickly and move forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Following a disagreement, I tend to have a hard time letting it go and moving forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe it is best to move forward on critical decisions carefully and slowly</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe it is best to move forward on critical decisions quickly and decisively</td>
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<td>I believe a team can be effective even when team members don't like each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe a team can be effective when team members come to respect and like each other</td>
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</table>

**Name**

**Predominant/Preferred Style**
Leadership Interaction Styles Scoring Sheet

Scoring Instructions:
Find “Plot Point 1” on vertical axis (top to bottom)  
Find “Plot Point 2” on horizontal axis (left to right)  
Put a dot where the two points meet

A-B = vertical score
D-C = horizontal score

The point of intersection for the two scores identifies your Leadership Interaction Style preference.
Deep Dive
Discussion Questions for Small Groups

1. What important insights into working as a team did you glean from “Deep Dive?”

2. In the teams in which you work, how are members selected?

3. How are “wild ideas” received and what happens to them (and/or to the persons who offer them)?

4. What behaviors and processes are encouraged or discouraged by the team you lead? By the teams of which you are a member?

5. For what and how are team members rewarded or recognized?

6. How does working with a team connect with your understanding of spiritual leadership?