



BLACK CHURCH REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Black Church Revitalization Initiative?

The Black Church Revitalization Initiative is a collaborative effort of Black congregations, pastors, the Bishop, Cabinet, and California-Pacific Annual Conference to strengthen the vitality, sustainability, discipleship, leadership, and missional impact of Black churches across Cal-Pac.

The initiative grew out of a process of listening, including surveys and individual conversations with Black pastors followed by months of collective conversation, prayer, and discernment among pastors.

This initiative is not starting with a predetermined answer about what every church should become. It begins with assessment, truth-telling, biblical reflection, and discernment so that each congregation can better understand its current reality and determine its faithful path forward.

Why are we doing this now?

Our Black churches possess extraordinary spiritual, cultural, historical, relational, and physical assets. They also face real challenges. Some congregations are experiencing declining participation, aging membership, financial pressures, changing neighborhoods, leadership challenges, deferred property maintenance, or difficulty connecting with emerging generations.

Ignoring those realities will not make them disappear. This initiative creates an opportunity to face them together while there is still time, capacity, and possibility to act.

What is the goal?

The goal is to help each congregation discern: Who is God calling us to be now, in this place, for these people, in this time?

Through assessment, biblical reflection, conversation, leadership development, and practical support, congregations will identify their strengths, understand their challenges, clarify their mission, and develop faithful responses to what they discover.

Is the Conference trying to close or take our church?

No. The purpose of this initiative is revitalization, discernment, and strengthening congregations, not creating a hidden process for closing churches or acquiring property.

The initiative does require honest conversations about the realities facing each congregation. Avoiding difficult information would undermine the very purpose of the process. Assessment findings are intended to help churches and Conference leaders make better decisions together, not to manufacture predetermined outcomes.

Transparency must work both ways. Conference leaders are committing to be transparent about what help they can offer, and congregations are being asked to be equally honest about their circumstances.

Have decisions already been made about our church?

No. The initiative begins with assessment precisely because faithful decisions should emerge from a clear understanding of each congregation rather than assumptions made in advance. The first decision is made by the congregation as they faithfully discern what a faithful future looks like for them.

Different congregations may ultimately discern different paths. Revitalization does not require every church to look alike.

Why does our church need a team?

Revitalization cannot belong only to the pastor.

Each participating congregation will identify a team of approximately three to five lay members who will work alongside the pastor throughout the process. Team members will participate in study, assessment, conversation, and discernment and help engage the wider congregation.

The initiative intentionally develops congregational ownership rather than placing responsibility for the church's future solely on its pastor.

What is expected of team members?

Team members are asked to:

- Participate consistently.
- Pray for their congregation and the initiative.
- Attend *Choosing the Faithful Path* and other scheduled gatherings.
- Speak honestly about the congregation's strengths and challenges.
- Listen to perspectives different from their own.
- Help the congregation examine information without defensiveness or blame.
- Remain open to change.
- Communicate with and engage the wider congregation.
- Help move discernment toward faithful action.

What is Choosing the Faithful Path?

Choosing the Faithful Path is a six-week Bible study that provides the spiritual and theological foundation for the first phase of the initiative.

All participating churches will gather together by Zoom. Each session will include biblical reflection followed by approximately 45 minutes in church-based breakout groups. Congregational teams will discuss what that week's Scripture and teaching mean for the particular realities of their church.

What role will the Bishop, Cabinet, and Conference play?

The Bishop and Cabinet are committing to walk alongside, support, and resource congregations through this process.

District Superintendents will participate in the initiative. The Conference will help provide assessment tools, facilitation, expertise, coaching, learning opportunities, funding, connections, and other resources as the needs and opportunities of participating churches become clearer.

This is intended to be a partnership. The Conference cannot revitalize a congregation on its behalf, and congregations should not be expected to navigate significant challenges without support.

What happens after the first phase?

The assessment phase is the beginning, not the entire initiative.

What comes next will be informed by what congregations learn about themselves. Future work will focus on taking action through training, programs, collaborative ministries, and making strategic investments in the long-term health and sustainability of our ministries.

