

2025 Vitality Ministry Council Annual Report

2024-25 has been a busy and exciting year for the Vitality Ministry Council. As chair, I would like to give credit to each of the Council members: Cynthia Hardy served as awards coordinator and Leadership Council liaison, Robin Carden as secretary, Julie Sheridan-Smith as LMTP liaison, and Mark Tanner as financial liaison. Cynthia and Robin are both transitioning off the Council this year (Cynthia with 2 terms and 6 years of service!), so we send them off with special thanks. Staff support was also excellent for us this year, even as there were challenges and transitions for many of them. So we also express deep gratitude for Laura Wright, Maggie Helmick, and Gerry Krupp.

Our flagship new project this year was the launch of the Sharing Vitality Grants: \$2500 to support member churches and associated ministries of the NA in efforts they are making to bring more vitality to their congregations and communities. We have an amazing and diverse first cohort, with projects that compellingly respond to circumstances we know many other churches relate to. We are thrilled that their ideas and experiences are going to be shared during Annual Meeting in a variety of ways including progress reports and a breakout session. A primary goal of this grant program is to cultivate collaboration across the NA by sharing with each other as colleagues where our inspirations and contexts may connect. We've also been able to renew the grant for another cycle in 2026, so we hope plenty more churches and ministries will apply for the program this fall!

To ensure viability and sustainability of this program and a number of other initiatives under the Vitality umbrella, another big task for us this year was updating accounting and budgeting information and procedures. With some great support from Cheryl Milnes we were able to improve clarity and organization that should help programs we support work better going forward. Special thanks to Polly Bodjanac with LMTP for this, as well, as we especially wanted to improve our organization in support of that program and she was instrumental to sorting that out.

Convocation continued in its national model this year with a wonderful event at Siena Retreat Center in Racine that attracted attendees from all over the country. We have found in recent years that people are especially responding to content related to practical, contextual ministry issues, so we will continue to find ways to supply that through convocation, webinars, or other events, while also finding outlets for rest, continuing education theologically, and more. We already have Mundelein booked as the site next year, which also will help us get a jump on preparing for future years with a goal of improving access for people by intermittently having sites outside the Midwest.

Vitality Ministry Council is passionately committed to this value of supporting access to opportunities from the NA, and so we're proud to have used funds this year to support things like travel to Convocation and Annual Meeting, funds for LMTP and CFTS including Boston Seminar, Leaders' Table participation scholarships, and more. We are also taking steps to increase impact of some of our awards and other grants with adjustments to their format that similarly improves access and participation.

We are confident the year ahead holds plenty more to continue developing this way, too.

- Robb Tarr, Chair, on behalf of Vitality Ministry Council