

Thriving and Viable Ministries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)

Purpose of This Tool

This assessment tool synthesizes research and best practices from multiple sources (listed at the end of this document). It provides both a **qualitative assessment** and a **quantitative dashboard** to help PCC congregations discern vitality and sustainability, and to clarify the dimensions of *vibrant worship* and *vibrant spiritual formation* within a Reformed framework.

Part I: Congregational Assessment (Qualitative)

Instructions: Rate each category on a scale of **1–5** (1 = Weak / 5 = Strong). Add comments, stories, or supporting data where possible.

1. Mission and Discipleship Pathway

Clear mission statement aligned with the Gospel mandate; visible discipleship pathway from invitation to formation and service. Alpha or similar programs connect clearly to next steps. Thriving churches keep “the main thing, the main thing”—reaching new people with the Gospel, discipling them in faith, and serving their community.

2. Leadership and Lay Empowerment

Effective leadership structures that equip elders and laity. A leadership pipeline that identifies, mentors, and deploys new leaders for ministry within the congregation and beyond.

3. Worship and Hospitality

Vibrant worship that fosters spiritual growth; hospitality extended to visitors and long-time members alike, reflecting the welcoming grace of Christ.

4. Community Engagement and Missional Presence

Active partnerships with community agencies; congregational involvement in local justice, compassion, and evangelism initiatives. Thriving churches are outward (missional) rather than inward (survival- or maintenance-focused). The congregation is a meaningful presence in its community, and its absence—were it to close—would be genuinely missed.

5. Financial Stewardship and Sustainability

Transparent, mission-driven budgeting; healthy participation in giving; diverse revenue streams including legacy gifts and grant funding.

6. Spiritual Formation and Small Groups

High participation in Bible study, prayer, and small group discipleship. Clear follow-up pathways (e.g., Alpha → small groups → mentoring → service) that support ongoing faith formation.

7. Metrics and Evaluation

Regular measurement of participation, volunteer engagement, and new faith commitments; use of data for adaptive planning. *Note:* Attendance numbers alone are a less reliable indicator of congregational health than active involvement and service, both within the church and missionally.

8. Communication and Digital Presence

Clear, consistent communication systems; website and social media effectively support outreach, engagement, and connection.

9. Denominational Alignment and Governance

Congregation aligned with PCC mission and theological commitments; healthy engagement with Session, Presbytery, and national church life.

10. Overall Congregational Culture

A spirit of joy, hospitality, generosity, respect and openness to change. Characterized by hope rather than nostalgia. Congregational members are able to articulate *why* they are involved in the life of the church—rooted in joyful obedience to the Lord’s call, with an understanding that faith produces visible fruit. A thriving congregation, especially in an urban setting, is a congregation that is mindful of the importance of ethnic diversity that reflects our society and creates intentional programs to help all people feel a sense of belonging.

Part II: Quantitative Dashboard (Key Metrics)

Track these indicators annually or quarterly to monitor congregational health. Indicators align with *Flourishing Congregations* research and PCC sustainability goals.

Category	Indicator	Target / Benchmark	Current Value / Notes
Mission Engagement	First-time guests per year	≥ Average weekly attendance	
Mission Engagement	Alpha / Evangelism completions	≥ 70% completion rate	
Belonging	Percentage active in small groups	≥ 60%	
Leadership	New leaders developed annually	≥ 10% growth	
Financial	Giving participation rate	≥ 70% of active households	
Financial	Months of cash reserves	3–6 months minimum	
Community Impact	Volunteer hours in community	Increasing annually	
Stewardship	% of budget to mission/outreach	≥ 15%	
Hybrid Presence	Livestream or digital engagement	Regular, consistent	

Part III: Defining “Vibrant” Worship and Spiritual Formation

Vibrant Worship

Vibrant worship is the communal response to God’s grace that engages the whole person—heart, mind, body, and will—through Word and Sacrament, expressed with authenticity, participation, and joy.

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Supporting Voices</u>
Christ-centred & Scripturally grounded	Preaching and liturgy centre on the Triune God’s redemptive work in Christ; Word and Sacrament retain primacy and connect Scripture to daily life.	Kennon Callahan; <i>PCC Book of Common Worship</i>
Participatory	Congregants actively pray, sing, listen, and respond; lay participation is visible and valued.	Tony Robinson (VST)

Contextually resonant	Music, language, and visuals reflect cultural and generational context while maintaining theological integrity.	Carey Nieuwhof
Emotionally engaging & Spirit-led	Worship invites awe, conviction, and comfort—genuine encounter rather than performance.	Thom Rainer
Missional & invitational	Worship naturally welcomes seekers and expresses the joy of the Gospel.	Rich Birch
Hybrid-accessible	Online and in-person participants can engage meaningfully with strong audio, visuals, and follow-up.	Carey Nieuwhof

Vibrant Spiritual Formation

Vibrant spiritual formation is the intentional, lifelong process by which individuals and communities grow in Christlikeness through Word, prayer, fellowship, service, and the sacraments—producing visible fruit of the Spirit and participation in God’s mission.

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Supporting Voices</u>
Intentional & lifelong	Spiritual growth understood as a continuous journey with clear next steps (e.g., Alpha → groups → mentoring → service).	Alpha Canada Impact Report 2024
Biblically rooted & theologically sound	Formation grounded in Scripture and Reformed theology, encouraging discernment and daily obedience.	PCC <i>Living Faith</i> ; Robinson
Communal & relational	Growth occurs in small groups and mentoring relationships marked by mutual accountability.	Flourishing Congregations Institute
Transformational & missional	Formation produces outward fruit: generosity, service, witness, and compassion in daily life.	Thom Rainer
Intersection of theology and lived experience	Congregants integrate theological understanding with everyday life—demonstrated through ongoing Bible study, theological education, and the ability to thoughtfully critique culture through the lens of the Gospel.	VST / Robinson; Christian Smith (faith as lived practice)
Measured & celebrated	Participation in groups, service, and new commitments is tracked and shared through testimony and storytelling.	Rich Birch
Adaptive & diverse	Multiple entry points for formation (in-person, online, intergenerational, intercultural).	Carey Nieuwhof

References and Online Resources

1. Kennon L. Callahan, *12 Keys to an Effective Church* (Jossey-Bass, 2010).
2. Arch Wong et al., *Flourishing Congregations Institute Research Reports* (Vancouver School of Theology, 2017–2024). <https://www.flourishingcongregations.org>
3. Alpha Canada, *Impact Report 2024*. <https://alpha.org/canada>
4. Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church; Transformational Church*. <https://churchanswers.com>
5. Carey Nieuwhof, *Blog and Leadership Resources*. <https://careynieuwhof.com>
6. Rich Birch, *UnSeminary Podcast & Systems for Growth*. <https://unseminary.com>
7. Ryan Burge, *The Nones* (Fortress Press, 2021).
8. The Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Living Faith; Book of Common Worship*. <https://presbyterian.ca/resources/>