



How Next Level Innovations (NLI) Will Work for Your Church

1. You've received an invitation – please discuss with your Church Council/Leadership Team and share this information.
 - a. You might wonder: What is different about NLI? It was formulated by local Northern Virginia pastors who have already grown large churches, and developed successful programs across the UMC that have helped churches move to the next level of innovation.
 - b. You might want more information about how we got to this program: NLI was developed using two church consultation models: 1) HCI (Healthy Church Initiative) from the Missouri Conference (Bob Farr's book "10 Prescriptions for a Healthy Church" gives you a look at the model; here is a website about it: <http://bobfarr.org/healthy-church-initiative/>. 2) West Ohio Conference's Missional Church Consultation Initiative: <http://www.westohioumc.org/conference/missional-church-consultation-initiative>.
 - c. The first group of churches from the Alexandria/Arlington Districts have completed their Innovation Consultation Weekend and are about to enter into their third phase working through the innovations with their mentor. The second group from the Bi-District (including one church from the Richmond District) is in the beginning phase of the process.
 - d. Innovation Consultation Weekends for our Pilot Program, which you have been invited to join, will be held during the fall of 2019 - winter of 2020. Peer Cohorts will begin fall of 2018.
 - e. If you have further questions, feel free to contact the Richmond District - Maria Maxwell (mariamaxwell@vaumc.org) or (o)804-521-1124, (c) 804-433-6936 with questions about how this might work for your church.

2. The next step is to attend the Invitation dinner - bring with you no more than three (3) key leaders who will help your congregation make the decision. Consider staff and lay leadership that will help communicate information about the possibility of becoming a Next Level Innovations Church. The Richmond District dinner will be held on April 12, 2018 at 6:30pm at Tarrant's West located at 11129 Three Chopt Rd., Richmond, VA 23233.
3. After hearing more about it at the Invitation dinner, enter into a time of prayerful discernment with your church leadership - is this the right step and the right time for your church? We will need to know your prayerful decision by May 11, 2018. Please contact the Richmond District - Maria Maxwell at (mariamaxwell@vaumc.org) or (o)804-521-1124, (c) 804-433-6936 as to whether your church would like to participate or not.
4. If the answer is 'not now', we hope there will be a second group beginning in 2019; prayerfully consider if that might be the right time.
5. If your church discerns yes, after a vote of your Church Council/Leadership Team, please attend the Orientation event on May 30, 2018 from 6:45pm-8:30pm at Bon Air UMC 1645 Buford Rd, Richmond, VA 23235. Dessert and coffee will be provided. You should bring a team of 6-8 key leaders. This group will be your NLI team working the entire multi-year process together. This may or may not include the initial 3 that attended the Invitation dinner. Prayerfully select who is best able to go on this journey and who is best able to teach and lead change with your congregation. This will not necessarily be staff or church council members. It is best to choose according to gifts and talents of your people. If you add some staff to this group, the team may be as large as 10 people. At the orientation, you will be notified who your church mentor will be for the entirety of the process.
6. The entire process will cost the District and Conference over \$10,000 for each church. We have sought out grants to help cover this expense. If your church decides to go forward, the direct investment from your church will be \$500 in 2018 (payable at the Orientation meeting), \$1500 in 2019, and \$1000 in 2020, for a total of \$3,000. In addition, there are books, meals and other materials for the clergy peer group, laity group, and Innovations Weekend that will need to be purchased by the church and/or pastors.

7. During Lent of 2019, we will ask you to engage your church leadership/NLI team in a spiritual formation study. This study will focus on Wesleyan theology and the understanding that the catalyst for our churches to change begins with the Gospel message. This study will give foundation to the NLI process so that as the pastor, the NLI team and church leadership move forward, they do so with a firm understanding of the primary beliefs that make for a sustainable foundation for change.
8. From September 2018 - June 2019 the senior clergy of the church will be in a Peer Learning Group with 8-10 other senior clergy from similar churches in the Elizabeth River and Richmond District. This group will be receiving training in areas like visioning for change, breakthrough prayer, alignment with staff and laity teams, stewardship of resources, and other topics of need based on size and location of church.
9. There will be a peer learning group for associate clergy and executive directors of the churches in the spring of 2019.
10. In the winter/spring of 2019 your church will have a presenter from the District staff come to the church to lead a Ministry Focus Event open to everyone in the church. The purpose of this is to emphasize alignment of the ministry of your church with the vision and mission of the church, and to help the church to begin to understand the NLI process and the upcoming weekend.
11. Also, in the fall of 2018/spring of 2019 all NLI churches will be invited to one or two special Church Team Events focusing on particular areas of ministry such as evangelism, communication or stewardship. The topic will be decided in conjunction with the NLI Pastors.
12. Your church will be undergoing a full self-study of itself, led by your church's NLI team.
13. At some point early in the clergy peer learning process, your church will select a weekend for the NLI Innovations Weekend in the fall of 2019 or winter of 2020. On that Innovations Weekend a full team will come to your church, interview key leaders and staff, hold training events in evangelism and discipleship, and present a recommendation of several key Next Level Innovations that are designed to take your church to the next level in making disciples for the transformation of the world. The weekend will conclude with an encouraging worship event to highlight the ongoing

work of the church, and the possibilities yet to come.

14. After the Innovations Weekend, the church will enter into a season of discernment for 30 days as to whether they accept the innovations proposed, or choose not to move forward at this time. The church will hold two Town Hall Meetings to discuss the innovations. The innovations are purposely packaged together - all or nothing - to encourage taking on some harder innovations with some easier ones. Hopefully the work done to this point will result in a vote at a Church Conference of 70% or more of the congregation to go forward. If the church is not amenable to going forward, the resources of the mentor and peer groups will end.
15. The church's mentor will be an integral part of the accomplishment of the innovations, with training, ideas, and working through the process of implementation. We feel this is a critical point of the program - your church is not left alone to figure out how to accomplish the innovations. Expect one to two years in processing and implementing these innovations.
16. NLI is not a 'one and done' process, and we will encourage churches to continue to invest in further coaching around ongoing areas of need. There may be reunions around particular issues for the clergy peer group as well.
17. It is hoped that by working on the next level of innovations for this church, it will in turn encourage other churches, and this church and its leadership will become a resource for later cohorts in the Elizabeth River and Richmond Districts as well as the Virginia Conference.