Quick Guide for Local Churches
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Request to Participate
The first thing a church will do is sign up for the VitalSigns dashboard. This is an easy and quick process.

1. **Log on** to [http://vitalsigns.gcfa.org](http://vitalsigns.gcfa.org)

![Image of VitalSigns dashboard](image)

2. You can find your church through searching by location, selecting your conference or district, or entering your General Church number (a six digit code that you may or may not know).
3. Under the ‘Select by Conference’ dropdown **select** the conference
4. Under ‘District’ dropdown **select** the district
   a. When the district has been chosen, the selection for ‘church’ will appear.
5. **Choose** the applicable church
   a. Once the church has been chosen, a box will appear with the church information.
   b. **Complete** the information requested and **click** on ‘Send Request’.

![Image of VitalSigns reminder email](image)

VitalSigns Reminder Emails

A VitalSigns email is sent out every Sunday as a reminder to report data. The reporting period begins on the previous Monday through Sunday. i.e., if the email is received on July 8, 2012 the reporting period is for July 2 – 8. The email will contain the link to the ‘My filing page’ for the church.
• *Click* on the ‘Submit your filing’ link from within the email message. (example of email is below)

• There is no log-in, user name or password required to enter the VitalSigns website.

![Example Email](image1)

**VitalSigns Website**

When the website launches, 5 weeks will be displayed. Data can be entered/edited for any of the fields visible. Five weeks will always be visible on this screen, moving the oldest data off the screen each week.

**Entering Data**

• *Enter* the data in the designated field for each question. (Keep in mind the number can be zero) A field may be left blank if the answer is unknown.

![VitalSigns Website](image2)
• Use the ‘Filing Comments’ text boxes to record factors that might have influenced the numbers entered. i.e., Attendance for this Sunday was up because it was Confirmation Sunday. (see below)

![Filing Comments Image]

• When data entry is complete, click ‘Submit My Filings’. An acknowledgment of receipt of data will be displayed as below.

![Submit My Filings Image]

• If you need to make a change, click on the ‘Back to the Submit Page’ link. Otherwise just close the window to exit – there is no logout required.
• If you go back to change numbers, remember to click ‘Submit My Filings’ again to commit your changes.
Once data has been entered and submitted, the fields appear ‘grayed out’, but once the cursor is positioned in the field, it becomes obvious the data can be changed.

**NOTE:** If corrections need to be made on weeks not displayed, someone with administrative privileges at the district/conference level must make these changes or send an email to VitalSigns@gcfa.org

**Share stories about your church**

On the ‘thank you’ screen, there is an opportunity to share stories with other churches. Something special or unexpected might have happened within your church or community during the week, or you might have tried something new and it was a great success so you decide to share.

You can share these stories and others by selecting a topic available on the drop menu under ‘Share with the Community’? (Also see Community Resources section on page 8 of this document)

- Click on the down arrow next to ‘Select a Section’
- Enter a **Subject** and type your story in the text box
- When you are satisfied with your entry, click ‘Save’
How to change the email address

There are many reasons email addresses change and it is important to remember to make the change within VitalSigns when this happens. The ability to change the email address used by the church is on the ‘My filing page’.

Click on the ‘edit my email’ link and the below screen will appear.

- Update the email address and click Save.
Viewing Reports
Once the data has been submitted for the church, the ability to view various reports is available from the ‘My filing page’.

- Click on ‘Reports’ to view stats by Summary or Breakdown.

- You’ll be redirected to the reports page where there are several viewing options.

- Click on the down arrows to choose the jurisdiction, conference, district and church.
  - It is always interesting to see how your local church is doing compared to other churches in the district or conference overall
• If you want to change the date range, click anywhere in the date field box and the calendar will appear.
• An example of the charts is below

![Image of charts showing attendance and professions of faith over time]

You have the ability to drill down to see more detail.

**NOTE:** If you have selected your church for the report you will only see your church information when you drill down and this is probably not going to be very helpful.

• Click on the ‘Delve deeper’ link by any question to see more detailed reporting.

![Image of highest numbers chart]

**Highest Numbers (1/1/2012 to 6/28/2012)**

- **Attendance**
  1. OLNEY OAKDALE-EMORY - 615.9
  2. BETHANY ELICOTT CITY - 496.7
  3. MONTGOMERY - 305.8
  4. WINFIELD EBENEZER - 129.6

- **Professions of faith**
  1. BETHANY ELICOTT CITY - 5.0
  2. MONTGOMERY - 1.5
  3. OLNEY OAKDALE-EMORY - 1.0
  4. KEMPTOWN PROVIDENCE - 0.7

- **Small Groups Participation**
  1. BETHANY ELICOTT CITY - 415.0
  2. MONTGOMERY - 100.0
  3. FAITHPOINT UMC - 90.0
  4. WINFIELD EBENEZER - 27.7

- **Mission Outreach**
  1. MONTGOMERY - 36.3
  2. WINFIELD EBENEZER - 6.7
  3. BROOKEVILLE MT ZION - 5.9
  4. ARABY - 1.7
Community Resources
It is always good to learn what is happening within our denomination, and one way to do this is by visiting the ‘community resources’ page in VitalSigns. This is visible to everyone.

- Click on ‘Community Resources’ and you will be redirected to the page where you can read what others have shared
- You can write comments on existing postings and save the input

Exiting VitalSigns
Once you have entered and saved the data for your church, you can just close out of the program. There is no log out required.
VitalSigns Dashboard Questions

1. **Total worship attendance at all regularly-held weekly services**
Enter here combined attendance at all services held on a weekly basis as the primary opportunity for worship. If the church has worship services attended primarily by persons who do not attend on Sunday morning, attendance at those services should be reported. Count all persons (including children) who participate in part of any of these services.

2. **Total number of persons received into the church by profession of faith**
Enter here the number of persons who joined the church this week who have not previously been a member of a church. Do not include persons received into the congregation by transfer.

3. **Total number of small groups**
Enter here the number of small groups that met this week. Small groups are groups of people who gather together on a regular basis with the goal of becoming more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, through an intentional process of learning, mutual support and accountability, and/or service to the world.

4. **Total number of persons actively engaged in small groups (count only once)**
Enter here the number of persons currently engaged in a small group that is part of the congregation's ministries. Small groups are groups of people who gather together on a regular basis with the goal of becoming more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, through an intentional process of learning, mutual support and accountability, and/or service to the world.

5. **Total number of persons from the congregation engaged in local, national and international mission/outreach**
Enter here the number of persons sent out on behalf of the congregation for ministries intended to transform people in your community, your region, and the world.

6. **The total amount given by local church to other organizations for support of benevolent and charitable ministries**
Enter here the amount of funds given by the church to support missions and ministries outside of the church. This includes giving to apportionments, Special Sundays, the Advance, and other United Methodist and non-United Methodist ministries engaged in work to transform the world.

7. **Total offering received this week through pledges and offerings**
Enter here the total offerings and pledges received this week to support the ministries of the church. This includes offerings for the regular operating budget of the church, special offerings for particular ministries, capital campaigns, and other forms of designated giving. Do not include receipts from investments, fees for programs such as daycares or after school programs, or fundraisers.

- **Factors affecting your ministry in the last week. (Optional Narrative)**