



Thriving ESSENTIALS

Dear Council,

You are reading this letter because someone in your congregation checked into *Thriving Essentials*, the new church leadership training course developed by the CRCNA. They felt this course was worthy of your consideration as a way to equip and energize leaders within your church.

The *Thriving Essentials* course is designed for *all* your ministry leaders—elders, deacons, volunteers, staff, new leaders, and seasoned veterans. The course aligns leaders around four core concepts in these areas: Mission, Discipleship, Discernment, and Leadership. Ministry experts recognize these as essential aspects of thriving congregations, but church leaders are often operating out of many different paradigms. This course develops the foundations of a shared vocabulary and ensures that all of your leaders are building on a similar framework.

The pandemic has opened up new challenges and opportunities for reimagining ministry. Whether your church is in a time of transition or stability, this four-part course will help to strengthen the core principles of church leadership around God's desired future for your congregation.

To get the most out of *Thriving Essentials*, it is important that *your* council take the lead by **endorsing** this training and **participating** with other leaders of your church.

Need to know more? To make an informed decision, see more details at crcna.org/essentials. Have you heard directly from the leader who recommended us? Or perhaps you would like to ask another leader or two to try out the course individually first. In pilot testing, 94 percent of pastors and lay leaders who took the course said they would recommend *Thriving Essentials* to others.

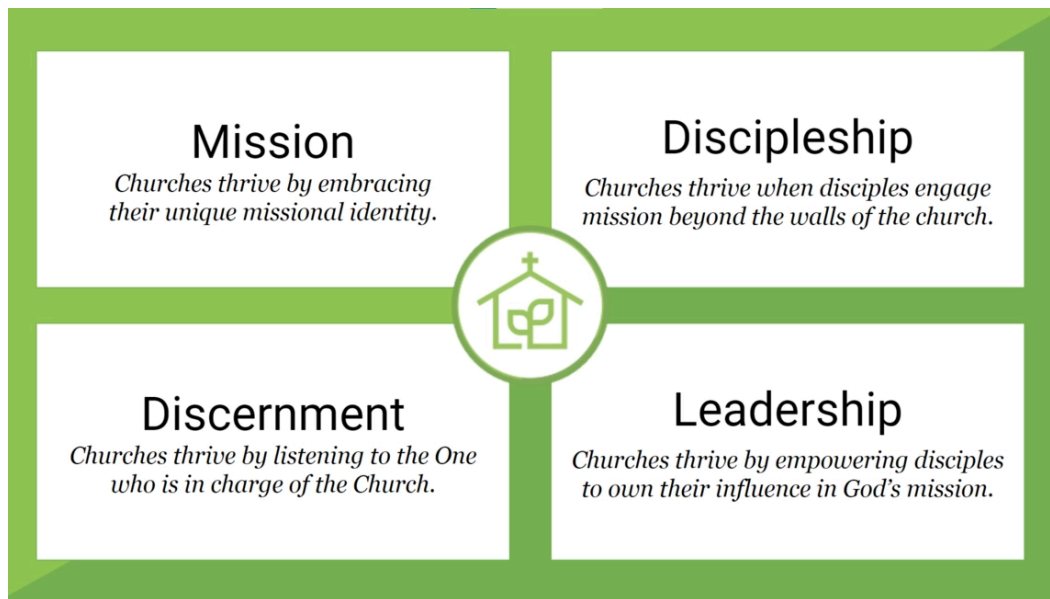
When you're ready, pre-register your church at crcna.org/essentials, and we'll work with you to schedule a custom church event—online or in-person—for all of your elders, deacons, staff, and volunteer ministry leaders.

We look forward to training with your church!

Sincerely,

The CRCNA Essentials Team

**Thriving Essentials is funded through a generous grant to the CRCNA from Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations initiative. The aim of this national initiative is to strengthen Christian congregations to help people deepen their relationships with God, build strong relationships with each other, and contribute to the flourishing of local communities and the world.*



Mission

Every church is called to participate in God's mission, but each church needs to discern their niche within that larger mission. It begins by understanding the unique context where God has placed us, and recognizing the gifts and passions within the congregation. In this session, we'll look at how churches thrive when context and congregation converge and we discover - or often rediscover - our church's unique missional identity.

Discipleship

Disciples are formed as they engage God's mission beyond the walls of the church. In this session we'll look at how churches thrive when they help members put their discipleship into practice throughout the week. Reframing church discipleship programs as a means, not an end, can infuse them with new energy and purpose as we 'gear up' to serve. We'll also see examples of how church members inspire each other to discover the missional opportunities all around.

Discernment

Practicing discernment is hard enough as individuals, much less doing it together as church leaders or an entire congregation. The idea of 'waiting upon the Lord' has almost become counter-cultural. In this session, we'll look at how churches thrive when they resist the temptation to do and instead foster the impulse to discern. When discernment is done in community, it can strengthen our faith, weaken our divisions, and prevent fewer missteps as we pursue God's mission.

Leadership

Even in churches, our ideas about 'leadership' are largely driven by our workplaces, news, and entertainment. But Jesus flipped around our preconceptions about power and leadership. Churches thrive when they embrace the idea that everyone is a leader, because everyone has God-given influence. In this session we'll explore how to recognize our influence, guard against misuse, and to steward that influence for Kingdom impact.