

What makes you come alive?

By [Elizabeth Hagan](#)

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“Don’t ask what the world needs,” says Howard Thurman. “Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

This was the guiding quote of a church visioning retreat I led recently at [Fellowship Congregational Church \(UCC\) in Tulsa, Oklahoma.](#)

Fellowship Church and its pastor, Chris Moore, invited me to help guide a group of church members and active participants in a day-long conversation about how they organized their life together. At this juncture in their church life, as at many other mainline Protestant churches, Fellowship’s leaders are asking questions such as these:

- What kind of kind of ministry should we invest our time and finances in (even if it is not what we used to do)?
- What kind of church structure do we need to support the ministry we do (even if it means re-writing our governing documents)?
- How do we encourage and empower the next generation of children and youth (even if there aren’t as many here as there used to be)?

So, to begin to get to the bottom of these questions, we talked a lot about energy.

What makes us come alive individually and as a community of faith? What drains us? What might we need to let go of so that we can get our energy back?

And from the facilitator point of view, it was amazing to watch the eyes in the room as they were given permission to spend a whole day thinking like this. For energy is simply that: energy! Talking about what makes us come alive is inspiring. Once the positive vibes start coming, it’s hard to control them.

By the end of the day, the conversation path led us to some clearer possibilities than when we started both about ministry and governance at Fellowship. And I heard attendees say afterwards, “We now know what we know. And I have more faith now that we as a church can move forward in the positive direction we all want.”

I did a happy dance because this clarity is what coming alive is all about.

**Energy gives us clarity about what we need to do and what we don’t.** Too often in church we spend our energy tokens on things that have “always been done.” Or things that will keep everyone happy or even honor the memories of the church founders. Or even procedures that support our church constitution and by-laws that make no sense for modern times.

But what if more of us started our next church council or session or board meetings by asking one another, “What made you come alive in the past week?” (And really listened to each other).

And then, “When was the last time you felt energized by our church?” And then (gulp) moved more of our resources in those directions?

Maybe it’s too crazy of a thought, but wouldn’t you want to attend a church where the collective community felt alive? I know I would.

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