

First United Methodist Church, Burlington

CONSULTATION REPORT

10/23/2017

INTRODUCTION

We have been privileged to work with Pastor Melisa Bracht-Wagner, the leaders, and congregation of First United Methodist Church in Burlington. We greatly appreciate the work you did to prepare for the consultation and the hospitality you provided to the consultation team throughout the weekend. Our prayer is that God will use this report and this process to inspire the congregation to follow the Holy Spirit in your response to Christ's mission in this community and world.

STRENGTHS

1. EXCELLENT FACILITIES

The spaces available throughout the church's facilities provide many opportunities for ministry to and with the community. The sanctuary reflects the best of both your heritage and the contemporary world to enhance the worship experience for everyone. Your meeting spaces in the church and the LOFT offer places for study, spiritual growth, and community support and service.

2. COMMITMENT TO MISSION

Your church has a long history of supporting mission locally and globally. You work with a variety of community partners, including non-profit agencies, businesses, and other churches, to improve the lives of people in the community. The LOFT and SUMM are two important ways you make a difference in your communities and transform people's lives for the better.

3. STEADFAST RELATIONSHIPS

We heard many references to the good people here in the church. God has blessed each of you with gifts for ministry which are present in your outreach into the community. We heard several examples of the ways you care for one another in times of need, yet some relationships may need to be healed where conflict has festered. One person summarized your love for one another, saying "relationships are bigger than any issue" that we may need to address.

4. MUSIC MINISTRY

Music in many different styles is shared by gifted musicians both as soloists and in a variety of groups. The acoustics of the sanctuary provide an inspirational space for music in weekly worship and in the occasional concerts you host.

5. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Ministry with children through JUMP (children's worship), PBJ (Wednesday night), and Confirmation are important aspects of your care and nurture of the spiritual lives of young people in the church and the community. You have a devoted group of staff and unpaid servants in the congregation who work together to disciple kids through the nursery, puppet ministry, and a host of personal relationships.

6. PASSIONATE LEADERSHIP

We met many people in our weekend with you who are visionary and risk-taking leaders. They are willing to experiment to respond to the changing needs of ministry in order to reach new people for Christ. Pastor Melisa's heart for *the least, the last, and the lost* of our community is evident in her servant leadership, not asking people to do something she wouldn't do herself.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

1. MISSION AND VISION FOR THE LOFT

The LOFT, "a community building of First United Methodist Church, develops relationships through fellowship, mission outreach, and recreation," will play a significant role in the future ministry of the church. However, we observed competing interpretations about its purpose. The mission and vision of any congregation needs to be clear, compelling, and shared. Without focus, the congregation will inevitably experience confusion, conflict, and complacency.

2. VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Many people mentioned the desire to have more individuals involved in hands-on ministry. Intentional spiritual growth is the first step toward activating disciples in service to the church and the community. The people of First United Methodist Church are gifted for ministry in many ways, but those who are already active will need to mentor and appreciate new leaders—not to do things the way we might prefer, but to help new people discover how to use their God-given abilities most effectively.

3. INTENTIONAL OUTREACH

We heard about many opportunities for members of the church to connect new people with God. However, many people from outside the congregation come in and out of the LOFT without ever getting to know participants in the life of the church. The demographics of the community are not represented fully in the church's membership. As some told us, your image in the community is sometimes perceived as elitist. Invisible barriers may be separating you from people who come from walks of life other than your own.

4. WORSHIP AND MUSIC

With so many gifted musicians, it makes sense to continue to build on your worship life for nurturing people in the faith, old and new. We heard about the desire for more youth and young adults (ages 12 to 30) to be worship leaders. The 11:11 service has shown evidence of making a difference in people's lives but it has yet to reach its potential.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Your children's ministry has been growing in recent years, and you have a strong core of leaders that are passionate about helping children grow in their faith. As the children age, you have the opportunity to develop youth ministry (ages 12 to 18) with that same kind of success.

ACTION STEPS

1. MISSION AND VISION

Upon the acceptance of this report the mission statement for First United Methodist Church in Burlington will be that of The United Methodist Church: “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Remember that the local church is the primary means for making disciples.

Day of Visioning: Bathed in prayer with the support of the congregation, the coach and the pastor will conduct a Day of Visioning in the fall of 2017. The purpose of this day is to flesh out a more specific vision for the future which God intends for the church.

The church council will select and empower a broadly diverse Dream Team with the coach to discern and champion the vision. The Dream Team will share the completed vision with the church council by January 1, 2018. Specific goals and a detailed plan for communicating the vision with the entire congregation on a regular basis will be included with this report. The church council will be responsible for helping the church live into the newly discerned vision within the entirety of the life and ministry of the congregation. Implementation will be completed by July 1, 2018, and the Dream Team will continue celebrating the vision regularly.

Annual Ministry Audit: This plan will also include an Annual Ministry Audit to align ministry around the church’s vision (such as the one offered by Paul Borden), where all committees and ministries will be evaluated according to the mission, vision, and goals of the church. Beginning in 2018, this audit will be completed annually by the church council in anticipation of the Charge Conference.

2. DISCIPLESHIP DEVELOPMENT

Spiritual growth comes through personal devotional practices and the experience of God’s grace in a trusted small group. To that end, the church will develop a comprehensive discipleship pathway for all ages and life experiences by July of 2018. Intentional mentoring will become a part of this ongoing work of discipleship as one servant trains another in an area of ministry. At least 50% of church members will be participating in a small group, including Sunday school classes, softball teams, choirs, committees, etc. by the end of 2018.

3. EXPERIMENTS IN OUTREACH

Face-to-face relationships are at the heart of outreach. We hope to encourage every member of the church to intentionally pursue more relationships with the community beyond the members of the church, especially people who participate in ministries in the LOFT. Sometimes these new experiences bear fruit, and sometimes just a seed is planted, but God is calling us out into our mission field. By January of 2018 all small groups will be oriented to pursue and monitor this goal with their members. By the end of 2018, an incentive goal, such as a golden toaster, may be offered to celebrate the outreach connections and new relationships.

4. WORSHIP

Worship is an integral part of intentional faith development in this congregation. The church council will form a worship study team by January 31, 2018 to evaluate current worship practices and make recommendations for further enhancing the worship experiences of the congregation.

Special attention will be given to the 11:11 service to identify music, worship style, time, and place for worship that will reach new people to increase average attendance to 75 persons by the end of 2018.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Youth ministry is grounded in the relationships we develop with children as they grow older. While confirmation and youth group has re-started, and youth choir and instrumental groups are forming, a team of three to five people will create an intentional discipleship plan specifically for youth by August of 2018.

The consultation team recommends, that should the church vote to accept the prescriptions of this report, that during the “implementation phase” of these prescriptions a defined time-off for re-creation and spiritual renewal be set aside for the pastor of the church. This time may include but not be limited to a specific “Renewal Leave,” as defined by the *Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, as well as continuing education related to Healthy Church Initiative prescriptions and/or apart from them. These arrangements will be made in consultation with the coach, the staff-parish relations committee (SPRC), and the district superintendent.

CONCLUSION

We, the consulting team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation through this weekend consultation process. Our prayers and hopes for your congregation are that the Holy Spirit will use this process to help your church move to the next level in ministry for the sake of God’s mission in the world.

CONSULTATION TEAM

Ryan Christenson, Lead
Phil Carver, Coach
Marsha Gerot
Beth Harbaugh
Sally Barrett
Alec Amosson

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Sunday, October 1, 2017, Sanctuary, 10:10 a.m.
Wednesday, October 4, 2017, LOFT, 5:45 p.m.
Tuesday, October 10, 2017, LOFT, 10:00 a.m.

CHURCH CONFERENCE

Thursday, October 19, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

cc: Lilian Gallo Seagren, Conference Superintendent, Southeast District