



First United Methodist Church Williamstown, WV

Consultation Report Nov, 2007

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Basic Situation:

First UMC Williamstown is located in a very stable, aging mission field, but there are unexpected opportunities for mission. The children's ministry is very strong (although fragile in leadership); consolidation and growth of the nearby High School has led to a gap in social services; and there is outreach potential Marietta College. Only 39% of the members regularly worship between two Sunday worship services (8:45 and 11:00). The traditional service is at maximum capacity, but the contemporary service is not thriving. The church has an unfortunate (and unwarranted) reputation in the community as "rich and troubled", and has tended to have difficult pastoral relationships. Nevertheless, there is growing commitment and a more innovative attitude among core leaders. The senior pastor brings fresh vitality and "out-of-the-box" thinking.

Consultation Goals:

Interpret the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and obstacles, facing the church in the emerging mission field; and identify key strategic moves that will grow God's mission through First United Methodist Church. Most importantly:

- Build trust and support for the pastor;
- Encourage teamwork and unity among staff and volunteer leaders;
- Help free the church from controlling influences;
- Assess the location and facility;
- Train and build the discipling process.

Appreciation:

The congregation has been very friendly, and the core group leading church is most enthusiastic. Leaders have demonstrated profound faith and genuine desire for spiritual depth and mission impact (i.e. church growth). Pastor Steve and the people have been generous in listening to both the challenges and the opportunities, and have invested considerable energy to the consultation process. Thank you for welcoming me into your midst.

Resource

The consultation has relied on the *Congregational Mission Assessment*. My insights and recommendations are shaped by this template:

Foundational:	Genetic Code Core Leadership Organization	<i>About the identity of the church</i> <i>About the seriousness for mission in the church</i> <i>About the structure of the church</i>
Functional:	Changing People Growing Christians Discerning Call Equipping Disciples Deploying Servants	<i>About how people experience God in the church</i> <i>About how people grow in relationship to Jesus</i> <i>About how people discover their place in God's Plan</i> <i>About how people are trained for ministries</i> <i>About how people are sent & supported into the world</i>
Formal:	Property Finance Communication	<i>About location, facility, and technology</i> <i>About stewardship, budget, and debt-management</i> <i>About information, marketing, and advertising</i>

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Contents:

1	Consultation Goals, Process, and Thanks
4	The Big Picture
6	Church and Community Overview
14	Congregational Strengths and Weaknesses
16	System Check
18	Strategic Recommendations
35	Teaching Summary
37	Foundation:
37	Identity and Purpose
29	Leadership
40	Organization
42	Function:
43	Changing People
45	Growing Christians
47	Discerning Call
48	Equipping Disciples
50	Sending Servants
52	Form:
52	Property
54	Finance
55	Communications
56	Encouragement
56	Next Steps

Appendices and Resources Attached Separately

Congregational Mission:

From: "Membership Matters": *Come along! Come alive! Come home!*

Mission Statement: *Making Disciples – Making a Difference*

The Big Picture of Church Growth

Church Renewal "In the Box"		Growing Faith Community "Out of the Box"		Missional Movement "Beyond the Box"	
Chaplaincy Church	Family Church	Program Church	Discipling Church	Heartburst Church	Apostolic Church
Nature: Maintenance Care Giving Privilege Tradition Loyalty Information	Nature: Mercy Visitation Consensus Heritage Control Taste/Opinion	Nature: Philanthropy Projects Task Groups Ideology Permission Style Options	Nature: Transformation Leadership Teams DNA Empowerment Mission Targets	Nature: Innovation Servanthood Opportunism Rigorous DNA Partnerships Micro-Accuracy	Nature: Radical Pragmatism Mentoring "Monastic" Cells Christian Lifestyle Ancient Continuity Macro-Expandability
Desires: Survive Comfort Teach Children	Desires: Revitalize Find Purpose Reach Youth	Desires: Grow Members Renovate Grow Adults	Desires: Grow Mission Relocate Call Disciples	Desires: Cross Cultures Indigenous Tech Multiply Teams	Desires: Plant Churches Reach Cities Train Missionaries
Needs: Break Control Renew Clergy Enliven Worship	Needs: Break Control Focus Clergy Overcome Obstacles	Needs: Streamline Manage Time Increase Stewardship	Needs: Train See visions Maximize Trust in Church	Needs: De-Centralize Network Leaders Radical Trust in God	Needs: Spiritual Disciplines Grow Disciples Overcome External and Internal Bigotry
Leadership: One Pastor Chaplain	Leadership: Pastor/Assoc. Chaplains	Leadership: Career Clergy Task Masters	Leadership: Mavericks Equippers	Leadership: Spiritual Guides Constant Coaches	Leadership: Spiritual Giants Pilgrim Bands
Resist Change Accountability Good Theology	Comfortable with Change Balance Clear Christology		Embrace Change Productivity Passionate Missiology		
Learning Curve: Learn and apply new skills a) Spirit-Filled Conversation with Culture b) Motivational Faith Sharing c) Small Group Adult Spiritual Growth d) Equipping Lay Initiative	Learning Curve: Focus mission and mentor leaders a) Overcoming Failure, Healing and Being Healed b) Spiritual Life and Calling c) Mentoring to Recover Joy and Discern Call d) Embedding DNA Boundaries		Learning Curve: Radically Trust God a) See Hidden Potential in Persons, Situations, and Self b) Total Surrender to Larger Purpose c) Reliance on a Cross-Cultural and Cross Sector Web of Relationships d) Courage to Endure and Persist		

Big Picture Commentary

In the context of the “big picture” of church growth, First United Methodist Church is a “Family Church” that is torn between retreat into “Chaplaincy” and advance into “Program” church life.

- There is a strong group of at least 20-30 people (primarily older, but of various ages) who want the church to shape itself around their personal aesthetic tastes and needs. They want the pastor to be their “chaplain” and to keep worship and programming within fairly narrow personal comfort zones. Note that historically the church grew lazy in stewardship, depending on a few affluent families to pay the bills.
- There is another strong group of at least 20-30 people (primarily boomers, but of mixed ages) who want the church to multiply relevant programs for outreach and design worship alternatives to be more seeker sensitive. They want the pastor to function as a CEO to raise money and administrate efficiently, equipping volunteers to do more and better work. Note that historically the church has not emphasized gifts discernment, training, or mission teams ... and that many of these leaders are so busy in life as to make spiritual discipline difficult.

The rest of the people are in-between. They are reasonably healthy and open, generally more traditional, often unaware of the tensions within the church and the pressures on the pastor. They do not have a foundation of trust with which to stand up to aggressive behavior, nor the spiritual discipline with which to be passionate about outreach.

Children’s ministry is strong because that is one area about which all parties agree (albeit for different reasons). Youth ministry and worship are the two places where the friction is felt most. The youth group goes up and down like a yo-yo, depending on which side is more influential in any given budget year. Worship is a constant struggle for mutual understanding.

The church and pastor are having difficulty transitioning from the “family” church that is most suitable to homogeneous, stable, small town life ... to the “program” church that is most suitable to heterogeneous, mobile, suburban life. Underlying tensions include:

- Strong desires to protect internal harmony in tension with urgent needs for innovative programs beyond the comfort zones of individual members;
- High priorities for care giving and diplomatic leadership in tension with rising challenges to connect with strangers and assertive mission direction;
- Abiding expectations for traditional consensus management and dependence on the pastor to do ministries in tension with rising expectations streamlined decision-making and lay- or team-led ministries.

Pastor Steve is clearly oriented to “program” church leadership, which is what First UMC needs to survive and grow in the emerging mission field. However, he is in his first fulltime parish and has three handicaps. The first two are typical of most UMC clergy facing transformation. He is “thin-skinned” (i.e. very merciful, urgent about being liked, and readily wounded by mean-hearted comments). Additionally, he is relatively untrained in the principles of disciple-making systems and control intervention. The third handicap is unusual. He is forced to attend seminary training that is not readily customized for his needs or the congregational situation. This places a huge extra burden on his energy and limited finances.

The “Family Church” cannot remain in this precarious balance between “chaplaincy” and “program” expectations very long. Steve Gedon’s pastorate is probably the most significant pastoral relationship time in over 50 years for the church. One way or another, some people will leave the church in the next five years. They will either be advocates of the chaplaincy church or of the program church.

If the program church leaders leave, First UMC will rapidly decline in members, worshippers, and finances. Neither the children’s ministry nor the contemporary worship service will be sustainable; the church will find itself in chronic financial deficits; and the current high quality of property maintenance will significantly diminish.

If the program church leaders stay, First UMC will experience a temporary financial crisis and an urgent need for small group multiplication and leadership development for youth and adults. Thereafter, the children’s ministry will grow and diversify into private homes and other sites, mission outreach will increase, and the contemporary worship service will grow. Indeed, the church will likely need to add a second traditional service to Sunday morning.

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In other words, the years 2008 and 2009 will probably be decisive for the future of the church through 2060. The church is on a “razor’s edge” of growth or decline, but it is very unclear which way most members will jump. If they back away to protect privileges and comfort zones, the church decline will accelerate but for the next decade they will have peace and harmony a diminishing and aging faith community. If they leap ahead to embrace seekers, the church will go deeper and further with Christ and become a model of transformation for the UMC Conference.

Please refer to the “Big Picture” chart. The basic strategic moves listed at the bottom of the “in the box” and “out of the box” columns are crucial for the church. The outreach attitude will be encouraged by:

- 1) Understanding demographic and lifestyle segment trends and listening to culture;
- 2) Teaching members and leaders how to share faith in word and lifestyle;
- 3) Encouraging adult spiritual growth (especially discernment of spiritual gifts and personal mission);
- 4) Equipping lay ministries (especially for care giving, outreach ministries, and evangelism).

The most urgent need is for the church to rally around a new sense of identity and purpose that goes beyond the inward mutual support of the Family Church. There needs to be a clearer consensus about core values and convictions, and a powerful motivating vision and mission to define the purpose of the church in the eyes of both members and the general public.

As the congregation gathers momentum for programs that take the church “out of the box” certain steps are particularly important to create a positive pastoral relationship:

- 1) Learn to confront mistakes and overcome failure with forgiveness and learning;
- 2) Develop a strong sense of personal spiritual life, and focus one-to-one mentoring for personal mission;
- 3) Focus the pastor and Council on the discipling process;
- 4) Rigorously embed core values, beliefs, vision and mission (“DNA”) for accountability.

These basic strategic moves will take the congregation to the next level of spirituality and mission.

NOTES:

Community and Church Overview

Demographic Profiles:

The primary mission field of any given church is defined by the average distance people are willing to travel to work and shop (about 30 minutes for most people in Williamstown). That mission field for First UMC includes the expanding area from which High School students will be transported to an enlarged and central High School. It also includes Marietta and its college, since the Ohio River is now less of a geographical or psychological barrier than in previous years.

The mission field is very stable (73% have lived there over 5 years). Other than retired people, major occupations relate to management, professional service, education, and social services. Here are the top lifestyle segments and the ministries that are most likely to reach them:

- Retirement Town Seniors who prefer early retirement, on more limited incomes, in scenic and comfortable surroundings.
Ministries: Large women's and men's groups; fellowship, food, and speaker; small groups with affinities for travel and nature; meditation and book discussions; mentoring; "depot" outreach ministries that collect things to give away.
- Mid-Size Town Mid-Scalers with a median US income, in traditional marriages, with children, and concerns for family values.
Ministries: Children's and Youth Ministries; parenting classes; interventions about substance abuse; marriage enrichment; cross-generational outreach ministries that families can do together; counseling.
- Middle Class Families with college educations, professional careers, and stable marriages. They are concerned about social issues, but share consumer attitudes.
Ministries: Continuing education about most subjects; advocacy; interventions for child and spousal abuse; targeted social service programs (clothing distribution, food banks, housing); assisted living for seniors.
- Small Town Blue Collar who work in industry or manufacturing, and are often doing shift work. They experience more family and parenting struggles, are financially stretched, and orient to the outdoors and sports.
Ministries: Hands-on mission related to building, repairing, and decorating; small groups doing practical things for the needy; sporting clubs and environmental protection.
- Aging Industrial City Empty Nesters who left community service (police, fire department) or technical (trade, retail) professions unwillingly. They deliberately chose not to go to Florida in order to stay close to family.
Ministries: Special occasion ministries (Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, Christmas Eve); advocacy and fund raising; mentoring; affinity groups about prayer and Bible study.

The more ministries are targeted to distinct lifestyle segments, the more the church will grow.

There are four layers of insight you need to gain in your community. The first two layers are demographic and lifestyle segment, and this information can be obtained through the US Census, Percept research, or the UMC "Prizm" information you already have. The more important layers can only be investigated by your own listening-prayer teams.

- Affinity groups or micro-cultures are constantly bubbling up and dissolving again in your mission field. These are groups or networks around shared enthusiasms, addictions, personal needs, leisure activities, and so on. Connecting with these networks will help you develop small groups, short-term mission teams, communication networks, and topical preaching.
- Spiritual types will also only be discovered through your own listening. Generally speaking, there are five kinds of spiritually yearning people in any given zip code. Many are alienated from, and even hostile toward, institutional religion.

The Broken	Looking for healing
The Lost	Looking for guidance
The Lonesome	Looking for intimacy

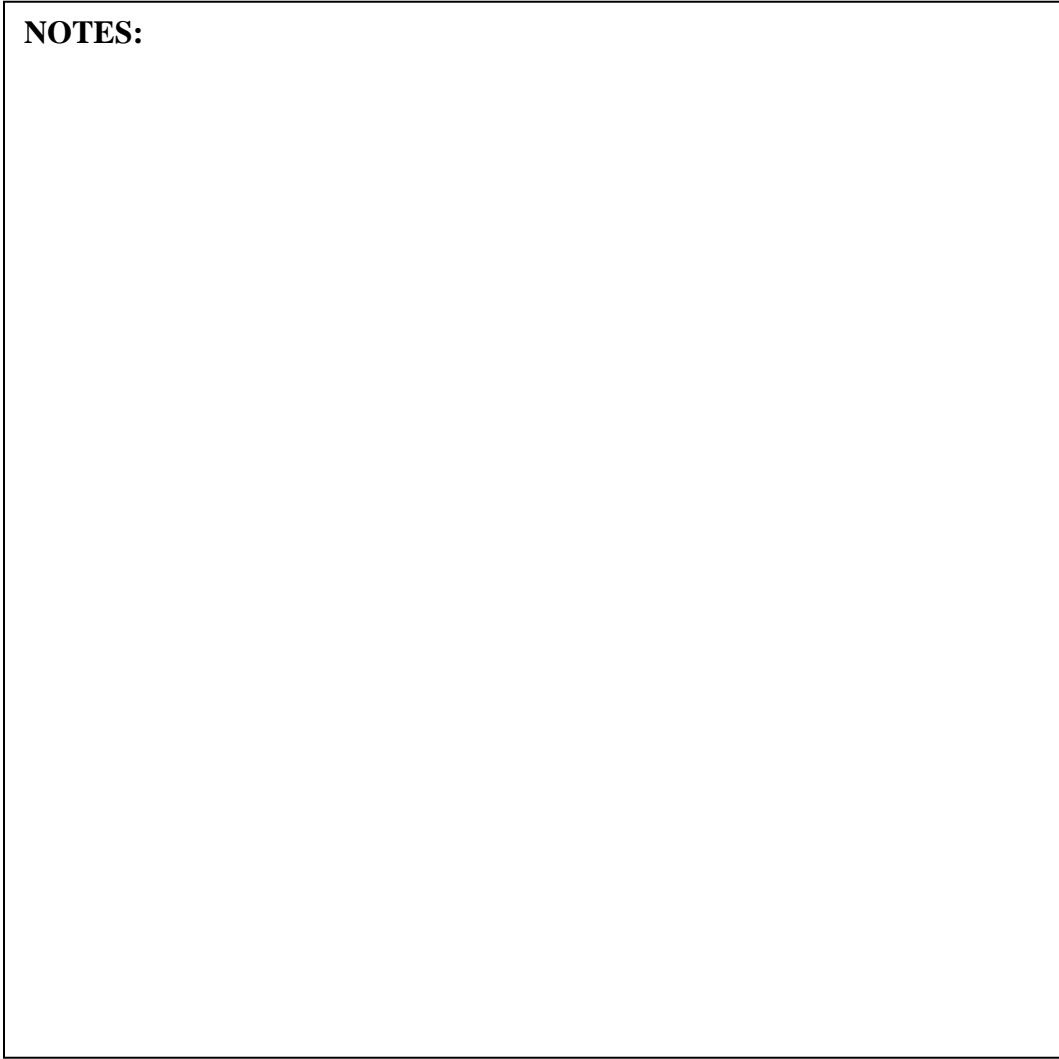
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The Anxious	Looking for hope
The Victimized	Looking for justice
The Celebrative	Looking to give thanks

These last two layers of inquiry are what define your “heartburst” as a church, and it will guide the development of your worship options. Given the diversity of your mission field, you need to develop and organize ministries around all of these yearnings. Evaluate your overall ministry by discerning which programs offer healing, guidance, intimacy, hope, justice, or thanksgiving. Any program, meeting, leadership deployment, or budget which does not clearly achieve one or more of these things should be terminated.

NOTES:



Lifestyle Segments

The top lifestyle segments are “Affluent Families”, “Middle American Families”, and “Young and Coming”. I recommend that you obtain the most recent Percept study of your town (www.percept.org). Sensitivity to these lifestyle segments will help you focus worship options, hospitality strategies, and outreach ministries.

“Middle American Families”

Many in this community are also preoccupied with “family concerns, personal goals, and social issues”. They are less worried about basic survival, but their finances and free time are severely stretched. In addition to the life concerns of “Affluent Families”, they are concerned with the items in bold print:

Marriage enrichment ... surviving divorce;
 Parenting skills ... in a dual career context;
 Elder care ... and facing the challenges of aging and retirement;
 Finding a good church ... and mentors who can guide through life ambiguities;
Finding spiritual teaching ... clearly connected with the Bible;
 Quality recreational and leisure time ... for personal refreshment;
Good Schools ... and the health, opportunities, and advancement of young children;
Achieving educational goals ... and establishing a satisfying career

Middle American Families that are repopulating older neighborhoods closer to the urban center will also be concerned with crime, the potential for gang violence, and general safety.

The following Percept indicators need to be interpreted correctly, given the cultural contexts of your mission field.

- 1) Resistance to change is *somewhat low*. However, Middle American boomers are generally very pragmatic, and will not change unless they foresee a immediate practical beneficial outcome. They are more likely to follow a logical strategic plan than an abstract policy.
- 2) Faith receptivity is *somewhat high*. However, Middle American boomers are generally very traditional. They tend to think in denominational or religious stereotypes, and define themselves more by what they are not than by what they are.
- 3) Giving potential is *very high*. However, Middle Americans tend to prefer multiple choices and designated giving, and are less motivated to give to generic missions or unified budgets.
- 4) Church program preferences will gravitate toward day care for children, youth programs, and Bible study and prayer groups. In older or more urban neighborhoods, there will be interest in street ministries and practical social services for financial assistance.

Middle American boomers are very likely to “church shop”, and will readily move their worship attendance to wherever the most relevant program is for their personal or family needs.

Anything the church can do to adapt worship and programming to these needs will increase interest among the public. These key concerns will guide the relevance of preaching, program, and volunteerism.

- Educated Young or Working Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Young Accumulators, Tex Sample’s - Cultural Right - Respectables). Young School Age Families, New Housing, Medium-High Income and Education, Technical/Sales, Managers/Professionals; Medium-High Installment Loan Debt. This segment consists of young, white parents with elementary school-age children. The majority have graduated from high school and attended some college. Most of these two-income parents are employed in technical/sales occupations. Many own their own home; their installment balances are high. Many read USA Today and play billiards and golf.
- Suburban Mid-Life Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Families; Tex Sample’s - Cultural Right; Respectables, Achievers). Families with Medium-High Income and Education, Managers/Professionals, Technical/Sales. This segment consists of white, urbanite parents with teenage children. Many are blue-collar and lower middle class. Most have an academic background (some with college degrees, most having attended a few classes), and are in technical/sales fields. The majority are homeowners, with two workers. These families keep abreast of world events by reading The Wall Street Journal

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and listening to news/talk radio. For excitement, they play video games and work out at the health club. Respectability is often very important to them. They are likely to be found in church. They believe in the self-denial ethic. Many are evangelical. They are politically conservative, and committed to traditional family values. The neighborhood is the seat of their relationships. Love of country is strong. They respond better to human faces than to abstract ideas. God is providentially involved in life's events. The Bible is a sacred text which answers the questions of identity. The sermon is of central importance. They prefer stories more than rational, linear, or conceptual thought. They believe and feel rather than think and do. Their primary concerns have to do with the personal issues that relate to personal and family life. They are very busy. They are concerned about their retirement. Ministries must conserve time. They have fewer crucial questions than most lifestyles. They change their faith preference less than the national average (24.1%). Image is important. One half of them have a college degree. Only 13% of this group will get their identity from their careers and achievements. They like to be in control of their work and prefer stability over risk.

- Young Suburban Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Families, Tex Sample's - Cultural Right - Respectables). Large Families, Medium Education, Medium-High Income, Technical/Sales, Precision/Crafts, Two Workers. Young Suburban Families are characterized by large, young families in urban areas. They are predominantly white, with a medium education, and medium-high incomes. The majority of occupations are in technical, sales and administrative support areas, and a significant number are employed in precision/crafts. It is common to have both spouses work outside of the home. This segment has the third highest percentage of homeowners, and more than half of these homes were built between 1960 and 1974. Concerned about world events and financial security, they listen to news/talk radio, watch the CBS Evening News, purchase life insurance upwards of \$50,000, and invest in savings bonds.
- Established Country Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Families, Tex Sample's - Cultural Middle, Strivers, Believers). Large Families, Medium Education, Medium Income, Mobile Homes, Precision/Crafts. Though not exclusively, many of these households are characterized by families who own mobile homes. Parents in their late 30s and 40's head the families, with mostly pre-teen and teenaged children. The household size is normally 3 to 4 persons. They are predominantly white, mostly from Northern European descent. Their education level is average, and they tend to work in precision production, and crafts and repair occupations such as mechanics, electricians and construction workers. This segment enjoys country music and fishing, and is likely to own a truck, van or sports utility vehicle.
- Young Mobile Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Families, Tex Sample's - Cultural Middle - Conflicted). Young Military, Large Pre-school Families, Medium Income and Education, Mobile Homes. This segment represents young, largely military families, with the second largest percentage of Hispanics in the U.S. Lifestyles segmentation system. These young parents are raising several young children, mostly age 5 to 11, with an average of 5-plus persons to a household. They have average educations and earn medium incomes. Also, this segment has the largest percentage of workers in precision production, craft and repair occupations. Many own their home, usually built after 1974. For relaxation, many listen to rock or country music, watch entertainment news, crime shows, and reality TV. They read Better Homes and Gardens and TV Guide, and enjoy bowling and playing video games.
- Young Blue Collar Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Families, Tex Sample - Cultural Middle - Strivers, Believers). This group is in their late 20's and early 30's, with young children, mostly 0-4. A significant portion are of Eastern European heritage. Their education is low to medium, and income levels tend to be medium. The heads of the household tend to work in precision production, craft and repair occupations, as well as operators, fabricators, and laborers. The average household has three members. They are frugal with their use of credit cards and debt burdens. They are recreational enthusiasts, enjoying billiards, bowling and golf. They primarily listen to rock and easy-listening music. Career is the dominant focus and the source of their status. Life is future-oriented and gratification is deferred. Work satisfaction is very high. The individual is more important than the community. They are expressive rather than self-fulfilling. They are striving to make it to the top. They are the most outer directed group in the U.S. They have low self-esteem and poor self-image. Their religion is very private and seldom corporate. Salvation is individual, never social. They place strong emphasis on personal responsibility. They move often. They are very involved with their families. They have a high degree of loneliness. They lack social passion. They need strong pastoral care. Small groups work very well with this group. 23% of this group has changed their preferred religious affiliation in the last ten years compared to national average of 24.1%. They read USA Today and Reader's Digest. They tend to look for a church different from the normal mainline church. They prefer a setting that is more action oriented than verbal.
- Empty Nesters. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Families, Tex Sample - Cultural Middle - Conflicted, Strivers). Middle-Age, Singles and Couples, Multi-Person Residences, Medium Education and Income, Technical/Sales, Services. These are empty-nesters, mostly 55 to 64 years of age. They are predominantly white and of Northern European ancestry. These households have an average education and are in the middle-income bracket, with occupations such as technical, sales and

administrative support; and services. They tend to live in their own houses, which were built before 1939. The average house has two individuals. Up-to-the-minute information is important to them, so they read The Wall Street Journal and USA Today. On the lighter side, they watch sports and situation comedy.

- Working Country Consumers. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Young Accumulators, Tex Samples - Cultural Middle - Strivers) Young School-Age Families, Medium Income, Low-Medium Education, Precision/Crafts, Military, Laborers; Very High Retail Credit Activity and Debt, Medium-High Revolving Account Activity and Debt. Working Country Consumers is comprised of 3 to 4 person households, with typically 35 to 54 year-old parents and 5 to 11 year-old children. The majority are of Northern European ancestry. These households have an average educational level and a slightly stronger tendency to have two or more members of the family working. Occupations include metal workers, typesetters, bus drivers, military personnel, and hand packers. The majority own single-family or mobile homes. Financially, these families are far above average in retail credit and revolving account debt. They enjoy fresh water fishing, reading Better Homes and Gardens, and listening to country music.
- Building Country Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Young Accumulators - Tex Samples - Cultural Right, Respectables, VALS 2 - Makers). Young School-Age Families, Mixed Jobs, Medium Income, Mixed Education; Very High Retail and Revolving Accounts Debt. This segment is a suburban, predominantly white group, who are busy raising school-age children. Generally, these individuals have a low education level. Many are employed as military personnel or laborers, garnering a medium income. Most own their homes; others live in mobile homes. They have high revolving and retail account balances. They listen to country music, do aerobics, and like to purchase items by mail or over the phone.

Senior Life

- ✚ Spirited Sunset Seniors. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Conservative Seniors, Tex Sample - Cultural Middle - Conflicted). Older Senior, Medium Income, Low to Medium Education, Mixed Jobs. This senior segment (99% over age 75) has a racial balance similar to that of the nation. They have an average educational background and professions include precision, production, craft, and repair; operators, fabricators, and laborers; and services. Most own a home, although some live in retirement homes. They like to read newspapers, such as The Wall Street Journal and USA Today. While they are 20% less likely to play tennis and other sports, they still possess a zest for life. Like the Aging Cautious Retirees segment, these individuals have a very low debt.
- ✚ Established Seniors. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Families, Tex Samples - Cultural Middle - Conflicted). This segment has a low education and a medium income. They are laborers and precision/craftspeople, mostly blue-collar. They represent individuals in their late 60's and early 70's of Northern European ancestry. The educational level of these households is low, with 35% having never graduated from high school. They tend to work as operators, fabricators and laborers; and earn average income. They live in homes built before 1939. These are usually two-person households. These individuals view the news on television and read the daily newspaper. They enjoy bowling and golfing. They are very frugal in their use of credit. They read Newsweek and Reader's Digest. In the past ten years, 19.1% have changed their religious preference, which is very low compared to national average of 24.2%. 17.9% are becoming more interested in faith than they were. One in six are concerned with providing care for their parents, better health for themselves, and are concerned about gangs. They tend to work close to home. They like easy listening music.
- ✚ Urban Senior Life. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Conservative Seniors, Tex Sample - Cultural Middle - Conflicted). Seniors, Singles and Couples, Medium-Low Income, Mixed Housing, Medium Education, Technical/Sales, Managers/Professionals. White, urban seniors, many own their own homes, while a significant number live in group quarters. Some live alone, some with a companion. Despite their tendency towards higher education, they are in the lower-middle income level, and employed in the managerial and professional specialties and the technical, sales and administrative support fields. Viewers of 60 Minutes, they also enjoy news/talk radio. In their retirement years, they enjoy traveling to foreign lands, and consulting financial planners.
- ✚ Country Seniors. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Conservative Seniors, Tex Sample - Cultural Middle - Conflicted). Seniors, Metro Fringe, Medium-Low Income, Low to Medium Education, Farming/Fishing, Laborers. Suburban seniors with low education and medium-low income, most are laborers. Homeowners, many live in single-family homes, while others live in mobile homes. The majority live with spouses, family members or companions, in older housing units. Over a third did not graduate from high school. Not much for exercise, they read Better Homes and Gardens and watch NBC Nightly News.

“Young and Coming”

An emerging lifestyle segment is preoccupied with “relationships, career formation, and personal development”. They are more likely aspiring business entrepreneurs or taking first steps into the corporate world. They are especially concerned with the items in bold print:

Marriage enrichment ... finding the right partner;
Educational Objectives ... establishing a satisfying career;
Long term financial security ... establishing a good credit rating;
Finding spiritual community ... networks for personal service;
 Quality recreational and leisure time ... for personal refreshment;

The following Percept indicators need to be interpreted correctly, given the cultural contexts of your mission field.

- 5) Resistance to change is *somewhat low*. However, Young and Coming boomers and busters are generally very trendy, and will not change unless they see their peers are supportive. They are more likely to join a friendship circle than do project out of a sense of duty.
- 6) Faith receptivity is *about average*. However, Young and Coming boomers and busters are generally very skeptical of institutional religion. They require evidence for sincerity, and measure authenticity by lifestyle.
- 7) Giving potential is *very high*. However, Young and Coming boomers and busters tend to spend money on organizations that can provide communication and entertainment, or that result in tangible benefits to real people.
- 8) Church program preferences will gravitate toward action/reflection groups, technology services, long-distance learning about local/global mission connections, and Christology.

Young and Coming boomers and busters are less likely to join a church, and more likely to throw themselves into a worship experience.

Anything the church can do to adapt worship and programming to these needs will increase interest among the public. These key concerns will guide the relevance of preaching, program, and volunteerism.

- ❖ Rising Potential Professionals. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Singles, Tex Sample - Cultural Left - Societally Conscious). Singles, Couples, Students and Recent Graduates, High Education and Income, Dormitories, Managers/Professionals, Technical/Sales; Medium-High Debt Loads. This segment is young, predominantly white and of Northern European descent. Rising Potential Singles are either recent college graduates or are still attending college. In the high-income bracket, they work in managerial/professional fields, the majority of whom live in one-unit residences. They carry somewhat high installment loan debt, perhaps reflective of student loans. They attend live theater and travel to foreign countries. They read USA Today and consult financial planners.
- ❖ Reliable Young Starters. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Singles, Tex Sample Cultural Left - Societally Conscious). Young Singles, Couples, Medium-High Education, Medium Income, Managers/Professionals, Technical/Sales. These households represent young singles who have demonstrated their high level of responsibility in their commitment to career, while at the same time maintaining responsible spending patterns. These singles have great potential for moving up the economic ladder. Most have graduated from college and/or post-graduate studies. They are purchasing managers, pharmacists, teachers, etc. with a medium income. They tend to rent apartments in large complexes, many of which were built from 1960 to 1974. Their tastes tend not to be extravagant. They listen to the news and talk radio shows, watch Today, and read USA Today and Newsweek. They frequent health clubs and tennis courts for exercise.
- ❖ Young and Promising. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Young Accumulators, Tex Sample - Cultural Left - I-Am-Me). Young Singles, Couples and Students, No Kids, Medium Income, Medium to High Education, Technical/Sales, Managers/Professionals. This segment is young, well-educated, well-compensated, and has few strings attached. There are no kids. They are predominantly white, with a high percentage from Northern European ancestry. They gravitate to managerial and professional specialty fields, such as management analysts and purchasing agents. One-third of them are still in school and are likely to rent apartments or live in dorms. These individuals tend to listen to news/talk radio and watch morning news shows and 60 Minutes. Newsweek and The Wall Street Journal are standard reading fare.

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Rural Families

- Working Country Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Cautious Young Couples, Tex Sample - Cultural Middle - Strivers). Couples, Small Families, Medium Income, Low Medium Education, Precision/Crafts, Military, Laborers. These households are primarily white, mainly of Northern European ancestry. Their educational level is fairly low and many work in the Armed Forces and as laborers. The majority own single-family or mobile homes, where 3 to 4 people reside. Young Country Beginners watch the NBC Nightly News, and read Better Homes and Gardens and Reader's Digest.
- Country Family Consumers. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Asset-Building Families, Tex Samples - Cultural Right - Respectables). Young School-Age Families, Mixed Education, Medium Income, Mixed Jobs; Very High Revolving and Bank card Debt. Country Family Consumers is comprised of young families, mostly with pre-teen and teenage children. The majority are white, with many of Northern European descent. Their education level varies. They are likely to be in the military or in precision production, craft and repair occupations, bringing home medium-income paychecks. Living in mobile homes or dorms, they enjoy watching ABC's Wide World of Sports. They also enjoy the great outdoors, country music, and fresh water fishing. They own trucks and vans. Although these young individuals may have just opened accounts in the last six months, they have the highest revolving bank card balances of all the U.S. Lifestyles segments. They are financially at risk because of their debts.
- Working Rural Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Asset-Building Families, Tex Sample - Cultural Right - Respectables). School-Age Families, Medium Income, Low Education, Mixed Jobs, Very High Retail Activity, Very High Revolving Account Debt. White, rural types, these individuals have little educational background and work as laborers and precision/crafts personnel. With middle incomes, many own newer homes or mobile homes. These individuals have high retail and revolving balances, suggesting extensive spending. They read Better Homes and Gardens and do aerobics.
- Laboring Rural Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Cautious Young Couples, Tex Samples - Cultural Middle, Conflicted, VALS 2 - Believers). School Age Families, Medium-Low Income, Rural, Low Education, Farming/Fishing, Laborers. White, rural folks, mostly blue collar. They have low education and work as laborers in the farming, fishing, and forestry industries. Although they have fairly low incomes and low credit activity, many own their homes. These individuals drive trucks or vans. They listen to country music and enjoy fresh water fishing. Most reside in Vermont, South Dakota, Nebraska, and North Dakota.
- Laboring Country Families. (U.S. Lifestyles - Mainstream Families, Tex Samples - Cultural Middle - Conflicted - VALS 2 - Makers). They are middle-age with medium to low incomes and work in lower paying blue collar jobs. More than half did not finish high school. They own vans and trucks, listen to country music and read Better Homes and Gardens. Their income is less than 70.7% of the population's. There are predominately three person per household, with the head of the household between 45-54. This group is concerned about their children, and they are especially concerned about drugs. They are very loyal to their religious beliefs. In the past ten years, 24.7% of them have changed their religious affiliation.
- Rural Working Families. (U.S. Lifestyles Group - Mainstream Families, Tex Samples - Cultural Right, VALS - Makers). Young Middle-Age Families, School-Age Kids, Rural, Low Education, Medium-Low Income, Mobile Homes, Farming/Fishing Laborers. This is a very rural, white segment, with parents in their 20's and 30's and children in school. In the medium-low income bracket, they earn a living as laborers, precision/crafts personnel, and in the farming, fishing, or forestry industries. The majority live in single-family homes, while a significant number live in mobile homes. Real "down-home" folks, they listen to country music and enjoy fresh water fishing. Many drive trucks or vans.

NOTES:

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Congregational Strengths and Weaknesses

First UMS has particular strengths that are relevant to these lifestyle segments. Church leaders should build on these strengths and address these weaknesses. These strengths and weaknesses represent good and bad habits. Like all habits, they are not changed by reading a book or taking a course, but through constant attention and positive reinforcement by peers.

Strengths include:

Pastor with a heart for mission:

Pastor Steve Gedon has received a powerful calling, and his personal story of career change and self-sacrifice is an inspirational model for others. He has an intuitive and immediate sympathy for very busy laity who hunger for God, and automatically receives respect from others. He is a “non-professional” professional, who is approachable and relaxed. He instinctively seeks substantive conversations, and is more of a spiritual mentor than a politician. He is prepared to go far “out-of-the-box” and is ready to learn.

Core leaders who are ready to “grow and go”

The core leadership (including staff and most board members) are among the 20% who want the “Family Church” to become a “Program Church”. They want greater variety in worship, education, and mission options. They are ready to stake more time and money on a motivating vision. They are investing themselves in spiritual growth disciplines, and taking new risks to align their lifestyles with Christ.

Warm welcomes and deep friendships

The congregation is generally welcoming to strangers, and eager to make people feel at home. They try to move people quickly into service, and offer them a voice in church life. The stability of residence and family connections in the community provide an environment in which deep friendships have flourished.

There are reservations here. There are definite limits as to how far church veterans are willing to allow newcomers to change traditions; and the deep friendships are accompanied by negative habits for gossip and backbiting. On the whole, however, newcomers will feel welcomed and appreciated. Acceptance and compassion are values that are accelerating as the church breaks free from its reputation as “rich and stuffy”.

Dedicated and talented volunteers

Church members include many dedicated and talented people. Many people use their professional skills in behalf of the church. This is particularly true in ministries for children, social service, and music. The main thing that holds talented volunteers back is the preoccupation of the church with consensus management, which bogs volunteerism down in bureaucracy and “permission getting”. Nevertheless, people are generally ready to “step up” and offer time and talent to serve the church.

Two great Sunday worship experiences

Both worship services are spiritual experiences, and are filled with a sense of the Holy. There is good preaching and participation in each service. The worship environment is beautiful and extraordinarily well maintained. I will have additional comments and recommendations about worship later in this report, but worship is generally inspiring and uplifting.

Children’s Ministries

The church is growing because of the personality and calling of the Senior Pastor, and because of the quality of the Children’s ministries. These include Sunday school, PALS, day care, Vacation Bible School, and other ministries. The space has been marvelously renovated and decorated; teachers are passionate and talented. Although the ministry is challenged for lack of space, this is a very positive stress to experience.

Weaknesses include:

Lack of sensitivity to the stress of the Pastor

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The pastor is used (and sometimes abused) in innumerable ways, all the time. People have unrealistic professional expectations on a pastor who is in his first full time parish, with limited seminary training. Most do not see the tensions that run through the church, and which are felt most severely by the pastor. Church people frequently contradict or undermine the pastor precisely where he should have spiritual authority; and conversely burden the pastor with management responsibilities precisely where they should step up themselves and do work.

Controlling leaders who want to maintain comfort zones

A handful of intimidating personalities and controlling individuals are constantly allowed to disrupt meetings or undermine planning. Harmony, or conflict avoidance, are more important to many people than mission impact and spiritual faithfulness. The lack of a foundation of trust (consensus over clear core values, beliefs, vision, and mission) is very clear ... but a small number of individuals are working very hard to undermine any such consensus so that their opinions will carry greater weight.

Bickering over worship tactics

The church allows its energy to be sapped away by trivial debates over projection screens, exclusive seating, musical groups, starting and ending on time, and innumerable other minor issues. They are generally unwilling to admit that not everyone can be satisfied all the time ... and that the point of worship isn't membership privilege anyway. The deep spiritual presence that is felt during worship is often forgotten and banished from midweek conversations that are essentially selfish debates about personal preferences.

Sunday Morning Is All There Is

The commitment to real personal growth and discipling is quite weak. For many, church experience is limited to Sunday worship attendance. Too few adults are committed to midweek small groups, team mission projects, and other spiritual disciplines through the week. Worship rarely recognizes the personal growth and mission that has happened the week before, and does not powerfully motivate the same things for the week after. Church people are generally too contented ... and compared to their Methodist ancestors remarkably lazy and spiritual living and mission outreach.

Poor listening skills

Church people tend to listen most to a small group of vocal people. These vocal people may be advocates of the "Chaplaincy Church" or the "Program Church". People are not particularly good at listening to the pastor, or to the general seeking public outside their church walls, or to God's call. Leaders are not familiar enough with the demographic, lifestyle segment, and hearburst groups within the mission field. Members are not ready enough to engage newcomers, seekers, and outsiders in deeper, respectful, and significant conversations about God. Poor listening skill generally reduces effective faith sharing.

These strengths and weaknesses ... and the hidden habits they represent ... should become the focus of constant evaluation in order to build on them. Positive reinforcement of the following habits will help the congregation build on its strengths.

Constantly reinforce the habits of:

- 1) Mission first ... membership privilege second;
- 2) Identify and apprentice emerging leaders;
- 3) Hold even the smallest things accountable to the core values and vision of the church;
- 4) Go deeper beyond "welcome";
- 5) People first ... tasks second;
- 6) Align personal passion to congregational purpose;
- 7) Train, train, train;
- 8) Different worship, different plan;
- 9) Make time for small group;
- 10) Get up close and personal in mission.

NOTES:

System Check

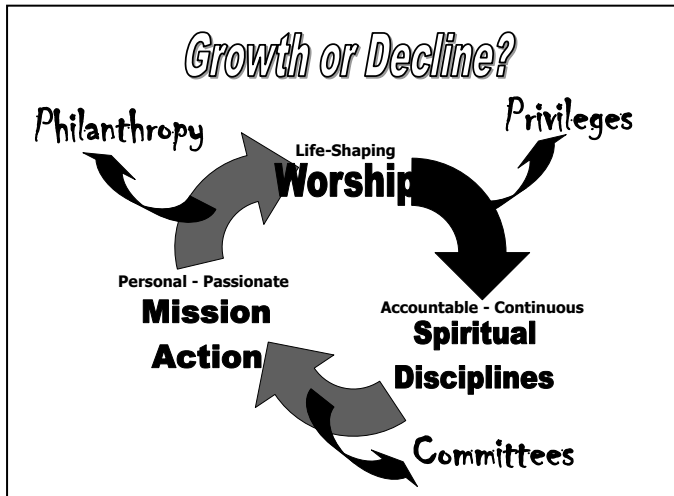
The overall system of a thriving church is only partially successful at First UMS. Participants tend to blame the plateau in worship and membership parking and facility limitations, or on volunteer shortages and pastoral relations stress (and these are important issues). However, the church has been on a plateau for well over 10 years, despite changing pastors and starting programs. In other words, leaders and members need to pay more attention to the success of the disciple-making system. If this works well, pastoral relationship stress will go down and financial/property issues will be resolved.

Both worship services are necessary, but each shapes the lives of participants in very different ways. Adjust your tactics accordingly. Your worship options are not drawing enough participants into small groups or partnered spiritual disciplines ... and the small groups that exist are too focused on mere fellowship or tasks.

Mission action emerges from personal passion, but not necessarily from serious spiritual growth. This means that the alignment of outreach with clear congregational vision is more coincidental than inevitable, and waters down the impact of your limited core of volunteers.

It will make volunteers more timid about personally engaging the lives of struggling people in the mission field.

Outreach leaders are too hesitant about sharing faith, and inviting and accompanying newcomers to worship. The social services do not intentionally link their clients with the worship and small group life of the church.



The breakdowns in the disciple-making process are revealed by the sidetracks of congregational life. Members become far too preoccupied with protecting their privileges (i.e. comfort zones, personal attention from the pastor, etc.)

Leaders become too preoccupied with procedure, approvals, and meetings ... and cannot invest time to identify and apprentice more leaders.

Outreach becomes simple social service, fails to share faith, and does not attract people into worship and the life of the church.

It is likely that First UMC in Williamstown has never really had a healthy, thriving church system in over 50 years (judging by the statistics I have seen and stories I have heard). Membership and worship attendance has been on a plateau at least since 1981, despite

occasional peaks in capital fund raising or (currently) children's ministries. So long as Williamstown and area remained traditional enough that most people went to church, financial and volunteer resources were available to sustain the church. Today, however, almost 45% of the population is "unchurched".

NOTES:

Empty box for notes.

Summary of Strategic Recommendations

The following major strategic moves are crucial for the future of the church. **Further interpretation of First UMC, and key training principles, are provided later in the report section by section.** I try to indicate a degree of urgency for the timetable for each major strategic change.

The recommendations are presented in the order of appropriate master planning. Foundational issues come first, and then functional issues. Formal issues (including property development) come last. This does not mean that some property and financial decisions are not urgent ... but it recognizes that the church cannot really act on these until vision, staffing, and leadership issues are addressed. Resist the temptation to leap too quickly into property development. The order of development is:

- 1) Lay the foundation of trust;
Become sensitive to the mission field;
Focus the core message;
Develop staff and grow lay leadership teams;
- 2) Build the discipling process;
Focus the mission targets of worship and adjust tactics;
Multiply small groups and teams;
Develop "signature outreach ministry";
- 3) Buy an adjacent house;
Relocate offices and create education space;
Redevelop the gymnasium;
Accelerate communications.

Never let debt-freedom and pastor-dependence undermine mission expansion and volunteer empowerment.

Foundational Recommendations: Visioning

Foundation of Trust See further advice and teaching on page 37

Immediate action

The congregation needs to discern God's motivating vision for the church. In order to do this, they first need to build a clearer foundation of trust. Use as a resource the process outlined in my book *Moving Off the Map*.

- Preach using the "Vision Lectionary", and encourage small groups and educational groups of all ages to use customize and use the attached vision lectionary exercise. Include children, and encourage them to draw pictures to create a virtual art display in the sanctuary of their perceptions of true core values, beliefs, vision and mission. Adult groups may wish to use resources from the Vision Discernment Workbook and the video "Will It Last? Embedding DNA" www.easumbandy.com.
- Implement a core leadership retreat in ASAP in winter 2008. This should be required of all council, trustees, staff, ministry area leaders as a condition of office. (Repeat this annually). The focus should be to a) refine core values, beliefs, vision and mission; b) help leaders define their personal life mission and how it is fulfilled through current church service.
- Share personal mission stories widely in the church through the winter. Encourage leaders to share personal stories interpreting core values and beliefs during worship, and use other media (drama, image, story, etc) to communicate the foundation of trust.
- Deploy listening prayer triads throughout winter and spring to listen to the public, and report insights in the context of worship. (See the strategy in *Moving off the Map* or read the attachment).

- Multiply focus groups in homes to further discuss and refine the consensus for the foundation of trust. Publish and celebrate a final consensus, with a true mission statement (core message and image) that can be widely publicized throughout the church and community) by Easter (or by the end of May).
- Use the Foundation of Trust as a vehicle of accountability to begin every session or ministry area meeting and embed these behavior expectations into lifestyle and program.

The emerging “DNA” should be visibly displayed in hospitality centers, and clearly presented in every worship service.

Measure every program decision (from worship tactics to youth ministries to facility design) against effectiveness these tactics might have in accomplishing your vision and mission (with no sidetracks or compromises). Constantly refer to the Foundation of Trust to confront anyone who manipulates or abuses relationships, or intervene in any situation where there is an inadvertent breach of shared faith.

Demographic Research and Signature Ministry Development

See website information appendix

Now through 2008

Congregational leaders must become “expert” on the demographic, lifestyle segment, and affinity group diversity within the zip codes that comprise their mission field.

- Obtain an extended ministry area study from *Percept*, and use other websites to understand demographic trends. See websites appended to this report. Pay special attention to the top lifestyle issues intrinsic to the community, and how church programming does or does not address them. (See appendix for additional websites).
- Shortlist and personally interview social service, health care, retail (especially fast food franchisers, strip mall developers, and automobile dealers), municipal government, and education leaders to discuss their perceptions of trends for the next 10-15 years.
- Deploy “Listening Prayer Triads” into the community to observe behavior and overhear issues, reporting insights back to the Council and to the worship planning process for prayer and preaching in worship. (A summary of the strategy is attached as an appendix).

Use this information to refine and develop current outreach ministries, and feed prayerful discernment of a future “signature ministry” either on-site or at a second-site. (A “signature ministry” is a big, bold, outreach ministry that is sacrificially supported by the members and in which they wholeheartedly volunteer their energy. It reveals the identity of the congregation to the community, and is a “front door” through which people access the resources and faith of the church. It should draw people into worship.)

Core Message

Urgent Action

Core leaders must shape the core message in behalf of the church. This will begin to emerge from the visioning retreat. A smaller team should be assigned by the pastor, with recommendations from the church as a whole, to do this. (A core message is the answer to the question, “What is it about our experience with Jesus that this community cannot live without?”)

- Make sure this team includes the people most broadly considered “spiritual leaders” by the people.
- Incorporate into this discernment serious disciplines for prayer and fasting.
- Encourage these spiritual leaders to “test” their thinking about core message by sharing brief insights in worship.

Use the attached study sheet for “core message”. In the end, the core message will be a few key words and a logo that will inspire the members to huge sacrifice, capture the imagination of the public, and become the chief exterior and interior symbol of the church.

Foundational Recommendations:

Leadership

Membership Expectations

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January – March 2008 (Lent)

The church actually has a good description of Membership Expectation in the handout “Membership Matters”. It is very similar to the list I shared with you below (and which causes such surprise and some consternation.

- **Surrender to Christ**
- **Weekly Worship**
- **Membership Training**
- **Prayer for Mission**
- **Bible Study**
- **Stewardship**
- **Small Group Accountability**

Capture the membership expectations in bullet form similar to this chart.

Develop and deploy a Lenten Devotional (to be used throughout the year as well) providing Bible studies and other tools. Use it in Sunday Schools and regularly Small Groups.

Celebrate this formally at least 4 times a year in both worship services ... and provide lay witnesses to share how they do it.

Translate and transform the “Statement of Practice” membership commitment card (in “Membership Matters”) in a system for administrative tracking. Measure worship and giving ... and also track participation in “mission participation” and “small group participation.” When members fail in their discipline, send a lay team to visit them and help them solve any problem.

Senior Pastor and Pastoral Relationship

See further advice and teaching on page 39

January - May 2008

The pastor is one of those rare ministers who actually understands himself as following a vocation rather than pursuing a profession. Therefore, he will only stay with a church so long as they respond with a desire to grow deeper and go further in Christ. The current pastor is the #1 reason First UMC is growing today.

- a) Establish or expand a Continuing Education Fund offering some financial support for his seminary studies. This not only brings some financial relief to the family, but symbolizes the commitment of the church for the pastor.
- b) Staff-Parish Committee should regularly send positive letters of support for the pastor to the District Superintendent and Bishop. Minority groups or individuals will try to undermine his credibility with the UMC Conference and this must not happen.
- c) Support the pastor in finding a mentoring relationship or coach who can supplement his formal education with church growth wisdom. This might be done with a pastor of any denomination, in a growing church, within 2 hours drive of Williamsport ... or in coaching with me or one of our EBA Associates.

Pastor, council, and other leaders should read and discuss key resources on ministry teams, including:

Tom Bandy (Abingdon Press):	<i>Coaching Change</i> <i>Mission Mover</i> <i>Why Should I Believe You?</i>
Jon Katzenbach (Harper)	<i>The Wisdom of Teams</i>
Wayne Cordeiro (Regal)	<i>Doing Church as a Team</i>
George Cladis (Jossey Bass)	<i>Leading the Team Based Church</i>
David Stark (Bethany)	<i>Growing People through Small Groups</i>
John Shuster (Berrett Koeler)	<i>Answering Your Call: A Guide to Living Your Deepest Purpose</i>
Ben Campbell Johnson (Eerdman)	<i>Hearing God’s Call</i>

Lay Leader

Immediate

The Lay Leader must be redeployed to be more effective for the church. There are three purposes for the job description of the lay leader:

- 1) Absolute support for the Senior Pastor, including defending him from gossip or behavior that is outside the boundaries of the Foundation of Trust;
- 2) Identification and development of a Signature Outreach Ministry, including identifying and training leaders, negotiating with mission partners, and presenting the face of the church to the community at large.
- 3) Model and teach the Membership Covenant for the whole body, including teaching newcomers and intervening to encourage church veterans in spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible, mission participation, and small group participation.

The lay leader should be broadly credible, highly respected, and very visible to the congregation ... and *always* be a consistent supporter of the pastor.

Staff Development

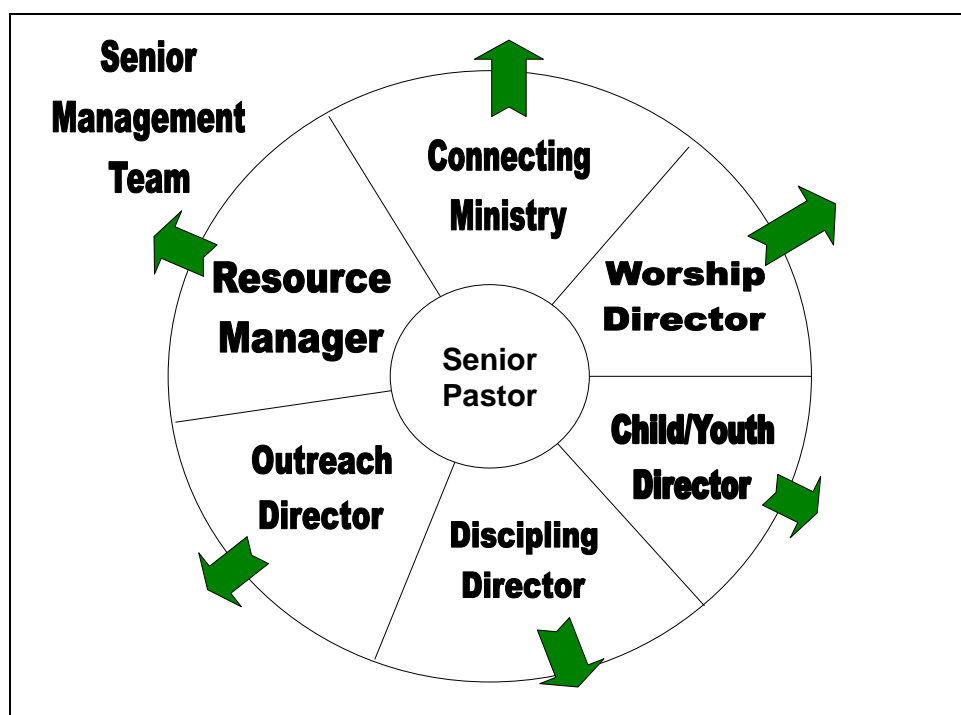
2008

Always “staff for growth”. This principle is broken at First UMC in three ways, and must be restored to health.

- 1) The church is currently under-staffed, and therefore staff members are carrying too many diverging responsibilities and in danger of burnout;
- 2) Staff are deployed in program silos, rather than to encourage the overall disciple-making process (synergy of growth) described earlier;
- 3) Staff are not sufficiently trusted to make management decisions in their own sphere of influence, resulting in too much bureaucracy, slow decision making, and internal frustration.

Read my book *Spirited Leadership: Empowering People to Do What Matters* (Chalice Press). Develop a Senior Management Team led by the Senior Pastor that places a staff or volunteer leader in charge of each segment of the disciple-making process. The goal of the Senior Management Team is not to maintain programs, but to grow trusted leaders who can manage their own programs. The details of how the Senior Management Team meets, its agenda, and its methods of accountability are in the book.

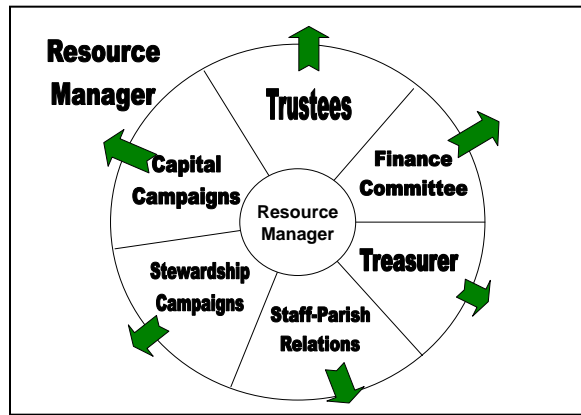
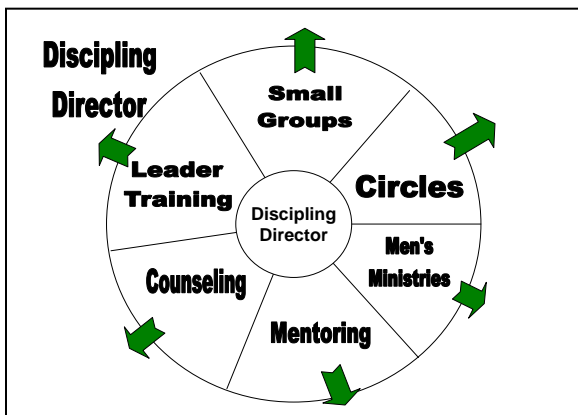
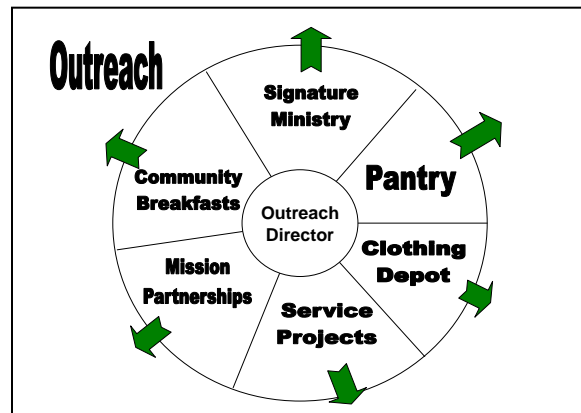
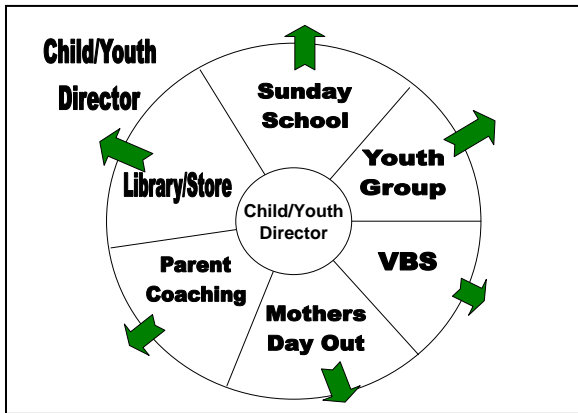
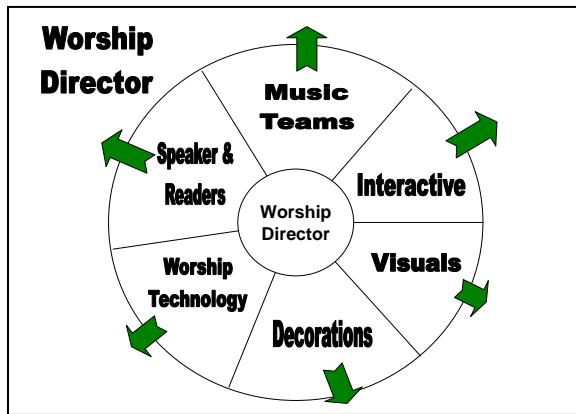
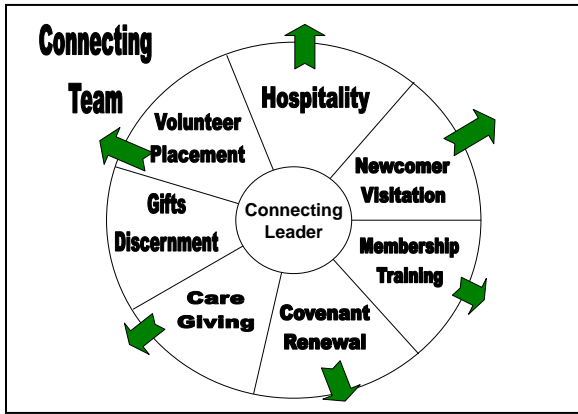
The following chart illustrates the deployment of the Senior Staff Team for First UMC:



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The leaders of this team may be staff or volunteer, but they represent the essential roles of leadership that are required for the discipling process to accelerate. The following snapshots provide insight into the responsibilities of each leader:



- ❖ Redeploy and train Kianna Anderson to be the new Children/Youth Ministry staff position full time. Kianna already has the heart and credibility for the position.
- ❖ Find a volunteer or hire a new part-time secretary/receptionist. This may often be done by a retired person with fair stipend.
- ❖ Redeploy and train Barbara Maconaghy as a part time small group developer. This is a crucial investment of staff money that will result (among other things) in better stewardship.
- ❖ Find a volunteer to be Financial Secretary. A church of this size does not need to pay a treasurer or financial secretary.
- ❖ Hire a full-time Music Director who fully supports both traditional and contemporary worship options;
- ❖ Appoint a volunteer band leader or music developer for the Contemporary Service.

Note that the only additional expense beyond what has already been budgeted is for part time secretary and additional continuing education budget.

Church Council

See further advice page 40

2008

The Council should establish church policy (setting ends policies, policies, and key executive limitations (to protect safety and promote good communications). They are in essence spiritual leaders of the church (elders in Native American metaphors) who help the pastor focus the overall direction of the church and protect the Foundation of Trust. In addition to the Membership Covenant, leaders have an even higher expectation and should be nominated and elected using the following criteria:

- Aligned to Vision
- Weekly Worship
- Upgrade Coaching
- Spiritual Habits
- Higher Giving
- Missionally Active
- Small Group Accountability

**Functional Recommendations:
Sunday Morning**

The Sunday Morning experience consists of two worship services (8:45 contemporary and 11:00 traditional) with Sunday school in-between. Ordinarily, Sunday schools that are not concurrent with a worship service fail to thrive ... but this is clearly working well for you and should not be changed. However, if the Sunday school plateaus, or exceeds space availability despite the property changes recommended later, you will need to revisit this pattern.

Hospitality

See further advice and teaching on page 35

Through 2008

Hospitality is warm, although leaders still tend to remain aloof from serious talking with newcomers, and gravitate to their in-group friendship circles. It is very easy for a newcomer to enter and leave without really being engaged in a profound way by a church member or leader.

- 1) Provide at least one day “basic training” for hospitality teams. This will include sensitizing them to the diversity of the mission field; prayer disciplines; behavioral coaching; evangelism training; networking with mid-week opportunities; follow-up and passing on information.

- 2) Add a “Parking Valet Team” stationed outside in the parking lot, the school parking lot, and the adjacent streets. Their job is to greet people, and escort the elderly or families with young children to the nearest door of the church.
- 3) Always station two doorway greeters ... one inside and one outside each major entrance;
- 4) Develop two serving stations, and make them more decorative with symbols that reveal your core values and beliefs. Offer more options for refreshments for all ages, and for people with special health needs;
- 5) Always use round tables for refreshments to encourage conversation.
- 6) Always deploy members of the Council (spiritual leaders) to specifically engage newcomers and others they do not know in conversation.
- 7) Count “significant conversations” and keep a record. A significant conversation is any conversation that goes beyond superficialities about relatives, sports, weather ... and more profoundly refers to issues of life and death, personal dreams and anxieties, intimacy and loneliness, and questions of faith.

Develop a “Welcome Center” proximate to the sanctuary as described later in this report under “property change”.

Worship
ASAP in 2008

See further advice and teaching on page 43

Contemporary Service (8:45):

The first (contemporary) worship service must be relocated to the gymnasium. This will involve renovations to the gymnasium (see recommendations later in this report). There are three compelling reasons why the contemporary worship service will not thrive in the sanctuary:

- a) Timid newcomers will not be inclined to go upstairs and follow the circuitous route to get to the sanctuary, and will find its décor too traditional and intimidating;
- b) The pews of the sanctuary (especially the center pews which are so long as to inhibit access to the middle) inhibit spontaneity;
- c) The refreshments are crucial to contemporary worship, and must be very close to the worship site before, during, and after worship.

Move the service to 9:00 for the time being. There are two basic guidelines:

- 1) Create an atmosphere;

Create the atmosphere by starting recorded music at least 30 minutes before the service, and pipe it into the hallway. If you use a live band, they should begin playing 15 minutes before the service.

Decorate the hall with banners and symbols of core message (core values, bedrock beliefs). Seat people at round tables. Provide constant access to refreshments. Provide toys or Christian puzzles for children to sit with their parents.

Go out of your way to make it informal, and filled with music, images, smells, and devotional objects (i.e. highly sensory).

- 2) Keep it simple.

The service should be about 30 minutes, with 15 minutes possible for Q/A. Never go longer than 45 minutes. Abandon the liturgy of the traditional worship service. Never use the same bulletin, prayers, or sermon. The elements are:

- Praise: Singing should begin very loud and celebrative. Use lots of rhythm. Then shift to more meditative singing. A live band can perform 1-2 songs, backed by images on the screen. Devote the first 10 minutes to singing.

- Mentoring: The focus of the service should be lifestyle coaching. The mentoring message may last 10-15 minutes, and may be given by the pastor or a credible lay leader. Place Bibles on every table ... but use only one Bible text for the service. The title should always be “How to ____ as a Christian”. Always announce there will be time for Q/A. Provide paper for people to write anonymous questions, and encourage people to ask questions.
- Prayer: Focus on intercessory and healing prayer. Use lots of amateur images taken from the mission field around the church. Invite people forward for laying on of hands, and stay afterward for further mentoring or healing prayer.

Flow out of the worship service to the refreshment tables. Be sure to station small group leaders who are very visible, and who can invite people back to midweek home groups to further discuss the theme of the service.

Try very hard to create a band for live music ... even if it is only occasional to start. Remember that the band should function as a true small spirituality group, and that seekers will want to talk with band members following worship service. It is an evangelism function.

Traditional Worship (11:00):

The traditional worship service is growing, but now limited for lack of space. Once you move the contemporary service to the gymnasium, you will eventually have an opportunity to create a second traditional service at the same time (but in a different space) than the contemporary service. But this will probably demand additional staff.

- “How to ...” Theme
- Gotta Getta Band (or Cantor)
- Lots of Song and Celebration
- Message in Sound Bytes
- Constant Refreshments
- Hold it in the Hall
- No Announcements or Offering
- Adult Audience
- Small Groups

- Your current strategy using the projection screen is good. Leave it down, and use it constantly. There should never be a time when the screen is simply blank. Consider buying images and video clips through Midnight Oil www.midnightoilproductions.com.
- You need all the seating you can get. Therefore, the Bell Choir must be relocated to perform from the side of the church. They should be visible anyway, and the sound will be better. The tables for rehearsal should be relocated to another room in the building ... perhaps the adjacent parlor.
- Begin music at least 20 minutes before the service begins. Never let people just sit in silence.
- Church leaders sit up front. All council and small group leaders should sit in the front pews, allowing newcomers and visitors space toward the back.
- Always have a volunteer do the Children’s Story. It is not the Senior Pastor’s strength, and deflects his energy away from preaching and prayer. That volunteer should also be involved with PALS. Videocam the children, and show them on the screen.
- Assume that people (newcomers and church veterans alike) do not know the basics of the Bible. Avoid the Common Lectionary, and use a “basic Bible” lectionary like the one I suggest in my book the Uncommon Lectionary “seeker cycle”. This connects scripture with real day to day life, and blends more easily into midweek, small group Bible studies.
- Always include prayers, celebrations, or commissionings related to the hands-on outreach missions of members or teams of the church. Be sure to include images or videos of members doing mission.
- If anything, increase the “traditions” of the traditional worship service. Pastor can preach in robes and stoles, use the organ to maximum effect. Always use a lay liturgist. Videocam the liturgist, choir, and special performers so they are more visible.
- The Welcome Center will be located proximate to the sanctuary. Be sure to have gifts to give away to newcomers, and always have the center staffed with volunteers even during the worship service.

The key to worship development is worship leadership team development. Always provide at least 1 full day for leadership training for music teams, technology teams, lay readers or liturgists, and any future teams for drama or dance. Insist on 3 occasions each year for the teams to meet together for evaluation and accountability to mission. Insist that all teams meet as true small groups ... not only doing a task, but praying for strangers, talking about Bible, sharing life struggles and spiritual victories.

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PALS (Children's Church)

2008

Parents (particularly relative newcomers to church) will eventually complain that their children have to travel upstairs. Relocate PALS to the parlor immediately proximate to the sanctuary. If necessary, provide better soundproofing for the doors.

**Functional Recommendations:
Other Worship Opportunities**

2008

Wednesday Night Service:

The focus should be on fellowship and teaching. Include the meal, but keep the worship service very simple. Sing great, highly meaningful, traditional hymns ... and then teach from a single extended scripture. Consider using the Disciple Cycle texts from my book *The Uncommon Lectionary* since it is designed in a single year to walk people through the five stages of salvation history through the entire Bible. Occasionally add drama, but keep worship to no more than 30-45 minutes. Follow the worship service with small group studies.

Special Celebrations:

A good way to build visibility in the community, and break down negative community stereotypes about the church, is to invest in 2-3 major celebrations through the year. In your community, these will likely be Christmas Eve, Mother's Day, and Thanksgiving. There may also be some summer festival. Invest energy and money in special concert-like worship services, coupled with fund raising for local mission, and cross-generational fellowship. Be sure to share your clear core message, and deploy members to mingle with crowds and connect with newcomers.

**Functional Recommendations:
Education and Spiritual Growth**

Through 2008 and beyond

See further advice and teaching on page 45

Small Groups:

Small groups are crucial for the synergy of growth, but they have not multiplied as they should, and many committees or groups are exclusively about "doing tasks" or just "enjoying fellowship". The components of strong intercessory prayer for strangers, serious Bible Study, and profound intimate sharing of life struggles and spiritual victories remain inconsistent.

- 1) Identify and train leaders. This is a #1 priority for the pastor and Council members. Initially, every Council member should be required to lead at least on affinity group. Use a resource like *People Together* by David Stark, or *LIFE Groups* by Bill Easum. The second half of my book *Christian Chaos* provides basic principles for small groups.
- 2) Multiply affinity groups based around lifestyle issues relevant to the seekers in the region. Review the lifestyle segments and their primary concerns to begin to identify relevant topics. Offer very short term home group sessions every week based on the topic of the sermon in contemporary worship. Do one or two sessions at most ... then close the group, but be sure to mentor newcomers into another kind of small group.
- 3) Always provide ongoing training and 24/7 coaching for small group leaders. This is a #1 priority for pastor and Council members. Eventually, the church will staff this position.

Practice accountability for all groups and group leaders. Accountability for group members revolves around a simple written covenant. An example is appended to this report. Accountability for leaders revolves around 2-3 training gatherings a year (perhaps and evening or day) in which leaders can evaluate one another for mission attitude, integrity to the core values and beliefs, skills and teamwork. See my book *Christian Chaos* for additional guidance.

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Sunday School:

The Children's Ministry is working well, but does not have a lot of "depth of leadership" if any of the leaders should be absent for any reason. Burnout is a serious concern.

- Provide at least 2 days of basic training for teachers and group leaders, plus regular opportunities for upgrading skills, personal growth, and problem solving.
- Organize nursery and Sunday school leaders in the small group design for personal support, prayer for children, Bible study and continuous learning, so that the leaders are "fed and nurtured" in their personal lives.

Education leaders work together with great 'team spirit', but this is more accidental than intentional. In order to keep momentum for children's ministries, concentrate on nurturing leaders.

Youth:

The youth do not feel strongly appreciated or empowered by the church. They often feel "used" and then "ignored" despite the rhetoric of older members. This must change.

- The above recommendations for Sunday school leaders apply to youth leaders.
- Focus the youth ministry more fully on hands-on mission opportunities ... locally, regionally, and nationally. Celebrate their mission contributions regularly in both Sunday worship services.
- If the church feels called to some form of Youth Center as a "Signature Outreach Ministry", relocate youth activities to that site.
- Include youth in all stages of the contemporary worship service (especially technology, decorations, drama, and hospitality).

Continue with plans to unite the planning and development of the youth ministry between the Sunday school and evening youth group. By 2009, develop a strategy of multi-options for youth ministry in which youth meet together briefly for prayer and fellowship, and then separate into multiple affinity-based small groups for relevant topics. These can be expanded into cross-generational affinity groups mid-week.

Functional Recommendations: Outreach

Through 2008 and beyond

See further advice and teaching on page 50

Outreach Teams:

Currently the church does "depot" mission, but not enough hands-on mission. The church tends to collect money or things to give away, but does not deploy large numbers of members in teams to interact personally with strangers to grace. Integrate mission as a regular component of worship:

- Regularly honor, pray for, and commission individuals who are already involved in mission or social service;
- Include images and intercessory prayer of local mission constantly in worship services.
- Establish a monthly "spiritual gifts discernment" night, using a curriculum and coaching, to help people discern or receive gifts for mission. Use the Spiritual Gifts inventory at www.easumbandy.com, or resources like *Life Keys* by David Stark.
- Pastor, Senior Management Team, and Council members should always have at least 3 people that they are mentoring to help them discern personal calling into mission. Mentoring relationships usually last about 6 months, and the names of mentees should be constantly in the prayers of core leaders.

Outreach initiatives should always be organized as true small groups or teams, and the primary vehicle of accountability should be the Foundation of Trust.

Signature Ministry

Every growing church needs some “signature outreach ministry” through which their identity and purpose is known to the public, and seekers find their way to worship. These are big, bold missions owned and celebrated by the congregation. They invest significant energy and money, and are willing to even go into debt for those missions.

- 1) Organize staff and volunteers as a true small group rather than as task groups. Become very intentional about prayer, faith sharing, personal support.
- 2) Annually commission outreach leaders (staff or volunteers) in worship, and regularly invite them to share positive stories in the midst of worship.

The church has three potential “signature outreach ministries”:

- ❖ Youth Center: There is a gap in social services that offers safe, healthy options for youth activities. The center would be a rental facility somewhere in town outside the church building, but be clearly identified with First UMC and its Foundation of Trust.

The Youth Center would be a combination drop-in center, mentoring space, educational space for lifestyle-skills, and addiction intervention and counseling center. It might include concerts and recreational activities. It would build good relationships with hospitals, police, and emergency services. It might also expand ministries to include the college campus in Marietta.

- ❖ Open Hands Ministry: This would be a variation on what many churches call “servant evangelism”. It would be located in rented space outside the church building, and the current clothing depot and food bank would be relocated there. Ministries would be expanded to mirror “Goodwill Industries” kinds of depot ministries (refinished furniture, household supplies, etc.) It would also be a staging area of mission teams to renovate homes and apartments for seniors, environmental cleanup, and any hands-on services that might be needed by any agency in the community.
- ❖ Senior Fitness: This might be located in the church building, but with a separate office space outside the church building to house a salaried Parish Nurse. Aside from physical fitness, the center would include diet and health care planning, recreational outings, family counseling, and specialized support for families facing Alzheimers Disease and other issues.

Make sure the Signature Ministry of choice is not just developed to fill a social service gap, but is genuinely elicited by the Holy Spirit from the hearts of the congregation. This is a long term commitment demanding significant financial and volunteer sacrifice by members.

One way or another, the church needs to create a powerful disciple-making synergy between its contemporary “coaching” worship, the multiplying lifestyle mid-week small groups, and the opportunity to volunteer in satisfying signature outreach missions.

Formal Recommendations: Property

Urgent in 2008

See further advice and teaching on page 52

Although the church might well consider relocation to a more visible site, the better option is to develop additional properties to the one you have. Why is it better to stay where you are?

1. You are immediately adjacent the High School, which is expanding dramatically as the school board centralizes services;
2. You are close to the bridge across the river, and potential ministry to Marietta College;

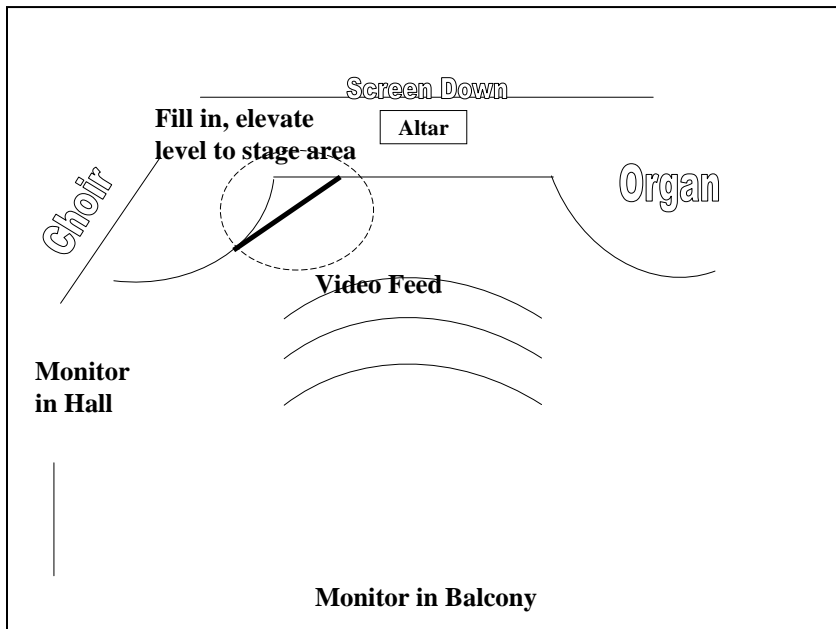
3. Williamstown is still the central focus of socialization within the mission field, and it is unclear that you could sell the existing property or raise sufficient funds for a move;
4. The vision is not clear enough, and the spiritual maturity of the congregation not deep enough, to survive a relocation effort.

The better plan is to acquire additional sites of ministry by purchase or lease, and renovate or rearrange existing property to make more space.

Sanctuary Area

In order to maximize space for sanctuary worship, make these changes in January:

- ❖ Relocate the Bell Choir to perform from the front of the church, and reclaim the entire balcony for worship seating. Performance from the front of the church will mean that occasionally the space between the communion table and choir will be crowded. Extend the chancel/stage area to remove dangerous steps.
- ❖ Remove the pews in the existing chapel, and add movable chairs (not pews) to the side of the sanctuary. These can be removed immediately after worship by ushers to allow people to exit.
- ❖ Add video screens in the balcony and in the side hallway (expansion seating plus welcome center) to help people see from awkward places.



- ❖ Run a cable to the front pew for video feed ... handheld video of children's story and special performances.

In order to ensure safety for children, make this change in January:

- ❖ Relocate PALS from the top floor (too secluded, far from parents, up steep stairways, difficult exit in case of fire) to the Parlor adjacent to the sanctuary.

In order to remove bottlenecks and encourage seekers to find the sanctuary, do this over the summer:

- ❖ Place a doorway linking the side expansion seating are (current chapel) to the elevator area. (Consult and engineer since this is a bearing walls. Do this construction over the summer).

Gymnasium and Hallway

In order to grow the Contemporary Worship Service, Relocate the service to the gymnasium, and make these changes by September 2008:

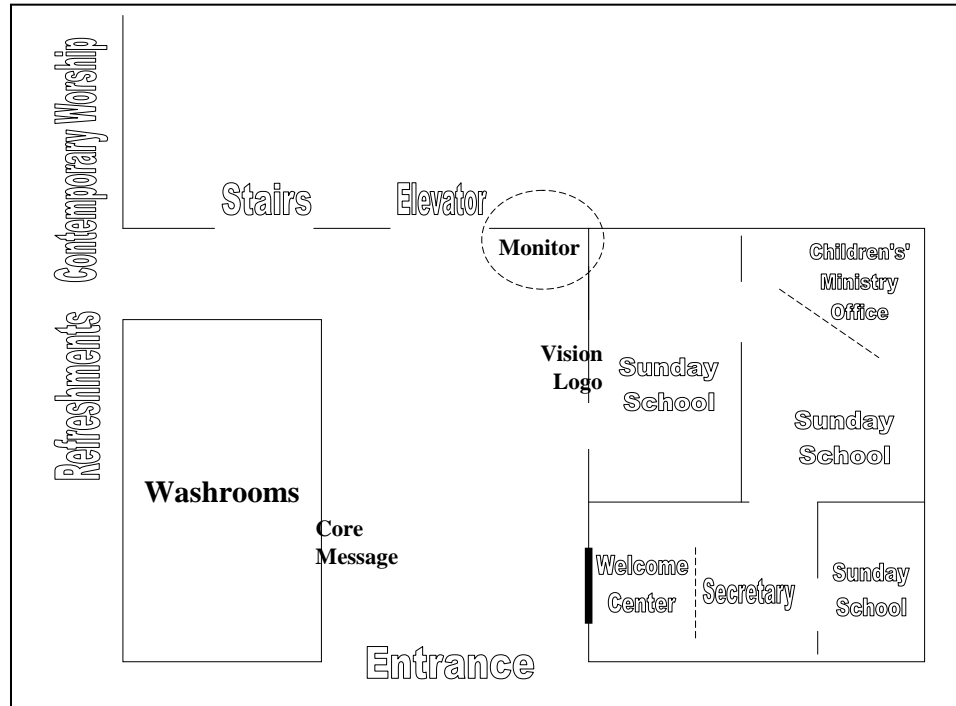
- ❖ Permanently elevate (but do not remove) basketball hoops;
- ❖ Install sound dampening banners on the walls;
- ❖ Purchase moveable partitions to separate the refreshment area (nearest kitchen), from the worship space (nearest the windows);
- ❖ Establish projection screen, stage area, on right hand wall (facing the windows) for the front of the center ... allowing for access to the back of the worship area from the outside door;
- ❖ Add quality sound and projection system;
- ❖ Provide shades for the windows;
- ❖ Use round tables and movable chairs;
- ❖ Decorate: greenery, colorful banners on ways and suspended from ceiling, anything to reveal core values, beliefs, vision and mission;
- ❖ Establish a second serving station at the partition area so people do not need to go far to refill coffee.

Note that this space will also be used as Sunday school space for 2-3 classes following the contemporary worship service.

In order to create an excellent Welcome Center and communication hub for newcomers, make these changes winter 2008:

- ❖ Reduce the available space of the secretary's office; open the wall facing the hallway and front entrance and create a countertop for literature, gifts, etc; label this boldly as the Welcome Center; station two volunteers there throughout the entire Sunday morning (as people come, stay, and go);
- ❖ Place a large video monitor in the corner of the hallway (beside the elevator door), programmable by the computer in the secretary's office. Continuously run core message, announcements, calendar dates, and other information.
- ❖ Place the "core message" of the congregation on the wall with the UMC cross and flame; replace the picture on the wall with the vision logo of the church.

(This image also shows the eventual new Sunday School classes once the Pastor's Office has been relocated.)



Now newcomers will enter for the contemporary service. The Welcome Center is on the right; communications hub ahead; worship center and refreshments on the left. Nursery downstairs.

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Sunday School Space

In order to expand and perfect Sunday School Space make these changes by September 2008:

- ❖ Relocate the one children's class on the top floor to the gymnasium, and the adult class from the board room into the gymnasium.
- ❖ Eventually convert existing offices into additional Sunday School rooms once the offices are relocated to another building.
- ❖ Relocate the Clothing Depot and other mission-oriented rooms from the basement to the additional building once acquired.

New Building

In order to provide office space, board room and mission space, make these changes by the end of 2009:

- ❖ Buy an adjacent house (preferably the one right next door). Renovate, and relocate church office, pastor's office, and future offices, meeting rooms, and outreach storage into this building.
- ❖ Use limited outdoor space attached to the house for some extra parking;
- ❖ Lease additional space in the community for whatever signature ministry God elicits from the hearts of the people.

Parking

Since street parking should remain a viable option for some time to come, expanding the parking lot is actually a secondary priority.

- ❖ Use valet teams to guide people safely to church doors;
- ❖ Designate the entire small existing parking lot behind the church as handicapped parking, seniors parking, young mother's parking, and visitors parking. Everyone else parks on the street or at the school;

Formal Recommendations:

Finance

2008-2009

See further advice and teaching on page 54

In order to finance renovation, new property, leased signature ministry space, and additional staff training:

- ❖ Obtain a mission-driven debt. The cost for servicing the debt should be no more than 22% of our annual budget. This should allow you to buy the house, and make necessary renovations to the house and gymnasium.
- ❖ Lease property once you know what the Signature Ministry is. If you wish a professionally guided capital campaign related to the development of Signature Ministry, I suggest talking with Horizons, Inc. Their website and contact information is on our website www.easumbandy.com under "alliances".
- ❖ Once you know the Signature Ministry, explore making it a non-profit and obtaining grants to subsidize staff and program.
- ❖ Develop two annual stewardship campaigns. Both campaigns should lay out the master plan" for property and program development.
 - The traditional fall (November 2007) every-member visitation aims at people over 45, who require a personal visit at home by enthusiastic lay leaders, give to a unified operating budget, and who are concerned about charitable tax receipts.
 - The missional spring campaign (May 2008) aims at people under 45, who want to meet with a financial advisor in a small group over coffee, and customize a mission-giving investment portfolio that matches their interests with a knowledgeable leader of the church. They are concerned about spending their tax refunds.

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- ❖ Remember that “leaders lead”. Always require that Council members give 2-3% more than the congregational average (unless they already tithed); always publish the combined giving of the Council members to the budget in both stewardship campaigns above. This sets a higher benchmark for members.

Note that the staff development plan adds only a small amount to personnel costs that have already been budgeted in previous years, namely, part time secretary/receptionist and additional continuing education money.

Formal Recommendations: Communication

Ongoing

Part of the demand for better communication is actually a symptom of low trust, and should ease as the church gains clarity about values and beliefs, and gains a mission attitude that replaces expectations of membership privilege. Communication will also be enhanced with the Welcome Center, Communications Hub, and additional secretarial staff.

- 1) Prepare an email database of members, and send a weekly update (Friday?) that includes: a brief message of encouragement from the pastor; financial summary; update on facility search; key coming events.
- 2) Ministry area and small group leaders should send a weekly email update (Monday?) to the pastor or small group staff person that includes: progress with the individuals they are mentoring; emerging problems they cannot already solve; key questions emerging from their circle of influence; coming opportunities or obstacles.
- 3) Develop a monthly newsletter in both digital and print options, especially highlighting key upcoming events, mission stories from the lives of church members, and a life-coaching message from the pastor.
- 4) Develop a quarterly video “newsletter” to be given especially to newcomers, especially highlighting core message, members talking about vision, key activities for all ages, and worship design. This is a great project for youth.
- 5) Develop 2 big outreach events every year that can be used to advertise the church to the public ... both by printed material and by deploying members/leaders to interact with the public.
- 6) Focus the core message of the church, and use it in all communications internally and externally.

The church should develop a website. This is actually very inexpensive to do ... a matter of a few hundred dollars at most. It is a great youth group project, and with guidance can help mature youth to the larger ministries of the church. The keys to website development are:

- Create a true team who will constantly work with it;
- Update it on a weekly basis with new images, sermon notes, calendar, and so on.

In your demographic, website use will still be a secondary means of communication. But over the next decade it will become well used ... especially by seniors.

First United Methodist Church Analysis and Teaching Summary

Teaching is in black and analysis applied to First UMC is in red.

Leaders study congregational life and mission in the following key categories or sub-systems. The middle five sub-systems represent the core disciple-making process of the church ... the movement or life of the congregation. Foundational sub-systems are about the boundaries of trust, purpose, and direction of this movement. The formal sub-systems are about the resources that sustain this movement.

Foundational:	Genetic Code	<i>About the identity of the church</i>
Core Leadership	Organization	<i>About the seriousness for mission in the church</i> <i>About the structure of the church</i>
Functional:	Changing People	<i>About how people experience God in the church</i>
	Growing Christians	<i>About how people grow in relationship to Jesus</i>
	Discerning Call	<i>About how people discover their place in God's Plan</i>
	Equipping Disciples	<i>About how people are trained for ministries</i>
	Deploying Servants	<i>About how people are sent & supported into the world</i>
Formal:	Property	<i>About location, facility, and technology</i>
	Finance	<i>About stewardship, budget, and debt-management</i>
	Communication	<i>About information, marketing, and advertising</i>

“Movement” is an organic concept natural to the image of the “Body of Christ”. The most basic shift from dying church to thriving church is revealed in the choice to become a “Body of Christ in Residence” or a “Body of Christ in Motion”. Purposeful, faithful change lies at the heart of Christian mission.

[Go deeper: Read my books **Roadrunner** and **Fragile Hope** for an ancient/future perspective for your church.]

First UMC:

Generally speaking, worship is not emerging from mission, and it is not leading into adult spiritual disciplines. Here are the high targets which you should strive to attain.



60% of adult worshippers should be seen in mid-week small groups or other accountable spiritual disciplines; 40% of youth and adults in Sunday school or small groups should become hands-on active in mission projects; and 30% of the newcomers to worship should come because of their experience with a particular mission of the church.

In order to get started toward these high goals, two fundamental strategic moves are:

- 1) Answer the question “*What is it about my experience with Jesus Christ that this community cannot live without?*” The entire discipling process cannot be motivated unless core leaders (program and support staff, board members and volunteer leaders)

can individually articulate a persona, significant experience with Christ. This may be done in many ways or media, but it must be absolutely clear. It is the “testimony” that should be credibly visible as a criteria for leadership.

- 2) Leaders lead. Therefore, every leader should model the above discipling process. That is, they should demonstrate and describe how their lifestyle routine involves regular worship, mid-week spiritual disciplines, and outreach that is both social service and evangelism ... each one leading to the other. This description of “spiritual journey” should also be articulate. Some churches regularly require leader to “witness” or “tell their story” in worship ... others ask leaders to collate their stories in a book that is given to all members and newcomers.

Some leaders do not have a significant experience with Christ, or a dedication to a spiritual journey, and need to be mentored. Other leaders do have such an experience or spiritual journey, but are too shy or otherwise unable to share it. They need to be coached. This becomes a primary responsibility of staff.

The most profound challenge to transform and grow the church is about attitude more than strategy. The “consumer” attitude toward the church strategy by the members can also be described as a “Me First” attitude. It is revealed by (among other things):

- Sunday-only church involvement;
- Low participation in small groups and adult faith formation;
- Low participation in hands-on outreach mission;
- High obsession with personal tastes and preferences for worship;
- Highly critical comments about youth or outreach ministries;
- High anxiety about mission-driven debt.

It is possible to overcome the “Me First” mentality with a “Mission Mindset”. Here are the key steps:

- ❖ Begin by mentoring leaders;
- ❖ Hold leaders accountable for mentoring volunteers in their sphere of influence;
- ❖ Preach it;
- ❖ Upgrade training for newcomers and all leadership teams (beyond skills to train attitude);
- ❖ Clarify vision, mission, and core message;
- ❖ Intervene to break control;
- ❖ Seize opportunities or “mentoring moments” to illustrate the mission attitude;
- ❖ Have courage, and build personal support, to endure stress;
- ❖ Develop a profound, visible, prayerful, personal spiritual discipline.

It often takes 7 years to really change congregational attitude. Since former UMC pastors only stayed at First UMC for less than 6 years, attitudes have been allowed to remain entrenched for a long time. The present pastor is in his 3rd year. It will take at least four years of steady, visionary spiritual leadership to change the attitude. It is starting already.

Foundational Insights and Recommendations

Identity, Leadership, and Organization

Church transformation and growth must be based on a solid foundation. This foundation is made up by the clear consensus of the congregation about core values, beliefs, vision and mission; leadership (salaried and volunteer) who clearly model the values and convictions of the church and align themselves to pursue a vision or mission *and let nothing sidetrack them from doing so*; and an organizational model that is “permission giving” and therefore encourages rapid decisions and redeployment of assets within clear boundaries of accountability.

Identity:

The body of Christ is not an institution, but an organism, and if we are to use this Biblical metaphor to describe the church, then within every cellular unit of the body (every member, leader, program, worship service, and outreach) the public should see very

clearly a “genetic signature”. The authentic “genetic signature” of the body of Christ is formed by a clear consensus that has emerged from the deep spiritual growth of the people. That consensus is made up of:

Core Values:	Positive, predictable behavior patterns which church members model spontaneously and daringly in their daily living. The New Testament describes these as “fruits of the spirit”.
Bedrock Beliefs:	Principles, symbols, and faith stories to which members can be expected to turn for strength whenever they are in trouble. The New Testament describes these in very Christ-centered ways (e.g. Colossians 1:15-23 or Romans 8:31-39).
Motivating Vision:	The song in the heart, image, or metaphor the mere recollection of which elicits incredible joy and demands to be shared with strangers. The New Testament uses various metaphors like “The New Jerusalem” or “The Heavenly Banquet”.
Strategic Mission:	Everything you need to know that demands the total sacrifice of members, captures the imagination of the public, and can be printed on a bus. The New Testament uses “The Great Commission” or the vision of the “Macedonian” (Acts 16).

Motivating visions are revealed, not created, and emerge from the deeply embedded core values and convictions of the core leaders and members of the church.

The “genetic code” of a congregation is the identity that is embedded intentionally in every leader, cell, worship experience and ministry. The reason this clarity and consensus is so important is that it a) builds unity when you are diversifying worship experiences and ministries, b) builds credibility when you are trying to communicate to the unchurched, and c) builds trust and accountability so that you release experimental mission teams without needless supervision. This genetic code only emerges from intense adult spiritual growth. This “genetic code” should be the first thing taught newcomers, ministry leaders, new church officers ... and should be embedded in every worship experience and ministry.

The genetic code of a congregation should be readily discerned in the behavior and environment of the church by newcomers, and especially modeled by congregational leaders. The annual meeting of a congregation should intentionally revisit the genetic code to define, refine, and celebrate it.

The genetic code of a congregation is most visible in its hospitality ministries. All churches want to be friendly to newcomers, but the sincerity, urgency, and nature of the friendliness are revealed in the number of hospitality teams, their sensitivity to the cultures of their primary mission field, and the quality of their training.

[Go deeper: Read the Vision Discernment and Ministry Mapping sections of my book **Moving Off the Map.**]

First UMC:

The positive core values apparent to seekers at First UMC include: caring, forgiveness, helpfulness, love and friendliness, and general allegiance to the “Golden Rule”. However, negative core values frequently distort or undermine these positive values. These include: maintaining harmony at any cost, fear of holding people accountable to the Fruits of the Spirit, local (not necessarily Methodist) heritage, and dependency on professional staff.

The bedrock beliefs are less apparent to seekers than they should be, and include: prayer, providence, the atonement of Christ, and confidence in God’s grace. However, these bedrock beliefs are often articulated weakly or poorly by members who lack confidence, are fearful of being judged shallow, and are unable to share faith. Why the church makes a difference in life is clearer than why Christ makes a difference in life.

The vision and mission are generally unclear. There is tacit acknowledgement of the vision and mission statement of the denomination. The congregation is committed to a vision of spiritual love, and to key phrases like “Here I am, Send Me” and “Kids are important.” However, preoccupation with “depot” rather than “hands on” missions, and clear alienation of the youth for the church, undermine both mission statements. The phrase “*Come along! Come alive! Come home!*” has the most power among younger members.

Clear vision, mission and core message will always attract more people to the church, increase financial giving, increase volunteering, and create a positive perception of the church amid the surrounding community.

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Refer back to the “Big Picture” chart at the beginning of this report. The “Family Church” style of First UMC encourages basic boundaries of behavior and expectations for pastoral time to be shaped around the personal tastes and needs of members. Not only does this create an “inward” focus that discourages newcomers, but it eventually allows church life to be dictated by the most powerful or intimidating personalities who are in membership. Stress and decline is inevitable.

There are three basic strategic moves:

- 1) Core leadership should plan a visioning retreat ASAP. The retreat should be within the mission field, but outside the church building. It should cost money for participants, and usually lasts Friday evening through Sunday afternoon. It should include large group discussion, but also accountability triads for Bible study, spoken prayer, and listening to the public. The goal is to develop a true list of behaviorally measurable core values; clearly compelling bedrock beliefs; a simple and powerful vision; and greater clarity about the publics for whom the congregation’s heart bursts to reach with the Gospel. (Verbal coaching has been given during our consultation about this).
- 2) Following the retreat, the entire congregation should be *requested* to join home focus groups, led by leaders from the retreat, for at least three sessions (over a period of 2-3 months). During this time, worship should be wholly dedicated to visionary preaching, personal testimonies, and experiments in liturgy that are outside the box of normal practice. The focus groups further refine the insights of the leaders on retreat, and the process culminates in a significant congregational worship celebration.
- 3) Staff, board, and ministry area leaders should now begin using the “DNA” as a vehicle of accountability in all meetings. They should routinely measure priorities of time, budget, and energy against these ... eliminating anything that does not move the church toward its target. The leadership can now frame the “core message” of the church to the public that is urgent.

The same basic strategy should become an annual routine, probably occurring after annual meetings and elections of new officers in the New Year. Teaching this “DNA” should now become the first priority for all membership assimilation.

Core Leadership:

The “core leaders” are both the formal, elected officers and committee members of the church, and also the informal, spiritual leaders of the church. These leaders should be able to rise above the daily management of the church to monitor and motivate the core process of the congregation to continually change, gift, call equip, and send disciples. They should rise above programs and “turf protection” to model and articulate the DNA of the congregation.

The larger the church becomes, the less the leaders should be specifically worried about any individual program, and the more the leaders should pay attention to the signature ministries which most clearly reveal the congregational DNA to the public. Their goal should not be the management of programs, so much as the apprenticing of new leaders. Paid leaders will midwife and mentor other emerging leaders to fulfill their gifts and callings in ministries.

Leadership job descriptions and committee mandates need to be *mission driven* rather than *task driven*. They need to be as simple and flexible as possible, to allow maximum freedom for leaders and committees to make and implement decisions without requiring permission. Therefore, be clear about the mission, and be certain to embed the genetic code. This larger vision of leadership is what separates “small-thinking” congregations from “large-thinking congregations”.

Seek to deploy all leaders as *teams*, rather than as *individuals*. The concept of “team” will be developed more fully in the next section about “organization”. Here it is important to recognize that leadership deployment that is missionally driven, and free to be creative, require personal and spiritual support through ongoing partnerships. Leaders need to constantly connect with a teammate. Job descriptions should be written with a clear mission, the genetic code, and then a few, brief, “executive limitations” identifying things they may NOT do without getting permission. Finally, paid leaders should intentionally shift themselves from being the *doers* of ministries, to become the *motivators and trainers* of ministry. Laity who give birth to their gifts and calling can do most, if not all, ministries commonly associated with the clergy as well or better, and in more timely fashion.

[Go deeper: Read **Moving Off the Map** to learn about leadership change; **Christian Chaos** for templates on how to write these job descriptions; and **Why Should I Believe You?** for clergy credibility.]

First UMC:

With the lack of clarity about core values, beliefs, vision, and mission, intimidating controllers are able to impose personal tastes, needs, and preferences as normative to congregational life and mission. This contributes to chronic friction between people and pastor. It is what has brought the church a reputation in the conference as a “difficult” church, and a reputation in the community as a “troubled and affluent” church.

Pastor

Steve is clearly gifted and called as a pastor, and it is a tribute to the Bishop and DS that they have entrusted him with this parish. The stress on him and his family, however, is unusually severe because he is perceived as a maverick among clergy peers, forced to follow a prolonged and expensive continuing education path that is not particularly flexible, in addition transforming a difficult church. He deserves, and ought to receive, more prayerful and intentional support.

Mission attitude, integrity, and teamwork are very strong. His learning curve includes the following priorities:

- Ability to understand and lead contemporary worship alternatives;
- Ability to mentor and coach staff and small group leaders;
- A “thick skin” to confront controllers and hold members accountable;
- Organizational skills to focus ends policies and empower teams.

These competencies will probably not be greatly enhanced by the seminar curriculum, and he will need to seek coaching for other congregations and leaders.

Staff

The staff are configured in a fairly traditional, program maintenance model, but need to shift their sense of priority to equipping and aligning lay leaders in a disciple-making process. There are significant gaps in staff deployment which my recommendations seek to remedy. Some staff are clearly restless and ready to shift their focus to their true heartburst for mission.

The staff work fairly well as a team, and insofar as the Foundation of Trust is known, with a high standard of integrity. Their learning curve includes the following priorities:

- Discipline to model the spiritual life;
- Ability to connect life-shaping worship, accountable small groups, and mission outreach in a single disciple-making process;
- Knowledge of alternatives for mission-targeted worship and small group principles;
- Courage to risk holding members accountable to values, beliefs, vision, and mission.

A higher continuing education budget is very important to train these staff, and help them train other volunteer leaders.

Lay Leader

The role of the Lay Leader has often been ambiguous in the UMC. For purposes of your church transformation, a strong Lay Leader is very important:

- Absolutely support the Senior Pastor in every decision, and help him endure increasing stress;
- Model spiritual disciplines, and hold people accountable to the Foundation of Trust;
- Identify and grow the Signature Ministry of the church.

The Lay Leader should not be drawn into too much management, nor into care giving ministries. The Lay Leader will be a key cheerleader to change the Me First attitude into a Mission Mindset.

Organization:

Truly servant empowering organizations will focus annual meetings solely on the refinement of genetic code, sharply orient board function toward vision and long range planning and away from annual management, delegate management to a trusted and gifted few, and deploy entrepreneurial teams to do everything. Most churches still labor under various forms of bureaucracies and hierarchies, so that their strategic planning is developed in hierarchy, and ministries are accomplished through bureaucracy.

Servant empowering organizations remove the congregation from management entirely. They focus the board on policy development, and delegate management to streamlined teams. Programs, ministries, or missions are all done by “spiritual

entrepreneurs” deployed as teams. Job descriptions and mandates are brief, very explicit about mission, and list only the “proscriptions” or “executive limitations” which teams cannot do. They create a synergy of practical action and personal growth.

In servant empowering organizations, all ministries are done through “true teams”. A “true team” has the entrepreneurial power to discern, design, implement, and evaluate mission without having to ask permission of anyone else. The primary accountability vehicle is the genetic code. You can transition a traditional organization to a team-based organization over a limited time (identifying essential tasks for which you recruit people until such time as the spiritual growth processes of the congregation can replace top-down mission with bottom-up mission). In the end, however, the transition is bound to leave some uncomfortable gaps in work. It is better to endure the gaps, than to perpetuate hierarchy by continually recruiting and appointing leaders to do institutional tasks.

[Go deeper: Read the first half of my book **Christian Chaos and Servant Empowering Organization**]

First UMC:

The organizational model is pretty traditional. It spends more time in monthly management (reporting and approving actions), and less time discerning where Jesus will be 10 years down the road to mission. Long term planning is not the most important thing. The real challenge for the Council is their ability to set the cost or standard of discipleship in behalf of the church. They need to establish (and model in their personal lives) the readiness to change heritage, program, budget, and property for perfect alignment with mission. They also need to publicly set the standard or pace of financial giving. So long as the vision and mission (core message) remain foggy, the board has difficulty aligning the long term future of the church.

Certain organizational habits are counter-productive to a thriving church:

- No formal expectations of leadership regarding spiritual disciplines, continuous learning, or mission involvement;
- Elections are primarily accomplished through nominations and appeals, rather than gifts discernment or call discernment processes;

There is a clear need for the Council to become models and mentors for the rest of the church regarding the spiritual life.

Attitude is everything. Once the core message is focused, the DNA (foundation of trust) clarified, and changes begin to happen, there will be stress. The stress will come especially in regard to worship development, permission giving, and higher expectations for discovering gifts and discerning call. The Council must be ready to model and explain this attitude ... and intervene in the midst of stress to help mentor members to share their own attitude. The fundamental attitude of leadership must be “Mission First” ... and not “Me First”. This attitude must be radical and rigorous for the church to grow.

Notes:

Functional Insights and Recommendations

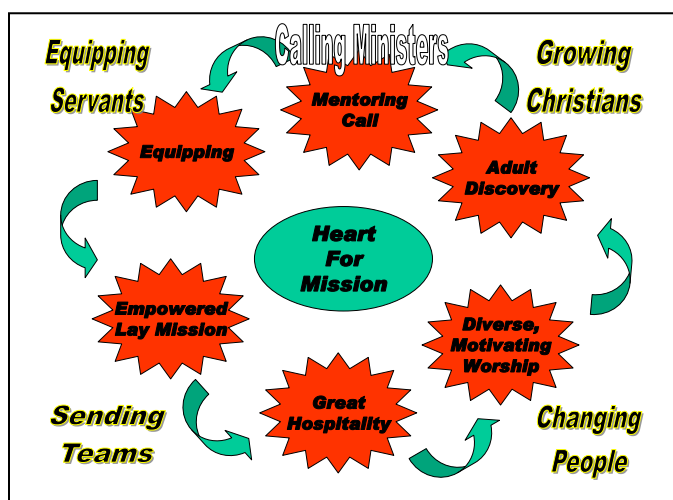
Core Discipling Process to Change, Gift, Call, Equip, and Send

The five “functional” sub-systems of congregational life represent the core process of people being “changed, gifted, called, equipped, and sent”. The leaders of the church always keep focused on the bigger picture of the core process, no matter what particular task or ministry might occupy their attention at the moment. The streamlined management teams (i.e. the “stability triangle” that includes the human resources, training, and administration teams) maintain the core process as the grow disciples, train ministers, and deploy servants.

Understand that the core process and the organizational model are tied to one another. Organizational structures deliver a particular core process. The old organizational models of bureaucracy and hierarchy are well suited to deliver a core process of people being “enrolled, informed, nominated, supervised, and kept” in an ecclesiastical institution with membership privileged, but they cannot deliver a core process for people being “changed, gifted, called, equipped, and sent”. Since most people today want to fulfill their lives, rather than serve an institution, the combination of servant empowering organization and new core process together attract newcomers to congregational life.

Finally, remember that your commitment to this core process to change, gift, call, equip, and send people will dramatically impact later decisions about property, money, and communication (the “formal” sub-systems of congregational life).

The following diagram illustrates the flow of experience that is a discipling process. It begins with radical hospitality to strangers, and then leader people through motivational worship, self-discovery, discernment of call, quality training, and deployment in fulfilling mission ... and the cycle is repeated as they continue to grow.



Hospitality welcomes newcomers from the diversity of the public into worship experiences that touch and transform their lives. Newcomers and members are drawn into adult growth processes to discover Christ, the spiritual gifts, and form new healthy relationships. The real key is to now mentor them to discern personal mission, and for this a full or part time paid position is often required. The church then invests in lay education budgets to equip laity for excellent ministries, and deploys them in ministry as teams that are more than task groups. They are spiritual growth, or mutual support, groups. These bring more people back into the hospitality and transformational worship ministries of the church.

the church, for three basic reasons:

vision beyond institutional survival;
 or them through the ambiguities of living;
 like a real, immediate, positive impact on the world.

If all you provide are good programs, seekers will simply behave as “consumers”. They will come for awhile because of some program, but drop out again as soon as they don’t need the program. This in fact is true of the membership of most established churches. If you want people to stay with you, and even increase their support, you must provide these three things.

[Go deeper: Read **Kicking Habits**, and use the study guide **Coming Clean** to better understand the disciple making system of a thriving church.]

Changing People:

Remember that in the 21st century, the transformational journey begins with experience and not with knowledge. Therefore, newcomers should be met with a worship experience that is multi-sensory rather than an educational experience aimed at the head, and outreach should rely on personal “heart-to-heart” interaction rather than tracts or curriculums. In the postmodern world, it is the adults who are looking to experience grace themselves ... not their infants who need to be ceremonially baptized.

Therefore, churches need to do more than create a welcoming environment ... they need to create (interior decorate and undergird with appropriate technologies) an ambience in which people can open up to the Holy. They need to provide more than friendly greeters and ushers, but motivated volunteers unafraid to articulate their faith, share deeply with strangers, and accommodate themselves to the needs of others.

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The “one-size-fits-all” worship service is no longer able to address the enormous diversity of spiritual needs and cultural behavior patterns. No matter how much you “blend” old and new styles, or stagger worship services through the Christian year to address distinct spiritual and personal needs, people are left out. They need worship in the indigenous form in which they live, or they can’t hear the Gospel. Their spiritual needs are too constant and intense to be accommodated to the Christian Year.

Indigenous worship recognizes that North America IS the mission field, and like all missionaries it invites people to worship in the cultural forms, music, and technologies of their daily lives. There are five basic kinds of tracks: healing, coaching, cherishing, celebration ... and yes, a traditional track.

Worship glorifies God best when it: a) positively transforms people through an experience of the Holy, b) motivates them toward 7-day-a-week spiritual growth and personal mission, and c) articulates the genetic code of the congregation to build unity among all the teams and cells of the church.

[Go deeper: read the chapter on worship in **Growing Spiritual Redwoods** and my book **The Uncommon Lectionary**.]

First UMC:

The mission field of Williamstown prefers a generally traditional form of worship ... although with additional images, some upbeat music, and strongly spontaneous fellowship. There is room to add a second traditional service in the near future, provided that staff and volunteer teams can step up to lead it. The second traditional service would be concurrent with the contemporary service at 8:45.

I shared feedback about the contemporary worship service during my visit. Some of my key points are:

- Multiple, trained, “layered” teams for hospitality ... in place before and after worship;
- More lavish refreshments and serving station, refreshments served during worship;
- Bigger, bolder images ... especially reflecting core message and bedrock beliefs;
- Small scripture bytes;
- More story telling of scripture rather than reading;
- Topical “lifestyle coaching message” ... not expository preaching;
- Much shorter messages, including a Q/A at the end;
- Focus a single topic and advertise it;
- Strong mission connections and recognition of mission leaders and opportunities;
- Strong link into mid-week small groups
- Stronger faith-sharing and interaction from band, refreshment team;
- Healing prayer after worship;
- Relocate and improve nursery;
- Consider how to reach more men;

Fundamentally, it is the stronger “synergy for church growth” that must be introduced. Worship needs to come out of mission, and lead to spiritual growth. Worship choices need to expand the transformational and mission-connectional components ... and not just the educational and care giving components ... of the church.

Worship Teams

It is important to understand that missionally targeted worship depends on team development and leadership training. It cannot depend on the clergy and staff alone. The church has done a good job building some worship teams (e.g. music) as true small groups ... but hospitality, technology, and other teams function more as task groups. See my book *Growing Spiritual Redwoods*, and also *Designing Worship Teams* by Cathy Townley (Abingdon Press).

Coaching Worship

Coaching worship is usually very informal. The environment may include tables and chairs, easy access to coffee and refreshments, tablets to take notes (or electrical outlets for laptop computers). The service will include music that is usually contemporary and presentational, although perhaps some praise choruses. Prayers are intercessory, specifically related to the topic and

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micro-culture relevant to the day. Technology often includes video clips on the topic, plus illustrations or outlines of the message as it is shared.

Topics are specific the principal issues and concerns of the lifestyle segments of the mission field (refer to the demographic section of this report). The message is strongly Bible-based, but with professional expertise. The pastor may or may not give the message. If not, the message is shared by a credible, Christian professional with expertise in the topic. There may or may not be an honorarium involved. The pastor is very visible in worship leadership and prayer. There is often personal prayer or laying on of hands after worship.

Advertise and promote the topic for the day well in advance, but also outside on signs, and through community networks. The size of the congregation may well be 50 – 250, but rarely larger. You want to build in a method for dialogue, either direct Q/A, or through submitting anonymous written questions. Spotlight small group leaders and small group opportunities ... particularly short term affinity groups (1-2 sessions) related to the topic of the day. Some groups may meet immediately after worship, others during the week.

Children may well come to worship with their families, but parents usually prefer not to be burdened with child care during the worship. Provide an excellent “Children’s Church” of K and pre-K children. Provide coloring books or other quiet entertainment in the worship center for older children sitting with their parents. Depending on the topic, you may have special small groups during or after related to the topic specifically for children, teens, etc.

Occasional Celebration Worship

Plan ahead to develop two (possibly 3) major public “celebration worship” events. These might be held along with an intergenerational festival outside in the park area. Such events are tied to key public holidays like Valentines Day or Mother’s Day in the spring, or Thanksgiving or Halloween in the fall. These are opportunities for praise, and deliberately gather everyone in the traditional and coaching services who are now in your databank. Invite the general public, but be sure to train and deploy your leaders to mingle with the crowd, share the core message, and invite people to worship. It is a kind of promotion for your two regular, distinct, worship services.

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve is one of the single most important times to connect with seekers and draw them to your church. Therefore, it is important that all worship and hospitality team members commit to sacrificing some of their own family time to be present and ready for Christmas Eve. In your mission field, the following three services will be valued:

- a) 4:00pm Children and Young Family Worship: Make this high-spirited, with lots of traditional carols, some excellent drama, and only a very brief message related to a Biblical Christmas story. Give an opportunity to give to a specific local outreach ministry ... but also budget in advance to give the children a present that is clearly related to your core message as a church. Music will be a combination of recorded, video, and small ensemble of musicians.
- b) 6:00pm Family and Youth Worship: Make this somewhat more traditional, but involve youth strongly in the worship design and implementation. No pageants for little kids. Use very contemporary Christian music related to Christmas, and make it noisy and celebrative. Focus very strongly on the full humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ and his power to heal, guide, vindicate, promise hope, and transform lives. Make “incarnation” a real experience today from storytelling by participants. Yes, you can also serve Holy Communion if it is done in a contemporary way. Preaching is more like story-telling or witnessing to what Christ has done for one’s life. Music will be a live band with vocals.
- c) 10:00pm (or later) Adult Worship: Make this very traditional, with even ancient church overtones. Use only traditional hymns. Holy Communion is central to it. Follow your classic liturgy. No children’s time, although you may provide child care. Strongly emphasize thanksgiving for mission involvement of the church, and spotlight small groups and adult spiritual disciplines. Music will be traditional gowned choir.

Be sure to have great refreshments all the time ... you may encourage a prayer vigil all evening, especially in between services, and redecorate the meeting room as a chapel. Be sure to train a special team of spiritual leaders who will be available, and seek out, individuals who are broken, lost, lonely, or anxious for personal counseling and support.

Growing Disciples:

Growing disciples in a thriving church implies an emphasis on adult faith formation, particularly among adults age 18 to 45. This does not preclude vital children's and youth ministries, but recognizes that such ministries only happen in the context of a fundamental emphasis of adult spiritual growth. In the postmodern world, this adult faith formation is usually lifestyle based, partnered, networked, customized by culture, technologically supported, oriented around a metaphor rather than a curriculum, and in an action/reflection methodology.

These next three sub-systems represent the core of the "discipling process" through which Christian life is deepened in faith, aligned to God's purpose, and deployed in mission. There are three group experiences:

- Discovery: People learn more about God, Christ, and Bible; their gifts and personalities; their relationships to family, friends, and strangers.
- Destiny: People discern their personal mission or calling through reflection and conversation regarding the Bible, contemporary life, and personal passion.
- Mission: People team together to accomplish whatever mission God calls them to do, and in the midst of this learn still more about themselves, God, and human need.

Thus journey or process never ends. The key is that every step should be mentored by group leaders or credible lay spiritual leaders who can challenge, coach, and guide people deeper into spiritual life. Much of this process may involve intentional small groups or cell groups, but there can be any number of hybrid partnerships for spiritual growth through Sunday school, age based and cross-generational groups, etc.

Affinity-based groups usually work better than curriculum-based groups in mainstream churches. An affinity is any shared enthusiasm ... from crafts, hobbies, sports and music ... to special interest projects and ministries ... to 12 step and mutual support groups. Every group must have a trained leader who shepherds people to grow in relationships and faith. They pray, read the Bible, talk about life and faith, and engage in their activity. Every group is a self-determining unit.

Affinity groups rarely exceed 12 people, and are time limited. Cell groups MUST come to an end, force members to make clear decisions about personal growth, and scatter and multiply. Leadership is very important. Following sections will discuss the identification and training of leaders. Note that different generations (of attitudes, not ages) value leadership in different ways.

- *Builders* value certified leaders who can manage mission;
- *Boomers* value professional leaders who can do or train mission;
- *Busters* value authentic leaders who can motivate and influence entrepreneurs.
- *Echoes* value audacious leaders who can show the way toward a big vision.

All four aspects of leadership will be important, in varying degrees of importance, depending on the group.

The metaphor I use in *Christian Chaos* helps you understand the general approach to spiritual growth in the thriving church. You are not "training dogs" but rather "raising rabbits". Traditional committees and task groups are like dogs that are commanded to do certain things by an authoritative institutional voice. Creativity is undesirable in training dogs. Cell groups and mission teams are like rabbits, in that they have freedom to roam and explore within the boundaries of a fence (genetic code) of congregational life. They can be motivated and influence, but will decide for themselves what to do and where to go. Creativity is a must in raising rabbits.

[Go deeper: read the chapter on small groups in **Growing Spiritual Redwoods** ... and the second half of my book **Christian Chaos** about small groups and mission teams.]

First UMC:

The church has too few small groups. These groups should be more intentionally "affinity" groups rather than "curriculum" groups. The church needs to pay particular attention to three things:

a) Small group leadership:

Every group must have a clear, trained leader who is held accountable for the personal and spiritual growth of members of the group. The various resources above help you design both basic and ongoing training for small group leaders.

b) Closure, multiplication and/or “mentoring moment”:

Every group should have specific time limitations, so that there is a clear time when small group leaders mentor each member of the group into the next step of spiritual growth. This is a key way to avoid group stagnation, and push individuals beyond their love for each other to be passionate about God’s purpose.

c) Discovery, Destiny, Mission Team flow:

Small groups should develop as part of the synergy of church growth. This means people move among groups designed for personal discovery of gifts, discernment of calling, and actual hands-on mission outreach. You should be able to track the progress of members in this movement. All groups should draw people back to one of the worship alternatives.

The pastor (and future staff person for small groups) should invest more energy mentoring leaders for small groups.

Discerning Call:

While traditional churches divert people away from their gifts by recruiting them to meet institutional needs through board management, thriving churches boost participants to the next level of spiritual growth. Discernment means hearing God’s call to use one’s gifts to be a blessing to humankind. It is the discovery of how one can fulfill one’s destiny in God’s plan for their lives and the universe. It is taking your place beside Jesus in the mission field.

This is the decisive point where a congregation turns away from a top-down hierarchical organization (in which the mission agenda is imposed by a controlling official body), in order to embrace a bottom-up servant empowering organization (in which the mission agenda emerges from the spiritual lives of the people). Administration is delegated to a trusted, gifted, called few, while the energies of laity are invested in the discernment of call and self-fulfillment in Christ.

The idea is to create an environment of constantly changing partnerships for growth and mission . . . a kind of “dance”. People need to move in and out of discovery groups (to learn more about themselves, their God, and each other), destiny groups (to hear God’s call to fulfill their life destiny), and mission teams (to do good things and witness to faith motivation). The leaders function like chaperones on the dance floor. Their primary work is to introduce new partners to form new groups, coach a new tactic or strategy for spiritual growth and mission discernment, and articulate the genetic code of the congregation.

[Go deeper: read my books **Mission Mover** and **Coaching Change**.]

First UMC:

There should be an annual visioning retreat for leaders, an intentional listening or research strategy to understand the mission field for the Council, and a plan for mentoring call for volunteers. Strong support should be given to the various and emerging outreach ministries. Highlight these ministries regularly in worship, and commission volunteers for these ministries in worship. In addition:

- Start a tradition for annual leadership visioning retreats every fall led by the senior pastor. These retreats should be required as a condition of office, and include refinement of the DNA of the congregation, and strategies for outreach for the church.
- Regularly dialogue with community leaders about demographic trends (especially senior leaders in health care, social service, and business interest in entertainment, food, and mall development.
- Slowly develop mentoring relationships between the most credible spiritual leaders of the congregation (start with the Council) and members of the church, to help them discern personal calling.

Again, make sure these ministries emerge from a sense of personal call, not just a sense of social urgency, duty, or task.

Perhaps the most important goal is to develop a “Signature Ministry”. This is a big, highly visible, constant outreach initiative that inspires the sacrifice of members and captures the imagination of the public. It provides very practical help for a targeted public. The seeds of such signature outreach ministries may lie in the Pantry or Pre-School, but both are presently too limited in their scope.

Training Ministers:

Congregational commitment to quality attracts newcomers to the church, and assures changed/gifted/called participants that they can receive support to do ministries in a manner that will build their self-esteem. People want to do things well, and feel healthy while they do these things.

The standard of measurement here is not with other churches or religious organizations, but with the entire corporate and non-profit community. Your goal is to provide as much sensitivity and support for skills development and healthy lifestyle as the most highly respected organizations in the community. To determine your benchmarks on quality, go find the most highly respected organizations in the community and see what they do ... what technologies they provide ... what personal support they offer. Eventually, the church will become the organization that sets the standard of quality for everyone else.

Since people want to do things well, you need to provide high continuing education budgets for volunteers. This budget should be higher than the comparable budget for paid leaders. This allows you to bring trainers in, send people out, build resources, and do whatever it takes to aim at professional quality. Since people want to do what they do in a healthy lifestyle, you need to provide 24-hour relational support.

Growing churches in a world of fast-paced change understand everyone will always be an *amateur*. While skill is important, desire is more important. Skills will need to be changed, re-learned, and upgraded all the time. Motivation, and the ability to seize opportunities with integrity (within the genetic code) are more important than skills. Remember the following principles.

- a) Most traditional churches are content to accept mediocrity, because they are so desperate to fill all the nominations in their bureaucracy. All growing churches expect quality, because they simply want to help people fulfill their destinies. They know that people do not want to be embarrassed in pursuing their passions, and want to do the best they can.
- b) Most traditional churches emphasize “time and talent” searches, and focus solely on skills. All growing churches begin with identifying *desire*, and identifying talent. That is why personal growth and discernment of call *precede* training.

Training advances motivated people to joyously fulfill themselves ... by giving the fruits of their personal growth to benefit other people.

There are three basic kinds of training. First, offer training *before* any ministry actually begins. Some of this training will relate to whatever skills are necessary to pursue the calling ... and you may well need to send people out or bring consultants in. Additional training should be offered to embed the genetic code, understand the core process, and keep the flows of relationship and faith building.

Relationship - Building	
<i>Flow</i>	<i>Risk</i>
✓ Conversation	Boredom
✓ Information	Competition
✓ Ideas	Disagreement
✓ Feelings	Conflicts
✓ Dreams	Shock
✓ Team Action	Stagnation
✓ Multiplication	Grief

Faith - Building	
<i>Flow</i>	<i>Risk</i>
✓ Covenant	Indiscipline
✓ Curiosity	Consternation
✓ Bible Awareness	Competition
✓ Trust	Dependency
✓ Questioning	Fear
✓ Action	Judgment
✓ Holy Discontent	Self-doubt

The second kind of training involves regular *upgrade* events or sessions. Not only do these sessions impart new skills to address emerging issues and demands of the mission activity, but these sessions provide an opportunity to review behavior against the genetic code, make connections with other aspects of the core process (“changed, gifted, called, equipped, sent”), and assist leaders to overcome plateaus for growth identified as “risks” in the above charts.

The third kind of training requires 24 hour coaching support. This is *not* necessarily the task solely of the pastor or paid leaders. It is primarily the task of team or cell leaders, but can be shared by all paid leaders as well. The coaching does not aim to solve problems for someone else, but to mentor another to solve the problems for themselves.

The most effective plan is to provide a full time leader related to “human resources” with a substantial lay training budget. Training usually consists of three components:

- a) Initial training (a day apart or other specialized training);
- b) Regular “upgrade” training (a day apart of special seminar training 3-4 times per year);
- c) Ongoing networking and coaching through exclusive access internet and email.

The focus of “basic training” usually consists of these components:

- a) Embedding “DNA” for accountability and alignment of all work;
- b) General training in Bible, relationship building, and Christ;
- c) Specialized training in whatever work is required;
- d) Cultural sensitizing to help leaders understand the target group of mission;
- e) Prayer support, and understanding of the overall discipling process;
- f) How to design a group covenant regarding time limits, location, confidentiality, etc.

The focus of “ongoing training” usually consists of these elements:

- a) Review of “DNA” and accountability to boundaries of behavior and mission alignment;
- b) Coaching through problems in the group or plateaus of growth;
- c) Specific continuing education (like conflict management, fund raising, and so on);
- d) Connecting the small group to worship and the larger discipling process.

[Go deeper: read my books **Mission Mover** and **Coaching Change**.]

First UMC:

In general, the congregation does not offer sufficient or focused training for volunteers. There is no lay training budget, or specific training expectations for Council and other ministry area leaders, and no annual evaluation of volunteer leaders. Staff and volunteers should be hired (acquired), trained, evaluated, and fired (dismissed) based on four criteria:

- **Mission alignment:** Rigorous commitment to the core message of the church, and readiness to shape their lifestyles around the mission 52 weeks of the year.
- **High Integrity:** Understanding, readiness to model, the core values, bedrock beliefs, vision and mission that is the foundation of trust for all innovative action.
- **Skills Development:** Commitment to invest time and money to acquire emerging and relevant skills to reach seekers, regardless of their personal taste and preferences.
- **Teamwork:** Readiness to invest in the patience, respect, encouragement, support, and cooperation associated with true teams ... beyond simple participation in a task.

The pastor and council already see themselves shifting more and more to an equipping and training model of ministry, and this should be encouraged.

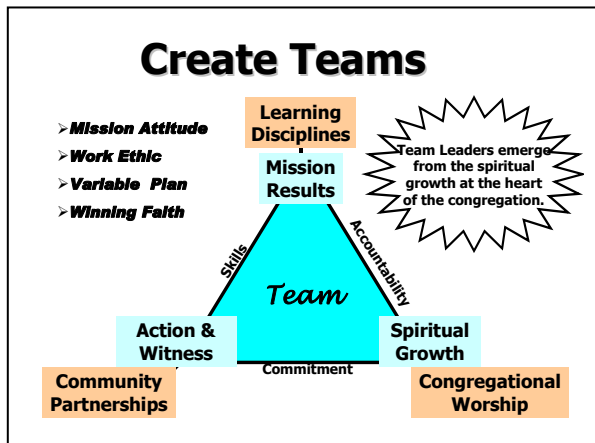
Deploying Servants:

The more servants deployed in the community and world, the more mission leverages personal and social change ... and the more attention is drawn to your church that allows your church to grow. There are four keys to the deployment of servants:

- Clear boundaries that allow servants to navigate creatively in the mission field with integrity;
- Constant motivation to continue spiritual growth and mission action 7 days a week as part of a healthy lifestyle;
- Simultaneous evangelism and social service, so that faith witness and beneficial service always happen together;

- Permission-giving organization that delegates responsibility to discern, design, implement, and evaluate mission to a team, and provides all resources possible for the team.

Successful deployment of servants requires more than encouragement to “just do it”. It requires an atmosphere of trust.



The leadership required of a true team is the ability to ...

- **Learn & apply new skills**
- **Celebrate wholeness**
- **Discern hope**
- **Trust God**

Leaders poise their teams to seize emerging opportunities as they arise ... with integrity, health, and optimism ... confident that they can learn from inevitable failures.

The key to servant deployment is the ability to create and release true teams that simultaneously do good and share their faith motivation for doing it. True teams are handpicked because they share commitment to the mission goal, are prepared to learn and interface new skills constantly, and will hold one another accountable in peer evaluation. Teams are growth groups which link to worship (not boards), are results driven, and form many partnerships to learn from mistakes and achieve success. True teams are entrepreneurial partnerships that are trusted within clear generic code.

In the deployment of true teams, growing congregations need to accept the inevitability of “gaps” in ministry. The church cannot simply recruit people to address a need ... no matter how pressing or valid that need seems to be. Such behavior will sabotage the multiplication of cells and stifle spiritual growth. Even if there are short-term benefits, the long-term cost will be diminished mission. The transition from committee and task group to true teams can be painful during the transition, because some programs which seem “essential” will not be done. Yet it is better to stop the addictive behavior pattern, and focus on adult spiritual growth. Eventually, all ministries will be done through true teams and the congregation will be much stronger, rapidly responsive to opportunities and needs, and more energetic with reliable and motivated volunteers.

The congregational target should be to focus first on “hands-on” missions by lay teams that require regular and practical participation in ministries, and combine “reflection” time with “active” time guided by a mentor or leader. The participation of members in shaping the policy of outreach organizations is the next priority, and financial contributions to charities is the last and least significant for church growth.

Most growing congregations have a “signature ministry”. This is some major outreach initiative that blesses non-members of the church that is widely known and recognized by the public. Such a ministry elicits enormous financial and energy commitment from the members, and is frequently referenced in the context of all worship alternatives. This “signature ministry” reveals the DNA of the church to the community as a personal signature reveals the personality of an individual.

[Go deeper: read my books **Mission Mover** and **Coaching Change**, plus the organizational and team chapters in **Growing Spiritual Redwoods**]

First UMC:

The congregation has a heart for mission, but still tends to deploy volunteers as task groups rather than mission teams. They tend to rely on “Depot” ministries in which they collect things, store things, and distribute things ... without immersing large numbers of members in actual relationships with the people the programs serve. The congregation needs to become more intentional about doing mission as an action/reflection strategy for personal spiritual growth.

- Pray regularly in worship for mission teams;
- Train leaders in faith sharing and evangelism;
- Invite people back to worship as they are encountered in daily life;
- Identify and build a “signature outreach ministry”.

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The ability to share faith begins with leaders answering the key question “What is it about my experience with Jesus this community cannot live without?” and then mentoring others in their areas of ministry to do the same. The process to develop clarity and consensus around bedrock beliefs will also encourage evangelism. Consider using books like Harold Percy’s “Following Jesus: First Steps on the Way” or “Good News People: An Introduction to Evangelism for Tongue-Tied Christians” (Anglican Books) if they are still in print. Or try “Faith Sharing” by Eddie Fox from UMC Discipleship Resources.

The congregation lives in the illusion that property rental constitutes evangelism. This is a mistake, since evangelism is about relationships and not property use. The Multi-Purpose Room, by itself, is not mission. The fact that outside groups use the room is irrelevant to the Christian Mission to multiply disciples. Few people will ever come to church because of it, or come to Christ because of it.

- ❖ Make a policy in the church that property will never be rented for any purpose unless a team of church members is actively involved with planning and implementation of the program. Then the church can build in relationships through which they can model a Christian lifestyle and talk with people about God. That is evangelism.

Notes:

Formal Insights and Recommendations

Property, Finance, Communication

The last three sub-systems relate to the solid or visible “forms” of organization that are perhaps most readily visible to the public. These include property (facility and technology), finance (fund raising, charitable giving, assets management), and communication (advertising, marketing, one-to-one interaction with the public).

Remember that traditional churches usually make the mistake of starting with these sub-systems, and then working backwards in their analysis of the church. They tend to assume that changes in the use of property, fund raising, and advertising will most powerfully leverage their church into a healthy future. This is not the case. The truth is that churches have no idea what to do about these formal sub-systems ... unless they address the previous eight sub-systems.

Property

The principle that “form follows function”, when applied to church growth, means that all of the assets of the church should be available to flexibly support the mission of the church. Property itself is not sacred. Mission is sacred. The question is how we can effectively use, shape, or adjust property to best facilitate the mission.

Nevertheless, property is one of the most common addictions for traditional churches. Heritage, nostalgia, aesthetic taste, and financial stability all get in the way of authentic mission. I am not saying that property does not have symbolic power ... nor am I

saying that the symbolic power of property should not be used to mediate meaning to people. In the end, however, it is only symbolic and nothing more. The sacred lies beyond the property.

In “Coaching Change” I identify one of the most significant aspects of “property” that is missed by modern churches: technology. The truth is that 21st century people value technology to the same degree that 20th century people once valued property. When you think about it, property itself is but a “technology” ... a method or vehicle to accomplish or teach certain things. Technological change may be more important than property change ... and more stressful to modern Christendom church people.

Most declining churches have beautiful facilities (inside and outside), which have become “sacred cows” for people both in the church and in the neighborhood. Property and technology are only tactics, and should be constantly reshaped to fulfill the only thing that is truly sacred: sharing the Gospel.

The primary “spaces” relevant to the postmodern church are: the worship center, food court, and nursery. (See the section related to property in the “ministry Mapping” chapter of my book *Moving Off the Map*.)

- The worship center should never be filled over 80% capacity, be very versatile for every track of worship, have excellent audio and video capabilities, and be easily accessible.
- The food court should offer multiple choices in quality drink and food, available from multiple serving centers, and be immediately proximate to the worship center.

[Note: The choices for refreshments should reflect the mission target of the public you are trying to reach ... and present them with the *best quality possible* for their preferred food groups. Furthermore, since much of your demographic is increasingly health conscious, you want to provide sugar free and other “healthy alternatives”. As you enclose the atrium and develop a larger communications and fellowship hub, consider *selling* food from a booth ... even at an *extra cost* that it could be purchased elsewhere ... and advertise assertively that the “profit” funds specific acute intervention, outreach missions.]

- The nursery should be comparable to the best day care in the community for health, safety and security, and be readily accessible from the food court and worship center.

Office space is the next priority. It should be situated with clear line of sight to entrances, contain the indigenous technologies commonly used by businesses and service in the community, and be accessible and useable by volunteers. Sunday school rooms, comfortable conversation areas, sports areas, and fellowship areas should be designed for flexibility as the mission of the church evolves. Kitchens are generally smaller, and equipped to reheat and serve food, rather than cook and prepare food (unless mission demands otherwise). All rooms should be computer networked.

The major issues that are exterior to the building include adequate parking, accessibility and safety, and symbols that articulate the genetic code of the congregation. (This last will be addressed in the section on “communication”).

Some congregations own additional property (houses, camps, etc.). These should be evaluated in the context of the specific mission for which these properties are tactics ... or in the context of the missional purpose of the income received from these properties. Income from properties that is simply used for an operating budget or salaries is *not* a sign of congregational health

Go deeper: read my book *Kicking Habits* and the sections on mission assessment and ministry mapping in *Moving Off the Map*.

First UMC

The church has wrestled with the question of relocation, but the truth is that their current position has many opportunities, parking is not the real problem, and multi-sites for mission (combined with additional Sunday worship services and staffing) can solve most of their acute problems. It will financially be much cheaper to pay for extra staff, additional training, adjacent sites, and leased space, than raise several million dollars to buy land and build. Besides, it is unclear who would buy the existing building.

The deeper reason the congregation cannot relocate is that the leaders and members are not spiritually mature enough to sustain such a transition. They are much more focused on heritage than mission, and have yet to discern a big, bold vision that will motivate them to serious sacrifice.

I have outlined the property changes that must be made. In general, the current space works against a discipling process because the flow of people is restricted in four ways:

- The main entrance from the parking lot is too narrow and the hall is too small to include a Welcome Center unless changes are made to the office space;
- The worship center is “hidden” upstairs and intimidating especially for seekers to find, and it is too far removed from the refreshment area;
- The access to the sanctuary is a bottleneck of a very small hallway, obstructed by a little-used chapel, and relies on a very steep balcony as the only potential “overflow” seating;
- The Sunday school rooms are partitioned to be too small and there is insufficient space for the more interactive and diverse classes and affinity groups that drive contemporary Christian education.

All my recommendations are designed to solve these problems (although not perfectly), and enhance the flow of people from worship, to learning and fellowship, to mission.

The church wrongly thinks that the Multi-Purpose Room is an act of mission. (See my note on Page 51). In fact, few people have started coming to church because of the rental of this space to outside groups. This is because true evangelism is about relationships, not property use. Property should never be rented unless a team of church members is actively involved in the planning and implementation of the program. The conversion of this space to become a Contemporary Worship Space will have far greater impact for Christians mission and church growth.

Finance:

Money, like property, is simply an asset to use effectively for the changing mission of the church. Thriving churches are unafraid to talk about money, and place high expectations on the core leaders and church members regarding financial giving. Since good stewardship is founded on adult spiritual growth, fund-raising follows naturally from the emphasis on adult spiritual growth in the congregation.

Most traditional congregations need to reverse the “me first” attitude of their church. This attitude demands that congregational operating costs be met first, and if there is money left over it should be devoted to mission. Thriving churches have a “mission first” attitude, and when they spend money for their operating budget it is only to maximize their mission.

The tactical keys to 21st century church financing are as follows. Remember that while modern people gave money to institutions to implement beneficial programs, postmodern people give money to authentic leaders to implement audacious and beneficial visions.

- Sound debt management (not debt freedom) is the sign of a healthy church;
- Designated giving options have replaced unified budgets;
- The operating budget does not finance all the mission ... it seeds or supports the mission teams to raise money for their mission;
- Treasurers and financial managers must be perceived as credible spiritual leaders of mission.

As the postmodern world becomes increasingly hostile to organized religion, it becomes more important for the congregation to own and control its own central property. No landlord should have the power to limit, shape, or control the creative missions of the church ... and your property and technology should reflect your own genetic code.

Remember that the key to increased giving is not so much a clever stewardship campaign, as much as serious adult faith formation. [Go deeper: read my book *Kicking Habits* and *Growing Spiritual Redwoods*.]

[Go deeper: read my book *Kicking Habits* ... and my book *Coaching Change: Breaking Down Resistance, Building Up Hope*.]

First UMC

The past experience of relying on a few affluent givers to sustain the church has been a mixed blessing. The building is well maintained ... but the congregation has been allowed to grow lazy in its stewardship. There is no mission-driven debt, and the congregation is sitting on about \$400,000 in assets that do not really do anything to advance God’s Kingdom. This contributes to the public perception of a wealthy, snobbish church ... and it further encourages bad giving habits. Why give, when there are buckets of money stored away?

Responsible mission-driven debt, and investment of capital funds in mission, can combine with a renewed seriousness for stewardship campaigns to take the church out of lethargy. Again, my recommendations are all designed to push the church toward mission. Most of my recommendations are frankly obvious: purchase an adjacent house, relocate offices to make Sunday School space, relocate and renovate space for the contemporary worship, expand hallways, and install a Welcome Center.

I am not convinced that you actually need a guided capital fund raising campaign until you require funds for a Signature Ministry that might be expensive. Then you may need the guidance of a professional fund raising company for the two capital campaigns of the future. I recommend contacting Horizon's Inc. www.horizonesstewardship.com.

Remember that leaders lead. It is important that both property and finance leaders be perceived as spiritual disciplined, regularly attending, missionally active, prayerful people. Council, staff, and small group leaders should demonstrate their stewardship commitment to the church by always giving significantly more than the average member.

Communication:

“Communication” here includes everything from symbolism inside and outside the building, to deliberate marketing, and from planned presentation of your genetic code to unspoken revelation of who and what you are. Everything about the congregation needs to reveal the core message of *this* community of faith *that* particular segment of the population. Whatever the program, person, or ministry, every cellular activity of the organism should express the same, clear focus of mission. Authenticity requires that the message you plan to articulate is indeed the message that is revealed in the smallest, most spontaneous word or action.

Communication should create a “micro-macro” synergy in the life of the congregation and community, so that local and global partners are joined in conversation. The postmodern public needs to sense that your primary communication is neither limited to debate among insiders, nor interaction in the neighborhood, but that it includes serious interaction that is one-to-one and community-to-world. People want their communication to be simultaneously intimate and universal. The most important issue for communication is the “core message” of the congregation. State the core message in 10 words or less ... using active (not passive) language ... and eliminate any ambiguity about your intention in ministry. In response to your core message, people should not have to ask “Do you mean...?”, but they should simply look at you (afraid, startled, happy, or joyous) and say “Oh. I See.” Communication and marketing leads the congregation back to build clarity and consensus about its core values, beliefs, vision and mission.

First UMC:

The church primarily relies on word-of-mouth, worship announcements, and newsletter to communicate with the congregation. The addition of a Welcome Center and Communication Hub should greatly enhance communications. And it is vital for the church to develop its core message, plus a brief and memorable vision symbol and mission statement. Additional strategic moves include:

- Focus the newsletter on small group experiences, hands on mission stories of the local church, lifestyle coaching messages from the pastor or staff.
- Urge a youth small group to develop a monthly video newsletter to be reproduced and given away to newcomers.
- Develop the church website, and encourage staff and ministry area leaders in blogging.
- Select 2-3 holidays and develop a more significant celebration or public event to attract people to the church.
- Especially multiply Christmas Eve celebrations targeting different groups.
- Develop a team to follow up newcomers with a personal visit on the same day, and give them a generous gift relevant to your core message and vision.

Remember to develop all these projects as true small spiritual growth groups or teams. A resource that may be particularly helpful is *Money Matters* from Ginghamburg UMC. This resource is especially good for seniors and young families because it combines the goal for tithing with a goal for credit card debt reduction.

Encouragement

I believe that First United Methodist Church (Williamstown) has the potential to significantly grow God's mission. There is a "core message" within your hearts that is urgent for the people around you ... and particularly relevant to the seekers (young and old) and large population of unchurched people. However, you need to go deep inside yourselves and closer in prayer with God, so that the Holy Spirit can elicit that "core message" from you. It needs to be separated from many other competing personal tastes, needs, and organizational habits that clutter your experience of "being church".

You do have spiritual leadership. Yes, you also have talented leadership, but your best assets are your spiritual leaders. These include your pastor. Steve has things to learn and challenges to grow, and deserves very strong support. Your Senior Pastor is the single most important reason why you are growing now, and will grow in the future. Most of all, he has a great heart for the "seekers" out there, and a deep desire to help them experience Jesus Christ. This attitude is also true for many volunteer leaders. There is a deep faith and experience of Christ within you, but you are too timid to share it boldly. Spiritual leadership is not only hard work, but an act of courage in a pagan environment. Step boldly in faith ... and God will meet you on the road to mission.

Your church has precedents for daring and creative change. You experimented with seniors outreach and built the gymnasium; you have created a terrific children's ministry; you have a growing reputation for outreach to the needy in the community; and you have already renovated the sanctuary once.

The challenge about staffing, space, and outreach are great. Anxiety is understandable. The strategic recommendations here should help you. However, many churches have far fewer resources than you have *and grow!* And many churches have far better resources than you have *and fail to grow!* In other words, the key to growth is not property. It is in the core message, spiritual leadership, and beneficial outreach of your people.

Next Steps

Pastor, Council, and core leaders will need to read and study the total report. There will be many questions. I am available to you by phone, skype, and email to interpret the report and guide you. There may be places where I have misunderstood you, or made a tactical recommendation that won't work, but that is to be expected. More likely, the issue is not what works but what you are willing to do. Much of your work is about shifting attitude ... not just developing programs.

- Share the sections on "Strategic Recommendations" and "Encouragement" as an executive summary more widely in the church. Pastor and Council leaders should sponsor focus groups in their homes to discuss the recommendations, and they can verbally share more background from the wider reading of the report.
- Make a full version of the report available to anyone who would like to read it ... but encourage people to read it along with an opportunity to de-brief with the Pastor or Council leader.
- Remember that this is a strategic plan for the next five years. Some things are marked urgent ... other things take more time. Develop your own timeline as you study the report.
- Commit. Once you have summarized the timeline, publicly commit to the plan. Let members and visitors understand clearly where you are going. Consider posting the timeline on the wall of the traditional worship room or new church office, or incorporate the plan for repeated viewing in powerpoint during worship.

Finally, look for sister congregations that are "Program Churches" of any denomination moving in the directions you wish to go. Look within a radius of two hours drive. Visit and work with them. The pastor can learn from their pastor; the Council and other leaders can learn from their board and staff. This relationship can help you develop resources and training opportunities, and give you some solid feedback to guide your journey.

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