

Platte Woods United Methodist Church

CONSULTATION REPORT

11/7/2010

INTRODUCTION

We, the consultation team, would like to thank the pastor, pastoral staff and program staff, lay leadership and congregation of Platte Woods United Methodist Church for the invitation to consult with this Body of Christ. We read and digested the self-study document provided by the leadership, conducted interviews with staff and key lay leadership, and led focus groups with members of the congregation. Everyone cooperated with us and provided all the information we requested. Our prayer is that God will use this process to enhance the ministry of the Gospel in this part of the world.

STRENGTHS

1. Outstanding Resources

Platte Woods UMC has a strong staff of pastoral leaders with unique and complimentary gifts that work very well together. It also has a large, well maintained building that provides for a wide range of programs and worship experiences. It now has an adequate site in a growing area due to a strategy of consistent adjacent property acquisition. The financial situation is strong with a significant reserve due to the generous heart of the congregation for the ministry it does.

2. Music and Worship

Music is a significant part of the ministry of Platte Woods UMC. It was consistently lifted up across the weekend by many persons as excellent and meaningful on Sunday morning. The congregation also has four worship experiences throughout the weekend with two different styles to connect with a broader range of spiritual needs.

3. Friendliness and Congregational Care

Throughout our conversations, we consistently heard how the friendliness and warmth experienced among the members is what connects them and keeps them here. Several mentioned that this is their family. This care is also organized and extended through pastoral visits, lay visitation teams, Sunday School classes, small groups and Bible studies.

4. Community Focus and Outreach

The pastors, staff and congregation have developed the Faith in Action events that extends the love of Christ to the community through service opportunities twice a year. Furthermore, they have developed groups that serve monthly through service projects within the community, as well as building service into the DNA of their small groups.

5. Website

The website is outstanding. It is one of the best the consultation team has seen developed by a local church. Since in the 21st century the way most people check out a potential church is through a website, Platte Woods UMC already has a significant connection with the persons under 40 that you are seeking to attract to come and experience your church in person.

CONCERNS

1. Lack of a Clear Consistent Plan

The church has a vision that has instead been identified as their purpose—"To build an outwardly focused Christian community of full participants in the life of grace." This vision will fulfill our common purpose as a United Methodist congregation of "making new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." The missing piece is a clear plan of how Platte Woods UMC will live out this vision over the next several years. It is this compelling vision and developed plan that can help every member invest their time, talents, and treasure to realize this clear picture of God's future. Everyone will be invited to invest in this vision.

2. Limited Staff Accountability and Leadership Development

The staff has started to move from primarily "doing" ministry to helping others become involved in ministry with them through the increased use of teams. Moving significantly beyond 800 in worship will require a staff that develops leaders who develop others to be in ministry. Leadership development then becomes the key priority for program and pastoral staff.

3. Lack of Newcomer Hospitality

As well as the church does friendliness to one another, this welcome is not extended well to first time guests. The nineteen mystery worshippers shared the lack of hospitality they experienced when attending a worship service, regardless of what day, time, or age of mystery worshipper. They shared examples of lack of acknowledgement, unclear signage, and no invitation to fellowship time. This might help explain why only a small percentage of first time guests return and become regular attenders.

4. Plateaued Worship Attendance for 5 years

Although this is a very large congregation (top 1% in size in Missouri) with many strengths and resources, it has remained near 800 in average worship attendance for over five years. As it fulfills the vision "to build an outwardly focused Christian community of full participants in the life of grace", it will once again become a growing congregation in worship attendance, outreach and spiritual vitality.

5. Children and Youth Ministry

The current ministries with children and youth are connecting with a large number of participants and utilizing many hard working, dedicated adult workers and leaders in these vital ministry areas. Several key concerns were raised with the consultation team during our time together. Those concerns included communication, planning and flexibility, follow through, and ability to expand the ministry. Broader opportunities and newer models are needed to reach additional children and youth, including those both inside the church and outside the church and the faith.

PRESCRIPTIONS

1. Developing a Plan to Live Out the Mission and Vision

The congregation understands when this consultation report is accepted (should that be the case) they will develop a clearer plan to accomplish the vision of Platte Woods UMC, which is "to build an outwardly focused Christian community of full participants in the life of grace."

The congregation will have a Day of Prayer that will allow the membership to be fully prepared for the Lord's Vision for the future. This day will be led by Pastor Ginger in consultation with conference staff person, Sherry Habben, and will be conducted on or before January 31, 2011.

The coach and the Lead Pastor will conduct a Day of Envisioning, within 30 days of the Day of Prayer. The purpose of this day is to dream how God might want to work through the congregation both individually and collectively to reach this community. The church will seek God's direction to discover what percentage of the un-churched within a five mile radius it is responsible to win to Christ and Platte Woods UMC. The Day of Envisioning will be paid for by the church and hosted in February of 2011.

A key component of this vision will be to embrace becoming a very large church with over one half of the congregation being comprised of post-moderns by January 1, 2021. To accomplish this goal, the Pastors, program staff, Leadership Council, and lay leaders of program and administrative areas will review their ministry areas, clarify the key components of a strategy, and launch those strategies by September 30, 2011.

2. Staff Alignment and Leadership Development

A key shift necessary for each staff person to align with the Mission is to continue to focus on results for the sake of the Mission. The Lead Pastor, Chief Operations Officer, and the coach will work with the staff to ensure alignment through staff meetings, quarterly goal setting and annual evaluations by the Lead Pastor, Chief Operations Officer and the Leadership Council. This will be completed on or before May 31, 2011.

The coach, Lead Pastor and Chief Operations Officer will meet with the Leadership Council to audit the current staff positions for the sake of the Mission. This will include an assessment of key ministries, roles of staff, the configuration of staff positions, and the number of needed staff positions. This will be completed on or before August 31, 2011.

Program and pastoral staff will need to become proficient at developing leaders who develop others to be engaged in ministry for the sake of the Mission. This requires the ability to teach leaders what staff have already learned about helping persons engage in ministry. The Lead Pastor, Chief Operations Officer, and coach will work with the staff to develop the training for these skills, which will be implemented on or before April 30, 2011. A helpful resource for this process is "The Equipping Church" by Sue Mallory.

It is understood that upon voting to approve this report the congregation is agreeing to structure itself to follow the Accountable Leadership Model described in "Winning on Purpose" by John Kaiser. This model will be implemented by February 1, 2011. There will be one Leadership Council comprised of no more than twelve to fifteen members whose responsibility will be to govern the congregation. The Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development will nominate persons for the Leadership Council. The Leadership Council will replace the current Administrative Council and all Disciplinary committees such as Board of Trustees, Committee on Finance, and Staff Parish Relations Committee. The Leadership Council will be responsible for all the functions of the replaced committees, according to 2008 Book of Discipline, para. 244.2 and 247.2. The pastor will be the leader and the pastor's staff will manage all the ministries of the congregation. All existing and new ministry teams, small groups, pastor, and staff members will be accountable to the new Leadership Council for specific goals including, the number of people coming to Jesus through their ministries, the development of leaders and the growth of their ministries.

3. Creating an Inviting Atmosphere

The Radical Hospitality Team along with the Hospitality Coordinator will review in depth the Mystery Worshipper report and develop a strategy to use the findings to enhance the hospitality process for guests by January 31, 2011. After strategies have been enacted, Platte Woods UMC will re-engage the remaining two quarters of the mystery worshipper process. An assessment will then be completed to note improvements and any further areas to strengthen.

Pastor Curtis and the Connectors Team will expand the number of participants on this team to at least 80 by May 1, 2011. The coach will train Pastor Curtis and the team in the key components of connecting newcomers, including identifying, responding, listening to, and then connecting each newcomer before they are invited to join. This training will occur before July 1, 2011, using the book "The Race to Reach Out" by Doug Anderson and Mike Coyner.

In consultation with the coach, Lead Pastor will develop a series of three invitation Sundays in 2011. This process will use the model of Joe Harding to involve the congregation in the practice of inviting persons in their relational network to join with them in worship on those Sundays.

A missing piece of hospitality is a clear identifiable entrance with adequate space for welcome and gathering and a nearby outstanding nursery. A building study committee will be nominated by the Lead Pastor in consultation with the coach on or before March 31, 2011, through Charge Conference action according to the Book of Discipline paragraph 2543. It will evaluate the current facility for carrying out the Mission in the 21st century, including a front entrance, gathering space, restrooms, and nursery. These facility improvements will promote the atmosphere for welcoming newcomers and fellowship of the worship community. This will include visits to other churches, which have recently built cutting edge examples of these spaces. They will report to the Charge Conference with a specific plan for implementation, including the plan for the Capital Campaign by September 30, 2012.

4. Assess and Strengthen Worship Experience

The Lead Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will appoint a Worship Enhancement Task Force of 5-7 people to review the worship experience through the Mystery Worshipper report and improve the Sunday morning experience in very specific ways. This task force will submit recommendations to the worship planning team on or before March 1, 2011.

To embrace the post-moderns more fully, Pastors Curtis and Angie, in consultation with the coach, will develop a launch team for a post-modern contemporary worship service to begin after Labor Day and by Advent Season 2011. This team will identify and research their target population, develop strategic pre-launch activities (prayer walks, surveys, social gatherings), study churches who have launched similar worship experiences successfully and determine worship time, site, style and small group ministry.

In order to better accommodate the size of the worshipping congregation and make it more welcoming for newcomers on Saturday evening, this service needs to be moved to Memorial Hall. This will allow it to become more intimate, friendly, and spiritually connecting for the worshippers.

The same building study committee named in prescription three will also be charged with assessing and recommending to the same Charge Conference how to renovate, redecorate, and improve the worship spaces in the Sanctuary and Memorial Hall. This will include but not limited to lighting, audiovisual, seating, and the size of chancel and nave.

5. Strengthening Ministry with Children, Youth and Adults

The Lead Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will appoint two teams to evaluate and assess the ministries with 1)children and 2)youth. Each team will include the responsible staff person(s) for said ministry area, representative of the Leadership Council, Chief Operations Officer, workers/leaders in the ministry areas, and parent representatives. Each team will recognize and affirm areas of strength to build upon. Each team will also visit and study other churches with cutting edge, growing, and effective ministry in that area. Each team will develop a strategy for enhancing this ministry by June 1, 2011, which will provide ample time to organize for implementation by September 1, 2011.

The Lead Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will appoint a team to evaluate and assess the ministry with older adults. This team will include a pastor, representative of the Leadership Council, and a core of older adults. This team will recognize and affirm areas of strength to build upon. This team will also visit and study other churches with cutting edge, growing, and effective ministry in that area. This team will develop a strategy for enhancing this ministry by October 1, 2011, which will provide ample time to organize for implementation by January 1, 2012.

CONCLUSION

We, the consulting team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation in this manner. Our prayers and hope for your congregation is that God will use this process to help implement your mission effectively, utilize your compelling vision through a developed plan and thereby make an eternal difference in Northland community for the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bob Farr, Director of Congregational Excellence

Amy Gragg, Member of Consultation Team

Doug Anderson and Sharon Washington, Church Developers, Indiana Conference

Town Hall Meeting Dates:

Wednesday, November 10, 2010 at 6:00pm in the Sanctuary

Wednesday, November 17, 2010 at 6:00pm in the Sanctuary

Church Conference Date: Monday, December 6, 2010 at 6:30pm in the Sanctuary