

DEKALB FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

2008-2009 VISIONING TEAM

Approved by Church Council: May 12, 2009

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OUR MISSION

Living Christ's presence through love and service.

OUR VISION

The mission of our church is to be a community of believers nurturing one another in the life and example of Christ, through worship, witness, stewardship, service and fellowship. Our faith is sustained by study, prayer and reflection.

OUR CORE VALUES

Spiritual Growth—

unique to each individual; comprised of learning, understanding, and accepting God's word, while striving for a closer relationship with our Creator

Family—

a family of God committed to loving, caring for, and respecting one another and creating a sense of belonging to which everyone is invited

Helping—

sharing the love of Christ through service, prayer, and gifts to the local church, community, and world

Forgiveness—

laying down the burden of our own annoyances, hurt, and hatred of others and accepting the love of God for all

STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

Chapter I INTRODUCTION

*“Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.
For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay” (Habakkuk 2:2-3).*

Recent history of strategic planning

The last decade of formal strategic planning work within our church ran from 1998 through 2008, with the most recent update having been done in October 2005. It resulted in the accomplishment of several significant goals: establishing First United Preschool and Daycare as a Christian mission of the congregation, obtaining a parking lot, starting the SHINE service, and running a capital campaign which funded much-needed improvements on the building and set aside money for the Land Acquisition Fund.

In 2007, the Church Council invited Rev. Jim Crone (then pastor of Ottawa: Epworth) to lead us in a preliminary visioning process. Through a series of Saturday morning events, we reaffirmed our mission statement “Living Christ’s presence through love and service,” identified our four core values “spiritual growth, helping, family, and forgiveness,” and implemented a process to streamline our administrative procedures.

The creation of the 2008-09 Vision Team

The Church Council approved the formation of a vision team at their May 13, 2008, meeting. Doug Eaton, Jim Feyerherm, Erin Grych, Carol Lindeberg, Karen Mason, Tim Paquette, Adam Pope, and Gary Wells serve on the Team, with Jane Eesley as pastoral staff. These persons were recommended by Church Council members and then selected to include a mix of ages, gender, and tenure with the church. The Council stipulated that there be a recent confirmand on the Team. This assignment was accepted and is being capably filled by Adam Pope.

The Vision Team’s goals and process

Our purpose has been to prepare a strategic plan for the next three to four years. This plan is presented to Church Council for possible revisions and ultimately approval by the Council. The plan has clear timelines and accountability. To put it theologically, our purpose has been to seek the will of God for the people of First UMC of DeKalb.

We have met most Monday nights since mid-June, beginning every session with spiritual centering. We have used *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations* by Gil Rendle and Alice Mann as a springboard for our information gathering and

deliberation. We have gathered data on the congregation and also on the DeKalb community. We also have completed a SWOT analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) in Church Council and in the Vision Team. More broadly, we asked three questions of our congregation: 1) What is most important to me about my church? 2) What do I worry most about my church? 3) If I could change one thing about my church, what would it be? These three questions were asked at all-church events in July and August 2008, and persons also could turn in their individual answers throughout the month of September. As we have shared spiritually, reviewed demographic data about the church and community, and spent hours reviewing the SWOT analysis and responses to the Three Questions, some patterns emerged.

Overview of findings

The 1998-99 Strategic Plan and subsequent updates to it focused on crucial programs such as a second worship service; starting a Christian preschool; building needs including a parking lot and long-deferred maintenance on the church building; and on the likelihood that we may at some time in the future want to secure a new site and build a new building. It was agreed that the acquisition of land was somewhat urgent, so a Land Acquisition Team was formed, together with a Land Acquisition Fundraising Team. With those accomplishments in place, we are feeling led to focus on the spiritual processes that make us a church community. These are some of the questions we have sought to answer:

- How can we be more welcoming to visitors?
- How can we do a better job of communicating the good things God is doing at DeKalb First?
- What can we do to help visitors discern if they'd like to become members?
- How can we help new and ongoing members make good connections within the congregation?
- How can new and longer-term members of all ages grow more spiritually?
- How can we care for our existing members more effectively?
- What can we do to make it easier to serve inside and outside the church?
- What low-cost means can we use to make this historic building more inviting in appearance (and easier to navigate for visitors)?

These were some of the questions raised by the congregation's responses to the SWOT Analysis and Three Questions exercises. We heard a need for shepherding through using better models for keeping track of visitors and members, increased opportunities for connecting with others, increased opportunities for growing in faith through study and service, a need for better visitor follow up and new member assimilation processes, and improvements in our communications with one another and our public relations beyond the congregation. With increased programming and service opportunities, a volunteer coordinator would be helpful. Especially in the Three Questions exercise, we received a lot of strong comments about our building, both positive and negative. We continue to support the work of the Land Acquisition Committee, and we recommend that a Freshening Team be formed to look at the present building and decorations with fresh eyes and making low-cost improvements, such as painting, inexpensive redecorating, and such.

As we continued to process these data, we became strongly aware of a need for intentional, systematic approaches — for practical methods through which we make visitors feel at home, respond to visitors once they've come to church, follow up with prospective members (whom we're referring to as Newcomers), and helping people to have an experience of belonging before they join the congregation formally. We're using *The Race to Reach Out* by Doug Anderson and Michael Coyner as a model for the teams which will support these processes. In supporting discipleship processes, we see ourselves reconnecting to our Methodist roots (the early Methodists received their name as a joke on how methodical they were).

When we entered the visioning process, we had no preconceived notions of where we would end up. We sought to listen for God's guidance, and there was a sense of epiphany as the three-part "Invite-Deepen-Send Out" model developed. We focus intentionally on the areas that need strengthening for our ministries to be more effective, given the feedback from Council and the congregation. Therefore, there are many ministry areas which are not mentioned in this report. Their omission is not due to neglect or oversight; rather it signals the areas which already function well.

Follow-up and accountability

We see **four phases** to this visioning process. The **first phase** was the creation of this document. The **second phase** is discussion and revision through the Church Council. This document was presented to the Church Council for discussion at the meeting on March 10, 2009. The existing committees were encouraged to review this document for discussion and sharing of concerns and/or recommendations. The revised document was then approved at the Church Council meeting on May 12, 2009.

With approval of the revised document, the **third phase** began. With the leadership of Church Council Chair Lou Jean Moyer, a VisionKeepers Team was formed of existing Church Council members. This team will have the task of communicating in between Church Council meetings with the groups that are responsible for completion of various tasks. They will learn which items have been completed ahead of time or on time, and which items need to have their target completion dates extended. Our recommendation is that the VisionKeepers Team would use the information they have gleaned to provide an update report at every Church Council meeting. The update report time would also be a time to celebrate the accomplishments of the congregation as we complete items and the spiritual fruit we see from the changes and improvements that have been implemented.

As most of the tasks have target completion dates in 2009/2010/2011, we assume that the various ministry areas may begin to develop some new goals and visions for the coming years. Thus the **fourth phase** is the discernment of Church Council (with support from VisionKeepers) as new items need to be added to our visioning document as we look to the future with hope. In this way, this visioning document will be a living document, with items continually being completed, goals revised, and new goals added. We trust that the ministries that these undergirding systems will support will lead to a profound spiritual flowering.

Chapter II

INITIATIVES AND TIMELINE

“Invite”

<u>Group & Initiative(s)</u>	<u>Timeline*</u>
Child Advocate	
• Pew brochure welcoming children in worship (with Christian Education)	2010
Christian Education	
• “Bring a Friend” Sunday (with Worship)	Fall 2009
• Kid activity packs	Fall 2009
• Consider expansion of parent/tot room (with Trustees)	2010
• Pew brochure welcoming children in worship (with Child Advocate)	2010
Communications/PR Team (new team)	2009
• Publicity	
o Develop a plan to strengthen public relations	Fall 2009
o Church shirts to wear in community (with Evangelism)	Spring 2010
o Improve weekly <u>Chronicle</u> articles and notices	2010
o Yard signs/Bumper stickers/Banners	2010
o More advertising about ministries besides children & youth	2010
o Review FUMC website and make possible improvements	2010
o Strategize public events participation to increase visibility	2011
• Messenger	
o Send Messenger to Preschool/Daycare families regularly	Summer 2009
o Consider e-mail Messenger (weekly &/or monthly formats)	2010
o Review all aspects of Messenger for usefulness & attractiveness to visitors and make improvements where feasible	2010
• Newcomer Team support	
o Introductory brochure available (with Office staff)	Summer 2009
o Redesign attendance sheets (format, email/cell phone) (with Newcomer Team)	Winter 2010
o Review materials to support Newcomer Team	2010
Evangelism	
• Nametags	Fall 2009
• Arrange transportation (VAC bus &/or private auto)	Winter 2010
Freshening Task Force (new task force)	2009
• Better signage (with Trustees)	Fall 2009/Winter 2010
• Freshen church building (with Trustees)	2010

Newcomer Team (new team, chaired by Newcomer Coordinator)

- First-time visitor follow-up
- Develop newcomer follow-up program using sponsors
- Interview visitors (or ex-members) who don't come back
- Visitor Open House
- Redesign attendance sheets (format/email/cell phone) (with Communications/PR)

2009

Fall 2009/Winter 2010
 Spring 2010
 Summer 2010
 2010
 Winter 2010

Trustees

- Better signage (with Freshening Task Force)
- Freshen church building (with Freshening Task Force)
- Make parking maps available
- Consider designated visitor parking spaces
- Consider new or expectant mother parking spaces
- Consider expansion of parent/tot room (with Christian Ed.)

Fall 2009/Winter 2010
 2010
 Spring 2010
 Spring 2010
 Spring 2010
 2010

Volunteer Coordinator (new position)

- Help recruit visitor greeter/Fellowship time host
- Recruit persons to lead pre-packaged facility tour

2009

2010
 2011

Worship

- "Bring a Friend" Sunday (with Christian Education)
- Develop 2-3 special services per year to attract newcomers
- Consider occasional additional off-site worship services: parks, NIU, other church, etc.

Fall 2009
 Spring 2010
 Spring 2010

"Deepen"

Group & Initiative(s)**Timeline****Christian Education**

- Adult education (with Pastors)
 - Consider "Basics of UM Christian Faith for Adults" (with Pastors)
- Youth education (w/Youth Council & Director of Youth Ministries)
- Consider different church service &/or Sunday School times (with Worship Committee)
- Consider ways to incorporate church history in Crossroads (with Church Historian)

2010
 2010
 Fall 2010
 Spring 2010

Church Council

- Leadership training
 - Training in leading effective meetings including discernment model 2009
 - Evaluation; Implementation of any changes in approach 2010
 - Training in spiritual care of committee members 2010
 - Evaluation of implementation of spiritual care process 2011
- Publish member handbook 2009
- Transition Night (old & new leaders) Dec. 2009/Jan. 2010
- Member handbook evaluation and implementation of improvements 2010
- Reevaluate possibility of Volunteer Coordinator as paid position Spring 2011
- Reconsider Stephen Ministry in 3 years 2012

Church Historian

- Teach history of church – archives, Messenger, Sunday School, & Bulletin Summer 2009
- Submit church history fun facts to church administrator for church bulletin as space allows 2010
- Prepare church history article three times a year for Messenger 2010
- Consider ways to incorporate church history in Crossroads (w/Chr. Educ.) Spring 2010

Director of Music Ministries

- Consider youth choir (Jr. High, High School; with Youth Council) 2011
- Consider developing youth music groups (with Youth Council) 2011

Finance/Stewardship

- Offer New Consecration Sunday program (which includes tithing) Spring 2009
- Offer tithing witnesses or drama in worship Fall 2009

Lay Leadership

- Recruit Newcomer Coordinator Summer 2009
- Recruit Volunteer Coordinator Summer 2009
- Recruit MemberCare Team Summer 2009
- Recruit Communications/PR Team Summer 2009
- Recruit Local Service Coordinator Fall 2009
- Recruit initial members of Freshening Task Force (with Trustees) 2009

MemberCare Team (new team)

- Pew Shepherding (care for those sitting near you in worship) 2009
- Develop system for follow up with people who have missed worship Fall 2010/Winter 2011
- Develop system to coordinate short-term aid after illness or bereavement 2010
- Implement plan to encourage existing groups to reach out to members 2010
- Implement plan to encourage existing groups to reach out to members 2011

Pastors

- Disciple Bible study Fall 2009
- Adult education (with Christian Education) 2010
 - Consider “Basics of UM Christian Faith for Adults”

Small Groups Ministries

- Two new groups each trimester Summer 2009
- One small group which includes tithing education each year Summer 2009
- Men's group Summer 2010

Staff-Parish Relations

- Reassess pastoral care staffing in 3-5 years Winter 2011

Volunteer Coordinator (new position)

- Support spiritual gifts discernment & deployment (with Natural Church Development [NCD]) **2009**
Fall 2009

Worship

- Consider different church service &/or Sunday School times (w/Chr. Educ.) Fall 2010

Youth Council

- Youth education (with Christian Education) 2010
- Consider youth choir (Jr. High, High School; with Director of Music Ministries) 2011
- Consider developing youth music groups (with Director of Music Ministries) 2011

“Send Out”

Group & Initiative(s)

Timeline

Latino/Hispanic Needs Assessment Team (new team with Pastor Jane)

- Assess Latino/Hispanic needs for possible future ministries **Spring 2010**
Spring 2010

Local Service Coordinator (new position)

- Hands-on local service (e.g., Hope Haven, ReNew DeKalb) **2009**
 - With Wesley Foundation, NIU Students & NIU Cares Day Fall 2009/Spring 2010
 - With Boy Scouts
- Organized work days (with Trustees) Fall 2009/Spring 2010
 - With Wesley Foundation, NIU Students & NIU Cares Day
 - With Boy Scouts

Trustees/Property Action Volunteers

- Organized work days (with Local Service Coordinator) Spring 2010
 - With Wesley Foundation, NIU Students & NIU Cares Day
 - With Boy Scouts

Visitation Team (new team)

- Gather & train new team **Winter 2010**
Winter 2010
- Implement organized nursing home & other home visits Spring 2010

Chapter III NEW JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Newcomer Coordinator

Primary role: Oversee all teams associated with newcomer recruitment and membership in cooperation with Evangelism

Initial Responsibilities:

Establish ministry team with the following areas:

- Attract newcomers to our church by using different inviting styles, working with other ministry teams
- Identify and welcome newcomers as they arrive and invite them to fellowship time
- Have key individuals stay connected to newcomers as they move towards membership (phone calls, notes, presence, and listening)
- Provide assessment group with tools to help establish belonging to church by newcomer's talents, gifts, and interests
- Work with Volunteer Coordinator

Ongoing responsibilities:

- Match newcomers with current members of similar gifts as sponsors
- Newcomer class (including staff and sponsors as needed) and celebration
- Provide resources and refreshments at classes

Qualities desired:

- Desire to create an environment of friendly hospitality and fellowship to newcomers interested in joining our church family
- Ability to involve more of our current membership in this ministry

(Use the book "The Race to Reach Out" as resource tool model)

Volunteer Coordinator

Primary role: The Volunteer Coordinator works with members and friends of 1st UMC to help each person get involved in ministry within congregation and community.

Reports to: Senior Pastor

Initial responsibilities:

- Work with Natural Church Development (NCD) Team to select spiritual gifts survey
- Work with Newcomer Coordinator to identify appropriate software to track spiritual gifts (as well as attendance, if possible)
- Work with NCD to offer first round of spiritual gifts surveys and to tabulate results
- With NCD/Newcomer Coordinator, develop inventory linking spiritual gifts to ministry opportunities within the congregation

Ongoing responsibilities:

- Promote use of spiritual gifts surveys throughout the congregation
- Receive and tabulate results of surveys
- Meet with individuals and groups (as requested) to help identify ways to serve
- Work with Newcomer Coordinator to support use of survey with prospective and new members
- Maintain awareness of ministries within congregation
- Attend 1st UMC Staff meetings as requested
- Maintain up-to-date listing of volunteer opportunities in the community
- Resource Committee on Lay Leadership

Qualities desired:

- Ability to discern spiritual gifts and help make connections between gifts and ministries
- Spiritual maturity and genuine care for people
- Attention to detail
- Ability to work with software programs (prior knowledge or willingness to learn)
- Commitment to knowing broad groups of people within the congregation and opportunities for ministry within and outside congregation