

St. Paul's United Methodist Church & Wesley Foundation
Growing Effective Church Consultation
State College, PA; January 28, 2017

INTRODUCTION

We want to thank the pastors and leaders for the warm welcome and careful preparation for our time together. Everything has been done to maximize our work together. Our report is deliberately as brief and simple as possible.

St. Paul's UMC and Wesley Foundation (SPWF), like all churches, has a unique setting and as such, its strengths, concerns and paths forward are different from any other church. In a somewhat distinctive way, we sense that many things that are its strengths are also its challenges. The location is wonderful and yet poses challenges. The building is a great blend of old and new, but similarly has limitations simply because of that blend. Other strength and challenge juxtapositions exist as well.

Our hope is that through this process of examination we may be able to discover paths forward that will help SPWF use its gifts and resources in ways that honor God.

STRENGTHS

- 1. Resources** – There is an incredible gathering of resources at SPWF with an unusually significant combination of human resource, facilities, and location. These resources allow for truly amazing possibilities where, by God's grace and blessing, the sky truly is the limit!
- 2. Resilience**--SPWF has had to face not one, or a few, but rather a number of difficulties coming in all shapes and sizes in its rich history. However, SPWF has bounced back from every storm encountered, thanks in large part to the spiritual depth, dedication, and passion of its strong lay leadership.
- 3. Excitement**--Currently SPWF is enjoying a significant wave of momentum. Spirits and morale are high for what God is doing in the present, but also for what God will do in the future. In particular, the current ministry team of Pastor Greg Milinovich, Pastor Becky McGee, and Jen Gruendler as the Director of the Wesley Foundation, has helped to inspire a sense of hope for what is to come.
- 4. Mission**--SPWF has a heart for and a rich history of participating in mission. SPWF has always been a great support for distant mission. Places such as Nicaragua and Rwanda are receiving significant support at the moment. Also in recent times there has been the emergence of increased emphasis on local mission through the Wesley Foundation, Out of the Cold, and the Shoe Bank, just to name a few.
- 5. Music**--SPWF has a long and rich tradition of excellence in music in a variety of ways. This musical tradition helps to foster a powerful sense of worship on an ongoing basis. Not only is this rich tradition valued by many in the congregation, but it is known throughout the community.

CONCERNS

1. **Vision** – There is no clear, compelling vision that unifies, energizes and prioritizes ministry at SPWF. A variety of good ministries offer purpose and excitement to people here, but there is not a single unifying vision around which the congregation rallies. This absence of vision limits energy, fund raising and the ability to impact the community for good and for God. The lack of vision also creates competition for resources rather than alignment of resources.
2. **Heart for People** – No uniform commitment or passion to reach people who are not currently connected to God or those who are outside of SPWF seems to exist. There must be a strong desire to connect those who are not here yet with God through Jesus and the community of those who follow him.
3. **Discipleship** – No path of discipleship is in place for those who seek to follow Christ with SPWF. This limits the spiritual depth and breadth of the congregation. The absence of a discipleship plan does not overlook the many programs and activities. This also recognizes that there is head knowledge of God but sometimes there is not a heart connection to stay in love with God around spiritual matters. There is not a clear path for existing disciples to continue growth, nor a path for new followers to begin their journey
4. **Complexity** – The organization of the congregation is more complex than necessary in both governance and staffing. This complexity makes it difficult to gain the focus and alignment necessary for vision. It also is difficult, especially for those who are newer or more peripheral to navigate these systems.
5. **Technology** - Lack of investment and development of current technologies limits SPWF. While the church seems willing to invest in communication and staffing for older means of communication, record keeping, and social connection, they have not kept current. This is costly in its current context-especially in a university town.

PRESCRIPTIONS

1. **Develop Vision** - Leaders will enter into a period of dreaming and discerning God's vision for St. Paul's Church and Wesley Foundation.
 - a. This will begin by Pentecost Sunday of 2017.
 - i. The day this consultation report is accepted, St. Paul's UM Church and Wesley Foundation will adopt as its mission, "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and State College." This means that every ministry in the congregation must demonstrate how it will accomplish the mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world and community.
 - ii. The dreaming and discernment process will begin with ministry staff joining together in prayer, the study of scripture and best practice resources to frame the visioning process (helpful tools may be found in Winning on Purpose, Simple Church, The Advantage).
 - iii. In the next phase lay leadership will be involved in a similar process of prayer, dreaming and discernment as they earnestly seek God's will for the future of the church and community.

- iv. A team of key staff and leaders invited by Pastor Greg Milinovich, in consultation with the Growing Effective Churches (GEC) coach, will frame guides for a congregation-wide discussion, dreaming and discernment.
 - v. Groups in the congregation will be invited to use the guide to join in the discussion, dreaming and discernment.
 - vi. The team of key staff and leaders will engage organizations and leaders in the community to determine at what points those community partners are seeking transformation with SPWF.
 - vii. The team will process responses and frame a clear and compelling vision statement that has significant support in the leadership and congregation based on that wide input. This vision will be one which the pastors will be able to heartily support along with the rest of the staff, key lay leadership, and ultimately the church as a whole. The church will then align with this vision and assist the pastoral staff in casting the vision.
- b. A ministry/program and mission audit will look at everything that SPWF does for the purpose of determining whether disciples are being made in line with Schnase's Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations. If they are not, the decision must be made to either change or discontinue the activity. The audit will be completed by August 30, 2017.

2. Spiritual Depth – To encourage spiritual growth within the congregation SPWF will begin by:

Starting two different prayer groups that will meet weekly during the Season of Lent 2017. They will meet for an hour to ensure the participation of more people, one during the daytime and one evening. Their purpose is to pray for the needs and people of State College and to ask God to burden the hearts of the people of SPWF for those who are not here yet. Pastor Becky McGee will work with the prayer team to coordinate this effort.

Also beginning on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, SPWF will enter into a second prayer focus--specifically 40 days of prayer. This will be concurrent with the time of dreaming for the vision. The goal of this 40-day period will be for every member of SPWF to pray at one point every day for the heart of SPWF and for those not yet here, along with the vision of this place. Elements should include but not be limited to: repentance, vision, seeing everyone with eyes of love, longing for those not yet connected with God, humility, and revival. Pastor Greg Milinovich will work with a team to coordinate which topics get lifted up on which days.

In conjunction with the 40 days of prayer Pastor Greg will lead a sermon series related to the heart condition of SPWF and hungering for those not yet connected to Christ.

A team from the church, as chosen by the pastoral team, will attend a workshop of Fresh Expressions on Friday, March 31 from 9:00 – 3:30 p.m. at Faith United Methodist Church, 700 Fairview Drive, Montoursville, PA 1775

Finally, in order to further hospitality, a diverse group (age, length of time in church, etc.) will walk through the entire church campus to look with fresh eyes at clutter, usage of space and signage. This group will be assembled by the pastoral team. There are amazing areas in the church that are being underutilized. There are beautiful places that are hidden by clutter or hard to find (signage). This should be completed before the fall semester begins. During this time staff and leadership will also read the book Clip In: Risking Hospitality in Your Church by Fiona Haworth and Jim Ozier.

3. Develop Plan of Discipleship Plan that addresses both heart and head in the classic Wesleyan way. In consultation with the GEC coach, Pastor Becky McGee will assemble a team to create a thorough and clearly defined discipleship path. This path should include a plan at two levels:

- a. For those just beginning their discipleship journey, including connecting with and tracking first time visitors (including students), and planning how they get connected into full discipleship in the life of SPWF.
- b. This plan should also include a path for discipleship that will address the needs for maturing disciples (eventually including children, youth, college students, and adults). The goal is to see disciples be formed rather than just members, and to see first time visitors become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Helpful vital signs as to the marks of a fully devoted disciple will be based off of the 5 key markers found in Bishop Robert Schnase's book: Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations. In particular, the established team is encouraged to be creative on how to help folks move from just head knowledge of spiritual matters to heart knowledge where knowledge meets passion. Staff for each age group will work towards the same discipleship vital signs with those in their ministry areas but will live them out as needed in their specific ministry context. This plan should be presented to the church leadership by August 1 with the intent of implementing it by the start of the fall ministry season of 2017.

4. Reduce and Simplify Governance and Staffing –

- a. Reduce and simplify council, committees and all forms of governance and ministry by reducing numbers of people involved in administrative roles and when possible reducing levels of committees etc. A plan should be completed for Charge Conference 2017.
- b. Clarify staff responsibilities, align the positions with the vision. Name and organize positions so they communicate the vision and the nature of each position in relationship to the vision. Job descriptions will be changed to reflect this by January 2018.

5. Technology - An audit of your computer systems was recently completed by SPWF. The deficiencies you have already identified (including systems with Windows 97) need to be addressed by January 31, 2018. If the following are not part of your self-study, they are to be added:

- a. Electronic giving to be implemented by May 1, 2017
- b. The plethora of paper processes need to be computerized
- c. Computerized process for capturing information to contact guests (in cooperation with prescription #2.
- d. Wi-Fi capabilities increased throughout the SPWF campus before Fall Semester 2017, which will include the ability for people to tele connect to various events.
- e. Increased on-line presence for communication, information, and connection to be developed by Fall Semester 2018.
- f. Begin to dream dreams of where you can go next ... apps to help people navigate the buildings, apps for daily devotions, apps for discipleship accountability, apps for prayer support....

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you in this very important time of discovery and discernment. We pray God's richest blessings to be upon you as you now enter a season of prayerful consideration for God's yearnings as to the adoption of this report and moving forward. The Lord be with you.

There will be three listening sessions to answer questions on this report. One on Monday, February 13, 7:00 p.m., the second on Sunday, February 19, 2:00 p.m., the third on Thursday, February 23, 7:00 p.m.

The Church Conference to vote on this report will be held on at the church on **Monday, February 27, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.** If the vote is affirmative, the coach will help the pastors and congregation implement the prescriptions over the next 18 months.

Respectfully submitted: The Rev. Dr. Dennis L. Otto, Consultant
The Rev. Matthew Lake, Consultant
The Rev. Dr. Dennis R. Keller, Coach
The Rev. Lori J. Steffensen, District Superintendent