

Goodrich United Methodist Church

CONSULTATION REPORT - April 15, 2018



Introduction

We, the VCI consultation team, thank Rev. Joel Walther, staff, lay leaders and the congregation of Goodrich United Methodist Church for the invitation to consult with this Body of Christ. The following observations and prescriptions are the result of this Consultation Team's study of the following information: a) Goodrich's self-study documents provided by its leaders, which include, *MissionInsite* demographic reports of the area population, the March 13, 2017 'Mystery Guest' report by Faith Perceptions - the result of worship visits by 12 persons from the community – *Readiness360 Report* and worship videos, b) interviews with the pastor, staff and ministry leaders, c) a focus group with members of the congregation, d) a meeting with the Church Board, and e) input from the consultation workshop.

We are confident that God will use this assessment experience and consultation report, to help Goodrich UMC to more effectively be and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the community and the world.

Strengths

1. Rich History of Resilience

Goodrich UMC has a rich history of resilience. During our interviews and in your historical documents serious situations were named that hit the church in the past 20 years that could have crushed weaker churches. You, however, have always bounced back. These were tough times that called on the congregation to be flexible, adaptive and strong. This resilience is something you can draw upon when the storms of adversity come again.

2. Welcoming Atmosphere

We found multiple Mystery Guests speaking of a warm and welcoming atmosphere here at Goodrich UMC. One wrote "everyone was very welcoming. Smiling faces greeted me and helped me find my way to the restroom and the sanctuary". Another wrote "the atmosphere was very welcoming and joyous". These words, spoken by your Mystery Guests, can become a pattern by which to strive. A first-time guest is more likely to return when a warm welcome is present. Keep up the good work!

3. The Gift of Strong Pastoral Leadership

Goodrich UMC is blessed to have Rev. Joel Walther as your pastor. In our interviews, focus groups and workshop it became clear that you think highly of his skill set. Words used to describe him were, sincere, hard worker, spiritually rooted, with a commitment to the community and congregation. Pastor Joel is seen as vital in leading this congregation in becoming a healthy and growing faith community.

4. Facilities, Location and Community

Your present location is a true strength and will serve you well. We were pleased to see the Trustee's detailed plan of action to care for and update the physical plant of Goodrich UMC. Some of these updates included top-coating the parking lot, new vinyl siding and a new phone system. They took action to be more energy efficient by replacing lighting and reprogramming the thermostats. This has lowered your building expense by about \$10,000. Many of the Mystery Guests said that the people they talked to in town knew the exact location of the church. One commented "I stopped at the dollar store in town and everyone was very aware of the church's location as it seems to be a focal point of the downtown area". The accessibility, location and size of your building are a huge bonus in reaching your community.

5. Experience of a Spiritual Journey

The ability to identify and share a genuine faith journey is a key to articulating a clear message to those not yet within the church. The interview team was pleased to hear the leaders of the church speak clearly of faith that has sustained them on their journey. The willingness to articulate your faith is a cornerstone upon which the church can build future ministry and mission. We celebrate with you the ability to draw from the work of Christ within the life of the congregation, this witness will go far as you reach out into your community.

Concerns

1. Lack of Self Identity

Goodrich UMC struggles to understand who it is. The question you must ask yourselves is... “What size do we want to be?” Your current building is designed for a worshiping congregation of over 300 while some of your behaviors are most commonly found in churches under 50 in worship. Examples include making and selling of pasties, rules only applying to some, and leaders and staff wearing multiple hats. In our readings and during our interviews we found no mission alignment due to a lack of a cohesive vision and unidentified core values. We found little evidence of shared congregational planning or goal setting which has led to a lack of effective evaluation. Interviews revealed the comfortable position of a corporate top-down leadership style has, at times, led to micromanaging and operating in ministry silos. A focused vision gives clarity, calms anxiety and gives common direction for the future.

2. Inward Focus

Communication

The team found the church’s communication pieces both print and website were not inviting to guests. Most communication pieces have a small church focus which includes, too many words, personal information and a cluttered layout. Your print and digital communications should be outwardly focused and invitational to guests.

Worship

The team applauds your work towards the relaunch and retooling of a second worship experience. We believe this will be a key step toward reaching new people. However, your current worship style is not guest friendly and is insider focused. The team experienced elements that are often seen in much smaller congregations including lengthy announcements and the sharing of personal prayer concerns. These elements are time consuming and not relevant to everyone present; thus detract from the flow of worship. There is also a growing concern about potential violation of privacy when prayer requests are shared. The team found the flow and a lack of quality will hinder as you seek to reach others.

Building Appearance

The lack of an identified main entrance makes it confusing for guests. One Mystery Guest said “when walking up to the building it would be nice to have clear signs as to which are the main doors that lead to the sanctuary. Depending on what part of the lot you park in, it is not clear which side of the building to enter”. Inside the building the team found the décor in many areas of the building to be dated and cluttered; for instance at your current main entrance we found pictures and historical items that pointed to the past instead of the future. The Mystery Guests found the signage limited and confusing. Giving your guest clear directions and a fresh appearance will go far in making you a welcoming community.

3. Need for Trust Building and Communication Improvement

The *Readiness360 Report* states, “You have some work to do in terms of cultivating trust within the church and relating effectively to folks who are different from the majority of the members.” This anxiety is fueled by changing community dynamics and a fear that new programming will impinge on your cherished church traditions. Due to these anxieties some find it hard to break into perceived silos of power that have kept new programs and projects at bay. According to more than one interviewee, there are on-going power struggles; which are indicative of leadership in need of training. The *Readiness360 Report* also states that only 38% of those surveyed, think you have a mix of newcomers and old timers in leadership positions; only 47% believe that your church is building relationships with young people, and only 56% believe that once oriented your church trusts new people to lead. In order to thrive in the next decade, leaders need to be identified, nurtured and trained to communicate effectively with each other and with people who are younger and/or different from you.

4. Disconnection with Larger Community

The consultation team heard through the financial reports and in the leadership interviews how big a burden the mortgage of the Family Life Center is for you. The building is under-utilized and there is no cohesive plan to connect the church family with the community through its use. We read in the community interviews and the Mystery Guest Report that the community can easily find you but does not always feel invited to use the building. Goodrich UMC needs to leverage the Family Life Center to maximize your input into the lives of your community. When this is realized the building will change from a burden to a celebration as the name of Christ is spread throughout your community.

5. Lack of Spiritual Growth Plan

The consultation team enjoyed hearing the personal witnesses of the Goodrich UMC's leadership during the interviews. There is no evidence of a comprehensive faith formation process that would bring others to that same understanding of God's working in their lives. Conflicts from the past, and a lack of ability to talk kindly to each other stand in the way of helping persons being intentionally nurtured toward a personal and fulfilling relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Using spiritual gifts to match people with ministry opportunities is not happening in an organized way. Intentional spiritual formation creates a safe space for everyone to mature in their faith.

Prescriptions

To address the above concerns, Goodrich United Methodist Church will implement the following prescriptions.

1. Unified Mission, Vision and Values with Identified Goals and Evaluation

- A. Mission, Vision, Values: Upon adoption of this consultation report, the congregation will reaffirm the use of the United Methodist Mission Statement: *To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world*. You will create a unified outwardly focused vision statement to direct all work of the church. Core Values will be identified. To complete this work the following steps will be taken:
1. The coach, or his designee, in consultation with the pastor will lead Worship Service for Spiritual Renewal. This will prepare the congregation to be fully responsive to God's vision of being and making disciples. This shall be accomplished no later than June 30, 2018. A resource is the Wesley Covenant Service.
 2. The directive coach, or his designee, will facilitate a Visioning Workshop for the congregation identifying 3-5 Core Values which will drive the vision no later than June 30, 2018.
 3. A Vision Writing Team of 3-4 persons named by the pastor, in consultation with the coach, will write a vision statement by August 15, 2018.
 4. The vision shall be rolled-out to the congregation no later than September 15, 2018.
 5. The pastor will develop a sermon series and recruit leaders to facilitate small group studies to embrace this new vision no later than October 30, 2018.
- B. Goal Setting and evaluation
1. An all-congregation Goal Setting Workshop facilitated by the coach, or his designee, shall occur no later than September 30, 2019.
 2. Thereafter the Church Board, or equivalent body, shall host and facilitate an annual long-range planning retreat. This planning retreat will be the foundation for ministry area goal-setting. The first of these long-range planning retreats shall occur no later than November 30, 2019.
 3. All ministry goal effectiveness shall be evaluated by the Church Board, or equivalent body, quarterly thereafter.
 4. The Church Board, or equivalent body, will be responsible for ongoing strategic mapping. This could include: annual retreats, evaluation of goals, necessary staff (paid and unpaid) reconfigurations, etc.
- C. Staff Alignment
1. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will create a subgroup of the Staff Parish Relations Committee to annually evaluate staffing and job descriptions to bring it into alignment with the mission, vision, and values. This will be initiated by September 15, 2018.
 2. A long-range strategy will be created by the Staff Parish Relations Committee to plan for new staff persons by January 15, 2019.
- D. Stewardship
1. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will create a Stewardship Education Team of 3-5 members to plan and implement a stewardship education program. This program will teach the congregation that as Christians we are called to give as a result of our faith not out of obligation to a budget. This will be completed by January 15, 2019. Resources include David Bell from the Michigan United Methodist Foundation and the Lewis Center at Wesley Theological Seminary.
 2. Move the annual stewardship campaign to Spring beginning 2019 allowing it to be separate from the budget.
- E. Accountable Leadership Structure
1. The Church Board will read and discuss *Leadership and Organization for Fruitful Congregations*, by Stephan W. Ross, to be completed by February 28, 2020.

2. **Shifting Focus Outward**

To shift the leaders and congregation to an outward focus, the following areas will be addressed:

A. **Communication**

Communication is one of the most important things we can do to reach people outside of the church and keep attendees up-to-date.

1. The pastor will create a Communications Team of 2-3 people by May 31, 2018. The team will review all printed and digital material of the church. These items will be reviewed for: timeliness, effectiveness, layout, quality and "How is it reaching guests?".
2. To help first-time guests, the website will designate a new page of information for those new to Goodrich UMC that includes any information a guest would be looking for including: map, address/directions, what to expect, what to wear, what a typical service looks like and the additional opportunities for kids and adults on Sunday morning. Once planning is completed on the new worship service this can also be included as "Coming Soon!".
 - a. Investigate doing your calendar differently, the current calendar page is hard to read. A suggested website to look at for this information is DeWitt Redeemer UMC which can be found at www.dewittredeemer.org.
3. Facebook and other social media will continue to be updated weekly and overseen by this team. Use events, links to sermons, and memes to keep a social footprint for members and new comers alike. This shows guests a positive look inside your church and various ministries.

This process will begin by June 15, 2018.

B. **Worship**

The Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will create a Worship Design Team of 3-7 people. The team will be in place by May 1, 2018. The purpose of the Worship Design Team will be to review the format and flow of all worship services as well as all elements of worship and their effectiveness. The style, tempo, and variety of music will be assessed. Investigate how to effectively use technology to create a meaningful worship experience. Resources include Rev. Cathy Townley at www.townleycoaching.com

1. The Worship Design Team will meet at least monthly to creatively plan all worship including: theme, music, and visuals. They will read together at least one of the following resources: *Building Worship Bridges: Worship to Accelerate Neighborhood Connections* by Cathy Townley, Kay Kotan, Bishop Robert Farr or *Think Like a Film Maker: Sensory-Rich Worship Design for Unforgettable Messages* by Marcia Mcfee, PhD. The team will explore the role of worship in the life of the faith community by September 1, 2018.
2. Members of the Worship Design Team will experience at least two Sunday morning worship services at similar sized churches. By identifying churches that are growing and reaching their target audience, the team will study the flow and quality. This will be completed by September 1, 2018.
3. The coach, or his designee, will conduct a Worship Workshop focusing on worship experiences that connect people with God and with each other. This workshop will be attended by the Worship Design Team and any other persons who lead in worship by September 15, 2018.
4. Develop a plan to enhance the worship experience by first objectively observing and determining how a guest might experience worship. This plan will include creating an alternative process for receiving prayer concerns and sharing those concerns with the congregation. This process will be implemented by October 1, 2018.

C. **Building Updates**

The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will create a Building Update Team of 3-5 people with at least one person from Trustees, Worship Design Team, and Congregational Care Team by February 1, 2019. The team will create a 30-60-90 day plan to include:

- identify what door will be the main entrance and outdoor signage needed.
- identify the interior signs that will need updating in collaboration with office space being adjusted.
- identify areas that are cluttered and contain items pointing to the past. (refer to the coach)
- identify key areas in the building, starting with the sanctuary, that need updated decor.

This plan will be implemented by April 1, 2019.

This plan will be complete by November 1, 2019.

3. Finding Peace and Learning to Communicate

- A. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will bring in an assessment team from the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center to do a needs-assessment on effective communication in the church. The church will enact the recommendations; that might include conflict resolution, communications training for current leaders, and all-church workshops. This assessment will be completed by November 10, 2018.
- B. The coach, or designee, will facilitate an all-church workshop based on *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni. This workshop focuses on a sustainable culture of on-going accountability to live your shared mission, vision and values. This will be completed no later than March 15, 2019. Additional resources include: Lencioni's website www.thetablegroup.com, *Sticky Teams* by Larry Osborne, *Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions* by Patrick Lencioni.
- C. The pastor and the Church Board will read, discuss and implement the model for healthy organizations of faith from *5 Dysfunctions of a Team*. This will be implemented by May 15, 2019.
- D. Beginning with the 2020 slate of officers and thereafter the Leadership Development Team, in consultation with the coach, will implement a process to regularly help individuals identify their spiritual gifts, abilities, and passions and place them into ministries aligned with their gifts. A suggested resource is *Network* by Bruce Bugbee and Bill Hybels.
- E. The pastor and coach, or his designee, will provide annual training for all leaders to understand the role, function, responsibilities, and authority of staff and leadership. This will commence January 1, 2020. Suggested resources include free leadership development webinars from the UMC General Board of Discipleship website along with the Local Church Officer Job Descriptions available from the general church.

4. Connecting Mission with Community

- A. Mission alignment bridges the gap between the possibility of using the building to build community, and the communities need to experience Christ. Therefore, upon acceptance of these prescriptions:
 1. Every ministry in the congregation must demonstrate how it will accomplish the congregation's shared vision and mission. To that end, the leaders will conduct a ministry audit aligning the church's ministries. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, shall recruit 3-5 people to facilitate this audit by February 1, 2019. A 'Ministry Audit' guide is available from the coach. Ministries will be evaluated by their faithfulness and fruitfulness.
 2. All ministries must be in alignment by September 15, 2019. The ministry audit findings may require realigning of resources including, but not limited to: financial, paid and unpaid staff, and facility. All aligned ministries will set annual objectives and goals to live into the shared vision and mission. An additional resource is *Six Questions Every Leader Should Ask* by Andy Stanley.
 3. Ministries found to be out of alignment with the shared vision, mission and values will be celebrated and dissolved by January 1, 2020.
- B. The Goodrich UMC facility offers to both the congregation and the surrounding community a space that is safe and functional. You will develop a community connection plan completed by February 1, 2020 that partners with your neighbors to:
 - Help the community to feel welcomed and invited
 - Build trust
 - Make a safe place for people of all ages to share community and learn the faith
 - Share your personal witness
- C. The Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will combine the Evangelism and the Invitation/Marketing Teams to form an Outreach Ministries Team by September 15, 2019. This team will undertake the following tasks:
 1. The Outreach Ministries Team will study *Get Their Name* by Bob Farr, Doug Anderson and Kay Kotan by November 1, 2019.
 2. Study the one-mile radius *MissionInsite* report and the community survey to understand who your neighbors are, what they need, and how Goodrich UMC can be in relationship with them. This shall be completed by November 1, 2019.
 3. Develop an implementation and evaluation plan based on this book by January 15, 2020.

4. Based on the findings of the *MissionInsite* reports, the team will plan and carry out three bridge events intended to build relationships. The bridge events shall be intergenerational. The first of which shall be completed no later than February 1, 2020.
5. The effectiveness of each bridge event shall be evaluated by the team within 30 days of its completion.
6. The initial three bridge events shall be completed by December 1, 2020.

5. Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development

- A. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, shall name 3-5 persons to form a Spiritual Formation Team no later than January 15, 2019. The Spiritual Formation Team will create an intentional design of spiritual formation which will allow everyone:
 - to grow in relationship with Jesus Christ;
 - to be transformed by studying and living the principles of the Christian faith and United Methodist theology;
 - to grow in mutual support and accountability with other believers;
 - to personify the mission of the church by serving others.
- B. Full implementation shall be completed by September 15, 2019. Suggested resources, Rev. Tim Trommater, Dewitt Redeemer United Methodist Church, Rev. Kathy Pittenger, Children’s Initiatives Coordinator for the Michigan Annual Conference, and *Membership to Discipleship*, by Phil Maynard

Conclusion

We, the consulting team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation through this Vital Church Initiative assessment process. Our prayers and hope for your congregation are that God will use this process to help your church become more effective and fruitful. May God give you courage and strength as you move forward.

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Town Hall Meeting Dates: Tuesday, April 17 at 6:30 p.m., Saturday, April 21 at 10:00 a.m.; Sunday, April 22 at 11:00 a.m. and Monday, April 23 at 11:00 a.m.

Church Conference Date: Sunday, April 29 at 11:00 a.m.

**Note: Prescription deadlines may be adjusted in consultation with the assigned VCI coach.*