

Trinity United Methodist Church

CONSULTATION REPORT



February 21, 2016

Introduction

We, the VCI consultation team, thank Pastor David Nellist, staff, lay leaders and the congregation of Trinity 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) Trinity's self-study documents provided by its leaders, which include the Does Your Church Have a Prayer? study, MissionInsite demographic reports of the area population, the February 11, 2016 'Mystery Guest' report by Faith Perceptions (the result of worship visits from 12 persons from the community), worship videos and the January 12, 2016 READINESS 360 report, b) interviews with the pastor, staff and ministry leaders, c) focus groups, and d) input from the consultation workshop. We are confident that God will use this assessment experience and consultation report, to help Trinity United Methodist Church to more effectively be and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the community and the world.

Strengths

- 1. Location, Population, Potential:** Trinity UMC is positioned at the very heart of a culturally rich, vibrant, re-developing and growing eastside community. Within walking and biking distance are myriad shops, restaurants, Congress Elementary School, multiple family housing units, stately historic homes and at least four colleges. According to Trinity's community interviews with neighbors and community leaders, there is a shared longing for a sense of community and for partnerships to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. The MissionInsite demographic study reports a higher than average number of spiritual seekers in your area who may be open to the Gospel. Trinity UMC can grow and thrive along with your community, if you are willing to engage and build relationships with your neighbors.
- 2. Commitment to Diversity, Inclusivity and Community:** Radical hospitality stems from the Christian understanding of God as the One who transforms slaves into a people of blessing, who are then called to welcome others who seek freedom. Trinity UMC has already been a leader in our Conference in moving towards all that it means to be a "Reconciling Congregation," which has required courage and faith. The consultation team also commends Trinity for reclaiming its founding principle of being a "community center." You are renewing your 20-year Community Ministries to its original focus on strengthening existing relationships, forging new ones, and working to create a base of volunteers to move the congregation from transactional financial support to relational ministries. For example: Community Ministries is re-vamping its tutoring and after school programming with the students at Congress Elementary School. Trinity's on-site versions of this commitment include ministries such as the Helping Hands Ministry, scouting, Art in Motion, joining the Reconciling Ministries network and Mission/Hunger trips.
- 3. Alternative Worship Experience:** Growing attendance at the 9:00 a.m. worship indicates both relevance and need in this community. This newly found practice can be a springboard for growth in other areas of the congregation. Interviews pointed to your willingness to examine what you are presently doing in that worship setting and willingness to be flexible in embracing change for the Gospel. Relevant and life giving worship is a vital foundation of congregational growth and its sustainable future. When worship is kept relevant and addresses spiritual needs, the church's vision for ministry and outreach takes shape in a way that can only be driven by the Holy Spirit's leading.
- 4. Children and Family Ministries:** Vital ministries to families with children from birth through sixth grade are both short and the long-term strategies of congregational health. Trinity provides a well-appointed nursery with trained, paid caregivers for the very young. All the Sunday school classrooms are well-equipped and visually pleasing. "Young Children in Worship," the Children's Time during worship, and various children's arts and

music ministries all contribute to intentional spiritual formation for young disciples. The recent adjustment in the Sunday schedule demonstrates Trinity's commitment to helping families enjoy a deeper Sabbath experience together.

5. **Leaders: Way Ready** - The website and conversations with leaders pointed to an inherent now-is-the-time urgency for the Gospel. Vocal and persistent leaders long for the people of Trinity to fully participate in God's world-changing future. In fact, during a focus group, your leadership indicated their readiness for change by scoring 9.2 out of a scale of 1-10. This collective personal conviction has the potential of turbo-charging Trinity toward an unsurpassed relevance to a world short on hope and help.

Concerns

1. **Building Inconsistencies:** An inviting building is a prerequisite to being an inviting people. The Trinity United Methodist Church building has several areas that invite participation by children and families. The larger impression of the building shows indifference to the intended invitees. The outdoor signage is inadequate, inaccurate and inferior. The location of the coffee and fellowship on Sunday mornings interrupts the 9:00 worship. The lack of a men's bathroom on the main floor and the outdated fellowship hall contradict the spiritual value of hospitality. Although it may feel to some as if the appearance of screens in the sanctuary is harmful to the aesthetic of the sanctuary, the lack of screens prevents communicating the Gospel in ways that may move the congregation to tears, or shouts of joy in the name of our God. Spreading the Gospel to as wide a range of people as possible requires communicating in many formats.
2. **Discipleship Pathway and Leadership Development:** Trinity UMC has an historic commitment to provide children, youth, and adults with spiritual growth and leadership training. Some of the necessary elements of those pathways are in place, and there are some missing pieces as well. Further, there is no intentionally organized process for developing and growing disciples of Jesus Christ. The church shows signs of being overly dependent on staff as ministry "doers" rather than ministry "equippers." Effective disciples share their faith in word and deed. It is essential for you to develop and execute a discipleship pathway that moves individuals from their earliest faith steps toward becoming fully devoted, deep followers of Jesus Christ. The gap in discipleship formation for your adolescent population presents huge barriers for their parents who may look elsewhere.
3. **Worship, Preaching, Music:** Worship is the central activity of the church as God's people meet. Worship builds up the faith community through prayer, music, silence, and spoken word – then deploys the faithful to live out their faith in service to a hurting world. We affirm that Trinity provides two worship times and styles. However, the Mystery Guest Report, worship videos and interviews raised several significant concerns. There is uneven priority given to the two worship experiences. When one Mystery Guest arrived for worship at 9:00 a.m., "I was told service didn't start until 10 am." Another wrote, "One thing I found incredibly silly was the room we were in was partitioned off by an accordion wall and on the other side there was fellowship going on." Mystery Guests also noted inconsistent-to-poor quality with regards to music and flow at 10 a.m. worship. One wrote, "The music was very traditional with an organ and choir. This was not appealing to me. It seemed like most of the choir was following tradition and there wasn't a feeling of sincerity." One interviewee said, "the music has become academic; it is much more about the music than music's place in worship." A number of Mystery Guests noted the congregation's "lack of involvement" in worship at 10 a.m. Overall, Mystery Guests (average age 39) rated their experience of the casual worship significantly higher than the classic worship, however they questioned the time: "I find the idea of the casual service confusing because it feels like it should be aimed toward young people, but the time is unsuitable for young people. I feel like they would get some college students if the casual service was held around 11:00 a.m." In both the Mystery Guest and READINESS 360 Reports, we noted that while some appreciate the delivery and content of the weekly message, many noted a lack of depth and relevance of the sermon. One Mystery Guest wrote, "I would like a message that is a little more relate-able to myself, something I can work on in my life that's direct." In worship videos, we saw an inconsistency in flow and transitions. Regardless of worship time and style, Trinity needs to consistently strive for meaningful, transformative "wow" worship that meets the needs of your current congregation and more effectively engages a new generation.
4. **No Vision, No Mission Alignment:** The Self Study documents, interviews, and focus groups revealed no knowledge of a vision to unify the ministries of Trinity. There are no goals, no strategic plan, and no evaluation of ministries. Ministries cannot be aligned to an absent vision. The lack of effective communication and consistent

follow-through exacerbates the problem. Creating a method by which the church aligns its energies to embody the shared vision and mission is required to optimize its resources.

5. **Not Knowing and Not Being Known by the Community:** Trinity UMC is a rooted community church. However, as the community has changed over time, your neighbors have changed. The mystery guests discovered that not many of your neighbors know much about Trinity. The community survey indicates that there is limited knowledge of the church. When asked what Trinity could do to help or enhance the community, the common answer was to simply be involved and present. The consultation team commends you for the revitalization of Community Ministries after a short hiatus as a first step in the right direction.

Prescriptions*

Upon the adoption of this report, Trinity UMC accepts as its own the United Methodist mission, “To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

The responsibilities of the VCI Prayer Team will expand to a covenant prayer team which will continue to pray for Trinity’s spiritual development to undergird the ministries and people of the church. This team will invite others in the congregation to join it.

The congregation will launch its readiness to be fully responsive to God’s leading through a worship of spiritual renewal on or before **May 1, 2016**. This will be facilitated by the coach, or designee, in consultation with the pastor. This will allow the congregation to fully celebrate its successes in the past and to stride confidently with God into the future.

To build on the momentum, Trinity will re-tool its view of its kingdom-building role through an all-church study of *HOLY CURRENCIES: 6 BLESSINGS FOR SUSTAINABLE MISSIONAL MINISTRIES* by Eric Law. The strategy for this study shall be developed and supervised by the Church Council chair and the pastor in consultation with the coach. The pastor will deliver a worship message series in conjunction with the study in the fall of 2016. A resource person is Bill Chu, Director, Wesley Foundation to MSU, East Lansing.

1. Building Inconsistencies:

Trinity wants to be more than a building in the community but rather a building filled with community. To that end an ongoing plan of maintenance and upkeep to enable ministry needs to be put in place. Making the building and grounds as open and inviting as possible is the objective.

- A. Therefore, in consultation with the coach the pastor will appoint a Facilities Review and Upgrade Team of 3-5 persons, at least one of whom will be a trustee, chosen by the pastor and the lay leader by **April 15, 2016**. This team will create a plan for the continued maintenance and upkeep of the building with an eye to the reality that there is only one chance for “first impressions.” This plan will set priorities for current repairs as well as create an overall vision and funding plan in order to manage the expenses of maintaining a very old building well into the future and fulfill the vision and mission of the church.
- B. The following list of repairs and updates will be included in the plan. Priority goes to safety issues or those areas in which delay creates avoidable further damage. A beginning list follows:
 - 1) Immediate repairs to the chimney before the shale tiles are damaged
 - 2) Installation of a men’s bathroom on the main level of the building
 - 3) Update Fellowship Hall to be an attractive and appealing multiple use space. Attention should be given to soundproofing against kitchen appliances and other possible distractions.
 - 4) Remove the safety hazard from the east side sacristy stairs (hand bell supplies).
 - 5) Replace out door signage to include accurate information of all worship services in a way that reflects your vision.
 - 6) Remove out of season decorations such as Christmas wreaths north and west sides of the building.
 - 7) Install signage directing to the parking lot plus clearly denoting reserved parking for first-time and disabled guests.
 - 8) Install signage within visual access of all doors leading into the building explaining the building layout.
- C. The Staff Parish Relations Committee, pastor, and office manager will create a Building Manager position that will give oversight to custodial and other facility-related services by **January 1, 2017**.

- D. The Finance Committee in consultation with the SPRC shall establish a 2-3 year plan for financing this position.

2. Identifiable Pathway to Discipleship and Generative Leadership Development

- A. Pathway Team - The pastor, in consultation with the coach, shall name 3-5 persons to form a Pathway Team on or before **April 15, 2016**. The purpose of this Pathway Team is to create an intentional design of spiritual formation moving people from where they are on their spiritual journey to becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. The discipleship design will be a lifelong process for seekers, non-believers, new Christians, and those maturing in their faith. Full implementation shall be complete by **Ash Wednesday 2017**. This faith development plan shall be based on a Wesleyan model that encourages all persons, regardless of age:

- to connect and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ;
- to be transformed by studying the principles of the Christian faith and United Methodist theology;
- to provide connection opportunities with other believers for support and accountability;
- to be in service to others for the purpose of the mission of the church; and
- to become a spiritually mature leader of the church.

Suggested resources include FROM MEMBERSHIP TO DISCIPLESHIP: GROWING MATUER DISCIPLES WHO MAKE DISCIPLES by Phil Maynard, A DISCIPLE'S PATH: DEEPENING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHRIST AND THE CHURCH by James A. Harnish and RACE TO REACH OUT: CONNECTING NEWCOMERS TO CHRIST IN A NEW CENTURY by Douglas T. Anderson and Michael J. Coyner.

- B. The Discipleship Pathway shall include regular bridge events. See prescription 5 'Knowing and Being Known by the Neighbors'.
- C. Generative Leadership Plan – The Committee on Nominations and Leader Development shall develop and implement a process for identifying, recruiting, equipping, developing, mobilizing, and evaluating leaders to broaden the pool of unpaid staff. This plan will engage both long timers and new people in ministry. The plan will be fully implement with the 2017 slate of officers and thereafter. Suggested resources are ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE by Sue Nilson Kibbey, *JOY TOGETHER* by Lynn Babb, or “Developing Your Ministry Plan Webinars” found at www.gbod.org/lead-your-church/ministry-plan.

3. Worship

- A. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will create a new Worship Design Team consisting of, and not limited to the pastor, music staff for all worship experiences, at least one youth, two young adults and two unpaid staff by **April 30, 2016**. It is recommended this team include persons with skills in the areas of visual arts, drama, technology, music, and learning styles. The new Worship Design Team will together review the Mystery Guest Report and *MissionInsite* 1-mile radius report. The team shall note their desired demographic for each worship and note areas of concern by **June 30, 2016**.
- B. In consultation with the coach and Worship Design Team, the church will hire a worship consultant by **June 1, 2016**. A recommended Consultant is Rev. Cathy Townley, Minnesota Conference of The UMC. The worship consultant agreement shall include:
- 1) Evaluating the quality and style of each worship experience. The consultant will evaluate the effectiveness of both worship experiences and recommend which hour is best suited for its intended demographic.
 - 2) Evaluating worship space for each worship experience.
 - 3) Recommending best worship practices.
 - 4) Recommending or providing continuing education opportunities for the Worship Design Team and the congregation. The consultant's recommendations will be received by **November 15, 2016**.
- C. The Worship Design Team will visit three healthy, vibrant churches (at least one of like size) by **July 1, 2016** to learn how to provide consistently high-quality worship.
- D. The Team will develop a strategic plan to invigorate worship based on the worship consultant's recommendations. This plan includes a clearly defined target audience for each worship. The plan shall be complete no later than **January 1, 2017**.

- E. The plan will be fully implemented by **Ash Wednesday, 2017**.
- F. To further enhance the inspiring nature of worship, the pastor will participate in annual continuing education and/or coaching to hone the depth and relevance of his delivery and message content. This continuing education shall begin no later than **October 30, 2016**.
- G. The Church Council, Finance Committee, Board of Trustees and Worship Design Team, and the pastor, in consultation with the coach, will develop a 2017 budget for sustainable, high quality and multiple worship experiences which may include:
 1. Right-sizing Music staff salaries
 2. Audio-visual enhancements of worship spaces
 3. Create a sacred space which will accommodate growth of the casual worship experience

4. Alignment and Accountable Leadership

- A. The coach, or designee, will facilitate the visioning workshop no later than **June 4, 2016**. The purpose of this workshop is consider core values and dream the congregation's God-given future. A vision team of 3-5 people named prior to the workshop shall write the Trinity vision statement based on the visioning workshop conversations. This vision shall be rolled out to the congregation no later than **July 15, 2016**. Alignment and accountability practices outlined below shall incorporate this vision and the adopted mission.
- B. Upon the **adoption of this report**, weekly paid staff meetings will focus on the goals of each staff person's ministry areas. A recommend staff study resource is THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM by Patrick Lencioni.
- C. The coach in consultation with the pastor will facilitate the 'Goal Setting' workshop with all leaders to learn how to write strategic ministry goals that align with the shared vision, mission and values by **November 1, 2016**.
- D. The pastor, working with each paid and unpaid staff person, will write results-based job descriptions for each to be approved by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) no later than **October 1, 2016**.
- E. The pastor and SPRC, in consultation with the coach, will conduct a staff audit, which will include a review of job positions and descriptions, effectiveness and aligning them with the shared vision, mission and values. This shall be concluded before **Advent 2016**.
- F. 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 **March 15, 2017**. A 'Ministry Audit' guide is available. Ministries will be evaluated by their faithfulness and fruitfulness (results). All ministries must be in alignment by **June 1, 2017**. The ministry audit findings may require realigning of all resources including and not limited to financial, paid and unpaid staff, and facility. All aligned ministries will set annual goals to live into their respective parts of the shared vision and mission. An additional resource is SIX QUESTIONS EVERY LEADER SHOULD ASK by Andy Stanley.
- G. Ministries found to be out of alignment with the shared vision, mission and values will be celebrated and dissolved by **June 1, 2017**.
- H. The pastor and paid staff, in consultation with the coach, will establish an intentional system of recruiting laity for on-going engagement of their spiritual gifts and skillsets in accomplishing the shared vision and mission. The system shall include the following:
 - 1) Existing staff, paid and unpaid, recruiting new leaders by forming ministry teams; recruitment will be based on gifts, talents, strengths, skills, and interests;
 - 2) Growth in use of leadership skills as faith expressions;
 - 3) Goal setting and accountability that improves effectively living the shared vision and mission; and
 - 4) Appropriate on-going training for all staff, paid and unpaid.

The first implementation of this system will be completed no later than **January 1, 2017**.

- I. The Church Council will explore how best to transition into a policy governance body. The transition shall be completed no later than **January 1, 2017**. Possible components of transition follow.
 - 1) The Church Council will complete a study of Stephan W. Ross' LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION FOR FRUITFUL CONGREGATIONS.
 - 2) The coach will facilitate the 1-day workshop entitled 'Leadership Accountability and Policy Governance' no later than **June 1, 2016**.

- 3) In consultation with the coach, the Church Council will propose for church action a realistic transition plan no later than the **2016 Church Conference**.

5. **Knowing and Being Known by the Neighbors**

Trinity UMC was born as a community church and desires to reclaim that heritage. Community Ministries is a great start, and it will take the entire church and the pastor to become the community church of the future. This task cannot be delegated to paid staff. The following will assist you in moving toward a relational (ministry with) model.

- A. The Pastor in consultation with the coach will create a Community Ministries Team by **September 1, 2016**.
- B. The Community Ministries Team will study GET THEIR NAME by Bob Farr, Doug Anderson and Kay Kotan by **November 15, 2016**.
 - 1) Study the one-mile radius *MissionInsite* report and the community survey to understand who your neighbors are, what they need, and how Trinity can be in relationship with them. This shall be completed by **August 1, 2016**.
 - 2) Develop an implementation and evaluation plan based on the study by **October 1, 2016**.
 - 3) Based on the findings of the *MissionInsite* reports, the team will plan and carry out four bridge events intended to build relationships. The bridge events shall be intergenerational. The first of which shall be completed no later than **June 15, 2017**.
 - 4) The effectiveness of each bridge event shall be evaluated by the team within 30 days of its completion.
 - 5) The initial four bridge events shall be completed by **October 1, 2017**.
 - 6) Bridge events shall be integrated into the Discipleship Pathway.

Conclusion

We, the consultation 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 you receive God's courage and strength as you move forward.

Lead Consultant – Naomi Garcia

Coach – Dan Duncan

Scribe – Patricia Bromberek

Writing Team – Tonya Arnesen and Bruce Kintigh

Town Hall Meeting Dates:

Tuesday, February 23, 7:15—8:45pm

Tuesday, March 1, 6:30—8:00pm

Monday, March 7, 6:30—8:00pm

Church Conference Date: Sunday, March 20, 2016 following 10am Worship

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