

Chelsea First United Methodist Church

CONSULTATION REPORT – May 6, 2018

Introduction

We, the VCI Consultation Team, thank pastors Joy Barrett and Tom Macaulay, staff, lay leadership and the congregation of Chelsea First 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) Chelsea First's Self-Study documents provided by its leaders, which include, *MissionInsite* demographic reports of the area population, the April 27, 2018 'Mystery Guest' report by Faith Perceptions - the result of worship visits by 12 persons from the community – *Readiness 360 Report* and worship videos, b) interviews with the pastors, staff and ministry leaders, c) a focus group with members of the congregation, d) a meeting with the Administrative Council, and e) input from the consultation workshops.

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

Strengths

1. Vibrant Children and Youth Ministries

Chelsea First's children and youth ministries are active and vibrant. Mystery Guests noted the large number of children and youth actively involved in worship and mission. Several persons interviewed said these ministries are what attracted them to Chelsea First. Most interviewees identified Preschool - 5th grade BLAST (Boldly Learn and Serve Together), Middle School, High School, and Confirmation ministries as the best things about Chelsea First. After school programs, Tuesdays with Tom for 6th graders and Middle School Outlet for 7th-8th graders on Wednesdays, draw community children into the church. These vibrant ministries are a foundation for life-long faith formation.

2. Financial Stability

Chelsea First has a long history of fiscal responsibility. Your history shows many successful capital campaigns over the years as you built and updated your beautiful facility. You also have a rich history of paying your apportionments and funding your budget. You made a bold move by designating a 10% tithe of the 2014 capital campaign with distribution priority to local missions. The average giving unit gives above the national average. While spending between 62 and 70% of your budget on staff over the past four years, you still maintain a positive cash flow on a regular basis. As you move forward toward a more focused stewardship approach to financial stability, you will be able to accomplish even more.

3. An Ability to Organize and Mobilize Your People

Chelsea First has a phenomenal ability to mobilize people. You encouraged congregational members to interview their neighbors. The response was extraordinary. They reported back their findings, even when those findings were counter to the message of the church. The number of people participating in the *Who Stole My Church?* book study indicated a desire to move forward willingly. In every interview, the Consultation Team heard how well the congregation works together for the sake of the children and youth of the church. When a congregation can mobilize efficiently, you can quickly become a major force for the sake of Christ within your community and the larger world.

4. Facility Ready for Ministry

Beginning in 1858 and throughout its history, the church has provided for the expanding building needs of its growing congregation. The financial challenges of building the church and timely renovations have been met by creative fund-raising solutions like a Mite Box Society, a "Burn the Mortgage" campaign, etc. The church building is a first-class facility – open, inviting and well maintained. Chelsea First's desire to provide a beautiful, welcoming space for those who choose to connect, grow and serve, is outstanding.

5. Central Location

The planting of this church in the city of Chelsea began with the vision and prayer of dedicated lay leadership from surrounding communities. Again in 1990 you prayerfully affirmed your downtown location. Chelsea First's central location gives you high visibility and potential for extended reach into the community and beyond. High five!

Concerns

1. Need for Transformative Visioning

The Consultation Team affirms the work you have done in creating your vision/mission statement. However, there are few signs of how it is lived out in the congregation. We could not find a consistent witness or common direction for how you make disciples. There was no method by which you hold each other accountable to agreed upon ministries and tasks. The Administrative Council reportedly responds to requests rather than initiating vision-based priorities and action plans. There was no method of evaluation beyond an ineffective-to-non-existent staff evaluation. We heard staff meetings are dominated by calendaring logistics and no unified goal setting. Beyond defining job positions, little staff group time is focused on shaping a sustainable and faithful future for the congregation. The *Readiness 360* report, interviews and focus groups revealed that this church struggles to find healthy ways to deal with theological conflict. The potential positive impact of your rich and wide center is compromised. Focus groups and consultation workshop conversations confirmed your practice of avoiding tough topics. A healthier way with difficult topics is to learn and practice ways to disagree agreeably; ways to show love to each other while being curious enough to lean in to understand another's opinion. Without clear and unifying vision, mission and values your future will continue to be ruled by busyness rather than fruitfulness for the Gospel.

2. Not Fully Leveraging the Worship Experience

The Mystery Guest Report acknowledged Chelsea First's variety of music styles in worship. The Consultation Team also noted it in the worship videos. This variety is a sign of a flexible, creative and risk-taking spirit. Yet, worship planning does not include the design of worship. The worship videos demonstrated a lack of effective audio technology to support spoken words as well as musical offerings. The projection screens are not fully utilized. Projected content is not attractive and often unreadable. The rhythm of worship is predictable. Long periods of announcements and insider-speak—no explanations to help guests understand the topic—block the quality of the worship experience. Movement of worship leaders is distracting and seemingly unintentional. Transitions appear chaotic. The function of worship is to offer quality experiences of The Holy One. Worship is central to the life of the church. It is the most consistent bridge to the community.

3. Inconsistent Hospitality and Overwhelming Communication

The Consultation Team experienced generous hospitality. Chelsea First's pre-service hospitality was rated as one of the top categories by Mystery Guests. Nevertheless, post-service hospitality was rated as one of the lowest categories by Mystery Guests. Each worship time was experienced differently by Mystery Guests. One guest stated, "It was very poor and lacking which made us not want to stay, so we did not. We waited around in the sanctuary to see if anyone would talk to us, but they all headed out the door right at the end of the service or even a little bit before." Your hospitality is inconsistent. The bulletin, newsletter and webpage are overwhelmed with information. The announcements during worship take an extended amount of time. Follow-up with guests is also inconsistent. 6 of the 12 guests left contact information. Only one received follow-up. When newcomers do not feel welcomed and cared for they leave. A revolving door of guests occurs. One *Readiness 360* responder wrote, "We need to find easier methods for newcomers to learn about our opportunities and get involved. We need to have more intentional communication about opportunities other than an announcement at a service." When everything is important, nothing is important. Not having an integrated plan of informing makes it hard for newcomers to find a place to belong.

4. Lack Risk-Taking Mission and Outreach

The Consultation Team learned from the Self-Study and interviews of a strong desire to connect with the Chelsea community. You also demonstrated this with the 2014 capital campaign title prioritized for local

missions. You provide space for many community groups like Scouting Programs and AA. You excel in hands-on opportunities and mission awareness for children and youth such as to Cass Community Ministries in Detroit, Redford Aldersgate Brightmoor Campus and the Jackson Interfaith Shelter. As far as the Consultation Team can determine your relationship with guests at the Community Breakfast are transactional (ministry to) rather than relational (ministry with). The church is lacking hands-on opportunities for adult relationship building and mission outreach in the Chelsea community. There is little evidence of partnering with community agencies to effectively meet needs in the community. Your desire to engage in community outreach is a start. Chelsea First needs to point past being satisfied in mission and begin the work of risk-taking mission and outreach.

5. **Spiritual Famine and No Intentional Leadership Development**

Chelsea First currently focuses on spiritual formation for children and youth. You have no clear plan for the spiritual maturity of adults. Adult Bible study, faith formation classes, and small groups are offered only sporadically. The *Readiness 360* report indicated that respondents are hungry for “an adult path of growing spiritually with Bible study opportunities at all levels.” While some church leaders were able to articulate their own faith journey, most lamented that linking discipleship and spiritual gifts to the work of the church is not a common practice at Chelsea First. There is no apparent plan for leadership development for staff and the congregation. There is no plan to move people, including guests, from exploring to a living faith. An intentional pathway for adult spiritual formation will lay a firm foundation of spiritually mature servant leaders ready and willing to live and share the gospel with a hurting world.

Prescriptions*

1. Disagreeing Agreeably and Holy Audacious Visioning

A. Healthy change can only happen when:

- you understand the process of change;
- you have established clear boundaries of behavior and communication and;
- you develop processes of giving and receiving feedback.

It is extremely difficult to deal with change without clearly addressing underlying issues of conflict.

As this church addresses difficult topics in healthy ways, you will establish a strong foundation of readiness to embrace God’s future for you. To that end, this congregation will:

- 1) Offer a worship experience of Prayer and Healing on or before July 15, 2018. This will be led by the coach, or designee, in consultation with the pastor. This will help prepare the congregation to follow God’s lead.
 - 2) By September 30, 2018, the coach, or designee, will facilitate the workshop *Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches*, and skills practicum sessions, ‘Neutralizing History.’ A resource is *Healthy Congregations*, by Peter Steinke.
 - 3) The coach will lead a process to establish a covenant of behavior. The resource is *Behavioral Covenants for Congregations*, Gil Rendle. This will be followed up by a workshop for applying Matthew 18 or The Rule of Christ, by October 15, 2018.
 - 4) Transparency is a critical practice of a healthy congregation. The Administrative Council, in consultation with the coach, will create a quarterly pattern of townhall meetings to inform the congregation of key decisions and solicit feedback for possible decisions. These shall begin no later than March 1, 2019.
- B. A ‘yes’ vote to this consultation report includes the adoption of the United Methodist mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”
- C. The coach, or designee, will facilitate a Visioning Workshop no later than January 15, 2019. The purpose of this workshop is to begin a strategic planning process to be facilitated by the coach. The process shall include, goal-setting, alignment, accountability leadership, evaluation and ongoing ministry audit.
- D. Thereafter, the Administrative Council will audit annually all activities for their fruitfulness in leading the congregation to accomplish its vision, mission and core process. A suggested resource for a ministry audit is Ministry Audit Workbook (Michigan Conference VCI staff).

- E. The coach, or designee, will facilitate the first semi-annual staff retreat for spiritual renewal and teambuilding. This will be done by October 31, 2018.
- F. At least once a month, the agenda of a weekly staff meeting will focus on spiritual formation, team building, goal setting and a shared understanding of the congregation's vision, mission, values and strategy. Leadership responsibility will be shared. The primary resource is *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, by Patrick Lencioni.

2. Worship

- A. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will name a Worship Design Team (WDT) with a designated leader. This team will include persons with skills in the areas of visual arts, drama, technology, music and learning styles. The purpose of the WDT is to improve worship flow, projection slides, sensory elements and consistency. The goal is to optimize the worship experience for multiple audiences. This team will begin its work no later than September 1, 2018.
 - 1) The team will plan and evaluate creative worship on a weekly basis. Worship planning will be centered on the theme of the message and sensitive to the unique styles and target audience of each worship community.
 - 2) The team will utilize *Building Worship Bridges: Worship to Accelerate Neighborhood Connections*, by Cathy Townley as a formative start to its work. This study will begin by September 1, 2018.
- B. To more fully understand the demographics of the community surrounding the church, and to investigate whether an additional worship should be developed, the WDT will engage in, and work through the year-long training program, "Multiply: New Service/New Site." Access to this on demand program is available through the Michigan Conference by contacting Gary Step. The training will begin by October 1, 2018.
- C. The WDT will engage the services of a worship design consultant for an onsite consultation to be completed by May 1, 2019. A resource for this consultation is Cathy Townley, cathy@townleycoaching.com. Findings and recommendations from the consultation are to be fully implemented by October 1, 2019.
- D. The Board of Trustees will solicit the services of an outside professional audio consultant for the purpose of securing adequate audio technologies and provide training to fully support the wide range of needs both current and more creative worship will present. The consultation will be completed by August 1, 2018. The suggested upgrades will be purchased and installed by November 30, 2018.
- E. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will name a task force of 2-3 persons to investigate and purchase video presentation software such as Pro Presenter, or Media Shout by July 15, 2018. The software will be fully integrated into worship by September 1, 2018.

3. Connecting Hospitality and Communication

- A. The Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will create a First Impressions Team (FIT) of 4-6 people to develop a clear process for welcoming, identifying, and following up with first-time guests by November 1, 2018.
 - 1) FIT will review the Mystery Guest Report for ideas on improving the process of greeting new guests by November 30, 2018.
 - 2) FIT will study *Get Their Name*, by Doug Anderson, Kay Kotan and Bob Farr with the Outreach Ministries Team (see Prescription #4) by November 30, 2018.
 - 3) FIT will co-lead with the Outreach Ministries Team, an all church small group study of *Get Their Name*, by March 1, 2019.
Additional resources are *Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully Engaged Members of Your Church*, by Nelson Searcy and *Race to Reach Out*, by Douglas Anderson.
 - 4) The pastor will meet with this team quarterly, beginning the first quarter of 2019, to stay informed and evaluate FIT progress.
 - 5) This plan will be implemented by April 14, 2019.
- B. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will create a Communication Team of 4-6 people by November 1, 2018. This team will evaluate all written and social media by November 30, 2018. This team will include the office manager and office assistant. The team will:

- 1) Develop a process of integrating all written and digital media. Components will include media specific to people already involved and people not yet involved. This shall be completed by May 1, 2019.
- 2) The website and digital media will be rebuilt to streamline it and to give guests directions, parking information, available childcare, etc. This shall be completed by July 1, 2019.
- 3) The Communication Team will create a plan to transition to a weekly digital newsletter by July 1, 2019. Each week will be scheduled for different ministries of the church, to ensure every ministry has an opportunity to communicate once per month. Items to include each week are:
 - a. a link to an online calendar;
 - b. links to the website and social media;
 - c. sign-up reminders;
 - d. special events;
 - e. worship times.
 Resources to help with this process are Brighton First UMC and DeWitt Redeemer UMC.
- 4) The printed bulletin will be less text dense. All liturgy will be projected on the screens. Liturgy includes: the call to worship, unison prayers, etc. Changes to the bulletin will be completed by September 1, 2018.

4. Relational Outreach and Missions

- A. The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will create an Outreach Ministries team of 4-6 people by November 1, 2018. It will:
 - 1) Study *Get Their Name*, by Bob Farr, Doug Anderson and Kay Kotan with the First Impressions Team by November 30, 2018 (see Prescription #3).
 - 2) Co-lead with FIT an all church small group study. The pastor will preach a simultaneous sermon series to support the *Get Their Name* study. The study and sermon series will conclude by March 1, 2019.
 - 3) Study the one-mile radius MissionInsite report to understand who your neighbors are, what they need, and how to be in relationship with them. This shall be completed by November 30, 2018.
 - 4) Develop an implementation and evaluation plan based on the study by April 14, 2019.
- B. Based on the findings of the MissionInsite report, the team will plan and carry out 4 to 5 bridge events. The sole purpose of bridge events is to build relationships with the community. The bridge events will be designed to be out of the church building and intergenerational. The first of which shall be completed no later than June 1, 2019.
- C. Following each event, the team will evaluate how effectively it accomplished its purpose. Evaluation will be completed no later than two weeks after each event.

5. Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development

- A. Spiritual Formation
 - 1) The Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will form a Spiritual Formation Team (SFT) of 4-6 people by November 1, 2018. The SFT will create a comprehensive path for spiritual formation for all ages. This path will guide all persons, including the spectrum from exploring to fully devoted followers of Christ.
 - 2) The SFT will frame a lifelong process modeled after United Methodist vows of membership:
 - Prayers: personal prayer practices and scripture meditation.
 - Presence: corporate worship and small-group community.
 - Gifts: financial generosity.
 - Service: giftedness-based service.
 - Witness: invitational evangelism.
 - 3) The SFT will study the book, *Membership to Discipleship*, by Phil Maynard to identify elements of a comprehensive path for spiritual formation. This study will be completed by November 30, 2018.
 - 4) The SFT will coordinate a six-week, church-wide small group study of *A Disciple's Path*, by James Harnish. The pastors will preach a simultaneous sermon series to support the study. The study and sermon series will take place during Lent 2019. Thereafter, this resource, may be used for new member classes.
 - 5) The team will determine the materials for church school and small groups. Curriculum will include an introduction to United Methodism, spiritual gifts inventory studies, developing a regular habit to study

and practice spiritual disciplines, and transformative Bible studies, such as Disciple Bible study. New member class materials will be determined in consultation with the pastor. The SFT will select and train leaders for these groups. Resources:

- Planning & Faith Development Leadership Training: *Foundations: Shaping the Ministry of Christian Education in Your Congregation by Discipleship Resources* (Discipleship Resources, available on Amazon)
- Prayers: *Companions in Christ: The Way of Prayer* (Upper Room)
- Gifts: United Methodist Foundation Executive Director, David Bell
- Service: *Serving from the Heart*, by Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile
- Witness: *Just Walk Across the Room*, by Bill Hybels

6) The Administrative Council will determine the best way to continue the work of the SFT in line with the church's strategic plan by May 1, 2019.

B. Leadership Development

Chelsea First will create a culture of identifying, recruiting, mentoring, evaluating and deploying a growing and diverse pool of new and continuing leaders.

1) The Nominations Committee will:

a) be renamed to Nominations and Leadership Development Team (NLDT).

b) focus on a system to identify, recruit, mentor, evaluate and deploy leaders and teams. The system will be implemented by January 1, 2020. This system may include the following steps:

- i. Recruit potential leaders through a method of identifying and inviting new leaders based on gifts, talents, strengths, skills, and interests using an assessment tool, such as *Equipped for Every Good Work*, by Dan Dick and Barbara Miller or *Living Your Strengths*, by Albert Winseman and Donald O. Clifton.
- ii. Be responsible for setting and evaluating goals and accountability benchmarks that align with the church's vision, mission and values in their particular ministry area;
- iii. Provide appropriate on-going training for all leaders.

2) The NLDT shall implement a congregation-wide spiritual gifts inventory to be completed no later than May 15, 2019. The results shall be collected and used by the NLDT in the nominations process.

3) The NLDT will match potential leaders with mentors in their respective areas of ministry by January 1, 2020.

Conclusion

We, the Consultation Team, thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation through this Vital Church Initiative. 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, May 8 @ 6:30 PM; Tuesday, May 15 @ 6:30 PM; Sunday, May 20 @ 4 PM

Church Conference Date: Monday, May 21 @ 6:30 PM

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