

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF SANFORD

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

April 25, 2009

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I. Introduction

The Re-Focus process began in January, 2007 with Pastor Jim attending a 48 hour retreat at the Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg. At this retreat the Pastor put together a Personal Calling Statement for himself. Over the next 6 months he met monthly with fellow clergy and a coach to help the clergy live out their personal calling statement. Next, Pastor Jim brought other lay people from the church to the Life Enrichment Center so that they also could experience this retreat known as the Focus Living Retreat. Those who came also put together a Personal Calling Statement for themselves, and could now help Pastor Jim host a Focused Living Retreat at the church facilities in Sanford for other interested members. Over the course of 9 months, 36 lay people had joined the pastor in experiencing a Focused Living Retreat. Those who attended experienced the value of Re-Focus at a personal level so that they could encourage Re-Focus at a corporate level in the life and ministry of the local church.

This next phase began in January, 2008 with Pastor Jim attending another 48 hour retreat at Wycliffe International for the training of leading the church through Phase II of Re-Focus. The retreat modeled the processes of what the church would do throughout this phase. The following months included more training of Pastor Jim with other clergy. A Re-Focus Leadership Team was picked among those who attended the Focused Living Retreats and comprised of Richard Tyson, Carole Pegram, Sue Eppard and P.L. Malcolm who joined the pastor in leading the congregation through Phase II of Re-Focus. They also attended training in two separate sessions during the summer.

Finally, in September 2008, the Re-Focus Leadership Team led the congregation through Summit I. After feedback from pulse groups and further preparation, the RFLT led the congregation through Summit II in November. The Sunday a week following, a summary was presented of the findings of Summit II for the congregation both prior and following the worship service. Some feedback was offered. Then, the RFLT meet again in January 2009 to prepare for Summit III, putting together the vision statement as part of their preparation.

The Re-Focus process has given us guidance to answer the following questions:

1. What is our Biblical Purpose as a church?
2. Where have we been and where do we see God leading us next?
3. Who are we currently ministering to effectively in our church and based on that to whom should we be reaching in our community?
4. What do we value as a church?
5. What is our vision for our church and ministry?
6. What model of ministry do we want to use to carry out our ministry?
7. What goals do we believe God wants us to set for our future?

THANKS to all those who took time to wrestle with these questions and participated in any fashion in this Re-Focus process. This is just the beginning, but we could not go forward without the initial work of those who love our church and believe God has purpose and vision for the First United Methodist Church of Sanford.

Now what follows is the work of this Re-Focus process that leads towards the implementation of strategic initiatives according to the vision God has given us.

II. Natural Church Development

In December 2007 30 leading members were each given a survey to fill out concerning the life of our church. The findings were organized around the Eight Essential Elements for healthy churches found by the Natural Church Development Project. The findings were as follows from highest rated to lowest:

Gift Oriented Ministry	54
Holistic Small Groups	52
Loving Relationship	44
Need-Oriented Ministry	37
Passionate Spirituality	34
Effective Structure	33
Empowering Leadership	29
Inspiring Worship	27

If we took this survey today, the numbers would be different. It is recommended that we take the NCD survey every two years to get an update on how we are doing. The thesis of Natural Church Development is that we can only improve up to the level of our lowest score. This means with the scores listed is that until we improve our worship we will not be able to become healthier as a church. Further in the report there will be listed a strategic initiative that has come out of the Re-Focus Process that recognizes our need to improve our worship.

III. BIBLICAL PURPOSE

Our biblical purpose answers the question about why we exist. As the RFLT examined the meaning of the biblical purpose statement, we realized that our existing mission statement fits this the best, and that we could not improve upon it. So, our biblical purpose is:

“TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE CHRIST KNOWN”

IV. MINISTRY MILESTONES

The RFLT summarized the few past decades of our church in the following chapters given the input to us from Summit I:

1970's Coasting

1980's Bumps and Turns

1990's High highs and Low lows

2000's Coming or Going?

V. LESSONS LEARNED

Our church has struggled with its identity, purpose and vision over the years. We have had some pastors that have been more influential positively for our church than others. However, Summit I participants concluded upon the following lessons learned from our history:

1. To rely upon the pastor and staff for the identity, purpose and vision of the church does not necessarily equip us to be and do what God calls of us as a congregation. We need to discover and work together to hear and obey God's call for our church at this time and place.
2. Our church has a history of putting children and youth in the forefront of our ministry efforts, and this has been rewarding and good and blessed by God.
3. Change is always happening, whether we like it or not, and that God calls us not so much to resist change as to grow with it. And, no matter what happens, God is with us!
4. We lose Christ-centered focus in the life of our church when discord and conflict consumes our time and efforts.
5. We have learned that when we build up people, such as teaching them the scriptures through small group ministry like Disciple I, we gain a greater sense of purpose and spiritual reward.
6. We need to learn how to deal with conflict better, in a more Christ-like manner. It could always be worse, so rejoice and be glad!

VI. ACTUAL VALUES

The following describe what Summit I participants discovered and what our pulse groups confirmed have been our actual values. These values can be seen in our actions throughout our church history. Some our favorable and others are not so favorable. They are:

Focused on Family, Children & Youth
 Resistant to Change/Control
 Financial Responsibility/Security/Integrity/Stability
 Our Comfort Zone/Status Quo
 Heritage/Traditions/Beautiful Building
 Prayer Focused
 Nurturing One Another

At the end of Summit I, we concluded that we needed to move from a church resistant to change to one that is prayer focused upon Christ.

VII. OUR MISSION FIELD

We live in a community that is:

- Growing in population and age;
- Multi-ethnic: 54% White; 32% Black; 10% Hispanic;
- Single Female head of households – 48%;
- Majority of children live in single parent households.
- Higher poverty rate than state average;
- Educational level (under age 25) lower than state average (though graduation/GED rate is slightly higher);
- More renters than owners;
- More blue-collar than white-collar workers;
- Households: 1/3 are one person and 1/3 are two persons.

Needs and Concerns of our community include:

- Safety and crime
- Homelessness
- Economic/work/income
- Health
- Child care and supervision
- Completing education

Barriers between our church and the community include:

- Skepticism;
- Resistance to change;
- Help, without accountability;
- Lack of belief system;
- Family stress;
- Immediate gratification reality/survival mentality.

Opportunities to serve in our community include:

- Family care;
- Basic food, clothing and shelter provision;
- Learning basic skills (e.g. cooking, auto care);
- After school tutoring;
- Mentoring.

Summary of our Mission Field and our church:

We live in a community comprised of many single parent families, lower than average income, blue collar, aging, and diverse in ethnicity.

We are a church comprised of all ages that tilt towards those older in age, slowly growing towards multi-ethnic makeup.

From these conclusions we have identified the following three Mission Focus Groups of which to target our ministry endeavors:

First is MFG 1, those most like us: They are young and elderly, white, middle class, educated, white and blue collar workers. We have the potential outreach to them through our relational contacts of friends, relatives, acquaintances (like at work) and neighbors.

Second is MFG 2, those who are somewhat like us: They are single-parent families, low income, minorities, less educated, young families and children from our child care and scouts. We have the potential to reach them with tutoring, seminars, mentoring of children and parents.

Third is MFG 3, those the least like us: They are homeless, irreligious, single young adults, gays, lesbians, bikers, and addicts. We have the potential to reach them through hospitality to their needs (e.g. recovery, acceptance, fellowship).

VIII. THE VISION

Given our mission field and these prospective ministry focus groups, we ask God to give us the vision that God has for our church at this time. The following is the vision statement and the prospective community impact:

The First United Methodist Church of Sanford acts a bridge between Christ and our community.

We can measure this by the evidence of increased participation in outreach – both our church ministering in the community and our community participating in the church.

Community Impact

We hope to impact families in our community, particularly single parents and children at risk, with the result that the children will complete school, stay out of trouble, and that the families will learn to budget expenses and finally to discover God helping them to the point that they come to Christ through the ministry of our congregation.

IX. OUR STRATEGIC VALUES

The strategic values are those by which we must adhere if we are going to fulfill the vision God has given to us. They are:

1. Prayer
2. Value Others
3. Servant Heart
4. Courage
5. Joy

The most important values shift must be from “Resistance to Change” to “Prayer Focused and centered in Christ.”

X. OUR MINISTRY MODEL

Ministry models reflect how a church will accomplish its purpose and vision; give a conceptual diagram of how people flow through the life of the church; and give a big picture overview of the ministries of the church.

In working on our ministry model at this point in time, we wanted to find an illustration that connected ministry that flowed out of vision and supported by strategic values. We believe that the explanation of the illustrations helps mold the way we do ministry, and thus re-fine and re-define our functional structures over time.

First we have a picture of a bridge with Christ on one side and the Community on the other. This bridge has as its support beams our strategic values.

Second, we have a picture of a school bus picking up disciples who are going on mission from the church to the community. The process of being in the bus includes our preparation work: inspirational worship and intentional faith development as we are on the move into the community. Then, when we stop and get out of the bus in the community, we exercise radical hospitality and risk-taking mission. All of this is supported by extravagant generosity, for God has been extravagantly graceful towards us.

XI. OUR STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

A. Missions Area

1) Adopt Hamilton Elementary School

Goal – To serve Hamilton Elementary School as a church body through volunteer participation in activities which are important to them such as tutoring, mentoring, chaperoning and generally being of help to the teachers and students with no strings attached.

Plans to Reach Goal:

Pastor Bradshaw will meet with the principal of Hamilton Elementary to offer our services and bring back to the church areas where we can volunteer.

A meeting of all church members interested in participating as volunteers will be assembled at the request of the Mission Committee. A Hamilton Elementary Outreach Team will be appointed.

All those interested will complete Dividends training which is required to volunteer in the Seminole County Public School System.

Team members will be matched with appropriate serve needs at the school.

2) IT Ministry

Goal – To develop an information technology infrastructure of people and equipment within the 1st United Methodist Church –Sanford, that can be used to enhance our missions, our youth, and our worship.

Plans to Reach Goal:

Investigate the purchase an LCD projector capable of projecting images from the balcony of the sanctuary.

Methodist Men have already committed nearly \$900 to this purchase.

B. Discipleship Area

1. Plan a meal together

- a. The last Thursday of the month.
- b. Catered and/or prepared by a church member who is experienced in group meal preparation.
- c. Cost of \$5.00 per person; not to exceed \$10.00 per family.

2. Small groups/classes/activities for all ages/varying interests following the meal together.

- a. Jesus in the Gospels, a 30-week intensive Bible Study.
 - i. Led by Steve Rumsey and Dennis Butler.
 - ii. Cost of \$42.00 per member for study books.
 - iii. Begun Feb. 12 – breaking after 15 weeks for summer and re-starting in August and ending mid-December.
- b. The Mystery Book Club – meets monthly
 - i. Cost of book being discussed if not from library.
 - ii. On-going – breaks decided by members.
 - iii. Open to anyone interested.
- c. Life-skills/Healthy Living classes/discussions of 6-8 weeks in length.
 - i. Developed under direction of Sharon Butler
 - ii. Cost to be determined, but must be kept low.
 - iii. Target audience is anyone interested, but it is hoped to be of special interest to low-income parents or those on tight budgets.
- d. Groups for elementary children such as GA or RA.
- e. Nursery for infants and small children – manned by volunteers or paid, certified child care workers.

3. Easy-fix week-end meals

- a. Begin with one easy-to-fix (with directions) meal
- b. Given to selected families in our Child Care Center
- c. Include church info and prayer in package
- d. Cost – to be determined.

C. Worship Area

Expanding the role of music in our worship was accepted as being one of the two top priority initiatives on which we can focus. Sustaining a music program /presence is not enough.

Music is a vital part of worship. It is vital to the message, and it is vital to the participants. Through singing we amplify God's Word as it is proclaimed in worship each week. Music expresses our joy in God's love, enhances worship, enriches church members young and old, and can even serve as an inspiring vehicle for community outreach.

Our congregation loves to sing and has been blessed with voices and musicians. From those playing the chimes before Sunday service to the chancel choir to our youth and children and their programs, the sound of music is part of our praising God.

In order to grow our music presence in worship, we need to provide more opportunities for musical praise and to motivate church musicians to offer their service and talents to the church as a whole. We already see a spark ignited in our youth that will hopefully lead to more refined musical skills, more conscious connection between music and worship and motivation to share their gifts within the church.

Our idea is to see special music at most, if not all, worship services. The chancel choir recently has not even been in the choir loft unless they have a particular song to sing. We believe that their presence at every worship service is important because a) they help to lead the congregation in all hymn singing and b) they show visitors and members alike that we are serious about the importance of music in worship. The choir is now present in the choir loft at each service.

Initiative: Expand the role of music in worship

Goal #1: Presence of Chancel Choir at all services

Step 1: Speak to Mark about concerns.

Step 2: Explain to choir the need for their presence

Step 3: Begin having choir present in the loft at every service.

Each week the scripture lesson, sermon and children's chat are tied together with a common theme or lesson. How appropriate it would be to have music chosen to further augment the day's message. This is something on which we could easily work.

Initiative: Expand the role of music in worship

Goal #2: Harmonize the message of the sermon with special music.

Step 1: Contact Pastor Jim about upcoming sermon topics/themes. The more advance notice the better.

Step 2: Coordinate with the music department.

Step 3: Include as many participants as possible – instrumental, choral, solos or small groups.

We also would like to increase the number of people in our congregation who take an active part musically in the service and the life of our church. We are willing to bet that there are many people who are musically inclined who either have not taken the opportunity to join choir or offered their musical gift outright. Most need a bit of encouragement to perform.

To that end we are putting together a form for congregants to fill out in response to questions such as “do you play an instrument?” or “would you like to sing in a small group?”, etc. Age does not matter in our quest. It is in the doing that we will come together, and we believe that everyone, regardless of age, has a gift to bring. In the next month we should have an idea of who is interested in trying some new ideas, musically speaking.

Initiative: Expand the role of music in worship

Goal #3: Increase active participation in worship music and the life of our church.

Step 1: Develop and write questionnaire.

Step 2: Insert questionnaire in Sunday bulletins/The Messenger for several weeks.

Step 3: Create a database of interested/willing congregants.

Step 4: Develop opportunities for these members to give of themselves and their music.

A database does not need to be limited to music, but at this time it is our plan. The actions we take in this initiative may very well inspire us to look at including dance, drama and other creative arts. Let’s begin, praying and believing that God will bless our efforts.

We see music as being one of God’s greatest gifts to us all and the music that is found in the Methodist hymnal is just the beginning. There is vocal and instrumental. There is classical, contemporary, gospel, and country. There are camp songs that inspire and silly kid songs that teach God’s word. There is such a diversity of music out there and we want to tap into it.

We are creating an ad hoc committee to discuss all of our options, oversee our goals and inspire more music, with the possibility that such an important committee will find a more permanent place in the workings of our church.

Initiative: Expand the role of music in worship

Goal #4: Creation of a music committee

Step 1: Contact people whose input would be valuable to this specific venture.

Step 2: Begin meeting together to discuss and develop ideas specific to expanding music in the worship service.

Step 3: Coordinate and implement these new ideas.

It is important to be a participant in, not just a passive observer of the liturgical aspect of music. People need to create beauty, and being a co-creator of a beautiful music event contributes to the

total of our worship and even the individual's self esteem. We cannot underestimate the bond that is created among music makers. Collaborating on music attunes people to one another physically as well as emotionally. Just ask those who have worked on a cantata or other special event music. A special bond is created. We become more open to the service when we are a part of it, and thereby closer to God, the creator of us all and of the music we bring to Him.

D. Hospitality Area

Initiative: To create name tags/badges for the congregation and a tree system to store them in between services.

Goals:

1. To create a simple, easy to read name tag with the individual's name, church's name, and the United Methodist logo.
2. To create generic name tags for greeters, ushers, etc. that assist in the church service.
3. To create a disposable name tag for guest/visitors.
4. To create and build a name/family tree for badges to be stored.
5. To encourage and advertise the wearing of the badges.
6. To have name tags ready for Pentecost Sunday.

Plans:

1. Pray
2. Committee meets for finalization of name badges, design of name trees and placement of trees.
3. Solicit donations for the name tree fund, if not enough funds are collected then remainder of funds be acquired via a love donation or pastor discretionary fund.
4. Committee meets to develop plan for advertisement (possible skit, etc.)
5. A member of committee meets with Pastor Jim to acquire an up to date database.
6. Get it Done!!!

XII. PLANS FOR CONTINUAL EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Re-Focus Leadership team recommends the following:

1. That we have an initial review of our current strategic initiatives as an agenda item at the August Leadership Council Meeting.
2. That we have a leadership retreat once a year in McKinley Hall two weeks after Easter to accomplish the following:
 - Review our strategic values to confirm that these still ring true for our congregation.
 - Evaluate the achievement of our strategic initiatives as listed above. Ask questions: Why did it succeed? Why did it not succeed? Should we try it again? What did we learn?
 - Prayerfully consider new strategic initiatives for the coming two years and develop an implementation plan to launch them.
3. That we have a leadership spiritual retreat (24 hours or more) twice a year off site in late January or early February to address the following:
 - Review an updated Natural Church Development survey (to be taken by 30 leaders in the church about a month or so prior to this retreat) to see what are weakest areas of ministry (see page 4 and section II about our most recent survey).
 - Review our vision statement to confirm that this is indeed the vision God has given to us as current leadership changes.
 - Evaluate how we are coming along in achieving our vision statement per the measurement of participation and expected community impact. Ask questions, Why or why not are we making progress? What needs to change in our approach? We have we learned?