

Simpsonville United Methodist Church Strategic Visioning Plan

A Long Range Planning Committee was formed in 2011 to develop a strategic plan for the church. This document represents the culmination of the work done by a large number of contributors. We view this not as an end, but as a major milestone in an on-going process.

Our approach was to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the church and develop strategic initiatives for improvement. We conducted a Natural Church Development (NCD) survey of a representative group of active church members. This gave us a measure of how our church compares with other churches, as well as a comparison with results from the same survey conducted here four years ago. The results indicate that we are a healthy church with many strengths, but there are areas for enhancement.

We conducted focus groups on four key areas and developed plans to address each area. Moreover the strategies developed are complementary to our church's mission statement. The mission statement is printed here for reference.

Our Mission... "Simpsonville United Methodist Church is a congregation who welcomes persons to faith in Jesus Christ, equips us for a faith that works in daily life, and sends us into the world to make a difference in Jesus' name."

The NCD process incorporates five steps: Prepare, Diagnose, Plan, Implement, and Evaluate. At this time we have completed the first 3 steps and have begun the implementation process. Our strategic proposals are summarized by focus area in the remainder of this document.

WORSHIP

The survey results indicated that worship experience had room for improvement and this represented a major emphasis for strategic change. The focus group developed five strategic initiatives for improvement.

- Increase lay participation in worship services. We want members of the congregation to become more involved in the service for a more meaningful experience.
- Enhance the Communion experience by encouraging additional congregational participation in Communion.
- Create anticipation by promoting upcoming messages, music, or special attractions in worship.
- Consider thematic sermons, i.e. a series of sermons on a general topic. This can be another way of helping to create anticipation among the membership.
- Incorporate a variety of methods to enhance the worship time, such as drama, liturgical dance, humor, music, and visuals.

MISSIONS

The role of missions was considered a priority area. It is a key component in supporting our mission statement, part of which says we are a congregation that "sends us into the world to make a difference in Jesus' name." The Missions focus group developed five strategic initiatives to enhance our effectiveness in missions.

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- Educate the congregation by developing a communication team that will work to bring more visibility of SUMC in missions.
- Evaluate present missions supported by SUMC and identify needed mission areas yet to be served. A missions survey will be conducted in the near future.
- Relook at the budget as it relates to missions.
- Actively recruit individuals to serve in missions.
- Do a Sermon Series using the curriculum Contagious Church and encourage members to take the class "Contagious Christian."

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Evangelism and Education are considered cornerstones to "equip us for a faith that works in daily life," another quote from our mission statement. Three initiatives were identified.

- Increase emphasis on prayer. This would be developed with age-level curriculum for Sunday School and supported by a Sermon Series. In the short term this will be emphasized during Lent in 2012.
- Engage Sunday School non-participants by starting new adult classes and training Sunday School greeters.
- Evaluate existing Christian Education programs.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

Children and Youth represent the long term future of our church. While we feel this area is a relative strength at SUMC, we must continue to strive for improvement and not become complacent with the status quo. Children and Youth are separate areas of ministry, but strategically we see opportunities for some common initiatives.

- Initiate Youth Mentoring to work with children in a planned format. Strengthen the role of children's Sunday School guides through training and by having youth occasionally help with children's Sunday School classes.
- Conduct Children's Council/Youth Council meetings to decide joint ministries. We want to work on a better understanding between children and youth and to improve the transition from children to youth programs.
- Review curriculum for youth and make changes as needed.
- Educate and inform the church family and parents about youth activities. Actions may include youth testimonials in worship about their missions and ministry, open house and Sunday night youth-led worship.

Submitted: January 22, 2012