



CONSULTATION REPORT FOR MISSION BEND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



INTRODUCTION

We, the consultation team, would like to thank Rev. Josh Hale, the staff, the lay leadership and the congregation of Mission Bend United Methodist Church for the invitation to consult with your church as part of the Vibrant Church Initiative. The observations and prescriptions in this report are the result of this team studying the following information:

- Mission Bend UMC self-study document provided by its leaders
- interviews with pastor, staff and lay leadership
- a focus group with members of the congregation and leadership
- a MissionInsite demographic report of the area's population
- input from the Faith Perceptions "Mystery Guest Worshipper" report
- input from Saturday's leadership workshop

It was a great joy to work with a congregation that openly cooperated with us and provided all the information we requested. The consult team's prayer is that God will use this assessment experience and consultation report so that Mission Bend UMC will more effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of its community and the world.

STRENGTHS

STRENGTH #1: DIVERSITY OF THE CONGREGATION

We congratulate Mission Bend UMC for their efforts and success in valuing diversity within their church family. This quality was by far the number one trait listed as the best thing about this church during our interviews. The focus group participants also listed diversity as an important aspect of their church. One mystery worshiper reported, "*It is quiet diverse. I saw people from different races, ages, and background... this church is a nice place to be and they are working to build a nice community.*" This diversity truly reflects the beauty of the Kingdom of God.

STRENGTH #2: LOCATION

God has placed Mission Bend UMC in a wonderful location within this mission field to both serve and reach a diverse population. According to the MissionInsite demographic study, 15,555 people live within one mile of the church. These people are described as "Very Diverse" and they responded higher than the state average on questions on religiosity. They stated that both "importance of attending religious services" and "their faith is really important to them" at a higher rate than the state average. There are many forms of housing, a variety of schools, and parks very close to the church. The unique diversity of the congregation is a fantastic resource for reaching the community for Jesus Christ.

STRENGTH #3: POTENTIAL

A reoccurring theme throughout the consultation weekend was the vast untapped potential of the body of Christ called Mission Bend. The community around the church has such deep needs that the church has the potential of significantly impacting the lives of its neighbors. The potential of the lay leadership of the church is immense if the diverse members of the church would choose to get involved as leaders. Mission Bend Christian Academy can be a great asset

to the church by providing an entrance for families who have already shown a bend toward the Christian faith by choosing to enroll their children in the Academy. This is but a short list of potential that we have heard from the clergy, leaders and members of the church. The team is convinced that Mission Bend UMC has a deep reservoir of potential that must be tapped for the church to become the unique church that God is calling it to be.

STRENGTH #4: MUSIC

Mission Bend UMC has a long history of excellence in music. The choir made a positive impact on the community early in the life of the church. Through the years, this excellence in music ministry has continued to be a major part of worship in the life of this congregation. Consistent and long tenured leadership has been a key element to this excellence. The consultation team applauds the efforts and ongoing commitment of clergy and staff to work together to find ways to diversify its music offerings to reflect the diversity of the congregation and community.

STRENGTH #5: HEART FOR MISSIONS

Mission Bend UMC has a history of and a heart for meeting the needs of the community in the mission field where God has placed them. Today, ministries associated with local schools, including the very successful Back Pack Buddies and Kids' Hope Mentoring Ministry exemplify this focus. They are also involved on Kairos/Prison ministries as well as Angel Tree, Thanksgiving Baskets, and Hands of Grace.

CONCERNS

CONCERN #1: ATTITUDE

Over all, we found attitudes within the congregation that reflect mindsets which will limit future possibilities for the church. The team heard a prevailing narrative of scarcity, grief for unrealized expectations, and fear. Ministries and necessary functions of the church are not happening because of a perceived lack of funds. During the focus group, participants gave no positive vision of the church's condition in five years. We heard, "Decline", "families moving away", "no clear future", "and no longer here". During interviews and focus groups we asked, "What do you want to get out of this weekend?" We received these answers: "hope," "we are hopeful, but also weary and fearful", "not to have the church doors close," "to move to a place where despite our differences and our indifference we have a vision for the future." A clear and consistent message of hope and of celebrating current successes is missing at Mission Bend UMC.

CONCERN #2: STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Mission Bend UMC's administrative structure is ineffective in facilitating the mission of the church. The structure of the congregation fails to link responsibility, authority and accountability. The current staffing structure does not encourage health or facilitate growth in either individuals or the church as a body. Current leadership demonstrates fatigue. Interviews with staff and leaders revealed, "that the many hours key leaders spend in meetings throughout a given month drain them of enthusiasm and ability to passionately engage in the ministries of the church." The current model is not effective in providing leadership and direction to the congregation.

CONCERN #3: PROCESS

The Faith Perceptions Report clearly shows a lack of consistency in existing processes and systems is a significant issue at this church. While fruitful ministry is occurring at Mission Bend, it often seems to be the result of luck or relentless trial and error. There is little in the way of strategic planning or follow through in most areas of ministry. Existing processes need to be evaluated and new ones created and consistently followed in all areas of church life.

CONCERN #4: MISSION AND VISION

“People caring for people in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ” appears prominently on the wall of the office, but there is no clear evidence that this statement is owned or understood by the leaders and congregation as a day-to-day reality. This church has no clear and compelling vision that motivates the body for effective ministry. The church participated in the conference Visioning Workshop, but the necessary work to discern, develop, and deploy a clear and compelling vision as the touchstone for all ministries of Mission Bend UMC has not occurred.

CONCERN #5: HOSPITALITY

The Faith Perceptions Report showed a dire need for improving hospitality during the Sunday morning experience. In “Greeting Upon Arrival” the church’s overall score was Poor, “Pre-Service Atmosphere” was Very Poor, and “Friendliness” was Fair. One mystery guest at the 11:00 service responded, “Honestly, I felt like an outsider, I was treated as an outsider and I was super uncomfortable there. I said hi to 4-5 people and, I kid you not, no responses from any of them.” A guest at the 9:40 service said:

“I didn't feel welcomed; I've covered this in other questions, but this should be taken seriously because if visitors doesn't feel welcomed, they will not return. I'm currently looking for a church to join and will be living in that area when my lease is up next year. I love visiting churches since I'm away from home and look forward to the general warmth I usually find compared to meeting coworkers at a new job. This church has a lot of work to do, but I think they should come together as a unit before they'll be able to invite others in...”

In conclusion, seven of the twelve guests indicated that they would not make a return visit if they were looking for a church home.

PRESCRIPTIONS

In order to address the above concerns, Mission Bend UMC will do the following:

On the day this consultation report is accepted (should that be the case), Mission Bend UMC will adopt as the mission of the church, “The making of disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” This means that every ministry of the congregation must demonstrate how it intends to accomplish the mission and new ministries need to have as their primary purpose the “making of disciples.”

A Day of Prayer and Repentance: The congregation will have a service of Prayer and Repentance to embrace God breaking open the hearts of the congregation for the unchurched. The service will allow the membership to be fully prepared for God's vision for the future. The service will be led by a person to be selected by the Center for Congregational Excellence. The Day of Prayer and Repentance will be completed by May 01, 2016.

PRESCRIPTION #1: ATTITUDE/MESSAGING

In order to develop a consistent message of hope and of celebrating current successes, the pastor with the coach will develop a plan for celebrating ministry successes large and small with the congregation. The pastor will coordinate with the Center of Congregational Excellence to schedule a communications workshop with TAC communications expert April Canik.

Celebrating successes – In order to support a consistent message of hope the pastors will immediately work with the coach to find congregational successes and life changing stories to share with the church family in creative and attention getting ways. An excellent example of how they have already done this is the video of families receiving Thanksgiving baskets.

Communications – Upon acceptance of this report the pastor and staff will immediately execute the strategies found in the VCI Communications Playbook. The pastor will choose a communication design team in consultation with the coach to evaluate the effectiveness of current communication within the congregation. The team will design and implement the needed and recommended changes generated by the workshop no later than May 31, 2016. We recommend the team pay particular attention to:

- Newsletter format and frequency
- E-news (e-mail)
- Evaluate website
- Explore new technologies to enhance communications.

The team will review practices of other similar sized churches that demonstrate clear and concise communications. They will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the changes and complete their work by Oct 1, 2016.

PRESCRIPTION #2: ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP AND SINGLE BOARD MODEL

Upon acceptance of this report, the Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will appoint a 6–8 person task force to develop a process to equip and empower current leaders as well as identify and equip future leaders of the church. This process will be developed on or before Jan 01, 2017 and implemented on an on-going basis.

The task force will make a plan to adopt the simplified structure (see *Book of Discipline* P244.2 & 247.2) with accountable leadership model (based on *Winning on Purpose* by John Kaiser) on or before June 01, 2017. Any affected committees (with the exception of the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development) may cease to exist once the simplified structure goes into effect. The Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development will work with the Pastor in consultation with the Coach to nominate the members of the new simplified structure. This simplified structure and officers will be presented for approval, election and full implementation no later than the 2017 Charge Conference.

PRESCRIPTION #3: DESIGN PROCESSES TO DRIVE KEY MINISTRIES

Effective ministry requires clear and consistent process of planning, implementation and review, particularly in worship and stewardship, the following processes will be developed and implemented:

Worship - The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will assemble a 5-7 person worship design team by Nov 15, 2016. This team will include at least 2 non-Anglo, U.S. born and 2 non-Anglo, foreign born members. Attention should be given to bringing in people with a variety of skills and interests, like worship arts, music leaders and technical support.

The worship design team will:

- Read and discuss the book, *Multicultural Ministry Handbook: Connecting Creatively to a Diverse World*, edited by David Anderson and Margaret Cabellon

- Coordinate with the Center of Congregational Excellence to schedule a consultation with De'Andre Johnson focused on strategic inclusion of worship elements relevant to Mission Bend's diverse congregation and surrounding community. Schedule by Jan 01, 2017 to be completed within 60 days.

- Visit at least three (3) other churches to witness multicultural expressions in worship. To be completed by Feb 01, 2017.

- Explore other resources made available to the task force by the Pastor and Coach deemed to be helpful in their research on best practices in a multicultural context.

- Identify, prioritize and resource relevant strategies to create consistent high-quality, multicultural worship experiences no later than Apr 1, 2017.

Stewardship - The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will put together a team of 4-6 people by Aug 01, 2016. Only one member should be serving or have served on the church's finance committee. The church will work with a stewardship consultant to be engaged by the Center of Congregational Excellence no later than Sept 15, 2016. They will assess current status, set realistic expectations and develop a culture of extravagant generosity. This team will also learn about and put together an effective narrative budget for use during all future stewardship campaigns. Completion expected by Nov 15, 2016.

PRESCRIPTION #4: REIGNITE THE VISION PROCESS

The coach will restart the process of crafting a new vision statement for Mission Bend UMC that will be confirmed by leadership. The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will:

- Appoint a visioning team consisting of 6-8 people and refine a vision statement, capturing the uniqueness of Mission Bend UMC to be approved by the Church Council on July 01, 2016.

- The pastor will then conduct a sermon series on the new vision of the church.

Following approval of the new vision statement, the Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will assemble a different 6-8 person task force to begin work on a ministry audit of all current ministries by Oct 01, 2016. The purpose of the audit will be to ensure that the ministries are in

alignment with the mission and vision of the church. This audit will be completed by Mar 01, 2017. If an individual ministry fails in this alignment, the responsible leaders have one year to realign it or sunset the ministry. In order to maintain optimal alignment long-term, we suggest an annual ministry audit.

In addition, the pastor and SPRC in consultation with the coach will create job descriptions that will align the staff structure with the new vision statement of the church, paying particular attention to the value of full time staff positions. Over reliance on part time positions inhibits effective ministry integration and cohesiveness of the staff as a whole. This will be completed by Oct 01, 2016.

PRESCRIPTION #5: HOSPITALITY

The Pastor, in conjunction with the Coach, will recruit a hospitality task force of 3-5 people by May 01, 2016. This task force will consist of at least two (2) people who have been members less than two (2) years. They will begin their work by reading and discussing the book, *Get Their Name: Grow Your Church by Building New Relationships* by Bob Farr. Then they will complete the following steps:

Coordinate with the Center of Congregational Excellence to engage a hospitality consultant (cost sharing between Center for Congregational Excellence and Mission Bend UMC, with church's share not to exceed \$300) to work with the church to address their hospitality process by June 01, 2016.

The Pastor and office staff will create and commit to a method of identifying first-time guests on Sunday morning and making some form of contact within 24 hours, with additional follow-up for returning guests.

These steps for the hospitality process changes will be completed by Aug 15, 2016.

CONCLUSION

We, the consultation team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation in this manner. Our prayers and hope for your congregation is that God will use this process to help you implement your mission more effectively, utilize your compelling vision through a developed plan, and thereby make an eternal difference in the Mission Bend community for the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Kate Walker, *Lead Consultant*

Dr. Steve Stutz, *Coach*

Rev. Curtis Matthys, *Scribe*

Rev. Mike Tyson, *Director, VCI*

TOWN HALL GATHERINGS

Sunday, March 6, 12:15 pm
MBUMC

Thursday, March 10, 7 pm
Stovall Household in Sugar Land

Monday, March 21, 7 pm
MBUMC

Tuesday, March 29, 7 pm
Hooker Household in Katy

Saturday, April 2, 10 am
MBUMC

CHURCH CONFERENCE DATE

Sunday, April 10, 12:15 pm
MBUMC