



Introduction

We, the Healthy Church Initiative Consultation team, would like to thank Rev. Dr. Barry Hughes, Rev. Milton Gutierrez, staff, lay leadership, and the congregation of Suncreek United Methodist Church for the invitation to consult with this body of Christ. The following observations and prescriptions are the result of this team studying the following information: a) SUMC's self-study document provided by its leaders, b) completion of the on-line congregational survey by the church members, c) interviews with the staff and leaders, d) input from focus groups, e) a MissionInsite demographic report of the area's population, f) input from the Faith Perceptions Mystery Guest Worshiper Report, and g) input from the Saturday workshop.

Our prayer is that God will use this assessment experience and consultation report in order to help SUMC build on its current momentum and more effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the community and the world.

Strengths

According to what you have told us, Suncreek UMC's greatest areas of strength are as follows:

1. Momentum

The consultation team continually picked up on a renewed energy and a building momentum in the congregation which has been reflected in recent increased worship attendance. The consultation team heard the congregation feels "upbeat" and there is an eagerness to move forward and reach the church's full potential.

2. People

The consultation team consistently heard the congregation's love for the children, youth, and adults of Suncreek, and excitement about the recent appointment of Rev. Dr. Barry Hughes as pastor. The staff and laity of the church are responding positively to Pastor Barry's leadership. We also heard affirmations from the congregation of Pastor Milton's ongoing ministry at Suncreek UMC as well as the extended staff of the church.

3. Mission-Mindedness

The self-study, interviews, and workshop revealed to the consultation team Suncreek UMC's desire to serve those in its community and around the world. This is reflected by the many mission ministries supported by the church including New Hope, Austin Street Center, partnership with Boyd Elementary School, Proyecto Abrigo in Juarez, ZOE ministries in Kenya, and Czech Republic, etc.

4. Worship Experience/Music

Suncreek UMC provides three distinct worship experiences. Quality music and compelling preaching were noted hallmarks of the worship services as expressed through the congregational survey, interviews, and focus groups. This positive worship experience was confirmed in the Mystery Guest Worshiper Report. Pastor Barry's messages and preaching were given high marks by the congregation and by Mystery Guests.

5. **Location**

The church is situated in a wonderful location, has excellent curb appeal, and is set within a growing and thriving mission field. It has great visibility on a major thoroughfare and is surrounded by neighborhoods filled with young families.

Concerns

According to what you have told us, Suncreek UMC is ready to live into its full potential. Even so, the congregation expressed the following areas of concern:

1. **Unifying Vision & Direction**

During our interviews, the consultation team heard many attempts to recite an existing church vision statement, “Alive in Christ. Connecting in Community. Growing in Faith. Serving the World.” We did not, however, hear a clear sense of a realized and unifying vision for the congregation, although many expressed a desire to have a strategic focus. You told us that the lack of vision has resulted in the ministries of the church operating in “silos” and has hampered the congregation’s ability to align resources for ministries, budgets, and staffing around a unifying, cohesive and action-oriented purpose.

2. **Facilities & Finance/Generosity**

The consultation team consistently heard expressed concerns about facilities that were in need of repair/remodel, or that were not adequate to accommodate all current needs and anticipated ministry growth. Concerns were also expressed by the congregation about the current debt-load carried by the church which hinders the attempts to update facilities and expand ministry.

3. **Leadership Development**

The consultation team heard that many Suncreek leaders have faithfully served for many years and have reached the point of “volunteer fatigue”. We also heard repeated comments that there seems to be no intentional process for identifying, equipping, motivating, and deploying new and existing members into servant-leadership positions. We also heard you express a need for improved internal and external communications/marketing. Comments were also made that a more efficient leadership structure would be beneficial to the church.

The consultation team affirms some initial steps that have been taken to create job descriptions and a system of accountability for staff and leadership positions and to reinforce a sense of “transparency and trust.”

4. **Discipleship Pathway**

While a variety of Sunday school groups and some Bible study classes are offered at Suncreek, the consultation team heard in interviews, focus groups and the workshop an expressed desire to strengthen and expand youth and children’s ministries at Suncreek, as well as develop new opportunities for deepening spiritual growth for youth, young adults, and the entire church family. However, there does not seem to be a systematic discipleship plan in place by which individuals of all ages and stages of spiritual maturity can be effectively and intentionally connected into the life and mission of the church and grow in their faith.

5. **Hospitality**

The consultation team certainly experienced warm hospitality here at Suncreek. Input from the interviews and some Mystery Guests’ comments, however, show a need for an intentional, consistent process for guest welcome, hospitality, and follow-up. Concerns have also been expressed about inadequate signage inside and outside the church that hinders hospitality efforts.

Prescriptions:

The following prescriptions should be seen in the context of maintaining and building upon current momentum, becoming more outwardly focused, and being relevant to community expectations.

Service of Prayer and Preparation

Upon acceptance of this report, the congregation will schedule a service of prayer and preparation to center the congregation on the work God is calling the church to do. This will be coordinated by the Coach and Pastor Barry by April 2, 2017.

1. Unifying Vision & Direction

On the day this consultation report is accepted, the congregation will affirm as its own the mission statement of the United Methodist Church, "*Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*" Every ministry of the church needs to have as its primary purpose "making disciples."

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will resource and offer a Visioning Workshop that will include staff and extended church leadership no later than June 30, 2017. The workshop will draft a Vision Statement and a plan to embed it within the congregation. The statement will be submitted for approval by the Church Council by July 30, 2017.

Following the Visioning Workshop, the Church Council, in consultation with the Pastor and Coach, will conduct a Ministry Inventory to begin the work of aligning all Suncreek programs and activities with the mission and vision of the church by January 1, 2018. This work will be completed by December 2018.

2. Facilities & Finance/Generosity

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will create a Strategic Facilities Team by May 15, 2017 made up of at least 7-9 people including youth and young adult representatives to develop a comprehensive facility plan for improvements that will prioritize and address immediate needs for space as well as accommodating future growth. This team will also come up with estimates for the cost of immediate improvement needs. This work will be presented to the Church Council by September 30, 2017.

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will create a Financial Strategy Team of 7-9 people by May 15, 2017. This team will develop a strategy for debt-reduction and explore a feasibility study and a capital campaign in 2018.

3. Leadership Development

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach and members of the current Nominating and Lay Leadership Development Committee and SPRC, will take responsibility for developing and implementing a strategy for intentional leadership development to include finalizing job descriptions, goal-setting, training, and accountability for all staff and key leadership roles.

This plan will be developed and presented to the Church Council for implementation before Charge Conference 2017. This work will include examining the leadership structure of the church, and exploring the possibility of a simplified church structure which frees people from attending meetings to becoming more engaged in ministry.

In order to keep the congregation better informed and involved in the ministries of the church, the Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will create a Communications Team of 5-7 people to be established by June 15, 2017 to review of all communication tools including bulletins, website, newsletters, Facebook, etc. and submit recommendations to the Church Council for implementation by August 1, 2017.

Any proposal for restructuring will be presented for approval at Charge Conference 2017 and begin implementation during 2018.

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will develop a Leadership Training Workshop to be conducted by September 2017. The workshop will include key existing leaders as well as potential new leaders, including young adults, as identified by the Nominating and Lay Leadership Development Committee. We also strongly encourage developing a model for training and empowering youth leadership.

4. Discipleship Pathway

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will name a 7-9 member Faith Development Team by October 1, 2017 that includes a cross-section of the congregation. This team will develop a clear and simple process for growing new and seasoned Christians in their faith, and will also include a process for new families entering the church to get connected into the life of Sun creek. This pathway will include a process for Youth, Children, and Adults to:

- Grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Provide connection opportunities for support and accountability that extend beyond Sunday mornings.
- Be in service with others for the purpose of fulfilling the mission of the church.

The team will use resources suggested by the Coach and will share its work with the Church Council by January 30, 2018 for implementation no later than August 1, 2018.

5. Hospitality

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, and in reference to the Faith Perceptions Mystery Guest Worshiper Report, will name a Hospitality Team of at least 7-9 people (including members of the current Inviting Ministries Team) on or before May 30, 2017. In consultation with the Coach and other Conference resources, this team will host a Hospitality Training event by August 31, 2017 that will result in developing a comprehensive welcoming plan for guests that is consistent across all three worship services. This work will include:

- Review all current hospitality efforts including parking lot and door greeters, nametags, etc.
- Create a plan to recruit, train, and schedule greeters for all entrances to the church building used during worship and other events.
- Review and update welcome packets or other materials to offer first-time guests.
- Review and update guest follow-up plan.
- Consider facility issues regarding hospitality including, but not limited to: indoor and outdoor signage, parking, entrances, interior sanctuary entrances, and children's areas. Recommendations will be brought to the Trustees.

Conclusion

We, the consultation team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation through this Healthy Church Initiative assessment process. Our prayer and hope for your congregation is that God will use this process to help Suncreek UMC build on its current momentum and become more effective and fruitful. May God give you courage and strength as you move forward.

- Rev. Dr. Jim Ozier, Lead Consultant
- Rev. Gene Wisdom, Coach
- Rev. Dr. Gloria Fowler
- Rev. Edlen Cowley, Consultant
- Rev. Todd Harris, Consultant
- Jay Putnam, Consultant
- Serena Eckert, Consultant/Scribe

Town Hall Meeting Dates:

- Thursday, March 2, 2017 at 7:00pm
- Tuesday, March 14, 2017 at 7:00pm

Church Conference Date:

- Sunday, March 19, 2017 at 10:30am

