

Addendum to the . . .

Report and Recommendations from the Strategic Planning & Implementation Team

Dated November 15, 2009

This addendum is offered with the hope that areas of concern might be clarified and that the planning team's rationale in formulating their recommendations might be better understood. It has been developed in response to questions and/or comments offered at the public forum held in November 2009 which 137 people attended and four small group discussions with team members that included just under 100 people.

Since April 2009, 6 areas have emerged as areas of concern for the membership of Sharon United Methodist Church. These topic areas were identified after initial discussions of the Strategic Planning & Implementation Team, a series of Round Table discussions, a Town Meeting, another meeting of the team, another series of Round Table discussions and a final meeting of the team to finalize the recommendations in this document.

The topic areas for the recommendations presented in the final report to the congregation in November 2009 were developed in the following manner: first, in the initial discussions of the 12 member team whose relationships with Sharon UMC represent both a breadth and depth of experience in the life of this church helped the team to establish areas of concern; secondly, through a series of Round Table discussions which 120 people attended information was gathered, and then, organized into a power point presentation which formed the basis for discussion at a Town Meeting attended by 87 people; and finally, a series of Round Table discussions attended by 92 people helped to gather more information from members of our congregation.

Finally, on January 9, 2010, more than 100 people attended the Annual Planning Conference where they heard Bishop Larry Goodpaster deliver a keynote message to kick-off the planning sessions that followed. Much of what he said was echoed in the planning sessions that morning and seems consistent with much of this plan.

Area 1: Focus on Christ

- The document states that *we should be deliberate about seeking God's will for our church.*
- In the round table discussions comments consistently offered the following suggestions:
 - (to become) Christ centered
 - "pray for direction"
- Team's rationale:
 - Seeking God's plan for our church
 - Awareness of the Prayer Initiative that was in its formative stages in the Fall of 2009

Area 2: Worship (see revision on final page)

Area 3: Spiritual Development

- The document states that *as our faith journey continues, opportunities for growth through a variety of study opportunities should be provided.*
- Samples of responses on this topic demonstrate concerns for:
 - Being part of "a spirit filled community of faith"
 - Support for the faith journey

(continued on back)

- Opportunities for spiritual growth/development for children, youth and adults
- “Grow” is part of our mission
- Suggestions to “spread,” “be in” and/or “study” *The Word*
- Team’s rationale
 - To offer opportunities to gain insight, knowledge and a better understanding of ourselves and our relationship to God and bring some answers to the meaning of life in faith
 - To provide support and fellowship for a broader audience by the development of community groups
 - To maintain and to improve the experience of our children and youth by sustaining the 60 minute Sunday School block on Sunday mornings (see Worship revision on the final page) and by supporting the annual formation of a confirmation experience for those middle school students who are prepared to examine their faith and to consider church membership
 - To respond to the concerns of the connectional nature of the United Methodist Church

Area 4: Membership Development

- The document states that *welcoming new members into fellowship at Sharon UMC and working to meet the needs of those who are currently members are important elements of a community of faith.*
- Responses from membership regarding our mission:
 - “Making disciples is the mission of our church.”
 - “Bring people to Christ”
 - “Spread the good news/the gospel”
 - “Bring love of Jesus to others”
- Team’s rationale:
 - Not to focus on numbers, but to focus on opportunities to connect with people
 - To respond to Bishop Goodpaster’s *Power of Three*

Note: In Bishop Goodpaster’s opening remarks to our Annual Planning Conference, he reminded us that . . . “We are inviting people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, not to join a church.”

Area 5: Staff/Lay Leadership

- The document states that *as we serve in leadership positions at Sharon UMC, we are working to discern how to seek God’s will for our church and its ministries.*
- Responses from the round tables and other discussions suggest:
 - “Need for strong leadership from Covenant Council and Staff/Parish now”
 - “Lay leadership is just as important as leadership from the clergy or staff”
 - “Leaders need to be visible and accessible”
- Team’s rationale
 - Business of the church is a shared responsibility between clergy, staff and laity
 - Job descriptions are essential for both staff and laity
 - District Leadership Conference recently urged encouraged clergy and laity to become “fearless leaders.”

Area 6: Relationships with Each Other and Our Neighbors

- The document states that *living in community is part of the Christian commitment. We are a part of a local community, a regional community and a global community. How might we be called to serve?*

- Responses from church members are similar to those regarding membership development:
 - “mission of our church”
 - “we are called to serve”
 - “spread the good news/gospel/love of Jesus
 - “Feed my sheep”
 - “challenge ministry team leaders to realize their roles”
- Team’s rationale
 - Seems to be at the heart of much of the work at this church
 - A response to the Western NC Conference of the UMC
 - Bishop Goodpaster’s call to “Go!”

In consideration of a revision from original plan:

Area 2: Worship

- The document states that *Sharon UMC is committed to providing diverse opportunities for worship.*
- Many of the round table and discussion responses indicated a primary concern regarding the worship experience at our church:
 - “(our) primary responsibility”
 - “(desire for) meaningful worship”
 - Concern for “relevance” in the worship experience
 - “dynamic worship”
- Team’s rationale:
 - Concern for a shifting demographic
 - Concern for providing a meaningful experience for long-time members as well as offering opportunities for those who are not yet with us
 - To offer a fresh start
 - To increase the opportunities for participation in the Sunday School experience for those who participate only in the 11:15am service
 - To maintain consistency with Spiritual Development
 - To maintain and to improve the experience of our children and youth by sustaining the 60 minute Sunday School block on Sunday mornings
 - To support the annual formation of a confirmation experience for those middle school students who are prepared to examine their faith and to consider church membership
 - To consider the impact of research concerning other churches in our area (Documentation of this research is indicated below. Details regarding this research are available upon request.)

Summary of Sunday morning schedules of churches in our area:

Churches within a 3 mile radius of SUMC (11 churches):

- 1 UMC has two traditional services, one at 8:30am and another at 11am. 1 other UMC has a blended service at 11am.
- 7 churches of other denominations have a total of 10 traditional services beginning as early as 8:30am or as late as 11:15am.
- 0 UMC offer contemporary services on Sunday morning in this radius.
- 3 churches of other denominations offer 4 contemporary services beginning as early as 8:45am or as late as 11:15am.
- 2 churches of other denominations offer worship on Saturday evenings (5:21pm and 6pm).

(continued on back)

Churches within a 5-20 mile radius of SUMC (21 churches):

- 16 UMC offer 21 traditional services beginning as early as 8am or as late as 11:10am: 11 begin before 11am. 9 begin at 11am or later.
- 1 church of another denomination offers 1 traditional service on Sunday morning beginning at 11am.
- 12 UMC offer 15 contemporary services beginning as early as 8:30am or as late as 11:30am: 4 at 9am or earlier and 11 beginning after 9am.
- 6 churches of other denominations offer 12 contemporary services beginning as early as 9:15am or as late as 7pm: 6 of these services begin before 11am; 4 are scheduled between 11:15am and 12:15pm; 2 are scheduled at 6pm and 7pm.
- 2 UMC offer blended services at 9am and 11am.
- 2 UMC offer services in other languages—Spanish (1 at 11am) and Korean (9:45am).
- 1 UMC offers a 6pm contemporary service on Saturday.
- 1 church of another denomination offers a contemporary service at 6pm on Saturday.

Office of Congregational Development has identified United Methodist Churches that exhibit Signs of Fruitful Congregations WNCC: 6 churches in general proximity to Sharon UMC

- Traditional services 8:30am (4), 11am (1)
- Contemporary services 8:20am (1), 9am (1), 9:45am (3), 10:55am (1), 11am (1)
- Blended 10:30am (1), 11am (1)
- Café 10:45am (1)
- Traditional Bilingual 1pm (1)

Revision is noted in the bold italics below:

Worship: Come before the Lord with gladness! Sharon UMC is committed to providing diverse opportunities for worship.

Recommendations:

Implement the following worship schedule effective in the spring of 2010:

- 9:00am Traditional Worship***
- 10:15am Café Worship***
- 11:15am Contemporary Worship***

- 10:05am Sunday School for children, youth and adults***

Create a transition for children in worship as they move to Godly Play or Live B.I.G. This should provide an opportunity for children to come forward for a dismissal, a blessing or other opportunity to participate in worship.

Strategic Planning & Implementation Team Members:

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Dr. Julian Aldridge | Mayreese Koraly |
| Elizabeth Bartee | Brenda Lampson |
| Pat Clayton | Clayton Leech |
| Carrie Elam | John Stafford |
| Nancy Fleming | Elizabeth Taylor |
| Robin Hill | Margery Warner |

Team Leader: David Rhew