

**Church Council – May 23, 2017 – 6:30 p.m. – Bradley Residence
Visioning Session**

The meeting opened with refreshments and a time of fellowship. There was a brief business item addressed before the visioning session began. Heather introduced Peg Aldridge as her pastoral coach, and Heather then offered a devotion based on Luke 24 and Psalms 85 and 86.

Peg then began the visioning session. She introduced Steve Wende, who was present at a meeting in March, and explained that he is in training to be a pastoral coach.

Peg then went around the room and asked each person to give a 1-word response to this question: **“What would you hope to experience tonight?”**

Responses: energy, clarity, hope, community, cooperation, connection, creativity, satisfaction, trust, joy, sharing, understanding, expansiveness, purpose, openness, progress, direction, engagement, productivity, action, fun, momentum, courage love.

Question from Peg: “What are we going to do that will lead to these results tonight?”

Responses: listen, dream, share.

Peg described Appreciative Inquiry process. She asked for definitions of terms and recorded group responses:

“Appreciative” = positive, thankful, thoughtful, respectful, present.

Other end of spectrum = judging, measuring, separating, shutting down, creating walls, dismissing, setting apart, acting superior.

“Inquiry” = asking, open, sharing, listening, being patient, experimenting, reserving judgment, vulnerable.

Other end of spectrum = answering, close-minded, dictating, presuming, prescribing, proscribing, shutting down.

Peg mentioned the book One Thousand Gifts which talks about the Greek word “euchristo,” which is Greek for Eucharist. The point of the book is that joy came in giving thanks after the breaking of bread. AI is a process that engages the Holy Spirit by looking for what God might be speaking in/through DMUMC. The process requires asking clarifying questions, and not shutting down dialogue. This way we learn to appreciate each other, and inquire from each other. The question is what moves the dialogue. We need to ask good questions, be careful about how we inquire and appreciate, so that we might hear more of what God is saying because we won’t jump to judgment.

Peg then led us through the “yes and” exercise, which is used in improv classes. Afterwards we noted that using “and” rather than “but” allows the conversation to move forward and gives everyone a chance to be heard. She urged us to use this exercise at our next Council meeting, and then after hearing everyone’s ideas, let that lead the conversation. She stressed that the question starts the change and “the word creates the world.” “Yes and” creates a different

world than “but.” She noted that if we say we are a growing thriving church, we will get more “yes and,” more growth, more thriving – it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Philippians 4:8-9 is her favorite Scripture, because it reminds us that we get more of what we what we focus on.

Peg noted that AI was created at Case Western Reserve University, and suggested we look on the web for AI Commons for more information.

Peg then discussed the 2-question surveys we had completed and distributed copies of the responses. She noted that everyone seems to be pretty much on the same page, in terms of wanting go to forward with a visioning process. The issue is to figure out how to do so. She said the next step is to think about the words we want to focus on, such as “connection,” or “engagement.” She urged us to pray about this.

Peg noted that if she leads us through the AI process, there will be 5-6 gatherings to go through the 4 Ds of the process - discovery, dream, design, destiny. In our session with Steve Wende in March, we talked a lot about the “discovery” phase and what’s going right at Duke Memorial, such as youth, outreach, worship, small groups, a heart for helping in community and world. She said we should focus on what God is blessing and let that help answer the question of what God has created us to be. For “dreaming,” we will ask what is in alignment with God’s dream for Duke Memorial. She suggested that we imagine DMUMC 5 years from now, and imagine what we are hearing, seeing, and smelling. In “design,” we figure out how to live into that dream, by looking at what are we already doing, what we should try, and who else needs to be in the room. In “destiny,” we ask how we will know whether we have succeeded, and we will ask how what we are doing ties back to our deep faith. Peg stressed that this is not a linear process, and that by the end of process, we will have acted, reflected, learned.

Peg said we may have one core theme, such as discipleship, that fits with everything. She stressed that we do not just pick a theme. Rather, we look at what we are doing well and see how things fit with and support the theme. We ask what we are linking back to, and as we consider adding or subtracting ministries, we constantly think about fit.

Someone asked whether there should be one central theme or whether there might be several. Peg responded that there may be intersecting circles, as in a Venn diagram, that establish core values, such as welcoming, worship, discipleship, etc. We should be looking for a topic or theme that will tie things together, not eliminate things.

Peg then asked for questions from the group:

Question: You said people have immutable characteristics. Does a congregation have similar characteristics that can’t change?

Peg: God can change all of us. If God wants DMUMC to do something, it can. It’s a choice.

Question: This is a very adult process. That can be a problem for adult learners. There's a child model, and we're encouraged to be like kids. Where is the space to move ahead and be creative, but not be guided/limited by how much we know? Where is the space to be children?

Peg: Her motto is "If you're not having fun, stop and start over."

Question: How do we know we have all the people at the table that we need?

Peg: When you get to the dream phase and start talking about specifics, you'll know.

Question: What is the timeline for the process?

Peg: 5 or 6 meetings, achieving happens during meetings, we will know what we're doing/how we're going to create by the end of the process.

Question: What is the outcome? A 5-year plan? What is the decision point to engage in this process? What are consequences? How much time is involved?

Heather: Council needs to decide whether we want to step into this process.

Peg: God needs to be in it. Be prayerful. Otherwise we're just talking. There is a difference between a plan and a process.

Peg asked for individual takeaways from the session: homework, energy for the process, new ideas, grateful for this group, a healthy impatience

Consensus: After discussion, we agreed to vote at the June Church Council meeting on whether to proceed with the AI process with Peg leading us. Those present were invited to provide feedback to Kathy before the June meeting. We also discussed whether and how our existing mission and vision statements fit into this process.

We ended the session around 9 p.m.