

DMUMC – Strategic Planning Meeting – March 6, 2017 – Parsonage Meeting with Steve Wende, pastoral staff, Council and lay leaders

Continued focus on 1 Corinthians 3 – what we are building

Steve's thoughts:

Issues for a downtown church like DMUMC:

- Most plans for church growth and renewal aren't designed for downtown churches.
- Downtown churches have more diversity, and it's harder to program for that. But if we know it is supposed to be hard, we don't have to feel like a failure. Realize that if something we try doesn't work, there's a reason. Don't give up too fast.
- Steve believes the downtown church is the church of the future. It will be the instrument God uses to break boundaries of wealth, class, and race.
- Younger people want to be downtown, because suburbs are lonely. The same is true for older people once their kids leave home. This is the "barbell" effect, and is good for the church. The young can give energy and the old can give money.
- Claim our church's history. Don't try to get out from under it.

To build our strategic plan, figure out:

"Here's who we are."

- Focus on what we do well, not what is wrong. Name, claim, and build on our strengths.
- That lets us think about problems in a different way, because it changes the frame of reference.

"Here's where we are."

- Look at the community. Who might actually come to church? Who are they? Look at demographics and analyze them.

"Here's who our leaders are."

- Appreciate that "Heather is a winner." She is protective of us and is courageous enough to question assumptions.
- Leadership means creating a community of leaders.
- Roles are not set. Get the right people – staff and laity – in the right places, which may mean moving people around.

Then:

- Try to put in 4-5 words who God wants us to be. (EG, "Your home in the city." "Love, grow, serve.") "Once you figure out who you are, whip it like a rented mule." Everyone should have same vision, same mission, same voice.
- Then push – expecting surprises, and expecting failure. Be willing to try things. Remember God is driving this. Let ourselves be surprised.

Brainstorming: Things we do well (some of these fit into more than one category):

We welcome people.

- We have a Welcome Statement and are seeing people live into it.
- We welcome people in the pews.
- New membership is done well, so that people get plugged in quickly
- We show hospitality by opening our space to outside groups, expanding our “perimeter of impact.”
- We are strong in our spiritual welcome.
- We pour out love on folks who come into building.

We are engaged:

- We live into “being with” people (eg JJ Henderson, Mobile Market).
- We do not treat church as a “spectator sport.” This is a “full contact church.”
- We handle our church size well, at a cellular level, through small groups.
- Our small group structure ensures we get to know each other, and the way our small groups act in the world refracts the way we read Scripture.

We are connected to our community.

- Our signs put our name into the community.
- We are doing things in the community.
- We lead with our connection to the city more than in the past.

We are talented individually and collectively.

- We have a fantastic staff.
- We benefit from our connection to Duke, in terms of academic wealth and resources like our pastoral interns.
- Our lay leadership is deep and wide.
- “We do structure well.” There is usually someone who has the know-how or institutional knowledge to do what needs to be done.
- We are nimble and can respond quickly to needs (eg, collecting money for gift cards for refugees).
- We demonstrate creativity.

We have strong programs.

- We have many opportunities for involvement, with something for everyone.
- We grow spiritually mature Christians, calling forth good things in people, and nurturing their gifts.
- We have strong children’s and youth ministries. Our confirmation and 3G programs for youth are “world class.”
- WDS and PMO are strong ministries and connections to the community.

We have vibrant worship.

- We have engaging preaching.
- We can fill a room with singing. The music has a life of its own.
- We have a wonderful organist.
- “We do not come to church to be seen.”
- “You can’t park your brain at the door.”

Takeaways (These are comments from people who participated in the evening, relayed to Heather several days later):

“Duke Memorial through its leaders and its congregants is poised to do amazing things. The depth and breadth of the individuals who have a long history with the church and those who are new members and those in-between are far vaster than I realized. With God’s guidance, there are no limits as to what we can accomplish. I am humbled and energized and inspired. Thank you for bringing those very people together for such a wonderful evening!”

“We are learning to listen well to what God wants us to do, and are responding to what we hear.”

“I really enjoyed the conversation we all had the other evening. My takeaway was that we need to come up with some concrete ways we can build up on all those things we said we love about DMUMC and do so well. What specific, actionable ways can we leverage those things to grow our church? That's what I'm thinking about now.”

“Thanks Heather... it’s was a fun night. I guess my thinking is... we have a beautiful collection of adventurous, hearty and dedicated icebreakers (like a ship heading to Antarctica blazing new trails). We have fostered such an opportunity for people to engage in so many different areas and ways. The challenge is the change (if we want it). Are there ways we’d be more effective if we focused our energies more collectively? Are we comfortable doing things differently? So perhaps if we want to change we’d need to focus even deeper... What are our top 3-5 strengths and can we agree on that together? How can we explore using those strengths to new things to reach out to our community? Anyway... that’s a bit of a ramble, but I guess it comes down to focus, collective energy and agreement on WHAT are the new things we want to try as a church mission. Or... do we stay the course and keep doing what we are doing? Yes, quite a challenge indeed!”

“Loved the time we spent together last week. Here are my take-aways:

1. If this group turned into an informal small group that met every few months, I would really enjoy that! Such a great chance to connect with some people that I don't usually talk with.
2. Bright Spots - I love this. It's 10x more fun to get better at things we are already pretty good at...and it can really make an impact.
3. Growth - We didn't discuss growth directly, which I found curious. Was this intentional? I know growth is scary to discuss for churches the same way profit can be scary to talk about within companies..."If we talk about profit, profit, profit, then it will lead to a culture where we

cut corners and take advantage of our employees etc..." Right?!? As a Christian business person, I didn't emphasize profit...I figured if I did a good job, it would all work out. I'm guessing churches may feel the same way about emphasizing growth? "If growth is our focus are we losing track of doing God's work? Will we give up the personal nature of our mission? Can God's work really be measured by people in the pews?" Right?!? I think this parallel is really fascinating.

What I found...setting profit goals galvanized us to be better at customer service, to be more creative on how we recruit and retain great employees, and to build a higher quality product...exactly the opposite of what I would have thought. And ultimately, that profit opens doors that never would have been possible...giving employees a chance to learn and grow in ways no one could have expected. Surprising no one, I feel passionately about this. But I am also very aware that my world is different. But some lessons may transfer, right? Growth can be pursued and it can be terrible for our mission...or growth can be pursued and it could ignite our mission."