



Missional Church Consultation Initiative

*Community United Methodist
Church*

Monticello, Minnesota

September 22-24, 2017



*The Minnesota Conference MCCI Team would like to thank Pastor Carrie Binnie and the leadership of Community United Methodist Church for your hospitality this weekend and for the privilege of teaming with you. Our prayer is that God will use this process to focus and maximize the potential of your congregation for fruitfulness for Christ. CUMC embodies numerous resources and **strengths** ideally suited for next-level transformational ministry, as well as some **concerns** that need to be addressed in order for the church to move forward.*

Strengths

1. Loving Relationships.

Many describe CUMC as **extended family**. The loving spirit is embodied time and again in caring acts. If a need is identified, members do their best to meet the need and support one another. Sunday morning fellowship and Wednesday evening supper are valued opportunities for fellowship and further relationship building.

2. Pastoral Leadership, Worship and Music.

Pastor Carrie's enthusiastic energy, worship presence, preaching and confirmation leadership were mentioned repeatedly as a strength. Mystery worshipers expressed positive feedback about her hospitality and ability to help them feel welcomed. Members appreciate that CUMC offers **two differing worship styles**. The musical leadership of the **choir and bell choir** enrich the traditional service. **Lars Carlson's** musical expertise is a source of pride and inspiration for those attending the contemporary service.

3. Significant Ministry Traditions.

United Methodist Women (UMW) offers the church and neighborhood several major annual events. The **plant sale and craft bazaar** are events steeped in tradition and are anticipated by many in both the congregation and beyond. UMW also serves loving **funeral lunches**, offering the family and friends of the deceased delicious food carefully prepared and served in a God-honoring way. The **Christmas Eve service** has been a point of entry for visitors, and is a cherished occasion for members and their families.

4. Legacy of Change.

From the very earliest of its days, CUMC has been a congregation that **takes risks and faithfully steps out** in new and innovative ways. One change created a loving and caring faith community through the merging of the Congregational and Methodist Churches in 1939. When the previous church building was no longer adequate, CUMC successfully **built a new church building** and moved to its current location on the hill. The congregation members constructed the new facility and made the move without losing their enduring core identity as a close-knit church family. **Adding a playground** to the CUMC campus was another recent positive change, and it signals to potential new families that "we are a church that values families and their children."



Concerns

1. Not Fully Guest-Ready.

Average weekly worship attendance of CUMC has been in either **plateau or slight decline** for several years, yet approximately 15,000 individuals live within a 3-mile radius of CUMC, and more than 80% of these persons do not have a church home. Despite CUMC's expressed desire to offer warm hospitality and friendship to newcomers, the mystery worshiper reports reflect a **lack of consistency** in welcoming new persons who come to CUMC. **Outside signage** was reported to be confusing, and **inside signage** needed additions. The current **website** is also not fully adequate to reflect for potential guests the real love, warmth and heartbeat of the congregation.

2. Worship Concerns.

Members repeatedly described the **unevenness of sound quality** in the sanctuary. Several mentioned trying out various seats to find the one from which they could hear the best. Others described how much better the music sounded on one side of the sanctuary when compared to the opposite side. The cause of these issues does not seem to be clear.

While the **contemporary service's** overall quality was described to the MCCI Team as good, there was also an expressed desire for a **worship band** to join Lars Carlson and to integrate even more overall cohesiveness of the service's flow. Members attending the **traditional service** described their love of the service, but also mentioned ways the service could become even more inspiring.

3. Capacity of Staff and of Current Facilities.

Going deeper spiritually was identified as a need for all ages. As **Danny** begins **ministry with children, youth and families**, training and support will be needed. **Pastor Carrie** presently carries out most of the **pastoral/congregational care** in addition to preaching and other pastoral leadership responsibilities.

While building space has been provided for children and youth, there is **little dedicated space for adults** to use for either meetings or learning opportunities. These space shortages will be accentuated if and when the temporary sanctuary walls are eventually removed.

4. No "Signature Ministry" in the Community.

During the MCCI weekend, several individuals said, "I wish Community UMC could grow into our name." While relationships within the congregation are rich and plentiful, the congregation's relationship with its wider community is not as well established. Individuals and small ministry groups are involved with service outside the church walls, but **no single, recognized outreach/service ministry** is in place that the **entire congregation embraces together** as "our way of impacting the larger community." Thus, many in the wider mission field around CUMC miss the opportunity of knowing the beauty of this congregation's faith in action as disciples of Jesus.



Prescriptions

Prepare—then *Inspire, Energize and Grow!*

1. Prepare.

So that CUMC can continue to enhance its **readiness to welcome and engage new visitors** from its surrounding community, upon a positive vote for this report Pastor Carrie and the administrative council will constitute the following short-term teams.

- A **Signage Team** will review all **interior and exterior church signage** to ensure that it is clear and visible for first-time guests to the property. The team will then implement any new, professionally created signage needed in a cost-effective manner. Before new signage is hung, its **placement will be vetted** with at least five persons who have never been to or inside the CUMC church building before. All new signage will be produced and in place by or before **Lent 2018**.
- Because more than 90% of all potential church visitors first check out a church's website before deciding whether to attend, a **Website/Social Media Improvement Team** will continue to oversee improvement of the appearance, usability and technical capability of the CUMC website, hiring short-term professional assistance as needed. This team will also create an ongoing system to ensure that the church's **website and its presence on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms are kept current and sharp**. If requested, the MCCI will provide a social media prescription coach to give guidance.
- Pastor Carrie and the CUMC implementation team that attended the August 2017 **MCCI "Guest-Readiness" team training day** will continue to fully implement their newly learned best practices for guest-readiness across congregational life by or before **December 2017**. This will include a comprehensive review of CUMC's current **visitor follow-up system**, in order to address any gaps so that no guest is neglected. The MCCI Guest-Readiness trainer, Brad Aycok, will be available if requested for follow-up phone or skype calls that will answer questions and provide additional guidance.
- So that all of CUMC's print materials receive a refresh for maximum visual appeal, a graphic designer prescription coach will be provided to work with a **Visual Identity Team** that will include Marilyn Thompson. This team will advise and guide the coach as he/she creates new templates for the CUMC worship bulletin, posters, newsletter and other print materials. The goal will be to achieve a distinctive "look" and visual identity for use on all CUMC materials, so that it is easily recognizable to the Monticello community and beyond.
- A **First Impressions Team** will **declutter and freshen the interior appearance** of all areas in the church building that are frequented by visitors and newcomers, especially the lobby and adjoining hallways. This may include removing bulletin boards, relocating items stored in the hallway areas, removing or updating decor elements and making adjustments that include professional signage at the Welcome Center using CUMC's new "visual identity" look (see bullet point above). The goal will be to foster an **updated, relevant appeal** as CUMC reaches out to welcome new persons of all ages, especially the younger demographic, with optimal guest-readiness. The First Impressions Team may create additional sub-teams of workers to assist as needed, and all work will be completed by the goal of **January 2018**, or by **Lent 2018** at the latest. A prescription coach will be supplied if requested.



2. *Inspire (Worship).*

In response to the many comments and ideas from CUMC members and leaders regarding the church's two **worship services**, upon acceptance of this report the following initiatives will be set into action.

By or before **January 2018**, a **Sound System Improvement Team** will be identified to explore options for addressing the sanctuary's sound system to achieve greater **quality, clarity and consistency** across the entire room. This team will contact the manufacturer of the sound system and arrange for a company technician to do a **complete audit and assessment of the existing system** in order to determine whether changes or upgrades need to take place, or whether adjustments or repairs are needed. The Sound System Improvement Team will also arrange for the company to provide sound system equipment **training** for a CUMC team of at least five or six persons, so that the congregation can ensure everyone in any seat in the sanctuary can always hear clearly. The administrative council will ensure that funds for this work are fully appropriated, and all should be completed by or before **Easter 2018**.

To help the 11 a.m. **contemporary worship service** continue to improve its impact and cohesiveness, a prescription coach will be provided to guide the creation of a new **contemporary worship design process**. Pastor Carrie, together with the prescription coach, will constitute a **Contemporary Worship Design Team** to use the new process. Guidance for development of a praise band/team will be included, to give additional support to Lars and the current worship musicians.

And to help CUMC offer the most **excellent traditional Sunday worship service** in the entire Monticello area, a traditional worship enhancement prescription coach will join a new **Traditional Worship Enhancement Team** and the pastor to recommend possible additional tweaks and improvements to help CUMC's traditional worship become even more spiritually inspiring and meaningful to both the congregation and to guests.

3. *Energize (Discipleship).*

Upon this report's acceptance, the following steps will be taken to help the congregation continue advancing into **deeper spiritual growth** in order to become **energized in faith**.

Using a resource of Pastor Carrie's choosing (chosen in consultation with MCCI leadership if desired), during the **2018 calendar year** CUMC will offer at least **two, if not three, short-term churchwide study series** during which **every group, class and ministry across all ages** will read, discuss and pray through the same material together. The sermon series and worship service themes during the weeks of each short-term all-church study series will also coordinate on topic and scriptures, so that the congregation is learning and growing together.

By or before **April 2018**, the administrative council and Pastor Carrie will help identify ten persons who are gifted with the "spiritual shepherd" Primary Leadership Component, to be trained as CUMC's new **Congregational Care Team**. By or before **July 2018**, this team will assume ongoing visitation and response for those in the church family who desire spiritual support, prayer and connection through times of struggle, illness, aging, transition and crisis. The Congregational Care Team's ministry will **broaden the church's ongoing capacity** to help those needing to experience loving spiritual care, without relying only on the pastor.

To help CUMC's new **children, youth and family ministries director Danny** receive all training and coaching possible for his new role, in **January 2018** the MCCI will either provide him a prescription coach with this expertise or else ensure that Danny plus a team of at least four CUMC leaders are guaranteed participation via video conferencing in a new, four-month children/youth/family initiatives training/equipping/implementation



opportunity called "Family Ties," offered by the West Ohio Conference, which will be led by nationally recognized specialist RaNae Street. Family Ties will begin in late January/early February 2018.

In response to the concerns expressed by CUMC members about the **limited adult classroom space** in the church building, by or before **June 2018** the administrative council and Pastor Carrie will deploy a **Space Utilization/Feasibility Team**. The responsibility of this team will be to **audit all existing spaces** throughout the CUMC building and create a proposal for how **current building space** could be reimagined to best provide **adequate adult meeting spaces** for the growing number of groups and classes. Most importantly, the team will review **Fellowship Hall** and identify optimal, flexible utilization options to maximize both fellowship and adult education simultaneously—and also consider updating/refreshing Fellowship Hall's appearance and décor, including decluttering. A final task of the team will be to explore the feasibility of any future potential steps that would add more meeting spaces. The team will bring its space utilization report and feasibility study proposal to the administrative council for review by or before **January 2019** for possible approval and action.

4. *Grow (Outward Impact).*

To live into the church's name, CUMC will invest outward into its community through the following three new efforts.

- Pastor Carrie and the Administrative Council will identify a **Signature Ministry Discernment Team** by or before **fall 2018** for the purpose of identifying a CUMC **signature ministry**—a specific **outwardly focused missional ministry** that will involve the entire congregation (all ages and all groups).

The Signature Ministry Discernment Team will use demographic data and conversations across the Monticello community with businesses, agencies and other informational resources to help prayerfully discern whom CUMC is specifically called to serve next. A primary consideration might be a churchwide signature ministry partnership with a nearby school, for example. The goal will be for **CUMC to become known as the church with a major signature ministry focus that demonstrates the love of Christ** and builds relationships through **in-person, hands-on investment**. The team will provide a final proposal to the Administrative Council by or before **December 2018** for discussion and potential approval. For the next two calendar years, **all classes, ministries and groups of the church (all ages)** will become involved in the new signature ministry in some way, beginning in **spring 2019**, and no later than **fall 2019**. Once a signature ministry is identified, the MCCI may provide a prescription coach if one is requested for the implementation phase.

- The **Administrative Council** and **all committee chairs** will become fully trained and equipped to deploy the MCCI's **"Triad" approach** to CUMC's single outreach events, thus creating momentum for getting newcomers to connect and return. A prescription coach will be assigned to provide the Triad training. Following the training, Pastor Carrie will provide ongoing oversight and collaborate with ministry leaders to ensure that the annual, **highly successful plant sale** and the **craft bazaar** both are part of the **Triad approach**, as well as other key annual CUMC events.
- As an expression of CUMC's **commitment to children and their families**, at a time of the pastor's choosing a **new research team** will be formed to explore the possibility of launching a **non-Sunday-morning worship service** designed especially to reach the many churchless **families with children** in the church's surrounding mission field. The new service may be offered weekly, every other week or monthly. A prescription coach will be assigned to guide the pastor and research team as they explore options and design a plan and timeline for launch.



ADDENDUM

Within the CUMC congregation are church leaders who in their professional business careers have successfully led and helped guide organizational change. In order to support **Pastor Carrie** to the fullest extent possible as she leads CUMC in the changes and growth that will come through implementation of these prescriptions, the MCCI will partner with Pastor Carrie to identify at least two of these church members who will serve as **regular monthly conversation partners** from whom she can glean **wisdom and insight** during the church's upcoming season.

Immediate Governance Decision Steps

The congregation will hold at least **three Town Hall Meetings** within the next 30 days to discuss these prescriptions:

1. **Wednesday, September 27 at 6:15-7:30 p.m.** in the youth room (grab dinner upstairs to bring with you), childcare provided
2. **Sunday, October 15 at 10:15-10:55 a.m.** in the sanctuary, childcare provided.
3. **Sunday, October 29 at 12:15 p.m.** in Fellowship Hall (pizza lunch and childcare provided)

Facilitators for these Town Hall Meetings will be identified by Pastor Carrie in conjunction with the MCCI Team.

The **congregation will vote on this report** to either embrace it or reject it within 30 days at an official **church conference** led by the district superintendent (or designee) on **Sunday, November 5 at 11:15 a.m.** (following combined worship service at 10 a.m.).

If embraced by a **75% or more vote** of the official membership present, the MCCI team will designate prescription coaches and team with CUMC to implement these prescriptions.

If the prescriptions are rejected, the MCCI partnership process will cease.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Rev. Dr. Marilyn Spurrell, MCCI Consultant

Rev. Charliam Renner, Lead Pastor of First United Methodist Church, Sullivan, Illinois

Rev. Tami Luckhardt, Executive Pastor of Messiah United Methodist Church, Plymouth, Minnesota