

Below is a summary of the Vision and Values report. It is not a complete summary.

Work to be done prior to the meeting on Wednesday, August 27:

1. Read the full report. It is lengthy. Please do not wait until 5:00 PM on Wednesday, Aug. 27.
2. Identify the recommendations you agree with and the ones you would like to implement.
3. Put in order which recommendation you would like for the church to do first, second, third and so on.

You will have questions about things in the report. Richard will try to answer the questions at the workshop on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Bring your question with you.

(Jason summary)

### **First United Methodist Church**

FUMC is a congregation reporting 417 full members at the end of the year 2006, with an average reported morning worship attendance of 160 persons.

Since 1997, the overall membership loss for the ten-year period has been 128 persons, a 23.4% decrease. Worship attendance, likewise has declined, but to a lesser extent than membership. Reports show that average worship attendance has decreased overall in the past ten years by 52 persons. This is a far more important statistic than the membership record. This is because the real strength of a congregation's ministry is reflected in active, present, persons who are participating in the principal activity of the Christian Community, the worship of God. Over the decade, the average attendance in Sunday School has shown a slight decrease of 37 attendees. This decrease in Sunday School attendance, like the average worship attendance is a statistic of concern.

In the area of membership, one other concern must be lifted. This is the concern of new member growth overall. As will be noted in a later section, as congregations grow older, their very survival depends of the recruitment, enlistment, and training, of new members for the cause.

To this end the total members received each year, which has gone up over the decade; is a primary focus for the next 3-5 years. First must set its sights and its goals on receiving at least 50 new members annually for the next five years. This goal will likely, with natural attrition, bring the church to a membership of 600 persons by 2010.

Financial giving at First has increased by 21.8% over the ten-year period studied by the consultants. The highest level of overall expenditure annually to date was in 2006, approx. \$225,000.

Stewardship varied related to the commitment of the congregation to staffing, particularly ministerial remuneration, up 15.2%, and to the sense of the connection with other United Methodist Churches that is represented by apportionments, paid 100% each year. A matter of celebration in financial stewardship is the increase in total per-capita giving over the decade. Clearly in years of major capital expenditures or when staff members are added, capita giving increases.

The conclusion to this is that there is a loyal core of members, who rise to the occasion, and who give sacrificially to make sure that the needs of the congregation, both in sustaining its needs and supporting ministry outreach, are met. With all this, the congregation is to be commended for maintaining a level of faithful per capita giving which has enabled the church to continue the rich heritage of ministry and service that has been carried on faithfully.

If the highest percentages of the congregations income is being contributed by the "Builders" and II Silents", (and in most United Methodist Churches, this is the case), then a projection of significant income loss over the next ten years is most likely. (This is already happening in our church this year.) Based on studies done in 1996, we know that 25% of your older members contribute 75% of our income as United Methodists nationally. The good news for Burkburnett is that the Boomer Generation is the principal contributing generation. Nevertheless, First must focus on membership and stewardship to offset for an ageing congregation.

This report, with the accompanying Strategic Plan outline, should be presented to the congregation, in group settings, as soon as possible, as noted in a previous section. This is necessary in order to perfect this document, achieve buy-in to the core values, mission and vision, and to implement the Strategic Plan with a time line. We recommend that this be done as a series of ice cream or coffee and pie socials hosted and led by those who participated in the workshop. No more than six families should be assigned to each small group. Be sure to include the youth within each family. Twelve-fourteen persons are the maximum per group that can be accommodated. Do not reinvent the wheel! Provide copies of this report (or a synopsis thereof) to every participant and work from the report. The purpose is not to start over, but to perfect the work that has been done, listen to the participants input, and then come together again as a leadership team to create a final Shared Vision for the congregation. Some congregations find that the Sunday School is the best vehicle for this purpose. However, with the low attendance noted above, this may not be the best approach at First Church.

In order to develop a true Shared Vision, every member of the Church needs to know that each has been heard. Only in this way will the support necessary for the undergirding of the program be forthcoming. Remember, PEOPLE WILL SUPPORT WHAT THEY HAVE HAD A VOICE IN DECIDING

### **FUMC is doing some spectacular things.**

The worship service attended by the consultants was solid and well ordered. The bulletin is excellently done, and contains not only a guide to the order of worship, but also good information on activities and up-coming programming. Maintaining a good presentation in this area is important. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression." A primary consideration for program development at First is the recognition of what one interviewee called the "youthification" of the area. Census figures indicate that 54% of the population of the study area is in the "Millennial and "Survivor" Generations". These age groups are primarily seeking relationships, whether on athletic teams, through child care arrangements, in small, topic oriented discussion groups, or in Bible studies. They are often intimidated by "front-door entry" on Sunday morning until they are acquainted with some person or small group to whom they can comfortably relate. This is notably true of those who have no personal background in any church. Therefore, it is most important for this congregation to be sensitive to this primary relational need, and to offer as many "side-port", non-threatening entry points as possible.

First Church has done a masterful job of providing a beautiful and functional facility, well located, which meets the present needs of the congregation in terms of worship, education, and fellowship. The building is well maintained, and has excellent aesthetic appeal.

The Day School is one of the best of the church's offerings in the area of outreach, and must be considered as such. The opportunity to utilize this as a resource for new members is clear and present. Certainly, the mission of the day school is to educate and care for children. But the dimension of offering these children and their parents the invitation to share in the church's life must not be overlooked. These are children from homes who obviously value their little ones, and wish to provide

them with the best early childhood education available. Since this is true, the consultants encourage the church to develop ways and means to contact them, follow-up on their church preferences, and invite them to participate. The School is a "side-port entry" into the church that is unparalleled.

Another outreach ministry that is generally not perceived as such is the youth program. With active youth, participating in Sunday School and UMYF, this is a base on which to build. This is a "growing edge" for the church at the present time, and it is important that this area be placed on the "front burner" of support. The program is one of the strongest in the Wichita Falls District, and should not be undervalued as a significant mission and ministry of the church. Discovering ways to grow this program by involving the friends of the active youth is most important.

Missions is yet another area of importance in the church. Churches that have a clear sense of serving others in the name of Christ are churches that seek not only numerical growth, but growth in the larger, more important areas of faith, spirituality, and fellowship. Opportunities for missions on small as well as large scales are all around us.

First United Methodist Church is a great church, with a wonderful history. It is also a church that can claim a solid future! In summation, the recommendations boil down to four principle areas that must be achieved if that solid future is to be a reality.

1. The church must develop a "Ministry Niche" as earlier discussed. What makes First different and unique? Why should persons choose First over any other church in the area? What does First offer, qualitatively and quantitatively that is attractive to residents of the area?
2. The church must develop a VISION, which the congregation can support. This document, along with the accompanying Strategic Plan document, can be the beginning of that VISION ·DEVELOPMENT.
3. The church must clarify, as part of the VISION, that the congregation understands itself in a church growth posture, that is, that at this juncture in the church's history, it must grow or die. This is because change is inevitable, and every growth window must be utilized.
4. The church must put into place a strong public-relations, communications program. Developing relationships with the local media outlets, print, video, and audio, will be central to this project. A group of persons in the congregation who have expertise and interest in this field should be organized as soon as possible to develop this ministry.

It seems clear that there are a number of members who love this church and who are ready to recognize a new era of ministry, address the needs of the community as they emerge, and be open to new insights and new directions for ministry. Bringing others to join them in this quest, is now the order of the day.

Without question the future turns on the Willingness of the congregation to seize the opportunity to create a new kind of congregation, one which is turned outward to its community and which moves beyond old paradigms of asking "What can the church do for me?" to the question, "How can I serve the Lord and live out my calling as a Christian through my church? To clarify this vision, to develop this willingness, and to respond to God's call of servanthood is the immediate challenge for First United Methodist Church. Remember: **YOU WILL LIVE THE FUTURE NOW BEING FORMED BY YOUR CHOICES!**

## **Mission statement**

Where are we? Where are we going? Where do you want to be known for?

1. To glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ; sharing the gospel in word and deed.
2. To make disciples of Jesus Christ by nurturing people of all ages in Christian living by sharing the gospel in word and deed.
3. To make disciples of Jesus Christ through relationships, fellowship and mission with others.

(Below is Don's attempt to identify the recommendations in the report. He may have missed some.)

Below are recommendations the consultants made in the report. We tried to lift them out of the report to help you. Page reference has been made for more information.

Recommendation 1: Not a recommendation as much as information. There lots of people in our community if they went to church would choose United Methodist.

“Good news for the religious community in Burkburnett is the study report findings on faith issues. Primary concerns of a majority of households are the areas of “hopes and dreams” and “spiritual and personal issues”. Faith receptivity is “very high” with 39% of the population strongly involved in historic Christian religious affiliations as compared to the U.S. average of 35%. Further, in the study area, 85% are likely to express a preference for a particular religious tradition, somewhat higher than the national average of 77%. However, it is also good news for United Methodists that **11.5%** of the populations are likely to express a **United Methodist preference**. This is somewhat above the national average of 10.1%. Additionally, it is important to note that 11% of the population express **no preference of religious affiliation**, less than the national average, but still a substantial number of unchurched persons who are a target population for First United Methodist Church. While many of these will be hard core, anti-church persons, they are, nevertheless, human beings whose hurts and hopes often drive them to seek solutions and meaning in their lives. The congregation that thinks in terms of offering meaningful ministry to these persons, and develops a program to communicate that sense of ministry will see the results, over time, of growth and deepening spiritual commitment.”

### Recommendation 2:

Plan a church-wide spiritual emphasis series (preaching mission) beginning on a Sunday morning and continuing through Tuesday night. See page 15 – top of page for more information.

### Recommendation 3: page 15

Recruit five persons per week (different persons each week) who will meet with the pastor mid-week and before each service on Sunday morning to pray with and for her ministry and the growth of the church.

### Recommendation 4: page 15

Print prayer cards asking every member to write down five persons for whom he/she will pray daily during the period of the late summer months, leading up to the Covenant Study. The five persons should be members of the church, but not family or close friends. These are five *persons in addition to* any other prayer emphasis being conducted, and are selected by each member personally and privately. Give time in worship to bring these prayer commitment cards to the altar and placed there. Only names

of those to be prayer for are on the cards—prayer volunteers do not sign their names. Their prayer commitment is to God. Place these cards in a basket or bowl on the altar for three months, so that others may have access to their names to include in their own prayer life.

Attach to the above, by perforations, a prayer reminder that can be torn off and placed in the Prayer Volunteer's purse or wallet, on which the same five names of those persons to be prayed for will be written.

Recommendation 5: page 15

As soon as possible, organize small group meetings in homes to study this report in its entirety, pray together, and focus on the development of a shared vision.

Recommendation 6: page 19 – start new Sunday School classes

Establishing new young-adult classes for both married persons and single adults should be a high priority of time and energy for the leadership at this time. Remember that the Sunday School does not grow significantly through adding new persons to existing classes.

Recommendation 7: Stewardship program – page 20 for more information.

The faithful core is to be commended for their struggle to respond ever more faithfully to keep First at a reasonably close level of service and ministry, in terms of stewardship. What all this means, of course, is that some substantial work must be done in the area of stewardship education, so that new people coming into the church, as well as current members, are challenged to be at their best as Christian Stewards. **The emphasis on the “joy of giving”, and on what God’s plan of Christian stewardship as revealed in the Bible truly is, is the emphasis that the consultants recommend. We encourage congregations never to tie financial stewardship to the needs or the budget of the church. Rather, emphasize Christian giving as a response to God’s grace and love for us, and as an opportunity to respond gratefully to God’s salvation to us in Christ, by ministering to others in His name. In the past, churches have too often taken the former approach to the detriment of Christian spiritual growth and understanding.**

Recommendation 8: page 21

**THE CONSULTANTS RECOMMEND THAT THE FINANCE COMMITTEE INITIATE A THOROUGH STUDY ON THE GIVING PATTERNS OF THE CONGREGATION BY GENERATIONAL GROUPS. THAT IS, WHAT PERCENTAGES OF OVERALL GIVING ARE BEING CONTRIBUTED BY THE PRESENT GENERATIONS:**

Note from the consultants – page 22 for information

To reiterate, the greatest concern of the consultants, statistically, is the decline in Sunday School and worship attendance over the decade. Sunday school and worship attendance are **a critical key indicators** of the health of a congregation. Attention must be directed at once to this important area. Either in Sunday morning classes, or in other small group growing and learning enterprises, the involvement of persons in relationships is essential. The consultants encourage an immediate plan in this regard, beginning with an immediate campaign for the Advent Season encouraging attendance from the pulpit, in the church newsletter, and in special personal lay witnesses during worship services on the impact of Sunday School on person's lives.

Recommendation 9: song leader – page 25

Music was inspiring on that Sunday, (especially the solo) and the ambiance of worship was comfortable and inviting, although slightly tedious and slow moving. Singing was less than enthusiastic, and this fact needs attention. Getting persons to sing, perhaps by a song-leader, is a most important part of worship participation and the praise of God. It is an expression of faith and a means of deepening the spirituality of worship participants. The consultant's recommend that a song-leader be recruited to enhance this part of the worship experience, and that hymns be chosen with an eye to their familiarity, mixing praise choruses with traditional hymns from time to time. Introducing new hymns to the congregation is fine, but should be done with some form of instruction and familiarization, either by the choir for a Sunday or two, or by actually teaching the congregation the hymn prior to or within the body of the service itself.

Recommendation 10: page 25 – 27 – altered worship style:

Perhaps a slightly altered worship style could be incorporated from time to time, “blending” traditional worship with some praise music and/or choruses from time to time.. This would involve some music by contemporary Christian writers and composers, and might be promoted as less formal. Indeed, “blending” the service to reflect a wide-ranging preference in worship styles in contemporary America is a good thing. This does not imply in any way abandoning our traditions, but only accommodating the different preferences in worship styles that have emerged generationally over the past few years.

Recommendation 11: hospitality among all the people – page 28

The ushers did an acceptable job in handing out bulletin and greeting worshippers. It would be helpful if ushers would provide direction to seating for latecomers, and actually guide them to their seats. Perhaps an educational program of sorts could be introduced through the church newsletter to encourage worshippers to move toward the center of the section in which they are seated and to the front. This enables the seating of latecomers in a far less disruptive way and allows their seating to be somewhat anonymous. A way of recognizing and greeting visitors is also important.

Recommendation 12: page 28 – Emphasis on the worship choir and recruiting persons

Emphasis on the worship choir and recruiting persons for the choir should be a priority. Every worship service needs a full music ministry, and the ability to stand alone as an authentic service of worship. Each person in the choir will bring 1 to 3 persons into the pew, so it is imperative that emphasis on choir participation be significant. This is a major *growth principle*.

Recommendation 13: worship planning – page 29

Finally, as regards worship, we recommend that the Worship Committee begin to form worship teams from interested parties in the congregation who, **IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PASTOR** would make suggestions and share ideas with her on the worship services from week to week. This is a primary opportunity for the worship committee to do its job by seeking input from the congregation. Plan worship well ahead, and “think outside the box”. Remember, every service does not have to follow the same format. While the pastor, in every congregation, has the final word in worship (based on theological and Biblical training), the contribution of ideas from interested laity is not only helpful but also essential. We are, after all, *Laos*, the whole people of God. Studying the Christian year and lectionary themes and passages will enhance worship significantly, and allow people to be heard with regard to a cross section of worship needs and preferences. **The worship committee should invite 6-8 persons to participate in planning worship, with the pastor and music director, for each Sunday beginning in the fall.**

Recommendation 14: public relations/communication page 30

A Task Force be appointed immediately with responsibilities in public relations/communications. This Task Force is to be charged with developing ways of achieving input from the community on perceived needs, areas of interest, issues facing the community and/or other information that will inform the congregation with regard to program offerings. Resources should be the school district, the Chamber of Commerce, the Police Department, and other community agencies that are cognizant of community issues.

Recommendation 15: page 32 – a program director

As soon as possible, add to the staff **a knowledgeable Program Director**, as a part-time staff member (10-15 hours per week). This person would be assigned a job description to include the following”

1. Recruit laity for specific program leadership in the categories listed in this report.
2. Organize small group opportunities in Older Adult ministries, Couples Classes and groups, and youth and children’s ministry.
3. Promote church wide fellowship events to build cohesiveness within the congregation.

Organize and prioritize, with the Administrative Council and Pastor, side-port opportunities within the church.

Recommendation # 15: contact new comers into the community page 34

Assign the Evangelism Committee (if one is not organized, do so) to develop a program, which checks regularly on newcomers through utility hook-ups. Devise a plan to call upon these people (by telephone) for a friendly invitation and a follow-up mailing, or if this is not feasible, design an invitational mailer packet to be sent to them. Further, devise a plan for lay contact with worship visitors as soon as possible after their visit.(Preferably Sunday afternoon. Whether in person or by telephone, this welcoming contact is an essential part of involving people relationally, which is one of the “hot-buttons” leading to involvement of people in congregational life.

Recommendation #16: estate planning page 38

The consultants recommend that in the fall of 2008, a seminar be conducted in the area of estate planning. This is an area very important to any church with a high percentage of older adults, and can be beneficial not only to the church, but to individuals as well.

Recommendation #17: facilities and signage – page 38 and 39

the signage, which needs upkeep and up-dating, especially that signage located on I-44.

The sign at the front of the church is certainly adequate, but really is an “announcement” sign rather than a “sign of invitation”. Is there a way the signage here, and throughout the facility could be updated to offer more guidance to visitors who are coming to the church for the first time, or for the passer-by who may be interested in visiting at a later time.

Recommendation 18 – parking page 39 & 40

Visitor spaces are essential, and should be placed on the head-in parking spaces in front of the sanctuary, or along the parking of the south entrance. Visitor parking signs placed along the north side of the south lot, and marked on both sides of the signage should be put in place immediately. This will inform visitors that they are welcome in a subtle but positive way and will have the additional effect of telling weekday passers-by that the church is eager to receive visitors.

A minimum of six visitor parking spaces should be provided. Encourage church members not to use them.

Recommendation 19: visitation of first time visitors: page 41

An important outreach emphasis is the immediate contact of those who visit the church for the first time. If one is not now in place, a visitor program should be organized in which visitors to the church are contacted by a team from the church on Sunday afternoon, the day of their visit. These calls should be no more than five minutes on the front porch, and a small memento, along with church literature should be given to the visitors. On Monday following this contact, a letter from the pastor should be prepared and mailed which includes an expression of thanks for the visit, and an invitation to return. It should also be stated in this letter that the pastor wishes to have a personal visit with the person or persons at their convenience, and that the pastor will call in a few days to make an appointment. After the second or third visit to the church, another contact should be made, this time by phone, from a layperson in the church, to ask if the visitors have any questions about the church. In this call, it would be well to ask, "Would you like for the pastor to call again about your membership?" If the answer is "yes", the caller indicates that the pastor will be informed of this request. If the answer is "no", the caller expresses appreciation for the time, and invites the visitor to come again, and to call if any questions arise. None of these calls is a high-pressure visit. Each step is made with the gentle approach of asking rather than insisting.