

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRY

A VISION AND VALUES WORKSHOP

Consultative Report

First United Methodist Church

Burkburnett, Texas

THE REVEREND KATHY McLEAN-DAVIS, PASTOR

SEPTEMBER 19-21, 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES OF THE VISION AND VALUES WORKSHOP	3
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS	5
THE CONTEXT OF MINISTRY	
The City of Burkburnett and the Burkburnett Independent School District	6
A GENERAL OVERVIEW	18
WORSHIP	25
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	30
PASTORAL and STAFF LEADERSHIP	35
LAY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	37
FACILITIES	38
OUTREACH AND MISSIONS	40
CONCLUSION: CHURCH ANALYSIS	43
A PERSONAL WORD FROM THE CONSULTANTS	45

PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES: THE VISION AND VALUES WORKSHOP

VISION AND VALUES is a workshop designed to inspire the leadership of a congregation to look objectively and honestly at the program, ministry, and covenant life of their church. Such a straightforward view begins with two critical questions:

HOW DID WE COME TO BE IN OUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, i.e. what are the principal events and issues that have formed our present life together?

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE, i.e. what is our **VISION** and **ACTION PLAN** for the future, based on our self-understanding and

With consultants trained in the process acting as coaches and sounding boards, the leadership is asked to evaluate the current status of the congregation in terms of its sense of Mission and Ministry, and to investigate the external circumstances in which it serves, that is, to identify the particular needs of the service area. As this task is addressed, and trends begin to emerge, the leadership is then asked if the present status is acceptable to the congregation, that is, if what is now occurring is truly fulfilling its defined mission? Is it meeting the expectations of the membership? Is there growth both spiritually and numerically? Is the future as now perceived what the congregation envisions? There are two primary principles on which this inquiry is based. They are:

You will live the future that is now being formed and decided.

You will reap the same results when the same approach is made, regardless of the level of energy or personnel that is used.

In order to present these principles in relevant terms, the consultant team utilizes ***principles of team building and leadership development***, as well as methods of institutional review and management.

Perceptions of the church and its ministry are drawn from statistical data provided by the minister, current and historical documents of the church, and interviews with selected persons in the community and congregation, as well as in the workshop itself.

Community analysis is derived from demographic information extracted from **Percept, Incorporated**, a research firm that focuses on communities areas around a selected congregation, census information from the United States Government found at www.dfw.census2000.com, and interviews with selected community leaders.

The workshop begins with an **examination of paradigms** (principal presuppositions with which the church conducts its ministry), **an examination of what an ideal church is perceived to be**, and **a call to create new paradigms** in keeping with the present reality of the church's life. Based on these new paradigms of identity, the leadership is then challenged to undertake a re-

definition of its mission and ministry, with concrete and achievable tasks assigned to those attending and with an intense effort to ultimately involve the entire congregation in a new **SHARED VISION** for the future of the church.

At **First United Methodist Church**, the above process was followed. The next step, of course, is receiving this report, to be followed by a plan to share it with the entire congregation for further perfecting and adoption. Included herein is the **SUMMARY CONSULTATIVE REPORT** respectfully submitted by **CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE, ASSOCIATES, INC.**

The list of recommendations included here represent **achievable, potentially effective** steps that the congregation can take to service its parish area as the vital, servant congregation that is clearly the desire of every participant in the workshop.

What is missing in these pages is the will to embark upon and achieve the changes that will set a new course of ministry and vision for your church. The will to achieve all or part of these can only come from you, the “people called Methodist” at **First United Methodist Church**. We encourage you to approach these recommendations in a spirit of openness and affirmation, and with a view toward what it will mean not only in your church, but in the parish area that you serve. North Burkburnett is, as are all communities in the beginning of this new century, experiencing change in the subtle yet definitive shifts of the target population in the midst of an ever changing culture, and with continually differing expectations of what the church is about and how it should serve.

In a spirit of prayerful concern, the consultants at **Church Development and Finance Associates** present this report to you. With you, we call upon the One “Who makes all things new” to be the guide of your efforts to meet the needs of a new millennium at **First** as the congregation seeks to serve its area in the name of our Lord.

A WORD OF THANKS

The consultants wish to thank those persons who gave so much time, energy, and insight to the successful completion of the workshop. Every person brought a high level of dedication, a willingness to invest a significant amount of time, and a deep and abiding love for the church to the work that was done. As a part of the leadership core of **First United Methodist Church**, you offer the gifts and graces that will guide this congregation to great heights of ministry and service. We are certain that you will “stay the course” and that you will keep the faith. God bless you all!

PARTICIPANTS:

*Matt Patterson
Bob Veal
Arnie Wells
Sue Watson
Jim Beason
Robert Richards
Tim Cornelius
Lee Ann Miller
Patricia Veal
Jason Durst*

*Deb Cornelius
Donna Norris
Nancy Wells
Roger Watson
Deana Richards
Nichole Beandrot
Jana Ono
Lee Norris
Georgianna Greenway
Margit Bale*

INTERVIEWEES:

We wish to thank, as well, community and area leaders who gave us time in their busy schedules to learn more about the service area of **First United Methodist Church**. The following persons were most gracious to give us all the time we needed and to share information with us that has been most helpful in the compiling of this report.

Community Leaders Interviewed:

Michael T. Slye, City Manager, City of Burkburnett, Texas
Randy Lovelady, Asst. Superintendent, Burkburnett ISD
Dick Vallen, Director, Chamber of Commerce, Burkburnett
Jack Stine, Realtor

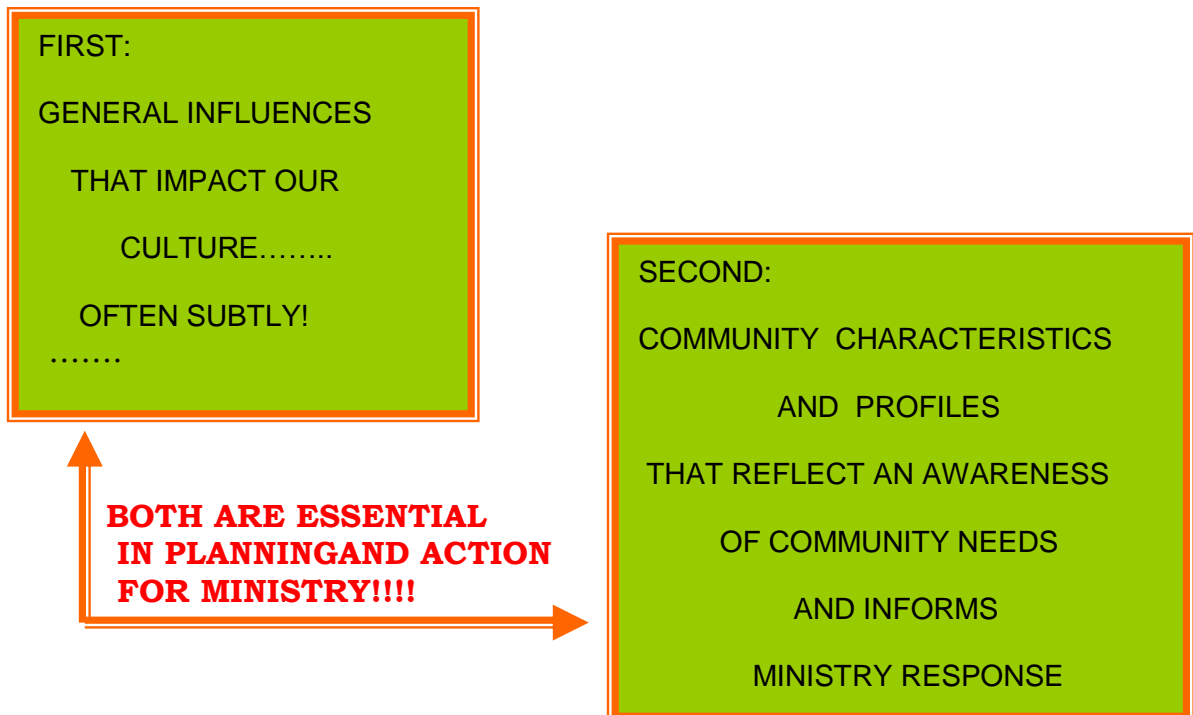
Church Members and Staff Interviewed:

Matt Patterson
Margit Bale
Bob Veal
Patricia Veal
The Reverend Kathy McLean-Davis
John and Gayla Kessinger
C.J. Lippard

THE CONTEXT OF MINISTRY: THE PARISH AREA, THE CITY OF BURKBURNETT AND THE BURKBURNETT INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Ministry and mission are not done in a vacuum. They are always carried out in specific context and affected by local, national, and increasingly, global contextual factors. **Understanding the context of ministry is not an option for 21st century leaders.** While we often know a great deal about the inside of congregations, church leaders often have limited understanding of the external factors that are shaping and influencing mission and ministry. **Trying to lead without both inside and outside information is like a bird trying to fly with only one wing.**

Therefore, it is essential to investigate:



FIRST:

Dr. Peter Drucker, Corporate Analyst, Management Consultant, and Sociologist has often spoken of “the futurity of present events”. What he means is simply that if you want to understand the future, you must look at the reality of events that have already happened. Here are seven “present reality” shifts in current United States Culture that are affecting the context of ministry in every church across our country.

1. **THE SHIFT FROM KNOWLEDGE TO EXPERIENCE:** Experience is the new currency of our culture. In the past, we gained knowledge of a subject or issue and then a later experience validated that knowledge. Today it is just the reverse. People have an experience that is later validated by knowledge. This shift has implications in the way we learn, communicate, and interact. For churches, it impacts the design of worship and liturgy, the process of spiritual formation, the design of sacred space, and how we program for ministry.
2. **THE SHIFT FROM A MONOCULTURE TO A MULTI-CULTURAL POPULATION:** While the U.S. is a nation created from many ethnicities and nationalities, the diversity of our population has accelerated over the past 25 years. Major changes in the immigrations laws of the 1970’s, the desirability of the U.S. economy, and many other factors have combined to create a second wave of new immigrants that may surpass the original wave of the late 1880’s and early 20th century. In the 2000 census, 40% of people under the age of 18 are non-anglo. Population diversity also means religious diversity, which has had a major impact on the American religious landscape.
3. **THE SHIFT FROM A PRODUCER TO A CONSUMER ECONOMY:** In the booming economy that followed World War II, driven by advertising and media technology, the U.S. transformed into a consumer-driven culture. The result of this shift can be summed up in one word—options. We want options for everything from the color and model of our automobiles to our soft drinks and coffee. This “consumer mentality” has also affected how people select a church and its offering of “religious goods and services”.
4. **THE SHIFT FROM A YOUTH ORIENTED CULTURE TO THE GRAYING OF AMERICA:** As a result of its size, the “baby-boom” generation brought a new emphasis on youth and now that the generation is reaching mid-life they are driving a new emphasis on aging. Look at the way the AARP has reinvented itself in the last five years. Additionally, advanced medical care and medicine have resulted in people living longer, and the median age of the population continues to rise. The sales are currently still tilting to the gray side. Senior adult ministry in the future will be much different than it is now, fueled by the size and influence of the “Boomers”.
5. **THE SHIFT FROM PRINT TO BROADCAST TO INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATIONS;** The print world that had been dominant for 500 years

began to give way in the 1950's to a visual or broadcast world dominated by radio and television. In the last ten years, the shift from a broadcast world to an interactive one has accelerated rapidly. The Internet, many argue, is far more about communications than technology. The implications of a 24/7 world and of communicating in visual and digital form are significant for congregations. Our approach to worship may be radically different in the future, just as the shift in worship emphasis was radically different after the Protestant Reformation and the Evangelical Awakening than the worship experiences that preceded each.

6. THE SHIFT FROM INDIVIDUALISM TO COMMUNITY: From its beginnings, the U.S. has had a social focus on individualism. While we have joined in groups to accomplish common tasks, there has still been an underlying thread of individualism. The boomer generation perhaps reflects this individualism to a greater extent than preceding generations. This individualism, coupled with increasing technology, has resulted in a disconnected society and one in which people are searching with new intensity for community. The depth of this search was exposed for many by the tragedy of 9/11 and the ensuing attempts of people to reconnect with family and friends, and to reexamine priorities. The so-called "Survivor" generations, (Gen-X and Y) seem to have a sense of community wired into their DNA. In terms of church, people are looking for authentic faith communities that provide a place of meaningful connections and service.

7. THE SHIFT FROM SUCCESS TO SIGNIFICANCE: We have the largest number of people in our history now entering into their 40's and early 50's with a life expectancy of another 4 decades. This, coupled with the resources of education and finances that afford them an opportunity to reflect on the second half of their lives, is driving the shift from success to significance. People are considering changing careers to engage in work and activities that provide more meaning. Others are opting to develop parallel careers that enable them to continue in their first half role and, over time, transition to something new in the second half. The church has an incredible opportunity to help people process this shift, and along the way discover a greater purpose in Kingdom ministry and service.

As 21st century leaders, we must begin to ask:

HOW IS OUR CONGREGATION RESPONDING TO THESE SHIFTS THAT ARE RESHAPING THE CONTEXT OF THE WORLD AND THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH WE DO MINISTRY?

SECOND:

To begin the process of accomplishing the parish area study phase of the process, the consultants review interview materials from on-site visits and utilize

research data from the United States Census Bureau, the City of Burkburnett, Burkburnett City and Independent School District Leadership, the Burkburnett Chamber of Commerce, and Percept, Incorporated, a National demographic research firm.

*The study area for this report is a three-mile radius around a central point emanating from **First United Methodist Church**. (See map in Addenda). From the above sources, the following information is summarized:*

The research area is characterized as predominantly “**Middle America**”, meaning that the economic and cultural base is a cross section of income groups, age-categories, and ethnic and racial sub-groups. “**Middle-America**” is a designation that differentiates the population from such other categories as “Rural Families” or “Senior Life” or others that indicate a different make-up of persons who live in a particular study area. Thus, the designation of “**Middle America**” is appropriate.. This “**Middle American Family**” designation accounts for 46% of area households. Of all households, 12% fall into the sub-segment of “**Affluent Families**” having to do with income level above \$75,000+ annually. The top individual segment is “**Working Urban Families**”(24.4%), which indicates the identification of Burkburnett as a suburban bedroom community in which the majority of the population is employed outside the city itself.

Currently, 10,663 persons live in the **defined study area**, an increase of 334 persons, or 3,2% since 1990. However, between 2007 and 2012, the population is projected to decline by 2,6% or 273 persons. Of course, the city of Burkburnett, overall, has a much larger trade area, especially with regard to the school district, and draws from other cities nearby with regard to business, shopping, and religious activities, including Shepherd Air Force Base and North Wichita Falls. The trade area for Burkburnett identifies 200,000 people within a fifteen minute drive time from the center of the study area, according to the city manager. 80% of working adults are employed in Wichita Falls or at Shepherd Air Force Base.

One person interviewed described the Burkburnett community as “focused on its identity as a bedroom community, and seeking to become the best bedroom community in North Texas, staying ‘ahead of the curve’ in quality development.” It is a city which is strongly “family friendly and driven by family values, especially supportive to children and youth”. Commercial growth is also a focus of the city, as noted by the recent establishment of the Hampton Inn, two new restaurants, a 90 unit upscale apartment complex, and cooperation with the casinos that are located just across the state line in Oklahoma, but border on Burkburnett city limits to the north. The projected closing of Wal-Mart on October 24, 2007 is expected to have a major economic impact on the city, but city leadership is regarding this as a focus of opportunity for other business growth, particularly in an effort to promote the city as a tourist destination with a particular theme such as antiquing or other attractive venues that will draw persons who may be

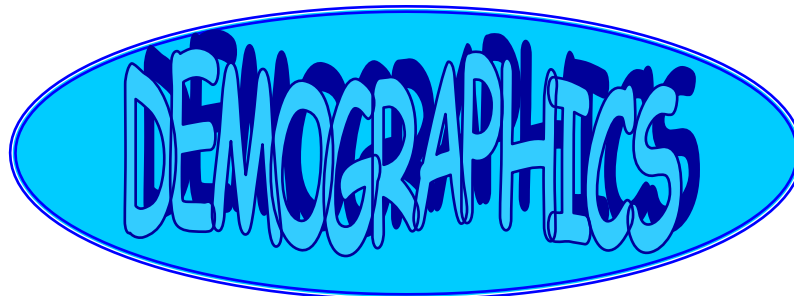
traveling on I-44 toward the Casinos in southern Oklahoma. These casinos are interested in and have become community partners with the city, offering support in various ways, such as providing holiday turkeys for the indigent of the city, which are distributed by the Chamber of Commerce. The November election, that includes the sale of alcohol for off-premises consumption and mixed beverages in restaurants. is seen as a step in this economic development emphasis.

Residential development at the present time is very low, and has been for the last 3-4 years, a period in which housing starts have continued to decline in the city. There is a potential development of 100 acres to the northwest of the city and additional development south of Burkburnett, near the golf course, the latter being developed slowly by Horizon Homes. While this is not major development currently (Horizon Homes is constructing 3 new “spec” homes), most new construction is pre-sold. Crimson Red is another custom home builder building mostly pre-sold homes. There is, of course, some turnover in used homes, but there are more houses on the market currently than the market will bear, especially with the downturn in real estate that is occurring nation-wide.

There is a very low ratio in the study area of ethnic diversity. The following chart indicates the population by ethnic diversity. It reveals that, while the study area is predominantly Anglo, there are other ethnic groups present. Studies indicate that Native Americans/Others will be the fastest growing segment of Burkburnett, increasing by 11.4% between 2007 and 2012. Perhaps this is an area of potential ministry for First United Methodist church.

TABLE 1
STUDY AREA POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY

	ANGLO	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	HISPANIC	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN AND OTHER
STUDY AREA	86.3%	3%	7%	1%	3%
U.S. Average	66%	12%	15%	4%	3%



As denoted in the most recent report by Percept, Inc. (see appendix), the largest population group is that of persons ages 6-25. These persons make up 29.2% of the total population, as compared to 28% of the U.S. population as a whole. Also significant is the so-called “Survivor Generation”, ages 26-46, who make up a slightly smaller percentage of the population, 25% as compared to the U.S. percentage of 30%. The relationship of an older population compared to

U.S. averages is a factor, as well, in the next category, the “Builder” Generation, (83 and above) who are 2% of the area population. In the U.S. as a whole, this generation is 3% of the population. Burkburnett is essentially a younger community, with **85% of the population below age 65 and 63% below age 47. The average age is 37.7 years.** City officials indicate, however, that there is an increasing older adult population, though this increase is so small as to be statistically insignificant at the present time. All of this bodes well for a church that emphasizes, as does **FUMC**, ministry to all ages. Nevertheless, children and youth ministries, as well as worship diversity must continue to be affirmed if the church is to garner its “fair-share” of the younger population over the near term.

As would be expected in a relatively stable population area such as Burkburnett, the study indicates that traditional family structures prevail. 66% of the households house married persons and form a traditional household environment. 20% of the households are single mothers, slightly less than the U.S. average. These factors, measured along with other factors such as poverty level households, educational levels, and other, similar issues, indicate a community stress level that is below the U.S. average when compared with similar communities across the United States. It should be noted that the average **household** income is \$54,559 as compared with the U.S. average of \$65,849, (Median and average are not the same.) **Church programming must give attention to economic and societal stress levels in order to provide options for ministry to persons who have no other place to turn.** Consciousness of a window of opportunity for ministry, in such areas as providing seminars and workshops in parenting, marriage and family life, and financial management, and other defined areas of need is essential. Programs in the church relating to **personal spiritual development** are the most desired and needed as indicated by the demographic study.

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.

All of the above research information indicates Burkburnett and North Wichita County as a **high quality of life community**. Stable, prone to traditional religious values, given to cohesive community lifestyles, and rooted in a heritage of family stability, the community provides care for its own, and honors the institutions that have sustained these values, churches, schools, etc. Such values are unlikely to be eroded in the near term precisely because of the slow-stable growth that is projected over the next five years, and the central, unifying influence of “family-friendly” residential and business growth on the mind and spirit of the population. This is not to say, however, that there are not concerns in the city that do not need to be addressed. While city, and chamber leaders are positive and enthusiastic about life in North Wichita County and the future of the area, they are, nevertheless, realistic about the issues that are present. In the following lists, facts about the area are highlighted that will inform us as we examine the “growing edges” of civic life, including problems and issues that may well be addressed by the religious community.

CITY OF BURKBURNETT:

1. Tax rate: \$0.45 per \$100 evaluation for Maintenance and Operation and debt service of \$0.6 for street bonds. +2% general sales tax to city..
2. Burkburnett is viewed as poised for growth, primarily in “upper-middle-income” to so-called “lower-upper income” families. There is a need for homes in the \$70,000-\$90,000 range to service middle-income families.
3. Two factors impact service delivery over next several years:
 - a. Increase in Native-American and overall minority population
 - b. Increase in senior citizen population
4. Needs in the city include transportation for elderly to necessary services, utility assistance for indigent population, and some food-clothing assistance. **This is a “ministry point” for FUMC**
5. Athletics are currently the principal occupier of extra-curricular time by youth of the city. Police officials seek the aid of churches in developing extensive youth ministries. Youth ministries beyond Sunday activities would enhance the efforts of the police department to bring about a positive influence on character development among youth. **This is a “ministry point” for FUMC**
6. One supermarket serves 11,000 persons plus in the city. The need for diversity of retail growth is an important concern of the Burkburnett Development Corporation.
7. The city and area boasts a low crime rate in relation to other cities of its size in America. Primary criminal activity is found in family violence issues and Juvenile and Drug issues. **Each of these is a “ministry point” for FUMC.**

Burkburnett Independent School District:

1. Approximate student enrollment (Current): 3,717
 - 3 Elementary School Campuses (Approx. 2000 enrolled)
 - 1 Middle School Campuses (Approx. 800 enrolled)
 - 2 High School Campuses (Approx. 900 enrolled)
 - 1 Alternative Education Center (Serves students with issues of discipline and At-Risk students for other reasons.)
2. 750 students enrolled in elementary school at Shepherd AFB.
3. 40% of district population is military.
4. School tax rate: \$1.50 per \$100 evaluation last year...\$1.04 next year currently, and \$1.17 if approved by voters in November.
5. No notable gang activity is present in the school system. Discipline issues have dropped 200% in last two years. Discipline Room has 75 percent less time spent that two years ago. District sends team to Discipline Conference each summer, who in turn, train faculty and staff. Students receive behavioral training throughout school career.
6. Ethnic make-up is reflective of community—85% Anglo-American; 6% Hispanic, 8% African-American, Balance: Asian and others.
7. The district is open to relationships with churches; Pastors and youth directors are welcomed on campuses.
8. High School and Middle School have lunch hour police presence.
9. Poverty rate in schools district-wide (free and reduced lunch program) is 46% of enrollees. Hardin elementary has 80% free and reduced lunch participants. (This is a “ministry point for F.U.M.C.)

The consultants urge careful study of the above factors, which offer a basic profile of the Burkburnett Community. Some of the information is merely routine. Some, however, is indicative of areas of community life where intervention is needed and windows of opportunity for ministry are offered. For example, the fastest growing population segment over the next five years will be Native American, related, no doubt, to the employment structure of the Indian Casinos that border Burkburnett’s city limits. (What does this offer **First United Methodist Church** as an opportunity to provide ministry services for families and children of this population segment? Often the schools provide some resource for students, but what about the adult population? These facts and others listed represent opportunities for ministry. **Understanding our context for ministry is essential, for it helps us, as Christians, to “find needs and meet them” in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.**

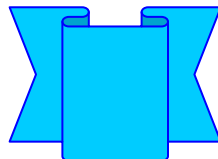
INITIAL CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH.....

With all this, it is clear that **First Church** has the foundation in place to develop a strong, dynamic, growing congregation. In other sections of this report, additional suggestions will be made. Here, however, we wish to make our INITIAL recommendations, for we believe, from wide experience as trainers, consultants, and persons of faith, that these issues, which are aimed at spiritual renewal to overcome malaise and indifference, are essential as first steps, and lay the groundwork for program ministries that can shape a new future for the church.

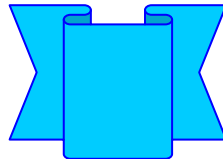
The development of a **Shared Vision**, *by definition the **desired future commonly held by the congregation***, is essential. Such a vision only becomes possible when honest analyses of present circumstances are reviewed in the life of the **Covenant Mandate of the Gospel**, and ownership of the church's life is claimed by a majority of members. Then a new paradigm of the church in a new millennium becomes the primary motivator of the congregation. This will open the most fundamental "core values" to be operative in the setting of priorities in which all members will participate. *The result will be the design of a system for authentic, compassionate listening, so that every member feels that she or he is honestly heard and that "every person's viewpoint is important"*. To that end, we recommend the following actions be put into place as soon as possible.



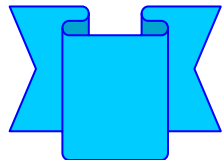
A church-wide study for the Spring (February-March) of 2008 on the nature of the church as a **Covenant Community**. This study should begin as soon as possible after the beginning of the Fall season in all Sunday School Classes, men's and women's organizations, the youth, the music ministry, and in as many home meetings as possible for those not affiliated in smaller groups. This study should be for four Sundays and shared with inactive members by audiotapes prepared by a study committee.



Plan, within two weeks of the end of the study, a church-wide spiritual emphasis series, (preaching mission), beginning on a Sunday morning, and continuing Sunday evening through Tuesday evening. This could be well related to the Thanksgiving observance, or to the beginning of Advent. A deeply spiritual pastor in the United Methodist tradition, who understands the United Methodist Church, and who communicates the Gospel with passion and clarity, should lead this. The theme should be “God’s People, Poised for Service and Ministry”. We recommend that a guest preacher be selected and that among those considered be Dr. Thomas Q. Robbins, Dr. John Allen, or Dr. John Fiedler, North Texas Conference Pastors, well known to the consultants. Of course, other pastors with whom you may be familiar as powerful speakers and spiritual persons will be well considered.

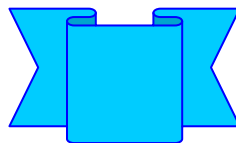


Recruit five persons per week (different persons each week) who will meet with the pastor mid-week and before each service on Sunday morning to pray with and for her ministry and the growth of the church.

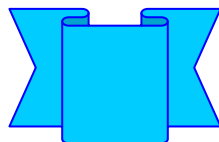


Print prayer cards asking every member to write down five persons for whom he/she will pray daily during the period of the late summer months, leading up to the Covenant Study. The five persons should be members of the church, but not family or close friends. These are five *persons in addition to* any 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.



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.

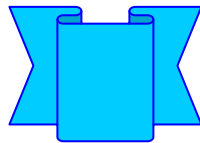


Begin as soon as possible, a leadership training effort in which every administrative and program body of the church is offered training in the mission and procedure of each group. Trainers for this effort may be obtained at little cost through the North Texas Conference Office, or by recruiting nearby pastors and lay leaders to conduct this Saturday or Sunday afternoon training event. Review present procedures in comparison with the current role of the laity in determining the direction and future of the congregation. A function of active lay leadership is to seek congregational input. When this is done, new directions will begin to emerge in a very short period of time. It will change the way business has been done in the past, resulting in the circumstances, both internally and externally, in which the congregation now finds itself.

Remember:

**YOU KEEP ON GETTING WHAT YOU'VE BEEN GETTING, WHEN YOU
KEEP ON DOING WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING!**

Challenge the congregation, through this report and in other ways, to focus on the future and not the past. Talk about the future, focus on the future, pray for the future. How? **Forgive the past** as God has. **Say "YES" to the future** as God has.



. Finally, let these first steps in the renewal of the church be celebrated in a victory service of a renewal covenant on a selected Sunday during the Lenten Season, 2008. As you celebrate your ministries, look at the great heritage won by your predecessors in the faith, and build for the future on their foundations. On this special day, plan a special service with great music of inspiration, rousing choruses of the Holy Spirit, and congregational and personal prayers that seek the guidance and direction and presence of the Holy Spirit. Following the service, plan a church-wide fellowship covered dish lunch. Make sure every person and family in the church gets an invitation personally from the Pastor and lay leadership. Encourage attendance on that day by asking each member to make a new commitment to the church and to each other by joining in the fellowship, and giving God a new opportunity to work beyond the past hurts and wounds that some may feel. Emphasize the question, "What will the next ten years bring?" Celebrate the rich history of sacrifice and commitment that are evident as you regard the past, and determine how you will influence the future of the **First Church**, so that those who come after you will have a history to celebrate.



These **general suggestions** are meant to respond to the concerns of which the consultants have learned during their work with you, that of a deep desire to reclaim the rich heritage and position of spiritual-servant leadership of **First United Methodist Church** in the Burkburnett, North Wichita County community. As noted, we believe that every problem or issue is best addressed in the light of Biblical truth and the leadership of God's Spirit. There are many spiritually mature, dedicated persons in the church, as evidenced by those who attended the workshop.

Every organization, whether religious or secular must seek to bring every part of its constituency possible on-board with its Shared Vision, so that ownership of the organizations' life is shared by all. This is the key to minimizing negative and hurtful circumstances, which even if engaged in by only a small part of the organization effect the whole, and often render it helpless to do what needs to be done to fulfill its identity and mission.

There is, in the field of physics today, a theory called "Field Theory". Its premise is that any action of any part of the whole sets the whole into movement and action. If that is true in physics, it is already known to be true in human social interaction. Therefore, the larger part of the whole, which were clearly represented in the **Vision and Values week-end**, desire only the best for the church and are sincerely willing to listen, communicate, plan, and to come to conclusions within the context of a **Shared Vision**. These leaders must now begin to take charge and put the best interests of the **Covenant Community** at **First**, before the congregation, in order to influence outcomes by a strong witness toward the future.

Finally, it is important to recognize that there is a difference between **unity** and **unanimity**. The latter means that everybody agrees about everything. We all know that is both impossible and unhealthy in any context. **Unity**, however, is a different matter. When we are in the **UNITY** of the faith, (see Ephesians 4; Romans 12) we may disagree about specific issues or concerns. That disagreement, however, is always subject to the larger mission and goal which we are attempting to accomplish as well as the essential identity that is ours to present the message of Jesus Christ to the world. Our decision making, after honest and prayerful debate and consideration, must always be consistent with that which has been adopted by the **Covenant Community**. In this **Shared Vision** an individual may not always "get his or her way". But he or she knows that the greater good is in fulfilling the mandate of Christ, for the way chosen is the way of God's call in the **Covenant**.

First United Methodist Church

AN OVERVIEW

(FOR REFERENCE TO ALL STATISTICS BELOW, SEE TABLE II, ATTACHED)

ATTENDANCE STATISTICS:

First United Methodist Church is a congregation reporting 417 full members at the end of the year 2006, with an average reported morning worship attendance of 160 persons. The membership figures reported to the North Texas Annual Conference and published in the Conference Journal indicate a slight, steady decline in membership over the past decade, the greatest loss being between 2002 and 2002, when a net loss of 49 persons was reported. Since 1997, the overall **membership** loss for the ten-year period has been 128 persons, a 23.4% decrease. 195 persons were removed from the role by Charge Conference action during this period, and 259 new members were received. The decline, of course, included death and persons who withdrew and/or transferred their membership during the period. While membership statistics are not the most important indicator of a church's health, it is important to realize that each of these numbers represents a person, whose spiritual needs are the mandate of the church to meet. Self-examination by a congregation is, therefore, an important part of regarding how well we are doing in reaching the community we serve by sharing the fellowship of the Christian life meaningfully with all persons.

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. This figure, along with Sunday School attendance and giving averages truly measure, as no other objective standard, the spiritual strength of a congregation.. As long as the attendance averages in public worship are going up, even if slightly, there is a momentum than can carry over into other emphasis of program and ministry. **This is a key factor in the quality and spirit of a congregation. .**

Membership in the Sunday School has fluctuated slightly in the ten years, but, overall, has not varied significantly, although the overall increase in Sunday School membership is a statistic of some mystery. Perhaps reporting methods should be reviewed. The overall increase in Sunday School membership of 69 persons, or 20.1% is inconsistent with the Sunday School attendance records, as well as the membership and attendance at worship. A correction of reporting, or

a review to determine is an error in counting members of the Sunday School may be in order. If, indeed, that is the accurate membership of the Sunday School, why is the average attendance not increasing as well? And what can be done to encourage Sunday School class members to be more consistent in their attendance? Leaders in Christian Education will do well to examine this enrollment peak and determine its accuracy and its cause.

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. This is true because the supportive and relational nature of most Sunday School classes, usually retains attendance levels longer. (See Statistical Table) One of the first means of reclaiming persons into the church's life, is in the development of new Sunday School classes in which persons can begin to develop friendships and sense a supportive community that is simply not possible in either worship or short-term groups. This is a point of immediate concern. It is always a "red-flag" when attendance in the Sunday School declines. **First** must consider this issue as critical to its future, and begin to examine the availability of facilities for establishing and growing both new and existing 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. While this does take place in a minimal fashion, the best hope for Sunday School growth is in new classes. This is because once classes are formed for several years, their identity is set, and it is difficult for new persons to "break through" established, long-standing bonds. Hence, growth is in new class development. Facilities that attract and provide "growing room" for new Sunday School classes, small-group enterprises at other times during week-days, and offer spiritual, recreational, and social growth spaces are the hall-mark of the future for a congregation that wants to grow, not just for growths sake, but for meeting the mandate of Christ to reach and serve the people who are in our ministry constituency.**

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 2007. A 600 member congregation will have opportunities and ministries available to it that are not present in a basically 400-member church, especially since new members will bring a new level of enthusiasm to the church's life. New members are always excited about their decision to unite with a congregation. If they are not excited, they would not take that step. Hence, the addition of new members consistently, ALWAYS, encourages a new and dynamic element of excitement in a congregation.

STEWARDSHIP STATISTICS:

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 (Grand Total Paid), was in 2006.. These variances are somewhat related directly to the expenditure for **Local Church Operations** and **Mission-Benevolence** giving. These have 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. (See sheet on Statistical Facts in Appendix). Certainly, this would not be an usual response with regard to congregational response in budget support. Always, leadership is key in any organization, and that is never more true than in a local congregation. **Local Church Operations** vary related to the employment of support staff as well as facility needs from year to year., and this makes significant impact on overall expenditure.

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, the per-capita giving increases, or when staff members are added. But even allowing for that apparent cause of per-capita increases, the overall per capita has increased at a positive rate. In the ten-year study period, the per capita giving has shown an overall increase of \$245 or 40.1 %. Related to this is the inflationary adjustment for the decade, indicating that the congregation exceeded inflation by 3%, a truly remarkable accomplishment, considering the decline in membership and average worship attendance. 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.

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.**

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. In addition to our Lord’s mandate to seek out and win others to salvation, the reality of

changing economic times, and the demographic changes which see the older, supporting generations declining, delivers to us, from an institutional perspective, a clear message of the necessity of outreach ministries that will result in membership growth. **Growth and new approaches to ministry are essential, if the present congregation wishes to present a legacy to another generation, as they received a rich heritage from the generation preceding them.**

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:

**BUILDERS-----81 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER
SILENTS.....AGES 62-80
BABY BOOMERS...AGES 45-61
SURVIVORS.....AGES 22-44
MILLENNIALS..... AGES 6-21
GEN-Z.....AGES 0-20**

If the highest percentages of the congregations' income are being contributed by the "Builders" and "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. The next paragraph vividly illustrates why this is a major concern for every United Methodist Church.

Based on studies done in 1996, we know that **25%** of our 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 to your church. Nevertheless, 26.4 percent of **First's** income is contributed by Silents and Builders.

The sobering reality in all this is that those same studies indicate that **one-half of currently surviving persons (year 1996) over age 53 will be deceased by the year 2010**. At that time, the youngest members of the "**Silent Generation**", will be 68 years old. If these predictions are true, and the actuaries believe that they are, then by 2010, it is possible that a high percentage of **First's** income to be used for mission, service, youth work, children's ministry, music and all other ministries of the church **COULD** be gone. While some maintenance growth will mitigate this statistic, there is ample evidence to be gained by an analysis by financial officials to fear that **First** is at a crossroads with regard to its future. Major emphasis on evangelism, church membership recruitment, and spiritual development will be essential in the next 2-5 years if the trend is to be reversed.

Certainly, the issue is not merely statistical. **It is spiritual to the core.** However, the statistics paint a picture for us that can be used to understand our circumstances, and, in turn, help our motivation to intervene in present trends so

that we may maintain a viable and missional congregation to serve our Lord in the area in which God has called us to minister and to serve.

For recent comparisons of **Giving by Generation**, please see the chart under that title included in the appendix. Also see the chart on **12 Statistical Factoids** included in the Appendix.

BENEVOLENCES

As indicated in the **Ten Year Statistical Table**, benevolence giving by the church also remained steady. In each year but one of the study period the church contributed faithfully to apportionments and other benevolent causes, consistently **surpassing a tithe** of its income to causes beyond itself. In every year of the decade, the church responded to ministry beyond its walls by paying **100% of apportionments**. This is to be commended with a loud **“Hallelujah”**. A part of being a **Covenant Community** is that we are not only in **Covenant** with each other, but with others across our denomination, who together are carrying on a worldwide ministry for Jesus Christ.

Summary:

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.**

These statements, based on an analysis of the statistical record, are related directly to the congregation’s perception of what major influences over the past five to seven years have resulted in the present landscape and intra-church environment, which is now present in the congregation. Participants in the workshop, after a significant process in which these issues were discussed, reached the conclusion that the following factors are the most salient ones that have led to the present state of the church. **(See detailed analysis of workshop results in attached “Strategic Plan Document”)**

1. Youth ministry
2. Trends in Worship Service
3. Changing society
4. Competition for time
5. Building

These significant influences on the congregation's developing identity will define its self-image as well as the perceptions of the community on the churches willingness to receive new members, its involvement in community life, and the spirit of caring that is evidenced through these trends.

How a church is perceived in its community is of utmost importance, and whether it is viewed as a 'fortress' which cannot be penetrated except by a few, or as a staid, boring, non-dynamic congregation, or as a community of open and welcoming people makes all the difference. The choice of that public perception will be especially critical with the potential membership from the new, young population that may be entering the community, essentially bringing about a slow, quiet renaissance that can represent a whole new future for **First** .

Beyond the influences listed as primary (above) by workshop participants, the congregation has a core of faithful, caring persons who desperately want to see changes and to see a vital, vibrant congregation emerge in the near term. It is this core group that will bring new vision from the inside, thus determining the identity of the congregation to itself and to the larger community.

The consultants have observed the fact that the congregation's community life is already, intuitively perhaps, responding to these concerns. Without question, the spirit of workshop participants was universally positive, and reflected genuine interest in the future of the church, and restoring the growth and enthusiasm of the early years. With this spirit among a significant portion of the core leadership, there is every reason to believe that the declines of the past few years can be overcome, and a positive direction continued.. To accomplish this, persons who dwell on past issues and hurts must be lovingly confronted, perhaps with mediation, and asked to get "on board" with the positive new direction and the **Strategic Plan** that the congregation will continue to develop.

Short of this kind of "buy-in" not to every detail. but to the general movement of the congregation as it emerges into a Spirit-led body, the church must move on, even without the support of dissenters. There is good, New Testament precedent for this, as may be read in Jesus' instruction of mission and witness to his disciples. There will be a period of adjustment in which priorities will be sorted out. But these will be short-lived as the congregation solidifies its vision, and strategically plans for the future.

The stated Core Values of the congregation as perceived by **Vision and Values** participants indicate just how central to the life of this congregation is the above awareness.

CORE VALUES: (See full work-list in STRATEGIC PLAN OUTLINE document)

These **Core Values**, as determined by participants, are basic to the self-understanding of the congregation. They should form a basis for discussion in the small groups previously mentioned, and the results of those discussions perfected by the leadership, and kept consistently before the congregation, along

with [the Statement of Mission](#), so that these become the self-understanding and identity of the community.

This is not to say that they are written in stone, for regular review is essential. But for the short term, the perfected [Core Beliefs or Values](#) will inform the congregation, and along with the [Mission Statement](#), be the measuring statements of the [goals, objectives, and action plans](#) of the church. When all of these are consistently reviewed and followed, the system will be in place that will reduce the conflict of uninformed opinion and pre-judgements based on personality and individual preference alone.



The remainder of this section of the report will be a brief analysis and recommendations to be considered in the following areas of the church's life:



WORSHIP

The worship service attended by the consultants during the course of the **Vision and Values Workshop** 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.**” (Would the congregation consider an investment in a better quality of paper on which to print the bulletin?)

If these are typical services, the congregation will offer an appealing first impression to many of the target population in the community, as well as meet the needs of those who are already a part of the church. There is a sense of warmth and friendliness on the part of the membership that is clearly in evidence to those who already know each other. The consultants, obviously strangers to all but a few of the worshipers, were, for the most part, enthusiastically greeted and welcomed by some of those present on that Sunday. Since they were not seated together, the experience of one of the consultants was quite different than the other, the one being greeted profusely by those seated around him, and the other largely ignored in another part of the sanctuary. This is a point of concern that should be addressed by an effort to make the congregation aware of the importance of acknowledging and greeting strangers and newcomers to the church. It is such a simple and obvious thing, but one that cannot be overemphasized...reaching out to visitors is the task of not only official greeters but also **every member of the church**. Encourage persons not to walk by and ignore others, but to engage them warmly, and ask if there is any information or service members can render at that moment.

On a scale of 10-100 points, with the highest level of evaluation of worship related to the context of community life, the consultants would rate the worship services at 90. The message was clear, Gospel centered, and well delivered. The church is fortunate to have a minister who is alive and vital, and delivering a message of relevance and inspiration. 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.

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.

Certainly, worship styles are important insofar as they point people to Jesus Christ, and enhance a meaningful spiritual experience for the worshippers. It is essential for us all to realize that not every worship style appeals to every person. That does not mean one is superior to another, or one more “spiritual” than the other is. **It simply means that individuals have different worship needs, and what is comfortable and reassuring and spiritually fulfilling for each worshipper is what must be the guiding principle of the congregation’s overall worship planning and experience.** The consultant’s interviewed a bright young family who are faithful members of the congregation who had occasion to visit a non-denominational church. They left that experience without any idea what those churches stand for or believe in. They simply found that the public worship of God is done in an exciting, dynamic fashion that appealed especially to their children.. We United Methodists must be more sensitive to that need, particularly in younger generations. It is certainly in our Methodist tradition. The Wesley brothers moved away from the musical styles of 17th century England and set the marvelous hymns we now sing as traditional hymns to the beer hall music of their time. They knew that music could move people and that the Gospel has never been limited to one perspective of music or worship approaches.

The most recent studies indicate that young adults are moved not only by offering different worship styles but also by finding a place of acceptance, relationships, and opportunities for service. Indeed, the consultants’ research, along with many others, is now finding that younger “Baby-Boomers” and the “Survivor” generation are open to substantive worship that helps them to connect with the churches and experiences of their youth and childhood. They simply don’t want to be bored to death with the same old thing, Sunday after Sunday. While this is often economically generated, that is, it is occurring within socioeconomic upper-middle class young adults, it is nevertheless a phenomenon that is very real in this new millennium. Both aspects must be within the spectrum of those who plan for both worship and program ministries in the church today.

Without question, growing churches in America which have offered both traditional and contemporary worship experiences have been the growing churches, quite apart from parochial identity. Churches that have held fast to traditional worship only have remained static or declined. (Hartford Seminary Study, 2000-2001.) Therefore, if congregations’ make the decision to grow, both options will be offered.

Additionally, the consultants inquired of several clergy and lay persons in the North Texas Conference as to the overall perception of **First** by persons outside the congregation. Responses almost always included phrases like “tied to the past”, “bound to tradition”, “resistant to change”, “not open to new thinking”, “afraid to venture out”, “conflicted about mission and future”. Again, seeking only to “speak the truth in love”, the consultants do not place these comments here to be hurtful. Indeed, our experience of the congregation is not consistent with these comments, at least in the brief time of our work with you. However, often “perception is reality”, and if this is the perception of those outside the congregation, it cannot be a good image that is being projected. The renewal of spirit within the congregation is the key to altering this image in a positive way.

All this being said, it is still true that different styles appeal to different people. Therefore, the consultants recommend that the Worship leadership of the church, both clergy and lay, investigate developing a “blended” worship experience that will include, from time to time a variance of praise and traditional. It is well to develop these parts of worship, capitalize on them, and publicize the options to the larger community. If both services are to continue, as well they should, both should be resourced with the best music, instrumentation, and audio systems that are available.

In the final analysis, worship is grounded in Holy Scripture, focused on God, and provides the format upon which we, as worshippers, seek to become reconciled to a Holy, Almighty, Redemptive Father. **We are, in true worship, not seeking to put on a “performance” for each other, which honors man, but to center our lives in God’s call and God’s will for our lives. Neither are we there simply to have a “feel-good” emotional experience.** True worship is never “subjective” (centered in “I”) but “objective” (centered on God). The Biblical outline for worship in the Judeo-Christian heritage is Isaiah 6. Essential worship elements revealed there are as follows:

- **Adoration and Praise**—“I saw the Lord, high and lifted up, and his train filled the Temple”
- **Conviction and Confession of Sin**---“Woe is me, for I a man of unclean lips, and dwell among a people of unclean lips.”
- **Forgiveness and Call**---“Behold, your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven”
“Whom shall I send, who will go for us”
- **Commitment and Commission:** “Here I am, send me.”
“Go, and say to these people.....”

When these are the criteria for worship the stage is set for the power of God to address us. Attention to planning and ordering worship centered in this Biblical

format and with an eye to **adoration** rather than **entertainment** will honor God and bring a new spirit of unity and understanding to the cooperation.

Other Worship Considerations:

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. **Perhaps a registration/information desk could be set up in the narthex could and staffed with a volunteer before and after the service so that newcomers and visitors could receive both direction and registration information there. Further, the use of name tags should be undertaken, even though some will say they already know everyone. The name-tags are worn so that new-comers can see and recognize the names of the membership. This will make it easier for visitors to wear temporary, paper tags, which they can obtain through the volunteer at the registration table. When tags are used, emphasize the first name of each person in large letters with the surname beneath it in smaller letters. Design the tags so that they are easily readable from 8-10 feet. A volunteer can alphabetize and re-display the tags each Monday morning.**

The following related suggestions are offered:

Ushers should continue to concentrate on **managing** the seating by politely asking worshippers to shift to eliminate single spaces in the pews where possible, and to seat persons as close to the front as possible. This eliminates latecomers being required to walk past (or climb over) other worshippers to be seated. . For now, seating management by ushers can handle this concern.

Remember that it is a fact in worship today that music is 40% of the spiritual impact of worship. (Lyle Schaller, Alban Institute, 1998) **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. The congregation is blessed with a faithful music ministry, which is an important drawing card to growth. It is important to let the community know this!!!!***

Another major Growth Principle: When a voluntary people space is 80% filled, it has reached the comfort level. Strong leadership may drive attendance to 85-90% for a while, but like the law of gravity, the 80% rule will win. This 80% rule applies to parking, sanctuary, Sunday School and nursery space.

The consultants suggest that the children's time be varied in its presentation, with the pastor presenting it one or two Sundays and month, and young parents being asked to deliver it on the other Sundays. Now and again, it will be helpful if youth, those of teen-age years, were to be asked to participate by offering the children's message. A children's worship bulletin is excellent for children to use in the worship experience, and can serve as a teaching tool for the experience of worship, the Scripture lesson, the meaning of the hymns, and other things. It may well be used to focus on the pastor's topic, with colored pencils to fill in cartoons related to the message. Bible references for the child to look up and other items may be included to focus the child on what is happening in worship. Children feel valued when this is made available to them.

A worship tip: Could?...would?...the ushers restock pews with pens, offering envelopes, etc. prior to each service, as well as straighten up the pews? It would take little time for the team of ushers, and would enable worshippers, especially visitors, to have what they need for the worship services. Materials placed in the pews should be fresh and new, not dog-eared, outdated, and dirty.

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.**

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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. The following list of KNOWS may be helpful in offering the program leadership guidance as they plan program offerings in the church over the next 12-36 months.

KNOW whom you are trying to reach!

Demographics, family sizes, educational levels, income status, etc.
Subscription to PERCEPT, Inc. or other demographic resource firm is
A helpful tool in bringing this information together quickly.

KNOW what they are thinking!

Market trends and analysis, surveys, visitation, target mailings.

KNOW your competition!

Other churches (both United Methodist and others) nearby.
What is working best for them? Ask them? Visit them! Talk to
their leaders.

KNOW your message!

Mission statement, core values and beliefs, shared vision, clearly
defined and used in all possible ways.

KNOW why the church should care!

Biblical proclamation, study, prophetic declaration of church’s
Vision and Mission.

To facilitate the above, the Consultants recommend:

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.

This task force will also be charged with making the web-site more accessible than the current site which is very difficult to find. A church domain name that can be publicized on its own, independently of other domains is essential in the

present climate of how people find churches. Review the existing web-site for effectiveness. It is now well-done, but unexciting. The task force will be charged with finding ways to make it more exciting, so that persons who go on the site will want to stay and browse through it. Publicize your web-site address on all publications, and on the sign in front of the church. Link it with the Chamber of Commerce, or the city, if possible. This can be done through signing up the senior pastor as a representative member for the church of the Chamber, which should be done anyway, to raise the pastor's profile and that of the church in the community. Ways and means of lifting **First** into the awareness of both community leadership and the general population is essential. That is the mandate for this task force.

ADDITIONALLY, WE RECOMMEND:

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**. You know better than the consultants what works best in this type of endeavor in your church.

Investigate carefully what the needs are in the community. What children's needs can be met? What about a Latch Key, after school program to supplement the current day school program? The current missional work in which the Church is involved is most commendable.. How can you build on this, and create a heightened awareness within the community that **First Church** wants to offer ministries of compassion and care? This congregation, in view of the ministries now being offered, operates from a paradigm of compassionate ministry and service. Building on that marvelous tradition, intentionally and energetically, will result in a community appreciation and recognition that will lift up our Lord to the parish area that God has called us to serve.

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. This principle helps us to understand why so much apathy exists in congregations. We, too often, fail to ask people what they want, what they think, or what they need. When we ask, and people feel respectfully heard, they we be more willing to support what evolves with their time, talent, and resources.

All of the above is recommended so that **First** will begin an intentional effort to identify its place in the religious marketplace in the community, to define this congregation's unique niche that is not now being met in that community.

The key to success for this congregation is to find an identifiable and relevant identity that goes beyond the present perception of self-satisfied (already noted) that will create an awareness of the church as a caring, compassionate congregation, reaching out to meet real needs and providing valued and valuable ministries to its constituency.

What is it that **First Church** has to offer that cannot be found in the other congregations that are in easy driving distance of the area?

The answer, of course, must be personal warmth and intimacy, a place to be involved, a place to be heard, a place where every person makes a real difference. The impression of the church presently, as expressed by a number of those interviewed by the consultants is that of a non-identity. The community does not know for what the church stands, or what it represents. Finding ways to overcome this impression is essential.

Specifically, then, the following suggestions are offered for your consideration:

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

Remember that it takes one small group (10-12 persons) to nurture and sustain every 10 persons in worship. This is another Growth Principle.

Averaging approximately 160 in worship, **First** would need at least 16-18 small groups, defined as program groups other than administrative groups. (Not committees but study/service/fellowship groups. The consultants suggest that the Church Council inventory the side-port entry points already in place and emphasize and strengthen them, adding others as needed and outlined in this report. (For example, the Wednesday night youth program would be a small group, as would the choir, or various Sunday School classes. Add Bible Studies and other groups focused on one or more subjects, and you already have a big head start on the number of groups needed. The trick is to share the knowledge of these groups with the larger community through your newly formed Public Relations Action Team.

5. The consultants recommend, in the light of the Sunday School attendance decline, a “Back to the Sunday School” program be designed and implemented to seek out present church members not now enrolled in a Sunday School class. Help for this type program is available from many sources. It is important to emphasize both growth in Christian knowledge and face-to-face relationships in this endeavor.
6. Offer, at times safe and convenient, the Disciple Bible Study, (already being offered), a pastor’s Bible Study course that is more devotionally oriented, (also now available), and one or two support groups which will meet community needs, i.e. parenting, grief support, divorce support, etc.
7. **Be conscious of the fact that younger Boomers and Survivors put a high premium on the safety and quality of the care of their children. They will not put their crib infant in the same room with a toddler. They will go past the sanctuary and the office straight to the nursery and can recognize immediately if the church is prepared for *their* child They require detailed information on safety, sanitation, and emergency options. They prefer to see these things in writing. If policy statements have not been adopted and made available by the appropriate bodies, this should be an immediate priority within the next month. **Again, this is a Growth Principle.****

Of course, thorough background checks on all persons who work with children are necessary.

One other matter: If a system is not now in place to check children in and out of the nursery to their parents only, devise one. It can range from the simplest “chit” program, to a more elaborate, but inexpensive in-house pager system which can be used to “vibrate” the parents from the sanctuary in even of necessity, and to present the pager (which is numbered) to pick up a child.

Through the aforementioned Communications/Public Relations Task Force, publicize what is going on in the church, especially with youth and children’s ministries.

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.

Follow-up contact by pastor/staff after this first visit and within three-five days is also most important.

As noted above, investigate the possibilities of offering one or two courses a year in such things as grief recovery or divorce recovery to the community, as part of the emphasis on “side-port entry” opportunities. Don’t give up if the attendance is not great at first. Keep trying, and publicize the rationale through direct mail advertising or through the Chamber of Commerce and the Schools. Utilize resources from nearby colleges or social services, and emphasize that the leadership of these events will be from outside the membership of the church. Costs of this enterprise will be born through small registration fees by the participants. Other such offerings may be parenting courses, working with adolescents, caring for older persons, the “Sandwich Generation”, and a myriad of other topics of interest that are needed and important to most people of our time. Additionally, courses in financial planning and management for young families are often welcome and can be taught by a trust officer of a bank, or, often, free of charge by a financial consultant or accountant. One church asked a local pediatrician to teach a short course on infant care for young mothers in the community. The response was staggering.

Continue to teach Disciple Bible Study. Continue to offer the Emmaus experience (without pressure) to your membership. Additionally, the consultants suggest that a short term Bible Study be taught by the pastor once each week in early evening for one hour, and that this be well publicized as open to the community.

Most important of all.....would the congregation consider beginning a mid-week “Live Night” in which all ages could come to the church for dinner (could be covered dish), and for a selection of courses in Bible and other topics that would be short term (6 weeks at most), in the Fall and Spring of each year. These courses would begin each year in the Lenten Season and in the Fall from mid September until November 1. A suggested schedule would be as follows:

6:15-7: P.M.	Dinner together as a congregation
7:00-8:00 P.M.	Courses for Adults, youth and Children offered
	Choir rehearses at this time.
8:00 P.M.	Adjournment

If such a program is adopted, publicize and promote it in the congregation and in the community, being sure that the entire community knows that it is invited. Obtain good leadership through the Annual Conference and the District, and DON'T GIVE UP! Give more than one chance for this to work. This approach has been effective in churches of all sizes in our conference, and with the right promotion and the right leadership can raise the profile of the church in the community and reach persons who are unlikely to come, at first, on Sunday morning. The consultants will be most happy to work with you to get such a program underway.

Investigate the need for support groups for single parents in the community, and sponsor one of these groups after consulting with some of the single parents themselves.

PASTORAL AND STAFF CONCERNS:

Essential to every church's life is the professional leadership that is engaged to give leadership and inspiration to the congregation. This section is meant to encourage both pastor and congregation in keeping relationships open and straightforward, and in encouraging both to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4) in order to keep open appropriate lines of communication. The following suggestions are offered in this regard.

1. Recognize the pastor's strengths as noted above and play to them. Her strong relational sense and her trustworthiness make her one who is able to keep confidences.
2. If and when staff members are added in the future, be careful that they are engaged with an eye to staff compatibility as well as intrinsic gifts and graces.
3. Every pastor has the right to staff loyalty. Be sure this is present and refuse to engage in responding to criticism from staff members that are properly directed only to the Pastor or the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. While this is in no way implies the presence of any disloyalty at the present time (there is none), it is a cautionary word that requires alertness by SPR.
4. Provide her with a strong, detail oriented staff, who will set the pastor free to be the pastor, i.e. to prepare for the central work of declaring the Gospel, and to care for the pastoral needs of the people of the church.
5. The consultants have no access to the tenure of senior pastors over the lifetime of **First Church**. It would be interesting to investigate the average pastoral tenures, and to determine the length of the pastorates, which were regarded as the most effective. Studies show that pastorates beyond five years are, generally, the most effective, and pastorates beyond eight years, ultimately contribute the most to a congregation's life. Unfortunately, all too often, pastors serve shorter periods of time for a number of reasons, and these pastorates are detrimental, especially when there is one short-term after another.

Such short pastorates do not contribute to stability and direction, particularly in the time frame since World War II. All of the sociological studies related to churches indicate that a minimum of five to eight years is essential for a church to begin to orient itself toward growth and service. Thus, it is time for the congregation at **First** to “step up to the plate”, open lines of communication and understanding, and move the church in the consensus direction, (a **Shared Vision**) which the congregation will determine in concert with the senior pastor. . A real part of this will include recognizing the role of the Senior Minister as one of spiritual authority, particularly in matters of Biblical and ethical issues, as well as in issues of church polity and worship. The authority of the pastor is bestowed clearly in Holy Scripture, and while it is never to be wielded as control, it is always to be heard, respected, and honored.

The summary word is, “open the door to this pastor’s leadership, and see if she can lead you, over the next few years, to a level of ministry, growth, and Christian commitment that will make the former days, regarded by some as the “Golden years of **First Church**” a dim memory. This will only be possible when principles of leadership are understood, and when minor grievances and objections are put aside in favor of a larger vision of ministry in the name of our Lord. This does not mean legitimate criticism is out of bounds. Where genuine concerns of pastoral effectiveness are to be raised, it is perfectly valid to do so, and the United Methodist Church has a system for addressing these concerns. But where the concerns are fundamentally the “nitpicking of style”, the leadership of the congregation must firmly declare that the mission of **First Church** cannot be stymied by gossip, innuendo, or minor issues that offer little consequence to the larger picture.

It is important that a profile of pastoral expectations be developed, beginning now, by the Staff Parish Relations Committee, and that, upon completion, this document be presented for review and response to the entire congregation. Then, upon completion, it should be sent to the District Superintendent, who, in turn, will forward this document for use by the Cabinet of the North, Texas Conference.

For this reason, an active, visioning laity must begin to work with the present pastor for both to be at their best during this time. It is always important for a congregation to understand the profile of personality and behavior of their pastor to the end that strengths may be utilized and growing edges may be recognized. All persons in leadership offer certain strengths and skills, which when capitalized on can offer great advantages to the organization served.

One final word with regard to staffing: When we put 40% or less of our budget into staff, we are staffing for decline: 40-45% is staffing for maintenance, and 45% plus is staffing for growth. In 2006, **First** spent 41% (\$104,280) on staffing. So, from a financial standpoint, the church is staffing for maintenance. What must be done now is to review and evaluate **how** this money is being spent, and if the current staff configuration is the optimal. What must be weighed is the issue of

part-time/full-time staff members. The consultants offer a broad based staff study as a part of the service portfolio of [Church Development and Finance Associates](#). In the absence of a full-blown study, [CDFA](#) will provide reference materials to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee on request and without charge. **Again, this staffing/funding ratio is a Growth Principle.**

leadership is essential

LAY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The offering of the congregation in the area of Disciple Bible Study is the best foundation now available for developing lay leadership in a United Methodist Church. All three Disciple levels form a Biblical and theological understanding that is unparalleled in United Methodist history. However, it must not be regarded as the end, but as the beginning of lay leadership training and development in the church. Beyond this foundational study, the Consultants recommend that the congregation offer the following as part of an ongoing training for lay leadership:

Recruitment for the Emmaus Experience

Training in United Methodist history, polity, and doctrine

Basic Christianity by module, or Christianity 101 available at Cokesbury

Basics of leadership, Characteristics of Being a Leader, and Team Building

Stewardship Training

In the course of the workshop, and during other conversations with **First** leadership, it became clear that the above mentioned areas were very much a need within the church. The above outline provides spiritual, practical leadership and stewardship insights, which are essential for the leadership to possess as the congregation responds to the changes in the parish area. Without these insights, any growth in new members from outside the United Methodist tradition will not have the opportunity to be trained in the heritage and mission of their new church home. Especially is this true with regard to training in United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, and in the area of stewardship, as well.

Included as an addendum to this report, **Church Development and Finance Associates** is happy to provide the church with a four Sunday Biblical study in Christian Stewardship which is suitable for use with high school students as well as adults.

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. Such a seminar can be conducted by the partners in **Church Development and Finance Associates**, or by representatives of the Texas Methodist Foundation, or by any number of financial advisors and planners. There is no cost to the church in using **CDFA**. or the Texas Methodist Foundation. Private planners may charge a fee. In whatever direction the congregation seeks leadership, the necessity of conducting this seminar within the next year is essential. Such an effort would greatly benefit existing permanent funds. **First is to be commended for establishing its existing permanent endowment fund.** Continuing to inform congregational members of the existence of the fund and how it is used is an important ministry. Colleges, hospitals, and other charitable institutions are now seeking out, informing, and soliciting funds from persons who have an interest in their work. We in the church certainly have a ready-made audience of people who have invested in their church throughout their lives, and becoming aware of opportunities in estate planning will be interested in continuing to do so upon the end of their lives. It is important for the Permanent Endowment committee to design literature and events in this regard that will assist persons in understanding the benefits of charitable giving in their estate plans.

The future of any church, financially speaking, is in permanent funds to support specific ministries. While it is unlikely that accumulated funds would ever grow large enough to support the entire budget, the supplementary effect of proceeds from endowment funds can enhance the ministry of any church. From 1990-2010, financial experts tell us that we are living in the time of the greatest transfer of wealth in the history of the world. As this generational transfer of wealth continues, it is the wise congregation that looks to its own members as they plan their estates to support permanent funds. What better source than to ask people who have loved and supported their church for their lifetimes to share a part of God's blessings to them in material terms with their church when they have gone to be with God?

FACILITIES

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, though the addition of more color in the landscaping will enhance the visibility of the church, as will attention to the signage, which needs upkeep and up-dating, especially that signage located on I-44. . There is, clearly, a pride in the building, which is well founded. Given this sense of pride,

there is no doubt that commitment to care and maintenance of the facility will continue. The first impression to the visitor is a positive one, and the suggestions below are meant to enhance the sense of ambiance, which the church facility offers to the community.

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

Directional signage is important, both inside and outside. Such signs will help visitors to more quickly find their way to the nursery. What often seems easy to those of us who are accustomed to a building is intimidating to a person who is new. Therefore, directional signs pointing to nursery entrance, worship center entrance, and other areas of initial traffic are important. There are presently no clear directional signs outside to identify or Sunday entrances to nursery facilities. Nor are there any hallway directional signs to point the way to offices, sanctuary, nursery, or classrooms. A hanging sign, at the intersection of hallways leading to the new educational building, would be most helpful.

Be sure to place your web-site address, when it is on all signage sign and leave it there permanently. Young, computer-literate adults now shop for a church home on the Internet more than from any other source. Placing the web address on the bulletin and church newsletter and any other mailings is essential. (Note: Keeping the web-site up to date is essential because of this fact.) **A Growth Principle: Readable, attractive, visible exterior and interior signage is essential to attract visitors.**

With regard to parking issues, it is important to note that most of the parking is street parking, with the addition of the lot on the south side of the church and the parking spaces immediately behind the sanctuary building. This seems to be adequate at the present time, but an eye to the future for parking should be on the radar screen of the Board of Trustees. Baptist parking certainly effects the availability of parking spaces on the street in front of the church, and while cordiality reigns, obviously (a good thing), it will be well, as our Baptist friends prepare to move to other quarters sometime in the future to be aware of acquiring additional permanent parking for **First United Methodist Church**. This is an area that may well be investigated by the trustees, so that as renewal occurs in the city of Burkburnett, a plan will be in place to extend parking possibilities.

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.

The church currently is stretched beyond the 80% limit on parking; that is, it is considered full when 80% of capacity. Obviously, this is a matter of concern for growth. The ideal ratio advocated by marketing specialists in the corporate community is 1 space for 2.5 worshippers. With an average 11:00 A.M. attendance of 160 persons, the church requires 64 parking spaces to support present attendance. The crucial reality here is that the 80% rule is already being exceeded in point of fact. To a visitor, driving up and seeing no place to park, the tendency is to drive on to another church.

Once more, a Growth Principle for churches relates to cost-effective financing in this area.

The value of annual income to the church budget for each parking space can be determined by dividing the annual total expenditure by the average attendance at both services, giving a true *per capita* giving of worship participants. In 2006, that figure was \$1590.00. Multiply \$1590 by the numbers who come (on average) per car (2.5). The result is \$3975.00 per space annual income to the church budget when a parking space is full 52 weeks per year. If each parking space is worth \$3075, the addition of 20 new spaces would reap an additional annual income of \$79,500.00. Therefore, parking cannot be seen as an undue expense, but, rather, as a revenue producer for the church. Coupled with the larger benefits of serving a larger number of people in matters of faith, providing adequate parking is essential for a growing church. Acquisition or improvement of property for parking should always take this into account.

We also suggest (again) that consideration be given to an information center, located just inside the sanctuary entrance (this may be merely a table with information available and a lay person to staff it on Sunday morning). This is the ideal place for newcomers to be greeted, and such an intentional effort to assist people with direction and information will bring them more quickly into a “comfort zone” with the church that will prove extremely beneficial. If this area is too small, a nearby area to locate such a station, and directions to it, is important.

OUTREACH AND MISSION

Outreach in a local church is defined as the effort to reach and receive persons into the life of the congregation. **Missions**, on the other hand, is the effort of the local church to invest itself in various ways of serving, locally and globally, the larger needs of the world that can be met by the Christian community. One is inevitably linked with the other, for as persons become a part of the church, are nurtured in the faith and fellowship of the body of Christ, they naturally reach a point where some way to express their faith, to “live it out” in a concrete way becomes important to them. Therefore, the wise congregation recognizes the

need to have a system in place not only to reach people for membership, but to pass them through a process of Christian teaching, spiritual growth, and supportive engagement, until they reach a point of seeking out means of using their gifts and graces to serve the Lord in a “hands-on” way. This section will deal with each of these as now in place at **First Church**, with recommendations to the immediate development of these areas in the near term.

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.

Direct mail pieces, inexpensively but tastefully done, can also become a part of the outreach program. **As noted in the section on program development, the need to set a high profile in the community as a congregation sensitive to the needs of persons in the community, and making itself available to those needs is of the highest priority.** “Side-port entries” into the church offer many persons contact points that go far beyond inviting them to Sunday worship. Everything the congregation does or sponsors, from Weekday School, to Boy Scouts, from athletic team sponsorships to Disciple Bible Study, to the Christmas musical should be shared with the community.

Determining the target areas of growth, if they can be defined, best utilizes such a brochure by mailing specifically to those areas. One church in a community with multiple zip codes experimented with limited mailings within those zip codes and developed a way of tracking over the next four weeks which visitors came from those zip codes. Subsequent contacts of those visitors included a question concerning the reception of the mailing and if it had any influence or bearing on their attendance for the first time. It was discovered that the mailings played a significant role in pointing people to the church.

One caution: mailings without follow-up will never be effective. A process to monitor and evaluate this effort will be necessary for a mailing program to get the “bang for the buck” that it costs.

The bottom line on outreach, of course, is that of consistency and clarity as to what is being done in the program, an evaluation of what is effective, and what is not. The clear mission of an outreach program is to raise the profile of the church in the community, to establish a "market niche", and to let the larger community know that the church, its pastor and its program are there for the asking. A church that wants to grow will begin its community work with an awareness of these factors.

Consistent attention to a local church web-site is more important now than ever. The consultants cannot express strongly enough the importance of keeping the web-site up-to-date, and making it as relevant and exciting as possible. Whoever is in charge of the web-site should give attention to design and maintenance of the web-site, and quickly make any changes needed. Keeping current on the site is absolutely essential, because, as stated earlier, "you never get a second chance to make a first impression" A live, current, informative site will pay dividends to the church that will be surprising.

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. The consultants suggest that a three-month period of encouraging youth to "Bring-A-Friend", with special programs, both spiritual and recreational could be a start at emphasizing this youth growth. Youth must be encouraged with a special emphasis to include their friends in church activities.

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. However, missional opportunities that are more "hands-on" offer much to the involvement and participation of our membership. It is this

for which most younger people are searching today. Witness, for example, the success of Habitat for Humanity, the Appalachia Mission Project, and a myriad of “work trips” sponsored by churches across the whole Christian spectrum. . Whether a single Saturday involvement in Habitat, or the planning of a mission trip through the Conference’s mission program, this type of project catches the imagination of many persons, and enables people to truly sense their participation in the work of God in the world. Such projects do not have to start out as major ones. We recommend that the church investigate, through Annual Conference officials, the opportunities that are now available, or will become available over the next twelve months. Feature these in the church newsletter, and see if there is any interest, even from a few persons. If a few are interested, the Conference Office can couple your volunteers with others from nearby United Methodist Churches, and a significant ministry can be accomplished. The current missional outreach of youth ministry is truly to be commended. Youth mission trips are an unparalleled form of both Christian witness and commitment and teaching the meaning of servanthood to our young people. Expanding these opportunities to interested adults should also not be overlooked as an opportunity for the same benefits for adults. Many churches have used joint trips to expand mission and to inspire participants to a deeper faith.

Interestingly, all the studies have shown that the most successful churches in America are those that offer multiple opportunities for Christian persons to serve in some meaningful way in order to express their personal faith.

This service, of course, may be teaching, or singing, or serving in the kitchen. But many persons also long for short-term opportunities to serve others outside the walls of the church, and by that serving, to demonstrate that they are, indeed, making a real difference in the world. The tradition that is present in many churches through the model of “The Great Days of Service”, is one to be investigated and utilized in order to offer opportunities of meaningful mission to those who wish to live out their faith by offering acts of love and service to others.

CONCLUSION

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, all of the above report and recommendations boils 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. But if a large portion of the membership can be recruited, the future can indeed, be bright for **First**. It comes down to a matter of choice and determination, and the willingness of the congregation to move beyond "the way we've always done it", and to assert a new plan for the future. If this can be accomplished in the next few months, then the future bodes well for a bold and powerful move into this new millennium.

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!

The consultants at **Church Development and Finance Associates** will follow with prayerful interest the choices the congregation now makes. Whatever they may be, our support and concern will continue to be offered to you, and we will continue to be grateful for the opportunity to have been a small part of the ongoing development of your church. We invite you to keep us informed, and to call on us whenever we can be helpful. Our insights and expertise continue to be available to you whenever you wish to call upon us.

Thanks and God Bless You All!
Thanks and God Bless You All!

A PERSONAL WORD FROM THE CONSULTANTS

Again, our genuine thanks to all who participated, by interview or in the workshop. Their dedication of time, energy, insight, and interest reflected their love for **First United Methodist Church, Burkburnett**, and their willingness to invest in it the effort to make it the church God is calling it to be. God bless you all. We hold you in our prayers as you move into the future that God has for you.

Deep appreciation, as well, to Rev. Kathy McLean-Davis, for trusting us enough to allow us, even if for only a short time, into the inner workings of the church. This experience cannot always be easy for a pastor, but Rev. McLean-Davis dealt with us and with the events of the workshop with grace and patience. We cherish her ministry and her friendship.

Richard B. Hearne

Don F. Renshaw, D.Min

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE ASSOCIATES