



MINISTRY ACTION PLAN OF EPWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



***TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD
A BRIDGE TO A FUTURE
OF VITALITY AND GROWTH.***

***“You will be prosperous and successful. Be strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged,
for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”***

(A reading from Joshua 1 as the Israelites were about to cross the Jordan River)

Introduction

Beginning in the fall of 2012 the newly formed Vision Team started its work to assess the ministry of Epworth UMC and to create a vision for the future of its ministry. Using Doug Ruffle's book Roadmap to Renewal the team studied and discussed the many aspects of Epworth and its ministries. In the summer of 2013 the team circulated a survey to the congregation that explored their thoughts, feelings and desires. Using those results and other information, in January, 2014 the Vision Team created the Ministry Action Plan (MAP), an updated version of which is presented here.

Purpose of MAP

The purpose of the MAP is to provide our congregation and the church leadership with a summary of the goals of the church and a vision of the future. This will provide guidance and reference as the church grows and undertakes new directions and initiatives of service.

This plan is a living document and will need to be updated and modified on a periodic basis. The plan is submitted to the congregation and leadership as a step in the ongoing process of meeting the needs of today and assuring the vision of tomorrow.

Our Community

Our church is dedicated to welcoming all and developing relationships with one another and with Jesus Christ. Our church family provides support and caring for all its members. We are concerned for the community and making a difference in the lives of others in the name of Jesus Christ.

Our congregation of about 280 members is made up of a full spectrum of ages and family situations. We have 60 people over 70 years of age, 87 persons that make up the 50-69 age group. We have 52 people in the 30-49 age range. Our 47 young adults range from 18-29 years old and our 19 youth range from age 11-17 and we have 15 children in our church community ranging from infants to age 10.

Mission Insite is a group that gathers information from the US Census and other sources. It has studied the local demographics for the community that surrounds our church. Some highlights from that data, collected as of 2016 are as follows:

- The population for the area studied is approximately 21,000
- Average age is 42 years old. 31% are over 55 years old
- Average household income is \$93,000 (often with dual incomes).
- One fifth are single parent households.
- 15% are "non-Anglo" ethnicity.
- 10-year population growth is estimated at about 10 percent.
- There are 14 houses of worship in the immediate area
- 51% consider themselves as "spiritual" yet only 22% find it important to attend religious services

Our Legacy and Values

For over 160 years, the members of our church have built what we have today. While there has been inspired pastoral leadership, then as now, it has been the people of the church who have decided to build and support the church in service to the triboro community. We must continue to strive to not only minister to our church family but go beyond the walls to serve the community in which we live.

Our Vision for Epworth Church

Our vision is to be a thriving, Spirit-filled church committed to changing lives through sharing Christ's love.

Mission Statement of Epworth Church

We share Christ's love by our lives (Discipleship), actions (Mission), and words (Witness).

Mission Statement of the United Methodist Church

The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. (Par. 120, UMC 2012 Discipline)

Our Welcoming Statement

At Epworth UMC, "welcoming all" means that we see all persons as created in the image of God and bearing sacred worth and dignity. We invite ALL persons to participate fully in the life of our church.

Our Challenge

"There has never been a more important time for us to focus our ministry on making new disciples, growing vital congregations and engaging in God-sized life transforming mission. As we know, The United Methodist Church, our congregations, our conferences, and our denomination is challenged like never before.

In the Greater New Jersey Conference, our challenges became clearer through a study of our historic trends and future projections. We found that between 2006 and 2016:

- Worship attendance declined by 20%
- Professions of faith declined by 34%
- Shared ministry collection rate declined 6%
- Baptisms declined from 3,321 to 1,882

These are discipleship trends, discipleship declines. The Historic Trends and 2030 Projections study indicates that if we do not change what we are doing right away, by 2030 we will have only 34,770 worshipers, down 12,981 worshipers and we will have 455 congregations, down 123 congregations."¹

¹ Episcopal Address by Bishop John Schol, May 30, 2013, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, Wildwood, NJ

As one can see from the Bishop's comments, maintaining the status quo is not an option. We need to boldly address our situation and initiate plans to reverse these trends within our own congregation. No longer can we dwell on what once was, but rather our focus needs to be on what, together, we can do today to make a difference for tomorrow and for generations to come.

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:19 May we embrace this "new thing" that is unfolding before us! We must open ourselves to see where the Spirit will guide us.

Our Opportunity

Epworth is well positioned to meet the challenge laid before us. We have strong leadership that is dedicated to the ministry. We have established missions that reach beyond our doors and our own membership. Our financial situation is stable and we are meeting our financial obligations. We have a well maintained facility that allows us to meet virtually any missional or ministry need. Our congregation seems to be willing to embrace change that promotes growth. With God's help, we are well equipped to reach out to make new disciples for Jesus Christ.

How do we proceed?

The ministry of Epworth UMC is a matter that we must commit to as a congregation and yet also as individuals. As Mordacai said to his niece, Esther, as they faced difficult times, "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14b Consider that God has gathered each of us from around the globe, literally, to be in this place at this moment. How will we respond? The greatest threats to us as a congregation are complacency, apathy and self-satisfaction.

Our Individual Ministry

Each of us through our baptism is called as a minister and, with God's help, our individual ministry can be very powerful and transformative. We can positively influence family, friends, colleagues, neighbors and those we meet in ways that will lead to a better world through our words and our actions.

Individually, we need to:

- Support our ministries and help create new ones
- Nurture our children in the life of the church
- Practice extravagant generosity
- Invite others to join us in worship, mission and fellowship
- Pray for the future of our church
- Share our faith with others by our words and actions

Five Areas of Congregational Ministry

Our congregational life together can be broken down into several key areas. These include Christian Hospitality, Nurture, Worship, Discipleship and Mission.

CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY: Welcoming, Inviting

1-2 Year Goals

1. To continue to develop a system for welcoming guests that goes beyond their initial visit to Epworth.
2. To become a congregation that incorporates and equips guests into the body of Christ.
HOW- Bible studies, discussion groups, fellowship events

Ongoing Goals

1. To continue to work to be more visible in the community through attractive signage, social media presence, community participation, working to reach beyond the walls.

HOW- Developing seasonal banners, update website, Facebook presence. Continued participation in Palmyra Day, July 4 parade, Vacation Bible School, Food Pantry, Christmas Concerts, and use of church facility to house local groups (scouts, Al-Anon, etc.)
2. To become more intentional about inviting others into our midst.
HOW- Using communication tools, designating special Sundays, special events
3. To continue to provide and further develop a variety of social and fellowship events for different age levels as well as multi-generational audiences.
HOW- Plan at least ten events per year. Also, each "group" of the church could sponsor an event that is open to all.

NURTURE: Caring for one another

Immediate Goals

1. To re-establish a Congregational Care Team that can:
 - a. Administer the sacrament of communion in homes and hospitals to those who are unable to attend services in the church.
 - b. To oversee the scheduling of in-home visits with shut-ins and others needing visits. Visits are to be made at least every two months with phone calls made between visits. A record of visits shall be kept in the church office.

- c. To provide educational opportunities designed to train volunteers to become part of the team.
 - d. Consider how we can best share wellness information with those who are unable to attend.
2. To create opportunities for discussion on various topics such as nutrition, parenting, grief and other assorted health issues.

Longer Term Goals

- 1. To schedule outside speakers throughout the year. This can be done through worship, or special events
- 2. To strengthen or create ministry such as parent support, bereavement support, caregivers support.

We will need to define "support" for clearer understanding

HOW- use communication tools, classes, studies

WORSHIP: 1-2 Year Goals

- 1. Have youth participate regularly in worship. especially on 5th Sundays.
- 2. To work on increasing worship attendance by 5% each year. This is to done by:
 - a. Implementing a welcoming system for our guests.
 - b. Being intentional in inviting others to be with us by designating special welcoming Sundays
 - c. Utilizing the full extent of communications and various media especially when we have a special Sunday.
- 3. To track attendance of worshippers and follow up on those who are absent
 - HOW- use email, phone calls, visits
 - WHO??
- 4. To continually evaluate the full Sunday worship experience including coffee hour and Sunday School schedules for effectiveness and acceptance.
 - HOW??
 - WHO??
- 5. To explore the need for additional worship experiences, both during special times or seasons of the year and on an ongoing basis.

HOW – develop a survey about worship and send to congregation

DISCIPLESHIP:

1. To continue to provide an in-depth, relevant range of Christian education experiences and studies for adults.
We should be intentional in varying time, day, and length of studies.
2. To continue to grow the youth ministry to incorporate mission work, church service projects, nurturing interaction among the youth and deepening personal relationships with God.
3. To invite members of our congregation and community to participate in classes and small groups.
4. To encourage the participation of more young children to attend and participate in Sunday School
HOW: Connect with the parents, Have special events geared towards the young.

MISSION:

1-2 Year Goals

1. To increase church participation in local missions.
2. To develop adult mission opportunities.

Ongoing

1. To involve more volunteers of all ages in mission work.
2. To work to be a “green” church. WHO??
3. To invite members of our larger community as well as members of our congregation to participate in our mission projects.

Supporting Ministries

Some of these ministries listed below have been longstanding while others are fairly recent. Each may have its own mission, function and leadership. The following chart illustrates where these supporting ministries relate to the five larger categories of ministry. We recognize that some groups may fit into multiple categories.

Christian Hospitality

Group:
Hospitality Team

Leader:
Jo Malessa

Goodtimers
Young at Heart

Fay Bassett
Anna Mae Magonigal

Nurture

Group:
Prayer Shawls
UMW & Circles
Memorials
Health Coordinator
Bereavement
Men's Fellowship

Leader:
Jo Malessa
Vicki O'Brien, Linda Sellars
Joan Schwering
Liz Rosvold
Jean Cook, Eva Schultz
Cliff Mason

Worship

Group:
Music
Worship/ Readers
Altar Guild

Leader:
Diane Soper
Janet Neff
Terry Neas

Discipleship

Group:
Sunday School
Youth Group
Adult Study groups
Emmaus
Vacation Bible School

Leader:
Tina Weiler (children), Dale Neas (adult), Jeff & Sandy Hancock (adult)
Charlie Soper
Charlie Soper
Tina Weiler, Charlie Soper

Mission

Group:
Bread of Life food pantry
Mary's Closet
Prayer shawls
Operation Christmas Child
Mission Committee

Leader:
Dale Neas
Donna Undercuffler
Jo Malessa

Ministry Support

Group:
Lay Leader
Administrative Council
Finance
Vision Team
Staff Parish
Trustees
Planned Giving

Leader:
Janet Neff
Don Neff
Dave Rosvold
Joe Garemore
Joe Garemore
Cliff Mason
Jean Cook

Creating New Ministries

Do you have an idea for a small group, a new ministry or activity, or a worship innovation?

Creative change, growth, and evolution prevent stagnation, and at Epworth we value new ideas and welcome new ministries and *ad hoc* committees. If an individual or group has ideas for change, innovation, or evolution, let the Administrative Council and /or Vision Team hear about it. If we are to move ahead as a thriving congregation each of us must take an active role.

Vision team

In addition to the Ministry goals, the Vision team has set the following 1-2 year goals:

1-2 year goals

- Establish a consistent and sustainable communications process to provide information and publicity on ministry activities internally and externally
- Identify community needs and requirements through surveys and dialogue with community groups
- Develop a facilities Master Plan to better serve the needs of the community through ministry
- Continue to review and update the MAP as needed.

Vision Team Commentary:

The initial MAP engaged many people and took more than a year to create. In review of the plan, the Vision Team recognizes that the goals are not as robust as they need to be in order to meet the needs of a faith hungry world. Setting achievable, realistic goals that go beyond maintaining the status quo is a challenging assignment. The Vision Team needs to review these goals, develop future goals and facilitate implementation of these goals in order to create disciples for Christ and lead us to a future that serves generations yet to come. We will continue to review and update this plan to better engage and inform our church. We pray for God's help and guidance.

Please review this plan and contact any of the following with your questions, ideas and suggestions.

2020 Vision Team

Joe Garemore, chair; Janet Neff; Vickie Bennett; Vicki O'Brien; Tina Weiler;
Mike Wariner; Liz Rosvold, Charlie Soper.