

Healthy Church Initiative Consultation Report: Sept. 24, 2011

FAQ SHEET: Frequently Asked Questions

Missouri UMC

Q: What is the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI)?

A: HCI is a program of the Missouri Conference of the UMC to help congregations grow in their discipleship and witness as we reach new generations for Christ. Our church chose to participate in this program, through action of the Administrative Council in 2010. Through HCI we have established an intercessory prayer team and vision team to help prepare the self-study and congregation for the Consultation Weekend which we hosted on September 22-25th. The weekend included interviews of staff and lay leaders, focus groups, training for church members, preaching by Bob Farr and presentation of our HCI Consultation Report that described the consultation team's findings of our strengths, growth areas and prescriptions for becoming a more missional and effective church for disciple making.

Q: What are we to do with the HCI Consultation Report?

A: On Sunday, October 23, 2011 at 6:00 pm, there will be a Church Conference for all members (including confirmed youth) to vote on the Prescriptions of the Report. A vote will be taken of the report in its entirety, with no amendments or exclusions. This is based on the wisdom from previous HCI consultations with over 65 churches. The success of the prescriptions and the ministries that result depends on the full execution of all the prescriptions.

Q: The report says we need to improve our welcoming and hospitality. Aren't we a friendly church?

A: Through an in-depth study, done by 12 mystery worshippers, all of whom do not regularly attend church, data demonstrated that the experience of connection, greeting before and after worship, overall friendliness and a willingness to return are areas that need to be improved because they are reducing the probability that a visitor will return. This can be done with intentional training, deployment of volunteer greeters, a system for integrating someone into the life of the church, and the joy of sharing the story of God's welcome to all people.

Q: What is the real problem with a plateaued worship attendance? What is it telling us?

A: Every year, a church can expect to lose 10% of its average worship attendance due to moves, deaths, transfers, etc. That would be approximately 70 people per year for our church. In order to simply maintain the church size, we need to receive 70 people every year by baptism, profession of faith and transfer. In order to grow, and make more disciples for Jesus Christ, we need to be welcoming, receiving and developing even more new disciples that will transform the world. Plateaued worship attendance is an indication that we are not achieving that goal.

Q: A "coach" is referred to frequently in this document. Who is the 'coach'?

A: Central to the HCI process and the success of churches working through their prescriptions is the presence of a 'coach.' Our coach is Christie Latona, a UM lay woman from the Washington D.C. area who's company and profession is coaching church leaders and facilitating change. Christie will regularly be in contact by phone with the pastor, and occasional visits to Missouri UMC throughout the next 18 months after the adoption of the Prescriptions. Her focus is to keep the system and its leaders accountable to the Prescriptions and encourage us with new ideas for ministry as we move forward as a church.

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Q: Why is a new structure of Lead Team and Operations Team needed?

A: The larger the organization, the smaller the governing and leading team. Sounds backwards, but entrusting a smaller group of folks for managing operations and moving the church towards its vision allows more people to be mobilized in life changing ministry. Large membership churches are staff-driven for mobilizing ministry through people involved in programs of the church. They are governed by a small group of elected leaders in a Lead Team (chairs of the functions of trustees, human relations and finance, the pastors and the lay leader). Most large membership United Methodist churches in our state and region have this 'single leadership team' model for accomplishing most effective ministry.

Q: Why isn't campus ministry a part of the HCI prescriptions?

A: Please be assured that campus ministry will be addressed in implementing the foundational Prescriptions #1 (Develop a Plan to Live Out the Mission and Vision), #2 (Staff Alignment and Leadership Development), #3 (Create a Welcoming Culture) and potentially #5 (Assess and Strengthen Worship Experience). Unlike ministry to children, youth and adults, it became apparent to the assessment team that more of the congregation had to own and name its identity (most identity aspects are mentioned in the "Strengths" portion of the report) before campus ministry would become an essential part of how and why MUMC does what it does.

Q: Will my worship service be changed?

A: Not necessarily. The HCI report has affirmed the quality of our current worship experiences and music and challenges us to look wider. In 2012-2013, a study group will develop a plan for more worship experiences at different times for different gatherings of people. Offering the good news of God's love for us in Jesus Christ through worship will be something we might do many times of the week. A focus on passionate worship and reaching all generations through worship should be a conversation that is always ongoing.

Q: What is post-modern worship?

A: Post-modern worship is typically multi-sensory worship that taps into the need to connect our spiritual growth with our daily life. It isn't typically "traditional" or "contemporary" in style but very indigenous to the people in the community, with emphasis on the arts, visuals and experiential moments. It can take many different forms and can happen at many different times and venues. A part of expanding our worship offerings will be to visit other congregations which offer postmodern worship to learn best practices and creative ideas for reaching new communities with the life-changing love of Jesus Christ.