

1 **Missouri United Methodist Church**

2 Consultation Report: September 24, 2011

3 **INTRODUCTION**

4 We, the consultation team, would like to thank Rev. Amy Gearhart, the pastoral staff and
5 program staff, lay leadership and congregation of Missouri United Methodist Church for the
6 invitation to consult with this Body of Christ. We read and digested the self-study document
7 provided by the leadership, conducted twenty interviews with staff and key lay leadership, and
8 led focus groups with members of the congregation and with the Vision Team. Everyone
9 cooperated and engaged with us fully. It is apparent that much groundwork has been laid for this
10 consultation and that much good work has been done. Our prayer is that God will use this
11 process to enhance the ministry of the Gospel in this part of the world.

12 **STRENGTHS**

13 **1. A Big Heart When Clear Needs are Seen**

14 Missouri UMC has demonstrated time and again its willingness, passion and commitment to meeting
15 needs—large and small—in its community and region. We celebrate, along with many we interviewed,
16 Missouri UMC’s intentionality in seeking to expand its offerings and efforts in meeting the needs of the
17 homeless population, at risk youth at Jeff Junior High School, natural disaster victims and more. The
18 community is seeking out Missouri UMC because of its resources and responsiveness. This is a source of
19 pride and excitement in the congregation.

20 **2. Music and Senior Pastor Preaching**

21 Music is a significant part of the ministry of Missouri UMC. It was consistently lifted up across the
22 weekend by many persons as excellent and meaningful on Sunday morning and people celebrated the
23 excellent connections forged by the former Director of Music with a variety of community groups
24 through a concert series. The excellence of its traditional music seems to be a draw for some in the
25 community. Almost everyone mentioned the strength and relevance of the Senior Pastor’s preaching on
26 Sunday mornings.

27 **3. Multi-Faceted Ministries—Something for Everyone**

28 From the diversity of perspectives, ages, interests and life situation, Missouri UMC is a place where a
29 wide variety of groups are formed and have life across the lifespan and contexts. Some describe Missouri
30 UMC as a large church made up of small communities.

31 **4. Building/Location**

32 Missouri UMC is a cathedral church to the state, built to serve the town and university. The historically
33 beautiful building and functional addition affords it ready access to the mission field that surrounds it. It
34 is also located on a heavily travelled road, with thousands of people walking and driving past the church
35 daily. With the campus located steps from the doors of the church and the community at its doorstep,
36 Missouri has an abundance of opportunities to attract, touch, welcome and engage thousands of people.

37 **5. Open and Hopeful in the Midst of Change**

38 Throughout the interviews we were struck by the high level of confidence and optimism even from those
39 who expressed concerns. It seems this community has a remarkable ability and willingness to stay

40 together in spite of disagreements, different opinions and concern about the “how’s” and “what’s”
41 involved in bringing Missouri UMC into its future while honoring its past.

42 **CONCERNS**

43 **1. Lack of Clear, Consistent Communication and Planning Processes**

44 It seems there is a lot of confusion in the system. It seems to stem from lack of clarity and transparency in
45 the decision making and planning processes along with uncertainty about lines of authority and who is
46 responsible for what. Unless people are directly involved in the decision making process it seems that
47 they are not aware of why a decision was made and/or how it will be implemented.

48 **2. Lack of Staff and Key Lay Leadership Cohesiveness and Teaming**

49 There seems to be a strong staff and dedicated key leadership, but no clear process for selecting,
50 developing, and coordinating all leaders and keeping everyone accountable. While efforts are being made
51 to address this, we see a need to realign this area with more intentionality and follow-through.

52 **3. Unwelcoming and Disconnected Discipleship Pathway**

53 We understand that plans are underway to create a stronger ministry of hospitality, connection and
54 belonging. The thirteen mystery worshippers shared the lack of hospitality they experienced over a three
55 month period when attending a worship service at 8:50 or 11:00, regardless of what day, time, or age of
56 mystery worshipper. (Unfortunately, mystery guests didn’t attend the 8:00 service because it was not
57 clearly mentioned on the website or signage.) Of the six areas assessed, the three areas of greatest concern
58 are post-service atmosphere, friendliness, return rating. Return rating is the likelihood of someone
59 returning to worship after their first visit. Taken together, these factors might help explain why only a
60 small percentage of first time guests return and become regular participants. Additionally, finding and
61 feeling a sense of belonging is a challenge at a church of this size and diversity. Missouri UMC is missing
62 opportunities to connect outreach into disciple making for those here at Missouri church and for those it
63 serves beyond the walls.

64 **4. Children’s Ministry Decline**

65 The current ministries with children are approaching a state of disarray. Several key concerns were raised
66 with the consultation team during our time together. Those concerns included communication, planning,
67 physical space and ability to expand the ministry. Families with young children need to feel that their
68 needs are as important as other constituent groups. Broader opportunities, a reorientation of space and
69 newer models are needed to reach additional children, including those both inside the church and outside
70 the church and the faith.

71 **5. Plateaued Worship Attendance**

72 Although this is a very large congregation (top 3% in size in Missouri) with many strengths and
73 resources, it has plateaued around 730 in average worship attendance over the last several years. From a
74 high of 809 in 2000 to a low of 577 in 1994, Missouri UMC has demonstrated its ability to rally. Now it
75 is time to grow by creating a culture of welcome, honoring its strengths as a traditional “high” church and
76 adding new service types that are relevant for additional populations it seeks to reach and bring into a life
77 of discipleship.

78

78 **PRESCRIPTIONS**

79 **1. Develop a Plan to Live Out the Mission and Vision**

80 The congregation understands when this consultation report is accepted (should that be the case) they will
81 develop a plan to accomplish the mission of Missouri UMC: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the
82 transformation of the world (paragraph 120, BOD). In doing so, a vision for our ministry together will be
83 clarified.

84 The congregation will have a Day of Prayer & Healing for those who are feeling disenfranchised inside
85 and outside the church and will allow the membership to be fully prepared for the Lord's Vision for the
86 future. This day will be led by conference staff person, Sherry Habben, in consultation with Rev. Amy
87 Gearhart and will be conducted on November 27, 2011.

88 The Senior Pastor and coach will conduct a Day of Naming. The purpose of this day is to name our
89 values, emerging vision and opportunities so that a broader consensus of who we are and where we are
90 headed is obtained. During this time the church will seek God's direction to discover what percentage of
91 the un-churched within a five-mile radius it is responsible for sharing the love and grace of Christ with.
92 The Day of Naming will be paid for by the church and hosted by January 14, 2012.

93 The Senior Pastor and coach will conduct a planning retreat. It will be comprised of, but not limited to,
94 the following components: a) mission audit whereby we evaluate our ministry alignment with our core
95 values and disciple-making process (praying, worshipping, learning, giving, serving); b) establishment of
96 annual goals for reaching new people and any additional strategies needed to meet them; c) identification
97 of new ministries required to improve our strategies for inviting, welcoming, connecting and belonging.
98 This retreat is to be conducted annually with full participation of key leaders, elected leaders and staff.
99 This is to give emphasis to the practices of a culture of transparency in communication and decision-
100 making. This will position the church for future growth and development.

101 **2. Staff Alignment and Leadership Development**

102 The Senior Pastor, the coach and two HR experts from within the congregation will work with the staff to
103 identify improvements needed to facilitate staff communications, general communications and
104 clarification of roles, responsibilities and needs to improve results for the sake of the mission. This will be
105 completed on or before October 29, 2011.

106 The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will meet with the Lead Team to audit the current staff
107 positions for the sake of the Mission. This will include an assessment of key ministries, roles of staff, the
108 configuration of staff positions, and the number of needed staff positions. This will be completed on or
109 before January 1, 2012.

110 The Senior Pastor needs to be given permission to restructure the staff in consultation with the coach and
111 two HR experts from within the congregation in order to implement the mission of the church and achieve
112 growth. The staff members need to understand their positions could be modified, repositioned or
113 terminated. Existing staff will be given first opportunity to reapply for any new positions that are created.
114 Position descriptions will include goals for their area and overall congregational goals.

115 Program and pastoral staff will need to become proficient at developing leaders who develop others to be
116 engaged in ministry for the sake of the Mission. This requires the ability to teach leaders what staff has

117 already learned about helping persons engage in ministry. The Senior Pastor and coach will work with the
118 staff to develop the training for these skills, which will be implemented on or before June 2012.

119 It is understood that upon voting to approve this report the congregation is agreeing to structure itself to
120 follow the Accountable Leadership Model informed by *Winning on Purpose* by John Kaiser and
121 *Ultimately Responsible* by Sue Nilson Kibbey. This model will be implemented by January 1, 2012.

122 There will be a single board model comprised of an Operations Team and a Lead Team. The Operations
123 Team is comprised of the Senior Pastor and three people each from the Board of Trustees, Committee on
124 Finance, and Staff Parish Relations Committee (including Lay Leader). Therefore, these three teams
125 become one. The Operations Team will be responsible for all the functions of these committees,
126 according to 2008 Book of Discipline, paragraphs 244.2 and 247.2. The cabinet of the Missouri Annual
127 Conference has approved this alternate model. The Committee on Nominations and Leadership
128 Development will nominate persons for the Lead Team. The Lead Team will replace the current
129 Administrative Council and Vision Team. The Lead Team is comprised of the chair of the Pastors, Board
130 of Trustees, Committee on Finance, and Staff Parish Relations Committee, Key Leaders and Visionary
131 Leaders and Lay Leader.

132 All existing and new ministry teams, small groups, pastor, and staff members will be accountable to the
133 new Lead Team for specific goals including, the number of people coming to Jesus through their
134 ministries, the development of leaders and the growth of their ministries.

135 All staff and leaders involved in the Lead Team and Operations Team are expected to be practicing their
136 discipleship (praying, worshipping, learning, giving, and serving) and modeling a committed life to
137 Christ.

138 **3. Create a Welcoming Culture**

139 The Senior Pastor and Coordinator of Hospitality, in consultation with the coach, will appoint a
140 Welcoming Task Force of 5-7 people by November 1, 2011. They will review the worship experience
141 through the Mystery Worshipper report and improve hospitality for Sunday morning experiences and
142 other major onramps to discipleship (e.g., Wednesday Night Live, Youth and Children's ministry, major
143 outreach projects, etc.) The strategy for creating and improving the hospitality process will be
144 implemented by December 1, 2011. After strategies have been enacted, Missouri UMC will conduct a
145 quarterly review to continue improving their hospitality ministry.

146 The Hospitality Team will expand the number of participants on this team to at least 10% of the
147 worshipping community by March 4, 2012. The coach will work with appropriate leaders to train the
148 team in the key components of connecting newcomers to the life of the church. The first training will
149 occur by January 31, 2012, using the book *Fusion: Turning First Time Guests Into Fully-Engaged*
150 *Members of Your Church* by Nelson Searcy.

151 The number of entrances to the facility is a complicating factor in seeking to greet newcomers. We
152 recommend conducting a traffic study on people and vehicles to determine the best way to deploy the
153 hospitality team and to improve our signage inside and outside the building. This needs to include getting
154 signage that lets people know to park in the garage. This should be completed by July 1, 2012.
155 Additionally, the study should include recommendations for security and evacuation plans.

156 In order to prevent people from falling through cracks, the church will identify, invest and utilize a web-
157 based database (like Church Community Builder) to help shepherd people through the welcoming,
158 connecting, belonging continuum.

159 Finally, the Information Desk in the Connector area needs to be staffed whenever the building is open.
160 The people who sit at that desk need to be fully informed and excited about the church and events that are
161 currently happening. A review of materials for distribution and communication about frequently asked
162 questions needs to be reviewed monthly at the staff meeting.

163 **4. Strengthen Ministry with Children, Youth and Adults**

164 The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will appoint two teams to evaluate and assess the
165 ministries with 1) children and 2) youth. Each team will include the responsible staff person(s) for said
166 ministry area, a representative from the Operations Team, workers/leaders in the ministry areas, and
167 parent representatives. Each team will recognize and affirm areas of strength to build upon. Each team
168 will also visit and study 2-3 other churches with cutting edge, growing, and effective ministry in that area
169 paying special attention to technologically advanced space and furnishings. In addition, the children's
170 ministry team will offer recommendations for reallocating existing space, updating current conditions as
171 required to allow growth to occur. We recommend the children's facilities be upgraded and appropriate
172 resources be mobilized for needed renovations and equipment. Each team will develop a strategy for
173 enhancing this ministry by June 2012, to be implemented by launch of the Fall 2012 Christian Education
174 season.

175 The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will appoint a team to evaluate and assess the ministry
176 with older adults. This team will include a pastor, representative of the Lead Team, and a core of older
177 adults. This team will recognize and affirm areas of strength to build upon. This team will also visit and
178 study other churches with growing, and effective ministry in that area. This team will develop a strategy
179 for enhancing this ministry by June 2012, which will provide ample time to organize for implementation
180 by Fall 2012.

181 **5. Assess and Strengthen Worship Experience**

182 The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will appoint a Worship Enhancement Task Force of 5-7
183 people on or before September 1, 2012. The task force will review the worship experience through the
184 Mystery Worshipper report and improve the Sunday morning experience and worship services in very
185 specific ways. This task force will submit recommendations for current service enhancements to the
186 worship planning team on or before January 1, 2013.

187 We recommend Missouri UMC continue to honor and enhance the excellent traditional worship services
188 while also embracing a post-modern worship experience sometime during the week. To embrace the post-
189 moderns more fully, the Senior Pastor, in consultation with the coach, will develop a launch team for a
190 post-modern worship service on or before March 1, 2013. This team will be trained to identify and
191 research their target population, develop strategic pre-launch activities (e.g., prayer walks, surveys, social
192 gatherings and taste and see worship opportunities), study churches who have launched similar worship
193 experiences successfully and determine worship time, site, style and small group ministry.

194

194 **CONCLUSION**

195 We, the consulting team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation in this manner.
196 We believe good things are happening here and are looking forward to even greater things. Our prayers
197 and hope for your congregation is that God will use this process to help implement your mission
198 effectively through a developed plan and thereby make an eternal difference in the Columbia community
199 for the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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201 Bob Farr, Director of Congregational Excellence
202 MaryAnn Morris, Sherry Habben, Tammy Calcote, Members of Consultation Team
203 Christie Latona, Coach

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206 **Open Forums in the Chapel**

207 Have questions? Want to hear more? Participate in one or more of the following Open Forums:

- 208 ▪ Sunday, October 2, 2011 at 6 p.m.
- 209 ▪ Wednesday, October 12, 2011 at 11:00 a.m.
- 210 ▪ Wednesday, October 12, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.
- 211 ▪ Sunday, October 16, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.

212 **Church Conference Date**

213 On **Sunday, October 23, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.** (in the Chapel) Missouri UMC members will vote on
214 whether or not to implement these Prescriptions.