



LEMONADE, LISTENING & LEARNING REPORT *WHAT MATTERS IN THE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE?*

GOALS: In May, 2009 the Session approved the proposal to initiate conversations during the summer to discuss, “What matters at Woodlawn Chapel?” The discussion focused on the past, present and future. The goals were to [1] provide a fellowship opportunity in which members would gather to discuss what mattered to them in their initial visits to Woodlawn, as well as impressions as a new member; [2] identify what matters to them now, and describe specific elements they would like to see in the future; and [3] provide deacons and elders with a document for their reference in future planning.

FORMAT: Many thanks to our conversation hosts for their commitment and follow through in organizing each conversation: Karen Barnett, Chris Keating, Tina Odo, Linda Sine. Carol Stepp, Joan Vachalek, Mark Vogel, Mary Voth, Harvey Ziegler. Conversation hosts contacted each member on their guest list by phone. Dates, times and locations were determined by the host. The first meeting was held the end of June and the last in the middle of August. Two September meetings were scheduled to include anyone that missed an earlier date. As a result, 64 participants representing 44% of the households attended.

Comments were recorded in each meeting, feedback opportunities were provided and those items were compiled into a summary document. Also many thanks to each conversation scribe for his/her important contributions: Chris Crutcher, Jerry Dodwell, Jennifer Forsythe, Matt Murawski, MaryLou Lynn Vogel, Cindy Wise, PJ Zell, and Mimi Ziegler.

DATA: Numerically we expressed what matters to Woodlawn members in 480 ways: 142 important memories of the past were mentioned. Responses not only reaffirm our past but also provide a glimpse at what could be termed our “congregational DNA.” 157 observations were recorded about what is valued in the present. These comments identify what gives life, meaning and vitality to Woodlawn NOW. In addition, 181 hopes, dreams and ideals for the future were outlined. These responses reveal a genuine level of caring that is running through our congregational veins.

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Joint Meeting & Initial Observations: A data report was presented October 8, 2009 in a joint meeting of Session. During that meeting, deacons and elders divided into three groups. Each group, lead by a guest facilitator, examined and discussed the data collected with regard to either the past, present or future. The following three sections summarize initial observations made by each of group.

THE PAST: The past is defined by a timeline of twenty years and amazingly the responses were similar over those two decades. The past created a church that values a welcoming atmosphere and friendliness that visitors appreciate. As visitors and new members we experience a traditional but open service; a place that highly values children; and expects strong

programs. We regard church members as members of our family. Church members fill needs and relationships not found elsewhere.

THE PRESENT: Data regarding the present focuses upon what people value now. We value the intimacy of our small congregation which we need not only to promote, but also grow. We need to maintain quality and excellence in worship, leadership, music and education. Comments about the present edged into the future: We need to expand our relationship with God through increased spiritual growth and education. We need to

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the Book of Jonah.

THE FUTURE: Data regarding the future focused on the theme of growth in specific areas that we currently value. "Member focus" translated into growing in a variety of ways both inwardly [spiritually] and outwardly [welcoming new people as members, as well as mission outreach]. A variety of programmatic opportunities were suggested with the specific needs of youth and young families noted. Conversations acknowledged that the expansion and development of Christian hospitality, spirituality, service and leadership requires also strengthening our overall leadership and developing processes that support and scaffold us into the future.

WHAT NEXT? Without a doubt, these conversations reveal how Woodlawn Chapel is moving toward a *shared vision* that articulates our collective faith and commitment to God and the future. Guided by God's call, we have the opportunity to create a future that embraces our love of Christian hospitality, our commitment to growing spiritually, and our desire to serve God and others. **Additional information will be forthcoming that confirms the on-going commitment of Session to lead where God is calling.**

During this Thanksgiving season, as we thank God for the abundance He provides, we should also pause and listen to what God is calling us to do as a congregation. With God's grace, our story today constantly merges into a future filled with possibilities and affirmed through our collective and individual commitment.

Many thanks to each person who participated and to the congregation who supported this activity both directly and indirectly. I am grateful for this opportunity to serve you.

Yours in Christ.

Gail LeMay
Elder for Planning
October 22, 2009