

Consultation Report for First UMC Katy

INTRODUCTION

We, the consultation team, would like to thank Rev. Dr. Dick White and Rev. Mark Kimbrough, the lay leadership and the congregation of First UMC Katy for the invitation to consult with your church as part of the Vibrant Church Initiative. The observations and prescriptions in this report are the result of this team studying the following information:

- FUMC Katy self-study document provided by its leaders
- interviews with pastor, staff and lay leadership
- a focus group with members of the congregation
- a meeting with the Church Council
- a MissionInsite demographic report of the area's population
- a Benchmark Report prepared by Dr. Don House
- input from the Faith Perceptions "Mystery Guest Worshipper" report
- input from Saturday's leadership workshop

It was a great joy to work with a congregation that openly cooperated with us and provided all the information we requested. The consult team's prayer is that God will use this assessment experience and consultation report so that FUMC Katy will more effectively *make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of its community and the world.*

STRENGTHS

STRENGTH #1 FRIENDLY & WELCOMING CONGREGATION

Authentic relationships are a strong foundational building block at FUMC Katy. The leaders and staff member interviews reflected a sincere appreciation for the warmth and family-style culture of the church. Several leaders mentioned they felt at home on their first visit and have since stayed for years. Many individuals and families have deep roots, spanning decades. The Faith Perceptions report also reinforced this warmth as a hallmark of the church in that the 12 mystery guests that visited (several of whom identified themselves as unchurched) gave above average rankings to the pre- and post-service hospitality. An even higher compliment came in the fact that 10 out of 12 of the visitors said they would consider returning and recommending it to others. Eleven of them even left their contact information. Faith Perceptions consultants very familiar with church data on a national scale noted that these high scores are a rarity among most church reports. One of the mystery guests reported, "I felt so warm and welcome at the church. It was comfortable and very at home. I felt like I knew everyone and was given a visitor's gift bag and I signed the guest register." During a focus group, one member noted, "I don't have family nearby, but this church has become my family."

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STRENGTH #2 EAGERNESS TO HELP

The people of FUMC KATY have a legacy of giving and helping --- whether that be responding to a flood, or a church work day. One member said after a personal crisis, "This church helped us love God again."

Volunteers give time to the Pumpkin Patch, mentoring at local schools, and the church provides space for community support groups for people with special needs and others. One staff member said, "There is a wealth of people here who are being the body of Christ and who mobilize quickly with an outpouring of help that is amazing." It seems when the membership is aware of a need, compassion and generosity soon follow. The Rejoice Sunday School class alone raises as much as \$20,000 a year for local missions.

STRENGTH #3 STRONG TRADITIONAL WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Church leaders, members and guests alike voiced an appreciation for enriching experiences in worship. All appreciate the close knit community, outstanding music and inspirational preaching. Mystery worshippers gave both pastors very high scores for their relevant sermons and engaging preaching styles, which is a rare strength. About the senior pastor, one of the guest worshippers commented, "His sermon made me think about imposed and self-imposed barriers I might have in my life." Another said, "The associate pastor is an excellent speaker. He's very articulate, funny and presented the sermon in an everyday fashion. I like this style."

STRENGTH #4 HISTORIC COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

As the very first church in the community, FUMC Katy has a proud legacy in shaping the community and as a spiritual home to many community leaders. Since 1898, FUMC Katy has offered a steadfast and faithful presence with a rich heritage to celebrate. Multiple mayors, school district leaders and teachers have called FUMC Katy home. By voting to stay downtown, the church committed to making a difference in the place where it was founded. The church continues to plant seeds into future generations by supporting at-risk students at area schools, nurturing children within The Little People's School, as well as in VBS and children's programming. A sense of pride inspires members of all ages to discover God's vibrant future for the surrounding community today.

STRENGTH #5 EXCEPTIONAL MUSIC PROGRAM

Few churches have the musical depth and gifts shared by FUMC Katy. The Music & Worship Arts Director is the longest tenured staff member and has helped build an adult choir, three children's choirs, a festival choir and a youth choir. One of the mystery guests noted, "The music was breathtaking...it moved me." The In His Steps liturgical dance troupe and the hand bell choir add an extra dimension to the church's musical assets. Additionally, the fifth Sunday band features musicians within the membership that add a variety enjoyed by the congregation.

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CONCERNS

CONCERN #1 ABSENCE OF CLEAR VISION

With multiple mission statements through the years, the church struggles to align around a single God-directed vision for FUMC Katy. A vague sense of direction results in a “generic” public brand that fails to help prospective guests distinguish FUMC Katy from the dozens of other churches in the community. Additionally, the use of a logo that is similar to other tree logos at nearby banks and businesses may weaken awareness of the unique impact the church seeks to make in the community. The absence of a clear vision undermines the ability of the church to make disciples, and results in an ever-expanding list of programs which tax human and financial resources.

CONCERN #2 LACK OF DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

There is no intentional strategy in place to make and grow disciples, with no clearly defined continuum of spiritual development. Without a clear path in place, individuals struggle to connect to Christ and experience continued life transformation. One focus group participant commented, “My wife and I sat in the pew for two years before someone invited us to a Sunday School class.” Using the Benchmark Report and focus group input, the team finds that resources have been under-invested in children’s programming and other aspects of creating a more thriving, inviting Sunday School program for children.

CONCERN #3 MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH NEW PEOPLE

While the communication materials produced at FUMC Katy are creative and professionally done, they are primarily focused on the internal audience. The church misses the chance to take its story to the community via local media forums. Additionally, the Little People School is not being leveraged in ways that could strengthen the ties to the church and encourage families to discover how the church can enrich the lives of their youngsters.

While the traditional services are excellent worship experiences, there is very little room to grow at the 11 a.m. hour and no alternative worship options for newcomers. According to the Faith Perceptions report, 11 mystery guests left contact information, but only one received a follow up contact, indicating an unacceptable gap in the hospitality system. Finally, FUMC Katy is commended for spearheading local mission efforts but few of them build authentic bonds of friendship that might naturally lead to sharing the gospel of Christ.

CONCERN #4 INWARD FOCUS

Throughout the weekend, the team heard many references to people being “comfortable” in a close knit environment. While there are positives to a family-like environment, this closeness can be a barrier to newcomers trying to connect with established members. Decisions are made based on desires of internal groups rather than needs of the people “not yet here.” An example of this would be a failure to engage “those not yet here” about the time and style of the proposed alternative worship that might meet their spiritual needs. Existing missional efforts offer help “to” others rather than building relational bridges with Christ and the church.

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CONCERN #5 LACK OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The consultant team heard many examples that indicate a lack of intentional leadership development and planning systems. Many leaders have served multiple years in the same capacity, without a system of rotation to encourage other and newer members to serve. Some have not been given a clear understanding of their role as a leader. Ministries are started out of passion or a desire to meet perceived needs, but without clear goals, measurable objectives, systems of accountability and evaluation. There is no sense of how they align to the vision of the church or momentum to move forward from planning to action. Incomplete information creates frustration in the staff and discourages alignment. We learned that two years have been spent planning for an alternative service, but key questions are still unanswered and the path to implementation is hazy.

PRESCRIPTIONS

In order to address the above concerns, FUMC Katy will do the following:

Focus Mission: On the day this consultation report is accepted, to help build on its momentum, the congregation will take as its mission statement: *“To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”* This means that every ministry in the congregation must demonstrate how it will accomplish the mission and that new ministries need to have as their primary purpose “to make disciples of Jesus Christ.”

A Service of Prayer and Celebration: The congregation will have a Service of Prayer and Celebration to embrace God breaking open the hearts of the congregation for the unchurched. The service will allow the membership to be fully prepared for God’s vision for the future. The service will be led by a person to be selected by the Center for Congregational Excellence. The Day of Prayer and Celebration will take place on or before May 21, 2017.

PRESCRIPTION #1: VISION CLARITY

Lack of a clearly defined congregational identity will prevent the congregation from fulfilling God’s unique vision for this church. While the congregation has used several different vision statements in the past, there is very little awareness of the vision statement currently in use. Vision has the power to describe a preferred future and motivate words to become actions. The first step in doing this is to claim who God is calling FUMC Katy to be. A facilitator designated by the Center for Congregational Excellence will conduct a four-hour Day of Visioning workshop with FUMC Katy. The purpose of this day is to dream of how God might work through this congregation, individually and collectively to reach the local mission field. This day will occur on May 13, 2017. Pre-workshop homework will be completed two weeks prior. Following the Day of Visioning, the pastors, in consultation with the coach, will: 1) appoint a Visioning Team consisting of 6-8 people; 2) craft a Vision Statement, capturing the uniqueness of FUMC Katy to be approved by the Church Council on or before August 31, 2017. Upon approval of the Vision Statement, the pastors, in consultation with the coach, will assemble a different 5 to 7 person task force to begin work on a ministry audit of all current ministries by August 31, 2017. The purpose of the audit will be to ensure the ministries are in alignment with the mission and vision of the church. This process will be completed by November. If a specific ministry does not align with or complement the vision, team leaders must revise or sunset the ministry within a year of the audit. In order to maintain optimal alignment long-term, the church will conduct a ministry audit once every two years.

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PRESCRIPTION #2: INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

The pastors, in consultation with the coach, will name a Discipleship Team of 5-6 people, by April 31, 2018. This team will represent persons of various ages and stages of spiritual maturity within the congregation. This team will work to create a systematic pathway for intentional faith development from the cradle to the grave. This pathway will be designed to meet people where they are, move them along on their spiritual journey, and equip them to become better stewards of their gifts and more fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

The Team recommends this pathway will:

- Expand relationship-building opportunities via small groups and additional classes for support, accountability and instruction in the means of grace
- Pay special attention to the spiritual formation of children, youth and adults. Using the recommendations outlined in the Benchmark Study, assess how to maximize the investment in children's ministry including programming and staffing
- Encourage faithfulness, generosity and service for the purpose of fulfilling the mission of the church

This Discipleship Pathway will be adopted by October 31, 2018 and plans for implementation into the life of FUMC Katy at all ministry levels (children, youth and adults) will be in motion by January 31, 2019. The consultation team recommends as a resource, *Move: What 1000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth* by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson.

PRESCRIPTION #3: SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

In consultation with the coach the Pastor will form a "Seizing the Opportunity Team" of 7-9 people that will:

Explore methods and opportunities to reach beyond the four walls of the church building into the community in various methods and formats to share the good news of Jesus Christ, the story of FUMC Katy and the loving church home that is awaiting those that choose to become a part of the church. This will include re-examining the current logo in light of the new vision statement and considering the use of social media, residential HOA newsletters, local media including the *Katy Times* and *Katy Magazine*.

- By September 6, 2017 in consultation with the Director of the Little People's School (LPS) create and implement ways to reach out to the parents and children of the LPS in order to extend meaningful invitations to become a part of the FUMC Katy church family
- By May 31, 2017 review the procedures for making contact with first-time guests to ensure at least one contact by the church within 48 hours of the worship service and an effective means of following up with guests who have returned two or more times to worship at FUMC Katy

In light of FUMC Katy's current pastoral leadership and the huge demographic growth in the Katy area, the Consultation team sees a unique opportunity for FUMC Katy to create an alternative to the existing excellent traditional worship for those in the community with little or no church

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background. The Consultation team believes that there is a window in which this church might create a “church within a church” much like the hugely successful “The Story” at St. Luke’s UMC Houston.

- By August 31, 2017 seek input from those who are not currently a part of the church about style, time and content of a third and alternately styled worship service to reach those in this community who do not know the benefit of a relationship with Jesus or the value of a church family
- The Sr. Pastor and Associate Pastor along with a selected group of people from the “Seizing the Opportunity Team” will meet with Dr. Tom Pace and Rev. Eric Huffman by May 31, 2017 to hear and understand how the success of “The Story” was achieved. After this meeting the “Seizing the Opportunity Team” will make a recommendation to the Church Council about how to proceed with a third alternative worship opportunity by March 31, 2018.

PRESCRIPTION #4: FOCUS OUTWARD

By February 28, 2018 the Pastor, in consultation with the coach, shall develop an Outreach Team to study the MissionInsite reports, and then dream of creative ways to reach out to the community. Persons on the team should have a deep passion for mission and evangelism. This Outreach Team will develop or adapt 4-6 externally focused events by April 30, 2018 to connect with the community. Each event will have a measurable way to invite and connect people into the fellowship or worship of the church. These events should be strategically placed through the calendar year. Multi-aged church participation is vital. Examples of events that could be used include: VBS, Go Camp, basketball outreach, etc. At least 2 of these events must be new, not having been done previously. No event will be a fundraising event. A suggested resource is the book, *Get Their Name* by Bob Farr.

PRESCRIPTION #5: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The goal of comprehensive leadership development work is to pursue a more cohesive, collaborative and effective leadership team aligned with the vision of the church.

- The senior pastor, in consultation with the coach, will on or before January 31, 2018 appoint a minimum of 7-9 person team to develop a process for the ongoing recruitment, training, and deployment of church members to serve inside and outside the church.
- The senior pastor, in consultation with the coach, will work with the Nominations/Lay Leadership Committee to develop a process to equip and empower current leaders, as well as identify and equip future leaders of the church, with special attention given to broadening the leadership. This process will be presented to the Church Council by May 31, 2018
- The senior pastor, in consultation with the coach, will develop a regular communication plan to foster relational and spiritual bonds among staff members. This will include a discipline of regular meeting, planning, shared learning, worship, retreat, and missional activities. The plan will be completed on or before July 1, 2017.
- The pastor in consultation with the coach will develop an outline for a staff retreat by November 20, 2017 to address planning for the next six months. The plan will include setting goals and measures as well as ways to implement and evaluate effectiveness of ministry in light of the new vision. The retreat will occur on or before January 31, 2018.

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Celebrate Success: Two months after the completion of their last prescription, FUMC Katy will hold a Service of Celebration and Vision. This will allow the community to rejoice in their growth through the VCI process, reflect on their current ministry, and share excitement about their next steps.

CONCLUSION

We, the consultation team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation in this manner. Our prayers and hope for your congregation is that God will use this process to help you implement your mission more effectively, utilize your compelling vision through a developed plan, and thereby make an eternal difference in the FUMC Katy community for the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Kate Walker, Lead Consultant

Rev. Jim Bankston, VCI Coach

Ms. April Canik, Scribe

Rev. Lance Richards

Rev. Bill Taylor

Rev. Mike Tyson, Director of VCI

Rev. Bob Johnson

TOWN HALL MEETING DATES:

April 5

April 9

April 23

CHURCH CONFERENCE DATE:

Sunday, April 30, 12:15 in the Sanctuary