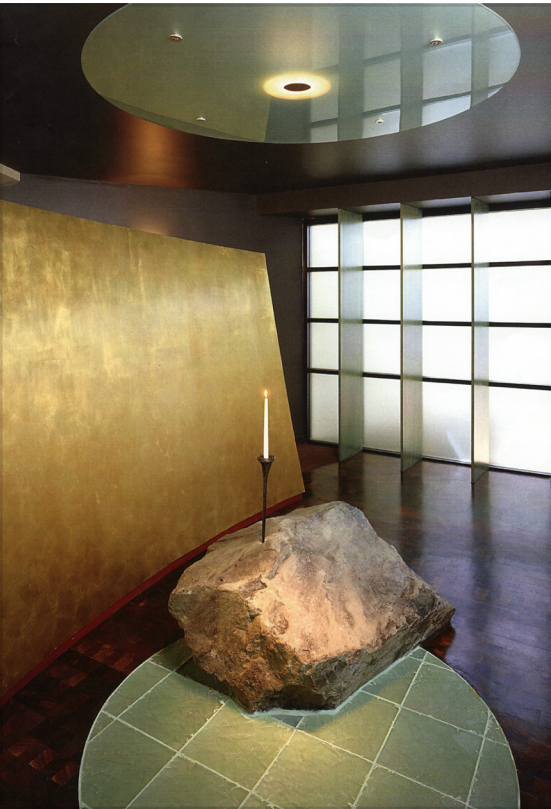


MERCER  ISLAND
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



STRATEGIC
PLANNING
REPORT

FEBRUARY
2011





Preliminary Report

Strategic Planning Team and Staffing Task Force

February 2011

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A Message from Sheri and Paul

Beloved MIPC Friends and Family!

What a wonderfully complex year 2010 was for us as a church family. Together...

- we said good-bye to many beloved members and friends who passed away – some expectedly and others quite unexpectedly.
- we mourned many staff departures, giving thanks for their many seasons of leadership and ministry among us.
- we celebrated almost as many new staff member arrivals giving thanks for the new eyes and hearts that they bring to enliven our mission and ministry.
- we continue to weather a very difficult economy walking alongside many individuals and families as we navigate these waters.
- we honestly and authentically engaged one of the hardest conversations in the Church or larger culture today – that is, the place of gay and lesbian people within the Body of Christ as it pertains to our Session's policy to be an open & affirming congregation.
- we finished the 2010 fiscal year with a balanced budget, which allows us to begin a New Year in a healthy way.
- we have seen God show up again and again to provide for our needs in every situation reminding us that we are moving in a Spirit-led direction.

As two of your pastors who have been actively involved in the Strategic Planning Process, we are excited for 2011 and the journey ahead. We are excited about what this process and the congregational survey has revealed to our planning team. And we are grateful that we are ALL on this journey together. Though we may not mutually agree on everything in any given season of life and faith together, what we can respectfully agree on resonates with the words of the great old hymn....

“On Christ, the solid rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

As a church community with a world vision, we are known for our vibrant ministries to children and youth and their families. We continue to celebrate a strong history of worship and educational offerings for all ages. We are rich with musical talents from the very youngest to the very oldest of us. And, engrafted in our communal DNA, is our deep commitment to mission partnerships in our community, city, nation and around the globe.

Your wise and faithful voices continue to lead us, as Session, staff and pastors, through this season of significant transition and change. We are hearing deep desires for a renewed commitment to the equipping of lay leadership, and an increase in the number of lay leadership church-wide. We are hearing themes of folks desiring deeper relationships and connectedness with others who share their unique life stages, but also for meaningful intergenerational relationships and experiences. And we are sensing strong wishes for everyone to be able to live out their Christian faith in their everyday, ordinary lives whether that be through an MIPC ministry or mission partnership or in your family, neighborhood, school or workplace. Most importantly, we are excited to hear a fervent request to grow deeper in life and faith together through renewed commitments to formative faith practices like transformational worship, intentional study and meaningful service.

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There's no doubt about it. God is setting a sure foundation for our future together, but we need each and every one of you to excitedly and joyfully say YES to be a part of God's ministry team at MIPC ***both now and in the seasons to come.*** Friends, ***now*** is the time to get involved and to invest ourselves wholeheartedly in what God is doing among us. ***Now*** is the time to be a part of making this church, not "what" we want, but rather "who" God wants us to be as Christ's followers in this world.

And so we invite you to carefully and prayerfully read through the results of the attached plan taking special note of emerging themes where the Spirit of God seems to be speaking through our collective voice. Indeed, we have weathered a lot during the past year, but we believe this will be another exciting chapter to add to the almost 60-years of God's history making at MIPC. And the best part is, there are so many chapters yet to be written with every one of you as central characters in this story.

In humility and in faith, let us raise our hearts and our voices proclaiming again....

On Christ, the solid rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Let us stand together anchored in the love, peace, mercy and justice of Christ for all of God's creation.

In every season, we remain committed to stand with you, and at times, for you,

In Christ's name,

Rev. Sheri Edwards Dalton

Rev. Paul Barrett

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I. Executive Summary

The leadership and congregation of MIPC have been wrestling with who God is calling us to be. Through our strategic planning process, we have listened and shared many thoughts and ideas and have incorporated a great deal of input from meetings, congregational forums, and surveys. The following is a summary of where we see our call for the next five years.

Overall Theme and Vision for the Future

Strengthening our Foundation – *On Christ, the solid rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand*

As Christ is the solid rock on which we stand, so too are our foundations *of seeking God, sharing our gifts, and serving others*, as stated in the proposed updated Mission Statement. MIPC is blessed with many strengths and vibrant ministries. We aspire to leverage these as we seek to grow each person's individual faith as well as grow into the church God is calling us to be. Following this page you will find a summary of our key findings and recommendations.

Proposed Mission Statement

A church community with a world vision, seeking God, sharing our gifts, and serving others, together.

(Note: This proposed mission statement is a recommendation from Strategic Planning, to be adopted more formally after a period of input and comment.)

Goals for the Next Five Years

Seeking God

Develop our faith through -

- Worship and preaching
- Spiritual development
- Small group opportunities
- Understanding our Presbyterian roots
- Christian Education and Bible study

Sharing Our Gifts

Live out our faith through -

- Discovering and celebrating our individual gifts
- Sharing our time through participation and leadership
- Sharing our passions within our congregation and beyond
- Sharing our financial gifts

Serving Others

Share our faith by reaching out to and supporting -

- Others in our church
- Others in our community
- Others in our world

Together

As Christians

As Presbyterians

As the body of MIPC, being led by our mission

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How do we accomplish these goals?

The Strategic Planning Team evaluated our current environment to develop a set of *key findings* about where we are today, and a set of *key recommendations* that will help us grow into the church God is calling us to become. The findings and recommendations summarized below are intended to assist us in achieving our five year goals. Note that these are broad guiding principles and that it will be up to leadership and individual ministries in their detailed planning to put specific action plans together to accomplish our goals.

Summary of Key Findings

- MIPC is grateful for many ministries with strong reputations and resources.
- MIPC differs from peer churches in key ways (e.g., high level of programs, little debt, lower worship attendance, lower giving per member, higher % of congregation that is >65).
- Over the last 10 years, MIPC has significantly expanded its programs and ministries as well as its level of staffing, while membership and attendance have remained level.
- MIPC has developed a strong reputation as a spiritual leader in the community and schools, however, without a funding source or new membership, it is hard to address the growing pastoral and caring needs resulting from this positive outreach.
- MIPC relies heavily on a small group of recurring volunteers.
- MIPC currently operates in a difficult economic environment that has been broadly challenging to churches and non-profits.
- MIPC has navigated through challenges of several transitions, but appears poised to move forward.
- An analysis of MIPC's current environment points to the following needs:
 - Expanded congregational participation, leadership, and financial commitment
 - A focus on adult spiritual development, engagement and connectedness
 - With 3 pastors instead of 4 (in accordance with Staffing Task Force recommendations), pastor time needs to be deployed differently (less doing and administering, more leading and delegating)
 - With limited financial resources and a challenging economic environment, we need to do more with less and still operate within a comfortably balanced budget; we won't be able to do everything we have done in the past or at least not in the same staff-driven manner
 - Leadership driven by communicating and implementing a common vision
 - Additional systems and procedures which are appropriate for MIPC's size
 - A need to reach out to less active members within our congregation
 - A need to reach out to and support the external community in ways that we can sustain with existing resources

Summary of Key Recommendations

Seeking God

- **Develop and enhance worship; focus on preaching.** Explore ways to increase lay involvement in all services. Free up pastoral time for prayer, study, preparation time by shifting meeting/committee attendance and admin. tasks to lay leaders.

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- **Focus on adult spiritual development and improve adult engagement and connectedness through small groups and other opportunities.** Consider the development of a systematic small group program, including structure and ongoing training/equipping of volunteers. Communicate more effectively what it means to be a member.
- **Provide opportunities and education for us to understand and strengthen our Presbyterian ties.** Integrate as appropriate into sermons, Christian education programs, new member classes, etc.; provide and communicate opportunities for involvement with Presbyterian programs.
- **Provide Christian education and Bible study opportunities that help us grow and best deploy our resources for the greatest impact.** Research best times to offer classes for maximum attendance. Consider fee-based system if outside speakers are desired.

Sharing Our Gifts

- **Discover, celebrate, and share our individual passions and spiritual gifts so that each of us shares those gifts at MIPC and beyond.** Integrate the education and development of spiritual gifts into the broader efforts to further develop lay commitment and participation. Move toward an on-line database of time and talents, accessible through the MIPC website.
- **Encourage, train, deploy, and support lay leaders.** Develop an intentional, structured, continuing support and training program for lay participation and leadership. Include a program to help lay people to discover and develop their spiritual gifts. Use current group of key lay leaders to help execute program.
- **Refocus pastors, staff, and key lay leaders' responsibilities to focus more intentionally on developing, supporting and equipping congregational leaders and participants.** One less pastor and other changes means less time to cover current responsibilities or any new responsibilities, which points to a significant need to refocus time (less doing and administering, more leading and delegating). Changes in the organization chart should be clearly communicated to the congregation. Limit non-core activities of pastors; provide adequate administrative support.
- **Develop and utilize a balanced budget that prioritizes ministries for which we have lay leadership.** Remove pastoral labor/admin. time from many programs; if lay leadership rises to fill need, the program survives, if not, it doesn't. Revise fee structures as necessary to fully acknowledge members and better help cover full costs of all programs.
- **Continue support of historically strong ministries at MIPC, but do so in ways that rely increasingly on congregational support rather than staff.** Examples – youth/children/preschool, caring ministries, mission programs.
- **Encourage financial stewardship as an essential part of our Christian responsibility and call.** Integrate this message into sermons, education, ministry plans, communications, etc. as much as possible.

Serving Others

- **Help one another use our passions and gifts to reach out to and support the needy in our church, in our community, and in the world. As we serve others, strive to be inclusive and welcoming to all.** Congregation's input shows a high interest in connecting with and supporting the external community, but less interest in becoming a larger church with more members. Address this interest by exploring ways to involve a greater percentage of the congregation, rather than having greater staff involvement. Be intentional with regard to reaching out to less active members within the congregation, as well as creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.
- **Expand our mission awareness and impact by increasing the congregation's understanding and appreciation of mission as an essential part of our Christian call, connecting a greater percentage of**

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the congregation to mission activities, and measuring and communicating our progress in both time as well as money. Congregation shows high interest in mission focus and work, but funding remains tight during this time of lean finances. Seek to increase the level of mission funding from the general budget by involving a greater percentage of the congregation in mission activities whether those activities involve contributions or meeting congregational requests for experience-based personal involvement. Explore the measurement of mission activities using estimates of both time as well as money.

- **Support and partner with community groups, Presbytery, and local and international mission groups to serve others.** Consistent with the spirit of doing more with less, as well as a part of our support to Presbytery and the community, leverage our mission work through partnering efforts with other groups with similar programs.

General

- **Lead and communicate using a clear and simple common vision.** Demonstrate strong leadership through this time of transition and change with a clear, simple, and inspiring vision. Use the revised mission statement and overall vision provided by strategic planning as a foundation, and weave this into a consistent, clear and frequent message to all ministries and the congregation. Pursue an intentional and continuous feedback loop with the congregation. Leverage the excellent progress made in MIPC communications; continue to support and develop this critical function. Consider adding an Elder for Communications as a new session position to help focus on and direct these efforts.
 - **Leverage the positive aspects of transition and change as we move forward.** This years' transitions have created a degree of openness toward change and new ways of doing things as well as great opportunities to explore changes; if we don't take advantage of this, it becomes an opportunity lost
 - **The Staffing Task Force (STF) recommends that MIPC stay with a three-pastor staffing model for the foreseeable future.** STF is in the middle of their process but has done enough work to recommend that we stay with a 3-pastor model (instead of a 4-pastor model) for the foreseeable future, based primarily on being the only prudent option available given MIPC's current budget.
-

Summary of Key Priorities

The following summary of priorities was developed to provide very focused input to STF, church leadership, and other groups of the church (Personnel, Finance, Budget Subcommittee, etc.) that are charged with making decisions about staffing and resource allocation. Based on the various input collected, all ministries of the church were ranked in descending order of priority, in two separate tiers of responsibility, a **staff tier** for primary involvement, leadership and focus by clergy and staff, and a **lay tier** for primary involvement, leadership, and focus by lay volunteers, with limited or minimal involvement by clergy and staff). All areas shown are important areas of the church – the priority ranking is intended to provide guidance about which areas need the most priority in order to achieve strategic planning goals, and the suggested priority of staff vs. lay resources to apply toward these efforts.

The **staff tier** contains the ministry priorities that the clergy and staff should focus on to implement the recommendations and to support the lay volunteers in implementing recommendations. The list in descending order of priority is:

1. Strong leadership using a common vision
2. Lay development, commitment, participation and leadership
3. Preaching

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4. Worship services including music
5. Pastoral care to members
6. Adult Ministries – spiritual growth, engagement and connectedness
7. Children and Youth Ministries

The **lay tier** contains the ministry priorities for lay volunteers to focus on to implement the recommendations. These ministries should be led primarily by lay leaders with more limited involvement by clergy and staff. The list in descending order of priority is:

1. Local Missions
2. Adult Christian education and Bible study
3. Caring Ministries
4. Outreach & Diversity – including Open and Affirming efforts
5. Non-local Missions
6. External community relationships and support
7. Non-member support and care
8. Music (non-worship)

There are three core priorities for church leadership (staff as well as lay volunteers) that are not appropriate to rank with ministry areas, but are essential for the proper operation of the church:

- Church budget and financial management
 - Stewardship including both financial support and time/talents support of the church (lay volunteers)

 - Staff support and development
-

The MIPC Strategic Planning Team recommends that we go boldly into the future, embracing this opportunity for change while cherishing our past. We are thankful for our many strengths, and we rely on God as we seek to grow into our future. We recommend that as we seek to grow into all that God calls us to be, that we encourage one another regularly, communicate well, and humbly trust God and one another to serve God's people, within and beyond MIPC.

In humility and in faith, let us raise our hearts and our voices proclaiming again...

On Christ, the solid rock we stand!

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II. Background, history and process

In early 2010, the **Strategic Planning Team (SPT)** and the **Staffing Task Force (STF)** were created as separate groups by the 2010 Planning Group. The 2010 Planning Group was originally commissioned by Session to create a committee to develop a revised strategic plan as well as to determine the best way to communicate and utilize the 2009 work of the Ministry and Budget Task Force. Midstream, the 2010 Planning Group was re-tasked to deal with the planning for the announcement of Dale Sewall's retirement. When that task was complete, the group determined that a pastor's retirement expanded the potential planning role beyond the capacity of a single committee. Therefore, the STF was commissioned to work on planning issues which were specific to staffing, most specifically the development of interim and long-term staffing plans and re-evaluation of the co-pastor model. The SPT would be responsible for the broader plan and would work closely with the STF to eliminate overlap and ensure the two groups operate most efficiently.

The **Strategic Planning Team (SPT)** was charged with developing a revised 5-year plan for MIPC. The existing plan was last updated in 2005-2006, and in the past has generally been updated every 5 years. The 2005 Strategic Plan covered a lot of foundational planning, which was not repeated in this update. In addition, the Ministry and Budget Task Force laid a lot of groundwork for the planning effort by analyzing the current status of the church and its finances, trends over time, and comparison to churches in its peer group. Utilizing input from church leadership groups, the congregation, and the related work of the Ministry and Budget Task Force, the SPT reviewed and updated the various components of the strategic plan and will assist the various church ministries in developing complementary strategies and future action plans. The SPT works closely with the STF to offer the STF input useful in determining MIPC's interim and long-term staffing plans.

The SPT began its work in April 2010 by analyzing the current environment in which MIPC operates (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, etc.) and created an updated *Situation Analysis* (available on the MIPC website). Next, it worked hard to gather and analyze various input from as many MIPC members, friends, and groups as possible. The team did this using a variety of meetings and focus group sessions with staff, elders, deacons, lay leaders, and church members. The team has also held a variety of congregational forums and other meetings that have provided the congregation with many opportunities to provide input to the plan. In June, the team formally surveyed MIPC staff, elders, deacons, and lay leaders, and in October it conducted an all-church congregational survey, gathering detailed input from nearly 400 people in the congregation. After analyzing all of the various input, SPT developed the findings and recommendations contained in this document. Jointly with STF, findings and recommendations were reviewed during a Session retreat in January 2011. This report was finalized after that. The final step will be to assist the various ministries with detailed ministry planning efforts and publish a summary of those results.

The **Staffing Task Force (STF)** was formed in February 2010 and began its work by conducting various interviews; collecting staffing data and analyzing its findings. In April 2010, they created and implemented a transitional staffing plan to cover pre- and post-retirement of Dale Sewall. They worked together with SPT to gather input from leadership and the congregation. STF also coordinates and meets with the Presbytery Committee on Ministry on an on-going basis. With the priorities developed by SPT and other data, STF will formulate and evaluate potential staffing models and finalize a long-term staffing plan recommendation to present to Session by April 2011.

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III. Key Findings

The following set of “key findings” is the result of extensive analysis and review of the results of the leadership and congregational surveys. These findings were then cross-checked against and corroborated by the feedback we received during the many communications sessions and meetings held during the planning process.

MIPC has many things to be thankful for with regard to where we are today and the progress that has been made since the last strategic planning process in 2005:

Areas of Progress

- Growth and development of our Adult Ministries area with the formation of the Adult Ministries committee and the Adult Christian Growth & Education committee
- Preservation of areas of traditional strength (youth/children ministries, caring ministries, etc.) through difficult financial and operational challenges
- Strength and development of communications with enhanced tools (MIPC website, weekly Bridges emails, enhanced Window format, high quality related communication pieces)
- Greater focus and congregational involvement in local missions
- Focus on using our MIPC Mission Statement to help guide our efforts
- Stronger church administration
- Enhanced financial management through the formation of the Finance Committee, addition of a church Treasurer, and improved communications and transparency with the congregation
- Improved Stewardship program with a focus on process, timing, and communications

MIPC Ministries with Strong Reputations/Resources

MIPC continues to have several areas with strong reputations and resources. These areas are thought of highly both inside MIPC and within our surrounding community:

- Preschool/children’s/youth ministries
- Prayer/caring ministries; pastoral care
- Mission focus and programs
- Music
- Community/school support
- Diversity of worship services

We need to continue to give thanks for these strengths and for the progress we have made, and also seek to leverage these as we move forward together.

Areas Where We Differ from Peer Churches

In our research, we discovered that there are a number of ways that MIPC is different from other local Presbyterian churches we surveyed. It is informative and helpful for us all to be aware of and understand these differences as we seek to chart our path forward. These areas include:

- MIPC has a higher level of programs and services in most ministry areas
- MIPC has a higher % of our budget devoted to staffing

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- MIPC has a higher % of full vs. part-time staff
- MIPC has little debt
- MIPC has a lower worship attendance as a % of our membership
- MIPC has below average giving per member as a % of membership; we have above average giving as a % of attendance

- MIPC has a higher % of the congregation that is >65
- MIPC has a Co-Pastor model which is unique (currently operating with a Senior Pastor model because one Co-Pastor position is vacant)

- MIPC has a unique intergenerational membership

Programs and Ministries have Expanded, but Membership and Attendance Has Remained Level

One issue we have to deal with is the fact that while we have been expanding our programs and ministries over the last 10 years, as well as our staffing to support these, our MIPC membership and attendance have remained largely flat. We have had significant new member additions over the years but this has been offset by an equal amount of member losses.

In addition, lay participation and support have increased somewhat, but not proportionately to the same level that we have expanded programs and ministries.

At the same time, once we start programs at MIPC it has been difficult to let them go. The staff/clergy have struggled mightily to keep all the programs going that have been started.

All of these factors combine to create an approach is not sustainable for the long term, at least not within current budget levels.

Lay Participation and Lack of Systems/Programs

Another issue with regard to lay participation is that there is a sense that MIPC relies heavily on the same small group of volunteers for much of our lay work, many of them self-starters that proactively jump in. Volunteers sometimes feel as if only a certain portion of the church population participates, thus putting undue burden on those who do volunteer.

Also, newer volunteers feel that they are encouraged to participate, but that there is not much church support if they should need it. Immediate responsibility and lack of training can overwhelm non-self-starters and make volunteering a burden.

There is a lack of systems, programs, and procedures that may make volunteering at MIPC harder for volunteers who want support and structure.

MIPC Has Developed a Strong Reputation as a Spiritual Leader in the Schools and the Community

While it is wonderful that we are seen as a resource for the Mercer Island schools and the greater Mercer Island community, a concern is that without a funding source or new membership, it is hard to continue to address the growing pastoral and caring needs resulting from this positive outreach. These community groups reach out to MIPC when needs arise, which is positive, though we need to recognize that it takes

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resources to respond and be of assistance, and at this time we do not specifically budget for any of these activities.

Current Economic Environment is Challenging Churches and Non-Profits

MIPC currently operates in a difficult economic environment. As we all know, the global recession is having an impact on churches and other non-profit entities. Donor fatigue is also an issue that is having impact.

MIPC does not have the funding to continue the same level of staffing, programs, and services and live within our financial means. This has been communicated broadly and hopefully everyone is aware of this situation now. We will need help from the congregation in terms of lay participation/leadership as well as funding to come up with a budget that works. We will also have to make some adjustments in terms of programs and staffing and the pastor staffing model to support them.

Our recent Stewardship campaign shows that overall giving is down. Going forward, we may need to take a fresh look at Stewardship, possibly involving an external consultant, to come up with a plan to develop the necessary level of giving to support the programs and ministries at MIPC.

MIPC has Navigated Several Transitions

MIPC has navigated through challenges of several transitions, including Dale's retirement, staff transitions, and the O&A process (though this is still ongoing). Seattle Presbytery has also reminded us that we need to recognize the transitional time we are in, and that we need to be sensitive to allow for the time and space that people need to grieve. They have also reminded us that even though we don't have an Interim Pastor during this time, that there is "interim work" that is ongoing and has to take place.

In addition to the pastor and staff changes we have experienced, the Open and Affirming (O&A) process has also been an issue of change for us to deal with as a congregation. In retrospect, the process was complex and the timing was difficult with the other transitions we were going through. From the 2010 congregational survey, the current efforts to be open and affirming to gays and lesbians are broadly supported at MIPC:

- 12% strongly disagree
- 5% disagree
- 11% neither agree nor disagree
- 16% agree
- 51% strongly agree

Time and healing may still be needed in this area to continue to find ways for all in the congregation to feel included and moving forward together. More communication will also be needed about what the revised policy means for the future so that everyone has a clear understanding.

At this time, it appears that most in the congregation are poised and ready to move forward. Throughout our planning process, we have heard comments that tell us folks are thankful for all the planning and discussion time, but that now it is time to move on.

Where Do We Go From Here – Future Needs

Taking all of the above *Findings* into account, the following outlines what we need to take into account as we consider recommendations for the future:

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- We need to expand congregational participation, leadership, and financial commitment with a program to inspire, encourage, support, and nurture. Without programs, systems and procedures, we have a surplus of good ideas without the follow-through necessary to avoid volunteer burnout, nurture and support volunteers, avoid people getting in over their heads, etc.
- We need a focus on adult spiritual development, engagement and connectedness including:
 - continued focus on worship and key worship elements
 - fostering adult connectedness beyond kids and child-raising
 - a response to the yearning for spiritual growth through small groups
 - greater engagement that is needed to provide additional lay support/help, but also to provide opportunities for greater adult spiritual development, service and congregational participation
- With 3 pastors instead of 4 (in accordance with Staffing Task force recommendations), pastor time needs to be deployed differently. We need to free up pastors so that they can focus on leading the congregation, lay development, preaching/worship, and pastoral care (top tier objectives). There is less staff time to cover current or any new responsibilities, therefore we need to refocus staff/clergy time from doing and administering to
 - inspiring
 - leading
 - preaching
 - equipping and supporting lay leaders (also “train the trainers”)
 - building and communicating a common vision
- With limited financial resources and a challenging economic environment, we need to do more with less and still operate within a comfortably balanced budget. We won’t be able to do everything we have done in the past or at least not in the same staff-driven manner.
- We need to shift leadership’s focus more toward communicating and implementing our common vision. This shift is important enough to add an Elder of Communications to assist with this.
- We should continue instituting additional systems and procedures appropriate for MIPC’s size. Much progress in this area was made since the time of the last strategic plan, but we need to continue in these efforts.
- There is a need to reach out to less active members within our congregation.
- There is a need to reach out to and support the external community in ways that we can sustain with existing resources.
- Other opportunities:
 - leverage our strengths
 - make the most of this time of transition when there is an openness toward change and new ways of doing things
 - leverage Pastor Paul’s strengths in an expanded role
 - better tap the next layer of people underneath recurring volunteers
 - use recurring volunteers to help train/involve next layer of lay leaders
 - free up pastoral/staff time through shifting admin. responsibilities, committee work, and meeting attendance to lay leaders to the extent possible

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IV. Key Recommendations

The Strategic Planning Team has concluded that MIPC needs to focus on the following objectives to close the gaps that were identified in our findings. These recommendations are oriented around key parts of the proposed mission statement and are designed to serve as a roadmap to guide MIPC's leadership and ministries as more detailed plans are developed.

Seeking God

- **Develop and enhance worship; focus on preaching**
 - the importance of preaching was clearly reinforced through congregational and leadership input
 - explore ways to increase lay involvement in all services
 - consider additional opportunities for one-service Sundays in the worship schedule
 - the congregation liked many aspects of the one-service summer (buzz, energy, higher attendance, "one family" unity, mixing of people from different services) and this change freed pastors and staff for other activities
 - based on the above experience, consider more fully the cost vs. benefit of 3 vs. 2 services
 - congregation clearly said that music is a key part of all worship services; need to determine a balance of resources between services that best serves the congregation's input/needs.
 - free up pastoral time for prayer, study, preparation time by shifting meeting/committee attendance and admin. tasks to lay leaders
- **Focus on adult spiritual development and improve adult engagement and connectedness through small groups and other opportunities**
 - determine more fully what spiritual growth means to the congregation
 - consider the development of a systematic small group program, including structure and ongoing training/equipping of volunteers
 - evaluate specific input received from congregational forums and thoughts from Williamson's meeting regarding adult small groups
 - communicate more effectively what it means to be a member
 - leverage MIPC's unique intergenerational nature
- **Provide opportunities and education for us to understand and strengthen our Presbyterian ties**
 - integrate as appropriate into sermons, Christian education programs, new member classes, etc.
 - provide and communicate opportunities to be involved with and help lead Presbytery programs; continue expanded focus on session to have consistent representation at recurring Presbytery meetings
- **Provide Christian education and Bible study opportunities that help us grow and best deploy our resources for the greatest impact**
 - evaluate/research opportunities for Christian education; best times to offer to maximize attendance; need to best match resources with attendance
 - consider fee-based system if outside speakers are desired
 - based on congregational input, include education on Presbyterianism, what it means to be Presbyterian, etc. (one class series is already scheduled)

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Sharing Our Gifts

- **Discover, celebrate, and share our individual passions and spiritual gifts so that each of us shares those gifts at MIPC and beyond**
 - integrate the education and development of spiritual gifts into the broader efforts to further develop lay commitment and participation
 - move toward an on-line database of time and talents (updatable and searchable by members), accessible through the church's website
 - this will help in planning for RuthAnn's future retirement
 - one feature could be a "current/coming opportunities" link showing opportunities for lay involvement
- **Encourage, train, deploy, and support lay leaders**
 - develop an intentional, structured support program for lay leadership/participation
 - include a training program for current and future leaders
 - program should inspire and encourage involvement and leadership
 - include a program to help lay people realize and develop spiritual gifts
 - nurturing/support of lay leaders is key; use shepherding/partnering as necessary
 - include clear member expectations as to participation
 - need systems and procedures to better ensure that this process works effectively and avoids volunteer burnout
 - clergy/staff/key lay leaders should focus on making this happen
 - utilize current recurring volunteer group to help roll this out
- **Refocus pastors, staff, and key lay leaders' responsibilities to focus more intentionally on developing, supporting and equipping congregational leaders and participants**
 - shift focus from doing/administering to inspiring/training/equipping lay people
 - this is consistent with the current doctrine that the church of the future empowers/equips/inspires/supports members for ministry wherever they find themselves called to serve Christ (workplace, volunteer, school, etc.)
 - key roles for MIPC clergy:
 - inspiration
 - leadership
 - preaching
 - pastoral care
 - development, communication, and congregational buy-in of common vision
 - development of staff and lay resources
 - strategic initiatives
 - key roles for staff:
 - development of lay participants and leaders
 - assist lay personnel in ministry and program administration
 - skill/experience for inspiring/training/nurturing should be a key part of job description for current and future staff
 - adequate administrative support for clergy is needed to free up clergy for more strategic, higher-leverage tasks; does not necessarily need to be paid staff
 - utilize key lay leaders to help roll out lay leadership and participation program; shift focus from doing to helping train/support/nurture others

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- develop and communicate a clear organizational chart that the congregation can understand and refer to
 - support with job descriptions and procedures that set expectations and limits on non-core activities (i.e., clergy involvement in non-member weddings & memorials)
- **Develop and utilize a balanced budget that prioritizes ministries for which we have lay leadership**
 - congregation spoke loud and clear on the need to live within our means
 - don't continue to do things and continue programs "because we've always done it"
 - only do what we have resources/lay leaders for
 - as a transition, consider moving some events to alternate years; publicize so people can plan accordingly
 - remove pastoral labor/admin. time from many programs; if lay leadership rises to fill need, the program survives, if not, it doesn't
 - use detailed program guidance from surveys/forums/input
 - continue to be realistic, upfront and transparent about budget/stewardship/finances, and leverage the progress that has been made in these areas to help lead congregation through potentially difficult choices and changes
 - where possible, prioritize members over non-members in program availability and cost
 - develop fee structures which fully acknowledge members and better help cover full costs of all programs, while still providing scholarship opportunities (e.g., youth programs, etc.)
 - allow members to sign-up before non-members
- **Continue support of historically strong ministries at MIPC, but do so in ways that rely increasingly on congregational support rather than staff**
 - youth/children/preschool focus
 - caring ministries
 - mission programs
- **Encourage financial stewardship as an essential part of our Christian responsibility and call**
 - To the extent possible, the congregational response to stewardship needs to be molded and shaped toward a fundamental view that it grows out of our Christian responsibility and call (a privilege as well as a responsibility), as opposed to being just another charity or club to support. This can be reinforced from the pulpit, in various communications, as a part of various ministries (i.e., adult Christian education, missions), etc.
 - Consider retaining a consultant to assist with this effort, to potentially benefit from a fresh look at our approach.

Serving Others

- **Help one another use our passions and gifts to reach out to and support the needy in our church, in our community, and in the world. As we serve others, strive to be inclusive and welcoming to all.**
 - congregation's input shows a high interest in connecting with external community, but less interest in becoming a larger church with more members – focus on reaching out to those less active members/friends of MIPC as well as the external community, but in a way we can sustain
 - explore outreach activities directed toward those in the congregation who are slipping away
 - leverage membership more - focus on equipping all members to be active in outreach by focusing outward not inward
 - big-name, outside speakers (i.e., Anne Lamott) had great appeal and many side benefits (outreach, buzz, etc.), but come with great risk

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- consider partnering in the future with other churches/organizations to shoulder/reduce risk (tried with Anne Lamott but with limited success); explore idea of potential endowment funding
- consider ways to extend excitement and buzz beyond the initial event (e.g., follow on with small groups to promote further discussion, encourage growth)
- **Expand our mission awareness and impact by increasing the congregation's understanding and appreciation of mission as an essential part of our Christian call, connecting a greater percentage of the congregation to mission activities, and measuring and communicating our progress in both time as well as money.**
 - Congregation shows high interest in mission focus and work, but funding remains tight during this time of lean finances. Seek to increase the level of mission funding from the general budget by involving a greater percentage of the congregation in mission activities whether those activities involve contributions or meeting congregational requests for experience-based personal involvement.
 - explore the measurement of mission activities using estimates of both time as well as money
 - there is significant interest in local, experiential missions with the opportunity for personal involvement
 - many in the congregation seem willing to support selected missions separately
- **Support and partner with community groups, Presbytery, and local and international mission groups to serve others.**
 - Consistent with the spirit of doing more with less, as well as a part of our support to Presbytery and the community, leverage our mission work through partnering efforts with other groups which have similar or complementary programs.
 - Build upon existing programs and partnerships as well as explore opportunities to create new ones.

General

- **Lead and communicate using a clear and simple common vision**
 - strong leadership is essential during this time of transition
 - leverage the strategic plan for determining priorities
 - take this opportunity in time of transition to get more power from the revised mission statement
 - communications - continue to build on excellent progress and strong foundation
 - this is the glue that keeps everything together; we are reminded how critically important this is and how difficult it is to do this right
 - add an Elder for Communications to help focus on and coordinate this important function
 - leadership, staff and volunteers need to shoulder their part of this (plan for, provide input for, keep uppermost in their minds, etc.) – can't abdicate or rely unduly on staff and clergy
 - incorporate a continuous feedback loop involving the congregation
 - there are many things congregation would like to be more plugged into
 - opportunities exist to use online surveys as a feedback tool; leverage what was learned in using Survey Monkey to conduct the congregational survey
 - include intentional listening and sharing opportunities on a regular basis
- **Leverage the positive aspects of transition and change as we move forward**
 - there was a general sense among congregation of:
 - an openness toward change and new ways of doing things
 - great opportunities arising out of all of the changes going on

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- great time and excuse for making significant changes that might not otherwise be possible if we weren't going through so many changes
- a need to celebrate our strengths and resources
- "we're done talking about transition, let's be bullish about the future"
- this time of transition is a great opportunity to introduce new ways of doing things; if we don't take advantage of this, it is an opportunity lost.
- it is easy to become negative and disenchanted in a time of change without an intentional optimism and a communication style and plan which supports that
- **The Staffing Task Force (STF) recommends that MIPC stay with a three-pastor staffing model for the foreseeable future**
 - STF is in the middle of their process but has done enough work to recommend that we stay with a 3-pastor model (instead of a 4-pastor model) for the foreseeable future
 - this conclusion is based primarily on being the only prudent option available given MIPC's current budget
 - STF has made this recommendation to Session and Session understands and is supportive
 - this decision will require significant changes in the pastoral roles to make it possible for three pastors to address key/new priorities as well as effectively cover the work formerly done by four pastors (refocusing of priorities, elimination of pastoral involvement in selected areas, some sacrifices, etc.)
 - further recommendations on specifics of staffing model, including whether to retain or move away from a co-pastor model (for details, see the copy of STF questions & answers on the website), will be forthcoming.
 - need clarity as to the number and type of committees that require pastoral and/or staff participation; goal should be to limit need for staff and clergy involvement in every committee

By design, these recommendations are at a broad level for purposes of this report, and are intended only to indicate high-level, key objectives for the church and its various ministry areas. The detail underlying these recommendations will continue to be refined. Over the next few months, with the approval and oversight of Session, the Strategic Planning Team will work with the leaders of the various ministry groups to assist them in translating these and other recommendations into specific, detailed action plans for the upcoming year and beyond.

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V. Appendices

A. Selected supporting documents located on the planning page of the MIPC website (www.mipc.org/planning):

- Report from the Ministry & Budget Task Force (August 2009)
- Work plans of the Strategic Planning Team and the Staffing Task Force
- Situation Analysis (summary of MIPC's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats)
- Survey results from the Leadership Input Meeting held in June 2010
- Survey results from the Congregational Survey conducted in October 2010
- Staffing Task Force – Questions and Answers

B. Staffing Task Force (STF) Process and Timeline:

Staffing Task Force (STF) Process and Timeline

Goal: Recommendation for long-term (3-5 year) staffing plan to Session by April

