

Consultation Report Crosby UMC

INTRODUCTION

We, the consultation team, would like to thank Pastor Jamie and Kandace Lea, the lay leadership and the congregation of Crosby UMC 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:

- Crosby UMC 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 Ad Council
- a MissionInsite demographic report of the area's population
- 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 Crosby UMC will more effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of its community and the world.

STRENGTHS

STRENGTH #1: COMMUNICATION

The consultation team reviewed existing communication pieces including church bulletins, newsletter, on-campus exterior and interior signage, bulletin boards, website and social media. Reaching all audiences, in their preferred communication channel, is a challenge for many churches, and Crosby UMC appears to cover all the bases for English-speaking audiences.

STRENGTH #2: NOT ENCUMBERED BY DEBT

While many churches face ministry cuts because of the burden of a mortgage, Crosby UMC has a history of financial responsibility which frees it from major debt. This enables the church to begin a focus towards stewardship and discipleship that will allow for future growth possibilities.

STRENGTH #3: FACILITY

Crosby UMC's facility is comfortable, with sound infrastructure, new lighting, fresh paint, and flexible multipurpose spaces. The church has kept up, for the most part, with facility maintenance issues which are frequently present in an older property.

STRENGTH #4: OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Our team was impressed and inspired by the number of outreach ministries in which the church is engaged in the Crosby community. The church serves the needs of children through Kids Hope, an active elementary school mentoring program, hosts scouting groups, and participates in Churches

Consultation Report Crosby UMC

United in Caring for children and families. Its weekday school program housed on the church property has an excellent reputation in the community. It also serves important needs through a prayer ministry, prayer shawl ministry, and recovery groups. Other outreach activities that have visibility in the community include a Harvest Moon Festival and Easter sunrise service. Pastor Lea and Kandace as a team actively model Christian outreach and service in traditional and nontraditional ways.

CONCERNS

CONCERN #1: GROWTH ISSUES

We heard many comments about members' desire to grow the church. As the congregation seeks to grow, it is constricted in several ways. We heard comments reflecting a "scarcity mindset"—the feeling that "we don't have enough, and we never will have enough" to expand staff or missions. Facility issues and parking limitations are seen as barriers to growth.

CONCERN #2: YOUTH/FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

We heard a clear desire from this congregation to grow the current youth and young adult ministries and to reach out to more families in the area with young children. This is both a concern and a significant opportunity. The church has a heart for children, available space and facilities to grow its children's and youth programs. We heard, however, that attempts to hire a full-time director of family ministries have so far been unsuccessful. The MissionInsite data suggests moderate growth over the next ten years in the children and youth demographic within three miles of the church.

CONCERN #3: LACK OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The consultation team recognizes there are many gifted, committed and effective leaders in a variety of areas. Current leaders are at risk of burnout as they continue to serve in roles because there are no new leaders to step in. There is no integrated, coherent plan for developing new and existing leaders tied to a clear vision. There is a feeling that once someone takes on a leadership role, it seems like a lifetime assignment. Willing leaders are sometimes rebuffed if they seek to take on a role and do it a different way.

CONCERN #4: CONSISTENT AND INTENTIONAL HOSPITALITY

An intentional, consistent assimilation process is needed for guest follow-up. Some mystery worshippers were engaged by the pastor and/or members and felt welcomed, yet others were not. One of the mystery guests reported, "I think this church has a lot of potential. Based on photos online, it appears that they have a healthy and active congregation. Somehow, I did not experience this. Making guests feel warm and welcome is the responsibility of the entire congregation, not just the pastor or his wife." While Sunday morning guests received follow-up communication (six of seven mystery worshippers who completed visitor cards did receive follow-up), there is no formal mechanism for gathering guest contact information at community outreach events.

Consultation Report Crosby UMC

CONCERN #5: WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

With a strong traditional service and a contemporary worship service, Crosby UMC understands the need to have multiple worship expressions. This is important to attract and retain a wide range of congregants, from young families to seniors. Separate areas of the church campus are used for the two services. The different worship experiences have a positive impact on attendance and enthusiasm. While the team applauds the congregation's resourcefulness and commitment to providing a contemporary worship setting, mystery worshippers suggested improvements could include a live band at the early service. This is consistent with current expectations that church music have a professional and polished feel.

PRESCRIPTIONS

Crosby UMC is a good church on a trajectory to become a great church. The consultation team saw many signs of progress and an eagerness to keep the church on a path to growth. The path, however, is not as clear as it should be.

In order to address the above concerns, Crosby UMC 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: "Making 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 "making disciples of Jesus Christ."

A Day of Prayer and Renewal: The congregation will have a service of prayer and renewal 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 Renewal will take place within one month of the date of acceptance of the Consultation Report.

The consultation team encourages the congregation to look at past practices with an eye on what is no longer working, without casting any blame. Much like the technology transition to all-digital signals that made analog televisions obsolete, the church should be alert to changes that—through no fault of the congregation—render old, comfortable ways no longer fruitful.

PRESCRIPTION #1: VISION AND STRUCTURE

Vision is essential for faithful servants of God. The Coach will conduct a Day of Visioning workshop. The purpose of this day is to dream of how God might work through the congregation to reach the local mission field by clarifying its identity and purpose. This workshop will occur within six weeks of the acceptance of the Consultation Report. Pre-workshop homework will be completed two weeks prior.

Following the Day of Visioning, the Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will:

Consultation Report Crosby UMC

- Appoint a Vision Discernment team consisting of 5-7 people, three of whom will be between the ages of 23 and 40, within two weeks following the workshop.
- Define a Vision, capturing the uniqueness of Crosby UMC. The Vision will be presented to the Administrative Council within five months following the Vision Workshop.
- Vision will be cast throughout the church and community, immediately following presentation to the Administrative Council.

Upon receiving the Vision, the Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will create another team of 5-7 people, three of whom will be between the ages of 23 and 40, to begin work on a ministry assessment of all current ministries within two weeks following publication of the Vision Statement. The purpose of the assessment will be to ensure that the ministries and staffing are in alignment with the mission and vision of the church. This assessment will be completed within three months of publication of the Vision Statement. If an individual ministry fails in this alignment, the responsible leaders have one year to realign it or sunset the ministry. In order to maintain optimal, long-term alignment, we recommend an annual ministry assessment.

PREScription #2: DEVELOP INTENTIONAL HOSPITALITY

A spirit of radical hospitality involves doing everything possible to anticipate and welcome new people, intentionally connect with them, and invite them into the life and ministry of the church. The pastor, in conjunction with the coach, will select a multigenerational task force of 5-7 people, three of whom will be between the ages of 23 and 40, plus representatives of the current hospitality team, within two weeks of the acceptance of the Consultation Report. They will begin their work by reviewing the Faith Perceptions Mystery Guest Worshipper Report, and by reading and discussing the book, *Get Their Name: Grow Your Church by Building New Relationships* by Bob Farr. The team will contact the Center for Congregational Excellence to schedule an onsite hospitality check-up with Jan Floro, (costs to be shared between Center for Congregational Excellence and Crosby UMC). Then they will consider the following strategies:

Hospitality

- Continue the improvement of exterior and interior environment, including signage with special attention to guest parking and children's play area.
- Ensure that updates of the website include a special navigation for first-time guests who are looking for information about what to expect when they visit.
- Consider giving guests and their children welcome gifts in exchange for their connection card or contact information.

Assimilation

- Visit at least three churches (need not be Methodist churches) and note guest experience, how guest information is collected, and any next steps guests are invited to take.
- Based on experience and workshop, develop a comprehensive assimilation process.
- Train volunteers to implement an assimilation process.

Consultation Report Crosby UMC

PRESCRIPTION #3: STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY

The Pastor, in consultation with the church council will examine and schedule a study of *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate*, or *Whose Offering Plate Is It?* both by Cliff Christopher, to develop a fresh approach to stewardship. This will be completed not later than three months of the acceptance of the Consultation Report.

The Pastor and Finance Team will develop a Stewardship Plan that encompasses new insights and modern church giving practices. This plan will use the Consecration Model to help people embrace the joy and privilege of tithing as a means of helping to grow God's kingdom. It will include making the offering time an integral part of worship in each service, stewardship moments in worship that highlight the difference giving makes, an annual stewardship campaign and a schedule/format for communicating financial updates to the congregation. This plan will be presented to church council within six months of the acceptance of the Consultation Report and implementation will begin immediately upon approval of the plan.

PRESCRIPTION #4: DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

Once Prescription #1 is complete, the church will embark on developing a Pathway to Discipleship. The first step will be to contact the Center for Congregational Excellence to schedule an Ascending Leaders workshop. Prior to the workshop, the Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will appoint a 5-7 person team, three of whom will be between the ages of 23 and 40, to develop a clear and simple process for growing new and seasoned Christians in their faith.

PRESCRIPTION 5: WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

The pastor, in consultation with the coach, will establish a Worship Excellence Team of 5-7 individuals, three of whom will be between the ages of 23 and 40, representing worship experiences for different generations. This team will contact the Center for Congregational Excellence to schedule a worship workshop led by Dr. Craig Gilbert within two months of the acceptance of the Consultation Report. The result of the workshop will be a strategy for delivering consistent and meaningful worship experiences going forward.

Strategies developed by the team will be implemented no later than three months following the workshop. This team will include an examination of the use of live musicians, equipment needs, optimizing the use of worship space and the current worship times. Team members will visit three churches with multiple styles of worship and report on best practices to the rest of the team within six months of the acceptance of the Consultation Report.

Celebrate Success: Two months after the completion of their last prescription, Crosby UMC will hold a service of celebration. 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

Consultation Report Crosby UMC

implement your mission more effectively, utilize your compelling vision through a developed plan, and thereby make an eternal difference in the Crosby UMC community for the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Seaborn Nesbett, Lead Consultant
Steve Stutz, D.Min., VCI Coach
Jim Flagg, M.Div., VCI Team Member
Susan Burnell, APR, Scribe

TOWN HALL MEETING DATES:

Tuesday, September 17	6:00 p.m.	Sanctuary
Sunday, September 29	Noon	Family Life Center
Tuesday, October 1	6:00 p.m.	Sanctuary

CHURCH CONFERENCE DATE:

Date and location to be announced.