

Consultation Report for Bullard First UMC

INTRODUCTION

We, the consultation team, would like to thank Rev. David Brasher, the lay leadership and the congregation of Bullard First United Methodist Church 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:

- Bullard First UMC's 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
- 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 consultation team's prayer is that God will use this assessment experience and consultation report so that Bullard First United Methodist Church will more effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of its community and the world.

STRENGTHS

Strength #1: Worship Experience

Prior to the consultation weekend, a company called Faith Perceptions hires unchurched people to experience worship with an outsider's perspective and evaluate key points. They report back their findings from the time they arrive in the community, until they leave at the end of worship. It was exciting to read from the twelve visitors of their pleasure to worship with this congregation. The numerical scores reflect the welcoming of guests, excellence in message, music, and friendliness leaving the guests wanting to return. The consultation team wants to applaud this congregation and leaders of a job well done.

Strength #2: Passionate Volunteers & Leadership

Bullard First United Methodist is blessed with a small but strong base of gifted lay leadership and volunteers. They are eager to move the church forward as the community grows and expands over the next few years. They are generous in helping those in need, open-minded, and have a desire to empower new leaders.

Strength #3: Financially Strong

Bullard First UMC is a financially strong congregation as evidenced by the financial reports and conversations with membership. It is evident by the actions taken to refinance debt and short term obligations on the new church van. When financial needs arise for ministry opportunities, the congregation is willing to give generously towards these advancements. An example of this is the manner in which the additions of screens in the sanctuary and the renovations for the new office space were accomplished.

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Strength #4: Growing community

Bullard First UMC is located in an area of the state of Texas that has experienced 48% increase in population over the last ten years and is projected to grow another 20% over the next five years.

Strength #5: Facilities

Bullard First UMC is blessed with a large facility with undeveloped land, conveniently located with easy access to a major highway and nearby local schools - all providing numerous opportunities for outreach, collaboration, and transforming lives.

CONCERNS

Concern #1: Dreams for the future

The consultation team did not hear what can best be described as a “Dream” for the future. Without a vision or dream of a preferred future, long range planning becomes nonexistent. In order for Bullard FUMC to begin to live into the realities that they find themselves, the congregation must again begin to dream. Solutions must be found to address the rapid growth of Tyler moving south, influx of young families with children, and underutilization of some resources while simultaneously straining the current capacity in other areas.

Concern #2: Leadership Development

It is extremely difficult for churches to transition beyond an average worship attendance of 200 because this number marks the limit of the number of people with whom a single pastor has the time, the energy or the personal reserves to build meaningful relationships. This results in people drifting in and out of the church because the church is unable to fulfill the relational requirements that people are looking for. Therefore, strong lay and additional clergy leadership is needed to expand existing successful missions and programs, which all are built on strong interpersonal relationships.

Concern #3: Missional Outreach

Aside from Mission House, we heard you say your outreach efforts are limited.

Concern #4: Long range planning

There does not appear to be a current strategic plan for Bullard FUMC addressing the next three to five years. As documented in the MissionInsite report the community of Bullard is predicted to grow exponentially over the next 10 years. Without a strategic plan to be prepared for this growth, Bullard FUMC will not be in position to respond appropriately.

Concern #5: Community Relationship Development

We heard you say the church has a heart for meeting the needs of its neighbors through the good work of offering outreach ministries; however, there does not seem to be an intentional strategy for doing this.

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PRESCRIPTIONS

A Service of Healing and Unity

The consultation team consistently heard incidences of “cliquishness” within the congregation which has led to hurt feelings and negatively impacted volunteerism and unity of the congregation. Prior to starting any of the following prescriptions, the church will have a service of healing and unity which will allow the membership to address this issue and prepare Bullard FUMC to grasp God’s dream for the future. The service will be led by a person to be selected by the Center for Congregational Excellence. The Service of Healing and Unity will take place by November 20, 2016.

Prescription #1: Dreams for the future

Genesis 28:10-19.

Adulthood can take away the ability to dream. In order for the church to be the church however, we must be willing to accept that often what God is calling us to do seems to be impossible. It is our contention that God has greater dreams for us than we ever dare dream for ourselves. We are too often willing to settle for far less than God dreams for us. The truth is apart from God these dreams are impossible. But with God at the center of our personal life and our community life as a church, the dreams that God gives us are not only possible they are probable. This prescription is different than any prescription we have ever written for any other church. There are no committees or teams, there is however a desire to help you dream the dreams that God has for you. In order to do this we are asking that you do the following:

1. Every Sunday for the first three months after adoption of this report, bring to worship your dreams for this congregation, written on a piece of paper and placed in the collection plate. These dreams are to be collected and held.
2. At the end of this three months, the dreams will be shared with the congregation as a whole i.e.: place them on bulletin boards/ fellowship hall, etc. where everyone can see them. And allow those dreams to speak to your soul.
3. After a two week period of prayer and reflection on the dreams that have been presented, the church will have a town hall meeting to discuss what those dreams might mean to you and the future of this church. This meeting is to be facilitated by the pastor, and a report made available of the results.
4. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you.
5. Based on results of the town hall meeting, the pastor in consultation with the coach will create a Dream Team of 5-7 individuals across the generations, including at least two people under the age of 37, (reference MissionInsite report of average community age) by March 1, 2017. This team will explore the opportunities for additional worship services, small group development, additional education times, and enhanced utilization of the facilities, especially the family life center, to allow this congregation to live into the dreams God has given them.
6. Take action accordingly.

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Prescription #2: Leadership Development

Although Bullard FUMC has many gifted, committed, and effective leaders in a variety of areas, there is a limited system for identifying, training, and supporting new and existing leaders. Developing this system is critical for expanding ministry and impacting the mission field. The starting place for this system is clarifying the role and job of each person on staff both paid and unpaid.

The coach and pastor will meet with the staff parish relations committee to audit the current staff positions in light of the Mission & Vision. This will include an assessment of key ministries, roles of staff, the configuration of staff positions, and the number of needed staff positions. (This includes appointed clergy staff). The Consultation team urges that the new configuration of staff will include a Pastoral Assistant or Associate Pastor whose duties will be defined by the Pastor in consultation with SPRC. This will be completed on or before December 31, 2016.

As the dream becomes more clear, job descriptions to fulfill the results of the dream need to align with the Mission & Vision. This includes a major component of empowering laity for the sake of the Mission & Vision. The pastor and the coach will work with the staff to develop these job descriptions and their use in staff meetings, quarterly goal setting, and annual evaluations by the pastor and staff parish relations committee. This will be completed on or before April 15, 2017.

The 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 prior to the Charge Conference 2017, so that the new leadership is reflected in the nominations.

A Simplified Structure/ One Board Model Workshop will be held by a designee from the Center of Congregational Excellence to explain and introduce the concept of a simplified structure/ one board model for governing the church not later than February 15, 2017. Following this workshop, the Administrative Council will decide whether to adopt this concept for use at Bullard FUMC. If the decision is to move forward, the pastor in consultation with the coach will appoint a taskforce to implement this decision based on the simplified structure/ one board model (see *Book of Discipline* P244.2 & 247.2) with accountable leadership model (based on *Winning on Purpose* by John Kaiser) on or before Charge Conference 2017.

Prescription #3: Missional Outreach

The Pastor, in consultation with the coach, shall develop a Connect Team of 5-7 people, to study the MissionInsite reports, the community survey from the self-study and then dream of creative ways to reach out to the surrounding community. Persons on the team should have a deep passion for mission and evangelism.

The Connect Team will identify appropriate target audiences and their needs within the community which this church could meet. Once identified, the Connect Team will develop an outward focus strategy, to be implemented and possibly become a "Signature Mission Ministry". This is to be completed by May 31, 2017.

The Administrative Council will review the contract to better understand the newly defined relationship between the church and Mission House. This is to be completed no later than December 31, 2016 and communicated to the congregation and the board of directors of Mission House to begin a clear and concise understanding of the scope and boundaries between the two organizations.

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Prescription #4: Long range planning

While Bullard FUMC has in place a concise Mission, “*Mission* – It is our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”, further work needs to be done on vision development. When completed, the mission and vision statement needs to be included in every newsletter and bulletin. It also must become a part of the culture of Bullard FUMC if it is to have any practical meaning.

Based on the results from the Dream Team, the pastor, in consultation with the coach,

- will appoint a Vision Development team, consisting of 5-7 people no later than January 15, 2017, to begin work to further discern and define a clear and concise vision for this church.
- will create a Ministry Program Audit team of at least 5-7 people before January 15, 2017, to help align all of the programs and activities to the vision. Every Ministry, Program, and Activity in the congregation must demonstrate how it will accomplish the vision and mission. Any new Ministry, Program or Activity needs to have as its primary purpose the “making of disciples.” This audit will be completed by June 15, 2017. Any mission ministry or program not in alignment must be discontinued or adjusted to align with the mission and vision by December 31, 2017.

Prescription #5: Community Relationship Development

The consultation team heard of your desire to have the church become more intentionally focused on the needs of the community. Therefore, the pastor, in consultation with the coach, will assemble a 5-7 member Outreach Team by November 30, 2016 with the purpose of:

1. Utilizing existing data from your Self-Study, including the MissionInsite and the Community Survey to gain a better understanding of the mission field. Next, identify needs and develop strategies for the church to be in ministry with the greater Bullard community.
2. Building intentional relationships with existing partners and looking for opportunities to develop new partnerships within the community, for example local schools and social services agencies, for the purpose of connecting people involved with these groups into the life of the church.

The Outreach team will recruit additional members to plan two additional non youth or children oriented all-hands-on-deck “Bridge Events” to occur on or before December 31, 2017 for the purpose of connecting with the community and introducing new people to the life of the church.

- Conduct two community service events (at no charge to the public and not specifically for our members) to reach new people and build relationships. One in the Spring of 2017 and one in Fall 2017. Examples of this might be Health Fair, Blood drive, etc.
- The team will plan, facilitate and evaluate these events and then will continue and/or adjust them based on their fruit for the coming years. We recommend the book, *Get Their Name*, by Doug Anderson, Bob Farr, and Kay Kotan for ideas and inspiration related to these events.

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CONCLUSION

We, the consultation team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation in this manner. Our prayer 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 Bullard First UMC community for the glory of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Dr. Jesse Brannen, Lead Consultant
Dr. Steve Stutz, Coach
Seaborn Nesbett, Consultant
Debbie Sutton, Scribe

Town Hall Meeting Dates:

Sunday, October 9, 2016 at 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 16, 2016 at 3:30 p.m.

Monday, October 24, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

Church Conference Date:

Wednesday, November 9, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.