

**Central United Methodist Church**  
**Envisioning/Renewing Weekend Final Report**  
**11/13/2011**

At noon on Sunday, November 13, 2011, the Envisioning/Renewing Weekend (ERW) task force brought the year-long ERW process to its conclusion. The task force sponsored a luncheon which featured concluding reports from the five Study/Actions Groups (SAGs) that had met over the previous year. These summaries will provide ideas and directions for the church's boards and committees as they go about their work in the months ahead.

**Administration & Communication**

Key Issues:

1. Did a systematic review of the concerns expressed during Central's November 20, 2010 weekend retreat.
2. Identified and prioritized four central issues:
  1. How can we address the concerns about the kitchen and make it more effective?
  2. What can be done to improve the effectiveness of Central's teams and councils?
  3. Is there a problem with administrative role definition and responsibilities at Central?
  4. How can we better use technology to enhance communication, worship and outreach?

Summary by key issue:

1. Kitchen Cleaned, and Kitchen & Dining Room Manager Selected
  - Problem: With the numerous different groups using the kitchen how can we maintain proper cleanliness and sanitation?
  - What has been done?
    - Kitchen and Dining Room Managers have been appointed. The Trustees have defined areas of responsibility.
    - Trustees arranged professional cleaning of kitchen and pest control efforts.
    - The September flooding interrupted their efforts.
  - Work that needs to continue
    - Recover from flood conditions
    - Complete pest control efforts
    - Support efforts of Kitchen and Dining Room managers

- Establish an annual calendar of professional cleaning and pest control
  - Responsible: Trustees, Kitchen and Dining Room Managers
2. “Best Practices” Established To Help Councils and Teams Work More Effectively
- Problem: Many participants of the weekend retreat expressed concern about problems within committee, teams and council meetings.
  - What has been done?
    - Researched and compiled a series of “Best Practices” to be shared with team leaders and members.
    - Presented to Church Council
  - Work that needs to continue:
    - “Best Practices” should be reviewed and shared among council leaders and members on an annual basis.
    - “Best Practices” should be posted on Central’s website.
    - Responsible: Church Council, Team Leaders, Webmaster
3. Resources Identified To Enable Better Communication of Roles and Responsibilities Within Central
- Problem: Numerous participants expressed concern about the lack of clear roles, responsibilities, and job descriptions at Central. Further examination convinced us that the roles and responsibilities at Central are already well defined. However, they are not communicated clearly enough. People need to be able to find out whom to contact about their concerns.
  - Solution: We found that there are resources already in place (human, print and web-based) that can help us better communicate roles and responsibilities within Central. These resources include:
    - The Church Office
    - The Central Sentry
    - The Annual Report
    - The Organization and Teams page of the Central web page
    - Individual Mission and Organization over-views for each council or team
  - Our Recommended Plan
    - Revise the web page to make it easier to locate information on church organization (COMPLETED)
    - Highlight the different church organizations in the Sentry (IN PROGRESS)
    - Ask each team, council and organization to complete a mission statement which can be made available in print and on Central’s website (IN PROGRESS). The statement would include:

- Mission/purpose, brief description of responsibilities or activities
    - Name and contact information for the team leadership (possibly an email address)
    - Current members
    - Guidelines of membership, if appropriate
    - Meeting times, places, dates
  - Work that needs to continue
    - Complete the mission and organization statements for each team, council and organization
    - Continue to highlight these organization in the Sentry
    - Post the mission and organization statements on the website.
    - Responsible: Church Council, Team Leaders, Church Office, Webmaster
- 4. Discussed and Have Recommendations for the Better Use of Technology To Support Worship, Outreach and Communication
  - Problem: How can we use technology to improve our communication, worship and outreach?
  - Discussed:
    - Problems with audio in the sanctuary
    - Potential uses of social media, email blasts, online video by Central
    - Additional technologies that can enhance our worship services
  - In progress:
    - Members of the video team and Living Water are researching new microphones, audio mixers, and video connectivity
    - The members of the video team are experimenting with ways to post video online
  - Recommendations:
    - That the Communications Committee be revitalized and charged with enhancing the church's communications procedures
    - That we consider committing adequate resources to improve the audio and video resources in the sanctuary
    - Responsible: Board of Trustees, Communications Committee, Video Team

### **Nurture Study/Action Group**

- Major issues were Communication & Social interactions

- Issues discussed - Some will continue to be handled by other committees:
  - Intergenerational activities needed - Education committee will continue
  - Kitchen cleanliness & organization - transferred to Administration/Communication SAG
  - Surveyed the congregation for small group interest
    - drama group
    - bereavement group
    - meals to Ill members
    - healing service
    - game or travel information group
- Some of these groups will start, and some were handed off to other committees. Some are still being discussed:
  - Young adult involvement - handed off to youth council
  - Book of life for members that have passed - still being discussed by the Memorial Committee
  - Outreach program discussed for those that have stopped attending church
  - Healing box - launch in September - Horace King is handling the box
  - Discussed a training session for committees to remind them of their groups purpose and remind them of by-laws need to be followed

### **Outreach Study/Action Group**

The Outreach Study Action Group (SAG) began with defining “outreach” as it applied to Central Church. It was our goal to contact the members and the local community of Central Church. It is our goal to see Central extend beyond the church building, be inviting, and to include all people who want to participate in the life of the church. The SAG reviewed the dreams, pinches, and crunches that were associated with our SAG. We immediately recognized that we would have to reach out within Central as well as in the community. We wanted to make outreach to the community a vital concern so that the community could see the essence of Central and to feel comfortable being a part of our ministry.

Our team agreed that ground rules were needed. Confidentiality was paramount as there were situations, events, and incidents that were sensitive and should be kept within the meetings. It was our goal to be objective and for our actions to reflect the group effort and not individual personal opinions.

Many topics that promote Central’s outreach were discussed and studied. The following list represents the major areas we studied:

1. Follow-up on the people who “visited” Central’s church services;
2. Develop procedure for using the information from the friendships pads to be used to tract individuals who attend church regularly and to identify visitors;

3. Develop a method to obtain solicit feedback from individuals who are part of our television ministry;
4. To insure our television audience is aware of how to contact Central Church, sign up for a van ride to and from church, or provide information on activities and services the church will sponsor during the upcoming week;
5. Include information during the broadcast of our services and Central's ongoing ministries e.g., the Clothing Center and Shepherd's Supper;
6. Developing a new tri-fold informational brochure about Central Church;
7. Request that the liturgist invite worshipers to Café Central to enjoy a time of fellowship;
8. Have a host and or hostess at Café Central who would greet the guest and answer any questions, acclimate visitors and give them a tour of the building;
9. Put up signs outside the church to make worshipers aware of Café Central including the times of operation.

The following recommendations were made:

1. To update the church directory and include candid photographs of various groups, classes, and functions;
2. To develop a list of "new" members who joined church since the printing of the last directory;
3. To purchase new updated eye-appealing friendship pads that have more space between the lines and that request more information;
4. Sponsor a table and greeters at the Luau that was held in August;
5. Place a guest book at both entrances to the sanctuary so those in attendance can sign it each Sunday as an alternative to the friendship pads.

We addressed the idea of helping individuals in a combination of what they need materially and spiritually. For instance, extending an invitation to the people who take advantage of the Shepherd's Supper and the Clothing Center engage in the Sunday worship or another program of the church. We discussed whether we make a concerted effort to make visitors feel comfortable and welcomed. The idea that the ushers are probably the only individuals in the church who may have a brief contact with visitors and why it should not start and end with that brief encounter was discussed. It was suggested that we invite new visitors to the annual church picnic "free of charge": not having to bring a dish to pass or to purchase chicken. Also, it was suggested that a personal note be sent to visitors in addition to the traditional letter that is sent.

Transitioning from suggestions and recommendations to fruition has been challenging. There was a draft of the tri-fold informational brochure was developed and presented for professional brochure to be completed. New friendship pads were researched and recommended for purchase. Members of the SAG acted as greeters and met and greeted guests and answered questions at the Luau. Inclusion is paramount. Hospitality is of the

greatest importance. The Outreach SAG feel that everyone should feel welcome and encouraged to attend Central Church.

### **Worship Study/Action Group**

One year ago we as a congregation first assembled and determined what our dreams, pinches, and crunches for Central. A few months later Study Action Groups (SAGs) were formed and we received the items that all seemed to relate to worship. Before we met for the first time, our group spent time on our own looking over the list and reflecting on it. Many of us were puzzled when we met to begin examining the list together. We all had our own thoughts on the list but stopped to remember we were not here to criticize the thoughts and feelings of others, but to try and determine why they were brought up and make sure the right people were given solutions to address them.

So we quickly evaluated the 45 statements on our list to decide if they might still be a concern. For each statement we considered if it was purely based on old issues, did it fit under our worship title, and have there already been changes made to correct it. We determined that a couple of things didn't fit such as "Another disciple study" and "Definition of saved - 'sinner' to 'sanctified.'" We also discovered several pinches had already been addressed, such as "Second Christmas Eve service is too long." We also found that there were items we just didn't understand because we did not have enough information; "intolerance" and "Same old – same old." And our most troubling issue was many statements contradicted themselves. And with those is where we began.

Many of our contradicting statements dealt with the sermons, and we found that those thoughts were true even amongst our group. The main two statements that drove our discussion were "Politically charged sermons," and "Continue uplifting services and messages." We realized that even in our small group these powerful statements led and drove a lot of our meetings. We concluded that a sermon's impact is different for each individual, and that sermon content is the pastor's decision. Therefore our group could not address these items. Upon further look on our list, it had been mentioned that there was "no discussion on sermons of controversial nature." We agreed something could be created to address this issue and in doing so, a better understanding of individual opinions about sermons may occur.

We thought the best way would be an intergenerational discussion class. This was not to be a critique of Pastor Mark's sermons, but a way to promote understanding between all members and their viewpoints. In brainstorming this idea further we came up with recommendations for the class. We thought that a six week time frame would be appropriate length, but exact timing would need to be determined by Education Council. Each class would be self contained, one week's discussion would not connect to the next; allowing multiple facilitators to run to class. We also decided that there should be five standard questions to help lead discussion:

1. What point/ points was Pastor Mark trying to make?

2. What points did you catch watching it this time that you may have missed the first time during service?
3. How did the message apply to and affect you individually
  - In your relationship to God?
  - In your daily life?
4. What was the connection between Scripture and the message?
5. Now what...?
  - What will we as a church do based on the message?

Due to class time on Sunday mornings we determined that twenty minutes to view the sermon as a whole, then the rest of the time would be used as small group discussion, hopefully leading to a more uplifting experience. Due to multiple conflicts this idea was never formally brought to Education Council, but we plan to present it in the near future.

There were also multiple items dealing with the music and worship. Many of them had already been resolved by Worship Council. Other items such as “No song leader at 8:30,” “Establish more integrated worship/music planning,” were brought to the music directors to discuss.

One area that we did not get to spend as much time discussing and would have liked to discuss more was the thought of “Not being spiritually uplifted or challenged in Sunday worship.” We found that even some of our own members agreed with this sentiment. One area we discussed was the use of more visuals, not just images flashing on a screen but dance, and art as well. We also thought that more lay person involvement might be a way that people could feel more challenged during Sunday worship. And finally with that more youth involvement would encourage and create a more uplifting and challenging time for them as well. We have submitted these ideas to Worship council.

Throughout this process we continually were reminded that we needed to stretch our thinking, and not just think about ourselves and our own thoughts and feelings, but to consider how someone else was thinking and the discontent of their heart. There were many items left untouched that we wanted to discuss but we hope that items that we did concentrate on were the right areas to work on.

### **Youth Study/Action Group**

- Got both Junior and Senior high UMYF groups formed. They will be run and led by youth.
- Started Young Adult group
- Freed up Director of Christian Education & Programming’s time so she can visit classrooms and not be tied down by teaching.
- Have set permanent confirmation teachers.
- Looked at curriculum for Sunday school classes.

- Working on getting the Youth Center up and running again.
- Developing a Youth Sunday where youth would care for the worship service.