

**Gulf Cove United Methodist Church**  
*Helping Everyone Meet, Know, and Serve Jesus*  
**Vision Retreat**  
**February 13, 2016 || 9:00am – 2:30pm**

**Attendees:**

|                          |               |                 |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Rev. Dr. Bill Fisackerly | Karen Current | Harold Grafe    | Joan Priest   |
| Doreen Alvarez           | John Dorotics | Charles Hilton  | Ken Priest    |
| Carol Ankeney            | Barbie Dunfee | Mary Hilton     | Linda Starck  |
| Ronald Basso             | Ray Dunfee    | Phill Kolbe     | Rick Starck   |
| Marilyn Calladine        | Roy Engler    | Emmett Leonard  | Dawn Tesauro  |
| Ralph Calladine          | Bev Ernest    | Gretchen Leppla | Donna Wallace |
| Ula Christopher          | Scott Folsom  | Frank Marzucco  | Tom Yager     |
| Vic Costello             | John Furtado  | Skip Messenger  | Dana Hanson   |
| Alfred Current           | Dee Grafe     | Becky Moss      |               |

The retreat was opened with 30 minutes of scripture reading, prayer, and meditation. After a discussion of the scriptures, those present were asked for their thoughts on four specific questions:

What brought you to GCUMC?

- Location
- Invitation
- Starting a new church
- Welcoming environment, friendliness
- Employment
- Looking to be fed
- Kid friendly

What helps you go deeper in your faith?

- Sunday school
- Small groups; safe place, security
- Outreach
- Personal daily devotions, meditation, and prayer
- Great role models
- Book studies, Alpha program
- Encouraged to question
- Recommendation of studies and books

What keeps you at GCUMC?

- Fellowship and friends of all ages
- Support and prayer support
- Great sermons and teaching
- Willing inclusion in family
- Love
- Outreach
- Great music
- Spiritual growth

**VIDEO by Rev. Dr. Harold Lewis**  
**Steps to Becoming a Mature Disciple**

Growing from a member to a disciple involves 7 or 8 steps:

1. Understanding the sacraments

- Sacraments are an outward sign of an inward grace. They are a sign, token, or symbol used as a sacred right or ritual.
- Communion celebrates the power of Jesus Christ. It is the new Passover.

- Baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism does not save! Connects us to Jesus and other believers around the world.

## 2. Spiritual gifts inventory

- Going to church and sitting in a pew is NOT a spiritual gift.
- Everyone has at least one spiritual gift, but most of us have not even opened the package!
- Supernatural motivations are given to every believer.
- With your spiritual gift, you wake up every day saying, "I'm ready to serve God!"
- Your spiritual gift does not come by osmosis. You must set aside a time to do an inventory.
- God calls and equips us to do His ministry.
- Different gifts are given to different people, and no gift is greater than any other gift.

## 3. New members basic Bible study class 101

- Sessions need to be provided specifically for new members who have no Bible knowledge.
- One introductory study is called "Journey of a Lifetime." It covers the Bible book-by-book, Genesis to Revelation, in one-hour-a-week sessions for 52 weeks. The program promotes itself by stating, "If you complete this study, you will have a basic understanding of every book in the Bible and why each book is where it is in the Bible. You will also know something about every major character in the Bible. You can learn more about the Bible in this study than the average Christian will learn in a lifetime."
- However, once you access and learn God's Word, you need to know how to apply it.

## 4. Discipleship outreach project

- We identify opportunities from within and without our church.
- Christ did not invite ANY of us to come in and sit down.
- An outreach project gives you an opportunity to apply hands-on action in the field.
- New believers need to know that they are EXPECTED to serve beyond the local church and that they are representing the hands and feet of Jesus. We are saved to serve.
- A couple examples of projects are feeding the hungry, and starting a Bible study in a nursing home.

## 5. Celebrate new disciples

- We move from members of a church to disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Consider a small ceremony or pot luck to coronate those individuals.
- Then talk about next steps.

## 6. Join a small group

- You are accountable to others for your walk.

## 7. Join a Bible Institute, if available

- You become responsible for your own maturation.
- Grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

## 8. Prayer partners

- Keep you accountable.
- Jesus Christ always sent the disciples out in twos, if not more. Not as single individuals.

A mature disciple KNOWS the way.

A mature disciple GOES the way.

A mature disciple SHOWS the way.

### MORNING DISCUSSION

Three one-hour sessions make up our current new member classes:

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|----------------------|--|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> week | get to know them; find out where they are coming from; tell some of the Methodist church history |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> week | learn how GCUMC got to be here; work through the spiritual gifts inventory                       |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> week | members of GCUMC speak on the different ministries we offer                                      |

Comments made during the ensuing discussion:

1. One thing missing from new member classes is what makes a Methodist different from other denominations.
2. Adam Hamilton requires a signed commitment to become involved in the church in some way.
3. Talking face-to-face with an individual about joining a ministry works better than simply exposing them to what is available.
4. We need a visual representation of where this church is going, a road map.
5. We need job descriptions to avoid misunderstanding, hurt feelings, and people leaving.
6. We can start a Bible 101, and some of the existing members will join in if for no other reason than they need a refresher.
7. Through a Bible 101, we can provide a process for parents of our children. For example, often on Sunday mornings someone who is dropping off their child for Children's Church or Sunday School will say that they don't know what to do to help their son or daughter, or ask if they should be praying the Lord's Prayer at home.
8. There is no motivation to go from being a visitor to becoming a formal member of the church. They need to be encouraged by current members.
9. Adam Hamilton's third video (Mission, Evangelism, and Methodism) suggests a way to reach new members:
  - a. Send mailings to community, and give two to each member to share with two friends.
  - b. Have parking lot and narthex greeters.
  - c. Look at the attendance pad as it goes by you on Sunday morning to see who are new visitors.
  - d. On the same day as the first visit, someone from the church (not the pastor) should make a short, 60-second visit to the guest's home. Stand outside the door and give them a newsletter and other information about the church. Welcome them with a gift that lasts, like a coffee mug. People don't come to faith because of theological arguments. They come because someone took the time to care.
  - e. On their second visit, be sure to remember their names.

- f. After their third visit, call them and say, "I would like to talk more with you. These are the times I have available. Which is best for you." Don't say, "May I come?" At the appointment, ask about them, and tell them about you and Jesus' influence in your life.
  - g. People do not come back if they don't have a visit within 72 hours.
10. We need to start an evangelism action team or welcoming committee.
  11. We cannot view new visitors as raw, unsaved meat. Many first-time visitors often have some type of trauma happening in their life. We must first let them know they are loved, welcomed, and safe. Then ask how we can be of service.
  12. We need a narthex that is 2/3 the size of our sanctuary. Right now there is a chaos of people between services. We should consider expanding the size of the narthex.
  13. We need a facility which has the rooms and space we need. Our portables are approaching the end of their lives. Currently, we are competing for space. We can't just sit and be happy with no mortgage. We must start looking into avenues whereby we can expand our facilities. About ten years ago, we conducted a study for expansion, but follow-through fell by the wayside.
  14. Processes need to be put in writing as to how you become a new member, go through Bible 101, move into small groups, and eventually become a disciple, including who is in charge of each step. Once someone goes through our new member class, there is nothing to guide them further.
  15. We need to let people know that just because they are a snowbird, they can still join GCUMC as an affiliate member (if they are also a member of a Methodist church elsewhere) or as an associate member (if they are a member of a different denomination).
  16. It was observed that when new visitors come, they get a bag, we take their card, and maybe someone says "thanks for coming." However, we need to ENGAGE them.
  17. The comment was made that closing the front doors on Sunday morning (due to air conditioning concerns) is taking a toll on the atmosphere that used to be present. It closes us to the world. We need to consider whether the money savings is worth it. It was suggested we flow out to the porch until we have the space we need.
  18. It was noted that some area residents don't even know we are here. We could distribute door-hangers with information about services.
  19. One individual stated that when he first moved here, he would drive past GCUMC but would be watching traffic. He didn't have time to read the sign, but did glance at the building. Without a cross on top, he didn't even realize we were a church.
  20. Church Council should be coordinating and putting processes in place.

Rev. Bill ended the morning session by noting a study that indicated there are eight characteristics which indicate a healthy, vibrant, growing church. A church will fill up only to the level of its worst characteristic. We should not be concerned about people going to other churches; but we should be concerned about people not knowing Jesus. He hopes the rest of the day will be spent finding out what we need to improve.

### **AFTERNOON DISCUSSION**

Baseball Analogy by Rick Warren  
Batter's Box

- Connecting with the outside, going into the world.

1<sup>st</sup> base

- Saved, baptized.
- A believer who has made a commitment to Jesus Christ. Is that good enough?
- 14 people on 1<sup>st</sup> base will not score.

2<sup>nd</sup> base

- Training.
- Nurturing.
- Connecting inside.
- 82 people on 2<sup>nd</sup> base will not score.

3<sup>rd</sup> base

- Commissioning.
- Not enough to grow on your own.
- You have to go out.
- 6,000 people on 3<sup>rd</sup> base will not score.

Home plate

- Out in community.
- Score points when people cross home plate.
- Jesus sent believers out in groups of two or more.
- Christian faith is about redeeming the world, not just saving ourselves.
- Jesus said to go into the world, baptize, and teach; make disciples.

What are we good at?

- People feel loved and welcomed.
- Bowling at Treasure Lanes: we circle up in prayer and pray for those who serve us in some way at the bowling alley; employees are now joining us in prayer; public prayer is cool! People come from as far as Arcadia, and some have joined us for worship at church. But there needs to be a next step.
- Veterans.
- Helping people who are already believers grow deeper.

Current ways we let the community know we are believers in Jesus Christ:

- |                  |                      |                            |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| • Bowling        | • Trunk or treat     | • Assisted living          |
| • Egg hunt       | • Arts and Crafts    | • Youth Ministry           |
| • Bell ringers   | • Kairos             | • Thanksgiving dinner      |
| • Closet of hope | • Kairos Outside     | • Habitat for Humanity     |
| • Veterans       | • Newspapers         | • Invite neighbors to come |
| • Crop Walk      | • Pig Pickin'        | • Englewood Helping Hand   |
| • Cuba           | • Elementary schools | • Sign outside the church  |
| • Office Staff   | • Children's Home    |                            |

How do we invite people to make a commitment to Christ?

- |                                       |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Occasional altar calls              | • Alpha            |
| • Camp                                | • New member class |
| • Invite people to help with a dinner | • Baptism          |

How do we get Christians together to grow in their faith?

- Small groups
- Worship
- Sunday school
- Book studies
- Bible study
- Habitat
- Vision retreat

How do we send people out to be Jesus in the community?

- Stephen Ministries
- EHH
- Kairos
- Kairos Outside
- Veterans
- Inglenook
- Emmaus
- Caring ministry
- United Methodist Men
- Habitat
- Crafty Ladies
- Bell ringers
- Youth mission trips
- Faith sharing

Who Are the Ministers

- The Methodist Church through the mid-1800s grew at a very fast rate because all the congregants acted as if they were ministers. The actual minister was a circuit rider who visited each church in a large territory for only a week at a time.
- Once full-time ministers started being assigned to churches, the rate of growth slowed down.
- The Methodist Church was healthiest when it required small groups and when the people were doing the ministry.

Discipleship Path

This is how we get new believers to become active in the body of Christ. We have identified the need for a Discipleship Path process and a need to put together a structure for our organizational goals. The following comments made during the ensuing discussion:

1. Who are the Coaches and Team Members? Are staff members coaches? Are volunteers coaches? Where is the line of authority or chain of command? Who answers to whom? Are we a staff-led church or a laity-led church?
2. It was pointed out that SPR has and updates job descriptions for paid employees.
3. A few years ago, the leaders of all volunteer ministries were asked to submit a job description of their ministry.
4. We need an overall game plan of which all of us are aware, or else the individual components will go in different directions and destroy our efforts. It boils down to COMMUNICATION!
5. Do we all clearly understand the difference between the mission statement and the vision statement? The vision contains the steps which lead to the mission.
6. Our vision seems to be “to go beyond our walls to seek the least and the lost” in order to fulfill our mission of “helping everyone meet, know, and serve Jesus.” This has been the entire point of thrive training, recent evangelism seminars, and fresh expressions. [Luke 19:10]
7. But does “the least and the lost” need to be clarified? They could be those who have fallen away from Christ, those who are truly down and out, or millennials who haven’t been introduced yet.
8. According to Adam Hamilton, healthy organizations have a clear MVP (mission, vision, & plan).

- The *mission statement* answers the question “why are we here”; it should be short enough to fit on a bumper sticker.
  - The *vision statement* answers the question “where are we going”; it is a long-term picture of the future; it energizes and unifies the congregation.
  - The *plan* develops SMART goals, usually short-term, to fulfill the mission; these SMART goals are specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, & time-sensitive.
9. At last year’s vision retreat, we decided upon three things that we wanted to do:
    - *Start a veterans’ ministry*: although there is still work to be done, we are trying.
    - *Get involved with a school*: we have established a good relationship with Myakka River and are starting a relationship with Vineland.
    - *Start a millennial service*: we are still confused about this goal.
  10. With regard to millennials, studies show that millennials may be “wishy-washy” about their faith, but they are very concerned about their community, their country, and their world. Projects that help the underprivileged will get them in the door. Adam Hamilton thinks that when trying to reach millennials, in Rick Warren’s baseball analogy, you need to move home plate around to the batter’s box in order to attract them.
  11. An organizational chart reflecting lines of authority should start with the Discipline which outlines the various committees and groups. The Discipline requires four major divisions:
    - *Nurture*: caring for the current members of the church, including their spiritual growth.
    - *Outreach*: caring for people who are not members of the church; it includes things such as evangelism, faith sharing, and missions.
    - *Witness*: our worship time, when we gather together to focus on Christ.
    - *Support*: the business end of the church (finance, trustees, staff-parish relations).
  12. Church Council must work on this process
  13. How do we involve the 80% in this process?
  14. It was suggested that this group (i.e., those attending this Vision Retreat) meet again to discuss progress made.
  15. We need to define what we do internally. It was felt that setting aside a part of each Church Council meeting would be the best way to do this.
  16. Some of our small groups should meet outside the home, such as at Panera’s or Tiffany’s Café.
  17. We need a written Discipleship Plan.

#### Church Facilities Expansion

- Members need discernment, a gift critical to this project. Do we need a new sanctuary? Do we need an education wing? Is it something we haven’t conceived yet?
- A trustee should be on the task force, because that individual must sign any legal documents.
- A leader needs to be selected for this task force.
- We need to follow up and COMMUNICATE!
- Members: Vic Costello, Helen Boyce, Carol McGuire, and Ray Dunfee. [After the meeting, others indicated their willingness to also be on this task force: John Furtado, Skip Messenger, Ralph Calladine, Randy Moore, and Rick Starck.]

#### Adequate Meeting Location

- We need a location which has an adequate setup (including table and chairs) for committee meetings. With the exception of groups that meet in the conference room (114), currently people have to review things while holding them in their hands, and take notes while writing on their laps.
- As to Church Council meetings, everybody is invited and encouraged to attend, and everybody has a voice. However, only actual Council members have a vote.

#### Commitments Needed, at least during Lent

- Praying daily
- Reading scripture daily
- Meeting with other Christians in some kind of small group at least twice a month (accountability partners)
- Giving, and if possible, giving a 10% tithe
- Involving yourself in some type of service project to help others feel the grace of Christ
- If we don't make and meet these commitments, we can't expect others to do so.
- As leaders, we can convey these commitments to the rest of the church.

#### Communication

- Slack is an application which enables individuals in a group to communicate with each other over the internet. Rick will provide training for Slack within 2 months.
- We need to have everybody in the church clearly understand what we are doing and who is doing it.
- Everybody needs to understand that there is a large group that is steering the church, that it is *not* just Rev. Bill.

#### Monthly Dinners

- Some individuals have indicated a desire to resume having the monthly dinners that were discontinued a few years ago. They hope to hold a dinner in March.

#### Goals from This Year's Vision Retreat:

- Church Facilities Expansion task force gets started.
- Discipleship Path: What are we offering to non-believers, to first-time believers, to middle believers, and to mature believers? We need to establish a set path which allows us to strengthen our weak areas.
- Millennial Project: That we continue to find ways to reach millennials.

### **ADJOURNING**

The Vision Retreat was adjourned at 2:30pm with communion and prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dana Hanson  
Recording Secretary