

A Strategic Plan for the Corvallis First United Methodist Church

Submitted by the Long-Range Planning Committee

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The 2005 Report



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Executive Summary

A strategic plan is a collection of goals, objectives, and strategies. Yet more is required if the plan is to be useful. Goals, objectives and strategies must be related to one another, and the purpose of the organization. This requires a vision of what the organization will become, as well as a common understanding of what it intends to accomplish—its mission.

Most plans, strategic or otherwise, soon become obsolete in a changing world. In addition, those who prepare plans never can know everything relevant about an organization. For these reasons the most useful plans are dynamic rather than static, and are subject to revision and change. That is why the Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) is a standing committee of Corvallis First United Methodist Church (FUMC). This strategic plan and those that follow can be updated annually. The Table of Contents (left) shows the full 2005 Strategic Plan report, for which this executive summary has been prepared.

- Christianity engenders the desire to work with and be closer to God.
- Believing Jesus Christ and striving to live a Christ-like life.
- Ministry is about relieving human suffering; God is an inclusive God who loves us all; God’s presence is in all of us.
- Christianity is one of many ways that lead to God.
- Grounded in the social gospel that sees Christ as the champion of the marginalized and the disenfranchised.

Theological Framework

Christianity, United Methodism, and The Corvallis First United Methodist Church all contribute to the theological foundation of this strategic plan. Christianity is the dominant theology. United Methodism is one of many groupings within the large tent supplied by Christianity. Methodists depend upon Scripture, church tradition, reason and experience for guidance. The FUMC has refined this theological base further with formal adoption of two policies that make it a reconciling and a natural step congregation. The following characteristics are descriptive of the theology of the Corvallis First United Methodist Church:

Demography

A demographic analysis identified the growth characteristics of particular areas in the Corvallis community. A Revolving Door community, with pockets of periphery growth, best described the community generally. (A revolving door community is one with movement in and out, but with little net population change.) The population age analysis made it clear an age and gender gap exists between FUMC and the community. The precise ethnic composition of the FUMC congregation is not known, but Hispanic-Latinos clearly are under represented.

The demographic analysis raised numerous questions that are addressed in various parts of this strategic plan. Knowledge of the population characteristics of the surrounding community provides information about successes, as well as failures, of FUMC in reaching all parts of the community. Such information also help identify community need independent of whether particular groups become a part of the FUMC congregation.

The Operating Framework

The operating framework of FUMC consists of three distinct parts. One part is the Church mission. Another part includes the policies, programs, and activities that are deeply treasured by the congregation. A third consists of resources or assets that serve all parts of the Church organization if it is to function. A brief description of each follows.

- 1) “Mission”—The church mission when the LRPC was created read: “Our mission is to bring people into a living relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, that we may love the world as God loves the world.”

The LRPC adopted this mission to guide its early work and used this mission statement for its strategic plan. As a part of an operating framework an organization’s mission establishes direction and integrates individual parts and activities.

- 2) “Policies, programs and activities” are features of FUMC that the congregation regards as fundamental and necessary for the accomplishment of its mission. These were identified in questionnaires submitted by church members.
- 3) “Enabling resources” are assets of the organization needed if the policies, programs, and activities are to serve the organization’s mission.

It is possible to think of FUMC as a whole if the three components are brought together (figure 1). The mission is shown at the top of the visual as the guide, or control, for the entire organization. It establishes the direction of the organization and provides criteria for integration of the entire program of the organization (policies, programs, activities). Finally, enabling resources are shown. They empower the policies, programs and activities needed to advance the organization’s mission.

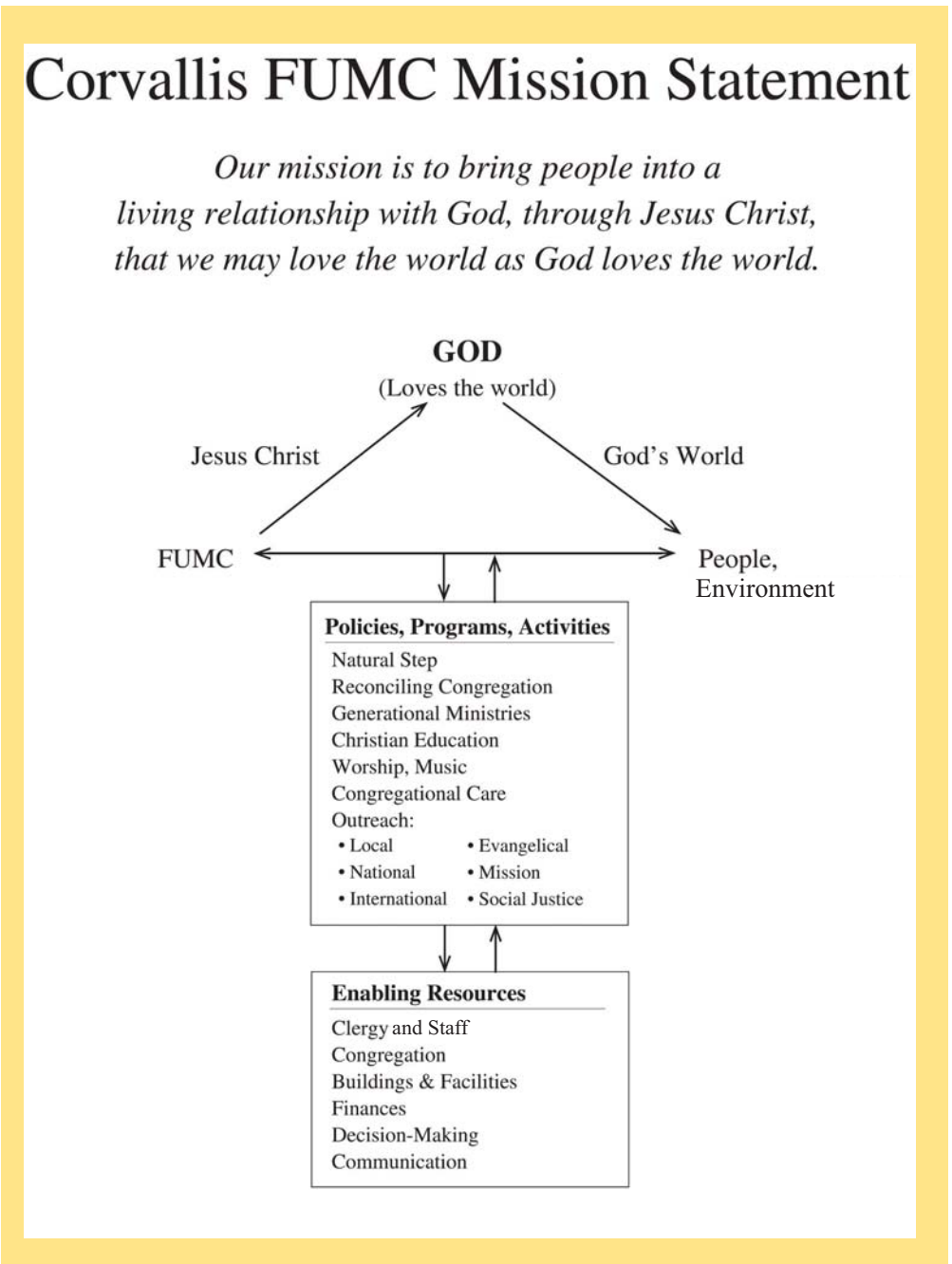


Figure 1. The operating framework of FUMC is made up of its mission; its highly regarded policies, programs, and activities; and its enabling resources.

The Vision Statement

“The Vision of the Corvallis First United Methodist Church is to actively address, as disciples, human suffering, human need, and a neglected habitat wherever they occur, and to provide love, care, challenge, and nurture to all we encounter.”

The vision statement together with the mission statement guided establishment of numerous strategic plan recommendations.

The theological base, mission, treasured policies, programs and activities, and vision for FUMC were examined for consistency and alignment. One inconsistency emerged. The reconciling congregation policy of FUMC is not in alignment with official policy of the United Methodist Church nationally. This is well known by those familiar with both organizations.

Multi-generational and Small-Group Ministries

A multi-generational ministry will give explicit attention to the needs of all generations. Small groups will become an increasingly common technique for in-depth treatment of numerous issues. Attention will be given in all such ministries to those faith elements that bond and bring people together as well as providing attention for special needs that do not concern everyone.

Both common and special needs need to be given attention in worship/music, Christian education, congregational care, social justice, and outreach. If both common bonds and special needs are to be addressed, greater demands will be placed on lay leadership. The Lay Leadership Committee and the Education Program Officer must identify and implement appropriate training and education programs.

Ministry: Worship/Music

The Worship/Music Strategic Plan

group addressed two interrelated problems. One is the kind and number of Sunday worship services that will be of the greatest value to the existing congregation. Another is the contribution of worship services to the attraction of new members.

Four focus groups are being used to determine the preferences of people from inside and outside the congregation based on age, gender, income, and marital status groupings. This work is not completed and recommendations are not yet available.

Ministry: Christian Education and Small Groups

The Christian Education and Small Group Strategic Plan group advanced the following initiatives:

- Provide training and mentoring for leaders, working with Lay Leadership Committee where appropriate.
- Develop small group ministry. Establish a pilot Covenant Group to deepen spiritual growth. Appoint a lay small-group coordinator.
- Create low-barrier classes for core knowledge subjects such as Methodism, Christianity, and communion for all ages.
- Use generational categories (in addition to other measures, such as spiritual or learning types) to identify educational, spiritual, and fellowship group needs.

Ministry: Outreach

The existing Outreach activities at FUMC are impressive in their breadth, depth, and quality. Perhaps because of their regional, national, and international reach FUMC does not have a commensurate community presence reputation. A survey of the congregation identified greater community service to be of high priority.

The LRPC proposes the following Community Services Program to address that priority. This Program

would consist each year of 1, 2, or 3 projects such as the following:

- A community supper. Many variations are possible. One would be a potluck with each member family or individual bring food or contributing and bring as a guests one or more non-Church individuals. Guests would include less fortunate members of the community.
- A musical event for the community.
- Other community events can be imagined. The events should (1) address a community need and (2) showcase the diverse and impressive activities and capacities at FUMC.

Enabling Resources

Enabling resources at FUMC include the clergy and staff, the congregation, financial resources, buildings and facilities, and the decision-making structure including information flows.

Resource: Clergy and Staff

The clergy and staff are expected to play many roles. Clergy are expected to provide spiritual leadership, coordinate Church programs, administer Church policies, and serve as staff leaders. Clergy and staff also prepare people for change and manage transitions. As with other churches we will see changes in:

- Worship. Experimenting with new and relevant ways of worship, as the six o'clock service is doing.
- Role of laity. We are all called to be disciples. With the talent in our church, it should be possible to alternate the use of people to prevent “burn out.”
- Identity. There are questions about our current identity as well as whether and how we want to grow, and how people may be attracted.

Resource: Congregation

The congregation itself determines the Church's program to a great extent. The congregation plays a significant role in establishing Church policy and provide the necessary energy for the implementation of most Church policies. This is why the decision-making structure and information flows are of great importance. If energy and imagination are used well in such endeavors, more will be available for such activities as teaching, small group leadership and the administration of high-priority projects.

Resource: Finances

While the Long-Range Planning Committee has focused on the Church's vision, mission, and decision-making structure, financial sustainability has been an ever present concern throughout our conversations. Many of the Church's fixed costs such as insurance and utilities are going up while tithed receipts are trending down.

Annual budgets and thereby programs are regularly built reaching beyond the committed revenues. Special measures are required just to maintain current operations. The lower receipts may be viewed as gifts that have been diverted to the building campaign however, the fact remains that we are not a growing congregation. We are reducing our various ministry budgets for the second year in a row. The next step will have to affect staff and salaries. One option that has been suggested is to bring the building campaign vision of the Community Center to fruition; that is to seek more paid utilization of the facility so that it is self-sustaining. Another option is to include a fund-raising component as a regular part of the ministries' budgets. It will be tough to balance these financial realities with our dream of reaching out to the community by drawing people to FUMC through our ministries.

The Finance Committee has strengthened its structure by adding the fund

raising coordinator and the annual giving co-chair as regular members. A financial audit was completed last year and is being reviewed. Next year the Long-Range Planning Committee will work together with the Finance Committee and others to consider strategies that will lead to more stable financial foundations for the Church whereby the extra fund-raising efforts can extend our mission rather than just maintain it.

Resource: Buildings and Facilities

The Strategic Plan Building and Facilities Use group identified two major concerns in the congregation about building use. One was a perceived lack of use of the Community Center consistent with publicity as to how the Center would be used when fund-raising occurred. The other concern was that a philosophy of building use does not exist to guide building-use decisions. No person has an assigned responsibility and the time to promote, develop and manage building use, especially the Community Center. On the second matter, it was discovered considerable attention has been given to procedures to be followed when requests are made for building use. There was an expressed need for a governing philosophy to guide those procedures and decisions. The following Goal and Strategies address the concerns expressed and reflect what has been learned.

Goal: "all uses, internal or external, will directly or indirectly advance the FUMC mission to the greatest extent possible." The following strategies flow from this Goal.

- The above goal incorporated into all guidelines pertaining to building use choices.
- A lay person recruited to provide leadership for building and facility use. Responsibilities would include promoting, overseeing and devel-

oping guidelines for building use consistent with FUMC policies.

- A building and facilities use committee created to advise the lay building and facilities use person. The committee will include a clergy person, the youth director, the hospitality coordinator, the office manager, and the weekday custodian. The Chair of Trustees and other staff may be consulted as needed.

Resource: Group Decision-making and Information Flow

Concern has been expressed about the number and length of group meetings, the size of committees and that little distinction is made between "large" and "small" issues, or between policy formation determination and program implementation.

The experimental proposal is for a one-year period, 2006, and is intended to:

- Permit the LRPC acquire knowledge of group decisions at FUMC.
- Address problems as close to their source as possible.
- Distinguish between policy formation and policy implementation.
- Make more effective use of clergy, the laity, and staff.
- Align authority and responsibility.
- Affirm the role of laity in the establishment of Church policy.
- Affirm the leadership role of the Minister for Administration, and the role of the clergy generally, in the coordination and implementation of Church policies.

The text for experimental proposal follows.

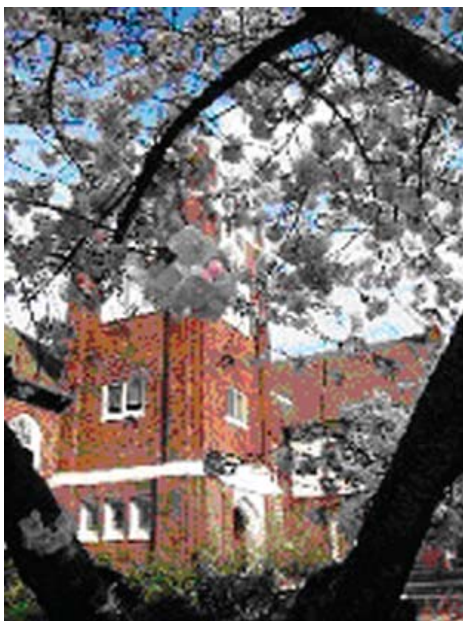
The Church Council (existing)

The proposed Church Council will have the same membership as at present and will continue to meet quarterly. The Church

Council will become a deliberative body to study, debate and decide matters of church policy that cut across program and administrative areas. Its agenda will consist mainly of items referred to it by the Agenda Committee, although decisions of the Agenda Committee may be appealed to the Church Council. Any member of the congregation may request consideration by the Agenda Committee of any matter of Church policy or policy implementation. Quarterly meetings. Membership of the Church Council is unchanged. The Lay Leader serves as Chair.

The Agenda Committee (proposed)

The Agenda Committee is, in fact, a committee of the Church Council. Its function is to determine the disposition of items requiring group decisions that are not within the purview of established committees, as well as items that at present (2005) are routinely referred to the Church Council. It will encourage individuals and groups to assemble and disseminate information pertaining to Church Council agenda items. Criteria will be established to guide the disposition of items coming before the Agenda Committee, especially those now routinely referred to the Church Council. The Agenda Committee will have five members: Lay Leader and Minister of Administration as co-chairs, SPRC chair, Church Business manager, and LPRC chair. Other clergy will have a staff relationship to the Agenda Committee. The Committee will meet bi-weekly or as frequently as needed.



The Administrative Committee (now Steering Committee)

The Administrative Committee will be concerned with the implementation of FUMC policies requiring the coordination of standing Church committees (Trustees, Staff and Parish Relations, Finance, Memorials, Wesley Foundation, Long-Range Planning.) The Lay Leader or Associate Lay Leader may serve as chair; other members are: the Minister for Administration and chairs of the standing administrative committees. Other clergy have a staff relationship to the Committee. Communication and coordination with the Program Committee is encouraged. The Administrative Committee has a responsibility to identify inadequacies in, and modification of, Church policies for consideration of the Agenda Committee. Meetings are bi-monthly or as needed.

The Program Committee (proposed)

The Program Committee will be concerned with the implementation of FUMC policies requiring the coordination of standing Church program committees (Spiritual Growth, Children and Youth, Igniting Ministries, Outreach, Reconciling Ministries, Worship, Music, United Methodist Women). The Associate Lay Leader serves as chair; other members are the Education/Program Director and chairs of standing program committees. All clergy have a staff relationship to the Committee. Communication and coordination with the Administrative Committee is encouraged. The Program Committee has a responsibility to identify inadequacies in, and modification of, Church policies for consideration by the Agenda Committee. Meetings are bi-monthly or as needed.

Structure of 2006 Experimental Proposal

Church Council

- Church policy
- Quarterly meetings
- Lay Leader, Chair

Agenda Committee

- Lay Leader and Minister of Administration—co chairs
- Business Manager; Chair, SPRC; Chair, LRPC
- Meetings are bi-weekly or as needed

Administrative Committee

- Lay Leader or Associate Lay Leader, Chair
- Minister for Administration
- Chairs, Standing Committees
- Meetings are bi-monthly or as needed

Program Committee

- Associate Lay Leader, Chair
- Education/Program Director
- Program Committee Chairs
- Meetings are bi-monthly or as needed

Long-Range Planning Committee

The Long-Range Planning Committee will place a number of items with policy implications before the Agenda Committee in 2006 for consideration by the Church Council.

2006 Priorities

The following priority items are recommended for 2006: **Worship/ Music, Finances, Decision-making and Information flow.**

Structure of 2006 Experimental Proposal to Streamline Decision-Making at FUMC



Long Range Planning Committee

(The Long Range Planning Committee will place a number of items with policy implications before the Agenda Committee in 2006 for consideration by the Church Council)

The Theological Framework

Christianity

What makes a “good” Christian? “Is it belief or action that makes one a Christian? Does it mean volunteering extensively, or opposing abortion and the death penalty, or believing in personal change and redemption?” These are some of the questions being asked by a group of researchers at Boston University School of Theology according to an article in the August 9th issue of *The Christian Century*. This research reflects the status of change in which the church is engaged at present, a change that Marcus Borg (*The Heart of Christianity*) describes as the transition from the traditional church to the emerging church.

The Bible is the basis for belief for all of Christianity. It chronicles the experience of two groups of peoples, Jews and Christians, with their God. However, there is discord where Biblical authority is concerned. To some, the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God. For others, it is a human product that describes an understanding of God’s work in human affairs at particular times and places as viewed through the historic and cultural understanding of the people of those times and places.

For some, Christianity prescribes a code of behavior required for entry into life eternal (heaven). For others, Christianity is a response to what has already been done for us that engenders the desire to work with and be closer to God.

For some, Christianity is about “right” belief and saying things about God in the “right” way. If you truly believe in Jesus Christ then you will go to heaven. For others, it’s about believing Jesus Christ and striving to live a Christ-like life.

For some, ministry is about saving souls from eternal torment by convincing others to express right belief. For others, ministry is about relieving human suffering and sharing that God is an inclusive God who loves us all; that God’s presence is in us all.

For some, Christianity is the only way to the one and true God and God’s salvation. For others, Christianity is one of many ways that lead us to God.

Corvallis First United Methodist Church would fall into the “for others” category listed above. It is a church that is strongly grounded in the social gospel in which Christ is seen as the champion of the marginalized and disenfranchised. Jesus’ activity and instruction in the 4th chapter of Luke’s gospel provides scriptural undergirding for this church’s self-understanding.

Social Gospel, Luke 4:14-42

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country.

15 He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,

17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go

free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

21 Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’

23 He said to them, ‘Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, “Doctor, cure yourself!” And you will say, “Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.”’

24 And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s home town.

25 But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land;

26 yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon.

27 There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’

28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage.

29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff.

- 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.
- 31 He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the sabbath.
- 32 They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority.
- 33 In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,
- 34 'Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.'
- 35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm.
- 36 They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, 'What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!'
- 37 And a report about him began to reach every place in the region.
- 38 After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her.
- 39 Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.
- 40 As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them.
- 41 Demons also came out of many, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the

Messiah.*

- 42 At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them.
- 43 But he said to them, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.'
- 44 So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.*

This is a church that connects Biblical imperatives with action in the form of ministry and mission, i.e., Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Chaps. 5-7; and Jesus' response to John's disciples in Luke 7:22.

- 22 And he answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.'

This social gospel leads the church to be, at times, in opposition to government policies, i.e. the war in Iraq and the environment; as well as with its own denomination where issues of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered persons participation in the church are concerned. Given that Jesus was often at odds with the religious establishment of that time, and the Roman government, this church's theology reflects its faithful response to the gospel in such matters.

Radical Inclusiveness

This church embraces what it considers to be Jesus' radical sense of inclusiveness and diversity exemplified in parables and other stories in which Jesus eats and drinks with sinners, converses with the Samaritan woman at the well, intercedes on behalf of the woman who is to be stoned, and heals the Roman Centurion's daughter. The

Apostle Paul reinforces this inclusiveness in parts of his epistles, most notably Galatians 3:28.

- 28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Where homosexuality is concerned it is felt that the Biblical witness, although consistently negative on the subject, is flawed due to cultural biases as well as poor scientific understanding of sexual orientation.

Doctrinally, FUMC would have a difficult time coming to consensus on the validity or importance of such traditional tenets of the faith like the virgin birth, the Trinity, and the Creeds. However, that Jesus is God's son and the revelation of what God is like, would receive little questioning, if any.

Traditional United Methodist Tenets

Below are some traditional United Methodist tenets that this church may or may not agree with either in part or in toto.

- United Methodists share a common heritage with Christians of every age and nation:
- God created humanity to live in covenant with God.
- As sinful creatures, we have broken that covenant and stand in need of redemption.
- Because God truly loves us, God acted through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to bring us salvation and the hope of eternal life.
- God's love comes alive in us by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works in both our personal experience and the common life of the church.
- We are part of Christ's universal church. We enter the church

through Baptism. In Holy Communion, we celebrate the presence of Christ and find strength for Christian living.

- We believe that the reign of God is a present and future reality. This prospect gives us hope in our present actions.
- We believe that Scripture contains everything necessary for salvation.
- We believe in justification by grace through faith in Christ and in the general ministry of all Christians.
- We believe the church is one in Jesus Christ. We express our unity in hymns and liturgy, in the historic creeds, and in the belief in one holy, catholic, and apostolic church

The meaning of the term “discipleship” for members of this church would evoke many different ideas with varying levels of commitment. This is a church that, like most United Methodist Churches, finds it preferable to express their discipleship through action rather than through words, through mission rather than through evangelism.

United Methodism

Corvallis is a United Methodist Church historically and traditionally. The United Methodist Church is regulated by its Book of Discipline which is updated every four years following the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. It is at the General Conference that church policy is set for the ensuing four years and codified as the Book of Discipline.

At the same time, the United Methodist Church is not a doctrinal church per se. There is not a laundry list of beliefs to which members must subscribe. This is in keeping with the strong belief on the part of the denomination’s founder, John Wesley, that we were given brains by God and expected to use them. Toward that end, United

Methodists are people who look not only to Scripture for inspiration, but also to the tradition of the Church, reason, and our own experience. These four are known to United Methodists as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Methodism has been known for various strengths and weaknesses over the course of its 220 year history in this country. Early on, its Circuit Riders, preachers on horseback who developed and rode a circuit of churches, were highly successful in evangelizing rural America. A visit to the East and Midwest will reveal small country churches dotting the country landscape with amazing regularity. This was due to those early ministers who did something new.

The UM Church has experienced schisms and mergers, name changes as well as the changes that time imposes on all things. It currently faces a manifold crisis in loss of membership, the danger of schism over issues of theology, sexuality, and politics. The subject was broached at the last General Conference but was quickly shouted down by consensus.

The following are emphases that are distinctively Methodist.

Prevenient Grace



God’s love surrounds us even before we are aware of it. It leads us to want to please God, to discover God’s will, and to an awareness of our sin.

Justification and Assurance

God reaches out to the repentant believer with accepting and pardoning love. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are justified—forgiven and restored to God’s favor. This experience of conversion can be sudden and dramatic or gradual. Wesleyan theology emphasizes that we can know that we are saved.

Sanctification and Perfection

God’s sanctifying grace helps us grow more loving toward God and neighbor, drawing us toward God’s gift of Christian perfection, being perfect in love.

Faith and Good Works

Faith in God’s redeeming work in Jesus Christ is the only response to god’s love we need. However, we express our salvation in good works, sharing God’s love with others.

Mission and Service

Salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world. Personal religion, evangelical witness, and social action go hand in hand and build each other.

Nurture and Mission of the Church

The church nurtures our personal faith and equips us for mission and service in the world.

Garrison Keeler described Methodism thus on an NPR broadcast on June 17, 2005:

“It’s the birthday of the founder of Methodism. John Wesley, born in Lincolnshire, England (1703). He was saved from a fire when was five years old, and came to believe that God saved him for a purpose. He became an Anglican priest, and joined a religious study group. The group was nicknamed the Methodists because of their emphasis on methodological rules of living—they prayed, and they fasted according to strict schedules.

Corvallis First United Methodist Church

“In 1773, John Wesley came to the colonies. He was a priest in a settlement in Georgia, but they didn’t care for his preaching and they ran him out of town. He went back to England and traveled around the back country on horseback, preaching to all the ordinary people he came across, through England and Scotland and Scotland. He preached 42,000 sermons along the way.

“He was always a member of the Anglican Church. His only idea was to create small groups within the Anglican Church to meet for prayer and Bible study. But when Methodists missionaries traveled to the United States, their ideas took hold. Their followers considered themselves members of a new church and they appointed their own bishops and ministers and created their own laws, separate from the Church of England.

“The Methodist Church became the church of many colonists on the frontier, and by 1850, the Methodist Church was the biggest denomination in the United States. A convert needed only to believe Jesus Christ was the son of God and was everyone’s personal savior. Methodists believe that all other questions about Christianity were up for discussion.

“Methodists established more colleges, more hospitals, child-care facilities, and retirement homes than any other Protestant denomination. William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army, was a Methodist. Methodists started Goodwill Industries in 1902. They also started the temperance movement. They were a big part of the Abolitionist movement and the anti-segregation movement.

“President Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford Hayes, William McKinley, and President George W. Bush were all Methodists, as well as Barry Goldwater, Walter Mondale, George McGovern, and Hillary Clinton.”

Corvallis FUMC is a church whose history goes back to the early days of the town of Corvallis, itself. The church was organized on November 7, 1848 and from its inception has been a mission-oriented church.

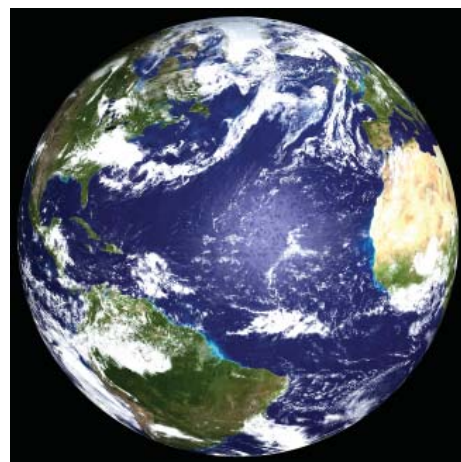
This church takes its presence in Corvallis and its local, national, and international mission very seriously. Its list of programs and accomplishments through the years bear witness to Christian commitment and dedication to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is a church that is seeking guidance and direction for its mission and ministry for the next five years by undergoing an extensive visioning process with the realization that times change as do the needs of people.

As mentioned earlier, Corvallis FUMC has chosen to disagree with the General Conference and its stance that persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and or trans-gendered be denied ordination in the UMC. Additionally, the general church has said that no church or conference shall refer to itself as reconciling. Corvallis FUMC proudly displays its status as a Reconciling Congregation on its letterhead, business cards, and other publicity, both internal and in local publications.

Corvallis FUMC has also taken a stance where stewardship of the environment is concerned by enrolling as an institutional member of the Natural Step Network. Because of this, decisions made at FUMC will take into consideration how the environment will be affected, if materials used can be recycled or come from materials that have been recycled, how energy will be used in an efficient manner, and how the needs of all people can be met by sustainable living.

FUMC takes seriously the notion that the earth is the Lord’s and all that dwells therein.



Demography

Early in its work the LRPC decided to conduct a demographic analysis to compare characteristics of the FUMC congregation with the Corvallis community. It was recognized such information would be fundamental to a great many questions likely to arise during the process of creating a strategic plan. A demography group was appointed to collect and analyze demographic information.

The demography group drew information from three sources:

- Maps generated by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), Office of Research.
- Demographic analysis of two Corvallis zip codes of data provided by GBGM, marketing information warehouse - Claritas.
- FUMC church membership database.

These data permitted areas within the Corvallis community to be classified by the number of household that move, and the resulting population change. For example, if a community has a great deal of movement in and out, but no appreciable population change in can be classified as a Revolving Door community. The table below identifies possible designations of areas within a community.

Corvallis was described by the demography group as basically a

revolving door community with pockets of growth around its periphery.

The demography group conducted a “gap” analysis to identify discrepancies between the population of the community and that of FUMC. On a percentage basis the congregation has about 10 percent fewer college age students (18–24 year olds) and approximately 15 percent fewer young adults (25–44 year olds). Given the above, it is not surprising FUMC has about 16 percent more active retired people (65–84 years) than the community.



FUMC has about 16 percent fewer people who have never married than there are in the community. The large percentage of single people in the Corvallis community (about 38 percent) probably stems from the presence of Oregon State University. Corvallis has almost an even number of males and females. The Corvallis FUMC is 60 percent female.

A definitive gap analysis was not possible between the community and

FUMC with respect to ethnic background and income. Hispanic-Latinos undoubtedly are underrepresented at FUMC. The same appears likely for those at the lower end of the income-wealth scale.

The demography group organized four focus groups based on age, income, gender and marital status. Participants were drawn from both inside and outside FUMC. Issues explored included attitudes about churches generally, as well as specific likes and dislikes regarding church services.

The demographic analysis brought several questions into the open including whether FUMC wishes to increase the size of its congregation. If the answer is “yes,” are there particular groups to which it wishes to appeal? If target groups are specified, how can they be attracted? Such questions are addressed elsewhere in this report. A detailed demography report was prepared and is available as an appendix

Possible Designations of Areas within a Community

Area Type	% Households Moved	Population Change
Unsettled	+	-
Revolving Door	+	0
Primary Growth	+	+
Exodus	0	-

The Operating Framework: Mission; Policies, Programs and Activities; Enabling Resources

to this report.

The Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) drew upon several sources to obtain an accurate assessment of FUMC when work began for a strategic plan (January 1, 2005). These sources included a FUMC retreat, an open ended questionnaire submitted to the FUMC congregation, and an interactive session to which all members of the congregation were invited. This permitted the identification of a cluster of policies, programs and activities that are highly valued by the congregation. The FUMC mission statement, these highly valued items, and enabling, or facilitating resources combine to provide a description of FUMC that was used to develop a strategic plan for FUMC.

- The existing mission statement: “Our mission is to bring people into a living relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, that we might love the world as God loves the world.”

This mission statement has served FUMC for some time and was used to guide the development of the strategic plan. The interactive session that preceded LRPC activity concluded the existing mission statement should be evaluated by the LRPC. The evaluation conducted indicated that none of the alternative mission statement identified were superior to the one in place.

- Policies. Two specific policies exist:
 - 1) A Reconciling Congregation. We are a Reconciling Congregation and welcome all persons in full participation in the life of the congregation regardless of age, sex, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital status, or physical or mental condition and are devoted to the reconciliation of all persons as children of God.
 - 2) By a vote of the congregation the FUMC has become a Natural Step congregation. This vote established sustainability and concern for the natural world as a FUMC policy.
- Programs and Activities. The following highly regarded programs and activities emerged from the questionnaires completed by members of the congregation: Outreach, Worship and Music, Christian Education, Generational Ministry, Small Groups, Congregational Care.
- The clergy, the congregation (including groups such as United Methodist Women), buildings and facilities, the decision-making and internal communication structure, as well as finances, constitute enabling resources that serve the entire Church program.

The FUMC mission, highly valued policies, programs, activities and enabling resources are shown graphically

on page 3. The conceptual base for considering the entire Church as a unit is drawn from philosophy of science literature rather than from strategic planning methodology. Workers in science often organize around a particular discovery or concept. A cluster of professional societies, practices, and associated technologies stemming from a discovery or concept has come to be referred to as scientific paradigm, or disciplinary matrix. There is a close parallel between a scientific paradigm and a church in this respect. Both have a central belief or mission that motivates particular activities and practices. (See Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd edition, The University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London, 1996.)

The similarity between science and religion here is that both have groups that are held together by shared values. These shared values permit individuals in each grouping to engage in a common endeavor. In both cases they believe group activity will permit them to better achieve individual objectives than independent action. The achievements of group activity, (worshipping and “doing good” together), is a distinguishing characteristic of churches. If the resulting satisfaction becomes apparent to others, size of congrega-

tion is likely to increase.

A Vision for the Corvallis First United Methodist Church to the year 2010

The creation of a vision for an organization is an important step in strategic planning. The earlier this can occur in the planning process the better, because the vision can guide subsequent activities.

In practice, visions are often modified as planning proceeds. Some items in a tentative vision statement may be eliminated as unrealistic. Possibilities, not previously imagined, may emerge during the planning process that can be in the vision statement to guide future. The vision statement that follows has resulted from an iterative process.

“The Vision of the Corvallis First United Methodist Church is to actively address, as disciples, human suffering, human need and a neglected habitat wherever they occur, and to provide love, care, challenge, and nurture to all we encounter.”

The vision statement together with the mission statement guided establishment of numerous strategic plan recommendations including:

- An outreach program that continues its local, regional and international service.
- An explicit local Community Service Presence Program
- A vibrant, engaged, and growing congregation with interest in, and concern about, the community it reflects
- A small group ministry that will permit in-depth treatment of numerous issues. (A small group ministry is not necessarily a homogeneous small group.)
- A multi-generational ministry
- Greater emphasis on lay leadership with appropriate education and training programs.

- Building and facility use measured and evaluated by their contribution to the Church mission.
- Group decisions that advance the Vision and Mission of the Church and that make effective use of the time and talent of the congregation.

The theological base, mission, treasured policies, programs and activities, and vision for FUMC were examined for consistency and alignment. One inconsistency emerged. The reconciling congregation policy of FUMC is not in alignment with official policy of the United Methodist Church nationally. This is well known by those familiar with both organizations.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

The FUMC Theological Response to Rapid Social, Economic and Cultural Change

In a time of rapid change, the Church finds itself in unfamiliar territory. Traditionally, it has been an institution of slow, measured changes that have taken, at times, hundreds of years to complete. It no longer has that luxury due mainly to the speed with which every aspect of human life has been changing. What we are experiencing today is unprecedented since the Church's inception.

So how is Corvallis FUMC to respond to the challenges that lay ahead? What will be the guiding force behind the decisions that will need to be made that will enable this church to not only survive, but rather thrive in the time ahead? What will empower Corvallis FUMC to be, as Martin Luther King, Junior remarked, ...the headlights, and not the taillights, of the culture?

Our faith, more than anything else, must guide us in this new, uncomfortable time, just as faith guided those luminaries in the early Church when they were faced with the task of formulating the Christian faith itself. This faith must be grounded not in intellectual understanding, or moralizing judgment, but in the dictates of the great commandment that Jesus delivered to us; "Love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and your neighbor as yourself."

Faith in the One who brought us God's love and lived it in our midst must be the lamp that lights our way. Jesus demonstrated what that love looked like in healing and teaching as well as in dealing with Pilot and the chief priests at the Temple. Jesus

lived God's love before the eyes of the people of that time, and we are called to do the same for the people of this time.

In Matthew's 28th chapter, Jesus commissioned the disciples to

- 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Our faith tells us that we are not alone. We are loved and empowered to share the love we have been given, especially in times such as these. Our Christian doctrine, then, provides hope.

As Methodists under this Christian umbrella, we are encouraged to apply reason to experience in making both individual and groups decisions. Reason and experience call attention to the importance of adaptability and flexibility when change is rapid. To take advantage of adaptability and flexibility requires that the truly enduring be identified, and that distinctions be made between the ephemeral and the fundamental.

FUMC Areas of Strength

The FUMC experience has resulted in five areas of considerable traditional strength. None of these, taken alone, make FUMC distinctive, but together constitute a nearly unique, and most attractive, combination. To be specific:

- 1) A relevant theology combined with freedom of the pulpit. Over the past half-century and no doubt earlier, the FUMC pulpit has been a source of outstanding sermons about issues of faith and social justice.

- 2) Excellent leadership and Christian education for children, youth, and adults. Attention given to the training and education of lay people for leadership roles.
- 3) A most significant contribution to beauty of the Corvallis community with music, art and the sanctuary.
- 4) Love for one another manifested by an outreach program of great breadth and depth, an exemplary congregational care program, and respect and regard for everyone encountered.
- 5) Explicit policies that demonstrate commitment to all people and our habitat. FUMC is a Reconciling Congregation and it has recently become a Natural Step organization. An abiding concern for social justice.

Christian theology and Methodist pragmatism establish our first goal as:

GOAL 1: The provision of hope in the face of uncertainty, courage in the presence of injustice, and the identification of enduring values during rapid social, economic and cultural change.

Strategy 1.1: Establish excellence in the five areas of traditional strength identified above.

Goals for Multi-generational Ministry

A multi-generational ministry is fundamental to the aspirations set forth in the previous section. Two objectives must be served simultaneously if a diverse congregation is to 1) be well served and 2) if the congregation is to serve well. The special needs of particular groups must be addressed. But they must be addressed in such a way

that all acquire a common understanding of the group mission, goals and strategies.

To accomplish the above, particular responsibilities are assigned the Long-Range Planning Committee as well as the Lay Leadership Committee. The Long-Range Planning Committee has responsibility to provide information about relevant church groupings to appropriate program committees. The Lay Leadership Committee will identify needed leadership education and training. These committees will work cooperatively with the Christian Education Committee to establish appropriate educational and training programs.

Worship/Music Committee

Focus groups have been established on the basis of age, gender, income, and marital status. The purpose is to discover preferences related to worship and music both for those now in the congregation, as well as those who may wish to join FUMC. When this information has been assembled and evaluated goals, objectives and strategies will be formulated.

Christian Education, Spiritual Growth and Small-Group Ministries

The following goals and strategies are based on material supplied by the Lay Leadership and the Long-Range Planning Committees as described above.

Goal 2: To enable people to be all God makes it possible for them to be by educating body, mind, and spirit. To deepen faith in and knowledge of God; enhance connections to the Church through relationships with one another; develop leaders who can teach others in the congregation and the community.

Strategy 2.1: Provide training and mentoring for leaders.

- 2.1.1 Provide Christian Education

teacher training and explore flexible commitments as, for example, with team teaching and shorter time commitments.

- 2.1.2 Build a culture and expectation for the development of leadership from within the congregation – for example, emphasize in worship, communications, small group presentations; integrate leadership training into classes and groups.
- 2.1.3 Evaluate the use of staff time for training/mentoring relative to leading classes. For example, for new offerings (small group coordinator, covenant group) staff can train the person(s) who will coordinate or lead.

Strategy 2.2: Intentional development of small-group ministries:

- 2.2.1 Begin a pilot Covenant Group to deepen spiritual growth. Leaders(s) will receive training from staff and extend what they have learned to other members of the group.
- 2.2.2 Begin ongoing, always-open spiritual group(s): newcomers are invited to join.
- 2.2.3 Establish a volunteer position of small-group coordinator.

Strategy 2.3: Provide low-barrier classes on core knowledge. Deepen faith and be invitational to those with varied backgrounds through low-barrier training for all ages in key knowledge areas such as Methodism, Christianity, communion, etc. Classes will be held regularly on major topics.

Strategy 2.4: Use generational categories as well as spiritual and learning styles to identify educational, spiritual, fellowship, and other needs of congregational groups.

Congregational Care Committee

This Committee is a valued activity that effectively serves many in the congregation that have particular needs. In 2006 attention will be given

to the possible extension of congregational care for additional generational needs.

Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee now has an impressive outreach program with significant local and international mission activities. These efforts have been integrated with Christian Education activities in an impressive way. For example, outreach and mission programs are an integral part of youth education.

Questionnaires from members of the congregation made frequent mention of the need for FUMC to better serve the community. This was surprising in view of the breadth and depth of existing outreach efforts. The conclusion reached by the LRPC was that FUMC activities have not been sufficiently focused to create a strong local FUMC community presence. The following Community Service Program is intended remedy this deficiency.

Goal 3: A Community Presence Service Program will be established at FUMC. The Program will consist of service projects for the Corvallis community that emphasize traditional FUMC strengths. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, outstanding music, relevant preaching, social justice, education and learning as well as care for the needy both inside and outside FUMC.

Strategy 3.1: The LRPC and the Outreach Committee will jointly explore ways outstanding features of the worship program can be made available to the Corvallis Community. This does not necessarily mean the worship as such will be reproduced, but some features may be.

Channel television may be a way of sharing our music and our sermons. The objective is to make clear to the community that progressive Christianity as practiced at FUMC has much to offer in uncertain times. Not everyone will be attracted to our positions, but

some people are likely to find them of value.

Strategy 3.2: The Outreach Committee, in cooperation with other relevant committees, will identify community service events to be included in the Community Presence Service Program. One or more Community Service events will be offered each year. A realistic objective would be for one such event to be offered in 2006, and at least two per year to be offered in succeeding years through 2010.

Examples of possible community service events follow. It is hoped these examples will stimulate more imaginative and appropriate events.

- A musical event for the community. This could showcase our capacity to appeal to different generational and ethnic groups. We have done something like this at the Christmas season but a specially designed program certainly would add to our community presence. I just think our music has been superb. We have an organist and that adds even more capacity.
- Could our well managed, and very impressive, garage sale, be modified to further enhance a community presence image? Perhaps we could advertise that some items will be reserved for needy families or needy people in the community, or that a percentage of the proceeds would go to charitable community organizations.
- A community supper. Different formats are possible. A simple version would be a potluck with each member either bringing food or paying for dinner. Perhaps each member family would be expected to have less fortunate people in the community as guests. This might require that someone or some organization identify such people that individual families could meet and host.
- An educational event. An important, perhaps controversial, issue

could be identified to be explored (say) in the afternoon and evening. “Politics and Religion” has been suggested. People from outside the Church could be recruited to serve on a program committee. The advantage of this would be that more people would know about the event, and program participants could be more easily identified and recruited. Care would need to be taken to get balance in the presentations. Resolutions, votes, or formal actions by those attending would not be permitted. However, a “free speech” hour could be provided to permit any position to be expressed so long as it was not libelous or insulting to any ethnic group or religion. Of course those attending could engage in advocacy efforts independent of the event if they wished to do so. An effort such as this would not be without risk, but if well done, it could gain us great credibility in the community.

- Other community events can be imagined. If these were advertised as a series, and publicized as a part of a general program of community service by FUMC, our “community presence” reputation would become established.

It is suggested the Outreach Committee be assigned responsibility for developing and administering the Community Service Program. It will be necessary for other established programs of the Church to work with the Outreach Committee. Music/Worship and Christian Education are examples.

Goals for Enabling Resources

Enabling activities and resources contribute to the FUMC mission by serving or enhancing several programs or activities. They must be recognized, managed and cared for if the FUMC mission is to be well served.

The Clergy and Staff

The clergy provide spiritual leadership, coordinate Church programs, administer Church policies, and provide staff leadership. The number of clergy employed by the Church has declined recently affecting appropriate goals and attendant strategies.

Goal 4. Effective use of the clergy.

Strategy 4.1: Experiment with new and relevant ways of worship. This is occurring currently with the Sunday evening worship service.

Strategy 4.2: Make more effective use of lay people to reduce clergy workload. This will require training and education for lay people.

Strategy 4.3: Consider the impact on clergy workloads as Strategic Plans are implemented. For example, FUMC would like to better serve the Corvallis community demographically. If strategies to accomplish this objective are successful, attention will be given to clergy workloads.

Strategy 4.4: Attention given to continuing education and training needs of clergy as affected by Strategic Plans.

Strategy 4.5: Make provision for protection of private and recreational time of clergy.

The Staff and Parish Relations Committee is assigned responsibility for Goal 4 and attendant strategies. They are currently engaged in addressing many of these issues, and are encouraged to seek assistance from the Lay Leader and other appropriate groups as they do so.

The Congregation

Throughout the history of the United Methodist Church the local congregation has played a vital role in building, maintaining and sustaining its church and its role in the community. It is the faith and strength of individual members who step forward in their lay capacity to serve, guide, and grow each local church.

Without ongoing lay involvement on all levels a church will die. Lay leadership calls upon all members, of all ages: to volunteer, to attend training classes and to serve where their gifts and talents lead. Discipleship begins with children as they learn about giving to others and continue through youth programs and also with adult programs.

At FUMC we are blessed with an abundance of on-going classes and training at various age levels and for those new to Methodism. Lay leadership and the need for lay education and training cannot be exaggerated easily.

The United Methodist Women have long been an important enabling resource for many FUMC programs and activities. They contribute significantly to the spiritual life of the Church. They take responsibility for many services the Church provides such as hospitality at memorial services. Further, the record shows they have made a significant financial contribution to mission work domestically and abroad.

United Methodist Women programs and activities reflect the changing role of women in society. Older women activities understandably are more traditional in nature and, for example, tend to concentrate on day time-meetings and activities. Younger women meetings and activities reflect the realities of work outside the home and younger families.

Buildings and Facilities

FUMC buildings consist of an older building that includes the sanctuary, together with a recently constructed community center. Existing use policies reflect the differing ages and purposes of the two structures, as well as permissible charges and competing interests in building use. Three considerations appear to have been neglected.

- A common understanding of the purposes buildings serve and a controlling philosophy of building use.
- Consideration of the most limiting factor in building use. Buildings use entails sacrifice in some form—maintenance costs, operating expenditures, and management.
- A realistic assessment of the financial potential of FUMC buildings if leased to others in the community.

The following goals and strategies have been developed in view of the above considerations.

Goal 5. All uses, internal or external, will directly or indirectly advance the mission of FUMC to the greatest extent possible.

This goal establishes the Church mission as paramount in building use. This may appear simplistic but its implementation is far from simple. Priorities cannot be established among use categories unless judgments can be made as to the relation of the possible uses to the FUMC mission. Some such use may advance the Church mission directly. An example of such a direct use would be use by the Church Youth preparing for a mission trip. But leasing a building for a fee will indirectly serve the Church mission if the income earned is used to advance Church goals.

There are, in general, at least four categories of use:

- 1) Staff or congregation member (s)

use to advance an FUMC program.

- 2) Congregation member(s) use for individual purposes.
- 3) By an outside group(s) that advances the FUMC mission directly.
- 4) By an outside group with little or no direct relation to the FUMC mission. If income is earned the FUMC mission may be advanced indirectly.

Strategy 5.1: Goal 1 will be incorporated into all guidelines pertaining to building use choices.

Strategy 5.2: A record be established and maintained of all scheduled room uses as follows: Building and room(s) used, date and hour of use, type of use, user, and rental income.

Strategy 5.3: A lay person be recruited to provide leadership for building and facility use. Responsibilities will include promoting, overseeing and developing guidelines for building use consistent with FUMC policies.

Strategy 5.4: A buildings and use facilities committee be created to advise the lay building and facilities use person identified in Strategy 1.3. This committee will include a clergy person, the youth director, the hospitality coordinator, the office manager, and the weekday custodian with the Chair of Trustees and other staff to be consulted as needed.

Strategy 5.5: The Board of Trustees, with advise of the building and facilities use lay person, make an assessment of the rental demand in Corvallis and surrounding areas for FUMC building use, especially the community center and the sanctuary.

Group Decision Making and Information Flow

The Corvallis FUMC Decision Structure—An Experimental Proposed for 2006.

(The work of the LRPC on this subject is reported in the Executive Summary and is not repeated here.)

Conclusions

1. The Corvallis First United Methodist Church is a coherent and cohesive organization guided by Christian doctrine, by United Methodist philosophy, and by FUMC mission statement and its policies, programs and practices.
2. Its mission statement—“Our mission is to bring people into a living relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, that we might love the world as God loves the world.”—has served the Church well. There is little evidence a change is desired or needed.
3. The Corvallis First Methodist Church wishes to increase its service to the Corvallis community. It can do this by its congregation better reflecting the community and by greater service to the community.
4. The FUMC proposes to serve its congregation by a multi-generational and small-group ministry. Increased emphasis will be placed on lay leadership with attendant education and training.
5. The Long-Range Planning Committee proposes a Community Services Program that will address community needs and make use of impressive existing activities and capacities at FUMC.
6. The number of clergy and the amount of clergy time at FUMC has declined. The best use of the clergy resource becomes of high priority. This requires attention be given to responsibilities, renewal, education and recreation.
7. The most effective use of buildings and facilities depends greatly on personnel to promote, oversee, and guide to advance the Church mission. Personnel are not currently engaged in doing so adequately.
8. Evidence exists that improvement can be made in the structure governing group decision-making and information flows at FUMC.
9. Financial sustainability is of concern at FUMC. Many costs are rising even as pledged receipts are trending downward.
10. As FUMC looks to the future, note is taken of its impressive assets. These include: a beautiful sanctuary, wonderful music, a talented congregation, an enviable community center, a caring clergy and a reconciling congregation.
11. In 2006 the Long-Range Planning Committee should give priority to 1) finances, 2) worship/music, and 3) group decision-making and information flows.