

Staff Notes by Faith Whitmore

One of the most frequently asked questions leading up to our "Future Search" weekend was, "Will it really make any difference? We've done these strategic planning processes before but we haven't really seen much follow-through." I can promise you, this time, my friends, that "Future Search" was a great success and it was just the beginning . . .

I celebrate it as a great success because:

- Over 100 St. Mark's folks showed up and hung in there for quite a grueling schedule: We met 3 hours on Friday evening; 10 hours on Saturday and another 4 hours on Sunday afternoon following worship!
- Those who wanted to be there and couldn't held us in prayer and we felt it.
- Lisa Beutler was Facilitator Extraordinaire! (She currently works as the Associate Director of the California State University Sacramento Center for Collaborative Policy. She specialized in helping organizations and communities reach decisions and create public policy. She had led numerous complex, high profile collaborative projects involving a broad spectrum of subjects including water, off-highway vehicles, technology and substance abuse . . . and not she add St. Mark's to her list!) Lisa is very, very skilled at listening, offering feedback and guiding us strongly and with good humor



through the arduous and very productive process. Not only that, she brought SIX of her colleagues from as far away as Florida and Los Angeles to help ~ all at their own expense, asking nothing of us but our trust, cooperation, and investment in the process. We could never have afforded such stellar leadership in our wildest dreams or budget! St. Mark's was given an invaluable gift and I am grateful beyond anything that words can express.

- We have not only a vision for where we will be in the year 2020, but we have a fairly clear picture and idea of what must be done in order to bring it to fruition.

I can promise that our "Future Search" will produce results because nearly everyone who was there signed up to continue our work in one of the following areas which were identified as the most critical at this point in our life and ministry together:

- **Welcoming Ministry** (we agreed that we need to improve our capacity to welcome new folks into the life of our church: for example ~ being more present to visitors when they arrive for worship on Sundays, partnering new members with those who can help them to find their way into the life and opportunities that St. Mark's has to offer, etc.) We heard our newer folks say that we aren't quite as open and friendly as we perceive ourselves to be.
- **Spirituality:** We heard an expressed desire for more spiritual



experiences, groups, and worship opportunities. As one person reflected, "John Wesley held

personal faith in Christ in creative tension with the social gospel. We are strong on the latter and weak on the former."

- **Expanding diverse worship opportunities:** We heard from the "Former Friday Night" folks that they miss creating worship together with children as an integral part of the experience. Others shared a desire for a more meditative style of worship (i.e. Taize services). Mid-week services were suggested by some, while others want us to plan services that speak specifically to teenagers.
- **Expand ministry and opportunity for Young Adults:** It was noted that only 15% of our congregation is in the 21-40 age range and that we do not have much to offer this group at this time. The commitment to turn this trend around is very high!
- **Development of Small Groups:** Research continues to show that small groups are the most fruitful way to grow a church. Unless people feel that they have "a place" within a large congregation, they will eventually leave.
- **Marketing:** It became clear to us that we need to be more assertive about sharing our ministry through our publications, the media, our web site, etc.
- **Additional staffing for implementation of all of the above.**

In the next several weeks we will be publicizing when these focus area groups will meet and give everyone in the congregation an opportunity to sign-up for participation. In other words, if you were not able to attend "Future Search" you definitely will not be left out of the "Future Process"!

We will continue to write about "Future Search" and our "Future Process" in *Markings* and will include updates, photos, etc. on our web site as they become available. The Church Council will be addressing this at each of our meetings as well, checking on, and encouraging progress each month. In other words, all this work and energy will not be silently shelved or slip away.



Special thanks to the Strategic Planning Committee (Lisa Beutler,

Elise Blaylock, Nina Blaylock, Ralph Davis, Stephanie Fredrickson, Chris Harris, Heinz Heckerroth, Pam & Steve Kepler, Dorothy & Mark Lingren, Marjie Lundstrom, Margot Perry, Melissa & Scott Stiewig, Hank Taber, Darrell & Moonine Walker, and Sally S. Weinland); to all those who attended (Chris Allan, Bonnie Apple, Al & Pat Arthur, Ginny & Ray Baldauf, Joanna & Ray Ballard, Carol Baltzell, Elise Blaylock, Nina Blaylock, Johanna Brownell, Ellie Charlton, Rita Clark, Dana Cook, Jan Dahl, Ralph Davis, Jill Dawdy, John & Marion Dodd, Klea Dole, Don Duncan, Dottie & Norm Eade, Keith & Rosemary Erlewine, Toni Eaton, Joyce Estes, Patti Evans, Boni Fields, Donna & Ken Fors, Cheryl Fuller, Kris Greenlee, Bill Gugeler, Chris Harris, Doreen Hart, Marilyn Hasbrouck, Heinz & Hope Heckerroth, Sue Hida, Kim Holder, Esther Huston, Lori Johnson, Ann & Terry Jordan, Pam & Steve Kepler, Linda Klamann, Cynthia & Howard Lawrence, John Lundstrom, Dave MacMurdo, Michael

Mathews, John & Miriam McCormack, Jack Miller, Bobbie Morford, Gaylon Palmer, Carolyn Parkinson, Flo Perry; Jeanine Perry, Margot Perry, Debora Petlow, Helen Porter, Shirley Reese, Don Reynolds, Bob Richards, Charlotte Richmond, Jim & Sylvia Roberts, Wayne Robinson, Ron Rowan, Darrel & DeeAnn Schmucker, Kaitlin Schmucker, Michael & Vicki Schwimley, Tammy Scott, Peggy & Richard Smith, Jennifer Stevenson, Scott Stiewig, Kelly Stockton, Orrinda Stockton, Carol & Roger Stoughton, Jean & Jim Strathdee, Julie Strathdee, Hank Taber, Karen Terhune, Holly & Tom Thompson, Lyndon Thomson, Glenn & Gwen Tilton, Judy Tracy, Darrell & Moonine Walker, Sally J. Weinland, Sally S. Weinland, Faith Whitmore, Sarge Wright, Betty & Clarence Youngren); Nick Konovaloff for being our on-site photographer; Cathie Johnston for catering the entire weekend (and enlisting her family to help so that we could all be fully present to the process); Dr. Metwali Amer from the Muslim community for his presence on Friday evening as a show of support for St. Mark's ministry in the community and the world; Gary & Patti Evans for hosting several of the out-of-town facilitators . . .

Comments from the Congregation

"What a gift St. Mark's was given this past weekend. With Lisa's guidance, feelings were stated and dreams made. It was nice to hear how well organized it was. I only wish I could have been there. It is such a comfort to know that we are at a place where we listen to each other. God's love is abundant!"

"The facilitators were more than competent, they were nicely vicious in requiring specificity. No generalities

were allowed. People had to describe exactly what they were pointing to. Much agitation and squirming as people struggled to say exactly what they meant. The facilitators said back what they heard and went to extremes in making sure the group understood what had been said . . ."

WOW!

"I was overwhelmed by the collective power of who we are and who we can become. It felt good to hang out with the Spirituality group: We need more, but what exactly does that mean?"

"Youth Sunday was a great part of the whole weekend - couldn't have been better - the best Youth Sunday ever!"

"We now have a lot of responsibility to follow through."

"It became clear to me that we need to learn our own story and then get clear about telling our story. We can't let our cautiousness about being confused with the fundamentalists keep Jesus out."

"Lisa Beutler's humor was disarming and perfectly-timed."

"One of my favorite moments occurred early-on ~ on Friday when I realized that this was going to be different than what I thought it was going to be!"

"I'll never forget when John McCormack appeared as 'The World's Most Diverse Person' in one of the skits."

AWESOME!