

**Grace United Methodist Church, Mechanicsburg, Consultation
September 17-19, 2010**

INTRODUCTION

We, the consultation team, would like to thank the pastor, leaders and congregation for the opportunity to consult with your congregation. Everyone was helpful and provided us all the information we requested. Our prayer is that God will use this consultation to enhance the witness of Christ to this community through the part of His body known as Grace United Methodist Church of Mechanicsburg.

STRENGTHS

1. **THE PASTOR:** This congregation respects, admires and cares deeply for their pastor. He has worked hard to build relationships and unify the congregation, as well as keep an eye on larger community and global issues. As a result people value his leadership, benefit from his preaching and many are willing to follow him into a new season of health and growth.
2. **MISSIONS:** The congregation has displayed a commitment to involvement in missions that meets the needs of folks in the community and around the world. The congregation continually rises to the challenge to serve beyond itself and its needs. People of all ages are given opportunities at various levels to become involved in being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ to those who are without adequate resources.
3. **HOSPITALITY/CARING:** The congregation embraces quickly and completely new guests who come to make Grace Church their home. They show love and care through hospitality and other means to one another.
4. **PERMISSION GIVING:** The congregation displays an openness to new direction and has already adopted a structure that eliminates much of the bureaucracy and control that keeps many churches from the flexibility and agility that is needed in ministry in a constantly changing world.
5. **LOCATION AND FACILITIES:** While the facilities provide a challenge for accessibility and upkeep, and the community has many other congregations from which to choose; the church is located in the midst of a rapidly growing community. Building on its rich history of making disciples for Jesus Christ, the church is now uniquely poised to be able to reach the changing neighborhood and growing developments with the Good News. The building's architecture has proven attractive to many folks who in recent years have come to call Grace Church home.

CONCERNS

1. **EVANGELISM:** As shown by 20 years of steady decline, this congregation has not been effective in reaching and making new disciples of Jesus Christ on a regular and consistent basis.
2. **MISSION/VISION:** The congregation is not united around a clear and compelling vision to accomplish the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ in this community.
3. **STRUCTURE/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:** While the structure adopted has freed up some of the bureaucracy, it has not effectively enabled leadership development. There is no process for recruiting, equipping and mobilizing leaders, leaving much of the congregation's ministry to rise and fall on the gifts of a particular pastor.
4. **FINANCES:** The congregation does not have an ongoing process to develop stewardship, and has not consistently taught the biblical concept of tithing as a benchmark of Christian discipleship. The congregation has spent most of its financial resources on facilities not ministry. The reliance on fundraisers has taken much time and resources that could be devoted to accomplishing the mission and vision.
5. **GUEST FLOW AND GUEST (NEW PEOPLE) ASSIMILATION:** There is no real process in place to move people from first time visitors to fully engaged disciples of Jesus. The congregation must work to increase guest flow AND be ready to receive and assimilate those guests into the life of the church.

PRESCRIPTIONS

1. **EVANGELISM:** The pastor will form a prayer team, to pray with him weekly for the mission and vision of the congregation, for the community, and for the consistent making of new disciples. This team will be in place by November 21, 2010.

The pastor and leaders will set aside a Sunday morning worship experience as a day of prayer and fasting dedicated to God. The purpose of the service will be three-fold. First, time will be given for the pastor, leaders and congregation to confess their sins of failing to make disciples of Jesus on a regular and consistent basis. Second, time will be given to pray that God will break the hearts of members of the congregation for those in the community who do not yet know Jesus. Third, time will be given for a compelling vision for reaching the community for Jesus Christ. This day will be led by the Congregational Coach or the District Superintendent. It will occur by November 30, 2010.

The pastor will then teach the Council Members, any staff members and other interested members of the congregation a course on evangelism (such as Re-Imagining Evangelism, or a similar type course). This course will be completed by July 31, 2011. Following the course the pastor, all council members, any staff members, and any other person who has taken the course and who are willing, will set a goal of one to two un-churched persons they will develop a relationship with and eventually share the Gospel of Jesus Christ by September 30, 2011.

2. MISSION/VISION: With the acceptance of this report, the mission of Grace United Methodist Church will be, "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." All decisions made by all leaders will then be evaluated by how those decisions implement the mission.

The leaders will plan an envisioning day for the congregation. This envisioning day will be led by either the Coach or the DS. Following the envisioning day the pastor, in consultation with the Coach and the DS will establish a vision for the congregation. The envisioning day will occur by May 29, 2011 and the vision statement will be in place by June 30, 2011.

The pastor and leaders will conduct six big events (four of which will occur on Sunday morning during the worship hour) that are designed more for those not here yet than for those who already attend. These six events will occur during the twelve months from November 2010 to October 2011.

The pastor and the pastor's staff will conduct a mission audit. Every ministry in the congregation will be examined to see how that ministry helps to make new disciples for Jesus Christ. Those that do not must then either be changed or discontinued. This audit must be completed by October 31, 2011.

3. STRUCTURE: The pastor, the Coach and DS will lead the congregation in adopting a new structure promoted by the conference and supported by the Bishop. In this new structure, the pastor will create a staff who will oversee those ministries expected by new people who visit any congregation. These staff members will report to the pastor and be held accountable for goals. All staff members must include evangelism, leadership and growth goals in their individual goals.

If volunteers cannot be found in the areas of children's ministries, youth ministries, adult spiritual formation and assimilation, money will be allocated to hire staff to fulfill the vision. The staff and new structure is to be in place by January 31, 2011. The pastor will begin holding regular council meetings and conduct leadership training at both council and staff meetings beginning immediately thereafter.

4. FINANCES: Under the leadership of the pastor and council, the congregation will develop an ongoing stewardship program to encourage the church toward becoming a faithful, tithing congregation. The pastor will preach a series of at least four messages on financial stewardship by March 27, 2011. The pastor will lead the congregation to conduct a Consecration Sunday, or similar event by December 31, 2011. The pastor will work with the council to explore avenues for planned giving, and to address capital needs. The pastor will preach at least once a quarter, beginning in 2012, a message on financial stewardship.
5. GUEST FLOW/ASSIMILATION: The council will develop a process of assimilation, designed to help new people become connected to Jesus Christ and the congregation, learn how God has designed and gifted them to serve in the body and then be mobilized into service. The staff person for assimilation will then recruit and train a group of people to implement that process. The process, recruiting and training need to be completed by August 31, 2011.

The congregation will vote to embrace or reject this report on October 31, 2010. If the congregation votes to embrace this report, the Conference will provide a congregational coach to help the congregation implement the prescriptions. This coach, Mrs. Jan Hughes, will work with the congregation for twelve months. (It is assumed, but not conditional upon having a coach, that everyone who votes for the report will actively serve in specific ways over the next several months to help the congregation begin to experience health and growth in order to be transformed and make many more new disciples for Jesus Christ.)

CONCLUSION

As members of the Matthew 28 team, our hope is that every congregation in our Annual Conference would once again be effective in fulfilling the Great Commission and making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We believe that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and implementing the prescriptions from the report, that Grace Church's best days are still ahead, and we thank God for what will be done through this pastor and the congregation in the life of this community.

Respectfully submitted:

Rev. Larry L. Leland, Jr. – *Consultant*
Mrs. Jan Hughes – *Coach*
Rev. Dr. Dennis Keller – *District Superintendent*