

**A PROPOSAL FOR ST. JAMES UMC:
OUR VALUES AND ORGANIZATION**
Endorsed by the Administrative Board
May 20, 2018

I. Overview

The Joel Team was created as an ongoing visioning group for St. James UMC. It takes its name from a passage in the book of Joel quoted by Peter as the church was being birthed on Pentecost: *“This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams’* (Acts 2:16-17). For nearly two years, the Joel Team has been discerning the Holy Spirit’s calling on our church. Specifically, we have been prayerfully considering the core values of our church and the primary processes for ministry. This report has several specific recommendations for our church related to this prayerful work. Our hope is that God has stirred in this team ideas and convictions that will translate into greater vitality for St. James!

II. Core Values

In naming the core values of St. James, our hope is to affirm the underlying purposes of all of our ministries. With a church our size, many of us bring different understanding of the culture of the church. With such diversity, it is helpful to name the values that draw us together. (Note: The order of these values form the acronym “DRUM” to help us remember).

- 1) **We Are Devoted**. At St. James, we take our faith seriously. We want to give God our best and nothing less. While we are grace-filled and forgiving, we also expect excellence. We expect our members to live into the promises they make upon joining this church.
- 2) **We Are Rooted**. In a world dominated by the quick fixes and disposables, at St. James we are rooted on “the better part”. We worship. We study our Bibles. We pray. We participate in small groups. We celebrate the sacraments. We are open to the means of grace that the Holy Spirit offers us for making us holy.
- 3) **We Are United**. St. James is a big church. We have more activities than we can count. We have members of all ages and with diverse perspectives. We worship in different styles. But like an armada of many ships, we are moving in the same direction. We celebrate how Jesus Christ unites us despite our differences. And we celebrate how Christ unites us in mission and ministry through our denomination, the United Methodist Church.
- 4) **We Are Missional**. The apostle James, from whom we take our name, once said, “Faith without works is dead.” St. James is a community not bound by the walls of our building. Our faith calls us not to serve ourselves, but to share the light of Christ with our community to the ends of the earth, that all may call Christ “Lord”.

These core values should undergird the mission and ministry of our church. Our activities should both reflect and deepen these values corporately and individually.

III. Process

One of the challenges of the size of St. James is that it can be hard to know how the ministries of the church fit together into a whole. The following framework is meant to help us see how that does and can happen, individually and corporately. Perhaps an image will help our imaginations:



- 1) **Invitation & Missions:** These are the ministries that are a vehicle for sharing the light of Christ outside our church and for bringing new people into the church. They help us live into the core value of being “Missional”. In a sense, these are the beginning (where new people begin to get engaged) and the end (where mature disciples are sharing the light of Christ and helping new people to get engaged). We hope to develop a culture of invitation at St. James, where we constantly ask ourselves how we are inviting people in our lives and in our community to come to know Christ through our church. This area includes the ministries typically labeled Missions, Evangelism, and Hospitality. The key question for this part of our ministry is: *“How are we sharing Christ’s light to the world and engaging people who are not disciples of Jesus?”*
- 2) **Formation:** These are the ministries that focus on growth as disciples. They help us live into the core value of being “Rooted”. Importantly, this ministry area balances our individual growth as disciples and our connection with others in Christian Community. This area includes the ministries typically labeled as Worship, Christian Education, Small Groups, and Children & Youth. The key question for this part of our ministry is: *“How are we forming disciples of Jesus?”*
- 3) **Incorporation:** These are the ministries that focus on our church as a community. They help us live into the core value of being “United”. This area is particularly worthy of our

attention because of the scale of St. James, where it is easy to fall between the cracks. Here we give attention to the church's "front door" (new members) and the "back door" (those who fall away). This area includes the ministries typically labeled as Fellowship, Membership, Congregational Care, and Special Events. The key question for this part of our ministry is: *"How are we strengthening our church as the Body of Christ?"*

- 4) **Equipping:** These are the ministries that focus enable and improve the other ministries of the church. They help us live into the core value of being "Devoted" by equipping all the ministries of the church and encouraging excellence in these ministries. This area includes the ministries typically labeled as Administrative, such as Finance, Trustees, and Administrative Board. The key question for this part of our ministry is: *"How are we equipping and holding accountable the leaders and ministries of our church?"*

Obviously, this framework simplifies complex and overlapping ministries. But perhaps by working from this framework, we can collectively envision how our ministries work together to create a community of faith that exemplifies and deepens our core values.

IV. Ministry Team Reorganization

We recommend restricting our ministry organizational chart so that it is clear how our ministries work together to support this overarching process of deeper engagement. As we reorganize, we have several specific recommendations for ministry teams, including the creation of a few new ones!

- 1) **Invitation & Missions:**
 - a. Evangelism Team: Create a new team to help equip the congregation in being invitational to our community. This is distinctive from the Hospitality Team (which welcomes people who come to us) because it's emphasis is on how we are proactively reaching out.
 - b. Missions Team: Provide oversight to the manifold existing missions of the church, helping to ensure timing for congregational engagement, and emphasizing opportunities for the church to develop ongoing relationships with people on the margins.
 - c. Hospitality Team: Review the church's space, signage, and existing hospitality ministries to ensure we are engaging visitors for worship and visitors to our space during the week
 - d. Weekday Ministries: Strive to better engage the congregation at large with our two on-site mission fields.
 - e. Higher Education: Consider how this team, or another team if needed, might nurture better connections with the mission field a few blocks away (ECU).
 - f. Community Ministries: Clarify church leadership connected to these various ministries (Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Upward Basketball, AA, Methodist Home for Children, ESL) to increase connectivity with these onsite mission fields.

2) **Formation:**

- a. Small Groups: Develop an intentional leadership incubation for small groups leaders with hopes of developing new opportunities so that we can engage far more of our church in small groups.
- b. Children's Ministry: Evaluate and reorganize program through equipping of lay leadership.
- c. Youth Ministry: Evaluate and reorganize program with a guiding question of "How can we form our youth today so that they remain faithful when they graduate?"
- d. Living Waters: Consider efficacy of this moniker (is it Sunday School?), equip class leaders for class retention, and provide support and accountability to teachers.
- e. Worship: Continue to strive for excellence in both styles of worship, and consider what new worship service(s) might be considered in the next few years to reach those we are not reaching currently.
- f. Adult Ministries: These ministries (Prime Time, Women's Groups, Library, In Stitches, Prayer Shawls, UMM, UMW, etc.) appeal to specific niches within the congregation and need effective, targeted recruitment. And we can consider what additional groups might be helpful to the church.
- g. Young Adults: Create a new team to better engage with young adults (18-30), exploring real and perceived needs (e.g. bike racks in our parking lot, reaching out on the Greenway side of our campus, establishing a presence on campus, providing transportation, etc.)

3) **Incorporation:**

- a. Family Life Team: Create a new team to intentionally foster activities that bring the church together through fellowship and learning.
- b. Membership: Develop clarity in process and in lifting up expectations to those joining the church, as well as systems for fostering connecting with laity. Also improve systems for identifying visitors and moving them towards members.
- c. Membership Care: Improve equipping of the congregation for providing care, as well as systems for the congregation to share information about membership in need of care.

4) **Equipping:**

- a. Administrative Board: Reorient primary work from reporting to accountability and support, with greater clarity of expectations and goals for ministry teams and a focus on celebrating ministry success. Our hope is that this board can ask of all of our ministries key questions, like: "What are we doing to invite people to Jesus?"
- b. Lay Leadership: In addition to nominations work, move towards cultivating and equipping leadership in the congregation.
- c. Finance Committee: Increase communication with ministry teams to ensure realistic budget practices and financial accountability.
- d. Trustees: Increase attention to how our physical space serves as a witness to community groups and visitors to worship, and help the church move towards more clarity in anticipated capital needs for preventative maintenance.
- e. Staff Parish Relations Committee: With increased management level positions, equip staff as managers. Support staff in move towards "equipping" paradigm as opposed to "doing" paradigm.

- f. Joel Team: After a brief Sabbath, we recommend this team reassemble to prepare for next phase of visioning, which is a 5-10 year assessment.
- g. Stewardship: Increase personal accountability for financial generosity, from new members to longtime membership.
- h. Prayer: Focus on ways to equip the congregation to answer their membership vow to be in prayer, including interactions with ministry teams.
- i. Environmental Stewardship: Hold ministry teams and individuals accountable for participating in sustainable practices at church, home, and work.

V. Other Observations & Recommendations

- 1) **Communications**: This is one of our biggest challenges. We need to name the challenges of communicating in a congregation this size: there is too much information for any one person to know, yet it can be challenging to know the most important information. We urge the staff to develop a comprehensive plan, and we urge the congregation to adhere to the plan.
- 2) **Size Adjustments**: Our church has grown substantially over the last couple of decades. Our system of organization and our expectations of our church staff & ministries have not entirely adjusted to that growth.
- 3) **Streamlining**: We need to consider where our procedures or ministries are duplicative and streamline our ministry organization so that we do not burnout our laity and staff.
- 4) **Celebration Mindset**: We tend to focus our communications on recruitment, but that can lead to burnout as we are always working on the next big thing. We need to cultivate a culture of celebration & Sabbath, where we look back on what God has done in our midst and celebrate it much as God did on the 7th day of creation! As a part of this, we need to be intentional about harvesting stories from our members of how their lives have been transformed through our ministries.

VI. Closing

The Lord has blessed St. James UMC with a vibrant and growing culture throughout its 66 years of existence. We are certain that, through God's grace, our greatest days are not behind us but ahead of us. We earnestly believe that confirming these core values and prioritizing them in the organization of our ministries and organization will put us in the best position to build on this history, and we are excited about what dreams may come from the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life!

Respectfully Submitted,

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